



## Western ranchers & communities welcome new rules for federal oil & gas

“American taxpayers have for too long subsidized oil and gas corporations, and it’s long overdue for BLM to require bonds that ensure full cleanup and reclamation of federal wells. This common-sense rule should easily move through the process and we look forward to its protections becoming reality sometime soon.”

– Bob LeResche

KATHERINE STAHL  
Powder River Staff

After more than half a century of waiting, Powder River, the Western Organization of Resource Councils, and allies applaud the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for releasing new rules for federal oil and gas wells. The proposed rules will help ensure that federal wells are plugged and reclaimed in a timely manner and shield taxpayers from footing the cleanup bill. Under the new standards, operators will post bonds that better cover the costs of plugging wells and reclaiming public and private split estate lands impacted by oil and gas development.

The proposed rules will eliminate nationwide bonds that allow a company to cover all federal wells in the U.S. with bonds as low as \$150,000. The rules phase in minimum bond amounts of \$500,000 for all of an operator’s wells in a state (increased from \$25,000 currently) and \$150,000 for all wells on one lease (increased from \$10,000 currently). The BLM calculated the proposed updated bond amounts by reviewing the average number of wells on individual and statewide leases and multiplying that by the average cost of reclamation for a single well. Additionally, BLM would retain the option of increasing bond amounts as the number of wells on a lease increase beyond the average, especially if certain risk factors are present such as wells in shut-in status. The proposed rules will also require inactive wells to be plugged and reclaimed sooner, end the practice of non-competitive leasing, and make it harder for so-called “bad actor” companies that are out of compliance with BLM rules to acquire new leases.

NEW RULES continued on page 8

## DC FLY-IN COVERS LIVESTOCK ISSUES

PENNIE VANCE | Powder River Staff

In July, staff and members of Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) member groups from Wyoming, North Dakota, and Montana participated in a Washington, DC fly-in to meet with their Congressional delegates to discuss issues impacting independent ranchers in the upcoming Farm Bill. Wyoming rancher, Wilma Tope, was scheduled to attend with Powder River staff, Pennie Vance. Unfortunately, Wilma’s flight was cancelled while she waited to board her flight, so WORC staff member, Michael Nelson, accompanied Powder River at the meetings.



Powder River staff member Pennie Vance alongside Steve Charter, a member of Northern Plains Resource Council and Elizabeth Bean, WORC’s agriculture campaign coordinator.

LIVESTOCK ISSUES continued on page 10

# Message from the Chair



In May of 1941, American troubadour and roustabout Woody Guthrie arrived in Portland, Oregon to work as a songwriter on a documentary film for the Bonneville Power Administration. In thirty days Guthrie wrote twenty-six songs generally celebrating working people in the Pacific Northwest and, specifically, workers who built the new dams on the Columbia to generate electric power. The twenty-six song cycle included “Columbia Talking Blues,” “Guys on the Grand Coulee Dam,” “Columbia’s Waters,” and one of Woody’s most well-known songs “Roll On, Columbia, Roll On” with the line, “Your power is turning our darkness to dawn.”

One of the less known of the Pacific Northwest compositions is “Elecktricity and All,” a song in which a young woman who is about to be married tells us, “I love a longshoreman, I do, I do. I love a longshoreman, I do, I do. We’re gonna get married, we are, and we’ll have elecktricity, too.” The bride-to-be says her new husband kisses and hugs her so tight, and that they’ll have lots of children around their door, and, oh, elecktricity at night. As the couple walks along the shore, the young man whispers in the young woman’s ear and she feels elecktricity.

When the dams went in, Woody and America celebrated—the Great Depression had gone on so long and now World War II raged. Hydroelectric power promised a certain easing of life’s hardships. But the gift of electricity came at a cost—the dams diminished the salmon runs, degraded riverine habitats, and desecrated Native lands and cultures. Still, the benefit was so great the trade-offs seemed worth it, and, as the years passed, we sought to limit the losses, striving to develop safer and more environmentally friendly ways to generate electric power.

Now with the effects of global climate change, we have found ourselves looking again at better ways to generate electric power. While the problem is societal, I ask what I can do as an individual. One thing I’ve done is have solar panels installed on our house. For much of the year the sun provides us with all the electricity we use and then some—the excess sold back to our local utility Rocky Mountain Power to be used by other homes and businesses. In the winter months when we sometimes use more electricity than we generate, we depend upon our utility.

