



# WWNRT Statewide Wildlife Escape Ramp Grant 2007-2009 Final Report



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## **WWNRT Statewide Wildlife Escape Ramp Project**

### **Final Report**

#### **Executive Summary**

##### **Stock Tank Escape Ramps**

**Project Start Date: 07-16-2007**

**Project Completion: 07-01-2009**

##### **Funding**

**Total Budget - \$223,500**

**Total WWNRT Funds - \$80,000**

**Total Expenditures - \$219,907.49**

**Total Match - \$139,907.49**

**Budget Revisions - \$0.00**



##### **Summary**

Watering tanks, troughs and ponds maintained for livestock often double as critical resources for a broad array of wildlife. As development and drought take an increasing toll on natural resources these watering sites can be vital, not only for the animals but also for the health of the ecosystems that rely on them. Water can be a critical factor in determining the abundance and distribution of wildlife. While a variety of wildlife depend on livestock tanks for water, animals of many species also drown while attempting to drink. Mortality rates cannot be reliably estimated but evidence suggests wildlife drowning is frequent and widespread. Effective wildlife escape ramps are inexpensive and easily installed and can virtually eliminate wildlife mortality in tanks. Properly designed and installed, these structures also improve livestock health by maintaining clean water that's uncontaminated by drowned animals. The most economical and easily constructed wildlife escape ramp is made of expanded metal grating which is well suited to metal tanks. Fiberglass ramps are normally used in fiberglass tanks, tire tanks and large open metal storage tanks. Through this project we have seen both used in all types of tanks.

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## **Introduction and Project Background**

The primary function is to save the lives of many species of wildlife that drown in stock tanks and watering facilities across Wyoming. Due to drought, more animals are being effected and are utilizing existing watering facilities to get water. The project directly impacts wildlife populations and improves wildlife / livestock interactions. Due to the vast number of stock watering tanks on federal, state and private lands and due in part to the drought, small mammals such as *Sylvilagus nuttalli* ( Cottontail Rabbits), Sciuridae family (Squirrel family), Muridae family (Mouse), *Centrocercus urophasianus* (Sage Grouse) and many species of birds and other small mammals are drowning in watering facilities. The stock water escape ramps will allow wildlife to escape from the perils of death in the tank. The food chain is being impacted by the loss of wildlife in stock water tanks. This will improve the loss of valuable food sources in the food chain. We also feel that this also provides ranchers and land managers a tool to show they care about wildlife improving the perception of ranchers for the general public .Wyoming is fast becoming a state that receives a lot of its money from tourism. Birds and wildlife are expected to be viewed, photographed and enjoyed alive. The project adds to the showcase of ranchers and resource managers as being wildlife friendly, caretakers of all. This, in the bigger picture, is a huge benefit to Wyoming. The project began with Jerry Jasmer, NRCS State Resource Conservationist who polled the field offices to see if they wanted fiberglass ramps and tank sizes. The project was then given to Lisa Shaw of the Niobrara Conservation District who polled the NRCS Field Offices and the Conservation Districts to see if they wanted fiberglass or metal ramps. The response was outstanding, with requests for ramps encompassing the entire state. Coordination between agencies, suppliers and the grantee were carefully planned to minimize the cost of distribution and maximize the use of the ramps. The original request was for 2,000 ramps and as word got out about the project, was expanded as funding allowed the purchase of 2,743 ramps.

## **Project goals, objectives and activities**

The Project goal was to take orders, distribute and oversee the installation of approximately 2,000 escape ramps that would be retro- fitted into existing livestock and wildlife water tanks throughout Wyoming to save small mammals, birds and rodents. The objectives focused on *Centrocercus urophasianus* (Sage Grouse) and other game birds



## **Results**

Orders were taken for 2743 ramps across Wyoming. Due to slow production some deliveries were not shipped and delayed the installation for the 2008 summer season. 1374 fiberglass and 1360 expanded metal were manufactured and distributed to USDA Service Centers across Wyoming. Installation varied throughout the state. Some locations installed the ramps immediately, where others housed the ramps over a period of time at field offices prior to distribution and installation. 2,472 ramps have been distributed to date, with 271 ramps being housed at field offices until a later time. Landowners and land managers have expressed that they had significantly less death loss in their tanks. Educational opportunities included showcasing the ramps in newsletters and news articles, in fair booths and on field tours. The publication Water for Wildlife – A Handbook for Ranchers and Range Managers was distributed to all offices. This publication is a great tool that includes information on all types of watering facilities and structures, not just the two prototypes offered in this grant.

