

WESTERN ORGANIZING REVIEW

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Two new groups join WORC

On December 6, the Board of Directors of WORC voted unanimously to accept applications for membership by Western Native Voice (WNV) and the Idaho Organization of Resource Councils (IORC).

“We are pleased to welcome these two groups into the WORC,” said Norm Cimon, outgoing Chair of WORC. “The Idaho Organization of Resource Councils hosts an emerging grassroots base in Idaho, while Western Native Voice extends our engagement with Native Americans communities throughout Montana. Both groups strengthen our regional network and our ability to impact local, state, and national policy decisions.”

Based in Billings, Mont., Western Native Voice works across Montana to strengthen Native American communities on reservations and in cities. An all Native American Board of Directors governs the organization. Established in 2011, WNV has more than 3,000 members.

“Western Native Voice and WORC share a true commonality of interests in protecting the land, protecting the rights of people, and promoting social justice,” said Carol Juneau, WNV Vice Chair. “I have seen the strength and determination of Montana’s Native people as well as Montana ranchers and farmers in defending their lands and their cherished way of life.

“I think this joining of common interests of WORC with Western Native Voice is a wise union of our shared strength and our shared determination to provide opportunities to empower Montanans to fulfill these heavy responsibilities.”



The Idaho Organization of Resource Councils

IORC works to protect Idaho’s unique way of life by empowering citizens to improve the economic well-being of their communities by preserving family farms and ranches. IORC also supports local, sustainable agriculture, small businesses and clean energy development, and responsible stewardship of Idaho’s water, land, air, and natural resources. Formed in March 2014, IORC’s office is in Boise. The group has two local chapters, the Weiser River River Resource Council and the Portneuf Resource Council.

“WORC groups and members have a wealth of knowledge that they can share with us on issues and innovative solutions,” said Julia Page, IORC Chair. “Local communities and leaders can make a difference and WORC members have many years of experience doing just that. I am excited that IORC can be part of such a resourceful organization of members and staff working on important issues.”

WORC now consists of eight member organizations: Dakota Resource Council (North Dakota), Dakota Rural Action (South Dakota), Idaho Organization of Resource Councils, Northern Plains Resource Council (Montana), Oregon Rural Action, Powder River Basin Resource Council (Wyoming), Western Colorado Congress, and Western Native Voice.

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The View from WORC

By Bob LeResche, WORC Chair

Happy New Year, 2015! And there is plenty of new within WORC.

First, we welcome two important new groups into our WORC family—Western Native Voice (WNV) and the Idaho Organization of Resource Councils (IORC).

Based in Billings, WNV works across Montana to strengthen and empower Native American communities both on reservations and in Montana's cities. An all Native American Board of Directors governs the organization, established in 2011.

IORC works to protect Idaho's rural way of life by empowering citizens to improve the economic well being of their communities by preserving family farms and ranches. Formed in March of last year, IORC has two local chapters, the Weiser River Resource Council and the Portneuf Resource Council.

With the addition of WNV and IORC, the WORC network now includes more than 12,200 members and 39 local chapters in seven states.

Second, several long-serving staff members transitioned into new roles beginning January 1st. Pat Sweeney, WORC's founding Executive Director, now serves part-time as senior advisor to WORC. Pat is focusing on special projects, civic engagement and voter participation programs and fundraising.

John Smillie has taken the reins as Executive Director. John has been with WORC since 1986, most recently as Campaign Director. Kevin Williams has been promoted to Director of Organizing and Campaigns. Kevin was WORC's Director of Organizing and has been on staff since 1995.

In addition, Scott Skokos joined the team January 5 as a Regional Oil & Gas Organizer, working out of Billings. Scott previously worked for four years as an organizer and lobbyist for Dakota Resource Council.

Third, as happens each year on a rotation basis among our member groups, WORC has a new set of board officers. I am succeeding Oregon Rural Action's (ORA's) Norm Cimon as WORC's chair. Norm's shoes will be hard to fill. I'm a member of the Powder River Basin Resource Council and own a ranch and organic farm near Clearmont, Wyoming. The board elected Nancy Hartenhoff-Crooks of Dakota Rural Action as Vice-chair and Rein van West of Western Colorado Congress as Secretary/Treasurer. Nancy is the coordinator of disability services at South Dakota State University, and Rein is retired Director of the Colorado Outdoor Center.

Norm Cimon did an outstanding job as WORC Chair, and we are extremely fortunate to be able to look forward to his continuing participation on the WORC Board representing ORA.



