

SUPREME COURT RULES IN FAVOR OF JUST COMPENSATION FOR SOLAR OWNERS



Shannon Anderson
Powder River Member

In a precedent-setting decision issued on August 30th, the Wyoming Supreme Court struck down High Plains Power's policy to cut by approximately 80 percent the compensation paid to rooftop solar owners for the power they produce and share with the electric grid. The decision now forces the Wyoming Public Service Commission (PSC) to reconsider what is a just and reasonable rate to compensate solar owners.

Had the PSC's approval of High Plains Power's policy been upheld, it would have negatively impacted hundreds of existing and future solar homeowners and businesses and the roughly dozen Wyoming small businesses that install solar panels across the state, providing jobs and revenue for Wyoming's future.

"Most businesses and homeowners invest in on-site solar generation to gain a degree of energy independence, a source of clean energy, AND a reasonable financial return on investment. Today's decision helps to preserve a simple and fair compensation structure for future solar investors and, most importantly, prevents HPP from reducing the compensation expected by their members already using solar," said Scott Kane, co-owner of Lander-based Creative Energies, the company responsible for installing many of the rooftop solar systems within

the High Plains service area.

The Court struck down the PSC's 2023 decision authorizing High Plains Power to reduce the compensation it gives to customers who generate solar power and send it to the grid. Wyoming's net metering statute requires utilities to credit customers for the excess solar power they provide at the same retail rate they pay for the electricity they consume from the grid. However, High Plains switched to compensating net-metered customers for their excess generation by paying them on a monthly basis at a

much lower rate, called avoided cost. This change meant that customers could no longer roll over generation credits, dramatically reducing the financial benefit of having solar panels.

Not wanting the precedent of High Plains Power's action to stand or influence other utilities, and seeking to represent the interests of their membership, Powder River, along with the Wyoming Outdoor Council intervened in the PSC proceedings reviewing High Plains Power's proposal in 2022 and later appealed the PSC's split 2-1 decision to the Wyoming Supreme Court.

"We're pleased that the

Wyoming Supreme Court has ruled that the High Plains and the PSC actions were in violation of the law," said Bob LeResche, Powder River Board member and solar-owner member of Powder River Energy Corp., a rural electric coop near Clearmont, Wyoming. "If left to stand, it would have paved the path for other electric utilities to enact

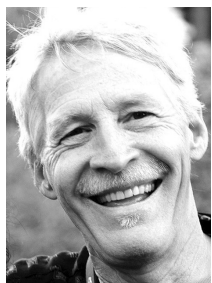
similar policies rendering customers' solar investments much less economic and gravely threatening Wyoming's growing solar industry."

"We are grateful that the terms on which we chose to make an investment in a solar system will be maintained" added Elizabeth Aranow, a High Plains Power solar owning customer. "We hope that the rooftop solar industry will continue to grow, providing more jobs and more distributed electricity."

"We're pleased that the Wyoming Supreme Court has ruled that the High Plains and the PSC actions were in violation of the law. If left to stand, it would have paved the path for other electric utilities to enact similar policies rendering customers' solar investments much less economic and gravely threatening Wyoming's growing solar industry"

– Bob LeResche

Message from the Chair



Over the past two years I've written chair letters on a variety of subjects, including energy development and economic transition, the power of nature to enrich our lives, Woody Guthrie and hydroelectric power, our work at the state legislature, nature writing that has been inspirational to me, the recent BLM proposal on coal leasing in the Powder River Basin, a gold mine in Alaska and how that made me think of my home in Wyoming, and the limitations of viewing our politics as a realm of winning and losing,

A few of the other subjects I've addressed feel particularly pertinent today. These are the 2022 celebration of Powder River's fiftieth anniversary, the somewhat contradictory feelings of anxiety and excitement we feel in the face of change, and the place of personal courage in the work we do on behalf of the environment and of social equity. Such things are at the forefront of my thinking now as Powder River undergoes a time of transition and self-examination.

