



## Solar Power Taking Hold in Wyoming

So far, 2018 has been a great year for solar energy in Wyoming! Our work is making a difference. Installations are up since our Spring Solar Celebration, and the videos we have produced are being mentioned to installers. In particular, people who did not think they could afford a solar system now realize they can install in phases instead of installing an entire system at one time. This is huge, as it makes solar energy accessible to more Wyoming households. So far, two of our events have been multi-organization efforts with more collaborative endeavors in the planning process. And it's only June!

The Laramie solar event, "The Future of Solar in Wyoming: A Community Conversation," was extremely successful. Over 100 people attended, including two legislators, leaving standing-room only. The conversation was engaging and community members asked thought-provoking questions. Representatives Connolly and Zwonitzer both expressed surprise at the turnout. Rep. Connolly said she had expected "maybe 8 people" to attend, and Rep. Zwonitzer stated that he "didn't know there was so much interest in solar energy."

The sentiments expressed by both representatives are a sharp reminder that our elected officials need to be part of the conversation surrounding solar energy. If interested citizens do not contact representatives and tell them that solar matters, decision-makers remain unaware of the level of interest that exists in our state. It's our job to let them know. If you want better policies for solar energy in Wyoming, call or email your representative or, better yet, sit down and have coffee with them and let them know that solar issues matter to you!

The "Picnic on the Pathways" event held in Sheridan on June 13th was a fun and engaging way to continue the conversation on renewable energy in Wyoming. The event took place outdoors and appealed to multi-generational groups. Installers brought solar powered car kits, a solar storage demonstration, and a solar powered freezer...with ice cream! Additionally, Rocky Mountain Power sent an electrical engineer to talk about the science of solar electricity and provide information on the Blue Sky Program.

The Future of Solar in Wyoming was co-hosted by Powder River and the Wyoming Outdoor Council (WOC). The Picnic on the Pathways event



The Future of Solar in Wyoming

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## Groundwater Experts Speak at CALC Annual Meeting



Mike Wireman, Groundwater Expert

Powder River affiliate Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition (CALC) held its annual meeting in May with approximately 60 people in attendance as well as several representatives from state agencies. With the growing concern of neighboring oil and gas wastewater injection wells near communities in Laramie County, this

annual meeting focused on educating the public on the potential impacts of these wells and the aquifer exemptions that precede them, as well as overall impacts from oil and gas development on our groundwater supply.

Former EPA National Groundwater Expert Mike Wireman and Sue Spencer, senior hydrogeologist with Weston Engineering, gave presentations addressing the impacts of oil and gas

on drinking water aquifers as well as the processes and policies in place for aquifer exemptions.

Wireman's presentation, "Protecting Our Groundwater and Aquifers from Oil and Gas Development," took an in-depth look at aquifers and how they are chosen for injection, and how communities can protect their drinking water sources. As a longtime EPA specialist, Wireman was also able to provide insight into how the agency functions.

Spencer addressed "Lessons Learned from



Sue Spencer, Senior Hydrogeologist with Weston Engineering

the Pavillion Groundwater Investigation," and dove into the history of the Pavillion area's oil and gas operations that led to the contamination of a number of domestic wells from unlined produced water pits and improperly cased oil and gas wells.

Both presentations resonated with attendees, particularly as increasing oil and gas development within the area has left many residents concerned about their drinking water sources as well as the future of Laramie County. In an article on the meeting by the *Wyoming Tribune Eagle*, CALC and Powder River Board member Wayne Lax stated, "It was really enlightening in terms of what can be shown where best practices are not used and when laws on the books are not followed and the problems that can happen...Those things can happen here, too, despite best practices. Things can happen underground that they may have a hard time keeping track of."

Casey Quinn Powder River Staff

# Message from the Chair

## *Practicing Humanity*



Most of us have had the experience of engaging in a discussion with a person who does not share our point of view. No matter how clear, how patient, how reasonable or how persuasive both sides are, neither will budge. There is no meeting in the middle, much less a mutual leaning to one side or the other. We usually walk away with an uncomfortable feeling and slight suspicion as to the quality of the other person's judgement. There has to be a better way!

I am always watching for accounts of successful discussion methods that validate all viewpoints but allow some movement from entrenched stands. Just recently I heard a TED talk given by Boyd Varty (TEDWomen 2013). In his talk, he stretched the definition of the African term "Ubuntu." Ubuntu is an old African word frequently translated into English as "human kindness" or "a quality that includes...compassion and humanity." Apparently this definition is seriously lacking, and Ubuntu is more than a term. It is a philosophy, even a way of living. Attempting to describe this

concept in English, Nelson Mandela chose to say it means, "I am; because of you." This idea suggests that no one can achieve humanity unless there are other people with other needs and other ideas who require our humane attention. We measure our worth only within the framework of all other people.

Boyd Varty suggested that we are what we are not only because of other human beings, but because of all other life forms. He told of the things he had learned from observing the animals on his family's game preserve in Africa. Taking his philosophy to another level, could we be what we are because of our entire environment? Would I be the same person if I had grown up in a crowded urban setting where I never experienced the mountains and the outdoor life? Surely not.

Another African, Alex Lenferna, argues that the ideas of Ubuntu could move people to think beyond immediate economic gain and focus on the health of the entire planet. He feels that environmental degradation diminishes our humanity and makes us less than we would be, both as individuals and as members of social and political groups.

Now, I doubt that this is an appropriate topic for a street-corner conversation in downtown Wright or Fort Laramie, but I do think that keeping the concept in the front of our consciousness while engaging in discussions will help us be more humane and, as a result, more persuasive. It will help us engage on the more important topics, and it will help us understand the needs of others more fully. The goal will not be to change one another's stand on an issue but to together figure out how to approach the issue in a way that enhances kindness and compassion. It is difficult to hold a hard line when humanity is at stake.

Next time the opportunity arises, I intend to spread a little Ubuntu around and see what grows.

*Joyce E. Evans*

## Sheridan Solar Tour Saturday, August 18<sup>th</sup> 10 am – 4 pm



If you're thinking about solar power, don't miss this informative and fun event. This self-guided tour of solar-powered homes in Sheridan will provide direct examples of solar systems in our area. Homeowners will be on hand to visit with participants about their systems.

All participants will receive a brochure and map of the featured homes, and select locations will provide refreshments and snacks.

