



Court Sends BLM Back to Drawing Board on Coal Leasing Plan

On March 23rd, Judge Brian Morris from the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana issued a landmark decision holding that the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) plan to open up the entire Powder River Basin to 10.2 billion tons of federal coal leasing violated NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) requirements. The court found that BLM's regional management plan failed to consider alternatives that would reduce impacts to air, land, water, wildlife, and the global climate.



consequences of its actions and to evaluate how selling federal coal—along with unfettered oil and gas development—would impact the people and environment of the Powder River Basin.

The case was brought by the Western Environmental Law Center on behalf of a coalition of conservation groups in Montana and Wyoming, including Powder River and its regional network, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC.)

The court agreed that BLM had failed to take the required "hard look" at the impacts and had not considered ways to reduce those impacts. Judge Morris was particularly concerned that BLM had failed to consider how its actions would contribute to climate change. In his decision, Judge Morris said, "BLM cannot acknowledge that climate change concerns

BLM finalized the management plans in September 2015 after a seven-year review. Powder River was actively engaged throughout the planning process, attending public meetings, engaging our members, filing comments, and even lodging an administrative protest to the plan. During that time, we asked BLM to better consider the

defined, in part, the scope of the RMP revision while simultaneously foreclosing consideration of alternatives that would reduce the amount of available coal." He ordered BLM to prepare a supplemental environmental impact statement to review climate change impacts and consider options for the amount of coal the government will make available for sale and subsequent mining. The judge also called on BLM to do a better accounting of carbon and methane pollution impacts from both coal and oil and gas, not only during the development phase, but also "downstream" when the minerals are ultimately burned

.....continued on page 12

RENEWyoming Update



The Solar Question & Answer Session was well-attended. Nearly 40 people gathered at Sheridan Public Library in the Inner Circle. A mini-panel composed of our local Sheridan solar installers and a Powder River staff member answered questions from the audience for around 45 minutes. Footage of the event can be found on our Facebook page.



Val Burgess at the Sheridan Library Solar Q & A

Our solar videos have been a big hit, and we featured them again at our Q&A Session. For the last 10 weeks, we have been posting one video per week on our website and Facebook page. If you haven't seen them yet, please watch them. In our work making Wyoming solar more visible, using multiple media platforms gives us a broader reach. We are excited to continue to highlight solar stories through video during the coming months, but we are going to slow down a little bit. Over the summer months we will be putting out a new video every two weeks. The next set of videos is going to focus on the

direction we need to head with solar as a state and how we can go about getting there. Stay tuned!

Our solar publication is getting great feedback. In particular, people have found the page on the REAP (Rural Energy for America Program) grant to be helpful. We will continue to

distribute our publication at upcoming solar events around the state. We also have the publication available in our office, so drop in, say hi, and grab one! If there is a story you think we need to tell that we haven't told yet, contact our office or email us at info@powderriverbasin.org and let us know.

If you are on Facebook or Instagram, please look us up. We are at @PRBResCouncil on Instagram, and Powder River Basin

.....continued on page 13

Message from the Chair

Bridging the Divides



There are divides among us. Divides that separate the state hydrologically; waters on one side flow to the Atlantic, and waters on the other side join the Pacific. Divides that make some of us look for an “R” or a “D” after a candidate’s name. Divides that make some of us buy local, organic foods, and others go to Walmart no matter how far they must drive. And divides based on the population of our immediate surroundings, whether we are rural or urban.

This urban/rural question is one we face almost daily in this state, and it is one we almost never consciously consider. According to the last census, nearly 80% of Americans live in urban areas with only slightly more than 19% in rural areas. In 1940, there were about 50% in each. What does this mean for us? It means that most people have no idea about living in the country. “The country,” as defined by the census, is most of Wyoming, but I would argue that such a divide

exists even in our state between those who live “in town” and in subdivisions and those who actually live on working farms and ranches. It means that there are people who agree with me politically and socially but have no idea what it means to work the land and to care for producing livestock. It means that there are people who think I am mentally, socially, economically, and philosophically inferior to them and who place no value on my comments because of that inferiority. It also opens the possibility that I could use the same arguments to dismiss their opinions. How can we ever reach consensus?

Linda Hasselstrom, a western South Dakota author, writes of her ranch experiences recorded in her journals. In her book, *Gathering from the Grassland: A Plains Journal*, she tells of an experience which sheds some light on the reasons for the urban/ rural divide. A friend had recommended an earlier publication of hers, *Going Over East: Reflections of a Woman Rancher*, to his book club. The other members of the club hated the book and stated that they simply did not believe that the book could be true. No one could work that hard, they thought; no one would choose a life that difficult. How often have we all tried to explain our emotional ties to the land and our dedication to the rugged way we live only to have it shrugged off as fiction? In this nation where most have lost touch with the land, where few take any responsibility for the health and future of the outdoors, it is understandable that they cannot believe those of us who still live here.

Our challenge is to make our stories believable. Initiatives such as WORC’s “Homegrown Stories” and Powder River’s “RENEWyoming Solar Stories” are great strategies to start making ourselves more real. We need to use every outlet to dispel the fiction that we are the mythical cowboy or the mythical hysteric. We need to show proof of our concerns, and we need to never weaken in our dedication to protect the valuable and irreplaceable. We must create and search out new ways to make our message heard and make it ring clear.

What we cannot afford is to allow the destruction of the basic life requirements that we rural people must have. These would include clean air, clean water, open spaces, room to roam, a healthy soil system, and an environment that supports both wildlife and domestic species. We have to show others that their quality of life also depends upon these same things. We have to prove to them that it is in their own best interest to consider environmental health as they make decisions that impact economics. We must convince them that we speak the truth. So, let us be aware of the divides; let us embrace the divides, but let us bridge those divides because failure to do so threatens everyone’s future.

Powder River Basin Resource Council (Powder River) is a grass-roots organization of individuals and affiliate groups dedicated to good stewardship of Wyoming’s natural resources. Powder River was formed in 1973 and stands for the preservation and enrichment of our agricultural heritage and rural lifestyle; the conservation of Wyoming’s unique land, minerals, water and clean air consistent with responsible use of these resources to sustain the livelihood of present and future generations; and the education and empowerment of Wyoming’s citizens to raise a coherent voice in the decisions that will impact Wyoming residents’ environment and lifestyle.

Powder River is a member of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC). WORC member groups are Dakota Resource Council, Dakota Rural Action, Idaho Organization of Resource Councils, Northern Plains Resource Council, Oregon Rural Action, Western Colorado Congress, Western Native Voice and Powder River Basin Resource Council.

The services provided by Powder River include public education, community organizing and lobbying as permitted on behalf of its membership. Powder River is a non-profit, 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

Membership dues: \$30 for individuals, \$50 for families and \$20 for students and senior citizens. Powder River is dependent on contributions for its work; contributions, large and small, are welcomed.

Active Affiliate Organizations

- Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition(CALC)
- Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens (PACC)
- Ranchers & Neighbors Protecting Our Water (RNPOW)
- Sheridan Area Resource Council (SARC)

Board of Directors

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- Vice Chair.....Bob LeResche
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Staff

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- Organizers-Shannon Anderson, Robin EH. Bagley, Hesid Brandow, Sheridan, WY and Casey Quinn, Cheyenne, WY

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Powder River Breaks

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Photos by Powder River staff and members

Clean Power Plan Serves Public Health & Safety

In 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the final version of the Clean Power Plan, a program to reduce harmful emissions and carbon pollution from power plants. Just about a year ago, President Trump signed an Executive Order directing the EPA to review the program. Shortly thereafter, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt announced a proposal to repeal the plan. EPA held a listening session in Gillette on March 27th, and is accepting public comment until April 26th on whether EPA should move forward with the repeal.

