



Wyoming Sierran

Newsletter of the Wyoming
Chapter of the Sierra Club

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Spring 2005

WILDLIFE TRUST FUND SIGNED INTO LAW

By Vickie Goodwin

Against the backdrop of the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, Governor Dave Freudenthal signed groundbreaking legislation to set up a wildlife trust fund for the State of Wyoming. Senator Bruce Burns of Sheridan, Senator Charles Scott of Casper, Senator John Schiffer of Kaycee and Tom Strock of Casper joined him in the ceremony.

Recognizing the twenty odd years it took to bring this legislation to its final stage, former State Senator and US Ambassador Tom Strock said, "It was a good idea 25 years ago. It's a marvelous idea now and one whose time has come." "It was the push from the people of Wyoming," said Governor Freudenthal, that made the trust fund finally happen.

Wyoming people attended interim committee hearings around the state and then drove to Cheyenne to speak first at the Senate and then the House Travel Committee hearings. Several legislators confirmed that they had received more email, letters and phone calls about this bill than any other.

Formally titled the Wildlife and Natural Resource Funding Act, the law sets up a \$15,000,000 trust fund. Funds can be added by legislature appropriation to increase the trust to a maximum of \$200,000,000. Interest income from the trust will be used to provide grants to nonprofit and governmental entities, including conservation districts, schools, 4-H clubs and Game & Fish. Grants from the income account will be managed by a nine-member board, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Select Committee of House and Senate members will oversee the board and reports will be filed annually to the Select Committee, the Governor and the Legislature. Grants for any projects costing over \$200,000 total must have legislative approval.

Originally the bill had a \$200,000 per year cap on the amount of money the board could give in grants. Using his line item veto power, Governor Freudenthal struck that portion of the legislation calling it "unduly restrictive".

Of course, now the real work begins. The board will be promulgating rules and regulations to implement the new law and Sierra Club members need to be there providing input to insure those policies reflect the intent of the legislation.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

2005 LEGISLATURE REVIEW

By Vickie Goodwin

The General Session of 58th Wyoming Legislature is over. In evaluating the session, it is important to remember there were 349 bills and 13 resolutions submitted in the House and 175 bills and 9 resolutions submitted in the Senate. Legislators had 40 days to consider a whole range of issues including medical review panels, medical malpractice, worker safety, government ethics, agriculture, water, senior citizens, children, drugs, education, veterinarians, sexual assault, drivers' licenses, open containers and conservation and wildlife issues, including the mythical jackalope. They do this work without benefit of staff and in a short period of time. Most legislators do their best to learn as much as possible about each issue, but they must rely on each other and the lobbyists to educate them.

Overall, the 2005 session was a good session for Sierra Club issues. Many of the bills we supported were killed either in committee or on the floor, but the most important bill, the Wildlife Trust Fund, did pass. (See accompanying story) On the other hand, very few of the bills we considered bad passed and those that did were amended to fix the parts we were most concerned about.

Sierra Club got a lot help from Wyoming Conservation Voters, the Wyoming AFL-CIO, and members groups of the Equality State Policy Center. Thanks also to the Wilderness Society and Earth Justice.

Listed below are the bills we focused on and the final outcome:

GOOD BILLS:

