



ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT TODAY ~ FOR TOMORROW

Legislative Session Recap

Claire Deuter
Powder River Staff

Powder River staff just wrapped up lobbying at the 2026 legislative session in Cheyenne. Because 2026 was a budget session, the session totaled only 4.5 weeks and any bill that did not connect to the budget required a higher threshold of a two-thirds vote to pass introduction. In terms of bills that Powder River tracked, some good bills passed and some bad bills passed.

Good bills that passed both the House and Senate and were signed by the Governor included House Bill 145: Removing triple taxation for resident EV drivers. This bill supported electric vehicle infrastructure and use in Wyoming by modernizing outdated electric vehicle tax policy and ensuring that out-of-state electric vehicle drivers contribute to maintaining the roads they use, benefiting Wyoming residents, communities, and local businesses. Another good bill was Senate Joint Resolution 9: Keeping public lands protected and decisions local. This bipartisan resolution, sponsored by Senator Barlow and 38 co-sponsors, voiced support for keeping public lands in public hands by opposing any state or federal legislation or policy that promotes the broad or indiscriminate sale or exchange of public lands. The resolution supported multiple-uses on public lands and called on the federal government to respect existing land management frameworks, county land-use plans, and the voices of local communities most directly affected by federal land decisions. Other good bills included water studies for groundwater (Senate File 50) and stormwater (Senate File 69).

Powder River also supported a handful of bills that unfortunately did not pass both chambers. House Bill 146: Affordable electricity act of 2026 would have made plug-in solar legal in Wyoming. Plug-in solar panels provide a simple, reliable, and more accessible way to go solar and save money by generating your own electricity. House Bill 146 died in the House Transportation Committee. Another good bill was House Bill 56: Carbon capture mandate-repeal. This bill would have repealed Wyoming's carbon capture and sequestration mandate that passed back in 2020. Powder River supported this bill given how costly and unworkable carbon capture and sequestration projects are with the



current state of technology and because the mandate led to extra charges on electric ratepayers' bills. Unfortunately this bill died in the Senate Minerals Committee. Other good bills that died included a bill which would have created a trust fund for agricultural education and workforce development (Senate File 109), a bill that would have put the question of whether to store high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel in Wyoming to the voters (House Joint Resolution 3), and bills relating to community input and control over local lands (Senate Files 40 and 42).

Bills that Powder River found issues with that the Governor signed include a bill that would request that the federal government give the state of Wyoming management rights over federal mineral leases within our borders (Senate Joint Resolution 1), a bill that would reduce enhanced oil recovery severance taxes for oil and gas producers (House Bill 128), and a bill that would provide funding for energy projects in the state except for wind or solar energy projects (Senate File 123).

Message from the Chair



Paying Attention

These past few months I've vacillated between paying attention to the news and completely blocking it out. Between ICE in Minneapolis (the home of several of my friends and family members), starting a war in Iran, and gas price inflation, it's all overwhelming.

Recently, I spoke with a friend and South Dakota organizer about data centers and what their legislature was facing regarding them. The conversation reminded me of how proud I am of Powder River for forming a new organizational subcommittee to deal with data center work.

The Powder River Data Center Committee, comprised of staff and members, submitted comments on Meta's proposed data center expansion to the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality in Cheyenne last month. In Meta's proposal, I was surprised by the proposed use of diesel engines for backup energy. Inevitably, data centers will likely use diesel engines for more than just backup energy. As a former coal miner operating a motor grader, haul trucks would blast me with hot diesel exhaust. One time, I was standing too close to the Wiggins while fueling a 994 Cat loader, and I was doused with diesel! Starting a cold D10 Track Dozer, it would billow out heavy white exhaust. Diesel is very nasty stuff.

