WYOMING WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION
WORKING TO PROTECT WYOMING'S PUBLIC WILD LANDS

The Round-Up

Summer/Fall 2016

State, National Legislation Continues to Threaten Public Wild Lands

Threats to public lands that belong to all Americans continue to arise on multiple fronts.

In the U.S. Congress, bills regularly crop up that propose a range of alarming changes to management of our public lands, most commonly transfer of federal public lands to state control, which the Wyoming Wilderness Association believes could lead to disastrous consequences.

In the Wyoming legislature earlier this year, two bills were proposed that alarmed advocates for wild public lands. One bill sought to open up closed trails and roads, and another bill sought to transfer federal public lands to state control and sell them off to the highest bidder. Thankfully both bills failed introduction due to a large outcry from our conservation partners and members!

However, a new legislative session is upon us. With the downturn in the energy industry and thus Wyoming's economy, it will become increasingly tempting for our legislators to turn to public lands as a way to fill the coffers. We feel this is a short-term solution that will have devastating long-term implications.

After all, Wyoming's residents and visitors cherish the state in great part for its natural splendor. Can you imagine your Wyoming without access to that favorite hunting spot, fishing hole, backpacking trail, or scenic landscape that restores peace in your life?

The Wyoming Wilderness Association is monitoring these threats closely and working hard to ensure Wyoming's public lands stay in public hands — for locals and visitors, alike. We have also teamed up with more than 30 other conservation organizations in the state to build a unified front and make it very clear that people around the state and nation don't want to see our wild lands become a bargaining chip for limited economic gain.

Wyoming's Red Desert | Photo courtesy EcoFlight

What You Can Do to Keep Public Lands in Your Hands

The voice of the people still holds sway in Wyoming — we just need to speak up! Here are a few things YOU can do to protect our wild lands:

- **Attend the Rally for Public Lands** on Saturday, November 5 in Casper with hundreds of wild lands supporters and over 20 conservation organizations!
- **Contact state senators and representatives** and voice your opposition to any public land transfer bills.
- **Get out the vote!** Refuse to vote for officials who are willing to transfer lands. Make sure you tell them why they are not getting your vote.
- **Make some noise on Social Media!** Share photos of your favorite public lands with hashtags like #wildwyo, #keepwyomingwild, and #307wild to show support for WWA and efforts to keep public lands in public hands.
- **Sign the enclosed petition** to Wyoming's senators and representatives. We'll send it in for you!
- **Support WWA!** We can't work to protect Wyoming's public wild lands without your help. Please consider a monthly or one-time donation today!

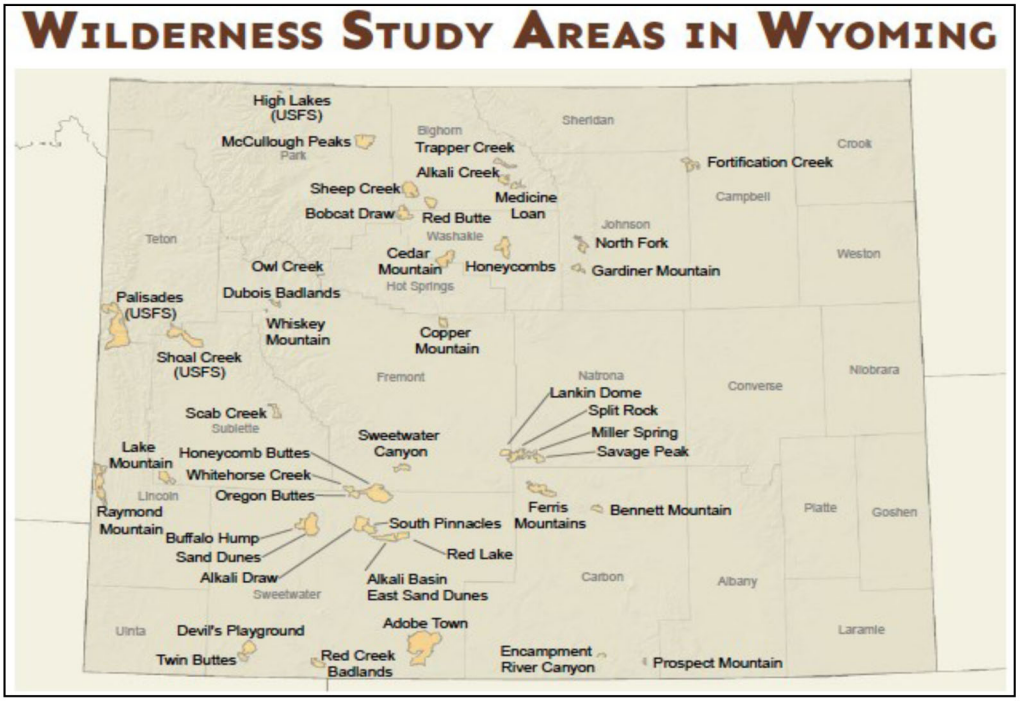
Future of WSAs Remains Uncertain

The Wyoming Public Lands Initiative continues to progress with, to date, seven county advisory committees deliberating the fate of Wyoming's 45 Wilderness Study Areas, 700,000 acres of federal lands that retain their primeval character and are managed to preserve their natural condition.