**Bonus – tour participants will receive a FREE membership to Powder River!  
Tickets - \$15 in advance, \$20 day of.**

For more information, call Powder River at 307-672-5809 or email [info@powderriverbasin.org](mailto:info@powderriverbasin.org).

**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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### Powder River Breaks

Editors: Gillian Malone & Robin Bagley  
Layout: Stephanie Avey  
Photos by Powder River staff and members

# Powder River Tells EPA: Beware Oil and Gas Wastewater Discharges

Powder River members and staff were invited to attend an EPA meeting in Denver in May regarding a new study on how to regulate and manage the growing volumes of wastewater produced by the oil and gas industry. The oil and gas industry is in a crisis over how to manage billions of gallons of oil and gas wastewater. The underground injection of wastewater has led to earthquakes in some states and the pollution of groundwater, streams, or drinking water in other areas. Meanwhile, the volumes of oil and gas wastewater are skyrocketing with an estimated 900 billion gallons produced annually.

Oil and gas wastewater is often saltier than seawater and can contain over 1600 chemicals, and regulators do not even have detection methods for some of the chemicals used in oil and gas extraction. The oil and gas industry's latest proposal for managing wastewater involves using this water for irrigation and other unspecified public uses. "Not so fast!" say Powder River landowners who know from experience that this can be a dangerous road to travel. Many remember damage to their soil and vegetation that

occurred from the discharge of billions of gallons of coalbed methane produced water that Wyoming allowed with little regulation, water treatment requirements or concern for the damaging impacts.

Powder River members and other impacted residents are telling the EPA to proceed with caution. Members from our Cheyenne affiliate, Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition, who attended the Denver EPA meeting, followed up with a letter to both the Wyoming Oil and Gas Commission and the EPA stating that the first approach to the oil and gas wastewater disposal problem should be to reinject the produced water back into its original formation. Powder River has also advocated for requiring the oil and gas industry to recycle and reuse this water for their own fracking operations before other disposal options are permitted. We will stay engaged on this issue and work to protect our fresh water, soils, crops, and vegetation from any damaging impacts of oil and gas wastewater.

**Jill Morrison**  
Powder River Staff

## Taxpayers at Risk of Paying to Clean Up Orphaned Oil and Gas Wells

In June the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a new report that finds the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is not accurately accounting for orphaned onshore oil and gas wells, or the risk that taxpayers will have to shoulder the cleanup risks.

The report, *Bureau of Land Management Needs to Improve Its Data and Oversight of Its Potential Liabilities*, finds a striking lack of data tracking across the agency on the number and public costs of orphaned wells, which have grown in number since GAO last examined the issue in 2010. The report states that BLM employees at the 13 field offices that manage 80% of the nation's onshore oil and gas wells "identified about \$46.2 million in estimated potential reclamation costs associated with orphaned wells and inactive wells that officials deemed to be at risk of becoming orphaned."

In a 2011 report, GAO recommended an increase in BLM's minimum reclamation bond amounts from the current levels, which were set in the 1950s and 1960s. BLM concurred with the recommendation, but has not followed through. In today's report, GAO noted that "[o]fficials from 9 of the 20 BLM offices and 1 stakeholder told us that BLM faces challenges related to federal minimum bond amounts that in their opinion are too low" but that "[a]ccording to BLM headquarters officials, the agency does not require that operators provide full liability bonds."

Marge and Bill West, who ranch near Arvada, Wyo., are members of Powder River and Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC). They made the following statements on behalf of the organizations:

"It's the taxpayer who pays, and the landowner. First we had all of the impacts of gas development –

**"We have close to 100 wells on our place, and none of them have been reclaimed yet. The company – High Plains Gas – went bankrupt and left several thousand wells in Wyoming."**

**Bill West**

drilling, roads, and water discharges that drained groundwater supplies, destroyed hay meadows and killed hundreds of cottonwood trees on our ranch. Now we have 100 idle wells. When they drilled these wells they didn't drill them off at the edge of the field. They often drilled them in the middle of fields where it's easiest to drill because the land is

flat. So, it's difficult to work around these wells, but there they sit, getting in the way until taxpayers come up with the millions it will take to plug and reclaim them." - Marge West

"We have close to 100 wells on our place, and none of them have been reclaimed yet. The company – High Plains Gas – went bankrupt and left several thousand wells in Wyoming. The state is paying to clean up the private and state-owned wells, but BLM didn't have enough in bonds to cover the cost of reclaiming the federal wells. That's the problem. It's high time the federal government required adequate reclamation bonds to cover cleanup costs, which is a simple solution to prevent the problem in the first place." - Bill West

**WORC & Powder River Staff**

**2018  
Picnic  
on the  
Pathways**



# ENDOW's Youth Summit Hears Diverse Voices



Wyoming's students and young professionals, ages 16-35, gather at the University of Wyoming Gateway Center on June 9th to propose ideas for Wyoming's future to Governor Matt Mead and ENDOW Executive Council.

On June 9<sup>th</sup>, Governor Matt Mead, members of the ENDOW Executive Council, and millennials ages 16 to 35 gathered in Laramie to talk about the future of our state. ENDOW is Governor Matt Mead's initiative to diversify the Wyoming economy.

In December 2017, ENDOW released its preliminary recommendations which included increasing air service, improving broadband technology, creating computer science standards for K-12 ages, developing workforce training programs, and providing a grant fund for emerging business startups. The idea for the youth summit emerged after a group of young professionals and graduate students wrote a candid column to the *Casper Star Tribune* titled "Millennials will inherit Wyoming's future, and they should be at the decision-making table." The article vehemently argued that younger generations were not invited to give feedback to ENDOW and urged the governor and the ENDOW Executive Council to be more inclusive in their discussions and decision-making.

In response to the column, the governor determined the need for a youth summit in order to gain a diversity of fresh perspectives that would be integral to ENDOW moving forward. The summit consisted of "solution sessions" for the following topics: advanced manufacturing, agriculture, natural resources, tourism and outdoor recreation, health and quality of life, technology and financial services, healthcare, workforce and education, entrepreneurial ecosystem, arts, and culture.