Communities must stay diligent with their local officials. Because governments and companies make agreements to keep information confidential, even engaged citizens can be caught by surprise when learning about decisions their government officials have already made. As a Gillette citizen, an example on top of mind is when the Mayor of Gillette and City Council members signed non-disclosure agreements with BWXT, a nuclear fuel-making company looking to build a nuclear fuel plant in Gillette. Shortly after this agreement, Governor Gordon authorized the Wyoming Energy Authority to award 100 million dollars in matching funds to BWXT's project. I did not see that coming.

Thankfully, Powder River staff and members connect with communities all across our state. You can see that reflected in our 2026 legislative reports. Thank you, Powder River lobbyists Donna, Claire, and Stephen. Be it data centers, nuclear, mining by Ramaco, polluted waters in Pavillion, our staff is very busy. Members help out by staying engaged, joining a committee, and providing information. It all helps. A big thank you to our volunteers and members who contribute monetarily and advocate for us.

Joy has been really hard to find these days. Staying in touch with each other brings more joy to my life. Let's enjoy the signs of spring and maybe wish for that heavy snow we used to get. Staying snowed in for three days sounds dreamy right now, and besides, we need the moisture.

Lynne Huskinson
Powder River Board Chair

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 Vote, Northern Plains Resource Council, Oregon Rural Action, Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action, 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.

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)

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POWDER RIVER BREAKS

Photos by Powder River staff and members

The PRBRC Bill Barlow Memorial Youth In Conservation Awards

Liza Cuthbert-Millett and Maria Katherman - Powder River Board Members



Caden Thaker



Heidi Bell and Avery Burgess



Kavaya Thapa

We had the pleasure of reviewing students' projects at the Wyoming State Science Fair, looking for projects eligible for monetary awards donated by the Barlow Family. We choose the best examples of scientific thinking and process, creative ability, thoroughness and execution plus their ability to communicate their motivation and results. The idea behind this memorial award is to promote the importance of studies of Wyoming ecosystems and the impacts of development. The awards are presented in the memory of rancher, conservationist and a founding member of PRBRC—Bill Barlow.

The science fair takes place in the Wyoming Union Ballroom at UW. Over 90 students competed, from middle school through high school with posters and data log books. They each present their project to the many judges circulating who also may question them on any aspect of their project. It is a noisy and exciting atmosphere. Students from all over the state are meeting each other and being interviewed with a chance to advance to regional and national science fairs.

Caden Thacker, a senior at Greybull High School, presented "Determining the Potential Toxicity of Fracking Surfactants: An Assessment of Product Viability to Reduce Environmental Water Contamination." We selected her project last year and

this year was even better. Her motivation was hearing a family member from Pavillion talk about the water contamination there. Along with our affiliate Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens, PRBRC has been involved for several years with this.

Caden exposed cultured mouse brain cells to different surfactants commonly used in fracking fluids and assessed their growth as a measure of safety. She stated in her results: "most compounds showed little impact, with the exception of exposure to 1-Dodecanol and Sodium n-Dodecyl sulfate." And, from her conclusion: "Companies utilizing 1-Dodecanol should consider other surfactants. If anti-corrosive surfactants need to be used, then this research would suggest that Diisononyl phthalate may be the least harmful option of the solutions tested."

In the Junior Division, awards were split between two projects; Avery Burgess and Heidi Bell from Big Piney Middle School and Kavaya Thapa from Snowy Range Academy in Laramie.

Avery's and Heidi's project, "Removing Microplastics from Water with Ferrofluids" was inspired in reaction to the worldwide plastic waste disaster. They were looking for an inexpensive solution for local water treatment plants. They used ferrofluids to successfully remove plastic from water

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How can Wyoming Benefit from Community Benefit Agreements and Good Neighbor Agreements?

Stephen Magnifico
Powder River Staff

Imagine a world where utility-scale wind and solar production doesn't just benefit the corporations that own them, or benefit the world at large by supplying renewable energy, but also directly benefits the communities that they're constructed in. Imagine a world where utility-scale wind and solar farms are legally required to be constructed in a responsible manner that does not harm the environment of the communities in which they're built.

