

State Land

For decades the public could not use State lands without the permission of the State's lessees. In 1988, the State Board of Land Commissioners adopted rules extending to the public the privilege of hunting, fishing and general recreational use on much of the remaining 3.5 million acres of State land. The rules defining this privilege are simple. First, the land must be legally accessible via public road, right-of-way, easement, public waters, or adjacent state, local or federal land. Anyone wishing to cross private land to reach State land must have the permission of the private landowner. The landowner is under no obligation to grant such permission. Second, off-road vehicle use, overnight camping, and open fires are prohibited on State land. All motor vehicles must remain on established roads. New roads or tracks cannot be created, nor can established roads be extended by public users. Activities that would damage State lands, roads, improvements, or the lessee's property are also prohibited. Finally, cultivated croplands are not open to public use.

Many sportsmen enjoy the privilege of hunting, fishing, and recreating on State land. In most cases, the public uses this land in a responsible manner. However, there are those who choose to abuse the rules and, in some cases, the land. Where the privilege is abused or lessee interests damaged, the Board may close specific State land, roads and areas on a temporary or permanent basis. Public users must obey all authorized closures, restrictions, and postings. More info at <http://slfweb.state.wy.us/Surface/brochure.pdf>

Federal Land

Federal grazing leases or permits authorize livestock grazing on public lands. Like any other private landowner, a federal grazing lessee or permittee can control access across his private property.

A private landowner holding a grazing lease or permit from the BLM or Forest Service does not have to allow or provide public access across his private property as a condition of the lease or permit.

Permittees have no authority to control access on or use of public land, nor can permittees restrict travel over a public road or a road with an easement that allows public travel. Lessees and permittees are not allowed to charge the public for the privilege of using public lands.

In addition to federal grazing leases, both BLM and the Forest Service authorize a variety of other uses with a number of different types of authorizations. In general, holders of these authorizations may not exclude the public from the public lands within their lease or permit area, if appropriate public easements exist. They do have the right to exclude the public from entering any buildings they may have been authorized to construct under the terms of their authorization. Additionally, some areas may be closed to public entry by order of the federal land management agency. An example of this is a mining operation that has been closed for reasons of public safety.

More info at: www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/resources/public_room/Info_Sheets.html

Washakie County Conservation District

"Working to Improve Our Quality of Life"



Things to Remember

Wyoming is a patchwork combination of federal, state and private landownership, each has it's own laws and regulations.

- Know where you are at all times.
- Obtain permission before entering private land.
- Observe signs and posted areas.
- Don't cause damage to the land with your vehicle.
- Control fire hazards and don't litter.
- Leave the gates the way you found them.
- Don't transport weed seeds.

Respect the Land,

Respect the Owner

Note: Access permission from state or federal lessees is not mandatory, but WCCD recommends the courtesy of contacting them.



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Washakie County Conservation District

Private Land

Unlike public land which is managed for a number of uses by a government agency and is open to the public in general, private land is controlled by the landowner who makes the ultimate decision as to how, when and by whom the land is used.

Being allowed access to private property is a privilege, and should always be treated as such. Developing a good relationship with a landowner and practicing neighborly conduct while on his private property will help your chances of being allowed access in the future.

Landowner Concerns

In order for recreationists to develop and maintain a positive relationship with landowners, it is important that they understand the landowners perspective.

In most cases farmers and ranchers are dependent on their land for their livelihood, in many cases the sole income for their family. In this position it is easy to understand why they may have serious concerns with allowing access to their property. Problems with livestock killed accidentally, the spread of weeds, fire dangers, vehicle caused damage to roads, fields, or rangeland, and gates left open are just a few of their concerns.

Roads & Trails

First and foremost, do not drive off roads and trails without written permission from the landowner. Vehicle traffic across fields and rangeland tends to knock down grass, spread noxious weeds, and has the potential for starting fires.

If the ground is wet, vehicles may cause ruts that will lead to erosion. It's much better to walk, than to damage roads, fields, or rangeland. A good rule of thumb is, "when in doubt, walk!"

Fire Hazard

Never park vehicles, including recreational vehicles, on dry vegetation. The exhaust system can get hot enough to start a fire. Be sure to have a functioning and approved spark arrester on your off-road vehicles.

