



POWDER RIVER GOES TO LARAMIE

Affiliate Partnerships Strengthen Statewide Impact

Natalie Johansen
Powder River Staff

Board Members and Staff of Powder River journeyed to Laramie to their July Board Meeting at high altitude. While our office, our work, and our history is rooted in the Powder River Basin, we have a substantial number of members in the southeastern side of the state. The gathering provided a perfect opportunity to strengthen relationships with that community and witness firsthand the renewable energy momentum building in Laramie done by our affiliate the Alliance for Renewable Energy (ARE).

The visit was a great chance to catch up with ARE members who've been a solid Powder River affiliate since 2018. ARE started when local members teamed up with organizers Monika Leininger and later Claire Deuter to begin their important work with the City of Laramie on climate action initiatives. Since then, ARE has built an impressive track record of supporting renewable energy projects throughout southeastern Wyoming, partnering with local government on grant applications, and consistently educating residents about clean energy opportunities through various outreach efforts and community events.

While in Laramie, board members engaged in conversations with ARE members about current initiatives and how they align with our broader organizational goals. ARE's upcoming work includes supporting the Laramie 4th Street Redevelopment Project, advancing the Slade School Housing Project, the Laramie Sailors Solar

Project, and helping the city transition to electric school buses. They're also working to connect residents with programs like the "Solar For All" initiative while maintaining their renewable energy education efforts across Wyoming. These discussions helped inform Powder River's strategic planning process and identified new opportunities for coordinated action across the state.

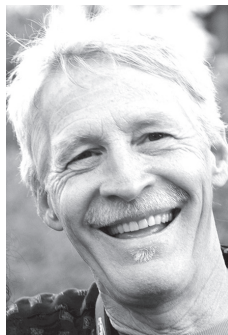
Board member Joyce Evans reflected on the value of these affiliate partnerships: "As PRBRC works to define its community, supporting affiliate organizations makes that goal more clear. It is so important to our whole state that groups of people can work together to share successes and innovations. ARE members were active participants in the July Board meeting, and their contributions were greatly appreciated. It may take a village to raise a child, but it also takes a village to preserve a State.

It is reassuring to know Wyoming has so many principled and dedicated citizens."

The board meeting in Laramie reinforced how affiliate organizations like ARE help define what our community truly is. When groups across Wyoming share their successes, tactics and innovations with each other, the collective impact grows stronger.



Message from the Chair



I recently learned of a surprising discovery about orcas, also known as killer whales. In the Salish Sea—the body of water shared by Washington and British Columbia that includes the Strait of Georgia, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Puget Sound—drone photography has shown orcas in the southern pod making and using tools, the first known instance of a marine mammal species using tools in a way thought to be the preserve of birds in the corvidae family and of primates, including us—human beings.

In the journal *Current Biology*, Michael Weiss from the Center for Whale Research reported that orcas will select a particular piece of bull kelp, bite off a section about two feet long, trim it, then balance it on their nose while approaching another orca. When the two orca meet, they wedge the piece of kelp between themselves and roll it along their bodies. It's a bit like rubbing your skin with a luffa when you take a sauna. Or better, having somebody else rub your skin with the luffa.

If you're a true Wyomingite and have a hard time relating to bull kelp, orcas, saunas, luffas, and large open bodies of water, please stay with me as I have some points that I think will be meaningful for us far from the ocean.

Point one: Researchers who observed orca tool making and use were surprised not so much because this showed the kind of intelligence that allows for future oriented thinking—they'd long understood orcas to be highly intelligent—but because the southern Salish pod has been studied for fifty years and no one had seen this before. These are among "the most monitored marine mammals in the world," Weiss noted. And yet only now has anyone seen this behavior. It's doubly surprising as every individual in the 73 member pod was observed manipulating and using bull kelp this way. How could we have not noticed? And what about the animals with whom we live with here in Wyoming—the moose and elk, the more elusive fox and weasel? I know so little about them. If I pay attention, what might I learn both about the animals and about myself?

