by Tom Darin

In an administration so closely linked to the oil and gas industry, it’s no surprise that the Interior Department’s drill-at-all-cost energy policies pose serious environmental threats to millions of acres of public lands in Wyoming. After all, big oil helped put this administration in power, and it’s no secret that this industry dominated closed-door meetings on — and even helped write — Vice-President Cheney’s National Energy Policy.

It’s quite another matter, however, when these pro-drilling, anti-multiple-use mandates permeate the Executive Branch’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), whose sole responsibility is to safeguard our nation’s environment.

In 1970, Congress passed landmark legislation entitled the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA’s goals are “to declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation; and to establish a Council on Environmental Quality.” These words, 33 years later, are still awe-inspiring.

The charter of the CEQ, rooted within the Office of the President, is “to be conscious of and responsive to the scientific, economic, social, aesthetic, and cultural needs and interests of the Nation; and to formulate and recommend national policies to promote the improvement of the quality of the environment.”

**CEQ Now Promotes Destructive Development**

With the stroke of a pen, the administration has virtually rewritten the CEQ’s charter and purpose. First, President Bush signed an executive order creating an interagency task force to “accelerate the completion of continued on page 3...
Wyoming's Future Is Up For grabs

Quietly and largely behind closed doors, top Bush Administration officials and executives from the oil and gas industry are mapping out Wyoming's future. And our state's political leadership seems to be in complete agreement or, lacking an alternative vision, is content to go along for the ride.

Policies and plans crafted in Washington, D.C. envision doubling, or perhaps tripling, huge natural gas production from the Rocky Mountain West, under streamlined procedures, and fewer environmental safeguards. The ultimate consequence will be the conversion of vast expanses of Wyoming's landscape into industrial sacrifice zones.

In addition to the 5,000 oil and gas wells recently approved for the Powder River Basin, tens of thousands of new gas and oil wells and associated roads, power lines, pipelines and the usual maze of industrial facilities, are on the drawing boards. No area of the state is spared, with the possible exception of Teton County, vacation home Dick Cheney who, ironically, is leading the charge for the industrialization of Wyoming.

Whether you embrace this future for Wyoming or, conversely, have reservations about it, depends largely on your perspective. If you believe that our state's greatest value is serving as the nation's energy colony (indus-

try officials use this phrase, the "blue capital of America, B2," or sometimes "the BTU capital of America"), you will naturally support the administration's plans. On the other hand, if your connection to Wyoming is rooted in unspoiled open space, clean water, clear skies and abundant wildlife, and your livelihood depends on the health and productivity of the land for agriculture and livestock production, you should be alarmed.

Consider, for example, the Upper Green River Valley, a once-bucolic area now experiencing significant new growth. Internal Bureau of Land Management email correspondence leaked to WOC reveals that the agency is planning to evaluate the effects of adding up to 5,000 new “infill” wells to the Jonah Field’s 500 existing wells. According to the email, this level of development could necessitate closing the 30,000-acre field to public access, including hunting, due to air quality and other public health and safety concerns. The same email suggests that in Sublette County’s first coalbed methane (CBM) project, called South Pinye, the number of wells originally proposed may double, to 470. The Pinedale Anticline Project, west of Pinedale, is on track to grow to 1,000 or more wells by 2015. While these projects go forward, the BLM is revising its Pinedale Resource Management Plan to allow for 10,000 new oil and gas wells. To top it off, the BLM has already leased 90% of the planning area to oil and gas companies, thereby ensuring that energy development will become the dominant use of the public lands in the Upper Green River Valley, multiple use requirements notwithstanding.

In the beautifully burned Red Desert, the BLM is moving ahead with proposals to drill thousands of new oil, conventional gas and CBM wells, with little understanding of, or concern about, the environmental consequences. An outpouring of public support for protecting the Red Desert — more than 65,000 individual comments from across America — appears to have fallen on deaf ears. Revisions to the BLM’s Resource Management Plans covering this area (being fast-tracked by the Bush Administration) call for significant increases in both conventional gas and CBM drilling. Thousands of miles of new roads, pipelines and power lines will be constructed to support this level of development.

It’s time for Wyoming to make some tough choices. The Saudi Arabia of America or open space, clear skies, abundant wildlife and sustainable economies? Those presently in control have already decided Wyoming’s future. Fortunately, if this is not your vision, there’s still time to act. Voice your concerns to Vice President Cheney, Senators Enzi and Thomas, and Representative Cubin, the governor and state and local officials, and vote for candidates who share your vision of a healthy, sustainable future for Wyoming.

WOC was part of a broad coalition that challenged the RMEC’s secret meetings and the administration’s calculated misuse of the CEQ to champion increased energy production on our public lands.

**Environmental Quality continued from page 1**

**WOC Appeals Powder River Basin CBM Decision**

**Wyoming Federal Court Reverses Interior Dept. Ruling**

by Jim Duey

In June, Wyoming Federal District Judge Clarence Brimmer handed down a decision that poses a potentially significant setback to our fight for responsible coalbed methane (CBM) development. Judge Brimmer’s decision reverses a WOC victory secured after a two-year battle and two favorable decisions by the Department of Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA).

