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CONTENTS Pages

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Issues -	Gross Reservoir Expansion Update	5
Conservation-	Successful Program in Jeopardy	6, 7
Technology -	High Powered Supercomputer	8
Wildlife -	How do we think of Wildlife?	9
Issues-	Bacteria to thwart invasive cheatgrass?	10, 11
Letters-	Gilco Seniors-Thanks-Quitting Tobacco	12, 13
Wildlife -	Can morality study help Yellowstone?	14,15,16
Animals -	Our Animals Can Have Allergies Too	20, 21
Environmental -	Solar Desalination	23
Issues-	Farmers Team Up With Humane Society	24, 25
Volunteer -	My Dates With The Land	26, 27
Worldview -	Part 13 - Overpopulation	29,30,31
Issues -	Where FEMA Fails	32, 33

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REGULAR FEATURES

Animals & Their Companions	18, 19
Book Review	28
Ad Index & Telephone #'s	34

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Gross Reservoir Expansion Update

By Judith Green

Denver Water would like you to believe that the Moffat Project—now called the Gross Reservoir Expansion Project—is a done deal, and is a good deal. Give up trying to stop it.

On the contrary, in a public meeting at the CCCIA community hall on Sunday, October 11, Chris Garre, president of The Environmental Group and Gary Wockner, executive director of Save the Colorado informed a group of about sixty concerned citizens that the effort to stop the project is gaining momentum.

Chris organized the meeting to update the community on these issues: Denver Water's recent public relations efforts in Coal Creek Canyon (same-o same-o); legal action that TEG and Save the Colorado are taking to stop the project; collaborations with other organizations; Boulder County's position and the commissioner's options; fundraising and community support. Chris also mentioned the Citizen's Alternative document submitted to the Corps this month outlining sustainable alternatives rejected by Denver Water that eliminate the supposed shortage and address all other purposes and needs for the project. This and other informative documents can be read at

tegcolorado.org/gross-docs.

Three key issues were discussed in detail: legal action, fundraising, and the role of the Boulder County commissioners. TEG and Save the Colorado retained attorney Mike Chiropolos, previously of Western Resource

Advocates. Gary reported that he and Mike are carefully preparing a case based on "fatal flaws" in the project; Gary expressed some optimism regarding the strength of the case. Chiropolos works for "essentially nothing" but Chris estimates at least \$30,000 additional funds are needed to carry our case to court; it is assumed that the Corps will grant the 404 permit. Donations for the legal defense fund can easily be made at tegcolorado.org. Chris suggested fundraising dinners and other events. The bottom line—funds are essential. Gary reiterated that the most important step now is to focus on the court case against the Corps.

Chris and Gary emphasized the important role of the

Boulder County commissioners. While the commissioners cannot legally take a position at this time, they have held public meetings and wrote an excellent response to the final environmental impact statement. The commissioners have a quasi-legal permitting function and could prevent this massive construction project in Boulder County. We are encouraged to contact Gardner, Domenico and Jones, expressing our concerns and appreciation of their work, at commissioners@boulder-county.org.

To date, Denver Water has not received a single permit for the project—federal, state or county.

Stay informed at tegcolorado.org and get involved by volunteering at <http://tegcolorado.org/volunteer-gross>, donating to the legal fund and writing to the Boulder County commissioners. Denver Water is not too big a Goliath for a swarm of us David's.



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Nation's Most Successful Program In Jeopardy

By Jodi Peterson

In July, Montanans celebrated the addition of 8,200 acres, known as Tenderfoot Creek, to the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Most of the \$10.7 million cost was paid for by the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, which uses oil and gas royalties for conservation and recreation projects.

But recently, the 50-year-old fund, widely viewed as one of the nation's most popular and most successful land conservation programs, was allowed to expire completely. Despite broad bipartisan support, and despite a deadline that was no surprise to anyone, Congress failed to take action to reauthorize it. That means that offshore oil and gas producers will no longer be paying into the chest that funds the program — and now that the funding connection has been broken, reinstating it will be very difficult, especially given the tone of this Congress. Instead, lawmakers will be dickering over how to divvy up former LWCF appropriations, which will now be going into the general treasury.

Earlier this summer, dozens of representatives on both

sides of the aisle had signed a letter in support of the perpetually underfunded program, which has conserved more than seven million acres so far. LWCF purchases wildlife habitat, buys private inholdings within wildernesses and national parks, preserves cultural heritage sites, provides public access for fishing and hunting, and pays for urban parks, playgrounds and ballfields. (The Center for Western Priorities created an interactive map showing how LWCF has made national parks whole by paying to buy inholdings from private landowners.) And if put to a straight-up vote, reauthorization would pass both the House and Senate with bipartisan majorities.

But action on LWCF was derailed by far-right opposition, led by Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, House Natural Resources chairman, reflecting the anti-public-land and anti-federal sentiments afoot in some quarters of the West. Bishop is floating his own reforms to the program, which include redirecting most of the money to state and local projects (in the 1970s, Congress removed a requirement that states get 60 percent of LWCF funding).

The sunseting of the LWCF was greeted with dismay by conservationists and by many of the legislators from both parties who have long supported it, including Republican Sen. Steve Daines and Rep. Ryan Zinke of Montana. At a Tuesday breakfast organized by the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers in support of LWCF, Daines said, "I personally don't think Rob (Bishop)'s view, and others have said this, necessarily reflects probably where most of the conference is now."

Rep. Raúl Grijalva, D-Arizona had some scathing words for the House in a statement: "You can see just how extreme some House Republicans really are when a popular conservation program with a spotless, fifty-year history of bipartisan reauthorization expires thanks to their

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partisan games. They can't pass a highway bill, they can't fund the government, they're still struggling with a defense bill, and now they insist that LWCF funding has to stop." Congress is authorized to allocate up to \$900 million annually to LWCF, not from taxpayers' dollars but from royalties paid by energy companies drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf. It rarely gives the fund anywhere close to that, though, and in recent years has sent about two-thirds of the allocation to the general treasury. As a result, the program has accumulated a \$20 billion IOU, which Rep. Bishop cites as a reason not to continue funding it. But that money isn't just lying around waiting to be spent, explains Mary Hollow, executive director of Montana-based Prickly Pear Land Trust, in the Helena **Independent Record**: "This is a paper account with nothing in it — there are only cobwebs," she said. "The \$20 billion has already been spent — diverted to fund other things ... it's inaccurate and unrealistic to think that if LWCF expires and we lose our authorization and revenue source that it would be business as usual."

So what's likely to happen next? "This is a sad day for everyone who cares about our national parks and outdoor conservation, recreation and wildlife. Congress has broken an enduring promise to the American people," said Alan Rowsome, senior director at the Wilderness Society and co-chair of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition, in a statement. But the coalition, the outdoor recreation industry, other conservation groups, and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers aren't just mourning the program's loss — they'll be kicking efforts into high gear to get the LWCF reauthorized as quickly as possible. And Congressional supporters are looking for those opportunities. Sen. Daines told the breakfast meeting that reauthorization has "a higher probability if we attach it to another piece of legislation," so they'll be looking for some piece of must-pass legislation before the end of the year, like the omnibus spending bill or a highway and transportation bill. He and Sen. Jon Tester, D-Montana,

have also cosponsored legislation introduced by Sen. Richard Burr, R-North Carolina, that permanently reauthorizes the program, and Tester cosponsored a bill that goes farther, locking in the full appropriation of \$900 million so it can't be siphoned off for other uses.

Tenderfoot Creek on the Lewis and Clark National Forest, approx. 8,000 acres purchased this summer with primarily LWCF dollars and some non-federal funds US Forest Service

Rep. Grijalva and Rep. Mike Fitzpatrick co-sponsored a permanent reauthorization bill as well. When introducing it, Grijalva said, "Drawing out the uncertainty over the program's funding every few years serves no one, especially when our constituents so strongly believe in the LWCF's mission and value to the country. We should make it permanent, avoid prolonged budget battles and get back to the business of protecting our natural spaces. Anything less is a disservice to the legacy of Teddy Roosevelt and the generations of Americans who gave us the many beautiful American landscapes we enjoy today."

*Jodi Peterson is a senior editor at High Country News.
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High Powered Supercomputer

A supercomputer that can cut day-long computations down to seconds is coming to Colorado State University. Colorado State's Information Science and Technology Center (ISTeC), in collaboration with the University of Colorado at Boulder, has received a \$2.73 million National Science Foundation grant to purchase a state-of-the-art, high-performance computing (HPC) system. Colorado State and University of Colorado will share the purchase and support of the system, which totals \$3.9 million. The system will be available to faculty, students and staff at both institutions to advance research and education.

"By far, this will be Colorado State's most advanced computing system ever," said H.J. Siegel, Abell Endowed Chair Distinguished Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Colorado State. Siegel also has a joint appointment in the Department of Computer Science, and is the principal investigator on the grant.

The planned HPC system will have more than 10,000 cores, or processing units, with an aggregate computing capacity of approximately 500 teraflops, which are a measure of a computer's processing performance. That makes it very, very fast.

"If a scientific application that takes one day to execute on a high-end desktop can exploit the parallelism of our new system, its execution can be reduced from one day to 10 seconds," Siegel said.

