

Grazing goats may eliminate need to burn berm



Written by Wauneta Breeze

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By Dave Vrbas
The Wauneta Breeze

Goats belonging to Larry Peterson of Imperial can be seen grazing along the banks of the Frenchman River west of Wauneta, above and below. The herd is effective at ridding the area of noxious weeds as they graze. (Breeze photos - Dave Vrbas)

It's an annual ritual no one enjoys. As spring rolls around and plants start popping up everywhere, Wauneta village employees and fire personnel can be seen along the river bank, burning the weeds, trees and grass to keep it cleaned up.

With that process comes the smoke, blanketing town in a billowing cloud of carbon monoxide.

That's where the goats come in.

The Village of Wauneta is putting goats to good use this year, using their penchant for eating everything in sight to clean up the riverbed, with hopes that the burn can be altogether avoided thanks to their hearty appetites.

The herd is owned by Larry Peterson of Imperial, and have been grazing by the riverbed just west of Wauneta's football field. In a few weeks, they will take their way through downtown and Wauneta's east side.

Village Utilities Superintendent Bill Bischoff said the goats are moved along the Frenchman bed by Peterson, who uses an electric fence to keep them barricaded in particular areas. The herd is effective at ridding those areas along the river of noxious weeds like thistle, also chowing down on the pesky willow trees that pop up all along the Frenchman bed.

"They not only get rid of the weeds and trees and knock the grass down," Bischoff said, "but they like to eat the junk too."

Bischoff hopes the goats' cleanup efforts will help the village avoid the cost and burden of having utilities crews and the fire department tend to the yearly burn.

"It's a great alternative to burning," he said. "And there's no danger of smoke inhalation that way."

As the goats are move through town in a few weeks, Bischoff asks folks to let them do their jobs without interference. There are a couple large dogs in the fence with

them, so keeping other pets and humans out of the fence will be important as they travel through downtown in the near future. "We ask that everyone just leave them alone," Bischoff requested. "They'll be fenced in, but the dogs are protective and we don't want anyone getting hurt."



A weed whacker on the hoof.