At issue in the case are three lease parcels in the Powder River Basin that Penasco Energy purchased in 2000 to use for CBM extraction. In an extensive legal proceeding before IBLA, WOC proved what we had been contending for some time: the Bureau of Land Management’s environmental study for oil and gas leasing in the basin, completed in 1985, failed to consider CBM or any of its unique water or air impacts. IBLA agreed with WOC, ruling in April that leases to be used for CBM extraction were sold illegally without the proper environmental studies in place to justify their sale.

In June 2003, Penasco challenged IBLA’s final ruling in Wyoming federal court. In March 2003, after filing comprehensive legal briefs, the Wyoming Outdoor Council (WOC) informed Judge Brimmer. In June, the judge reversed IBLA’s decision, ruling that the BLM could splice together studies from different environmental analyses to allow lease sales for CBM extraction.

The BLM’s 1985 study considered a no-leasing alternative to prevent wild and air contamination from the effects of conventional gas and oil drilling, but failed to consider any of CBM’s unique environmental characteristics.

The one BLM study that did consider CBM impacts – a 1999 document for the Bighorn Milner and gas development project – failed to address whether or not CBM leases should be sold and, if so, whether they should contain stipulations to protect other natural resources.

Nevertheless, Judge Brimmer ruled that these studies could be used together, even though they are separate documents, addressed fundamentally different issues and were completed 14 years apart.

Because of its environmental significance and the national precedent this case will set for the BLM’s oil and gas leasing program, WOC and co-counsel Earthjustice have filed an appeal with the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, seeking to overturn the Wyoming court’s decision.
Citizens Support Protecting Great Divide Basin

94% of Public Comments Favor Conservation over Development

By Tova Woyciechowicz

The Great Divide Basin within the Red Desert contains special jewels like Adobe Town, the Haystacks, Powder Rim, Wild Cow Creek and the Ferris, Pedero and Bennett Mountains. It also harbors large reserves of oil, conventional natural gas and coalbed methane gas.

The Bureau of Land Management is now revising its outdated management plan for the basin. The agency received an impressive 10,496 public comments during the scoping process for its Rawlins Resource Management Plan, which is expected to allow the development of approximately 5,000 coalbed methane wells and 5,000 oil and gas wells in the basin.

An overwhelming majority of comments to the BLM voiced a desire for conservation of the area’s natural values. Fully 94% of respondents supported adoption of the citizens’ Western Heritage Alternative, which envisions a landscape where well-planned energy development is compatible with wildlife and public recreation. The proposal was developed by WOC, Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, the National Wildlife Federation, the Wyoming Wildlife Federation, the Wilderness Society, the Wyoming Wilderness Association, the Center for Native Ecosystems and the Sierra Club.

More than 10,000 public comments favored protection of wildlife and their habitat and expansion of the basin’s Wilderness Study Areas. Nearly 6,000 comments advocated the use of directional drilling techniques for oil and gas development. Only 43 comments, most of which came from energy companies that stand to profit from drilling activities, pressed for extensive oil and gas development.

The BLM’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Resource Management Plan, which will incorporate the public comments it received, should be released this winter.

In the meantime, WOC is working to mobilize concerned citizens into a grassroots campaign to protect the basin, presenting slide shows and distributing educational materials at public events around Wyoming, leading outings to the basin’s special places and working with Biodiversity Conservation Alliance to prevent drilling threats to Adobe Town.

Interested in getting involved? Contact tova@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org or (307) 332-7031, ext. 15.

Freudenthal Weighs in on the Red Desert

Governor Urges Greater Protection for Natural & Cultural Resources

By Tova Woyciechowicz

Governor Freudenthal also recommended that the agency investigate the feasibility of oil and gas lease buy-outs in cases where leases should be suspended in culturally or environmentally sensitive areas. WOC has long advocated this solution to the challenge of dealing with existing leases in sensitive areas, but until the governor weighed in on this issue, our proposal had been ignored by government and industry officials.

In addition, the governor urged the BLM to better address development’s cumulative impacts, noting that “conclusion must be given to the relative values of the resources and not necessarily the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return.”

Finally, Governor Freudenthal urged the BLM to focus greater emphasis on the Red Desert’s wildlife, particularly sensitive species like the mountain plover. He expressed his support for the agency’s “Alternative Three,” which recommends the expansion of three “areas of critical environmental concern” (ACECs), the creation of one new ACEC and the designation of a new Wilderness Study Area.

While the governor stopped short of endorsing the Citizens’ Wildfire and Wildlands Alternative, which bars additional oil and gas development in the Jack Morrow Hills, we commended him for advocating more protections for the Red Desert’s unique natural and cultural values.
Wilderness Study Area Designation for Steamboat Mountain?

by Mac Blewer

Last May, I watched a full lunar eclipse over Steamboat Mountain, as lightning flared over the Red Desert and shooting stars fell. As the eclipse waned, the moon took on the appearance of a crocodile eye — orange, black and yellow — with a watchful crescent-shaped iris. The usual poor-wills, coyotes and great horned owls called, as we conversed in front of our sage fire, perhaps in an lull before the storm. But nature’s activities are still outstanding landscape qualities and opportunities for solitude and open air. The usual poor-wills, coyotes and great horned owls called, as we conversed in front of our sage fire.

