



WYOMING OUTDOOR COUNCIL WINTER 2004

FRONTLINE

R E P O R T

CROSSING THE GREAT DIVIDE



The Western Heritage Alternative calls for a balance between protection and development in the Greater Red Desert

Bennett Mountains. Biodiversity Conservation Alliance

By Molly Absolon

As you drive I-80 across southern Wyoming, miles and miles of barren, sagebrush wastelands flash by your window. The wind howls, blowing dust, sand and snow across the highway. It's a hard, deceptively blank place that's difficult to love. There's so much room, so little detail except endless sky.

It takes some exploration to recognize the land's redeeming attributes. If you slow down from 75 miles per hour and get off the main road, you'll find hidden draws where springs create an oasis of life. You'll see towering hoodoos of sandstone twisted into fantastical shapes. You'll find mountainous uplifts where the sagebrush is replaced by firs and pines and pockets of aspen. You'll watch herds of antelope racing away from your car, or a group of wild horses grazing on the parched landscape. Raptors soar overhead, the stars light up the night sky, and the wind blows.

This part of Wyoming—loosely known as the Great Divide region—is vast and empty. It is empty because of its harshness. Much of the Great Divide is rugged desert, lands nobody knew what to do with. With the exception of a few hardy ranchers who

ran their cattle here, prospectors who searched for gold, as well as some shepherders, hunters, and a limited number of oil and gas operators, these miles and miles of open space so typical of the Great American West have largely been left alone.

Today, they are one of the few great expanses of untouched desert left in the United States. But that is changing. The presence of natural gas in the fissures and cracks beneath the Earth's surface here is attracting people, and the empty, untouched character of the Great Divide will inevitably disappear.

"There is no place you can go in Wyoming—really in the United States except perhaps Nevada and parts of California—where you can see so far," says Marian Doane, native Wyomingite, and the statewide organizer for Friends of the Red Desert. Doane first began rock hounding in the region with her father as a child in the 1960s and 70s.

"This land makes me feel small and humble, and it gives me much-needed solitude," she adds. "When you look across these fantastic, harsh, yet formidable vistas, you can see very little human impact."

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Mark Preiss
Executive Director

It's been difficult to decide the right thing to say here. It would be easy to be expansively positive or cynical, to build words into a structure that could weigh in against the collective angst many in the conservation community have felt in the days that have followed the election. But, growing up in a farming culture in Minnesota, from a heritage of German Lutherans, it's nearly against the law to get too excited about anything, except perhaps when the wrong Jell-O is served in the church basement after service.

In our community, weather was paid attention to. The spectacle of all-the-time news, instant polls, the odd tangibility and importance of distant matters, was grounded by daily chores, feeding, milking, fixing fence, getting the kids to school.

As we turn toward winter, I recognize that, like my grandfather and uncles, I simply cannot but get up, and get to my own chores, the work ahead. Here at the Wyoming Outdoor Council, we've been doing just that for 37 years. Regardless of political climate and which way the wind was blowing.

It's our job to find innovative conservation solutions that balance economic development with sound stewardship. And it's time to collect our thoughts, roll up our sleeves, learn from our experience, and as a result, be more effective, more thoughtful, more strategic.

The Wyoming Outdoor Council is Wyoming's oldest statewide conservation organization. Together, we've been through thick and thin. We have an awesomely talented and dedicated staff, and we promise to be here, working with and for the hard-working people of Wyoming, using the specialized tools we've forged over these years. We'll continue to build homegrown solutions with Wyoming communities and with you, to ensure that Big Wonderful always means Wyoming.

In this issue of Frontline, we have talked to people from across Wyoming, people who come from many different perspectives – tourism, recreation, hunting, literature, and local business. All of them, clearly, are dedicated to protecting Wyoming's unique natural heritage. All have a very personal interest in protecting what we value. Wyoming's environment and way of life is our livelihood. Its natural bounty gives local business owners and the state a healthy bottom line, it gives Wyoming people and her visitors a place to camp, fish and hunt, to contemplate, create art, to raise a family.

In the months ahead, the Wyoming Outdoor Council will continue to cultivate these often ignored natural alliances and find the common ground as expressed in these stories that follow. By working together, will we be able to protect what's good about Wyoming. Our way of life, our quality of life.

Happy Trails,
Mark



Established in 1967, the Wyoming Outdoor Council (WOC) is the state's oldest and largest independent statewide conservation organization. Our mission is to protect and enhance Wyoming's environment by educating and involving citizens and advocating environmentally sound public policies and decisions.

Frontline Report is the quarterly newsletter of WOC and is provided as a benefit of membership. Letters to the editor and articles by members are welcome.

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Seeking Balance for Wyoming's Future:

New Board President Brings a Varied Career in Resource Management to his Role



Back row: L-R Scott Kane, Mark Preiss, Bruce Pendery (kneeling in front of Mark), Jim States, Laurie Milford, Christine Lichtenfels, Tom Bell, DJ Strickland (hidden), Marisa Martin, Susan Lasher, Steve Jones. Front row: Nancy Debevoise, Barbara Parsons, Joyce Evans, Barbara Oakleaf, Tova Woyciechowicz

In September, the Wyoming Outdoor Council's Board of Directors elected new officers. Jim States, of Saratoga, was named president. In addition, Laurie Milford, a Laramie resident was appointed vice president, Christine Lichtenfels, of Lander, Secretary, and Susan Lasher, of Worland, Treasurer.

In the following article, Jim introduces himself and talks about his goals and aspirations for the Wyoming Outdoor Council.

In a small community like Saratoga where I was born and raised, there was far more to do out of town than in it, and my brothers and I took full advantage. We spent our youth exploring the wild places around our home in every season and in all kinds of weather. I have always been grateful to my parents for making that possible. They actually decided against higher income and other amenities so their three boys would have a chance to grow up in Wyoming's wonderful environment.

When it came time to decide on my career, I wanted to give something back. Earning my way as a fire guard for the Medicine Bow National Forest, I obtained a bachelor's degree in education biology and a master's degree in plant ecology from the University of Wyoming, followed by a Ph. D. in animal ecology and behavior at Oregon State. For over 30 years since, I have been serving as an environmental scientist, advising industry, land managers, regulators, and conservationists on possible environmental consequences associated with a wide range of energy developments across the western United States.

Now, in addition to continuing my work on the environmental implications of energy devel-

opment, I have the opportunity to work even more directly with one of the most highly respected conservation organizations in the country, the Wyoming Outdoor Council, as President of the Board of Directors. Combining my work for industry and my work with the Outdoor Council is a little like traveling with a foot in two boats, both wanting to move in opposite directions!

Most important, I think, is having access to the best information on all sides of environmental issues. This gives me a unique opportunity to help find and work the common ground, those areas where it may be possible to move forward toward resolution rather than remain in gridlock.

Quality of life requires meeting our energy needs and connecting with a healthy web of physical features and other living creatures. These needs compete with one another and, therefore, must be met in ways that are balanced. To exploit the one at the expense of the other is to the detriment of both.

Profit is a primary motivator in our economy. There is a tendency by investor-owned energy companies to be so driven by the short-term value of quarterly profits that long-term values—like the values of pristine landscapes and undisturbed ecosystems for our children and for future generations—are forgotten.

One-half of Wyoming is public land, belonging to all of us. It cannot be right that the energy value of these lands should always and everywhere trump the other natural resource values of these lands especially when they benefit just a few in industry or even this whole generation of energy users.

The Wyoming Outdoor Council exists to see that these other values get factored in to natural resource decision-making on Wyoming public lands. I look forward to helping make sure that happens.

Jim B. States

GREAT DIVIDE *continued from page 1*

BLM developing management plan for southeastern Wyoming

Human hands are at work determining the future of this land, however. This winter, the Rawlins Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management is scheduled to issue a draft resource management plan for the entire southeastern half of Wyoming. The plan will determine how a total of eight million acres will be managed for the foreseeable future. This eight million is broken

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Be on the look out for public service announcements and action alerts about the release of the Rawlins Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management's Resource Management Plan this winter. Then it's time to get involved and make your voice heard.

Write a letter to the BLM and attend public hearings to support the Western Heritage Alternative. Send a copy of your letter to Gov. Freudenthal, Sen. Thomas, Sen. Enzi, and newspaper opinion pages. Ask for them to support the Western Heritage Alternative, which calls for a balanced, sustainable approach to oil and gas development in the Great Divide. For more information on the Great Divide Western Heritage Alternative, visit www.wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org/programs/reddesert/greatdivide.php

Rawlins Resource Management Plan

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down into 3.5 million acres of "surface" or actual BLM holdings, together with an additional 4.5 million acres of federal mineral rights managed by the Rawlins Field Office. It includes the eastern and southern half of the Red Desert, Adobe Town, the Ferris Mountains, Wild Cow Creek, Bennett Mountain, and the Atlantic Rim. To give it perspective, the Jack Morrow Hills Plan, which generated such controversy, dealt with only 620,000 acres.

"This plan covers a vast area," Doane says. "People don't understand how massive it is and how important it is for them to be involved. This could be our last chance to keep part of Wyoming the way it is for our grandchildren."

A total of 10,000 oil, gas and coalbed methane wells are proposed for the Great Divide region and will be considered in the resource management plan. That's a lot of wells. It also means a lot of roads, people, infrastructure, and change for this untouched landscape. But it is hard to get people riled up about the Great Divide. The land is unknown and its beauty subtle.

"The Greater Red Desert is in my backyard," says Mike Burd, of Green River. Burd is a trona worker for FMC and the vice-president of United Steelworkers of America's Local 13214. He has been an active participant in his union's Blue-Green Alliance—an effort to combine forces with Wyoming's conservation community over issues such as the future of the Great Divide region.

