



# Watching for Water

## The Value of Water in an Arid Land

By Molly Absolon

This summer, I started watching the afternoon buildup over the Wind River Mountains with a sense of desperation. Fluffy cumulus clouds would mass up into great gray piles that rumbled and flashed. The wind blew dirt around the streets forcing me to squint to protect my eyes. But we never got rain. The hills above town were brown almost before they were green.

Living in Wyoming is learning to live with an almost unconscious thirst. I find myself responding physically to photographs of lush, wet forests or waves lapping against a sandy beach. I feel parched at times, but I've also grown to love the beauty of our raw dry landscape. Here the earth's history is written on the land. You can see where water carved out canyons, where retreating ice left behind mounds of tumbled boulders. A violent afternoon

storm can turn silent sandy draws into raging streams leaving behind new channels and sculptures in the malleable earth. It's a land where spring comes with suddenness and heartrending beauty. The hillsides green up and the desert blooms: wooly daisies, bitterroot, death camas, larkspur, Indian paintbrush, phlox. The palate is brilliant and the display ephemeral. It always makes me breathless and a little sad, because I know it will be over almost as soon as it begins.

This issue of the *Frontline* is dedicated to water—lifeblood, nurturer, destroyer—and the challenges we face moving forward into the 21st century. These challenges are multiple. In the Powder River Basin, aquifers are being drained to release coalbed methane. The produced water is of varying degrees of purity and is either manna from heaven or a curse for dryland

ranchers. For the first time, Wyoming's Department of Environmental Quality is faced with too much water, raising a question about the impacts of overabundance on a land that has evolved in a state of scarcity. Mountain streams and lakes are being acidified by air pollution threatening the state's prized trout fisheries. And drought is creating a battle over instream flow between irrigators and wildlife biologists, upstream users and our thirsty neighbors to the south. The very definition of what waters are protected under the Clean Water Act is being redefined and could have lasting effects on the way Wyoming's precious wetlands are managed. And finally, as global warming shrinks our glaciers and advances the timing of our seasonal snowmelt, Wyoming faces fundamental changes in where and when it gets its water. All of us want and need clean, abundant water. Read more about what we're doing to ensure we do. ▶

*If there is magic on this planet,  
it is contained in water.*

Loren Eiseley, *The Immense Journey*, 1957



Wyoming's Water  
Pages 1-7



Around Wyoming  
Page 8



People  
Page 12

# Where Does All the Water Go?

## *Instream flow in Wyoming*

By Cale Case

The Middle Fork of the Popo Agie flows just a block away from the home where I have lived my whole life. As a boy the Middle Fork was for me what the Mississippi was to Tom Sawyer. A day did not pass when I wasn't fishing, skating or swimming. My 11-year old son, George, cannot have this relationship with the river. While there are vigorous flows just three miles upstream, in town the almost-dry stream is contaminated and unsafe. George and all our young people deserve healthy and vigorous Wyoming streams.

### Water Use in Wyoming

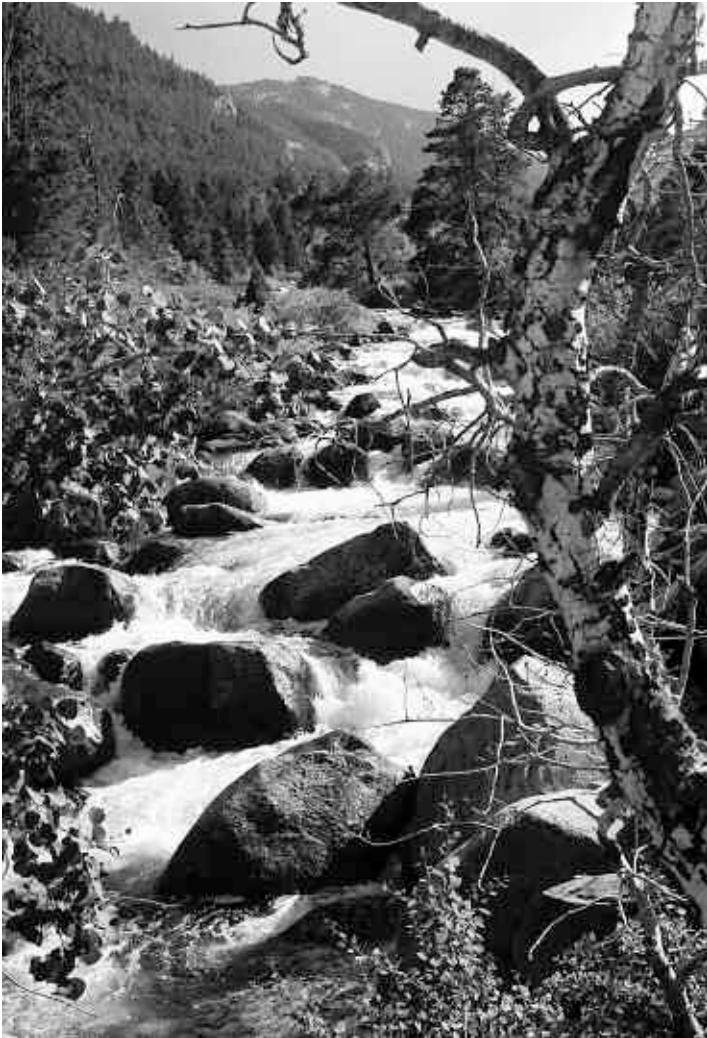
Wyoming water is governed by the prior appropriation principle. This "first in use, first in right" doctrine means that earlier water rights are superior to later ones. Early rights were largely limited to agriculture or municipal water supplies. In 1986, after a successful citizen's initiative headed by the Wyoming Outdoor Council and other conservation groups, the Wyoming State Legislature was forced to pass an instream flow law. But the law has been a dud. Today we are still faced with streams that are too contaminated for our children to play in, too warm to support the trout we brag about, and too low to float a boat.

