



## Powder River pushes for stronger Federal Bonding requirements

KATHERINE STAHL  
Powder River Staff

In May, Powder River joined with Western Colorado Alliance (WCA) and Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) to advocate for stronger federal onshore oil and gas bonding requirements. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is considering a rule that would update onshore oil and gas lease sales. Although the text of the rule is not available yet, it is expected to include updated requirements for financial assurances, or bonding, for oil and gas leases on federal land. This update is decades in the making, as federal bonding requirements have not been updated in over 60 years and have failed to keep pace with technological advances in the oil and gas industry.

Members and staff from Powder River, WCA, and WORC presented comments on the upcoming rule in a meeting with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Representatives from the Department of the Interior and the BLM were also present. Powder River Board member Maria Katherman participated in the meeting and provided a personal account of why updated bonding requirements are critical to the continued development of our natural resources. Katherman lives in the project area for

“This is like incentivizing companies to walk away without reclamation just because it is cheaper, and after all, their point is to make money.”

– Maria Katherman

the 5,000-well Converse County Oil and Gas Project. She notes the development of the project area has moved very quickly, despite insufficient bonding requirements for federal wells that leave the landscape at risk of lasting damage.

An estimated 99.5% of federal wells carry bonds insufficient to cover the cost of reclamation. Katherman pointed out in the OMB meeting that per well bonding averages to \$2,000 across the country, compared to average reclamation costs of \$76,000 or greater per well. She says that “This is like incentivizing companies to walk away without

reclamation just because it is cheaper, and after all, their point is to make money.”

Katherman urged the OMB to “take a hard look at the public cost incurred by the present bonding system.” She reminded agency representatives that “there can be no justification for the state, the tax-payers, or the private surface owners to end up having to pay for what should be the responsibility of the oil and gas industry.”

Powder River looks forward to seeing the draft text of the rule. In the meantime, our members and staff will continue to push for updated bonding requirements, applied to new and existing oil and gas leases.

## AGENCIES ADDRESS COAL IMPACTS

SHANNON ANDERSON | Powder River Staff

It’s been a busy time in the arena of coal regulation with several federal agencies moving forward with new standards to address the impacts of mining and burning coal in power plants. Some of these new proposals tackle long-standing priorities of our organization and are welcome developments. On the other hand, some of them seem too little too late to address the impacts of an industry that is in rapid decline. From the Department of the Interior’s review of the federal coal leasing moratorium to the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) new proposed standards to limit carbon pollution at coal power plants, Powder River and our members have been busy attending meetings and submitting comments.

**Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement (OSMRE) Ten Day Notice Rule:** In response to litigation from

coalfield community groups, OSMRE has proposed a new rule to govern how the agency responds to citizen complaints alerting the agency to a potential violation of coal mining laws, regulations, or permit conditions. Colloquially called the Ten Day Notice (TDN) rule because that is the period of time that OSMRE gives a state agency to decide whether to carry out an investigation and enforcement action in response to a complaint, the proposed rule is designed to reduce burdens for citizens to file a complaint, as well as clarify procedures for OSMRE to evaluate and process citizen allegations about possible SMCRA violations and clarify regulatory requirements of the Ten-Day Notice process. Powder River supports OSMRE’s proposal and will be submitting comments along with our sister organizations in the Western Organization of Resource Councils and allied organizations from coalfields across the nation.

COAL IMPACTS continued on page 10

# Message from the chair



About halfway through Chapter 2 of *Walden* — Where I Lived — Henry David Thoreau tells us, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” Thoreau has long been a touchstone for me. His deep attention to the world around us has been an inspiration and a guide.

There are many other writers who have inspired me to live at one with the earth and my fellow beings—both the human and non-human. Such writers have challenged me to address why I do what I do. What do I hope for from my actions as a neighbor, a friend, a citizen, a parent, a writer and musician?

Here are some of the books that have given me solace and inspiration regarding how we can live well with the earth. I list them in no particular order: *The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach of Cape Cod* (Henry Beston, 1928); *The Land of Little Rain* (Mary Austin, 1903); *Animal Dreaming: The Art and Science of Interspecies Communication* (Jim Nollman, 1987). This one was especially important to me — as a musician I was stunned by Nollman’s use of music in his efforts to speak with various other species from dolphins to turkeys to spiders.

Other books that have opened the world to me in new ways include *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (Terry Tempest Williams, 1991); *A Sand County Almanac* (Aldo Leopold, 1949); *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography* (Kathleen Norris, 1993); and *Of Wolves and Men* (Barry Lopez, 1978).

Then there are the books on place and nature by Wyoming writers — *Wapiti Wilderness* (Margaret—Mardy—and Olaus Murie, 1985); *Seven Half Miles from Home: Notes of a Wind River Naturalist* (Mary Back, 1985), and *Riding the White Horse Home: A Western Family Album* (Teresa Jordan, 1993).