I was accompanied by local naturalist Marian Doane, co-founder of Friends of the Red Desert and a relative of Gustavus Doane, on a weekend trek to conduct a wilderness survey to see if Steamboat Mountain could qualify as a designated wilderness study area.

If an area is proven to have wilderness characteristics — outstanding landscape qualities and opportunities for solitude — and thus qualifies as a wilderness study area (i.e., a potential wilderness area that requires further study before being designated as wilderness by Congress), the area is afforded increased protections from oil and gas development, mining and ATV use. Existing, valid grazing leases are still honored, and responsible hunting and other recreation activities are still allowed.

I believe that any fool can see that Steamboat Mountain proper, with its vast open tracks of sage and windstone. It felt good to be back in Dustin Springs for the first time since Fall 2002. Winter was fading, but not quite ready to relinquish its grip, judged by the chilly May air and the towering snow banks on north-facing slopes. Sleep came early.

After being roused early by love-struck flickers, blackbirds, yellow warblers and towhees, we hoisted our packs, cameras and binoculars and started up Steamboat. Over the course of three days, we photographed and documented all two-tracks and other human signs — a rusty barbed wire fence tanged in the aspens here, a shoot-up 20-gallon oil drum there, some old Coors cans from the era before flip-tops. We stopped at the old buffalo wallows and long-abandoned wolf dens that WOC founder Tom Bell had shown us on our last trek here. And we photographed the mountain’s vast pristine, in sunlight one day, and in rain, wind and mist the next. Although we found ample evidence of the desert elk that live here and use Steamboat’s aspen groves and big sage as cover during calving, we only saw two elk on Steamboat over three days, a pregnant cow and a wary yearling, which peaked at us from their hiding place in the aspens nearly a mile away. We gave them a wide berth and hiked in the opposite direction.

What we found after hiking the periphery of the mountain and tromping around several of the mountain’s drainages was that Steamboat Mountain proper indeed has wilderness characteristics. At the end of our research, we recommended to the BLM that 5,000 acres of Steamboat be designated as a wilderness study area.

Keeping in mind the importance of recreational access to Wyoming’s public lands, we proposed that the mountain’s surrounding camp sites and roads be left open, and that two two-tracks on top of the mountain be included in the wilderness proposal. However, we suggested closing four miles of the main, rocky two-track that cuts over the mountain from Steamboat and an illegal two-track jutting straight up the mountain above Jack Morrow Creek’s headwaters.

We also recommended that other areas around Steamboat, including Blind Valley and Monument Ridge, be proposed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for inclusion in the wilderness proposal. These areas contain many classic and unique wilderness qualities that exemplify the standards set by Congress. More details are in the Wyoming Office of Outdoor Council’s report, “Steamboat.”

Wyoming’s Wolf Management Plan May Endanger Delisting

by Patricia Dowd

A s gray wolf populations reach sustainable levels in Wyoming, Idaho and Montana, the states are now challenged to develop management plans ensuring the wolves’ continuing viability. This will enable the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to de-list the wolves from Endangered Species Act protections and grant the states the authority to manage wolves within their borders.

During the 2003 session of the Wyoming State Legislature, Wyoming passed a controversial wolf-management bill into law. Although Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) biologists recommended that wolves be managed as trophy animals statewide, their expertise and advice were pushed aside by politics.

House Bill 279 classifies wolves as trophy game animals in the northwestern part of the state, specifically Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, the John D. Rockefeller Memorial Parkway and contiguous wilderness areas in the Shoshone and Bridger-Teton National Forests. In the rest of the state, wolves are classified as predators, allowing them to be killed for any reason.

HB 279 manages for 15 wolf packs in Wyoming, seven packs outside Yellowstone and the state’s northwestern boundary and eight packs in the rest of the state. The bill’s Legislative Report for more information on HB 279.)

After HB 279 was passed, the WGFD was handed the task of creating a wolf management plan that reflected state statute — not an easy assignment. Although Wyoming Game and Fish Commission meeting in July, commission members adopted a state wolf-management plan that parrots HB 279’s guidelines and fails to ensure viable wolf populations in Wyoming. Despite overwhelming public comments calling for the protection of wolves, the commission moved forward with a plan that has a number of troubling provisions. For example, the plan contains no funding mechanism to cover the WGFD’s estimated $615,900 annual price tag for managing wolves; establishes arbitrary boundaries outside of which wolves are not protected and manages wolves for minimum numbers, which sets a bad precedent for managing other wildlife species in Wyoming.

Before wolf management can be turned over to the states, the USFWS must approve Wyoming’s, Idaho’s and Montana’s wolf plans. As we went to press, all three state plans had been sent out to independent wildlife managers and scientists for peer review. The peer review process must be completed by November 1. All three plans will then be sent to the USFWS for consideration.