That world isn't imaginary - it's here, and we're living in it. The path forward to expanding this world lies in something called community benefit agreements (CBA) and good neighbor agreements (GNA). CBAs are legally binding contracts between a developer and the community (usually represented by community organizations, such as a labor union or resource council) that outline benefits that the developer will provide to the community in exchange for goodwill from the community. A GNA is a CBA that focuses on mitigating negative impacts from the developer.

The first CBA in United States history was executed in California surrounding the development of the Staples Center (now the Crypto.com Arena). This CBA, negotiated between the Staples Center developers and local labor and community organizations, ensured that affordable housing was provided, local hires were prioritized, and that parks and recreational facilities within a 1-mile radius would receive \$1,000,000 to be either constructed or renovated, among other things.

CBAs don't just apply to large developments in urban areas. As recently as last year, the community of New Rockford, North Dakota, a small town 20 miles south of Devils Lake, finalized a \$22,000,000 CBA with the PRC Wind regarding the Flickertail Wind Project. As part of the agreement, Flickertail Wind will fund the restoration of a community theater, fund childcare and elder care programs,

and pay nearby landowners who are not hosting the turbines themselves. Additionally, Flickertail Wind will provide funding quarterly based on the project's megawatt capacity, ensuring long-term investment in the region.

Perhaps one of the most well-known GNAs that the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) is associated with is the agreement between Stillwater Mining Company and Northern Plains Resource Council (a WORC member group in Montana), its affiliate the Cottonwood Resource Council, and the Stillwater Protective Association. This GNA ensures that economic development in rural Montana is possible without endangering the environment. Originally signed in 2000, the agreement has been amended several times over the past two and a half decades. The agreement currently includes an adaptive management plan to define and track water quality metrics and trigger contamination mitigation even when water contaminants are below state and federal limits. Additionally, the agreement includes provisions to regulate traffic, including Stillwater Mining Company being responsible for providing buses for workers traveling to the mines.

As solar and wind projects continue to be developed in Wyoming, it's time for Powder River Basin Resource Council to take action to ensure that Wyoming is in a position to benefit from these developments and ensure that harmful impacts are mitigated. A GNA could ensure that a solar farm isn't constructed on important wildlife conservation areas or that wind turbines aren't constructed along important bird migration corridors. A CBA could ensure that Wyoming communities benefit directly from these renewable energy developments and that there is community buy-in for them across the state, all while shifting the statewide sentiment around renewable energy.

THE DATA CENTER EXPLOSION

Ronn Smith
Powder River Member



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already transforming our world. Optimists herald it as the panacea for human toil and trouble, while pessimists see it as the end of civilization as we know it. Curiously, some highly qualified experts entertain both visions simultaneously. Regardless of where you stand on the merits of AI, the genie is out of the bottle and very unlikely to go back. The challenge will be to harness it for the common good, which entails (among many aims) curbing its enormous economic, energy and environmental impacts.

AI relies on large-scale computing facilities, known as data centers, to train its models and respond promptly to human queries. Data centers also host blockchain mining, cloud computing and storage, and networking services, but AI is almost single-handedly responsible for their rapid growth in recent years. There are thousands of data centers in the U.S., each one occupying hundreds of acres on average. The largest campuses, forming the backbone of AI, consume over a thousand acres each.

A hyperscale data center uses thousands of servers equipped with high-power processing chips that perform trillions of computations per second. This takes massive amounts of electrical energy, with some data centers consuming more power than a million homes. Much of the energy is dissipated as heat, which requires huge cooling systems to prevent overheating and component failure.

Data centers employ a variety of complex cooling technologies – open loop, closed loop, dual loop, etc. But the principles underlying these technologies fit

into three simple categories:

1. Evaporative cooling works like a household swamp cooler, discharging heat directly into the atmosphere by evaporating lots of water. Hot and humid climates require even more water. This method uses the least amount of power.