High-performance computing supports research in a range of disciplines, including physics, engineering, materials science, earth science, and bioinformatics. What's more, the new system will utilize the universities' combined resources to ensure users access to software, consulting, best practices, HPC courses and data management services.

"The architectural features of this next-generation, many-core supercomputer will enhance student learning as they design, develop, deploy, and execute applications," Siegel said.

The system will be housed at CU in Boulder, and accessed through a fiber connection so it will perform as if it were on CSU's local network. Other members of the Rocky Mountain Advanced Computing Consortium, various universities and research centers in several states, will also be able to access the new system, which promises to facilitate research collaborations across many disciplines.

"We are pleased that, as a result of our successful collaboration with the University of Colorado, ISTeC can provide high-performance computing for the Colorado State campus," said Patrick Burns, Colorado State's vice president for information technology and a co-principal investigator.

Other co-principal investigators on the grant at CSU are Edwin Chong, professor of electrical and computer engineering with a joint appointment in the Department of Mathematics; and Jessica Prenni, director of research core facilities in the Office of the Vice President for Research with a joint appointment as an associate professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. The principal investigator at CU is Thomas Hauser, CU's director of Research Computing.



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How Do We Think Of Wildlife?

Americans tend to think about wildlife like their ancestors

Researchers from Colorado State University and The Ohio State University have found evidence that we think about wildlife like our ancestors did.

More specifically, the strength of Americans' "domination" wildlife values, or the belief that nature should be conquered and the natural environment used for the benefit of humans, can be traced to the country from which their ancestors migrated.

At the same time, researchers demonstrated that, overall, Americans' values toward wildlife are shifting from a domination view to the view that wildlife deserves treatment equal to humans. Researchers call this line of thought about wildlife "mutualism."

The study of values has important implications for human-environmental interactions, and the management of wildlife throughout the country. Wildlife managers serve diverse constituencies with wide ranging viewpoints on management approaches. If managers understand the value orientations of their constituents they can frame the feedback they receive in those contexts, and can communicate their decisions more effectively.

In a recently published article in *Conservation Biology*, researchers from CSU and OSU reported on their study that asked questions about values toward wildlife among residents of the western United States.

"From what we know about human values, we assumed that they would persist over many generations and be unlikely to change without a significant reason," said lead investigator Mike Manfredo, head of CSU's Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources. "Still, it was a bit surprising to find we could make such clear links between wildlife values and countries of ancestry."

The researchers, who also include Professor Tara Teel at CSU and Assistant Professor Alia Dietsch at OSU, conducted their investigation as part of a long-term research program designed to monitor change in wildlife values over time. The survey measured domination and mutualism values toward wildlife in addition to asking people their ancestors' country of origin.

The researchers grouped respondents by country of origin and then compared wildlife value scores to

contemporary value scores for residents living in those same countries. These country's values scores were obtained from a global values survey that included a measure of "mastery" over the environment.

"The relationship was striking," said Manfredo. "For example, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Norway had the highest mastery scores, and Americans who claimed ancestry from those countries had high scores on domination toward wildlife."

Interestingly, while values toward the environment appear persistent, the researchers also found residents of more urbanized states with higher levels of income and education have lower levels of domination and a growing emphasis on mutualism.

In practical terms, those with mutualism values have very different environmental priorities than those with domination values. Mutualism is associated with concerns about declines in wildlife populations and limiting human use of the environment. In contrast, domination is associated with concerns for a healthy economy, private property rights, and lethal control of carnivores when they conflict with human interests.

Can we expect values to keep changing in ways that appear to be more consistent with environmental sustainability? The findings are mixed, according to Manfredo. "It appears as though that type of change is occurring with modernization," he said. "However, we simply do not know if it will continue and if it does, how fast it will occur."



**The Golden Chamber of Commerce Presents Holiday Parades
Saturday December 5th, 12th and 19th**

At 11:00am the Holiday Parade starts from 10th Street in Historic Downtown Golden and goes up Washington Street. Featuring Santa Claus and Victorian Christmas Carolers, these parades are great family fun.

From Noon until 3:00pm you can ride with the Newfoundland Dogs, where the tips you donate go directly to the Golden Volunteer Fire Department.

When evening arrives, enjoy the Holiday Lights all around Golden and around Clear Creek History Park. We invite you to make a day of it and Shop & Dine in beautiful Historic Downtown Golden.

Native Bacteria To Thwart Invasive Cheatgrass?

By Gloria Dickie

For Ann Kennedy, the “aha” moment didn’t come in a lab, but rather on an early spring day some 25 years ago in a field in Pullman, Washington. The USDA Agricultural Research Service soil scientist was walking through a pasture near her house, when she noticed something. Or rather she didn’t. The mat of bright green cheatgrass shoots that once dominated the land come spring were nowhere to be seen. Instead, native plants and grasses like Idaho fescue and bluebunch wheatgrass had sprouted. It was then Kennedy remembered she had applied part of a bacterial experiment on the land a few years prior. Clearly, something was working.

Cheatgrass, sometimes called downy brome, is one of the most invasive weeds in North America. Since it was introduced via Eurasian grain imports in the 1800s, cheatgrass has put down roots in every single state, and has become the dominant plant on more than 154,000 square miles of the West. The invasive weed not only sprouts early, “cheating” native plants out of early spring water and nutrients, it thrives on disturbance like roadside construction, livestock grazing, and most of all, fire. The fire feedback cycle associated with the weed has transformed the American West, turning shrub steppe into grassland. Cheatgrass carries fire easily in regions like the

Great Basin, where it allows flames to travel from shrub to shrub, recovering easily after such intense heat. And when that yellowish-gray cheatgrass dries out before peak fire season, it leaves a perfect fuel bed behind. Studies have shown that fire occurs four times as frequently in cheatgrass landscapes than in all other types of groundcover combined in the West.

Researchers have been desperately looking for a way to overthrow cheatgrass’s reign for decades, and have tried some wacky experiments in the process — from fungal pathogens like the macabre Black Fingers of Death to changing soil texture to introducing super absorbent polymers into the ground to soak up water. Now, after nearly 30 years of trials and research, Ann Kennedy has found the innocuous cure — native soil bacteria.

In 1986, Kennedy was investigating the poor growth of winter wheat in Whitman County in eastern Washington when she stumbled across a bacteria, *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, that seemed to be inhibiting the number of shoots. She wondered if the same idea could be applied to weeds, like cheatgrass, medusahead, and jointed goatgrass. After testing 25,000 types of bacteria from nearby fields, and ensuring they didn’t negatively impact native grasses or other animals, Kennedy eventually settled on two weed-suppressive strains, later dubbed D7 and ACK55. Within three years of a single application, the bacteria reduced the

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amount of cheatgrass in test plots by half. Another five years, and it was down to almost zero. D7 was later sold off to a private company, but ultimately was less selective than ACK55. In addition to inhibiting cheatgrass, medusahead and jointed goatgrass, D7 also stunted the growth of native species like Sandberg bluegrass. ACK55 is now undergoing the EPA registration process, which is expected to take roughly 17 months. Then it will be available for widespread use.

For Michael Gregg, a land management biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington, there's no question of whether or not ACK55 will work. It's more of a question of application and whether it can be used across a large enough area. ACK55 can be applied two ways — native seeds can be coated in the bacteria during restoration efforts or it can be sprayed on the soil surface.


"A lot of things have to go right," he explains. "Mainly, you have to get the bacteria into the soil in the fall to colonize over winter and get to the cheatgrass roots in the spring." In order to ensure the bacteria makes it in, you need precipitation within two weeks of application — and colder temperatures. ACK55 doesn't like sustained heat. Then there's the matter of size. Cheatgrass dominates some 25 million acres in the Great Basin. Spraying such a vast area is prohibitively expensive, so researchers like Kennedy and Gregg advocate for a focused application.

The reactive approach is to apply the bacteria in recently burned areas to prevent cheatgrass from colonizing the landscape. The proactive step is to treat the leading edge of infestations — areas where cheatgrass is fast approaching. Even then, the bacteria needs to be used in concert with other management tools, Kennedy says. For example, the bacteria can't simply be applied to monocultures of

cheatgrass, as eventually the weed will just regenerate. The best regimen, she says, is to apply herbicides that attack cheatgrass at the surface level, while also applying ACK55, which attacks seedlings and the long-lasting seed bank underground. Then reseed with natives.


Ultimately, we could one day see the Great Basin region restored — which is critical for the sagebrush-dependent species like sage grouse that have seen their habitat converted to grassland. But it's a slow process. "That's kind of the problem," explains Gregg. "Some of this conservation work can span careers and the experiments might not even be long enough. But the implications (of ACK55) are huge in terms of fire spending and sage grouse (conservation)." As ACK55 takes its final test (via the EPA registration process), Ann Kennedy is already eyeing her next project — the invasive Italian Rye that's taken over her neighbors' land in Pullman.

"The concept is simple," Kennedy concludes, "you can get (any strain) you want, you just have to look for it."
Gloria Dickie is an editorial intern at High Country News.



