

Location, location, location

A little bit about Wyoming, and some things to keep in mind

Wyoming, like other states in the Mountain West, has a broad array of elevations, climates, soils, and other factors that affect what will grow and thrive. The two greatest factors affecting your particular site are typically elevation and precipitation. From Wyoming's highest point of Gannett Peak at 13,804 feet to its lowest point where the Belle Fourche River leaves the state at approximately 3,100 feet, there is great variation in climatic conditions including temperature, precipitation, and wind. Precipitation ranges from more than 80 inches annually in Wyoming's mountains (most of this falls as snow) to as few as 6-8 inches in our dry Wyoming basins. Where your property is located in the state has enormous impacts on what practices, plants, and strategies you can apply to your land and in what time frame you can expect results.

The geology of your site determines what types of soils you have. These soils are the foundation of the ecosystem and will also have broad impacts on how to best manage your land. Perhaps you will need to maintain adequate plant cover to protect sandy or other light soils from erosion by wind or water, or perhaps you will need to alter your choice of plant species for your landscapes or pastures to cope with highly alkaline or salty soil conditions or heavy clays.

Mother Nature often moves slower than we humans like, and when we are working in sites with low precipitation or short growing seasons sometimes we have to be even more patient. Consider setting expectations at realistic levels so you won't be disappointed or waste your money and other resources trying to speed along these slow processes. For example, if you are reseeding a pasture in an arid region of the state, it may take up to four years for your seeding to completely establish. During the first few years, you may have to deal with annual weeds and an unkempt appearance while the seedlings take hold. Keep these

same factors in mind as you consider making changes on your land as some practices that disturb our sometimes fragile ecosystems can only be healed with a long recovery time. In the example above, the need for reseeding may have been avoided if the landowner had recognized the signs of overgrazing by livestock before it was too late for the existing plants to recover.

Goal setting:

Wyoming's climate varies drastically across the state. Whatever expectations you may initially have for your property, you will be best served by setting realistic goals for



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your particular site. For example, it is unlikely you will be the state's largest tomato producer if you live in Pinedale (high tunnel growers, prove me wrong!), or that you will grow banana trees in Torrington. On the same lines, if you have grazing animals, understand the natural productive potential of your rangeland or non-irrigated sites, and only stock the land with the number of animals it can support. Even 100 acres will not produce enough forage to support two horses year-round in the lower-precipitation areas of the state.

There are resources in your community to help determine the potential for your particular site for a variety of activities. Resource professionals at your local conservation district, Natural Resources Conservation Service, UW Extension, Wyoming Weed and Pest District, and Wyoming State Forestry Division offices can help you get started, depending on your area of interest.

New to the area or considering a move?

If you are planning to move to the state or to a different location in the state, there are a number of things to consider before making the change. Know what to expect. Rural living in our state can be considerably more



challenging than where you may be living now or where you recently moved from. If you are considering buying land, you'll want to know all about it, including whether there is adequate quality water available or if you'll have to haul water, what water rights the property may have, whether you'll be responsible for the maintenance of your roads (winters can be severe in Wyoming, and roads often have to be plowed frequently due to snow and wind in order for you to get to town and back), how much wind there is in every season (this can vary greatly from summer to winter), how the local wildlife will impact you, and many other factors. Know before you buy! You'll be much happier if you are prepared to deal with whatever factors you will find when you get there.



Many communities across the state have a variety of rules when it comes to things you might want to do on your land, such as building activities. Playing by the rules is not always an easy task when the rules vary from county to county. You can avoid a great deal of trouble by finding out which particular rules apply in your community. A quick call or visit to your county courthouse to check on local planning and zoning rules is a good idea. Some counties have very little zoning, and others may have fairly restrictive zoning depending upon your particular situation. Check first; then proceed if it checks out.

A thorough understanding of the natural attributes of your proposed location, the community resources available, and the local rules that may affect your planned activities will all help you make a happy transition to your new home.

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