2. Convective cooling works like a car radiator, using fans to indirectly move heat to the atmosphere. It requires relatively cool ambient temperatures to work effectively. This method uses more power than evaporative cooling.

3. Vapor compression cooling works like an air conditioner, absorbing heat by evaporating a circulating refrigerant then rejecting it to the atmosphere by condensing the refrigerant. This method uses the most power, but requires no water.

In this tradeoff between water and power consumption, even the minimum amount of cooling power does little to mitigate the overall energy demand of a large data center. At present, fossil fuel generation meets 60% of that demand. Since a data center must respond in real-time, it requires backup power, often provided by hundreds of diesel generators. The race to win the AI war has virtually suspended concerns about air quality degradation and the long-term climate impacts of mounting greenhouse gases.

The data center stampede has also sidelined the battle to keep electricity affordable to the average consumer. Sparing ratepayers from the cost burden of skyrocketing electricity demand from data centers will require changes to federal transmission and distribution policy, as well as to rate regulation by state public utility commissions. For now, some data centers are addressing the conflict by providing their own off-grid power source. But this strategy could forfeit opportunities to utilize regional sources of renewable energy, exacerbating environmental impacts.

However we react to these disturbing trends, we must act quickly. Data center capacity will likely double in the next four years, with Wyoming absorbing more than its per-capita share.

For more in-depth information about data centers, see Ronn's article in WyoFile: <https://wyofile.com/the-hidden-toll-of-ai-data-centers/>

A Visit to Papa Joe's Produce

Claire Deuter
Powder River Staff

I had the opportunity back in January to visit Papa Joe's Produce's greenhouse in Sheridan. I got a behind-the-scenes look at local food production and had the privilege of tasting some delicious produce.

Papa Joe's is a local family-run business that serves Sheridan and the surrounding area with fresh, high-quality produce and quality homemade kitchen goods, all year round. They offer online ordering and weekday pickup from their farm. "Papa Joe" Wesnitzer is the founding visionary of Papa Joe's Produce, with more than 50 years of experience growing and preserving food. Following retirement from CenturyLink, Joe turned his passion for farm-fresh produce into a business, through which he could share both produce and knowledge with the community. Papa Joe's Produce sells to local grocery stores, local businesses, and food security organizations.

Adam Bunker gave me a tour of the greenhouse. Adam is the operations manager at Papa Joe's. He works hands-on in the greenhouses, manages overall operational direction as set by the family, and is responsible for marketing and outreach. He gets to work in the dirt while also tracking operation and business statistics to measure the farm's production, efficiency, profit, customer activity, etc. Adam also served as president of the Wyoming Food Coalition, a statewide nonprofit with the mission to strengthen local food systems.

The tour started in one of Papa Joe's greenhouses, which contained a variety of produce, including lettuce, tomatoes, and basil. To grow their leafy greens all year-round, the business primarily uses grow lights and a deep water culture (DWC) hydroponics method, where plants float on foam rafts while their roots stay submerged in a nutrient-rich water solution. Papa Joe's has more than 5,000 plants growing in these DWC beds at any given time.

I was happy to see colorful flowers in the greenhouse on that chilly January day. Adam explained to me how the business strategically uses flowers like marigolds and nasturtium as natural pest control. Some fragrant flowers repel pests, and others attract pests, leading the pests to eat the flowering plants instead of the produce. This is just one example of how Papa Joe's focuses on providing safe-to-eat food.

Between greenhouse stops, I was greeted by a happy pup named Rosie. Rosie is Papa Joe's chief greeting officer who decided that the herding life just wasn't for her. While petting Rosie, I checked out the outdoor



areas where the business grows more produce during the warmer months. Papa Joe's maximizes their space for production both indoors and outdoors.

