

GAO Says BLM Isn't Watching Oil and Gas Industry

Agency falls behind on enforcement, Congressional watchdog group says

Federal auditors say the Interior Department is spending so much time issuing drilling permits to oil and gas companies that it is failing to protect public health and the environment from problems with existing wells.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued the report, *Oil and Gas Development – Increased Permitting Activity Has Lessened BLM's Ability to Meet Its Environmental Protection Responsibilities* in late July. The main conclusion of the GAO report is that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is so focused on issuing permits for oil and gas drilling that it's neglecting its responsibility to protect the land and other resources.



Tight sands drilling operation near Clark, Wyoming.

“GAO Report” continued on page 14

WORC Study Finds Multi-billion Dollar Taxpayer Liability for Oil and Gas Clean-up

Federal and state agencies need to overhaul regulation of oil and gas development or taxpayers and landowners could be saddled with billions in clean-up costs, according to a new WORC report.

Released on August 16, the study, *Filling the Gaps – How to Improve Oil and Gas Reclamation and Reduce Taxpayer Liability*, focused on reclamation planning and financial assurance for oil and gas drilling on public and private land.

“Existing financial assurance for oil and gas sites, known as blanket bonds, falls far short of actual clean-up needs,” said James Kuipers, of Kuipers and Associates and study author. “The overall industry-wide liability is estimated in the billions of dollars, and

just a few bad actor companies could saddle taxpayers and landowners with millions of dollars of clean-up liability.”

Kuipers said the federal government requires the hard rock and coal mining industries to post bonds based on actual clean-up costs.

WORC's report supports a Government Accountability Office (GAO) analysis of shortfalls in management of federal oil and gas drilling. In July, the GAO concluded the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) focus on oil and gas drilling permits has led to neglecting its responsibility to protect the land and other resources. That GAO report confirmed the findings of a WORC

“WORC Study” continued on page 15

Western Organizing Review

Editor

Kerri Nelson, Associate Development Director

Contributing Editors

Jeri Lynn Bakken, Regional Program Associate

Kevin Dowling, Communications Director

John Smillie, Program Director

Tim Ennis, Regional Technology Coordinator

Kiki Hubbard, Research Fellow

Ross Keogh, Intern

The Western Organizing Review is published quarterly by the Western Organization of Resource Councils Education Project, a private, nonprofit corporation which supports the charitable and educational activities of WORC.

WORC is a regional network of seven grassroots community organizations that include 9,500 members and 45 local chapters. WORC helps its member groups succeed by coordinating regional issue campaigns.

Celebrating 25 Years of Grassroots Leadership and Action

Contents

The View from WORC	3
Bits & Pieces	4
Wyoming Group Works to Protect the Beartooth Front	6
Roundup Ready or Not, GM Alfalfa is Here	7
WORC Builds Momentum Against Future Trade Agreements	8
Court Upholds Captive Supply Ruling	9
Northern Plains Mobilizes for Water Beyond Methane	10
Energy Bill Ignores the Needs of Western Landowners	11
The Problem with GM Alfalfa	12
Three Easy Ways to Speed Up Your Computer	13

Western Organization of Resource Councils

WORC Offices

Billings Office

2401 Montana Avenue, #301
 Billings, MT 59101
 406-252-9672
 billings@worc.org
 www.worc.org

Washington, DC

110 Maryland Ave. NE #307
 Washington, DC 20002
 202-547-7040
 dc@worc.org

Montrose, Colorado

60584 Horizon Drive
 Montrose, CO 81401
 970-323-6849
 montrose@worc.org

Lemmon, South Dakota

2307 5th Avenue NE
 Lemmon, SD 57638
 701-376-7077
 jerilynn@worc.org

Member Organizations

Dakota Resource Council

Box 1095
 Dickinson, ND 58601
 701-483-285
 drc@drcinfo.com
 www.drcinfo.com

Dakota Rural Action

Box 549
 Brookings, SD 57006
 605-697-5204
 action@dakotarural.org
 www.dakotarural.org

Idaho Rural Council

P.O. Box 118
 Bliss, ID 83314
 208-352-4332
 irc@rmci.net
 www.idahoruralcouncil.org

Northern Plains Resource Council

2401 Montana Ave., #200
 Billings, MT 59101
 406-248-1154
 info@northernplains.org
 www.northernplains.org

Oregon Rural Action

P.O. Box 1231
 La Grande, OR 81401
 541-975-2411
 info@oraction.org
 www.oraction.org

Powder River Basin Resource Council

934 N. Main St.
 Sheridan, WY 82801
 307-672-5809
 resources@powderriverbasin.org
 www.powderriverbasin.org

Western Colorado Congress

PO Box 1931
 Grand Junction, CO 81501
 970-249-1978
 info@wccongress.org
 www.wccongress.org

The View from WORC

by *Dena Hoff*

Another year is rushing past, and most of us are too busy to notice. So far, 2005 has been rather disappointing for many of us who thought we were living in a democracy where our opinions, needs, and dreams for a better society mattered.