WESTERN ORGANIZING REVIEW

The *Western Organizing Review* is published quarterly by the Western Organization of Resource Councils.

WORC is a regional network of grassroots community organizations, which includes 12,212 members and 39 local chapters. WORC helps its member groups succeed by providing trainings and coordinating regional issue campaigns.

WORC'S NETWORK

Dakota Resource Council
Dakota Rural Action
Idaho Organization of Resource Councils
Northern Plains Resource Council
Oregon Rural Action
Powder River Basin Resource Council
Western Colorado Congress
Western Native Voice

WORC'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Nancy Hartenhoff-Crooks, Vice-Chair
Rein Van West, Sec./Treas.
Bette Stieglitz
Theodora Bird Bear
Becky Ihli
Julia Page
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Wilma Tope
Monica Wiitanen

CONTACT WORC

220 South 27th Street, Suite B
Billings, Montana 59101
406/252-9672
billings@worc.org
www.worc.org

Around the Region

A look around WORC's network

Dakota Resource Council

The Dakota Resource Council (DRC) says new rules to make Bakken crude safer to ship depend on the state government's willingness to implement the standards. On December 12, the North Dakota Industrial Commission released rules to require extraction of most amounts of propane, butane and other volatile natural gas liquids found in crude oil.

The rules affect about 960 facilities in western North Dakota, according to a state official.

Dakota Rural Action

Dakota Rural Action (DRA) is teaming up with the Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) to train veterans returning to or starting careers in food and farming. FVC, an outreach organization offering veterans employment and farm education programs, is providing scholarships to veterans for DRA's Farm Beginnings, a training program on low-cost and sustainable methods of farming and ranching and on tools to launch a profitable enterprise.

"The Farm Beginnings class was such a great experience that opened up several new avenues," said Zack Carter, a young veteran and graduate of the program. "I now run cattle with another student from class who was also sponsored from the Farmer Veteran Coalition. The class and the farmer network were and still are involved with decisions I make on a daily basis."

Farm Beginnings has trained 58 families since it began in 2009. 77% percent of the graduates report involvement in farming since completing the class.

Idaho Organization of Resource Councils

On October 16, the Idaho Organization of Resource Councils launched the Portneuf Resource Council, based in Bannock County with a concentration of members in the city of Pocatello. The new local chapter is focusing on protecting Pocatello's watershed, updating the city's comprehensive plan, promoting urban agriculture, and passing cottage food legislation.

Northern Plains Resource Council

The Carbon County commissioners have rescinded a motion to create the Silvertip Zoning District that would provide landowner protections in the face of oil and gas development. In December, the Commissioners found that creating the Silvertip Zone was in the public interest and convenience for public health, safety and welfare, and for public infrastructure.

"The Commissioners stated just one month ago that this was good for the people in the zone, and now they have sided with just six people [out of 19], who have protested this," said Bonnie Martinell, a Belfry organic farmer and member of the Northern Plains Resource Council.

The zone would have created basic landowner protections for air, water, and land, setback requirements, and given landowners a voice in the type of oil and gas development on their property, rules that exist in most other states except for Montana.

Oregon Rural Action

Marc Sanson hit the ground running on December 1 as the new executive director of Oregon Rural Action (ORA). From Big Sky, Montana, Marc's experience includes in non-profit administration, foundation and major donor fundraising, staff supervision, and professional baseball management.

Powder River Basin Resource Council

A proposed 500-foot setback from oil and gas wells fails to protect homeowners living near oil and gas drilling, according to the Powder River Basin Resource Council. On November 18, the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission proposed a 500 foot setback—150 feet more than the current 350 foot setback—from both vertical and horizontal wells.

Set decades ago, Wyoming's current setback distance of 350 feet is one of the smallest in the nation. Landowners and citizens had called on the Commission to increase the distance in the face of new industrial scale horizontal oil wells. This proposal falls woefully short of the quarter-mile setback (1,320 feet) put forward by Powder River and other landowner groups in a citizen rulemaking petition submitted to the Commission in May 2013 and again this October.

Western Native Voice

Voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts by Western Native Voice helped hold steady voter turnout in Montana Indian Country. While the national voter turnout for a midterm election was the lowest in 72 years at 36% of eligible voters, turnout in Montana native communities averaged 40%, the same percentage as the last midterm election in 2010.