Earlier this year, two of our community organizers—Katherine Stahl and Claire Deuter—left our organization. Katherine accepted a position with the Asheville, NC, environmental nonprofit Mountain True and Claire began work as fossil fuel campaign coordinator with our umbrella group WORC—the Western Organization of Resource Councils. On July 1, Powder River Executive Director Robin E.H. Bagley announced her resignation and on August 9, staff attorney and Organizing Director Shannon Anderson informed the board and staff that she was leaving Powder River to accept a position as Virtual Power Plant Policy Director with Solar United Neighbors. These staff members have been central to our work. We're deeply grateful for all they've done for us. These departures have led the board and staff to think deeply about our continuing mission and the challenges we face going forward. We've formed a transition team made up of staff, board representatives, and Powder River members to address both immediate hiring needs and more long term questions of our organization's role on behalf of Wyoming's people and places.

To continue our work, board members and staff have taken on some of the tasks of the departing staff. We've also hired Natalie Johansen as a community organizer with a focus on renewable energy. Because Natalie will begin while we conduct an Executive Director search, WORC will serve in an interim capacity to provide orientation and supervision for her while also helping to develop a long-term work plan. Former Powder River organizer Claire Deuter, now with WORC, will provide direct supervision and mentorship for Natalie.

Thanks to Claire's and WORC's commitment to Powder River, we'll be able to continue community organizing while conducting the search for a new executive director. Once a new ED is in place, we'll bring on a legal and legislative affairs staff member and a second new organizer whose work will focus on both renewable energy and on responding to issues brought forward by our members and other Wyoming citizens. This will call for a person with a generalist sensibility—someone who can respond to unforeseen issues and whose interest includes the links between our energy work, other environmental issues, and the development of vibrant communities. With the new staff in place, we'll schedule a strategic planning retreat at which we can clarify and articulate Powder River's ongoing mission.

While these new hires are crucial in order to continue our day-to-day activities, equally important is the call for us to think about the broader aspects of our work—our mission and values in terms of the issues we address, how we address them, and how we work with one another. We are offered the opportunity to examine the human and deeply personal relationships we seek to foster between staff, board members, and our overall membership. As we engage in the reflection without which we cannot carry out our mission, we hope above all to make sure Powder River continues to offer a workplace that, while challenging, is simultaneously welcoming and invigorating.

In this time of change, we want to articulate who we are and who we hope to be as individuals and as an organization. In early August we began this at an in-person day long board development meeting in Casper. At this meeting we examined the roles and responsibilities of the board, the expectations board members have of each other and of our organization, and the ways in which we envisage the work of our organization

FROM THE CHAIR
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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, Nebraska Organizing Project, North Dakota Native Voice, Northern Plains Resource Council, Oregon Rural Action, Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action, 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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LARAMIE..... Natalie Johansen
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Executive Director Transition... Sara Kendall/Western Organization of Resource Councils
Organizer Support..... Claire Deuter/
Western Organization of Resource Councils

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POWDER RIVER BREAKS

EDITOR: Pennie Vance
Photos by Powder River staff and members

Regenerative Ag: A Win for Wyoming's Ranchers & the Environment

Pennie Vance
Powder River Staff

In August, ranchers from across Wyoming and as far away as California attended a regenerative agriculture (RA) workshop at the Sheridan County fairgrounds, featuring world renowned RA expert, Fernando Falomir. As a member of the Working Lands Collaborative, Powder River helped produce and co-sponsor the workshop.

Falomir is a fifth-generation rancher who, through years of applying regenerative practices, has transformed his family's badly degraded, arid 420-acre-per-animal ranch to a productive 40-acre-per-animal ranch. That means that where he previously ran 100 cows, he can now run up to 400.

In response to member interest and Powder River's mission to "promote sustainable agricultural practices and policies in the State", over the years we have passed dozens of resolutions supporting sustainable ag practices. In 2016, we began sponsoring regenerative ag webinars, workshops and field trips, including one by famous North Dakota RA rancher, Gabe Brown, to educate ranchers about this vitally important movement.

