



STEFF'S SPRING UPDATE

Dear Friends,

As the Wyoming Outdoor Council's new program director, I'm excited to let you know what our members and supporters have helped make possible the last few months. As you know, Lisa McGee has stepped into the role of executive director. We're lucky to have her leading the way! This year, we sent two full-time staffers (plus three interns!) to the legislative session, which helped result in some great wins for Wyoming's conservation community. Read more below. We've been busy on other fronts, too. I've given a glimpse of some of our ongoing work, but there's plenty more going on. Please be in touch if you'd like to know more. Thanks for your support!

complex, and the bills were challenging to explain even to our supporters. We created fact sheets, lobbied legislators, and spoke to the media, but what ultimately made the difference was the voice of citizens. You spoke up and demanded accountability from your legislators. Thank you! Please know that your participation makes a huge difference!

Partners are key! The Outdoor Council began as a “coordinating council,” and that role is just as important today. Among the groups that helped defeat SF 74: Powder River Basin Resource Council, Wyoming Interfaith Network, American Civil Liberties Union, Wind River Native Advocacy Center, Equality State Policy Center, and many others. We joined forces with sportsmen groups such as the Wyoming Wildlife Federation and Trout Unlimited on wildlife-related bills, which was key to securing special license plates to help fund wildlife crossings. Our partnership with the ESPC's broad coalition allowed us to combine efforts in support of good governance reforms, such as passage of HB 192, which requires recordings and broadcasts of interim committee meetings. We also often work with agriculture, local government, and education groups. We'll keep bringing sportsmen and other conservation groups together throughout the year to be an effective, unified voice on key issues.



2018 Wyoming Legislative Session: Reflections and Future Steps

Robust citizen involvement is critical to our success. We entered the session facing two ill-conceived committee-sponsored bills (HB 25 on mining regulation, and HB 20 regarding wildlife management), and faced an unexpected threat in SF 74, designed to chill free speech and public dissent. Defeating these bills was an uphill battle, (especially SF 74, which was sponsored by powerful factions). The issues were

We'll keep helping citizens and other groups be effective advocates. Not only did this year's stellar legislative interns help us advocate more effectively for public lands, wildlife, clean air and water, and better governance, but they also came away with some tangible skills and tools they can share in their own communities. Ahead of this year's session we also partnered with Powder River Basin Resource Council to train a group of conservation staffers in effective lobbying — and it paid off! In the coming year we'll host more

in-depth advocacy trainings, as well as more legislative internships in 2019.



Image: Josh Milek

Other Program Updates

Holding the Line on Sage-Grouse

We were glad to learn that Casper oilman Diemer True withdrew his application to remove 250 wild greater sage-grouse eggs from their nests this spring as part of his ill-conceived proposal to sell the pen-raised birds to oil and gas companies. His idea was for the companies to release the grouse as a way of “mitigating” the loss of native birds whose habitat was destroyed by development activities. Not only is privatizing our wildlife unpopular with Wyomingites, but science has shown that sage-grouse simply don’t survive when returned to the wild. Unfortunately, the sage-grouse farming bill that allows this kind of commercialization of Wyoming’s native wildlife remains in effect — and permits True’s company, Diamond Wings Upland Game Birds, to reapply next year. We’ll stay engaged as this issue moves forward, and we’ll keep working to hold the state accountable on protecting our wildlife. We’ll also keep leading the charge to defend the bipartisan sage-grouse conservation plans that are under attack.

Energy Dominance on our Public Lands?

In response to President Trump’s “energy dominance” agenda, the Bureau of Land Management has moved aggressively to identify and eliminate rules, regulations, and policies that “unduly burden the development of domestic energy resources.” What does that look like in Wyoming? A BLM draft environmental impact statement for the proposed 5,000-well Converse

County Oil and Gas Project that lacks many of the environmental safeguards ordinarily required for such large projects — including reducing harmful air pollutants and recycling fresh water used for drilling and fracking. This massive drilling proposal embraced by the BLM strips away important protections for sage-grouse and birds of prey. We submitted detailed comments to the BLM, calling for the reinstatement of these commonsense measures and for other safeguards for the people who live in the 1.5 million-acre project area. We’ll know if the BLM took our concerns into account, as well as the many serious concerns of citizens and local, state, and federal agencies, when it releases the final draft later this year. Stay tuned.

Read Our New Report on Wasted Natural Gas

With help from the Environmental Defense Fund, we recently released a report showing that Wyoming is missing out on \$8.8 million to \$16.1 million in tax revenue each year due to intentional natural gas flaring and venting, and careless leaks. Of that statewide loss, \$3.4 million to \$6.5 million is unrealized ad valorem revenue — property tax that goes directly to counties. That money could have gone to the purchase of emergency equipment, road and bridge repair, or human services like nurses and libraries. We’re continuing to ask Wyoming agencies to implement commonsense practices that reduce the need for flaring and venting, as well as requirements to fix avoidable leaks. The state, and some operators, have already found success in such a program in the Upper Green River Basin gas fields. We’ll keep pushing the state to protect air quality and human health — and collect all revenue that’s due to Wyoming citizens — by implementing these effective measures. Read our 6-page report at wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org.

Steff Kessler
Program Director