Thanks to all the members and our great staff who worked so long and hard to defeat CAFTA. Fourteen of the 18 representatives in the WORC states voted against CAFTA. Let us hope that the CAFTA fight has built lasting alliances for future battles, and a new awareness in the American public about just whose interests Congress really takes to heart in making policy. Passing CAFTA was just another example of the concentration of power into fewer and fewer hands for the benefit of fewer and fewer people with the prospect of enormous social displacement and loss of local and national control over social, economic, and environmental policy making. We won't have to wait long to see the promises made about the benefits of CAFTA mirror the empty promises and outright lies that came with NAFTA.

The energy bill, despite our best efforts, is a total betrayal of the western communities and the landowners who live near them.

Having vented my disappointment, I will now try to bring a little ray of sunshine into your day.

The sunrise this morning was beautiful. After changing the irrigation water and doing the barn chores, I walked out into my garden, ignoring the weeds, and looked at the bounty just waiting to be put into the freezer and the pantry shelves. I breathed the fresh air and thanked God for all the people at WORC who fought so hard to keep it clean. I thought about all the shared values we are for when we are constantly being accused of being "against everything" by our detractors.

We want peace and prosperity and dignity in our homes and our world. We are for fair prices and living wages so we can maintain safe, healthy, vibrant communities with excellent schools and affordable health care.

We want our raised voices to be joined by many other voices and be heard in government over the jingling of corporate moneybags buying influence, so we can truly participate in setting policies for the common good.

Our children should be able to live and raise their children in the places they grew up, with meaningful livelihoods which are appreciated and adequately compensated, and in wide open spaces with clean air and water.

Everyone should have access to enough healthy and nutritious food raised sustainably by family farmers and ranchers.

We long for time to rebuild communities around shared work and play, where we can get to know and appreciate our neighbors. We believe in trade that benefits all the trading partners in a just and equitable way.

These are things we are for. How could anyone not want to join us in making these things possible?

Talk to your neighbors. Share your dreams, and invite them to share their dreams. Ask them to join us.

We have so much to offer, and so much to do, and we can succeed if we don't give up hope and offer that hope to everyone we meet.

Watch the sunrise, take a deep breath of clean air, smell the flowers, and be glad you are alive to fight another day for everything that matters to us all.

Dena Hoff is the Chair of WORC. She and her husband operate a farm near Glendive, Montana.



Bits & Pieces

Dakota Rural Action Wins Factory Farm Zoning Change

The Deuel County Chapter of **Dakota Rural Action** won a court decision in July requiring a public vote on proposed zoning changes. The decision overturned the rejection by the county commission of two petitions seeking the changes. The proposed ordinance would increase the minimum distance between factory farms and either homes or private wells. The ordinance provides for a 1.25 mile set back for largest factory farms from any residence or well, up from a quarter-mile for homes and 640 feet for wells. The ordinance would also clarify that conditional use permits are referable for a public vote. Unless the county commission appeals the ruling, the county will conduct a public vote in the fall. "This is a clear indication that average citizens can retain some control over their communities and have their opinions counted in public elections," said member Jim Buchholz.

Dakota Resource Council

The North Dakota State University Research Foundation (NDSURF) has conceded to the state's attorney general that the public should have access to documents related to contracts between the foundation and Monsanto. The attorney general responded to a letter from the **Dakota Resource Council** contending that North Dakotans deserve to know what type of research is being done at their land grant university. In the letter, DRC pointed out that NDSURF's mission is to support NDSU, and that its governance, finances, communications and research are all linked inseparably to NDSU. "We are not interested in proprietary information," said Dean Hulse, DRC chair. "We simply want to know what type of commitments our public university is making to a private company on behalf of taxpayers. Is the NDSURF operating in the best interest of farmers and consumers or being unduly influenced by private, special interests?" NDSU was a partner with Monsanto in the development of Roundup Ready hard red spring wheat until Monsanto bowed to market pressure and suspended research in May 2004.



Vegetable display at a farmer's market, as part of Oregon Rural Action's Community Food Connections Project.