Having home solar power has led us to other changes—I cut the lawn with an electric mower powered by the sun. We’ve invested in a plug-in hybrid car that allows us to do almost all of our local travel without burning gasoline. And because we charge the car at home we at least partially avoid using coal fired electricity. We also have electric space heaters that let us heat a room only when we’re using it.

These individual actions have made me think about the possibilities for more decentralized generation of electricity, not only from solar power but from wind and other renewable and less polluting sources. I imagine a day when new homes in Wyoming are sited for maximum solar gain. The same for public buildings, commercial shops, factories, farms, and ranches. I imagine too a day when all vehicle traffic uses electric power generated by renewable and clean sources.

This would give us more say in our lives while making our electrical system more secure as it would diminish the need for large electrical generation facilities and long transmission lines, factors that put our power system at risk for accidents, attacks, and technological failures.

But at our current level of technological capacity, home generation can’t do it all. We still need larger facilities. We need the infrastructure for both individual and collective power generation and distribution—solar panels on buildings, charging stations for vehicles, batteries with large capacity storage made safely and without environmental damage. We need a commitment to what we can do both as individuals and as members of a society who share the same challenges and possibilities. Such a commitment leads us back to the feelings the young bride had in Woody Guthrie’s song—happy and elecktricity, too.

*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 soil event attracts ranchers

PENNIE VANCE | Powder River Staff

Powder River members and staff recently participated in the two-day, Sheridan County Working Lands Day, an regenerative ag event featuring soils expert, Nicole Masters.

Masters is an internationally known agroecologist and educator on the science of healthy soil. Her focus is helping ranchers understand and use that science to increase the health of soil on their fields and ranges.

With a growing interest in the many benefits of soil health, workshops are becoming more common around the country. What set Masters' workshop apart from other soil events in recent years is the extraordinary depth of her knowledge of the complex components of soil health and how those components interact along with her keen ability to make that knowledge understandable to ranchers and farmers.

Masters acknowledged the challenge of the paradigm shift that's necessary to transition from soil-depleting ag practices such as tillage, over grazing, and heavy chemical use to soil-building practices such as managed grazing, avoiding bare ground and limited chemical use. That shift is facilitated when ranchers are provided a solid understanding of how soil health is damaged and how that damage can be repaired. When its health is restored, the soil's ability to produce high nutrient livestock feed and retain water is increased while reducing expensive inputs.

While the learning curve is steep for many people, Masters stressed that you don't have to be a soils expert to begin restoring soil health. With a basic understanding of a ranch's unique soil conditions and the fundamental practices necessary to overcome deficiencies, ranchers can experience improvement in just one growing season.



Area producers listen while Nicole Masters instructs during the field trip portion of the Working Lands event.

Powder River is actively engaged on the Working Lands Committee and was a sponsor of the event. For more information on Masters, check out her numerous online videos or her book, *For the Love of Soil*.



The Alliance for Renewable Energy (ARE), Powder River's Laramie affiliate, tabled at the Laramie Farmers Market in July. Volunteer members greeted the public, shared ARE's mission, and provided resources on solar energy and energy efficiency. Interested Farmers Market attendees were able to share their contact information to learn more about renewable energy and ARE's work in the community.



**POWDER RIVER BASIN**  
*Resource Council*

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**51ST ANNUAL MEETING**  
**NOV. 4TH - SHERIDAN**

**BUSINESS MEETING - 2:30 PM**  
Members Only

**DINNER & KEYNOTE SPEAKER - 6:30 PM**  
Rodger McDaniel  
Author of *Profiles in Courage: Standing Against the Wyoming Wind*

PLUS! Dainis Hanzers Powder River Country photographs slideshow

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**SAVE THE DATE!**  
Visit [powderriverbasin.org/events](http://powderriverbasin.org/events) for updates.



# Proposed BLM Well Bonding Rule – *What’s not to like?*

BOB LERESCHE | Clearmont

*EDITOR’S NOTE: This is reprinted from the Aug. 12, 2023 edition of the Casper Star-Tribune.*

Many Wyomingites find it surprising when the federal government does something worthy of our approval, but the Bureau of Land Management actually did so last month. In mid-July, BLM proposed new rules to hold drillers of oil and gas wells financially responsible for cleaning up after themselves.

