



POWDER RIVER BASIN
Resource Council

2019 Annual Report



**ENCOURAGING
RESPONSIBLE
DEVELOPMENT
TODAY...**

For Tomorrow

Protecting Wyoming's Quality of Life Since 1973

Powder River Basin Resource Council was founded by ranchers and townspeople concerned about the impacts of strip mining on landscapes, communities, and freshwater aquifers. For 47 years, we have worked for responsible energy development in Wyoming. Using community organizing, scientific, policy, and legal experts, and coalitions with other organizations, we wage effective campaigns to protect Wyoming's air, land, water quality, and wildlife and to promote sustainable agricultural practices and policies. We are committed to community organizing, leadership development, and the empowerment of citizens.

The successes we found in our early work have continued throughout the years. Over the past four decades, the concentration of our work has been on ensuring responsible development that prevents and mitigates the negative impacts of energy development on the environment and Wyoming citizens. We have worked hard to prevent energy companies from harming private property or ruining our clean air and water. Our citizen power has effectively limited energy company influence over the legislative process and administrative agencies.

Additionally, a core part of our mission is protecting Wyoming's agricultural heritage and ensuring a sustainable ag economy. We have helped ensure a future for family farmers and ranchers, worked to curb corporate control of livestock markets, and passed legislation to provide more rights for ranchers and farmers negotiating with energy companies. Recently, we have expanded our work to support our state's growing local food and new agricultural economy.

Our Mission

- The preservation and enrichment of our agricultural heritage and rural lifestyle;
- The conservation of our unique land, mineral, water, and clean air resources, consistent with responsible use of those resources to sustain the livelihood of present and future generations; and
- The education and empowerment of our citizens to raise a coherent voice in the decisions that will impact their environment and lifestyle.

Powder River Basin Resource Council

47th Annual Meeting



When Coal is No Longer King: A Conversation on Wyoming's Future

Saturday, November 2, 2019

Holiday Inn

1809 Sugarland Drive ~ Sheridan, WY

Panel Discussion

Denise Parrish

Deputy Administrator, Wyoming Office of Consumer Advocate

Robin Cooley

Director, Department of Workforce Services

Adele Morris

Senior Fellow, Climate & Energy Economics, Brookings Institution

Moderator: Rep. Cathy Connolly

2019 Annual Report Powder River Basin Resource Council

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2019 Coal Campaign Victories

Wyoming Adopts New Rules to Limit Risky Self-Bonding



The Belle Ayr Coal Mine

In response to public pressure from our organization, the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) pushed forward a new set of rules that completely revises how coal companies can qualify for self-bonding, limiting the controversial practice to companies with excellent credit histories and ratings. Since most coal companies do not have excellent credit ratings in the down market, the new rules will effectively prevent self-bonding by the industry, including the larger companies of Peabody Energy and Arch Coal.

DEQ advanced the rules to the Environmental Quality Council (EQC) for a final hearing in February. Our organization was instrumental in showing public support of the rules. We submitted technical comments and generated member comments from Wyomingites from around the state. In addition to being good policy for Wyoming, the rulemaking could also set a national precedent for the federal Office of Surface Mining and other states that still allow self-bonding.



Increasing Transparency of Collateral Bonding

With self-bonding on the way out, companies are looking for new ways to avoid third-party financial assurance to

guarantee reclamation work at coal mines. Contura Energy is the first coal company to use a real property collateral bond, valued at almost \$27 million. We sought a copy of the company’s property appraisal from DEQ and took the public records case to court when DEQ denied public review. At the end of August, a judge in Cheyenne ordered the DEQ to release the appraisal, setting a good precedent for all future attempts to use collateral bonds. In his decision, Judge Sharpe wrote: “... the public possesses a strong interest in knowing that the mining company posted adequate collateral to secure its reclamation obligations.”

Defending Our Victory on the Ramaco Coal Mine

2018 was abuzz with work to defend the Environmental Quality Council’s (EQC) tough decision finding significant deficiencies in Ramaco’s permit application related to hydrology, subsidence, and blasting. 2019 built upon this important work, culminating in oral arguments before the Wyoming District Court in early June opposing Ramaco’s appeal of the EQC’s decision.

Our legal arguments presented to the court were well-crafted and well-researched, and we feel confident we are on the winning side. The case is now ready for a decision from the judge, and we look forward to a legal opinion that will settle the law and send the company back for more work.