Oregon Rural Action Expands Farmer's Market Project

Oregon Rural Action's Community Food Connections Project is providing research and support to farmers and farmers' markets in Northeast Oregon and is working to increase opportunities for farmers to sell their products locally and provide opportunities for people to purchase local farm products. The project is conducting market surveys for farmers markets in Joseph, Pendleton, La Grand, and Baker City this summer to give market coordinators critical information, such as average number of patrons. The project set up a website, www.neofarm.org, to advertise the markets in the region and has created brochures to place in tourist attractions. In the fall, the project will offer training for farmers and market managers through the 2nd Annual Farm Direct Marketing Conference.

Northern Plains Celebrates Five Year Anniversary of Good Neighbor Agreement

Northern Plains Resource Council and its two affiliates in Stillwater and Sweet Grass counties celebrated a hand-shake deal on revisions to the Good Neighbor Agreement with the Stillwater Mining Company in June. The mine is the only producer of platinum-group metals in the Americas and one of Montana's largest employers.

After over a year of monthly meetings, negotiators from both sides resolved issues related to water monitoring and quality, future review of reclamation plans and performance bonds, and the evolving relationship between the mine and Cottonwood Resource Council of Sweet Grass County, Stillwater Protective Association of Stillwater County, and Northern Plains members.

—Aaron Browning, Northern Plains staff

Western Colorado Congress Plans Annual Meeting

Jim Hightower is the keynote speaker at the 25th Annual Meeting of the **Western Colorado Congress** on October 8, at the Campbell Center, Mesa State College, in Grand Junction. Twice elected Texas Agriculture Commissioner, Hightower is a National Public Radio commentator and author of *Thieves in High Places: They've Stolen Our Country and It's Time to Take It Back*.

The meeting also features Lois Gibbs, who organized her neighbors after discovering that 21,000 tons of chemical waste was buried underneath their neighborhood in Niagara Falls, New York, the infamous Love Canal. She later founded the Center for Health, Environment and Justice. For more information, call (970) 249-1978.

Powder River Basin Resource Council Offers Youth Science Award

Science-minded middle- and high-school students throughout Wyoming can compete for recognition—and cash—under a new energy category in Powder River Basin Resource Council's Bill Barlow Memorial Youth in Conservation Awards, offered in conjunction with the Wyoming State Science Fair. The new category, which includes studies of renewable energy, energy conservation or energy efficiency technologies, is aimed at increasing awareness of and interest in alternative energy options that could offset America's demand for conventional fuels. Eligible projects will focus on renewable energy sources—in-

**WORC Calendar
2005**

Principles of Community Organizing Workshop

Glenwood Springs, ColoradoSeptember 24-27

Dakota Resource Council Annual Meeting

Minot, North DakotaOctober 22

Dakota Rural Action Annual Meeting

.....November 5

Northern Plains Resource Council Annual Meeting

Billings, MontanaNovember 11-12

WORC Board and Staff Meeting

Billings, MontanaDecember 1-3

cluding solar or wind power, hydroelectric generation or generators fueled by biomass, such as animal or municipal wastes—as well as ways to reduce energy use or improve efficiency. Students and science teachers across the state can contact Powder River at (307) 672-5809 or prbrc@powderriverbasin.org for more information.

—John Vanvig, Powder River staff

Idaho Rural Council Continues Fight Against Factory Farms

Members of the Idaho Rural Council are facing the addition of 70,000 to 100,000 more dairy cows to the state's 445,000 current total. Twin Falls County members are challenging a permit for a factory farm in Cassia County along the Twin Falls County line. While Cassia County would get the taxes, Twin Falls county residents would get most of the manure, stench, and broken roads from heavy dairy traffic. Lincoln County members are fighting a water transfer to an 11,000-head factory farm because of water shortages, and Elmore County members are challenging another dairy proposal what would add thousands of dairy cows in the county.

Wyoming Group Works to Protect the Beartooth Front

Powder River Basin Resource Council affiliate fights irresponsible energy development

The turn of the century was supposed to mark the start of a new life for Deb Thomas. The Thomas' had just purchased land with plans to turn their piece of Wyoming, at the front of Beartooths, into a dream home. Their plans changed when Windsor Energy Corporation began tight sands drilling operations less than a quarter mile from their property. Before the hazardous drilling fluids repeatedly washed over her property, Deb took action. She helped form the Clark Resource Council (CRC) the newest affiliate of Powder River Basin Resource Council. CRC has made substantial progress in regulating and limiting drilling activities around Clark, Wyoming.



Deb Thomas, Clark Resource Council, stands next to a pipeline ditch near her home in Clark, Wyoming.