Falomir's successful personal ranching experience and his study of biochemistry at the University of Colorado—along with vast national and international field experience on working ranches as an RA

REGENERATIVE
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Introducing, Powder River's Newest Staff, Natalie Johansen

Natalie is Powder River's new Community Organizer for Renewable Energy where she will be focusing on promoting sustainable energy solutions and protecting Wyoming's natural spaces. She brings a diverse background in environmental studies and outdoor leadership to her role. In 2020, she graduated from Pacific Lutheran University with a degree in Geoscience. Her background includes experience on an all-women's trail crew in Montana, fieldwork in Alaska, and three years as a ski instructor and outdoor leader in Wyoming.

She recently graduated from the University of Wyoming with a

Master's Degree in Science, in Natural Science Education with a concurrent degree in Environment and Natural Resources. Natalie is happy to continue calling Wyoming home and to put her education and experience towards protecting the land she loves so that she and future generations can enjoy the outdoors by hiking, backpacking, and skiing



Powder River and Western Organization of Resource Councils Continue Supportive Relationship

Claire Deuter
WORC Staff

As Powder River's prior renewable energy community organizer, I'm excited about the opportunity to help Powder River's new organizer, Natalie Johansen, fill that role. After my time at Powder River, I joined the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) as its fossil fuel campaign coordinator. WORC is a regional network of ten grassroots community organizations across eight states, including Powder River. As a staff member at WORC, I will provide supervision and support to Powder River's new community organizer as the organization transitions into a new era of work for the health and well-being of Wyoming's people and their environment.

WORC helps its member groups succeed by providing training, coordinating issue work, and advancing the vision of a democratic, sustainable, and just society through community action. As an organizer at Powder River, I attended multiple WORC trainings

on community organizing. WORC and Powder River's relationship dates back to the 1970s when Powder River was working to protect landowners from the devastating impacts of largely unregulated fossil fuel development in the Powder River Basin. Other community action groups in the region, like the Dakota Resource Council and Northern Plains Resource Council, were working on similar issues at the time. Recognizing a need for regional coordination to build power, WORC formed in 1979 and has worked with Powder River ever since.

I'm looking forward to supervising Powder River's new community organizer and sharing my prior experience as a Powder River organizer and current access to WORC's trainings and resources. The strength of our regional network and our ability to work together to create meaningful change has been instrumental to the decades of success for Powder River and the other WORC network organizations.

FROM THE CHAIR

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in its next fifty years.

As we experience transition and transformation, we seek to examine honestly and compassionately the ways we work together and the work we are called to do on behalf of our state—its people, its other living beings, and the natural resources from which we build our physical and social worlds. Working together, we can face the anxiety that change may cause with both equanimity and excitement. We can look forward to the possibilities that await.

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meeting in Casper. At this meeting we examined the roles and responsibilities of the board, the expectations board members have of each other and of our organization, and the ways in which we envisage the work of our organization in its next fifty years.

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David Romtvedt

“One Big Small Town: Reflections on Living in Wyoming” at Powder River’s 52nd Annual Meeting

Barbara Smith
Wyoming Poet Laureate



Barbara M. Smith was appointed Wyoming’s Poet Laureate by Governor Mark Gordon in October 2023. She is the ninth Poet Laureate in state history. “Barbara’s poetry captures the essence of Wyoming and is instantly relatable,” Governor Gordon said. “Her work speaks to the incredible changes that have taken place in the state and across the West since the arrival of the first pioneers.”

Smith has received the Governor’s Arts Award in 2006, the Neltje Blanchan award for Nature Writing, a Wyoming Arts Council Literary Fellowship, and a writing residency at the Ucross

Foundation. She has been published in numerous notable collections including, *The Last Best Place*, *Deep West*, *Leaning into the Wind*, *Crazy Woman Creek*, *Blood, Water, Wind, and Stone*. Her poem, *Putting a Name on It*, won the first-place award for poetry from the Wyoming Historical Society in 2023.

Smith grew up in North Dakota and Montana with her extended family of Norwegian immigrants who made their way across the world to the American West. She began a 38-year teaching career in English at Western Wyoming Community College in Rock Springs, retiring in 2007. She currently teaches a community course at the college on memoir writing.



At the Cabin

*Our neighbors build a buck fence
around their three acres.*

*Boys turn into men, cutting and sawing,
stripping bark, nailing the cross bars.*

*It takes a decade to do it
on two-week-a-year vacations.*

The fence tells us:

This much is mine.

