

Wyoming Agriculture

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WyFB 104th Annual Meeting Nov. 9-11, 2023 in Cheyenne

BY KERIN CLARK

It Starts With You. Grassroots involvement. Policy development. Leadership. Advocacy. Membership. It all starts with the individual member joining and being involved in the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. That's how it has been for 104 years and counting. You make a difference for your future by starting the conversation, starting the involvement, and starting the policy development at your local level.

Join your fellow farmers and ranchers November 9-11, 2023 at the Little America in Cheyenne for the 104th Annual Meeting of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. The Farm Bureau Federation's grassroots policy development is the strength of the Federation.

Voting delegates from the county Farm Bureau Federations participate in policy discussion, elect officers and ultimately chart the policy course for the coming year. Members also enjoy networking with other farmers and ranchers, seeing old friends and making new friends. The meeting is hosted by the county Farm Bureau Federations of the Southeast District.



104TH ANNUAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 9-11, 2023
CHEYENNE, WYOMING

Water in Wyoming Foundation Seminar

The WyFB Foundation is hosting a "Water in Wyoming" seminar the morning of Nov. 9 from 8-11 a.m. The first speaker will be Chris Brown, Senior Assistant Attorney General with the Wyoming Attorney General's Office. Brown will discuss how interstate compacts and court decrees affect Wyoming law. The second speaker will be Wyoming State Engineer Brandon Gebhart. He will discuss Wyoming water law fundamentals and structure. The third speaker will be a staff member from the Wyoming Water Development Commission to discuss water development in Wyoming. The seminar is free and open to the public. Attendees are requested to register by emailing broes@wyfb.org

ANNUAL MEETING ... Page 8

ESA Reform Congressional Forum

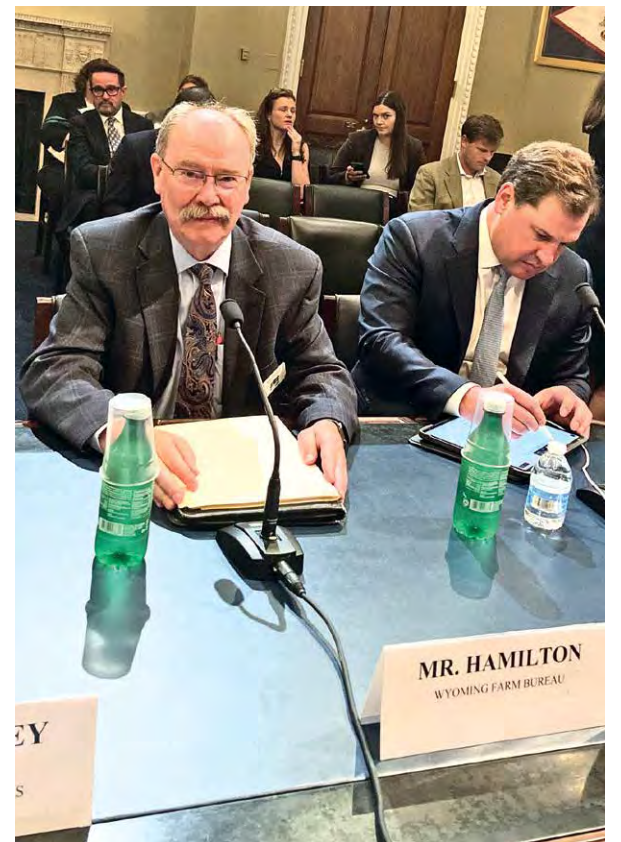
WyFB's Ken Hamilton testified about the impacts to Wyoming and the need for ESA reform

BY KERIN CLARK

"The federal government needs to live up to their agreements, stop saying one thing and then doing another, and use some mechanism to prevent the goal posts from being moved both by the administrative agency and the judicial branch," said Ken Hamilton, Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) Executive Vice President, at a recent congressional forum regarding reform of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Congressional Western Caucus and House Committee on Natural Resources launched a joint ESA Working Group (Working Group) in July 2023. A Working Group forum was held September 13, 2023 in Washington, D.C. Hamilton was one of five stakeholders to speak directly about the impact of the ESA and the need for reform of the Act.

