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## 2018 Final Report Yellowstone to Uintas Connection (Y2U)

Our work at Yellowstone to Uintas Connection (Y2U) continues to have significant positive impacts for fish and wildlife in the Yellowstone to Uintas wildlife corridor as the following report outlines. In 2018 we continued our work on behalf of wildlife, wildlife habitat, habitat connectivity and watershed health within this corridor connecting the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem with the Uinta Mountain Range. Here in after, we will refer to this merely as the Corridor.

### **Agency Oversight –**

**Status:** Y2U continues to submit scoping comments on Forest Service and BLM decisions, provide feedback on agency monitoring protocols, and works towards creative solutions to help these underfunded agencies accomplish their stated conservation and restoration goals.

### **Work Plan:**

- Continue to submit comments on Environmental Assessments (EA), Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), and other stages of the land management decision-making process.
- Continue following up with agency staff as projects develop, and when possible, attend site visits where both agency staff and Y2U staff can discuss project purposes and objectives

### **Expected Outcome:**

Y2U has formed valuable relationships with several Forest Service and BLM staff over the last year, resulting in many positive outcomes including the collaborative closure of illegal roads and a reduction or elimination of trespass cattle in several closed allotments. With these positive relationships, we hope to increasingly be viewed as a resource to these agencies for data and feedback. However, Y2U will continue to be the voice for wildlife and habitat connectivity throughout the Corridor. We will continue to advocate for the use of sound science in land management decisions and when necessary, we will support litigation to oppose projects that are projected to have a negative impact on wildlife and habitat.

### **Bear River Development –**

**Status:** Y2U continues to attend all public meetings regarding the development of the Bear River. We are resisting plans for developing dams on Bonneville cutthroat trout streams in the Bear River Range and on the Bear River itself. In the spring of 2017, PacifiCorp (the largest dam operator on the Bear River) proposed raising Cutler Dam in Cache County by 3 feet to provide more hydroelectricity generation and water storage capacity. In August of 2018 Y2U secured two thirds of the funding needed for a GIS analysis on the area potentially impacted by the proposal. There are concerns that the project will inundate productive farmland and crucial wetland habitat in Cache County. Additionally, questions have arisen as to how this will compound the drying Great Salt Lake Ecosystem and what adverse effects the project may have on Cache County road infrastructure and Logan City's sewage treatment facility. Y2U is seeking connections with Cache County, Logan City and a local farmer group to raise the additional funding needed for the GIS analysis.

#### Work Plan:

- Y2U is working with Chris McGinty, a Geographic Information Science (GIS) expert at Utah State University to conduct a GIS analysis of the proposal.
- PacifiCorp will begin collecting public feedback for the project's Environmental Impact Statement, which Y2U will be heavily involved with. We are in direct contact with PacifiCorp's Cutler Dam project lead, Eve Davies.

Expected Outcome: During the EIS process, use the GIS analysis to inform and provide critical data on the project's impact to critical migratory bird habitat, local agricultural operations, and city infrastructure.

#### **Bloomington C&H Corral Project –**

Status: In the spring of 2017 Y2U submitted scoping comments on the proposed Bloomington C&H Corral Project to the Montpelier District of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. Our comments demonstrated that a new corral is not necessary and that there is a need to eliminate unauthorized cattle use on the Forest and eliminate trespass on private property in Paris Canyon, Idaho. Y2U suggested alternatives that would implement better public lands management in this very important area of the Bear River Range, located in the heart of the Corridor. In the fall of 2017 Y2U along with Wildlands Defense, filed an objection to the Final Decision for this project. In April of 2018 Y2U met with the Montpelier District Ranger and a resolution was agreed upon which included fencing and additional cattle guard installation to contain access to the new corral, permanent protection of 175 acres of the headwaters of Paris Creek, three monitoring exclosures on the Bloomington allotment, which includes Paris Canyon, and joint utilization monitoring with the Forest Service.

#### Work Plan:

- Maintain exclosure integrity and measure forage production inside of the exclosure for comparison to grazed areas.
- Monitor utilization with Forest Service and recommend adjustments in monitoring protocol.
- Monitor and report trespass in the closed 175-acre riparian pasture.

