

Wyoming Outdoor Council

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FRONTLINE



Working to protect public lands and wildlife since 1967

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Wyoming Outdoor Council
Established in 1967, the Wyoming Outdoor Council is the state's oldest statewide conservation organization. Our mission is to protect Wyoming's environment and quality of life for future generations.

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BY LAURIE MILFORD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



On January 3, 2011, Matt Mead will move into the governor's office in Cheyenne, marking a major transition for Wyoming and the start of a new era.

In the months prior to the 2010 election, many people throughout the political spectrum were looking at Governor Dave Freudenthal's departure with at least a bit of trepidation.

Mr. Mead's resounding victory in November shows that the electorate by and large felt most confident handing him the keys to the car—perhaps because he seemed likely to pick up where Mr. Freudenthal left off. After all, Wyoming was cited by the financial news

and opinion site *24/7 Wall St.* in 2010 as being the best-run state in America.

In a period of strident partisan politics at the national level, Mr. Freudenthal, a Democrat in a largely Republican state, was a forceful but nonpartisan chief executive. He leaves office with approval ratings from Wyoming Democrats, Republicans, and Independents in the 80 percent range.

One of the reasons for his popularity, it seems to me, is that Governor Freudenthal ran the state according to what he and his advisers thought best, not according to what a political party would promote. He seemed always to have his eye on both the Wyoming economy and on the Wyoming quality of life. And he didn't hesitate to make difficult decisions.

When the Great Recession began in 2008 and early 2009, Governor Freudenthal immediately pushed the legislature to cut the state budget by 10 percent across the board. As we emerge from this recession, Wyoming is one of the few states that still has an operating surplus. This is important to note, because while other states are struggling with deficits, Wyoming has the capacity to make careful choices and implement strong environmental protections to strike a balance

between development and conservation.

From the Outdoor Council's perspective, Governor Freudenthal didn't always make the right decisions. At times, the conservation community found itself at odds with his administration. And many of the Council's 1,400 members felt he didn't do enough to protect Wyoming's environment, especially when it came to regulating coalbed methane water in the Powder River Basin.

Yet his door was always open, and he was willing to consider a well-reasoned argument and a well-thought-out compromise. This was perhaps his most admirable trait as a leader.

Most importantly, from my perspective, Governor Freudenthal was willing to be an advocate for special places on public lands; he stood up, repeatedly, and argued that some Wyoming landscapes should be off-limits to development. The most outstanding example of this was his unwavering support for the Wyoming Range Legacy Act, introduced by Senator John Barrasso and signed into law in 2009, which removed 1.2 million acres of the Bridger-Teton National Forest from future oil and gas leasing.

The push for this legislation began in 2005 on the heels of our legal challenge to new oil and gas leasing in the Wyoming Range. The

movement to protect the range originated as a cooperative effort among a diverse coalition of hunters and anglers, labor unions, ranchers, landowners, and conservationists—but Governor Freudenthal's support was crucial to the ultimate success of the legislation. We couldn't have done it without him.

Progress for the environment amid a drilling boom

On Dave Freudenthal's watch, Wyoming experienced an unprecedented oil and gas boom, which generated some tremendous benefits for the state. It created good-paying jobs, boosted Wyoming's economy, and helped improve education funding, among many other things. But the boom also brought some serious, and well-documented environmental costs.

In the face of numerous threats to Wyoming's wildlife, air, water, and way of life, Governor Freudenthal made decisions that we disagreed with. But he was also willing to work with the Outdoor Council to find some balance and in some cases usher in some spectacular progress.

Wyoming has, in fact, taken the lead on high-profile environmental issues in recent years—often in the name of state primacy—

including adopting groundbreaking rules in 2010 that require companies to disclose the chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing.

Another great accomplishment of the Freudenthal administration was the establishment and continued growth of the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust. Appointing Bob Budd to be the executive director has also proven to be a good choice.