Why? Because the law is overcomplicated, anti-property and narrowly administered. Despite the vast importance of water resources to our economy and way of life, just 1 percent of 21,000 stream miles with fisheries have been protected since the law was enacted. Almost all of these are headwaters areas above diversions. Downstream stretches lack protection.

The law permits instream flows only for the minimum amount "to establish or maintain new or existing fisheries." Aesthetics, health and safety, water quality, economic and recreational benefits are ignored. As implemented, flows for the benefit of fisheries are just enough to keep them alive—not enough to provide for habitat and the flushing flows that mimic natural systems.

Existing water rights, with their historic priority, can only be converted to instream flows if they are permanently surrendered to the state—something nobody has ever done. Thus, all instream flows have been new appropriations with current priority dates. This means that any person with a need and an earlier priority can use the water, and, therefore, we really are not protecting anything at all. No ability exists to address instream flows on a temporary basis during drought years. And if an owner of senior rights decides to leave his flows in the river, they cannot be protected from upstream water rights holders or from those past the next diversion downstream.

It is a "use it or lose it" world. Only the Game and Fish Department can recommend stream segments to be protected for fisheries, but even then the process is long and complicated, and to date has protected very little.



Alex Peltz

By the end of summer, the Middle Fork of the Popo Agie is a mere trickle when it reaches Lander.

# Watching for Water



Dave Glenn

## Cities Grapple With Water Flow Issues

Our water law doesn't permit communities to solve their instream problems locally either. For example, the State Engineer's Office has been unsuccessful in finding a legal way to allow the City of Pinedale to release its own water from Fremont Lake to improve flows through town. There are lots of Wyoming towns like Pinedale that would appreciate more flow for aesthetic, public health and other reasons. While in my hometown of Lander, the city is applying to withdraw still more water from the Middle Fork of the Popo Agie by acquiring unutilized water rights. This will make our terrible water situation even worse.

To solve these conflicting desires for Wyoming's precious streams we need dialogue among cities, water rights holders and citizens. A cooperative means to encourage water conservation, and more efficient delivery could be just the ticket to make everyone better off.

## The Solution?

Instream flow opponents argue that flows should only come from new reservoir capacity and that transfers from existing users or recoveries from water conservation strategies should not be permitted. They believe that junior agricultural water-rights holders are entitled to water even if senior users would prefer to support instream flows. And the opponents of instream flow argue that irrigation return flows augment streams in late summer—a proposition that occurs only under certain circumstances.

Conservation groups and property owners have been attempting to advance a new Wyoming instream flow law for several years and we are making progress. A major obstacle continues to be the Joint Agriculture Committee. To date, no major bill has made it out of committee and a promised interim study turned out to be a farce. A minor bill to deal specifically with the Pinedale situation passed the committee, but got hung up elsewhere in the legislature.

We will keep trying, but it is becoming more apparent that the legislature will not be up to the task of a more liberal instream flow law unless extraordinary pressure for reform develops. It is time for a citizens' initiative to make instream flows a reality. Our fish and our rivers depend on it, so do our children. 🐟

*Cale Case represents Lander, Hudson and the Wind River Indian Reservation in the Wyoming State Senate where he has sponsored instream flow bills for four of his 14 years in office. The Wyoming Outdoor Council supports these efforts and will continue to work with Senator Case to revise Wyoming's antiquated water laws.*

“ I had a friend who was caught up by rivers. Each year, he'd pick a different river to float down and he would pull together a cadre of his very best friends to join him. They bought raft-loads of beer and beef steak. They planned their campsites and they arrived from all over the country, some driving far, some flying in. My friend drew people like that, for he was a good, gentle man with the kind of chuckle that made you smile just hearing it. It was the kind of laugh that made you think of a river.

The group laughed their way downstream, over rapids thick with foam from a retreating spring, through canyons filled with the voice of the wren, past tamarisk and willow, always with the river.

This past spring, my friend's good heart gave out and he was gone. He left a smile and a simple request—let the river wash me away.

I think this would have been his prayer: May there always be rivers and fishermen and may these rivers have personalities as different as the people who enjoy them. ”

Tom Reed  
Trout Unlimited



# When Is Water Considered Water?

*The Supreme Court Considers What Constitutes “Waters of the United States”*

By Cory Toye

A glance at a topographic map of the arid lands in the western United States reveals an interesting phenomenon: the drainages are often filled by intermittent or ephemeral streams represented on the map by dotted blue lines. For people in Wyoming, that doesn't mean the drainage isn't an important waterway—it just means the water dries up by the end of the summer or that it only runs during a rainstorm. That's normal for us. But we still recognize these drainages are integral to our landscape. They sculpt our lands, create important wildlife habitat, and provide valuable forage for livestock.

For years, ephemeral streams have been considered “waters of the United States” and, therefore, subject to the Clean Water Act. A recent Supreme Court opinion has thrown this definition into question, however. For Wyoming, the implications of this decision, while still unclear, could be far reaching.