The Tongue River

While Ramaco's appeal of the EQC decision is pending, the company has been hedging its bets on the outcome of the case by submitting new information to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to move forward in the permitting process. Notably, the company's revised application reduces anticipated coal production by 90% from the previous version of the permit, avoids mining in a hydrologically sensitive area next to the Tongue River, places new restrictions on blasting, and makes several other major changes in response to the EQC's decision. However, deficiencies in Ramaco's analysis of water impacts and other issues remain. The DEQ is now on an unprecedented *eleventh* round of technical review of the coal mine permit application. We have carefully tracked the DEQ's review process, and we continue to share important information learned through public records requests with neighbors to the proposed mine.

We remain committed to this multi-year campaign to protect the Tongue River Valley and its residents, and we will continue our efforts in 2020 and beyond.

Challenging Blackjewel and Ensuring Reclamation during Coal Mine Bankruptcies

A large focus of 2019 work revolved around new Wyoming mine operator Blackjewel. We objected to Contura's proposal to transfer its permits for the Eagle Butte and Belle Ayr mines because of Blackjewel's checkered history of dozens of environmental and worker safety violations at mines it operated in Appalachia. We raised our objections at a hearing before the EQC in May, and after the hearing, the EQC members decided they needed more information about the company's violations and the legal

EQC delays coal permit to consider violations

Complaint: Blackjewel's history in other states makes operating in Wyoming a problem

By ANDREW GRAHAM
WYOFIELD.COM

Via Wyoming News Exchange

requirements before they could issue a decision.

That delay for additional legal briefs to be submitted provided an important buffer in time that kept Contura on the hook for the permits and reclamation bonding as Blackjewel tumbled into bankruptcy on July 1. This forced Contura to be an active party in the bankruptcy, and made them step up to pay a new proposed owner of the mines, FM Coal, to take over.

But our work is not over: we will continue to hold all of the companies operating in the Powder River Basin – new and old – to the high standards of the law to ensure reclamation is funded to clean up our lands and waters after mining.

No New Coal Leases

There is only one federal coal lease application in Wyoming’s Powder River Basin moving through the process, and even that lease is delayed. All other leases are on hold or have been withdrawn – taking almost three billion tons of coal off the table. We still have a “market moratorium” and not a ton of coal in the Powder River Basin has been sold at a lease sale in over seven years.

In 2019, we also worked with allies to submit detailed comments on the Department of Interior’s new coal leasing study for the Powder River Basin. The new study



Photo by Michael Forsberg

was in response to a victory in federal court in Montana ruling that the resource management plans for the Buffalo and Miles City field offices of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had to be revised to consider the option of selling less federal coal to reduce the effects of climate change.

We also joined forces with Natural Resources

Defense Council to defend a 2016 rule put forward by the Department of Interior to charge federal coal royalties based on the first “arm's length” transaction between an energy producer and an unaffiliated customer, stopping companies from selling their product to “captive” subsidiaries at deflated prices. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, 42% of coal sales in were “captive transactions” in 2016. The case is currently pending in federal district court in Wyoming.

Pushing for Retirement of Outdated & Expensive Coal Plants

We've also been hard at work to require electric utilities to come to grips with the future costs and risks of continued reliance on coal-fired power. We have been actively engaged in stakeholder meetings and negotiations surrounding the future of PacifiCorp's coal fleet, and in October the company announced early retirement of four coal units at its Naughton and Jim Bridger plants in Southwest Wyoming. Even Wyoming's coal burning utilities are recognizing that clean energy sources of solar and wind are the lower cost options for customers.

However, some Wyoming lawmakers and our



Governor continue to defend coal at any cost and pushed forward a controversial new bill in the 2019 legislative session that forces a utility to try and sell a coal plant before it retires it. We have been actively engaged in the implementation process for this law before the Public Service Commission to try to limit its negative impacts for utility customers.

We also continue to be actively engaged in the broader conversations around coal plant retirement and the need for smart community and worker transition plans, especially in Southwest Wyoming where the first coal plant retirements will occur.