Powder River members Christy Gerrits and Gillian Malone, as well as staff member Shannon Anderson, joined other concerned citizens in Gillette to oppose the Plan's repeal, arguing that it places marginal corporate profits over public health and long-term prosperity. Approximately 300 people attended the hearing with around 100 people delivering comments, which were split on the issue.

"Repealing the Clean Power Plan will not stop the momentum behind clean energy. Most states have already achieved the Clean Power Plan's carbon-pollution-reduction goals as utility customers around the country are demanding clean power for economic and environmental reasons," said Christy Gerrits, a Powder River board member and recently retired science teacher in Gillette. "EPA's action won't stop the momentum behind clean energy. Utilities will keep building and using clean power, as wind and solar resources are not just the energy of the future, but are the energy choices of today."

While the coal market has been in decline for years, now



Christy Gerrits at EPA Listening Session

accounting for only about 30% of the nation's electricity production, the renewable energy economy is competitive and growing quickly. According to recent data published by *USA Today*, employment in the nation's solar industry has grown by 20% annually in recent years. There are now approximately 260,000 U.S. solar workers, five times the number of coal mine workers.

"The Trump Administration's efforts to champion coal haven't been successful in bringing coal back, and cutting the Clean Power Plan won't save coal jobs and communities," said Powder River board member Gillian Malone.

"Market forces are responsible for these declines, and we need to start focusing on the economic opportunities renewable energy is already creating for Wyoming by developing the technology and skills we need to participate in this new energy market."

"In the meantime, Powder River has also been pushing for transitioning coal mining jobs into reclamation jobs. If we accept the inevitable direction our nation is moving, we could have a win-win in Wyoming," added Malone.

"The Clean Power Plan is good on multiple levels: clean energy jobs leading to economic growth, the health benefits from improved air quality, and ultimately, the health of the planet. What it's not good for are polluters who don't want to operate responsibly, and who don't want to pay for the public health impacts of their industries," said Gerrits.

Powder River Staff

BLM Greenlights 5,000

New Oil and Gas Wells in Converse County

In late January, BLM released a draft plan to approve 5,000 new oil and gas wells through the Converse County Oil and Gas Project. The announcement opened up a 45-day comment period on the project's environmental impact statement (EIS), which ended on March 12th.

The 1.5 million-acre project is being proposed by five major oil and gas companies: EOG Resources, Anadarko Petroleum, Chesapeake Energy, SM Energy, and Devon Energy. The companies proposed the plan back in 2014 when oil prices were high, but it sat on the shelf for four years, when prices dipped down again.

BLM had four years to consider the project and the unprecedented level of disturbance it proposes for people, landscapes, and wildlife habitat in Converse County, but the extra time didn't improve the agency's analysis. In fact, BLM's preferred alternative in the EIS is exactly what the companies proposed—5,000 wells over 10 years. The agency also exempted the companies from mitigation measures currently required under BLM's management plans.

Powder River submitted detailed comments on the BLM's plan, and specifically asked the agency to require phased development of drilling and development of the oil and gas resources. Phased development would allow the agency to enforce reclamation standards and limit impacts to air, water, wildlife, and our public health, we said.

Phased development would also help to moderate the "boom-bust" cycle of oil and gas development, we argued. BLM's own analysis shows significant negative socio-economic impacts from a sudden influx of workers and contractors. BLM estimates that population numbers in Converse County and nearby Natrona and Campbell Counties would increase by 9,500 as a result of the plan. Many of the new workers would require temporary housing—often resulting in people camping out in motel rooms and RV parks—and would place burdens on community infrastructure, including schools, health care

Weekly Brent and West Texas Intermediate crude oil spot prices, 2011-2017
dollars per barrel





Farm Bill Update

Passage Hazy in Light of November Elections

The setting for the 2018 Farm Bill is tumultuous, to say the least. US farm income has dropped by more than half since 2013, from \$123 billion to \$59.5 billion. From grain production to cattle, dairy, and hogs, many farmers and ranchers are struggling to stay afloat with prices below the cost of production. In addition to low prices, drought, and wildfires, farmers and ranchers are also trying to find footing in an uncertain market clouded by unprecedented global grain exports and possible retribution toward ag products from the administration's new tariffs on steel, aluminum, and Chinese products.

Meanwhile, all of this falls under the long shadow of the November mid-term elections, making the 2018 Farm Bill highly politicized. While the House version has been introduced, passage is uncertain. However, a strong Farm Bill that works for independent producers would be welcome.

Since the passage of the 2014 Farm Bill, the global grain market has shifted, well, globally. According to Alan Guebert's *Farm and Food File*, Argentina exported 1.6 million metric tons (mmt) of wheat in 2013-2014; now they export 13.7 mmt, a whopping 835% increase. Russia and Ukraine have also experienced tremendous growth with their wheat exports growing by 200% and 175%, respectively. On the flip side, US wheat exports have dropped from 31.5 mmt to 24.5 mmt over the same period.

Livestock producers are facing great uncertainty with their markets due to the renegotiation of NAFTA and trade conflicts with Asian countries who buy beef. The administration has implemented tariffs against imported steel and aluminum, impacting Japan, who imports \$2 billion worth of US beef per year. In an already depressed live cattle market, this does not bode well for Wyoming cattle producers.

The noisiest trade dispute is currently with China, who has threatened to target a number of U.S. farm products, including beef, in retaliation over tariffs. The Chinese aren't yet a large market for U.S. ranchers, buying only \$31 million in US beef per year, but have a growing demand for beef which they mostly fill with Brazilian and Australian imports. U.S. live cattle prices have dropped precipitously since February after regaining some ground following a slump last fall.

Overall, the news from the countryside is not good. Which makes the looming Farm Bill so critical.

The 2014 Farm Bill is set to expire on September 30, and whether or not a new one passes prior to the fall election seems uncertain. If a new one is not passed, the current one will have to remain in place. As of this writing, the House Ag Committee's version has been introduced, but may not pass on the House floor.

What we do know is that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is one of the key points of contention between members of the House Ag Committee. Nutrition spending accounts for 80% of the Farm Bill's budget, so this is no small argument. Committee Chairman Mike Conaway (R-TX) has proposed revamping the program with additional work requirements, and working training, for able-

bodied SNAP recipients up to age 60. Committee Democrats oppose these provisions because it will cut funding for millions of low-income Americans.

Other low points of the House bill are that the Farmers Market and Local Foods Promotion portion, as well as the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), have zero funding, which would essentially eliminate them if this bill passes. Since local foods and renewable energy are important issues for Powder River members, we will be watching these programs.

Disappointingly, Rep. Steve King's (R-IA) bill to "Protect Interstate Commerce," has been accepted as an amendment to the House bill. The bill essentially would strip states of their rights to regulate agriculture production and differentiate products. For example, efforts to label anything locally or Wyoming grown would be illegal, as would county ordinances regulating confined animal feeding operations. The bottom line would result in stripping local control and making food production one-size-fits-all. For these reasons, Powder River signed onto a letter opposing King's bill, along with a number of groups in the WORC network.

The Senate Ag Committee also will work on their version of the Farm Bill, where Chairman Pat Roberts (R-KS) indicated he does not support any changes to SNAP and there appears to be more across-the-aisle cooperation. According to Farm Bill scuttlebutt, the Senate version could be released around the end of April to early May. The House version likely will be voted on in mid-May. No matter what happens with the House bill, many groups will be working to ensure the Senate bill is more workable.

A brief note about NAFTA negotiations

NAFTA is being renegotiated, but the process has crawled along. Whether or not the deal will be finished in enough time for Congress to vote on it this year remains to be seen. Because negotiations are ongoing, it's time to tell our Congressional delegation that we want the investor-state-dispute-settlement (ISDS) process dumped. The ISDS is what gives multi-national corporations the ability to "sue" the government over what they feel are disadvantageous policies imposed by the government, like country-of-origin-labeling (COOL). This process doesn't even happen in the courts; it's held before a tribunal of three attorneys, who can award monetary damages payable by the taxpayers, and it's not appealable.