The new rules would update 60-year-old requirements for financial assurance to plug and reclaim oil and gas wells drilled into federal subsurface. Many of these wells in Wyoming are drilled from private surface and many have sat for decades unplugged and unreclaimed on our ranches and other private lands.

The new standards will do something landowner, conservation, and taxpayer advocates have long called on BLM to do – make industry pay for cleaning up.

The need for this proposal is clear. Thousands of idle and orphan wells are left abandoned, causing groundwater contamination, leaking methane, polluting the air, spreading noxious weeds, lowering property values and interfering with other uses of the land. Federal leases do theoretically require operators to plug their wells and remediate well sites. But the reality is today’s federal rules are so outdated that huge liabilities are left to taxpayers. Rules in place today require ludicrously tiny bond amounts that don’t come close to covering actual costs of plugging and reclamation. The half-century old minimum sizes of cleanup bonds on federal leases have since never been adjusted for inflation.

Worse yet, bond sizes are unrelated to the specific wells they supposedly guarantee. They’re the same for a simple 1,000-foot-deep well on a flat field near a highway as for an 11,000-foot well with a five-mile horizontal extension in a rugged mountainous area. Today, the bond required for all wells drilled on one lease is only \$10,000. Bonds covering all leases in one state are only \$25,000. This is patently ridiculous given that it costs \$71,000 to plug and reclaim the average single well. A driller can even purchase a nationwide bond that covers only \$150,000 in cleanup costs – regardless of how many thousands of wells the operator may drill around the country.

Our current bonding system incentivizes irresponsible operating procedures. Wells become orphaned when companies that drilled and profited from them declare bankruptcy or simply walk away. This has become standard operating procedure for many companies because it’s the economically rational decision. Why spend \$71,000 or more to plug and reclaim a well when it’s cheaper to simply forfeit your \$10,000 single-lease bond?

In my part of Wyoming, we’ve lived this reality through the bust of the coalbed methane industry. Thousands of wells have been left to languish on the landscape in the Powder River Basin as companies filed bankruptcy or simply evaporated. The companies understood the simple economics of BLM’s current rules – it was cheaper to forfeit the minimal bonds than pay to plug and reclaim the wells.

Wyoming State regulators have in recent years made headway improving our bonding and financial assurance standards to ensure companies clean up after drilling, and Wyoming levies a

“conservation tax” on production that pays to plug and reclaim orphan wells. But the federal government has yet to follow suit.

Without strong rules in place, it is left to us taxpayers to pay for cleanup. Congress recently appropriated \$4.7 billion taxpayer dollars to clean up wells that should have been the responsibility of companies that drilled them.

The proposed BLM rules raise bond amounts across the board and do away with nationwide bonds. Higher bond amounts will guarantee industry wraps up their oil and gas development in a responsible manner, benefiting landowners, taxpayers, and the environment. Industry groups may bemoan this new level of accountability, arguing that higher bond requirements hurt smaller operators. However, the cost of a bond to the driller is usually only 1% to 5% of the bond’s face value. Purchasing a bond is NOT a financial burden on an operator, but just a small part of the cost of doing business.

Accountability is not a novel concept. The coal industry is required to post bonds sufficient to completely reclaim their mines when they close. Building contractors must be fully bonded. Each of us who owns a pickup is required to carry meaningful levels of liability insurance. But the oil and gas industry hasn’t been held to these standards for a long time. The new rules would change that. Those who profit from extracting public resources should be held truly accountable. I hope BLM does so by adopting this proposal to require bonds that will actually pay for restoring the private and public lands they have used, rather than seeking taxpayer dollars after the fact to clean up this multi-billion dollar industry’s mess.

# Coal CEOs are running out of excuses

LYNNE HUSKINSON | Gillette

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This is reprinted from the July 19, 2023 issue of WyoFile. WyoFile is an independent nonprofit news organization focused on Wyoming people, places, and policy.*

The contrast between those who work and live in coal country and those who profit the most off the coal industry is staggering. In coal communities from the Powder River Basin to Navajo Nation to Central Appalachia, we have lands, water and people — like many of my former colleagues in the mines — scarred by decades of extraction methods that put profits before everything else.

On the other hand, in the corner offices of the coal industry's headquarters, we have millionaire coal CEOs who often don't even live in our communities, backed by armies of lobbyists and accountants paid to protect them from accountability.