Expected Outcome: Recommend adjustments in monitoring protocol and location. Recommend appropriate stocking rates and push for more timely response when utilization standards are met. Protect 175-acre riparian pasture and the headwaters of Paris Creek.

#### **Crow Creek Pipeline Project –**

Status: The Crow Creek Pipeline project is proposed by the Forest Service to provide natural gas to the Afton/Star Valley, Wyoming area by pipeline instead of the current use of highway transportation. Y2U's primary concern is that a large portion of the 20-mile-long pipeline route runs through Idaho Roadless Areas (IRA) and further fragments the Corridor. We are specifically concerned about the unintended road that will be created along the pipeline route and the potential for OHV use in this area. We also want to address concerns such as potential effects of soil disturbance, methane leaks, and the indirect and cumulative ecological impacts which must be analyzed and disclosed in the Environmental Assessment (EA). These are particularly of concern where the pipeline route leaves authorized roads and trails that are already in place and enters IRAs. In November of 2018, Y2U and Western Watersheds Project (WWP) submitted comments on the project Draft EIS (DEIS).

#### Work Plan:

- Upon release, Y2U will address whether the EIS adequately analyzed the potential environmental impacts of the project and addressed potential alternatives.
- Consult with WWP on potential litigation options.

Expected Outcome: Unknown at this time.

## **Duck Creek BLM Allotment –**

**Status:** Data collected on the BLM’s Duck Creek Allotment for the past 13 years by Dr. John Carter, Y2U staff ecologist, has demonstrated that the BLM methods do not provide an objective and accurate depiction of rangeland health conditions or livestock forage consumption. For the past year Y2U has attempted to address this concern by becoming involved with a collaboration to monitor utilization and analyze stocking rates on the Duck Creek allotment. The participants included BLM, Utah Grazing Improvement Program, Utah State University Ag Extension, Rich County Commissioners, Rich County Resource Management Group, Duck Creek permittees, Wild Utah Project, Western Watersheds Project and Y2U. Due to the lack of trust stemming from past litigation between the involved parties and an unwillingness to work in an honest manner, this group will likely dissolve. Y2U has asked the BLM to participate in an evaluation of their monitoring methods regardless of the outcome of the collaboration.

### **Work Plan:**

- Dr. John Carter, our Staff Ecologist, submitted a research paper which was published in Rangelands Journal refuting standard BLM and livestock industry grazing practices.
- The BLM’s Office of Scientific Integrity requested that Dr. Carter peer review their national rangeland assessment. This was done and submitted with numerous recommendations for more specificity. We are waiting on the release of this report.
- Y2U will consider signing on to further litigation with WWP.
- Continue to monitor utilization and forage production on the Duck Creek allotment.

**Expected Outcome:** Continue putting pressure on BLM to accurately measure utilization and use accurate data to affect management decisions including stocking rates.

## **Bear River Range E. Coli Monitoring –**

**Status:** In 2018 Y2U monitored water quality at three locations within the Bear River Watershed. We selected these locations based on 2017 sampling results which identified three streams as areas of concern. All three of these locations have once again shown elevated E. coli levels that exceed state water quality standards for recreational contact. Y2U monitoring efforts over the past two years have demonstrated that cattle grazing on Forest Service cattle allotments are causing an exceedance of Utah and Idaho E. coli water quality standards. Each of the Utah samples were taken on a creek listed as a class 2B Contact Recreation stream in the Utah Administrative Code (Rule R317-2. Standards of Quality for Waters of the State). In accordance with this classification, the criteria were violated at both Millville Canyon and North Rich sample sites during the 2018 sample period. The Paris Canyon site is located along Paris Creek, which is designated as a Primary Contact Recreation water body. In accordance with this classification, the Idaho state water quality standards were violated at the Paris Canyon sample site during the 2018 sample period. The Utah sample sites were sampled and reported as violating state water quality standards during the summer 2017 E. coli investigation conducted by Y2U.

### **Work Plan:**

- Y2U will submit our 2018 final report to the Forest Service in January of 2019.
- Y2U will submit our data to the States of Utah and Idaho for listing as impaired.
- Continue to promote the use of riparian exclosures and livestock exclusion to assist with the reduction of waterway contamination from livestock feces.