Freudenthal was instrumental in helping hunters, landowners, and conservationists (including the Wyoming Outdoor Council) convince the federal Bureau of Land Management in 2008 to protect essential big-game migration corridors in the Pinedale area.

He helped turn a bad proposal into a better 20-year plan for BLM lands in the Pinedale area. Finalized in 2008, the new plan makes more than half of the area's public lands unavailable for oil and gas development, yet allows development and drilling to continue, in a concentrated, phased fashion, around the Jonah and Pinedale Anticline natural gas fields. Addressing the continued decline of mule deer on the anticline will test Governor-elect Matt Mead's dedication to conservation.

In 2010 Wyoming finalized its laudable and eminently practical plan to protect sage-grouse. Governor Freudenthal's executive

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Energy, Policy, and Wyoming

How the elections could affect energy policy

BY RICHARD GARRETT, ENERGY AND LEGISLATIVE ADVOCATE



Wyoming is blessed with incredible wildlife, tremendous landscapes, stalwart agriculture, and robust energy and commodities industries. All of these natural resources and values combine to create a way of life that is unique in the nation if not the world.

Within about fifteen minutes of any Wyoming front door you can find horizon-to-horizon open spaces, world-class wildlife, great swaths of ranch land, and evidence of energy development. Though we sometimes take it for granted, it's truly amazing that all of these things have co-existed (sometimes uneasily) for generations.

But that might be changing. Wyoming, like the nation and the world, is at a crossroads—one that leaders, both in the state and nationally, have clearly marked.

The fact is that forces outside of the state are presenting new challenges to Wyoming's traditional economic balance of energy development, agriculture, and tourism, and it is crucial that we influence them for a better outcome for the state and our rich natural environment.

An authoritative energy outlook study published in July of 2010 by the U.S. Department of Energy forecasts that **the world's coal consumption will increase by 56 percent by 2035**. While the consumption rate for coal in most of the wealthier nations will be relatively flat over the next 25 years, it is predicted to skyrocket in emerging and developing countries. In the United States, even with new forms of energy coming on line, coal consumption will increase by more than 10 percent by 2035, according to the report. Much of the increased consumption will occur (or be enabled) as a result of "increasing use of coal for electric generation at new and existing plants, combined with the startup of several coal-to-liquids plants," the report concludes.

It's no secret that coal extraction thrusts more than \$1 billion annually into the state's economy. And like the greenhouse gases it emits, this resource seeps into every aspect of our lives. It influences decisions and decision makers at the local and state levels. It creates a wealth of opportunities and an embarrassment of environmental risks.

And now, because of the nation's ever-growing energy demands, concerns about global climate change, and national goals for

better energy security—energy development and consumption and the way they interact with Wyoming's environment and our quality of life could profoundly shift.

Governor-elect Matt Mead and President Barack Obama have, in their own ways, signaled to Wyoming that we should anticipate this shift. We at the Wyoming Outdoor Council have taken note and are ready to work even harder to make sure we preserve the state's environment and quality of life. Here is our perspective.

A critical year for Wyoming

We believe that 2011 is a critical year for Wyoming. A year when we can start to take better control of our conservation and energy future. President Barack Obama and Governor-elect Matt Mead have offered direction that those of us who want a better Wyoming should not fail to act on:

Wyoming should be the first door anyone knocks on for energy needs. As governor, I will see that our state has a coordinated policy for energy development, which includes and takes into account available research to keep our state pristine and which includes alternatives to diversify the energy economy.

—Matt Mead, 2010 campaign website

I don't think there's anybody in America who thinks that we've got an energy

policy that works the way it needs to; that thinks that we shouldn't be working on energy independence ... American people are expecting, and what we owe them, is to focus on those issues that affect their jobs, their security, and their future: reducing our deficit, promoting a clean energy economy.