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On Saturday, November 14, Gilpin County Senior Living, a 501c(3) non-profit, is hosting a fun-filled evening at Gilpin County School to benefit the building of affordable housing in Gilpin County for senior citizens.

The evening will begin with a lasagna dinner complete with salad, garlic bread, dessert and beverage at 6 p.m. followed by a silent auction and talent show. If you would like to donate items to the silent auction, participate in the talent show or to volunteer, please call Ardetta Robertson at 303 582-5206 or email at s_robertson@juno.com.

Dear Readers,

Just a quick note of thanks during this season: *to loyal advertisers (please tell them you saw their ad in the HIGHLANDER)*, regular long-time readers and especially to my wonderful contributing writers and photographers. While I strive to bring everyone something they will enjoy reading or looking at it is impossible to do this alone. Advertising dollars pay for printing, postage and distribution.

If we think hard enough we can all be grateful for something, someone or much more. We live in this great

country and while some petty politicians in Congress have made it a top priority to obstruct progress, voters can see to it they only serve one term. Compromise is a part of life and doesn't have to be a negative thing, even in Wash. DC.

I'm thankful we got great precipitation in the spring and now again this fall to avoid the worry of forest fires. I'm grateful for my family, friends, and the best animal companions anyone could have. I believe we create our own reality: the choices we make, the opportunities acted upon, to have a smile on my face colors my daily outlook. These are all things we have possible to make life positive.

Take a moment or two during the holiday season to remember all the wonderful things in your life. Try to help your neighbors if you see a chance to pass on a positive attitude and share holiday cheer. Do a good deed if the opportunity arises and give back to others.


Take good care of yourself and while it might sound sappy – think happy thoughts. Positive change begins within each of us and then radiates out from a place of gratitude. If you treat other folks, as you would wish to be treated then you've done the best you can. Thanks for reading the Highlander. Editor

Dear Readers,


Quit Tobacco for a Day or Quit for Life by Participating in the "Quit for a Day Challenge!"

In honor of the American Cancer Society's annual Great American Smokeout, Clear Creek, Gilpin and Jefferson County Public Health Departments are encouraging people who use tobacco to participate in the "Quit for a Day Challenge" on November 19, 2015.

Tobacco products and their ingredients are designed to be addictive with nicotine serving as the primary chemical compound that causes dependence. According to the 2012 Surgeon General's Report, most people initiate tobacco use before the age of 18, and because the teen brain is still developing, youth are more vulnerable to nicotine addiction. Tobacco use remains the leading cause of



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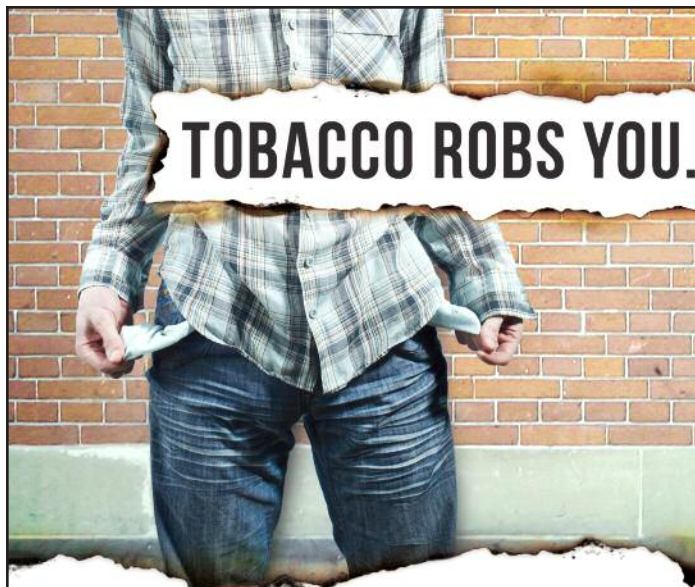
preventable death and disease in the United States, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that cigarette smoking and secondhand smoke exposure cause 480,000 deaths each year.

Regardless of the age of initiation or the length of time a person has used tobacco, quitting is possible and worth it. According to the CDC, the number of people who have quit smoking successfully exceeds the number of people that currently smoke. You could be the next to quit for good! Though it often takes more than one attempt to quit successfully, don't let that be a concern. Quitting takes practice, and chances of success increase with each attempt. It is never too late to quit, and the body begins to heal shortly after quitting any form of tobacco.

If you wish to take the "Quit for a Day Challenge" on November 19, 2015, find out more and register at <http://bit.ly/QuitChallenge>.

For support with quitting, call the Colorado QuitLine at 1-800-Quit-Now (1-800-784-8669) or visit www.coquitline.org.

For questions about the "Quit for a Day Challenge" or additional support, contact tobaccofree@jeffco.us or 303-275-7555.



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This message is brought to you by Clear Creek, Gilpin & Jefferson County Public Health Departments.

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Can Morality Study Help Yellowstone?

By Ben Goldfarb

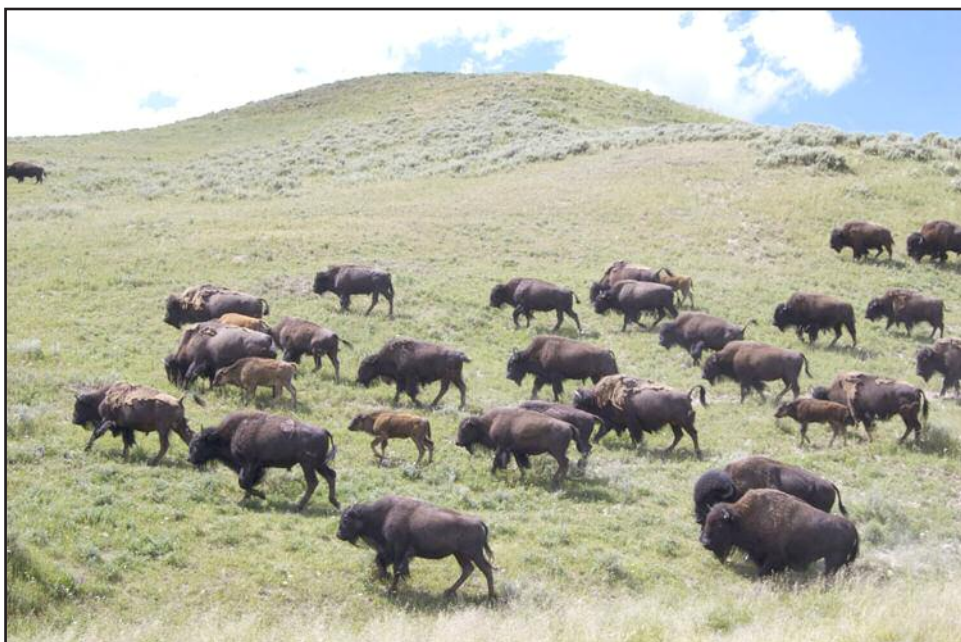
Sociologist Justin Farrell plumbs the spiritual depths of environmental struggle.

Few corners of the West are more contentious than the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The reintroduction of wolves, the hazing of brucellosis-carrying bison, the possible delisting of grizzly bears, the extraction of natural gas, the debate over elk feed-lots — sometimes it seems like a different controversy lurks behind every tree. (And don't even get folks started on kayaking or snowmobiling.) Yellowstone's discord has long fascinated Justin Farrell, today a sociologist at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies.

Farrell was born in Cheyenne, the descendent of Wyomingites and Idahoans; though he grew up in Nebraska, he traveled often to Yellowstone throughout his youth. The area, he noticed, changed rapidly: One year, a resort company built a hotel next to his grandfather's cabin. "It raised a lot of questions in my mind about the types of people who were moving out there, and how they interacted with the people who had lived there for a long time," he says.

Farrell explores those questions in a new book, *The Battle for Yellowstone: Morality and the Sacred Roots of Environmental Conflict*. The book, for which Farrell analyzed thousands of documents and conducted over 100 stakeholder interviews, offers a path to understanding the deep-seated divisions within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) — and, perhaps, to someday resolving them. High Country News sat down with Farrell to discuss the sanctity of bison, the rise of the New West, and the religious symbolism of *Canis lupus*.

High Country News: You investigated familiar conflicts, including the reintroduction of wolves and the hazing and



killing of bison. But you're looking at these issues through a new lens: You view the battle for Yellowstone as a moral battle, rather than an economic or scientific one. What does that mean, exactly?

Justin Farrell: I argue that we all operate from starting points that often go unnoticed, but that ultimately motivate why we do what we do: Why we care about wolves, why we view buffalo as sacred, why we're so passionate about private property rights. Those aren't just attitudes — they're deeper questions about who we are as human beings and where we think society ought to be headed. The overwhelming techno-scientific approach we take to environmental issues, while often useful, tends to discourage other approaches. But these conflicts have cultural and moral dimensions.

HCN: It seems like those dimensions are constantly changing. You write about how demographic shifts in the so-called New West are driving prevailing values.

JF: The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem has some of the fastest-growing counties in terms of population and land development. That can lead to moral devaluation: The people who move to the area bring with them different values, which can ultimately devalue traditional heritage and ideals about what land and wildlife is good for. That can create some deep disagreement.