They tack a sign on it:

“Private Property-Stay Out!”

Then they are gone.

*This does not stop deer from bedding down in
pine needles*

or squirrels from picnicking on their table.

Birds chatter across the treetops.

A moose steps over the fence.

“No Trespassing” flutters like aspen leaves.

A marmot freeze-frames on the wood pile.

*The great grey owl silently watches me leaning
on their gate.*

Aerial View of the Powder River Basin with EcoFlight

Shannon Anderson
Powder River Member

In mid-July, staff and guests took to the sky to get the bird’s eye view of coal and oil and gas development in the Powder River Basin. The flight was courtesy of EcoFlight, an organization that uses small aircraft to provide the aerial perspective to educate and advocate for our remaining wildlands, watersheds, and culturally important landscapes. From the air, EcoFlight connects stakeholders with differing viewpoints to advance the goals of conservation and environmental justice.

The flight offered a first-hand experience to review the reclamation progress at Wyoming’s large strip mines. Some mines are in the process of winding down, while others are still operating on a very large landscape. We also looked at oil and gas development, including well sites, water infrastructure, and roads. The amount of development on the landscape highlights the need for the Bureau of Land Management’s new bonding and financial assurance rule to ensure there are funds set aside to plug wells and reclaim the landscape after wells stop producing oil and gas.

For a complete gallery of the photos from our flight and others check out: <https://ecoflight.org/photos/>



Photo courtesy of EcoFlight, July 19, 2024

Northern Cheyenne Elder Shares Indigenous Wisdom at the Food Forest

Pennie Vance
Powder River Staff

For anyone wondering what kind of winter lies ahead, it might be wise to consider the indigenous wisdom shared by Linwood Tall Bull during his recent talk on a warm August afternoon at the Sheridan Food Forest. "If you see a tall coneflower growing on a southern slope in the fall," Tall Bull told an audience of over 70 people, "there'll be deep snow in the coming winter."

According to Tall Bull, centuries before the advent of modern weather forecasting and corner drug stores, plants like the coneflower were critical to Northern Cheyenne survival, serving as weather predictors, food sources, pharmacies, and more. Native plants continue to be important in their culture today.

The straight, sturdy stem of the coneflower, which can grow to over 4 feet tall, allows the dried flower head to poke through deep snowdrifts, making it easy to find the plant's stems and roots in the winter. That is important to the Northern Cheyenne who traditionally used (and continue to use) coneflowers to brew a tea known for strengthening the immune system. A healthy immune system was critical to survival for the plains dwellers whose tipi homes, made of poles and buffalo hides, were their only protection during long hard winters.

“Linwood and Randall Tall Bull graced the Sheridan Food Forest and gave spectacular presentations to an audience that sat rapt around the Food Forest’s Northern Cheyenne native garden for a fantastic community event.”

-Bob LeResche

programs in hospitals, teaching doctors how to diagnose native patients using Indian sign language. Randall Tall Bull is a skilled artisan of traditional tools, weaponry, and indigenous skills. He is committed to preserving and sharing the teachings of his father, Linwood Tall Bull, and his grandfather, William Tall Bull.

During the Food Forest event, the Tall Bulls demonstrated how to make roship tea by steeping the stems of wild roses in water, and how chokecherries, pits and all, have for centuries been ground to a pulp using stone tools on a large rawhide bowl. The berry pulp is then shaped into patties and dried in the sun for winter food. The rawhide bowl and other traditional tools on display

For over an hour, with wit, wisdom and humor, Linwood and his son, Randall Tall Bull, shared Indigenous oral stories, passed from generation to generation, about Northern Cheyenne culture and history, their special relationship with the buffalo and their deep knowledge of native plants on which they depended.

Linwood and Randall are enrolled members of the Northern Cheyenne and educators at Chief Dull Knife College in Montana, teaching courses on Ethnobotany and Northern Cheyenne culture. Linwood has also taught medical pro-



Linwood Tall Bull, grinding chokecherries with his grandmother's century old grinder to make patties.

were researched and crafted by Randall.