The most recent victory for CRC has been the delay of a seismic Environmental Assessment for a 75 square mile area near Deb's home. The victory, which the Cody Enterprise called "a testament to the Clark Resource Council and its tenacious efforts to protect that portion of the Beartooth Front," has come thanks to continual pressure applied to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) by members of CRC. CRC has demanded a complete and thorough environmental assessment of the seismic studies potential effects on wildlife and municipal water wells.

Letters from CRC have poured into the governor's office, the local BLM office, the Wyoming Oil and Gas Commission and any other organization that CRC thought might listen. The letters paint a horrific picture about the nature of drilling practices. CRC members are concerned with drilling fluid run-off, unlined drill pits, contaminated underground water, and illegal offsite hazardous materials dumping.

Windsor Energy is drilling wells on two sites in the basin and working to construct a pipeline and compressor station.

—Ross Keogh, Intern

Vist www.clarkresourcecouncil.org for more information on Clark Resource Council.

Roundup Ready or Not, GM Alfalfa is Here

In June 2005, the Monsanto Company and Forage Genetics International won approval by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to commercially release Roundup Ready alfalfa, a variety that tolerates the leading ingredient in Monsanto's trademark Roundup herbicide, glyphosate. Farmers are concerned that Roundup Ready alfalfa could pose unique environmental, agricultural, and economic risks to the Northern Great Plains, as the first perennial GM crop commercialized for production in this region.



Because alfalfa is a cross-pollinating crop, genetically modified DNA from Roundup Ready fields could contaminate organic and other non-Roundup Ready fields.

Many organic and natural beef producers are unable to purchase grain with a guarantee that it does not contain transgenic traits because of the rampant contamination of U.S. corn and soybeans. If alfalfa becomes as contaminated as other commodity feeds, non-GM seed sources will become extremely limited for farmers and ranchers committed to non-GM production.

Dakota Rural Action member and National Organic Certifier Bernard Barnaud is certain that cross-pollination will cause problems. "Organic producers can't guarantee their certified organic alfalfa is GM-free if Roundup Ready alfalfa is grown near their fields—this is a big problem," Bernard said.

Mabel Dobbs of *Way Out West* adds, "I think [Roundup Ready alfalfa] is as critical if not more critical than wheat because of the containment issue."

Currently, only 17% of alfalfa in the U.S. is treated with herbicides. Roundup Ready technology is not a panacea for controlling alfalfa weeds, especially in

light of mounting evidence that glyphosate-resistant weeds are on a steady increase. Since 1996, pesticide use on herbicide tolerant crops has increased by 138 million pounds. In California alone, it is estimated that Roundup Ready alfalfa could result in the application of 200,000 pounds more herbicides a year. Moreover, researchers identified glyphosate-resistant weeds in Roundup Ready alfalfa experiment plots within three years of planting.

In addition to higher seed and chemical costs, Monsanto's patents on its self-propagating traits add unprecedented liability risks to users of its technology, including a Technology Agreement that erases farmers' right to save seed for replanting. Questions regarding the spread of patented traits and ownership of contaminated seed remain unanswered by U.S. regulatory and judicial systems.

—Kiki Hubbard, *Research Fellow*

For more information on Roundup Ready Alfalfa, see page 12 or visit www.worc.org.

WORC Builds Momentum Against Future Trade Agreements

CAFTA passes House, Senate

Despite narrow passage of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) in July, WORC, its member groups and allies have created a movement against the current trade model. The debate against the CAFTA helped raise the understanding that the current trade model is broken. Now, both the public and Congress have a better understanding of trade agreements.

Although, Congress took another step toward outsourcing American workers and agriculture, the battle by the U.S. Trade Representative and multinational corporations to pass CAFTA created a movement which will make future trade agreements even harder to pass.

WORC's Congressional delegation recognizes the problems in the trade models of CAFTA and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), 78% voted against the agreement. These votes reflect the

strong opposition to this trade pact in the region and around the country. In unprecedented circumstances, it has taken the administration well over a year and a lot of last minute arm twisting to pass CAFTA.

According to Reed Kelley, WORC Trade Team's Co-Chair "CAFTA weakens U.S. cattle producers' position in the global market and opens the gate for more harm in future trade agreements. It enables multi-national

corporations to take advantage of lower labor and environmental standards and gives special rights to foreign investors."

"This agreement promotes a race to the bottom—to the lowest wages, lowest commodity prices paid to producers, and to the lowest protections for human health, safety and welfare."

