

**INSERT:
SUSTAINABLE JOBS FACTSHEET**

THE PLAINS TRUTH

VOICE OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS RESOURCE COUNCIL

Volume 40, Issue 3, Summer 2011



Film festival in Billings for a third year

Mark your calendar for a fun Northern Plains event: the Wild & Scenic Film Festival in Billings.

**Friday, September 16
7:00 p.m.
Petro Theater
MSU-Billings**

A \$10 admission will get you more than two hours of fun, engaging, and short independent films that look at different aspects of our natural environment – issues, adventure, inspiration. These are films you won't see in commercial movie theaters.

Adding to the fun, we'll be giving away oodles of good stuff, thanks to our national sponsors – Patagonia, Clif Bars, Tom's of Maine, Osprey Packs, Sierra Nevada Brewing Company, Klean Kanteen, Grist.org., and others.

If you would like to make your business a local sponsor, call Clementine at (406) 248-1154 or email clementine@northernplains.org for information.

Bring your friends and family for a fun evening!

– Steve Paulson

Exxon oil spill hits home

Truth often first victim in a crisis

In this special report, we look behind the headlines of the Exxon oil spill on the Yellowstone River and its ramifications for TransCanada's proposed Keystone XL tar sands pipeline through eastern Montana.

Late on the night of July 1 at the ExxonMobil Operations headquarters in Houston, Texas, technicians noticed a loss of pressure in the Silvertip oil pipeline from Wyoming to Laurel, Montana, and began to shut it down.

Depending on who is talking, no one is sure how long it took to shut down the pipeline. First, ExxonMobil said the pipeline was shut down in about 28 minutes. However,

Montana landowner Forrest Mars announced July 20 that he has purchased one-third of the proposed Tongue River Railroad, along with Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Arch Coal.

Northern Plains Resource Council has successfully kept the Tongue River Railroad out of the southeast Montana agricultural valley since the project was first proposed in 1980.

"This just shows that even Warren Buffett (owner of BNSF) and Forrest Mars can

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Photo courtesy of Kate Sheppard/Mother Jones

Northern Plains member Alexis Bonogofsky looks at oily backwaters on her land near the Yellowstone River two weeks after the Exxon spill.

the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) reported later that the real turn-off time was 56 minutes. At any rate, about 42,000 gallons of crude oil spilled into the fast-moving and runoff-swollen Yellowstone River.

At one point, ExxonMobil actually said there was no oil

in the river. Eventually the company confirmed oil had spread 25 miles. However, independent observers have confirmed oil deposits up to 240 miles downriver.

ExxonMobil set up a hotline for landowners with oil on their land. Those who called the hotline found no one who

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Study of XL predicts 5-7 million-gallon spill at worst

A rupture in the proposed Keystone XL pipeline could release 5 million to 8 million gallons of tar sands crude oil into the Yellowstone or Missouri rivers if a worst-case scenario similar to the ExxonMobil spill were to occur, a new report warns.

John S. Stansbury, Ph.D., a professor of engineering at the University of Nebraska, released a report, *Analysis of Frequency, Magnitude and Consequence of Worst-Case Spills from the Proposed Keystone XL Pipeline* on July 11.

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Forrest Mars buys one-third of coal railroad

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Rancher Mark Fix shows where the proposed Tongue River Railroad would pass through a gap in a hillside and cross his pastureland, hay fields, and calving grounds beyond, on its way up the lower Tongue River.

TO THE MEMBERS

Oil spill outrage: Time for a shift in power, priorities

As we all have recently learned, Montana is not immune to oil spills. The mighty Yellowstone, upon whose waters we depend for drinking and irrigation, and upon which countless creatures depend, has been sullied by an oily mess after an oil pipeline under the river ruptured.

Am I outraged? Yes. Am I surprised? Sadly, no.

Our fellow members have almost 40 years of experience and know that, despite the assurances of industry and despite the fact that government is supposed to be enforcing the law, “accidents” will and do invariably happen.

Aquifers aren't restored after strip mining. Coal ash ponds leak. Fracking chemicals show up in unexpected places. And it turns out that ***surprise!*** longwall coal mining actually does create significant subsidence problems, despite industry's promises during the permitting process.

So the fact that an oil pipeline failed is no surprise.

Clearly, as long as we're dependent on fossil fuels, we'll continually be facing



these catastrophes, and those costs are going to be borne by common folk like you and me, especially those whose livelihoods are centered on the land.

We need a new paradigm for powering our society. One that doesn't require ripping up the land and fouling our air and water. One that doesn't alter the climate. And while we're creating a wish list, an energy paradigm that provides good jobs in places where people want to live.

That is the vision of Northern Plains. We know there are sources of energy that are cleaner, cheaper, and faster to bring on line than those dirty, arcane fossil fuels. And we are championing those energy sources.

Energy efficiency, which is a “source” of energy in that it displaces another form of energy, has essentially NO downsides – it doesn't even require new transmission lines. The goal is to reduce our energy use while still completing the same societal functions to such a degree that we can easily meet our remaining energy needs with renewable sources such as sun and wind.

Is this possible? Northern Plains demonstrated it is more than five years ago with our Home on the Range building. In my other capacity as an architect, we're designing whole campuses that generate as much energy as they consume, and they do this within conventional construction budgets.

This transition from fossil fuels is not going to happen overnight, but we need to move on a very deliberate course away from them NOW. Meanwhile, we must hold industry's and government's feet to the fire to ensure that the remaining fossil fuel extraction is done in a responsible manner that minimizes damage and does not push the costs onto others.

We know that it isn't simply just going to happen on its own. It's not going to


happen when we've got policies that subsidize fossil fuels both directly and indirectly. It's not going to happen when we've got gutless politicians doing the bidding of corporations rather than citizens.

It's not going to happen when our financial systems don't account for the true costs of fossil fuel resource extraction. It's not going to happen if we don't have an educated populace that understands the consequences of the current paradigm.

And it's not going to happen in Montana without the LEADERSHIP of Northern Plains! So if YOU are outraged by the oil spill, help us build our power as Northern Plains. Help us make the clean energy paradigm a reality!

Recruit new members to Northern Plains. Help out at one of our upcoming fundraising events. Write a letter to the editor. Become a monthly donor to Northern Plains. Help our task forces with the heavy lifting of bringing forth this paradigm change!

Bless you for all you do, and let's go forth and build some real power!

– Ed Gulick, Chair 



Northern Plains Resource Council is a grassroots conservation and family agriculture group. Northern Plains organizes Montana citizens to protect our water quality, family farms, and unique quality of life.

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\$500+ Riders of the Big Sky	\$50 Range Rider
\$200 Bottom Line Rider	\$40 General Member
\$100 Rough Rider	\$15-39 Living Lightly

Endowment

The Northern Plains Endowment is a permanent fund established to help sustain Northern Plains' work into the future. If you want to make a donation, a memorial gift, or a bequest to this fund, please contact the Northern Plains office.