ESA REFORM ... Page 9



WyFB Executive Vice President Ken Hamilton testified at a Congressional Forum in Washington, D.C. regarding Endangered Species Act reform. AFBF/SHELBY HAGENAUER PHOTO.

Sharing agriculture with Wyoming consumers

BY KERIN CLARK

"It's a great event to get the Farm Bureau Federation name out there and engage a variety of people in conversations about agriculture," said Taylen Mollett, Laramie County Farm Bureau Federation volunteer, talking about the September 9 Wyoming Needs Agriculture event.

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) 10th annual "Wyoming Needs Agriculture" event gave Cowboy fans of all ages the opportunity to interact with farmers and ranchers and learn more about agriculture. The event was held during pre-game festivities of the University of Wyoming football game.

The first 400 fans to participate received a Wyoming Cowboys/Wyoming Needs Agriculture t-shirt. Even after the t-shirts were all distributed, fans kept coming in to the WyFB area to rope, play the Family Feud-Ag Quiz Bowl and take pictures. Roping the dummy quickly became a fan favorite of the "Ag Olympics."

Fans could also play the "Ag Quiz Bowl" against each other in a "Family Feud" style of questions about agriculture. Fans lined up at the table with buzzers to buzz in with their top answer. Laramie County FBF Volunteer Shawn Mollett served as the game show host. His enthusiasm and excitement for the game drew in participants.

WYOMING NEEDS AG ... Page 16



Conversation and a photo with a farmer. A great way to start conversations about agriculture during the Wyoming Needs Agriculture event. WyFB President and Laramie County Farmer Todd Fornstrom (right) visited with cowboy fans of all ages sharing agriculture's message. TAYLEN MOLLETT PHOTO.

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www.wyfb.org

CALENDAR
OF EVENTS

October

- 2 Southwest District Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting at 10 a.m.—Library in Kemmerer
- 5 Southeast District Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting at 10 a.m.—Platte Valley Bank Meeting Room in Wheatland
- 7 Northwest District Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting at 1 p.m.—Weed and Pest Building in Thermopolis

November

- 9 WyFB Foundation Symposium at 8 a.m.—Little America in Cheyenne
- 9-11 WyFB 104th Annual Meeting—Little America in Cheyenne
- 14 Washakie County Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting at 6 p.m.—Washakie County Fairgrounds

January 2024

- 19-24 American Farm Bureau Convention—Salt Lake City, Utah

February 2024

- 1-2 WyFB YF&R Collegiate Discussion Meet—Laramie
- 2-3 WyFB YF&R Conference—Farm Bureau Center in Laramie

Visit wyfb.org for calendar updates

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Policyholders' Meeting
December 7, 2023 – 8:00 a.m.
Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual
Insurance Company
Farm Bureau Center, 931 Boulder Drive
Laramie, Wyoming 82070

Wyoming
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Farm Bureau Family
showing up in hard seasons

Zippy Duvall

American Farm Bureau Federation President



Words fail when we see the devastation of natural disasters—from wildfires to hurricanes. We watch the reports, read the headlines and pray for relief from the suffering and comfort for the hurting. And though we cannot reverse the course of the storm, we look for ways to help in its wake. In farm country and across Farm Bureau, we jump right in to support and help our family near and far. If I were to share every story of the Farm Bureau family stepping up to help those in need, that would fill pages on pages. But for now, I would like to highlight just a few examples of how this family is there for each other in times of need and to invite the generosity of anyone reading this column to assist those currently facing down disasters.