—Dena Hoff, WORC Chair

"This part of the country is not buying into this trade agenda" said Kelley, a rancher from Meeker, Colorado. "The heavy opposition to CAFTA should serve as a warning to promoters of this so called 'free trade' agenda, especially when those representatives and senators closest to the land and the food produced from it recognize the damage CAFTA will do to our country."

CAFTA passed the Senate by 54-45, the closest senate vote on a trade agreement since before NAFTA. CAFTA barely squeaked through the House by a vote of 217-215 with two Representatives not voting.

"This agreement promotes a race to the bottom—to the lowest wages, lowest commodity prices paid to producers, and to the lowest protections for human health, safety and welfare," said Dena Hoff, Chair of WORC and a farmer from Glendive, Montana. "Only the trade pact sponsors, the multinational business interests, win this race. The average citizens of all the CAFTA countries are the big losers," said Hoff.

—Jeri Lynn Bakken



For more on CAFTA and WORC's fight for fair trade, visit www.worc.org.

Circuit Court Upholds Captive Supply Ruling

Ruling overturns jury's verdict that Tyson used illegal cattle contracts

On August 17, the 11th Circuit Court upheld a decision to overturn an Alabama jury's finding that Tyson Foods, the nation's largest beef packer, had used illegal cattle contracts to manipulate cattle prices and cost U.S. cattle producers \$1.28 billion.

"This decision is a blow to family farmers and ranchers across America," said Mabel Dobbs, Chair of WORC's Livestock Committee.

In February 2004, a jury found that Tyson Foods had used captive supplies to manipulate cattle prices—costing cattle producers \$1.28 billion. On April 23, 2004, a federal judge overturned the jury's verdict.

Captive supplies in fed cattle procurements have been a major concern in the beef industry for many years. Captive supply reform became a part of WORC and its member groups' work nearly 15 years ago with a proposal for a workable and fair solution to return open public markets to the cattle procurement process. WORC's proposal to restore competition to the livestock market requires:

1. A fixed base price on contracts and marketing agreements, and
2. Contracts be traded in open, public markets—no more secret deals.

"This decision is a blow to family farmers and ranchers across America."

—Mabel Dobbs, Chair of WORC's Livestock Committee.

"For years we have said that Tyson and other packers use these secret deals, called captive supplies, to manipulate markets, and that they violate the Packers and Stockyards Act," said Dobbs. "We proposed a common sense solution to this problem to the United States Department of Agriculture the same year this case was filed. USDA has never acted on that proposal. Now that



proposal has been introduced to Congress as S. 960, the Captive Supply Reform Act.

"This decision adds urgency to Congressional efforts to restore competition in the cattle markets. We urge members of Congress to pay attention to the jury's original findings and support the Captive Supply Reform Act."

Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyoming) introduced the Captive Supply Reform Act in April 2005.

Through current contracting methods, the packers are able to line up enough supply through formula contracts to affect the cash price, driving it down.

"Formula prices are tied to the cash price, therefore all prices, both formula and negotiated, are driven down due to the high levels of captive supplies. When all contracts are made in an open public market, no one form of contracting will have the ability to hold cattle prices captive," said Skip Waters, past chair of WORC and rancher from Moorcroft, Wyoming.

—Jeri Lynn Bakken

Northern Plains Mobilizes for Water Beyond Methane

On July 29, Northern Plains Resource Council gained approval of its *Water Beyond Methane* proposal by the Montana Board of Environmental Review (BER). The board voted 4-1 to move forward on the proposal to overhaul rules for management of coalbed methane extraction water.

Northern Plains' proposal would make reinjection the preferred disposal method for methane-produced water. Where reinjection is not feasible, companies would be required to clean the water by removing salts and other pollutants that could damage soils. The proposal would allow farmers and ranchers to use methane water with a valid water right from the state. The proposal would also restore to Montana the ability to prevent discharges from Wyoming coalbed methane extraction from polluting Montana waterways.

"We have a real opportunity to make sure things are done right in Montana."

— Mark Fix, Northern Plains Coalbed Methane Taskforce Chair

"We have a real opportunity to make sure things are done right in Montana," said Mark Fix, Chair of Northern Plains' Coalbed Methane Task Force. The methane companies need to put as much of the water they take from our aquifers back in the ground so it's available for future generations," said Fix.



Over 55 members, staff, and other supporters of Northern Plains Resource Council traveled to Helena to attend the Montana Board of Environmental Review's hearing on Northern Plains' Water Beyond Methane Proposal.

Fifty-five Northern Plains' members attended the hearing and 18 members made statements during the six hours of testimony.