"I don't want to see the desert raped and scraped with no worry about the consequences," Burd continues. "This is the only planet we've got. We can't mess it up, then jump off and go somewhere else."

"We need to develop it at a pace that the land will take," he adds. "There's a balance. We all want to warm our homes and drive our cars, but there is a way to do it that is clean and safe and will keep jobs in Wyoming."

Western Heritage Alternative calls for balance

Conservationists and labor are suggesting that way is what they call the Western Heritage Alternative. This alternative is not anti-development. In fact, under its proposed plan, 92 percent of the Great Divide Region would be available for some kind of oil and gas development. But the

plan does insist that this development occurs in a way that is sustainable both for the land and its people.

"Everyone wants clean air and clean water, and they want to drive their car, hell I've got an RV out there in the driveway. I think we can have both, it just takes some sensibility and patience," Burd says.

"I grew up admiring [former] Gov. Ed Herschler," he continues. "And I agree with his position that Wyoming needs development, but that development must be done at Wyoming's pace, for Wyoming's workers and Wyoming's land."

The Western Heritage Alternative calls for such a pace. It strives to protect Wyoming from yet another boom-bust cycle through careful planning and conservation. It calls for the use of the best available technology, staged development, directional drilling, reinjection of water produced through coalbed methane extraction, no surface occupancy in areas where wildlife winter, buffers around grouse strutting grounds and nesting areas, care for sensitive cultural sites, and limitations on the number of roads built.

The goal of these objectives is to provide wildlife with sanctuaries during development, to lessen the physical impacts on the landscape, and to ensure the area's human history remains in tact.

Critical places targeted with special attention

There are a few places in the region where the Western Heritage Alternative calls for additional protection. These are places that are particularly fragile, culturally sensitive or important to wildlife. They represent only eight percent of the total acreage involved in the management plan.

"When the people I talk to realize we are not here to shut down oil and gas, that we are asking them to do it correctly, to slow down development and create an extended, sustainable industry, they agree," Doane says. "Even drillers agree."

The boom has already started, however. Burd says hotels are full in Rock Springs and Green River and the cars in area parking lots carry tags from Oklahoma and Texas.

"These people are here to make a buck. They are not bad people, but they don't share Wyoming's values. This isn't their home," Burd says. "I've lived here all my life."

THE WESTERN HERITAGE ALTERNATIVE:

The Western Heritage Alternative received overwhelming public support during the initial comment period on the Great Divide Plan. Of 10,500 comments received by the BLM, 94 percent explicitly asked the agency to adopt the Western Heritage Alternative.

The Alternative:

- Strikes a balance between oil and gas development and the demands of public

recreation and wildlife.

- Proposes the protection of a total of eight percent of the resource area as wilderness study areas to preserve the Great Divide's most sensitive wildlife areas and spectacular landscapes. Leaves 92 percent of the area open for sustainable development.
- Calls for directional drilling and "No Surface Occupancy" in big game wintering areas and sage grouse strutting grounds, near raptor

nests, and around areas where rare or endangered species live.

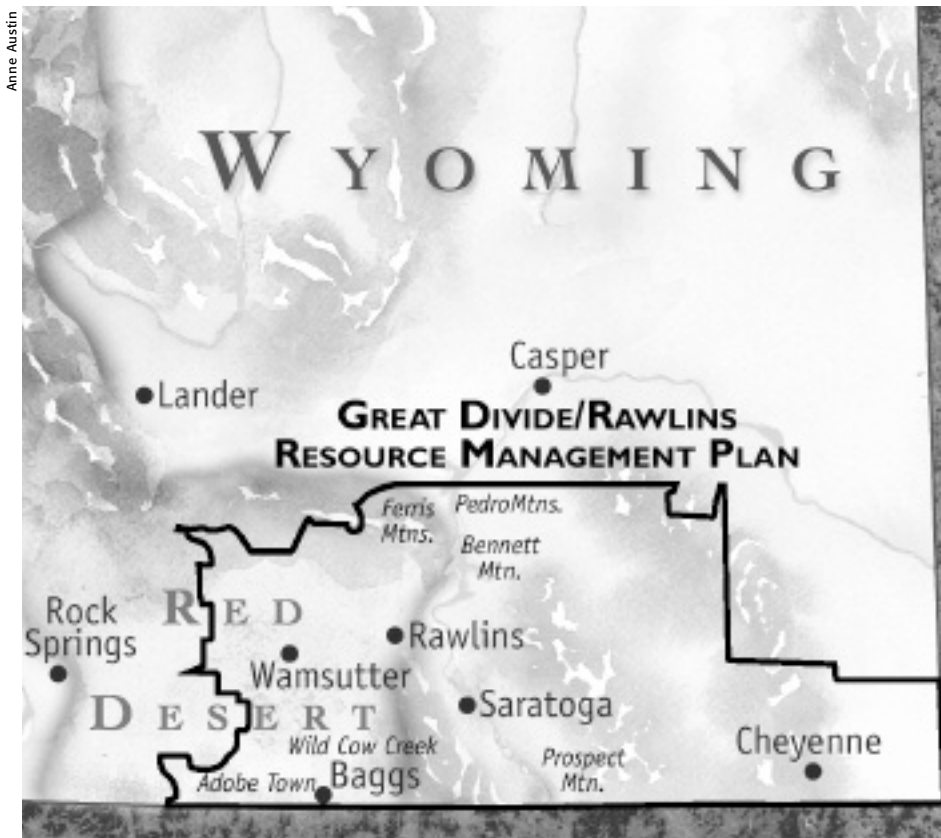
- Asks for the use of Best Available Technologies in all development to minimize impacts on air and water quality.
- Minimizes the number of roads and well pads.
- Proposes staged development to slow down the boom and help create a stable job market that favors local workers.

I want to keep Wyoming clean for my grandkids. I want to keep the jobs in Wyoming so my grandkids can make a living."

"We can have both," says Christopher Boswell, Gov. Freudenthal's chief of staff. "We'll struggle with balance. We'll be frustrated when so many policies are developed far from Wyoming, by people who may not have Wyoming's interests foremost in their minds. We'll screw up some of the development, and we'll get much of it right.

"There's a fair percent of the population both in Wyoming and nationally which believes development of the nation's energy resources is worthwhile. Many also agree that it should be done with care. The debate is over the degree of "care" exercised," Boswell concludes.

The Rawlins Resource Area Management Plan will be the BLM's attempt to codify this degree of care for southeastern Wyoming. The plan is due to be released this winter. Members are encouraged to write letters to the BLM and to the editor of their local papers. They are urged to ask public officials to adopt the Western Heritage Alternative and make sure the pending natural gas boom looming over the Great Divide occurs on Wyoming's terms. ▶



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT FOR THE GREAT DIVIDE REGION:

Approximately 10,000 natural gas wells are proposed for the Great Divide in a number of different project areas. The Great Divide already has an extensive gas field—1,300 wells in place with approximately 1,300 more planned—around the town of Wamsutter. The new projects planned for the area include:

Atlantic Rim: up to 3,880 coalbed methane wells proposed south of Rawlins to the Colorado border. The BLM is working on a draft Environmental Impact Statement for the area.

Seminole Road: 1,240 coalbed methane wells proposed northeast of Rawlins. The BLM is working on a draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Desolation Flats: 385 gas wells proposed 20 miles south of Wamsutter. The BLM has come out with a final Environmental Impact Statement and the project appears to be moving forward.

Vermillion Basin: up to 56 gas wells southwest of Bitter Creek. Drilling is proceeding.

Jack Morrow Hills: The Wyoming BLM released its final Environmental Impact

Statement for the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan this past July. The plan estimates the initial development of 255 oil, gas and exploratory coalbed methane wells in this small part of the Red Desert. Based on studies cited by the BLM, up to 1,077 natural gas wells and 543 coalbed methane wells may be drilled in the planning area. The Wyoming Outdoor Council has filed a protest with coalition members and is looking to congress to protect this as a National Conservation Area for future generations.

Targeting Issues that Affect Wyoming's Big Game

Cultivating the common ground between conservationists and hunters

Hunting in Wyoming is changing.

Always an integral part of the state's culture and way of life, hunting is also an important wildlife management tool and a popular form of recreation that brings critical dollars into the state's economy and its Game and Fish Department. But outside forces—such as disease, oil and gas development, and expanding subdivisions—are threatening the state's wildlife and potentially its hunting legacy.

"The hunting experience around here has definitely changed," says Mark Winland, a science teacher at Campbell County High School in Gillette, and an enthusiastic 4th generation Wyoming hunter. He says the changes began with the first oil boom in the 1960s, but they have accelerated with the recent coalbed methane rush.

"If you are the type of hunter that likes to sit in your vehicle, stay on the roads, and pop the first thing that you see, you'll still find good hunting," Winland says. "If you are looking for a more primitive experience, that's harder to come by now."

Winland says that the Powder River Basin has become semi-industrialized and broken up by roads and power lines. He believes these changes are having an adverse effect on wildlife, but says that effect is difficult to quantify. What is easier to see is the change in the hunting experience.

That change is not limited to the Powder River Basin. In the Red Desert, Tom Maki, the staff representative for the United Steelworkers of America District 11, says many of his union buddies followed his lead in joining in a Blue-Green Alliance with conservationists protesting leasing in the Jack Morrow Hills because they did not want to see their hunting grounds "destroyed."

Courtney Skinner, an outfitter in Pinedale who has run a wilderness camp in the Upper Green River Valley since the

1950s, told NBC's Nightline that hunters have told him they don't want to come to Pinedale anymore because the area is too crowded.