## The Supreme Court Decision

On June 19, 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Rapanos v. United States* and *Carabell v. United States*. The cases dealt with the jurisdiction of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers concerning claims under the Clean Water Act. The main issue was what waters in the country are waters of the United States and, therefore, under Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps jurisdiction.

In the Clean Water Act, the term “navigable waters” means the waters of the United States, including the territorial seas. The Army Corps regulations construe the term “waters of the United States” to include not only waters susceptible to use in interstate commerce—the traditional understanding of the term—but also tributaries of those waters and the wetlands adjacent to them or their tributaries. Using this definition, both perennial—or year-round streams—and ephemeral tributaries fall under Army Corps jurisdiction.

The plurality opinion issued by Justice Scalia in the *Rapanos* and *Carabell* cases created a new rule that changes this definition and replaces 30 years of Army Corps policies and practices. Scalia used Webster's dictionary from 1954 to help define whether the Clean Water Act covers wetlands and ephemeral streams. The new definition he came up with requires: 1) the adjacent channel contains a water of the United States (i.e., relatively permanent body of water connected to traditional interstate navigable waters); and 2) the wetland has a continuous surface connection with that water.

## What this means for Wyoming

There is no doubt that ephemeral streams play an important role in the water quality of Wyoming. If this rule is implemented, such streams could be open to less stringent requirements for water quality because they are not permanent nor are they connected directly to permanent bodies of water. This includes spring runoff from the

“In the West, because of the doctrine of prior appropriation and the “use it or lose it” concept, we waste our water. Water is precious. Water is life. Without water, none of us would survive. Water law has to change. Prior appropriation has outlived its usefulness. It encourages people to waste.”

Dick Baldes

Retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist

mountains and dry creek beds in the desert. And it includes coalbed methane-produced waters that producers often discharge into existing ephemeral streambeds. Coalbed methane-produced water can contain pollutants that could harm water quality in the state. These streams are tributaries to larger bodies of water in the state and nation, which means the pollution can migrate downstream causing consequences far from the source.

A more reasonable approach to determining waters of the United States was offered by the opinion of Justice Kennedy. Kennedy requires a link—what he called “a reasonable inference of ecological interconnection”—between a body of water and a navigable body of water. This rule makes more sense for western states such as Wyoming because an interconnection between ephemeral tributaries and larger bodies of water can usually be easily shown. However, this rule still poses a problem for wetlands such as the Great Divide Basin, where water does not leave the basin and there is no link between the basin and waters of the United States.

Congress needs to create legislation that would provide accurate guidance for the water quality regulations in the country by providing a more specific definition of waters of the United States. The Clean Water Act allows for broad interpretation with the intention of protecting as much water in the country as possible. Different administrations and courts have fluctuated on the definition of waters of the United States with political interests in mind. A new rule would afford the ephemeral streams and distinct waterways of Wyoming adequate regulations to protect water quality for Wyoming. Further, a new definition would take the interpretation of the Clean Water Act from the courts and allow the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers to ensure the water quality of the country. 🐾

*Third-year University of Wyoming law student Cory Toye worked as a legal intern for the Wyoming Outdoor Council this summer.*

## More Snow This Winter May Not Be Enough

**W** Wyoming's drought situation is becoming more severe, as most of the state has seen scorching summer temperatures and little rain this year. A lot of snow this winter would help repair the land next year, but one expert says there's another factor contributing to the problem: the timing of the snowmelt.

Dr. Kevin Trenberth is the head of climate analysis at the National Center for Atmospheric Research. He says the snowpack has been melting two weeks earlier than usual, which means the water arrives too early.

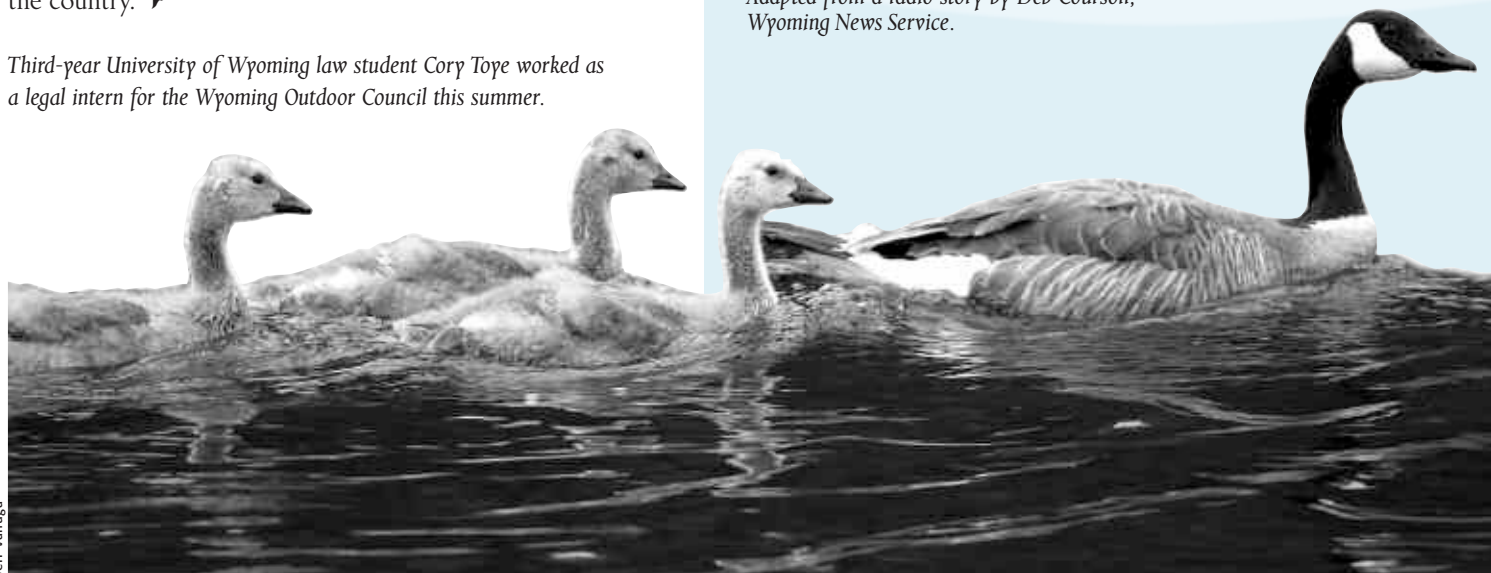
“The snowpack is less as the summer comes around, and that has important consequences for soil moisture and also drought,” Trenberth says.