- **HB 71** – Community landfill remediation, sponsored by the Joint Minerals Committee. A lot of work went into putting this bill together and Michelle Barlow of the Wyoming Outdoor Council was active in working out any kinks. The bill provided for regional and community landfill remediation; inspections and corrective actions; created corrective action accounts; provided a reduction in the amount of solid waste in the state and help local governments plan for future landfill siting.
This bill was pulled before it even made it to Committee. Evidently there were problems that bothered state officials.
- **HB 88** – Watercraft-authorized activity, sponsored by Rep. Gilmore – this bill would have allowed fishermen to anchor the boat in the middle of the stream and fish legally. It was referred to the House Travel Committee.
This bill was voted down in the committee 4-5.
- **HB 94** – Environmental Health Study, sponsored by Joint Labor, Health and Social Services Interim Committee. HB 94 would direct the Department of Health to study the jurisdiction of all environmental health programs and to determine which developing environmental health threats are currently not assigned to an agency. *HB 94 had a rocky road in the house. The bill failed Third Reading and Final Passage 29-28. The Wyoming Constitution requires that a bill pass by a majority of those elected to the body, so 31 affirmative votes were needed for passage. A motion for reconsideration was made and the bill was voted on again the following day. It passed 34-25 with 1 excused. The bill moved smoothly through the Senate.*
- **HB 116** – Fuel-efficient vehicle registration, sponsored by Reps. Berger, Martin, Warren, White & Zwonitzer. This bill would have provided for a reduction of registration fees for fuel-efficient vehicles.
Though HB 116 passed the House Transportation Committee 8-1, it was never heard on General File in the House.
- **HB 157** – Renewable energy commission, sponsored by Rep. Warren. This bill would have created a commission to study renewable energy in Wyoming and ways to better use our renewable resources. When heard in the House Minerals Committee, there were close to 30 people there to speak in favor of the bill, including the Department of Environmental Quality and Pacific Power. As we listened it became clear that the industry guys were going for payback because Governor Freudenthal dismantled the energy commission shortly after he took office. Sen. Hawks from Casper and Rep. Miller from Riverton, both well connected to mining and oil and gas industries and the lobbyist from the Wyoming Mining Association told the committee that there was at least 50-60 years of fossil fuel resources left in the state. Miller told committee members that the future is in nuclear power and talked of innovations in China.
The bill failed the committee vote 8-1.
- **HB 158** – Radioactive materials transportation, sponsored by Rep. Gilmore, Meuli, Robinson & Wasserburger and Sen. Geis and Ross referred to House Transportation Committee. The purpose of this bill was to tighten up the restrictions and fines for transportation of radioactive materials.
The bill was never heard in committee.

- **SF 28** - Water rights-penalties, sponsored by Sen. Geis, added specific penalties for the growing number of unpermitted dams and reservoirs being built in areas of coal bed methane drilling.

After a conference with the State Engineer, the Petroleum Association of Wyoming, Wyoming Stock Growers, Farm Bureau, and conservation groups to work out any kinks in the bill, it passed through both Houses and has been signed into law.

- **SF 60** – Split Estate, sponsored by Joint Judiciary Committee, deals with the conflict between surface landowners and subsurface mineral owners. The bill gives landowners who do not own the mineral rights under their land some rights over oil and gas drilling activity on their property. Oil and gas companies must give 60 days advance notice to landowners before beginning development. Companies and landowners must attempt to reach a surface use agreement. The law now requires payments to the surface owner for damages and disruption, and specified bonding from the companies if a surface use agreement is not reached.

SF 60 passed both houses and was signed into law. The compromises fashioned by the interim committee were very fragile and committee members were able to convince legislators not to amend the bill in any significant way.

- **SF 105** – Outdoor lighting, sponsored by Sen. Case. We've seen this bill several times before. It would give cities and counties authority to control outdoor lighting to decrease light pollution.

This bill failed on a 1-3 vote in the Senate Agriculture Committee.

- **SF 106** – Temporary Instream Flow & **SF 107** – Instream Flow Reform, both sponsored by Sen. Case, both were killed in the Senate Agriculture Committee.



BAD BILLS:

- **HB 121** – Grizzly Bear license fees, sponsored by Rep. Childers & Sen. Burns – referred to Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources. This law lowers the resident grizzly bear license from \$1,750 to \$500 and the Non resident grizzly bear license from \$17,500 to \$5,000.

Passed both the House & Senate and signed into law.

- **HB 174** – Safe Drinking water act, sponsored by Zwonitzer, Anderson, R., Buchanan, Hageman, Peterson, Samuelson & Sen. Anderson, J., Geis – referred to House Labor, Health and Social Services Committee. This bill is designed to give Wyoming primacy over our drinking water. Those sponsoring the bill feel that Wyoming's Department of Environmental Quality might be easier to work with than the Environmental Protection Agency.

When the bill was heard in committee, Rep. Zwonitzer did a good job of presenting the bill but virtually no one else spoke in favor of the bill. DEQ stated it would need at least \$2.2 million to administer the bill. No one felt anything was broken. Committee members voted against the bill.