Point two: the population of the southern Salish orca pod has been going down for a number of years. One reason is that pod members mate only with other pod members. Another is that the main food source for orcas is chinook salmon whose numbers are also going down because

of overfishing, climate change, and habitat destruction in spawning streams. Then there's the bull kelp—because of the ocean's rising water temperature their numbers are going down, too. Bull kelp, chinook salmon, orcas—dependent on each other, they're all at risk. What are the links between species I may not have seen, the links I should be aware of if I want to help maintain the diversity of life here in Wyoming?

Point three: Orcas must slough off dead skin and rid themselves of surface parasites so selecting, trimming, and manipulating bull kelp—two orca wedging the kelp between their bodies and rolling it back and forth—is a practical way to maintain healthy skin. But orcas have other techniques to slough off dead skin and get rid of parasites, so kelp rolling is not done only to ensure good health. Researchers observed that it was usually related members of the pod in the same age group rolling kelp leading to the suggestion that this dance—let's call it a dance—creates and strengthens social bonds. Maybe it's a matter of touch which in primates—again, that's us—relieves stress and diminishes conflict so that we can live together in harmony.

This leads to point four: the importance of social bonds. I suspect that physical distancing during covid—six feet apart, no touching, masks, isolation at home—damaged the bonds we depend upon to help us live together in harmony. For us touch is a broad concept that includes simply being together in the same space, talking to one another in person. And it doesn't even have to be talking about important things. Talk of any kind helps us to know and care for one another so that when we face social conflict, we can do a better job of sorting out how to serve differing points of view and how to care for one another when we disagree.

Point Five: play. The whale researchers didn't mention play but I think those orcas were playing, too. Maybe that's actually the most important point of all—play, which will serve us equally well in Wyoming as in the Salish Sea.

David Romtved

Chair, Board of Directors

POWDER RIVER BASIN

Resource Council

AND ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS INVITES OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS TO A

HARVEST

Celebration
& Potluck

SEPTEMBER

3:30 TO

20TH

7:00 PM

KEARNEY HALL, PINEY CREEK EXIT OFF I-90

Located along US Highway 87 in Johnson County, WY. 4 1/2 miles south of Story, WY..
1 mile west off of Exit 44, Interstate 90.



FEATURING BBQ BERKSHIRE PIG
WITH ALL THE TRAPPINGS

Enjoy

- Jammin' & Strummin' by our favorite local musicians
- Famous "**PIES by GUYS**" live auction
- Visiting with old friends & new

Please Bring

- Sides and Salads A-O
- Breads & Desserts P-Z
- Folding Deck Chairs (optional)
- Light Beverages provided

No tickets will be sold for this event, but, as always,
Donations at the Door are welcomed! Thank you.

Bringing Back the Harvest Celebration

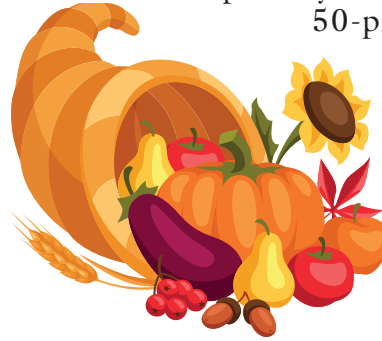
Gillian Malone
Powder River Staff

Powder River is bringing back the ever-popular Harvest Celebration and potluck this year, scheduled for September 20th. Back in 2006 this event came to fruition as the result of three members Nancy Sorenson, Bernie Barlow and Carol LeResche daydreaming up a way to celebrate the members and enjoy the bounty of locally harvested foods. The event has looked different throughout the years as it has been hosted in Gillette, Buffalo and Sheridan. There have been prize drawings of Local Foods baskets, main dishes of Beef, Lamb or Pork and in 2019 a “Pie by a Guy” was auctioned off for \$3000.

