



# WYOMING OUTDOOR COUNCIL FRONTLINE

SPRING 2006

R E P O R T



Jeff Vanuga

Horseback riding is a popular roadless area activity.

## More than a “land without roads”

*Wyoming’s roadless areas are the state’s hidden gems*

By Molly Absolon

the easiest travel path in this land with no trails, thick vegetation and lots of small cliff bands to navigate. We scrambled around waterfalls cascading over moss-covered rock bands and crawled through tangled underbrush before the canyon floor opened up into a wide meadow sprinkled with late season asters. It was a beautiful, wild place.

Canyon Creek, in the Shoshone National Forest, is just one of 115 inventoried roadless areas in Wyoming. “Roadless” is a technical term for national forest lands greater than 5,000 acres that have no maintained roads and are essentially “natural.” In Wyoming, there are more than 3.2 million acres of designated roadless areas ranging in size from small chunks like the 7,000-acre Canyon Creek parcel to the state’s largest, the 315,647-acre Grayback Roadless Area in the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

These special places are now up for grabs. President Clinton’s roadless rule from 2001, which issued a moratorium on future road building in these wild lands, was overturned in 2005. The Bush administration is now calling for state governors to petition the secretary of agriculture with specific requests for roadless area protection within their state boundaries. Governor Freudenthal has decided the best way to determine the management of roadless areas is through the forest plan revision process, currently underway on both the Shoshone and Bridger-Teton national forests. *continued on page 3*



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Above: Bonneville Pass in the Dunoir Roadless Area.

**A**long the eastern flanks of the Wind River Mountains, Canyon Creek slices down through layers of limestone, dolomite and sandstone on its way out of the mountains and into the Wind River Valley. The drainage created by the creek as it cuts down to the plains is similar to nearby Sinks Canyon with its towering cliffs and sloping meadows, but Sinks Canyon is often crowded with visitors who make the easy drive up from Lander to hike, climb or just escape the heat of town for the afternoon. In Canyon Creek, you almost never see anyone.

I first hiked up Canyon Creek nearly ten years ago. My friends and I dropped into the valley near where the creek flows into the Little Popo Agie River and hiked upstream. After a few too many tangles with brush and boulders, we abandoned any attempt at keeping our feet dry. Walking in the stream provided



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*Executive Director  
Mark Preiss*



## Leaving Cheyenne on the Road Less Traveled

Our programs are more effective and lasting if we engage people in our efforts, building broad support. With this in mind, the Wyoming Outdoor Council has been working alongside the Wyoming Association of Churches, Wyoming Children's Action Alliance, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and the Wyoming Early Childhood Development Council to advance legislation that supports healthy communities and a healthy environment.

The intent of this collaboration is to define a future for Wyoming that improves and promotes child welfare, public health, good jobs, and environmental protection. On March 14, I spoke at a press conference at the capitol to affirm the need for all of us to work together to address these complex issues. I wanted you to know about this exciting effort. Below are excerpts from my comments.

- The Wyoming Outdoor Council is pleased to be working together with these fine organizations and individuals, looking for new ways to support Wyoming's working families, and at the same time, protect the environment in which we live.
- For too long, we have seen a division between the health of our communities and the health of our environment. For too long, one interest has been pitted against another. We've been told that we can't have economic prosperity along with a healthy environment. But Wyomingites know this is simply not true. We have come together to begin to address this unnecessary division and to support legislation and funding that reflects these values.
- We support the concept behind the Energy School, and encourage the new school to develop and maintain a strong relationship with the Ruckleshaus Institute. We encourage the school to follow the intent of the legislation, and make strong investments in renewable energy. We encourage the advisory committee to support research, but to also apply this research on the ground in Wyoming. In this way, the school can promote good jobs, and help develop new technologies, including renewable energy, that protect Wyoming's environment.
- We encourage the legislature to support a living wage for Wyoming public employees and repeal the food tax. We encourage our legislators to support strong and meaningful investment in the Wildlife Trust Account. And we support the governor's appropriations for additional staff at the Department of Environmental Quality to maintain a checks and balance system for Wyoming's energy development.
- The legislation we have highlighted here today reflects a responsible balance. Our Senate President Grant Larson said it well in his remarks on the opening day of the session: "We have a rare opportunity to meet all of our current needs, to fund them, and we have the opportunity to address the future of Wyoming."
- The Wyoming Outdoor Council agrees, and knows that we must take the fiscal health of our state, its people, its communities and the health of our environment head on. To do anything less is unacceptable.

As this issue of *Frontline* goes to press, the legislative session is winding down and the future of many of the bills highlighted above decided. As with all legislation, the real work begins after the session is over with the rulemaking process. We'll keep you apprised and engaged.

Happy Trails,  
Mark



Established in 1967, the Wyoming Outdoor Council (WOC) is the state's oldest and largest independent statewide conservation organization. Our mission is to protect Wyoming's environment and quality of life for future generations.

*Frontline Report* is the quarterly newsletter of WOC and is provided as a benefit of membership. Letters to the editor and articles by members are welcome.

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### Giving Roadless Areas a Face

When you look at a map of Wyoming's roadless areas, the pattern of distribution is easy to determine. Many of these lands are along the edges of mountain ranges; they are the treed lowlands and open parks that were not designated as wilderness when the icy peaks above were set aside. Often they are within easy reach of communities and many Wyoming citizens use them for recreation.

"I like to head for the open spaces where I can get away from people," says Jim Pratt of Powell. Pratt, who is retired, is a member of the Backcountry Horsemen of America and a frequent user of both Wyoming's wilderness and its roadless areas. "I like to get up early and watch the sun come up, build a fire, sleep outside, all the things you go out there for.