HCN: As you point out in the book, rugged individualism has always been part of the West's identity. Now ranchers and outfitters are seeing their livelihood called "spiritually bankrupt" by some of the more amenity-minded New Westerners. What did you hear from the Old West community about how morality is changing?

JF: Many had a really profound connection to the land, rooted in attitudes like, "I'm working the same land that my father and mother once worked, but now there are new laws

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that limit traditional ways of making a living.” Old Westerners see these amenity migrants, new environmental laws, and wealth, and they think there’s a sort of moral hypocrisy going on. Ranching and extractive industries are being eliminated in some places, but is building a 10,000 square-foot house ultimately any better for the land?

HCN: It seems like wolves epitomize the “what is wildlife good for” debate. Some outsiders assume that the people who hate wolves hate them for economic reasons — they’re ranchers and hunters who are worried about livestock and game. But you say people seem morally opposed to wolves. What’s the source of that opposition?

JF: One of the primary feelings I heard is that individual rights are being infringed upon by the federal government. The reintroduced wolves came from Canada, so there’s also the fact that people see the wolf as an “immigrant” — a word that brings up a lot of connotations right now. The wolf links to all sorts of other issues in American politics that go well beyond the Yellowstone area.

HCN: People often oppose wolves in religious terms, too — it’s an animal that symbolizes man losing dominion over the earth.

JF: People have this sense of a natural hierarchy with god at the top, then humans, then other animals. Still, that wasn’t the strongest cultural dimension I found. In fact, the pro-wolf movement had a much stronger religious dimension. You hear this notion that by reintroducing the wolf, you create a wholeness that goes beyond ecology. The language isn’t overtly Christian, but it kind of follows the Christian narrative about the fall and then redemption. The fall would be what humans did to the wolves earlier, by exterminating them from the area, but now redemption is possible, and we’ve got to seize this opportunity. I also noticed that people were much more spiritual when they lived further away from the park. Those people tend to idealize the wolf more, maybe because they’re not as

connected to the on-the-ground difficulties of dealing with the animal.

HCN: Those same spiritual attitudes also exist in the case of bison. You embedded with the Buffalo Field Campaign, the primary activist group that’s trying to prevent hazing and slaughter. They’re very overt about the spiritual value of bison and the moral importance of defending them.

JF: They’re an interesting organization. One of their main tactics is shedding light on what’s happening, by simply videotaping and taking photos of government actions against buffalo. They find instances of extremely violent hazing, or a calf that has a broken leg, or mothers that have an abortion while being hazed. Showing people who don’t live in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem what’s going on has a huge impact. They rely on moral shock, on using shocking events and footage to cause social change.

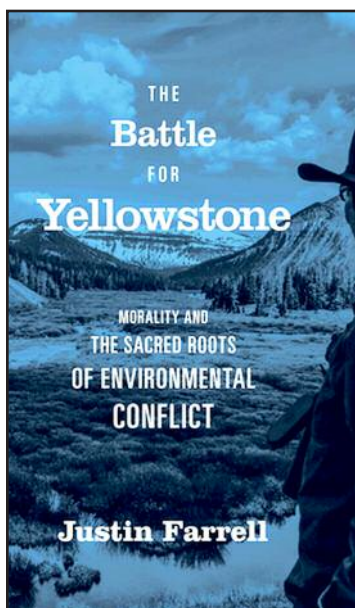
I’m as objective as possible on these issues, but I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t inspired by that group. The Buffalo Field Campaign has

been very effective because it’s such a morally charged issue, and they make you feel that in a way that arguing about brucellosis from a scientific point of view doesn’t.

HCN: I thought one of the most fascinating parts of their story was that even though the organization itself regards bison in an overtly spiritual way, the individual volunteers tend to be uncomfortable talking about their own morality.

JF: I call it religious muting. Out in the field, when they’re near the buffalo, they talk in overtly religious terms. But when you get back to camp, they’re much more “rational” — they sterilize any sort of religious motivation. This is part of a larger trend in the U.S. of moving toward identifying as spiritual rather than religious, or being uncomfortable with religion because it’s come to be associated with the Christian right or extremism.

HCN: The last conflict you wrote about was the campaign against gas drilling in Wyoming’s (Continued next page.)



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Highlander Wildlife

Hoback Basin, where a whole bunch of diverse interests got together to protect the area from gas drilling. How did morality play out in that conflict?

JF: You had folks who would traditionally be for gas drilling everywhere else, but here, they say this place is too special to drill. They would say things like, "I've been coming here since I was young, my family has lived here for generations." This is an example of how old Westerners are getting involved in the environmental movement. These people love land, but they aren't your average environmentalists. They distinguish themselves from tree-huggers. It's this



interesting mingling of Old West and New West morality. The idea that land is special and sacred was the rallying cry of this movement, and it was very effective. They ended up buying out the wells from the company, PXP. It was a "Wyoming solution," as they called it. It wasn't that they

passed laws to forbid drilling; instead, they honored the contracts the company had, and paid fairly for them.

Majestic spiritual icon, or religious abomination? Depends whom you ask. Wolf photo courtesy Carter Niemeyer, US Fish & Wildlife Service.

HCN: You make a strong case that environmental conflict has a moral dimension. To be blunt: so what? How does understanding the moral aspects of conflict help us resolve them?

JF: Talking about morality brings issues to the surface, especially during intractable conflicts. Sometimes you can find common ground at the level of morality, like in the case of fracking in the Hoback. Oftentimes, we don't step back and recognize why we're having these arguments in the first place. My argument is not that morality matters in every single case, but it's present in many cases, and we should be aware of it.

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity. Ben Goldfarb is a correspondent for High Country News. Follow @ben_a_goldfarb

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*Top Left: Red, Mattie,
Julie, CC and Abi.*

*Bottom Right:
Red babysits Rudy.*

*Bottom Left:
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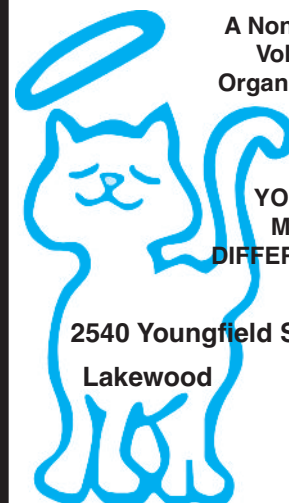
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Top Right: Amiko napping.

*Left: Biscuit and
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*Bottom Right:
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Our Animals Can Have Allergies Too!

By Dr. Jennifer Schissler

Do you suffer from seasonal or year-round allergies? You might be surprised to learn that pets often do, too. In fact, ear infections and skin allergies, which are often related, are the top two reasons people take their dogs to the vet; these conditions are among the top 10 reasons people seek veterinary care for their cats, according to VPI Pet Insurance.

Veterinary dermatologists – with expertise in animal allergies, skin and ears – are trained to help. In fact, the specialty of veterinary dermatology developed because allergies, and the infections they induce, are the most prevalent cause of skin and ear problems in dogs and cats worldwide. Pet allergies not only are common, but can impact the well-being of an entire household as suffering pets incessantly scratch and lick, often distressing their sympathetic owners. Allergies can be seasonal or year-round. Environmental allergy can be triggered by indoor allergens, such as mold and dust mite; plant allergens, from grasses, trees and weeds, can irritate both indoor and outdoor animals. As in people, fall ragweed season can bring about allergy flares in pets. In Colorado, springtime allergy season may start as early as February, with juniper

and cedar pollination.

Here's the dish on food allergy: Just as in humans, pet allergies may be caused by food ingredients. Food allergy is identified and treated through an elimination diet trial prescribed by your veterinarian. Of note, the vast majority of over-the-counter diets do not meet the requirements of a diet trial because of ingredients and/or methods of preparation.

How do you know if your pet has a food or pollen allergy?

Signs in dogs: • Licking, biting and scratching, especially legs, feet, face, armpits, groin and rear • Red, dry, greasy, scaly, malodorous skin • Scabs, small red bumps and halo-like sores; hair-loss, caused by secondary bacterial infection • Scratching the ears, shaking the head, discharge/odor from the ears.

Signs in cats: • Licking, biting and scratching of skin, and pulling out hair • Bald patches or shortened hair • Red, raised, moist patches of skin on the abdomen or thighs • Swollen lips or chin • Severe face scratching • Small scabs on the skin, often on the back and neck • Scratching the ears, shaking the head, discharge/odor from the ears

Diagnosing allergy in dogs and cats - Diagnosis is made by ruling out other causes of itch, such as mite infestation. Allergy tests are not recommended as the sole means of diagnosis because false-positive results are common. All breeds of dogs and cats are affected by allergy. The most common dog breeds we see with allergic skin disease



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Preventing allergy in pets - There is no proven way to prevent allergies in dogs and cats. Genetics likely play a role. Early exposure to allergens, parasites and bacteria may influence allergy in a variety of ways, but much remains to be discovered. Allergy must be treated; it is never cured.

Food allergy is treated with a restricted diet. Complete avoidance of offending non-food allergens is impossible, therefore medical therapy is needed. Two main treatment strategies are immunotherapy and anti-inflammatory medications. Immunotherapy is administration of allergens by injection or drops given by mouth to promote tolerance. Allergy testing, via blood or skin, determines the ingredients included. There are several anti-inflammatory options for treatment of allergies in dogs and cats. In addition, there are several exciting new medications for dogs that specifically target a chemical cause of itch (IL-31) with minimal side effects.

