

Plans for bentonite mine explained

by Cindy Glasson

Members of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field office in Worland, WyoBen and members of the public attended a meeting last Thursday regarding the bentonite project, which will commence west of Thermopolis.

According to the BLM, they have received just 35 comments to date on WyoBen's draft proposal for extending the mining operations of their 108T pit along Highway 120.

The 10-year project will amount to mining approximately 37.5 acres a year for each of those years in their western, middle and eastern portions.

Holly Elliot, a specialist in the National En-

vironmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the BLM said the comments have generally said, "no mining," but six comments contained some real concerns, including visual impacts to tourism, safety of trucks entering the highway and the impact on wildlife and sage grouse habitat in the area.

Through NEPA, Elliot said they are required to do internal scoping that include impacts and issues related to wildlife, and in this specific area, sage grouse. Because of the type of mining that will be done, castback mining, the impacts to wildlife will be minimal.

Adam Babcock, Visual Resources Management (VRM) specialist told the group there are

four classes of visual impact, from Class I, the most protective, which would include National Parks to Class IV, the least protected, which would include areas like oil fields.

This mining project falls into a Class III where there must be a partial retainer of the existing character of the landscape with a moderate change to the natural characteristics.

Activity at the mine may attract attention with a Class III, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Babcock explained the causal observer would be someone driving past the area that doesn't live there or doesn't

See Mine on page 6



photo by Cindy Glasson

In honor of all veterans

Junior and senior class students from Hot Springs County High School spent their morning on Veterans Day setting the flags at Monument Hill Cemetery for Hawk's Avenue of Flags. With all hands on deck, it took less than half an hour for the entire display to be in place.

Closing date set for old airport

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners awarded the bid for the job trailer used at the new airport during their second monthly meeting on Tuesday afternoon.

The winning bid was granted to Diamond Point Construction for \$15,000. The award is dependent on approval by the Federal Aviation Association.

In 2014, the Town of Kirby presented a proposal requesting part of the State Lands and Investment Board (SLIB) monies for a project involving replacing a water line to their storage tank.

The tank would no longer fill with water at an adequate rate due to changes in the pressure provided by the water supplier. Several valves and a concrete vault needed replaced as part of the project as well.

The project had been an alternate for SLIB funding at that time, however, the funds were all depleted with town and county projects.

Since then, there has been approximately \$95,000 left over from the South Thermop Water and Sewer project and the town has given their blessing to reallocate those funds to the Kirby project.

The commissioners agreed with the reallocation and new paperwork will be submitted in December.

The closing date for the old airport has been set for Jan. 5, 2017.

Part of the hold up on closing it previously has been the hangar situation. Some are completed, while others are not, and the commissioners were concerned about owners having to leave their planes outside at the new airport over the winter.

Nate Messenger, manager of the new airport, feels it would be in the best interest of the county to go forward with the January closure as right now, no one is monitoring the other airport and there are some wildlife issues with antelope on the runway.

Messenger suggested owners could leave their planes in the hangars at the old airport over the winter as most of them do not fly during the winter months. However, once the hangars are completed in the spring, they would then have to move their planes to the new airport.

The commissioners voted to have GDA Engineering prepare the paperwork for the FAA for a January closure.

Ag citizens honored at Harvest Moon Ball

by Cindy Glasson

FFA members, families and alumnus gathered at the fairgrounds Saturday evening for their Annual Harvest Moon Ball and 6th Annual Centurian Banquet.

Centurian Ranch

The Centurian Award is given to a family that has been on their ranch or farm for a minimum of 100 years.

It all started in 1909 when John Grobowski purchased 112 acres of land on the upper Owl Creek. He had a herd of cows and put up his own hay to feed them. He was married several times and had a daughter, Theresa, in 1916. His last wife, Grace, helped raise Theresa. Things were going well and John purchased an additional 80 acres.

Theresa grew up, married and had 4 children, of which two are still with us: Sue Calhoun Morehead and Norma Calhoun Beltz.

In 1951 John, Grace, and their granddaughter Sue, along with help from the neighbors, built a log house on the ranch. John passed away in 1970. Grace decided to stay on the place and continue ranching. Finally in 1973, at the age of 72, Grace decid-

ed it was time for her to sell her cows after many years of calving her herd on her own.

Around 1982 Theresa Grobowski

Rapid City at the time. Theresa lived with Sue until her death in 2002. Sue Calhoun Morehead currently lives in Colorado Springs.



Cassie Owsley presents Brad Lofink with his Ag Citizen of the Year award during the Harvest Moon Ball.

Calhoun and husband, Warren, moved back to the ranch to help her mother run the place. Theresa and Warren built the shop and continued living at the ranch putting up hay as well as tending their own small cowherd until 1987 when Warren passed away. Deciding not to stay, Theresa moved in with her daughter, Sue, who lived in

full-time. Rick and Norma have a small bunch of cows that a neighbor runs for them. The hay grounds on the ranch are still in production but are leased out. Rick and Norma still live in the log house and enjoy the quiet country life.

Ag Citizens of the Year

Brad Lofink grew up in Worland

with his parents and two sisters. They lived on the Worland Ranch right next to his grandparents. When Brad was in about fourth or fifth grade Verne began the auction business, Lofink Auction Services, which Brad always helped with along with the farming. Brad said that from the time he was in the fifth grade he always knew exactly what he wanted to do... farm!

Brad was always active in 4H and FFA when he was younger. He used to show sheep and pigs. He once told his dad he didn't ever want to teach a steer how to lead! Brad had his own flock of the old style Dorset sheep. He was the first of two people in Wyoming to have Dorset sheep. He worked on crossbreeding his Dorsets with Columbias, which they jokingly called "Corsets"! They made terrific show lambs and he showed them as well as sold them to other kids for fair animals. Brad graduated from high school in 1987.

The Lofinks moved to Thermopolis in 1989 where the family continued to farm and have auctions.

Brad began working on cars because one of their hired hands was a Vega brother from Vega Brothers Shop in Worland. Brad realized that having mechanic skills would come in very handy in farming because it is much easier to try to fix your own equip-

ment than to pay someone else to do or even wait till it fit into their schedule. For two years after high school Brad worked for Vega Brothers and did not do any farming. He enjoyed the mechanic work and decided at that time to learn about machining with Goyn Machine, also from Worland. His mechanic experience also led him down another road -- he is a licensed car dealer -- he owns Plow Boy Auto Sales. It may not be a big business but he can mechanic and sell cars as a hobby without having to give up his farming!

At one time or another they leased McNamara's, Stump's, Bob Harvey's, Quarberg's, Baker's, Hillberry's, Cotton's, Wilson's and Pettipiece's land. Later on they bought Stump's and Bob Harvey's place and are currently running about 600 acres. They grew sugar beets for a while in the past but decided it didn't pay for them to do so, and they stopped growing beets. For a short time Brad also helped his father run about 75 head of cattle. They currently grow barley, beans, wheat and hay.

Brad is his dad's right hand man. Verne says he would never have been able to do all of what he does without Brad. He says that he used to be the leader but as the years have passed he has learned that he can sit back a little more and let Brad do things. He never has to worry about things getting done



Sonja Becker, Ag Citizen of the Year.

See Ag citizens on page 6