The goal of the WPLI is to forward a major lands package to U.S. Congress that delineates the status of WSAs, be it release for development or wilderness designation. Committees comprised of conservationists, agriculture and energy representatives, motorized users and more must reach a consensus about the fate of each WSA within their county before combining recommendations into one large bill.

As the WPLI continues to unfold, we must ask ourselves if it is shaping into a truly impartial and sensible process. What is the value of a lands bill that might, for example, recommend 10 wilderness areas at the expense of 35? Is it appropriate for the Wyoming County Commissioners Association to drive the process when commissioners hand-pick members of each advisory committee and can edit or approve the committee's recommendations?

WWA took part in the formation of the Wyoming Wilderness Act of 1984. Many of our members played a crucial role and remember the day nearly 1 million acres of pristine land were permanently protected. We are committed to cautious vigilance as we participate in the WPLI and will work to ensure all Wyoming's public wild lands are protected. For updates, visit www.wyo-wcca.org.



1976 BLM directed to inventory roadless areas for wilderness characteristics in the Federal Land Policy & Management Act.

1980 Inventory complete, state BLM delineates boundaries for 42 BLM WSAs.

1984 Wyoming Wilderness Act sets aside Palisades, Shoal Creek & High Lakes WSAs to be managed by Forest Service.

1991 U.S. Congress receives recommendation from Wyoming BLM that nearly half its 577,504 WSA acres become Wilderness. It has yet to act 25 years later.

2015 WSAs managed as *de facto* wilderness up for discussion in the WPLI.

Bighorn Forest Roadless Collaborative

The Bighorn Forest Roadless Collaborative (BFRC) was formed this summer in response to the Governor's Task Force on Forests, which recommends assessing roadless areas in each forest.

Because the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR) bans building new roads and limits timber harvesting, the collaborative has been tasked with reconciling a discrepancy between the Bighorn National Forest's 2005 Forest Plan and the RACR in a 126,000-acre area of the forest. It will also focus on logging and the accompanying road status of more than half the 1.1 million acres of the BNF that are in Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs). The BNF's 2005 Forest Plan designated half of its "suitable timber" areas inside IRA boundaries.

Members of the collaborative will determine which areas are suitable for Wilderness designation, which should be released from roadless, and which should remain roadless. WWA holds a conservation seat on this collaborative. To contribute public comment, go to http://tinyurl.com/bnfroadlesscomment.

Shoshone: Thank you, Volunteers!

The SNF is undergoing Travel Management Planning with the objective of adding motorized loop routes to the existing Motor Vehicle Use Map. Our strategy of involving you, our citizen volunteers, to record observations of roaded areas in the SNF yielded a trove of data the Forest Service was able to easily access and analyze. We are thankful for all 50 who recorded authorized and unauthorized motorized use, resulting in 300 photo-tagged waypoints to document concerns.

In July, WWA submitted substantive comments on the proposed action. Please see www.wildwyo.org to read them. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be out within the next few months. Check our website periodically for important updates!

Adobe Town Threatened

By Shaleas Harrison
BLM Wild Lands Community Organizer

Recently I experienced an anomaly when exploring a corner of the Adobe Town Wilderness Study Area, located in the southern Red Desert. Trailing the sun, I drove my car for what seemed like hours through meandering dirt roads. Like most roads here, it ended at an abandoned well site. A barren patch of soil and a capped wellhead bore witness to the economic undertakings that now threaten this landscape. After a night's rest, and unsure of my exact location, I packed a small bag of necessities and headed west to a few spires in the distance.

Adobe Town in Wyoming's southern Red Desert is a reminder of the fragility of wilderness. | Erik Molvar

I wandered into an endless paradise. Tuffaceous sandstone crumbled below my feet and lofty pillars of mudstone exposed fossils from another epoch. I knew right away that the story of these spectacular cliffs and arches began long ago. Being there on foot provided a rare experience, and I deceivingly perceived I was in complete isolation, miles away from anthropogenic influence, and alone to discover the enchantment of this Zen garden.

A flight over the Red Desert the following day proved the perception of isolation otherwise, and further strengthened my fight for wilderness. While on the flight, my eyes caught a glimpse of where I camped. I saw the spires and endless buttes below, and to my surprise I also noticed that encircling Adobe Town a web of roads and densely packed well pads sprawled in all directions to the horizon.

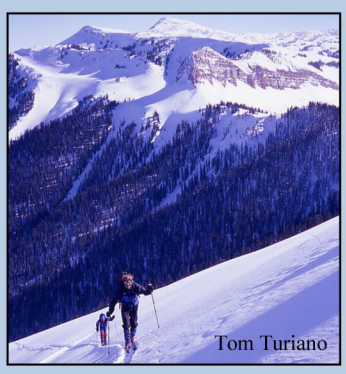
I fear a future where development engulfs every square inch of nature including the baffling facades of Adobe Town. While these havens provide sanctuaries for solitude, we must ask ourselves: why so much exploitation everywhere else? How are migratory species such as deer and elk to survive with such fragmentation? As Adobe Town confounds reason in its complexity, I suspect that such disturbances in the natural order of things are symptoms of a lack in our human understanding of the world, and the effects of our actions.