Responses to medications are individually variable, and some animals will need a combination of treatments to optimize response. In addition, patients often benefit from treatments applied to the skin to remove pollens, correct dryness and greasiness, and prevent secondary infection. Aside from allergies, veterinary dermatologists diagnose and treat a wide variety of skin, hair and nail conditions, including parasites (mange), autoimmune skin disease, infections and hormone problems. Diagnosis of skin conditions requires techniques to microscopically assess for mites, bacteria, fungi and inflammatory cells on the skin. Blood tests assess for general health and hormone problems, such as hypothyroidism.

It's a good idea to routinely examine your pet's coat, skin and nails. If you notice changes, consult your veterinarian for advice, as these changes can be an indication of internal disease. *Dr. Jennifer Schissler is a veterinarian with the*



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Solar Desalination

Dear EarthTalk: What exactly is solar desalination and how can it help an increasingly thirsty world?—Maryann Dell’Amore

Solar desalination is a technique used to remove salt from water via a specially designed still that uses solar energy to boil seawater and capture the resulting steam, which is in turn cooled and condensed into pristine freshwater. Salt and other impurities are left behind in the still.

Less than 1% of the world’s desalination is powered by renewable energy sources today, but that could all change soon if companies like California-based WaterFX have anything to say about it. Its Aqua4 “concentrated solar still” (CSS) uses a concentrated solar thermal collector to compress heat, create steam and distill water at 30 times the efficiency of natural evaporation. It can produce 65,000 gallons of freshwater per day—and it can desalinate a wide range of water sources, not just seawater.

To wit, the company will start employing solar desalination to treat some 1.6 billion gallons of salt-laden irrigation drainage from California’s drought-stricken, agriculturally-rich Central Valley next year. Crops extract nearly pure water from soil, leaving behind salt and other potentially toxic minerals like selenium that naturally occur in the water. These excess minerals must be drained from the soil, or crop productivity plunges. By treating this drainage, WaterFX can prevent about 15% of farmland in California from being retired every year to make room for storage for untreated drainage water. It will also prevent the drainage from contaminating fresh waterways and endangering wildlife. According to California’s State Water Resources Control Board, approximately 9,493 miles of rivers and streams and some 513,130 acres of lakes and reservoirs are listed as being impaired by irrigated agricultural water.

“If we don’t start removing the salts now, at least 10% of

all current farmland in production in California will have to be retired, and in many scenarios this number could be up to 30 to 40%, especially on the west side of the Valley where the salinity is very high,” says WaterFX’s Matthew Stuber. “Water in the drainage areas will contaminate groundwater and natural surface waterways at an accelerated pace, eventually polluting sources of drinking water and the natural environment. Once that is released into the environment, you severely damage the natural habitat and wildlife.”

Another large-scale solar desalination project is currently under construction in Saudi Arabia and scheduled for completion in early 2017. The plant is slated to produce 60,000 cubic meters of water per day for Al Khafji City in North Eastern Saudi Arabia, ensuring a constant water supply to the arid region throughout the year. According to Abengoa, the Spanish renewable energy company building the pioneering facility, the incorporation of solar would significantly reduce operating costs, as Saudi Arabia currently burns 1.5 million barrels of oil per day at its desalination plants, which provide 50-70% of its drinking water. Total desalination demand in Saudi Arabia and neighboring countries is expected to reach 110 million cubic meters a day by 2030.

With freshwater supplies at a premium already in many parts of the world as a result of climate change, there has never been a better time for solar desalination to come of age. Whether or not this emerging technology can go mainstream sooner than later may mean the difference between a peaceful future and one wracked by conflict over access to ever-dwindling supplies of freshwater.

WaterFX, www.waterfx.co ; California’s State Water Resources Control Board, www.swrcb.ca.gov; Abengoa, www.abengoa.com. www.earthtalk.org.

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Farmers Team Up With Humane Society

By Pete Letheby

Like all farmers and ranchers, Kevin Fulton has experienced his share of tough days at work. But he does everything possible to make sure that his animals - goats, sheep, cattle and chickens - never have to experience more than one bad day themselves.

"If we can provide an environment where our animals only have one bad day in their lives, we've done our job," he said. "That's in contrast to the animals in factory farms who only have one good day in their lives — the day the misery ends for them. That's a big difference."

Fulton, 55, owns and operates a 1,000-acre organic farm on the edge of Nebraska's isolated Sandhills, where he's produced grass-fed beef that's been served in upscale restaurants from San Diego to New York. The town closest to his spread is Litchfield, population 250. Yet though he lives far from the people in the urban areas that he serves, Fulton has become a national spokesman for animal welfare.

He is, you might say, a poster child for the Humane Society of the United States. This borders on treason for those engaged in conventional agriculture, which is big on the use of chemicals and antibiotics and not heavily concerned about the welfare of confined farm animals. Most notably, Fulton helped to inaugurate the Humane Society's trail-blazing Agricultural Advisory Councils.

His involvement with the group began in the fall of 2010, after Wayne Pacelle, the Humane Society's longtime president, visited Nebraska for a town hall meeting to discuss the welfare of farm animals. Pacelle was most interested in finding out about confined animal operations, which, he'd been told, were brutal and anything but humane. That's when Fulton came forward.

"The Humane Society was getting beat up out here in the ag community," Fulton recalled. "Many farmers thought the organization was worse than the antichrist. The ag industry was painting it as, 'You've never been on a farm and you're all a bunch of vegans.'" "I told Wayne, 'You need to get farmers more involved on the front lines to fight these battles.'"

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The result: Fulton decided to start a progressive farm and ranch movement in cooperation with the Humane Society. It's been just five years, but today 19 states have with their own or shared Humane Society Agricultural Advisory Councils, all with farmers as members. The most recent states to climb on board were Washington, Oregon and Idaho, forming the Northwest Advisory Council.

Although the councils have no legislative or governmental authority to enact changes, they have had an impact through lobbying, education and recruiting farmers to join a cause that resonates with the American public. Perhaps most importantly, the Humane Society councils have put conventional agriculture on notice — or perhaps on edge — by bringing it under sharper scrutiny. This has an impact: Conventional farmers are not particularly worried about being attacked from the outside, but they seriously dislike being challenged by their fellow farmers and ranchers.

The ag councils' approach is simple: Farmers and ranchers need to respect the land and treat farm animals humanely, an approach that consumers find sympathetic.

His fight for altruistic standards has earned Fulton some threats from fellow Nebraskans, who'd like him to just clam up and go away. But Fulton, who, in his younger days, worked as a college strength and conditioning coach and competed in countless weightlifting and strongman competitions, isn't fazed by threats.

When former Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman vowed to "kick HSUS' ass" out of Nebraska, Fulton simply became more energized. He points out that Nebraska now has well over 50,000 Humane Society supporters. This is more than the number of farm operations in the state.

"I am Humane Society," Fulton says. "And I am Nebraska. I'm not going anywhere."

There is increasing evidence that Fulton's insider approach is making inroads. A rapidly growing number of major U.S. food companies and restaurant chains -- from Wendy's to Aramark to McDonald's to, most recently, General Mills — are moving away from inhumanely produced animal products. Some states' recent, overzealous "ag-gag" laws, which outlaw photos of farm operations, have also sparked a backlash from consumers who can't help wondering just why the industrial farms are so secretive. What, they ask, is Big Ag hiding from the public?

What's more, two former presidential candidates - Nebraska's Bob Kerrey and Kansas' Bob Dole, both known for their sturdy Midwestern common sense - recently signed on as Humane Society advisors. Who would have ever imagined that? Reform of confined farm operations must be long overdue, Dole and Kerrey reason. Change is a good thing.

Pete Letheby is a contributor to Writers on the Range, an op ed service of High Country News (hcn.org). He is a journalist and freelance writer in Grand Island, Nebraska.



