

Wyoming Outdoor Council

Winter 2018

# FRONTLINE



Working to protect Wyoming's environment and quality of life since 1967

## RESOLVE TO ADVOCATE: Your Guide to the 2018 Wyoming State Legislature



**The Outdoor Council  
Launches Citizen Lobbyist  
Internship Program!**

# A Message from the Director



LISA MCGEE  
Executive Director

Throughout my time at the Wyoming Outdoor Council, people have often asked me about the context of our work. I think, especially now, they expect me to lament the state of political discourse or the challenges facing conservation. But what I usually say—and I do so in all honesty—is that I am hopeful.

There's no question we face real threats to the values we cherish—to our public lands, our clean air and water, our wildlife, and our outdoor way of life. That is our reality, and it's not likely to change soon.

But hope is not the same as blind optimism. Hope demands that we acknowledge reality and then take action. It requires that we push back against harmful ideas. Hope depends on our being informed, advancing solutions, and, most importantly, supporting each other in this work. And hope asks that we listen closely to others, engage even when we disagree, and respond thoughtfully and civilly, so that the conversation about our shared future can continue another day.

Thanks to a membership, board of directors, and staff committed to an enduring mission—protecting Wyoming's environment and quality of life for future generations—I'm pleased to say that the Outdoor Council has been cultivating hope for more than 50 years.

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## Wyoming Outdoor Council

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

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This year, in addition to the legislative issues we've highlighted here, we'll also be working on campaigns to protect millions of acres of Wyoming's public lands, defend sensitive wildlife habitat and key migration corridors, and secure a statewide rule requiring energy companies to find and fix harmful gas leaks coming from faulty equipment. We'll also be rallying citizen volunteers to help us on a project to document streams that were improperly classified by the state to allow for higher pollution levels.

**I truly believe that it's only through such an active practice of hope that we will affect lasting change.**

As I step into my new role with the Outdoor Council, I am indeed hopeful. And I invite you to join me in cultivating the practice of hope in your public life. Make sure your membership is up to date. Learn more about the bills under consideration

at the legislature. Contact your legislators. Talk to your neighbors.

I truly believe that it's only through such an active practice of hope that we will affect lasting change—and have the best chance of protecting the Wyoming we all love for another 50 years.

## Helping Tell the Story:

### *The Outdoor Council Hires a New Communications Director*



**T**he Outdoor Council is pleased to welcome longtime Wyoming journalist Dustin Bleizeffer as its new communications director. Dustin is former

editor-in-chief of WyoFile and was the energy reporter at the Casper Star-Tribune. His reporting drew attention to repeated environmental violations at Wyoming refineries and a bureaucracy that failed to protect people from ozone pollution caused by oil and gas development in the Upper Green River Basin. In Germany and China, he reported on energy and climate issues that tie Wyoming to the rest of the world.

“I loved the energy beat because it touches all aspects of life and community in Wyoming,” Dustin said. “Whether it was

a story about conflict or a good news story about stakeholders coming together, I got to see the respect people have for one another, and the deep commitment people have for a better quality of life here.”

Most recently Dustin was a John S. Knight Journalism fellow at Stanford University, where his work inspired a project to build teams of science, technology, and journalism experts who engage with communities in the rural American West as they take on local challenges.

“The experience underscored the great potential in engaging with the public as we look to a future of uncertain environmental challenges and the potential for more sustainable energy systems,” Dustin said.

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# A Guide to Citizen Involvement

*at the 2018 Wyoming State Legislature*

## PREVIEW OF 2018 CONSERVATION & ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

**The Wyoming State Legislature convenes February 12, 2018**, for a fast and furious four-week budget session. We expect to see a number of conservation-related bills this year—even with the 2/3 majority vote required for non-budget bills to be introduced.

We've compiled a list of priority bills to expect in 2018. Please note that at the time of writing we can't predict what might come up during the session, so the best way to stay up to date is to sign up for our alerts or attend one of our events (see page 7). However, the following bills, many of which were drafted and sponsored by committees during the interim, will likely be introduced.