Northern Plains' *Water Beyond Methane* proposal is backed by three southeastern Montana irrigation groups, the Rosebud Conservation District, Trout Unlimited, local community groups in Dawson, Carbon, Sweet Grass, Park, Stillwater, and Yellowstone counties in Montana, Crow Tribal members of the Surface Owners of the Wolf Mountain Area, and several independent ranchers.

The BER voted earlier this year to postpone deciding on the petition and initiate rule making until its July 29 hearing.

On July 29, the BER decided to hold field hearings in Miles City and Lame Deer in early November to hear public comment on the proposed rule prior to a final vote.

—Ross Keogh, Intern

Energy Bill Ignores the Needs of Western Landowners

On July 29, Congress overwhelmingly passed an energy bill purportedly designed to diversify U.S. energy production – through the use of oil and gas, coal, nuclear, renewable energy and energy efficiency – and to reduce dependence on foreign oil.

“The bill fails to protect landowners harmed by booming energy development in the West, endangers scarce water resources, and misses a golden opportunity to set the country on a clean energy path through the use of renewable energy,” said Nancy Sorenson, on behalf of WORC. Nancy is a rancher from Arvada, Wyoming, and a member of Powder River Basin Resource Council.

Passage marks the end of a four-year effort to come up with a energy bill acceptable to both the House and the Senate. The Senate voted 74-26 in favor of the bill and the House vote was 275-156.

“This bill squanders our precious time and resources on 20th century solutions to 21st century problems.” —Nancy Sorenson, Powder River Basin Resource Council

Many members of Congress were determined to pass a bi-partisan bill to demonstrate their ability to work collaboratively and to address the public’s frustration about the energy crisis. Unfortunately, the compromise gutted the clean energy provisions in the bill and did virtually nothing to reduce dependence on foreign oil, according to the bill’s critics. U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-Oregon), a member of the House-Senate Conference Committee, called the bill “a series of missed opportunities, stuffed with a smorgasbord of subsidies for energy industries like oil, coal, nuclear and ethanol.”



Nancy Sorenson, and her husband, Robert, own a ranch in the Powder River Basin in northern Wyoming. The Powder River Basin is one of the most targeted areas for energy development in the West.

With limited exceptions, none of the provisions supported by WORC members made it into the final bill.

The energy bill fails to include a federal renewable energy standard, even though 20 states currently have similar standards. Further, it extends the wind production tax credit for only two years (down from three years in the Senate energy bill), which will keep the wind industry from reaching its potential.

“This bill squanders our precious time and resources on 20th century solutions to 21st century problems,” Sorenson said.

—Patty Larson, Washington, DC, Office Director

For more information, click on “The Comparison of the House, Senate and Conference Committee energy bills” and “More on Energy” on WORC’s website, www.worc.org.

The Problem with GM Alfalfa

Adapted from WORC's factsheet

The "Queen of Forages"

Alfalfa is the fourth most widely grown crop behind corn, soybeans, and wheat. While alfalfa is primarily used in feed for dairy cows and beef cattle, it also greatly contributes to pork, lamb, sheep, and honey production because of its low fiber and high protein content.

In June 2005, the Monsanto Company and Forage Genetics International won approval by the USDA for Roundup Ready alfalfa, a variety that tolerates the leading ingredient in Monsanto's trademark Roundup herbicide, glyphosate. Monsanto's alfalfa is the first genetically modified perennial crop to be commercialized, which poses special environmental, agricultural, and economic risks.

"Some of our Japanese hay customers are asking us to sign documents saying no genetically modified products will be coming over."

— Jeff Plourd of El Toro Export, El Centro, CA

Agricultural Risks of GM Alfalfa

Alfalfa is a cross-pollinating crop so genetically modified DNA from Roundup Ready fields is nearly certain to contaminate organic and other GM-free fields. Contamination could ruin organic alfalfa and alfalfa export markets, as well as other organic and GM-free markets, including some in the natural beef, horse breeding, sprouting, and honey industries. No law or regulation requires farmers who plant Roundup Ready seeds to create refuge or buffer areas to avoid cross-pollination with neighbors' crops or surrounding weeds. USDA says that farmers who want to be GM-free are responsible for preventing contamination of their crops.

Because Monsanto patents its genetically engineered seeds, farmers who purchase Roundup Ready alfalfa seeds will have to sign Technology Agreements

that shield Monsanto from liability for accidental contamination or any other problems its product may cause. The effect of these agreements is to pit farmer against farmer, and to let Monsanto off the hook for any economic damage caused by its product.