**Expected Outcome:** Y2U will demonstrate that cattle grazing near recreational waterways and in municipal watersheds have a negative impact on water quality and leads to exceedance of state water quality standards. Y2U will also demonstrate that the use of fencing to exclude livestock access to large portions of streambank can reduce the level of contamination from livestock feces.

## **East Smoky Panel Mine Project –**

**Status:** The East Smoky Panel Mine Project at Smoky Canyon Mine DEIS was released in late September 2018. This is another open pit phosphate mine on BLM public land near Afton, Wyoming. The expansion of this mine will further fragment the Corridor, destroy wetlands, wildlife populations, and plant communities while polluting streams in the region with heavy metals. The mine will also cause noise and safety concerns that not only affect wildlife, but also humans.

### **Work Plan:**

- Y2U will be submitting comments on the DEIS that are due by December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

**Expected Outcome:** Y2U expects that the usual Finding of No Significant Impact will be determined by the agency. Y2U will be consulting with other environmental organizations that submitted comments on the DEIS and will likely file an objection.

## **Environmental Advocacy –**

**Status:** An important part of our work involves publicly advocating for the restoration of degraded watersheds, intact ecosystems, and wildlife habitat connectivity. We are helping empower citizens to get involved with these efforts.

### **Work Plan:**

- During the 2017 and 2018 Utah State Legislative Sessions, Y2U lobbied against Bear River Development and for SB 151 which would reduce the State's property tax subsidization of water use. Utah uses more water than any other state in the nation due to the perceived low cost of water. We need to move to a higher tier rate system that encourages conservation. We will continue lobbying during the session in 2019, as well as organize groups of citizens to lobby alongside us.
- In June, of 2017 we conducted our first Successful Activism Training featuring presentations from PhD Psychologist Dr. David Christian and non-profit lobbying expert Stacey Frisk. The training helped introduce forty people to methods for interacting and working with decision makers. Whether you are lobbying politicians, communicating with public lands managers, or partnering with private landowners, it is important to have the tools to foster working relationships with individuals and groups from differing backgrounds. In January of 2018, Y2U hosted the second annual Successful Activism Training at Squatters Brewery in Salt Lake City. The sold-out event was a huge success thanks to the hard work of our staff and speakers at the event. We are proud to have welcomed back Dr. David Christian who spoke for the second time with us on a communication technique known as Motivational Interviewing. We have been using this training in our work since 2016 to create working relationships with agency staff and various other stakeholders. Y2U will continue to host the Successful Activism workshops.

**Expected Outcome:** Continue our lobbying efforts, activism trainings, and awareness campaigns to raise public involvement in conservation and expand public awareness of environmental issues.

## **Environmental Education –**

**Status:** Education is critical to the work we do. In 2018, we again significantly expanded our education and outreach efforts, specifically for youth. During the summer of 2018 Y2U conducted numerous community presentations on watershed and wildlife issues around the corridor. Y2U also put on three full day educational events for sixth and eighth grade students from rural schools in northern Utah and Southeastern Idaho at our adopted Limber Pine Trail in the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest. We taught these students about forest ecology and succession, watershed services, and bird and animal identification. Y2U put together an extensive guide for each participant and encouraged the students to go home and “teach” their family what they learned at our event.

#### Work Plan:

- Y2U will attempt to procure funding for additional youth education events at our adopted Limber Pine Trail in 2019.
- Y2U will continue to provide environmental education through public presentations.

Expected Outcome: Educate youth on basic forest ecology and watershed service as well as provide environmental education opportunities to the communities in and around the corridor.

#### **John Wood Forest Management Project –**

Status: In 2017, Y2U along with Wildlands Defense and Alliance for the Wild Rockies submitted scoping comments in response to the Forest Service's John Wood Forest Management Project in the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. In January of 2018, Y2U joined the Caribou Forest Initiative (CFI) and has been working the past year as part of this collaborative group that includes Idaho state Legislators, County Commissioners, local industry including sawmills, mining and grazing, local concerned citizens as well as Idaho Conservation League and Greater Yellowstone Coalition to assure that sensitive areas are avoided and that funding is generated from this timber project to accomplish benefit for fish and wildlife through habitat improvement, stream rehabilitation, and corridor protection. This collaborative group is analyzing and submitting recommendation to the Forest Service regarding the John Wood Forest Management Project.