## **Coordination**

The project was coordinated between all the USDA Field Offices in Wyoming with support specifically to Jerry Jasmer, NRCS Natural Resource Conservationist and Lisa Shaw, Niobrara Conservation District Manager for administering the project. After collecting data on need, these two coordinated with two companies to manufacture the ramps, distribution and tracking. Tom Christianson, Game and Fish Sage Grouse Coordinator, was the spokesperson and link between the Wyoming Sage Grouse Working Groups, who provided funding and the educational component for the project match. The Wyoming Private Grazing Lands Team provided cash match. The Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and the US Fish and Wildlife Service all provided letters of support and assisted in spreading the word about the project. The local landowners and land managers played a significant role in the installation and maintenance for the project. The Game and Fish also added funding and support to the project allowing for the purchase of additional ramps.

## **What Worked**

Overall the project worked well. The following items were noted:

- Central pick-up at the Mega Ag Convention worked well for cost-effective distribution
- Fiberglass Structures and Sturman Enterprises both provided a quality product.

- Tracking sheet developed by Jerry Jasmer, notes comments and location of all ramps.
- Landowners report less mortality of wildlife across Wyoming.
- BLM and Forest Service requested information on suppliers and began installing ramps on federal lands based on this project. Montana NRD's also contact us about how to implement the program statewide in Montana.
- Game and Fish provided match for \$33,000 to purchase ramps and other components that will save wildlife and Sage Grouse. (Clips on fences and fencing for Springs)

What didn't work so well...

- Fiberglass Structures out of Montana failed to provide the product in a timely manner due to slow production rates and lack of a central delivery point. Jay missed the initial deadline for central delivery to the Mega Ag convention in Casper and shipped ramps when he had a load going to an area of the state. This delayed the installation for almost a year in Southern Wyoming.
- Because NRCS began the project and then Conservation Districts became involved later in the project, there was confusion in some offices about numbers requested, distribution, tracking and the opportunity to partner. This issue can only be resolved with communication of both parties.

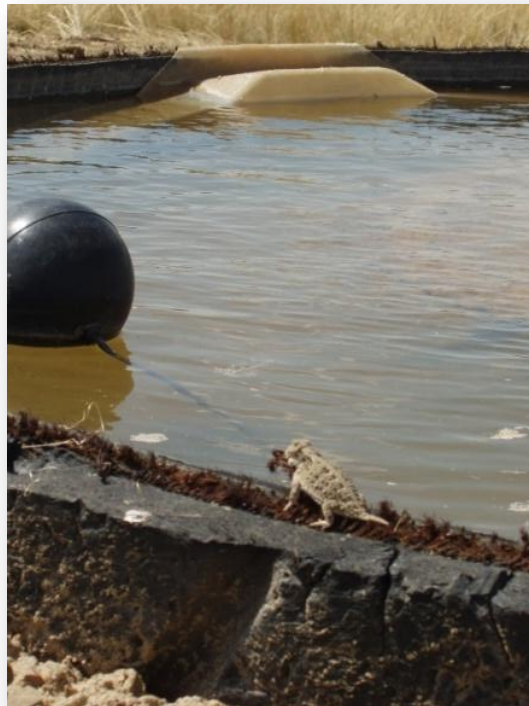
### **Future Recommendations**

The future of ramps is ongoing. There are still a lot of stock tanks that lack wildlife escape ramps. New stock tanks are installed each year and are a required component for cost share through the NRCS EQIP Program. To improve the process and ensure success, the following items are recommended: A contract with the manufacture should be established and include deadlines for delivery and fees if this is not met, payment following completed delivery and detail other requirements. Coordination within each field office should be with a spokesperson or individual to avoid confusion and conflict.



