

## WYOMING PUBLIC LANDS INITIATIVE: SUBLETTE COUNTY

**You can help determine the future of some of our most beloved local landscapes by applying to participate in the Sublette County advisory committee! Deadline to Apply is June 6.**

**WHAT IS THE WYOMING PUBLIC LANDS INITIATIVE?** The Wyoming Public Lands Initiative is a county-convened process intended to bring together a wide range of stakeholders to collaborate and create federal legislation for public land management. This opportunity will attempt to address how public land agencies manage our special landscapes, including “wilderness study areas.”

**WHAT ARE WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS?** Wilderness study areas, sometimes called WSAs, are special places that, almost three decades ago, were determined to have wilderness character. Only the U.S. Congress can designate wilderness, so after these wild lands were inventoried, they were given the status of “wilderness study areas.” There are 42 of these areas managed by the BLM in Wyoming and three managed by the Forest Service, totaling over 700,000 acres. Because they lack the permanence of formally designated wilderness, their status has been in limbo for years. The agencies manage them to retain their wilderness character until directed by Congress for their permanent protection or other management.

**WHY NOT JUST LEAVE THEM THE WAY THEY ARE?** The status quo might not be the best option anymore. Wilderness study areas were always an impermanent designation. These lands were never meant to be managed for so many years as wilderness without formal designation—and there are stakeholders in Wyoming who would like to see the question resolved and see a permanent decision. Many of these areas’ wilderness qualities have been threatened by mismanagement and impairment and there’s the threat that Congress could make a decision about their fate without our input.

**WHAT CAN WE DO IN THIS PROCESS?** There are a range of options that might be considered for these lands. Some stakeholders would like to see all of these wilderness study areas released, which means they wouldn’t be managed to retain their wild character. Others might like most or all of them to be permanently designated wilderness. Middle ground proposals might be considered too, that could include adjacent lands and have special management designed to protect the specific values and uses within each landscape, while protecting the wild areas through designation as wilderness. We believe that in order to be successful in finding win-win solutions, this process needs to look beyond WSA boundaries to adjacent lands or other county landscapes and explore options. The Wyoming Public Lands Initiative is open for consideration of other public lands in Sublette County. **If the question of WSAs is to be resolved, stakeholders in Wyoming will have to come together, find common ground, and explore opportunities for compromise.**

**WHAT IS THE BEST CASE SCENARIO?** Stakeholders with diverse interests work together in good faith to create legislation permanently addressing Wyoming wilderness study areas, and to design permanent management for other important landscapes, using a process that is fair, inclusive, transparent, and appropriate for the values in question. We believe it’s possible to create win-win solutions that protect these landscapes and provide certainty for our local communities. **If done right, there is a chance that we could see the first new wilderness designations in Wyoming**



**in more than 30 years and other permanent designations for our special local landscapes.** This could happen only if a bill is crafted that has broad local support, from hunting, angling, recreation, business, agriculture, and cultural interests, as well as the support of the conservation community and elected officials. In our minds, that's a goal worth working toward for these special places.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO? You can help by getting involved in this process!** By participating, you will be able to bring your unique perspective and local knowledge to a diverse table of stakeholders. The quality of life we enjoy in Sublette County, as well as our outdoor recreation and tourism economy, will benefit by adding permanent protections to our most special public lands. By sitting down in good faith with neighbors to share our values and perspectives, we can help create federal legislation that could permanently protect some of these areas and design management for others that would conserve their important values. This is a not a chance that comes around often.

### **HOW DO YOU GET INVOLVED?**

- ✓ **You can apply to be a representative on the county's Citizen Advisory Committee.** Fill out the application and return it to the county courthouse in person or by email by June 6. Please be sure to check all of the categories that you can represent, including "general public." Please also suggest other categories or interests (historical, cultural, local business, outfitters and fishing guides, tourism industry, type of recreation group, etc.) if you don't feel the given categories fully represent your expertise or perspective. Also, on the back page, we suggest you note that you are open to learning about the full range of possible designations or management and will keep an open mind during deliberations.
- ✓ **You can participate on the county's place-based subcommittees.** The county has indicated that it will convene special working groups around specific landscapes. If you're especially interested in one place, let the commissions know or use the back of the form to indicate this.
- ✓ **You can attend meetings and field trips as a member of the public and offer your viewpoints.** All meetings will be open to the public and there should be numerous opportunities for public comment.

**WHAT ARE SUBLETTE COUNTY'S WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS?** The county has three, including the rugged Scab Creek, which is adjacent to the Bridger-Teton National Forest near Boulder. Lake Mountain, in the southern Wyoming Range has excellent fishing opportunities, and Shoal Creek, on the Bridger Teton National Forest near Bondurant, will also be considered. And remember: the lands adjacent to these WSAs, or landscapes elsewhere in the county, will be included too so other opportunities for permanent landscape protections—including wild and scenic river designations—may also arise.

### **DO YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION?**

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