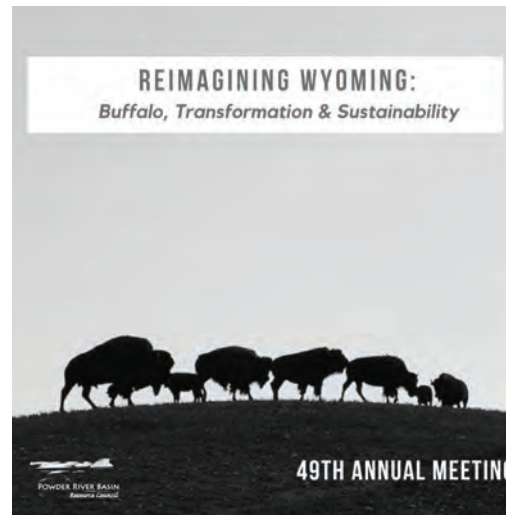




Reimagining Wyoming: Buffalo, Sustainability & Transformation *Powder River Basin Resource Council's 49th Annual Meeting*

On Friday and Saturday, Nov. 5 - 6, Powder River will host its 49th Annual Meeting online. This year's theme, *Reimagining Wyoming: Buffalo, Sustainability & Transformation*, will explore how buffalo can be part of the solution as the state adapts to a rapidly changing economy.

Jason Baldes, Tribal Buffalo Program Manager for the National Wildlife Federation, will be the keynote speaker on Friday, Nov. 5 at 5:30 pm. He is an advocate, educator, and speaker on indigenous cultural revitalization and ecological restoration. In 2016, Baldes spearheaded the successful effort to relocate a buffalo herd to the Wind River Indian Reservation. Indigenous people have a long relationship with buffalo that includes practical land management and economics, as well as a cultural and spiritual understanding of humans' place in the web of life. His presentation will provide us with an example of envisioning economic revitalization through an indigenous lens to provide new ways of thinking about sustainable transformation for Wyoming. This event is free and open to the public.



The Business Meeting, which is limited to Powder River members only, will be Saturday, Nov. 6 at 9:30 am. Both events will be held on Zoom, and one registration takes care of both events. You can register at www.powderriverbasin.org/events.

“Wyoming has been talking about economic transformation for years. This is an opportunity for us to see new possibilities for cultural and economic revitalization,” said Marcia Westkott, Powder River Chair.

The Silent Auction is also online this year, featuring a wide variety of items, including locally crafted jewelry, stunning artwork by Wyoming artists, sporting goods, and more. The auction

closes Nov. 6 at 5 pm. Visit 32auctions.com/prbrc2021 to bid on these items and support Powder River's work.

For more information, contact the office at 307-672-5809, info@powderriverbasin.org or visit www.powderriverbasin.org/events.

Robin EH. Bagley
Powder River Staff

Laramie Solar Tour Amps Up the Community

The first ever Laramie Solar Tour took place on Saturday, Oct. 2, to educate and inspire Wyomingites to launch their communities into reaching their full solar energy potential. Over 50 members of the public attended the tour, whether via the in-person bike tour, self-guided driving tour, or live streaming online to visit a variety of residential, university, commercial, and municipal solar power installations.

The bike tour visited locations around the community, including the Laramie Ice & Event Center, the university's Indoor Practice Facility and Visual Arts Center, Bim Kendall House/Haub School, Downtown Clinic, and two private residences. Additionally, there was a self-guided driving tour that



Laramie residents pose near a new solar installation at the city's Ice and Event Center. Photo courtesy of Creative Energies.

featured five private residences. Speakers from Rocky Mountain Power (RMP), the University of Wyoming, the City of Laramie, and local solar installer, Creative Energies, joined the tour attendees to talk about the economic, social, and environmental benefits of these solar setups.

“I loved visiting with people on the solar tour about my solar panels because I love that I generate about half of my electricity on the roof of my own house. I want everyone to know how doable and possible it is here in Wyoming. For me the only hard part was making the decision,” said Madeline Dalrymple, Laramie resident and solar owner.

Several solar installations on

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

- Alliance for Renewable Energy (ARE)
- Clark Resource Council (CRC)
- Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition (CALC)
- Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens (PACC)
- Sheridan Area Resource Council (SARC)

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Powder River Offices:

Main Office:
 934 North Main St
 Sheridan WY 82801
 Ph: (307)-672-5809
 Fax: (307) 672-5800
 Email: info@powderriverbasin.org
 Web: powderriverbasin.org

Lander Office:
 153 N. 4th Street
 Lander WY 82520
 Ph: (307)-286-5531 (Monika)
 Ph: (307)-399-3247 (Alyssa)

Powder River Breaks

Editor: Robin EH. Bagley
 Layout: Stephanie Avey
 Photos by Powder River staff and members.

Message from the Chair

Dear Powder River Members and Friends,



The golden warmth of fall has finally let go its hold on our imagination. It was the most brilliant autumn I can remember in years. Red, yellow, orange don't begin to capture this year's palate. Once the smokey fires were dampened and the sky blazed blue again, the aspen, maple, ash, and cottonwood burst into an array of colors good enough to eat: butterscotch, lemon, blood orange, garnet sweet potato, saffron, ranch egg yolk, black cherry, Colorado peach, and salted caramel. It was a visual feast just to walk up the path near my home to Kendrick

Mansion to gaze down on the multi-hued buffet that was Sheridan, Wyoming.

We bid a teary-eyed good-bye to another beloved Powder River board member on an early September afternoon in Kearney Hall near Story. Stacy Page packed a lot into her 68 years. You can read about that full and vibrant life in her obituary in this issue. What you may not know, and what so many of us experienced in her presence, is how fully and completely she embraced it all, the joys and triumphs as well as the challenges and sorrows. After learning her cancer was terminal, Stacy said, "Instead of 'Why me?' I thought, 'Well, why not me?'" In excelling in so many ways yet seeing herself as no one special, Stacy was, indeed, special to those who knew her. She fiercely loved and defended the natural world, and she and her husband Roger continued to be generous, long-time supporters of Powder River. Frail but undaunted and upbeat, Stacy attended her last board meeting in Buffalo on July 23, just three weeks before she died at home.

