

NEWS FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

This is our 50th year of conservation work in Wyoming. I hope you'll save the date for our 50th anniversary party in Lander on September 22–23. In addition to great music featuring Jalan Crossland, arts activities, workshops, and lots of discussion about the future of conservation, we're thrilled that former *EPA Director Gina McCarthy* will give the keynote address. Be sure to reserve tickets early at the link in my postscript below.

Late last year we sent an email asking what most concerns you for 2017. Thanks to everyone who responded to our survey. Three issues stood out: keeping public lands in public hands, ensuring strong protections for clean air and water, and fighting climate change. I'm pleased to let you know that our work continues to address each of these issues (and many others, as well). We've also added three new staffers to our ranks: a policy advocate who will be based in Cheyenne, a communications coordinator in Lander, and a public lands organizer in Rock Springs. The additions will make us even more influential in our 50th year.

Keep it Public, Wyoming!

Thanks to all of you who joined the more than 400 citizens at the public lands rally in Casper in November. Along with other conservation groups, tribal advocates, local businesses, recreation groups, and hunters and anglers, we formed the Keep it Public, Wyoming coalition to help energize and unite citizens against a proposed constitutional amendment that would have paved the way for state takeover of public lands. At subsequent meetings in Riverton and Cheyenne, folks turned out in droves with a clear message for lawmakers: Wyoming's public lands must stay in public hands. Thanks

to this active citizen engagement, the Wyoming Senate president withdrew the amendment during the legislative session. We have sent a clear message not only to our state lawmakers, but also to our congressional delegation. The coalition will continue to work together as long as necessary to defend Wyoming's shared backyard. Learn more and add your name to the growing list of supporters at keepitpublicwyo.com.

The 2017 Legislative Session

This year's session wrapped up last month after a busy eight weeks. We were successful on many fronts. One bill that sought a prohibitively high tax for wind and solar energy generation died in committee after we rallied citizens to contact legislators. We also led the charge to ensure stronger language for Wyoming's outdated radioactive waste storage laws and we worked with partners to stop a bill that would have allowed for the release of more sediment from dams, which would have been harmful to water quality, especially fisheries. We also helped improve a bill that set up a tough regulatory structure for potential sage-grouse bird farms, by limiting egg collection and ensuring the Game and Fish Department can restrict these operations. Thank you if you were among the hundreds of citizens who let your lawmakers know where you stood on these issues! We'll continue to work on at least two bills in the interim—one related to solar energy and one that



Wyoming Outdoor Council

Celebrating 50 Years of Conservation

would improve how the state deals with its trust lands. We'll keep you posted.

Wyoming Range

After a decade of waiting—and just three days before the inauguration of our 45th president—Undersecretary of Agriculture Robert Bonnie signed a “no leasing” decision for the long-contested 40,000 acres of oil and gas leases in the Wyoming Range. This is a great outcome for this special part of the Bridger-Teton National Forest, for wildlife and fisheries, and for the thousands of locals who love these mountains and have stuck together to see this last part of a complicated puzzle nearly completed. There are still some loose ends, which I hope to be able to report to you about in the coming months, but it's looking like a very happy ending.

Governor's Outdoor Recreation Task Force

Gary Wilmot, the Wyoming Outdoor Council's executive director, has been appointed co-chair of Governor Matt Mead's new statewide task force on outdoor recreation. The group has been working to determine how best to support this growing industry, whose economic influence in Wyoming is beginning to gain the recognition and respect it deserves. Our goal is to focus on shared values—such as our love for Wyoming's outdoor way of life—to convince lawmakers that conservation is as good for business as it is for the soul. Stay tuned!

Wyoming Public Lands Initiative

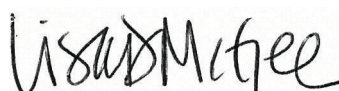
This statewide effort to address the long-term management of Wyoming's wilderness study areas (and other wild landscapes) is well underway, with nine counties engaged so far. The goal is to bring together a diverse group of citizens from each participating county to reach consensus if possible on legislative recommendations. Our goal is to see gains for conservation. We have a staff member on the Fremont and Teton County committees, and we're providing support to partners in other counties.

Methane Waste

Last year the Bureau of Land Management updated its decades old “waste rules,” related to the release of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Not only would the updates reduce pollution, but they would also make good fiscal sense. The rule was challenged

by the oil and gas industry and a number of states, including Wyoming. We joined other conservation groups, along with the states of New Mexico and California, to intervene in the lawsuit in support of the rule, and had a preliminary victory early this year when the Wyoming federal district court did not grant the challengers' request to put a temporary hold on the rule. Meanwhile, Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso is leading the charge to scrap the rule entirely. Again, we'll keep you posted.

We're facing some tough challenges in the months ahead. I'm happy to visit with you about any concerns or questions. I hope you'll take heart in knowing that the Wyoming Outdoor Council's membership is as robust and engaged as it's ever been. Your support and voice are making a difference for Wyoming. Thank you!



Lisa McGee
Program Director

P.S.

Reserve your tickets for our 50th anniversary celebration in Lander, on September 22–23.

Head to wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org/50-years and book now for the earlybird rate.

Hope to see you there!