



Wyoming Outdoor Council



ANNUAL REPORT

2021

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

More Voices for Lasting Change

Tallying wins and losses is not always clear-cut in the long game of conservation, where progress tends to be incremental and victories are often quiet. But it's an important endeavor, not only to celebrate our successes but because it's an opportunity to reflect on the positive impacts we can have here in Wyoming when we come together — as Wyoming Outdoor Council members, as the conservation community more broadly, and as a state.

Throughout 2021, we were deeply embedded in collaborative efforts that sought to solve problems facing Wyoming communities. In some cases we were the driving force, in others we were one of many interests and simply offered input or a steadying hand. Regardless, we didn't show up to the table with the assumption we had all the answers. We learned long ago that we can't protect public lands, wildlife, and clean air or water by winning debates — the key is to bring people together to find lasting solutions.

I'm proud of the successes that Outdoor Council members helped us achieve last year. However incremental the change, however quiet the victory, these achievements matter and your support made them possible. Thank you.



LISA McGEE
Executive Director

A handwritten signature of Lisa McGee in black ink.

Here's how you made a difference in 2021...

You supported Indigenous advocacy and leadership in the campaign to permanently protect the Red Desert.

As we build support to protect the Red Desert, the leadership of Indigenous advocates and Tribal leaders — who have historically been denied a say in how their ancestral lands are used and managed — is essential.

Thanks to your generous support, the Outdoor Council and Citizens for the Red Desert were able to host a three-day meeting for representatives of six Tribes with connections to the Red Desert. Tribal leaders and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers shared their perspectives and priorities to help shape recommendations for protecting the desert. The gathering was one step in a larger effort to ensure that Tribal governments have a say in the long-term management of these lands.

We were also able to co-facilitate, with Citizens for the Red Desert, a driving tour and training for journalists and others about the Indigenous history of the Red Desert, cultural sensitivity, and Tribal government. Tribal Advocacy Coordinator Yufna Soldier Wolf also co-led a Red Desert tour for community members from the Wind River Reservation.



The work in the Red Desert is important to the Tribes because they, too, are reconnecting with the land. This reconnection preserves and protects the oral stories, history, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge that this sacred landscape holds and has been lost over the years.

— Yufna Soldier Wolf,
Tribal Advocacy Coordinator



You helped keep water clean for drinking, wildlife, and recreation.

Strong protections keep Wyoming's best streams, rivers, and lakes safe for drinking and swimming and supportive of fish and other aquatic life.

Your support let WOC's conservation advocates stand up for clean water throughout Wyoming. We participated in a state review of water quality standards, delved into proposed revisions to Teton County's septic system regulations, analyzed Grand Teton National Park water quality data via public records, and fought back against ongoing risks to Boysen Reservoir and the Madison Aquifer from oil and gas wastewater.

We also kept up our steadfast review of the state permits that allow Wyoming oil and gas operators to dispose of their wastewater. This behind-the-scenes watchdogging is not glamorous, but it's essential to safeguard one of our most precious resources.

Water is necessary for all life on the planet. Due to the way water moves across and under the landscape and has historically been allocated and managed by different regulators and stakeholders, **dedicated watchdogging is crucial** to ensure comprehensive **water quality** protections across the state.

—Brandon Reynolds, Conservation Advocate



You kept the pressure on to protect Wyoming's wildlife migration corridors.

Across Wyoming, herds of big game including mule deer, pronghorn, and elk follow ancient pathways between their summer and winter habitat each year. All along their journey, these animals face pressure from industrial development, highways, fences, and other human-made obstacles. An executive order signed by Gov. Mark Gordon set out how the state will formally designate and manage migration corridors.

As we entered 2021, the first migration corridor local working group — a test case for how the governor's executive order would be implemented — was showing signs of veering off course. Your support and advocacy on this issue helped keep the group on task and set up a successful model for future working groups to follow. It also made abundantly clear to the governor's office and others that you value Wyoming's big game herds, and that designating additional corridors remains a priority.