## PUBLIC LANDS & WILDLIFE

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### *Wyoming Public Lands Day*

Working with the diverse Keep it Public, Wyoming coalition, we support this proactive legislation. It designates a special day to recognize and celebrate the value of our public lands for multiple use and access, and as integral to our Wyoming heritage. Several versions of this legislation are under consideration.



### *Public access and state lands exchange evaluations*

We expect to see a similar version of a bill we supported last year to require an evaluation of the impact of proposed land trades on the public's ability to access other public lands. We will support the legislation if it promises to achieve those goals.



### *HB 6 Wildlife location and research information-confidentiality*

This bill defines a very narrow set of wildlife GIS data to be kept confidential due to public safety, fair chase, and research concerns. We worked closely with the committee to ensure that the vast majority of our wildlife data are public except in these very special cases.



### *HB 39 Wildlife conservation license plates*

Through the purchase of specialty plates, this bill will provide funding to enhance highway overpasses, underpasses, signage, and fencing to protect wildlife corridors and reduce wildlife and motorist incidents.



### *HB 20 Game and fish agreements with federal agencies*

This unnecessary bill allows legislators to micromanage wildlife management and potentially write or deny management parameters regarding sensitive species.



# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Several bills addressing the cleanup of polluted sites or bonding to pay for future cleanup have been sponsored by the Joint Minerals Committee at the request of the Department of Environmental Quality.



## **SF 16** *Financial assurance-class I and V underground injection control wells*

Requires bonding of hazardous waste and coalbed methane injection wells so that taxpayer dollars do not fund the closure and remediation of these wells.



## **SF 17** *Cease and transfer priority list*

Continues a successful program to clean up and close leaking municipal landfills.



## **SF 18** *Orphan site remediation funding*

Creates a special funding account to start remediation on identified abandoned polluted sites where there is not a responsible party.



## *Erosion of reclamation and other laws pertaining to small mines*

A bill which greatly reduces the requirements for reclamation, public notice, and comment for small mines—passed in the interim in spite of opposition by the Wyoming Mining Association, the Wyoming Contractors Association, and the Outdoor Council.



## ON THE WATCH LIST

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## **State Takeover of Federal Lands**

Last year Wyoming citizens vehemently opposed efforts to transfer title of federal lands to the state or private interests. We expect to see a new tactic in 2018, with a focus on transferring the management of these lands to the state—which lacks the robust guarantees of multiple use, public participation, and access that federal law ensures.



## **Defunding Game & Fish Department or Department of Environmental Quality**

Serious budget cuts to both agencies in recent years have affected staffing and programs. We'll oppose budget items that harm our state's ability to protect our air, water, and lands; to enforce our pollution laws; or to adequately protect and manage our wildlife.



## **Robbing the Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Fund**

Wyoming's Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust is a wildly successful program that leverages \$6 for every \$1 spent on the ground to enhance and conserve our state's wildlife habitat and natural resources. We'll continue to oppose any efforts to use funds from this account to pay for other services.

# Your Involvement Makes the Difference!

## *Tips for Effective Communication with Legislators*

As a small state, Wyoming allows us to have ready access to elected officials and a direct impact on decision making in Cheyenne. Yet even with the best research, compelling arguments, and good relationships, what wins the day is the people standing behind an organization. **Please participate in this legislative session to support conservation policies in Wyoming!**

### SENDING MESSAGES

Legislators use their laptops constantly to correspond with constituents. Because they review hundreds of bills, the best time to contact them is ahead of votes in committee or on the floor. Keep the following in mind as you craft your message:



- Avoid form emails, which often aren't read. Instead, write your own message and speak from your own experience or values to express your concerns.
- Catch attention by starting with personal details: where you live (especially if it's in a legislator's district) and your connection to them or the issue.
- Respectfully state the specific action you'd like them to take and mention the number and title of the bill. For example: "Please vote no on HB 809 transfer of federal lands."
- Keep it brief! Legislators get hundreds of emails in a day.

### CALLS & VISITS

We sometimes ask members to call legislators during the session. A receptionist will take your message and ensure it is delivered. This gets attention! Call 307.777.7711 for the Senate or 307.777.7852 for the House.