2025’s celebration will include the famous “Pies by Guys” extravaganza, music by the Kearney Hall jamming band, and a delectable feast featuring succulent, slow-barbecued pork with all the trimmings accompanied by a variety of gourmet dishes created from locally harvested produce.

Please share in the meal by contributing a side or salad or dessert. We have a number of easy volunteer positions to ensure the Harvest Celebration is a success. If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to Powder River at info@powderriverbasin.org for more details.

We are excited to bring this event back, especially during a time in our 50-plus-year history when



we need to gather and enjoy one another’s company and celebrate who we are as Powder River Basin Resource Council. Powder River let’er buck!

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Sarah Hunkins
Washington DC Representative at WORC

NEPA has been the bedrock environmental law guiding projects on our public lands and minerals throughout the country since it was signed into law in 1970. This means that if a project is proposed in a community, NEPA provides an avenue for the public to comment on proposals and receive detailed analysis on the impacts that the proposed project would have on people and the environment.

Unfortunately, over the last 7 months, NEPA has faced attacks from Congress, courts, and the current administration under the guise of “streamlining” projects and permitting. However, studies have shown that the main obstacle to more expedient NEPA permitting is inadequate staffing at agencies, which will only be exacerbated by the extensive funding and staffing cuts underway in federal agencies.

The changes to NEPA are far from minor: public comment opportunities have been seriously reduced, cumulative impacts and environmental justice will no longer be considered, project

sponsors can now write their own NEPA analysis if they pay a fee, and environmental impact statements and environmental assessments are being gutted that lasting impacts will happen to communities.

It’s critical that Westerners like you, where development on public lands and minerals is common, speak out in opposition to these drastic changes to NEPA. What’s critical right now is making clear to decision makers in Washington that upholding and safeguarding NEPA is what communities in Wyoming want and depend upon to safeguard our places.

Would you like to get more involved in defending NEPA? A first step could be submitting a Letter to the Editor (LTE) to your local news outlet expressing your concerns with the attacks on NEPA. Contact Sarah Hunkins, Washington, DC Representative at Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC): shunkins@worc.org for a guide to writing LTE’s and to seek out additional avenues of involvement.

SNAPSHOTS OF PAST HARVEST CELEBRATIONS



Principles Of Community Organizing Fall Training

Oct 21-23, Billings, MT

Principles Of Community Organizing Fall Training, sponsored by the Western Organization of Resource Council's is Tuesday, October 21st- Thursday, October 23rd in Billings, MT. Scholarships may be available depending on your membership status. Please contact Katherine at info@powderriverbasin.org for more information.



Creating Change

ARE's Community Achievements

Natalie Johansen
Powder River Staff

If your Wyoming community is ready to take meaningful action on climate and sustainability, we'd love to connect with you. Here's what we've accomplished together in Laramie:

- Supported the passage of Laramie's carbon neutral by 2050 resolution
- Played a key role in advancing the City of Laramie's Emissions Reductions Plan of 2024
- Made the city aware of Rocky Mountain Power's "Blue Sky Program" grant opportunities and supported the City's applications, leading to successful awards for solar installations and EV charging stations at:
 - » Laramie Fire Station #3
 - » Downtown Bison Parking Lot
 - » Community Recreation Center
 - » Laramie Ice & Event Center
 - » Laramie Regional Airport

- At ARE's encouragement, the City developed, submitted, and secured these Blue Sky Program grants, as applications needed to come from entities with existing buildings and grid connections
- Organized solar home tours for community education
- Maintained ongoing community outreach and education efforts

Current and Future Projects:

- Supporting the Laramie 4th Street Redevelopment Project
- Advancing the Slade School Housing Project
- Developing the Laramie Sailors Solar Project
- Assisting the city in bringing electric school buses to our community
- Connecting residents with federal programs like "Solar For All"



Surpassed our Goal

Powder River participated in WYO Gives again this year, and because of members like you, we took in the highest donated amount in the five years we've used the platform. A big thank you goes to the Hughes Charitable Foundation for its additional contributions.