Not surprisingly, corporate lobbyists are parading through Congressional offices in an effort to keep ISDS in the new agreement. So it's vital that senators and representatives hear from their constituents that ISDS has no place in a fair trade agreement.

Robin E.H. Bagley
Powder River Staff

Citizen Voices Make the Difference During Legislative Session

With Wyoming facing financial shortfalls, plus a growing desire to diversify the state's economy, the 2018 Legislative Session was unique in both the type and significance of bills presented during a budget session. But for those who participated in the session, the most unusual thing was the series of efforts to undermine the legislative process.

Despite this, Powder River ended the session with major victories that will benefit the state long-term. Thanks to our members and citizens all across Wyoming, not one bill that Powder River opposed was signed into law. Our collective voice helped defeat bills that threatened our way of life, including our ability to live and work in peace. The phone calls, emails, citizen lobbying, testimony in legislative committees, and sustained public engagement by our members helped solidify our successes and defeat destructive legislation.

Specifically, your work helped to kill House Bill 25 upon introduction, a bill that would have allowed gravel mines to bypass the usual permitting process through DEQ Land Quality and begin construction without a proper and thorough analysis of the impacts these small mines would pose for neighboring landowners.

We also fought and killed tax breaks for industry that would have harmed Wyoming by throwing away tax revenue we receive on our finite resources. Senate File 98 would have given a 50% tax break to new oil and gas wells after two years of production. In a time of economic distress, the last thing we should be doing is pushing a reduction in severance taxes; studies have shown time and time again that reducing severance taxes has no economic benefit to the state. Thanks to your help, we slowed the momentum of this bill in the Senate, and then it died a swift death in the House Revenue Committee.

Of course, the most widely recognized efforts by our members and Wyoming citizens was combatting Senate File 74, Crimes Against Critical Infrastructure. You can find the full story in the article below.

Also worth noting is that our years of work to ensure the security of our public lands reached fruition during this session when House Bill 94—which would have set the stage for federal land transfer—failed introduction. With consistent pressure from wildlife, conservation, and hunting organizations, federal land transfer efforts in the Wyoming legislature may be dwindling, although the threat will always exist by those seeking to privatize our resources for personal

gain.

Not all of the Budget Session was spent fighting bad bills. Powder River was also proactive on a handful of good bills that will benefit Wyoming. One such bill was House Bill 72, on ad valorem tax collections, which credits counties for any legal costs incurred in attempts to collect delinquent taxes from industry and prevents counties from being held liable for amounts not collected due to nonpayment.

Other beneficial bills that passed were Senate File 16, financial assurance for Class I and VUIC wells, which removes grandfathering for injection well bonding, and Senate File 18 on orphan site funding, which provides a significant funding mechanism for orphan site remediation by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality.

Powder River supported an amendment to House Bill 78, on funding for water construction projects, which ensures that Carlile area residents in Crook County, who recently experienced water well contamination, can access drinking water by allowing up to 200 taps into Gillette's Madison Formation pipeline.

As for the state budget, Powder River supported funding for Farm to School, a measure that we helped enact last year. The budget amendment added \$50,000 in funding to the Department of Education for processing costs for Wyoming meat used in schools; the funding is good through the 2020 school year.

The Environmental Quality Council (EQC), which offers a voice to the citizens of Wyoming in regards to development, was threatened with defunding. This budget amendment was pushed by several legislators who explicitly stated it was due to the EQC's decision to deny the permit for Ramaco's Brook Coal mine. However, an amendment supported by Powder River restored EQC funding to a full two years.

Thanks to your voices and engagement with the legislature, the bills that would have been bad for Wyoming died, while a number of positive bills passed. As we have said throughout the legislative session, the work we do would not have the impact it does without the engagement of our members. Thank you for your efforts; you make the difference.

Casey Quinn
Powder River Staff

Riding the Wyoming Legislative Rollercoaster

Legislation drafted by a consortium of the most powerful fossil fuel industries and corporate interests in the country has been introduced, passed, defeated, or is pending in over a dozen states. The legislation, typically titled *Crimes Against Critical Infrastructure* and initially drafted by the American Legislative Exchange Council—or "ALEC"—is popping up in states where oil and gas pipelines and infrastructure is prevalent. In Wyoming, the legislation was brought to legislators for introduction by the Holland and Hart law firm, which represents the oil and gas and mining industries.

The Wyoming version of the bill, known as Senate File 74 – Crimes Against Critical Infrastructure, would make objecting to, protesting or "impeding" any critical infrastructure (such as pipelines, oil and gas wells and infrastructure, coal mines, refineries, trains, chemical plants, powerlines, and communications infrastructure)

punishable by huge fines and imprisonment. Individuals impeding critical infrastructure would face misdemeanor and felony trespass charges, steep fines, and imprisonment for up to ten years.

In Wyoming, the legislation was aimed at weakening First Amendment rights, and allowed fines of \$1 million for organizations who "aid and abet" citizens exercising their right to free speech and association regarding virtually any form of energy-related proposal or project (think Powder River.) A parade of companies representing every major corporate industry in the state supported the legislation. The Senate Judiciary Committee, in an unprecedented move, even allowed the bill to be introduced to the Senate Judiciary Committee by the director of the Wyoming Business Alliance.

Opposition to SF 74, based on the fact that the bill contained vague and subjective language with numerous unintended consequences,

Ochsner: Allowing Oil and Gas Development Near Fort Laramie is a Mistake

The Bureau of Land Management recently auctioned oil and gas leases within a half mile of the Fort Laramie National Historic Site. One of the parcels that was up for auction appeared to be less than a quarter of a mile from the park's boundary. In the end, only one of the six parcels surrounding the historical site sold. And it sold for just \$2 an acre. Is this the value that we are placing on preserving our nation's history?

For nearly sixty years, the Fort Laramie Historical Association has worked to advance the scientific, educational, historical and interpretive activities at the National Historic Site for the benefit of its visitors. Fort Laramie dates back to the early 1800's as a trading post, and for centuries as the location of the confluence of the North Platte and Laramie Rivers.

Fort Laramie has historical importance to many people and interests, including northern plains tribes, the US Military and Goshen County tourism. Fort Laramie was the location of the historically significant 1851 and 1868 treaties. The site also houses Wyoming's oldest standing military building, Old Bedlam, which was constructed in 1849. Fort Laramie was critical to the settlement of the West and remains critical to the area's economy.

To allow oil and gas development on public land so close to such a vital piece of Wyoming and national history is a mistake. As a lifelong resident of Goshen County, I understand the economic importance of oil and gas development to our area. Development should not be done, however, without any regard to its surroundings and potential impact.

Just last month, Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke stated the BLM would defer lease sales near Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico because of negative impacts to cultural resources. He also referenced the economic value of protecting lands near our national parks. It begs the question, why defer lease sales near one

national historical park and not those near Fort Laramie?

Prior to the auction of leases near Fort Laramie the BLM reviewed environmental impacts to the area, but that review contained no analysis of the potential impacts of development around the Fort Laramie National Historic Site (FLNHS). Even more, concerns raised by the National Park Service about the potential impacts to visitor experience, air quality, water quality and night skies were completely ignored.

I believe that oil and gas development and parks can coexist when government agencies work with each other and the local community to plan in a way that avoids conflicts. Unfortunately, this was not the case with the leases near Fort Laramie or several other national parks. Since the start of 2017, BLM has announced lease sales close to Zion National Park, Hovenweep National Monument, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Rocky Mountain National Park, Dinosaur National Monument, Great Basin National Park, Mesa Verde National Park, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Fossil Butte National Monument and others.