If you have more time, it's helpful to

build relationships with your legislators prior to the session. Have a conversation with them to let them know what's important to you, or grab a group of community members for a meeting. Let us know if you'll be in Cheyenne during the session and we'll help you with your visit.

### OTHER RESOURCES

Wyoming's Legislative Service Office has excellent tools to inform your participation, including a dynamic website, fact sheets, a database of bills, and livestreaming audio. Browse the website at [wyoleg.gov](http://wyoleg.gov), or tune in to a live floor debate!



### SIGN UP FOR EMAIL UPDATES

We make it easy! Just sign up for our email alerts and you'll receive information on upcoming legislation and whom to contact. Alerts also direct you to our email system where we'll provide suggested talking points; all you need to do is compose your message and hit send. The communication will come from your email address and you'll receive any replies.



#### **TO SIGN UP:**

[wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](http://wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org)  
click "Get Involved" and "Sign Up"

# WOC Invests in Civic Engagement

*Do you want to be a better advocate in 2018? Join us!*

## BEERS & BILLS

Join us for a beer, a bite to eat, and a discussion of pending conservation legislation. We'll have the latest news and talk about how you can make a difference.

**PINEDALE:** Jan. 30 from 5–7 p.m.  
*Boondocks, 23 W Pine St.*

**LARAMIE:** Feb. 6 from 5–7 p.m.  
*Altitude Brewery, 320 S 2nd St.*

**CHEYENNE:** Feb. 15 from 5–7 p.m.  
*Danielmark's Brewing, 209 E 18th St.*

## SHAPE WYOMING

Come to **Cheyenne** on **February 19** for a one-day comprehensive advocacy training with hands-on experience at the legislative session! Outdoor Council staff will help lead this excellent workshop with our friends from the Equality State Policy Center.

Visit [equalitystate.org](http://equalitystate.org) for details.

## CITIZEN LOBBYIST INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

We're excited to launch this series of weeklong "mini-internships" at the 2018 legislative session that will provide comprehensive, hands-on training as a citizen lobbyist with a full curriculum. Our goal is to empower citizens to return to their communities and engage as effective conservation advocates. There is still one internship spot open, so email [stephanie@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](mailto:stephanie@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org) if you'd like more information!



### MEET AN INTERN!

Lander resident Era Aranow may be uniquely prepared for her upcoming legislative internship. She was a junior Olympian in

fencing, and competed at the Division 1 level at Harvard.

"People liken the sport to physical chess," she explained. "There's a lot of back and forth. To be successful . . . you need to become good at reading other people and learning the rules of the game."

Lobbying requires many of the same

skills. Effective legislative advocates are also quick on their feet, adaptable, keen observers, respectful of their opponents, and strategic thinkers.

Era is currently the staffing coordinator for NOLS Wilderness Medicine and a graduate student in Environmental Science and Policy at John Hopkins University. After years of sharing a love of public lands with students through outdoor education, Era is eager to take her advocacy to the next level. "I've spent years teaching about the value of nature, public lands, and the outdoors . . . now I want to learn how to stand up for these ideas."

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Outdoor Council director Lisa McGee has followed Dustin's career for a long time. "His thoughtful and thorough coverage of many of the issues we address—from public lands to public health—has impressed me," she said. "The insights and skills he brings to the Council will help us communicate more effectively about our work, reach new audiences, and ultimately affect change. I'm so happy to welcome him to our staff."

Dustin looks forward to joining the Outdoor Council's team of experts who

share a common goal: building alliances for a better quality of life in Wyoming. "I'm excited to help tell the story of the Outdoor Council's work."

Dustin lives in Casper with his wife Kristy and their son Samuel. His oldest son, Taylor, is pursuing his undergraduate degree in computer science at the University of Wyoming. Dustin spends his free time fishing, hiking, camping, and enjoying live music.

## **There's a lot at stake for Wyoming in 2018.**

Help us be ready to work  
for you in Cheyenne and  
across the state.

*Join or renew today!*  
[wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org/donate](http://wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org/donate)