Northern Plains Staff

Staff Director: Teresa Erickson
Development Coordinator: Steve Paulson
Director of Organizing and Campaigns: Olivia Stockman

Organizers: Caleb Lande, Becca Fischer, Svein Newman, Clayton Elliott, Rose Moore
Program Support Coordinator: Clementine Lindley
Communications Coordinator: Larry Winslow
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Western Organization of Resource Councils

Northern Plains is a founding member of the Western Organization of Resource Councils. WORC is a regional network of seven grassroots community organizations that include 10,000 members in seven Western states. WORC helps its member groups succeed by providing training and coordinating regional issue campaigns. Visit WORC at www.worc.org.

Northern Plains Resource Council

220 South 27th Street, Suite A, Billings, MT 59101
Tel: (406) 248-1154 Fax: (406) 248-2110
Email: info@northernplains.org



Fate, love in Cindy Webber's favor

Being a native Montanan, Cindy Webber has a deep respect and love for the land that has lasted throughout her life.

Cindy grew up in Livingston and attended Montana State College (now MSU). While studying there, she met Ed Webber and fell in love. Little did she know that Ed had ranching ties to land south of Big Timber.

After college, Ed and Cindy ended up moving south of Big Timber to a ranch where they raised their kids. To Cindy, who didn't expect to move to a ranch, "it was all about fate and love."

Interestingly, moving to the ranch was how Cindy became connected with Northern Plains. She and Ed got involved with the formation of the Boulder Valley Association (BVA – a former Northern Plains affiliate) when news became public that the Stillwater Mine was planning to expand into the Boulder Valley.

"Originally (31 years ago) when we heard that this new mine was going to be established in our valley, Ed was instrumental in creating an organization that could talk to the mine – Boulder Valley Association." BVA was organized by Northern Plains; Cottonwood Resource Council took its place years later.

But life caught up with Cindy and Ed and they ended up taking a break



“When I needed it, I “knew where to go to get information – Northern Plains.”

– Cindy Webber

from BVA a few years after it formed.

In 2008, Cindy read in the Big Timber Pioneer that gas drilling companies were leasing state minerals under the Boulder and Yellowstone rivers. She “knew where to go to get information – Northern Plains.” Cindy attended a public meeting that Cottonwood Resource Council hosted and ended up rejoining the organization.

When asked why she got involved again in Northern Plains she said “I am concerned about what gas development could do to the water.... We need to protect it from toxic pollution and from those who want to market Montana's water.”

Cindy has taken that concern and translated it into action. She is a Northern Plains Board member, has lobbied in the legislature twice, and is the current chair of Cottonwood Resource Council. And she's having a lot of fun with it. “It's fun to work on projects where you have a one-on-one relationship with people. You get in proximity with people and find that it's about more than just the issues.”

As for gas development, Cindy is making sure our water resources are protected first.

“That's what we were able to do with Stillwater Mining Company, preserve the quality of the water,” she said, referring to the 11-year-old Good Neighbor Agreement.

Cindy and the Cottonwood Resource Council are positioned and motivated to make a difference with their work on hydraulic fracturing and other gas drilling issues.

She might be right. Maybe it really is all about fate and love.

– Becca Fischer

From our supporters

I have been aware of Northern Plains Resource Council since its inception and am not surprised at its effectiveness and durability. It took a few years (29), but I finally finished college, got a job with a steady paycheck and cherish the opportunity to be a dues-paying member.

Thanks for all the smart hard-driving, tenacious, and effective work you continue to do over the years – oh, and folding some fun into the mix as well.

– Barbara Bennette, Elmo, Montana, who died just a month after writing to us

I have nothing but praise for the staff and leaders of Northern Plains Resource Council. If it wasn't for Northern Plains and other similar organizations, Montana would not be a fit place to live. Keep doing what you are doing! Thank you.

– Craig Martin, Kremlin, Montana

Join us on Facebook

If you use Facebook at home, type “Northern Plains Resource Council” into your Search box and pay us a visit.

Better yet, “Like” us! We promise not to flood you with constant posts, but we will post useful bits of information and ways for you to make a difference. And maybe we'll pass along something just for fun once in a while.

Pass it along

Are you enjoying this issue of the Plains Truth? Well then, don't keep it to yourself, recycle by passing it along to a friend.

You also can view current and past issues of the Plains Truth on our website at www.northernplains.org. Just click on the Publications box.

Why I'm a Monthly Sustainer

Member finds monthly giving an easy way to help

Rose Anderson of Billings became a monthly donor on the day she joined Northern Plains Resource Council.

“I wanted to help Northern Plains a lot, and that was easier to do if I gave a little bit each month,” she told us.

Rose travels a lot but gets in touch and lends a hand whenever she's in town, volunteering with research and other projects in the office. In June, she went through WORC's training, “Principles of Community Organizing.”

She's happy with how her monthly giving has worked out, saying, “It's drawn directly out of my bank account and I don't even have to think about it.”

If you join Rose and our other monthly donors, you can save yourself the hassle of renewals and save Northern Plains the expense of printing, postage, and staff time that goes into sending renewal letters. It's a great and simple way to give!



From left, Becky Ceartas, of Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA; Rose Anderson, Northern Plains member from Billings, and Sara Hilbert, NP member from Billings, visit during WORC's Principles of Community Organizing in June.

To become a monthly donor, go to the Northern Plains website and hit the Join / Donate button at the top right and fill out the form under Become a Monthly Sustainer. The information is secure.

– Steve Paulson



Spill

Continued from Page 1

could give them answers about what they might be exposed to by the spill.

ExxonMobil said everything would be all right and the public was not at risk. Crude oil contains dangerous chemicals including benzene and hydrogen sulfide. But ExxonMobil officials said much of those substances would have evaporated quickly after the initial spill, meaning the long-term health risk is low. However, some residents in oil-stained areas have complained of nausea, dizziness, and shortness of breath that have lingered for days. An unknown number have been treated at area hospitals.

Oil fumes overwhelming

Early on, Northern Plains member George Nilson of Billings said the fumes from oil that washed into his neighbor's property have been overwhelming.

"I've been in it for five days now, and the only way I can breathe is to have all the windows open," he said.

ExxonMobil is one of the largest corporations in the world. Even now, its public relations machine is busily working to calm the waters. Landowners are being told that ExxonMobil will pay for any damages to their land, but they want to do it in private and not discuss such concerns at community meetings.

In frustration over ExxonMobil's ever-changing stories and lack of transparency with the state and local officials, the Governor of Montana pulled out of a unified command post and set up a separate state headquarters in Billings to take complaints from landowners.

Cheerleader-in-Chief

While the Governor has been eager to scold ExxonMobil for its pipeline failure and emergency response, he remains Cheerleader-in-Chief for the Keystone XL pipeline. The Keystone XL pipeline is proposed to carry corrosive tar sands oil across 250 miles of Montana en route from Alberta to the Gulf Coast. Its route will include many water crossings in Montana, including the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers.

