What’s Going On in the Open Space Between Palen and Stampede?

The HOA Board has approved the Palen-Stampede Open Space as a test area for the treatment of cheatgrass. As is readily apparent, cheatgrass has become a problem in all the open space areas of HR Ranch, and impacts much of the property of residents of this community. Last year, a rapidly moving wildfire, fueled by cheatgrass threatened homes and property. It will only get worse. The threat posed by this annual invader for fire is our primary concern for addressing the non-native annual grass.

Cheatgrass also degrades the quality of prairie grasslands for the species that evolved here: meadowlarks, horned larks, nighthawks, lark bunting, grasshopper and other sparrows native to the western prairie. Control of this invasive will ensure quality prairie habitat for these and other species.

The open space is staked out with a band separating the area into 3 plots, N and S plots of about 15 acres each separated by a band of approximately 5 acres. Two different herbicide treatments will be applied in the large plots: Plateau and Esplanade, while the 5 acre band will receive no treatment.

Esplanade is more expensive, but has a much longer period of effectiveness (5 years estimated) which may make it less expensive in the long run than Plateau which must be applied every-other-year, until the seed bank for the natives is depleted—estimated to be roughly 5 years.

Cheatgrass is a Laramie County listed noxious weed requiring treatment. Enforcement has admittedly not been high, primarily because it’s so widespread.

Ultimately, we would like to treat ALL the open space areas for cheatgrass. This test area should help us determine both the most effective means in terms of both cost and efficiency.

We would like to, at least, create a buffer strip of roughly 70’ along the edge of the open space areas and resident’s property, again, with fire protection in mind. We are operating within a narrow window this fall, but felt that communication with property owners was important before taking this step.

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