Increases in the turnout of registered voters in Montana ranged from 14% on the Rocky Boy Reservation to 10% on the Fort Belknap and Blackfeet Reservations. Turnout at the Northern Cheyenne Reservation matched the 2010 turnout percentage, while turnout at the Fort Peck, Flathead, and Crow Reservations dropped.

Western Colorado Congress

Members of the Western Colorado Congress called for an increase in setbacks from oil and gas drilling and better protection from air pollution at a December 10 meeting of a Colorado task force charged with providing recommendations to balance managing the oil and gas industry and its effects on people.

Joyce Wizer, a member of WCC's Grand Valley Citizens Alliance, told the task force that a 1,500-foot minimum setback between residences and well pads would help cut both noise and odor complaints. Colorado's current setback is 500 feet.

Concerned citizens also commented on plans to drill over 100 oil wells near Palisades and proposed oil and gas leasing in the North Fork Valley.

WORC is truly seen as a leader

One can't transition from a 42-year career in community organizing without a lot of mixed emotions and feelings. But one good thing about this decision is that it is a transition. I am grateful to the WORC board and staff for working with me on a plan that allows me to remain as Senior Advisor over the next three years. And continue in a limited capacity to work with the great new leadership and expanding staff at WORC.

As I reflect on the past four decades, I can't help but think about the primary goals we have as progressive community organizers and leaders: winning justice, building strong organizations, expanding leadership, developing connections and moving transformation in ourselves and society.

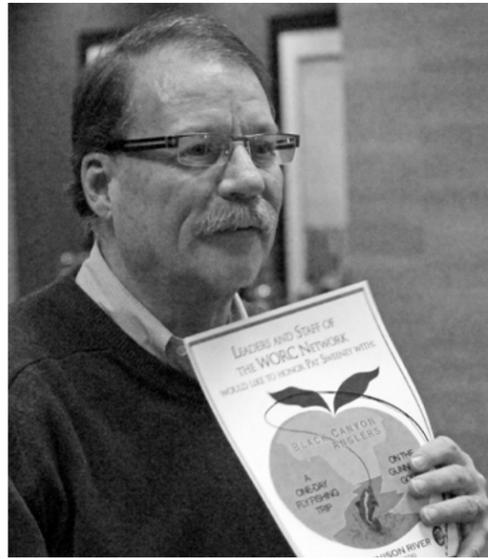
I can hardly count the wins on a wide variety of issues from local to state to national and increasingly confronting the international implications of free trade deals that could really undermine our work and our democracy. We have participated in historic events. Actually we have made history. From the passage of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act in 1977 and Coal Leasing Reform Act, to killing the Synfuels Corporation, and enacting the powerful, forward looking Northwest Power Planning Act, to stopping GMO wheat while passing state level cottage food legislation that expands our vision of homegrown prosperity. We are good at playing both defense and offense!

All the while we have built a strong network of state organizations and chapters, now including Western Native Voice. I remember organizing my first chapter, the Stillwater Protective Association in 1976, and it's still going strong today, 38 years later. This chapter, along with Northern Plains and Cottonwood Resource Council, negotiated one of the most comprehensive Good Neighbor Agreements in the country. We have a model regional network not really duplicated anywhere else in the country. A network that is now over 12,200 members, eight groups, 39 chapters and 70 staff in 18 offices, including our Washington, D.C. office.

We have never stopped expanding our own thinking and experiences. What an opportunity WORC has provided me to learn and grow personally from trainings, exchanges, travel, workshops, and collaborations. My own experience and journey is really very similar to so many of our leaders and staff, where involvement in our organizations and organizing expands our own perceptions of the world. Just think that nearly 2,000 participants have gone through our *Principles of Community Organizing* training since I started it some twenty-five years ago.

Networking and collaboration have also been an important part of my work over the years and a key component of our strategy. I have always seen our niche to coalesce with key partners. We have been instrumental in reaching out and building some long lasting collaborations, like the National Family Farm Coalition, Western Mining Action Network and so many others. WORC is truly seen as a leader in many of these collaborations. They are so important as relationship building should be a hallmark of our organizing and work both one-on-one and in our partnering outreach.

It goes without saying that WORC is indeed family to me from the staff, many of whom have partnered with me for twenty to thirty years and share so much of the success and strength of WORC. How can I not mention my 32-year



marriage to my organizing partner, inspiration, and companion, Teresa Erickson? And of course at WORC one of the great benefits is working with so many of our key leaders from across our seven states and Native communities.