So many in our coal communities have fought for years to secure changes that could protect our health, our safety and our environment only to be met with fierce opposition and blatant mistruths by coal industry CEOs. We've heard it over and over again — whenever coal barons are asked to invest in miner safety, restoring mine lands they abandoned or in cleaning up their own pollution, they claim poverty.

They say they simply don't have the resources, arguing that actions that would require them to protect their workers from toxic coal dust or to clean up dangerous and hazardous old mines would cost them so much revenue they'd have to close up shop and lay off miners.

But the rhetoric coal barons use to avoid accountability simply does not match the reality they are sharing with their wealthiest stockholders. Rather than scrounging for pennies, the coal industry's own earnings statements show coal CEOs are rewarding Wall Street investors with huge share buybacks, paying top dollar for stocks while leaving miners and coal communities in the dark. Over the last year and a half, seven publicly traded coal companies repurchased more than \$1 billion of their own stock from Wall Street investors, according to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Why is that significant? Analysts from S&P Global note that companies usually buy back shares when the cash "is not needed to fund operations or new capital projects." To tell miners and mining communities that \$1 billion isn't needed is a slap in the face. It is clear evidence that these coal CEOs thought it was more important to reward Wall Street than to invest in mine safety or cleaning up the drinking water they've polluted.

Think of what this money could have done if invested in curbing the toxic coal and silica dust that miners are breathing in now, or in preventing landslides and erosion caused by countless abandoned mines across the country. Lives could be saved and communities would be protected.

This wouldn't be charity, either — it would be coal CEOs simply paying for the damage they have caused. Instead, a handful of wealthy shareholders will be rewarded while the rest of us pay the price.

This isn't just an insult — it undermines the arguments that coal CEOs use every time they're put under pressure. The same pattern of deception is happening right now everywhere there is a push to hold coal CEOs accountable for their actions. Think of the countless times coal CEOs tell politicians they can't afford to abide by common-sense safety proposals or they strategically declare bankruptcy to shed their obligations to their workers. The fallout from Blackjewel's collapse in Wyoming is only one recent example.

Meanwhile, they've pocketed enough cash that they can fork over \$1 billion to Wall Street. These coal barons should be laughed out of Congress and our state capitals for making such outlandish claims, and met with strong standards to protect miners and coal communities. Instead, they get a free pass.

Miners and former miners like me are used to getting the runaround from coal bosses. The same companies constantly claiming they care about our safety didn't even offer trainings about black lung safety, claiming we couldn't get it where I worked in the Powder River Basin.

Now, research shows that those working in surface mines out West are falling ill with black lung just like so many of our colleagues in Central Appalachia.

It's time to break this vicious cycle. These new share buybacks clearly show where the coal barons' priorities truly are, and — to nobody's surprise — it's their own profits.

Congress, our state elected officials, and the public should never forget this reality. These companies are claiming poverty while skimming a billion dollars in profits at the expense of future clean up, miners' health, and community safety.

The policymakers who consistently say they support coal miners must fight back on our behalf.

Congress and state officials should keep this in mind every time they hear another sad story from a coal company trying to wriggle out of its obligations.

They've already made their choice to do what is best for their bottom lines — now, it's time for our elected officials to make the choice that is best for the people.

SOLAR  
STATS

Energy Produced:  
479kWh

Carbon Offset:  
765 pounds

We offset an equivalent  
of 6 trees in  
June and July

# In Memory

This summer Powder River lost two long-time leaders, Janelle Gray of Sheridan and Mary Lou Morrison of Casper. They brought their talents to bear for the organization in a variety of ways throughout the years, and they will be truly missed.



## POTLUCK PICNIC

About 30 Powder River members gathered for a potluck picnic at Sheridan's Kendrick Park on July 31. Members met new staff, Katherine Stahl and Katherine Schrock, in addition to enjoying good food and conversation.

**POWDER RIVER BASIN**  
*Resource Council*

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# Proposed rezone of Tongue River Valley to be considered Sept. 7

SHANNON ANDERSON | Powder River Staff

On Sept. 7, the Sheridan County Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a hearing on whether to adopt a proposed amendment to the Rules and Regulations Governing Zoning in Sheridan County entitled the “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.

Our members have been showing up for months now to the Planning and Zoning Commission meetings, providing input that has improved the proposal. However, since the proposal is fundamentally flawed, the revisions have been akin to putting lipstick on a pig. 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.

