

## TRAPPER'S POINT

# Group works to protect corridor

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**GREEN RIVER** — A recently formed coalition of concerned parties is working on a protection plan for a key wildlife migration corridor in western Wyoming.

Officials involved in the effort said the coalition — which includes government agencies, state lawmakers, agricultural producers, conservationists, and oil and gas industry interests — has been working for over a month to draft a protection plan for the historic Trapper's Point area west of Pinedale.

Thousands of deer and antelope migrate each year through a natural "bottleneck" at Trapper's Point.

The bottleneck is located between two river drainages in the Upper Green River Basin about seven miles west of Pinedale in Sublette County.

State Rep. Monte Olsen, R-Daniel, who organized the 22-member coalition, said he hopes the group's final recommendations will be considered by the Bureau of Land Management in its soon-to-be revised management plan.

The BLM's Pinedale Field Office is currently revising the agency's Resource Management Plan for the Pinedale District.

"I think some good things have already happened with this," Olsen said in a recent phone interview about the group.

"A lot more discussion still needs to take place, but we've started to talk and make progress on a series of things," he said. "I brought everyone together ... to see if we couldn't sit down and work out a protection plan to present to the

# CORRIDOR: It is the longest migration route in the lower 48 states

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BLM for their Pinedale RMP.

"This will be a plan that will preserve, protect and perpetuate the continued usage of this historic core area," he noted.

Twice a year, several thousand deer and antelope migrate through the small, sagebrush corridor located on a low ridge between the riparian areas of the Green River and New Fork River.

The route marks the longest migration in the lower 48 states and includes the approximately 160-mile trip from Grand Teton National Park in Jackson Hole down to the Green River and the Mesa near Pinedale.

Along the route, the big game animals have to traverse several small migration corridors, including Trapper's Point, in Sublette County and the Bridger Teton National Forest. The migration bottle-

neck's include areas that contain crucial winter range for the animals.

State archeologists have documented a 6,000-year old antelope kill site in the bottleneck and archeological records suggest there has been big game migration through the corridor for thousands of years.

But crucial winter ranges in the area have been restricted in recent years, mostly by subdivision development, oil and gas development, highway and county road construction, and new fence construction.

Development in the Trapper's Point area has narrowed the bottleneck to approximately a half-mile, or about 320 acres.

## Tentative agreement

The coalition consists of a variety of parties, including the BLM, the Forest Service,

we want to work with everybody and here's what we're proposing."

Linda Baker, Grassroots Coordinator for the UGRVC, said for the coalition to succeed, "This is going to take a long process involving establishing a certain level of trust from all interested parties."

"Hopefully it will give everybody a feeling of being involved ... and I think it has the potential to reduce litigation and a lot of hard feelings and mistrust that lie on both sides of the table," she said in a phone interview Tuesday.

Baker said there's a good chance the BLM will listen to the group's recommendations on Trapper's Point because the group is acting as an unofficial adaptive management team.

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the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Jackson Hole Alliance, Green River Valley Cattleman's Association, Upper Green River Valley Coalition (UGRCV), Sublette County government and the Wyoming Department of Transportation, among others.

Olsen said during two meetings in October and one last week, the group identified five potential threats to the continued migration of ungulates through Trapper's Point.

Those threats include oil and gas development, private land development, vehicle/wildlife collisions on the highway, fences and hunting. Olsen said the coalition is working to draft a potential

course of action to address the identified threats.

As an example of the group's efforts, Olsen said oil and gas industry officials presented a map at the last meeting outlining the areas within the corridor in which they would agree to not allow leasing, drilling or surface occupancy.

"What's interesting is that in order for industry to even come up with a proposal like that, they had to go to the lease holders of those minerals and those (lease holders) agreed to it," he said.

"That's what is so unique and in my mind so positive about this ... the fact that industry themselves are saying we know what we need to do,

though I might be overstepping my boundaries for saying that," she said.

"But it seems to me this is a management style that allows all the players to come to the table and discuss what their differences are and what they can agree on ... and in the end I think it makes management so much more transparent," Baker said.

Conservationists have been advocating for years the creation of special protections in areas like the Trapper's Point bottleneck to help migrating big game populations.

In August 2002, the BLM mistakenly bid the leasing rights on two parcels of public lands within the Trapper's Point as part of a larger federal oil and gas sale. The BLM quickly rejected and refunded an oil company's bid, however, after wildlife concerns were voiced by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.