"I'm very much in favor of roadless," he continues. "I've lived in Oregon where there are roads everywhere. The last thing I want to do is ride down roads. It's terrible. When that happens here, I'll get rid of my horses."

Across the state, roadless areas provide Wyoming citizens with these kinds of back-to-nature getaways far from the crowds of Yellowstone or Grand Teton national parks. When you bump into someone up around Canyon Creek, chances are they are from Fremont County. The same is true for most of the other roadless lands in the state.

Many of the names of the specific roadless tracts are meaningless to all but nearby residents: Munger Mountain, LaBonte Canyon, Sand Creek, Little Bighorn Canyon, Libby Flats. But ask a local and you're likely to hear stories about favorite hunting spots, secret fishing holes, and great wildlife watching. Unless you ask Jim Pratt. He'll just give you a knowing smile. Jim's not about to give away the whereabouts of any of his special rides.

Anita Bartosh, who lives in Marbleton on the eastern edge of the Wyoming Range where the state's largest roadless area complex is located, said in a recent Wilderness Society report that everyone in her hometown heads into the roadless areas to recreate on the weekends.

"You name it, we do it up in the Wyoming Range," she said. "We fish, hunt, snowmobile. It's one of the reasons we live here."

It may be the lack of a catchy name that has helped protect these lands from the overuse so common in more popular wilderness areas or national parks. Roadless areas are relatively undiscovered. For this reason, they provide exceptional opportunities for primitive recreation—hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, climbing—as well as first-class wildlife habitat.

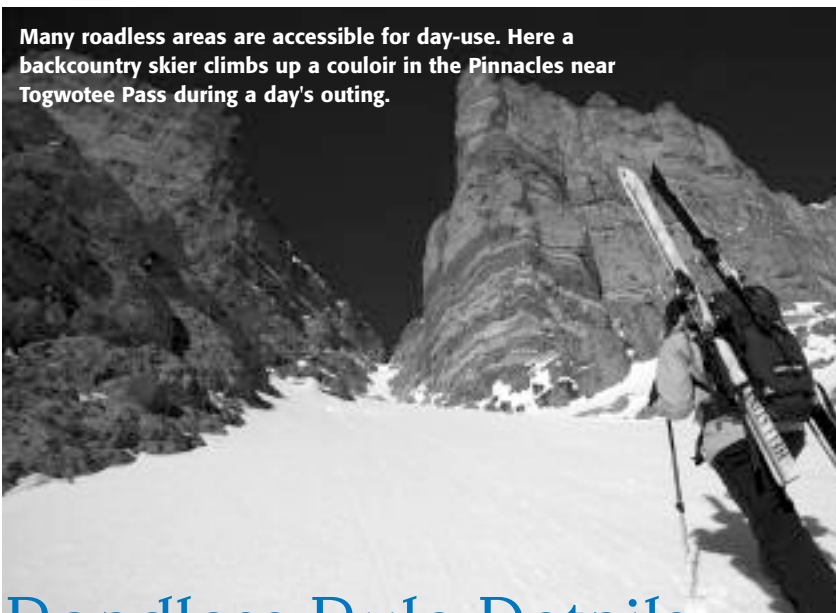
### Supporters and Detractors: Who Has the Power?

The original 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule generated more than 1.5 million comments—more comments than any other federal rule has ever received. Ninety-five percent of these comments were in favor of continued protection for the nation's remaining roadless areas.

A poll by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership found that 84 percent of hunters and 68 percent of anglers supported keeping roadless areas roadless. More remarkably, a poll of registered voters nationwide found that 76 percent favored roadless protection. This support crossed political parties: 62 percent of Republicans, 86 percent of Democrats, and 78 percent of Independents polled spoke up in support of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. But these voices fell on deaf ears.

The Bush administration's reversal of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule negated the three-year effort of countless administrators and citizens, wasted the millions of dollars that went into hosting public meetings and congressional hearings as well as to *continued on page 4*

Many roadless areas are accessible for day-use. Here a backcountry skier climbs up a couloir in the Pinnacles near Togwotee Pass during a day's outing.



Jeff Vanuga

## Roadless Rule Details

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule includes the following provisions:

- Protects 58.5 million acres in 39 states; 3.2 million acres in Wyoming.
- Maintains public access and recreational opportunities including hiking, horseback riding, camping, hunting, biking, snowmobiling and fishing.
- Preserves critical wildlife habitat.
- Safeguards clean water.
- Closes no existing roads or trails.
- Allows new roads in special circumstances, such as to fight fires or in other natural events that threaten public safety.
- Allows logging of certain timber to reduce risk of wildfires.
- Allows motorized recreation on existing trails and roads.
- Multiple use is permitted.

**Protecting wild and unfragmented landscapes is a bipartisan American tradition, one that rises above ideology. It is a uniquely American idea born of our uniquely American heritage. Europe has its great castles and works of art, Africa its ancient pyramids and cultures. Here in America we have our wild places, the first home of Native Americans. These untamed landscapes are what remain of the pioneer spirit that shaped this nation's character.**

*Mike Dombeck, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, announcing the signing of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule into law January 2001.*

*continued from page 3*

process written comments, and sent all of us back to the drawing board. Once again, we are being asked to voice our opinion on the future of roadless areas, but this time in a state-by-state, one-forest-at-a-time fashion.

### **What Other States Are Doing**

Governors across the nation are opting for a variety of different responses to the Bush administration's call for their input on the issue of roadless areas. Freudenthal, as mentioned above, will likely not submit a petition, but will continue to work with the forests to find a "balanced approach" to roadless area management. In Colorado, Gov. Bill Owen has initiated an involved public

effort to solicit citizen input. Colorado has created a 13-member task force to hear public comments and make recommendations to the governor. This effort is being funded by a \$110,000 grant from the Forest Service (*High Country News*, Dec. 26, 2005).