#### Work Plan:

- Y2U will continue participating in the Caribou Forest Initiative by upholding our mission to protect wildlife and restore habitat in the CFI focus area.

Expected Outcome: Benefit fish and wildlife in the project area through road closures and stream rehabilitation with approval and funding procured through the project process while accomplishing needed forest restoration in the area.

#### **Landowner Conservation Campaign –**

Status: Private land makes up a significant portion of the Corridor and represents an opportunity to establish positive working relationships with those who rely on these lands for their livelihood. Y2U recently received the GIS analysis that was funded through a joint grant proposal with project partner Wild Utah Project. This GIS analysis completed by Wild Utah Project determined key wildlife impedance points, as well as bottlenecks, in a portion of the corridor occurring south of Caribou County in Idaho and North of Davis County in Utah stretching East to Mountain View, Wyoming. We are especially interested in how these impedances and bottlenecks overlay with private land. This will help inform our Landowner Conservation Campaign where we will help procure funding, expertise and other resources for private landowners to install wildlife friendly fencing and riparian area exclosures, assist with conservation easement procurement, and implement other regenerative ranching practices that benefit wildlife. Y2Us staff and board recently took a tour of the Lonetree Ranch, near Mountain View, Wyoming. Dr. Robert Taylor has implemented many of the above listed practices on his deeded property and we will be working closely with them in 2019 to assure that their public land allotments in the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest and BLM ground are grazed according to standards. We will be performing utilization monitoring together as well as monitoring unauthorized use of the High Uinta Wilderness. We are very excited for this opportunity to work directly with the permittee and eliminate the delay in action that we find working with the Forest Service. We expect to have great results come out of this unexpected partnership.

#### Work Plan:

- In 2019, Y2U will work to ground truth the GIS analysis and prioritize identified parcels.
- Y2U will begin the outreach campaign with high priority private landowners to establish relationships with potential program participants.

- Y2U will incentivize program participation by assisting landowners with writing grant proposals to procure funding for wildlife friendly fencing, riparian exclosure and technical assistance leading to an increased margin for the operation.

Expected Outcome: Provide resources and assistance for private land restoration efforts and habitat connectivity throughout the Corridor.

### **Limber Pine Trail –**

Status: In 2016, Y2U adopted the 1.2-mile Limber Pine Trail in the Bear River Range in the National Forest. This trail is a heavily visited location near Bear Lake and receives over one-hundred visits per day during the summer months by adopting this trail, maintaining the educational signs, and visiting with hikers, Y2U engages users by creating a dialogue regarding the surrounding wildlife, watershed and human impacts. Y2U hosted 3 education events for 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from rural schools in Northern Idaho and Southeastern Idaho at the Limber Pine trail.

#### Work Plan:

- In September 2017, we received a grant from the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) to conduct 3 youth environmental education events at the Limber Pine Trail in 2018. During the summer of 2018 Y2U hosted educational events for over 75 students from rural northern Utah and southeastern Idaho teaching the students about forest ecology and succession, watershed services and bird and animal identification. Y2U put together an extensive guide for each participant and encouraged the students to go home and “teach” their family what they learned at the event.
- The Herald Journal featured Y2U in an article about our adoption and maintenance of the trail and youth education programs. We will continue to raise awareness of the site with social media and newspaper publications.
- Procure funding to host additional education events in 2019.

Expected Outcome: Continue using the site for adult and youth environmental education opportunities.

### **OHV/ATV Noise and Dust Study –**

Status: Prior to 2017, Y2U collected over 100 days of sound data on snowmobiles, ATVs, dirt bikes and other vehicles. Over two thousand records of observations were entered into the database to date. In summer of 2016, there was a large increase in traffic with sound levels recorded at over 100 dB, so we decided to delay our sound report to allow for additional data collection in 2017. During the summer of 2017, we worked with Dr. Randy Martin from Utah State University, as well as an undergraduate intern who helped us collect both air quality and vehicle number data.