Transformational. Is that too strong a word for what a career at WORC has been or what we aim to do? I don't think so as you add up all the ingredients and what we bring to organizations—our passion, drive, vision, leadership, experience and strategy skills.

I believe that our movement needs both sprinters and long-distance runners. We have so many important campaigns from the local community level to national that demand skilled leaders, campaigners and organizers to focus on in order to win. But we also need the long-distance runners who, in addition to immediate campaigns, can focus on organizational building and long-term strategy. Organizers and leaders who can help develop our vision, values and organizational culture around which we form powerful organizations. I have been lucky to be a long-distance runner and I plan to continue. It's a life-long passion.

— Pat Sweeney

113th Congress Scorecard

The 113th Congress has very narrowly avoided the distinction of being named the least productive session ever, according to GovTrack and the Pew Research Center. The intense gridlock of recent years clearly continued in 2013 and 2014, however, with relatively few bills passed—a total of 296.

While there were a few successes at passing substantive bipartisan legislation, the past two years were characterized by disagreements over House attempts to gut environmental protections and push unbridled energy development. Legislation regarding the Keystone XL pipeline was the poster child for this conflict, with the House voting at least ten times to override the presidential permitting process for this controversial pipeline.

The following lists of legislation represent key votes on WORC's issues by the members of WORC's Congressional delegation in 2013 and 2014. Each vote has a description that indicates if the vote was in favor of WORC's position on the bill, amendment or motion, or against it.

To see how other members of the House voted on these issues, go to: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/index.asp> or <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/index.asp> and search by Roll Call Vote number.

For Senate votes, go to: http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/a_three_sections_with_teasers/votes.htm, select 2013 or 2014, and search by Roll Call Vote number. Text, summaries and status of bills and amendments may be viewed online at thomas.loc.gov.

House Votes

H1. Keystone XL Pipeline

H.R. 3 would have approved the construction and operation of the Keystone XL pipeline, overriding the requirements that an Environmental Impact Statement must be completed and that a Presidential Permit must be issued before the pipeline can be built. WORC opposed the bill, which passed the House on May 22, 2013 by a vote of 241-175 (2013 Roll Call Vote 179). The Senate did not pass H.R. 3, and the bill did not become law. A plus (+) represents a vote against the bill, in favor of WORC's position.

H2. Local Food

Rep. McClintock (R-CA) offered an amendment to the House Farm Bill (H.R. 1947) that would have eliminated the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program, which provides marketing and resource assistance for direct-to-consumer sales, and also supports farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, and other local agriculture business models. WORC opposed the amendment, which failed the House on June 20, 2013 by a vote of 156-269 (2013 Roll Call Vote 272). A plus (+) represents a vote against the amendment, in favor of WORC's position.

H3. Coal Ash/Drinking Water Protection

Rep. McCollum (D-MN) offered a motion to H.R. 2218 (See H4, below) to require all coal ash disposal facilities to prevent contamination of groundwater and sources of drinking water. WORC supported the motion, which failed the House on July 25, 2013 by a vote of 192-225 (2013 Roll Call Vote 417). A plus (+) represents a vote for the motion, in favor of WORC's position.

H4. EPA Coal Ash Disposal Rules

H.R. 2218 would have blocked the EPA's pending rules for coal ash disposal facilities that would regulate coal ash as a hazardous waste. WORC opposed the bill, which passed the House on July 25, 2013 by a vote of 265-155 (2013 Roll Call Vote 418). The Senate has did not act on H.R. 2218, and the bill did not become law. A plus (+) represents a vote against the bill, in favor of WORC's position.

113th Congress Scorecard

Senate

		S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Score
CO	Udall (D)	+	-	-	NV	+	-	+	50%
	Bennet (D)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	71%
ID	Crapo (R)	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	14%
	Risch (R)	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	14%
MT	Baucus* (D)	-	-	-	+	NA	NA	NA	
	Walsh* (D)	NA	NA	NA	NA	+	-	+	
	Tester (D)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	71%
ND	Hoeven (R)	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	14%
	Heitkamp (D)	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	29%
OR	Wyden (D)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	100%
	Merkley (D)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	100%
SD	Johnson (D)	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	57%
	Thune (R)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
WY	Enzi (R)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
	Barrasso (R)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%

*Sen. Max Baucus resigned his Senate seat to become the ambassador to China. Sen. Walsh replaced Baucus. Because neither Senator was able to vote on the full range of WORC concerns, a score was not tallied.