Elsewhere, governors are gathering public input through less formal channels. Idaho Gov. Kirk Kempthorne and Mont. Gov. Brian Schweitzer have asked their county commissioners to submit recommendations, and according to a *High Country News* article from Dec. 2005, Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman is considering a similar approach. In the summer of 2005, California, New Mexico and Oregon filed a lawsuit to reinstate the

Clinton roadless rule. Oregon's governor Ted Kulongoski originally petitioned the Department of Agriculture requesting the right to leave the Roadless Area Conservation Rule in place in Oregon, but this request was rejected by Undersecretary of Agriculture Mark Rey.

Washington's governor Chris Gregoire also asked the Department of

Agriculture for an expedited process that would have allowed her state to adopt the roadless protections contained in the original rule. Like Kulongoski, Gregoire was told no and this February, Washington joined California, New Mexico and Oregon in their lawsuit against the federal government.

In Wyoming, the fate of the roadless lands in the Bighorn and Medicine Bow national forests appears to have already been determined given Gov. Freudenthal's current position that the future of roadless areas should be decided by the forest plans. The Med-Bow's forest plan was finalized in January 2004. In this document, 95 percent of the inventoried roadless areas in the forest have some level of protection. The Bighorn National Forest Plan, finalized in 2005, protects only 15 percent of the forest's inventoried roadless areas from commercial logging, road building and motorized recreation.

For the Bridger-Teton and the Shoshone national forests, the planning process, which is scheduled to take three years, has just begun. Currently these forests are holding public meetings, working with a government cooperators group, and accepting public comments to define "desired conditions" for the respective forests. Once the desired conditions are determined, the next stage will involve mapping and management details.

### **Roadless Rule: A Balanced Solution**

The Wyoming Outdoor Council favors reinstating the original Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which would provide a national policy of protection for roadless areas. Roadless areas are not only popular recreational destinations, they are also rich in wildlife and fisheries.

We know the Roadless Area Conservation Rule provides a vision for these lands that has widespread public support. We are working with local sportsmen and women, backcountry horsemen, conservation groups, and both the Bridger-Teton and the Shoshone national forests to ensure roadless areas in these forests are protected. We'll also be hosting forums and leading field trips to roadless areas around the state over the next year. And we have joined a national campaign to petition for the rule's reenactment.

As Al Sammons told the Shoshone National Forest government cooperators on behalf of the Wind River Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of America in January 2006, "The Shoshone is a big, wild, rough, untrammled, masterpiece of nature. These characteristics are why horsemen love this forest. The Shoshone should be managed to maintain this tradition."

Wyoming is lucky to have several of these big, wild, rough, untrammled masterpieces of nature left across the state. But they need our help to stay that way. ▶

## **What's Next?**

Freudenthal has lingering questions about the effectiveness of petitioning the federal government on roadless area protection and has indicated that he may not participate in the process. He has until November 17, 2006 to make his final decision. We encourage you to write to the governor to let him know you support roadless area protection. Pressure from citizens may tip the scales enough for him to take a stronger stance in favor of keeping roadless areas roadless.

Governor Dave Freudenthal, Governor's Office  
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# Horse Whispering for a Wild Backcountry

## *The Inberg Family's Gift of Respect and Cooperation*

By Molly Absolon

Dick and Judy Inberg are, at first glance, opposites. Dick at 6'4" is tall and gangly. He looks like the muleskinner he is in his plaid flannel shirt, suspenders and slouching posture. His face is lined, with kind, deep-set eyes and a thick white mustache. He politely removes his cowboy hat as he enters my office, leaving a crease across his brow. Beside him, Judy is petite and looks like a schoolteacher or businesswoman. A small tidy woman with round wire glasses and neatly cropped graying hair, she has a patient way of deferring to her husband as we talk. They are a humble pair and it is only after some prying that I began to get a sense of how much I—and others who cherish Wyoming's open spaces—owe the couple for their years of effort protecting the lands I love.

Today Judy and Dick are hard at work fighting for yet another cause: their beloved backcountry, specifically roadless areas in the Shoshone National Forest.

"I came out here in 1959 to work as an engineer in the uranium mines in the Gas Hills near Riverton. I didn't like it much at all when I first arrived," Dick recalls. "But then I went into the mountains backpacking and I fell in love with the country..."

"That's what we live here for. If it wasn't for the wild backcountry, I wouldn't be here."

Dick's backpacking career did not last long. He'd grown up in northern Wisconsin canoe camping and he quickly saw that horses were the most appropriate 'canoe' for Wyoming's terrain. Backpacking gear was heavy and uncomfortable in those days, plus the distances in the Shoshone were too great to get very far, even on a week-long hiking trip. Horses, and later mules, became the Inberg's porters and companions.

The couple's favorite place to ride is in the Dunoir Special Management Area, a roadless area in the Shoshone National Forest near Dubois. They can get there from their home in Riverton easily for a day ride that quickly takes them away from the bustle of their everyday lives into the solitude of the craggy high peaks and blustery plateaus of the Absaroka Range.

Dick and Judy do occasionally make pack trips into wilderness, but Judy says she is a really a "softy" and prefers riding on trails through meadows rather than over rock and ice. Much of the designated wilderness in the Shoshone National Forest is, according to her, "not very horse friendly" and the Inberg's are first and foremost riders. They want to see the backcountry protected for riding, hence their interest in roadless areas.

