

Sioux Ranger District 2014 Program Overview

Current workforce:

District Ranger- Kurt Hansen
Resource Clerk GS-6– Tyler Beck
Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist (Range/Fuels)GS-11 Buck Buchanan
Range Management Specialist GS-9– Meghan Reedy
Range Technician GS-7 (18/8)– Vacant
Forestry Technician (Fuels) GS-9– Bobby Cordell
Forestry Technician (Fuels) GS-7– Brent Elmore
Minerals/Lands/Recreation/Wildlife GS-11 – Tawni Cordell
Wildlife Biologist GS-11–Vacant/Zoned with Ashland RD
Physical Science Technician GS-6 (18/8)– Vacant

Custer Gallatin NF Zoned Timber Organization located @ Sioux RD:

Forester – Allison Weakland
Forestry Technician (Silviculture)– Scott Elmore
Forestry Technician – Vacant

BLM firefighters:

Field Operations Supervisor – Jason Donahay
Engine 2604 Captain – Matt Weakland
Asst. Engine Capt. - Vacant

The District is comprised of large buttes and plateaus that rise from the surrounding prairie in 8 distinct land units. The geology is the Arikaree/Brule Formation (White river Group) and/or Fort Union sandstone capping the hills. The White River group consists of volcanic ash sediments intermixed with thin layers of sandstone. The Hell Creek formation is usually found at the base of most of the land units. The vegetation consists of Ponderosa Pine with mixed grass prairie species. Other tree species include green ash, aspen, boxelder, cottonwood, and small areas of paper birch.

Range /Weeds

- 64 Active Grazing Allotments, 75 miles between the eastern and western grazing allotments
- 73 permittees
- 55,000 Permitted AUM's, 13,000 hd of livestock
- We currently have cooperative weed agreements with Harding County (SD) to help us spray weeds on the District.
- Our targeted weed species are leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, Canada thistle, houndstongue, and absinth wormwood.

Timber

- Additional funding has allowed the planting of 432,000 trees on 1,000 acres in the 69,000 acre Kraft Springs Fire area of the Long Pines. Significant grants from the National Forest Foundation and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation helped to greatly increase the amount of trees and acres planted this year. Plantings have been ongoing since the 1988 45,000 acre Brewer fire burned in the Long Pines. The 2002 fire re-burned many of these areas and killed a number of plantation areas.
- The Russell Timber Sale is was started last year in the Ekalaka Hills. Nieman Timber Company in Hulett, WY is purchasing the timber. The Ridge and Opeechee sales in the Ekalaka Hills were sold in 2007 and 2008. The Ridge Sale burned in the 2012 Dugan Fire. The Opeechee sale is currently being harvested.
- We are currently planning for doing timber sale activity in the East Short Pines land unit.
- Our reforestation efforts have focused on the Long Pines after the 1998 and 2002 fires. Some plantings were lost in the 2002 fire. Since then, we have planted 4,400 acres to ponderosa pine.

Minerals

- Oil and Gas development – 2 oil wells in current production and 1 saltwater injection well. 17 lease parcels for the North Cave Hills, East Short Pines and West Short Pines were sold in Nov. 2008 but no drilling activity has happened yet. The Sioux Oil and Gas Leasing EIS only covered the South Dakota portion of the District. Decision signed in May, 2007. The Slim Buttes and South Cave Hills portions of the District will be offered during a future lease sale. We have the Red River formation underlying the SD side of the District. The Tyler Formation also underlies the district but is not developed.
- AML program: The AML work on the District is tied to strip mining of uranium-containing lignite coal beds in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Little or no reclamation was done on these sites. The District AML programs consists of oversight of current cleanup work, site inventory of land units on the District and submittals to OGC to find additional Principle Responsible Parties to clean up abandoned mines.

The program currently consists of three segments:

1. Oversight of Riley Pass CERCLA cleanup by Tronox LLC (formerly Kerr-McGee now owned by Anadarko Oil), Principle Responsible Party (PRP) for 5 sites for 200 acres, including the largest of the sites on the District. Awaiting a large court settlement to continue to work at these sites. Our estimate for cleanup is over \$100 million. The CERCLA sites at Riley Pass have been eroding and carrying contaminated sediments off the Forest for about 60 years.
- Site inventory of AML continues on other land units of the District. Over 300 sites have been found so far, and 90 of those have been reclaimed so far.
 - The District has one gravel pit. It is under a special use permit with Harding Co., SD in the North Cave Hills.