House

		H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8	H9	H10	H11	Score
CO	DeGette (D)	NV	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	100%
	Polis (D)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	NV	+	100%
	Tipton (R)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	9%
	Gardner (R)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	9%
	Lamborn (R)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	9%
	Coffman (R)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
	Perlmutter (D)	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	82%
ID	Labrador (R)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	18%
	Simpson (R)	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	18%
MT	Daines (R)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	9%
ND	Cramer (R)	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	NV	-	-	10%
OR	Bonamici (D)	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	82%
	Walden (R)	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	18%
	Blumenauer (D)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	100%
	DeFazio (D)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	100%
	Schrader (D)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	100%
SD	Noem (R)	-	+	-	-	-	NV	NV	NV	-	NV	-	14%
WY	Lummis (R)	-	-	-	-	-	NV	-	-	+	-	-	10%

H5. Oil and Gas Giveaway

H.R. 1965 would have given priority to oil and gas development over hunting, fishing, grazing, renewable energy and other uses of federal land through a series of provisions that include (but are not limited to) automatically approving federal oil and gas permits not acted on within 60 days, and requiring that split estate landowners and anyone else protesting a lease, right-of-way or permit to drill pay a \$5,000 fee. WORC opposed the bill, which passed the House on November 20, 2013 by a vote of 228-192 (2013 Roll Call Vote 600). The Senate has not acted on H.R. 1965. A plus (+) represents a vote against the bill, in favor of WORC's position.

H6. Methane Emissions

Rep. Holt (D-NJ) offered an amendment to H.R. 2728 (See H8, below) to clarify that the Department of Interior has authority to require reduction of methane emissions (venting, flaring and fugitive emissions) from federal oil and gas wells. WORC supported the amendment, which failed the House on November 20, 2013 by a vote of 190-230 (2013 Roll Call Vote 601). A plus (+) represents a vote for the amendment, in favor of WORC's position.

H7. Disclosure of Fracking Chemicals

Rep. Lowenthal (D-CA) offered a motion to H.R. 2728 (See H8, below) to ensure that the Department of Interior has authority to require the public disclosure of chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing of federal oil and gas wells. WORC supported the motion, which failed the House on November 20, 2013 by a vote of 188-232 (2013 Roll Call Vote 603). A plus (+) represents a vote for the motion, in favor of WORC's position.

H8. BLM Fracking Rules

H.R. 2728 would have stripped the Department of Interior of its authority to issue rules for hydraulic fracturing of federal oil and gas wells. WORC opposed the bill, which passed the House on November 20, 2013 by a vote of 235-187 (2013 Roll Call Vote 604). H.R. 2728 was not acted upon by the Senate and did not become law. A plus (+) represents a vote against the bill, in favor of WORC's position.

H9. Buy American

Rep. Grayson (D-FL) offered an amendment to H.R. 4660, the bill to fund the Commerce Department and other agencies, to prohibit the U.S. Trade Representative from negotiating trade agreements that waive requirements for government agencies to Buy American. WORC supported the amendment, which passed the House on May 30, 2014 by a vote of 225-183 (2014 Roll Call Vote 263). H.R. 4660 was approved by the Senate, and remains in effect until the end of Fiscal Year 2015 (September 30, 2015). A plus (+) represents a vote for the amendment, in favor of WORC's position.

H10. Natural Gas Export

H.R. 6 would have rushed reviews of proposed facilities to export liquefied natural gas without the extensive safety, economic and environmental reviews that the Department of Energy is supposed to give under existing law. Rep. Garamendi (D-CA) offered a motion to H.R. 6 to require that DOE deny applications to facilities that would increase gas prices for senior citizens or export gas to countries sponsoring terrorism. WORC supported the motion, which failed the House on June 25, 2014 by a vote of 192-225 (2014 Roll Call Vote 358). H.R. 6 passed the House, but was not passed by the Senate and did not become law. A plus (+) represents a vote for the motion, in favor of WORC's position.

H11. Corporate Giveaway

H.R. 3979 is a bill to establish a budget and authorize expenditures for the Defense Department. Last minute negotiations among Congressional leaders resulted in inclusion of a package of public lands bills containing corporate giveaways, such as a Montana coal swap that provided a windfall to Great Northern Properties to the detriment of local ranchers, and an Arizona land swap that transfers a site sacred to Native Americans to a foreign copper mining company. H.R. 3979 passed the House on December 4, 2014 by a vote of 300-119 (2014 Roll Call Vote 551). The bill passed the Senate on December 12, 2014 (see S6). A plus (+) represents a vote against the bill, in favor of WORC's position.