I was thinking of Stacy at our September board meeting (this one, via Zoom, thanks to Covid's resurgence), as we discussed a draft of a resolution to be considered at our annual business meeting in November (also to occur remotely). What we grappled with wasn't the idea informing the resolution but the language itself. Within the traditional, rather dry format of "whereases" and "be it resolved" was tucked away the tiny word "love." I don't think we ever used the word "love" in a draft of a resolution before, but there it was, bold and unadorned. After much discussion, we were unanimous in deciding to keep it, declaring our "love and respect for the natural world and the beings that inhabit that world."

I don't know if that language will remain in the final draft of the resolution, because it requires approval by voting members who are present at the annual business meeting. If you are a member and have strong feelings about this language, you might want to show up to vote on-line on November 6. Personally, I hope it does remain. As I see it, that statement defines the very core of Powder River. We do our work based on love. If we oppose an industry's practices which harm the natural world and its inhabitants, we do so resolutely out of the love of that world and its inhabitants, not out of some predetermined hatred of that industry. This distinction may seem subtle, but it is profound. In the present age when we are encouraged to ground our identities in opposition to those whom we are told are fundamentally hateful, there is no room for connection, respect, understanding...and love. "I am who I am because I am not them," is the motto of division and despair. In contrast, loving the natural world and its inhabitants informs the ways we care for that world and fiercely defend it. It enlivens the ways we reach out to others: friends, members, and allies, as well as to those who oppose us.

It gives me great pleasure to see the possibility of our openly embracing the language of love and respect as I end my two-year tenure as chair of this board, not only because these words have always quietly described the spirit of Powder River, but also because that language is an apt description of my fortunate privilege to have worked with Powder River's staff, its members, and fellow/sister board members, all truly remarkable... and, yes, lovable.

Gratefully,

Marcia Westkott

Powder River Solar Energy Production

Energy Produced: 478.6 kWh
 Carbon Offset: 730 lbs

We have offset the equivalent of 8 trees in August & September 2021!



Did you know that Powder River has a YouTube Channel?

You can find us by going to YouTube.com and searching PowderRiverBasinRC. All of our solar stories and our oil & gas impact videos are available to watch.

Sheridan Area Hemp Operation is “Real” Ag

Hundreds of independent, small ag businesses are popping up across Wyoming, filling the state’s dire need for a more diversified economy. Because traditional cattle ranching tends to be a low-profit, high-risk endeavor, many ranchers also rely on outside jobs and small adjunct businesses to survive. On-ranch custom butchering facilities, fish farms, vegetable cash crops, hemp farms, and other value-added businesses are the new face of ranching.

I recently paid a visit to one of those enterprises, owned and operated by Powder River member Mona Mitzel near Leiter, along the banks of Clear Creek. Here, Mona’s son raises cattle, and Mona, with help from her husband Steve, raises hemp to extract its CBD oils which are mixed with carrier ingredients to become salves and tinctures. I knew from the minute that Mona jumped off her dusty 4-wheeler and greeted me with a hearty handshake, that I was in for a great morning.

Massive cottonwood trees tower over Mona’s outdoor hemp plot and her three hoop houses (passive solar greenhouses where plants grow directly in the soil). Two cow dogs welcomed us from underneath a once-upon-a-time play house, now hemp storage shed, surrounded by farm machinery, outbuildings, and assorted farming paraphernalia. Everything from the patched hoop houses laden with hemp plants to the homemade hemp harvesting table and re-purposed chicken coop reflect the confidence, flexibility, and innovative spunk needed to be a successful startup enterprise.

Like other crops, hemp is susceptible to drought, pests, and weeds, problems Mona approaches with regenerative ag principles as much as she can. She interspersed Japanese millet and Austrian winter peas throughout her hemp plants to conquer weeds. Where the millet



and peas grew, only a few inch-high Canadian thistles barely survived this root chokehold.

Growing hemp and using the extracted oils to develop products is a business with many other unique challenges. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations prohibit Mona from labeling her products as a treatment. She must list what’s in the products but legally cannot list the benefits. Mona just shrugs and says that her best promotion is her customers’ word of mouth when they share their personal experiences such as help with headaches, joint pain, anxiety, and sleep problems.

Determining maximum plant potency is another critical factor in growing extracts. Potency dictates when high quality plant extracts can be harvested. For example, roses or marigolds are harvested just before the pollinators arrive. Basil and mint before flowers appear. Cottonwood buds before they burst into silky fluff. Failure to choose the optimum time results in a weak essence and inferior product.



For Mona’s hemp crop, the stakes are much higher. Harvesting in a state-mandated 15-day harvesting and testing window when the THC level is 0.3% or less, is critical. THC is the chemical component of hemp which can cause a psychoactive response at high levels. All harvests are tested by the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA), and a test result over the

....continued on page 10

Picnic on the Pathway a Success

This year’s Picnic on the Pathway event on Aug. 12 was a fun-filled success. Powder River, the Sheridan Community Land Trust, North Main Association, Science Kids and the Sheridan Food Forest support team worked together to host an afternoon of science-oriented family activities. The Land Trust and Science Kids showed families how to identify fish and bugs and how to test water quality in the river. It didn’t take long until whole families were wading into the river in search of specimens.



The North Main Association, Powder River, and Food Forest volunteers led a forager hunt in the Food Forest where family members worked together on a treasure hunt to harvest a list of the plants growing in the forest. The kids eagerly accepted a tiny bee pin earned by participating in the hunt. Sandwiches, chips and drinks were provided to everyone with funding support from Albertsons. Please thank them for their generosity next time you’re in the store! We look forward to another Picnic on the Pathway in August 2022, tentatively again located at the Food Forest and nearby Goose Creek.