Another wrench was thrown into ENDOW's gears the week leading up to the youth summit when an economist, Peter Evangelakis from REMI, an economic forecasting firm, presented a study at the Wyoming Legislature's Joint Revenue Committee about the state's tax structure. The study argues that economic diversification, including the ENDOW initiative, is bound to be a failure at taxpayers' expense if it comes without tax reform. It included graphs showing how attracting almost all new industries and jobs, with the exception of oil and gas, will actually cost the state money instead of producing new revenue. New people and businesses in the state will require government services such as roads, public education, and law enforcement, the study points out, and due to Wyoming's lack of a corporate or personal income tax, the cost of providing these services would outpace new revenues. This issue was an elephant in the room throughout the entire youth summit. Governor Mead attempted to address the elephant and made a "don't throw the baby out with the bathwater" statement during his opening speech at the summit:

"A recent report came out and said the problem with diversity and why you shouldn't diversify is because of the tax base in the state of Wyoming," Mead said. "And I get that; we need to broaden our tax base. But be careful of reading a report that says we shouldn't diversify our economy because

we don't have a broad tax base, because then you draw that to its logical conclusion: 'What we really need to do is just have one industry, and if you're not in that industry you're going to leave the state, and hey that will save the state of Wyoming money because then we can start closing down schools, by the way we can start closing down roads.' That's not a Wyoming future. That is not the way the Wyoming spirit works. We can do more."

Despite the obstacle of legislators' unwillingness to tackle tax reform, discussions from the youth summit were filled with passionate ideas to help stabilize the state's economy. Millennials working together in their solution sessions crafted suggestions for economic diversification and sent them on as recommendations to the ENDOW Executive Council.

Recommendations on Wyoming agriculture included eliminating barriers to entering the agricultural industry and educating the public about the agricultural way of life. Some participants pointed out the difficulties of young people entering the agricultural arena if they were not born into it and how youth could become more involved in agriculture through mentoring programs. Millennials also want the state to better market many Wyoming ranchers' commitment to sustainable farming and ranching as well as ethical livestock production.

Recommendations on the energy and natural resources front included encouraging alternative energy while supporting traditional forms of Wyoming energy, and balancing multiple uses for public land. Participants agreed that it might be time for the State Legislature to write friendlier policies for renewable resources like solar and wind. One discussion focused on the importance of public land, not only for our agricultural and energy sectors but also for tourism and recreation.

Four overall recommendations were given to the ENDOW Executive Council: building connections through networks and mentoring; creating more accessible and available job opportunities; marketing the advantages of the state, and encouraging innovation while appreciating the past.

By August 24<sup>th</sup>, the ENDOW Executive Council will submit a 20-year strategy plan to the Governor and the State Legislature. Contributors at the youth summit have high hopes that their recommendations will make it into the final report.

**Monika Leininger**  
Powder River Staff

# Progress Continues at Food Forest

The Food Forest is in peak season! Pathways have been designated, but not yet dug in. Potatoes have been planted as a space-holder crop in the location of the future gazebo. In May we laid mulch and ground-cloth outside the fence on the west side to inhibit weed growth.

Speaking of weeds, they are growing (like weeds)! We had a weeding day on June 16<sup>th</sup> to get the forest in shape. It was a great start, but more needs to be done. Weeding chores are ongoing during the summer months so that our wonderful edible plants can compete. We are looking for volunteers who have time to hold regular weeding sessions during July, August and September. If you are interested, please contact Hesid Brandow at [hbrandow@powderriverbasin.org](mailto:hbrandow@powderriverbasin.org) or Carol LeResche at [leresche@rangeweb.net](mailto:leresche@rangeweb.net) so we can get the word out about your weeding party.

What makes weeding fun? Getting together with fellow weeders and showing off your beautiful space after it's done! We are planning a mid-summer Food Forest Picnic, but we have to get our space ready to invite in the community. We are looking forward to making it welcoming and getting more use out of it.

Humans aren't the only ones using the Food Forest. A pollinator count was held at the forest on May 26<sup>th</sup>. A total of 62 native bees, nine honeybees, two pollinating wasps, and six pollinator flies were recorded. That is a huge increase over the May count last year when seven native bees and eight honeybees were recorded. On June 23<sup>th</sup>, the Food Forest held its second pollinator count of the season, and noted that the pollinator count continues to



rise. The remaining summer pollinator counts at the Food Forest will be held on Saturday, July 21<sup>st</sup> and Saturday, August 25<sup>th</sup>. Both counts will begin at noon.

The newest addition to the forest is a cherry grove. It is located in the center of the garden near the entrance. In total, there are five cherry trees. They are arranged in a semi-circle with space in the middle for a sitting area. As the trees mature, this is going to provide a beautiful, shaded location for reading, meditation, picnicking, and generally enjoying the Food Forest. A beautiful metal butterfly chair donated by Molly Clark will complete the space. If you have a bench you are not using, the forest could use more seating!

The forest is also in need of more mulch! If you have a truck and time to go by the dump, the mulch is free. Truckloads can be placed along the west fence outside of the garden where mulch has already been placed. The mulch along the fence needs to be deeper, and it is also a good storage location for mulch that will eventually be used within the forest. Please contact Carol or Hesid at the above email addresses to notify us if you will be leaving mulch. Thank you very "mulch" in advance!

Remember, this is YOUR Food Forest. We want to see you there, whether you are just visiting, harvesting, or getting your hands dirty. Please, make time to enjoy this treasure! As always, we are interested in hearing from you about any ideas you have for additions to the forest or Food Forest events.

**Hesid Brandow**  
**Powder River Staff**

## Oil & Gas Industry Behind BLM Proposal for Permanent Roads

### *Recreation is Pretense for Abandoning Road Reclamation*

The BLM's Buffalo Field Office recently issued a draft decision that proposes allowing hundreds of miles of coalbed methane access roads on BLM-administered public lands to become a permanent part of the landscape, and allowing motorized recreational use of these roads. In an announcement on the proposal BLM wrote, "The I-90 corridor has a high density of oil and gas wells and associated infrastructure at or near the end of production. As wells reach the end of their lifecycle, the well pads, roads and other infrastructure may be reclaimed if they are not designated to provide recreation or commercial benefit to public land users such as big game hunters and grazing permittees."

The area BLM is analyzing lies mostly in Johnson County on both the north and south sides of I-90 with a small portion in Campbell County. The main access points are exits off I-90 which include Schoonover, Indian Creek, Upper Powder River, Dead Horse, and Buffalo Cut-Across Roads. According to the BLM document there are more than 2,200 coalbed methane (CBM), oil, and monitoring wells within the project boundary, along with over 600 miles of roads that were constructed for CBM development. At a public meeting in Buffalo, BLM staff informed Powder River that this is the first of six such proposals to be developed in Sheridan, Campbell, and Johnson counties across the Powder River Basin.