—President Barack Obama, speaking at his post-midterm election news conference, November 3, 2010

Before the election, Governor-elect Matt Mead generally described how important it is that Wyoming have a coordinated energy policy for carbon-based fuel commodities and diversified energy resources like wind. Unfortunately, Mead will find himself up against a legislature that traditionally has resisted any policy for energy beyond drill more, dig more, burn more, and ship it to market.

Elsewhere, California voters elected Jerry Brown governor, which sends Wyoming a message, too. California has long been one of Wyoming's most prized customers for energy, but voters there appear to have endorsed candidate Brown's ideas of developing a California energy policy that would be geared toward generating energy close to where it is consumed as a way to create jobs, reduce California's carbon footprint, and make the state more self-reliant.

While these are laudable objectives for the state of California (and we would encourage thoughtful consideration for these ideas

in Wyoming, too), their implementation will almost certainly present challenges for Wyoming.

If adopted, California's new energy policy might significantly reduce Wyoming's ability to sell energy or energy resources to that state, one of the country's leading energy consumers.

A new policy could, for example, put our nascent wind-energy industry at risk if California decides it wants somehow to favor locally produced, "green" electrons over imported ones. Meanwhile, a new policy could also reject Wyoming's coal-fired, "brown" electrons, and could potentially lessen demand for Wyoming's natural gas resource, which isn't as clean as it might seem and doesn't have adequate distribution channels.

And as other states and nations work to reduce their dependence on carbon-based energy, Wyoming's coal industry and its economy will be in trouble—unless "clean coal" becomes a reality rather than just a slogan.

The good news is that we can listen and respond to what the U.S. Department of Energy study predicts, and what our president, Wyoming's governor-elect, and the California electorate tell us about the future energy requirements of energy importing states.

Wyoming has an opportunity to help businesses match future market demands with a blend of technologies, products, and expertise that will better secure the state's economic future through much of the first

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"The Wyoming Outdoor Council has become a leading source for



good, science-based information about the interaction of energy development and the

environment. As an owner of a renewable energy company, I appreciate that the Outdoor Council understands that the issues are complex, and that renewable energy, done responsibly, will benefit both the environment and the economy. The Council knows that the only way to achieve sustainable solutions in Wyoming will be to work with as many stakeholders as possible, including the energy industry."

—Scott Kane, founder of Creative Energies, Wyoming's largest provider of distributed renewable energy sources

Each year Wyoming Outdoor Council staff and volunteers work for Wyoming's land, water, and wildlife. Our work covers the map, from the Medicine Bows to the Tetons, from Pinedale to the Powder River. Get up-to-the-minute information about our work at wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org.

Please join or renew your membership today.

Wyoming needs you!

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order calling for the protection of sage-grouse core areas is one of the best examples I've seen of a science-based, state-led conservation initiative.

The idea of protecting "core" areas is founded on the simple fact that more than 80 percent of Wyoming's sage-grouse population live in these areas, so if land managers protect the core habitat, they'll protect more than 80 percent of the birds.

Wyoming developed this approach under the looming threat that the federal government could list the Greater sage-grouse as an endangered species. The bird was not listed in 2010, largely due to Wyoming's proactive core area conservation plan.

Governor Freudenthal helped build a broad base of stakeholder support for these protections—mostly in the name of keeping the feds off of Wyoming's back. Whatever the impetus, the outcome is great, from our perspective: sage-grouse should benefit.

The sage-grouse core area plan, however, exists only as an executive order, and thus could be rolled back by a future governor. In a meeting we had with Governor-elect Mead prior to the elections, we were encouraged to hear of his support for the executive order. He also expressed support for the state's disclosure rules for hydraulic fracturing fluids.

How we're navigating the change

Prior to the November elections we hosted in-depth meetings with all of the viable gubernatorial candidates in Wyoming. Our goal was to start laying the groundwork, as a nonpartisan, nonprofit public interest organization, for a productive working relationship with the next governor, whoever won the race.

The Wyoming Outdoor Council extended the same offer to all of the candidates in both major parties: to be a consistent and reliable source for science-based information and distinct legal expertise.