One of the strangest and most moving books on nature I’ve read is J. A. Baker’s *The Peregrine*, published in 1967. I said it was a book “on nature,” but that’s not quite right. The Peregrine isn’t so much on nature as it is nature. It’s not about bird watching; it’s about becoming a bird. For seven months Baker daily tracked and observed a pair of peregrines in England’s East Anglia coastal region, a mixed terrain of marshland, woods, fields, river valleys, mudflats, estuaries, and the sea. No human aside from Baker appears in the book. We learn almost nothing of Baker aside from his field experience. We do know he wrote the book following a diagnosis of a serious illness. Clearly, evanescence has sharpened his awareness of beauty.

The irrelevance of humanity in *The Peregrine* leads me to a last book — Joseph Wood Krutch’s *The Desert Year*. Having grown up on the Sonoran Desert in Arizona, I feel a deep affinity for Krutch’s evocation of that landscape but I’m uncertain about his sense of the wall between “nature” and “humanity.” In the essay “From a Mountaintop,” Krutch writes, “From where I stood there was no visible evidence that the earth was inhabited...It was thus the world must have looked at the end of the fifth day, and I found myself wondering whether the text of Genesis might not possibly be garbled, whether, perchance, it was really after the fifth, not the sixth day, that God looked at his work and saw that it was good. Would not I, in His place, have stopped right there? Would I have risked the addition of a disturbing element? Was the world ever again so obviously good?”

Ignoring for a moment the questions of both God’s existence and gender, Krutch’s view is one that has long bedeviled environmentalists. Is nature everything but human beings? That’s not my belief and it’s not the driving force in our efforts at Powder River. We can learn from the natural world how to live in accord with both its possibilities and its constraints. We need neither abandon our humanity and become the peregrine nor live as humans—a disturbing element—isolated from nature. We can be one with it and with ourselves. That’s our job at Powder River.

David Romtvedt

**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 BREAKS

EDITOR: Robin EH. Bagley  
Photos by Powder River staff and members.

# Sheridan County's proposed rezone of the Tongue River Valley moves forward

SHANNON ANDERSON | Powder River Staff

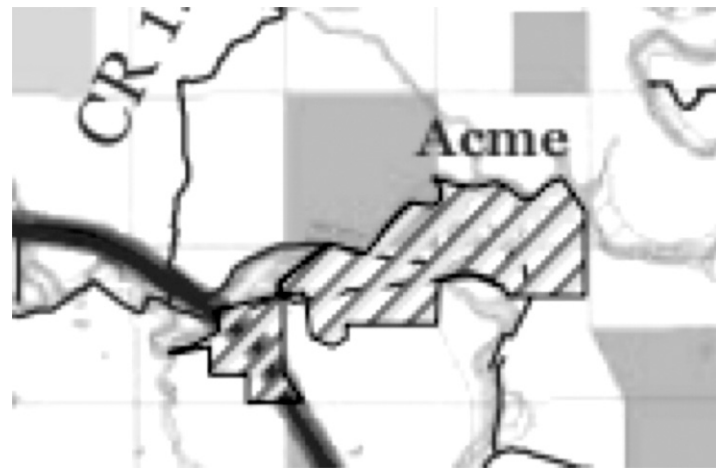
On June 1, Sheridan County Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed a proposed amendment to the Rules and Regulations Governing Zoning in Sheridan County entitled "Acme Special Use District." The proposal will combine what are now agricultural, recreational, rural residential, and some industrial lands into one zone that would facilitate commercial or industrial development in the Acme and Kleenburn areas along the Tongue River.

While the proposal identifies some uses that would be prohibited, there was acknowledgement that any uses currently in effect in the existing industrial zones would be grandfathered, regardless of whether they are on the allowed list or not. Additionally, the proposal would allow residential dwellings or ag activities as an acceptable use of the land in the zone. For other uses, a master plan would be required with a variety of conditions, including setbacks, traffic studies, open space and riparian habitat protection, dark sky compliant lighting, and water supply and sewage plans.

Our members have been showing up for months now to the Planning and Zoning Commission meetings, and our organization and our members will continue to do so over the coming months as the proposal gets reviewed and finalized at future meetings. Members of the public, including landowners within and adjacent to the zone, have unanimously spoken in opposition to the rezone proposal raising concerns about impacts to existing uses of the area, including historical, agricultural, hunting, fishing, recreational, and residential zones along the Tongue River. Of note, a portion of the county-owned Kleenburn Recreation Area would be included in the zone, as well as the Acme power plant site that is being cleaned up by the Sheridan Conservation

District. A series of community visioning sessions carried out by the Conservation District affirmed that community members want to see the site restored to ag and recreation lands, as opposed to allowing greater industrial development in the area. However, as opposed to honoring that previous community decision, the county is now moving forward with proposing to allow additional industrial development in the area.