He says the changes he has seen in his backyard bring tears to his eyes. They have also pushed him to join forces with "the greenies." This alliance is not a comfortable one for Skinner, who says he has always considered himself a hard-core conservative until now. But like a born-again Christian, Skinner has seen the light and is now on an evangelical crusade against unbridled oil and gas development in the West. To spread his message, he grants interviews to reporters, testifies at meetings, preaches at the barbershop, and talks to clients around the campfire.

"When a hunter first starts out, taking the animal is the most important thing," Skinner told reporter Kevin Berger from Salon.com, "And once you catch your first fish, you're a fisherman. But then hunting and fishing just become reasons for the journey—reasons to get out, lose yourself in nature, look at the stars and hear the river run. That's the way to confront a little bit of America's past and rejuvenate your soul so you can move forward to the future. That's the tradition we want to preserve. Those are the things increasingly more valuable than all of the natural gas mines."

Preserving the tradition

In order to ensure a good hunting experience, you need abundant wildlife, clean water, clean air and sound stewardship of public lands. The rush to develop oil and gas reserves without adequate attention to these concerns worries some sportsmen and has them beginning to rethink their traditional allegiances.

Pat Wray, a member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America's board of directors and the author of "The Chukar

IS ROADLESS HUNTING ELITIST?

A side argument to the whole hunter, gun-control, habitat protection debate revolves around roadless areas.

According to two studies conducted by Trout Unlimited, the best hunting in Idaho and Oregon—as measured by size and number of big game taken and fish caught—occur in roadless areas. A similar study has not been conducted in Wyoming, but given the amount of elk and deer habitat and trout fisheries found in the state's roadless areas, it is likely the results would be similar.

But the National Rifle Association believes roadless hunting is elitist. According to a Washington Post article from July 9, 2004, the NRA "wants to make access by car to hunting areas a priority."

According to the Post, the NRA's major complaint about roadless areas is that they limit "mainstream hunter access to valuable hunting land."

An NRA spokesman was quoted in the article saying, "You are talking about people having to hire hunting guides, which is a financial burden, or you are talking about trekking. It would take exceptionally long to hunt, and what about disabled hunters?"

In a place like Wyoming, where for many the hunting experience is synonymous with backcountry adventure and where there is a well-developed economy based on guiding and outfitting, such arguments are far-fetched.

They have generated considerable heat among outdoor writers as well. The Lewiston, Idaho Tribune ran an editorial that said "most of the legions of people insisting on a driveway right" to hunt "simply have more invested in their beer bellies than their boots."

Hunter's Companion" says, "The NRA will make a push on behalf of politicians who are strong supporters of gun rights, but very often these are the same people who are the least supportive of efforts to protect hunting habitat from roads, logging and mining."

"We're alarmed at the rapid rate of development by the oil and gas industry without adequate investigation and planning into the effects of this development on wildlife," says Cathy Purves, the western Wyoming field director for Wyoming Wildlife Federation.

"Hunting is a part of Wyoming's way of life. People here do it to supplement their groceries, they do it for recreational sport, they do it to help manage wildlife. They are deeply connected to hunting," Purves says.

"We [at the Wyoming Wildlife Federation] are calling for no net loss to wildlife," she says. "To do this, we need to make sure drilling operations are done in the right way."

Doing it right to protect wildlife

Doing it right has become a rallying point for people across the state in their fight to protect Wyoming's natural heritage from ill-conceived and poorly considered natural gas development. But so far, the federal government has failed to take up the cause. This failure may be enough to push hunters into the so-called "green" camp.

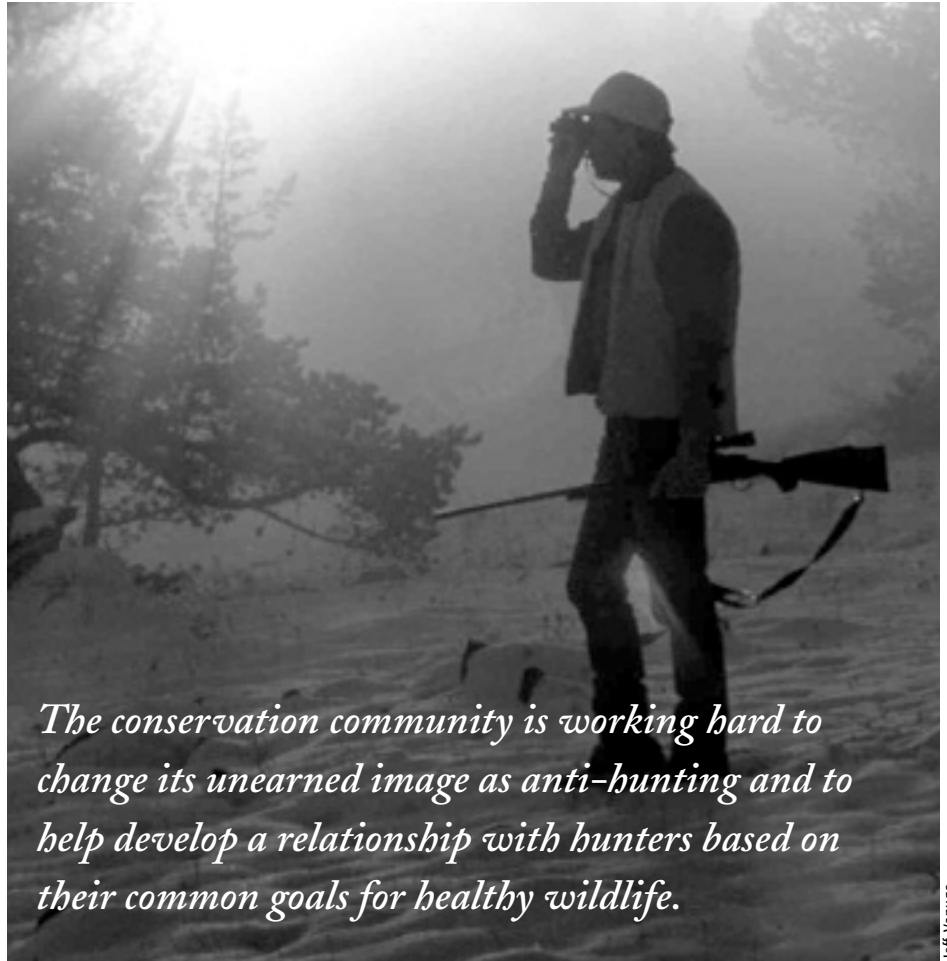
For example, in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Jack Morrow Hills Study Area, the BLM acknowledges that there are oil and gas leases that will be developed in the some of the most important big game habitat found in the Red Desert and that the impacts of this development could be "severe" for mule deer, pronghorn and desert elk.

Severe impacts to these animals inevitably means severe impacts to hunting, but the BLM plan does not suggest any way to prevent them from occurring.

Conservationists and gun control

Sportsmen comprise the vast majority of America's law-abiding gun owners and they are intent on maintaining their gun rights. In the past, this has made many hunters single-issue, single-party voters, but some are beginning to argue that it is time for hunters to look beyond the barrel of their guns and start considering other potential threats to their sport.

In an op-ed piece for High Country News' Writers on the Range, Tom Reed, a freelance writer based in Laramie, argued that it takes more than the Second Amendment to ensure an American's right



The conservation community is working hard to change its unearned image as anti-hunting and to help develop a relationship with hunters based on their common goals for healthy wildlife.

Jeff Vanuga

to hunt. There also has to be wildlife, habitat and open space, and these things are increasingly threatened by oil and gas.

"As an outdoorsman living in the West, it's hard for me to ignore the damage that has been done to our wildlife heritage....," he writes. "Places where I used to hunt pronghorn and sage grouse on the Upper Green River outside Pinedale, Wyo., are now oil and gas fields.

"A ranch where I once killed a dandy buck in Wyoming's Powder River Basin was roaded and tapped for coalbed methane two years ago. It won't recover in my lifetime."

Common Ground

The conservation community is working hard to change its unearned image as anti-gun, anti-hunting and to help develop a relationship with hunters based on their common goals for healthy wildlife. In Wyoming, this relationship is nascent, but Purves wonders if this year's hunting season will change that.

"I spoke to a hunter the other day who

had just come back from the Red Desert and was appalled at what he'd seen there," Purves says.

"He could not believe the change in just one year. There were more roads, more traffic, more wells, more rigs. It took away his hunting experience."

Winland, in Gillette, believes that the loss of the hunting experience that is already occurring in places like the Powder River Basin, the Upper Green River Valley and the Red Desert is just the first thing people will notice. What he worries more about are the long-term effects on habitat and wildlife. Effects he thinks we cannot quantify yet.

"This is the test," Winland says. "Is the landscape resilient enough to bounce back when this is done? The optimistic side of me says yes, the pessimistic side is worried.

"I'm worried about things like noxious weeds. I'm worried that the landscape could be biologically pretty different when this whole thing is over. I hope that isn't true." ▶

When Conservation Makes Cents

The power of economics in public lands management

By Molly Absolon

When Kniffy Hamilton, the supervisor of the Bridger-Teton National Forest, announced plans to go ahead with oil and gas leasing in the Wyoming Range this past summer, a diverse chorus of voices joined together in a clear note of opposition.

Opposition from certain sectors came as no surprise. But what was unexpected was the unified front of local businesses that came together to protest the lease sale. Their voices clearly argued that the leases not only jeopardized Wyoming's natural heritage, they also threatened business.

"We need pristine, clear-running streams. It is very important to our business," says Macye Lavinder Maher, the manager of Live Water Properties, a Jackson-based real estate office that specializes in fly-fishing property in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho.