The next two greenhouses on the tour primarily focused on lettuce. I peppered Adam with questions, which he generously answered. I asked about Papa Joe's biggest challenges and what he hopes for the future. When discussing the state of local producers in Wyoming, Adam explained how the main challenge for strengthening the local food sector isn't competition amongst local food producers. A large challenge is the local food producers' ability to compete with bigger, non-local brands. Adam emphasized that because of this, it's important for local producers to share knowledge and support each other so that the entire local food producer industry can grow stronger and more competitive.

My conversation with Adam left me feeling inspired to shop local more frequently. Not only is the food high-quality and delicious, but it's grown by people who genuinely care about their community and environment. Wyomingites can find a statewide local food producer directory at the Wyoming Food Coalition's website at www.wyfoodcoalition.org.

My tour ended with Adam sending me home with a jar of tasty apple habanero jelly, lots of vibrant green butter lettuce, edible flowers, and salsa for me to share at the Powder River office. I opted for the jar of smoked bean salsa. I don't think I'm ready for their spicy "Green Scorpion, Death Spiral, 7Pot Brain Strain" salsa any time soon.

Ranchers Voices Raised in Washington D.C. with the National Family Farm Coalition

Katherine Schrock
Powder River Staff

The Powder River Basin Resource Council was invited to advocate at the Federal Legislature with the National Family Farm Coalition on issues that directly affect ranchers and farmers across our nation. Longtime PRBRC member Joyce Evans and Assistant Director Katherine Schrock accepted the invitation and attended February 17-19. Members of NFFC who make their livelihood as farmers and ranchers were joined with consumers and advocates and collectively placed on five teams to advocate for the following bills:

- 1) Trade Justice: Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling
- 2) Fighting Corporate Power: Farmland Access
- 3) Fair Prices & Dairy Reform
- 4) Economic Justice: Credit Reform
- 5) Food Sovereignty & On-Farm Slaughter



Katherine Schrock with her advocacy group

keeping land within local agricultural control, and not in the hands of corporations, is crucial. The USDA says the US is losing 4.3 acres of farmland every minute. Wyoming lost 6.1 million acres between 1997 and 2022, representing a 17.6% decline.

3) This bill creates a guaranteed fair price for farm products based on costs. NFFC is the only farmer organization to advocate explicitly for a fair farmer price – because our farmer members identify the lack of fair prices as one of the biggest barriers to viable livelihoods.

4) The Fair Credit for Farmers Act will improve access and accountability for the farm loan services offered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) while strengthening farmer-borrower rights. These improvements will especially help to ensure that historically underserved farmers and ranchers receive equal treatment in FSA lending and appeal processes.

5) A shortage of slaughtering options has led to bottlenecks in the industry, especially as the demand for local meat continues to rise. Many regions in the US face a shortage of slaughtering/processing facilities. Expanding on-farm slaughter relieves pressure from strained facilities.

The biggest take away from this experience is the potential PRBRC has to organize a stronger voice in ag and local foods. We must work for the protection of the land that is ranches or farmed, those who do the work and how they are paid, and our food sources. If the above bills and or other issues more specific to Wyoming ag and local foods resonate with you please call the office at 307-672-5809 and let's talk about it.



Joyce Evans' group in front of the National Capitol

FACTS ON THE FIVE

1) After a World Trade Organization dispute, US requirements for mandatory country of origin labeling (MCOOL) for beef and pork were repealed by Congress in 2015. MCOOL is also not required for eggs, dairy, and processed seafood such as canned tuna. Expanding and clarifying MCOOL regulations will restore market integrity and fair competition for US producers, while allowing consumers to make fully informed purchasing decisions.

2) With more than 40 percent of all US farmland expected to transfer hands in the next few decades,

THE FLY-IN EXPERIENCE WITH NFFC

Kenya Abraham, Lexington, Kentucky

Being an advocate for farmers with NFFC feels like carrying something living.

There's such a huge weight to it.

You're not just representing a policy or a position.

We are carrying early mornings in the dark and heavy feed buckets in the cold wind.