The difference between the two pipelines is huge, with the Keystone XL pipeline projected to carry 20 times as much oil per day as the

An Open Letter to the Governor

The following is excerpted from a guest opinion written by Northern Plains Pipeline Landowners Group members Darrell Garoutte, Tim Hess, and Doris Frost. It was printed in four major Montana dailies and other media.

The Keystone XL will be 20 times the size of the Exxon pipeline which recently ruptured – with exponentially larger impacts should there be a spill. The Keystone I pipeline, which runs through North Dakota, has had 12 leaks in its first year of operation. Because the Keystone XL pipeline needs a permit from the state of Montana, we call on you, Governor Schweitzer, to protect Montanans along the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers by:

- Requiring that TransCanada provide a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan for public review prior to issuance of a permit;
- Requiring that all disturbed land be reclaimed, in consultation with soil scientists familiar with the region;
- Requiring a comprehensive engineering study of pipeline pressures and worst-case spill risks specific to KXL;
- Requiring that if a person's water supply is contaminated by construction or pipeline operation, all costs associated with finding and providing a permanent water supply of comparable quality and quantity be covered, as well as any other damages, including but not limited to any consequences, medical or otherwise, related to water contamination;
- Requiring that the pipeline bear liability for surface and water damage;
- Requiring that all hydrologically sensitive areas are identified and a plan is implemented to protect them;
- Requiring a certificate specifying which government agency will oversee all construction activities in Montana.

We have valid reasons for our concerns about the Keystone XL pipeline:

- Despite its many assurances, TransCanada's Keystone I pipeline produced 12 spills in its first year of operation.
- Tar sands oil is a corrosive material. The overall Alberta pipeline system that carries tar sands oil has had approximately sixteen times as many spills due to internal corrosion than the U.S. system.
- The Keystone pipeline is a 36-inch pipeline, and will have a transport capacity of up to 830,000 barrels of oil per day – 20 times more than the ExxonMobil pipeline.
- The Keystone pipeline is routed to cross the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers.

Exxon pipeline. The 12-inch Silvertip Exxon pipeline that ruptured July 1 carried 40,000 barrels of Wyoming crude a day to the Exxon refinery east of Billings. TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline will be 36 inches in diameter and carry up to 830,000 pressurized barrels of corrosive tar sands oil a day.

The Governor touts the idea that TransCanada will use the safest technology possible in the Keystone XL pipeline to prevent a massive spill. However, TransCanada's Keystone I pipeline in eastern North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska began transporting Alberta tar sands oil a year ago and already has had 12 oil

spills, one of which was large enough for the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration to order a shutdown of the pipeline.

"This really scares me," said Doris Frost of Miles City, a member of the Northern Plains Pipeline Landowners Group and who irrigates from the Yellowstone River where the Keystone XL pipeline is planned to cross. "We are talking about a pipeline that carries more than 20 times the oil that the Exxon pipeline carries, and it's far more corrosive material. The State Department, Montana DEQ, and everyone else involved in the

permitting process needs to take a hard look at what is being proposed."

A report released in February by the Natural Resources Defense Council and other groups showed that pipelines carrying tar sands have a higher rate of corrosion failure.

"The oil industry is always saying that the chances of a leak are nil to zero, and responses in the case of a leak would be quick and thorough," said Carl Weimer of the Pipeline Safety Trust. "However, that wasn't the case with the Gulf oil spill, the Enbridge pipeline spill in Michigan, the Chevron pipeline spill in Salt Lake City, and the dozen spills on TransCanada's Keystone I pipeline."

A TransCanada gas pipeline exploded in a rural area west of Gillette, Wyoming, on July 20.

Bring it on

Jim Skillestad, a Dawson County Commissioner, told the Glendive Ranger-Review that he attended a state Chamber of Commerce meeting in June where TransCanada received a "standing ovation for what it has done in the state."

Skillestad, a landowner in Dawson County, said he has signed a contract with TransCanada to run pipe across his property. He said he is not worried about potential leaks and damages.

According to the Ranger-Review, Skillestad said TransCanada taxes would make the county about \$11.5 million per year.

Dena Hoff, Northern Plains member and irrigator on the Yellowstone River near Glendive, is not so optimistic.

"TransCanada is going to impact everyone in the county. If they don't have doubts, they are fooling themselves," she told the Ranger-Review. "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

On July 20, Governor Schweitzer issued an executive order to create an oil pipeline safety review council to assess the risk of ruptures and leaks in all sections of pipeline that cross Montana's rivers and streams.

Initial assessment rejected

The U.S. State Department, which has authority to grant a presidential permit approving Keystone XL's construction, had its initial Environmental Impact

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OIL SPILL

Spill

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Statement rejected by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as “inadequate” because significant environmental impacts had not been sufficiently evaluated. The State Department is now preparing a final EIS. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality has yet to issue its permit as well.

Members of the Northern Plains Pipeline Landowners Group have requested that DEQ attach specific conditions (see box on opposite page) to any permit to improve the safety of the pipeline.

In Congress, a House subcommittee passed fast-track legislation in mid-June that would order Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to reach a decision on the project by November 1.

If passed by the full House, the bill



Northern Plains member Alexis Bonogofsky of Billings took this photo of oil-covered foliage along her family property on the Yellowstone River soon after the Exxon spill.

would compel Clinton to overrule demands for a further review of the project from the EPA and disregard local safety concerns from landowners along Keystone XL's 1,700-mile route.

From the number of daily media inquiries, both in-state and nationally,

the Northern Plains office has received the last few weeks, it appears the “Yellowstone oil spill” has caught the nation's interest and given us a chance to remind the public of the coming dangers of tar sands and the Keystone XL pipeline.

– Larry Winslow 

How you can help

Montana Audubon has these suggestions:

- Leave the clean-up efforts to the professionals who know how to handle toxic chemicals and to the wildlife experts who can safely catch, clean and release wildlife back into the environment. Safety is priority.

- Look for wildlife with oil and call the wildlife hotline 1-800-259-0596.

- Take photos if you live in or visit an area that was directly affected by oil.

- Listen for the absence of natural sounds such as buzzing insects and calling frogs. Has an area changed relative to other non-impacted sites?

- Keep a written record of changes you are seeing, hearing and experiencing.

Share information with the Audubon Education Center in Billings or email amy@mtaudubon.org.

Report

Continued from Page 1

Stansbury's analysis of the Keystone XL pipeline estimated that a spill on the Missouri River could contaminate the river with over 134,000 barrels of oil and a spill on the Yellowstone River from the Keystone XL pipeline could release over 188,000 barrels of oil. There are 42 gallons of oil to a barrel. Contamination of benzene on any major river (like the Missouri and the Yellowstone) could exceed drinking water standards for more than 450 miles.

TransCanada says spill response time for the Keystone XL pipeline would be 11 minutes and 30 seconds; however, the June 2010 spill of more than 800,000 gallons of crude oil into a tributary of the Kalamazoo River along the Enbridge pipeline, another tar sands pipeline, was not shut down for 12 hours! Stansbury says a conservative estimate of response time would easily be 10 times the 11 minute and 30 seconds that TransCanada reported.