# Financial Report

	WWNRT Funds	Cash Match	In-kind Match	TOTAL
Project Plan & Design		\$3,000.00	\$1,760.00	\$4,760.00
Implementation	\$80,000.00	\$11,547.49	\$123,600.00	\$215,147.49
TOTAL	\$80,000.00	\$14,547.49	\$125,360.00	\$219,907.49
	36.3% WWNR Trust Fund	6.3% Cash Match from outside sources	57.3% in-kind match provided by landowners	















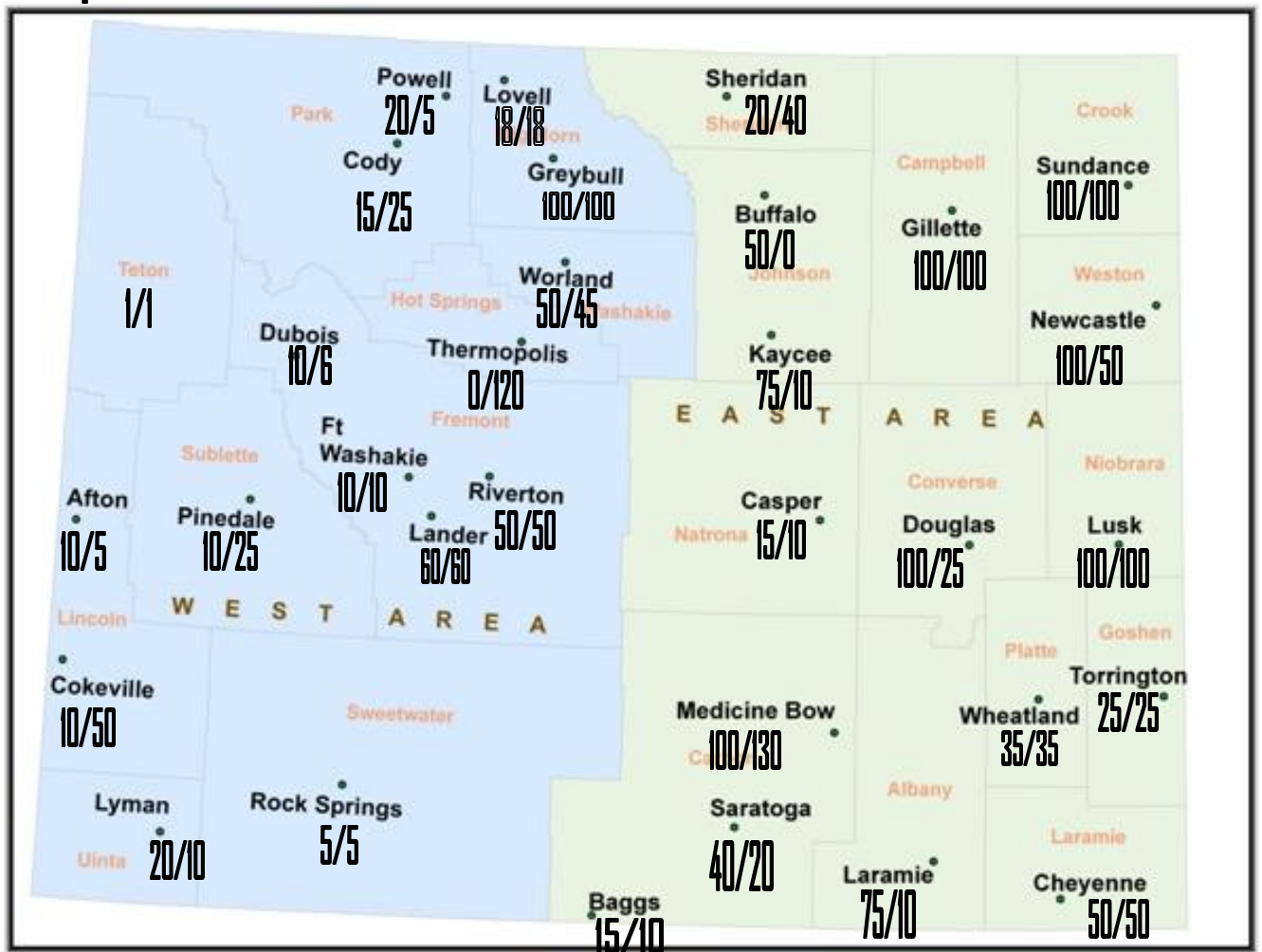








# Map 1



**2007-2008 Wildlife Escape Ramps distributed to each USDA Service Center.  
Fiberglass/Expanded Metal**

Map 1 – depicts the distribution of the ramps to the USDA Service Centers. Due to changes in staff or lack of cooperation of some offices, there is no record of the watershed locations of the ramps in some areas, causing voids in a watershed location maps. NCD holds the records of the Ramp Trackers that were completed and returned indicating watershed locations.

Map 2 – Depicts the Sage Grouse Core Areas of Wyoming.