We are heartbroken for our friends in Maui and throughout the Hawaiian Islands. The loss from the wildfires is unthinkable, and I immediately received calls from folks wanting to know how to help. I'm proud of the approach taken by the team at Hawaii Farm Bureau, who initially urged us all to give to relief organizations addressing the immediate life-or-death on-the-ground needs, before they eventually set up a relief fund for affected farmers and ranchers.

Hawaii's farmers and Farm Bureau members jumped right in to help address the immediate needs in their community. One example, pineapple grower Maui Gold, began delivering pineapples along with essential items to those impacted. Though Maui Gold's farmland was largely unscathed, much of their reservoir was destroyed in efforts to

put out the fires on the island. So, despite facing their own challenges, they focused on the greater needs of others. What an inspiring example of service. While their farm and many others face uncertainty, they are still looking for ways to support and uplift their community—from volunteering in relief efforts to partnering together to provide financial support.

Hawaii Farm Bureau's fund, administered through their foundation, will help farmers who faced losses ranging from crops and pastureland to agricultural equipment and structures, due to the wildfires. And Farm Bureaus across the country are stepping up to lend support. For example, the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture joined forces with the Hawaii Farm Bureau Foundation and Maui County Farm Bureau to help farmers and ranchers in need. The OKFB Foundation began calling for donations in August and just wrapped up this drive, matching County Farm Bureau and individual donations up to \$5000. Now, \$7000 in donations are on their way to helping farmers in Maui.

On the other side of the country, our family members in Florida are picking up the pieces from Hurricane Idalia. Much of the devastation with this storm was right in the middle of rural, farm country in Northeast Florida and South Georgia. In addition to the widespread damage to homes and rural communities, hundreds of acres of vegetable crops were wiped out and tens of thousands of orchard trees were knocked down or stripped from the winds.

In less than a week, the Farm Bureau family was leading the way to help rebuild. Our friends in Florida shared that volunteer members worked with the Florida Cattleman's Association and other agricultural leaders to get four semi-truckloads of farm materials, such as fencing posts, to the communities hit hardest by the storm. Florida Farm Bureau has also activated its Hurricane Idalia Relief Fund for Agriculture to provide additional support and relief for farmers in Florida's Big Bend region.

I have no doubt that in the weeks and months ahead, we will hear more inspiring stories of how Farm Bureau is coming together to help those recovering from disasters. Long after the headlines fade, these communities will continue the difficult journey to heal and rebuild. While we don't know what the days will bring or what other storms may be on the horizon, we can be certain that the Farm Bureau family will continue to show up and lift up our neighbors in all seasons. ■

For farm relief efforts in Maui, donations can be sent to:

Hawaii Farm Bureau Foundation
Memo: Maui Wildfire
P.O. Box 253
Kunia, HI 96759

For farm relief efforts in Florida, donations can be made online or sent to:

Florida Farm Bureau Women's Fund
Memo: Hurricane Idalia Relief Fund
P.O. Box 147030
Gainesville, FL 32614

Celebrating our
time-tested affiliate

Ken Hamilton

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Executive Vice President



By now many of our county Farm Bureau Federations will have met and discussed possible policy changes and additions to Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation or American Farm Bureau policy positions. This process is vital for those of us who represent you to policy makers at the state and national level. It is a time-tested process which your organization has been working on for over 100 years.

In an era where people measure things in one or two decades, having a process with that kind of history is reassuring. As a Farm Bureau Federation member, you may have also been aware that Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company (Mountain West) has been celebrating their 75th Anniversary.

I think that is something all of us should celebrate. Having a company affiliated with the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation that has been able to provide an important financial benefit speaks well to the leadership of both the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation and Mountain West.

In 1948 members of the Wyoming Farm Bureau took an important step. They set out to raise money to start an insurance company that would focus on farmers and ranchers. Three years after the conclusion of World War II, agricultural folks throughout Wyoming came together to solve a problem, and more importantly put their money where it was needed.

While gathering up the money to start the company was a big lift, the hard work

would be how you develop and make that money turn into a company. With that you need to have good people who understand insurance while understanding agriculture too.