Environmental Risks of GM Alfalfa

Not only is Roundup weak on some important alfalfa weeds, several glyphosate-resistant weeds already exist, and evidence for others is mounting. Farmers who use Roundup to kill alfalfa at the end of its stand life and experience glyphosate resistance in weeds or volunteer crops, or control wild alfalfa along roadsides, will have to resort to less friendly and more costly chemicals. It is estimated that Arkansas farmers will spend \$500 million in 2005 controlling glyphosate-resistant weeds.

University of California-Davis specialist, Mick Canevari, has seen weed resistance to glyphosate in his experimental plots where Roundup Ready alfalfa has been grown for three years. "When we started this study, there were four or five stinging nettle plants on [one] end of the field. Now you can see nettle all along the field. We're seeing more and more nettle each year."

Markets at Risk

Most U.S. alfalfa is used as domestic animal feed, while 5% is exported. Seventy-five percent of these exports are bought by Japan, and the rest is shipped to Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, and Canada. Customers in these countries demand GM-free feed, and export companies have been outspoken about their opposition to Roundup Ready alfalfa. Ninety-nine percent of exported alfalfa is produced in the West, mostly Washington, Oregon, and California.

—Kiki Hubbard, Research Fellow

Download the entire fact sheet, *The Problem with GM Alfalfa*, at www.worc.org.

Three Easy Ways to Speed Up Your Computer

Computer tips from “Tim, the Tech Guy”

If your ultra fast, ultra new computer is acting like a horse and buggy and not the Ferrari that it should be—it might be time to do a tune-up. Computers need maintenance and care just like an automobile. There are also some default settings that can be changed to add a few more horses under the hood.

Clearing the Internet Cache

Your internet browser is set by default to hold a copy of the web pages that you visit on your hard drive. This is called caching and you should clear this cache periodically. I would recommend this at least every other week.

To empty the cache in *Internet Explorer*:

1. Left mouse click on “**Tools**” and select “**Internet Options**”.
2. On the “**General**” tab you will see a selection under “**Temporary Internet Files**” to “**Delete Files**”. Select this and in the next window check the “**Delete All Offline Content**” and then select “**OK**”.

Note: If you haven't done this in a long time it may take a while to clear the cache.

If you are using *Firefox* for your browser:

1. Left mouse click on “**Tools**” and select “**Options**”.
2. Click on “**Privacy**” and then click on the “**Clear**” button for Cache. Close the window with the “**OK**” button.

Clearing Temporary Files

You should be cleaning up the temporary files that accumulate on you hard disk drive.

1. This can be done by opening “**My Computer**” and right button mouse clicking on the “**Local**

Disk C: Drive”. This will display a menu of items.

2. You should select “**Properties**”. At this window, on the “**General**” tab, you will see a button for “**Disk Cleanup**”. Left mouse click on this and in the next window check the “**Temporary Internet Files**” and “**Temporary Files**”. You may need to uncheck the other items. Next click “**OK**”.

For Advanced Users of Windows XP

For the more adventurous users who want to squeeze all the horsepower they can from their computer, performance settings can also be changed. You need to be logged in as Administrator or equivalent.

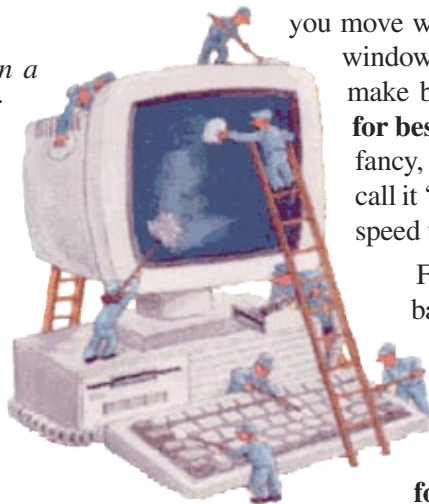
You can click on “**Start**” and select “**Control Panel**”. Then select “**System**”. Select the “**Advanced**” tab. Click the “**Settings**” button.

On the “**Visual Effects**” tab you will see a list of the fades and animations that Windows is doing as you move windows, move the mouse, open a new window etc. There is a quick selection you can make by clicking the circle next to “**Adjust for best performance**”. This will turn off the fancy, smooth, animated, (or as we techie’s call it “eye candy”) visual effects—but it will speed up you computer quite noticeably.

Finish with the “**OK**” button. You can go back to this setting and add the effects that you want one at a time without having all of them turned on.

An effect you might want to leave on is the “**Use Drop Shadows for Icon Labels on the Desktop**”. It leaves a cleaner looking desktop. If you don’t like the look after this change you can restore everything by going back to this window and choosing the “**Let Windows Choose What’s Best for My Computer**” option.