At the public meetings and through written comments, Powder River and a number of potentially impacted landowners raised real and legitimate concerns about the BLM proposal, including the prospect for damage and



trespass on adjacent private lands; possible deterioration of wildlife habitat and the greater landscape from off-road use; soil erosion and the spread of noxious weeds; and the lack of BLM enforcement and funding to maintain hundreds of miles of permanent roads. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, BLM had committed during the permitting process to require full reclamation of well pads, roads, and infrastructure for these tens of thousands of CBM wells. The current BLM proposal would reverse that previous commitment and allow the oil and gas industry to leave behind thousands of

miles of roads under the guise of public recreation.

"This is precisely the sort of outcome we feared when all these roads were being built in the beginning of the coalbed methane boom," said Powder River landowner member Bernie Barlow. "It's one thing for ranchers to choose to keep certain post-CBM roads on their own private ground for their own use, but it's quite another for BLM to allow CBM companies to shirk their responsibility of reclaiming miles and miles of roads on public lands. As usual BLM is letting the oil and gas industry off the hook."

In addition to filing comments on the proposal, Powder River has issued an alert raising many of our concerns. We encourage landowners and citizens to stay engaged and contact their county commissioners and other elected officials to ensure their concerns with this far-reaching proposal are addressed.

**Jill Morrison**  
**Powder River Staff**



# Farm Bill Trudges Along

After the House's poor excuse for a Farm Bill was voted down in May, farmers and ranchers were cautiously optimistic that the Senate's version of the legislation would be friendlier toward small, independent producers and rural communities. However, the House bill turned out to be another zombie bill, and narrowly passed 213-211 on June 21<sup>st</sup>.

Meanwhile, the Senate turned out a Farm Bill that looks a lot like the current Farm Bill. More bipartisan and less controversial than the House bill, the Senate version is pretty much "business as usual." The good news is that it maintains funding for the Farmers Market and Local Foods Promotion and Rural Energy for America Programs (REAP). In fact, REAP got a funding boost in this bill so we hope to see more renewable energy grants in rural communities. Also, since the bill does not dramatically cut Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding, it is taking less fire from social-justice organizations. The Senate bill



could be voted on in early July and is expected to pass.

What could make the Senate Farm Bill more interesting are some amendments, including one for checkoff reform. This amendment by Senators Lee and Booker (Utah and New Jersey, respectively) would be an improvement in how mandatory checkoff fees are used and help prevent abuse, so that is one Powder River will be watching closely.

While the Senate Farm Bill doesn't have anyone jumping for joy at how it helps independent producers, it's far better than the House version. Once both houses have passed legislation, the next step will be the conference committee process where the House and Senate finalize the legislation. Stay tuned for updates as this process inches forward.

**Robin EH. Bagley**  
**Powder River Staff**

## House Farm Bill Will Hurt Local Producers

Farmers and ranchers are a diverse group of people that disagree on a lot of issues, but we're all interested in having a market for our products. Whether raising livestock or growing crops, we need to know that someone is going to buy from us at a fair price. Prices of many agricultural products don't even cover the cost of production, and the U.S. is currently in the midst of the greatest farm crisis since the 1980s. It's no surprise that the agricultural profession has the highest suicide rate in the nation.

In the midst of all this gloom, here comes the 2018 Farm Bill. The goal of the Farm Bill is basically to ensure a safe and abundant food supply for the nation, which includes working to enact policies that keep producers in business. While skeptical, farmers and ranchers hoped Congress was paying attention and would respond with a bill that actually helps independent producers.

That was not the case. The House version of the Farm Bill disappoints on a number of levels, but the most egregious piece is the amendment from Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa. His "Protect Interstate Commerce Act" would eliminate most state and local laws regarding the production of agricultural products. These are laws and ordinances passed democratically in our state legislatures and county commissions around the country. According to King's website, he argues that this legislation "is designed to end unconstitutional efforts by some states to regulate the means of production of agricultural goods in other states." This is a clearly incorrect and misleading statement. State laws requiring certain standards of production do not regulate how other states do it, only whether it can be sold in that state. Basically, if a law or ordinance regulates an agricultural product that is also produced in another state, it can be overturned by the federal government. Haven't we been through this kind of thing before with the GMO labeling argument? So much for states' rights.

Invoking the Interstate Commerce Clause to justify the federal government's interference in states enacting their statutes is a far stretch, indeed. As an attorney, Larry Wolf, stated in *The Sheridan Press* May 10, "The dormant Commerce Clause is not intended to stop all exercises of state regulatory or tax power. Just those that have a clear basis in trying to assist the economy of the regulating state at the expense of other states." States making their own statutes regarding standards of food production don't favor an individual state, simply the process by which the food product is produced.

Wyoming agricultural producers who may differentiate themselves by producing premium product to meet the consumers demand in states that expect higher quality food will no longer have this market opportunity. Our own state would be unable to manage its own food supply in accordance with the wishes of our people and be forced to accept the lowest common denominator foisted upon us by larger agribusinesses from other states.

What's really perplexing about King's amendment is that he claims to be a defender of states' rights. He was a member of the 10th Amendment movement and in 2010 stated, "The inclusion of the 10th Amendment in the Bill of Rights was a means by which our Founding Fathers intended to stop the destructive reach of a growing federal government." (*Forbes*, Dec. 9, 2013)

Needless to say, his amendment is an about-face. It strips local control in favor of the ever-consolidating reach of agribusiness corporations. Laws that protect consumer choice and food safety are absolutely within our rights to enact, and King's amendment is a perfect example of federal overreach.

The House Farm Bill won't help Wyoming producers, and the inclusion of King's amendment will certainly hurt us. The decades of work we Wyoming producers have put into differentiating our products will be for nothing. We need to tell the House of Representatives to dump this bill.

*Theresa Shaw of Shiloh Valley Farm is a Sheridan-area farmer and a member of the Powder River Basin Resource Council.*

*This was reprinted from the Sheridan Press on May 15, 2018.*

# Committee Revisits Public Records Act

In May, the Wyoming Legislature's Joint Corporations Committee met in Lander to hear testimony and feedback on what changes the committee should make to Wyoming's Public Records Act (the law that requires government agencies and commissions to disclose communications and records).