The BLM must commit to a more consistent and inclusive process that ensures responsible energy development and protection of our national parks. It is my hope that the BLM will not continue its trend of leasing near our treasured historical site. The value of the FLNHS to the area and to its visitors far outweighs any amount of oil that could be extracted near its borders. The impacts and concerns of the National Park Service, at the very least, need to be considered when oil and gas development is probable in its backyard.

Colby Ochsner is the secretary and treasurer of the Fort Laramie Historical Association.

This was reprinted from the Casper Star-Tribune, April 14, 2018.

Coal's War on Wyoming

We have seen our politicians and Mr. Pruitt do their song and dance routine now and it is the same old nursery rhyme that we all learned about Old King Coal, "... and he called for his fiddlers three ..."

They can say anything they like about coal. They can scrub it white, they can douse it with perfume. But all they are doing is putting the lipstick on the pig and it is still, coal. Coal is a valuable resource but it has problems and industry can and has ignored them. There are problems involved with mining it, moving it and using it. Industry can ignore those problems, but they are not going away.

A hundred years ago, Peabody Coal tried cleaning up its mine in Sheridan by changing the mine's name to Kleenburn. It didn't work then and after a hundred years, Peabody's coal is still black and when you burn it, there is ash.

The News Record quoted Mr. Pruitt as saying "... Our job is not to coerce markets ..." and "... Our job is not to come in and say this type of fuel is good."

Then what the hell was he doing, what was the purpose for this dog and pony show? They wanted to jolly up 'ol King Coal and maybe score some donations and this is one place where the people will cheer when they say there is no such thing as climate change. They talked about a "war on coal" and yet they try to weasel out of the responsibility of reclamation.

When will the coal industry get over this War on Wyoming? I wish that I could explain to them about the beauty of this state, a fragile beauty that is destroyed by their exploitation.

Leland "LJ" Turner

Gillette

This letter appeared in the Gillette News Record on April 2, 2018.

County Commission Caves on Ramaco Rezone in Tongue River Valley

Despite significant opposition to the proposal, in early March the Sheridan County Commission voted 3-to-2 to approve Ramaco Wyoming Coal Company's application to rezone 114 acres along the banks of the scenic Tongue River from agricultural to light industrial. Powder River lodged comments opposing the rezoning, as had a large number of members and other area residents. At the time of the hearing, letters against the rezoning outnumbered supporting letters nearly 2-to-1.

Testimony at the hearing stretched out for nearly three hours with parties on both sides delivering comments to the commissioners. A number of Powder River members delivered comments in opposition to the rezoning:

John Buyok, who lives and farms near the development site, said, "Our family has been in this area 108 years...This area is totally unsuited to industrial zoning...It's a classic example of an alluvial valley floor...The land proposed for the development has a high water table and is hydraulically connected to the Tongue River and the Kleenburn Ponds. Any industrial spills or contaminated runoff will end up in the river or the recreation area in short order. Only about one percent of the land in the Tongue River Basin in Wyoming is irrigated or sub-irrigated...approving this rezone will take between five and 10 percent of the agriculturally productive sub-irrigated land in the Tongue River Basin out of production."

Bonnie Aksamit, whose home sits next door to the proposed industrial park, had the following comments: "We chose to live out there because it's quiet...it's sad to even think about a rezone. {The rezone} will create increased traffic, dust, and noise...Who wants to sit on their front porch and see a

"We chose to live out there because it's quiet...it's sad to even think about a rezone.... Who wants to sit on their front porch and see a manufacturing facility?"

Bonnie Aksamit

manufacturing facility?...The roads out there aren't in good shape. Who is going to upkeep them? Plus there is a lack of infrastructure; they should go to the Hi-Tech Park instead, where it {the project} belongs."

" Ramaco has made a lot of promises, and we hope they follow through with them. After listening to their presentation, they talked a good game, but as neighboring landowners, we're still skeptical."

Joan Tellez

Joan Tellez, a Resource Council member who owns property near the site, commented, "Ramaco has made a lot of promises, and we hope they follow through with them. After listening to their presentations, they talked a good game, but as neighboring landowners, we're still skeptical. This rezone is permanent, and now Ramaco can do whatever

they want out there. They have no conditions, and that makes us nervous about the future."

Finally, Jill Morrison, Powder River's Executive Director, who was unable to attend the hearing, had this to say: "The decision was disappointing, and we are still concerned about the location and the impacts. In this day and age, when the county focus has been on cleaning up the Tongue River, placing industrial development along the banks of the river is foolish. We know industrial development is not compatible with the current recreational, agricultural and residential neighbors. We will continue to hold Ramaco accountable to uphold their promise to be a good a neighbor and for any impacts."

Powder River will continue working with impacted neighboring landowners to hold Ramaco accountable

Robin EH. Bagley
Powder River Staff

"Check Out" the Seed Library

Gardening season is nearly here; time to try to some new seed varieties. The Sheridan County Seed Library has a selection of heirloom seeds that you can try for free. That's right – free.

Anyone can check out up to five seed packets per month at no cost from the Seed Library. All you need to do is fill out a simple form from the office at the Extension Service, record the seeds you're checking out, and you're done. While we hope that you will save seeds and then bring some of those back to the library, it's not required.

The Seed Library has a variety of heirloom vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Please note that these are small packets, more like samplers, instead of full commercial packets. There are enough seeds to let you try the variety and then save seeds if you wish.

The Seed Library is located at the University of Wyoming Extension Office, Watt Ag Building, 3401 Coffeen Avenue. You can also stay updated on the Seed Library on Facebook, @SheridanCountySeedLibrary.

Robin EH. Bagley
Powder River Staff



The Food Forest Has A Lot Going On This Season!!

Spring is an ideal time to get busy and get our hands into the soil. As the weather warms up, the Sheridan Food Forest has lots of events for people to plug into, from educational events to transplanting and preparing pathways. Take a moment and look at what's happening. What a great way to get outside, socialize, and start the season right!



people's movement through the area. Once we clear paths in June, we will fill them with mulch to discourage regrowth. The date of this event will be announced as it gets closer.

2018 Pollinator Counts:

- May 26th at noon
- June 23rd at noon
- July 21st at noon
- August 25th at noon to coordinate with National Bee Day.

Scott Hiniger helped open the season with a pruning demonstration on April 14th. Thanks to Scott, the forest is now in prime shape to spread its branches in good health!

Grapes have been transplanted from the back of the Forest to the area near the front fence. This is an area where they can catch good sun and they will be able to use the fence as a trellis.

April is also time to lay landscape fabric and mulch along the outside perimeter of the Food Forest on the creek side to suppress weeds along the fence. The Forest already has some landscape fabric, but will probably need more to complete this project. Anyone who has extra and wants to donate it will be welcome. Mulch for weed suppression will be obtained from the landfill. The more that we can do to control weeds around the perimeter of the Food Forest the better!

We are in the process of designating pathways to guide

There are many other ways to plug into the Food Forest. To learn more about the Food Forest, or to get on the Food Forest mailing list, contact Carol LeResche at leresche@rangeweb.net or find the Sheridan Food Forest on Facebook

Carol LeResche
Sheridan Food Forest Coordinator

Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition 2018 Annual Meeting

Monday, May 7th

**Kiwanis Community House
4603 Lions Park Drive**

**6:30pm - 7:00pm Business Meeting
7:00pm - 8:00pm Featured Speakers**

Featured Speakers:

**“Protecting our Groundwater and Aquifers
from Oil and Gas Development”**

Mike Wireman

Hydrogeologist and former EPA National Groundwater Expert

**“Lessons Learned from the
Pavillion Groundwater Investigation”**

Sue Spencer

Senior Hydrogeologist with Weston Engineering

Picnic on the Pathways

June 13th, 5:30 – 7:30 pm
Washington Park, Sheridan

In partnership with the Sheridan
Community Land Trust & Science Kids

Solar demonstration & hands-on solar
fun while enjoying Sheridan's parks &
pathways!