Reporter Engagement & Narrative Building

There remains tremendous public interest in coal, and Wyoming is a focal point for coal news and information. Our staff and leaders field regular calls and emails from local, regional, and national reporters, and we help to provide critical background information and a Wyoming perspective on these stories. We continue to make front page news here in Wyoming and across the nation. For the fourth year in a row, our organization was quoted or mentioned in over 100 stories covering coal news. This year, our reach grew thanks to dedicated communications staff and a greater amount of member-authored opinion pieces. We also engage with members, reporters, allies, and decision-makers through social media to help push out our Wyoming news and perspective beyond the borders of the state. Our Twitter account was particularly influential during live-tweeting of the Blackjewel EQC hearing and bankruptcy court proceedings. Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram to get the latest news!



Powder River Basin Coal Mines

2019 RENEWyoming

Wyoming Solar Continues to Grow



The Wyoming Solar Energy Association (WYSE)

This past year saw the continued expansion of solar energy in Wyoming. Once again, the Spring Solar Celebration was a smashing success. It was hosted in Casper and had around 80 people in attendance. Almost all of the solar installers in Wyoming were able to attend the event. During the celebration, they announced the formation of Wyoming's first solar trade organization, the Wyoming Solar Energy Association, or WYSE.

During the past year, we have produced four new solar videos. One video, the Jackson shared solar installation, was shared by the Wyoming Association of Municipalities and has resulted in contacts to the Jackson Wastewater Treatment Facility from other wastewater treatment facilities in the state wanting to learn about solar and efficiency measures employed there.

Net Metering: A Solar Roller Coaster

The year started with a bill to open the cap on net metering that would have allowed net metering of systems above 25 kW (our state's current net metering cap) if utilities agreed (a pretty small ask). However, the bill didn't



survive the legislative session.

On the heels of that letdown, the Legislative Corporations Committee took up net metering as an interim topic. At the committee's May meeting it was another slide down the coaster track when it became clear that some members of the committee wanted to eliminate net metering. The summer was filled with ups and downs (strategizing, planning, testifying, and then bad proposals from the committee). Currently, the committee has put forth two proposals: The complete repeal of net metering statutes or revisions that would create a buy-all sell-all framework for solar energy. Either proposal would make solar unaffordable by doubling to tripling payoff time for solar systems. We will continue our work to protect our current net metering statutes and ensure that Wyoming's solar owners are not unfairly penalized.

Community Solar

We have been working to get community solar for the Sheridan area. Community solar is a mid-sized shared solar system that community members can buy or lease into. It is good for people who have shaded roofs, rent their homes, or have other reasons why a home solar system won't work out.

We spoke to Montana Dakota Utilities (MDU), and they said they would consider building a system if we could

show enough community backing. We are petitioning, talking to businesses and city council members, and getting really great support. We think this can happen within two to five years!

Carbon-Neutral Communities

A group of our Laramie members are pushing the city into the future in advocating for Laramie's City Council to adopt 100% renewable energy and a carbon neutral initiative. Through a partnership with our Laramie members, the Alliance for Renewable Energy of Laramie, the University of Wyoming's Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, and the City of Laramie, the main sources of the City of Laramie's greenhouse gas emissions were compiled. Due to the enormous amount of work to be completed, the City of Laramie hired an intern, funded in part by the Haub School, to finish the inventory over the summer and tailor the calculator to fit the city's specifications. Over the summer, UW Senior, Xanthe Yorke finished the work and presented the findings to the Laramie City Council

The Alliance for Renewable Energy of Laramie continues to vet their goals through the Environmental Advisory Committee, a branch of the city council, and expects to see a commitment with financing for solar installations from the city by Spring 2020.



Laramie City Council meeting where emissions totals presented

Oil & Gas Impacts

In 2019, Powder River ramped up efforts to address impacts from booming oil and gas development. Our organizing work focused on impacts to split estate landowners and adjacent property owners, reducing impacts from oil and gas air pollution, addressing safety issues from oil and gas wastewater spills and discharges which threaten our freshwater, and highlighting flaring and the need to reduce the waste of this valuable resource. We also continued our push for the clean-up of old pits and leaking gas wells in Pavillion and the plugging and reclamation of thousands of orphan oil and gas wells.

Protecting Health, Safety & Environment

Powder River leaders continue to pressure the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to step up actions to reduce oil and gas pollution from flaring and emissions from oil and gas wells and facilities. Late last year, our leaders again traveled to Denver to testify



and urge the EPA not to relax rules that require the oil and gas industry to control methane and hazardous air emissions.