In Lander, we testified that as frequent users of the Records Act, Powder River has a direct stake and interest in how the law works (or doesn't) to ensure we have access to government records. By requesting electronic copies of documents and emails, we often get a more informed perspective on how and why government decisions were made, and in some cases, whether those decisions should be questioned or challenged.

The good news for the public is our testimony and the comments of other parties, including the Liberty Group and the Wyoming Outdoor Council, persuaded the Committee to vote to reconsider a bill that didn't make it far in this year's budget session because legislators ran out of time to consider it. 2018's House Bill 178, sponsored by Representatives Jennings and Edwards and Senator Scott would create a deadline for agencies to respond to a records request and would beef up the penalties for noncompliance, including awarding attorney fees and costs of litigation if a requesting party has to take an agency to court and is successful. These improvements would bring our state law more in line with the rights and remedies afforded in the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which applies to federal agencies.

The Corporations Committee will also consider the issue of fees

charged by state agencies to the public for accessing electronic records. As more and more government communication and correspondence occurs over email, access to those electronic records becomes more and more important. Powder River has opposed a state rule that charges fees for accessing those records, but agencies argue they are forced to move forward with fees because of a legislative change in the Records Act a few years ago. The Corporations Committee plans to bring in representatives from the Attorney General's Office to answer questions about the fee rule and its statutory authority at its next meeting in September.

Meanwhile, the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Air Quality Advisory Board has twice voted down rules that would charge fees to access DEQ records. The Board will be considering the rules again at its next meeting, date and location to be announced. DEQ also recently launched a new online system to submit requests for public records and the agency will be making responses available to the public in a searchable database. Check it out at: <https://wydeq.nextrequest.com/>

All in all, there are some encouraging conversations and actions around access to government records and how those of us in the public can learn more about our government, shining some sunlight on decisions that affect us.

**Shannon Anderson**  
Powder River Staff

## Pavillion Area Testing and Clean-up of Oil and Gas Contamination Continues

In April, the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) held a public meeting in Riverton to release their latest groundwater testing results to impacted Pavillion area landowners. The test results showed high sulfates and total dissolved solids (TDS) in most water wells, and Bis2 Ethylhexyl Phthalate and Diethyl Phthalate were detected in split samples in two separate water wells. The DEQ Groundwater Quality Division also revealed they are moving the responsibility for Encana's Voluntary Remediation Plan clean-up from the hazardous waste division to the Groundwater Quality Division because this will allow the department more oversight for additional testing and cleanup. The state's investigation of previously closed unlined production water pits continues. DEQ and others are targeting the unlined produced water pits as a primary source of contamination.

During the meeting, several Powder River members who belong to our affiliate Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens (PACC), asked tough questions about the test results and the ongoing cleanup. The DEQ Groundwater division director, Lily Barkau, promised to get to the bottom of the contamination and address the clean-up. Pavillion area ranchers informed DEQ that more livestock in the area died this spring after drinking water from a well, and the deaths were attributed to high sulfates as reported by the landowner and a local vet.

The DEQ testing also targeted bacteria; earlier testing indicated the presence of "slime" bacteria and micro-organisms which appear to be feeding

on the methane likely leaking from the Encana gas wells. Encana is working on plugging many of the improperly cased and leaking wells, but according to a couple of nearby landowners, Encana is having problems plugging some of the wells.

In May, Powder River followed up the Pavillion meeting with a letter to DEQ including the expert analysis from hydrologist Mike Wireman, who noted, "The report significantly minimizes the occurrence and role of methanotrophs in palatability issues. While the report states that *"these bacteria were detected in notable numbers throughout the area"* it does not provide any of the data—nor does it discuss the source of the methane that support these bacteria. All but 2 of the well samples contained dissolved methane. It is very likely that the increased mobilization of methane related to gas development has increased the transport of methane to domestic well bores and provided an enhanced supply of methane and thus the high counts of methanotrophs."

DEQ said they were going work to get bottled water delivered until at least September. We will continue to work to ensure that Pavillion area landowners get the long-term fresh water supply they need and deserve.

**Jill Morrison**  
Powder River Staff

## Solar...Continued from page 1

was co-hosted with Science Kids and the Sheridan Community Land Trust. WOC has expressed interest in co-hosting future events, and several organizations around the state have expressed interest in working collaboratively with Powder River on solar energy this year. The momentum of the RENEWyoming campaign is gathering steam, so stay tuned.

Our next RENEWyoming event will be a solar tour on August 18<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. The tour will be similar in structure to home and garden tours and will be self-guided. Tour tickets are available for \$15 ahead of time or \$20 on the day of the event. Tickets will be available at our office or our website starting July 1<sup>st</sup>. At the time of purchase, we will

provide you with a map of participating businesses and households.

We are planning further events around the state for the fall and winter months. During the summer, keep an eye out for our next run of solar videos. If there is something related to solar energy in Wyoming that you think we should know about, please contact us at [info@powderriverbasin.org](mailto:info@powderriverbasin.org) and let us know!

**Hesid Brandow**  
Powder River Staff

# DEQ's Advisory Board Needs to Protect Taxpayers and Ensure Reclamation Jobs



Coal mines in Wyoming are big. Really big. The Powder River Basin produces over 40% of the nation's coal, and the dozen mines in Northeast Wyoming cover hundreds of square miles. Mining creates giant pits and rearranges the countryside, which needs to be put back in place and returned to productive use. This restoration is called "reclamation," and state and federal laws require that coal mining companies do the work and pay for it. This means a lot of jobs. The downside is, if companies go under and walk away from their mines they leave a huge liability for taxpayers.

Most Wyoming optimists and "Friends of Coal" these days believe the coal industry dodged the bullet over the last couple of years. Coal production has stabilized (but at a lower level), big companies have emerged from bankruptcy with stronger balance sheets, and the risk of mines going under in the short term seems small. So why should we worry about this cleanup liability? We should worry because the market for Wyoming's coal is shrinking, and the contraction is a trend, not a blip. Coal just can't compete in a new energy marketplace flooded with low cost natural gas, wind, and solar. Profit margins of Powder River Basin mines are slim to none. And as mines become unprofitable, companies are already beginning to offload them – along with their cleanup liabilities – onto someone else. As successive owners fail, that

someone else could be you and me as Wyoming taxpayers.