Linwood shared stories reflecting the importance of family in Northern Cheyenne culture where large families continue to live close to one another, sharing homes, work, challenges and meals. He also touched briefly on a family history that included an entire village of his ancestors being burned to the ground. All of the villagers died except young people and children who were hidden in gullies covered with branches. Linwood noted that some of those children became the great-grandparents of elders living today.

As the warm August afternoon waned into a cool evening, the Tall Bulls ended their presentation by inviting everyone to ask questions, explore the handmade tools and ceremonial items Randall had made and collected, and sample the traditional Northern Cheyenne food and drink they had prepared.

Reflecting later on the event on Facebook, Powder River Board member, Bob LeResche, shared his enthusiasm for the event: (paraphrased) "Linwood and Randall Tall Bull graced the Sheridan Food Forest and gave spectacular presentations to an audience that sat rapt around the Food Forest's Northern Cheyenne native garden for a fantastic community event."

This was the second year the Tall Bulls brought their skills and knowledge to the Food Forest, and many of those in attendance shared hopes that it would become an annual event.

The event was a collaboration between the Bighorn Native Plant Society, Powder River Basin Resource Council, the volunteer crew from the Sheridan Food Forest and Piney Island Native Plants. Piney Island's conservation horticulturist, Alisha Bretzman, a student of the Tall Bulls, has collected native seeds from throughout the area and after several years of experimentation, has successfully replicated many of the native plants featured at the event.

Please join us in our search for a
**NEW Executive Director
for Powder River!**

If you or someone you know is interested in applying for the position, please go to the Powder River Basin Resource Council website www.powderriverbasin.org, and click on "About Us" for more information.

Lawmaker Revives Radioactive Debate Over Nuclear Waste in Wyoming

Dustin Bleizeffer
WyoFile

Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted from the August 2, 2024 edition of WyoFile.

The time has come to again consider opening Wyoming's doors to a spent nuclear fuel waste repository, some lawmakers proclaim. Minerals, Business and Economic Development Committee Co-chairman Rep. Donald Burkhart Jr. (R-Rawlins), a longtime proponent of the idea, said he will bring a draft bill to the committee in October.

The outlook for Wyoming's fossil fuel-dependent budget is trending downward while the state could reap more than \$4 billion a year from nuclear waste storage, "Just to let us keep it here in Wyoming," he told committee members during the final minutes of a two-day hearing in Casper on Wednesday.

Burkhart said he was asked by the Legislature's Regulatory Reduction Task Force — which is co-chaired by Sen. Mike Gierau (D-Jackson) and Rep. Bob Nicholas (R-Cheyenne) — to take up the effort. Minerals committee member Sen. Stacy Jones (R-Rock Springs), who also serves on the task force, said, "It was just brought to us as a possible money maker for Wyoming."

Burkhart shared a rough draft among committee members for potential legislation paving the way to nuclear waste storage, but he has declined to share the document publicly, according to the Legislative Service Office. He did not respond to WyoFile inquiries regarding the working draft document and more details about the proposal.

Jill Morrison, who has lobbied against similar proposals since the 1990s as an advocate for the Sheridan-based Powder River Basin Resource Council and has since retired, said it's a bad idea that keeps coming back every few years.

"They want to try to sneak it in and ram it through," Morrison told WyoFile. "It threatens public safety and it's really going to wreck Wyoming's national reputation and image as a destination for tourism and recreation — a beautiful place to visit or live. 'And guess what,' Morrison added. 'People don't want it.'"

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-Jill Morrison

'Rough Draft' Proposal

Burkhart gave an overview for the concept to committee members on Wednesday.

The facility would accommodate spent nuclear fuel in "dry" form as opposed to "wet," he said. When nuclear fuel rods are initially removed from a reactor, they must be cooled in water, according to the Department of Energy. Afterwards, the material can be stored in "dry" containers, an arrangement which is considered more stable.

Burkhart said he recently visited with a private landowner in Fremont County who, as in the past, is interested in selling land for the facility. The land purchase would cost an estimated \$2 million and it would cost about \$400 million to build the facility, "None of which would come from the state," he said. "It would all come from private enterprise."