We are fortunate to have had these people work for Mountain West since its beginning. From part time agents representing the company while working on their agricultural operations to full time agents who work to understand the intricacies of the laws and regulations that currently govern the insurance industry, Mountain West has evolved and prospered for 75 years.

With the foundation that was created in 1948 and the careful husbandry past and current boards have exhibited the future looks bright for the next 75 years. ■

Legislative Update

BY BRETT MOLINE

The Joint Transportation Committee plans to, at its November meeting, bring forth a proposal to increase fuel taxes. The proposal is to increase the fuel tax on gasoline by 2 cents per gallon and decrease the state portion of gasoline powered vehicles registration by \$20. For diesel, the state fuel tax would increase 5 cents per gallon with a decrease in per diesel vehicle registration of \$90. WyFB has policy on both sides of the issue. WyFB is against increasing fuel taxes and is in favor of decreasing taxes.

The Joint Agriculture Committee is considering a proposal to change how big game damage is calculated for lost forage. Currently, the law allows compensation for extraordinary loss of forage. Extraordinary forage loss could be defined as forage above and beyond what would typically be eaten by wildlife. This aspect has proven very difficult to substantiate. The proposal will be to compensate for all lost forage rather than extraordinary lost forage. Another proposal will compensate for lost forage where

the big game herd is over the objective set by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The burden will likely remain with the landowner to show damage. Rules would be set by the Game and Fish Commission to work this proposal. WyFB policy supports this proposal. The details of this proposal will be worked out at the Committee's November meeting.

The Select Water Committee has proposed adding staff to the Wyoming Attorney General's office to work with the counties and the state on National

Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). It has come to light the counties and the state do not have the expertise to answer pertinent questions concerning NEPA and if the Federal agencies are following the Act. The idea is that if the State has the expertise on staff, the courts may be used to enforce the Act. WyFB again has policy on both sides of the issue. WyFB is not in favor of growing state government but does have policy supporting making sure the federal government and its agencies follow the applicable laws. ■



Member-CENTS

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation believes constitutional government, the competitive enterprise system, property rights and individual freedom are necessary components for a strong agriculture, a strong Wyoming and a strong America. We are a centennial grassroots organization that cares about your future.

Whether you are a farmer, rancher or a consumer of food... membership is a good investment to secure stability of agriculture here in Wyoming. As a member, WyFB provides you with exclusive benefits as a way to say thank you. These benefits may pay your annual membership fee many times over.

Visit wyfb.org and click on the "Benefits" tab for a complete listing of value-added benefits.

Current members may access member benefits at www.wyfb.org and click on the "Benefits" tab.

You may also utilize the Farm Bureau Member Benefits app on your phone to access your benefits.

Questions: email broes@wyfb.org or call 307-721-7723.

FEATURED BENEFIT: KonnectMD

Did You Know?

75% of primary care offices close at 6 pm, leaving the ER to treat most illnesses with prescriptions. 66% of ER visits are considered non-emergency, which also results in at unjustified \$2,200 medical debit bill per visit.

Gold Plan

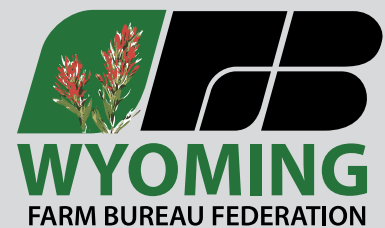
- \$0 Virtual Urgent Care Visits, 24/7
- \$0 Prescriptions, 600+ Medications

Platinum Plan

- \$0 Virtual Urgent Care Visits, 24/7
- \$0 Prescriptions, 600+ Medications
- \$0 Talk Therapy, 24/7 Unlimited Visits



To Learn more or enroll now, visit our partner page: www.konnectmd.com/wyfb



Thanks to the partnership between KonnectMD & the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation, you have discounted access to Virtual Urgent Care, Prescriptions, & Behavioral Health Therapy.