If you are not already involved in the efforts to protect this important part of Sheridan County, please contact our staff and we'll keep you updated on future meetings and how to submit comments and information to the Planning and Zoning Commission.



The potential Special Use District is denoted in the map above.

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## Farm Bill efforts focus on restoring MCOOL

ROBIN EH. BAGLEY | Powder River Staff

With construction of the 2023 Farm Bill underway, efforts throughout cattle country are focused on restoring mandatory county-of-origin labeling (MCOOL) for beef. In June, Powder River met with a member of Representative Harriet Hageman's Washington, DC staff to talk about the opportunity the legislation presents for reinstating accurate beef labeling.

Powder River Board member Joyce Evans explained how important MCOOL is to independent cattle producers, especially with such thin profit margins. Since the Farm Bill is a wide-ranging piece of legislation covering all aspects of American agriculture, it makes sense to include labeling legislation as one

piece. There is currently a bill in the US Senate, S. 52, sponsored by Senator Thune of South Dakota, of which Wyoming Senator Cynthia Lummis is a co-sponsor, but as of yet, no companion bill in the House. However, Hageman's staff member said the MCOOL is one of the Representative's top priorities for the Farm Bill.

In addition to MCOOL, Powder River also touched upon reforming livestock markets so that the packers can't manipulate live cattle prices through captive supplies and the OFF Act, which is a bi-partisan bill to restore transparency and better oversight to mandatory check-offs.

The next several months will be key for the Farm Bill, so stay tuned for updates throughout the summer and fall.

# Best and worst ways to limit climate change

DAVID ROMTVEDT | Buffalo

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This was originally published in the May 12, 2023 edition of the Casper Star-Tribune.*

In June of 2022, Vibrant Clean Energy, a Colorado based organization devoted to “pursuing intelligent transformation of the electric and energy system to meet the needs of the 21st century” issued the results of an investigation it conducted examining “the role advanced nuclear technologies can play in providing clean dispatchable generation in an electrified and decarbonized energy system.” The VCE study was commissioned by the Nuclear Energy Institute, a trade association whose mission is to, “promote the benefits of nuclear power, advocate for smart policies, and educate lawmakers on industry issues.”

While such a report may provide us with useful information, we should be cautious when reading its conclusions. Very cautious, indeed, as we are asked to take seriously a study on the use of nuclear power paid for by those who want us to use nuclear power.

The VCE report is 40 pages long. In those 40 pages, there is no mention of the possible release of radioactive material, of the risks associated with war and terrorist attacks on nuclear facilities, of accidents at nuclear plants, or of how to permanently store radioactive waste.

The absence of comments in the report on the risks and long term consequences inherent in nuclear power suggests that supporters are willing to play with the future hoping nothing bad will happen in their lifetimes. In asking us to support nuclear power, proponents are asking us to make our children, their children, and their children for thousands of years figure out what to do when disaster occurs.

Keenly aware of both the safety and cost of nuclear development, Germany recently announced the closure of its last nuclear plants. Environment Minister Steffi Lemke said, “The idea of a nuclear renaissance is a myth.” In every country now building nuclear power plants, we see significant construction delays and cost overruns. More importantly, we cannot go on producing radioactive materials for which we have no permanent safe storage method. Lemke stated that in dismantling its nuclear plants, Germany must deal with radioactive materials accumulated over 62 years. “Nuclear power supplied electricity in Germany for three generations while its dangerous legacy will remain with us for 30,000 generations.”

When objections such as I am raising are made, the

supporters of nuclear power often say it is the only way we can rapidly and meaningfully “decarbonize” the atmosphere and so limit the catastrophic global effects of climate change. But it’s not true. There are cheaper, safer, and more effective means to combat climate change. Over 40 of these are listed in a March 2023 report from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). This report, unlike the VCE study commissioned by the Nuclear Energy Institute, is based on 175 studies conducted by an international group of scientists whose work was supported by all the world’s governments.

The IPCC report shows that the most effective ways to limit climate change are to use solar and wind power, to enhance energy efficiency, to stop deforestation, and to reduce methane emissions. “What struck me especially was that wind and solar were so big,” said Kornelis Blok, professor at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. These have the capacity to cut eight billion tons of CO2 emissions by 2030 — the combined emissions of the United States and the European Union today. And they do this at a lower cost than continuing with the current electrical systems. After wind and solar, the best action is to stop the destruction of forests. This could cut four billion tons of emissions by 2030 — nearly half the current total emissions of Africa and South America. Restoring degraded forests and limiting methane emissions would each cut another three billion tons while enhancing energy efficiency in buildings, factories, lighting, and appliances would cut 4.5 billion tons.