- **HB 203** – Grizzly bear relocation notice, sponsored by Rep. Davison, Barnard, Childers, Gingery, Hageman, Peterson, Quarberg, Zwonitzer & Sen. Cooper, Geis referred to The House Travel Committee. The bill provided for notification to local officials when relocating a grizzly bear in a county. Amendments weakened the bill considerably and made it a less problematic bill. *The amended bill passed both houses and was signed into law.*

- **Senate File 37** – Game and Fish Department funding, sponsored by the Joint Travel Committee would have made the G&F less dependent on funding from hunting licenses. This bill caused a lot of mixed feelings. Over the years, the legislature has required more from the department, without allowing any funds to cover the extra work. The Game & Fish struggles to cover its costs without any legislative funding for general operations. But legislative funding means legislative oversight and more political interference. *The bill was amended, removing much of the funding, in the House. After passing through the Senate Travel Committee, the bill died on general file in the Senate.*

REALLY BAD BILLS:

- **HB 11** – State Standards for federal resource management, sponsored by Joint Agriculture Committee. This bill would have directed the Governor to draft and enact plans and policies governing how the State would participate in federal agency planning and management actions, then laid out a number of specific principles, positions and standards to be followed in those plans. It would have dictated the actions taken by the Governor and by State agencies and officials, interfering with their ability to actively participate in federal management and planning decision and to take into account the desires of the citizens of Wyoming. The Wilderness Society alerted us to this bill and helped prepare fact sheets to educate the legislature. Information was given to the governor's office.
- **HB 240** – Establishment of Public Roads, sponsored by Reps. Olsen & Luthi and Sen. Cooper. Basically, an angry rancher and the Wyoming Farm Bureau pushed the Wyoming legislature to change a 75-year-old law that had required the county commissioners in each county to have roads marked and mapped out by 1924. A single sentence was suggested in an exception that would have opened up all roads on any land that had been federal before 1976. Ted Zukoski of Earth Justice was a great help in focusing arguments against this bill. Though Sierra Club and Wyoming Conservation Voters presented their concerns and Wyoming Conservation Voters suggested several amendments that might make the bill less problematic, the bill slide through the House Agriculture Committee and the Senate Transportation Committee. On 3rd reading, Sen. Burns asked the question that had us most concerned. "How does this bill not open up every road on public land, regardless of county commission approval?"

HB 11 was transformed to House Joint Resolution 9. Rep. Hageman, Chair of the House Agriculture Committee stated that the governor's office was not comfortable with the bill so Hageman brought the bill back as a joint resolution making it more of a suggestion to the governor.

HJ9 made it through the House and the Senate Agriculture Committee, but died on Senate General File.

- **HB 77** – Game and fish-hunting near incorporated municipalities, sponsored by Rep. Bagby – this bill was a reaction to incidents in Rawlins and Jackson. Many communities have ordinances that prohibit hunting in the city limits and this legislation is not really needed.

Rep. Bagby explained the bill the House Travel Committee, saying that he would like to have the bill pulled and placed on interim study. The bill was not reported out of committee.

The bill died on 3rd reading in the Senate on a 15-15 vote.

- **SF 128** – Entering private property while hunting or fishing-2, (corner jumping) sponsored by Sen. Geis was referred to the Senate Travel Committee. Wyoming Chapter Sierra Club chairman Todd Herreid spoke eloquently against the bill.

Though the bill was moved by Sen. Cooper, it failed to receive 2nd in the committee.



For more information on Wyoming's legislature, visit The Equality State Policy Center's website at www.equalitystate.org. There you will find daily reports on the happenings at the Capitol, in-depth reports on issues impacting Wyoming citizens and the Wyoming LAP* Book - a publication which provides the general public with easily accessible information on campaign contributions to state legislatures and votes that state legislature cast on the important issues.

Bighorn Forest Plan May Recommend Wilderness

By Kirk Koepsel

The Forest Service has been very public with comments that the agency intends to recommend a wilderness area for the Bighorns in its Forest Plan Revision. The Forest Supervisor stated that he was considering recommending Rock Creek in the southeast portion of the area.

The Bighorns currently only have one wilderness area, Cloud Peak. This wilderness includes the high peaks section of the Bighorns. Cloud Peak itself rises to an elevation of 13,167 feet leaving only the Wind River Range and the Tetons with higher mountains in Wyoming. Although Cloud Peak is a spectacular area with beautiful glacier carved valleys and craggy high peaks, it contains little lower elevation forested lands. Cloud Peak is the classic rock and ice wilderness area that exists in many parts of the West.