Wind Farm Tour

What 25 People Discovered Inside a Wind Turbine

Natalie Johansen
Powder River Staff

More than twenty community members joined the Alliance for Renewable Energy and the Sierra Club Wyoming Chapter for an educational tour of the High Plains/McFadden Ridge wind energy facility this past month. The tour provided firsthand insight into large-scale wind energy production and its role in Wyoming's renewable energy landscape.

The purpose was to provide our members with factual information about large-scale wind energy operations and create opportunities to ask questions directly of Rocky Mountain Power/PacifiCorps employees.

The experience began with a presentation on turbine construction, wind power calculations, and time for participant questions. We then had the opportunity to go inside an actual turbine—one of the most memorable moments occurred when I watched in amazement as all twenty-five of us fit inside the base of a single tower, demonstrating the impressive scale of these structures.

Following the tour, we asked attendees to reflect on their most surprising discoveries. One striking fact was learning that the typical cost for wind farms follows a rule of thumb of one million dollars per megawatt of capacity. The McFadden Ridge farm generates 28 megawatts while High Plains produces 99 megawatts—the current cap in Wyoming.

The concept that “it takes energy to make energy” particularly resonated with participants. Our tour guide explained that each turbine essentially functions as its own supercomputer, continuously monitoring wind conditions, adjusting blade angles, and optimizing performance through sophisticated control systems.

Members were equally surprised by the complexity involved in selling the power these turbines generate. The intricate grid connections, power purchase agreements, and market dynamics required to deliver Wyoming wind energy to consumers revealed layers of complexity far beyond simply generating electricity.

The Alliance for Renewable Energy and Sierra Club Wyoming Chapter thank Rocky Mountain Power for facilitating this educational opportunity. Tours like these provide valuable forums for community members to ask questions, observe operations firsthand, and gain the factual foundation necessary for informed energy discussions in our state.



Did You Know?

What's Up with the Wyoming Legislature

Natalie Johansen & Sharon Buccino
Powder River Staff

The 2025 legislative session may be behind us, but legislators work during the interim preparing bills for the 2026 session.

The interim meetings focus on selected topics chosen by the legislators. The numbers tell the story of legislative ambition: **82 priorities with \$774,500 budget spanning 19 committees.** Keep in mind that 2026 brings a budget session with limited time for new legislation - any bill other than a budget bill introduced will need a two-thirds vote just to be heard.

Several familiar issues have emerged from this process. Nuclear reactor manufacturing has returned to the table alongside new nuclear safety legislation and storage of nuclear waste in Wyoming. Property tax concerns, wildfire management, education funding, election integrity, state lands management, and Colorado River water issues also made the cut. For Powder River, our primary focus will be on nuclear manufacturing, safety and spent fuel nuclear waste storage bills plus ongoing challenges with state lands leasing and sales. We'll also monitor our foundational issues: agriculture and food policy, renewable energy development, and water protection. We are working with Nancy McCann in Cheyenne to get this work done.

Experience has taught us that staying informed requires vigilant attention during the interim to committee schedules, agendas, and bill drafts as they evolve. Here is what we are tracking so far:

Select Water Committee has tentative meetings scheduled for November 4-6, 2025, though no bill drafts or agenda have been released.

Judiciary Committee met August 12, 2025, focusing on mineral interest and ownership issues. They reviewed bill draft 26LSO-0076 addressing "Mineral interest ownership, use and tracing."

Select Federal Natural Resource Management Committee also met August 12, 2025, with an extensive agenda covering multiple topics of interest to our membership.

Agriculture, State and Public Lands and Water Resources Committee meets August 28-29, 2025. Their June meeting covered eminent domain and state lands updates.

Revenue met August 21-22, 2025. Topics included property and sales tax issues as well as review and discussion of Wyoming's overall tax structure and administration.