In January, Dick and his friend and colleague, Al

Sammons, made a presentation on behalf of the Wind River Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of America on horse use in the Shoshone National Forest for the forest's government cooperators group. The government cooperators group is working on coming up with recommendations for the new forest plan, which will be completed in 2008. Dick and Al wanted to show the economic impact of recreational horse use in the communities around the Shoshone National Forest. Fremont County has the most horses per capita in Wyoming with Park County coming in second. Their contribution to these rural economies is more than \$6 million according to Al's calculations and for these people to be happy, they need quiet, well-maintained trails in non-motorized primitive areas.



Dick Inberg



Judy Inberg

Dick Inberg rides his mules in the Bonneville Pass roadless area. Inset: Judy Inberg takes a break by the side of the trail.

"We avoid areas with a lot of four-wheelers," Dick says. "Part of the experience we are looking is solitude, quiet, uncrowded... When someone fires up their four-wheeler you can hear it a quarter of a mile away."

"We deal with so many finite resources in the world. Oil and gas are finite. If you over-timber, timber is finite. Same with grazing. Once the forest becomes motorized, it becomes a finite resource because of the physical impacts. One can argue that horses leave lasting impacts too and that is true in places where they are overused or when people aren't using proper techniques to minimize their impacts, but Backcountry Horsemen have a tradition of volunteer service. We really work hard to take care of the lands we use."

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That volunteer service added up to over 36,000 hours between 1996 and 2004 and equated to more than \$500,000 of donated time and materials according to Dick and Al's presentation. But Dick, who is one of the volunteer leaders, acknowledges that it is getting harder to do the labor needed to maintain the area's trail system.

"We're all getting old. I'm going to be 70 soon, Al's a year older," Dick says. "We don't have a lot of young people coming up. The younger generation is different. [The environment] isn't a priority for them. It seems like we are losing our hunting and fishing ethic."

"It seems like the younger generation isn't interested," Judy adds, "Lots of service groups are having trouble attracting young people. They just don't join. I'm puzzled.

"It's not only Wyoming, but it does seem that Wyoming has gotten polarized and crazy over environmental and conservation issues. These days anything environmental is evil around here. There seems to be a disrespect for the environment and the people that work for it, I don't know why."

Nonetheless, Dick is optimistic about the planning process for the Shoshone National Forest. He truly believes that the forest planners will listen to people in

the public, and for that reason he is quick to encourage citizens to write the forest with their personal vision for the way they want the Shoshone to be managed.

"Our backcountry is very, very important," Dick says. "Not just for recreation but for wildlife, water quality, air quality... Once it is roaded, motorized and torn up, we don't have a backcountry. We won't get it back. I've seen this happen back East. They roaded all the forests, logged everything, killed all the animals and now 50 years later they are saying, 'Hey what did we do?' I don't want to see that happen here.

"I've got a lot invested in this," Dick says as he and Judy get up to leave. "We lost a son to this cause. It means a great deal to us."

The Inberg's son, Kirk, was a bear biologist with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. In 1991, Kirk was on a routine tracking mission to locate a wounded grizzly bear in the Absaroka Mountains when the plane he was flying in went down. Kirk, biologist Kevin Roy, and pilot Ray Austin were all killed. Kirk loved the area where he worked and died and so do his parents. Today, the Absarokas remain one of Dick and Judy's favorite places to ride. Like their son, they treasure these lands and are committed to ensuring that they remain protected. It is their living legacy for Kirk. ♣

## My Wild and Woolly Youth

### *Thomas Family Adventures in the Beartooths*

By Deb Thomas

"What do I know about Roadless Areas?" I started to mull over the subject, and realized I knew nothing about them. In all honesty, I didn't even know where they are on the Beartooth Front!

My family and I live on the Montana-Wyoming state line, on the east side of the Beartooth Mountains. Our backyard is the Shoshone and Custer national forests. From our door, we can walk or ride our horses for miles and miles without being on a road; there are approximately 135,000 roadless acres from the Clark's Fork Canyon to the Montana state line, in the Shoshone Forest. I have lived in this area for 42 of my 51 years, and my home and heart has always been here, along the Beartooths.

Although my mother's family has lived in the Red Lodge area for only 100 years, my father's clan has been here for about 150. As children, we never thought of the forest as roaded or roadless, primitive or semi-primitive, motorized or non-motorized. It was a beautiful and wild place that we hiked, explored and shared with other creatures; some human, some not.

On a rare occasion fresh wheel marks on an old two-track road, or a cigarette butt along a trail, would be found, but that was pretty much the extent of human sign on the land. During the summer months it was rare to hear motors; the sound of wind in the trees, water splashing over rocks, or a squirrel scolding his unwanted guests was the norm. Although some of the places we would hike were old roads, they were usually overgrown and would not have made for a pleasurable drive in the country. During the winter, there were no roads. Any that had been visible during the summer were now under a cold white layer of snow. The forest was especially still at this time of year; calmness would flow through my body and mind, I would feel I was a huge part of nature and a tiny speck in the universe, all at the same time. My father would tell us his adventures of skiing down Sunlight Basin to deliver the mail and sleeping in snow caves to stay warm. Tales of cooking rabbits and eating deer jerky along the trail; never anything about roads! My mother did have a story about roads. She talked about coming over the Beartooth Pass right after the highway had been built. How exciting it was to see the vast mountain ranges, and ride in a car, which was a

rarity in her world. Other than picnic grounds and an occasional cabin, there were no roads or vehicles in the forest. The idea that the forest would be anything but wild never crossed my mind. I was naive.

As an adult, I have spent hours on horseback in the forest. Still, not many roads in the Shoshone or the Custer, but the human footprint is larger, and growing. The roads now provide access for ATV riders, snowmobiles, and people who come to recreate in the forest. As we go deeper into the forest to see the sights and return with lumber, oil and gas, the forest changes. As use grows, so does the number of roads. The forest is still a wild place. It's not uncommon to see large herds of elk and hear them calling their babies. We have watched young wolves playing and hunting rabbits in the snow. Even a rare meeting with a mountain lion, late at night, YIKES!! But it is not as wild as it once was.