Pennie Vance
Powder River Staff

Carbon Capture Mandates Are Short-Sighted and Hurt Wyoming Ratepayers

In a state known for its strong winds, Wyoming's elected officials sure don't seem to have learned how to gauge how hard or which direction the winds are blowing. At least where energy markets are concerned, they would rather bury their heads in the coal than see that the nation is rapidly moving away from the expensive and highly polluting coal-powered electricity currently produced in Wyoming, towards lower cost clean renewable energy. Bucking these winds is short-sighted, leading Wyoming to miss out on the opportunity to diversify its economy and stay relevant as an energy producer, and it will cost Wyoming electricity ratepayers – us – a lot of money.

As utilities try to replace outdated and expensive Wyoming coal units with the renewable energy that our neighboring states want, our elected officials keep trying to force them to keep coal plants open. In 2019, Wyoming passed Senate File 159, which requires public utilities planning to retire old and uneconomical coal units in Wyoming to first to attempt to sell them. If this sounds like government interference in the private sector, it is. But in 2020, this government overreach got worse when the legislature passed House Bill 200, Governor Gordon's plan to create the nation's first (and only) "coal standard." This law forces electric utilities to add expensive and unproven carbon capture technologies onto already uneconomical coal before they can recover the costs of any investments in renewables.

Carbon capture technology is extremely expensive, and it has failed miserably at the two power plants in North America where it has been tested. At Texas's Petra Nova plant the carbon capture operations required so much energy that NRG Energy built an entirely separate natural gas power plant—the emissions of which were not offset by the Petra Nova technology—just to power the scrubber, and then the plant was shut down in 2020 as it proved to be uneconomical and unreliable. And at the Boundary Dam Power Station in Saskatchewan, adding carbon capture to only one of the generators cost over \$1.5 billion, and it still failed to remain reliable or to meet its carbon capture goals.

Rocky Mountain Power, the largest utility serving Wyoming, modeled carbon capture at all of Wyoming's coal units in their 2021 biannual Integrated Resource Plan but didn't select it as the best option as it failed to meet their mandate of providing electricity at the lowest cost and least risk. In fact, they found that reasonable capital costs for carbon capture would need to come down at least 33%, or revenue for captured carbon dioxide would need to increase by at least 84%, to achieve break-even economics.

To encourage utilities to keep coal plants open and to experiment with expensive carbon capture, HB 200 allows utilities to recover the

costs of carbon capture investments by adding these costs to the rates Wyoming customers pay for their electricity. To further sweeten the deal, the legislature has said utilities can seek an even higher rate of return than normal on these investments, and that utilities don't need to share any profits from the sale of captured carbon dioxide with their customers. The bill explicitly says those profits, along with profits from the higher rate of return on equity, can go to the utility's shareholders.

Of course, since other states don't want overly expensive coal energy, they won't allow utilities to add these costs to the rate base for their state's customers. This means that Wyoming ratepayers get stuck paying the entire bill, and we could see our electricity rates skyrocket in a misguided attempt to keep coal alive.

The good news is that Wyoming has some of the best renewable energy resources in the United States, including that same wind our legislators and Governor are trying to buck. Renewables, such as wind and solar, are on average [five times cheaper than coal-fired power plant retrofits](#). While renewables can't replace the lost coal revenues, they give us a leg up in launching a diversified economy and can save ratepayers money.

Thankfully, Wyoming's Public Service Commission has produced draft rules that say that utility companies can avoid installing carbon capture technology if they can prove it is not economically feasible. The PSC is accepting comments on their rules now, making this an excellent time for ratepayers across Wyoming to speak up about what energy future and electricity prices they want to see.

I urge you to submit written comments to the PSC in support of affordable electricity, and specifically, their rule that requires utility companies to evaluate the economic and technical feasibility of carbon capture before they pass those costs on to ratepayers. You can email your comments to wpsc_comments@wyo.gov by Friday, October 22. Our future demands your action.

**Greg Findley
Lander**

Greg Findley is a small business owner who is concerned about the future of Wyoming's economy and energy mix. He lives in Lander with his wife, two kids, and their overly loved yellow lab.

Editor's Note: This was originally published by WyoFile on Oct. 19, 2021. WyoFile is an independent nonprofit news organization focused on Wyoming people, places and policy, www.wyofile.com.

Joint Taskforce to Tackle Laramie-Area Emissions

Powder River's affiliate, Alliance for Renewable Energy (ARE), has formed a joint taskforce to tackle Laramie-area carbon emissions. This effort is a collaboration with the Laramie City Council, Albany County Board of Commissioners, the University of Wyoming operations staff, and residents of Laramie to foster discussion and cooperation on a joint campus-city-county emissions reduction and climate action planning process. This taskforce will meet monthly with the help of a professional facilitator to identify critical collaborative projects, strategies for emissions reduction, and explore opportunities to reinvigorate the university's Climate Action Plan.

To date, out of these entities, only the City of Laramie has made commitments and taken strategic action to reduce local carbon emissions.

The Albany County Commission has yet to make any formal commitments to carbon reduction but remains interested in the conversation. In 2009, the university adopted a Climate Action Plan but later withdrew from climate commitments in 2017 amid budget cuts. This taskforce aims to align city, university, and county carbon reduction efforts with the city's existing emission tracking and reduction goals and strategies.

In the spring of 2022, the joint group will present key recommendations and strategies to university, city, and county leadership.

**Monika Leininger
Powder River Staff**

BLM Starts Review of Federal Coal Program

Through our members and staff, Powder River has worked hard over the years to get the Department of the Interior (DOI) to take a hard look at the federal coal program and study ways to improve it. This especially matters for Wyoming as the vast majority of our nation's coal comes from the federal reserves of the Powder River Basin. In 2016, DOI put in place a moratorium on new coal leasing and started to review the federal coal program. However, Secretary Zinke during the Trump Administration revoked the moratorium and stopped the review. Now, with new DOI leadership the review has restarted this fall. If you're feeling a bit of whiplash, you're not alone, but we're hoping the review sticks this time around long enough to be completed.

