

# IN THE FIELD



## Your Spring Update from the Wyoming Outdoor Council

Dear friend,

*Welcome to springtime in Wyoming! While I realize that a surprise blizzard may be just as likely as sunshine and wildflowers, the promise of more pleasant days ahead is enough to get me through the occasional gloom. And the same goes for our work here at the Wyoming Outdoor Council: We've faced challenges in our advocacy this year but, as you'll read below, there is also much to celebrate.*

*In these first months of 2022, our staff have brought their expertise to bear — supporting strong federal rules to reduce methane emissions; advocating for a state lands conservation leasing program and common-sense oil and gas leasing reforms; lobbying the Wyoming Legislature; watchdogging clean water issues in Boysen Reservoir; and aiding grassroots conservation organizers in communities around the state. But we didn't have to go it alone, thanks to members like you who were there every step of the way.*

### From the Legislature

**Sage-grouse farming.** One of our top priorities at the legislature this winter was SF 61, a bill that, in its original form, would have allowed commercial sage-grouse egg collection and farming to continue indefinitely in Wyoming.

Along with Outdoor Council staff, lawmakers heard from biologists, sportsmen's and women's advocates, and other conservation groups that sage-grouse farming creates new threats to wild sage-grouse (nest disturbance and a potential source of disease) with virtually no possibility of ever benefiting the species. The Indigenous Land Alliance of Wyoming brought important voices to this conversation, educating legislators and others about the bird's cultural significance and championing an Indigenous conservation perspective. And many, many Outdoor Council members and other Wyomingites also contacted their local legislators and asked them to stop this privatization of wildlife. Thank you to each and every one of our members who took action!

I'm disappointed to report the bill did pass — but only after an amendment to extend the existing sage-grouse farming law by five years, rather than

indefinitely. Our staff will stay engaged on this issue, likely for years to come, and keep you updated about how to take action.

**Nuclear power in Wyoming.** Another bill WOC devoted significant time and effort to, though with a more nuanced approach, also passed and was signed into law by the governor: HB 131 bill gives legislative approval for siting advanced nuclear reactors (like the Natrium project proposed for construction in Kemmerer) and nuclear waste storage facilities in Wyoming. Our primary issue with this bill was that it could allow advanced nuclear projects to skirt the requirements of the state's Industrial Siting Act, which are intended to avoid negative socio-economic



Image: Josh Milek

and environmental impacts on communities where major industrial development takes place. Once again, however, we were able to make this bill more palatable with some favorable amendments. In addition to the obvious environmental issues at stake, projects like Natrium will demand thoughtful scrutiny of potential impacts on local infrastructure, emergency services, workforce housing, and more.

**Good news for conservation.** I'm thrilled to let you know that the legislature upheld Gov. Mark Gordon's \$75 million budget request that will robustly fund the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust — and support conservation projects around the state for many years to come. Thanks to all of you who voiced your support in emails to your local legislators!

The legislature also passed several excellent bills that will improve the public notice process for state land exchanges, give hunters the option to donate fees from unsuccessful license applications to support wildlife conservation and public access, and give companies new options for meeting their bonding requirements for coal, uranium, trona, and bentonite mines.

## Climate Summit

Several of our staff are working with the Lander Climate Action Network ([www.landercan.org](http://www.landercan.org)) to organize a statewide Wyoming Climate Summit, which will be held June 25 in Lander. The day-long event will feature workshops, guest speakers, and inspiration to address climate change right here in our own communities.

## Citizens for the Red Desert

We continue to work with Citizens for the Red Desert ([www.reddesert.org](http://www.reddesert.org)) to create a sustainable future for the Northern Red Desert through home-grown legislation. This year, the coalition is gathering input from the many different groups of Wyoming people who have connections to the desert, to build the



framework for a bill we hope will be introduced in Congress. And with the spring green-up just around the corner, we're excited to lead another series of tours with local decision makers and stakeholder groups — and enjoy the Red Desert in the peak of its beauty!

## FIELD Training

With loosened COVID-19 restrictions making in-person meetings and gatherings an option once again, WOC's first order of business was to plan a new session of FIELD Training: our free, eight-week conservation leadership program. This year we are bringing together a cohort of Indigenous youth and young adults, beginning April 25 in Fort Washakie. We'll share stories from this installment of FIELD Training in an upcoming publication.

## You're Making an Impact!

It's been a long winter and a much longer global pandemic, so it should go without saying that all of us are ready to reconnect! Watch for details on some upcoming events (don't forget to sign up for email updates if you haven't already). And if you'd like to say hello, shoot me a message at the email address below or pop by our website to find contact information for each staff member. Thank you for being part of the WOC community!

*Kristen Junther*

Program Director

[kristen@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](mailto:kristen@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org)