Asked what motivated him to do the report, Stansbury said, “To provide my decision-makers – legislators, governors and State Department

Stansbury's Keystone XL worst-case scenario report is available on the Northern Plains website at www.northernplains.org under Issues > Tar Sands Pipeline.

folks – with an independent, unbiased assessment of the potential spills and impacts from those spills.”

The recent Exxon pipeline oil spill on the Yellowstone River showcases the fact that spills do happen, and emergency responders are often not prepared to deal with their impacts when they do.

– Rose Moore 

An Emergency Response Plan has still not been released by TransCanada for the Keystone XL pipeline. Emergency responders and people living along the pipeline need to know what to do in the case of emergency, and have the plan to review prior to the construction of the pipeline.

Please join us at the hearings for the Keystone XL pipeline in Helena, tentatively scheduled for this fall (after the release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement). Contact Rose at Northern Plains (406-248-1154) for more details.

Mars

Continued from Page 1

make a bad investment.” said Mark Fix, Past Chair of the Northern Plains and a rancher along the route of the Tongue River Railroad. “We will not allow the Tongue River Railroad to be built because it will tear apart Montana ranchland and negatively impact agriculture in southeastern Montana to haul more of our coal to China just to make corporations and rich individuals richer.

“This doesn't change anything for us – whether it's Arch Coal, BNSF or

the Mars empire – they are just big, heartless corporations and our fight remains the same.”

The Tongue River Railroad would cut 131 miles of the beautiful Tongue River Valley in half, condemning productive farms and ranches. Mars owns the Diamond Cross Ranch on the Tongue River south of Birney.

Mars stated in a letter to Northern Plains that the railroad will now run from Miles City south to Otter Creek and not all the way to the Wyoming border. This change has come about because the Otter Creek coal is exclusively to be exported to Asia and no longer for the long-touted

Midwest markets as was the original justification for the Tongue River Railroad. Ranchers on the upper end of the valley, according to Mars, will no longer be impacted, but from Ashland to Miles City, they will.


However, ranchers in the upper end who are Mars' neighbors haven't given up the fight.

“We have always been dedicated to protecting the entire Tongue River Valley,” said Jeanie Alderson, Vice Chair of Northern Plains Resource Council and a third-generation Tongue River rancher. “I depend on my neighbors as much as they depend on me. Our operations work because

we are not dissected by an industrial railroad.”

Arch Coal recently has pushed for the Tongue River Railroad since buying the right to develop the isolated Otter Creek coal tracts from the State of Montana. The tracts, near Ashland, would be the largest coal strip mine in Montana equaling the amount of coal currently produced by all other coal mines in the state.

Northern Plains has two legal challenges against developing the Otter Creek coal tracts and the Tongue River Railroad.

– Rose Moore, Becca Fischer 



Eminent domain group wants voters to decide

Door still open to reform law

A coalition of landowner groups, led by Concerned Citizens of Montana, have begun a citizen referendum process to block the bill recently passed by the Montana Legislature dealing with the power of eminent domain.

Supporters of repealing HB198 will be required to collect signatures from at least 5% of the state's registered voters by October 28 to place it on the ballot in the 2012 general election; 15% of the voters' signatures would freeze the law until the election.

HB 198, carried by Rep. Ken Peterson (R-Billings), authorizes public utilities, as defined in statute, to exercise the power of eminent domain and grants any facility – transmission lines, certain pipelines, geothermal facilities – receiving a certificate under the Major Facility Siting Act (MFSA) the right to use eminent domain. The law applies retroactively to all persons that have received a certificate under the MFSA after September 2008. The bill was approved by the legislature and allowed to become law without the Governor's signature.

Since the passage of the law, eleven landowners crossed by the Montana Alberta Tie Line in north central Montana have been handed condemnation papers by the project developer, Toronto-based Tonbridge Power, Inc. The landowners have filed a case before the District Court in Glacier County challenging the constitutionality of the provisions found in HB 198. A ruling is expected in the coming months.

The Montana Supreme Court dismissed a previous lawsuit that landowners had previously won stating Tonbridge did not have the power of eminent domain, saying that the District Court needs to rule on the new law first.

As HB 198 is being challenged in the courts and among voters, new opportunities for reform of Montana's eminent domain laws have emerged. Legislators have recently

Sign the petition

To sign a petition to repeal the new eminent domain law, go the website set up by "Vote for 125" citizens group at www.votefor125.com.

If enough signatures are gathered in each county, the referendum would be on the November 2012 ballot.

begun the interim committee process, with a number of committees holding their initial meeting in the last month. It is expected that the Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee (ETIC) will initiate a study of landowner protections under the state's eminent domain laws. Many legislators are cognizant of the pendulum swing toward corporate interests in the last session and are interested in exploring new ways to guarantee the constitutional rights of landowners facing condemnation are protected.

Northern Plains' position on eminent domain – the government's authority to take private property or to grant that authority to private parties – is that it should only be used as a last resort for public projects that advance the public good. The process, in our opinion, must include fair compensation and treatment for landowners.

2011-2012 interim committees were appointed by the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate upon adjournment of the session. By statute, membership is required to be balanced with an equal number of Democrats and Republicans on each committee. While they cannot pass bills or create law, their recommendations will guide future legislation in the next session.

Northern Plains members expect to be a part of the eminent domain discussions in Helena, pushing for reform to the state code to put strong protections in place for landowners' rights. If you are interested in learning more about how to get involved in the interim committee process contact Clayton at clayton@northernplains.org.

– Clayton Elliott



THANK YOU SESSION: Northern Plains member Pam Ellis, left, visits with Representative Robyn Driscoll on a warm July 13 evening at the Northern Plains legislative thank you party for Billings-area legislators. Held at the Home on the Range, Northern Plains also honored Senators Kim Gillan, Gary Branae, Lynda Moss, and Kendall Van Dyk, and Representatives Margie MacDonald, Carolyn Pease-Lopez, Virginia Court, and Mary McNally for their support and defense of policies aimed at protecting the healthfulness of Montana's land, water, and air.

Northern Plains hosted another legislative thank you party for Missoula-area legislators at Ten Spoons Winery in Missoula on July 27. A gathering for Great Falls, Helena, and Bozeman legislators is planned for Tuesday, August 23, at the home of Mary Boyle and Dave Amman in Helena.

GNA agenda includes Stillwater mine growth

Members of the Good Neighbor Agreement Task Force will be dealing with some interesting issues in coming months.

The East Boulder Oversight Committee is working with Stillwater Mining company to find solutions for elevated groundwater nitrogen concentrations near the East Boulder mine.

On the Stillwater side, SMC is capitalizing on skyrocketing palladium prices to expand its proven reserves. SMC has commissioned a \$12 million tunnel boring machine to complete the "Blitz Exploration Project." The project will involve a 5-mile long, 18-foot diameter exploration tunnel heading east from the current mine site. Improvements are being made to the existing facilities on the east side of the Stillwater River to support the project.