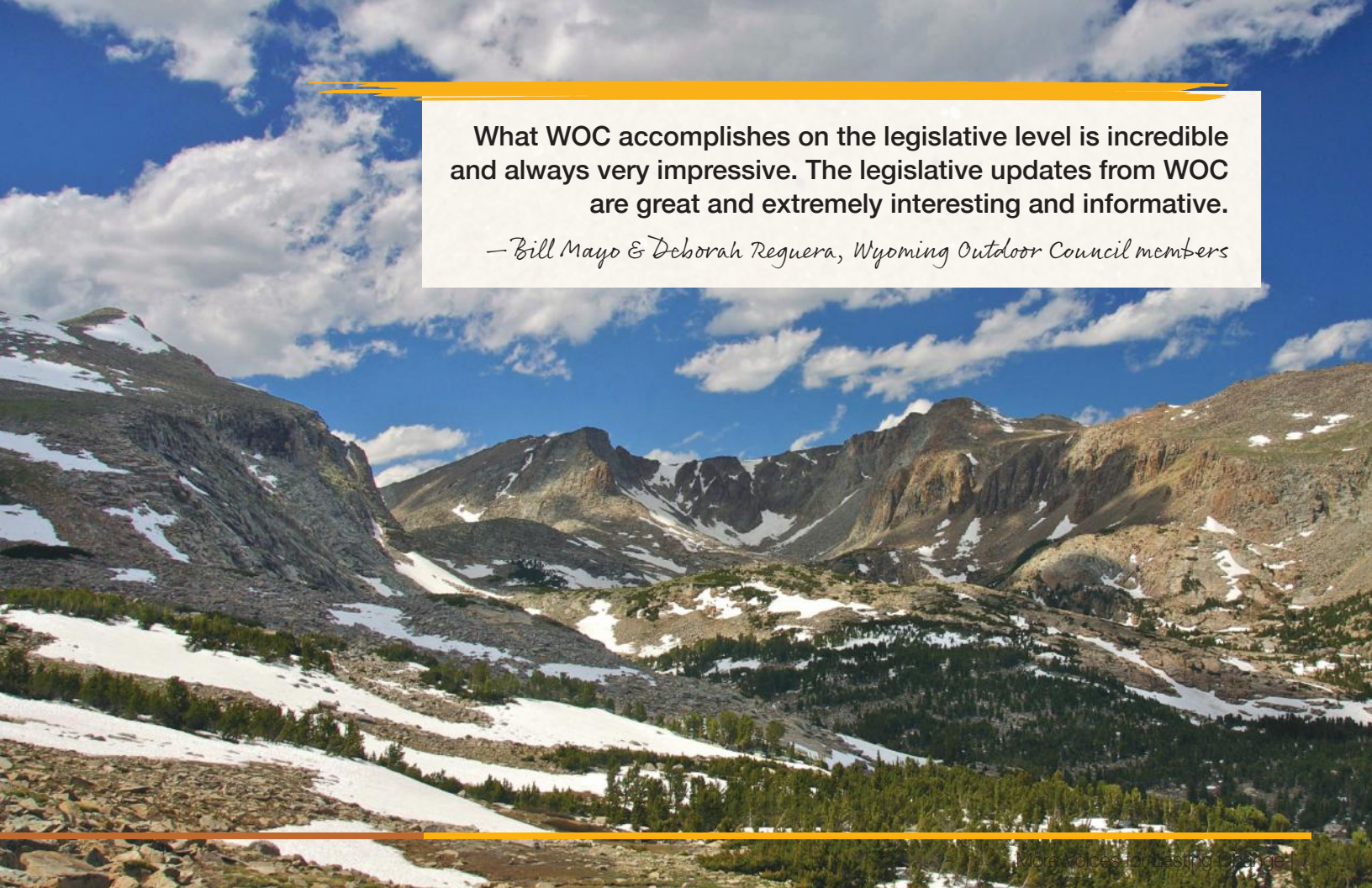
You spoke up for conservation at the Wyoming Legislature.

The Outdoor Council stood behind good conservation bills and pushed back against harmful legislation in Cheyenne.