Snow levels vary from year to year according to Trenberth's findings, but the timing of the melt has become consistently earlier than usual throughout the West. He marks it up to global warming and says that it can have significant effects on native plants and the animals that rely on them.

“Water is not available in the especially late spring and the peak summer when many plants need it,” Trenberth says. Lack of late season water also affects irrigators, he adds.

Not only is snowmelt occurring earlier, glaciers in the state's mountain ranges are retreating at a rapid rate. These glaciers are an important source of late season water particularly in the Wind River/ Big Horn watershed. Is there a solution to this dilemma? Some experts are saying that we may need more dams and water storage projects to get us through dry spells in the future. Others are wary of the consequences of reservoirs on wildlife, fisheries, native plants and the landscape. Regardless of which viewpoint one subscribes to, water promises to become a hot issue as the world warms and snow melts. 🐾

*Adapted from a radio story by Deb Courson, Wyoming News Service.*



# Can You Have Too Much Water?

*The Challenge of Abundance in a Land of Scarcity: Regulating Coalbed Methane Water*

By Steve Jones

In April of 2006, a controversy that has been brewing for a long time finally came to a head when Patrick J. Crank, Wyoming Attorney General, wrote an opinion (Attorney General Opinion, No. 2006-01) on the question of whether the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) can regulate water quantity. Crank concluded: "The Environmental Quality Act allows regulation of the quantity of water if the quantity has an unacceptable effect on the quality of the water."

The attorney general's opinion should be welcome news to ranchers and farmers in the Powder River Basin, who have been dealing with too much of the wrong kind of water. Simply put, pollution can be caused by too much water, regardless of its quality. Erosion, siltation, sedimentation and flooding can all have negative environmental consequences, most of them on water quality. Other things such as temperature can also be changed by the amount of water added to a stream, especially an intermittent stream.

Since the coalbed methane play began in the mid 1990s, operators have been allowed to discharge massive quantities of water into drainages of the Powder River Basin changing the character of the landscape. While DEQ permits these discharges of pollution, it has said that it can't do anything about the tremendous volume of water because they can't regulate the volume, per se.

But the fact is, DEQ has always regulated the quantity of water pollution. First, as part of any discharge permit, there is a specified "total flow limit." This is a limitation on the volume of pollution. Secondly, DEQ can regulate the concentrations of pollutants being discharged. Such a calculation cannot be done without estimating the quantity

of the discharge and the volume of the receiving stream or lake.

DEQ has always been reluctant to tell a discharger of pollution, "You have too much water" or "You can't discharge that much water down this stream channel." The agency's approach has been to allow the polluter to decide on the volume of water to be discharged, and then DEQ will simply determine how clean their discharge has to be in order to get a discharge permit for the pollution. The system has worked well for oil and gas discharges, for instance, because such facilities don't have huge quantities of water to discharge. But with coalbed methane, it is a different story.

Coalbed methane drillers need to dewater aquifers lying within a coal seam in order to withdraw the gas. The question then becomes, what do they do with the water once it is withdrawn from the coal seam? The cheapest solution is to discharge the CBM water without treating it. But the problem with this solution is it has unacceptable environmental consequences such as erosion, siltation and sedimentation. There are other problems too, such as the fact that the water is usually not fit for irrigation and can cause the native grasses in stream bottomlands to be replaced by more salt-tolerant grasses (which are less palatable and nutritious for cattle and wildlife).

The attorney general's opinion on regulating water quantity was rather equivocal, but it does open the door for the DEQ to take a more aggressive stance on the paradoxical challenge of managing too much water in a land used to too little. The Wyoming Outdoor Council continues to push the DEQ to accept this role and take the lead on finding workable solutions to the water disposal issue. ▶



Jeff Vanuga

“The first fish [my three-year-old son] caught he just looked up and squealed and jumped... and immediately I thought, the value of a fishing day is \$57 or was at that time, what a joke. It's not just money. There's value in flowing water and for my son to catch that little brook trout...and I wouldn't give up that memory for anything.”