Our Cheyenne Affiliate, Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition (CALC), sponsored a live webinar event with Dr. Lisa McKenzie, a key researcher of how air pollution from oil and gas wells impacts public health. McKenzie and her co-researchers published their study, finding that air pollutant concentrations increased with proximity to oil and gas facilities, as did health risks. The findings indicated that state and federal regulatory policies may not protect the health of people residing near oil and gas activity.



Rural road in Laramie County

We continue to advocate for safe air quality for all by objecting to flaring permits and pushing for air quality monitoring in southeastern Wyoming. CALC members documented excessive flaring in Laramie County, which was investigated and addressed by the Wyoming Oil and Gas Commission. Following ongoing citizen concerns about air quality impacts from booming oil and gas drilling operations east of Cheyenne, DEQ installed a mobile air quality monitoring unit in Laramie County. However, CALC members were disappointed by the fact that the unit was several miles away from the nearest oil and gas rig and asked DEQ to continue monitoring the air east of Cheyenne in order to monitor the risk nearby development poses to public health.

CALC worked to address for better road safety in neighborhoods where oil and gas development is located. Laramie County's development is situated in close proximity to residential neighborhoods, creating heavy truck traffic which also damages the roads. CALC has proposed an updated road use agreement to their county

commissioners. The updated agreement would address safety concerns as well as the repair of county roads so these expenses don't fall on the taxpayers.

Addressing Oil and Gas Shenanigans

The unprecedented boom in oil and gas permitting plus a wave of new oil and gas companies (equity and hedge fund companies) entering Wyoming caused new problems for mineral owners, landowners and regulators. A race by these oil and gas companies to stack up thousands of permits and control leases caused more bond- ons for split estate landowners with some companies seizing control of entire ranches. The competition by companies to control property also shafted mineral owners whose minerals were being held but not developed. The game industry plays to “capture the flag” and control an area overwhelmed the Wyoming Oil and Gas Commission with tens of thousands of permit applications and protests between competing operators. Powder River weighed in to push for stronger permitting regulations and called for increasing site specific bonding to cover the future costs of plugging deep oil wells and reclaiming oil well pads. We also organized for improved policies that strengthen the hand of split estate landowners in negotiations. We continue to organize and work for protection of the property rights of adjacent landowners who are being impacted but have no rights or assurances for protection of



Boysen Reservoir

their health, safety and property values.

Protecting Boysen Reservoir & the Wind River from Oil & Gas Wastewater

Powder River's efforts, in coalition with our allies, exposed and prevented Aethon Energy from receiving an expanded permit to increase oil and gas wastewater discharges into streams that flow into Boysen Reservoir and the Wind River. The permit would have doubled the discharge from the Moneta Divide gas field from 104,000 barrels of polluted wastewater per day to nearly 200,000 barrels. We succeeded in getting public hearings on the proposed permit and hundreds of citizens responded to the call to comment against the expansion of this permit which threatens our freshwater resources. We also hired experts who reviewed the proposed permit and filed reports documenting specific areas where the permit completely fails to protect water quality for livestock, irrigation, fisheries or wildlife. We called for a follow-up investigation regarding the already damaging impacts from the existing discharges on Alkalai and Badwater Creek which flow into Boysen Reservoir. The state agreed to investigate. We continue to organize and work to protect these freshwater creeks, reservoirs and rivers from polluted oil and gas discharges of fracking fluids and produced wastewater.

Oil & Gas Orphan Wells - Better State & Federal Bonding

This year Powder River's diligent efforts to keep Wyoming and the BLM focused on addressing the increasing number of orphan oil and gas wells and the lack of adequate oil and gas bonding garnered local and national attention. In the past, our work succeeded in getting Wyoming to jump on the problem, but unfortunately the problem continues to grow because of the lack of adequate bonding. Between 1997 and September 2019, it cost the State of Wyoming \$21.2 million to plug 2,813 wells orphaned wells and only \$6.9 million was covered by bonds. The other \$14.3 million came from Wyoming's conservation tax fund. As of October 2019, there were



Wastewater truck accident near Woods Landing

3,133 orphan wells from private and state minerals added to their list of Wyoming oil and gas wells to plug. At the federal level, BLM has some 13,000 federal mineral oil and gas wells in Wyoming that need to be plugged and reclaimed. Most of these orphan or idle oil and gas wells are littered across private ranch lands in Wyoming. We are gaining attention at the federal level to

get the BLM to increase bonding to prevent a bigger problem in the future. A recent US General Accounting Office report noted that the bonds for oil and gas have not been raised in over 50 years. We continue our push at the state and federal level to increase bonding and ensure the tens of thousands of oil and gas wells in Wyoming are plugged and reclaimed in a timely fashion.