Other actions we can take include shifting to more sustainable plant-based diets in wealthier countries which could cut 1.7 tons of CO2 emissions and emphasizing public transport, bicycles, and e-bikes which would be more effective than using electric cars for the same travel.

In addition to clarifying the most effective ways to limit CO2 emissions, the IPCC report reveals the least effective ways. These are nuclear power and carbon capture and storage. IPCC figures show that in terms of cutting emissions, nuclear power and carbon capture and storage each have only 10% of the potential of wind and solar, and at far higher costs. Ironically — it would be better to say dishearteningly — these are the two options supported by many in Wyoming including the governor’s office.

The solutions listed in the IPCC report show that we can cut CO2 emissions in half by 2030 using solutions that require no new technology. What these solutions do require is the will to abandon ineffective policies no matter the political and financial power lined up behind them.

SOLAR  
STATS

Energy Produced:  
497kWh

Carbon Offset:  
795 pounds

We offset an equivalent  
of 6 trees in April and  
May!

## Smart from the Start renewable energy workshop

CLAIRE DEUTER | Powder River Staff

In May, Powder River staff had an opportunity to attend a workshop in Lander called Balancing Conservation and Clean Energy: Exploring Low-Impact Siting Strategies for Wyoming Renewable Energy Development. The Smart from the Start Coalition, formed by the Nature Conservancy, Wilderness Society, and Defenders of Wildlife, hosted the workshop. We learned about opportunities and challenges surrounding utility-scale renewable energy development in Wyoming.

The workshop challenged participants to define what “smart” renewable energy development in Wyoming looks like. A major discussion point included wildlife impacts: how can we embrace renewable energy transition and increase renewable energy projects while also protecting Wyoming’s wildlife populations? Ideas included developing projects outside wildlife migration corridors and minimizing fencing around projects.

Another key discussion point included minimizing impacts on land. How can we build wind and solar while preserving Wyoming’s open spaces? Many participants suggested developers build renewable energy projects on previously disturbed lands, also called brownfields. These lands include areas where previous energy projects existed and provide access to existing infrastructure such as roads and transmission lines. Developing renewable energy projects on previously disturbed lands reduces the need to develop new infrastructure in open spaces.

Additionally, there was a session about new geospatial mapping tools that decision-makers can use to identify potential project areas. By using map filters, such as those for brownfields and wildlife migration corridors, decision-makers can pinpoint the smartest sites for renewable energy projects. Other workshop topics included energy taxes and county permitting regulations.

Overall, it is clear that Wyoming’s renewable energy transition does not have to come at the expense of other Wyoming values, such as the conservation of wildlife and open spaces. By identifying our values, understanding the regulatory environment, and using geospatial mapping tools, advocates can encourage renewable energy siting that is smart from the start.

# Study planned on energy development impacts to raptors

KATHERINE STAHL | Powder River Staff

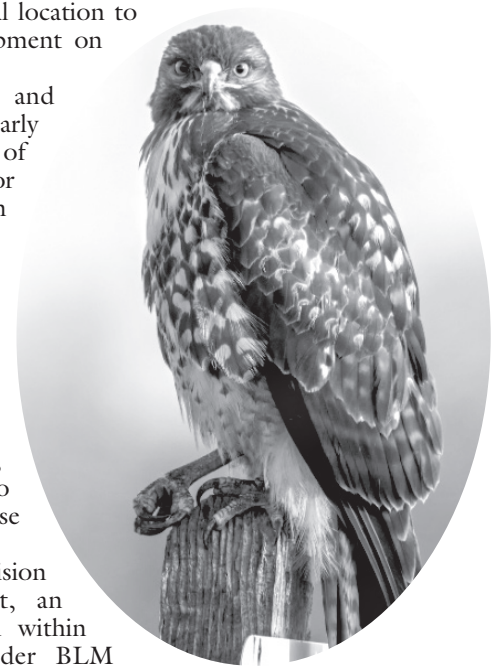
The Teton Raptor Center (TRC) and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) are collaborating on a raptor study within the 5,000-well Converse County Oil and Gas Project area. Converse County’s potential for both renewable and fossil energy development, as well as its prime raptor habitat, make it an ideal location to assess the impacts of energy development on raptor populations.

In their study overview, TRC and WGFD say that this study is particularly unique because it assesses the impacts of energy development on raptors prior to, during, and after development. In contrast, many studies only assess impacts after development. The Converse County Project presents an additional unusual study aspect: the BLM is issuing waivers to oil and gas operators to be able to drill year-round, including during nesting season. Year-round drilling presents the potential for nest disruptions, which TRC and WGFD hope to identify and address through the course of the study.