Some people believe it is our right to use the forest. That our species owns all, whether the other creatures

we share the forest with survive, or not. That the forest should be a playground for those of us who can walk, ride, or fly into her center. And, that her bounty is for harvest of what we decide we need.

As plans are being made for how our forests are to be used, we need to decide what is best not only for humans, but for other species that have no voice. We need to take a long hard look at what more roads in roadless areas will look like 40 years from now. Some of us try to walk softly, but still believe we have the right to go where we want; maybe we don't. There are places on the planet that need less roads and fewer people; I believe the forest is one of them. ▶

*Deb Thomas is a member of the Wyoming Outdoor Council who lives in Park County, Wyo. Deb—along with her husband Dick Bilodeau and son Quinn—has spent the last ten years working to protect her community and the beautiful public lands on the eastern side of Yellowstone Park. Since 2004, she has been the community organizer for the Clark Resource Council.*

By Tom Reed

There is something about the still hour before dawn's birth on an October morning during elk season. It is a quiet hour where the only sound you hear is the popping of kindling from the wall tent's wood stove. You lie there on your cot and wait for the warmth to wash over you, testing the rising temperature by snaking a forearm out of your sleeping bag every few minutes. Finally, you stand and start the morning.

This morning is like that. My friend and I are hunting in the Sierra Madre, in a beautiful swatch of country that is heavily laced with aspen trees and choked with oakbrush. This is the only place in Wyoming that has oakbrush and aspen stands of its type and as a result, the hunting is fine.

We are in the Little Snake roadless area, a reach of country almost 10,000 acres in size and big enough to provide excellent hunting. It hugs the Huston Park Wilderness area and touches the Colorado border. It is a good place to be on an October morning in a warming wall tent. I drove my old pickup truck up the rough four-wheel drive road—a route specifically designated for such travel—and set up this camp in exactly the same place I had set up camp the year before. It's starting to feel like home.

I get the coffee going and as I'm feeding the fire with another chunk of kindling, I hear something faint and far-off. It is distinct enough, though, for me to step out of the tent in my long underwear and stand there in that cold October morning, breath steaming into the dawn, ears cocked. And there it is again. A bull elk bugling. I have heard that when cow elk aren't bred the

## Reverie of an Elk Hunter: *Save this Land*

first go-round in September, they sometimes come into a second estrus, sparking a second rut. Perhaps that is what this is. And there it is again—that sound that makes every hunter's neck tingle with goose bumps. It is like nothing else on earth.

We hurry now, eager and moving, putting off breakfast for a breakfast bar and gulping our coffee in big painful swallows. Rifles loaded. Packs ready. Cow call around my neck. Go.

We climb in the darkness, trying to not crunch aspen leaves too much, leaving the pickup truck and the wall tent behind, working fast. Sweating and breathing. The elk talk back and forth now and within minutes, we are in the herd. A bull bugles from one side of us, in the timber. In the darkness to the other side, his rival answers. We can hear cow speak to their calves. Somehow, the wind has honored us. We are amidst a whole herd of elk and they have not smelled us. How does this happen? The gods have smiled.

As dawn rises, we hear elk crunching behind us. We have parked ourselves at the edge of a tiny park stretching only a few hundred yards long *continued on page 8*



Tom Reed is a hunting and fishing enthusiast who says many of his favorite recreational destinations are in roadless areas.

*continued from page 7* and only 30 yards wide. Out steps a cow and we do not even blink. She is only about 15 feet away from my hunting partner, who has his rifle propped up in front of his face and is barely breathing. She stares right at us and then decides we are okay and moves out into the meadow, starting to graze. We hear another crunch and there is a spike, a legal elk. He stares hard too and still we don't move. I can hardly breathe. The spike inhales sharply, we can hear wind over nostril, and then moves out into the meadow. My whisper is barely audible: "Shoooooot."

Carefully, moving almost imperceptibly, my friend raises his rifle and pulls the trigger.

By noon, we are back down at camp and the elk quarters are cooling in the shade of the big aspens

nearby. We laugh and drink a beer pulled from the cooler in the back of the truck and we think about how lucky we are to be able to walk out of our camp and into a hunting territory that is unchanged by human hands except for a jeep road and a wide place to camp. A hunting ground that is nearly as pristine as it was when mountain men walked the land. A roadless area that provides recreation for the every day person. We will be back. As long as the land stays this way. It will if we have enough foresight, as sportsmen, to save this land for the next generation, to keep it as it is: no improvement necessary. 🏹

*Tom Reed is the Wyoming/Montana field organizer for Trout Unlimited as well as the author of Great Wyoming Bear Stories.*

## Does Roadless Pay?

“Wilderness locks up the land.” “Roadless areas block economic development and result in the loss of jobs.” “You can’t feed your family on scenery.”

These arguments about the value of wilderness have been accepted without debate for years, but recently there has been a shift. Economists are now looking at “wilderness valuation” in an attempt to put numbers to the seemingly intangible value of preserving wild places. The figures they have come up with are striking.

A June 2000 study entitled “Economic Values of Protecting Roadless Areas” conducted by Colorado State University economics professor John Loomis and CSU doctoral student Robert Richardson found that the 42 million acres of roadless forest in the lower 48 states support nearly 24,000 jobs and provide \$600 million in annual recreation benefits. Passive values—or what, according to polls, people are willing to pay to protect wild places for the future—added another \$280 million per year.