WORC Report Finds Coal Self-Bonding Unnecessary and Risky

The practice of self-bonding at coal mines could be ended today without a significant impact to the coal mining industry. That's the conclusion of a new report, *Now is the Time to End Self-Bonding*, which points out that self-bonds in the West have hit a historic low, and that conventional alternatives to self-bonding are readily available from dozens of sources on affordable terms. Separately, a report from the federal Government Accountability Office (GAO) released on April 5th specifically recommends ending self-bonding under federal law.

"Self-bonding is risky to taxpayers and unnecessary to coal mining companies," said Bob LeResche, Powder River's Vice-Chair and a WORC Board member from Clearmont. "The GAO recommends ending self-bonding outright, and our report demonstrates that would not harm the industry. Self-bonding could be ended tomorrow and no one would blink."

A self-bond is a promise from a coal company to pay for required coal mine cleanup, known as reclamation, not backed by any collateral. If a self-bonded coal company liquidates before completing reclamation, the self-bond becomes nothing more than an uncollectible "IOU" and the public is left without sufficient funds to complete reclamation. Many states do not accept self-bonds, but some do, including, among western states, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and North Dakota.

WORC's report has three major findings:

- *The amount of outstanding self-bonds has hit historically low levels, declining 78% since 2015 among western coal mines.* There are only \$577,448,720 in self-bonds outstanding in western states today, down from \$2,564,743,329 in 2015. This decline is due to the wholesale replacement of self-bonds by Peabody Energy, Arch Coal, and Alpha Natural Resources, forced during their respective bankruptcy proceedings.
- *Surety bonds, a conventional alternative to self-bonds, are available on affordable terms to the coal industry,* according to coal company investor disclosures and court filings. This suggests that replacing the remaining western self-bonds could be done with minimal impact.
- *Coal companies that remain self-bonded tend to have good credit ratings,* which suggests they can replace self-bonds with conventional bonds on affordable terms.

"The immediate threat posed by self-bonding has receded for the time-being," LeResche said. "Congress and individual states should

seize this perfect opportunity to end self-bonding before it again becomes a danger to taxpayers. We urge decision-makers at the state and federal level to end the public's exposure to self-bonds once and for all."

In 2015 and 2016, the three largest coal companies in the country filed for bankruptcy with \$2.3 billion of self-bonds owed to state coal regulators. WORC and Powder River led an intervention into the bankruptcy proceedings to force Alpha Natural Resources, Arch Coal, and Peabody Energy to replace their self-bonds with third-party insurance instruments. That effort culminated in wholesale replacement of \$2.5 billion of self-bonds, including by Cloud Peak Energy, which replaced its self-bonds voluntarily outside bankruptcy court.

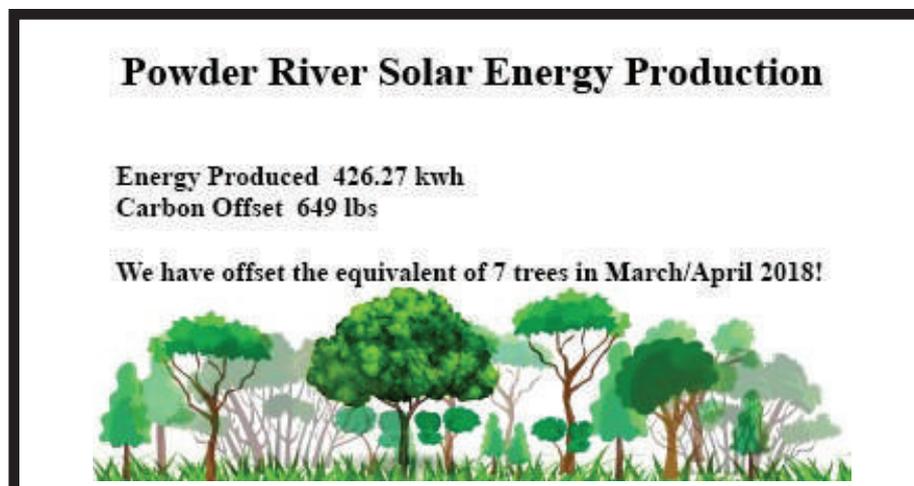
Despite the success of that effort, several attempts to permanently reform self-bonding languish on the federal and state levels. The federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) initiated a rulemaking in 2016 to strengthen self-bonding rules, but that rule has not moved forward under the current Administration.

In October 2017, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke released the *Energy Burdens* report, which recommended cancellation of the self-bonding rulemaking and even the repeal of OSMRE's "Policy Advisory" to states, which had recommended against continued acceptance of self-bonds. Although the Policy Advisory has already been rescinded, Interior's report states that the agency will "carefully consider the report and recommendations of the pending GAO audit of financial assurances currently underway" and requests public comment before rescinding the self-bonding rulemaking.

In Wyoming, the state that has historically carried the greatest load of self-bonds, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has proposed limits on self-bonding. These proposed rules received strong public support. However, a citizen advisory board recently sent the rules back to DEQ for further study.

A previous study from GAO found that self-bonding is available only to the coal industry among natural resource extraction industries. The April 5th report from GAO makes the case that self-bonding poses a risk to the government because it is difficult for state regulators to reliably determine the financial health of a coal mine operator and to determine whether the company operator qualifies for self-bonding, and state regulators face challenges to obtain a replacement for existing self-bonds when an operator no longer qualifies.

Dan Cohn
WORC Staff



Powder River Awards Three at Wyoming State Science Fair

In an ongoing effort to promote the importance of studying Wyoming's ecosystems and the ecological impacts of development, Powder River presents two sets of awards each year at the Wyoming State Science Fair. The "Bill Barlow Memorial Youth in Conservation Awards" are presented in the memory of Bill Barlow, a rancher and visionary conservationist who was also a founding member of Powder River. 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.

Each recipient earns a free membership to Powder River and a monetary award. Powder River members Wayne Lax, Kathleen Selock, and Stacy Page traveled to Laramie in March to judge these awards.

Eduardo Burgos from Greybull High School was the recipient for the "Award for Impacts on Development," and a \$350 monetary award. Eduardo's project was titled "*Potential Bioremediation of Waste Hydrocarbons: Utilization of Mycorrhizal Fungi as an Environmental Enhancement Agent*." He tested several commercially available mycorrhizal formulations for their effectiveness of breaking down hydrocarbons in crude oil-contaminated soil. He found that the brand "Gnarly Roots" had the greatest breakdown of hydrocarbons in the contaminated soil.

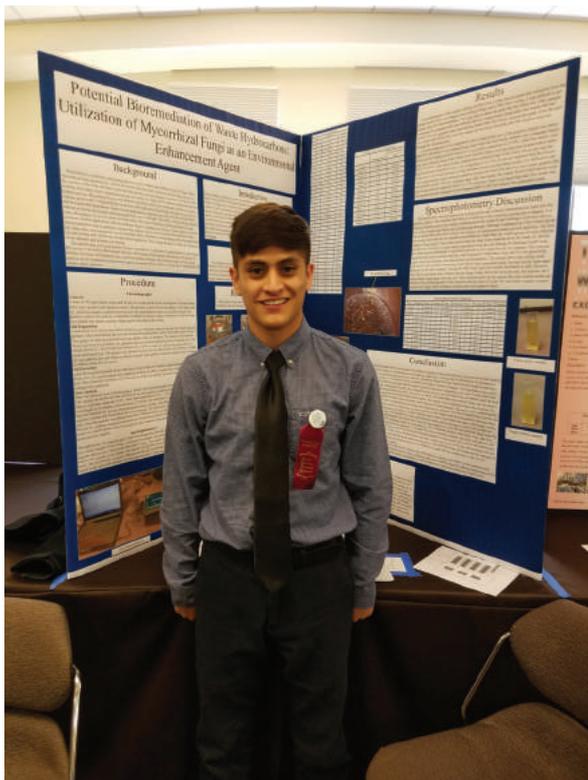
Kort Bannan from Lusk Elementary Middle School won the environmental award, and Reuben McGuire of Pioneer Park Elementary in Cheyenne won the renewable energy award. Both received monetary awards of \$200 each.