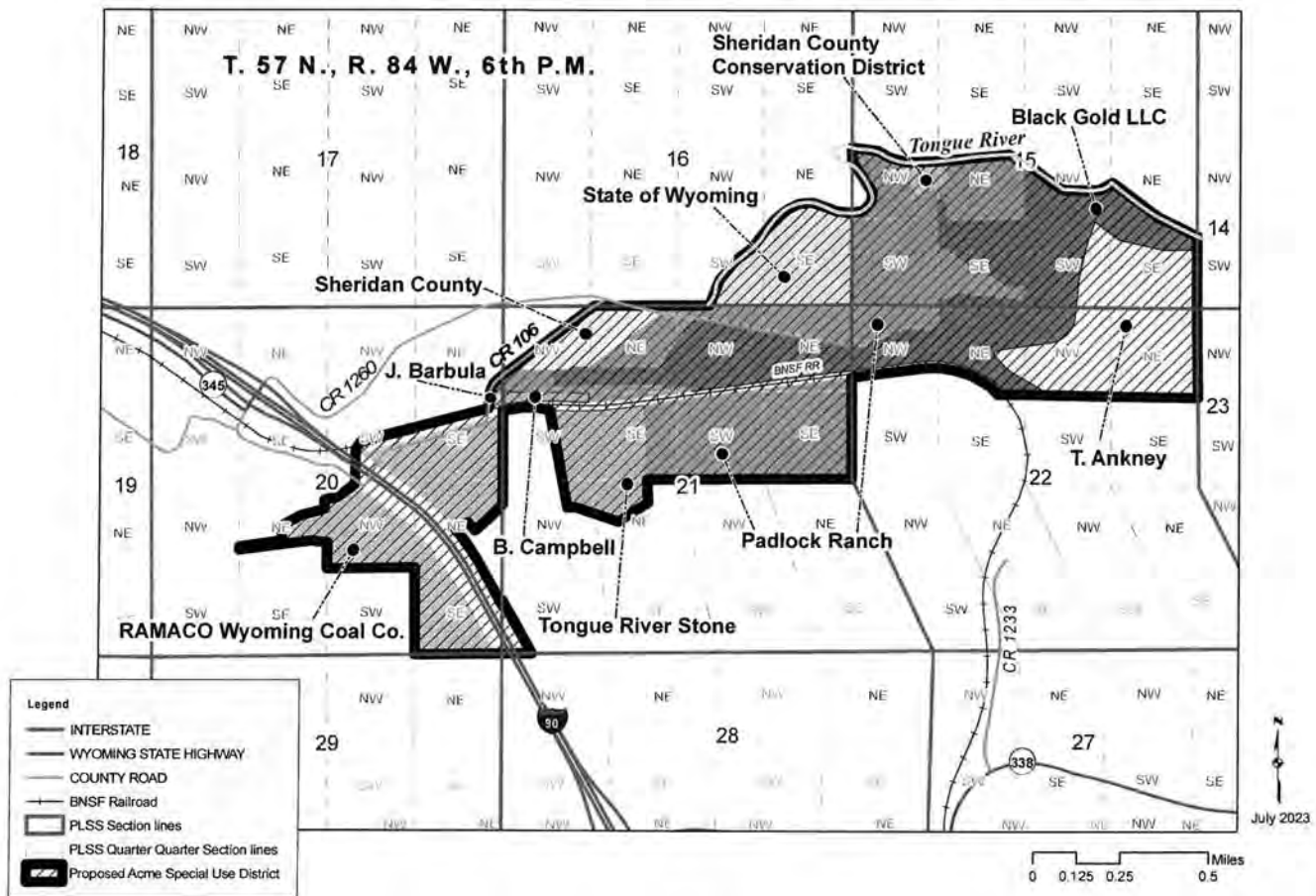
Concerns from the greater Sheridan public have centered on the public land included in the rezone area. The special use district includes a portion of the county-owned Kleenburn Recreation Area, which is widely popular with the Sheridan community, as well as a portion of a neighboring state section that is oft used for hunting and recreation activities year-round. The proposal also includes 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 – and the community investment that has been made in restoring the site – the county is now moving forward with proposing to allow additional industrial development in the area.