Those numbers alone are impressive, but when Loomis and Richardson started calculating what they call “ecosystem services,” or the value of roadless areas’ natural systems such as water filtering and purifying capacity and carbon sequestration benefits, they came up

with a total value of between \$1.88–2.38 billion.

The projected value for harvesting all the timber on these same lands is \$184 million.

Unfortunately, when the Roadless Area Conservation Rule was overturned in 2005, these statistics—although known and generally accepted—were ignored. According to the Bush administration, the only economic benefit of keeping the rule was \$219,000 saved from unnecessary road maintenance.

This discrepancy reflects a disconnect between the reality of today’s western rural economy and the myth of that economy that has built up over the years. Thirty years ago mining, timbering and ranching accounted for 20 percent of the rural economy. Today these industries account for only 8 percent.

“Most people’s understanding of the economy lags about 20 years behind reality,” Ray Rasker, an economist with the Sonoran Institute, a conservation group in Tucson, Arizona told *Outside* magazine in March 2005. “It’s a tough perception to change, because the new economy is often invisible.”

Nonetheless, our understanding of the western economy is being redefined daily in places like Jackson, Bozeman, Park City and Moab. In 1995, the U.S. Forest Service conducted a survey that determined that national forests generat-

ed \$125 billion in economic activity per year. Recreation accounted for 75 percent of that activity while timber and mining represented 15 percent. In the 11 years since that survey was conducted, recreation has only grown in its importance.

The Lander-based National Outdoor Leadership School, which has a \$21.5 million annual budget, depends upon primitive recreation in wilderness and roadless areas. Backcountry Horsemen generate millions of dollars of economic activity exercising their passion for horseback riding in wild, undeveloped places. There are countless outfitters and guides operating across Wyoming offering everything from wilderness hunting trips to river excursions, wildlife safaris, climbing expeditions, and photography outings. These activities do not mesh well with more traditional forest uses such as timbering and mining.

While recreation and tourism do not replace the economic contribution of mining and oil and gas to Wyoming’s coffers, they do represent a significant part of the state’s economy and its identity. Tourism is now the second largest industry in Wyoming. This contribution has to be considered in determining the future of Wyoming’s roadless areas. 🏹

—Molly Absolon





# AROUND WYOMING

## HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRAM WORK

### GREATER YELLOWSTONE

**Upper Green: Where the skies could become hazy all day.** The final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Jonah Infill project was released in January. We expect to see the Record of Decision approving a dramatic expansion (3,100 new wells) of this project in March.

Unfortunately the final EIS continues to show there will be significant impacts to visibility in the mountains surrounding the Upper Green River Valley as well as in Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. The BLM's plan for reducing air pollution is mostly hypothetical and consists of the use of "tier 2" technology on drill rigs, which is not widely available yet, and other unproven technologies like electric-powered drill rigs. This project will also have negative impacts to wildlife in the area, particularly pronghorn and sage grouse. Unless we see significant improvements in the Record of Decision, the Wyoming Outdoor Council is strongly considering taking this matter to court.

*Contact: Bruce Pendery*

### **Seismic project rallies Clark community.**

Last summer residents of Clark, Wyo. were successful in asking the BLM to prepare a second, more detailed environmental assessment (EA) in response to their concerns about the impacts from a proposed seismic project along the Beartooth Front. The BLM released its revised EA for public comment in December. Residents of Clark and the Clark Resource Council remain concerned, however, and have asked the BLM to prepare a more thorough EIS. Seismic testing involves heavy buggy-mounted drill rigs, ATVs and drilling rigs carried by helicopters. The Wyoming Outdoor Council has joined the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, the Wyoming Wildlife Federation and the Wilderness Society in urging the BLM to withdraw two areas from the project: Shoshone National Forest lands north of the Clarks Fork River that provide bighorn sheep and mountain goat habitat, and the Bald Ridge Seasonal Closure Area/Critical Elk Wintering and Parturition Range. *Contact: Lisa McGee*

### **Benefits of vegetation treatment questionable.**

Due to the substantial concern about the effect bark beetles are having on Wyoming's national forests, forest managers in the Kemmerer ranger district have proposed a series of vegetation treatment projects in an attempt to address the issue. Vegetation treatment can mean a variety of things: prescribed burning, selective thinning of trees or commercial timber harvest, to name a few. Because there is no evidence that short of removing all the trees from the forest, timber harvest has any effect on beetle infestation, the Wyoming Outdoor Council joined the Greater Yellowstone Coalition to persuade the Forest Service to look at the best available science before making its management decisions. In addition, the Forest Service's proposed action involves new road construction in two inventoried roadless areas of the forest. This decision would be contrary to the Forest Service's own policy to leave roadless areas intact while their management is still undetermined. To voice your opposition to this project, contact Kemmerer District Ranger Russell Bacon and his staff at 307-877-4415 or comments-intermtn-bridger-teton-kemmerer@fs.fed.us. *Contact: Lisa McGee*

### **Migration corridor projects working to protect big game travel paths.**

The Wyoming Council for the Humanities has approved a grant for the Wyoming Outdoor Council to create a DVD of Meredith Taylor's *Ancient Corridors* program to be used for educational purposes across the state. We are also working with conservation and ranching partners to protect and restore critical habitat and migration corridors for free-ranging wildlife and develop a proposal for a Path of the Pronghorn project from Grand Teton National Park down into the Upper Green. *Contact: Meredith Taylor*

**Grizzly bear delisting premature.** People came to Cody this winter from around Wyoming, the Northern Rockies, and as far away as North and South Dakota to ask U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to refrain from premature delisting of the

grizzly bear, and to improve protections for the bear and its habitat. At the hearing, opponents to delisting—including the Outdoor Council—emphasized the importance of habitat protections, reducing human-caused grizzly mortality, and ensuring adequate regulatory mechanisms and funding. Special thanks goes to Wyoming Outdoor Council member Deb Thomas from Powell who testified for us at the Cody hearing. USFWS is reviewing the public comments and will proceed with the delisting process as determined. *Contact: Meredith Taylor*