Only dispose of lit smoking materials in such a way that they will not ignite another source, such as using a cup of water to extinguish smoking materials. Remember to pack out the trash.

Gate Etiquette

Be observant as you pass through gates. Close all gates that you find closed and leave open those that are open. Occasionally ranchers will leave gates open to allow livestock to move from pasture to pasture or to get to water.

Obtaining Permission

Use common sense when contacting landowners and asking permission to access their land, don't drop by or phone at inconvenient hours.

During hunting season, farmers and ranchers are flooded with requests for access. Here are some things to keep in mind when contacting landowners about access:

- ☞ Inform the landowner how many are in your party and how long you would like to stay, then stick to your plan. This will help the landowner manage the recreationist activities on his property.
- ☞ If the landowner turns you down because his place is already full of recreationists, don't take it personally, their decision is in the best interest of the resource, and the recreationists.
- ☞ Driving into a landowners yard at 4 a.m. to ask permission to hunt may be a good way of being denied access.

Know Where You Are At All Times

Since the intermixed land ownership in Wyoming can be confusing, obtaining the proper maps is important.

Landownership maps of individual township and range areas, can be purchased at the Washakie County Assessors office, and topographic maps are available at the local Bureau of Land Management office. Know and respect boundaries.

It is important to know where the farm or ranch ends and the next begins. A landowner may give you permission on only part of his land. If you are unsure of boundaries, obtain a map of the area, and ask the landowner to outline all necessary boundaries for you. When in the field, if you are not certain that you will remain on the landowners property when coming to a fence, don't cross it.

Trash Talk

Pack it in, pack it out, and take any trash that you find along the way back out with you as well. Leave it cleaner than you found it!

Human body function waste needs to be buried at least 300 yards away from any stream, water body, road or trail. The hole should be 6 to 8 inches deep. So make sure you always bring your shovel! A lack of the proper tool is no excuse. Pet waste should also be kept away from trails, roadways and streams.

Graffiti

Hundreds, even thousands of years ago, drawing on, or scribing into, cliff or cave walls, could have been a form of communication for ancient peoples. In today's world, graffiti is vandalism. It can damage cliff walls, trees, rock art, ruins and historic structures. Attempting to remove graffiti can cause further damage.

Weeds

Be careful not to spread weeds. Research has shown that vehicles transport weed seeds easily. Seeds can be caught in tire treads, picked up in the mud, lodged in the radiator, the coils of a winch, behind a license plate or in the cracks and crevices on the underside of the vehicle, only to be transported and fall off in another location, starting a new infestation. If coming from an area that has weed problems, be careful to clean the undercarriage of your vehicle or any other equipment before you enter private property.

People and their animals are also carriers of weed seeds. Thoroughly clean boots or shoes before and after your trip, and don't forget to check laces for burrs or other weed seeds. Carefully examine your clothing for any weed seeds. Remove and properly dispose of the seeds.

It takes considerable time and expense for a landowner to control a weed problem, and it can reduce available forage in rangeland settings. In addition; the spread of weeds can impact wildlife habitat.

Trespassing is a Crime

Two separate Wyoming Statutes pertain to trespass:

W.S. 6-3-303 Criminal trespass:

(a) A person is guilty of criminal trespass if he enters or remains on or in the land or premises of another person, knowing he is not authorized to do so, or after being notified to depart or to not trespass. For purposes of this section, notice is given by:

- (i) Personal communication to a person by the owner or occupant, or his agent, or by a peace officer; or*
- (ii) Posting of signs reasonably likely to come to the attention of intruders.*

(b) Criminal trespass is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, a fine of not more than seven hundred fifty dollars (\$750), or both.

W.S. 23-3-305 Hunting from highway; entering enclosed property without permission; hunting at night without permission prohibited:

- (a) No person shall hunt, shoot, or attempt to kill any wildlife from any public road or highway.*
- (b) No person shall enter upon the private property of any person to hunt, fish, or trap without the permission of the owner or person in charge of the property.*
- (c) No person shall fire any firearm from, upon, along, or across any public road or highway.*
- (d) No person knowingly shall fire any rifle from the enclosed lands of one person onto or across the enclosed lands of another without the permission of both persons.*
- (e) No person shall hunt at night upon privately owned or leased lands except with written permission of the landowner or lessee.*

Violation of this statute is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, a fine of not more than four hundred dollars (\$400), or both.