Kort's project was titled *Saving the Ocean 1 Fiber at a Time*. Sheep wool woven into mats is used to absorb oil from water, especially in oil spills in the ocean. The oil can even be salvaged from the mats, and the mats can be reused up to 10 times. Kort's family raises meat breed sheep and currently the sheared wool is discarded because there is no economical use for it. He tested the coarse wool from his sheep against fine and medium textured wool and found the fine wool did the best job of absorbing oil with the coarse wool absorbing less. His project demonstrated that the coarse wool was still effective for absorbing oil, and that this may be a use for the wool from his sheep.

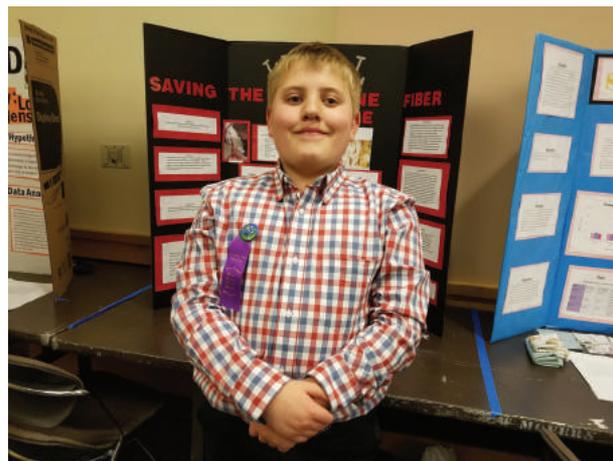
Reuben's project was titled *Water + Spin = Power*. He wanted to know what configuration of hydroelectric generators—series, parallel, or parallel-series hybrid—is most efficient in generating electricity. He was interested in using renewable energy to provide some of the electricity in his house, but solar panels were too expensive for his budget so he used the water pressure in his house. In his tests he found that the straight series provided the most electricity but took away most of the water pressure; the parallel provided the least amount of electricity with water pressure remaining strong, and the parallel-series hybrid that he designed provided electricity while maintaining enough water pressure to reach the top floor of his house.

Stacy Page
Powder River Board

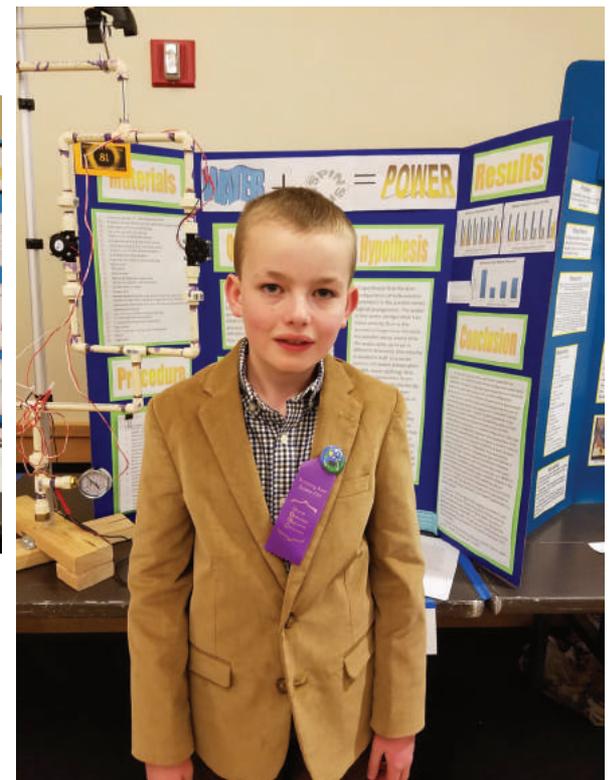
2018 Science Fair Winners



Eduardo Burgos, Greybull High School



Kort Bannan, Lusk Elementary Middle School



Reuben McGuire, Pioneer Park Elementary

Editor's Note: Powder River Basin Resource Council and affiliate Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition recently sent this letter to Governor Mead in regard to the back pedaling of the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality's Air Quality Division on implementing the Pinedale air quality rules statewide.

**Powder River Basin Resource Council
Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition**

April 18, 2018

Honorable Governor Matt Mead
Idelman Mansion
2323 Carey Ave.
Cheyenne, WY 82002-0010

RE: Increasing Air Pollution and Health Impacts from Oil and Gas Facilities

Dear Governor Mead:

We are writing to express our concern over the growing impacts to public health from air pollution emitted by the thousands of new and permitted (soon to be drilled) oil and gas wells near populated areas in Wyoming. Every day, we hear growing concerns from Wyoming citizens living near oil and gas development regarding the visible and health-related impacts from an increasing number of oil and gas wells and production facilities in Laramie, Converse, Campbell, and Johnson counties. According to the WOGCC website there are 4,606 oil and gas permits in Laramie County, 8,818 well permits in Converse County, 4,869 in Campbell County, and 1,231 in Johnson County. The total number of wells in these counties is up to over 19,500 permits and is expected to rise in the coming months.

Moreover, we are deeply concerned about the failure of the Wyoming DEQ to analyze and comment on recent air quality impacts from the 5,000 to 10,000 new wells proposed and permitted in Converse and southern Campbell County. Until very recently, we understood that the DEQ was planning to move forward with proposals to recommend tighter air quality standards/thresholds for

oil and gas wells in these other counties in the state, similar to the Upper Green River Basin area, since both have high-density O&G development. We believe it is critical for DEQ to act soon to propose and implement measures that will reduce health impacts and prevent wasteful practices in the oil and gas industry. These include:

1. Lowering the threshold for VOC emissions requiring combustion or vapor recovery systems, to at least the levels enforced in the Jonah-Pinedale area;
2. Allowing only zero-bleed pneumatic controllers to reduce methane and VOC emissions;
3. Requiring leak detection and repair programs to cut fugitive emissions by a significant amount, and
4. Using closed storage tanks (crude and produced water) with 98% VOC emission controls.

We are also writing to request a regional impact analysis by DEQ in the area around Cheyenne and in Converse County where over 5,000 new federal wells are proposed. A regional analysis should model impacts of all the existing and foreseeable O&G production activity. We believe this analysis would demonstrate that the existing VOC emissions, which industry has indicated in recent permitting documents, are around 50 tons per year for one 4-well pad. If we multiply this number by a conservative number of 200 pads it will result in producing 10,000 tons per year of VOC emissions. The Converse County Oil and Gas EIS predicts 15,000 tons per year of VOC emissions. This number is comparable to the Jonah-Pinedale emissions and is certainly enough to threaten ozone attainment in Laramie and Converse County. We believe decisive leadership from your office will provide the incentive the Wyoming DEQ needs to take action and prevent air quality exceedances, waste, and significant threats to public health. Wyoming prides itself on being a leader and moving forward with these common sense air quality protections is a win win. Thank you for your consideration and attention.

With Best Regards,

Joyce Evans, Chair
Powder River Basin Resource Council

Alex Bowler, MPH, President
Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition



Wayne Lax, a Powder River board member from Cheyenne, traveled to Washington, D.C. on a Western Organization of Resource Councils fly-in to save the Methane Waste Prevention Rule and stop the waste of taxpayer-owned natural gas. Wayne is pictured here with Sue Beug from Northern Plains Resource Council. (Photo courtesy of WORC)

**Stay Informed on
Events & Issues!**
Sign up for our email list

You already get the *Powder River Breaks* newsletter, and you can check out our website at www.powderriverbasin.org, but if you want to receive alerts and event announcements, make sure we have your email on file. Just email us at info@powderriverbasin.org and ask to be added to our membership email list. It's really that easy!