According to the Record of Decision for the Converse County project, an estimated 98 wells will be located within existing nest buffers in areas under BLM management authority. This means that 98 existing raptor nests may be exposed to year-round drilling if the operators receive waivers (termed Timing Limitation Stipulation (TLS) relief). Once half, or 49, of these potential waivers have been issued, regulatory agencies must begin work on an adaptive management plan for the project area. The adaptive management plan must be finalized by the time all 98 waivers are issued. This means that all 98 existing nests may be experiencing nesting season drilling prior to adaptive management actions being taken. Additional TLS relief issuance would incorporate the adaptive management plan.

Clearly, there is great need for this study. The oil and gas industry, and state and federal regulatory agencies, should understand the impacts of energy development on raptor populations. Ideally, the study would inform adaptive management actions and help regulators make science-based decisions on raptor management throughout the project’s lifespan. The study is designed to last 12 years, but more funding is required to ensure that duration is met. Additionally, BLM should be responsive to concerns identified in the study.

To this end, we urge our members to reach out to the BLM Casper Field Office and encourage the agency to be receptive to public input and adaptive management informed by the TRC raptor study by emailing [blm\\_wy\\_casper\\_wymail@blm.gov](mailto:blm_wy_casper_wymail@blm.gov) or calling 307-261-7600. Wildlife is a public resource and should be managed for the public interest. Reach out to the BLM Casper Field Office to let them know that you value science-based population management for Converse County’s raptors.



# Air quality monitoring must be better

KARL SCHNEIDER | Cheyenne

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This was originally printed in the April 22, 2023 edition of the Casper Star-Tribune.*

Oil and gas development in Laramie County has increased exponentially over the past decade. As Wyomingites, we're familiar with the economic boons this industry brings. Over half of our state's revenue relies on the fossil fuel industry. Taxes and royalties on fossil fuels fund our schools and keep our hospitals open and our roads navigable. The oil and gas industry alone accounted for 26% of Wyoming's GDP and employed 28,000 individuals in 2019.

Not so obvious, though, are the adverse effects of this booming industry. Many people are unaware of the threat that oil and gas extraction and production poses to our personal health, the health of our children and our aging population, and even the health of our unborn babies.

If you've spent much time in Laramie County, you've probably noticed the oil and gas infrastructure that dots residential neighborhoods outside of Cheyenne, or bright orange balls of flame on the horizon, visible from miles away. You might have seen drilling rigs multiple stories tall, or sound barriers that look like giant fortresses. The visible impact of oil and gas production poses some risks, especially to private landowners who may experience reduced property values as a result of infrastructure on or near their property. The greatest risk, though, is invisible and nearly unavoidable: air pollution. (225p)

The oil and gas industry is the world's largest industrial emitter of volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. In the presence of sunlight, VOCs can react with nitrogen oxides to form ground-level ozone. Although atmospheric ozone is beneficial and protects our planet from ultraviolet radiation, ground-level ozone is harmful and contributes to respiratory distress even in totally healthy people. When nitrogen oxides or sunlight are not present, VOCs are still independently harmful. Peer-reviewed research has shown that at sufficient concentration and duration,

exposure to VOCs can increase cancer risk.

Sufficient exposure can also lead to a suite of serious health conditions besides cancer, including damage to the immune system, neurological impacts like loss of smell, and respiratory damage. In fetal development, VOC exposure has been associated with lower birth weights and increased risk of congenital heart and neural tube defects. In pregnant mothers, VOC exposure is associated with an increased risk of miscarriage. Young children and the elderly are more susceptible to health risks associated with VOC exposure.

Volatile organic compounds are emitted when gas is flared or vented. They can leach from idle or abandoned wells. Owing to the abundance of oil and gas production around Laramie County, VOC emissions and their associated human health impacts are cause for great concern. What is being done? Are oil and gas operators required to eliminate any venting of gas? No. Are strict limits set on flaring? No. Are operators required to monitor emissions around the clock? No. Are we in Laramie County at least able to confidently assess our air quality before we head outside? Also no. At every step, our regulatory agencies fail to adequately protect public health. At every step, corporations are favored over people.

Our state's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has situated an ambient air quality monitor in Laramie County. On paper, it meets all the requirements that an ambient monitor should meet – it's downstream of oil and gas development, unobstructed by trees or buildings, and is easily accessible by technicians. The monitor is also miles away from homes or any active oil and gas operations and infrastructure. Since the monitor is miles from any oil development it shows the air quality being good. By its location the monitor fails to provide an accurate portrayal of the impacts of oil and gas development on rural populations.

The monitor should be moved. Placing the monitor in a more densely populated area closer to oil development will ultimately yield more informative results. We deserve to know what is in the air we breathe. We deserve to be informed enough to make healthy decisions for ourselves and our families. Peer-reviewed research shows that air pollutant concentrations and associated health risks increase closer to oil and gas facilities.

To assess the risk to human health that oil and gas development in Laramie County poses, the ambient air quality monitor must be moved closer to oil and gas facilities.



