

IN THE FIELD



Your Fall Update from the Wyoming Outdoor Council



Dear friend,

During a staff retreat this summer, our team spent a beautiful morning on the shore of the Yellowstone River. The water's shifting movement was a fitting reminder that change never ceases. WOC is in a state of change, too: We've added capacity, made exciting hires, and collaborated on new initiatives to protect Wyoming's environment. In times like these, it's easy to focus on what's around the next bend. But we'd be remiss not to look upstream, too. In that spirit, please join us in reflecting on all that we've recently accomplished together.

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RED DESERT PROTECTIONS NEARING THE FINISH LINE

With your enduring support, we've reached an exciting moment in the campaign to protect the northern Red Desert and Big Sandy Foothills — home to dense populations of Greater sage-grouse, cultural sites important to dozens of tribes, and unparalleled recreation opportunities. In August, the Bureau of Land Management released its proposed Resource Management Plan for the Rock Springs Field Office.

When the BLM shared its draft plan a year ago, we were optimistic: The preferred alternative protected wildlife and cultural values while maintaining solitude and recreation opportunities. While misinformation

fueled backlash, WOC staff defended key landscapes as part of the governor's task force. You made your hopes for the Red Desert heard, too, by delivering hundreds of supportive comments.

Now, with the revised plan in hand, we're excited many key protections remain intact. Notably, the designation of two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern were included: the South Wind River ACEC and the expansion of Steamboat Mountain ACEC. By the time you're reading this, a 30-day public protest

period will have ended, and we'll only be awaiting the governor's consistency review before the plan is finalized. We're glad Gabby Yates, our new public lands program manager, will support our efforts on these lands and others.

SUPPORTING TRIBAL LANDS & COMMUNITIES

The Wind River Reservation is home to the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes, along with abundant wildlife, beautiful rivers, and wide-open vistas. However, widespread illegal trash dumping on the reservation poses a public health hazard and threatens wildlife and water resources. To address this epidemic of illegal dumping, WOC is supporting these communities in their data collection, analysis, and cleanup efforts. Our initial focus will be on a handful of severely impacted sites. We're grateful to have Jennifer Fienhold, our new tribal engagement coordinator, supporting this important work.

WOC staff, including tribal engagement coordinator Big Wind Carpenter, recently traveled to Washington, D.C. to advocate against several bills introduced by Wyoming's congressional delegation. One bill, the Pilot Butte Power Plant Conveyance Act, would sidestep tribal treaty rights by transferring lands not to the tribes, as was promised, but to a non-tribal private company, setting a terrible precedent for excluding tribes from their own lands. Another bill, the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative Act, would abandon protections for 130,000 acres of Wilderness Study Areas, opening them to energy development and other threats. A one-sided process closed out dozens of tribes with connections to these lands (including tribes with sovereign treaty rights), in addition to other stakeholders. We'll keep you updated as we continue to fight these bills.

WINS FOR OUR CLIMATE FUTURE

This summer, we hosted 25 citizen advocates from across the state and Wind River Reservation for WOC's first-ever Climate Leadership Retreat. With guidance from our climate and energy team (John Burrows, Jonathan Williams, and Big Wind Carpenter), leaders discussed practical climate solutions for their communities. Our climate team will also be working with the City of Cheyenne and Lotus Engineering and Sustainability to lead community engagement on Cheyenne's Climate



Action Plan — a key step in growing sustainability efforts in our state's capital.

In another win for climate, WOC was part of a Wyoming Supreme Court decision that struck down a High Plains Power policy to drastically cut payments to rooftop solar owners for the power they produce and share with the grid. Had this policy been upheld, it would have negatively impacted hundreds of existing and future solar homeowners and businesses. There's good news on the utility-scale solar front, too: Thanks to your comments, the BLM's recently finalized Western Solar Plan includes greater protections for our wide-ranging wildlife.

COMING UP

During the state legislative interim, members like you have been instrumental in halting the progress of several bad bills, including one targeting net metering, and another that would expand the mineral types that are exempt from a small mine permit. As the interim continues and we near the 2025 general session, keep an eye out for more opportunities to get involved.

Finally, wildlife program manager Meghan Riley recently kicked off WOC's first-ever wildlife trivia tour! Grab your friends and test your natural history, biology, and ecology knowledge — and learn about protections for big game migration corridors. We'll hope to see you in Jackson (Oct. 1), Pinedale (Oct. 10), Cody (Oct. 17), and Lander (Oct. 24).

THANK YOU

We are grateful beyond measure to have the support of members like you. Together, our conservation community is strong — and we'll continue to fight for Wyoming's healthy lands, abundant wildlife, clean air and water, and climate.