



Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland
2468 Jackson Street
Laramie, WY 82070
307-745-2300
www.fs.usda.gov/mbr



News Release

Media Contact: Aaron Voos
307-745-2323
aaron.voos@usda.gov

Public meetings planned to kick-off Pole Mountain Gateways project

Connecting our communities to the land with sustainable non-motorized recreation.

(LARAMIE, Wyo.) February 24, 2020 – The USDA Forest Service - Laramie Ranger District and the University of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute would like to encourage the public to attend information-gathering meetings on March 24 in Laramie and March 26 in Cheyenne, pertaining to non-motorized recreation on the Pole Mountain unit of the Medicine Bow National Forest.

The meeting on Tuesday, March 24, 2020, will be held at the Albany County Fairgrounds in Laramie, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. A second meeting with the same agenda, will be held Thursday, March 26, 2020, at the Kiwanis Community Center located in Cheyenne, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

These will be the first in a three-part series of public meetings to be held in advance of a broad-scale Forest Service planning project. Meeting number one will seek to gain a better understanding of preferred public destinations and usage on and through Pole Mountain. Future meetings will establish priorities for the project, such as access locations.

“What does the public want Pole Mountain non-motorized recreation to look like 10, 20, 30 years from now?” asked Laramie District Ranger Frank Romero. “We’re looking well into the future with the Gateways project and we want the community to help us with that planning, just like they did with the motorized equivalent a few years back.

“Timing of this project couldn’t be any better, with the proposed Pilot Hill land acquisition nearing completion and a high level of public interest for planning sustainable recreation access on Forest,” continued Romero. “We look forward to working with our neighbors and interacting with a wide range of people to help develop a solid proposed action.”

In order to maximize current and future user experiences, the Forest Service intends to conduct an Environmental Analysis (EA) for the entire Pole Mountain administrative unit that will look at trails, facilities, parking, signage, and other aspects of non-motorized recreation.

The project has been named Pole Mountain Gateways to reflect the area’s designation as a Wyoming Forest Gateway Community Priority Area, which resulted from implementation of the National Trails Stewardship Act.

The intent of the public meetings over the next few months is to establish a solid starting point for the upcoming Pole Mountain Gateways project by gathering input from Forest users. These meetings are not required as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, but rather, they are an opportunity for the Forest Service to learn more about public use of the area before proposing management updates. At the meetings, the USFS will explain the upcoming NEPA process, the need for non-motorized recreation planning, and will gather user-specific information.

There are several key assumptions being made by the Forest Service entering the project:

- Year-round public usage on Pole Mountain will continue to increase.
- Sustainability and connectivity will be key aspects of any future management decisions.

- The USFS will need to take an “All Lands” approach that includes collaborative planning efforts with our neighbors and has a landscape-scale perspective. This includes consideration of the proposed Pilot Hill property to the west and Curt Gowdy State Park to the east.
- We will continue to manage for multiple use of public lands.

The Laramie Ranger District is currently planning a connector trail in the northwest corner of Pole Mountain, which will provide a short-term solution for the initial connection between the proposed Pilot Hill land acquisition and the National Forest. The connector trail will be analyzed via a Categorical Exclusion. A specific trail concept will be available for public viewing at the first round of public meetings. This trail will be separately analyzed from the larger, long-term EA but is intended to ultimately tie into management decisions that could result from Pole Mountain Gateways.

The analysis area for the Pole Mountain Gateways project is north of Interstate 80 between Laramie and Cheyenne in the Laramie Range. It includes approximately 55,000 acres on the Medicine Bow National Forest. Popular areas include Blair-Wallis, Eagle Rock, Happy Jack, Tie City, Vedauwoo, and many others.

In the Laramie, Cheyenne, and Fort Collins area, the Pole Mountain unit is some of the closest and most accessible National Forest Service land. This portion of the Forest has a variety of recreation opportunities and sees heavy year-round usage from visitors who want to explore public lands. Uses of Pole Mountain include, mountain biking, livestock grazing, hiking, off-highway vehicle travel, communication sites, climbing, camping (campground and dispersed), military training, and hunting/fishing.

Except for the initial connector trail concept, it is important to note that no proposals or determinations have been made by the Laramie Ranger District on this topic. The Forest Service will combine public input with an upcoming public needs/usage assessment to determine future proposed actions.

Coinciding with the public meetings, there will be an informative, interactive website devoted to the topic. Updates on the project, pictures, and changes to the website will all be posted on various social media forums.

To gather the pre-NEPA information, the Laramie Ranger District has solicited the assistance of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute of Environment and Natural Resources. The Ruckelshaus Institute will coordinate the public meetings, develop the project website and social media sites, and collate public input for the Forest Service.

The Ruckelshaus Institute, a division of the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Wyoming, advances the understanding and resolution of complex environmental and natural resources challenges and supports stakeholder-driven solutions to environmental challenges by conducting and communicating relevant research and promoting collaborative decision making.

For more information, contact the LRD at (307) 745-2300 or stop by 2468 Jackson St. in Laramie from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Information may also be found on this website, <https://fs.usda.gov/mbr>, or you can follow the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland on Twitter, **@FS_MBRTB**.

-USDA-

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.