**Tom Annear,**

Wyo. Game and Fish, instream flow supervisor,  
FocusWest Interview



## Ranching in Coalbed Methane Country

By Andy Blair

On Saturday, September 2, the Wyoming Outdoor Council organized a tour of the Barlow Ranch in the Powder River Basin. The ranch's owner, Bernie Barlow, led a discussion on the challenges she has faced with respect to coalbed methane (CBM) development, and local rancher Steve Adami took us on a driving tour of the extensive development on and around his place. Our goal was to have an open discussion about ranching in the midst of the current coalbed methane boom.

After driving around the back roads in the Powder River Basin for a while, one of the first things you notice when you come onto the Barlow place is a rela-

The concerns that landowners have with CBM development revolve around the significant amount of surface disturbance and the abundance of produced water associated with putting in a well. Much of the water that comes from CBM wells is saline. Many of the clay soils in the Powder River Basin are also saline. Even where the CBM water is acceptable for irrigation and consumption by livestock, if you run it down an intermittent drainage that rarely sees surface water, you will draw the salts out of the soil onto the surface and ruin what was once good grazing land. This is only one example of the complexities involved with CBM development in the Powder River Basin.

Aaron Clark, coordinator of the Governor's CBM



Ranch tour participants stand beside a well discharging CBM produced water.

tive absence of roads, transmission lines, well pads, and containment ponds. The prairie rolls out in all directions interrupted only by a few buildings and some old pump jacks left over from a previous boom. Bernie has been working with coalbed methane developers for several years over the issue of developing the resources that lie beneath her ground. Like many in the Powder River Basin, she owns the surface but the subsurface is administered by the Bureau of Land Management and leased to individual developers. This arrangement has resulted in many surface owners in the Powder River Basin feeling that their interests are not being adequately protected by industry or land managers. Up to this point, the Barlow Ranch has not seen significant development of the CBM resources that lie beneath the ground, but they have been on the receiving end of produced water discharged from an upstream, in-channel containment pond.

Task Force, joined us for the tour and was able to offer some perspective on the state's efforts to grapple with these complexities. Created during the 2006 legislative session, the CBM task force is charged with evaluating impacts and possible uses of water produced by coalbed methane operations. Mr. Clark pointed out that the issues surrounding coalbed methane development are multi-faceted and that each landowner has his or her own opinion on how development should be handled. He also said that the issue of how to manage produced water is one of the major themes being addressed by the Governor's CBM task force.

Like most issues regarding resource management, there is no simple solution. The Wyoming Outdoor Council will continue to monitor the progress of the CBM task force and advocate for agreements that address the concerns of the surface owner. ▶



# AROUND WYOMING

## HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRAM WORK

### GREATER YELLOWSTONE

**Year one of forest planning in review.** As reported in the last *Frontline*, the Bridger-Teton and Shoshone National Forests are in the process of updating their forest plans, the overarching documents that establish management goals for the next 10-15 years. The process is estimated to last three years and this summer marked the end of year one. To date, both forests have published draft "desired conditions"—statements that reflect how the Forest Service would like areas of the forest to be managed taking into consideration ecological, social and economic concerns. This fall, the forests' planners will pull out maps and begin to apply the desired conditions to places on the ground. In other words, some areas may be identified as primitive backcountry areas suitable for non-motorized recreation, while other areas may be targeted for oil and gas development. The Wyoming Outdoor Council is actively working to

ensure that both plans emphasize the outstanding backcountry and roadless character of these forests—qualities that support native wildlife populations and sustain healthy watersheds. In the next year, these world-class forests will need vocal supporters. *Contact: Lisa McGee*

**New voices in the Wyoming Range campaign.** This summer, local residents along the eastern side of the Wyoming Range decided that they had had enough. In July, at a barbecue near Daniel, the group Citizens Protecting the Wyoming Range was formed. Led by outfitter Gary Amerine, whose business relies on hunting in the range, the group includes more than 250 citizens, outfitters, sportsmen, sports-women, and others. Many of its members have not traditionally been comfortable aligning themselves with environmental groups, but the pressure to lease lands in popular hunting and recreational areas is creating unusual bedfellows. Citizens

Protecting the Wyoming Range formally protested the sale of leases in the Wyoming Range in August and advanced many of the arguments we spelled out in our lease protests. The creation of this group reflects a larger movement in the West as hunters and anglers are increasingly finding their favorite areas threatened by energy development. *Contact: Lisa McGee*



A recently published study in the scientific journal *Frontiers in Ecology* confirmed the Wyoming Outdoor Council's position that managing elk like livestock—that is, feeding them in concentrated groups throughout the winter—only exacerbates the prevalence of disease in the herds.

**Feeding elk or feeding disease?** The Wyoming Outdoor Council and two other conservation groups recently filed a brief on our lawsuit challenging federal agency approval of permits for the state-sponsored elk-feeding program in western Wyoming. The lawsuit by Wyoming Outdoor Council, Greater Yellowstone Coalition and Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance asked the Wyoming District Court to order the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to study alternatives—including phasing out feeding—for reducing the spread of disease at 15 elk feedgrounds located on federal land in western Wyoming.

The lawsuit also challenges the Forest Service's authorization of the feedgrounds being used for a test-and-slaughter program, which includes a complex of pens and chutes that has been dubbed the "mother of all elk traps" by state officials. The lawsuit seeks to halt the test-and-slaughter program pending the completion



Citizens Protecting the Wyoming Range members, Gary Amerine (L) and Justin Childs (R) take Governor Freudenthal's policy analyst, Temple Stevenson, for a ride into the Wyoming Range.

