



Wyoming Outdoor Council

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Investing in People = Investing in the Future

To protect the Wyoming we love for future generations, we need to invest in people today. Conservation in Wyoming demands a big tent of people from different walks of life agreeing to disagree about a lot of things, but coming together where we have common ground: wildlife, clean air and water, and beloved open spaces.

For us, this means showing up in communities around our state, aligning with Indigenous conservation leaders who are already doing important work, and engaging younger people. It also means honoring and caring about our staff — your conservation superstars — by offering competitive salaries and generous benefits, and building a forever home that will provide a healthy and inspiring place to work and gather.

You — our members and supporters — make this possible. Thank you.

*Here's what we accomplished
together in 2022...*



LISA MCGEE
Executive Director

Lisa

You made possible the Wyoming Climate Summit.

Wyoming is feeling the impacts of climate change on all fronts — from wildfires, drought, extreme weather, invasive grasses, and decreased stream flows. At the same time, our cash-strapped communities continue to be reliant on fossil fuel production as the world shifts toward renewable energy sources.

For our state to thrive into the future, it's essential that we cut back on wasteful (and climate-warming) methane emissions, put plans in place to ensure renewable energy development is done responsibly, and help Wyoming communities adapt and become more resilient.

And there's nowhere better to make a difference than at the local level. In the summer of 2022, the Outdoor Council helped launch the inaugural Wyoming Climate Summit — which was officially hosted by the Lander Climate Action Network and Indigenous Land Alliance of Wyoming. The Summit brought together 200 people from around Wyoming to discuss local climate action, opportunities for communities to become more resilient, and how to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge into climate solutions. The Outdoor Council is building on this momentum in 2023 to support Wyoming's grassroots climate leaders.



You grew the campaign to protect the Red Desert.

The Red Desert is an ancestral homeland of the Shoshone, Bannock, Ute, and Arapaho peoples — tribes' connections to the desert date back many thousands of years and continue to this day. Historically, federal land management agencies and public lands conservation groups have both failed to consider Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and priorities.

In the second half of 2022, we refocused our efforts in the Red Desert on priorities identified by Indigenous conservation leaders. These included collaborating with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office to study a vandalized petroglyph site and work toward a plan for reclaiming damage and preventing future harm. We also put staff resources into laying the groundwork for agency-level designations that could protect sites within the desert that have historic, ecological, and cultural significance.



You got your hands dirty at our stewardship day.

The Outdoor Council uses legal, policy, and scientific expertise to amplify your voice and protect Wyoming's public lands, wildlife, and quality of life. But sometimes getting things done — and building stronger personal connections in our community of WOC members — means we all need to roll up our sleeves.

The Outdoor Council partnered with our friends at The Nature Conservancy to host a volunteer stewardship project and help restore a wet meadow in the Sweetwater River Nature Preserve near Atlantic City. Volunteers built a variety of rock structures that will reduce erosion and allow more moisture to soak into the meadow.

These efforts will pay dividends for many years to come — in terms of both the benefits to this sensitive habitat and the relationships that were built and strengthened in the process. We'll seek out other opportunities for volunteer stewardship work in the future.



You showed up at the Legislature.

Each legislative session, within the walls of the Wyoming Capitol, lawmakers consider hundreds of bills with the potential to impact our lands, wildlife, health, and communities for years or even generations to come. Your voice is essential to coaxing the best possible outcomes from the legislature.

At the Wyoming Legislature's 2022 budget session, we faced our fair share of challenges — as well as opportunities to work with lawmakers, support good bills, and push back against bad ideas. Perhaps most notably, Outdoor Council members came out in force to oppose a bill that would have made private sage-grouse farming legal in Wyoming forever. The bill passed against the will of the science, conservation, and hunting communities but, thanks to you, it was amended to authorize sage-grouse farming for just five more years. Your advocacy also helped improve another problematic bill — which sacrificed significant local control to speed up the approval of advanced nuclear reactors — to make the process more transparent.