BUFFALO RMP....Continued from page 1

in power plants.

Landowners in the Powder River Basin—which extends from Northeast Wyoming into Southeast Montana—were pleased with the court’s decision and called on BLM to do more to reduce the impacts of federal coal development.

“The court’s ruling rightfully declares that the impacts of energy development should be accounted for and that the government must consider taking some coal off the table to provide for other land uses” said Mark Fix, a WORC member whose Miles City, Montana ranch is downstream from several coal mines. “I’ve seen the impacts of climate change in our region firsthand, through increased fires and extreme storm events. As a rancher, I rely on nature for everything. If we don’t get a handle on climate change, my neighbors and people like me will be out of business.”

Powder River has long called on BLM to modify its federal coal program to ensure that the program operates in the public interest. During the last administration, we supported efforts for a programmatic review of federal

coal leasing, and we hope that the new court-ordered action will provide an additional opportunity for reviewing conditions in the Powder River Basin.

“The government needs to regain control over planning and leasing for many reasons,” said Bob LeResche, Powder River’s Vice-Chair and a Powder River Basin landowner. “American taxpayers, mining states and coal communities, especially now, must receive a fair return for federal coal. Given today’s lagging coal markets, a detailed review will help everyone to balance leased coal with market demand, and to account for the significant impacts coal creates to our air, land, water, agricultural economies, and other economic activity in our states.”

“We’re glad the court is requiring BLM to conduct a thoughtful analysis to re-align federal coal management with today’s realities by addressing impacts and markets as they now exist, and to reduce impacts to coal communities,” LeResche added.

Presently there is only one active coal lease application pending in Wyoming’s

Powder River Basin, and almost a billion tons of coal was withdrawn from applications just in the past year, which is significant: coal companies are in no hurry to get new federal reserves because of a down market and future uncertainty.

“As the managers of over 40 percent of the nation’s coal, BLM’s decisions matter for our communities, our public health, and our climate,” said Shannon Anderson, Powder River’s Staff Attorney who helped on the case. “With the rate of coal leasing declining because of a depressed market and increased demand for clean energy, our government has the time to do the right analysis, which we hope will lead to the right decision made in the public interest.”

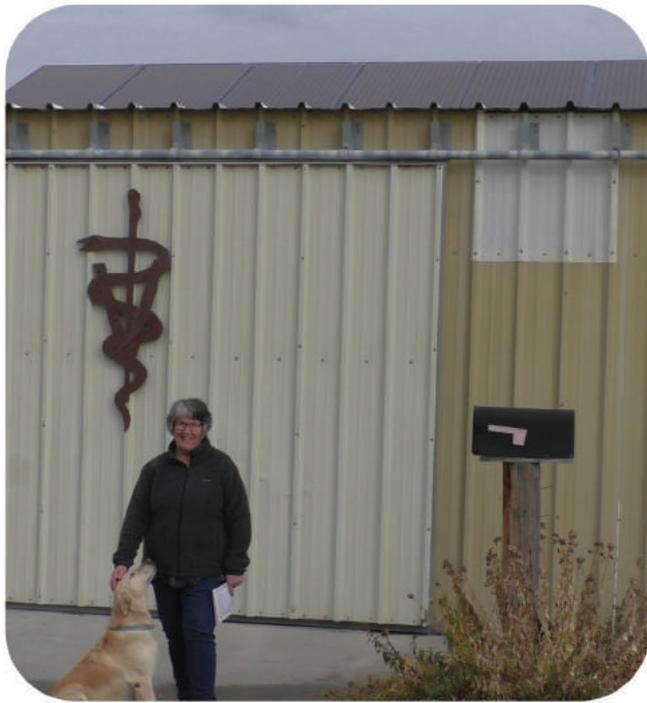
We look forward to engaging our members in BLM’s new review of coal leasing. Stay tuned for public participation opportunities coming soon.

Shannon Anderson
Powder River Staff

March for Science 2018



Kim Briddle-Shoshoni, Wyoming (Nov. 2017)



Kim Briddle stands outside of Fremont Veterinary Clinic near Shoshoni, Wyoming.

I have always been interested in solar energy. My dad was interested in this stuff back in the 1970s, and built a Passive Solar, earth berm house in Riverton in 1981. My brother built a similar house in Worland in the 80s also. We talked a lot about using solar, and how Wyoming, with its beautiful clear skies, is a good place to utilize it.

I read about solar energy in *Mother Earth News* and followed the development of alternative energy globally. I was very pleased to finally be able to afford the solar array on the clinic. I'm a black belt tightwad, and the idea of free energy from the sun is awesome to me.

We installed our system in February 2014. We worked with Creative Energies out of Lander to install. It's a 4.65 kW grid-tied system with 15 310-watt solar panels, plus the inverter. The panels generate 100% of our electrical use at the clinic. We also produce a small amount that we sell back to the grid.

I like being on the cutting edge of the technology (even though solar isn't cutting edge). I like the idea of being independent and the idea of sustainability. I only wish battery backup was not so expensive. It would be terrific to go off-grid.

The benefit to the business is the money saved over the life of the panels. The benefits to the community is the use of renewable energy.

There's no maintenance to our system. It just works. We haven't experienced any problems and the system has held up to hail. There are no drawbacks at all.

When we installed, We received federal tax credit, and depreciation expense for the business. We also received a Renewable Energy for American Program (REAP) grant for 25% of the cost of the project. With the credits, depreciation, and grant, the total cost of the system to us was \$6,817. That made the project affordable! The state could have a tax credit similar to the federal credit....maybe tied to property tax? Or a refund of the sales tax? Anything the state could do would be great!

If you're thinking about installing solar today, you should see if you can get a grant, there is no downside, just saving money for years to come! I would encourage every business to apply for the REAP grant to take advantage of this awesome opportunity to install renewables.

I can't say enough about the opportunity to go solar. It was a project that I have been contemplating for years. The REAP grant gave us the means to carry out the project.

RENEWyoming....Continued from page 1

Resource Council on Facebook. You can also find us on Twitter at @PRBResCouncil. We are as busy as bees posting lots of great information on solar energy, and we would love to have you be a part of our online community!

We will host more events as the year goes on. There is very real interest in solar installation this year, and installation has heated up along with the weather. For every person who installs, there are several others who are thinking about it. A lot of people are interested in

installing, but they have a number of questions before they begin the process. Through events like the Solar Celebration and Question & Answer Session, plus online activity, we will help people find the answers. With your help and continued support, we can make 2018 a bright year for solar energy in Wyoming!

Hesid Brandow
Powder River Staff



BLM.....Continued from page 3

facilities, and emergency services. BLM also anticipates that Glenrock and Douglas would need to increase their municipal water supply capacity to serve the additional residents. BLM says it is “common for developers to share in the costs of such infrastructure,” but does not propose any mitigation fees as part of its plan. Oil and gas development is also exempt from Wyoming’s Industrial Siting Act, which makes impact fees available to local communities affected by industrial development.

One of the most troubling aspects of BLM’s proposal is the degree of impacts to air quality in the Powder River Basin. BLM discloses that there will be violations of health-based air quality standards if the plan goes forward. This would mean high levels of ozone and particulate dust in the air, which would impact public health. BLM’s analysis also shows the project would impair visibility at the nearby Fort Laramie National Historic Site for 25 days per year.