Steff Kessler, Greater Yellowstone Coalition

USFWS



of an adequate environmental review. We expect the case to be heard on October 19, 2006.

Contact: Meredith Taylor

### **Clearing the haze over Jonah.**

On June 28, the Interior Board of Land Appeals denied our request for a “stay” on BLM’s approval of the Jonah Infill natural gas project, which allows for 3,100 additional new wells. While disappointing, the decision was not unexpected. On August 7, 2006, we submitted a request for reconsideration of the denial. Our request was based on two new lines of evidence that had not been available previously, one of which is a letter from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) debunking industry’s claim that ozone exceedances in the Jonah Field were due to weather conditions. Such conditions were very unlikely, according to the EPA’s findings. The other new information regards the techniques used by the BLM for predicting ozone pollution, which have been recently shown to be out of date. We hope this new evidence will cause the IBLA to reconsider its initial decision sometime early this fall. Contact: Bruce Pendery

## **RED DESERT**

**BLM issues long-awaited Jack Morrow Hills decision.** After nearly two years and despite extensive public involvement—over 80,000 people submitted comments supporting protection of the Jack Morrow Hills—the BLM released a Record of Decision in July that made few changes to its prior plan. Although some improvements from the Final EIS were made—namely the BLM qualified some language suggesting it might be more protective of sensitive resources and important habitats—the basic development scenario of 255 wells in the area remains the same. This is troubling because 255 wells is an estimate, not a cap.



Andy Blair

Wyoming Outdoor Council staff explores the Red Desert’s Honeycomb Buttes on a recent outing.

Friends of the Red Desert, the Wyoming Outdoor Council and other groups have advocated for a balanced approach to managing this area, which could be realized through designating parts of the desert a National Conservation Area. This approach requires Congressional action and would ensure all current uses remain, but new oil and gas development would be prohibited. Some places in Wyoming deserve protection and the Jack Morrow Hills area of the Red Desert is one of them.

Senator Thomas is cautiously waiting to see how the public responds to the plan, but is keeping the option of National Conservation Area designation open for discussion. Please write to him in support of long-term protection for parts of the Red Desert. You can contact Senator Thomas through a link on his web page: <http://thomas.senate.gov/>.

Contact: Lisa McGee or Bruce Pendery

## **STATEWIDE**

**Hiking, biking and sitting around talking.** This summer, the Wyoming Outdoor Council offered a number of outings to draw attention to some of the special areas we are working to protect. Highlights of the season included touring a wind farm near Rawlins, mountain biking and hiking in the Wyoming Range, exploring the Jack Morrow Hills, and visiting the Bernadette and Eric Barlow Ranch in the middle of coalbed methane country. We have also sponsored speakers, participated in community events, hosted forums, and given slide presentations to reach new audiences and include more people in our efforts to protect Wyoming’s amazing outdoor heritage. If you have ideas for a field trip or are interested in hosting an event, give us a call. Contact: Andy Blair

**Legislators approve electric utility bill.** In late August, the Joint Minerals Interim Committee unanimously approved a bill that would require electric utilities with more

than 50,000 Wyoming residential customers to develop an “integrated resource plan” for new power plants or transmission lines. The plan would describe a utility’s future need for electricity and the manner in which electricity would be generated and distributed. The bill also establishes Electricity Cost Recovery, a process that allows a utility to recover its investment in a timely fashion. (Electricity Cost Recovery refers to the actual cost of electricity that a utility pays to supply electricity to their customers. That cost would be paid by customers on a dollar-for-dollar basis.) The Wyoming Outdoor Council is concerned about the bill because it does not contain any environmental standards or sustainability principles that the Wyoming Public Service Commission should apply in reviewing the integrated resource plans. The full legislature will debate the bill in January 2007. Contact: Michele Barlow

# Ancient Corridors — Following the Prehistoric Path of the Pronghorn

Now Out in DVD

By Molly Absolon

The Wyoming Outdoor Council is pleased to announce the release of *Ancient Corridors—Following the Prehistoric Path of the Pronghorn* on DVD. These DVDs are free and available to the public. They will also be given to schools and libraries across the state for educational purposes.

The program follows pronghorn through western Wyoming along the path they have used for thousands of years from wintering grounds in the Red Desert to lush summer range at the foot of the Tetons. Today, the route represents one of North America's last and longest remaining big game migrations.



Jeff Vanuga

Archaeological evidence shows that pronghorn have followed the same ancient migration path through Greater Yellowstone for at least 6,000 years.

Conservationists, landowners, ranchers, and wildlife experts are working to preserve this migration by designating the route — which largely follows public land and is only about a mile wide — a National Migration Corridor.

“Since the dawn of humankind, ancient cultures around the world depended on hunting wildlife for their survival. In western Wyoming, early people relied almost entirely on big game species like the pronghorn whose ancient migration pattern we follow in this program,” says Meredith Taylor, the wildlife coordinator for the Wyoming Outdoor Council and creator of the Ancient Corridors program.

“This story is about people, animals, survival, adversity, culture and history. It brings together all the elements of great drama,” she adds.

Archaeological evidence shows that pronghorn and their human predators have traveled this ancient corri-

dor through Greater Yellowstone for at least 6,000 years. Despite this conservation success story, the migration path is in jeopardy. Today the pronghorn must travel past several geographic bottlenecks that are threatened by encroaching urbanization and oil and gas development, as well as by fences and roads. Such pressures could sever the route and mean the end of pronghorn in Grand Teton National Park, thereby disturbing the predator-prey balance long established in the park.