Senate Votes

S1. Carbon Fee

Sen. Blunt (R-MO) offered a motion to the 2013 Budget Resolution (S.C.R. 8) that would have created a point of order against future legislation instituting a fee or tax on carbon emissions, making it more difficult to pass such legislation. WORC opposed the motion, which failed the Senate on March 22, 2013 by a vote of 53-46 (60 votes were required for passage, 2013 Roll Call Vote 59). A plus (+) represents a vote against the motion, in favor of WORC's position.

S2. Keystone XL Pipeline

Sen. Boxer (D-CA) offered an amendment to the 2013 Budget Resolution (S.C.R. 8) that would have required further review of the Keystone XL pipeline to answer questions such as how much of the pipeline's capacity would be shipped through the U.S. to overseas markets and how much of the steel used to build the pipeline would be from U.S. plants. WORC supported the amendment, which failed the Senate on March 22, 2013 by a vote of 33-66 (2013 Roll Call Vote 60). A plus (+) represents a vote for the amendment, in favor of WORC's position.

S3. GMO Labeling

Sen. Sanders (I-VT) offered an amendment to the Senate Farm Bill (S. 954) that would have ensured that states have the right to label any food or beverage that contains genetically engineered ingredients. WORC supported the amendment, which failed the Senate on May 22, 2013 by a vote of 27-71 (2013 Roll Call Vote 135). A plus (+) represents a vote for the amendment, in favor of WORC's position.

S4. Farm Bill

S. 954 was the Senate's version of the Farm Bill. WORC supported this five-year Farm Bill because it would continue to support local foods and renewable energy programs, and does not include the controversial provisions in the House Farm Bill that would repeal the country-of-origin labeling law and limit federal antitrust enforcement. S. 954 passed the Senate on June 10, 2013 by a vote of 66-27 (2013 Roll Call Vote 145). Congress ultimately passed a different version of the Farm bill in 2014. A plus (+) represents a vote for the bill, in favor of WORC's position.

S5. Energy Efficiency

S. 2262 would have helped homeowners pay for energy efficiency upgrades to their homes. WORC supported a motion to end debate and vote on final passage of the bill. The motion failed by a vote of 55-36 on May 5, 2014 (60 votes were required for passage, 2014 Roll Call Vote 142). A plus (+) vote represents a vote for the bill, in favor of WORC's position.

S6. Corporate Giveaway

H.R. 3979 is a bill to establish a budget and authorize expenditures for the Defense Department. Last minute negotiations among Congressional leaders resulted in inclusion of a package of public lands bills that contained corporate giveaways, such as a Montana coal swap that provided a windfall to Great Northern Properties to the detriment of local ranchers, and an Arizona land swap that transfers a site sacred to Native Americans to a foreign copper mining company. H.R. 3979 passed the House on December 4, 2014 (see H11) and passed the Senate on December 12, 2014 by a vote of 89-11 (2014 Roll Call Vote 325). A plus (+) represents a vote against the bill, in favor of WORC's position.

S7. Keystone XL Pipeline

S. 2280 would have approved construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, but the motion to end debate and vote on final passage of the bill failed by a single vote, 59-41 on November 18, 2014 (60 votes required to proceed, 2014 Roll Call Vote 280). A plus (+) represents a vote against the motion, in favor of WORC's position.

WORC supports appeal of WTO ruling against meat labeling

In October, the World Trade Organization (WTO) dealt another blow to American consumers' right to know the country of origin for beef. In a long-awaited decision, the WTO ruled that the U.S. Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) program for meat violates trade agreements because it unfairly discriminates against Canadian and Mexican livestock imports. The ruling opened the door for Canada and Mexico to retaliate with tariffs on a variety of U.S. exports.

With overwhelming support from consumers and farmers, Congress passed COOL in the 2002 Farm Bill. It went into effect in 2008 and since then has faced efforts by the food industry to kill the program or delay its implementation. COOL labels show which country a particular cut of meat was born, raised, and slaughtered. The most recent WTO ruling found that although COOL is legal and provides consumers with accurate information, COOL raises costs and treats imports less favorably, violating trade rules.