Rock Creek would be an addition to the existing Cloud Peak Wilderness, but what a great addition it would be. With Rock Creek added, one would be able to hike all the way from the Great Plains to the top of Cloud Peak without ever encountering a road or structure. Rock Creek would add a lot of low elevation forest land to Cloud Peak. Rock Creek contains forests of ponderosa pines, lodge pole pine and Engelmann spruce. The area also has a number of small meadows and wetlands. Rock Creek is a spectacular area which arises abruptly from the great plains with canyons and rock outcroppings. The Forest Service is recommending a quality wilderness addition.

Most disturbing of the decision, however, are the great areas that the Forest Service is not recommending. Conservationists were pushing for four other additions; Little Bighorn Canyon, Devil's Canyon, Walker Prairie and Medicine Lodge Canyon. All of these areas are also lower elevation terrain like Rock Creek, but include a number of unique features. Little Bighorn Canyon is known for containing the Tongue and Little Bighorn River Canyons, the two largest waterways on the Forest. Devil's Canyon contains some of the highest waterfalls on the Forest including the famous Bucking Mule Falls. Walker Prairie includes vast acres of mountain grasslands. Finally the Medicine Lodge Canyon area is a beautiful canyon that descends into the Bighorn Basin which contains significant rock art in its lower reaches. The Bureau of Land Management has already recommended the portion of Medicine Lodge Canyon it manages for wilderness, but thus far the Forest Service has failed to follow suit with its adjoining lands.

Although the Forest Service made some progress after recommending no new wilderness in its draft plan, the agency still has a long way to go before it includes the most deserving areas on the Forest with this designation. Before the final plan comes out, the Sierra Club is hopeful that additional areas will also be recommended for wilderness.



Note to Introduce New Teton Group EXCOM

As your newly elected Chair of our Sierra Club Teton Group, I wanted to let you know we've got an exciting new Executive Committee and some wonderful and important things to work on and do – and we need you and your ideas and help to make this all happen. Please get in touch with me or any of us on the EXCOM or our excellent new staff member, Kate Drexler, if you'd like to help and share ideas for what we'll be doing in the next year!!

Here's your new EXCOM:

Our Vice Chair, **John Spahr**, is one of the most dedicated and experienced people in the Wyoming conservation movement. John has served in the Teton Group and the Wyoming Chapter EXCOMs, as Treasurer, Chair, Vice Chair, Fundraising Chair, and Legal Chair, and has been active in a number of other conservation groups as well. For our Group, for starters, John wants to lead an effort to protect roadless areas, particularly in the Bridger-Teton, building on work the Group did with the Forest Service a couple of years ago to map roadless areas and identify ones that particularly deserve protection.

Our new Secretary/Outings Chair, **Joyce Icardo**, moved here more recently and has much experience with the Sierra Club in Bakersfield, California, and in the Reno/Tahoe Area, particularly with outings. In the Sierras, she co-lead outings and organized "conditioning hikes" to draw in more people so they could join in more strenuous outings. Here she's worked at the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery and Educational Center in Yellowstone and as Administrative Assistant to the Director and has been active on the snowmobile front. She's already organizing new outings for our Group and would love to hear your ideas.

Our new Treasurer, **Beverly Charette**, lives on the Western side of the Tetons and wants to help extend the Club's work in that part of our area. It's really promising to have a new member of the EXCOM from the Western side. Beverly is a dedicated conservationist and will pitch in on the whole range of our work, not just in her own area or as Treasurer, and she's hit the ground running already.

Our Conservation Chair, **Kristen Painter**, has lived in Jackson for eight years and been an environmental activist for fifteen. She's eager to help build stronger cooperation in the community to address the whole issue of how development is affecting wilderness, wildlife, and the way of life we cherish here. She will organize specific efforts ranging from trail work to helping enforce existing laws and regulations and will be in touch!!

Our Environmental Education Chair – a new position for our group – is **Erin Himmel**, who works at Grand Teton National Park with the outreach education program as part of her thesis project for a Master's Degree in Environmental Education. She's served in the Park for two summers and will this summer again as a ranger naturalist. Among other things, for our Group Erin will be leading outings and doing broader "outreach" with the community drawing on her naturalist experience.