# Oil and gas industry cares only about profits, human lives be damned

MARILYN HAM | Cheyenne

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This was originally published in the June 10, 2023 edition of the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle.*

A recent study summarized by *Casper Star-Tribune* reporter Nicole Pollack calls into question assertions made by a Laramie County commissioner. The study reports that on a per-capita basis, Wyoming experiences higher levels of mortality attributable to oil and gas production than other states. The study achieved these results by modeling ambient air pollution sans oil and gas emissions and comparing that to actual air pollution.

The results of the study should not be shocking to any of us. No matter who you are, no matter how much you appreciate the economic benefits of oil and gas, this industry, like any corporation beholden to its shareholders, cares first and foremost about its own success.

Laramie County Commissioner Buck Holmes wrote in late April that “oil and gas producers go beyond what is required of them as they develop cutting-edge technologies to improve emissions.”

Although this is a laughable statement at best, the study cited above allows us to better see through Holmes’ remarks. The oil and gas industry cares about profits, human lives be damned. Don’t believe me? Read through the public comments on proposed EPA rules to limit methane emissions from this sector – thereby limiting emissions of harmful pollutants. You’ll see such notable groups as the Petroleum Association of Wyoming and yes, our very own Department of Environmental Quality objecting to the rule’s implementation.

If oil and gas operators were truly going above and beyond, they would have no issue adhering to new regulations. How could something be burdensome if a company was already doing it? Clearly, something is false – and it’s not the peer-reviewed journal published science telling us our citizens are dying.

Wyoming’s mostly good air quality is largely a function of its small population – fewer people means fewer cars, less energy use and lower emissions. Barring natural events like fires, it is our state’s fossil fuel industry that drives pollution and harms our health. Our regulators must remember that when they approve new oil and gas projects. The impacts of these projects add up and impact people.

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## Data shows oil and gas activity has health impacts in Wyoming

KARL SCHNEIDER | Cheyenne

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This was originally published in the June 15, 2023 edition of the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle.*

Last month, I submitted, and the *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle* published, an editorial about oil and gas extraction in Laramie County. In the editorial, I asserted two things: One, that this industry releases compounds that are hazardous to people. Two, that the county’s placement of an air quality monitoring station several miles from the nearest well precluded the

monitor from obtaining any useful data. I said the monitor should be positioned closer to an area where there are wells and housing.

Within a week, County Commissioner Buck Holmes issued an editorial to refute mine. In it, he claimed that his 40 years of experience working with the industry shows that it is safe and healthy. He also claims I leveled personal attacks against those that work at the DEQ. That statement is false. I never attacked anyone. Finally, he claims that since I don’t accept data from a monitor miles from any well, I ignore science. I disagree.

On May 17, the *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle* published on its front page a peer-reviewed story about “Pollution causing Wyo. health issues.” The analysis shows that “oil and gas activity contributed to 7,500 premature deaths, 410,000 asthma attacks and 2,200 new childhood asthma cases nationally” in 2016. “Roughly 13 of those deaths occurred in Wyoming.”

Commissioner Holmes, the data does not support your position. Once again, I ask that the air quality monitor be moved so it is in the same area as oil wells and people’s homes. That way we can have valid data.

# International soil health expert coming to Sheridan in August

PENNIE VANCE | Powder River Staff

The Sheridan Working Lands Committee, of which Powder River is an active member, has put the final details on this year's healthy soils event, Working Lands Workshop 2023 Featuring Nicole Masters, coming to Sheridan August 8 – 9.

Local livestock producers, including Powder River members, who have been impressed by Masters's soils work strongly advocated for bringing her to Wyoming, even when that meant bringing her here from her home in New Zealand.

Interest in Masters's work was evident when the field trip

scheduled for Day Two of the event filled to capacity shortly after registration opened. Fortunately, we can still share in Masters' expertise by attending the Day One Workshop which will be held at Sheridan College.

So why is Masters sparking so much interest? An article by Jill Henderson in the "Eco Farming Daily" answers this question by describing Masters as a professional in her field:

"[W]ith 20-plus years and millions of rejuvenated acres under her belt, who stands out as an increasingly influential woman in regenerative ag. Her talents are as deep as the roots of ryegrass and as diverse as the microbes in the living soil she helps create.

Her personal and often humorous approach to reviving degraded land not only provokes a questioning of land management practices, but also leaves her followers believing that what she describes is not only possible, but much easier, cheaper and more profitable than they could ever have believed."

That sentiment is echoed by Gabe Brown, a regenerative ag expert and rancher whose work is followed by many Wyoming producers. "For years many of us involved in regenerative agriculture have been touting the soil health – plant health– animal health – human health connection but no one has tied them all together like Nicole does."