Preventing Wastewater Spills

Woods Landing, a small town just outside of Laramie on Highway 230, has experienced an increase in oil and gas traffic coming from an oilfield across the Colorado border near Walden. Three accidents have taken place near Woods Landing over the course of six months. The first accident spilled 100-150 barrels of produced water into the Laramie River; the second resulted in a fatality of the driver, and the third accident occurred when a water tanker turned over near the Colorado border.

Due to public safety concerns, Powder River collaborated with members of Albany County Clean Water Advocates (ACCWA) to organize citizens in the area and

find solutions. In June, a meeting was held at Woods Landing where members of the public were able to express their concern as well as hear from the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) and the Wyoming Highway Patrol on what is being done to mitigate such accidents. Both agencies have taken steps to help address the problem, but we will continue to stay engaged on this issue.

Pavillion Gas Field Clean-up

Our affiliate, Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens, continues to monitor and push for progress on Encana's efforts to clean-up contaminated pits and plug leaking gas wells. We are still dogging the state on a final report on the impacts to individual water wells and looking for permanent solutions for homeowners with impacted wells. Pavillion area leaders and residents, Jeff and Rhonda Locker, were profiled by Powder River in a video released in February. The video went viral and has been viewed by over 20,000 people.



Jeff & Rhonda Locker

Ad Valorem Mineral Taxes

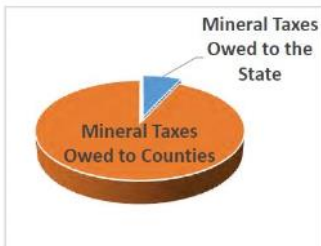
Delinquent Taxes Become Hot Topic

Because of our work throughout the past couple of years, the problem of delinquent *ad valorem* mineral taxes is now well-known throughout Wyoming. Counties are owed over \$55 million in *ad valorem* mineral production taxes while the state is owed far less in severance taxes, despite having around the same assessed value. The main reason for the discrepancy is that severance taxes are paid on a monthly basis, while *ad valorem* taxes are paid 18-24 months after resources are extracted. Counties struggle to collect these delinquent taxes in the event of company bankruptcies.

During the 2019 general session, a bill was passed that gave counties priority liens to assist with tax collection during bankruptcies. Unfortunately, the bill included language that has proven problematic for counties and will not go into effect until July of 2021.

In light of the coal bankruptcies this year, the Legislature's Management Council created the Select Committee on Coal/Mineral Bankruptcies with *ad valorem* mineral production taxes among its topics. A powerful example of the issue is provided by the Blackjewel bankruptcy in which Campbell County will lose out on \$8.75 million in *ad valorem* taxes. With examples like these and Powder River's organizing, the legislature has acknowledged this problem and is working toward solutions.

In October, this special committee met to work toward solutions including monthly collections and county liens. Legislators instructed the Legislative Services Office to draft bills that would fix the language in lien statute and implement monthly collections while addressing industry



concerns over transition of collections schedules. In the meantime, Powder River will continue working with treasurers to collect data on tax delinquencies and provide that information to our legislators to remind them of its relevance.

2019 Agriculture Work

Local Foods

Powder River continued increasing access to local foods while developing stronger markets for producers. One of our biggest accomplishments this year was getting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) implemented at the Downtown Sheridan Farmers' Market. With our assistance in filing the necessary paperwork and training staff and volunteers, the market offered SNAP for the first time in history.

We were also involved with several local foods trainings at Landon's Greenhouse this spring. Powder River staff and several members facilitated the trainings, which covered using cold frames, water conservation, growing heirloom vegetables, and more.

In May, Powder River coordinated and hosted a community input meeting in Sheridan for the recently

revived Wyoming Farm to Plate Task Force. There were over 35 citizens in attendance from Wyoming's northeast region—among them producers, farmers' market managers, community garden coordinators, school nutritionists, extension staff, entrepreneurs, and more. Additionally, Powder River is



SNAP booth at the Downtown Sheridan Farmers Market.

involved with a statewide coalition of groups interested in using local foods to combat food insecurity in our communities.