SMC has also announced plans to begin seeking permits for limited surface facilities up the Benbow Road

outside the town of Dean. Plans are still very preliminary, but SMC will approach state agencies with a more detailed proposal later in the year.

Members of the Stillwater Oversight Committee are still learning about the details of this proposal, and are eager to work with SMC to mitigate as many potential impacts as possible.

Plans tentatively include limited water treatment and waste rock disposal areas for use during development of a portal to connect with the Blitz Project tunnel. If further mining in the area proceeds in the future, the existing Stillwater mine facilities will be used for ore, water, and waste rock processing.

Potentially the most significant impact of this development will be a significant extension of mine life. Currently permitted tailings and waste rock disposal facilities have a finite lifespan, and there will likely have to be new facilities sited and permitted in the future.

– Caleb Lande



BMLA seeks protections from longwall mine

When Bull Mountain Land Alliance (BMLA) members toured the land above Signal Peak Energy's coal mine in the Bull Mountains, they weren't surprised to find that subsidence problems were worse than the company and state and federal government had predicted.

In longwall mining, when coal is removed, the surface of the ground caves downward, causing cracks, fissures, and holes. In the Bulls, some surface cracks are as large as 15 feet wide and 19 feet deep and, contrary to government predictions, they aren't always going away.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently released its Environmental Assessment in preparation of leasing federal coal for Signal Peak to expand its mine. BMLA members are concerned. Part of the coal proposed for lease lies directly under land owned by BMLA member Steve Charter. More coal to be leased is under members Hank and Kit Nilson.

BLM officials claim subsidence would "heal" quickly. This has proven incorrect. Even though



A PDF of the Bull Mountain Land Alliance's new factsheet on subsidence issues from longwall mining can be found on the Northern Plains website at www.northernplains.org under Our Local Groups > Bull Mountain Land Alliance.

Federal lease stipulations sought

- Financial bonding for water replacement, erosion control, and damage to improvements;
- Establishment of a systematic subsidence damage control and surveillance program for the entire mine area;
- Establishment of a subsidence damage control and damage advisory committee;
- A slope failure assessment conducted by an expert;
- A stipulation mandating the replacement of water resources with a like class (e.g. Class 1 for Class 1);
- For the lease to be seam-specific and not generally applicable to all coal in the leased sections, and to apply exclusively to underground-mineable coal (vs. stripable coal);
- A tour of subsidence areas, open to the public and press.

subsidence threatens the viability of working family ranches, risking catastrophic slope failure and damage to springs, BLM has opted not to update its analysis nor to perform

an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Concerned about mine oversight and ranch safety, BMLA decided to appeal the BLM's environmental assessment

and "finding of no significant impact" on the 2,700-acre expansion of Montana's only underground coal mine. Joined by Northern Plains, BMLA officially filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals on June 16, requesting a hard look at the impacts of this coal lease through a full EIS.

"The BLM's approach to its environmental assessment of the subsidence has been based on the best-case scenario," said Steve Charter, Chair of BMLA and a Bull Mountain rancher. "If there is a lesson to be learned from the oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico and Yellowstone River it is that it is important to plan for the worst-case scenario. This is why we felt it was necessary to challenge the assessment. So that if by chance things do happen for the worst, the land and water will be restored and our agricultural livelihood will be protected."

Simultaneously, BMLA is seeking stipulations in both BLM's lease and any mining permit issued by the state aimed at reducing the impacts of longwall mining.

— Svein Newman 

West Coast ports scurry to export coal to Asia

With lagging coal sales in the United States, big players in the coal industry are hustling for customers in the growing economies of the Far East. This will mean more strip mines in places like Montana, along with dramatically increased traffic of coal trains between eastern Montana and ports on the West Coast.

The web of companies involved in these export proposals spans the Pacific Northwest and into the Powder River Basin of Montana. The two main port proposals include the Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point (near Bellingham, Washington) and the Port of Longview near Longview, Washington (on the Columbia River). In addition, Cloud Peak Energy (formerly Rio Tinto) currently exports about 3.3 million tons of coal out of Vancouver, British Columbia.

SSA Marine, in conjunction with Peabody Coal, intends to export 24 million tons of coal through the Gateway Pacific Terminal. Millennium Bulk Terminals (MBT), a subsidiary of Ambre Energy in Australia, is proposing to export coal from the terminal in Longview. It had originally

announced plans to export 5 million tons each year, but it later was discovered that it plans for 80 million tons of coal annually. **Arch Coal, the lessee of the Otter Creek Coal tracts, has a 38% stake in MBT.**

Numerous citizen groups in Washington and Oregon are fighting the two major proposed coal export ports and a variety of smaller proposals. After facing opposition from the local communities to both of the major proposed ports, coal export companies are looking for other areas from which to export.

Northern Plains intends to focus on the impacts of increased strip mining and coal train traffic. It is estimated that 50 additional trains per day will be going through communities in Montana. Either way, Montanans and others in the Northwest could be paying the price so that big coal companies can develop their Asian markets. Northern Plains intends to make sure coal and rail companies don't railroad our communities with the costs of exporting our coal to Asia.

— Becca Fischer 

Hearing held in rail suit

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals held a hearing in Portland on July 12 to discuss the merits of Northern Plains' slow-moving case against the Tongue River Railroad.

Northern Plains argues in the case, which we initiated in 1998, that the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB), the entity in charge of permitting the Tongue River Railroad, did not conduct a complete analysis of the railroad's impacts, nor did STB demonstrate that there is a need for the railroad. A final decision on this case is expected this year.

The environmental analysis done by the STB uses data going back to the 1970s. Also, the railroad was permitted piecemeal in three sections stretching from the Montana-Wyoming border to Miles City. The railroad, its plans now in flux, was projected to bisect 131 miles of ranchland in the Tongue River Valley.

With the leasing of the Otter Creek coal tracts, the railroad has gained new interest and political support. Arch Coal, the lessee of Otter Creek, intends to use the railroad to ship the coal across Montana to the West Coast and then on to Asia.

— Becca Fischer 



GAINING GROUND

Beartooth co-op reformers cautiously optimistic

Opportunities seen in fall board elections

It's been a roller coaster ride for the group of Northern Plains members working to reform Montana's rural electric co-ops.

For Stillwater Protective Association members serving on the Beartooth Electric bylaws committee, the last few months have been trying, but ultimately successful. After nearly 18 months of working on bylaws revisions with other co-op members and members of the board, Charles Sangmeister and Burt Williams are cautiously optimistic about the future of the co-op.

"While the committee was successful in putting a series of positive bylaws amendments up for a vote of approval by the membership, other issues loom large for the future of Beartooth," said Sangmeister. "Already the co-op with the highest rates in the state, the Beartooth Electric Board recently approved an unprecedented debt

ceiling increase. The Board's use of outdated data in the decision-making process has truly taken the word 'trust' out of trustees. I can't believe that our trustees are making ill-fated decisions that leave a co-op of 4,000 members under a tremendous economic burden."

