

Sublette County

OFFICE OF COUNTY ASSESSOR

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County Assessor*

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Dear Property Owner,

It is with regret that I contact each owner in the Hoback Ranches Service and Improvement District, knowing that many of you have lost your homes. I first want to let you know that I lost my home to fire in Pinedale in 2012. Therefore, I am aware of the concerns you have, the uncertainty that you are facing, the struggles you may have with itemizing your losses, with dealing with insurance companies, with the nightmare of paperwork, with trying to rebuild, and with the emotional trauma that you are experiencing. With that said, I would like to give you some preliminary answers to some questions you may have about how my office will be working toward reassessing the Roosevelt Fire area.

I'm sure that you have had a number of agencies on your property, doing a variety of types of damage assessment. Our purpose in visiting your property will be to ascertain whether structures need to be removed from the taxroll. We have already begun to review Hoback Ranches, and will continue to systematically visit each property, doing exterior inspections to determine which structures remain and which have been destroyed. We are working diligently to try to complete this before there is too much snow. Where possible, we will knock and identify ourselves. However, in an effort to be efficient, we will not spend a lot of time trying to locate a homeowner. My staff will have identification, and they can either answer your questions onsite, or get your contact information and try to get you in contact with someone who can answer your question(s).

When our physical site inspections are complete, and the data is all entered, you can expect to receive another letter from us indicating which of your structures remain on the taxroll, if any, for tax year 2019. You will have the opportunity to notify us if you feel that there was damage to any of the remaining structures that will not be able to be repaired by 1/1/2019, the statutory assessment date. For instance, from an exterior inspection, we may not be aware that a structure no longer has access to power. We will work with you on such issues, but we do need you to inform us, after you receive that letter, of those things that may not be obvious.

I also want to let you know that I understand that there are damages to some properties which will likely impact land values in the burned timber areas. Although Wyoming law requires that we have sales to substantiate any adjustments, having enough sales to quantify the loss in value is simply impractical with the few months we have left in this year. Therefore, I am working with some Colorado County Assessors who have experienced private-land wildfires in heavily timbered areas. Where warranted, I will be utilizing some of their data to make some adjustments to land values due to burned timber. At this time, I cannot tell you what those adjustments will be, because it is just too early. However, I want you to know that I will do all that I can, within my ethical appraisal judgement and Wyoming law, to ease your tax burden until such time as we have sales to better indicate how the fire is actually impacting the local market.

As far as 2018 tax bills are concerned, it is important to know that, although the bill came out in September and the second half is not due until May of 2019, the 2018 tax bill is based on the property

characteristics as of January 1, 2018. In Wyoming, we always pay taxes in arrears. Therefore, those tax bills are still due, even if you've lost your home. A couple of years ago, the legislature heard a bill to change this, so that devastating losses could be prorated mid-year. That bill did not pass, in part, because budgets and mill levies are set based on a fixed value certification. However, that same law, which doesn't allow for proration in the middle of the year, will be helpful to you on the rebuilding end of things. If you start construction after 1/1/2019, you will not pay taxes on new structures for all of 2019, even if you complete the home and use it during 2019.

If you have need to contact neighbors, you may find their names and mailing addresses on our Sublette County website. Following are instructions for how to do that:

From the home page of www.sublettewyo.com , hover over GIS/Map Server until a window drops down. Select MapServer. Read the paragraph and then, if you agree, click the blue words "I accept the terms of use above, take me to the Mapserver." This will take you to a map of Sublette County. At the top left, click "Search" and enter your own name or address and hit enter. It will pull up a list of matching results. When you find your property, click the "Map It" button to the right of your search result line. The map will zoom in on your property. Then you can use the tools at the top left to change your view or get more information from the map. The lower case "i" tool is the information tool. If you click on it to select that tool, and then click within a parcel boundary, it will give you the property ownership info on the right side of your screen.

You may also need some information about your structures for your insurance company, such as year built, square footage, etc. The characteristics of the structures as of 1/1/2018 may be found by clicking the hyperlink that says "property detail." Again, those characteristics are as of 1/1/2018 and will not be updated with the post-fire characteristics until after we mail assessment schedules next April. As previously stated, post-fire property information will be mailed directly to you as soon as we can. If you need any help with navigating the website, feel free to call us.

As always, our office is notified of building permits by the Planning and Zoning office. So we will return to your property before snowfall in the year that we receive notification that you have been issued a new permit. It is also possible that we will review the area at a later date to determine if there are any other issues that may contribute to value. Of course, you may request that we visit your property to review your data characteristics with you.

In addition to this information from my office, I was also asked by another agency to include the following helpful information:

The Department of Health brought water testing kits to Sublette County. They are currently located at the Bondurant Post Office. The shipping to send the kit for testing will be at the expense of the Homeowner. However, the fee to have the water testing is being waived if you label it "Roosevelt Fire." There is talk of possibly doing further or additional testing in the spring after the runoff.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Respectfully,

L. Jeness Saxton
County Assessor