Maher was actively involved in opposing the Wyoming Range lease sale. She says Live Water Properties routinely weighs in on land-use issues because of their potential impact on water quality and healthy fisheries.

"This [lease sale] was a case where public lands affect private land values," Maher says. "The business community in Jackson was appalled—and I mean appalled—that the recreational opportunities in the Wyoming Range might be taken away both for what that would mean to business and for what it would mean for our quality of life."

"Public lands serve many, many purposes," says Jen Lamb, the public policy manager for the National Outdoor Leadership School, a Lander-based 20 million-dollar business that uses the Wyoming Range for its educational programs.

"The tourism and recreation industry is growing. Its influence is growing, but because it is so dispersed—many companies are small family organizations or they are run by people who are not traditionally joiners—they often don't come together to weigh in on issues," Lamb continues.

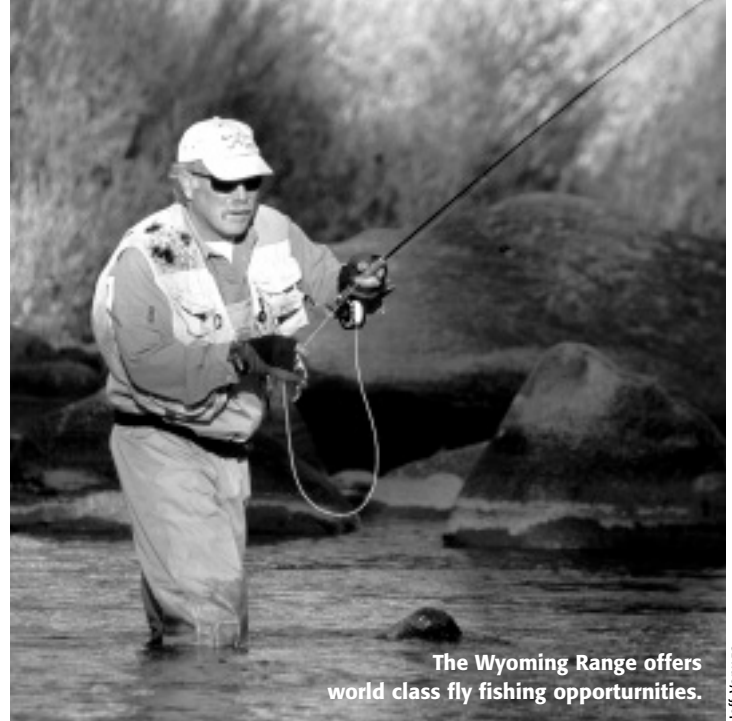
"I'm excited businesses are beginning to see they have a stake and a voice."

Economics speak louder than values?

The power of that voice lies in its ability to put a dollar value on the potential impacts of development. Conservationists have long struggled with this issue. The things we strive to protect: wildlife, clean air, clean water, and open land are difficult to quantify. But businesses can and do break things down into a matter of dollars and cents.

For example, in a letter to the governor thanking him for his effort to help stop the Wyoming Range leases, 26 Jackson-area business owners wrote:

"In 2001, retail sales in Wyoming related to fishing totaled over \$221 million. In that same year, the economic "output" (often called "ripple" or "multiplier" effect) due to fishing in Wyoming was over



The Wyoming Range offers world class fly fishing opportunities.

Jeff Vanuga

\$326 million. In addition, fishing accounted for \$60 million in wages and salaries, 3,395 jobs and over \$9 million in sales and fuel taxes."

The letter went on to quantify the income associated with wildlife watching, hunting, and other forms of outdoor recreation. These dollar signs spoke loudly. Gov. Freudenthal and Sen. Thomas wrote letters to the Forest Service opposing the lease sales until further research could be conducted into their impact. The opposition went up the line and ultimately, Hamilton's decision was overruled by her boss.

What made the Wyoming Range different?

"I think there is an evolution taking place," says NOLS' Lamb.

"We haven't been that active in public land issues in the past for a couple of reasons," she continues. "Number one, we did not have that many issues that affected our classrooms directly. And number two, we did not have adequate resources to conduct the necessary research.... But that is changing.

"The threats are real," she concludes. "We are primarily educators, but we have to be advocates for our classrooms."

The proposed lease areas in the Wyoming Range were what Lamb called a "direct hit" for the school. According to her, if you took an overlay of NOLS' winter operating area—its classroom—and set it on top of a map of the leases, they mirrored each other.

"The Wyoming Range is an accessible area with good reliable snow in the winter," Lamb says. "If we abandon this area, I can't think of anything to replace it."

“The business community in Jackson was appalled—and I mean appalled—that the recreational opportunities in the Wyoming Range might be taken away both for what that would mean to business and for what it would mean for our quality of life,” says Macye Lavinder Maher of Live Water Properties in Jackson.

The worry that outfitters have limited room, that oil and gas development on public lands has the potential to change the character and nature of Wyoming is not limited to Lamb. Courtney Skinner, a 68-year-old wilderness outfitter based in Pinedale, told a reporter for the Orange County Register that the lifestyle in the Upper Green River Valley has been “devastated.”

“Wyoming, up until this boom has been a recreation state, and certainly anything that affects that [outdoor-based] economy should be treated very carefully,” Skinner said.

There are some challenges to businesses such as Skinner’s or NOLS speaking out. These operators rely on permits to conduct business on the nation’s public lands and the potential for these permits to be revoked is very real.

“I rely on a Forest Service outfitting permit. If they pull that on me, I’m done,” says Jim Jones, the president and part-owner of High Country Flies, a retail and fly-fishing guide operation in Jackson. Not that Jones’ fear of reprisal kept him from acting. High Country Flies was one of the 26 businesses signing on to the governor’s letter, as were both NOLS and Live Water Properties.

“It is awkward to have a great relationship with the BLM for example, and then to go in and say we are protesting [one of their] actions,” NOLS’ Lamb says. “It is kind of like slapping your mother in the face.”

Using the economic voice for future conservation

Businesses have weighed in on public lands issues for years. But the organization involved in the Wyoming Range protest was somewhat unprecedented. What made it so uncontroversial and easy for the business community to get involved was two-fold: one the Wyoming Range seemed like an obvious choice for preservation, and two, the conservation community—organizations like Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, and the Wyoming Outdoor Council—served as a catalyst, bringing business leaders together in a series of open houses in the Jackson area that were aimed at demonstrating just what was at stake if the leasing went forward.

“Is all development appropriate? Certainly not,” says Gov. Freudenthal’s Chief of Staff, Chris Boswell. “This year’s proposed oil and gas lease sales in the Wyoming Range should have been halted and were, at the governor’s and Sen. Thomas’ urging. It’s an area which is both accessible and rugged. It is heavily used by hunters in the fall, NOLS courses in the winter, anglers and campers in the summer. It is appropriate to weigh the benefits of minerals exploration in such an area versus the enormous tourism and recreation returns.” ▶



A student from the National Outdoor Leadership School practices her telemark turns on a winter course in the Wyoming Range.

Wyoming's Visitors Look for Wild and Scenic Places

The state's second-largest industry relies on its natural heritage to attract tourists

By Molly Absolon

Data collected by the Wyoming Business Council's Division of Travel and Tourism says it all: Tourists come to the state to enjoy its scenery, wildlife, outdoor recreation, and natural environment. But in spite of their shared love for Wyoming's wild places, the conservation community and the tourism industry have had little connection historically. This may be changing (see related story on oil and gas leasing in the Bridger-Teton National Forest on page 8), but more effort needs to be put into cultivating a constructive relationship with our natural ally, the tourism industry.

Tourism is the second-leading industry in the state. It has grown steadily over the past five years, bringing in millions

of dollars and providing nearly 30,000 jobs.

Wyoming Outdoor Council's Molly Absolon talked to Diane Shober, the director of the Wyoming Business Council's Travel and Tourism Division about her goals for the department. Shober saw no inherent conflict between tourism and oil and gas development in the state, in spite of the potential for large scale industrialization in some places such as the Upper Green River Valley and the Powder River Basin. In her mind, there is endless capacity in Wyoming for both.

What follows are excerpts from their conversation. This interview is another in our series of conversations with the state administrators charged with the future of Wyoming's lands, its economy, and its public image.



Diane Shober, director of the Wyoming Business Council's Travel and Tourism Division.

Wyoming Division of Tourism

Q: Who is the classic Wyoming tourist?

A: That's very interesting. We just had our annual research completed... The average age of the visitors is 44.3... there was a slight increase in the number of 18-24 year olds traveling. Eighty-one percent of our visitors are graduates. They have a fairly high income; they are professionals and they are traveling in groups of 3.3 people. This kind of information ... tells us who is coming, when they are coming, how they plan their trip, how they book their trip, what they do when they are here.

The role of our division is to provide an umbrella marketing campaign to draw non-resident visitors to Wyoming. Obviously Yellowstone National Park is the primary destination for most visitors coming in and out of Wyoming, and so the opportunity is to capture them, because they are already here and they are traveling on our highways. To do this we need to work with local communities and destinations to provide information that is exciting and interesting to potential consumers so that when they are planning their trip in and out of Wyoming, they stay longer.

Q: My guess from looking at the website and the things that are promoted there, is that most people are coming here for the natural environment.

A: You look at this [report] and you'll see the things that they do, the things that they have experienced on their trip, and they are all related to our attributes. It's what we promote. You know Wyoming is a great natural outdoor recreation area. We have national parks, national forests, state parks and BLM lands. We have a lot of things to see and do, there's a great wealth of history here, and cultural history, and especially with baby boomers aging and that whole demographic representing a huge population of potential visitors. Wyoming is, I think, a marketplace that is rich in opportunity to really seize that traveling public.