Since the co-op signed on to become a member of Southern Montana Electric in 2003, Beartooth Electric members have faced a crippling series of rate increases relating to the promotion and construction of the Highwood Generating Station. Skyrocketing costs led SME G&T – a subsidiary of Southern – to scrap plans to build a coal-fired plant and instead move forward with a gas-fired

What electric co-op members can do:

- Attend meetings of your co-op board of directors;
- Attend your co-op's annual meeting;
- Run for a position on the board;
- Call Caleb at the Northern Plains office, 406-248-1154, for more information.

plant. The new plant is scheduled for completion later this year, and the Southern Board recently approved a debt ceiling increase to build a second phase of the plant. The City of Great

Falls and Yellowstone Valley Electric voted against the new financing.

Meanwhile, Southern has contracted with PPL Montana to purchase electricity to serve its customers. It contracted for significantly more power than its members (Beartooth Electric, Tongue River Electric, Mid-Yellowstone Electric, Fergus Electric, Yellowstone Valley Electric, and the City of Great Falls) can use. Excess power is then sold at a loss on the open market.

Risky investments and lack of financial disclosure have led many members of Beartooth Electric and other Southern co-ops to protest the activities of their boards. With elections coming up this fall, challengers are expected to run for open board seats. Since co-op boards are elected, there are opportunities for members to get involved and move for more due diligence in the financial decisions made by their co-ops.

– Caleb Lande 



“ I can't believe that our trustees are making ill-fated decisions that leave a co-op of 4,000 members under a tremendous economic burden.

– Charles Sangmeister, Beartooth bylaws committee member

From the vault: December 1975

"If this area has been chosen to generate the power necessary to sustain a standard of living for a population that is roughly double that of this state, we are entitled to expect full compliance with the law as well as full enforcement of it and more reasonable penalties if such compliance is not forthcoming.

"We who will generate the power, live in the air which results as a byproduct of that industry, adapt our lifestyles to maintain someone else's standard of living, yet not directly use the power produced in our back yard, expect and are entitled to a state policy guided more by law than by political convenience."

– Excerpted from a Steve Jessen editorial in the *Forsyth Independent*, November 27, 1975, on the then-proposed *Colstrip Units 3 and 4 coal-burning power plants*.

WORC promotes Homegrown Prosperity

Community leaders, staff, and a guest speaker shared local examples of Homegrown Prosperity in early June during WORC's Board and staff meeting in the Black Hills in Lead, South Dakota.

Julia Page, a Northern Plains delegate to the WORC board, described our energy efficiency campaign to a group of more than 60 leaders and staff participating in the session. The campaign is working to establish a revolving fund to finance residential energy-efficiency improvements.



Julia Page

WORC (the Western Organization of Resource Councils) was co-founded by Northern Plains and other Western citizens groups in 1979 to help us on our issues and provide solid training for our staff and leaders. WORC convenes two Board/staff meetings annually.

WORC Chair Monica Wiitanen

of Colorado focused on WORC's approach to Homegrown Prosperity. "WORC builds Homegrown Prosperity by making our communities even better places to live, work, and raise a family," she said. "We organize local people to improve the economic well-being of our family farms and ranches, increasing the vitality of our communities. Our efforts produce local, healthy food and clean energy, like community-scale wind, solar energy, and biofuels."

Other presentations featured a farm-to-school program, local food regulations, a harvest festival, farmers' markets, an online food cooperative, and Dakota Rural Action's Farm Beginnings program in South Dakota. The program offers classes by knowledgeable farmers for aspiring farmers. Patrick Spears, President of the Intertribal Council on Utility Policy, spoke about tribal efforts to use wind energy, energy efficiency, and straw-bale housing.

Participants viewed the Oscar-nominated film, *Gasland*, a cross-country odyssey examining the controversial practice of hydraulic


fracturing. Powder River Basin Resource Council members John Fenton and Jeff and Rhonda Locker, Wyoming residents who were featured in the film, made a presentation afterward.

"A personal highlight for me was watching the movie *Gasland*, followed by the opportunity to hear from the Wyoming Powder River Basin Resource Council members who were personally impacted by hydraulic fracturing," said Lana Sangmeister, Northern Plains board member and WORC Vice-Chair. "It was very powerful and motivating!"



Lana Sangmeister

"As always, the June meeting provided us the opportunity to network and deepen relationships with our WORC affiliated members, as well as to learn more about the multitude of issues in which we are engaged," Lana added. "It was a great, inspirational meeting in a beautiful part of South Dakota."

– Kevin Dowling, WORC 



Overseers favor industry's fracking loophole

During the 2011 legislature, Senator Bob Hawks (D-Bozeman) introduced a bill to require public disclosure of the chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking.”

Senator Hawks' right-to-know bill was killed, partly because of the Board of Oil and Gas Conservation's (BOGC) announcement that it would draft rules requiring disclosure of fracking chemicals. However, the BOGC has built loopholes into the proposed rules to allow continued secrecy around fracking chemicals.

Fracking is a process used in oil and gas development in which toxic chemicals are pumped under high pressure into the oil or gas-bearing rock, fracturing the rock so that more oil or gas can be recovered. This process is used in the Bakken oil field in Montana and North Dakota, but is also being used on exploratory gas wells in Sweet Grass and Park counties, wells much shallower than those in the Bakken.

When used in other parts of the country, fracking has often been followed by the contamination of



State Senator Bob Hawks testifies before the Board of Oil and Gas Conservation in Sidney on June 15.

nearby wells by toxic chemicals and hydrocarbons.

The BOGC held a public hearing in Sidney on June 15 to discuss the draft rules. About 80 people attended but only eight actually testified, among them were Senator Bob Hawks and rancher Paul Hawks of Melville, who drove seven hours to testify. However, the BOGC seemed uninterested in hearing about any oil or gas fields outside of the Bakken in northeastern Montana. The BOGC has refused at this point to hold an additional hearing near the gas fields in Sweet Grass and Park counties.

Despite this barrier to oral comment,

What's next?

The Board of Oil and Gas Conservation will review comments on public disclosure of fracking chemicals and likely finalize rules at its Aug. 11 meeting.

many members submitted written comments by the June 23 deadline. A call-in day was held on June 23, but the BOGC refused to accept any comments via phone.

The BOGC's proposed rules still allow for “trade secrets,” and not even the BOGC will know the chemicals the companies are using. The public is still left in the dark. Even the 20% of chemicals that do not fall under the trade secret loophole will be hard to access publicly. They will be posted on a website run by the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission (IOGCC) called FracFocus (www.fracfocus.org). Only one well in Montana is currently on the website, and the IOGCC is a federal agency that has openly come out against regulation of fracking fluids.

– Becca Fischer 🌿

Lease holder wants to know

The BOGC is also ignoring the important issue of landowner notification before wells are fracked. Landowner and Northern Plains member Paul Hawks, who has leased his minerals, is particularly concerned.

“As a rancher who has leased the minerals, I expect to know what chemicals are being pumped into the ground so that I can protect my water resources from possible contamination,” said Hawks.