### GREATER RED DESERT

### **The Rawlins Resource Management Plan for the eastern Red Desert winds its way through federal bureaucracy.**

The Wyoming Outdoor Council met with BLM State Director Bob Bennett on two recent occasions to discuss BLM's revisions to the draft Resource Management Plan for the Rawlins Field Office. It now appears that BLM will not release the final EIS until next fall with the final decision coming out in July 2007. In the meantime, the Outdoor Council is monitoring and submitting comments on projects in the area. Recently, BLM has proposed the Cherokee West seismic project near Adobe Town, the Creston/Blue Gap II oil and gas development project (1,250 wells) west of the Baggs Highway, the Seminoe Road Project (1,240 wells) near Seminoe Reservoir, and the Atlantic Rim Project (2,000 wells) south of Rawlins. We have several appeals challenging coalbed methane development in the area pending before the Interior Board of Land Appeals. This winter the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance and several other groups received a stay of the Cherokee West seismic project pending further environmental review. We will keep you posted on developments so that you can remain involved in protecting this incredible landscape, or you can visit the BLM Rawlins Field Office website to get information. *Contact: Bruce Pendery*

*continued on page 10*

## STATEWIDE

**Small oil and gas projects to evade environmental review.** Following a trend in recent years to “streamline” and “expedite” oil and gas development projects, the Forest Service recently issued a proposed rule that would allow up to one mile of new road construction, one mile of road reconstruction, three miles of pipeline installation, and as many as four drill sites in new oil and gas fields on National Forest lands to be categorically excluded from National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. If adopted, this means that the Forest Service would not have to prepare an EIS or an EA before authorizing these activities. Categorical exclusions are appropriate for activities that are proven to have no significant effect on the environment—like mowing the lawn or painting a government building. The level of development

contemplated in the rule, however, is wholly inappropriate for this type of administrative rubberstamping. Our national forest lands in Wyoming deserve better. The Wyoming Outdoor Council submitted comments on the proposed rule and will continue to track it in the hope that it will not be adopted. *Contact: Lisa McGee*

**Keeping Wyoming's water clean.** The Water and Waste Advisory Board is still struggling with its revision of Chapter One of the Wyoming Water Quality Rules and Regulations, which sets forth water quality standards for Wyoming lakes and streams. One of the most controversial aspects of this revision will be how the Department of Environmental Quality will protect water for agricultural use, particularly coalbed methane water, which can harm irrigated crops and native grass-

es. The public will be able to comment and a public hearing will probably occur some time in April 2006. *Contact: Steve Jones* ▶



Jeff Vanuga

The Water Quality Advisory board is currently revising regulations for managing Wyoming's lakes and streams.

## Outreach Highlights Spring-Summer, 2006

*Your guide to fun, educational adventures in the company of Wyoming's people and landscapes*

**APRIL 22 Earth Day.** The Murie Center's Spring Earth Festival is planned for April 19 through the 23rd. WOC will be participating in the main festival in Jackson on the 22nd. For more information, you can check out the Murie Center's website at [www.muriecenter.org](http://www.muriecenter.org).

**APRIL 29 Wind Farm Tour.** The date for this is still tentative. We are hoping to set up a tour of one of the wind farms in Wyoming to provide an opportunity for people to learn more about the particulars of renewable energy.

**MAY 10 Wildlife-Friendly Fencing Project.** The date for this is still tentative. We are trying to set up a service project, probably around Kelly Warm Springs in Jackson Hole, to convert existing fencing to wildlife friendly fencing in order to assist migrating wildlife.

**MAY 15-19 Bike-to-Work Week.** This is National Bike-to-Work Week with May 19 being the official Bike-to-Work Day. Help reduce our consumption of foreign oil while keeping fit by riding your bike to work.

**MAY 27 Jack Morrow Hills Field Trip.** Come spend a spring day with us in the Jack Morrow Hills. As the date draws nearer we will narrow down the destination. Possibilities include

Steamboat Mountain, Killpecker Sand Dunes, White Mountain Petroglyphs, the Boars Tusk, or the Honeycombs. If you have a favorite spot that you would like us to run a trip to, feel free to send us your ideas.

**JUNE 3 National Trails Day.** We will be coordinating a service project on this date to help celebrate National Trails Day. The goal of this day is to celebrate the network of trails that help provide access to our favorite backcountry locations.

**JUNE 17 Fly fishing trip into the Wyoming Range.** Let's go look for some of those Colorado River cutthroat that hide under cutbanks and dead logs along the streams of the Wyoming Range. The Wyoming Range is currently slated to see significant oil and gas leasing. Come and see where some of these leases are and let's try and catch some fish.

**JUNE 24 Ride the Jonah.** This will be an educational, leisurely bike ride through a portion of the Jonah Field. We will look at the processes involved in an active gas play from drill pad development through to the compressor station. If you are interested in learning more about the nuts and bolts of where natural gas comes from, this is the trip for you.

**JULY 7 International Climbers Festival Trade Fair.** We will be participating in the 13th annual International Climber's Festival Trade Fair. In addition to American rock climbers and mountaineers this event always draws a few climbers from more far flung parts of the globe. Drop by and visit our table in the Lander City Park to hear what initiatives we are currently pursuing. You can also check out the Festival's website at: [www.climbersfestival.org](http://www.climbersfestival.org).