Yellowstone National Park, with its wildlife and geysers, is Wyoming's number one tourist attraction.



Jeff Vanuga

Most visitors to Yellowstone include Grand Teton National Park in their trip. Shober wants to expand that spillover to other parts of the state.

Q: Have you run into any conflicts with increasing development in the state, such as the growing natural gas industry? Is development starting to jeopardize that image of Wyoming as a wild and scenic place?

A: No. I mean, are there people out there who may see that? Yes. But when you look at the larger, the aggregate base of our consumer, I have not received any word in the office of travel and tourism.

I was just in Dallas and Chicago two weeks ago where we conducted focus groups for a new television commercial that we are going to introduce next spring. It was interesting to see just what 'Joe Public' in these major metropolitan areas thinks of when he or she thinks of Wyoming. It has nothing to do with energy or the production of coal or oil or anything like that.

Q: What was it?

A: Well unfortunately, Wyoming does not have a really stand-out image. One of our opportunities—challenges or opportunities, however you want to look at it—is to try to define that. They do think of Wyoming as vast wide-open spaces, and

after they saw the commercial, they said, 'Oh that looks beautiful, that's where we want to go.'

Industry and oil and gas, agriculture, and tourism can all work very well for Wyoming's economy and Wyoming's future. They are not in competition or in conflict with one another. They can actually be intertwined to be great partners as we look at growing jobs for Wyoming and increasing our overall economic health.

Q: It seems as if looking at the future of the state, there could be conflicts between tourism and oil and gas in places like the Upper Green River Valley, if development starts to infringe upon an area's natural scenic wonder or to affect our wildlife. I was wondering if there was any state vision that helps you look forward and deal with these potential conflicts.

A: Well Gov. Freudenthal, the Wyoming legislators, the lawmakers, are cognoscente of the fact that we have a natural area here. That is why there is a managed plan for growth and a managed plan for development.

It is not a free for all to just go out and drill and produce coal or whatever, the Department of Environmental Quality is very contentious about what happens. We all want to protect what is here.

And that's where when I say there is a partnership and we can work together, we really can.

Q: Do you target hunters at all in your marketing?

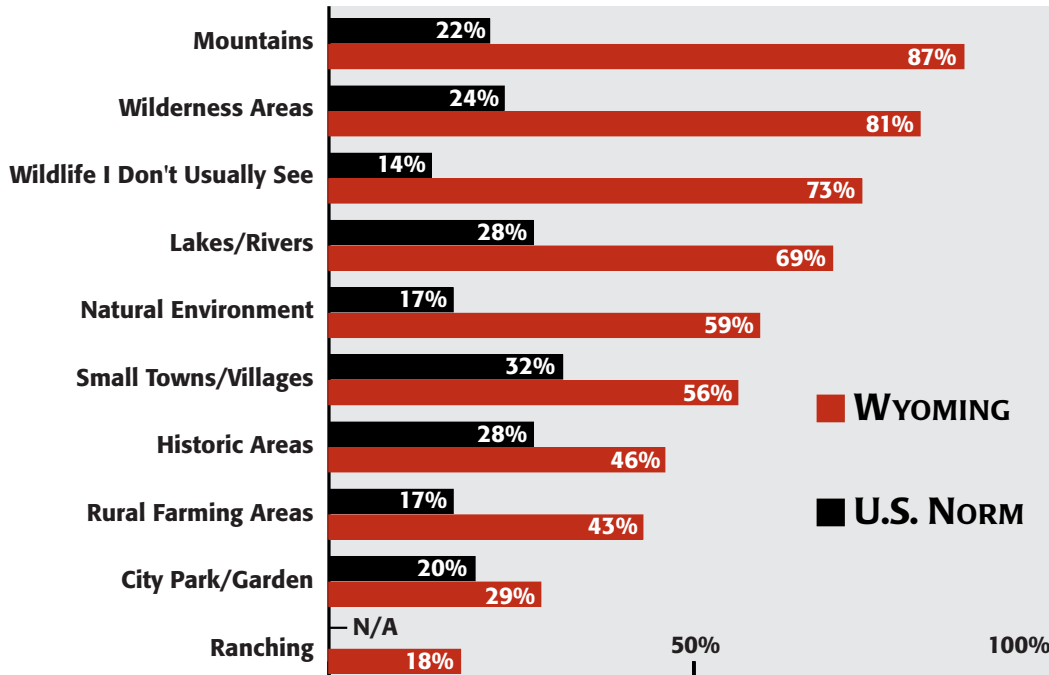
A: [Hunting] is a seasonal opportunity and because there are a limited number of licenses available, it is not a supply-demand kind of thing that we can market and sell, but we do support the hunting industry. In a lot of areas in Wyoming, it's a great economic benefit to those communities during the fall seasons.

In our office,—it's called the public information office but it is really geared more towards media and journalist relations—we are working a lot with writers to come and do stories. We've worked with *Field and Stream*, and *Outdoor Guide*; catalogs will come here and do photo shoots, and so we really are enhancing all of that in terms of the outdoors and hunting industries.

continued on next page

THINGS EXPERIENCED ON TRIP

BASE Overnight Marketable Trips



IN 2003 TOURISM IN WYOMING ACCOUNTED FOR:

- 6.8 million people staying overnight
- \$1.9 billion in direct expenditures
- \$88 million in state and local tax revenues
- \$488 million in direct personal income
- 28,000 full and part-time jobs.

Sources: Longwoods International Travel and Tourism in Wyoming, 2003 Travel Year Report; Dean Runyan Associates, Wyoming Travel Impacts 1997-2003

Q: You mentioned the boom-bust economy of the state, it seems as if tourism could even that cycle out.

A: If you look at the numbers, you will see that...destination spending has increased 4.5 percent per year over the last six years. Local and state tax collections have increased 5.6 percent per year. That's a huge contribution. If you took away the one industry that we all rely on [—the energy industry—] tourism is still there.

Tourism provides a great complement to Wyoming residents because growing the industry does not necessarily affect our lifestyle. Visitors come and then they leave, and so there is not the development, not the changes in the way we live and work.

The other opportunity is that product development, meaning museums, attractions and events, all of those things add to the quality life that we as Wyoming residents get to enjoy. It's not a coincidence that economic development boards ask for a vacation guide when they are creating relocation packets, because to a prospective resident who would come here or a business that would locate here, that means something. To bring people in, you need quality of life opportunities, so it really does represent many effects of our industry.

Q: Do you see any conflict between the idea of wildness as an attraction to the state and energy development on public lands?

A: We have less than 500,000 people in our state, there is still room for so much out there. We are certainly not at the point where we are compromising... this is my perspective, others may have a different view, but from my perspective, there's a lot of room for growth and opportunity.

There's 100,000 square miles of space in Wyoming... I travel the state extensively and there are times when I will drive and not see another car for many, many miles, so I don't think that we are suffering from being overcrowded.

But I appreciate the fact that it is a conflict for those that are here in many ways. We think, 'I want it for myself, I don't want to share it with anyone else,' but public lands are just that, public, and they belong to everyone. They belong to us as Wyoming citizens, but they also belong to Americans. That is the beauty of public lands in all states, we have the opportunity to enjoy them wherever we go.

Change is inevitable. In order to allow change to happen—because it will happen whether we want it to or not—we need to be a proactive part of it. We need to man-

age the change and develop the change in a way that can still preserve the things that are really precious to us, and still allow growth and opportunity to happen. If you are not an active participant in change, it will move beyond you and you will have things that you might not want.

Q: You say you think there is plenty of room for a healthy tourist economy to exist side-by-side with a vibrant minerals industry. It is hard for me to imagine the kind of development proposed—50,000 wells in the Powder River Basin, 11,000 wells for the Great Divide, 10,000 wells in the Upper Green River Valley—having no effect on the quality of Wyoming's natural heritage. Do you really think we can do both? Doesn't it seem as if there needs to be a concerted effort to develop with thought toward the impact of development on tourism?

A: We are committed to a well-managed balanced plan for developing a healthy Wyoming economy and I assure you that tourism will continue to play a key role. ▶



IN THE TRENCHES

HIGHLIGHTS OF CURRENT PROGRAM WORK

GREATER YELLOWSTONE ECOSYSTEM/UPPER GREEN RIVER VALLEY

Elk salt baits reclaimed in the Bridger-Teton. This summer, ten illegal elk salt bait sites located in the Thorofare area of the Bridger-Teton National Forest near Yellowstone National Park were reclaimed by volunteers from the Wyoming Outdoor Council, Taylor Outfitting of Dubois, and Forest Service personnel.

Salt baits have been used in the Teton Wilderness for decades as a way to lure elk in to hunters. The practice appalls many who consider it unethical both for its lack of fair-chase and for the damage it causes to the land. Elk congregate around the bait site causing soil erosion and extensive damage to vegetation and native forage. They also become easy targets for hunters.

Recognizing the problems associated with salt baiting, the Forest Service issued a special order in 1990 prohibiting the practice in national forests. In 2001, the Wyoming State Legislature strengthened that order by enacting a law that precludes hunters from shooting big game animals over bait. But in spite of these laws, a few hunting guides have continued to put out salt furtively—presumably in order to guarantee their clients an easy shot.

To help deal with the problem, the Bridger-Teton National Forest has increased wilderness ranger patrols to educate the public, reclaim the salt bait pits, and enforce regulations. Three outfitters have been cited and fined for taking a big game animal over a salt bait site in the past year.