#### Work Plan:

- Waiting for the final report from Dr. Randy Martin. The report is expected in December 2018.
- Analyzing opportunities to expand our data collection in 2019.
- In 2019 our staff GIS analyst Denise Petersen will be generating a map of the Bear River Range portion of the Corridor to show areas impacted by sound from OHVs.
- Distribute the updated sound and air quality reports once they are complete to Forest Service staff to propose changes to their speed limits, road maintenance and law enforcement in the Caribou National Forest.
- Present the report to the local County Commission to propose changes to their speed limits, road maintenance and law enforcement on county access roads to the Caribou National Forest.
- Continue leasing equipment for monitoring air quality (particulates), video with stereo sound, speed radar, and sound (decibel levels).

Expected Outcome: By exposing the excessive OHV usage - including excessive speeds, dust and noise - we hope to encourage action by the Forest Service. The resulting data set from this project will help with ongoing efforts to create summer and winter travel plans for OHVs that reflect the recent increase in traffic. The project is an important element of protecting wildlife in the Corridor and providing opportunities for quiet recreation.

## **Paris Creek Restoration –**

**Status:** The project goal is to restore habitat for Bonneville cutthroat trout in the 0.5 miles of Paris Creek headwaters that occurs on the Caribou National Forest and through the 0.5-mile reach of Paris Creek that occurs on Kiesha's Preserve, the wildlife preserve that Y2U manages near Paris, Idaho. We aim to increase stream flows in this mostly dewatered reach of Paris Creek. Dr. John Carter, Y2U staff ecologist, has been working on this project for many years, engaging the Forest Service and Idaho Fish and Game to conduct fish surveys. These were completed in 2001 and 2012, showing that Bonneville cutthroat trout are missing from the dewatered reach. The Forest Service brought equipment and expertise in 2016 to actively restore stream channels, create pools and riffles and plant willows along the streambank. Dr. Carter and the Forest Service fisheries biologist looked at the effectiveness of the restoration efforts along the portion of the creek in the Forest and reported great progress. Idaho Department of Environmental Quality surveyed fish, invertebrates and wildlife along the Kiesha's Preserve reach this summer. We are now engaged with these agencies, private landowners and PacifiCorp to return enough flow to sustain cutthroat trout. Ultimately, increased flow will restore the ability of Bonneville cutthroat trout to inhabit the entire 3 mile, currently dewatered, reach of Paris Creek.

### **Work Plan:**

- The Forest Service started implementation of the habitat reconstruction in September 2016 and it is now complete. We continue to jointly monitor project success, and there are already deep pools and riffles on the site as a result of the restoration. All willow plantings have survived. We continue to monitor flows and water quality in relation to Bonneville cutthroat trout habitat specifications.
- It is still evident that a water release at the upstream diversion should be negotiated with PacifiCorp. PacifiCorp continues to deflect to irrigators, but our monitoring and research on water rights and water management at the plant reveal that the power company does have an option to release the water.
- Dr. Carter has been working with the Idaho Dept. of Water Resources to re-establish historical water rights for Kiesha's Preserve. If Kiesha's Preserve regains its water rights, then a certain amount of water would be required to be released downstream of the current power company diversion. Our intent would be to return the water to the stream to increase flow.

**Expected outcome:** Y2U will challenge the renewal of the permit that allows for the diversion on the Forest. We will continue to pursue grants and private donors to restore Paris Creek for native Bonneville cutthroat trout.

## **Paris Hills ITAFOS (formally Agricom) –**

**Status:** Paris Hills ITAFOS is a proposed underground phosphate mine in Bloomington Canyon near Kiesha's Preserve, the wildlife preserve that Y2U manages, and Paris, Idaho. Due to underground pumping and reinjection issues, the mine permitting process was delayed by two years. Y2U has been negotiating for off-site mitigation for this phosphate mine, submitted sage grouse monitoring and mitigation plans to the mining company as well as State and Federal Agencies, and discussed the lack of air quality monitoring with DEQ. Some of our efforts to date have resulted in an expanded groundwater monitoring program and exploration of the use of more efficient diesel trucks to limit air pollution. There was an additional delay in the permitting process due to the buyout of Agricom by ITAFOS.