Minerals, Business and Economic Development Committee met July 29-30, 2025, with two nuclear-related bill drafts under review: "Protection of

Nuclear Reactors" and "Advanced Nuclear Reactor Manufacturers – Fuel Storage." Staff and members of PRBRC attended these meetings.

The topics covered at this meeting on the first day were: the Business Ready Communities program, low-carbon energy standards, coal litigation funds, industrial siting, nuclear facilities and security at such facilities, the Wyoming aeronautics report, and carbon geo-capture. On the Second day, there was discussion of enhanced oil recovery/carbon dioxide infrastructure, oil and gas bonding pool investments.

PRBRC staff members provided testimony the second day on two key draft bills at the interim committee meeting: 26LSO-0074, Protection of Nuclear Reactors and 26LSO-0073, Advanced Nuclear Reactor Manufacturers/nuclear waste storage. In the 2025 Legislative Session similar bills relating to nuclear waste did not pass but the issue will be back in 2026 and PRBRC will continue to oppose storage of highly radioactive spent fuel in Wyoming.

The draft for legislation around advanced nuclear reactor manufacturers and nuclear waste storage has the attention of Natrona County people and the large room was packed. Most comments to the committee related to impacts on the small community of Bar Nunn as well as concerns over transport of the reactors and the return and storage of highly radio-active waste to Wyoming. The draft bill, 26LSO-0073, was tabled with recommendations that more work and public engagement is needed. No additional interim meeting has yet been scheduled for the Minerals Committee.

Public participation is critical throughout the interim. The legislative website (<https://www.wyoleg.gov/citizenEngagement/AttendLegMeetings>) provides guidance on engaging with committees and attending meetings. You can also sign up to receive notice of scheduled meetings and materials related to those meetings.

Consider attending committee meetings when they're held in your region—committees meet in different towns during the interim. Your presence as a local voice adds authenticity that lobbyists simply cannot provide. Even if you don't testify, legislators notice which issues bring citizens to hearings. For those who cannot attend in person, many committees accept written comments, and a thoughtful email highlighting local impacts can influence committee discussions and final recommendations.

Our success depends on sustained engagement from members who understand that effective advocacy extends far beyond the session's formal boundaries. By staying informed and involved year-round, we maintain the collective voice that protects Wyoming's resources and communities.

The Tall Bull's return to Food Forest with Students

Bob LeResche
Powder River Board Member

Northern Cheyenne ethnobotanists Linwood and Randall Tall Bull gave a fantastic seminar on Northern Cheyenne native plants, their stories and uses at Sheridan Food Forest on June 19th. Fourteen students and elders from Chief Dull Knife College joined food forest volunteers and people from Piney Island Native Plants and Sheridan College to explore and discuss the Northern Cheyenne native plant garden and then share a meal. Our guests provided Indian fry bread tacos for all, Hollis Hackman grilled elk burgers and Edith Heyward and Don Crecelius brought corn on the cob.

It was a wonderful and fruitful afternoon and evening enjoyed by all 40 who attended. Many thanks to our Northern Cheyenne neighbors who made the trip from Montana to share with us!



Randall Tall Bull describing traditional uses of Woman's Sage at the center of the Northern Cheyenne garden



Randall and Linwood Tall Bull describing native plants and their uses to the class and visitors.

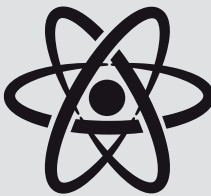


Elk Burgers, Corn on the Cob , and Fry Bread Tacos enjoyed by students and guests.

SOLAR STATS
FROM POWDER RIVER OFFICE
SOLAR PANELS



Energy Produced:
239.2kWh



Carbon Offset:
382.6 pounds



We offset an equivalent of
2 trees
in July

Powder River Basin Resource Council

Home Base has New Signage

This past spring a member saw the need for new signage in the front yard of the home base of Powder River and has generously donated towards the production of a new sign. The current home base at 934 N. Main Street was purchased in 2003. For the Administrative and Organizer staff the building and location has served the organization very well with six comfortable work stations and a general meeting area. The artwork was commissioned to Bailey Schupp of Pinedale, Wyoming. We are very proud to let both the community of Sheridan, Wyoming, and those passing through know that PRBRC is committed to the mission of protecting the land, water, air and people of Wyoming.