We support the Wyoming Game Fish Department and Bridger-Teton National Forest for their efforts to enforce state law and the special order prohibiting salt baiting. Most importantly, both the Forest Service staff and the volunteers who pitched in deserve a huge thanks for reclaiming these salt bait sites. *Contact: Meredith Taylor.*

Fighting for critical winter range. The Bureau of Land Management has approved Questar's request to drill over the winter on the Pinedale Anticline in the Upper Green River Valley. The Pinedale Anticline



Meredith Taylor

Volunteer Gemma Daggett and Wyoming Outdoor Council's Meredith Taylor work to reclaim a salt bait pit in the Thorofare area near Yellowstone National Park.

is crucial winter range for mule deer and has been closed to drilling in the past for this reason. The Wyoming Outdoor Council has opposed winter drilling because of its potential to have adverse, unforeseen impacts on mule deer. In spite of our concerns with the BLM's decision, we are pleased with the mitigation measures Questar has agreed to and would like to see these applied to all drilling on the Pinedale Anticline. *Contact: Marisa Martin.*

Bridger-Teton Forest Plan Revision will determine the forest's next 20 years. Yet another public lands management plan is up for revision in the near future. In 2005 Bridger-Teton National Forest is scheduled to come out with a new plan to guide its forest management. Be on the look out for ways you can be involved in shaping the future of the forest. *Contact: Marisa Martin and Meredith Taylor.*

Pinedale Resource Management Plan Revision delayed. The release of a draft resource management plan for the BLM's Pinedale Resource Area, which was originally scheduled for November 2004, has been delayed until April 2005. The

Wyoming Outdoor Council is working with the Upper Green River Valley Coalition to encourage community outreach efforts and to move Wyoming people to comment on the plan once it is released. *Contact: Marisa Martin.*

Protecting Wyoming's Grizzly Bear. The Wyoming Outdoor Council has begun a campaign encouraging the public to get involved in drafting Wyoming's plan for managing grizzly bears once they are removed from the Endangered Species List. Public meetings will be held around the state later this year. Be on the lookout for action alerts about this issue. *Contact: Meredith Taylor.*

Wyoming Range Redux South Piney Natural Gas Development Project proposes CBM wells along Wyoming Range. Infinity Oil & Gas of Wyoming, Inc. and other operators propose to drill 210 coalbed methane wells along the eastern flank of the Wyoming Range, west of Big Piney. A draft environmental impact statement is expected in November or December, with a 60-day public comment *continued on next page*

period to follow. If you want to be on the mailing list for this environmental impact statement, call the BLM Pinedale Field Office. *Contact: Bruce Pendery.*

Riley Ridge Oil and Gas Development.

Interest has revived in yet another natural gas development near Wyoming Range. The Riley Ridge oil and gas field is located on Riley Ridge southwest of Big Piney. It is an area of mixed sagebrush, aspen and conifer forests that serves as a gateway to the Wyoming Range and is used by the imperiled Canada lynx and the rare Colorado River cutthroat trout. There is a relatively small existing oil and gas field in this area that was approved in the 20-year-old Riley Ridge Environmental Impact Statement.

After being somewhat quiet for many years, holders of oil and gas leases in the area are suddenly pursuing approval of a number of oil and gas wells and exploration projects, including wells on the Bridger-Teton National Forest and in the BLM Lake Mountain Wilderness Study Area. Some of these wells have been approved recently. The Wyoming Outdoor Council has initiated several efforts to try to make sure development in Riley Ridge is done in a way that does not compromise the values of the area. *Contact: Bruce Pendery.*

RED DESERT/GREAT DIVIDE

Working to protect the Jack Morrow

Hills. In early July 2004, the BLM released the final environmental impact statement for the Jack Morrow Hills. The BLM's plan, while closing substantial portions of the area to oil and gas leasing in the future, was still not adequate to protect this vital part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The plan allows up to 1,077 natural gas wells and 543 coalbed methane wells to be drilled in an area that includes important winter range for wildlife, large herds of elk and pronghorn, seven wilderness study areas, and remarkable historical and cultural values such as the Oregon Trail and areas sacred to Native Americans.

Because of the threats to these resources, the Wyoming Outdoor Council filed a protest of the final environmental impact statement in August in hopes of improving the plan. We are awaiting a decision on the protest from the BLM. We

were not alone in our dissatisfaction with the BLM's plan. A project manager for the BLM in Rock Springs said they had received an unprecedented 1,000 protests. Public involvement like this, coupled with the 81,000 comments sent to the BLM before the EIS was completed, have made a difference and will be very useful as we turn to congress for action in protecting the Red Desert. *Contact: Bruce Pendery and Tova Woyciechowicz.*

Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs join in fight to protect the Greater Red

Desert. In September, at the Federation of Western Outdoor Club's 73rd Annual Meeting in Ketchum, Idaho, members passed a resolution developed by Wyoming Outdoor Council organizer Tova Woyciechowicz, supporting conservation in the Greater Red Desert/Great Divide. The group is made up of more than 60 outdoor recreation groups with tens of thousands of members across the western United States. The meeting marked the beginning of a relationship with these allies that will be useful in the campaign to protect south central Wyoming. *Contact: Tova Woyciechowicz.*

Desolation Flats Project threatens Adobe

Town. The BLM has come out with a final Environmental Impact Statement for the Desolation Flats natural gas project that will allow 385 gas wells, 542 miles of roads, and 361 miles of pipeline in an area of national park quality badlands approximately 20 miles south of Wamsutter in the Greater Red Desert. Much of this project overlaps with the citizen's proposed Wilderness Study Area of Adobe Town.

Development in Desolation Flats will cut off wildlife migration and threaten the pristine nature of the area, which is characterized by 1,000 foot cliffs, endless badland mazes, fossil-rich sandstone, important nesting habitat for birds of prey, and valuable cultural and historical sites.

Individuals can help by contacting their congressional delegation, Governor Freudenthal, and by writing letters to the editor to present the case for protecting this remote, but awe-inspiring piece of the Red Desert. *Contact: Tova Woyciechowicz.*

Greater Red Desert/Adobe Town Stakeholder Meeting.

A meeting was held in October to begin the process of engaging non-traditional stakeholders in a discussion about lasting protection for Wyoming's Greater Red Desert, specifically Adobe Town. In addition to the representatives from the Wyoming Outdoor Council, attendees included local ranchers, representatives of the Rock Springs Grazing Association, officials from the Rawlins and Rock Springs Field Offices of the Bureau of Land Management, Friends of the Red Desert, Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, the Wilderness Society, Western Wildlife Conservancy, Wyoming Wildlife Federation, and representatives from the staffs of Sen. Thomas, Sen. Enzi and Rep. Cubin. This effort is the first of what is hoped to be continued dialogue about appropriate protections for the Adobe Town area. *Contact: Tova Woyciechowicz.*

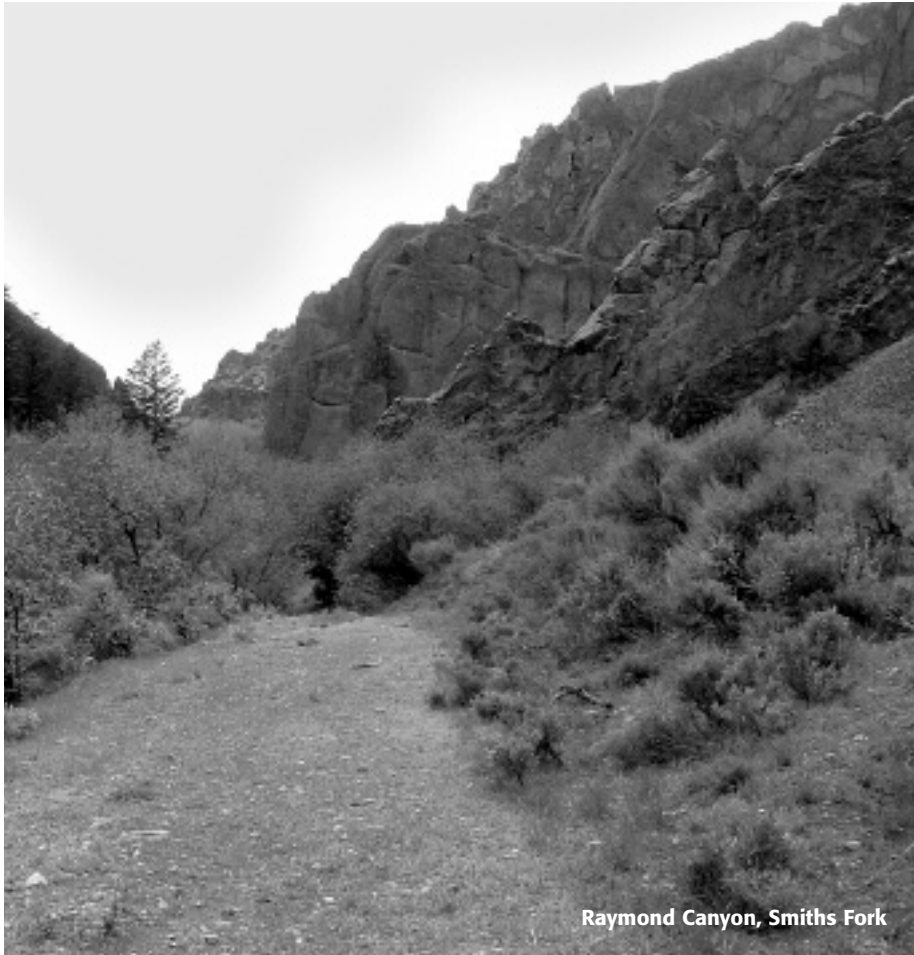
Rawlins BLM sits down with conservationists to discuss best management practices for oil and gas for the Greater Red

Desert. In September, representatives from the Wyoming Outdoor Council, Friends of the Red Desert, Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, and the Rock Springs Labor Union met and toured gas wells near Atlantic Rim in the Greater Red Desert with the Rawlins Bureau of Land Management Field Office. The group, which included the BLM's recreation planner, its range conservation specialist, the head of the oil and gas program, the oil and gas project manager, a staff biologist, and a public relations officer, discussed responsible energy development. This conversation resulted in new relationships and interest in getting a more diverse group to meet with the Rawlins BLM in the future. *Contact: Tova Woyciechowicz.*

POWDER RIVER BASIN

DEQ seeks stakeholders input on managing coalbed methane produced waters.