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My Dates With The Land

By Rob Pudim

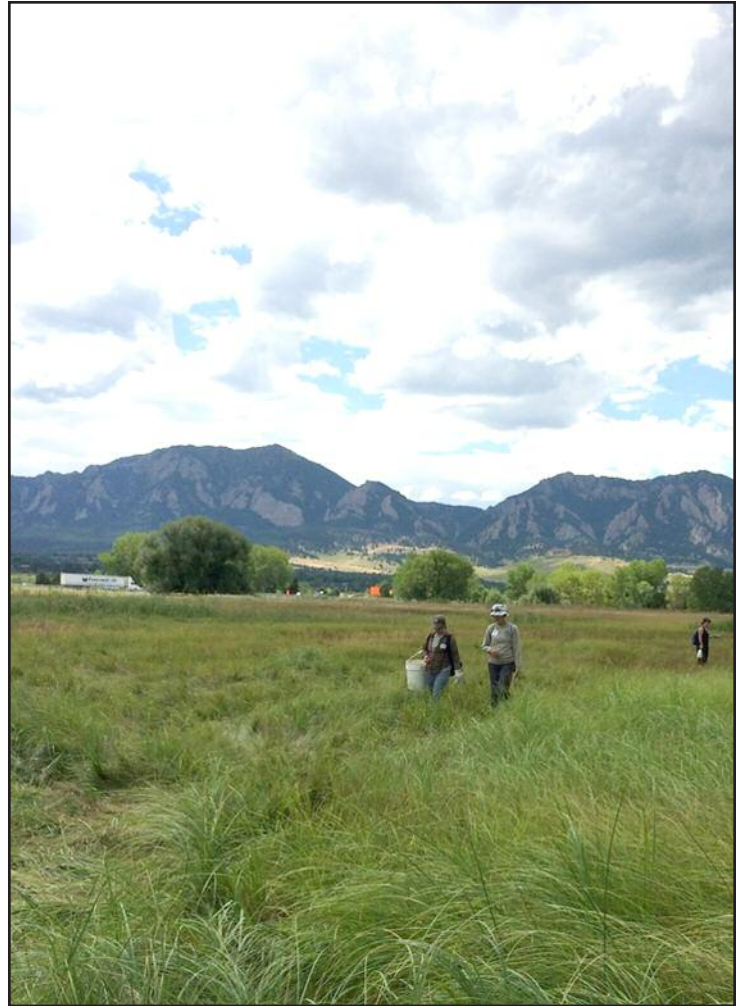
When I first joined Wildland Restoration Volunteers, I had the naive idea that helping the environment was a lot like a blind date: You get together and hope you click.

Some of the projects were just like that: We'd carry tools in, rebuild a trail so it no longer interfered with endangered plants, and go our separate ways, feeling good. After the first weekend I was involved, the trail I worked on was solidly in place and the plants saved, all in a day or two of work. Some of my other trail dates involved building fences around a wetland, blocking unnecessary roads, and cutting down obnoxious Russian olive trees or Siberian elms along waterways.

Many Westerners love this kind of work because we get out there with our loppers, chainsaws and shovels, and then we get to move things around until they're right. Whatever the problem is, we fix it, and we like to think that once we've taken action, the problem stays fixed.

But most restoration projects are nothing like this, and in fact, they seem much more like a long-term relationship. It takes patience, commitment and optimism to begin fixing the land, along with sweat and the occasional pulled muscle. It has its bad moments along with its genuine pleasures, and it's rarely as exciting as a Friday night date.

Here's what I mean. Years ago in a national forest, there was an open expanse of hard-packed dirt on the side of a mountain, and it had become dense as concrete. Motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and four-wheel drive vehicles had been pounding it for years. Erosion channels



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as deep or deeper than I am tall choked the creek below with silt. My crew of volunteers broke up the hard pack, spread wild seed and straw over it, planted some ponderosa pines, stapled down erosion mats and built check dams across the channels.

A few years later, it had become a different place, a grassy meadow strewn with flowers. Erosion channels are now silted up, with plants growing in them, and the rainwater has been slowed and diverted so the creek below looks clear. This is a success story, correct? A few days of work, and voilà! Restoration!

Not really. The meadow has alfalfa and mullein growing in it, and neither plant is native. The alfalfa was probably mixed in with the straw we spread, and it is true that the mule deer probably love it. The grass was made up of three or four native species and the flowers were native gaillardia and townsendia. But in a montane meadow not suffering from human impact, there ought to be hundreds of different plants growing, including sand lilies, pasque flowers and paintbrush.

A long study of prairie restoration that began in 1975 has found that species richness always declines in restored places. It's not like restoring a car that then ends up just as good as new. Many native species need fungi and other constituents to germinate, and our volunteer work could never provide that.

The reality is that we don't know how to restore an impacted area the way we know how to restore an automobile; we only know how to make it function better or look prettier. Once it's gone, we cannot get it back. OK, that's a bit of exaggeration; in another 50 or 100 years, if we do not stomp it down again, the land and stream might come back. But the land would have fixed itself; we just provided a temporary cosmetic boost. In my cynical moments, I think we should call ourselves Wildland Beautification Volunteers instead of Restoration Volunteers.

Some people say that what volunteers like myself have been doing is silly anyway. We are putting enormous effort into a small part of the West while the rest of our public lands are going to hell with gas and oil drilling, water pollution, overgrazing, off-roading, and a long list of other insults. We should look at the big picture, they say, not a single small meadow on the side of an insignificant mountain.

Well, the big picture is too much for me, and being silly is something I do well. So I'll keep doing what I do, and I hope other people elsewhere will do

their silly thing as well, and together we will help fix what we have done to the land we love, a little bit at a time. Restoration is really like a marriage: You work on your own arrangement and don't worry about the state of matrimony in the United States. Marriages aren't perfect, and neither are attempted restorations of the land. But you aren't doing it for yourself anyway; you're doing it for the kids.

Rob Pudim is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a column service of High Country News (hcn.org). He draws memorable political cartoons and does a lot of volunteering from the Front Range of Colorado.

Photo previous page is of the South Boulder Creek Teasel Removal Project off the Wildland Restoration website. This great website has volunteer opportunities for local projects and their projects all over Colorado.

Go to www.wlrv.net to see a list of projects or other ways you can volunteer. You can set parameters and then the website will show you projects in your area and at the level you wish. Summer is their most active time, but there are other ways to volunteer with this great non-profit.

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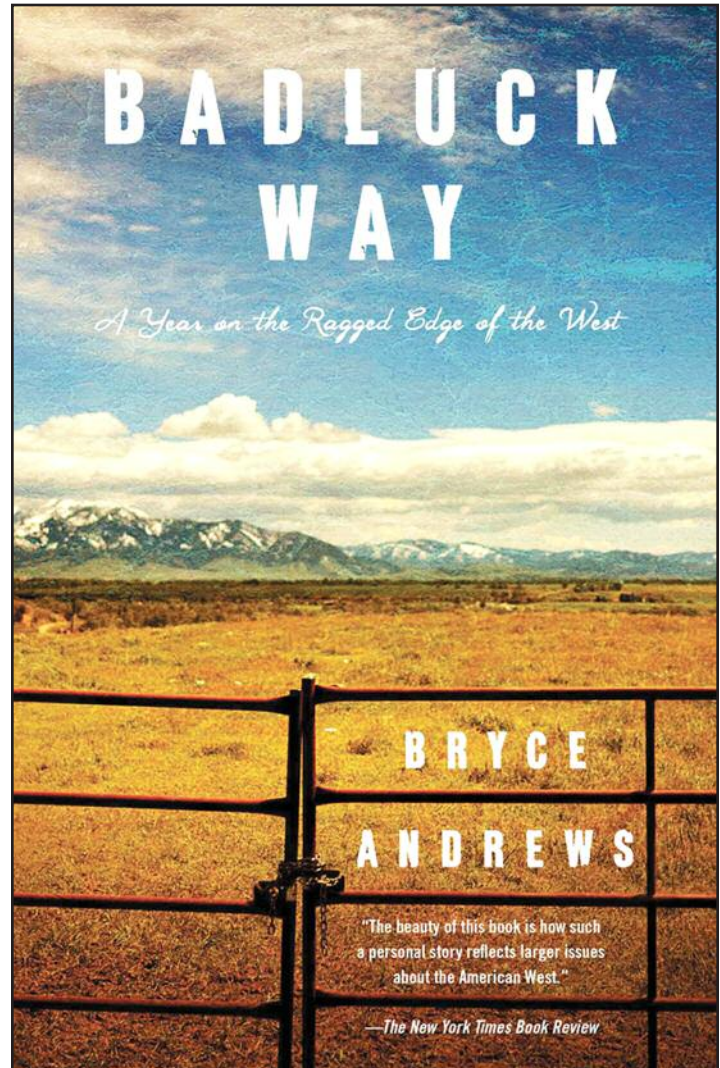
Where Agriculture & Aesthetics Go Hand In Glove

From Page Lambert - HCN

*Former Seattleite and author
Bryce Andrews writes and
ranches in Montana.*

At the age of 6, Bryce Andrews sat at his family's kitchen table in Seattle, listening to rancher Pat Zentz talk about building sculptures and pulling spotted knapweed. Art and agriculture went together, the boy assumed. The next year, curators at the University of Washington's art museum installed "The Myth of the West," an exhibit his father organized, while young Andrews stood wide-eyed before Albert Bierstadt's painting Yellowstone Falls, then turned and practiced his quick draw facing Warhol's Double Elvis. That same year, his family visited the Zentz Ranch in Montana, in a pilgrimage that would become an annual event. Sixteen years later, Andrews himself began living the myth of the West, when he became an assistant livestock manager on a different ranch.

Andrews' first book, his award-winning 2014 memoir, *Badluck Way: A Year on the Ragged Edge of the West*, begins with his journey from the "damp claustrophobia" of Seattle to the 20,000-acre Sun Ranch in remote southwest Montana. "I had practiced this departure many times," he notes. "I was headed away from my youth." The Madison Valley opens before him, peaks rising like "glinting canine teeth," the Madison River drawing "a golden line through the heart of the valley," which is home to two small towns, Ennis and Cameron. Intrigued by the ranch owner's mission to reconcile the needs of wildlife, livestock and the



land, Andrews gives narrative weight to all the members of this community, not just people and cattle, but wolves and grizzlies as well. "One of our great failures," he believes, "is that we do not allow animals to be individuals. When gritty struggles play out on the landscape, it matters which wolves, which people, and which cattle."