Here's where bonding comes in. Every coal mine in Wyoming is required to post a reclamation bond – basically an insurance policy that guarantees even in the worst-case scenario our state will have the funds to hire workers and contractors to clean up the mines.

Wyoming's Department of Environmental Quality wisely proposed a new set of bonding standards that help meet that objective. Importantly, this proposal limits the controversial practice of "self-bonding." Self-bonds really are not insurance at all, but merely promises from a company that they will cover the reclamation costs of their mines. These IOUs become worthless when a company enters bankruptcy. Self-bonding became a big problem for Wyoming when our three biggest coal companies went through bankruptcy over the past couple of years with over \$1.5 billion in self-bonds. Yes, that's billion with a B. Since self-bonds aren't backed by a bank or other third party, the state was at the rear of the collection line during bankruptcy proceedings. That means if a company liquidates or sells off properties, Wyoming taxpayers will be left holding the bill for cleanup costs. DEQ's proposed standards limit the share of cleanup liability that can be self-bonded, and require that companies have at least minimal official credit ratings to use self-bonding at all. This only makes sense, since the state is essentially extending its credit line when it allows a company to self-bond.

Unfortunately, at a hearing in Gillette at the end of March DEQ's Land Quality Advisory Board prioritized minor complaints from coal and utility interests over the clear public interest. The board refused to accept the proposed standards, and sent them back to DEQ for more review and justification. In doing so, the board missed an opportunity to ensure taxpayers will be protected and there will always be enough money for mine reclamation work, and significantly, for reclamation jobs.

Even though the standards were sent back to DEQ with vague comments, the agency should not meekly weaken the limits on self-bonding. If anything, they should strengthen their proposed standard and eliminate self-bonding – and its corresponding risk – altogether.

When the rules come back to the Advisory Board on June 27, let's hope the Board protects Wyoming's interests and jobs. The Board should approve stronger standards for reclamation bonds, which will ensure reclamation jobs get done and we taxpayers are not liable.

Bob LeResche

*Bob LeResche is Vice Chair of Powder River and a board member of the Western Organization of Resource Councils. He is a former Commissioner of Natural Resources for the State of Alaska, Executive Director of the Alaska Energy Authority, investment banker and CEO. With his wife Carol he operates a ranch and organic heirloom vegetable farm near Clearmont, Wyoming.*

## NFFC Visits Wyoming on America the Bountiful Tour



The National Family Farm Coalition/Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance stopped by Wyoming on their America the Bountiful Tour. Powder River is a member of NFFC. Pictured are Carol LeResche, Elliot Snow (intern with NFFC), Jill Morrison, and Niaz Dorry (Executive Director at NFFC) at Carol's organic vegetable farm near Clearmont.



The National Family Farm Coalition stopped at the Gillette Farmers Market during their trip through Wyoming. Elliot Snow (NFFC intern), a couple of farmers market patrons, Niaz Dorry (Executive Director at NFFC), Powder River Board member Judy Leggett and Frank Wallace, who run the daily farmers market, are shown.

# Judge Favors Landowners on Coal Leasing

A federal judge ruled in March that the federal government's plans to open up the entire Powder River Basin to 10 billion tons of coal leasing violated the law. As ranchers in the Powder River Basin who deal with the impacts of mineral development, we believe this is a very good decision.

In 2015, the Bureau of Land Management finalized a pair of "resource management plans." BLM's plans must balance the uses of public land between agriculture, wildlife, recreation, minerals development, and more. Instead, BLM opened up nearly every acre of federal coal in the Powder River Basin to coal leasing.

As members of the Powder River Basin Resource Council and Northern Plains Resource Council, which challenged the plans in court, we were concerned that BLM was again promoting mineral development at the expense of agriculture. This is old hat for BLM, which in the 1974 "North Central Power Study" called for the northern Great Plains to become a national sacrifice area for widespread coal development—consequences for agriculture, residents, and the global climate be damned.

BLM's resource management plans repeated this long-standing and misguided policy, ignoring the economic and social imperative of dealing with climate change. As ranchers, we see and feel the impacts of climate change all around us. Warmer, drier summers and more unpredictable spring rain mean less water for livestock and irrigation, more stress on animals and crops, and worsening fire seasons. Climate change affects the weather, and in agriculture, the weather can make or break us. Times are tough in agriculture right now, but they will become much tougher if we ignore climate change.

The resource management plans also ignored the on-the-ground reality of the shrinking coal industry. Coal power plants are shutting down left and right because they are becoming uneconomical to run. Today, even without subsidies, electricity from wind farms, solar plants, and natural gas is simply cheaper, and the coal mining industry has been quietly adjusting to this new reality. Since January 2017, coal companies have withdrawn or postponed applications for 65% of all the Powder River Basin coal those companies had previously applied to lease, about 1.65 billion tons. It's a huge admission about the industry's future direction.

An even bigger indication is that Peabody Energy and Arch Coal have quietly removed 4.4 billion tons of coal from their reserves. Those tons of coal were leased and anticipated by investors to be mined, and coal executives now acknowledge they are unmineable. It makes no sense for the government to double-down on coal leasing when the industry itself is hedging its bets.

We're headed for a future after coal, and the federal government should be planning for it. This is a difficult conversation, especially because many of our neighbors make their living in coal. We don't want their families to suffer any more than we want to deal with the impacts of climate change. The hard truth is that the industry's collapse is beyond our control: electric utility executives in distant cities are ending coal.

We firmly believe coal companies and utilities must repay the profit they've made off of hard-working Montanans and Wyomingites instead of stranding coal workers and our communities high and dry. In the meanwhile, BLM is pursuing business as usual instead of sensible policy for this transition.

Overall, we are relieved that a judge agrees with us that BLM's coal leasing plans ignore important factors like climate change and the shrinking coal industry, but we're looking ahead to the unfolding transition from coal with trepidation for what comes next for our region, communities, and livelihood.

*Terry Punt is a cattle rancher near Birney, Montana, and a member of the Northern Plains Resource Council.*

*Leland James Turner ranches cattle and sheep near Wright, Wyoming, and is member of the Powder River Basin Resource Council.*

*This is reprinted from the Billings Gazette on May 4, 2018.*



## Leininger Joins Powder River Staff

Howdy Partners! My name is Monika Leininger and I am the new Community Organizer for Powder River Basin Resource Council in Laramie. I've lived in Wyoming since I was less than a year old and have grown up in this wonderful state. It is my opinion that I represent Wyoming values of fairness and equality in all the work I do.