A number of positive bills the Outdoor Council supported passed during the 2022 session, including legislation related to funding for wildlife conservation, public access, transparency around state land exchanges, and bonding requirements for mines. Worth celebrating above all is a \$75-million budget appropriation for the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust.



You used every tool to protect migration corridors.

Wyoming has multiple opportunities to officially recognize several new big game migration corridors as part of its migration corridor executive order, and in 2022 the Outdoor Council was ready to engage in those processes. When it became clear that the state had lost momentum, we quickly shifted to other approaches to protect corridor habitat.

We met with WOC members in Sublette County along with our partners at Citizens United for Responsible Energy Development to discuss development on private lands that could impact corridor habitat, as well as opportunities to get involved in the designation of the Sublette pronghorn and Wyoming Range mule deer corridors. Throughout 2022 we revitalized partnerships with other groups and advocates working on migration issues, and focused on county-level land-use planning decisions that impact corridor habitat — priorities that carried into 2023.

We resubmitted to the Bureau of Land Management our previous nomination for the Red Desert to Hoback mule deer migration corridor to be designated for special protections as an “area of critical environmental concern.” And as oil and gas leasing on federal public lands resumed after an 18-month hiatus, we pushed back on attempts to lease corridor habitat or crucial winter range for development.



You told the EPA: Safeguard our drinking water.

An oil and gas company's plan to inject polluted wastewater into the Madison Aquifer risks contaminating a potential source of drinking water (without solving any problem). Wastewater from the Moneta Divide oil and gas field needs to be responsibly managed to protect groundwater and streams that flow to Boysen Reservoir.

In 2022 — nearly two years after state regulators gave Aethon Energy initial approval to inject wastewater into the Madison Aquifer — the decision was forwarded to the Environmental Protection Agency for “concurrence.” The Outdoor Council and several partners met with the EPA’s regional administrator in November to reiterate our concerns about the threat to clean drinking water, as well as Aethon’s ongoing permit violations. Before the end of the year we launched a petition to keep the pressure on the EPA to safeguard the aquifer.



You boosted federal policies to curb methane emissions.

Methane emissions are a major contributor to climate change, harm our air quality, and waste a finite natural resource. A previous study commissioned by the Outdoor Council found that Wyoming oil and gas operators wasted more than \$90 million worth of methane every year through leaks, venting and flaring.

The Outdoor Council advocated for a proposed EPA rule that would regulate methane emissions from the thousands of existing oil and gas wells in Wyoming. The rule is expected to spur better technology and keep natural gas competitive as consumers demand cleaner sources of energy. We also supported a separate rule proposed by the BLM that aims to reduce emissions and improve returns to taxpayers by requiring companies to pay royalties on methane they waste.



WOC has been graced for decades with an extraordinary staff. Their accomplishments across our large and politically challenging state are remarkable. The board's vision for this space is to honor this work by providing a modern, functional, and inspiring workplace as well as a gathering hub for our members and partners. —*Hap Ridgway, board member (2014-2020)*

To learn more about WOC's future home, turn to the back page.





HOW WE USE OUR FUNDS

The good you do by **POWERING** our mission via conservation programs: \$888,585

The good you do by **SUSTAINING** our mission via administration & management: \$223,397

The good you do by **AMPLIFYING** our mission via fundraising: \$225,524

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$1,337,506

A down payment on WOC's future home.

After nearly sixty years of successful advocacy — and decades spent working from cramped facilities with windowless offices, an inadequate washroom, and poor ventilation — **the Outdoor Council is finally building a “forever home.”** This space in Lander — whose energy usage will be entirely offset by rooftop solar panels — will provide more than just new office space and meeting rooms for your statewide conservation team. **It will also be a hub for conservation advocates.** There will be a meeting space for our staff and board, partners, and community members working to protect all that you love about Wyoming.

Will you make a gift today for our new forever home? Your support today will ensure conservation wins now and into the future for Wyoming. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, your gift will be matched until we reach \$1 million! We're so excited for WOC's next chapter and we hope you'll be a part of it!



262 Lincoln Street
Lander, WY 82520

307.332.7031
wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org

Protecting public lands, wildlife, and
clean air and water in Wyoming since 1967