PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION:

The site is located on the east shore of Simpson Lake in the Wind River Mountains. It is rare that any historic resource exists that is specifically related to recreational use, in this case dude ranching, on primitive or wilderness lands. Simpson Lake Lodge was built in 1926 by three expert craftsmen who used hand tools to create exquisite detail in the main lodge and the two guest cabins. Most of the building materials—logs, stones, sand, etc. were gathered on site or from the immediate vicinity.

The site’s buildings are historically significant due to their exceptional workmanship, and their extremely remote location makes the workmanship even more impressive. In order to build the cabins, the builders hauled the original cook stove, milled lumber, cement, and miscellaneous tools and supplies by wagon up the Union Pass Road, and then to Moon Lake. They built a raft and floated the materials across Moon Lake, then hauled them the remainder of the way to the site by horse pulled travois. The three cabins each have two rooms, saddle notching, sawn log ends, split log floors, milled lumber ceilings, tar paper roofs, split log door and window moldings, and stone foundations. The cabins are significant also because of their connection to “tie-hacking” in Wyoming, in which railroad ties were harvested from trees and floated downriver to railroad construction sites.

Formerly known as the “The Three Waters Hunting and Fishing Camp”, Charlie Moore of the CM Ranch bought the cabins shortly after they were built and renamed the site “Simpson Lake Lodge.” The Lodge became a popular part of his dude ranch operation. In 1952, Les Shoemaker, who was a local forest ranger, and his wife Alice, purchased the CM Ranch and Simpson Lake Lodge Cabins from Charlie Moore. Les and Alice loved people and they took genuine
pleasure in sharing the CM and the cabins with their guests. In 1992, the cabins were added to the National Register of Historic Places. Use of the cabins continued until 1997 when the CM Ranch was purchased by the Kemmerer family, and ownership of the structures was assumed by the Shoshone National Forest.

The buildings at Simpson Lake Lodge stood against brutal winters and harsh elements at an altitude of 9780 feet for almost 90 years, which is a true testament to their exquisite log construction by exceptional craftsmen. They are cherished by many local residents as well as the hundreds of recreational visitors who stayed in the cabins during a 70 year span. The buildings were rapidly deteriorating and required stabilization of the roofs and foundations to prevent further decline. Work began summer 2016 and continued in 2017 through a cooperative partnership which includes the Forest Service, Fremont County and HistoriCorps.

**WHAT:** Project participants worked with HistoriCorps’ staff to preserve the main lodge and 2 cabins. Volunteers, instructed in new skills and techniques by field staff, completed preservation tasks including:

- Foundation repair and stabilization
- Log repair and replacement
- Replacing and repairing window frames, glass, and hinges
- Preserving heavily weathered door exteriors
- Replacing roof decking
- Rehabilitating and repairing daubing on walls

**WHERE:** Wind River Mountains, Fremont County, Wyoming
The GPS location of the site is: 43.421903, -109.740951 Closest town: Dubois, Wyoming

*HistoriCorps is a service learning partner of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture committed to the preservation and stewardship of significant resources on public lands.*