Registrants for the Day One Workshop will benefit from Masters' expertise through her interactive agenda, which includes:

- Proactive vs. reactive ranching...limiting factors and case studies
- Feeding your underground workforce (using refractometers)
- Fungi, benefits and how to feed
- How microbes and plants interact
- Reading your landscapes, pests, weeds, and diseases as indicators

Many sources of information and YouTube recordings of Masters can be found online. She is also the author of *For the Love of Soil*, which is available for purchase online and as an audiobook at the Sheridan County Fulmer Library.

The fee for the Day One Workshop is \$50 per person. The workshop will run 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., and includes "tea" breaks and a catered lunch.

Register for the workshop online on the Sheridan County Conservation District website at: [sccdwy.regfox.com/working-lands-2023](http://sccdwy.regfox.com/working-lands-2023). If you have problems or questions, please text or call Pennie Vance, Powder River's Ag and Local Foods Organizer, 307-399-5848 or email her at [penniev@powderriverbasin.org](mailto:penniev@powderriverbasin.org)

**WORKING LANDS WORKSHOP 2023**

**FEATURING NICOLE MASTERS**  
INTEGRITY SOILS AND AUTHOR OF *FOR THE LOVE OF SOIL*

**AUGUST 8**  
CLASSROOM  
Sheridan College Kinnison Theater

**AUGUST 9**  
FIELD DAY  
Rock Springs Ranch, Decker, MT

**EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION FEES**  
DAY 1: \$50  
DAY 2: \$75

**FEES AFTER JUNE 30**  
DAY 1: \$75  
DAY 2: \$100

\*DAY 1 ATTENDANCE REQUIRED TO ATTEND DAY 2

**LIMITED SPOTS AVAILABLE FOR DAY 2**  
EARLY REGISTRATION RECOMMENDED

REGISTER AT [WWW.SCCDWY.ORG](http://WWW.SCCDWY.ORG)  
OR SCAN QR CODE ABOVE

**QUESTIONS?**  
307-672-5820 EXT. 3

*"For years many of us involved in regenerative agriculture have been touting the soil health – plant health – animal health – human health connection but no one has tied them all together like Nicole does..."* -Gabe Brown, Brown's Ranch

Nicole Masters is an independent agroecologist, systems thinker, author, and educator. She is recognized as a knowledgeable and dynamic speaker on the topic of soil health.

Her team of soil coaches at Integrity Soils work alongside producers in the U.S., Canada and across Australasia, supporting producers who work with over 24 million acres to take their operations to the next level in nutrient density, profitability and environmental outcomes. She is one of a growing number of people who are facilitating a rapidly expanding world of quality food production and biological economies.





# Alliance for Renewable Energy elects new officers

CLAIRE DEUTER | Powder River Staff

The Alliance for Renewable Energy (ARE) recently elected its 2023 officers, including Madeline Dalrymple as president, Carol Bilbrough as vice president, Liza Cuthbert-Millett as treasurer, and Finn Jackson as secretary. A group of dedicated volunteers drives the organization along with staff support.

ARE's mission is to transition its community to renewable energy based on scientific data, economic fairness, public education, and support. Its vision is a community that sustains its energy needs through renewable and sustainable energy.

ARE meets every month to discuss ways it can promote

renewable energy in the community and support the City of Laramie in its goal to reduce carbon emissions through municipal government operations and pursue a net zero, carbon neutral future by 2050 (City of Laramie Resolution 2020-14).

Over the past year, ARE has hosted the Laramie Solar Tour and a webinar on renewable energy funding for local businesses. With so many exciting opportunities surrounding solar energy, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency, ARE's volunteers are eager to get to work.

ARE meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at 5:30 pm and is open to all. Please reach out to Powder River for more information or if you want to get further involved.

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## AARP Officers help celebrate new seating at Sheridan Food Forest



New pine benches were recently installed at the Sheridan Food Forest. The seating was funded with an AARP Community Challenge Grant. Community members and AARP State President Stella Montano turned out on a rainy Saturday in June to celebrate the new seating. Visit the food forest (located at Thorne Rider Park) and sit a spell.

**EPA Coal Ash Rule Improvements:** Also in response to litigation from conservation organizations, EPA has proposed closing loopholes from its 2015 coal combustion residuals (CCR) rule (also called the coal ash rule) to address inactive or legacy coal ash ponds that were not covered in the original rule. The proposed new rule addresses the over half billion tons of coal ash and the decades-old ash ponds that have escaped federal inspections, leaking harmful chemicals into groundwater. In response to the new safeguards, Bob LeResche, Chair of the Western Organization of Resource Councils and Powder River Board Member said:

“[We] applaud EPA for taking the long-overdue step to include legacy ponds and inactive landfills in the CCR Rule. From Colstrip to Wyodak to Stanton, our members have experienced firsthand the impacts of unregulated ponds and landfills. We do applaud EPA for taking this step to strengthen the CCR rule but want to emphasize that the changes will be useless without proper implementation by EPA. We hope that the agency’s oversight and enforcement will greatly improve so that frontline communities throughout the West and the nation that are now dealing with groundwater contamination from legacy ponds can finally return to a more habitable way of life within a healthy community.”