“Today you can still go out in the spring and the fall and watch the pronghorn on their journey. This experience is found in very few places in the world. We are fortunate to have such an incredible opportunity here

in Wyoming,” says Mark Preiss, the executive director of the Wyoming Outdoor Council. “The Ancient Corridors program is designed to educate people about the pronghorn migration and to motivate them to help make sure it remains intact for our kids and their kids to enjoy.”

The Ancient Corridors program was first presented at a symposium in 2002. It then became part of the Wyoming Speaker's Bureau. The Wyoming Council for the Humanities provided financial support for the program and for the

production of the DVD. Wyoming Council for the Humanities scholars Richard Adams, Mark Miller and Ann Noble supplied many historic and prehistoric details, which were integral to the program's success.

“Ancient Corridors was one of the more popular programs in the Wyoming Speaker's Bureau,” says Marcia Wolter Britton, the executive director for the Wyoming Council of the Humanities. “The program tells a uniquely Wyoming story. We're excited to see it in a DVD format making it easily accessible to a wider audience across the state.”

The Wyoming Outdoor Council is distributing free copies of the DVD to libraries and school districts in Wyoming. To obtain a copy of the DVD, contact Bonnie at 307-332-7031 ext. 17. For more information on the Ancient Corridors program by the Wyoming Outdoor Council, please go to the web site: [www.wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](http://www.wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org) ▶

# On the Ground in the Wyoming Range

## Getting to Know the Lands We Work to Protect

By Lisa McGee

On a clear morning last August, I drove west from Merna as my husband, Matthew, navigated from the passenger seat. The object of our trip was to get a personal sense of this landscape—the Wyoming Range—that has been a focus of my work for the past year. Although we'd both seen the range from a distance, neither of us had spent any time here. This trip would remedy that.

Matthew and I drove in and around some of the lease parcels, which were predominantly lodgepole pine forest with some open areas of sage and willow. There was little traffic along the road—a few trucks towing horse trailers—but otherwise it was pretty quiet. We stopped to have lunch along Horse Creek and to let our dog out of the car to play in the water. We talked about what a very different experience we would be having if this peaceful area was opened to large-scale energy development.

Later that afternoon we found the road along Dry Beaver Creek and followed it until it became trail. Our plan was to hike up Lookout Mountain, a spot from which we'd be able to see many of the areas in the Wyoming Range that have been offered for lease sale in an oil and

gas lease auction. There were still patches of snow on the mountain, which was grassy to its summit and flanked in places with deep purple lupine and yellow asters. We had clear views of the parcels and of the Wind River Range in the distance. We camped that night on the east side of the mountain and had the area all to ourselves.

The mountains and forests are part of the reason I choose to live in Wyoming; these places are also the inspiration for the work I do. When hiking or backpacking, I'm often struck by such beauty that I am literally stopped in my tracks. I frequently find myself exclaiming, "Wow" unable to find another appropriate descriptor. Our experience in the Wyoming Range had many such "wow" moments—from the views to the wildflowers. I was pensive, however, knowing that energy development threatens to change this place dramatically.

Over the past ten months and in four separate auctions, 44,600 acres have been offered for oil and gas lease sale in the Wyoming Range. Throughout this time, the Wyoming Outdoor Council has been part of a working group comprised of local residents, AFL-CIO members, hunters, anglers, outfitters, motorized and non-motorized recreational users and other conservation groups whose goal is to ensure these leases are

never developed—and that the Wyoming Range is permanently protected from oil and gas development.

### Recent Success

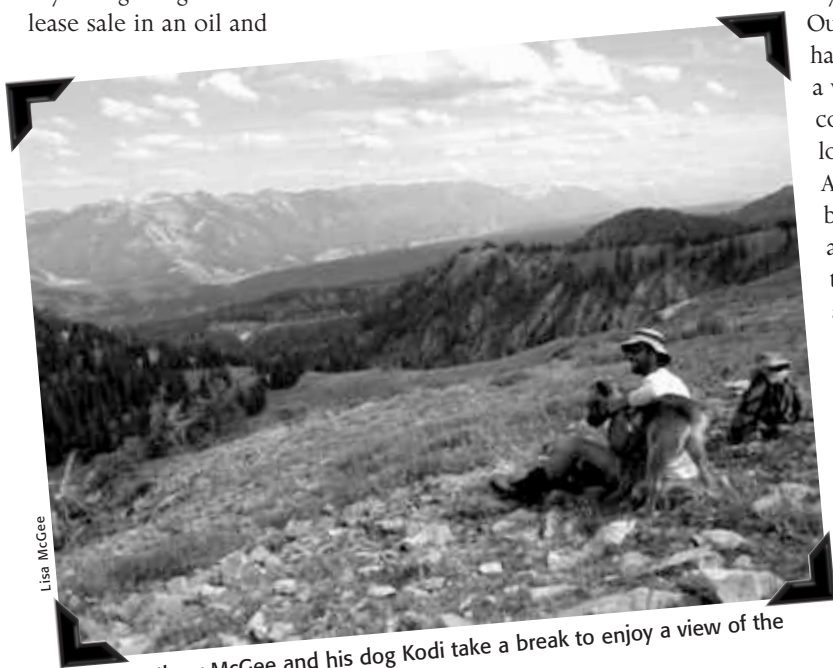
Our role in this effort has been largely a legal one and this past summer and fall we had some preliminary, but exciting successes. As part of our appeals of the first two oil and gas lease sales, we requested the Interior Board of Land Appeals grant stays, which effectively halts any on-the-ground activities until the board decides the merits of the appeals. The board determined that we were likely to be successful based on the issues we raised and granted both stay requests. We are hopeful these decisions will set precedents for the remaining parcels. A stay affords temporary but important protection and allows the agencies an opportunity to change their decision to develop this widely popular place in the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