Unfortunately, thanks to the legislature’s insistence on establishing a dual-status classification for wolves, it appears that Wyoming’s wolf plan may well fail to meet USFWS guidelines for removing wolves from protections offered by the Endangered Species Act. USFWS officials are concerned with the ambiguity of HB 279’s statutory language and have recommended that it be amended. The agency’s recommendation appears to be that the bill defines—— with a watchful crescent-shaped iris. After being roused early by love-struck flickers, blackbirds, yellow warblers and towhees, we hoisted our packs, cameras and binoculars and started up Steamboat. Over the course of three days, we photographed and documented all two-tracks and other human signs — a rusty barbed wire fence tanged in the aspens here, a shoot-up 20-gallon oil drum there, some old Coors cans from the era before flip-tops. We stopped at the old buffalo wallows and long-abandoned wolf dens that WOC founder Tom Bell had shown us on our last trek here. And we photographed the mountain’s vast pristine, in sunlight one day, and in rain, wind and mist the next. Although we found ample evidence of the desert elk that live here and use Steamboat’s aspen groves and big sage as cover during calving, we only saw two elk on Steamboat over three days, a pregnant cow and a wary yearling, which peeked at us from their hiding place in the aspens nearly a mile away. We gave them a wide berth and hiked in the opposite direction.

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We also recommended that other areas around Steamboat, including Blind Valley and Monument Ridge, be proposed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for inclusion in the wilderness proposal. These areas contain many classic and unique wilderness qualities that exemplify the values that Congress, and the public, intended to protect for future generations with the passage of the Wilderness Act. I hope we will protect them. ♦

Wyoming Outdoor Council

Frontline Report

Fall 2003

Grey Wolf
Industry Stakes its Claim to the Upper Green’s Public Lands

by Meredith Taylor

More than 15 years have passed since the Bureau of Land Management last revised its Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Upper Green River Valley. RMPs are used to guide the agency’s management of multiple — and often competing — uses of our public lands. Updated RMPs are needed to plan wisely for the future uses of BLM-administered public lands.

Unfortunately, it appears that the revised plan for the Upper Green is being written to appease industry and follow Bush administration orders to fast-track natural gas and CBM development. The BLM has already permitted a total of about 3,000 natural-gas wells in the Pinedale Resource Area, more than 500 of them in the area’s Jonah Field.

Planning an Industrial Sacrifice Zone

At the outset of the RMP revision process, the BLM was planning to analyze a reasonably foreseeable development scenario of 5,000 total wells for the Pinedale Resource Area, a 6.5% increase from existing well numbers in an area that is already experiencing troublesome impacts on wildlife and air quality at existing levels of development.

Now industry has told the BLM that it wants to double the number of wells the agency will analyze in the revised RMP to 10,000, meaning the number of wells in the Pinedale Resource Area would more than triple. One reason for industry’s proposal is that it intends to “infill” more wells on its existing leases. For example, in the 30,000-acre Jonah Field portion of the Pinedale Resource Area, industry hopes to use 60-acre well spacing instead of the current 40-acre spacing. As a result, the BLM is considering permitting as many as 3,550 wells in the Jonah Field, up from an initial proposal for 1,550 wells, a number that according to a BLM official may soon be eclipsed by industry requests for even greater numbers of wells. If permitted by the BLM, such proposals could totally sacrifice the area to the single use of gas production. As one BLM official noted in disbelief at the serious discussion of this level of development, “The level of surface disturbance at 32 pad-section (30-acre spacing) is well beyond acceptability from a wildlife perspective if we wish to retain any semblance of what habitat even remains at this point.”

Local Residents Alarmed

Many local residents are alarmed at the increasing industrialization of their once-sleepy valley. A recent Pinedale Round-Up editorial argued:

Now is the time to offer some sort of rebellion against industry...[T]he County certainly reaps the rewards from gas development. Industry provides us with a lot and for that we’re thankful. But now is the time for the County to make some sort of effort to at least have a life preserver handy when it is overwhelmed and to make some sort of effort to stave off a claim to our ‘reasonably foreseeable future’. Industry should not stake that claim for us.

As Linda Baker of the Upper Green River Valley Coalition says, “Few places on Earth harbor the wildlife herds we take for granted in the Upper Green. How many can boast over 100,000 mule deer, elk, moose and pronghorn? The longest big-game migrations in North America outside of the Arctic? The largest populations of sage grouse? We cannot allow their habitat to be wiped away.”

Taking a Stand

The BLM must not be permitted to rubber-stamp industry’s proposal to more than triple the number of permitted gas wells in this wildlife-rich valley. We must take a stand against this shortsighted onslaught by industry, the BLM and the Bush/Cheney National Energy Plan on the Upper Green’s matchless wildlife habitat, treasured recreation destinations and rural lifestyle.

WOC, our conservation partners and concerned citizens are calling on the BLM to prohibit leasing in crucial wildlife habitat, migration corridors and critical winter range. In addition, WOC advocates the designation of a National Migration Corridor to keep the pronghorn’s Upper Green winter range linked to summer range in Grand Teton National Park. Only with such visionary planning can we succeed in safeguarding Greater Yellowstone’s biological integrity and its residents’ quality of life.

