

Wyoming's Red Desert The Operative Word is "Desert".

The Red Desert is part of the Great Divide Basin - a high altitude (average elevation around 6,800 feet) arid to semiarid region along the eastern slope of the continental divide.

Water

Water is scarce. Annual precipitation averages less than ten inches and winter snowfall accounts for much of it. Average annual evaporation rates are four or five times higher than precipitation rates. Deep drilling (up to 1000 feet) may be required to bring in a well. It is suggested that ground water as a source of supply for residential, stock, or agricultural use be thoroughly explored and judged to be viable to support your proposed use. To obtain more information about water rights, contact the State Engineer's Office in Cheyenne, Wyoming (307) 777-7354.

Soils and Growing Season

According to the Bureau of Land Management the growing season in the Red Desert is about 90 days. Average summer air temperature is 63 to 66 degrees Fahrenheit (but diurnal fluctuations can be quite dramatic). Soils on the uplands are generally well drained with concentrations of calcium carbonate and/or sodium and high pH levels. Soils in lowland areas are dominated by highly saline and/or alkaline silty clay/loam soils with high pH levels. When wet, these soils become practically impermeable and have a low bearing strength. The high salt content limits vegetative cover and restricts vegetation to salt tolerant species.

Oil and Gas Exploration

The Great Divide Basin comprises one of the largest developing oil and gas fields in the continental United States. As a general rule the surface estate is split from the mineral estate and is subservient to the oil and gas or mineral estate. You may not be able to prevent oil and gas or mineral development on your property and you may have to allow a right-of-way across your property to access oil and gas or mineral development on adjoining tracts. However, the surface estate owner may be entitled to some sort of compensation. You should consider consulting with an attorney. In addition, you may want to contact those who hold oil and gas or mineral rights on and around your property to discuss their development plans.

Open Range

Wyoming is an open range state. If you do not want someone else's livestock roaming and grazing on your property you are responsible for erecting and maintaining fences. You are also responsible, and may face criminal liability, if your pets harass, kill, or wound livestock (or wildlife) on or off your property.

Zoning and Development

Most of the property in the Red Desert area of Sweetwater County has been zoned as an Agricultural District with some industrial areas zoned for Mineral Development. Most likely the property you are considering lies within an Agricultural District, but a specific determination will be made if you apply for a permit. Developing your property or establishing a permitted use will require a county zoning permit. Please contact our office at 307-872-3914 to speak with a member of our staff about permitting, road requirements or any other questions or concerns you may have.