### **Work Plan:**

- Track permitting and submit comments to the involved agencies.
- Continue negotiations for off-site monitoring and mitigation and cooperate in joint monitoring of Paris Creek and Bloomington Creek flows and water quality.
- Engage with local grazing associations and encourage improved cattle management around sage grouse habitat.
- Utilize local media to educate the public and urge the County to press for full transparency on environmental issues (air, water and noise pollution) related to the mine and surrounding land.

- Request public hearing on air quality issues.

Expected Outcome: Additional concessions from the mining company and cooperation on mitigating wildlife and OHV impacts in the adjacent areas of the Bear River Range.

### **Platte Petroleum Project –**

Status: This 18,000-foot-deep oil exploratory well is adjacent to the High Uinta Wilderness, creates more roads and generates noise that carries into the wilderness and roadless areas. Other issues include the project's heavy water use, chemical discharge, and associated negative impacts on water resources.

#### Work Plan:

- Y2U filed multiple objections and the Forest Service produced three EAs in response to our objections and comments.
- We engaged in a final resolution meeting and, as a result, the Forest Service released a Final Decision expanding its air quality analysis, wildlife analysis and did away with an excavated pond for wastewater from drilling and significantly reduced drill rig lighting from shining into the surrounding forest.
- A concern was the fact that wildlife would use the pond and be exposed to toxins. Now the wastewater is contained in a steel tank for disposal.

Expected outcome: Y2U involvement with this project has been terminated for the time being.

### **Pocatello Municipal Watershed –**

Status: The Westside Ranger District of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest continues to permit cattle to graze and pollute watersheds and streams that comprise Pocatello's water supply. In 2012, Y2U organized an allotment tour with the Forest Service and other interested parties and livestock permittees. The Forest Service management allows continued pollution of the streams and water supply by livestock. Our report and comments were submitted on the DEIS, showing all the streams in this 43,200-acre project area were polluted by nutrients, sediment and E. coli. We have engaged Pocatello City and provided our information to them and urged them to request that the watershed be closed to grazing. Pocatello City did request that the Forest Service close the area to grazing. Currently, the Forest Service continues permitting grazing at the same level.

#### Work Plan:

- Y2U submitted a very direct rebuttal of this decision to the Forest Service. Our work lead to them closing a small portion of the watershed to grazing. Y2U will continue to propose closing the allotments.
- Oppose the Forest Service's categorical exclusion of the new decision to force Pocatello City to build and maintain fences to protect this portion of the watershed, which should be the responsibility of the livestock permittees.
- Pocatello is already paying the costs of treating their drinking water, their discharge water and this will only increase those taxpayer costs. The city recently passed a \$9.5 million bond issue to obtain more surface water rights in this watershed largely due to the water quality issues related to their current water supply.
- In 2017, E. Coli data collected by both Y2U and Western Watersheds Project indicates that a significant portion of watershed needs to be closed.
- Y2U is currently seeking legal representation to challenge the Forest Service and their continued renewal of grazing permits in this municipal watershed.

Expected Outcome: Continue placing pressure on the Forest Service to manage the allotment in a way that reflects the current impact that current grazing has on the drinking water of more than 100,000 citizens. Continue conducting water quality monitoring, submitting comments, and raising awareness through media.

## **Rasmussen Valley Mine –**

**Status:** The new Rasmussen Valley mine is a 440-acre open pit phosphate mine. This new mine will impact the region by destroying wetlands, wildlife populations, and plant communities as well as polluting the Blackfoot River and its tributaries with heavy metals. The mine will also cause noise and safety concerns that not only affect wildlife, but also humans. We filed comments on the DEIS in 2016. The Final EIS came out in September 2016. We filed an objection on March 1, 2017. Y2U was unable to find legal support for litigation efforts to stop this new mine but our comments and objection have informed the mining company and agencies about the negative impacts for the Corridor, the wildlife and the watersheds due to this type of mountaintop removal project.

### **Work Plan:**

- Monitor regional environmental impacts of the new mine.
- Continue working on mine permits in this region and raise awareness of the issues they cause.