What You Can Do:

Please write to the BLM outlining your concerns. Ask the agency to prohibit gas wells in important wildlife corridors and critical habitat areas in its revised Resource Management Plan for the Pinedale Resource Area.

CONTACT:

Kellie Rosdler
Pinedale RMP Coordinator
PO Box 768
Pinedale, WY 82941
Email: pinedale_wymail@blm.gov
Phone: (307) 367-5529

WOC Protest Prompts BLM to Pull 14 Oil and Gas Leases

by Christine Lichterflé

In late July, the Bureau of Land Management agreed with WOC that 14 oil and gas lease parcels, encompassing more than 14,000 acres, in the Cody area should not have been offered for sale in December 2002. The agency’s decision, which was prompted by a WOC protest, means that the parcels will not be offered for sale until after the BLM consults with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concerning protections for grizzly bears, as mandated by the Endangered Species Act.

Public lands managed by the BLM’s Cody Field Office, on the eastern edge of the central Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, contain grizzly bear habitat. Consequently, when the BLM undertakes an action that “may affect” a threatened or endangered species, it is required by law to formally consult with the USFWS, whose scientists evaluate whether the BLM’s action will jeopardize the species and recommend steps that should be taken to limit impacts on the animal’s habitat and well-being.

Nonetheless, the BLM admitted that “no threatened and endangered (T&E) species inventory has been conducted for the grizzly bear in the [Cody Field Office] area. No programmatic grizzly bear consultation has been performed on these parcels.” That is, the BLM failed to comply with the basic mandates of the Endangered Species Act.

This is no legal “technicality.” The USFWS has previously determined that “oil and gas exploration and development is generally detrimental to grizzly bears.” The industrial activity associated with oil and gas development — including construction of well pads, pipelines and buildings and operation of heavy machinery in previously undeveloped areas — destroys grizzly bear habitat and drives bears away. Of particular concern is the often extensive road building that accompanies oil and gas exploration.

While we’re pleased that grizzly bears in the Cody area should now receive the protections that the Endangered Species Act demands, it’s unfortunate that a formal WOC protest was needed to admonish the BLM about the law under which it is required to operate.
On July 14th, Wyoming Federal District Judge Clarence Brimmer blocked national implementation of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The rule, adopted during the Clinton Administration, would have protected more than 58 million acres of roadless public lands in the U.S. – including 3.24 million acres in Wyoming – from road-building. This ruling disagreed on nearly every point with a previous Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision in Kootenai Tribe of Idaho v. Freeman, a case originating in Idaho. Most notably, where Judge Brimmer held that the roadless rule was the result of a “rush to give President Clinton lasting monuments in the annals of environmentalism,” the Ninth Circuit had found that a 69-day public comment period, which was more than 30% longer than the legally mandated length, clearly met requirements for public comment. The roadless rule was promulgated after years of development, during which citizens were given numerous opportunities for public comment. More than 400 public meetings were held nationwide, including 16 in Wyoming, at which thousands of citizens provided detailed comments to administration officials.

Roadless areas in Wyomings national forests play an important role in protecting wildlife habitat, watersheds and fisheries. Since 1978, when roadless areas were identified in the Forest Service’s Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II, we have lost more than 680,000 acres of roadless areas to roadbuilding. The roadless rule would have stopped further losses of precious roadless areas, but with Judge Brimmer’s ruling, the fate of the roadless rule is in doubt.

Judge Brimmer concluded that the rule violated the National Environmental Policy Act and the Wilderness Act of 1964. He ruled that the U.S. Forest Service failed to analyze an adequate range of alternatives, failed to conduct an adequate cumulative effects analysis and failed to prepare a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, among other things.

Furthermore, Judge Brimmer took the view that there is no distinction between roadless areas administratively protected by the roadless rule and wilderness areas protected under the Wilderness Act. He argued that since the Wilderness Act states that wilderness areas shall not be created except as provided for in the Wilderness Act, and that roadless areas were de facto wildernesses, the Wilderness Act therefore barred implementation of the roadless rule.

But this is erroneous. For example, oil and gas extraction, logging and mining are allowed in roadless areas, as are snowmobiles, motorcycles and mountain bikes. The only activity uniformly prohibited in a roadless area is road building. While preserving an area’s roadless character is a major reason for protecting it, it falls far short of the protections afforded designated wilderness areas, which include a ban on all motorized vehicles, and logging and other mechanized transportation.

WOC and seven other environmental groups have appealed Judge Brimmer’s ruling to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, which will decide whether it agrees with Judge Brimmer’s view that the protections afforded designated wilderness areas, such as a ban on all motorized vehicles and logging, are not adequately protected in roadless areas.

Governor Freudenthal calls transbasin diversions "risky propositions.”

Reservoir to the Sweetwater River or from the Green River below the city of Green River all the way to the North Platte near Rawlins. The transbasin diversion analysis appears to be driven by concerns about the State of Utah’s interest in acquiring approximately 60,000,000 acre feet of water from Wyoming. But these groups ignore one important factor. The Colorado River Compact has granted Wyoming a certain percentage of acre feet of water from the Green River. Wyoming’s right to that water cannot be taken away unless a new compact is drawn up and signed by all involved states.

