

## Press Release:

### Racers Petition Governor Mead for Oil & Gas Lease Deferrals in Migration Corridor

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#### Contact:

Shaleas Harrison  
Wyoming Wilderness Association  
[shaleas@wildwyo.org](mailto:shaleas@wildwyo.org)  
307.272.7136

Kristen Gunther  
Wyoming Outdoor Council  
[kristen@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](mailto:kristen@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org)  
307.332.7031



“These days it’s not enough to simply enjoy public lands, you have to fight for them. And this race makes you do that,” Melissa Bartley said after completing a 5K run in Wyoming’s Red Desert.

She was among 74 runners who took part in the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Run the Red on June 2, an event launched to encourage people to get to know and appreciate this critical landscape. The race is organized by the Wyoming Wilderness Association, Wyoming Outdoor Council, and the National Outdoor Leadership School. This year, racers traveled from 10 different states to this remote corner in southwest Wyoming to compete, and also to experience one of Wyoming’s treasured landscapes: the Red Desert.

The routes offered stunning views of a landscape with bright green greasewood, painted badlands, and shifting sand dunes. Runners circled the iconic Boars Tusk and enjoyed views of the distant Wind River Range. **The Red Desert includes 13 critical Wilderness Study Areas, the longest ungulate migration corridor, and the largest desert elk herd in North America.**

Yet the Red Desert is in grave danger. The Bureau of Land Management is updating its Resource Management Plan for the region to determine how multiple activities — including

energy development — are balanced with conservation in the Red Desert. Some activities proposed for the new management plan could limit future public access and decimate wildlife that depend upon these habitats. In fact, **the BLM is currently slated to offer oil and gas lease parcels inside the treasured Red Desert to Hoback mule deer migration corridor.**

“Protecting public lands requires the help of a lot of people,” said WWA organizer Shaleas Harrison. “We need to ensure that the public understands what’s at risk and speaks up to support conserving some of the wild areas currently threatened. One way they can do this is by telling the BLM what they want to see protected in the management plan.”

This year, Run the Red participants were offered the opportunity to write postcards to Governor Matt Mead requesting that he petition the Department of Interior to defer oil and gas leasing in the mule deer migration corridor. Kristen Gunther, Wyoming Outdoor Council conservation advocate, spoke to racers about the current threats.

“The Red Desert to Hoback mule deer migration is a unique feature of this landscape,” she said. “If oil and gas operators are allowed to drill inside the narrow corridor that these animals depend upon for survival, our ability to maintain healthy mule deer numbers in Wyoming will be severely threatened.”

Dozens of postcards were collected, and will be forwarded to the governor and other state elected officials.

“We thank the runners, our sponsors, and the BLM for making this race possible,” said John Burrows, environmental stewardship coordinator for NOLS. “The Red Desert is an important classroom for our school that is full of ecological and historical significance. We hope this race helps the public see the value of keeping this place wild.”

For more information about how you can help advocate for meaningful protections in the Red Desert, **visit [runthereddesert.com](http://runthereddesert.com).**

#### **Run the Red 2018, race results:**

Scott Pies, from Rock Springs, came in first place for the 50K with a time of 4 hours and 2 seconds. Erik Aanerud, also from Rock Springs, came in 1st place for the 23k with a time of 1 hour and 55 seconds, and John Raymond, from Farson, came in 1st for the 5K with a time of 26 minutes and 29 seconds. *(For complete results, visit [ultrasignup.com](http://ultrasignup.com) and search “Run the Red.”)*