Powder River welcomed the news of the review restarting. Powder River Board member Bob LeResche stated:

“Review of the federal coal program is sorely needed and long overdue. As the coal market continues its decline, the American public, mining states, and coal communities deserve a fair return from federal coal. Leasing should match real market demand and minimize impacts on our air, land, water, and agriculture and to other economic activity in our states. The federal coal program is a leading contributor to US greenhouse gas emissions, but its last analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was back in 1979; our knowledge of climate change has grown exponentially since then, and the updated science must be incorporated into the program. We urge Interior to fully review and update the agency's coal leasing policies, regulations, and planning documents in light of our national commitment to combat climate change, protect water, air, wildlife and other natural

“As the coal market continues its decline, the American public, mining states, and coal communities deserve a fair return from federal coal. Leasing should match real market demand and minimize impacts on our air, land, water, and agriculture and to other economic activity in our states.”

– Bob LeResche

resources, support coal communities through the coming energy transition, and provide a fair return to American public – the owners of the federal coal resource.”

The review kicked off with a public comment period where organizations and individuals from across the country provided recommendations to DOI. Many of our members submitted their own comments, and Powder River worked with our sister organizations in the Western Organization of Resource Councils network, Natural Resources Defense Council, and The Wilderness Society to submit a detailed set of recommendations grounded in a

comprehensive review of scientific literature and other information detailing the impacts and problems of federal coal development.

Our recommendations to DOI included moving forward with a revision of 43 CFR Part 3400 (the federal coal program) and developing a new set of rules, guidance documents, and other management criteria by which leasing and mining of federal coal resources is judged under the public interest mandates of federal law, including protection of land, water, air, wildlife, and global climate resources; considering policy options that help to plan and manage the decline of federal coal leasing and development in an orderly, structured way that provides time, space, and opportunity for a just and equitable transition for workers, communities, and coal-dependent state economies, and ending subsidies on federal coal production by implementing new fiscal policies, such as increasing royalty and rental rates, as well as discontinuing royalty rate reductions.

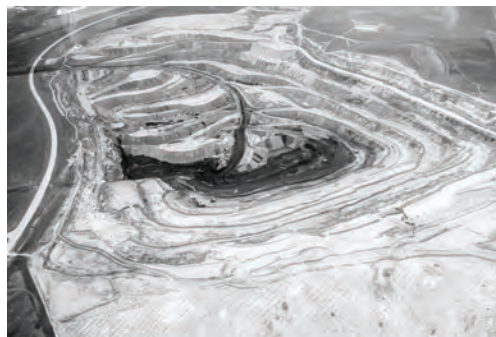
We now anxiously await the next steps in DOI's review, and we look forward to the department's implementation of the important reforms we have long advocated for.

Shannon Anderson
Powder River Staff

Self-Bonding for Coal is in the Past

Now for some really good news! Public documents from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) show that no coal mines in Wyoming are using self-bonding to guarantee reclamation costs. You heard that right – no coal mines are self-bonded.

Our staff regularly requests a table of the bonding status of coal mines from the DEQ, and we knew this day would come following some key bond replacements over the past year at the last few mines that were still eligible for self-bonding (bonds without the backing of a third party insurance company or cash or property collateral pledged to the DEQ).



This is a big change from the \$2 billion in mine reclamation costs that were covered only with self-bonds only a few years ago when a majority of coal companies in the state were in bankruptcy proceedings. Through the bankruptcy proceedings, our advocacy work, coupled with the legal work of the Department of the Interior, resulted in the replacement of self-bonds for the biggest coal mines. After the bankruptcies, we supported new DEQ rules that changed the eligibility criteria for self-bonding and limited the practice going forward.

Other operators have now voluntarily replaced their self-bonds, and Wyoming's coal mines are self-bond free.

Shannon Anderson
Powder River Staff

Look Before You Leap on Nuclear

The Cowboy State is weighing plans to host a multi-billion dollar “demonstration” nuclear power plant—TerraPower’s Natrium reactor. The long history of similar nuclear reactors, dating back to 1951, indicates that Wyoming is likely to be left with a nuclear lemon on its hands.

The Natrium reactor design, which uses molten sodium as a coolant (water is used in most existing commercial nuclear reactors), is likely to be problematic. Sodium reacts violently with water and burns if exposed to air, a serious vulnerability. A sodium fire, within a few months of the reactor starting to generate power, led to Japan’s Monju demonstration reactor being shut down.

At 1,200 megawatts, the French Superphénix was the largest sodium-cooled reactor, designed to demonstrate commercial feasibility. Plagued by operational problems, including a major sodium leak, it was shut down in 1998 after 14 years, having operated at an average capacity of under seven percent compared to the 80 to 90 percent required for commercial operation. Other sodium-cooled reactors have also experienced leaks, which are very difficult to prevent because of chemical interactions between sodium and the stainless steel used in various reactor components. Finally, sodium, being opaque, makes reactor maintenance and repairs notoriously difficult.

Sodium-cooled reactors can experience rapid and hard-to-control power surges. Under severe conditions, a runaway chain reaction can even result in an explosion. Such a runaway reaction was the central cause of the 1986 Chernobyl reactor explosion, though that was a reactor of a different design. Following Chernobyl, Germany’s Kalkar sodium-cooled reactor, about the same size as the proposed Natrium, was abandoned without ever being commissioned, though it was complete.

All these technical and safety challenges naturally drive up the costs of sodium-cooled reactors, making them significantly more expensive than conventional nuclear reactors. More than \$100 billion, in today’s dollars, has been spent worldwide in the attempt to commercialize essentially this design and associated technologies, to no avail.

The Natrium design, being even more expensive than present-day reactors, will therefore be more expensive than practically every other form of electricity generation. The Wall Street firm, Lazard, estimates that electricity from new nuclear plants is several times more than the costs at utility-scale solar and wind power plants. Further, the difference has been increasing.

To this bleak picture, TerraPower has added another economically problematic feature: molten salt storage to allow its electric output to vary. TerraPower hopes this feature will help it integrate better into an electricity grid that has more variable electricity sources, notably wind and solar.