Powder River called on BLM to conduct a “health impact assessment” as part of its EIS. We provided BLM with copies of numerous studies about public health impacts from oil and gas development. We asked BLM to consider direct public health impacts stemming from increased air and water pollution, and indirect impacts such as loss of sleep, heightened stress levels, psychological distress, and quality of life impacts from living with oil and gas development. We also called on BLM to increase the setback distance between homes and wells in the project area to reduce impacts to public health and quality of life.

Even EPA weighed in with comments, criticizing BLM for merely going along with the companies’ plan. EPA told BLM that the some of the impacts to air and water resources could be avoided by selecting an alternative plan, while allowing the same number of wells over the same 10-year period. The companies’ plan also adds more than 700 miles of roads compared to the BLM’s alternative option and uses 900 million more gallons of fresh water per year. It doubles the amount of waste water and suggests 30 new disposal wells to inject produced water underground.

Another troublesome part of the project is its impacts to wildlife.

BLM discloses that over 50 sage-grouse leks will be abandoned and populations will be extirpated (become extinct locally). In four of the five priority habitat management areas (PHMAs) in the project area, the development will cause increased violations of Wyoming’s sage-grouse protection plans, while the fifth area will be dangerously close to the 5% disturbance cap.

Table 4.18-26 Existing and New Surface Disturbance in Greater Sage-grouse PHMA under Alternative B

PHMA ¹	Size of DDCT Assessment Area (acres)	Surface Disturbance in the DDCT Assessment Area					
		Existing		New		Total	
		Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Bill	4,054	67	1.7	142	3.5	209	5.1
Douglas	88,195	23,328	26.5	3,092	3.5	26,420	30.0
M Creek	26,445	239	0.9	927	3.5	1,166	4.4
North Glenrock	118,201	12,129	10.3	4,144	3.5	16,273	13.8
Thunder Basin	81,953	7,967	9.7	2,873	3.5	10,840	13.2

¹ Based on BLM/USFS PHMA and Core Area Version 3 Maps.

Mule deer populations and raptors will be greatly impacted by the project, as BLM is proposing to allow year-round drilling as opposed to its normal management of limiting development during sensitive breeding and nesting times.

BLM staff members are now back at their desks reviewing all of the comments that came in on the plan. BLM will also be meeting with the “cooperating agencies” on the plan, including the Converse County Board of County Commissioners. The agency has stated that it will finalize the plan later this year.

It’s worth noting that this project is part of a move to large-scale and widespread drilling in Eastern Wyoming. Adjacent to this proposed project is another plan from EOG for an additional 1,500 wells being analyzed by BLM. All told, there are 8,550 well permits in Converse County, 4,548 in Campbell County, 1,232 in Johnson County, and 4,477 in Laramie County. The tally is up to nearly 19,000 permits and is expected to rise in the coming months.

**Shannon Anderson
Powder River Staff**

Riding Wyoming Legislature....Continued from page 5

was formidable and passionate. SF 74 quickly became the most controversial—and long-debated—bill of the session. One after another, landowners, church groups, Native Americans, the ACLU, and ordinary Wyoming citizens described all the ways this legislation could impact their free speech and private property rights. The unique combination of individuals and public interest groups gave corporate industry a run for their money and the bill was defeated twice during the session—it became known as the Zombie Bill.

Powder River and our leaders and landowner members, Joyce Evans and Liza Millett, played a leading role in defeating the legislation in House Minerals, on a tie vote. Evans and Millett presented specific examples and concrete testimony about the far-reaching and unintended consequences of this legislation and how it could violate private property

rights, hinder ranchers’ operations, and organizations.

Unfortunately, the death of SF 74 did not last long because powerful industry lobbyists swarmed House Mineral Committee members after the vote and were able to resurrect the bill through unusual legislative procedural maneuvers. But Powder River continued to engage citizens across Wyoming to write and call in. After hours of floor debate in the House and 20 proposed amendments (12 of them passing), the session was coming to an end, and the legislation looked nothing like the original bill. By this time Big Industry was sweating because they had paid a lot of money to lobbyists to get the bill passed. Despite many legislators declaring the amended bill undecipherable, it passed by a narrow margin in the House. In the last day of the session, the Senate concurred with the House amendments,

and the bill was sent to the Governor.

Powder River urged Governor Mead to veto the legislation. Once again our chair, Joyce Evans, and member, Liza Millett, came to the rescue and met for over 45 minutes with Governor Mead, raising the same property rights and landowner concerns we had raised throughout the debate. Governor Mead vetoed the legislation later that day, saying it was imprecisely drafted and should be reworked in the interim.

The rollercoaster ride over SF 74 is finished for now, but the fight over this legislation will likely appear next session. We will remain vigilant to protect landowner rights and our rights to free speech and association. Stay tuned and Stand with Us!

**Jill Morrison
Powder River Staff**

THE FUTURE OF SOLAR IN WYOMING

A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

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presentations from solar
owners, and a panel
discussion with local
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**The Outdoor Council will pour the first beer
and Powder River will provide appetizers!**



**MAY 16
5:30-7 PM**

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CHOPHOUSE
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LARAMIE, WY**



POWDER RIVER BASIN
Resource Council



Wyoming Outdoor Council

for more information: powderriverbasin.org/events/



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In this Issue

Court Sends BLM Back to Drawing Board on Coal Leasing Plan.....	Pg 1
RENEWyoming Update.....	Pg 1
Message from the Chair: Bridging the Divides.....	Pg 2
Clean Power Plan Serves Public Health & Safety.....	Pg 3
BLM Greenlights 5,000 New Oil and Gas Wells in Converse County.....	Pg 3
Farm Bill Update.....	Pg 4
Citizen Voices Make the Difference During Legislative Session.....	Pg 5
Riding the Wyoming Legislative Rollercoaster.....	Pg 5
Ochsner: Allowing Oil and Gas Development Near Fort Laramie is a Mistake....	Pg 6
Coal's War on Wyoming.....	Pg 6
County Commission Caves on Ramaco Rezone in Tongue River Valley.....	Pg 7
"Check Out" the Seed Library.....	Pg 7
The Food Forest Has A Lot Going On This Season!!.....	Pg 8
Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition 2018 Annual Meeting.....	Pg 8
Picnic on the Pathways.....	Pg 8
WORC Report Finds Coal Self-Bonding Unnecessary and Risky.....	Pg 9
Powder River Awards Three at Wyoming State Science Fair.....	Pg 10
Letter to Governor Matt Mead.....	Pg 11
Kim Bridle-Shoshoni, Wyoming (Nov. 2017).....	Pg 13
The Future of Solar in Wyoming.....	Pg 15

Save the Date

2018

- May 5th -Food Forest Work Day
- May 7th -Calc's Annual Meeting, Cheyenne
- May 12th -Board Meeting, Fort Laramie
- May 16th -Future of Solar in Wyoming, Laramie
- June 13th -Picnic on the Pathways, Sheridan

Planned Giving and Estate Planning Gifts: Don't Forget Powder River Basin Resource Council

The Powder River "family" has been thinking a lot about the future lately, because, as the saying goes, "We aren't getting any younger." We want to make sure this organization remains viable for future generations in the same way it serves today's members. For this reason, we are inviting you, our extended family of members and donors, to consider including Powder River in your estate plans.

More specifically, we are asking that you consider designating Powder River Basin Resource Council as a beneficiary in your will. Your gift will create a living legacy allowing Powder River to continue our work far into the future and helping to ensure that Wyoming remains the place we know and love for our kids and grandkids.

As one long time Powder River member, Digger Moravek stated, "I want to raise Hell long after I'm gone." You, too, can do this with a

generous bequest to Powder River.

Please consult your legal and financial advisors about how you can use a variety of estate planning tools to support Wyoming's most effective grassroots member organization, and how you might benefit. For example, there is a tax exemption for estate tax rates of up to \$5 million.

Thank you! If you have any questions, please give Powder River a call at 307-672-5809

**Powder River Basin Resource Council
Fundraising Committee**

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