Whatever the alternative, Besson says that a transbasin diversion project might cost a cool $300 million. Geology professor Charles Love of Western Wyoming Community College decides the theme: "If this is going to go for agriculture, it says, ‘then tell me how the state coffers are ever going to pay back the cost of the pipeline from the profits... and pay for any future [water] development in southwest Wyoming.’"

Governor Freudenthal has said in no uncertain terms that he opposes transbasin diversions, characterizing them as "risky propositions.” While he is willing to allow an in-house analysis to proceed, he doubts that the Wyoming Legislature will approve any of the proposed alternatives.

Transbasin Diversion for the Green River?

$300 Million Project Would Pipe Water From the Green to the North Platte

by Steve Jones

It’s time to start talking about transbasin water diversion. At least, that’s what Wyoming Water Development Office Director Mike Besson says. He figures the way to cure the North Platte River Basin’s continuing water shortage is to grab some water from another basin. He’s got his eye on the Green River Basin.

Wyoming has never failed to deliver water from the Green River Basin to downstream states, as required under the Colorado River Compact. But the same cannot be said for the North Platte River Basin, under the Missouri River Basin Compact.

The Wyoming Water Development Commission is conducting an analysis of possible solutions to the North Platte’s water shortage problems. Two alternatives would divert water from either the Little Sandy River or the East Fork of the New River to the Sweetwater River (a tributary of the North Platte). Other alternatives include piping water from Fonnelle Reservoir to the Sweetwater River or from the Green River below the city of Green River all the way to the North Platte near Rawlins.

WHAT IS ODOUR?

The term ‘odour’ is used to define a range of sensory experiences related to the airborne presence of malodors. Odours can be emitted from a variety of different sources which can be both natural and man made. These sources can be point or non point sources. Airborne malodors can be odorous or non odorous. Odorous malodors are those which have an unpleasant or unique smell which can be detected by people. Non odorous malodors are those which do not have a smell.

Malodorous odours are those which are unpleasant to people. These odours can cause a reaction termed an ‘odorant.’ Odorants are the molecules which trigger an odorant response. The term ‘odorant’ is used to define a particular class of molecules which are able to trigger an odorant response. These molecules are generally small and can be volatile. Odorants can be detected by the human nose because they are able to pass through the nasal epithelium and stimulate the olfactory receptors.

The olfactory receptors are located in the nasal cavity and are responsible for detecting odours. The olfactory receptors are highly sensitive and can detect odours at concentrations as low as 1 part per billion. This sensitivity allows the human nose to detect odours at very low concentrations.

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Roping the Wind, Hitching up the Sun

Renewable Energy Conference Provides Bright Ideas

by Michele Barlow

With a mere 4.6% of the world’s population, the U.S. consumes about 25% of the world’s oil and natural gas. Relying on ramped-up oil and gas drilling in unspoiled areas of Alaska, Wyoming and elsewhere in the West cannot satisfy our nation’s insatiable appetite for energy. The key to meeting our future energy needs is using energy more efficiently and developing renewable energy resources. Increasing renewable energy use to 10 percent by 2020 can save as much as 8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas — enough to meet the current needs of 35% of U.S. households.

Harnessing Wind & Solar Power

In August, the Converse Area New Development Organization (CANDO) in Douglas hosted Wyoming’s first statewide renewable energy conference, titled Roping the Wind and Hitching Up the Sun. More than 150 landowners, entrepreneurs, developers, conservationists and state and federal representatives attended the two-day event. Speakers discussed the history of renewable energy in Wyoming and worldwide, advancements in power storage and renewable energy sources. Net metering and tax breaks, rural community and economic development and project design and financing.

Among other important topics, the conference focused on wind project development in Wyoming’s rural areas and on working across the Central Great Plains and western Rocky Mountains. The conference also responded to frequent calls from state, regional and national print and broadcast media reporters, who appreciated his thorough knowledge of the thorny legal issues surrounding CBM development, and, no doubt, his quick wit. At the same time, Tom said, “But I’m not saying good-bye. I look forward to working with you at the Alliance.” Thanks, Tom, for all your excellent work. We look forward to working with you at the Alliance.

WOC Participates in National Solar Energy Tour

On October 3, WOC served as the Lander site for the American Solar Energy Society’s National Solar Tour, inviting the public to view our solar energy system in detail. The goals of the ASES tour, conducted during “Energy Awareness Month,” included helping residents of communities around the country understand their options as informed energy consumers, stimulating interest in energy alternatives by providing a working example of a solar project and providing informative materials.

With the assistance of Scott Kane of Creative Energies, who designed and installed WOC’s solar energy system, we eagerly showed off our simple grid-connected system and handed out information about grants available as informed energy consumers, stimulating interest in energy alternatives by providing a working example of a solar project and providing informative materials.

As of September, three Wyoming wind projects near Arlington and Medicine Bow are producing from renewable sources, called wind, biomass and municipal solid waste) may increase from about two percent of total power generation in 2001 to almost six percent of generation in 2015.