Molten salt storage would be novel in a nuclear reactor, but it is used in concentrating solar power projects, where it can cost an additional \$2,000 per kilowatt of capacity. At that rate, it could add a billion dollars to the Natrium project.

This host of factors makes it reasonably certain that the Natrium will not be economically competitive. In other words, even if it has no technical problems, it will be an economic lemon.

To top it all off, the proposed Wyoming TerraPower demonstration project depends on government funds. Last year, the Department of Energy awarded TerraPower \$80 million in initial taxpayer funding; this may increase \$1.6 billion over seven years, “subject to the availability of future appropriations” and TerraPower coming up with matching funds.

Despite government support, private capital has recently abandoned a more traditional project, the mPower small modular reactor, resulting in its termination in 2017. And it was Congress that refused to appropriate more money for the sodium-cooled reactor proposed for Clinch River, Tennessee when its costs skyrocketed, thereby ending the project in 1983.

A much harder look at the facts is in order, lest Wyoming add to the total of many cancelled nuclear projects and abandoned construction sites. Of course, the Natrium lemon might be made into lemonade by converting it to an amusement park if it is never switched on, like the Kalkar reactor, now refashioned into Wunderland Kalkar, an amusement park in Germany, near the border with the Netherlands. For energy, the state might look to its natural heritage – its wind power potential is greater than the combined generation of all 94 operating U.S. nuclear reactors put together, which are on average, about three times the size of Natrium.

Arjun Makhijani and M.V. Ramana

M. V. Ramana is Professor and Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security and the Director of the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, University of British Columbia. Dr. Ramana holds a Ph.D. in Physics from Boston University and is the author of [The Power of Promise: Examining Nuclear Energy in India](#).

Arjun Makhijani, President of the [Institute for Energy and Environmental Research](#), holds a Ph.D. in engineering (nuclear fusion) from the University of California at Berkeley. He has produced many studies and articles on nuclear fuel cycle and renewable energy issues over the past forty years, including [Prosperous, Renewable Maryland: Roadmap for a Healthy, Economical and Equitable Energy Future](#), which lays out a pathway to an electricity system based completely on renewable energy, without any use of fossil fuels or nuclear power.

Editor’s Note: Reprinted from the Oct. 17, 2021 edition of the Casper Star-Tribune.

Donate a Car to Powder River



Powder River staff members travel around Wyoming, and we put a lot of miles on our cars. We keep them well-maintained as we want the staff to travel safely. However, the vehicles do eventually wear out. In the past we have been lucky enough to have members donate cars in good condition, which is a wonderful gift for Powder River.

If you have a reliable, dependable car that you would like to donate, please contact the office at 307-672-5809. Thanks to all of our members for their continued support!

Powder River Staff

National Coal Council Under Intense Scrutiny

In September, a letter from members of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) detailed a highly inappropriate relationship between the National Coal Council (NCC), a federal advisory committee, and its corporate alter ego, National Coal Council, Inc. WORC urged Secretary of Energy, Jennifer Granholm to scrutinize and restructure or terminate the NCC.

The NCC is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), which exists to facilitate the collection by federal agencies of advice and research from third parties that is relevant, objective and open to the public, are fairly balanced, and comply with reasonable cost controls. WORC's letter describes how the NCC includes no perspectives from individuals or organizations working to address the negative impacts of coal extraction, and there are no clear lines of separation between NCC and NCC, Inc. The industry association blatantly funds and influences the work of the NCC, resulting in biased information to the Department of Energy (DOE) on behalf of the coal industry.

"The Department of Energy needs to end the National Coal Council's unethical influence over national energy policy. The industry representatives who make up the council operate without public scrutiny and push an agenda that lines their own pockets. It's time to expose this shadowy practice and show the American public the full extent of the Council's efforts to prolong schemes to prop up the coal industry at everyone else's expense, including electricity ratepayers, coal mine neighbors, landowners, and ranchers who live with the impact of coal mining," said Bob LeResche, Powder River and WORC Board Member from Clearmont, Wyoming.

"The National Coal Council barely even pretends it is anything more than a corporate lobbying group. The council abuses the credibility of the federal government and misuses tax dollars to further corporate interests," said Mark Fix, a member and past chair of Northern Plains Resource Council who ranches in eastern Montana's coal country. "At a minimum, the council should be disbanded and reformed. However, the blatant corruption goes so deep, I'm not sure this specific entity could earn credibility no matter the reforms or restructuring."

Under the Trump Administration's "Energy Dominance" agenda, the NCC's focus shifted to advocate for the increased use and financial support of coal. Specific examples from this time described in WORC's letter include:

- NCC events, often including dinner, drinks, and social time, are funded by the coal industry, and that this funding blatantly influences the work of the NCC. For example, at one recent NCC meeting, the federal advisory committee received a presentation on NCC, Inc.'s financing, in which the speaker lauded the approval of new appointments by the DOE Secretary to the NCC because they would generate additional revenue for NCC, Inc.
- The Council appears to believe that it has a single-focus policy mission of propping up the coal industry. One NCC speaker put it best when he said, "the single most important priority for the committee" is to "preserve and rejuvenate the existing coal fleet."
- In another instance, the Chairman of an NCC subcommittee admitted that while the NCC seeks to give the DOE the advice it seeks, the NCC has a parallel goal of, "at the same time, serving our own strategic objectives."
- NCC speakers exhibit pro-coal biases, with occasional open bashing of counter perspectives coming from the conservation community or those with differing political views. For instance, a speaker at a NCC event in 2018 remarked, "[I]magine where we would be if we were a year and three months into the Hillary Clinton Administration."
- In an almost comical example of the pro-coal sentiment of the NCC, the Director of the National Energy Technology Laboratory at the time, Grace Bochenek, led NCC meeting attendees in a "COAL" cheer.