In an effort to get a handle on the overwhelming volume of coalbed methane water being discharged into the Powder River Basin, the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality has decided to begin a process designed to control overall water volume within each watershed drainage. The process is starting cautiously,



John Carter

Raymond Canyon, Smiths Fork

with stakeholders meetings set for November for two watersheds: Pumpkin Creek and Crystal Creek, both tributaries of the Powder River. There is one designated seat for an environmental group in each group. The Wyoming Outdoor Council and Powder River Basin Resource Council will share this role. *Contact: Steve Jones.*

GRAZING

Smiths Fork Allotment Management Plan expected soon. In April 2004, the BLM and the Wyoming Outdoor Council settled an administrative appeal that WOC had filed challenging livestock management on the Smiths Fork Allotment. In the settlement, the BLM agreed to prepare an allotment management plan for the Smiths Fork by February 2005. We anticipate that plan will actually be ready by November. We hope the proposed plan will lead to real, on-the-ground improvements on the Smiths Fork, but will remain vigilant to ensure this is the case. *Contact: Bruce Pendery.*

STATEWIDE

Helping communities deal with solid waste. In the fall of 2003, Gov. Freudenthal directed the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality to convene a citizens' advisory group to help develop the state's solid waste management policies. The 27 members of the group included a mix of public and private engineers, municipal solid waste managers, county commissioners, city employees, community recycling leaders, and Wyoming Solid Waste and Recycling Association board members. The Wyoming Outdoor Council was the only environmental organization with representation on the committee.

The committee presented a report to Gov. Freudenthal and the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality this October. The problems identified by the group stem largely from the growing number of leaking landfills contaminating groundwater around the state, coupled with the rising cost of building and main-

taining safe solid waste disposal services—costs which are prohibitive for many small, rural communities.

The group came up with a number of recommendations to help deal with the solid waste management issue. They also worked to get the Joint Minerals, Business and Economic Development Interim Committee to approve a Community Landfill Remediation Bill. If the bill passes the Wyoming Legislature during the 2005 session and is signed into law by the governor, the advisory group will remain in tact and will shift its focus to helping DEQ in the rulemaking process. *Contact: Michele Barlow.*

EPA responds to Wyoming Outdoor Council's allegations that Wyoming fails to meet minimum standards of sections of the Clean Water Act.

In 2001, the Wyoming Outdoor Council and the Powder River Basin Resource Council filed a petition with the Environmental Protection Agency citing Wyoming's failure to administer the Clean Water Act's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Program in a way that protected the state's water adequately from the impacts of coalbed methane produced waters. In September, after an audit of the Department of Environmental Quality's Water Quality Division, the EPA issued its final Findings and Corrective Action in response to the petition.

The audit revealed several glaring deficiencies in the DEQ's practices. EPA found that DEQ must apply technology-based effluent limitations for coalbed methane discharges, that DEQ must start imposing effluent limitations on coalbed methane produced water to protect aquatic flora and fauna, and that the DEQ must stop processing major permit modifications as minor modifications.

According to Stephen Tuber, the Assistant Regional Administrator for the EPA, "significant improvements have been made in Wyoming's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System program since the petition was filed." A final follow-up review of the state's program by the EPA is to take place this winter to ensure all necessary corrective actions have taken place. *Contact: Steve Jones.* ♣

Supporting the Governor's Efforts

Freudenthal Proposes to Use State Surplus for Wildlife Trust Fund

The Editors

This November, Wyoming's Governor Dave Freudenthal made a proposal to the state legislature, presenting a plan before an interim committee to put aside up to \$400 million of the state's surplus revenues from minerals development to protect wildlife and habitat.

"There are some things that are more important than politics," the Governor stated, introducing his Wyoming Wildlife, Recreation and Conservation Permanent Account Act, "and this is one of them."

The account proposed by Freudenthal would be governed by a citizen board comprised of representatives from wildlife, agriculture, sportsmen, tourism and conservation interests. The board would make

grants to nonprofits and governmental organizations to support improvement and maintenance of terrestrial and aquatic habitats; to acquire critical habitat; to conserve native non-game wildlife resources; and to promote water storage projects for wildlife and instream flow.

In presenting his bill, the Governor repeatedly cited the importance of Wyoming's hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation heritage.

"I'd like for my son to be able to bring his son out hunting as I did, and still say, 'this is what Wyoming's all about,'" he said.

This proposal will inevitably engender a legislative debate. Already the Wyoming Stockgrowers Association and other groups have set in motion their own bill version,

which differs significantly from the Governor's proposal. Their bill limits the availability of grants to a few specific agencies and prohibits nonprofits from these funds unless sponsored by an approved agency and with a request under \$100,000. In addition, in their bill, the purposes of the fund are expanded far beyond wildlife habitat protection.

Governor Freudenthal ended his presentation to the committee with a request to consider the impact on future generations, and for Wyoming people to work together. "There are lots of old fights, but let's set them back and do this," he urged the committee. "Twenty years from now, I hope we can say we did the right thing for Wyoming." ▶

Protecting Wyoming

By Marisa Martin and Bruce Pendery

Faced with yet another request for public comment on yet another important environmental issue, you might wonder, does one comment really make a difference?

The answer is yes. Just within the last year, the public has tipped the balance toward conservation on a number of important issues, including protecting roadless areas in the Wyoming Range, and ensuring that parts of the Red Desert remain undeveloped. Things don't always turn out the way you'd hope, but your voices do make a difference.

From handwritten letters to brief emails, public comments can provide the extra pressure needed to persuade land managers to do the right thing. They are an example of democracy in action. They are your chance to let decision-makers know how to better manage your special hiking trail in the Wyoming Range or your favorite fishing and hunting spots in the Shoshone National Forest.

The Wyoming Outdoor Council fights for your right to comment on important decisions. We believe that land managers make better decisions when informed by public comments. The Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service and the National Park Service merely manage public lands. You own them. Therefore, you deserve—and are guaranteed by law—a role in deciding how they are run. We are committed to protecting and enforcing the laws that give you that right. And we encourage you to fully exercise it.

Public participation can have significant results. Public comments and public pressure helped delay oil and gas leasing

One Person at a Time

in the Bridger-Teton National Forest, saving thousands of acres of roadless areas in the Wyoming Range. Thousands of voices, including Wyoming Outdoor Council members, Wyoming citizens and others, were heard in the offices of Forest Service decision-makers and other elected representatives. Gov. Freudenthal and Sen. Thomas may not have asked the Bridger-Teton to delay leasing until further environmental analysis was completed without knowing the public supported their position.

The tens of thousands of public comments on the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan also had a beneficial effect. Your voice, together with many others, helped put this extraordinary area "on the map" both with BLM and the public. The thousands of letters received by the BLM, ensured that wilderness and wildlife values could not be ignored in a rush to develop oil and gas.

There are significant flaws in the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan, flaws that seem to fly in the face of public opinion, which can be frustrating. The Wyoming Outdoor Council is protesting the plan because of these flaws, but we are still encouraged by the good things the BLM did include. To us, they represent the fact that the BLM did listen to public concerns.

For example, the final plan expands protections around Steamboat Mountain Area because of its importance to elk, and it closes a large area of critical wildlife habitat to future oil and gas leasing. Your comments made this possible.

Ensuring special places receive the protection they deserve often comes down to what environmentalist Brock Evans has counseled: it's a matter of "endless pressure endlessly applied."

Keep up the pressure! ▶



Wyoming's Poet Laureate

David Romveldt's Words and Music Shaped by His Sense of Place



By Molly Absolon

He's a poet, a ranch hand, a musician, an essayist, a family man, and a philosopher. He enjoys physical labor and exercise, solitude, and the infectious energy of a big party. He's multi-lingual and has lived all over the American West and abroad. He is Wyoming's Poet Laureate and a member of the band, the Fireants, which played at the Wyoming Wilderness Ball in October.

"I guess if you were being critical, you could say I am a

dilettante," David Romveldt says. "I see something new and say, gee, I'd like to try that.

"All these labels and titles are part of the whole that makes up me as a person," he continues. "But I think you'll see that issues of music and language have been steady throughout my life."

Romveldt, who lives in Buffalo, Wyoming with his wife and daughter, sees being named Poet Laureate of Wyoming by Gov. Freudenthal as a kind of vindication of his work. He's lived in the state since 1988, but he's never really felt fully accepted. For one thing, he doesn't write cowboy poetry. For another, he was born elsewhere.

"Being named Poet Laureate felt very big," he says. "It marks a recognition of my work in a realm where it is not really appreciated. It gives me the sense that I am part of this place.

"Old timers really aren't convinced outsiders belong here," Romveldt continues. "I'm lucky I married into a family with roots in Wyoming, the old timers cut me some slack, but they still hesitate to accept me.

"Writing someone off because they aren't from here is an easy way to discount people without actually considering the issues. You can just say, 'Oh the people that made that decision are no good, so their argument is irrelevant,'" he adds.

While Romveldt can rationalize the inequity of this kind of xenophobia, he still says he wants to fit in. In an essay he wrote for Sun magazine, he writes, "I'd gotten into an argument about environmental politics with a Wyoming native who felt that my view could only have been held by a non-Westerner. When I defended my westernness by saying that I was born in Portland, Oregon, I was told, 'There you have it.'