We carry our hands in the soil.

We carry the risk of drought and the gamble of markets.

We carry the prayer over seeds.

We carry families who have built something slowly.

We carry our heritage.

We carry risk and our loss.

And Always, We Carry Dignity.

Entering those polished halls with marbled walls, we stand at the intersection of soil and statute.

Sometimes you leave energized!

Feeling heard, respected, and hopeful.

Sometimes you leave frustrated!

Knowing how slow systems move, and you're just pushing along at a hamster wheel.

Mostly you leave tired!

Because it is absolutely exhausting to try and translate this lived reality into policy language.

But we should always leave with pride!

Pride because I know that I've

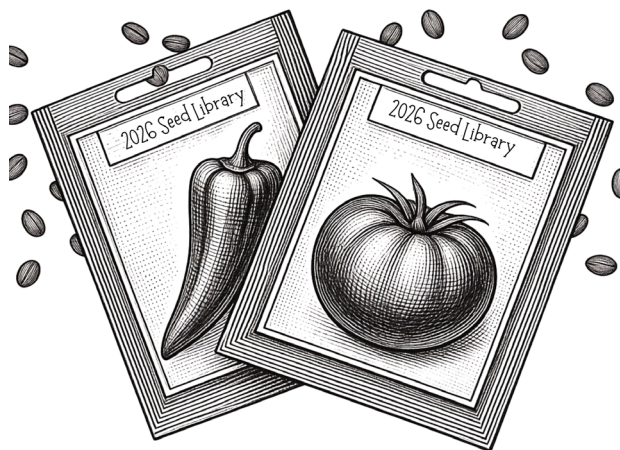
carried the fields into the halls of power and made them listen, without leaving my boots at the door.

It is an honor to do this work with NFFC and may we continue to stay on FOCUS. Fixed On Change Until Success

WYOMING SEED LIBRARIES

Claire Deuter
Powder River Staff

Did you know that your local library might provide garden seeds for free through a community seed library?



A seed library is a lending program that allows community members to “check out” seeds to use in their gardens. Powder River runs a seed library in conjunction with the Sheridan County Public Library Fulmer Branch and stocks the library through generous donations from various reputable seed companies. Library cardholders can visit the seed library kiosk, browse the selection

of vegetables, herbs, and flowers, and check out a limited number of seed packets per month. There is no obligation to return seeds, but returning unused seeds or donating saved seeds is strongly encouraged. The mission of the Sheridan Seed Library is to support a thriving community of gardeners and seed savers, provide information and education about sustainable gardening, and cultivate a culture of sharing. Other Wyoming seed libraries are found at the:

- Laramie County Library in Cheyenne
- Park County Library in Cody
- Fremont County Library in Lander
- Carbon County Libraries in Rawlins and Elk Mountain
- Niobrara County Library in Lusk
- Big Horn County Library in Greybull
- Washakie County libraries
- Converse County libraries

Contact your local library to learn if there is a seed library near you. For Sheridan seed library users, please consider renewing your Powder River membership or making a financial donation. Your support helps us continue this community resource!

Affiliates are Back in Action

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” ~ Margaret Mead

Trees are beginning to bud and leaf out, and spring bulbs are pushing up as spring begins in Wyoming. It’s a time of new growth and new beginnings, and that extends to Powder River Basin Resource Council’s affiliates. Since December, the staff has met in person with four of our five active affiliates.

- SARC (Sheridan Area Resource Council) The staff and a handful of members met in January to reinvigorate folks in Sheridan and Johnson Counties. We discussed issues such as water rights, affordable housing concepts, plastics reduction, school lunch waste and an AARP sponsored walkability study.

- ARE (Alliance for Renewable Energy) These past couple of months, ARE has taken on a new set of issues related to renewable energy: plug-in solar, community solar, and forming a solar co-op in Laramie. Additionally, ARE has agreed to reorganize into different working groups or “task forces” to ensure that each member is able to work on issues that they are the most passionate about.