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Part 13 - Overpopulation

By Frosty Wooldridge

Series on overpopulation in America— enormous environmental destruction of raising domestic animals for consumption

“As far as food is concerned, the great extravagance is not caviar or truffles, but beef, pork and poultry. Some 38 percent of the world’s grain crop is now fed to animals, as well as large quantities of soybeans. There are three times as many domestic animals on this planet as there are human beings.

“The combined weight of the world’s 1.5 billion cattle alone exceeds that of the human population. While we look darkly at the number of babies being born in poorer parts of the world, we ignore the over-population of farm animals, to which we ourselves contribute...that, however, is only part of the damage done by the animals we breed.

“The energy intensive factory farming methods of the industrialized nations are responsible for the consumption of huge amounts of fossil fuels. Chemical fertilizers, used to grow the feed crops for cattle in feedlots and pigs and chickens kept indoors in sheds, produce nitrous oxide, another greenhouse gas. Then there is the loss of forests. Everywhere, forest-dwellers, both human and non-human, can be pushed out.

“Since 1960, 25 percent of the forests of Central America have been cleared for cattle. Once cleared, the poor soils will support grazing for a few years; then the grazers must move on. Shrub takes over the abandoned pasture, but the forest does not return. When the forests are cleared so the cattle can graze, billions of tons of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere.

“Finally, the world’s cattle are thought to produce about 20 percent of the methane released into the atmosphere, and methane traps twenty-five times as much heat from the sun as carbon dioxide. Factory farm manure also produces methane because, unlike manure dropped naturally in the fields, it does not decompose in the presence of oxygen. All of this amounts to a compelling reason...for a plant based diet.” Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*

Harsh facts about raising beef cows for food: it takes 12 pounds of grain to add one pound of meat on a cow. It takes 2,500 gallons of water to add one pound of beef on a bovine. The average mature dairy cow, which weighs

about 1000 lbs., produces about 148 lbs. of raw manure each day that equals 52,000 pounds annually. Source: Texas State Energy Conservation Office’s report. The average cow drinks and excretes up to 50 gallons of water daily. (Source: www.earthsave.org)

(1.5 billion cows eat, crap, expel methane gas and more 24/7. Enormous amounts of fossil fuel burns to feed them, transport them, milk them, slaughter them and take them to market. The United States faces an added 122 million people by 2050—a scant 35 years from now. Will we

possess enough water, energy and arable land to continue this enterprise?) Photography by www.google.com

With 1.5 billion cows on the globe, planet Earth must deal with trillions of pounds/gallons of manure waste, water waste and carbon footprint waste to feed the animals. Combined with the amount of fuel, arable land and water to grow the corn and grain

encompassed in filling the stomachs of beef cows, “Houston, we’ve got a problem.”

While the United States of America expects to add 122 million more people within the next 37 years, it suffers seven states already facing water shortages with its current 316 million in 2013. By growing the population to the projected 438 million by 2050, America faces sobering realities not being considered.

“A United Nations report has identified the world’s rapidly growing herds of cattle as the greatest threat to the climate, forests and wildlife,” said Geoffrey Lean, environmental editor of *The Independent*. “And they are blamed for a host of other environmental crimes, from acid rain to the introduction of alien species, from producing deserts to creating dead zones in the oceans, from poisoning rivers and drinking water to destroying coral reefs.

“The 400-page report by the Food (Continued next page.)



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and Agricultural Organization, entitled *Livestock's Long Shadow*, also surveys the damage done by sheep, chickens, pigs and goats. But in almost every case, the world's 1.5 billion cattle are most to blame. Livestock are responsible for 18 percent of the greenhouse gases that cause global warming, more than cars, planes and all other forms of transport put together."

(Shot of Texas industrial beef waste river heading to a holding lagoon. Ultimately such waste seeps into every corner of the natural world.)
Photography by www.reddit.com



With the current 7.1 billion humans on the planet, another 3 billion within the next 35 years can only accelerate livestock destruction of the natural world.

Bovine overgrazing worldwide constitutes the major driver for deforestation. Eventually, those pastures turn to deserts. One liter (just over a quart) of milk requires 990 liters of water to produce it. That equates to 989 liters of

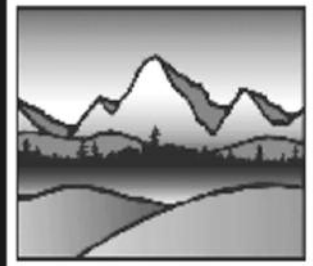
wastewater the planet must tolerate.

(Behind every bucolic farm barn, farmers burn anything and everything including plastics, chemicals, containers that held chemicals such as fertilizers, medicines, oil and unspeakable filth.) Photography by www.BurnBarrel.org

Feedlots and fertilizers over-nourish water, causing weeds to choke all other life. The vast array of pesticides, antibiotics and hormones ultimately migrate into drinking water and endanger human health. In dairy farm states like Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan and Ohio—ground water contamination



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creates mega-problems for humans and animals alike.

Cancer: Sandra Steingraber wrote a book about cancer caused by contaminated ground water, rivers and lagoons—*Living Down Stream*.

Agricultural contamination washes down to the sea, killing coral reefs and creating “dead zones” devoid of



(Steaming billions of tons of cow manure cannot be handled by the natural world. It poisons the soil, groundwater and atmosphere. Over 1.5 billion cows create inexhaustible waste worldwide in our water, oceans, land and air.) Photo by Robert Barker

life. The Mississippi River absorbs and transports millions of gallons of contaminated water into the Gulf of Mexico. Recent reports show a 10,000 square mile dead zone in New Orleans.

The mind-numbing damage can only grow by insane degrees as the human race adds another 3 billion of itself by 2050.

“Our choices as consumers drive an industry that kills ten billion animals per year in the United States alone. If we choose to support this industry and the best reason we can come up with is because it’s the way things are, clearly something is amiss. What could cause an entire society of people to check their thinking caps at the door—and to not even realize they’re doing so? Though this question is quite complex, the answer is quite simple: carnism.” *Melanie Joy, Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism: The Belief System That Enables Us to Eat Some Animals and Not Others*

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Where FEMA Fails

By Elizabeth Shogren

When the 2012 Waldo Canyon Fire was finally snuffed out, the residents of Manitou Springs, Colorado, a small town on the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, breathed a collective sigh of relief. The community had narrowly escaped what was then the most destructive fire in Colorado history. Not long afterward, Mayor Marc Snyder gave a tour to Carol Ekarius, the executive director of the Coalition for the Upper South Platte, a nonprofit that works to protect the watershed southwest of Denver. As the two walked through the picturesque town, with its eclectic historic buildings tucked between Pikes Peak and the Garden of the Gods, Ekarius pointed out structures she predicted would be damaged or destroyed when, inevitably, there would be flooding off the scorched slopes rising above them.

Snyder initially was appalled by this unsolicited warning. Ekarius, however, was persuasive: She had seen floods devastate her rural watershed in nearby Teller County after the 1996 Buffalo Creek Fire and again after the 2002 Hayman Fire, with catastrophic consequences for one of Denver's main reservoirs. "I wish I didn't have a crystal ball, but I've seen it so many times after fires in the mountains," Ekarius recalls. Snyder quickly recognized the danger his community faced, and he began trying to raise money to upgrade its drainage system — the best way, he thought, to avert impending disaster. "The consensus was it was coming, whether it came in year one or year 10," he says. "It keeps you up at night, let me tell you."

The town applied for funding from FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, but the small amount Congress allocates to protect vulnerable communities before disaster was already depleted. Unable to upgrade the drainage system, town officials installed new emergency

warning sirens, warned residents and steeled themselves for the calamity they knew was coming.

On Aug. 9, 2013, it arrived. Snyder spotted a heavy storm brewing over the mountains. "I'd been living under this shadow of doom for about a year," he says. "I remember looking over and seeing that ominous dark cloud over the burn scar, and I thought: This is it."

As rain pounded the charred slopes, a wall of muddy water carrying rocks, trees and other debris raced off them and raged through town, overwhelming the old drainage system. The torrent was so strong that it picked up cars on the highway and swept them downstream. Two people were killed nearby and dozens of homes and businesses were destroyed or damaged. So was the storm water system. Afterward, FEMA's largess flowed, helping to repair City Hall and paying for much of a new \$6 million drainage system. But upgrading it before the flood would have cost far less, and much of the destruction could have been averted. So why wasn't it?

FEMA says it receives requests for several times more funding than it has available each year for preventive projects. "There's a clear need there," says Michael Grimm, director of the risk reduction division of the federal insurance and mitigation administration at FEMA. (In recent years, President Barack Obama has asked Congress for more funding for pre-disaster hazard mitigation, but Congress has allocated only \$25 million. In his 2016 budget request, Obama is seeking eight times that much, \$200 million — though the likelihood of getting that is small.)