The sign currently displayed at the PRBRC home base.



The new sign to be installed in September 2025.

POWDER RIVER BASIN RESOURCE COUNCIL (POWDER RIVER) is a grass-roots organization of individuals and affiliate groups dedicated to good stewardship of Wyoming's natural resources. Powder River was formed in 1973 and stands for the preservation and enrichment of our agricultural heritage and rural lifestyle; the conservation of Wyoming's unique land, minerals, water and clean air consistent with responsible use of these resources to sustain the livelihood of present and future generations; and the education and empowerment of Wyoming's citizens to raise a coherent voice in the decisions that will impact Wyoming residents' environment and lifestyle.

POWDER RIVER IS A MEMBER OF the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC). WORC member groups are Dakota Resource Council,

Dakota Rural Action, Idaho Organization of Resource Councils, Nebraska Organizing Project, North Dakota Native Voice, Northern Plains Resource Council, Oregon Rural Action, Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action, Western Native Voice and Powder River Basin Resource Council.

THE SERVICES PROVIDED by Powder River include public education, community organizing and lobbying as permitted on behalf of its membership. Powder River is a non-profit, 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$30 for individuals, \$50 for families and \$20 for students and senior citizens. Powder River is dependent on contributions for its work; contributions, large and small, are welcomed.

Recognizing Two Founding Members

Two founding members of the Powder River Basin Resource Council recently have passed away. We would like to recognize and thank them for their passion in protecting the Land, Water, Air and People of Wyoming.

Joan Wallick

Joan Claassen Ford Wallick, 94, of Big Horn, Wyoming, passed away peacefully on June 20, 2025. Joan was born on May 13, 1931, in the small town of Wellsburg, Iowa. Growing up during the Great Depression gave her a lifelong appreciation for community, resourcefulness, and the strength of close family ties.

Joan was a passionate advocate for mental health and served for many years on the Northern Wyoming Mental Health Center Board. She was equally dedicated to conservation and the environment, working side-by-side with Bob on causes that mattered to them both. She was a founding member of the Bighorn Audubon Society and an early supporter of the Powder River Basin Resource Council. Her love for the arts and Wyoming history also led her to enthusiastically support the Brinton Museum and the Big Horn Historical Society.



Gerald Kresge

Gerald Jarnes Kresge passed away in Sheridan, Wyoming, on June 25, 2025. Jerry was born Jan 26th, 1932, in Kewanee, Illinois. After graduating from high school in Burlington, Iowa, he served in the U.S. Army including time as a medic in Europe. He fell in love with Wyoming when he attended graduate school at the University of Wyoming in 1956. He taught for a total of 31 years, most of it at Buffalo High School. He spent many summers working for the Big Horn National Forest Service and also volunteered for a number of archaeological digs. Jerry was a founding member of Powder River Basin Resource Council, as well as the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sheridan. His contributions and his passion for the environment and social justice were invaluable.



ACTIVE AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

- Alliance for Renewable Energy (ARE)
- Clark Resource Council (CRC)
- Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition (CALC)
- Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens (PACC)
- Sheridan Area Resource Council (SARC)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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COMMUNITY ORGANIZER.....Natalie Johansen

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POWDER RIVER BREAKS

Photos by Powder River staff and members



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Sheridan, Wyoming 82801

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53rd Annual Meeting

Saturday, Oct 25

Ramada Plaza

Keynote Speaker

Sam Western

Powder River Basin Resource Council's Library

For those who defend the environment

PRBRC Library started with books on coal, forest, nuclear energy, oil and gas development, water issues. It has expanded now and as always is always open during office hours. Please call 307.672-5809 before coming in to make sure the office is open.



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