In 2016, I graduated from the University of Wyoming with Bachelor degrees in Environment & Natural Resources and Social Work. I have had a long-time passion for issues of environmental injustice and making the connection between people, their environment, their health, and wellbeing. In 2017, I returned to University of Wyoming to get my Master's Degree in Social Work and continue on to write my thesis about environmental injustice issues in Wyoming such as orphan sites around the state, groundwater contamination, air pollution, and waste dumping on the Wind River Reservation.

Although my background is primarily social justice related, I believe that there can be no social justice without environmental justice. I believe that our environments impact the way we live our lives and irresponsible



development can lead to health problems, economic impacts, threats to communities, and decreased wellbeing of the Wyoming residents, ranchers and farmers that I know and love.

My favorite thing about Wyoming is our unparalleled access to wilderness and how you can explore this state to no end. I've been teaching myself how to fly fish for the past year and am obsessed with our beautiful rivers, streams, and lakes. Every chance I get, I am out camping, hiking, fishing and loving on our home state.

I am wholeheartedly committed to the work that Powder River does and feel grateful to be in this state and work for the people of Wyoming. Like all Powder River employees, I will be organizing around a multitude of issues such as local agriculture, sustainable development, renewable energy, and issues around irresponsible oil and gas development. I look forward to meeting our members, working to protect our natural resources and building Wyoming's bright future.

**Monika Leininger**  
**Powder River Staff**

# CALC Members Meet with EPA on Sussex Aquifer Exemptions



Alex Bowler, Myrna Brautigam and Wayne Lax, CALC Leaders

Leaders from Powder River's Cheyenne affiliate, CALC, traveled to Denver in May to meet with Craig Boomgaard, Environmental Scientist to the EPA Region 8 Underground Injection Control Program to discuss their concerns regarding two potential injection wells.

In late 2017, Powder River led a campaign to protect Laramie County communities and the Sussex Aquifer from three proposed injection wells. Powder River members, CALC, and the communities of Durham Estates and Triple Crown sent over 100 emails to the Wyoming Oil and Gas Commission (WOGCC) protesting the three

waste water injection wells. After a hearing was scheduled on Powder River's protest on one of the wells – the *Pole Creek 148-25H* – EOG Resources withdrew the application, which had proposed injecting roughly 25,000 barrels of toxic waste water per day into the Sussex Aquifer, a potential drinking water source. It is likely EOG withdrew the application due to local

opposition and Powder River's protest, which included an in-depth analysis from former EPA groundwater expert Mike Wireman predicting that the proposed contaminated area would not stay within its permitted zone.

Despite this major win, the permits for the other two wells – the *Durham 106-07H* and the *Pole Creek 175-34H* – are still on the table and awaiting approval from EPA Region 8 UIC Program which often defers to the state agency, or in this case the WOGCC.

The proposed sites for the wells are east of Cheyenne and less than one mile from Durham and Triple Crown subdivisions and home to over 200 families. Having worked through the necessary steps on the state level to protest the wells and protect these homeowners, CALC members met with decision makers at EPA as well as Deputy Director to the WOGCC, Tom Kropatsch, to share their concerns. The meeting helped show us how the EPA UIC program operates.

After the meeting, CALC President Alex Bowler said, "We appreciated the opportunity to have them listen to our concerns and offered up a couple alternatives to injecting waste water into an aquifer which may be used for drinking water in the future."

The WOGCC is currently awaiting more supplemental information from EOG before they can move forward on the permitting process. Powder River and CALC will continue to actively push to have these discussions with agencies and the industry to protect these communities and aquifers from oil and gas injection wells.

Casey Quinn  
Powder River Staff

## In Memoriam

Dr. David A. Polefka

June 20, 1939 – April 19, 2018

Dr. David A. Polefka, Big Horn, Wyo. Loving parent, great intellect, mental health professional served Northern Wyoming for more than 30 years [d. Sheridan Wyo, April 19, 2018] David Polefka was born in Bethlehem Pennsylvania, June 20 1939, to Joseph and Helen Polefka. After high school, he graduated from Lehigh University with degrees in Physics and Psychology. He was active in the Lehigh Glee Club, and once played the lead role in Faust. Polefka then attended Stanford University for graduate study in psychology.

He met the woman who would become his loving wife and life companion of half a century, Vistara Parham, in Missoula Montana in 1967, while he served as an assistant professor at the University of Montana. Dr. Polefka and Ms. Parham returned to Palo Alto together in 1970, where he resumed his doctoral research. That year their first son, Rama O. Polefka of Cupertino, California, was born. Dave completed his research and earned his Ph.D. in Psychology in 1976, despite at one point losing the only typed copy of his thesis while he and Ms. Parham were hitchhiking in Mexico. It was in Palo Alto that Dave and Vistara began their study and practice of yoga and meditation, a journey that would guide the rest of their lives together and established in their family deep rooted values of compassion and service. Their second son, Shiva Polefka of Washington D.C., was born in Vancouver, Washington in 1979.

In 1981, the family moved to Sheridan when Dr. Polefka accepted a job at the Northern Wyoming Mental Health Center. There, Dave served as a mental health professional and substance abuse specialist for 25 years, treating countless patients in the Sheridan County community. Dr. Polefka also served as a counselor and therapist for men and women of the U.S. military at the Sheridan Veterans Administration hospital, where he worked for the final five years of his career before retiring in 2010. Complementing his service to the people of Northern Wyoming, Dr. Polefka benefitted from tremendous love, support and generosity from friends, neighbors and colleagues throughout the Sheridan County community, who provided kindness and assistance to him throughout the years.

In retirement, Dr. Polefka enjoyed visiting the Fulmer Public Library, reading innumerable books, and exploring the beautiful landscapes and backroads of Northern Wyoming. During their lives together in Big Horn, Dave and Vistara manually planted hundreds of trees and native plants on their property, transforming a windswept plain into what today is an extraordinary habitat area for wildlife. Today, despite the perennial Red Grade winds and the 2007 Little Goose Fire, the trees they planted and tended together stand tall. The Bighorn chapter of the Audubon Society visits monthly to view the extraordinary diversity and abundance of migratory birds that inhabit them.