**Expected outcome:** We hope to obtain additional mitigations to offset damage and pollution and to improve fish habitat, reduce grazing, and considering deer and elk migration pathways in the region.

## **Red Ryder Vegetation Management Project –**

**Status:** In late 2017, Y2U and Wildlands Defense submitted DEIS comments and a proposed alternative for analysis in response to the Forest Service's plans to thin timber in the Bear River Range, both in the Logan and Ogden Ranger Districts. The timber harvest and creation of roads will increase habitat fragmentation and degradation within the Bear River Range and the important Corridor. In the spring of 2018, Y2U director Jason Christensen, toured the project area with the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest Silviculturist and several other Logan Ranger District staff members. New road construction, gravel pit, prescribed burn and timber harvest areas were looked. Impacts from the project were discussed as well as potential mitigation of these impacts. In June of 2018, a Final Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact was issued by the Logan Ranger District. Y2U chose not to object to this decision and will monitor whether the Forest Service sticks to the agreed upon mitigation including permanent road closures of new and existing roads in the project area.

### **Work Plan:**

- Y2U will continue to monitor the impact of the project and work with the Forest Service regarding closing new and existing roads in the project area.
- Work with the Forest Service to ensure sound science is used for thinning prescriptions and that the logging company adheres to such prescriptions.

**Expected Outcome:** Develop a working relationship with the Forest Service on needed forest restoration while ensuring protection of sensitive habitat and habitat fragmentation is considered during the planning of future forest restoration projects in the region.

## **Road Closures –**

**Status:** In October 2017, Y2U began working with the Montpelier Ranger District to close illegal OHV/ATV roads. In 2017 Y2U assisted with the permanent closure of 5 miles of unauthorized user-created routes. In 2018, using heavy equipment donated by Kiesha's Preserve, the wildlife preserve that Y2U manages, we were able to offer the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache and Caribou-Targhee National Forests the resources and labor needed to close unauthorized user created routes according to each Forest's Travel Plans. In 2018, Y2U assisted the Forest Service in the permanent closure of over 7.0 miles of roads and 15 illegal campsites in the Caribou-Targhee National Forest and 1.5 miles of roads and 50 illegal campsites in the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests. In August 2018, Y2U director Jason Christensen toured the project worksites with the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache Forest Supervisor, Dave Whittekiend and Logan District Ranger Jennefer Parker and Montpelier District Ranger Mike Duncan to assess work progress and plan for future road closure work.

#### Work Plan:

- Meet with Uinta-Wasatch-Cache and Caribou-Targhee National Forests over the winter months to discuss closing additional user-created routes and illegal campsites in 2019.

Expected Outcome: Our goal is to close an additional 10 miles of user-created routes and 50 illegal campsites in 2019.

#### Three Creeks –

Status: This 140,000-acre intensive infrastructure and grazing project by BLM and Forest Service will further fragment wildlife habitat in the Bear River Range. We have been negotiating with BLM for four years to engage the public in an objective, science-based project. The effort has not moved the agency. We continue to work with other organizations to promote a project that sets aside streams and watersheds, important to cutthroat trout, sage grouse and pronghorn, for protection. We and our partners have collected habitat and water quality data and submitted it to the agency as well as providing detailed comments on the draft EA/EIS, which has been delayed for over a year. In August of 2018, Y2U along with Western Watersheds Project (WWP) filed an appeal to the Final Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact.

#### Work Plan:

- Consult with WWP on potential litigation options.

Expected Outcome: We will continue to monitor riparian conditions in the Three Creeks allotment and provide feedback to the BLM based on their monitoring methods. We will also give suggestions for improved monitoring methods that more accurately reflect the true condition in over-grazed riparian areas. Our goal is to work with the BLM to establish better monitoring of riparian areas and sage grouse habitat within the allotment.