On-hydropower renewable energy sources contributed to the tremendous growth in renewable energy. Increasing renewable energy use to 10 percent by 2020 can save $25% of the world’s oil and natural gas — enough to meet the current needs of 35% of U.S. households.

Renewable Electricity Production

The amount of electricity currently produced from renewable energy sources is miniscule, but growing. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, generation from non-hydropower renewable energy sources (geothermal, solar thermal, photovoltaics, wind, biomass and municipal solid waste) may increase from about two percent of total power generation in 2001 to almost six percent of generation in 2015.

One promising development is a market-based mechanism that requires utilities to gradually increase the portion of electricity they produce from renewable sources, called a Renewable Electricity Standard or Renewable Portfolio Standard. To date, 13 states have enacted these standards and three additional states have established non-binding renewable energy goals.

Envisioning a Bright Future

One evening as the renewable energy conference, Douglas-area landowners and representatives of a wind power company engaged in a lively conversation about developing a commercial-scale wind farm in Converse County. The next day, I visited with a rancher about the benefits of my own small-scale photovoltaic system — energy independence, predictable electricity costs and zero emissions.

We can now envision a future where rural landowners, renewable-energy companies, enlightened public officials and conservation-minded utilities can work together to help meet the nation’s energy needs.
Farewell to Ray Corning, Friend and Fighter
by Mac Biever

From our perch on Oregon Buttes, we surveyed the rolling hills of the northwestern Red Desert. A few miles south and helped the land. Lupine, Indian paintbrush, and shooting stars dotted the sagebrush for miles around. The “Grand Old Fellows,” as Mark Twain called the silver peaks of the Wind River Range, rose to the west, and we could see Oregon Buttes’ sister sky islands, Green Mountain and Steamboat Mountain, to the east and south.

As the late afternoon sun accentuated the hills’ contours and shadows, my friend Ray Corning pointed to the land and smiled, as if touched by earlier memoirs of another ramble in another wild place.

“Those wide open spaces remind me so many ways of the Alaskan tundra,” he said, moving his long, sinewy arm through the air in a half-carees. “I love it. We better be careful what we do out here.”

Stepping past a lama pine scarred by a hungry porcupine, we descended gingerly down the twisting, gravelly trail. Ray pointed out different species of grasses along the way. I would not know it, but that trek that we took two years ago was my last time in the desert with Ray. Although I would visit him and his wife, Mary, many times before the end.

On September 9 we lost a dear friend and a brave fighter when Ray passed away after a ten-month battle with esophageal cancer. Even during his last days he would do what he thought was right, all the way. I would not know it, but that trek that we took together was my last time in the desert with Ray.

Gary Hickman, a retired assistant regional director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, recalls, “Ray was a very professional, principled fisheries biologist who would stand down the politicians at great risk to his own job. He never was a ‘yes man.’”

Passionate Pursuits
Ray was born in 1943 in Casper and spent much of his childhood in Wyoming and in Nebraska, where his father worked on the railroads. After earning a Bachelor’s degree in Fisheries Science and a Master’s in Zoology from Colorado State University, he began a career that would take him from the tidal marshes of Virginia to the tundra of Alaska and eventually the open spaces of Idaho and Wyoming.

Over three decades Ray worked for the Idaho Fish and Game Department, the Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries Department, the BLM in Washington, DC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Anchorage.

After his retirement in 1994 he moved to Lander, where he pursued some of his environmental passions, relentlessly fighting for stronger water quality protections and monitoring water quality and wetland health in the Popo Agie River watershed and on the Green Mountain Common Grazing Allotment.

“Ray would always approach people from a position of respect and knowledge,” says Jack Kelly, field manager for the Lander BLM Office. “He never did it in a way that diminished anyone else. That’s why he was so respected. It set him apart.” Kelly credits Ray with helping the agency identify a few springs important to wildlife and recreationists on the Green Mountain Common Allotment.

“A Wonderful Asset to this Finite Earth”
But Ray was much more than a hard-driving conservationist. His warmth was felt by all who met him. During his time with the Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries Department, he fed poor families with the fish that he electrocuted during his surveys. He dressed up as Santa Claus and delivered presents to families in need. He was a dedicated father, a devoted husband and a lover of life and the land.

“Ray was a wonderful asset to this finite earth,” recalls his friend and WOC founder, Tom Bell. “He combined his knowledge and expertise with his love of the natural world to do many fine things in his principled way. More than that, he was a warm, compassionate human being.”

Thane Humphrey, Ray’s “adopted Alaska son,” believes that “consciously or by instinct, Raymond went where he standing on the summit of Everest. Skydiving from 30,000 feet. Learning to care exploration trips and sailing and S.C.U.B.A. expeditions world-wide. Spending more than 40 weeks teaching wilderness skills on National Outdoor Leadership School courses all over the world.

Thank you, Steve Goryl!
by Christine Likenfelli

Standing on the summit of Everest. Skydiving from 30,000 feet. Learning to care exploration trips and sailing and S.C.U.B.A. expeditions world-wide. Spending more than 40 weeks teaching wilderness skills on National Outdoor Leadership School courses all over the world.