**JULY 22 Day trip into a Shoshone National Forest Roadless Area.** We plan to organize a day trip into one of the designated Roadless Areas within the Shoshone National Forest. The issue of how to manage Roadless Areas is a significant one for many western states. Our intention is to spend time hiking and talking about the values of Roadless Areas.

**If you have questions,** or just want to hear more about these events, feel free to contact Andy Blair at [andy@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](mailto:andy@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org) or 307-332-7031 ext 13. In addition to what is listed here we are planning to add more trips, service projects and presentations as opportunities arise. If you have an idea for an outreach event we are always happy to have your input.

## The Members of the Wyoming Outdoor Council: An Interview with Shane Smith

By Laurie Milford

Shane Smith is director of the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens and a long-time member of the Wyoming Outdoor Council. I caught up with him by phone recently to ask his perspective on the conservation movement.

"The environment is not a partisan issue—clean water, clean air, hunting, fishing—you don't have to be of one party to realize the effects of extractive activities on these things," Shane says.

Shane has applied his interest in these issues to his work for decades. In 1977, he helped found the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens. In addition to being a public botanic garden, the mission of the gardens is also to provide meaningful work for seniors, youth at risk, and handicapped folks.

The operations are guided by an environmental ethic. In the late 1970s, the gardens pioneered the use of beneficial insects to control pests. Further, the greenhouse is fully heated by passive solar, and the office building is 50 percent powered by photovoltaic panels, making electricity for the operation in large part free. The Botanic Gardens also serve an important role in teaching people about environmental stewardship.

"You could sum up a lot of what we do as sustainability," Shane says.

It's because Shane values a healthy environment that he joined the Wyoming Outdoor Council. He served on the board from 1990-1997. Shane has seen a lot of changes at the organization: "WOC has a wonderful history thanks to Tom Bell's vision. We've gone from a staff of just one or two people—when board members were asked to open their billfold just to keep someone on staff—to a leading conservation group. But we've always been homegrown. We're nonpartisan, and we don't have any outside affiliations. Decision makers are more open to WOC than they are to national organizations. Governor Herschler used to say, 'Wyoming on our terms.' That's the philosophy of WOC, too. We don't have to sell our state to the highest bidder."

Shane now serves on the board at the

Ruckelshaus Institute of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Wyoming. When I asked him to describe the institute's influence in environmental politics in our state, he noted that one of the many roles the institute plays is encouraging all interested parties to examine the effects of growth.

"Rural sprawl, the proliferation of second homes—these are problems in Wyoming.

For instance around Laramie and Cheyenne, you have ranchettes in places where people used to enjoy a pristine view. The Ruckelshaus Institute is asking, 'What effect is all of this having? Are there better ways to do this?' Growth

**"Gov. Herschler used to say 'Wyoming on our terms.' That's the philosophy of WOC too. We don't have to sell our state to the highest bidder."**

*- Shane Smith*

is a difficult thing to stop. But with fortitude, we can shape it. The Ruckelshaus Institute is helping the government and other folks learn how to shape Wyoming's growth—again, on our own terms."

Shane remembers important strides made by the Wyoming Outdoor Council over the years. One example is the Arlington wind farm. He recalls, "We were hearing from various folks who opposed the project because it would harm birds. Pacific Power and the company that built the farm were also calling on us. WOC decided we could support the project if the generators were designed to protect birds, and we told the designers this. In the end, Arlington was one of the first wind farms that listened to environmental-



**Longtime Wyoming Outdoor Council member  
Shane Smith**

ists. In part because of the influence of WOC, the farm built some of the first solid-beam columns used at wind farms. [Solid beams eliminate roosting.] Also the operators geared the turbines to turn more slowly. Ultimately, WOC felt we needed to weigh the effects of the wind farm against the effects of other forms of energy. And we decided, 'Let's take the lesser evil.'

Shane knows that those of us who promote renewable energy in Wyoming have an important task ahead. "Wyoming is behind the eight-ball," he says. "We're relying too much on extractive energy and losing the high ground to other states. We should be using some of the current windfall to position ourselves to be the leader in free renewable energy. Let's make Wyoming an energy player far into the future. Some folks seem to think that the money from extractive energy will last forever. But that income is going to end some day."

In the coming months and years, *Frontline* readers will see more of the Wyoming Outdoor Council's program to promote clean energy. (For a description of that work, please send an email to [molly@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](mailto:molly@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org).) Many thanks to Shane for his help in building the foundation for our clean energy work and for his continuing support for all of the Outdoor Council's efforts. 🐾

# Stretching Your Dollar:

## Earth Friends Wildlife Foundation Poses Challenge Grant

The Earth Friends Wildlife Foundation of Jackson has promised to match 10 percent of any new money raised by the Wyoming Outdoor

Council in 2006. This is an opportunity for you to stretch your contribution, making your money work even harder toward protecting the wildlife, clean air, clean water, and lands you value.



### About Earth Friends

Founded in 1995 by Rick Flory, the Earth Friends Wildlife Foundation is a charitable organization committed to supporting the work of conservation and wildlife protection groups. The founda-

tion recognizes the need for partnerships among businesses and wildlife interests, and it supports the efforts of scientists, socially responsible businesses, and communities in creating a sustainable future. Through the foundation, Rick Flory and Lee Robert provide matching grants to aid conservation groups working in the West. In Wyoming, that means help for our efforts to protect the remaining pronghorn migration route in the Upper Green as well as the critical winter ranges and birthing grounds for all of Wyoming's rich wildlife. Please join Earth Friends in supporting the work of the Wyoming Outdoor Council by making your pledge today. If you would like additional details about the challenge grant, please call Laurie Milford at 307-721-7610 or email her at [laurie@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](mailto:laurie@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org). ▶

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