We emphasized that we don't discourage energy development in Wyoming; rather we encourage doing it right, in the right places, at the right pace. I think we are proving each and every day in all of our interactions that we're reasonable people with reasonable concerns and goals, backed by some 1,400 informed citizens.

Now that voters have chosen Matt Mead to be Wyoming's governor, we hope he will

continue the traditions of keeping the door to the governor's office open, standing up for special places, riding herd on the legislature in a nonpartisan fashion, and issuing important vetoes when necessary.

The governor of Wyoming has a great deal of influence in decision-making related to natural resources, so we believe it behooves any significant public interest conservation group to have a working relationship with the governor.

The sage-grouse core area plan, however, exists only as an executive order, and thus could be rolled back by a future governor.

When we met with Mr. Mead at the Outdoor Council's Lander office in May, we were all impressed with his earnest engagement with the issues and his genuine desire to understand our positions and our work.

I believe the Wyoming Outdoor Council and Mr. Mead will be able to find common ground based on our shared desire to ensure the well-being of Wyoming residents, and protect the quality of life we all appreciate. On a personal note, I come from a family of farmers and stockgrowers. I'm confident the agricultural perspective Mr. Mead and I share will lead us to identify many values in common.

Building relationships

In addition to reaching out to the gubernatorial candidates, we also focused a good deal of our energy in 2010 on continuing to foster working relationships with legislators, state and federal agency heads, and other decision makers.

Thanks to the strong and growing support of our membership, the Outdoor Council staff now have the resources to show up, on behalf of all of us, every day, throughout the state.

We make our presence felt not only during the two-month legislative session, but at every pertinent interim legislative committee meeting throughout the year; at important state and federal agency hearings; at open houses; and at all categories of official and unofficial gatherings where arguments and decisions are made. I'm proud of

our ability to work effectively in front of and behind the scenes for Wyoming's environment and quality of life.

We've shown a willingness to meet and engage with people whose interests, on the surface, might appear contrary to our own—working to narrow the gaps and find common ground whenever possible. This has enhanced our credibility and our sway with a growing range of policymakers of all political stripes. And again, and perhaps most importantly, we've shown up every day, everywhere it was important for us to be.

We're willing to try new types of advocacy—including meeting people whose goals might seem counter to ours—because, quite simply, we're all fellow members of the community, and we believe we should always be being willing to talk.

For its part, the energy industry seems to be listening more than ever and is desirous to hear what the conservation community has to say about this wind plant or that transmission line—and industry representatives are more often seeking the advice of our staff biologist, and the input of our legal team.

More and more we find ourselves lending our scientific and legal expertise to people and groups representing a wide variety of interests.

We plan to continue this collaborative approach in 2011, and we look forward to working with the new administration in Cheyenne, which, we hope, plans to pick up where the previous administration left off.

If the future is anything like the past, our relationship with the state will continue to be a tricky one. We'll collaborate and comment. We will work with decision makers to improve state environmental policies. We will continue to press the governor to protect the resources and special places that are important to our members. And—when the implications for Wyoming's environment and way of life demand it—we will take legal action.

After 40-plus years, the Outdoor Council has learned the costs and benefits of all manners of environmental advocacy—from compromising with diverse stakeholders to being steadfast adversaries to certain actions and interests. With this wealth of experience to draw from, our task as I see it is to pursue our mission relentlessly while making wise choices about the approach we take in order to achieve lasting success for Wyoming. 🌄

“The fact is that forces outside of the state are presenting new challenges to Wyoming's traditional economic balance of energy development, agriculture, and tourism.”



“The U.S. Department of Energy forecasts that the world's coal consumption will increase by 56 percent by 2035.”

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half of the 21st century. The state can create this more secure economic future through policy decisions and meaningful investments in energy research and development.