“I think WOC does great work and I want to support it the best way I can,” explains Steve. “Without its determined efforts, many wild places in Wyoming would be ruined!”

A full-time computer system administrator at our next-door neighbor NOA, Steve has years of experience working on Apple computers. He also brings endless perseverance and an unworkable work ethic to every thing he does. Although perhaps not requiring the same amount of resolve as it took to stay for five days at Everest’s 26,000 high camp, alone in order to get a summit-day weather window (which Steve did reaching the summit on Friday the 15th of May 1990), fixing computer system problems can try the patience of most.

Thank you, Steve, for being our computer Superman, quickly coming to our rescue and keeping us up and running! Your enviable knowledge, ready advice and hours of volunteer work are a huge help.”

Easy Money With Your Help!
As we head into the holiday season, many of us will do some shopping on the internet. With one extra step, you can make sure that WOC gets a donation for each purchase you make, with no extra cost to you. It’s simple. Log on to www.igive.com, list WOC as your “cause,” buy something through the many stores listed on Igive.com, and not only does WOC receive a percentage of the price you paid, but also a $5 bonus for signing you up as a new member. If each person reading this article merely signs up and buys something, WOC will receive more than $5,000!

More than 450 companies sell their products through Igive.com, including REI, Eddie Bauer, Office Depot, Dell, Barnes & Noble, PetSmart and Patagonia. By using Igive.com, you can ensure that a portion of the cost of your purchases — varying from 5% to as high as 26% — is donated to WOC. And you can even deduct the donated amount from your taxes.

Please help us take advantage of this simple way to raise funds that are critical to maintaining WOC’s effectiveness. Working together, we can do a lot. Thanks.

Marisa Martin Joins Staff
In September, WOC welcomed Marisa Martin as an intern to our Greater Yellowstone Program coordinator. Marisa recently graduated from the University of Michigan with a J.D from its Law School and an M.S. in Conservation Biology and Ecosystem Management from the university’s School for Natural Resources & the Environment.

At Michigan, Marisa was a Doris Duke Conservation Fellow. She was a Joseph Sax Environmental Fellow at the University of California-K. Udall Environmental Scholar. During her summer breaks from law school, she was a North Star Sierra Club environmental intern at a law firm in Minneapolis, a legal intern at the New Mexico Environmental Law Center in Santa Fe and a legal clerk at Earthjustice in Hawaii. Marisa’s master’s opus was a spatial projection of future grey wolf habitats in Michigan and Wisconsin once the state’s wolves are delisted from the Endangered Species Act, a topic very relevant to Wyoming as we move toward wolf delisting.

“It’s great to be in Lander,” Marisa says, “and I’m excited to be part of WOC’s important work protecting Greater Yellowstone’s remarkable wildlife and wild country.” As an outdoors enthusiast, Marisa is also looking forward to hiking, backpacking and exploring Wyoming.

We’re delighted that Marisa is on board, and are confident that her exceptional skills and admirable commitment will bolster our success in safeguarding the GEY’s rich natural treasures.

Atmgewolkeight, Marisa is a Michigan Environmental Scholar. During her summer breaks from law school, she was a North Star Sierra Club environmental intern at a law firm in Minneapolis, a legal intern at the New Mexico Environmental Law Center in Santa Fe and a legal clerk at Earthjustice in Hawaii.

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Second Annual Ride the Red Outing Attracts 39 Bikers

by Christine Lichtenfels

On September 13, 39 energetic mountain bikers gathered for our Ride the Red outing, a 45-mile loop on two-tracks and dirt roads in the Red Desert’s Jack Morrow Hills area. For the second year in a row, WOC has organized and sponsored this event as an opportunity for people to experience and appreciate the Red Desert and the unique recreational opportunities it provides.

Following a snowy, windy night, the day dawned frosty and clear. The Wind River Mountains to the northwest sparkled in the morning light with their fresh coating of snow. Surprisingly, the desert’s dirt roads were in prime condition, without the dreaded gumbo we feared would come with the snow.

Riders ranged in age from an impressive 12 years to fifty-something, and came from all over the southern half of Wyoming and Fort Collins. Bikes ranged from basic to high-tech, and even included a tandem bike!

Home-baked goodies, plentiful other snacks and beverages, endless sun (and wind), beautiful views and great company abounded. A special few, including Tim Bush from Cheyenne, caught sight of a herd of desert elk, while others experienced the thrill of watching wild horses gallop across the sagebrush.

“What a fun outing!” enthused one participant. “The refreshments hit the spot and our well-earned t-shirts will be worn with pride!”

Our deepest thanks go to former WOC board member Chris Hiemstra and his wife Theresa Kay, who provided the vision, motivation and endless hours of time and effort to make this event a reality. Thanks also go to the folks at Brown ‘N Gold of Laramie, who were immensely helpful in making our Ride the Red t-shirts, and to NOLS Rocky Mountain for generously loaning us water containers and first-aid supplies.

Stay tuned for information on next year’s Ride the Red. We’re looking into new routes to explore more parts of the Red Desert. Hope to see you there! 

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