"Part of me wanted to insist that Portland was in the West," he continues. "Why did I care so much whether people in Wyoming or Montana saw me as a Westerner? Because I wanted to belong."

Late at Night

After long days riding, moving sheep from Four Mile to the mountains, Margo's grandfather comes home, enters his darkened house. Negotiating the turns from memory, he finds a box of matches, strikes one. The blue tip flames, illuminating the room, thickly shadowed, an old man's face. He seems to wait then looks up, grins, "Of course," as if remembering an important event far away." Of course," he repeats, pulling the string that hangs in front of him. "Electricity, I forget about electricity."

From How Many Horses, 1988, Ion Books

Like many writers and poets, Romveldt's work is informed and influenced by his surroundings. This intimacy and sense of place makes him feel he belongs here—that he knows Wyoming. Hence his frustration with the outsider label that can still rile him up. Ironically, in his opinion, much of the writing that is deemed 'uniquely Wyoming' is less about what the state is really like than about the image it seeks to convey.

"Many people outside Wyoming treat the place as a mythical landscape, a romantic image, more than a real place," Romveldt says. "They expect the writing from Wyoming will be place and landscape centered."

Romveldt's link to the land and its people runs throughout his work but his writing is not necessarily about cowboys, rodeos, cattle, and the romantic image of the American West typically associated with Wyoming writing. He says the "gritty, demanding daily chores" he does as a hired hand on his father-in-law's ranch "can, paradoxically, be transcendent" because of their intimacy with place, with animals, and with his

continued on next page

companions and his writing reflects this transcendence in a way that is uniquely his own.

But Wyoming—its land, animals and people—is changing. Romveldt says he sees it in his own backyard where there are more people in the mountains and more energy development on the plains. But he is hesitant to say the new Wyoming is any less Wyoming than it has ever been. In his mind, there is no static time when the West was more authentic than it is at the present.

“I can’t say to what degree change is more dramatic now than in the past,” Romveldt says. “Imagine the period in which the Europeans came into the northern Rockies and the Great Plains and the way of life that people knew was completely changed. Destroyed? Altered? Transformed? Whatever you call it, everything that people knew of life ceased to exist.

“These changes were so dramatic and so excruciating for the peoples of the West that it’s hard for me to believe the changes we’re seeing are greater. By saying this, I don’t want to diminish what is happening now. The issue of water in the intermountain west means that everything we take for granted will have to change. And we know to what degree mineral exploitation alters our physical landscape and our sense of ourselves.”

Romveldt’s link to the land and its people runs throughout his work but his writing is not necessarily about cowboys, rodeos, cattle, and the romantic image of the American West typically associated with Wyoming writing.

Romveldt’s status as Wyoming Poet Laureate has given him new name recognition in the state, but he is perhaps more well known for his music. His band, the Fireants plays what they call “dance music of the Americas.” It’s a foot-stomping mix of Latin rhythms and Cajun beats spiced up with a polka here and a salsa there.

The band also has a social conscious. Each band member is allowed one “gimme” —an event where they play for free to support a specific cause—per year. The Wyoming Wilderness Ball was not a gimme, but the band did play for less than normal.

“Playing for a slightly reduced fee or paying for our own rooms and expenses are ways we try to help while recognizing that we need to earn a living,” Romveldt says. “We’re honored to play for the Wyoming Outdoor Council and in general for this kind of event. And while I can’t speak for the band, as an individual I often wish that I could always play for no charge.” 🐾

Lorna Wilkes-Ruebelmann: Board member moves on after many years of service



More than 30 years ago, an article on the Sierra Club in the Casper-Star Tribune sent Lorna Wilkes-Ruebelmann rushing to the Natrona County Library in search of some kindred souls. Lorna had just moved to Casper, and was feeling isolated and in need of a cause. That was the beginning of her work with the Wyoming Outdoor Council.

“It was an exciting time to be involved,” Lorna recalls. “We were a bunch of idealists

who got organized and were very effective... Politically things have changed. Now people are more interested in their pocket book than in the common welfare. Environmental battles are often fought in the courts these days.”

Lorna remembers those early years with pride and some nostalgia. She says they were successful in getting a number of important environmental bills through the Wyoming legislature, including laws that created a land-use planning commission and an industrial-siting commission. She felt citizen involvement was critical to the environmentalist’s success. Their movement was driven by a kind of energy and enthusiasm that seemed to die out in the 80s according to Lorna. Now she believes, it is time to get reenergized.

“I’m really worried about the state of our democracy,” she says. “I believe everyone of us has to take an interest. People have to get involved. I’m very proud of the Outdoor Council’s work and believe we’ve been highly effective, but we can’t let up.”

Lorna served on the board from the late 70s into the early 80s, and then came back on in 1998. She served as treasurer and was actively involved in the executive director search this past spring. Now she and her husband George have moved from Sheridan to Cortez, Colorado for their retirement, but it doesn’t sound as if Lorna has slowed down. She’s taken a position as program director for the local Hospice organization and is in charge of Hospice volunteers around the Four-Corners region.

The Wyoming Outdoor Council thanks Lorna for her years of service and wishes her the best in Colorado. 🐾

Upcoming Events

Restoring Wild Patterns Presentation

Wyoming Outdoor Council's Meredith Taylor will be making a presentation on Restoring Wild Patterns at the Wyoming Wildlife Federation's annual meeting in Dubois November 30-December 2.

Balanced Choices for the Red Desert and Great Divide Slideshows

Wyoming Outdoor Council's Tova Woyciechowicz, will be presenting a slide show entitled "Balanced Choices for the Red Desert and Great Divide" around the state this winter.

The presentation takes you on a journey through Great Divide country—a windswept landscape that includes the Great Divide Basin, the Adobe Town Badlands, the Ferris Mountains and much of the Red Desert—and highlights its many valuable assets including: wildlife, ranching, recreation, cultural heritage, and oil and gas. The slideshow presents a hopeful vision that Wyoming can make balanced choices for the future that enhance our state's value, as well as ensure our quality of life and a healthy environment.



Tova Woyciechowicz

Adobe Town,
Red Desert

Thursday, January 13, 2005 at 6:30 p.m.
Uinta County Library, 701 Main Street
Evanston, Wyoming 82930

Thursday, January 27, 2005 at 6:30 p.m.
Rock Springs Library, Johnson Room
400 C Street, Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901

Thursday, February 3, 2005 at 6:30 p.m.
Teton County Library, Auditorium
125 Virginian Lane, Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Living With Wolves

Wyoming Outdoor Council's Meredith Taylor will speak at a forum on Living With Wolves at the Denver Museum of Science and Natural History on Wednesday, February 16.

Members Keep Us Energized

Thanks to All of You Who Help Keep Wyoming Wild

The staff at the Wyoming Outdoor Council depends upon you—our members—for everything from volunteer efforts and financial contributions to the emotional support you provide by just being a part of the organization. We'd like to thank you for your help. You keep us moving forward in good times and in bad.

“Every morning I get up and work to protect Wyoming's environment. In particular, I focus on preserving, protecting, defending and conserving Wyoming's rivers, lakes, streams and groundwater, and the habitat associated with them: wetlands, riparian habitat, fisheries and aquatic life. It means a great deal to me to know that the Wyoming Outdoor Council's members are supporting me in those efforts.”

Steve Jones, Watershed Protection Program Attorney

“Serving the Wyoming Outdoor Council's members and addressing their interests is one of the main reasons we exist and go to work every day. The Wyoming Outdoor Council's members keep us abreast of issues we might not otherwise know about, alert us to new possibilities and ways of doing things, and keep us smiling knowing there are hundreds of others that care as much about Wyoming as we do.”

Bruce Pendery, Staff Attorney and Public Lands Director

“In my view, the Wyoming Outdoor Council's greatest assets are our loyal members. During my time here quite a few projects and campaigns were successful because of the work, credibility and experience of the Wyoming Outdoor Council's dedicated members. Collectively, they are first-class passengers of Spaceship WOC.”

Michele Barlow, Director of Government Affairs and Conservation Education

“The Wyoming Outdoor Council's members are the lifeblood of the organization. Wherever I go throughout Wyoming, I run into members, new and old, who remind me of how much they appreciate what the Wyoming Outdoor Council's is doing to keep Wyoming wonderful. Thanks to all of you Wyoming Outdoor Council supporters who make it all worthwhile.”

Meredith Taylor, Greater Yellowstone Program Coordinator

“I often send alerts and requests for Wyoming Outdoor Council members to comment on important decisions being made in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Knowing that so many Wyoming Outdoor Council members respond to these alerts and comment on decisions energizes me. Thanks to all of our members for providing such solid support.”

Marisa A. Martin, Greater Yellowstone Program Attorney

“Members fuel the fire in my belly. It's watching mental wheels turn about an issue and working with the marvelous and diverse folks in local communities that make me thrilled to come to work everyday. I want to personally thank all of you for being the base that makes this organization thrive.”

Tova Woyciechowicz, Community Organizer

Wilderness Ball!



On October 30, 175 wilderness supporters turned up at the Lander Community Center to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Wyoming's Wilderness Act. The revelers, many of whom came in costume, were entertained by music from Jalan Crossland, Bart Koehler and the Fireants.

Costumes included famous environmentalists and political figures, Wyoming wilderness areas, a clear cut, a bevy of wild animals, meadows, forests, and a host of other creative interpretations of Wyoming's wild places and the issues that affect them. But in the end simplicity won out. The winner of the Wilderness Hero costume contest was Tom Bell disguised as Tom Bell.

Thanks to all volunteers!



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