The even better news is that by following Governor-elect Mead's advice—stepping up to the plate and recognizing that a thoughtful and well-implemented energy policy makes good business and environmental sense—Wyoming's policymakers can help (re)create the environment that Mead calls “pristine” in the quote above.

So what might Wyoming's energy policy look like?

First, it must acknowledge that all of Wyoming's natural resources are world class, including our singular landscapes and natural environment, which are essential to the state, the state's economy, and our way of life, and must be protected for future generations.

Second, the state must invest more resources and demand a higher level of commitment from the federal government and industry partners to research and develop both renewable sources of energy and coal technologies that will meet the demands and expectations of future out-of-state markets that will quite rightfully require constraints on the emission of greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

If Wyoming fails to make clean coal more than a slogan, our elected officials and business leaders will ultimately discover that they can't sell the state's coal or the energy it produces in key markets.

With coal pouring more than \$1 billion annually into the state's revenue stream, Wyoming can ill afford to be a less than active and involved participant in the processes, technologies, and decisions that will make it a cleaner and more reliable source of energy.

Third, we must demand that natural gas extraction and delivery be much cleaner than it currently is. In the words of Steve Torbit, the regional executive director of the National Wildlife Federation: “With just a few changes in how gas is extracted, and a higher concern for long-term environmental and conservation interests on the part of the fossil-fuel industry, we can have ‘clean’ natural gas that actually is clean.”

And finally, we must develop and mandate the use, within Wyoming, of conservation, energy efficiency, and appropriately



sited renewable energy as ways to reduce our carbon footprint. These strategies are essential to reducing the effects of climate change.

Wyoming could even become an attractive place for sustainable 21st century businesses to call home. Eric Lantz, a policy analyst at the Colorado-based National Renewable Energy Laboratory, was recently invited by the Wyoming Infrastructure Authority to present an analysis of Wyoming's wind industry. Lantz told the authority that with more than 9,000 megawatts of wind energy projected to be developed in the state in the next several years it would make sense that Wyoming become a leader in the manufacturing of wind turbines, components, and renewable-energy technologies.

All of this will take commitment and stamina not only from the new governor and policymakers but also from the public and the conservation community. **The November 2, 2010, elections have presented Wyoming residents an opportunity to rethink the state's approach to energy and help shape an energy policy that matches the vision that Governor-elect Mead articulated during his campaign:**

Wyoming needs to coordinate and facilitate energy development, to include all energy resources. ... Wyoming must lead and not simply follow the federal government. As governor, I will work to use Wyoming expertise and Wyoming people for such efforts.

The role of the Outdoor Council will be to advocate policies that work for Wyoming's people and environment and to support outcomes that compel Governor-elect Mead to follow through on his promise to keep our state pristine. 🌄