The Wyoming Range is a place that is becoming increasingly rare—a place of easy access and quiet beauty. It is also a place with many attributes that have won the support of a diverse group of advocates. The Wyoming Outdoor Council is hopeful that with the continued hard work of the many people who care about this place, the Wyoming Range will remain the special place it is today. ▶



Lisa McGee and Kodi in the Wyoming Range.

Matthew McGee



Matthew McGee and his dog Kodi take a break to enjoy a view of the Wyoming Range.



## Welcome New Board Member Keith Rittle

By Molly Absolon



Keith Rittle

Keith Rittle's first impression of the West was awe. He was ten years old and his family had traveled by

train from their home in Pennsylvania to Gardner, Mont.. From there they headed south through Yellowstone to Grand Teton National Park.

"My main memories are of day hikes in the Tetons, the mudpots in Yellowstone, Mammoth Hot Springs," Keith recalls. "I thought it was all pretty out of this world."

Those memories stuck and fed his love for the outdoors. He got into scouting and went on to become an Eagle Scout, something he says has made a lasting impression on his life.

"I know it sounds kind of cheesy, but scouting was an invaluable experience for me," Keith says. "I learned at an early age how to make a fire, how to read a compass and a topographic map—all sorts of skills that allow me to enjoy the outdoors today."

This same passion is what brought him west again and ultimately shaped his career. In 1991 he moved to Laramie to get his masters degree in geology from the University of Wyoming. There he met his wife, Kathleen and found a home. Keith, Kathleen and their three-year-old son Ted still live in Laramie where they enjoy hiking, biking and cross-country skiing in the National Forest lands around town.

Keith comes to the Wyoming Outdoor Council board with the hope that he can help bridge the gap between industry and conservation. He works for Trihydro, a Laramie-based engineering consulting firm that works with a number of industries, including oil and gas.

"My goal is to increase the communication—to explore ways to find solutions that both industry and conservationists can live with," Keith says.

The Wyoming Outdoor Council welcomes Keith's insights and looks forward to his participation on the board.

## Changes at the Wyoming Outdoor Council

As we go to press with this issue of *Frontline* and our 2005 Annual Report, we are sorry to report that our executive director, Mark Preiss, is resigning from his post. Laurie Milford, our current development director and a former member of the board of directors, has accepted the position of acting executive director. The board of directors will begin the hiring process for a new executive director in the coming weeks. If you know of a strong candidate for the position, please contact our board president, Scott Kane, at (307) 332-3410 or scott@CESolar.com.

Mark served as our executive director from August 2004 until October of 2006. Under Mark's focused leadership, the Wyoming Outdoor Council developed a new strategic plan, initiated an organization-wide branding process, successfully reached out to new and important partner organizations, implemented a renewable energy program, and scored several major legal advances including two IBLA rulings on oil and gas leases in the Wyoming Range. Our deepest thanks go to Mark for his dedicated service working to protect Wyoming's environment and quality of life.

## Tom Bell Receives Two Awards for Conservation Work

By Molly Absolon

Tom Bell, our founder, mentor, supplier of tomatoes, and smiling friend, has been honored yet again for his years of tireless service to Wyoming's people, land and wildlife. He was inducted into the Wyoming Outdoor Hall of Fame on September 8 and received a lifetime achievement award from The Wilderness Society on



Wyoming Outdoor Council

September 15.

The Outdoor Hall of Fame recognizes individuals who have made significant, lasting lifetime contributions toward conserving Wyoming's outdoor heritage through volunteer service, environmental restoration, educational

activities, visual and written media, the arts, and political and individual leadership. Those of us who know and revere Tom know he represents all these things and gives himself selflessly to his community, his values and his dreams. We feel honored by his association with our organization and are thrilled by his award.

Tom was specifically recognized for being a "stalwart voice of conservation in the West for over six decades," and for his "groundbreaking work in outdoor education, journalism, legislation and policy." He joins a number of outdoor luminaries including Frank and John Craighead, Curt Gowdy, Olaus and Mardi Murie, Paul Petzoldt, President Theodore Roosevelt, and many others in the Hall of Fame. Inductees are honored on a Wall of Fame at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center/Draper Museum of Natural History in Cody.

The Wilderness Society also honored Tom for his years of service to conservation. He received this award at a celebration in Jackson where author Terry Tempest Williams was also recognized. She received the Robert Marshall Award, which goes to a person who has devoted long-term service to conservation and the fostering of an American land ethic.

## WYOMING OUTDOOR SURVEY RESULTS IN!

Thanks to everyone who responded to our survey this summer. We had a remarkable rate of return (20 percent) and are now in the process of analyzing the information to determine how best to integrate it into our strategy for the future. Look for details in the winter issue of *Frontline*.

Congratulations to Ken Bosworth of Pocatello, Idaho and Roxanne Moore of Dubois, Wyo. winners of our incentive prizes—\$150 gift certificates from Sierra Trading Post and Wild Iris Sports.