The facility would be operated by a private entity in cooperation with the federal government, which would maintain regulatory control over it, Burkhart added.

Although such a facility would be designated "temporary," Burkhart said it will most likely become a de facto permanent stor-

age facility because there's little faith that the federal government will build a permanent one to which "temporary" stockpiles could ultimately be relocated. Many local officials around the country have offered locations for a permanent repository, but communities have ultimately rejected the idea.

Current state statute prohibits a commercial high-level radioactive waste facility unless the federal government establishes a permanent repository. Burkhart thinks that will likely be challenging in Wyoming too. "Frankly, my opinion would be the government will never have permanent storage," he said.

By hosting even a "temporary" nuclear fuel waste storage facility, Wyoming could also push for a reprocessing plant to generate even more revenue, Burkhart said. "Currently, the United States does not reprocess nuclear fuel," he said. "I feel that within the next five years, that will change, and when it changes, wherever the fuel is stored is where they will do the reprocessing."

Recurring Effort

The idea for a temporary, or intermediate, high-level radioactive waste storage facility has been proposed several times in recent decades, most notably in the 1990s.

In 1992, after several years of contentious debate, then Gov. Mike Sullivan vetoed a similar measure, stating in a letter to Fremont County commissioners, "It makes no sense to me as Governor to put this state or its citizens through the agonizing and divisive study and decision making process of further evaluating the risks and benefits of an MRS [monitored retrievable storage] facility."

In 2011, Sullivan told a group of geologists, "There was huge fear. This struck a chord like I never seen in my office over anything. I had three boxes of letters, pro and con. They were not check-the-box letters. These were coming from people hand-written because of their love for Wyoming and because of their fear of nuclear."

In 2019, the Legislature formed the Spent Fuel Rods Subcommittee to reexamine the issue, but did not advance legis-

lation. Proponents see an opportunity, however. The nuclear energy industry is enjoying a resurgence in support and investment, including in Wyoming where the U.S. Department of Energy and Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates are backing the \$4 billion Natrium nuclear power plant, and where BWXT Advanced Technologies is considering setting up a microreactor manufacturing hub.

If the U.S. boosts its nuclear energy capacity, according to proponents, the nation will have to grapple with its decades long failure to finally establish a permanent repository for radioactive waste and potentially consider reprocessing the byproduct.

Federal Efforts

Federal efforts to establish a permanent repository for high-level radioactive waste are currently led by the Department of Energy through its consent-based siting program — a process for communities to establish broad local support for hosting such a facility.

In 2021, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission issued a license for a storage facility in Andrews, Texas. Last year, the agency also issued a license for a storage facility in Lea County, New Mexico. Both efforts have been tied up in legal challenges and "no work has gone forward on the facilities," NRC spokesman David McIntyre told WyoFile via email. "There is no permanent repository and really no movement towards one."

EPA Tells WY to Go Back to the Drawing Board to Protect Public Health from Coal Plant Pollution

Shannon Anderson
Powder River Staff

In late July, we got a decision we had been waiting for from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): the EPA's proposal to reject Wyoming's regional haze state implementation plan (SIP) meant to show progress towards reducing haze pollution that blurs iconic views in national parks and wilderness areas from Grand Teton to Yellowstone. EPA's proposal comes after years of delay and litigation tactics from Wyoming's worst polluting power plants to avoid regulation, enabled by a state plan that required no new emissions reductions.

The state plan was submitted by Wyoming's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to EPA on February 18, 2022, to meet requirements of the Regional Haze Rule, a program established under the Clean Air Act. But it was a do-nothing, flawed plan that incorrectly concluded that no new reductions in pollution were warranted for any of the state's industrial sources. If finalized, EPA's proposal to reject the state's plan means the DEQ will have to go back and re-evaluate whether additional pollution controls should be required on the state's large coal plants, including the Wyodak, Dave Johnston, Laramie River, Jim Bridger, and Naughton power plants. Alternatively, if DEQ doesn't move forward with a better plan, or if utilities once again delay and stall pollution reducing progress, EPA can proceed to implement a federal plan.