Western Organization of Resource Councils



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Powder River Kicks Off Rancher-to-Rancher Group

The first meeting of the Powder River Regenerative Rancher-to-Rancher group was held via Zoom on Sept. 21. Abbey Bruski from the regenerative ranching support group in eastern Montana joined us to share a motivating talk on how their ranchers came together. They've grown into a strong group which meets monthly for a shared meal, usually with a speaker, plus ample time to talk with one another about their experiences with regenerative ag. Members in the Powder River group enjoyed Abbey's enthusiasm and the opportunity to share their personal stories with one another.

Ranchers across the country are forming similar support groups to share stories of challenge and success in transitioning from conventional ag practices to regenerative ag practices which center

around the importance of restoring soil health to optimize long-term ranch productivity. Although a rapidly growing movement, many ranchers are reluctant to change how they've always operated. This has resulted in regen ranchers finding themselves isolated in their own neighborhoods. These rancher-to-rancher groups help provide the kind of supportive community that's always been a part of ranching.

A second Zoom gathering of the Powder River group is scheduled for late October. For more information about joining the group, please contact organizer Pennie Vance at penniev@powderriverbasin.org.

Pennie Vance
Powder River Staff

White House Releases New NEPA Rules

The first 10 months of the Biden Administration has been marked with proposals to undo regulatory changes made by the Trump Administration. Perhaps at the top of that list are the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) rules to implement the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA was enacted to require agencies to essentially look before they leap - to study the environmental, public health, and economic consequences of a decision and to consider alternatives that will reduce those impacts. While NEPA does not mandate a result, it is the process that matters, especially as a mechanism to allow those most impacted by an agency decision to weigh in and comment. Since NEPA touches virtually all federal agency decisions, the CEQ's rules have tremendous consequence for environmental review of permits, government funding of projects, and how the public can have a say in the process.

In 2020, the Trump Administration CEQ made a number of fundamental and troubling changes to the NEPA rules, which previous to those changes had not been significantly altered since their adoption in 1978. Under the 2020 NEPA rules, government agencies can ignore the landscape-scale or global impacts of a project, such as climate change; public participation is reduced to the lowest legal amount, and complex environmental reviews are subject to arbitrary time and page limits. The rules also explicitly allow a project applicant, such as a company proposing to mine or drill public minerals or on tribal lands, to prepare its own environmental impact statement by removing the prohibition on hiring contractors that have conflicts of interest, such as financial ties to the applicant.



Liza Cuthbert-Millett testifies at the NEPA hearing in Denver in 2020.

Luckily for the public, the Biden Administration CEQ proposed this month to undo some of those changes to require better consideration of climate change and other impacts. Notably, the proposed rules would give federal agencies the flexibility to determine the "purpose and need" of a proposed project based on a variety of factors, and to work with project proponents and communities to mitigate or avoid environmental harms by analyzing common sense alternatives. The 2020 NEPA rules limited federal agencies' ability to develop and consider alternative designs or approaches that do not fully align with the stated goals of the project's sponsor, often a private company.

CEQ's proposal out for public comment now is the first phase of rulemaking. Over the coming months, CEQ plans on proposing a set of broader second phase changes to the NEPA regulations to help ensure full and fair public involvement in the environmental review process; meet the nation's environmental, climate change, and environmental justice challenges; provide regulatory certainty to stakeholders and project applicants; and promote better decision-making consistent with NEPA's goals and requirements.

Comments on CEQ's phase one rulemaking can be submitted until Nov. 22 via the www.regulations.gov website by searching for CEQ-2021-0002. More information on the rulemaking is available at www.nepa.gov

Shannon Anderson
Powder River Staff

In Memory of Margaret Stacy Page



Stacy often joked that she was more about the destination than the journey. Mainly because, she said, she wanted to see how things turned out.

As a nearly lifelong runner and athlete, she understood that a finish gave meaning to the endeavor. And Stacy always finished the race, often in the top tier. But for all the

finishes she did experience, she'd be the first to tell you her life was an amazing journey – one that she deeply relished.

Margaret Stacy Page was born and joined her parents, Roberta and Milton Page, and her older brother Larry, on May 14, 1953, in Passaic, New Jersey. When her younger sisters Nancy and Marianne came along, Stacy was a loving big sister. When Stacy was four years old, the family moved to Lincoln, Massachusetts, where she attended elementary through high school.

Stacy's path to Sheridan can be traced directly to those East-Coast-school connections. After graduating in 1976 from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, with a degree in Botany, she interned for a year in California. On her way home, she stopped in Sheridan to visit her childhood friend, Susan "Sukey" Farley Ross, fell in love with the area, and never left.

Mutual friends (and future brother-in-law Bud) introduced Stacy to Roger Sanders in 1977. Stacy and Roger were married in 1986. Out of the deal, Stacy got a huge, practical-joke-playing, boisterous, bird and wildflower watching, kind, supportive, and loving extended family, who welcomed her as one of their own: namely, Roger's parents Herman and Elaine Sanders and his siblings Nancy, Leland (Bud), Doris, Mike, Jim, Patrice, and Alan.

In 1995, at the age of 42, Stacy had a "health scare." After years of trying to start a family, she was totally blindsided by her pregnancy, and was mistakenly and ironically convinced she had cancer. Stacy and Roger welcomed the birth of Samuel Martin Sanders on March 22, 1996. Stacy said being a good mother was one of her proudest accomplishments. She also loved getting to know Sam's life partner, Shannon Marks, whom she considered the daughter of her heart.

Stacy worked as a superintendent at the UW Extension Farm near Wyrarno, Wyoming for many years. In 1986, she decided to pursue her Master's degree in Plant Pathology, graduating in 1989 from the University of Wyoming. She soon became a Vegetation Specialist for the Wyoming DEQ. She worked for the state for 34 years, retiring in 2017.

At DEQ, Stacy was known as a fair regulator, even though regulating was a role she didn't particularly relish. What she did like was talking about plants with the reclamation specialists from the coal mines! And like plant geeks do, they all bonded over a mutual love of photosynthesizing things and remain friends today.