- CALC (Cheyenne Area Landowners Coalition) In February, CALC members met after a long hiatus. Water rose as an issue of primary concern, and tangentially, data centers (and their impact on water and air quality) were also of interest. CALC is ready to become active again to address these concerns. To strengthen the voice of CALC, the current membership is looking at expanding membership beyond what was once identified as a “Landowners Coalition.”

- PACC (Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens) In January, PACC members met with Lily Barkau of the DEQ to discuss the current status of Pavillion water cleanup efforts. This productive meeting resulted in plans for another meeting, May 26th with DEQ, and hopes for completion of remediation in the next 5-10 years.

- CRC (Clark Resource Council): Fall 2026, Powder River will work with CRC to facilitate a meeting with the DEQ about the status of the water cleanup effort there.



GREEN DRINKS

In 2014, Powder River helped organize “Green Drinks,” a way to bring people from the Sheridan area who were interested in the environment together.

The informal monthly happy hours were a way for people to gather, learn, network, and enjoy each other’s company. The community members in attendance ranged from citizen scientists to academics

to government employees to non-government organization staff, and more.

Sheridan Green Drinks disappeared during COVID, but it is being rebuilt. Sheridan will host a Green Drinks event on the third Tuesday of each month, and if you are interested in the environment, you are invited! Follow the Sheridan Green Drinks Facebook page for event notices (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61588384636028>), and to learn the time, location, and speaker for that month’s event. Invite your friends, enjoy a drink, and come build community.

Youth In Conservation Awards Continued from page 3

and then tested their process on samples from creeks, school tap water and water leaving the local treatment facility.

Kavaya Thapa’s project, “How does the application rate of coal char in soil affect plant growth?” developed from her interest in using science to help farmers dealing with heavy clay in Wyoming soils and the challenge of exploring

alternative uses for Wyoming’s coal. She tested coal char as a soil amendment. The coal char was sourced from Ft. Union Industrial Plant in Gillette, and radishes substituted for sugar beets. Her results showed success in loosening soil and improving plant growth with coal char comparable to the much more expensive bio char. She concluded this could be an affordable alternative for large scale farm operations.

THE DIRT ON LAUNDRY SOAP

Compiled by Andrea Knutson - Powder River Board Member

As we begin spending more time outdoors, following is a helpful guide in choosing how to wash away the elements we attract while doing chores, gardening, or encountering the many adventures that Western life offers.

Make Your Own from recipes online.

Popular ingredients include:

- Zote and/or Fels Naphtha Bar soaps
- Pure Soap Flakes from puresoapflakes.com
- 20 Mule Team Borax
- Baking soda for deodorizing
- Washing Soda- sodium carbonate (FYI washing soda is extracted from Trona, right here in Wyoming)

Environmental Considerations	Sheets	Liquids	Pods	Powders
Pros				
No plastic containers are required. Lightweight and compact require less fuel for transport. Contain PVAs/PVOHs, but less than pods.				
Easy to use. May clean better than powders. Can use pre-soak/pre-treat stains				
Designed to avoid overuse of products. Separation of chemicals provides better cleaning with less product. Easy to use.				
Generally, less expensive than liquids or pods. Lots of eco-friendly options. Can be purchased in lightweight bags/limited packaging.				
Cons				
Contain PVAs/PVOHs but less than pods. May not clean as well as liquids/may require pre-treatment of stains.				
Require a plastic container for transport & storage. Pollution & disposal costs are associated with the plastic container. Weight & packaging cost more fuel & space for transport than sheets or most powders. PVAs/PVOHs are used in these products. The jury is still out on how harmful these are as they "dissolve" into monomers that then biodegrade. How long that takes and what these "little" but not micro plastic pieces do is still unknown. They ARE petroleum based. It can be loaded with dyes, fragrances and optical whiteners.				
Clumping. May not fully dissolve at lower temperatures. May not be compatible with HE machines. It can contain optical whiteners. Weight makes it expensive to transport. Boxes can be complicated to recycle.				