#### Uintas Wilderness Cattle Monitoring –

Status: In 2013, Y2U reported to the Uinta Wasatch Cache National Forest and the Ashley National Forest that cattle were trespassing, long-term, in the Burro Peaks, Thompson Peak and West Beaver allotments, which were closed to grazing in the 2003 Forest Plan Decision. Y2U documented these trespass cattle in fall of 2015 and reported this trespass to both Forest Supervisors. Y2U continued monitoring in October of 2016 and 2017, reporting results to the Forest Service. The Forest Service has been using deferment tactics with Y2U since we began reporting this issue in 2013 continually putting the onus on our staff to identify whose cattle the offenders belong to. This summer Y2U placed 12 game cameras throughout these allotments to capture irrefutable data; photographs that are labeled with date, time and coordinates. We have provided the Ashley and Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests with our final report and the evidence of trespass and unauthorized use including dates, coordinates, ear tag color, brand and photos of the occurrences. During the 2018 summer monitoring of the three closed allotments, only Burro Peaks had trespass and unauthorized cattle use. Thompson Peak and West Beaver allotments remained livestock free.

#### Work Plan:

- We will be meeting with both Forests in January 2019 to discuss this ongoing issue and demand that something is done to eliminate the trespass and unauthorized use of the Burro Peaks allotment.
- Y2U will be looking into legal representation to provide additional pressure on the agencies to eliminate this issue.
- Continue monitoring the Burro Peaks, Thompson Peak, and West Beaver Allotments that were closed to grazing in the 2003 Forest Plan Decision for trespassing cattle.
- Report trespass and unauthorized cattle to the Forest Service and permittees as well as continue pressuring the agency to maintain the standards set forth in Annual Operating Instructions (AOIs).

Expected Outcome: Significantly reduce or eliminate trespass and unauthorized use of the closed allotments in the High Uinta Wilderness which will provide a much-needed reprieve for wildlife and other wilderness users from livestock grazing.

## **Uintas Wilderness Domestic Sheep –**

**Status:** Y2U organized a coalition of environmental groups and interested individuals to address 11 sheep grazing allotments in the High Uinta Wilderness that conflict with native bighorn sheep. We have met with the Regional Forester, Forest Supervisors, and other USFS staff on more than one occasion to delineate our concerns and recommendations. This 175,000-acre area is habitat for Canada lynx, bighorn sheep, black bears, cougars and many other species. It also provides a significant water source for much of Utah. This summer Dr. John Carter, Y2U staff ecologist, presented to the Intermountain Region, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache Forest Supervisor and district rangers and staff the Forage Capacity & Stocking Rate Determination For High Uintas Wilderness Domestic Sheep, an analysis completed by Y2U and Wild Utah Project, which shows a capacity for stocking at 10 percent of the current rate on these High Uintas Wilderness domestic sheep allotments.

### **Work Plan:**

- Submit Forage Capacity & Stocking Rate Determination For High Uintas Wilderness Domestic Sheep analysis as well as additional comments when DEIS is released.

**Expected Outcome:** Optimistically, the Bighorn Sheep risk analysis will result in Forest Service recommendation to close some allotments. Our work is intended to show the impact of current stocking rates, which are far too high. We are also looking at the possibility of buyouts of these High Uintas Wilderness domestic sheep allotments and our report might provide motivation for reluctant permittees to accept buyouts.

## **Winchell Dugway –**

**Status:** In conjunction with Alliance for the Wild Rockies and Wildlands Defense, Y2U submitted comments to the Caribou-Targhee National Forest in response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) with regard to a proposed project to build an ATV route between Morgan Meadows and the deserted historic mining town of Caribou City in the Caribou Range. In February of 2018, Dr. John Carter, Y2U staff ecologist and Alliance For Wild Rockies filed an objection to the FEIS for this project.

### **Work Plan:**

- The area is part of the regionally significant wildlife corridor that spans from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to the Southern Rockies, and motorized use on the proposed route would further displace wildlife in an area that is already overrun with OHVs/ATVs. Y2U will monitor the impacts of the new trail on wildlife and habitat in the area.
- Y2U is currently seeking legal representation to further challenge the necessity and bring awareness to the impact on the corridor of this project.

**Expected Outcome:** Continue placing pressure on the Forest Service to analyze the impact of the continued exponential growth of OHV/ATV use in our National Forests. OHV/ATV use impacts wildlife and habitat and the Forest Service must consider these impacts when proposing new trails in the already heavily fragmented habitat of our National Forests.