As for me, I'm really looking forward to working with all of you to strengthen our Group and build a much broader, stronger constituency here and more widely to support conservation issues – in particular, to protect our wilderness and wildlife that are increasingly at risk these days. I served as Chair of the Group two years ago and as Teton Group representative to the Wyoming Chapter and am a member of the Sierra Club's Global Population and Environment Committee. My husband and I moved here three years ago after spending vacations here while living and working in Washington D.C. I'm an economist and worked at USAID, the World Bank, and the US Treasury on international public policy and programs in women's issues, population, health, and education. I can't wait to join forces with you all to help protect what we have here and to enjoy our wilderness and wildlife.

Please get in touch with any or all of us – and we'll be in touch with you soon again too on next meetings to develop our plans for our Group. Kate Drexler's phone number at our local Sierra Club–Teton Group's office is 307-733-4557. Her email is kate.drexler@sierraclub.org. My contact information is given below. Many thanks.

Barbara Herz
PO Box 211
Moose WY 83012
Tel: 307-732-0987
Email: cherzbherz@aol.com

The Sierra Club
invites you to

Conserving Wild Places in the Conservative West

a conference on Public Lands Protection

Snow King Lodge
Jackson, WY
May 13-15, 2005

Conference Overview

Preserving our public lands in the West has taken a backseat to big business. Join us to find out how the Sierra Club is leading a team from the experts the nuts and bolts on how to conduct a successful wilderness campaign. Some of the topics that will be covered include how to move your conservative delegation, framing your issues, getting your message out, developing coalitions with hunters and anglers, grassroots organizing and many more.

Presenters

Presenters include organizers from throughout the West who have played a significant role in public lands protection legislation. They include:

- Bart Koehler** - Director of the Wilderness Society Wilderness Section
- Heather Morijah** - Associate Regional Director for the West River Region of the Sierra Club
- Jeff Widen** - Public Lands Director for Colorado Environmental Coalition
- John Wallis** - Director of Nevada Wilderness Project
- Rick Johnson** - Director of Idaho Conservation League
- Steve Capra** - Director of New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
- Eric Antebi** - National Press Secretary for the Sierra Club

Tony Dean will deliver the keynote address during the Saturday evening banquet. Tony is host and executive producer of *Tony Dean Outdoors*, an outdoor television series that airs across the upper Midwest. He also produces a daily radio show, *Dakota Backroads*. His shows have won over 160 regional and national programming awards. He's a well-known outdoor writer whose articles have been published in a variety of magazines. Tony is a member of the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame and has received numerous conservation awards at the state, regional, and national level. He also maintains an outdoor website www.tonydean.com, which receives more than 50,000 regular visitors each month.



The conference will begin Friday evening with registration and a reception for participants. Saturday will include morning sessions, with field trips in the afternoon, followed by dinner with keynote speaker, Tony Dean. Sunday sessions will go until noon. An optional outing will be available for those who would like to stay for the afternoon.

CONFERENCE FEE: (Includes all daily activities, Friday night reception, 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches and key note speaker banquet. Lodging not included)

- On or before 4/20/05:.....\$95
- After 4/20/05:.....\$115

For more information call the Sierra Club Northern Plains Regional Office at 307-672-0425, or view the agenda online at: www.sierraclub.org/wy and click on Wyoming Chapter

Heli-Skiing in the Palisades

Over the past few weeks, three back-country skiers in Teton County have been rescued by helicopter. The local reports praise the helicopter rescues and how important it is for Teton County to have the availability of a helicopter for these types of rescue operations. It is not stated, but implied that by supporting heli-skiing and its local company, Teton County will have a helicopter available even if the Forest Service's license operator is unable to comply because the helicopter is being used elsewhere. This was the case in the three rescues this month.

What is also implied is that we, as citizens of Northwest Wyoming should support heli-skiing in the Palisades Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and the request by the private company, High Mountain Heli-skiing to increase its permit of skier user days to 1,500. This is a doubling of the user days from the 5-year permit which expired in 2001. The Bridger/Teton National Forest's preferred alternative called for 1000 user days. The conservation community, including the Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club, appealed the ruling by the Bridger-Teton National Forest based on old scientific data that did not reflect the present wildlife conditions in the Palisades WSA. The Forest Service has withdrawn the request pending further review. We applaud the actions of the Forest Service.