Following the ruling, rancher Mabel Dobbs, Chair of WORC's Ag and Food Campaign Team from Weiser, Idaho, issued a statement on behalf of WORC urging the Obama Administration to appeal the decision. She said the ruling allows the WTO to meddle in commonsense programs and protections supported by the American people. "American consumers have a right to make informed decisions about the meat they buy and eat," Dobbs said. "American independent livestock producers should be able to differentiate our meat products from our foreign competitors."

With pressure from family farm and consumer groups and some members of Congress, the U.S. Trade Representative announced in November that the U.S. would appeal the WTO decision. The final ruling could be months away.

In the meantime, however, opponents of COOL inserted language on the must-pass federal budget bill in December requiring the U.S. Department of Agriculture to issue a report recommending any changes in federal law required to bring COOL into compliance with the WTO by May 1, months before the WTO appeals process is expected to end. Among the changes Secretary Tom Vilsack is reportedly considering is making COOL voluntary, essentially gutting the program.

In a December letter to the editor printed in the Casper Star-Tribune, Powder River Basin Resource Council members and ranchers Jay and Wilma Tope wrote, "Just like other products that land on the shelves in the United States, from parts to peppers, we feel we also have the right to label our product. This is just logic."

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Become an effective leader in your community with tested organizing and fundraising skills.

July 15-18—Billings, Montana

Training topics include:

- Why we organize
- Leadership development
- Running good meetings
- Developing issue campaigns
- Building & maintaining chapters
- Grassroots fundraising
- Membership recruitment
- Planning and taking actions

Visit www.worc.org for more information.

WORC seeks environmental review of federal coal program

In late November, WORC and Friends of the Earth (FOE), with the support of philanthropist Paul G. Allen, filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia to require the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) for the federal coal leasing program.

There has not been a comprehensive environmental review of the federal coal leasing program since 1979. Since that time, scientific evidence has established that greenhouse gases produced by coal mining and combustion endanger the public health and welfare. The BLM, however, has never analyzed the coal leasing program's impact on climate change. The complaint argues that the results of this analysis will compel the agency to deliver on its legal obligation to promote environmentally responsible management of public lands on behalf of the citizens of the United States.

"More than 80 percent of federal coal comes from the Powder River Basin in Montana and Wyoming. People living in the Powder River Basin have endured many hardships not predicted in the outdated environmental studies including lack of access to grazing lands, un-restored groundwater aquifers, toxic emissions from explosions, costly and dangerous railroad traffic in major cities to name a few," said Bob LeResche, [then] Vice Chair of WORC and rancher from Clearmont, Wyo. "A full environmental study will enable the BLM to fulfill their duty to promote environmentally responsible management of public lands in light of climate change on behalf of the citizens of the United States."

"There is an inconsistency between the President's declared policy on global warming and the coal leasing policy of the BLM," said Ben Schreiber, climate and energy program director of FOE. "The lawsuit is saying, under the law, the BLM must provide an updated programmatic environmental impact statement that examines the contribution of mining and combustion of BLM coal to climate change and consider alternative energy policy options that would help reduce global warming."

"More than 40 percent of all the coal mined in the United States is owned by U.S. taxpayers, yet the BLM has not fulfilled its obligation to manage these resources responsibly," said Dune Ives, co-manager of the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation. "The American people should not have to go to court to get the government to do its job, but we need to do what's necessary to protect our lands for future generations. We are supporting this litigation because we can't wait three more decades to understand the environmental impact of the federal coal leasing program."

In early 2013, President Barack Obama declared the policy of his Administration is "to act" in leading the world in addressing climate change by "using less dirty energy, using more clean energy, wasting less energy throughout our economy." The lawsuit says, "As administrator of the largest coal deposits on earth, the BLM must undertake a review of the coal management program to assess its environmental effects and alternatives that mitigate or eliminate them.



The Bureau of Land Management has not studied the effects of its coal leasing program on climate change. Burning coal to generate power accounts for 40 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions. Photo by Bruce Gordon.

Of the primary fossil fuels used for energy production, coal produces the most CO₂ per unit of energy. The plaintiffs believe ending the extraction of our coal should be the starting place for the United States to achieve the greenhouse gas reductions necessary to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the BLM has a responsibility to supplement a programmatic environmental study whenever significant new information bearing on the program's environmental impact emerges. The scientific understanding of the causes and effects of climate change, and the role of coal and other fossil fuels, has advanced significantly over the past three decades.

Coal combustion for power generation is responsible for 40 percent of global CO₂ emissions. The BLM, as the public's agent in managing federal mineral resources, has direct responsibility under NEPA to consider the environmental and public health effects of coal mined on public lands.

