

News Release

**USDA Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest
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Critical Winter Range Wildlife Closures Begin Next Week

Jackson, Wyo: Beginning December 1, 2003, the Bridger-Teton National Forest will begin enforcing the winter range wildlife closures throughout the forest. Special travel restrictions apply to portions of the forest from December 1st – May 1st of each year. These areas are identified on the Winter Travel Plan maps, which are available at each forest district office, as well as at the Visitor Center on North Cache in Jackson. These maps should be referred to if planning a trip to the forest.

It is important that all users understand the significance of observing the critical winter range closure. Critical winter range areas have been designated as essential to the survival of wildlife. When people access closed winter range, the animals using the area flee to new locations. This retreat requires animals, especially ungulates like deer, elk and moose, to use energy they cannot spare. Further, it usually places them in areas less suitable for grazing and/or browsing, preventing them from gathering the energy they need to survive through the remaining months of winter. This leads to a weakened condition, which can have a direct effect on the animals' ability to defend itself, making it more susceptible to predation and disease, and can lead to future reproduction problems in individual animals.

Forest Supervisor Kniffy Hamilton emphasizes that the Bridger-Teton is a multiple use forest that strives to provide ample recreational opportunities for the variety of users that come out to enjoy the forest. The Teton County/ Jackson Parks and Recreation Department has teamed up with the Bridger-Teton yet again to help deliver a myriad of groomed trails for the outdoor enthusiast to enjoy. Regular trail grooming on Cache Creek trail each Monday, Wednesday and Friday will commence December 15th

Because many of the trails are used for a variety of recreational activities, the Bridger-Teton would like to remind everyone of the importance of trail etiquette. Horseback riders have the right-of-way and all other users should move to the side of the trails until the horses have passed. In addition, horseback riders are asked to remove the manure from the groomed trails. Skiers on

these trails are asked to slow down before bends and corners, for their own safety as well as the safety of others. Forest trails are for leisure and recreation purposes and not intended for race training. When walking or snowshoeing on the groomed trails, users should avoid walking in the groomed tracks for the skiers. The Bridger-Teton continues to remind dog owners to carry a mutt-mitt and to clean up after their dogs when utilizing the groomed trails. In addition, because so many of the groomed trails are adjacent to winter range, if a dog owner has any doubt as to the amount of voice control they have over their dog, the forest asks that you please carry a leash.

For more information on trail grooming, volunteering for winter patrols or the winter wildlife closure, please contact the Bridger-Teton National Forest Jackson Ranger District at 307-739-5400. For avalanche reports, call 307-733-2664 or go to www.jhavalanche.org

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