- Paleontology- The District has the world-class Hell Creek formation. Vertebrate and plant fossils have been found from several locations on the District. Hell Creek has been the most productive formation. We have had a Dinosaur Dig for the last 3 years.
- Some of the non-recreation special uses are tied oil pipelines on the District.
- 2 National Natural Landmarks – The Castles in SD and Capitol Rock in MT.

Fuels

- We had an F3 tornado hit the District in June in the Long Pines Area and we are looking trying to do some salvage logging in those areas.
- Fuels treatments in 2007-2008 consisted of mechanical work to pile dead logs from the 2002 Kraft Springs Fire in the Long Pines and thinning contracts in the Ekalaka Hills. We are hoping to do the same kind of work in the Dugan Fire area to break up the dead fuels on the landscape.
- We have restarted our prescribed burning program by doing a joint burn of 300 acres with the BLM in the Ekalaka Hills in some of the Russell Timber Sale units.
- The bulk of our fuels work follows the Ekalaka Hills Hazardous Fuels Project. It is aimed at addressing the Carter County Fire Plan.
- We hosted a 7 member Montana Conservation Crew for about 8 days this summer that helped do some thinning for us

Partnerships/Agreements

We currently have agreements with:

- Harding County to spray weeds
- South Dakota Army National Guard to do road maintenance
- SD Wildland Fire Suppression to have several local VFD's do some roadside thinning for us
- Working on getting an agreement finalized with the National Wild Turkey Federation for fuels and timber related contracting.

Recreation

- 6 developed recreation sites, 4 campgrounds and 2 picnic areas
- Main use is in the fall during hunting season. Ekalaka Hills gets a lot of local use. More use of SD sites recently due to oilfield traffic related to the development of the Bakken in ND.
- We currently administer 5 hunting outfitter and guide permits scattered across the SD and MT portions of the District.

Lands/Special Uses

- 29 non-recreation special uses permits are currently administered by the District. These permits are tied to pipelines, electrical lines, etc.
- 4 communication site plans were updated and completed this year.

- Working on obtaining a ROW in the Slim Buttes to a historic Ranger Station.

Wildlife

- We have been doing aspen enhancement projects for wildlife habitat improvement.
- Continuing goshawk monitoring in timber sale prescriptions
- We have no Threatened or Endangered animals or plants
- We have high densities of raptors and bat species. We have Goshawks in several places on the districts and a little bit of sage grouse habitat.
- We have elk, mule and whitetail deer, mountain lions, sharptail grouse, several moose and 3-4 black bears on the district.

Heritage

- The land units on the district are considered sacred to the Sioux Tribes just like the Black Hills.
- We have one of the highest densities of heritage sites of any of the Districts on the Custer Gallatin.

Facilities

- Our office is a Forest Service owned facility. We had a large Recovery Act project to build a new energy efficient passive solar office that was completed in 2011. We cut our energy usage by 65% in the first year. We also were able to take care of the maintenance issues we had on the rest of the buildings and housing on the compound.



Uranium Mine at Riley Pass



Chalk Buttes near Ekalaka



North Cave Hills near Ludlow, SD

**Acreege Distribution of
Sioux Ranger District**

Carter County, Montana

Unit	Gross Acres	Private Acres	NFS Acres	% of District
Long Pines	69,997	4,302	65,695	40%
Ekalaka Hills	21,508	3,558	17,950	11%
Chalk Buttes	6,089	26	6,063	4%
Total	97,594	8,086	89,708	55%

Harding County, South Dakota

Long Pines	350		350	
Slim Buttes	47,041	3,311	43,730	26%
North Cave Hills	14,353	200	14,152	9%
South Cave Hills	8,896	546	8,350	5%
East Short Pines	6,146	80	6,066	4%
West Short Pines	1,280	200	1,080	1%
Station	10		10	
Total South Dakota	78,076	4,338	73,738	45%

Total Sioux District 175,660 12,424 163,446 100%

History

1883- Town of Camp Crook founded

1904 – The Slim Buttes and Cave Hills were withdrawn from settlement, and were made Forest Reserves by Presidential proclamation.

1905 – The Short Pines were made a reserve. These three forest units were administered as a part of the Black Hills Forest Reserve.

1906 – The Ekalaka Forest and Long Pines Reserves were proclaimed.

1908 –

- **An Executive Order Created the Sioux National Forest by consolidating five local Forest Reserves and the Sioux Forest was separated from the Black Hills National Forests.**
- **The Dakota National Forest was established and administered as a Range District by the Sioux National Forest. (This is now part of the Little Missouri National Grassland, Medora Ranger District in North Dakota)**
- **Ranger Stations were scattered around each land unit. The Forest Supervisor's Office was located in Camp Crook, SD.**

The Town will celebrate 125 years in existence and the Forest celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2008.