But the shortage of pre-disaster funding is just one of the ways that FEMA is out of sync with community needs, now that climate change is impacting the West. A close examination reveals policies that discourage upgrades to help structures withstand larger floods; favor flood control using pipes and pumps, instead of systems that mimic nature; or provide aid to communities damaged by floods after wildfires only if each flood has been declared a national disaster.

Billions of dollars are at stake. "Outside of defense spending, this is the biggest area where the feds are spending money to build things," says Jeffrey Thomas, a Louisiana lawyer and former FEMA contractor. "Are they compatible with the high aims we are articulating for our cities to be more resilient to climate change?"

A White House task force recently called for reforms, and Obama responded with an executive order in January. He directed federal agencies to create a new standard, one that requires that projects constructed with federal funds be built on higher ground

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or elevated to withstand the floods expected with rising sea levels, greater deluges and other consequences of climate change. Obama also encouraged FEMA to support green infrastructure projects, such as moving buildings out of floodplains and planting trees and shrubs instead, to soak up floodwaters and make communities more resilient.

It's too early to judge the effectiveness of the executive order, which FEMA has yet to implement. But it wouldn't even address the dilemma faced by mountain communities like Manitou Springs. The necessary fixes, experts say, won't come from FEMA or the White House alone. Lawmakers need to act, but, as Steve Adams, director of strategic initiatives for the Institute for Sustainable Communities, says: "Nobody thinks you could successfully amend statutes at this time because of the Congress."

There are other possible sources of federal assistance for vulnerable communities. The Federal Agriculture Department's Natural Resources Conservation Service can fund projects, even if the destruction doesn't warrant a federal disaster declaration. There's not enough money, though, to do very much. For example, the program helped buy concrete jersey barriers and sandbags to protect rural developments near Flagstaff, Arizona, against anticipated flooding after the 2010 Shultz Fire. But "what did come was orders of magnitude worse than anyone predicted" and quickly overwhelmed those barriers, says Dustin Woodman, engineering division manager for Coconino County, Arizona. The torrential rain washed soil, trees and other debris down steep slopes into two rural neighborhoods, killing a 12-year-old girl and filling dozens of homes with several feet of mud.

Woodman has spent the last five years designing and funding \$30 million in projects to handle floodwaters to protect the Timberline and Doney Park subdivisions outside Flagstaff. He quickly learned that FEMA would fund projects that used concrete or metal pipes to direct floodwaters, but not the green infrastructure favored by many scientists and communities. He sought funding elsewhere for such remedies, like meandering channels planted with grasses and shrubs to absorb and direct floodwaters. "FEMA is focused more on traditionally engineered flood-mitigation structures — levees and retention basins," Woodman says. "Rather than fight that fight, we focused the FEMA funds we had on projects where we wanted to do more traditional projects."

FEMA also resisted when Woodman wanted to use its money to replace a 2-by-4-foot roadside ditch with a channel 10 times larger. "Those public assistance funds are only able to be used for replacement in-kind,"

Woodman says. That makes it difficult for communities to upgrade drainage ditches, bridges or other structures when risks increase. But since the

flooding had already carved a ditch the size Woodman wanted, he was eventually able to get a waiver for that project.

For years, counties have been asking FEMA and Congress to acknowledge that major fires often cause flooding and should be treated as one disaster. Currently, unless each flood is declared a federal disaster, victims likely won't qualify for FEMA's help. Kayle Higinbotham, 68, lives in an 1880 Victorian ranch house five miles west of Manitou Springs, at the base of Pike's Peak. Her home flooded this spring when a 12-foot-deep gulch next to her house filled up with debris, and sediment washed down from the slopes. But even though three feet of muddy water filled her family room, her house isn't in a mapped floodplain, so Higinbotham doesn't qualify to have it bought out or moved to a safer location. Before the fire, her house and the 60 acres she inherited were valued at \$1.7 million. Now, her real estate agent tells her she couldn't find a buyer.

The risk of a dangerous flood is so great that the fire department advised her to leave home during the summer monsoon. When Higinbotham is home, she anxiously monitors the weather and listens for a flood warning on her radio. All this has left her with post-traumatic stress disorder. "You get on your feet from the fire, and then comes the flood," Higinbotham says. "And then you get on your feet from the flood, and here comes the next flood. There's just no end in sight."

The plight of people like Higinbotham has inspired community leaders to compete for federal grants, call for changes in federal policy and even levy new taxes. *This is a condensed version of a larger investigation by Elizabeth Shogren in partnership with the New England Center for Investigative Reporting. NECIR is a nonprofit newsroom based at Boston University and WGBH News that produces investigative reporting and trains the next generation of journalists. The Fund for Investigative Journalism paid for travel for this report. For additional features on climate change issues, visit necir.org and follow @necirbu.*

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NOVEMBER
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POWER UPDATE



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Visit our website and click on 'Manage Your Energy' to learn more about our renewable energy programs and rebates, special rates for off-peak energy use, equipment rebates you might qualify for and easy low-cost ways to save energy and money.

www.unitedpower.com



Free Trip to D.C.

United Power is now accepting applications for the Washington, D.C. Youth Tour to be held June 9-16, 2016. The cooperative will pay all expenses for this unique opportunity for three local students to experience our nation's capital first hand. This experience will allow students to gain a better understanding of American History, see government in action, develop leadership skills, and gain a better understanding of electric cooperatives.

United Power's Youth Tour is open to high school students 16 years of age or older and whose primary residence is in United Power's service territory.

Applications are available under the 'My Community' tab at www.unitedpower.com. For more information contact United Power's Community Outreach Specialist at 303-637-1334. **Applications must be postmarked by January 15, 2016.**



Cooperative Youth Tour

Washington, D.C.
June 9-16, 2016

Operation Round-Up Celebrates 20 Years Helping Members

United Power's Operation Round-Up is a charitable foundation funded by members who choose to "round-up" their monthly electric bill. The average donation is about \$6 per year, but the donations really make a difference in the lives of members who have experienced obstacles in their lives.



Operation Round-Up is celebrating 20 years in 2015, and has granted over \$1.5 million to support individuals, families and organizations in United Power's Territory. Operation Round-Up funds don't just go toward utility bills. Round-Up has provided funds for local fire departments, community health clinics, youth programs, food banks, families in need and many other worthwhile causes.

Canyon Cares of Coal Creek Canyon, a nonprofit organization committed to providing short-term financial assistance to individuals and families in need in Coal Creek Canyon and Nederland, was a recipient of a Round-Up grant this spring. The \$2,500 grant helped Canyon Cares respond to urgent needs within the community, such as housing, heating, food, transportation and medical expenses.

To learn more about how you can "round-up" your bill, check out the 'My Community' tab at www.unitedpower.com or call a Member Services Representative at 303-637-1300.

Customer Service: 303-637-1300

Coal Creek Office: 303-642-7921

www.unitedpower.com

Give Thanks for a Little & You will find a Lot



NEW LISTING!

95 Lewark Avenue

On Top of the World

2 BD/ 1 BA 1,579 sq.ft. **\$264,000**



11760 Lillis Drive

Remodeled Home with Barn

4 BD/ 3 BA 2,796 sq.ft. **\$419,000**



Under Contract!

11846 Crescent Park Drive

Main Floor Living, Gorgeous Remodel

3 BD/ 2 BA 1,925 sq. ft. **\$392,000**



Under Contract!

13 Leon Lane

Love Living in the Mountains

3 BD/ 2 BA 1,781 sq.ft. **\$349,999**



33566 Coal Creek Canyon Drive

Beautiful Updated Log Home + Cabin

4 BD/ 4 BA 4,236 sq.ft. **\$394,000**



1210 Indian Peak Road

Beautiful Executive Home

4 BD/ 3 BA 3,544 sq.ft. **\$559,000**



NEW PRICE!

11944 Vonnie Claire Road

Complete Remodel!

4 BD/ 2 BA 1,872 sq.ft. **\$349,000**



Price Reduction!

11673 Hillcrest Road

Great Getaway Cabin

1 BD/ 1 BA 846 sq.ft. **\$164,000**



SOLD!

616 Chalet Drive

Huge Decks to Enjoy Mountain Living

3 BD/ 2 BA 2,176 sq.ft. **\$265,000**



SOLD!

165 Hummingbird Lane

Home Sweet Home

3 BD/ 3 BA 2,688 sq.ft. **\$350,000**



SOLD!

95 Ronnie Road

Solitude Without the Isolation

4 BD/ 2 BA 2,300 sq.ft. **\$337,000**



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TBD Rudy Lane West

.73 Ac. **\$30,000**



33966 Nadm Drive

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126 Lichen Lane

Flat 1.46 acre, gorgeous Horse Property!

5 BD/ 3 BA 3,116 sq.ft. **\$398,000**



11547 Shimley Road

1.15 Ac. **\$29,000**



0 Lillis Lane

Two building sites and much more!

5.04 Acres **\$79,000**



NEW LISTING!

69 Aspen Drive

Remodeled

2 BD/ 1 BA 1,056 sq.ft. **\$274,000**



Under Contract!

601 Camp Eden Road

Amazing City & Mountain Views!

3 BD/ 2 BA 2,013 sq.ft. **\$369,000**



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33901 Skyline Drive

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3 BD/ 2 BA 3,174 sq.ft.



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