—Tim Ennis



The report was requested by Senator Joe Lieberman (D-Connecticut).

GAO Confirms WORC’s Findings

The GAO report covers much the same ground as WORC’s February 2005 report, *Law and Order in the Oil and Gas Fields*, and confirms much of WORC’s conclusions and recommendations. Five of the eight BLM field offices surveyed in the GAO report were featured in WORC’s Law and Order report: Glenwood Springs, Colorado; Miles City, Montana; Farmington, New Mexico; Buffalo, Wyoming; and Pinedale, Wyoming.

The number of oil and gas drilling permits issued by BLM nationwide has more than tripled, from 1,803 in fiscal year 1999 to 6,399 in fiscal year 2004. Five Rocky Mountain states—Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Montana and New Mexico—accounted for 95% of the activity.

The GAO report found that:

- While the number of drilling permits more than tripled, the BLM’s oil and gas management budget rose just 64% and its staffing levels rose only 21%.
- The two BLM field offices that had the largest percentage increase in issued drilling permits met their annual inspection goals only once each in the past six years. The Buffalo, Wyoming, office last met its goal in 2000. The Vernal, Utah, office last met its goal in 1999.

Combined, the eight offices visited by GAO met their annual environmental inspections goals only about half of the time during the past six years.

- In fiscal year 2004, the Buffalo, Wyoming, field office made only 27% of its required inspections.
- All of the surveyed field offices had a backlog of past due idle-well reviews.

- Seven of the eight field offices had a backlog of reclamation inspections.
- Half of the field offices don’t have any resource monitoring plans. The heavy workload associated with processing drilling permits has slowed the development of resource monitoring plans in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming.
- The BLM lacks consistent and readily available data on idle-well reviews, and on interim and final reclamation inspections.

WORC’s *Law and Order* report found that environmental compliance inspectors in the BLM spend an average of just 15% of their time on inspection and enforcement activities. WORC’s report provides more detail than does the GAO report about inspection and enforcement resources, inspection activities, and violations and enforcement actions. WORC’s report analyzed state oil and gas inspection and enforcement programs; the GAO report only looks at the BLM’s inspection and enforcement.

The *Law and Order* report called for more inspections and stiffer fines for violators. It said the job of policing the oil and gas industry had been largely left to private citizens and community groups because by the shortcomings in state and federal enforcement.

—Kevin Williams and John Smillie

For links to the GAO report and WORC’s Law and Order report, go to www.worc.org.

“WORC Study” continued from cover

report released in February, *Law and Order in the Oil and Gas Fields*.

“*Filling the Gaps* is one more report showing land management agencies are not balancing booming energy development with protecting taxpayers, landowners, and natural resources,” said Peggy Utesch, WORC spokesperson and member of the Western Colorado Congress.

The key findings of are:

- Financial assurance (damage deposit) amounts in all cases examined fall far short of potential clean-up costs;
- Reclamation plans rarely cover true clean-up needs; and
- Failure of a few oil and gas companies to reclaim could cost taxpayers and landowners millions of dollars of clean-up liability.

WORC’s report recommends four steps to improve the bonding and reclamation programs:

- Land management agencies should adopt clear, specific reclamation requirements and standards, especially for land reclamation;
- BLM and states should require reclamation plans tailored for specific sites and update them yearly;
- Professional engineers – not oil and gas industry executives – should prepare reclamation cost estimates; and
- Bonds should cover reclamation costs and potential liabilities.

—Kevin Dowling

The report and associated material are available at www.worc.org.

Home on the Range

WORC and Northern Plains are kicking off renovation of a vacant grocery store into their new, energy efficient office building with a groundbreaking ceremony in September. The office features radiant floor heating, evaporative cooling, composting toilets, solar water heaters, and photovoltaic panels.

Help by donating \$15 to buy one of 4,700 solar cells needed to add solar energy to the building.

Send your donation to WORC/
Northern Plains Resource Council, 2401
Montana Avenue, Billings, MT 59101.



Artist's rendering of an interior view of WORC and Northern Plains' new office.

Western Organization of Resource Councils
Education Project
2401 Montana Avenue, #301
Billings, Montana 59101
billings@worc.org

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT No. 352
BILLINGS, MT 59101

September 2005



In this issue...

GAO Says BLM Isn't Watching Oil and Gas Industry
WORC Study Finds Multi-Billion Dollar Taxpayer Liability for Oil and Gas Cleanup
Wyoming Group Works to Protect the Beartooth Front
Energy Bill Ignores the Needs of Western Landowners
Roundup Ready or Not, GM Alfalfa is Here