Please plan to attend the Sept. 7 meeting, 5:30 p.m. at the Sheridan County Courthouse. Comments can also be emailed to [publicworks@sheridancountywy.gov](mailto:publicworks@sheridancountywy.gov)

Map to Accompany Proposed Acme Special Use District Amendment



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

# NEW RULES

continued from page 1

With an estimated 99.5% of federal wells carrying bonds insufficient to cover the costs of cleanup, a critical component of the proposed rules is a phase-in period for operators of existing wells to post updated bonds for those leases. Within three years of the rule's passage, all federal wells will be covered with updated bonds that provide a financial incentive for cleanup.

Importantly, although the rule does not specifically discuss climate change, it will have a positive climate impact. Idled and abandoned wells leak methane, a potent greenhouse gas with 20 times the warming power of CO<sub>2</sub>, as well as other pollutants like benzene, a known carcinogen. The US EPA estimated that unplugged and abandoned wells released over 276,000 tons of methane in 2019. By establishing a financial incentive for oil and gas operators to plug and reclaim wells in a more timely manner, and by reducing the amount of time a well can be idled, the proposed rule will help reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas industry.

In 2021, to address the problem of millions of orphan oil and gas wells, President Biden signed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, allocating \$4.7 billion to state and federal agencies for plugging orphan wells. Although undoubtedly beneficial, this allocation of funds means that taxpayer dollars are being used to clean up the mess of a multi-billion dollar industry. Powder River board member Bob LeResche points this out and identifies how the proposed rule will improve corporate accountability: "American taxpayers have for too long subsidized oil and gas corporations, and it's long overdue for BLM to require bonds that ensure full cleanup and reclamation of federal wells. This common-sense rule should easily move through the process and we look forward to its protections becoming reality sometime soon."

Powder River looks forward to the implementation of this rule, and in the meantime, we urge our members to engage in the rulemaking. Be on the lookout for action alerts from our staff with instructions on how to submit comments to the BLM in support of the rule. Find more information on the rule by visiting [blm.gov/onshore-oil-and-gas-leasing-rule](https://blm.gov/onshore-oil-and-gas-leasing-rule). From this page, you can find details on attending in-person and virtual meetings on the rule, read the full text of the rule, and submit comments via a link to [regulations.gov](https://regulations.gov) (Document ID BLM-2023-0005-0001). Comments must be submitted by Sept. 22. Please call the Powder River office (307-672-5809) with any questions.

# SHERIDAN FOOD FOREST



On Aug. 6, the Sheridan Food Forest held *Dessert in the Forest* honoring sponsors and volunteers with a tour, homemade treats (including strawberry ice cream from Sheridan Food Forest berries) and a lighting of the entrance sign at dusk. About 25 people attended, ate, gabbed and watched the beautiful sign light up at dusk. Thanks to the volunteers who put on the event and everyone who attended!





# It' Time to Update Your Membership

Choose the Easiest Option for you to do so



- A) Photograph the QR Code with your phone to complete online
- B) Fill in and deliver to: 934 N. Main Street, Sheridan, WY 82801
- C) Call 307-672-5809 and we will assist in completing over the phone

## Member Information

First and Last Name(s) : \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Phone Number (s) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Home \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address(s) \_\_\_\_\_

I/We support the following issues effecting Wyoming.

Coal Mining and Power Plants

Local Food Production

Coal Transition

Renewable Energy

Soil Health / Regenerative Ag

Oil and Gas

Livestock Issues

Write In \_\_\_\_\_

I /We have attended these PRBRC Events

Solar Power Tours

Harvest Celebration

November Annual Meeting

Sheridan Food Forest

Coal Mine Tours

Affiliate Meetings

Agricultural Land Tours

Seed Library @ Fulmer Public Library

I/We have a 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**)

*Thank you!*

Please provide any additional information you would like for us to know:

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We engaged in meaningful discussions with the Wyoming delegation's DC legislative staff. At each meeting we asked for:

- Their support for Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (MCOOL), by supporting the American Beef Labeling Act S.52;
- Their support in removing a rider recently inserted in the Packers and Stockyards Act (PSA) rulemaking process by the House Appropriations Committee at the behest multinational agribusiness interests. The rider would strip the USDA of their funding and ability to modify the PSA during the current rulemaking process. The rider would effectively nullify attempts by independent livestock producers to insert language in the PSA to strengthen the act's original intent to combat monopolization in the livestock industry, and
- Their support of the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming, OFF Act, SF.557. This bi-partisan bill would make the administration of the beef checkoff program more transparent so that producers who pay into the checkoff know exactly where their dollars go. Investigations indicate that hundreds of thousands of checkoff dollars have been used to support big packers to the detriment of independent ranchers.