Sheridan Food Forest

The Sheridan Food Forest continues to flourish. New pathways with pea gravel and flagstones are in place as well as an upgraded irrigation system. A number of new fruit trees were planted again this year, and the fruit harvest is increasing. Also, the pollinator garden was finished this year; it provides a food source for pollinators, plus is glorious in bloom. The Food Forest hosts a variety of pollinators

including native bees, butterflies, wasps, and domestic honey bees. In July, a group of school children from Dayton/Tongue River visited the Food Forest to learn about foraging and pollinators. All of this work is thanks to the incredibly dedicated group of Food Forest volunteers.



Seed Library

The Seed Library made a big move this year—to the Sheridan County Fulmer Public Library. Relocating the Seed Library to this central location greatly increased awareness and use in the community. A seed library restocking event was held prior to the growing season, and the library saw a large increase in new users this year.

Cover Crops Tour

Powder River collaborated with the Sheridan Community Land Trust, Natural Resources Conservation

Service, and the University of Wyoming Extension Service to sponsor the “Cover Crops in Northeastern Wyoming Field Workshop.” Over 30 Attendees gained first-person insight and expert advice on employing cover crops to improve soil and control weeds. The successful workshop involved field visits to an Extension research site and two ranches employing cover crops on a large scale.

National Family Farm Coalition Summer Meeting

Powder River staff and a member attended the National Family Farm Coalition Summer Meeting held in Sioux Falls this July. The meeting brought together a diverse group of grassroots, agriculture nonprofits, and it was energizing to collaborate with producers from around the country working on similar issues.

ENGAGE Council

Following former Governor Matt Mead’s creation of the Economic Diversification Initiative (ENDOW), . ENGAGE was formed, consisting of people ages 18-35 focused on economic growth and diversification. In September, ENGAGE held its second annual summit with the goal of attracting youth to talk about what the younger generation wants to see for Wyoming’s future. The ENGAGE summit held a panel on local food and agriculture in Wyoming. Moderated by Powder River Staff, the panel featuring local producers spoke on what Wyoming is doing right in the food sector such as unique legislation like the Food Freedom Act; and downfalls in Wyoming such as our access to USDA processing facilities for the locally raised meat industry.

Members Featured in Homegrown Stories

Homegrown Stories is a storytelling project of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC). This year four of our members were featured. This platform presents us with an opportunity to showcase our independent farmers and ranchers who are working for better markets, providing healthy food, and making a difference in their communities. All of the stories can be found at www.homegrownstories.org.

2019 Legislative Victories

We had another successful year of lobbying at the Wyoming Legislature. Here is a quick rundown of some of our biggest legislative victories this year.

Stopping the Criminalization of the First Amendment and Impacts to Property Rights: For the second year in a row, we opposed a bill aimed at creating crimes against “critical infrastructure,” a category of things which was broadly and ambiguously defined. The bill would have chilled and penalized protected speech and unconstitutionally impacted the right to free association. It would have also impacted the day-to-day operations of landowners who have oil and gas infrastructure and powerlines on their land. Our landowner leaders were instrumental in helping to defeat the legislation, which died early in the legislative session.

Stopping New Tax Breaks for Industry: Two of our hardest earned successes this legislative year involved bills that would have provided tax giveaways to the oil and gas industry. On the very last day of the session, we stopped a bill that would have cut taxes for oil and gas production, and we solicited a veto from the Governor on a bill that would have given a property tax exemption to land used to store energy production equipment. Earlier in the session, we also defeated proposals to reduce taxes for uranium and coal companies.

Helping Counties Collect Mineral Tax Revenue: In addition to stopping tax breaks, we also worked to collect the taxes owed by mineral companies. We successfully supported a new bill that gives local governments priority to collect owed mineral production taxes in bankruptcy and in times of forfeiture. The bill came on the heels of a Powder River report showing that the total amount of taxes owed to counties is \$55 million, but because of a flaw in our law, those taxes go to the bottom of the collection line. This bill will help correct that flaw and bring in needed revenue for local government and schools around the state.