**EPA Carbon Pollution Rule:** In spite of having clear regulatory authority to limit carbon pollution under the Clean Air Act, EPA has had a rough go of getting a rule in place. Its original Clean Power Plan was enjoined by the U.S. Supreme Court and later struck down this past summer. EPA is now limited to requiring pollution reductions at the individual power plant level and is restricted in implementing broader, and perhaps more effective, ways that it could address climate change. The proposed rules released last month are quite complicated, taking up 181 pages in the Federal Register. However, one of the key takeaways is that coal plants operating past 2040 would be required to install carbon capture technologies. In response Lynne Huskinson, Powder River Board Member from Gillette stated:

“While we appreciate the EPA’s attempts to curb pollution from power plants, we believe they are on the wrong track by encouraging

further subsidies and investments in carbon capture (CCS) technology. Carbon capture on coal-fired power plants has proven to be expensive to install and has fallen short in reaching its goals.

“There is only one coal-fired plant with CCS operating in the world, Saskatchewan’s Boundary Dam Unit 3, and it only captures about half the carbon they projected. The only coal plant with CCS to operate in the United States was Petra Nova on the W.A. Parish coal plant in Texas, which shut down in 2020, but only after it cost \$1 billion to build, with \$200 million of that in federal subsidies. The Kemper carbon capture project in Mississippi never even went into operation after its projected costs rose to over \$7 billion.

“Now looking at these failures, we ask why would the administration choose this costly and unproven technology to curb carbon pollution? Carbon capture technology on coal plants is unlikely to curb carbon emissions, will only pump more federal dollars into the coal industry, cost ratepayers more money on their monthly utility bills, and delay the transition to renewable energy.”

**Department of the Interior (DOI) Coal Leasing Reviews:** On the federal coal side of things, DOI is reviewing if and when to resume federal coal leasing and evaluating its management policies related to the federal coal program. Separately, the Buffalo Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is reviewing how much coal it should make available for leasing under its Resource Management Plan (RMP). Both of these reviews are also in response to successful litigation from community groups, including ours. No federal coal has been leased in Wyoming since June 2012, and even without a leasing moratorium in place that is not likely to change anytime soon, but these actions are more than just symbolic in terms of how they could direct agency action for decades to come in the Powder River Basin and across the Western U.S.

With so much happening, don’t hesitate to reach out to our staff with questions or more information about how you can get involved and take action on these agency proposals.



## CALENDAR

**JULY 14 | Powder River Board Meeting | Casper**

**JULY 31 | Potluck at Kendrick Park | Sheridan**

**AUG. 8 - 9 | Working Lands Workshop | Sheridan**

# POWDER RIVER BASIN RESOURCE COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP FORM

Improvements in our communication with you, our members, is on the horizon with an update to our database. Please use one of the following options to assist in this process by updating your contact information:

A) Complete the form below and drop it in the mail or visit the office and complete in person:

934 N. Main Street, Sheridan, WY 82801;

B) Call the office at 307-672-5809 and we will complete it over the phone, or

C) Take a photo of this QR Code with your phone and complete the form online:



## Member Information

First and Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street, City & State Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation:(optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Home Work

Secondary Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Home Work

EmailAddress \_\_\_\_\_

## Additional Family Member

First and Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Home Work

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

**1. I/We am/are a member of Powder River Basin Resource Council in support of the following issues in Wyoming. Please check all that apply.**

- Coal Mining and Power Plants
- Local Food Production
- Coal Transition
- Renewable Energy
- Soil Health / Regenerative Ag
- Oil and Gas
- Livestock Issues
- Write In \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. PRBRC Affiliates Membership

- CALC Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition (Laramie County)
- PACC Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens (Fremont County)
- ARE Alliance for Renewable Energy (Albany County)
- CRC Clark Resource Council (Park County)
- SARC Sheridan Area Resource Council (Sheridan County)
- Please contact me in regards to an Affiliate Membership
- None

**3. PRBRC Sponsored Events I have attended. Please check all that apply.**

- Solar Power Tours
- Harvest Celebration
- November Annual Meeting
- Sheridan Food Forest
- Coal Mine Tours
- Affiliate Meetings
- Agricultural Land Tours
- Seed Library @ Fulmer Public Library
- None

Any additional information you would like to provide

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for assisting us with this project.  
Powder River Basin Resource Council**



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Sheridan, Wyoming 82801

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## Encouraging Responsible Development Today. . .For Tomorrow...

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### 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 percentage 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.

### WYOMING DELEGATION CONTACT INFORMATION

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