“These rules fall short of fully revealing the chemicals used in fracking and leave the public still guessing about toxic chemicals that could affect their health, livestock, water, and land.”

Given the BOGC's long history of advocating for oil and gas interests, Montana citizens' fight for public disclosure of fracking chemicals and public health is far from over.

– Becca Fischer 🌿

Swift kick needed for fair livestock markets

Over the past decades, we have watched resources and opportunity leave Montana's rural communities. Today, our small towns have fewer banks, fewer young people, fewer small businesses, and fewer family farms and ranches. America has lost more than half a million independent ranchers during the past three decades alone.

Though it will take many steps to secure rural prosperity, one necessary solution is close at hand. On June 22, 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released proposed rules that would rein in some of the most unethical practices the country's largest meatpackers use to muscle down the prices they pay to livestock producers and to squash competition. The proposed rules would restore much-needed justice to hog and poultry producers as well as cattle ranchers.

Three major meatpacking companies now buy nearly 90% of American-fed cattle, which accounts for an overwhelming majority of all beef sold

in the United States. This monopolistic control has created a playing field ripe for abuse and prevented cattle producers from getting a fair shake in a fair marketplace.

USDA's proposed GIPSA (Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration) rules, which incorporate many standards Northern Plains members have sought for decades, would help check the meatpackers' power. A year since rules were proposed, USDA and the White House have yet to finalize and enforce these protections.

That's why Northern Plains is taking action. Northern Plains members joined allies across the country, generating an estimated 6,500 phone calls during a national call-in day to get the Obama administration to release the rules. Members have also written letters to the editor and met with Montana's congressional delegation to ask their support for the rules and their opposition to any

What you can do

■ Call the White House, 202-456-1111, and ask President Obama to release and enforce the new GIPSA rules.

■ Attend a congressional town hall meeting during the August recess and tell Montana's federal lawmakers that you support the proposed GIPSA rules and Livestock Marketing Fairness Act.

Call Northern Plains at 406-248-1154 for talking points.

attempt to undercut them in Congress.

Another key step to restoring fairness and competition in livestock markets, the Livestock Marketing Fairness Act (S. 1026), was recently co-sponsored in the U.S. Senate by Jon Tester after a request from Northern Plains. It would stop a practice that has

artificially lowered prices paid to cattle producers by as much as \$69 per head and continues to rob rural America of upwards of \$5.7 billion annually.

Many livestock contracts are negotiated well in advance, but without an attached dollar amount. Feedlots and cattle producers will be directed to deliver a certain number of animals on a certain day and are promised prices based on the market rate at that time. In the days leading up to delivery, the few corporate packers who control the market will slaughter their own cattle instead of buying on the market, artificially depressing demand, lowering prices, and robbing ranchers of their fair share.

The Livestock Marketing Fairness Act would end this abuse, requiring pre-negotiated “forward contracts” to contain a firm price that can be equated to a fixed dollar amount. It would also require these contracts to be offered or bid openly and publicly.

– Svein Newman, Clayton Elliott 🌿



GAINING GROUND

Norway envoy tells of climactic changes

Wegger Strommen, the Norwegian Ambassador to the United States, told a crowd of approximately 90 people how climate change will affect his county during a June 1 symposium at MSU-Billings. Northern Plains co-sponsored the event, which also included presentations from:

■ Dr. Douglas Holtz-Eakin, President of the American Action Forum and Director of Domestic and Economic

Policy for the 2008 John McCain presidential campaign;

■ Dr. Knut Alfsen, Research Director at CICERO – Center for International Climate and Environmental Research Oslo;

■ Dr. Steve Running, Professor of Ecology, Director of Numerical Terradynamics Simulation Group, University of Montana.

The panelists touched on different

aspects of the climate debate. Dr. Running – who shares a Nobel Prize with fellow scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – brought the issue close to home with statistics about Montana’s changing resources. Dr. Alfsen focused on the science behind climate change in Norway. Dr. Holtz-Eakin discussed the political reality of regulating climate change. Despite the differences in focus, each speaker stressed the need for change.



Wegger Strommen

“We have come to the conclusion that we cannot face the future with the current balance of energy sources. Our economy has to change. I mean, we have to change,” Ambassador Strommen said after the event.

– Becca Fischer

Birney BBQ morphs into two events

This summer marks Northern Plains’ 20th year of hosting special events in the Tongue River Valley. In a departure from the familiar Birney Barbecue, we are hosting two events to mark this milestone.

The first, the Birney Potluck, will take place at Poker Jim Butte near Birney on 5 p.m. Saturday, August 6. It’s free, but we ask that you bring a side dish, salad, or dessert. Donations will be accepted for Northern Plains’ work against the proposed Tongue River Railroad.

Poker Jim is just a few miles east of Birney along East Fork Hanging Woman Creek Road. The event is also a good chance to hear Martha Scanlan’s singing, while enjoying a lovely evening overlooking the Tongue River Valley.

The second event will be moved downriver to Miles City, where the Miles City Fish Hatchery is being threatened with the Tongue River Railroad’s request for an easement. Bob and Marilyn Thaden will host the Miles City Harvest Festival at their Tongue River Vineyard and Winery on the evening of Saturday, September 10.

The Miles City Harvest Festival will include a live and silent auction, a barbecue dinner featuring local foods, and music by a special guest. Cost is \$10 a person. Children 10 and younger get in free.

Call Clementine or Rose at 406-248-1154 with any questions. We hope to see you this summer!

– Rose Moore



Participants prepare to board the Biodiesel Bus for the second Northern Plains Brews Cruise on June 17. Member Paul Miller generously donated his time as designated driver.

Food, fun, friends hit road for Brews Cruise

What do you get when you take a big green bus, 25 friends of Northern Plains, three area breweries, fresh local food, and a Friday night in June? A great night of fun.

The second annual Biodiesel Brews Cruise, a fundraiser for the Northern Plains Clean Energy Task Force, took place on June 17 to support our work on energy efficiency and renewable energy. The cruise began at Home on the Range,

where revelers piled onto the Biodiesel Bus for a trip to Carter’s brewery, where they imbibed favorites such as the Coldwater Kolsch, Midnight Express Oatmeal Stout, and the III Imperial IPA. After a quick stay on the balcony at Carter’s, it was all-aboard to the Montana Brewing Company for another round. Finally, our intrepid volunteer bus driver Paul Miller drove the crew to Laurel to visit Montana’s newest microbrewery, Fat Jack’s. The Owl Cafe in Laurel served up

a tasty menu of local food, which was a big hit for the hungry travelers.

“We had an excellent turnout for our second annual Biodiesel Brews Cruise,” said Connie Keogh, Chair of the Clean Energy Task Force which organized the event. “Raising money for our clean energy projects while enjoying local brews and food with a great bunch of folks was very successful and a lot of fun!”

– Caleb Lande

Celebrate Northern Plains’ 40th Annual Meeting Nov. 11-12

Northern Plains’ 40th Annual Meeting will take place at the Billings Crowne Plaza Hotel on Nov. 11-12. We hope you can come help us celebrate!

