

Third property improvement project

By Mark Hughes

The Small Acreage Issue Team has been involved with two property improvement projects – one near Wheatland and another northeast of Casper.

Activities at both small acreages address native rangeland and pasture management issues. To address a greater variety of issues, a third property that included either forested

or riparian acreage was sought. The nomination of the Bob and Jane Adams property east of Laramie allows the team to address both issues.

The Adams live on a 37-acre tract in the Pole Mountain area approximately 15 miles east of Laramie near the popular Vedauwoo Recreation Area. Bob, a certified home performance contractor through the Wyoming Energy Council Inc. (<http://www.wyoec.org/>), built their energy-efficient home eight years ago, and the couple moved in soon thereafter. Prior to moving to their forested acreage, Bob and Jane lived on a much different property on the treeless plains east of Cheyenne.

The Adams property at over 8,300 feet elevation has great diversity of vegetation and wildlife. Conifer trees include three species of pine, Douglas fir and subalpine fir, juniper, and Engelmann spruce. Stands of aspen, serviceberry, and native sagebrush add to the diversity. Elk and moose are frequent visitors to the property. Bob and Jane have witnessed as many as nine bull elk at one time



Bob Adams, left, discusses property issues with Tony Hoch, Mark Hughes, and Rex Lockman.

lingering on the property. Other wildlife include mule and whitetail deer as well as mountain lions, coyotes, and a host of birds and small mammals. Subdivision covenants discourage fencing in order to allow wildlife to move freely through the area.

The property also boasts a much sought-after asset of riparian resources of a live stream and ponds fed by year-round springs. These water resources attract many species of wildlife to the property and provide a diversity of trees and shrubs.

Despite the beauty and diversity, the Adams are facing several challenges and have several objectives

for improving the property. Reducing the mountain pine beetle devastation is the most pressing; mountain pine beetles have claimed dozens of large pines.

The Small Acreage Issue Team will work with the Adams to address the following property improvement issues.

Forest Health

In addition to losses from mountain pine beetle attacks, many of their mature Limber pines are infected with white pine blister rust – a fungus that has killed hundreds of limber pine in the area. Also, some large Engelmann spruce have recently suffered attacks by the spruce Ips beetle. Bob

Bob and Jane Adams enjoy their forested property in Vedauwoo Springs.



contains forest, riparian areas

and Jane have had more than 300 of the evergreens commercially sprayed to prevent mountain pine beetle mortality; however, spraying all of the trees on the property is cost prohibitive, and the Adams are very concerned about continued loss of the large pines. In some areas of the property, forest thinning would enhance the growth and health of existing trees. There has been recent aspen die-off, and management efforts are needed to improve these stands.

Riparian Area

Natural springs and ponds not only benefit wildlife but are a big part of the aesthetics and tranquility of the property. Downed trees have impaired the flow of water and choked ponds with woody debris. The Adams wish to restore the riparian area to its greatest potential for moose, elk, and other wildlife.

Wildlife Enhancement

The Adams are fascinated with the wildlife on their property and wish to do all they can to enhance this experience. The Adams mentioned a few trees they had planted were destroyed by elk or deer rubbing their

antlers on them, but they were quick to state the wildlife were here first, so they don't mind sacrificing an occasional tree. There are no plans for specific wildlife habitat improvements – the existing natural features provide good wildlife habitat. Other management objectives like weed control, pond improvements, and tree thinning will benefit wildlife.

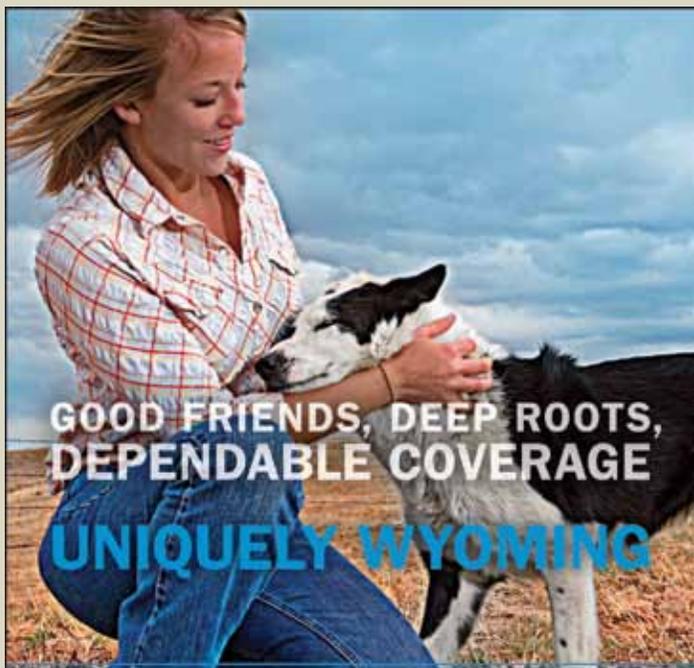
Weed Control

The property has Canada thistle and Dalmatian toadflax, which are designated noxious weeds in Wyoming, and other undesirable weeds. These need treated before they spread and dominate native grasses. Seeding with native grasses, in addition to spraying, may be the best way to control weeds in the long term.

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Mountain pine beetles have taken their toll on the property over the past two years.



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Drifting snow often blocks the entrance to the Adams property.

Snow Management

This past winter, Bob and Jane had more snow on the property than any previous winter. Five-foot drifts often accumulate on their road and completely block the main entrance into their property. Controlling the drifting with wooden snow fence, planting living snow fences, or a combination of both will greatly reduce time Bob spends plowing with the tractor and make the snowy winter months more enjoyable.

The Small Acreage Issue Team will enlist the help of several resource professionals over the coming months to assist Bob and Jane in meeting their property improvement goals. As with the other two property improvement projects, progress will be monitored and shared in *Barnyards & Backyards*, the Web site, and the Facebook page.

Monitor their progress

To see the team's progress on the Adams property and those near Casper and Wheatland, go to barnyardsandbackyards.com and click on Property Improvement Project on the right-hand side of the page. Once there, there are also links to the Facebook page and videos of the properties and related subjects on the YouTube Channel at the bottom of the Web page.

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