Legislative Session Continued from page 1

Powder River staff stayed busy tracking bills, organizing members through action alerts, testifying in committee, and working with allied organizations and lawmakers. This session was marked by stark political divisions between the Freedom Caucus and Wyoming Republican Caucus, leading to many late nights for the representatives on the House floor. The session was also clouded by controversy, in an event now known as "Checkgate," a handful of Freedom Caucus representatives accepted donation checks on the House floor, resulting in multiple investigations and statewide media coverage. Despite the chaotic session, Powder River

staff stayed grounded and focused on our issues thanks to our members who offered support, guidance, and reminders of why we do this work.

Powder River staff will continue to stay active during the interim session. During the interim, legislative committees hold meetings around the state to take a deeper dive into topics and craft bills before the next session in Cheyenne. This is a great time for members to become involved with the legislature. Stay tuned for more information from us on the interim session. Thanks again to our members for all of their support during this legislative session. We could not do this work without you.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Powder River Staff

There are some new faces reading the Powder River BREAKS! Welcome to each and every one of you. Your enthusiasm and interest keeps the work of PRBRC's Community Organizers engaging and powerful.

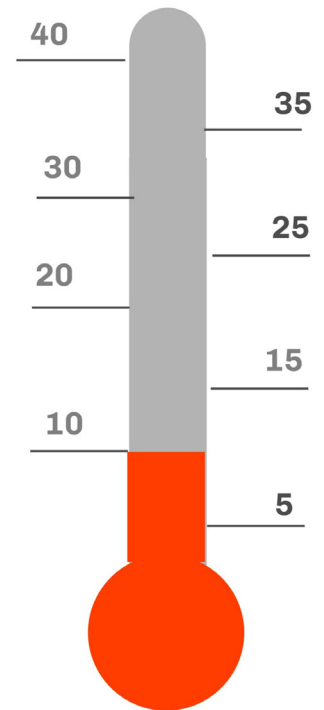
Our new members have joined for a variety of reasons, from data centers, to nuclear concerns, and more. Toi of Laramie, WY most recently enrolled as a member of both PRBRC and ARE and shares why:

“Managing the impacts of climate change and building energy independence through the development of renewable energy is important for the wellbeing of all of us including the plants and animals that support our lives. I joined the Powder River Basin Resource Council to help our community adapt to the changing weather patterns and global instability that our warming planet is creating.”

Thank you and welcome, Toi and Bern.

New members desire to work together to protect the people and places of Wyoming. New members know this member-driven organization is how to succeed.

The Board of Directors has set a high goal of staff building more power with an additional 40 new members in 2026. We are a quarter of the way there. If you know someone whose concerns align with Powder River Basin Resource Council's, then invite them to join, and we will reach out to them.



Recognizing the life of Member Phil Gilmore

Phillip Douglas Gilmore, 70, passed away in his home on Thursday, January 22, surrounded by his loving family. Phil was an active member of PRBRC alongside his wife Janelle Gray. Phil was a co-owner of Landon's Greenhouse for over two decades with Janelle and her brother, Wayne. He created landscape designs, led the landscape crew, and dug holes with his own two hands. He planted countless gardens throughout Sheridan, literally reshaping the town's landscape—to say nothing of the handiwork he put into his own home. There is no telling how many places and people his quiet leadership, hard work, and creativity touched.

A Celebration of Life for Phil was held Saturday, March 14, 2026, at Kearney Community Hall hosted by his family and friends of the Sheridan Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.





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HARVEST
*Celebration
& Potluck*

Saturday, August 15, 2026
3:30 p.m. to Dusk
Kearney Hall (Between Story & Buffalo, WY)

New: Children's Vintage Games & Races

Mark your calendars and
Watch For Further Details

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