

# STEFF'S FALL UPDATE

## Dear Friends,

*These are critical times for Wyoming. In the last year, we have seen more than 2 million acres of our public lands leased for oil and gas development. Coal mines have closed, leaving workers and communities in the lurch. Our Legislature continues to double down on the minerals industry instead of supporting policies needed for a diversified economy. And almost on a daily basis we're seeing our nation's core environmental regulations attacked.*

*The Wyoming Outdoor Council rises to the demands of these times. I've never seen a group of people work harder or smarter, or dig deeper to respond to today's challenges. We are attending legislative meetings, chairing wildlife task forces, proposing policy solutions, meeting with government officials, writing technical comments, hiring scientists, convening coalitions, and providing important leadership for our state every day. This report reflects just the tip of the iceberg of our robust statewide program work, and your membership inspires us and keeps us strong. Thank you for your help.*

## We're Taking a Stand with Wyoming Public Lands Day

The **first-ever Wyoming Public Lands Day is September 28** — just around the corner! We hope you plan to get out and enjoy our vast public lands. (Go to [keepitpublicwyo.com](http://keepitpublicwyo.com) for a full list of events, celebrations, and volunteer opportunities.) This hard-fought win was possible thanks to the work of a broad coalition of partners dedicated to keeping public lands in public hands. Wyoming Public Lands Day is more than a celebration. As Gov. Gordon said in his proclamation earlier this month, these lands “are the shared birthright of every resident of Wyoming.” This holiday reaffirms our commitment as Wyomingites to oppose any efforts to privatize these lands and rob us of our outdoor legacy.

## Nuclear Waste Storage is Still a Bad Idea for Wyoming

In a surprise move this summer the Legislature decided to study moving the nation's high-level radioactive waste — the nuclear waste from commercial reactors — to Wyoming. Nuclear waste storage — and the likelihood that our state would become the *de facto* permanent high-



Image: Tim Lumley

level radioactive waste dump for the nation — threatens our public safety, our national image, our political certainty, and our future economic diversity. It's been studied and roundly rejected by a majority of our residents several times in the past. We quickly responded by researching and distributing a detailed fact sheet, coordinated with our partners, and mobilized our members to contact the “Spent Fuel Rods” subcommittee. Despite hearing from more than 100 people who oppose this bad idea, the subcommittee recommended that the Joint Minerals Committee consider draft legislation at their next meeting on November 4-5 to move this proposal forward. We will need your help at that time to defeat this terrible idea, so **please stay tuned for alerts!**

## Centering Science in Wildlife Migration Policy

This summer, we shared key policy expertise and a conservation vision with Gov. Gordon's Wildlife Migration Advisory Group as it worked to determine how best to safeguard our world-class big game migration corridors. The diverse group agreed that **these corridors are critical habitat and require enforceable protections** that maintain their function and connectivity. The group has asked the governor to develop an executive order modeled partly on Wyoming's approach to sage-grouse conservation. We hope this will be a strong tool to protect our migrating big game herds in the face of federal oil and gas development and other threats, and that it will put Wyoming in the driver's seat. We're also watchdogging a legislative effort that may interfere in the process. We'll continue to advocate that science-based, collaboratively developed recommendations are effectively implemented to keep Wyoming's iconic migratory big game populations viable.

## Environmental Quality Updates

### Holding the state accountable for clean water

The DEQ is still preparing its response to the hundreds of public comments regarding a disastrous proposal to dump up to 8.27 million gallons of oilfield wastewater per day and 2,161 tons of total dissolved solids per month into tributaries of Boysen Reservoir. The Outdoor Council contracted with four scientists to analyze the validity and impacts of this proposal and submitted the findings and our legal analysis to the DEQ. This provides us a good basis for any future steps challenging the proposal. We also submitted information showing that operations in the same Moneta Divide oil and gas field might already be in violation of state and federal water quality laws regarding these waterways — and we asked the DEQ to investigate. In August, the DEQ notified us it will investigate the allegations — an action the agency would not have taken without our prompting. **Stay tuned.**

### Clean air still a priority in Wyoming, despite federal rollbacks

Years of work with residents, industry, and the

state resulted in the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality implementing a statewide policy in 2018 to curb methane leaks from new oil and gas facilities. This action partially insulates us from recent federal rollbacks in regulating methane and continues to ensure cleaner air and more tax revenue for Wyoming. High ozone levels in the Upper Green River Basin this winter, however, reinforced the need for vigilance around inspections and the enforcement of our laws, especially as DEQ cited an underwhelming 67 percent compliance rate in the area. We're working with partners to advocate more inspections and improved regulation of oilfield equipment, wastewater ponds, and other methane sources in the Upper Green to curb the harmful health impacts of ozone.

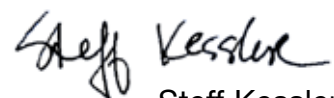
## Empowering the Conservation Community

Wyoming's conservation challenges are large, and we need a big tent of diverse interests to help us make a difference. The Outdoor Council believes in building citizen leadership at all levels, and this includes empowering our partner conservation and sportsman groups for greater effectiveness. This June, we contracted with Resource Media, a nationally renowned environmental communications firm, to come to Wyoming for two days of coaching on effective advocacy communications. We welcomed more than two dozen activists and staff from a range of groups, and they left with important tools and inspiration for working together for our wildlife and public lands.

### Stay connected with us!

Are you receiving all our updates and action alerts? **Make sure we have your email address!** Sign up at [wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](http://wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org).

Thank you for making all our hard work possible in 2019!



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