Stacy will be remembered as physically strong, even though she described herself as an average athlete! Starting in Junior High, Stacy played field hockey, soccer, and tennis. This is also when she began a lifelong love-affair with running. She thoroughly enjoyed all of the outdoor opportunities in Sheridan, from downhill and cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, and ice skating to biking, hiking, and backpacking. Until illness stopped her, she worked out or ran daily with her friends Martha Swatt and Brenda Jacobs. Stacy finished the Boston Marathon in 1985—a proud moment of which she nevertheless said, "once was enough!" Along with her mentor Ronn Smith and friends

Karen Powers, Wendell Robison, and Rich Garrison, Stacy was a founder of the Big Horn Mountain Wild and Scenic Trail Run, a 100-mile distance race in the Big Horns, which she organized for many years and continued to support as an aid station volunteer.

Stacy also nurtured a lifelong love of music. Her family made sure she had piano lessons, which she, unlike so many other kids similarly coerced, actually enjoyed! When it came time for band, she dreamed of playing the trombone, like her father. But there were none available to rent, so she took up the French Horn instead. After she retired in 2017, she re-dedicated herself to the Horn, taking lessons, and playing the occasional prelude for her Sheridan Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. She and Roger supported the arts in Sheridan and throughout Wyoming, regularly attending concerts here and in Laramie when Sam was at UW. The Grand Teton Music Festival in Jackson was many times a summer highlight.

Stacy enjoyed travelling and believed that it increased her appreciation and enthusiasm of the diversity in our world. Her travels outside of the United States and North America included motor touring or bicycling in England, Wales, Scotland, France, Italy, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Australia.

Social activism was part and parcel of Stacy's being. She was involved in many social and environmental justice causes. She served on the Board of the Powder River Basin Resource Council, Wyoming Promise, and the Sheridan Arts Council. She was a member of the National Friends Service Committee (Quakers) and Sheridan Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. Stacy was a Democrat at heart, and with the assistance of friends Kris Korfanta and Barbara Chase, was able to re-register and realize her long-time dream of dying as a Democrat!

Stacy's fighting spirit allowed her to outlive the expected prognosis for her cancer (metastatic uveal melanoma), and to live well besides. During this saga, she reconnected with Janelle Gray, and they called themselves cancer buddies. On their walks they'd gripe about their diagnoses ('why me?' finally becoming 'well, why not me?') their fears, indignities, and the keto diet!

Stacy passed away on Monday, August 16, 2021, surrounded by her loving family and friends at her home in Sheridan. Stacy wanted to be remembered as a good friend and a good cook, and she will be. Until the very end, she was her lively, giving self, socializing with a steady stream of visitors to her and Roger's home. And while Stacy was beloved by many, she humbly asked us to resist holding her as an example. She wanted us to remember that she was as flawed and fallible as us all.

Stacy was preceded in death by her parents Milton and Roberta Page; brother Larry Page; brothers-in-law Mike Sanders and Hal MacDonald; nieces Andrea Page and Stephanie Sanders and nephew Ryan Martin Sanders. She is survived by her husband Roger Sanders; son Sam Sanders and Shannon Marks; sister Nancy Grimaldi and Peter; sister Marianne McKnight and Andy; in-laws Nancy Hower and Herb; Bud Sanders and Carol; Doris Sanders and Jack Wilke; Jim Sanders and Judy; Patrice Sanders; Alan Sanders and Sherry Wickum; nieces and nephews Tim and Aron Hower, Geneva Ladtkow, Dan and Ashley Sanders, Jason and Megan MacDonald, Scott Sanders and Ryan Haley, numerous grand-nieces and nephews, as well as many, many friends. She will be sorely missed.

Memorial contributions to honor Stacy may be made to: Powder River Basin Resource Council, 934 North Main Street, Sheridan, WY 82801 or the Kearney Community Hall, P.O. Box 124, Story, WY 82842.

Biden Administration to Resume Federal Oil and Gas Leasing

On Aug. 31, the Biden Administration announced its intention to offer 459 previously-deferred Wyoming land parcels for oil and gas leasing. This decision comes following a Louisiana judge's order that prevented the Department of the Interior (DOI) from implementing an executive order that paused lease sales pending a review of the federal oil and gas leasing program. While the DOI has appealed the Louisiana court decision, the agency is working through the details on whether and how to proceed with leasing in the meantime. Parcels will be offered in five states in the West, but the vast majority (72%!) are in Wyoming.



While the Louisiana ruling prohibits the administration from continuing a full pause on lease sales, the BLM retains the authority to defer the leasing of parcels to address serious environmental and climate concerns covered under the National Environmental Policy Act, of which there are many. Many of the parcels for sale in Wyoming present a serious risk to sage grouse and big game habitat. Sage grouse lek counts are only 54% of what they were in 2015, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided that listing the sage grouse as endangered was not necessary because of protections implemented by federal and state agencies, and it is essential that their habitat is preserved in order to prevent an endangered species listing.

The potential greenhouse gas emissions from drilling on these parcels would also push the U.S. well over its carbon budget for remaining under 2°C of warming, a legally binding commitment made when President Biden rejoined the Paris Accords when he entered office. Recent studies have demonstrated that further oil and gas leasing and subsequent drilling is incompatible with this commitment. Opening

Laramie...Continued from page 1

the tour were made possible through RMP's Blue Sky Grant Program, which is funded by the option for customers to pay \$1.95 per 200 kWh block per month on their electricity bill. This fund provides grants for certain solar installations in RMP's service area.

"We have about 60,000 Blue Sky contributors within Wyoming, Utah, and Idaho," said Michael Morrissey, RMP Wyoming Regional Business Manager. "We've been doing this for 20 years, and we just finished our 185th Blue Sky project here in Laramie."

Sheridan...Continued from page 3



mandated limit results in an order to destroy that entire hemp harvest. Once the WDA determines the THC level is within limits, by Wyoming law Mona has only 15 days in which to get the crop fully harvested. Mona would like to see Wyoming adopt the federal regulations, which are 30 days from test to harvest.