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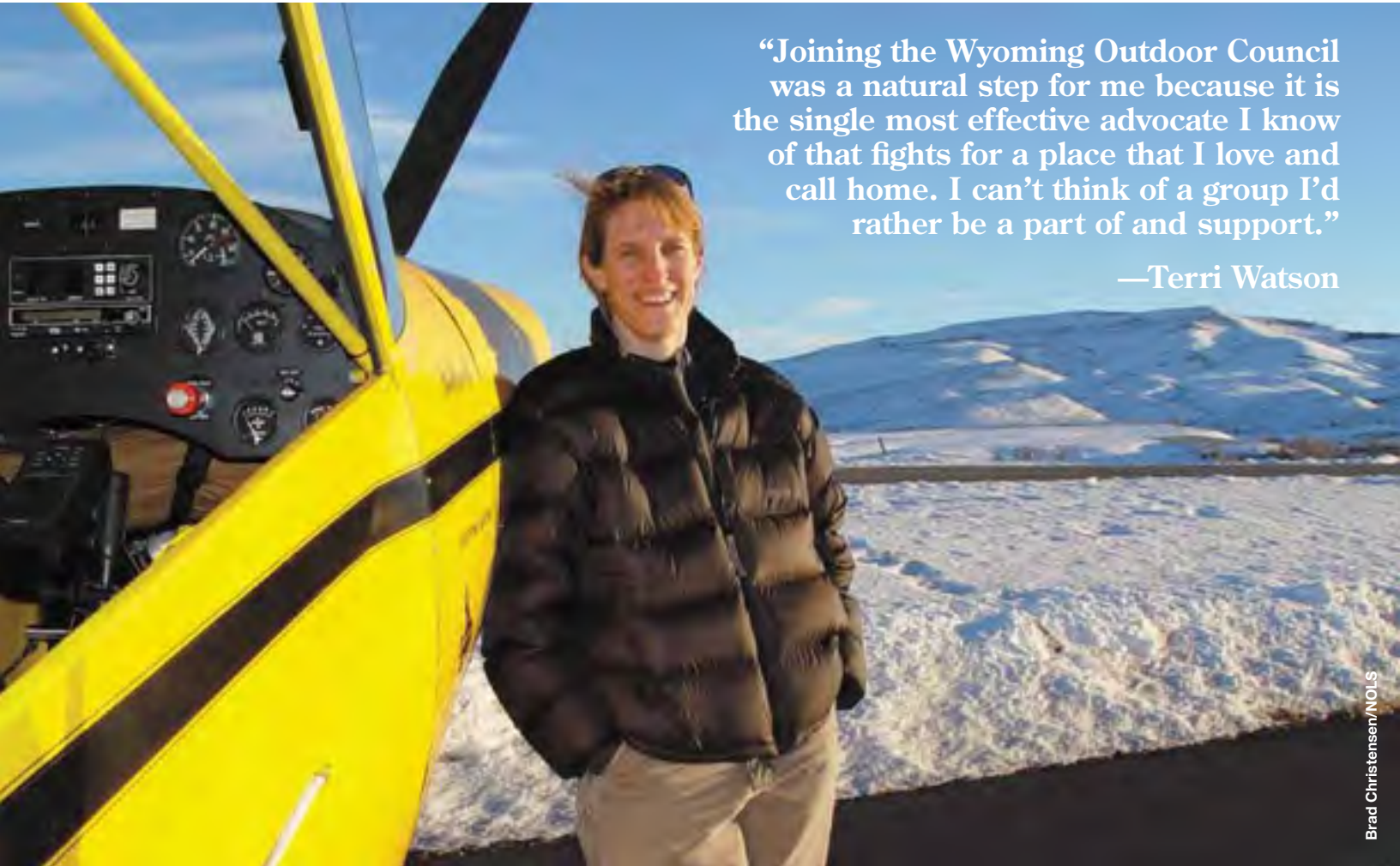
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“Joining the Wyoming Outdoor Council was a natural step for me because it is the single most effective advocate I know of that fights for a place that I love and call home. I can’t think of a group I’d rather be a part of and support.”

—Terri Watson

Brad Christensen/NOLS

Terri Watson grew up with Sheridan roots and began her flying career as a pilot for the U.S. Army. In 1990 she returned to Wyoming from active-duty service and flew for LightHawk, a volunteer-based aviation organization that champions environmental protection through the perspective of flight.

She flew LightHawk flights in conjunction with the Wyoming Outdoor Council to show people the impacts of coalbed methane

development on the landscapes near her grandparents’ home in the Powder River Basin.

“There’s nothing quite so profound as seeing your home changed, especially from the perspective of flight. That birds-eye view drove me to want to do something more lasting to protect it.”

Terri included the Outdoor Council in her will as a way to plan for the future.

“I don’t have a lot of money to give, but I want to take care of the things that are important to me after I’m gone. I’ve lost people my age and younger in my lifetime—so it didn’t seem too early to take action and start planning ahead.”

Please join Terri by renewing your membership each year and, if you choose, by remembering the Wyoming Outdoor Council in your will and becoming part of the Wyoming Legacy Society.

The Council’s influence grows with each and every member. Please join or renew your membership today.