Dr. Polefka is survived by his wife Vistara, his brother Joseph of Hingham, Massachusetts, sons Rama and Shiva, stepson Martin Pieracci, and two grandchildren. The Bighorn Audubon Society (<http://BighornAudubon.org/>) has launched a project in Dave's honor to purchase and install bluebird houses on Red Grade. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to support this project, or to the Powder River Basin Resource Council.

This was reprinted from the Sheridan Press on April 24, 2018.

# Powder River Petitions to End Self-Bonding

## State Needs to Protect Taxpayers and Adjacent Landowners

In April the Powder River Basin Resource Council (Resource Council) filed a formal rulemaking petition with the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality's Land Quality Division to end the practice of self-bonding for coal mines. In order to better shield Wyoming taxpayers from having to fund mine clean-up in the event of a company's bankruptcy or forfeiture, the petition proposes eliminating the risky practice of allowing coal companies to self-bond for reclamation obligations.

"The coal market has changed dramatically in the last 30 years. What worked then for self-bonding does not work with the new market," said Stacy Page, a Resource Council member and former regulator involved in reclamation. "We have reached a point of energy transformation in our country, with coal usage on the decline and increasing usage of natural gas and renewable energy. The state has a responsibility to ensure reclamation happens and not at the expense of adjacent landowners or taxpayers."

The petition proposes two amendments to the state's regulations. First, it requests eliminating the loophole of self-bonds, which are not financial guarantees but rather a promise to pay from the company. Second, the petition asks for state to require that at least 25 percent of the mine operator's bond be a cash bond. Because self-bonds are not backed up by any financial assurances, they do not ensure that the regulatory authority will have sufficient funds to reclaim the site if the company operating the mine fails to complete the required reclamation.

According to the petition, self-bonding does not achieve the main objectives of the Wyoming Environmental Quality Act's bonding system, which is to ensure available funds to complete reclamation work, and to encourage timely and effective reclamation practices. Self-bonds do not fulfill the requirements of the Act because the taxpayers are responsible for covering reclamation costs should companies default on their obligations by bankruptcy or otherwise walking away from them. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently completed an audit in which it found that regulators have difficulty determining whether a company is financially healthy, and recommended eliminating the practice of allowing self-bonds.

"This is not a hypothetical situation. When the big three coal companies declared bankruptcy, they were holding \$1.5 billion worth of

reclamation work in worthless self-bonds. Luckily those mines continued operating so no bonds were forfeited, but we might not be that lucky again," said Page.

"Right now there is about \$2 billion in coal mine bonds in Wyoming, with \$275 million of that in self-bonds. With our state's financial situation, picking up the tab on \$275 million in reclamation would be a huge burden on the taxpayers," said LJ Turner, a Resource Council member and rancher impacted by coal mining.

The petition also explains that self-bonds do not provide any incentive for reclamation and bond release. When real financial bonds are on the line, companies are motivated to get their money back by completing their reclamation work. Only about 10 percent of lands disturbed by mining in Wyoming have been released from final bond, and some large mines, like Peabody's North Antelope Rochelle, have not achieved any final bond release.

"Reclamation just isn't happening as quickly as it should be. Companies need an incentive get the reclamation done in a timely fashion, and self-bonding won't do that. For those who live near coal mines, this is especially important," said Turner. "It's time we close this self-bonding loophole and ensure that companies who want to mine are financially sound and up to the task of fulfilling their obligations to the public. No more IOUs that aren't worth the paper they're written on from companies on shaky financial ground."

**Powder River Staff**

### Petition Update

On May 18th Department of Environmental Quality Director Todd Parfitt denied Powder River's petition for rulemaking because the agency is carrying out its own rulemaking to amend coal mine bonding rules and limit the practice of "self-bonding." Director Parfitt told us, DEQ "look[s] forward to your continued participation in the [Land Quality Division] Financial Assurance Rulemaking process." Director Parfitt noted that the rules should come back to public notice and comment by the end of the year.

## Wyoming Promise

*Editor's note: The following LTE, by Powder River member Kris Korfanta, appeared in the Sheridan Press following a May 17th Wyoming Promise event featuring Sen. Al Simpson.*

The enthusiastic welcome for Wyoming's former State legislator and United States Senator, Alan K. Simpson, indicates the growing desire of ordinary citizens to put their personal politics aside to learn how to fix our political system. We appreciate all the folks who helped make this event possible and those of you who turned out to hear Al explain the need to relieve our political system of the corrupting influence of big money from often anonymous donors. Senator Simpson is one of the national leaders of American Promise, at work to help establish a 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to rid our elections of ever-growing massive donations from giant (and often internationally owned) corporations, unions, and other entities, and return them to the people.

19 other states have called for a constitutional amendment (including Montana and Colorado) that will declare that corporations are not people and that money isn't free speech. Because our legislature has neglected to act on this issue, Wyoming Promise volunteers are circulating petitions to get an initiative placed on the Wyoming ballot for November 2020 so Wyomingites can vote on the issue. This is no easy task—especially in Wyoming which requires signatures from 15% of registered voters in 16 of the 23 counties.

This is a citizen-led, grassroots movement, and one of the only true cross-partisan efforts getting strong approval from citizens across party lines and throughout the nation. Despite the accomplishments so far, we all have a very long way to go and we need your help! You can access the [Wyomingpromise.org](http://Wyomingpromise.org) web site to learn more, donate, or volunteer. Local businesses that have petitions are: Tarver Law Office, CB Music and Repair, Salon de Beaute, and the Sports Alley. Volunteers will be circulating petitions at most of the major events this summer.

Senator Simpson warns that the job will be very difficult, but urges us all to keep up the effort. In conclusion of his presentation he said, "You have nothing to lose but your country."

Again, Thanks to all,

Kris Korfanta,  
Team Leader Wyoming Promise, Sheridan County



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## Save the Date

- July 21<sup>st</sup>- Board Meeting, Buffalo
- August 18<sup>th</sup>, Solar Tour, Sheridan
- September 8<sup>th</sup>, Harvest Celebration, Big Horn
- September 22<sup>nd</sup>, Wild & Scenic Film Festival, Cheyenne
- October 6<sup>th</sup>, Wild & Scenic Film Festival, Laramie
- November 3<sup>rd</sup>, Powder River Annual Meeting

# 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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