Mona and most small business entrepreneurs have a special tenacity that allows them to take on these kinds of challenges, but they also depend on the support of communities and our state lawmakers. These small businesses provide the diversity and flexibility to help Wyoming free itself from the ravages of our

up an additional 568,000 acres to development in Wyoming, let alone the thousands of other acres offered in other states, threatens these global commitments and warrants further environmental review.

This is especially true given that five million acres of currently leased land in Wyoming are non-producing and remain open to development. These leases could provide 67 years of future development opportunity. If these leases were all developed at rates similar to currently active leases, the U.S. would far exceed its carbon emissions budget.

These idle leases also illustrate the emptiness of industry concerns. While industry groups have argued that the leasing sale pause has harmed development and employment in Wyoming, this is simply not the case. Enough undeveloped leases exist to allow oil and gas developers to continue production at similar rates well into the future. In addition, Wyoming's rig count has tripled since the lease sale pause went into effect in January, and the Wyoming Oil and Gas Commission has approved double the number of permits to drill as in the same time frame in 2020. It is global market dynamics, and not the availability of new leases, that determine the boom-bust cycle of the oil and gas industry.

Powder River worked with partner organizations to submit comments to the BLM advocating for a continued pause on lease sales until a full environmental and climate analysis is completed. Be on the lookout for future opportunities to submit comments to the BLM regarding leasing.

Lottie Mitchell
Powder River Staff

The Laramie Solar Tour was a partnership between Sierra Club Wyoming; Powder River Basin Resource Council; Powder River's Laramie affiliate, Alliance for Renewable Energy, and the American Solar Energy Society's National Solar Tour. To view videos of the Laramie Solar Tour live stream recording, please visit Alliance for Renewable Energy's Facebook page.

Monika Leininger
Powder River Staff

boom-bust cycle. As the monopolization of our food industry has shown, bigger is often not better.

The Wyoming legislature is again considering a substantive change to the ag land tax structure that could threaten these small ag businesses. Powder River will be monitoring and reporting on this movement and will work to make sure that such changes don't inadvertently harm producers.

I drove away from Mona's hemp farm with the same feelings I always have after visiting one of Wyoming's small ag businesses, gratitude and awe. No serious ag endeavor is a novelty to be dismissed as somehow not "real."

Pennie Vance
Powder River Staff

Harvest Celebration Raffle Wrap-Up

Having to cancel our in-person Harvest Celebration for the second year in a row for COVID safety was a big disappointment to members and staff. However, the Harvest Raffle was still a go, and Powder River members and staff stepped up to make it a success. Cathy and Mark Wallace were the winners of the handmade quilt donated by Mary Barbula; Dick Warren won the bison meat package donated by Christy Gerrits; and Don and Kathy Spellman won the bountiful food basket donated by the food vendors at the Landon's Farmers Market.

A big thanks to all of our donors with special recognition to all of the Farmers' Market vendors who year after year fill the large basket to the brim with homemade jams, breads, spices, meat, cookies and an abundance of fresh produce. Please thank them the next time you're at the market.

Pennie Vance
Powder River Staff



Thank You to All of the Landon's Farmers Market Vendors Who Donated to Our Harvest Celebration Raffle!

Lower Piney Heirloom Vegetable Gardens, Rachel & Luke Bourgault
Western Variety Farm, Brian Berglund
Triple R Farm, Riley Rankin
One Hot Mess Salsa, Beckie Nedved
Wild Hollow Artisan Baking, Rhonda Duncan
Grass King Cattle Company, Jim & Karen Zezas
Pepper King, Ryan Williams
Lupine Lane Food & Flowers, Janelle Gray, Phil Gilmore, & Maya Gilmore
Sunflower Bakery, Jolly Rogers
Murphy Gulch Ranch, Pam Belus and Bernard Holz
Papa Joe's Produce, Joe Wesnitzer, Adam & Amanda Bunker, Carol Sims
Box Cross Road Farms, Tom Varcalli
Annie's Farm, Annie Addlesperger
Brooke Holstead
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2021

5 November	Annual Meeting Speaker, Online
6 November	Annual Business Meeting, Online
12 November	Board Meeting, Online

Planned Giving and Estate Planning Gifts

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. So we're inviting you, our extended family of members and donors, to consider including Powder River in your estate plans.

Your gift would create a living legacy allowing Powder River to continue our work far into the future and helping ensure 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 through a bequest to Powder River.

The two easiest ways to include Powder River in your estate planning take little time (and no legal assistance).

- **THROUGH YOUR RETIREMENT ACCOUNT** (Your IRA, Roth-IRA, SEP-IRA, 401(k), or other such account): Name *Powder River Basin Resource Council* as a Primary beneficiary for a percentage. One percent, 10%, 25% or whatever you wish. You can do this through the account custodian, or often even on the custodian's website in a few minutes (Powder River's Tax ID is 74-2183158).

- **THROUGH YOUR LIFE INSURANCE POLICY:** - Name *Powder River Basin Resource Council* as a primary beneficiary of any percent-

age of your life insurance policy. You can do this through your insurance agent or the insurance company, or often even on your insurance company's website in only a few minutes (Powder River's Tax ID is 74-2183158).

If you are preparing a formal will or living trust document, you can include Powder River Basin Resource Council as a primary beneficiary of a specific dollar amount or percentage of your estate. If you already have such an instrument, you can have it revised to include Powder River. This is probably best done through your attorney.

Finally, there are several more complex tax-advantaged ways to contribute to Powder River's future and receive continuing income and tax advantages during your lifetime. These include "charitable remainder trusts" and sale of appreciated and depreciated securities. Please consult your legal and financial advisors about how you can use such tools to support Wyoming's most effective grassroots member organization, and how you might benefit.

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

Thank you!

Wyoming Delegation Contact Information

Barrasso, John (R)
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Website: barrasso.senate.gov
Phone: (202) 224-6441
Fax: (202) 224-1724

Cynthia Lummis (S)
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Suite SD-G12
Washington, DC 20510
Website: lummis.senate.gov
Phone: 202-224-3424

Cheney, Liz (R)
416 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Website: cheney.house.gov/
Phone: (202) 225-2311
Fax: (202) 225-3057