One of the single worst bills we tracked in 2021 would have led to the repeal of Wyoming's net metering law, striking a blow to Wyomingites who have invested in rooftop solar systems and to the small businesses that install them. Net metering allows residents, small businesses, and local governments to produce their own renewable energy and sell it back to the grid at a retail rate. With your help (and even in a pandemic) we were able to successfully organize to support rooftop solar and stop this bill.



During the 2021 general session, WOC members and partners played a *John Burrows, Conservation Advocate* **crucial role in protecting the current state statute** that allows businesses and residents to receive retail rates for energy they send back to the grid. As an advocate, **it was inspiring to see how passionate and engaged people from across the state became** in defense of rooftop solar.



What WOC accomplishes on the legislative level is incredible and always very impressive. The legislative updates from WOC are great and extremely interesting and informative.

— Bill Mayo & Deborah Reguera, Wyoming Outdoor Council members

You set the stage for Wyoming to lease state lands for conservation rather than mineral development.

With a constitutional mandate to generate income from state trust lands, Wyoming has historically leased these lands primarily for oil, gas, and mining. We have a better idea — and thanks to you, it's gaining traction.

The Outdoor Council advocated for an innovative new program that would allow organizations or individuals to protect specific parcels of land by purchasing a conservation lease. Throughout 2021 we worked closely with the Office of State Lands and Investments and consulted with other conservation and hunting and angling organizations to lay the groundwork for Wyoming to offer its first conservation lease on state lands. We're excited about the prospect of protecting the conservation values of important parcels of land around the state while also providing necessary revenue for our schools. A win-win!





In the changing economic and social context of the 21st century, **forward-looking management of Wyoming state lands** requires that we build tools that can help us **protect valuable ecosystem resources** tied to these landscapes, while also generating revenue to support Wyoming schools. **We're proud to be a part of finding solutions** for these critical lands by advancing, and hopefully helping to implement, conservation leasing options at the state level.

—Kristen Gunther, Program Director

You helped us keep up our demand for common-sense methane emissions standards ...

The unnecessary waste of natural gas — frustratingly common in Wyoming — harms our air quality, contributes to climate change, and robs the public and local governments of revenue from a valuable natural resource. With your help, we were able to illustrate the true scale of the problem and demand that Wyoming do better.

Using high-end infrared cameras, we worked with partners to document multiple examples of legally permitted methane emissions from leaking oil and gas infrastructure on public lands in the Upper Green River Basin. The resulting videos — which we posted online and shared with operators and policymakers — were dramatic. They highlight the true scale of Wyoming's fugitive emissions problem and make clear how a region that once boasted some of the cleanest air in the country can remain dangerously close to violating the Clean Air Act's standards for ozone. The footage is spurring necessary conversations among energy operators and regulators about the need for more substantive change.

... and you supported responsible energy development.

Working closely with partners and the University of Wyoming, we also convened a group of stakeholders to develop a smart, workable vision for the responsible siting of large-scale renewable energy projects. Renewable energy, such as wind and solar, is part of any climate solution in Wyoming; however, one real challenge is ensuring that industrial-scale projects don't harm wildlife populations or sensitive habitat. The group, which represented a range of interests, finalized a set of 10 consensus-based policy recommendations (find them on our website). These recommendations provide a starting point for much deeper conversation and engagement to guarantee that renewable energy needs are balanced with other important values in Wyoming.



FINANCIALS

Conservation Programs: \$784,179 **Administration & Management:** \$189,456 **Fundraising:** \$254,288*

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$1,227,923

You are a vital part of our community.

And together, we are united around the values of conservation, helping safeguard our wild places and way of life for the next generation.

Will you consider joining the Tom Bell Legacy Society by leaving a gift to WOC in your will? We've teamed up with FreeWill so you can write your will for free. And if you'd like, you can choose to leave a gift to the Outdoor Council. Your legacy gift ensures a united voice for conservation into the future.

VISIT: freewill.com/wyomingoutdoorcouncil



***Each dot represents the percent of Outdoor Council supporters in each county. You are everywhere!**



262 Lincoln Street
Lander, WY 82520

307.332.7031
wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org

Protecting public lands, wildlife, and
clean air and water in Wyoming since 1967