Grasping the totality of this space and our society's pathological relationship towards the natural world remains difficult. Nature serves as the surest indication that we are ephemeral and ignorant beings, yet we continue to encroach upon and destroy the sanctums that teach us these lessons. I am indebted to Adobe Town for reminding me of the fragility of wilderness and the blind behaviors of our time. It stands testament to the future eclipse of our species, and our entombment in geological time.

Taking the Lead in the B-T

WWA, in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, is charging ahead with a study of over-snow vehicle use (OSV) in the Palisades Wilderness Study Area (WSA). Our data will provide critical information about the activities that impinge on the Palisades' spectacular wilderness characteristics.

This ongoing monitoring study started in winter 2016 and will continue for the foreseeable future. We will compile and analyze the data gleaned over successive winters and produce a report to aid the Bridger-Teton National Forest in making informed decisions regarding the upcoming revision of the B-T Forest Management Plan, slated for 2018. This data will also help us as we gear up for the WPLI process in Teton County.



Tom Turiano

WWA photo

Young Ambassadors for Wilderness: Training Lifelong Leaders

WWA has just wrapped up our third year of our Young Ambassadors for Wilderness program with great success, thanks to our highly engaged youth participants, our talented volunteer lesson leaders, and enthusiastic community support from local businesses and agencies. Your annual donations to YAW enable us to continually augment the programming and teach more youth how to advocate for our wild lands. Thank you!

Please visit our website to enjoy more photos highlighting YAW lessons and outings including nature sketching, Native American land stewardship, meditative practices to unplug in nature, a 4-day backpacking trip through the Cloud Peak Wilderness, many day hikes in recommended wilderness and other public lands, and geological history encompassing many of Wyoming's public wild places, from the Tetons to Devils Tower.

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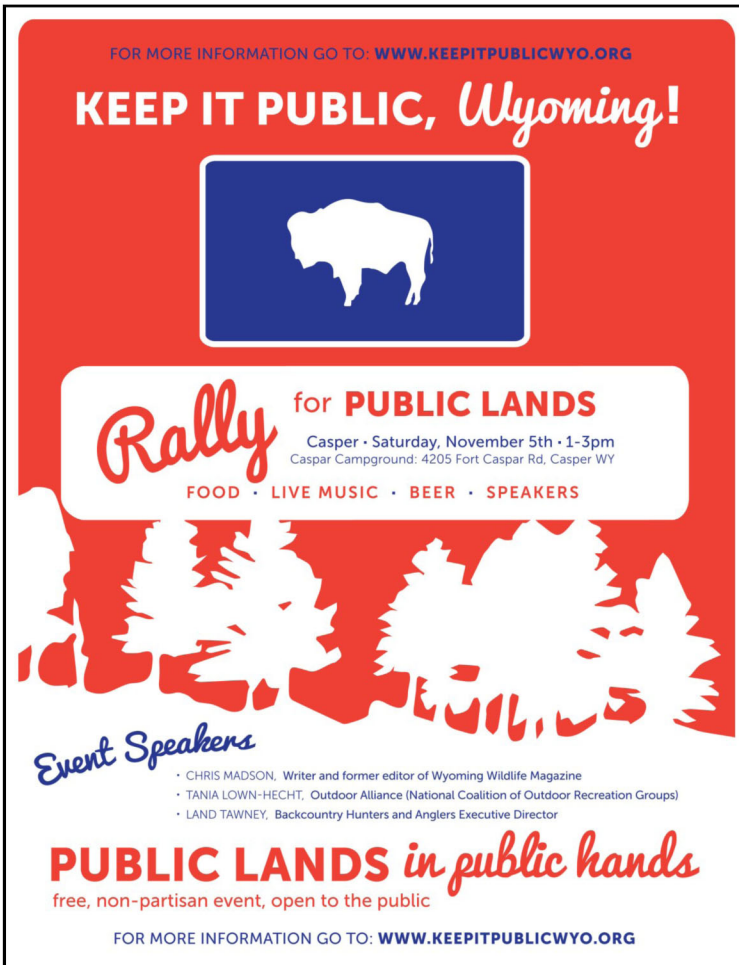

Don't Miss Out!
Saturday, Nov. 5
Casper, WY

Question: What is painless for you, a boon for us?

Answer: Donating on a monthly basis!

You won't even notice the gift leaving your bank account every month, and it helps us plan more efficiently when we have ongoing, reliable support for our efforts to keep Wyoming's wild public lands in your hands!

Here's how it works: Check the box for monthly giving on our donation envelope or set up payments online at www.wildwyo.org. Fill in the amount you wish to donate, submit your credit card details and voila! It's taken care of. One less thing on your to-do list!

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