

between drilling and trona mining, according to the u.s. Bureau of land management. Interest is rising in oil and gas development in southwest Wyoming. But the region's trona miners have long feared that oil and gas drilling above and next to their mines can cause cave-ins, flooding, or gas seepage. Another concern is encountering abandoned oil and gas wells while mining for trona. About 90 percent of the world's natural soda ash comes from four underground mines in the area. Soda ash is used to make detergents and glass and is used in several industrial processes. The idea is to extract as much trona as possible before allowing oil and gas drilling. A public comment period is expected this fall, according to Ted Murphy, associate manager for lands and minerals in the Rock Springs BLM office.

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Wild Fire - The wild fire that started in the Big Horn Mountains on Independence Day is almost out. Over thirty firefighters from Sheridan, Dayton and Fort Washakie as well as Helitack crews helped control the wild fire. Fire supervisor for the national forest is Bill Biastoch and he says that the fire is believed to have been started by a lightning strike. The fire has burned 10 to 15 acres in a remote area of the forest. An airplane water tanker was ordered from Billings and ground crews spent most of the first day just trying to get to the fire. Because of the remote location fire fighters had to be airlifted in to the blaze by helicopter. The forest service has not announced any new fire restrictions since the blaze. Biastoch said that there must be very dry conditions since spruce trees, that are normally difficult to ignite, were some of the first to burn. Forest service officials want everyone to take precautions when dealing with fire in the forest this year. To get the latest updates on fire conditions or restrictions in the mountains stop by or call the local Big Horn National Forest office at 674-2600.

Whitney Benefits - Whitney Benefits, Incorporated is a private foundation in Sheridan that has close ties to education. Whitney is now taking the first step in raising the standard of education in Sheridan County. Whitney Benefits has contracted Doctor Mariam Manley from Jackson to complete an educational needs assessment for Sheridan County. The purpose of the assessment is to get data from the county that can be used to plan, support and ensure that programs, opportunities and services available to the youth of Sheridan County will allow them to maintain a stable career when they become adults. The assessment has been set up with input from all three Sheridan County school districts, Sheridan College and other local foundation representatives. Doctor Manley has over twelve years of applied research experience in this area. And she has conducted several large scale needs assessments such as this in other areas. Whitney Benefits is providing the funding for the study to be conducted in Sheridan County in the near future.

Mountain Lion - Several recent reports of a mountain lion in the Sheridan area have prompted the Wyoming Game and Fish department and the Sheridan Police Department to remind residents that mountain lion sightings within the city limits are a possibility. Mountain lions are large predators that primarily prey on deer. The brushy draws in and around Sheridan provide habitat for a healthy population of deer. Sometimes mountain lions may frequent these areas looking for food. Although, the interaction between man and cougar is very rare a cougar in town can be a serious situation. If you see a mountain lion, do not approach it. Stay calm and do not run. Cougars, like all cats, instinctively chase animals that run. If you have small children, pick them up so they don't run, and back away slowly.

If you see a mountain lion, contact the Sheridan Police Department or Wyoming Game & Fish department as soon as possible. Personnel will try to locate the animal or any sign to verify that it was a mountain lion. The Wyoming Game and Fish department also has a free publication which has information on mountain lion biology and what to do when you live in lion country.