Ted Nace is our keynote speaker. Ted is the author of *Gangs of America: The Rise of Corporate Power and the Disabling of Democracy*, and also *Climate Hope: On the Front Lines*

of the Fight Against Coal. Some of you may have met him at last year’s Annual Meeting.

If you are thinking of submitting a resolution for the membership to consider at the business meeting, start working on it soon. September 30 is the deadline for resolutions, both from our task forces and individual members. This early deadline allows

the Resolutions Committee to help you get the language just right.

One last request: If you will be bringing any auction items, please contact Steve at Northern Plains so he can get your donation catalogued. Call him at 406-248-1154, or email steve@northernplains.org.

– Steve Paulson



COUNCIL ROUNDUP

Annual celebration of Beartooths Aug. 6

Beartooth Alliance will host its annual celebration of the unique mountain environment surrounding the towns of Cooke City and Silver Gate on August 6.

Beartooth Environmental Awareness Day (BEAD) will be held at the Range Riders Inn in Silver Gate, and will feature a presentation and photography by Dan Hartman, a Silver Gate naturalist and photographer whose work on the ecology of owls in the northern forest has been featured in a number of national magazines.

Traditional BEAD activities will also return, including an outdoor barbecue beginning at 11:30 and pie auction fundraiser preceding Hartman's presentation. If you are in the Silver Gate area, plan on attending!

– Clayton Elliott 🌿

Local foods, library keep YVCC booked

After more than a year of advocacy, the Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council can celebrate another success, as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver certification is written into the approved budget for the new Parmly Billings Library.

With water-efficient native plant landscaping that will halve irrigation needs, improvements like waterless urinals that will lower indoor water use by 40%, triple-pane windows and efficient lighting that will lower energy use by 24%, low-toxic building materials, and more than 75% of construction and demolition waste diverted from the landfill, the library will serve as a cornerstone of green building education and a wise investment for Billings taxpayers.

YVCC members are working on innovative and low-cost strategies to get the library up to LEED Gold, the second highest U.S. Green Building certification.

In other news, members are joining a Lockwood School teacher to build bokashi cold compost bins for the school; and will soon meet with Lockwood School staff and the adjoining Boys & Girls Club to discuss a garden there. YVCC recently

gave a presentation about school gardens to a statewide conference of family and consumer science teachers, hoping to help spread the local foods trend to other communities. The garden YVCC worked to start at Canyon Creek School is expanding by adding an on-site greenhouse.

YVCC members are also working to revitalize the Local Foods Buying Club, which was temporarily halted this spring.

– Svein Newman 🌿

CRC summer picnic planned for July 31

It's summertime finally, and the members of Cottonwood Resource Council are planning their annual summer picnic.

The picnic will be Sunday, July 31, at 4 p.m. at Holly Hatch and Kirk Skinner's place 11 miles north of Big Timber on Highway 191.

Call Becca at the Northern Plains office at 406-248-1154 for more information.

CRC continues to be active in the right-to-know campaign on fracking chemicals. CRC member Paul Hawks drove to Sidney to testify for landowner notice and public disclosure of the chemicals used in fracking. Thanks to everyone who commented on the Board of Oil and Gas Conservation's proposed rules.

– Becca Fischer 🌿

SPA annual picnic set for August 21

Several Stillwater Protective Association members continue to work to reform Beartooth Electric Cooperative, and the Good Neighbor Agreement Task Force is as busy as ever.

A proposal by Hydrodynamics Inc., to build electric generating facilities on East Rosebud Creek and West Rosebud Creek still looms large, and SPA is working to track developments on the issue.

Members and the nominations committee are planning SPA's annual picnic, Sunday, August 21, at the Big Yellow House in Absarokee.

– Caleb Lande 🌿

CCRC airs Gasland to raise awareness

The Carbon County Resource Council hosted a screening of Academy-Award nominated documentary *Gasland* on June 16 to raise awareness of the effects of the oil and gas drilling occurring in the Bakken and soon for Sweet Grass County.

State Senator Bob Hawks (D-Bozeman), who carried a bill in the legislature that would have required companies to publicly disclose the chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing or "fracking," and who had just attended the public hearing on the Board of Oil and Gas



Sen. Bob Hawks

Conservation's (BOGC) draft disclosure rules in Sidney, was the keynote speaker.

Attendees were asked to submit comments to

BOGC calling for strengthened rules to protect landowners and drinking water.

– Svein Newman 🌿

Farm-to-school their bread and butter

Members of Sleeping Giant Citizens Council have kicked off summer activities on their campaign to increase the amount of local food served in Helena-area schools.

Members have been attending weekly farmers' markets in towns, connecting with local producers and teachers with a plan to assist teachers as they begin their curriculum planning for the next school year.

Sleeping Giant hosted a member potluck July 14 and showed a short film on the local food movement.

As they keep up the pressure on local foods, Sleeping Giant members have begun a new issue assessment, looking at the unique challenges facing the Helena community, possibly to begin a second issue campaign.

– Clayton Elliott 🌿

DRC meeting serves up Farm Bill, pie

Dawson Resource Council members held their annual meeting at Hungry Joe Hall in

Glendive on June 26.

Jeri Lynn Bakken of the Western Organization of Resource Councils made the trip from South Dakota to report on the 2012 Farm Bill and other agricultural issues to an audience of about 40 people. Sandy



Sandy Barnick

Barnick of the Northern Plains Pipeline Landowners Group gave an update on the Keystone XL pipeline.

Robin Trangmoe won first place in the annual pie-making contest for her rhubarb custard pie. Amy Myran captured second with a coconut oatmeal pie, and Irene Moffett took third place with her rhubarb pie.

DRC members look forward to the year ahead, supporting the Northern Plains Pipeline Landowners Group and the newly revamped Agriculture Task Force, as well as working on other local issues.

– Rose Moore 🌿

BCC focuses on wolves, trail access

Bear Creek Council's wolf committee compiled detailed research and submitted comments to the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Commission asking for additional measures to protect wolves in the immediate vicinity of Yellowstone Park.

During the last state-sanctioned wolf hunt, Yellowstone wolves were targeted in large numbers as they migrated out of the park. BCC members argue that the wolf hunt should focus more on areas where there are conflicts between wolves and livestock, and less on wolves that do not pose a threat to agricultural operations.

BCC members have also been working to find resolution to the closing of the Yellowstone River Trail, a popular access point to the park from Gardiner. A local landowner closed access to the trail where it crosses private property, citing irresponsible use of private property by trail users.

BCC members hope to either negotiate a way to open the trail, or propose an alternative route.

– Caleb Lande 🌿



Check the date on the upper right of your address label to see when your membership is due for renewal. Please notify us of any change of address.



THE PLAINS TRUTH

VOICE OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS RESOURCE COUNCIL

In this issue:

- Lies and truth about the Exxon oil spill
- Northern Plains factsheet: *Sustainable Energy Jobs*
- Forrest Mars buys a third of Tongue River Railroad

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