Supporting New Opportunities for Ag Producers: We supported a bill that opens the door for hemp farming in

Wyoming. The bill gives authority to the state Department of Agriculture, accelerates program implementation, and advantages Wyoming over other states at a key transitional moment nationwide.

Increased Transparency: We worked with the Equality State Policy Center and other transparency allies, like the Liberty Group, to pass a major overhaul to the Public Records Act. Under the new law, for the first time ever, agencies now have a deadline to response to records requests from the public.

Wyoming Public Lands Day: Along with conservation groups and public land users from around the state, we supported a bill to establish Wyoming Public Lands Day. The inaugural day occurred on September 28, and Powder River celebrated by organizing a cleanup day at the Welch Ranch Special Management Area in Sheridan County.

Harvest Celebration

Powder River's 14th Annual Harvest Celebration & Potluck was held on August 24 at Kearney Hall and featured locally raised beef and lamb. As always, our members provided a bountiful amount of local, homemade side dishes, salads, and desserts. Over 100 Powder River members, family, and friends gathered for an evening filled with local food and music. "Pies by Guys" continued the fun tradition of scratch baking for a good cause. Local farmers and ranchers generously donated a wide variety of local food items for the raffle, truly showing what foods are available here. The Harvest Celebration raised \$10,000 for Powder River this year.



Youth In Conservation

Annually, Powder River judges the Wyoming State Science Fair in order to award selected students for their work in conservation. The “Bill Barlow Memorial Youth in Conservation Awards” are presented in the memory of Bill Barlow, a rancher and conservationist who was also a Powder River founding member. These awards honor students whose science fair projects study Wyoming ecosystems, consider impacts of development on the natural environment or our agricultural heritage, or explore innovative energy alternatives. The winners this year were Cheyenne sixth-grader Shelby Hoobler for her project on river erosion, “My



Shelby Hoobler

Sediments Exactly,” and Newcastle 11th grader Markie Whitney for her project on increasing the efficiency of solar panels, “Solar Panels-Too Cool!”

Shelby wanted to explore how to keep our streams healthy in spite of the impact of erosion and urbanization on natural waterways in Cheyenne. She conducted several tests of sediments along Crow Creek, which is being utilized by ongoing oil and gas operations east of the city. She kept a log of sediments throughout the

creek to gauge information about the biodiversity and the water quality. Shelby hopes to continue her research on stream and waterway health.

Markie was interested in creating more efficient solar panels. When solar panels get too hot, they are less efficient and produce less energy. She conducted an experiment using water as a "heat sink" to produce more voltage. Markie has designed, and filed a patent application for, a solar panel with sensitive metal wings on the back that help to expel the heat, and then she placed the panel in cool water. She then compared the efficiency of her solar panel to a traditional one and found she was able to capture 11% more voltage from her design. She plans to replicate this research by attaching a PVC pipe to the back of a full-sized solar panel and running cool water through the pipe. The water, acting as a heat sink, will absorb the excess heat of the solar panel.

Administration

Powder River's work is overseen by the Board of Directors, who are elected from and by the membership for two-year terms. As a membership-driven organization, members decide the direction of Powder River's work. Members bring resolutions for a vote of membership approval at the annual meeting and lead the campaigns embraced by the organization.

Powder River grew this year. We maintain two office locations in Wyoming. The main office is located in Sheridan and our satellite office is in Laramie, where our organizer, Monika Leininger, is based. We made a bold move in August, hiring a contract organizer in Southwest Wyoming. Michele Irwin will assess the need for work surrounding the upcoming retirement of coal-fired power plants as well as the need for a just transition for the workers and coal-reliant communities. We hope this position will become a permanent one in 2020.

Our Sheridan office houses Jill Morrison, our executive director; Stephanie Avey, our ace executive administrator, and Shannon Anderson, our energizer bunny who serves as our staff attorney/organizer and handles coal campaigns and assists with oil and gas, uranium, and many other thorny issues. Hesid Brandow is our solar energy organizer, and also works on mineral tax policy issues and does some local foods organizing in the Sheridan area. Erik Rieger organized our local food and sustainable ag work until he left in August to attend graduate school, and Michele Barlow stepped in part-time in late 2019 to help with additional research and policy analysis. Monika Leininger, our Laramie-based organizer, works on oil and gas issues, renewable energy, and covers work at the state capitol and numerous policy-making meetings that happen in that part of the state. Last but not least, Robin EH. Bagley leads our communications work, assists with development and steps in when needed on our ag campaign work.