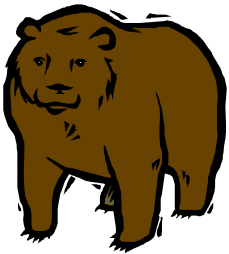
It is not the Sierra Club's position to oppose heli-skiing, and we do recognize and support a private company to provide heli-skiing and search and rescue support. However, we are opposed to increasing the skier user days in the Palisades WSA. The Palisades earned its WSA status in 1984, which granted the area protection while grandfathering in certain activities such as heli-skiing at the 1984 levels. The Forest Service has ignored protection guaranteed by its WSA status concerning heli-skiing. The agency has allowed increased activity as heli-skiing became more popular and from High Mountain Heli-skiing's requests. As a wilderness study area, no motorized travel is allowed and the area is to be managed as wilderness until the United States Congress makes the wilderness designation permanent or not. But until that designation is made or not, the Palisades WSA should be maintained as wilderness. By allowing increase usage, the Forest Service is not following the rules of protecting a WSA. This is the reason that the Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club opposes heli-skiing in the Palisades WSA. There are many areas in the Bridger/Teton National Forest outside of Wilderness areas and wilderness study areas that are able to support heli-skiing. These areas may not be as pristine or economically rewarding as heli-skiing in the Palisades has been, but the area must be protected as a WSA until designation. We urge the Forest Service to revert the permitted user days back to the 1984 level of 468 user days and therefore protect the Palisades WSA.

To comment on this issue, please contact the Bridger/Teton National Forest at: (307) 739 -5500 or r4_b-t_info@fs.fed.us

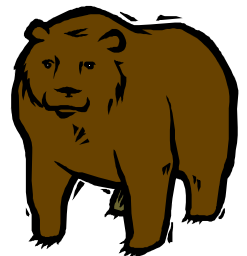
or write to : Bridger/Teton National Forest

P.O. Box 1888

Jackson, WY 83001



North Platte Group Update



The North Platte Group of the Sierra Club, which represents the Casper area, held an educational program on grizzly bears in March. The program was well received and helped provide group members with information for the upcoming Game and Fish Commission meeting on bears in late April. The Group is planning a program on xeriscaping in May and will host an outing to Martin's Cove in July (see outings Schedule). The Group re-elected in all its existing officers to another term for the upcoming year.



Sierra Club 2005 Outings

Each summer and fall, when the warm weather returns to Wyoming, members of the Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club hit the mountain and desert trails to explore the wild places we all love and cherish.

Join staff and fellow Sierra Club members on an adventure into one of Wyoming's wild places. Wyoming's wild lands have so much to offer - solace, beauty, grandeur and awe - and a little fun thrown in for good measure is always good for the soul.

While all trips are free of charge, space is limited, and registration is required. If you are interested in an outing, please contact Kate Drexler in our Jackson office at 307-733-4557 or kate.drexler@sierraclub.org or Kirk Koepsel in the Sheridan office at 307-672-0425 or kirk.koepsel@sierraclub.org

June 11th and 12th - Red Desert: Honeycombs co-sponsored by the Friends of the Red Desert Educational Hike and Overnight or day trip.

The Honeycombs are scenic badlands located in the heart of the Red Desert. In addition to the vast herds of wildlife seen around the area, the multicolored badlands are a real visual treat. Contact Kate Drexler at 307-733-4557 or kate.drexler@sierraclub.org

July 16th - Bridger-Teton National Forest: Hike through the Palisades.

One of the most beautiful mountain ranges in the state, the Palisades is truly a place worth visiting. Its virgin forests, alpine lakes and stunning views make this area very special. However, increased levels of heli-skiing in the winter now threaten the wilderness integrity of this great place. Contact Kate Drexler at 307-733-4557 or kate.drexler@sierraclub.org

July 23rd - A trip along the Sweetwater River to Martin's Cove.

Learn about the tragic events surrounding Martin Handcart Company's migration west and the heroic rescue efforts that took place to save them. Also, enjoy the scenery of the Sweetwater Rocks country. Contact Kirk Koepsel (307) 672-0425 or kirk.koepsel@sierraclub.org

August 6th - Red Desert: Steamboat and Sands co-sponsored by the Friends of the Red Desert.

Explore the largest active inland sand dunes complex in North America and see the home of Wyoming's only desert elk herd. Steamboat Mountain and the Killpecker Sand Dunes are two of the most interesting features of the Red Desert. Contact Kate Drexler at 307-733-4557 or Kate Drexler at 307-733-4557 or kate.drexler@sierraclub.org

September 17th - Big Horn: Rock Creek Hike.