Following are specific responses from delegates' staff in DC:

## COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING (COOL)

Senator Lummis is a strong supporter of mandatory labeling and co-sponsor on the American Beef Labeling Act. Senator Barrasso signed onto the bill last year but has not this year, stating concerns about beef born in the US, fattened in Canada, and processed in the US that might not qualify for "Product of USA" label. Our research shows that less than 1% of US producers would encounter that issue.

Representative Hageman has been a COOL supporter and recently introduced the Country of Origin Labeling Enforcement Act, similar to the American Beef Labeling Act but considered stronger by most producers. Powder River was able to organize an in-person meeting with Hageman, including Powder River rancher, Judy McCullough, in August at the R-Calf Annual Convention in Rapid City, SD. The meeting focused on Hageman's new labeling bill. Everyone who participated was encouraged by her level of engagement and request for follow-up. Powder River will continue to strategize on how ranchers and consumers can help move the bill forward.

## CHECKOFF REFORM IN THE OFF ACT

Senator Lummis is concerned about check-off corruption and agrees with the need for transparency. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the meat packing industry are fighting the OFF Act because they benefit from the misappropriated funds. Senator Barrasso staff indicated they are still in the information-gathering phase, with limited support at this time. Neither senator has yet agreed to co-sponsor the OFF Act.

Representative Hageman agreed that transparency on where funds are being spent is needed. At our meeting in Rapid City, she indicated she will support efforts to expose the corruption in the checkoff program, but did not commit to supporting reform legislation.

## APPROPRIATIONS RIDER ON PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ACT (PSA)

At the time of our meetings, neither Wyoming Senator had yet committed to opposing the PSA Appropriations Rider. While Barrasso's staff indicated that he believes the market is too monopolized, he has not taken any action on this issue.

This is not an issue that Lummis's staff has been following closely, but they agreed to review the problem. Hageman's staff said that in collaboration with R-Calf, the Congresswoman has asked that the rider be removed. She reiterated her concerns at the in-person meeting.

The most important takeaway from our meetings is that Wyoming's Congressional delegation are genuinely interested in ranchers' concerns. However, they must hear directly from their Wyoming ranching constituents to counter the messages from the meat packing lobby. They all said they needed ranchers' testimony about how these issues impact their ranch and the independent ranching community as a whole.

Powder River is working to schedule meetings in Wyoming with our Congressional delegation and/or staff to help them understand the importance of these issues and encourage their support. We encourage all members who care about livestock producers and as well as where their food comes from to reach out to our delegation and ask them to support these issues.



## CALENDAR

**SEPTEMBER 22 | Powder River Board Meeting | Casper**

**NOVEMBER 4 | 51st Annual Meeting | Sheridan**

Winner



## COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

Thank you to First Federal Bank & Trust and Sheridan Media for their Community Commitment program. We were grateful to be selected for a \$1,000 donation from First Federal and a \$1,000 marketing budget from Sheridan Media.

## Sheridan solar installer goes electric

CLAIRE DEUTER | Powder River Staff

The Sheridan solar installation company Price Solar & Electric is all in with its new electric vehicle. The company recently purchased a sleek, blue 2023 Rivian R1T with quad motors. What's even better is that this electric truck will be charged daily from a 40-kilowatt solar system that sits atop the company's office – the largest solar system in Sheridan County!

The company will use the truck to go to and from sales meetings and site visits. Bobby Price, the company owner, explained how the company used to spend over five hundred dollars a month on gas. With the Rivian R1T, the company does not pay for fuel at all—the car is charged by the power of the sun.

Choosing to charge an electric vehicle through solar power aligns directly with Price Solar & Electric's focus on renewable energy. "It's an opportunity for us to show that we believe in what we're doing," said Price.



Electric vehicles are gaining attention at the Wyoming Public Service Commission as well. Pursuant to the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Commission held a public comment hearing on Aug. 16 to discuss ratemaking standards for electric vehicles. Utility companies, charger installation companies, and advocacy organizations all chimed in with their two cents. The Commission did not make any decisions regarding electric vehicle rates at the meeting and will continue the conversation on the topic in the coming months. Stay tuned for updates!



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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.

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