Remember to check out our website with our campaign information, publications, and digital copies of the newsletter. People can also easily renew their membership or make a donation on the website, check it out at: www.powderriverbasin.org. Also, we are active on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. We still mail our award-winning newspaper, the *Powder River Breaks*, to update our members our issues and keep them involved in public processes that directly impact their lives.

Treasurer's Report

The Powder River Board of Directors approved a 2019 amended budget of \$530,550. As of October 31, 2019 we have spent 79% of our budget, or \$417,972. To date, we have raised 75% of our budget and expect we will raise the remaining 25% by the end of the year. We also anticipate that we may be slightly under budget for our overall expenses at the end of year. The one line item in our budget that is over our projected expenses is in the maintenance line item, due to our long-overdue office remodel which included the replacement of office blinds, new flooring, and painting.



Additionally, Powder River has a strong internal fundraising team and we believe we will meet our major donor goal of \$30,000 and our end of the year fundraising campaign to challenge our members to match the \$30,000. We recognize and thank all of our foundation grantors and the Western Organization of Resource Councils for their partnership in helping with our foundation outreach and fundraising. We also extend our gratitude and appreciation to our generous major donors and our members who are the heart and soul of this organization and ensure our continued success.



Leadership Workshop

Leadership & Action Workshop Held in Laramie

In April Powder River, in conjunction with WORC, held a Citizens' Leadership & Action Workshop in Laramie.



The two-day event brought together community members, allies and new leaders for a lively, hands-on training that enhanced attendees' abilities to take action in their communities.

The workshop covered practical trainings on writing letters-to-the-editor, holding public officials accountable, planning winning campaigns, and dealing with intimidation. One session featured Wyoming reporters Andrew Graham, Heather Richards, and Cooper McKim who talked with the audience about working with the press and getting your story covered. Another session presented practical advice on using video for better storytelling.

People had the opportunity to break into small groups and work on particular issues they face as well as get advice from Powder River and WORC staff. Overall the workshop sharpened people's leadership and media skills as they participate in public policy and work to win our issues around the state. Plus it gave people an opportunity to get to know each other, and Powder River, better.



Wyoming journalists participate in a training session on pitching stories to the press.

Coalitions and Affiliates

Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)

Powder River is a founding member group of WORC, an association of grassroots organizations in seven states including North Dakota, South Dakota, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Oregon and Wyoming. Through WORC, these local organizations join together to provide training and technical assistance, policy analysis, research and networking to improve the effectiveness and regional coherence of the coalition members efforts. WORC provides consolidated fundraising and a critical presence in Washington D.C.

Equality State Policy Center (ESPC)

Powder River has been a member of the Equality State Policy Center since ESPC's inception. ESPC is a coalition of a broad range of Wyoming organizations from labor unions to conservation groups, dedicated to good government for the people of Wyoming.

Community Affiliates Across Wyoming.

Ranchers & Neighbors Protecting Our Water
Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition
Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens
Sheridan Area Resource Council
Clark Resource Council

Each affiliate may have representation on the Powder River Basin Resource Council Board of Directors. Affiliates are self governing and decide their own priorities and issues to pursue. Some issues become shared priorities with Powder River.

2019 Board and Staff

2019 Board

Officers

Joyce Evans	~	Board Chair
Robert LeResche	~	Vice Chair
Christy Gerrits	~	Secretary
Roger Davidson	~	Treasurer

At-Large

Judy Leggett	Joan Tellez
D.J. Purcell	Shiva Polefka
Wayne Lax	Marcia Westkott
Gillian Malone	Kevin Lind
Stacy Page	

2019 Staff

Jill Morrison Executive Director
Stephanie AveyExecutive Administrator
Shannon AndersonOrganizer/Staff Attorney
Monika Leininger.....Organizer
Hesid BrandowOrganizer
Robin EH. Bagley....Communications & Development

Powder River Basin Resource Council 2019 Annual Report

**For information on how to support Powder River Basin
Resource Council please contact us at:**

Phone: 307-672-5809

Email: info@powderriverbasin.org

Website: www.powderriverbasin.org

**Powder River Basin Resource Council
934 North Main Street**



POWDER RIVER BASIN
Resource Council