Rock Creek is a Forest Service recommended addition to the Cloud Peak Wilderness which provides a natural corridor to allow people to travel from the Great Plain to over 13,000 ft, without ever crossing a road. Rock Creek is known for its interesting rock formations, old growth forests and open meadows. Contact Kirk Koepsel at 307-672-0425 or kirk.koepsel@sierraclub.org

It's time once again to elect new ExCom members. Below are the candidate's names and their statements. Please place your votes on the included ballot.

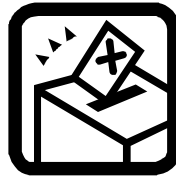
YOUR VOTE NEEDED BY MAY 1, 2005

We would like to thank all the nominees for volunteering their time and effort to the Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club and recognize the good work of the Ex-Com members, both past and present.

Wyoming Executive Committee Candidate Statements

JOHN SPAHR - JACKSON

John has been a member of the Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club since 1994. During that time he has served on the Teton Group and Wyoming Chapter ExComs, holding position of Treasurer, Chair, Vice Chair, Fundraising Chair, and Legal Chair. He has been a member of The Yellowstone Ecosystem Task Force, The Northern Rockies Task Force and a delegate to the Council of Club Leaders. His conservation interests are protecting habitat, clear skies, and clean water through maintaining wilderness and roadless areas on our National Forest and BLM lands. "We are fortunate to live in Wyoming with its open spaces and wild places, and maintaining them for ourselves and future generations is why I am running for the Wyoming Chapter ExCom."



BOB YOUNG - LARAMIE

Bob is the Director of Workforce Services in Laramie Wyoming. He has been a member of the Sierra Club in Wisconsin and Colorado, and has enjoyed fishing, hunting, camping, skiing and backpacking in the Wyoming area for over 30 years. Bob has raised 2 children to have the same respect for nature and the environment that he does, and they all find ways to be outdoors no matter what the season.

MARY BYRNES - LARAMIE

Mary has lived in Wyoming since 1975 and over the course of these years she has been very fortunate to adventure into the wilder spots of this beautiful State and region. Mary is very committed to assisting the Sierra Club efforts in protecting the environment - - compelled and greatly inspired by innocent eyes of her young daughters and the sights of humanity and the environment witnessed while living in Jamaica and Africa. Mary asks for your kind support.



BARBARA HERZ - MOOSE

Barbara a member of the Sierra Club for many years, chairs the Sierra Club-Teton Group. She's focused on helping limit drilling in the BT and the Upper Green and on other campaigns to protect Wyoming's wilderness. She's also a member of the Sierra Club's Global Population and Environment Committee and is active politically. She lived in DC for 30 years where she worked on international population, health, and education and women's opportunities at USAID and the World Bank. (She started the Bank's Women in Development Division.) She and her husband bought a cabin in Wyoming in 1988 and moved to Jackson full time almost three years ago. Barbara would like to focus on expanding the constituency for conservation by reaching out to others at the local, state, and national level and so increasing our clout.

TRAVIS MURPHY - LARAMIE

Travis has been an environmental and social justice activist for over 14 years. Currently, he works as the Community Organizer for Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, a Wyoming based non-profit group dedicated to protecting wild lands and wildlife. Additionally, Travis currently serves as the Medicine Bow Group's representative to the Wyoming Executive Committee. In these capacities, he has been able to gain an in-depth understanding of conservation issues in Wyoming while building relationships with conservation groups and advocates from around the state and region.

AMBER ASH - LARAMIE

Amber is a 21 year old Political Science major at the University of Wyoming and a Certified Nurse Assistant at United Medical Center. Although Amber is young, it is also her greatest asset to the organization. She is an energetic, hard-working individual who hasn't been dissuaded by failure. She strongly believes that where there is a will, there is a way. Failure to succeed the first time opens new paths which may be more akin to our needs than the first. If each and every one of us believes that we can make a change, we will. As a member of the executive committee, Amber would recommend that Wyoming embark on an intensive movement in the public school system. This movement would work with individual schools to educate students on environmental issues. Children are extremely impressionable at this age. By intervening early, we can greatly impact the future. Furthermore, we need to balance our needs with ranchers and other employers who will be greatly affected by movements within the Sierra Club. If we alienate the very people who can break or make our movement, then it shall surely fail. However, if we work closely with the people who are most likely to be affected, our success will be multiplied tenfold

Help Us Conserve The Red Desert

By Todd Herreid and Kate Drexler

What do Native Americans, Ranchers, Hunters, Anglers, Historians, Outdoor Lovers, Archeologists, and Off Road Vehicle Users all have in common? They all have a lot invested in the preservation of Wyoming's Red Desert. As the oil and gas industry gets the green light from the Bush Administration to drill without boundaries in Red Desert country, citizens from all of these backgrounds have come together on common ground seeking protection of certain areas.