Clean Power Plan: If Montana can, why can't Wyoming?

Member commentary by Bob LeResche, originally published November 2014

The apocryphal explanation for the rise of the Japanese auto industry—and the accompanying fall of Detroit—has it that when the U.S. government established fuel economy standards for motor vehicles in 1975, "Japan hired 1,000 engineers but Detroit hired 1,000 attorneys."

Wyoming seems determined to play a starring role in an unfortunate repeat performance of Detroit's big, bullheaded blunder.

In June, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published proposed standards to reduce carbon pollution nationwide. They call it the "Clean Power Plan," and have constructed it, according to EPA, to provide "all the power we need, with less of what we don't need: pollution."

The Clean Power Plan is no list of federal dictates—no one-size-fits-all set of rules. Rather, it proposes goals for each state, outlines techniques states might choose to advance toward those goals, and asks each state to craft its own road forward.

Given Wyoming's great reliance on coal, EPA suggests a very modest goal for our state: a mere 19 percent increase in carbon efficiency in the next 15 years, which is far less than the 30 percent average nationally.

Suggested measures to achieve this modest goal include 1) improving efficiency at coal-fired power plants, 2) using existing gas-fired power plants more, 3) expanding low-emission generation (eg: wind, solar, etc.) and 4) increasing energy efficiencies at points of use, such as homes and businesses.

EPA's watchword in the proposal is "flexibility." Wyoming may meet our goal however we want, using any mix of the four methods listed, or even through other means, such as increasing transmission efficiency, building new gas generation, energy storage, combined-cycle plants, expanded nuclear, market-based trading programs, or any other way.

By late October, Montana's Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) had published five potential scenarios and strategies by which its state can meet the EPA goals, maintain cheap domestic energy supplies, and keep the huge Colstrip coal-fired power plant operating. They have already held public meetings to discuss these scenarios in Colstrip, Billings and Missoula, and heard from more than 500 Montanans. MDEQ Director Tracy Stone-Manning told the Billings Gazette, "EPA provided us with a whole lot of flexibility," and described how MDEQ had reached out to industry in preparing its strategies, and noted that, "a major effort to increase energy efficiency will create jobs."

What has Wyoming done? Not so much. How have we responded? Like a pouty Luddite.

Gov. Matt Mead continually reaffirms his skepticism of climate science and has forbidden discussion of climate change in our schools by not vetoing a legislative ban on Next Generation Science Standards because they acknowledge the fact of global warming. Just sixteen days after EPA published its proposed CO₂ reduction plan, a Mead press release led with, "Governor Mead has taken a strong stand against federal overreach including filing more than 30 lawsuits involving the federal government."

Mead's first reaction to EPA's thoughtful, very flexible, state-centered proposal was nothing but negative. Before WDEQ had even had a chance to review the document, the Governor told it what to think. "Our first take was this doesn't look good," he said at a press conference June 18. "It looks to us like coal is being targeted, to the detriment of Wyoming. ... We're going to pinpoint as well as we can: We don't like this, this, this and this."

Change a few words, and you can hear the faint whines of 1975 Detroit.

With the governor setting such a negative tone, it is hard to imagine what Wyoming DEQ can do. It certainly has not produced five creative Wyoming-specific scenarios and heard from 500 citizens at public hearings, as has MDEQ. "We are still working on our responses at this time and have not released anything official yet," emailed DEQ's director earlier this month when asked what Wyoming DEQ thought of EPA's proposal.

This month the United Nations published the most alarming study to date of global climate change, and the threat to our planet is a proven scientific fact. Now is the time to act. Citizens of Wyoming deserve a state government that will move us forward and help America lead rather than obstruct and hold us back.

If Montana can react positively and creatively, why can't Wyoming? Why won't Wyoming?

— Bob LeResche and his wife own a ranch and raise heirloom vegetables in the Powder River Basin. He serves on the Boards of Powder River Basin Resource Council and is Chair of WORC.

WORC

220 SOUTH 27TH STREET, SUITE B
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CALENDAR

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Palisade, ColoradoJune 11-13

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
Billings, MontanaJuly 15-18

DAKOTA RESOURCE COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING
Location TBAOctober 24

DAKOTA RURAL ACTION ANNUAL MEETING
Location TBANovember 7

IDAHO ORG. OF RESOURCE COUNCILS ANNUAL MEETING
Location TBANovember 14

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