Coal plants and other large pollution sources emit sulfur dioxides, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter, which all contribute to regional haze. In addition to obscuring views in our treasured national parks and wilderness areas, haze-causing pollution can travel hundreds of miles from its original source, through communities and neighborhoods, causing serious health impacts like heart and respiratory disease.

REGENERATIVE

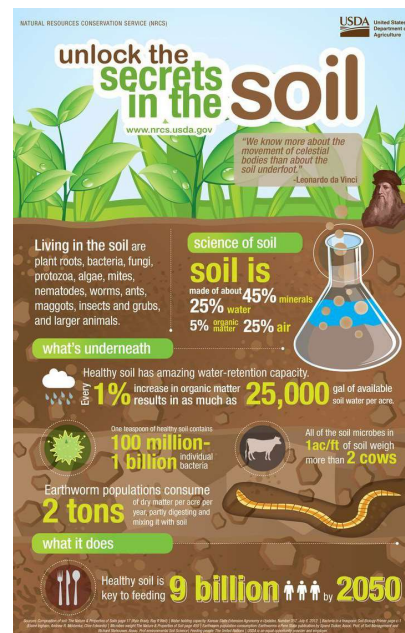
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consultant for "Understanding Ag" (www.understandingag.com) made him highly qualified to help educate workshop attendees and provide practical answers to their many questions.

Regenerative ag is not new; it is an ancient practice whose roots go back thousands of years to the agricultural practices of indigenous peoples. In the 1800s, agriculture practices began moving away from sustainable models towards the industrial model we see today. In the 1930s, J. I. Rodale, a pioneer in returning regenerative ag to food production systems in America, coined the term. Interest in RA has grown slowly since, then began to explode about 20 years ago because of mounting concerns about our changing climate and the negative impacts to soil, water, and other resources essential to agriculture.

Today's farmers and ranchers are facing another challenge – that of economic survival. The conventional ag practices they've become dependent on, such as the expanded use of chemicals for fertilization and pest management, and prohibitively expensive machinery designed for monoculture farming have all become too costly. These costs (and increasing monopolization by industrial ag) are causing a catastrophic loss of independent farms and ranches in America - over 14,000 from 2021 to 2022, according to the U.S. Census. While there is no panacea to solve this economic crisis, the adoption of RA practices is proving to be not only one of the most sustainable tools to move forward, but also an important means to reduce input costs.

Conventional ag practices were designed to grow large volumes of food as fast as possible. Producers were instructed by government agencies, universities and "experts" in the industry that this was the only way to grow food. However, over time these practices have slowly disrupted and even destroyed many of the natural biological systems, especially our soils. The primary purpose of RA is creating and maintaining healthy soils which is the foundation of all agricultural success, both for today and generations to come. The loss of soil and soil health is affecting everyone,



but dealing with this loss is falling most heavily on the shoulders of our country's independent farmers and ranchers. Many are seeking ways to transition away from the conventional practices they can no longer afford, neither environmentally nor economically. This is where experts such as Falomir are stepping up to the plate.

Regenerative agricultural is not an easy fix; it requires dedicated, long-term commitment. But it offers small, incremental improvements today and, in a decade or so, healthy, profitable, restored farms and ranches for many generations to come. Falomir and other RA educa-

tors and consultants, along with university extension offices, soil conservation agencies, and non-profits such as Powder River, are here to help.

Powder River is committed to its mission to support Wyoming's ranches and environment, especially at this critical time. Watch for future opportunities to learn about regenerative ag principles and practices on our website and in future issues of Powder River Breaks.



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**Mark Your Calender
Annual Meeting
Nov 9 - Sheridan WY**



One Big Small Town:

Reflections on Living in Wyoming

You're Invited to:

Powder River's 52nd Annual Meeting

Nov. 9 - Sheridan, WY

2:30: Business Meeting - Members Only - Sheridan Library

4:30: Social - Live Music - Best Western

6:30 Dinner - Keynote Speaker, Barbara Smith

Best Western Main Street

Dinner by Shabby Shack Catering

Read more inside about Barbara Smith, Wyoming's Poet Laureate

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