Known as the Heart of the Wild West, the Red Desert is located in Southern Wyoming and stretches out over 6 million acres. It is a region of unique and unparalleled beauty covered with towering buttes, endless sand dunes, jagged badlands, and infinite open space. Moreover, this region has deep cultural and environmental significance making it an invaluable place for past, present, and future generations.

Archeological evidence suggests a rich history in this parcel of land. Although only 11% of the area has been surveyed, thousands of ancient fossils have already been uncovered including giant ground sloths, camels, and woolly rhinoceroses indicating a vivacious, prehistoric ecosystem. Tortoise shells and shark teeth discoveries reveal this may have once been an primeval ocean area. Petroglyphs, pictographs, tipirings, and other discoveries give light that humans have inhabited the area for over 10,000 years.

For hundreds of years and still today, The Shoshone and Ute Tribes worship at numerous sacred Native American sites scattered throughout the land. Now, in the face of hasty oil and gas development, tribes are calling for protection and further study of this culturally significant region.

In addition to this being a historical and cultural hub for our state and country, the Red Desert is alive with a healthy and abundant network of wildlife. It provides habitat for over 350 species, including bobcat, cougar, black bear, badger, sage grouse, bald eagle, and wild horses, to name a few. It is the southern anchor of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, providing crucial winter range for the largest migratory game herd, over 50,000 pronghorn antelope, in the lower 48 states.

The natural vitality draws all walks of life to the region during the warmer months. In the fall, hunters trek through the desert through six foot stand of sage, aspen, and other rich vegetation in search of elk, pronghorn, and deer. The Sweetwater and Big Sandy Rivers bestow anglers with some of the finest fishing experiences in the West. Hikers, campers, and ATV users wander through the superb scenic landscape enjoying the breathtaking views and plentiful wildlife.

The use of this land does not stop here. Countless parcels of Red Desert Country provide range for one of Wyoming's most successful industries: ranching. The open space and grassy valleys allow cattle grazing to be plentiful and ranchers to be prosperous.

It is evident that this land is special to many people. The decisions made today concerning oil and natural gas development on this public piece of land will affect the lives of many Wyoming citizens.

The public has already voiced their opinion on how to proceed. In 2003 more than 60,000 comments were submitted to the Bureau of Land Management, 93 % of those asking that portions of the Red Desert be permanently protected. Despite public input on how public land should be managed, the BLM is proposing a development plan that would irrevocably alter this precious place. With 20,000 proposed oil and gas wells the open space is threatened to be lined with a web of roads, pipelines, power lines, and drill stations. For just a two month supply of natural gas and 32 minute supply of oil for our country ancient historic artifacts, cultural places of worship, wildlife, and essential grazing grounds will be lost forever.

There is a better way. The Sierra Club is working on behalf of the public to permanently designate portions of the Northern Red Desert National Conservation Areas making them off limits to oil and gas drilling.

The Sierra Club is also supporting the Western Heritage Alternative for the Great Divide Basin/Rawlins Resource Management Plan. The current "Conservation Alternative" that is being promoted by the BLM is a sham that will allow for wholesale industrialization of this wild and remote area of Wyoming. Your voice needs to be heard. Public comments to the BLM closed on March 17th, however, phone calls and letters to Governor Freudenthal and our Congressional Delegation in support of the Western Heritage Alternative are important. To learn more about this important Red Desert issue check out the website www.reddesert.org.

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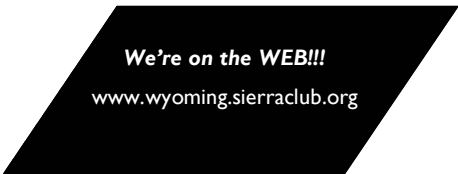
**Newsletter of the Wyoming
Chapter of the Sierra Club**

Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club
247 Coffeen Avenue
Sheridan, WY 82801

Phone: (307)672-0425

Fax: (307)674-6187

Email: wychaptersc@vcn.com



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