The Opportunity of YF&R

BY CODY ALPS,
WYFB YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER
COMMITTEE MEMBER

The first Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation event that I attended was the Young Farmers & Ranchers conference in Douglas, Wyoming, in January of 2021. A friend of mine had invited me, and it was well worth attending. I reconnected with people I had known through FFA in high school. I learned about what Farm Bureau does and how it works. I discovered an opportunity. An opportunity to learn, to grow, and to be a part of something bigger than myself. Fast forward to October of the same year when a person I had met through the YF&R conference reached out to me about becoming a part of the YF&R committee. After a little convincing, and some consideration on my part, I thought “what the heck, why not?” Shortly after that I was elected as one of the WyFB YF&R committee members of the Southeast District.

It has been two years since I was approached about running for a committee member spot on the YF&R state committee. Soon I will be running for reelection at our district Farm Bureau meeting. While I’ve been serving as a committee member, I have gained numerous valuable experiences. One of which is holding a leadership role in an organization that’s bigger than just my own farm. I’ve been able to not only be a part of something that benefits the whole state, but I’ve also been able to contribute to the direction that the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation YF&R has had over the last two years. Working towards a common goal with other members around the state and knowing that we are making a difference in ways we wouldn’t be able to from our own individual farms and ranches, has been a highly rewarding part of being a committee member.



Cody Alps

Another great part of being a committee member is the chance to learn and connect with other members, whether it is with other people from around the state, or with other people from around the country. With the various statewide events and meetings we hold as a committee, there are many opportunities to connect with other members and to learn from each other. In March of 2023 I, along with other committee members from around the state, were lucky enough to be presented the opportunity to travel to Jacksonville, Florida, for the national American Farm Bureau YF&R convention. All in all, it was an amazing experience. One of my favorite aspects of the conference was how everyone that attended could connect in some way. In some instances, other Farm Bureau members in attendance lived states away, but were dealing with very similar issues. In other instances, it was a member from a neighboring state with a farm or ranch that was entirely different and unique to anything that we were used to from our area.

Another aspect of being a part of Farm Bureau that has been important to me is how it ties into my own farm and day to



The opportunities are endless. Cody Alps (left) taking advantage of networking and learning at the 2023 AFBF YF&R Conference.

day life at home. There’s been instances where I’ve been able to implement and use what I’ve learned from other members on my own place. It’s also a constant reminder that what I’m doing while I’m working isn’t just about my own farm. There’s a much bigger picture that we are all a part of. However, sometimes life gets in the way. At times it feels like it would be easier to step away from outside responsibilities and focus just on the work that’s immediately around us. This year has been no such exception. Facing highly unpredictable weather, which has been more unpredictable than typical Wyoming weather it seems, constant breakdowns left and right, and other unforeseeable life events has given most people in our state plenty to juggle all at once. I would be ly-

ing if I said it was always easy to make the necessary adjustments and sacrifices for me being apart of the Wyoming Farm Bureau and the YF&R these past two years, but I wouldn’t be lying if I said it was worth it every time. Being a part of YF&R and Farm Bureau as a whole certainly is a commitment, but rather than looking at that commitment as an obligation look at it as an opportunity and it will be exactly that. An opportunity. ■

Cody Alps is a member of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmer & Rancher Committee. Cody farms and ranches with his family in Goshen County raising cattle and primarily growing alfalfa and grass for their haying operation.

Regular YF&R discussion meet competition in November

Collegiate Discussion Meet to be held February 2024

Farm Bureau Federation members between the ages of 18-35 are invited to participate in the 2023 WyFB YF&R Discussion Meet competition. The competition will be held during the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) Annual Meeting in Cheyenne in November. The state winner receives a \$500 cash prize and an expense paid trip to the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Annual Meeting in January 19-24, 2024 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Being an advocate for agriculture is important and should be a part of everyone’s business plan.

Develop your leadership and advocacy skills and meet other young farmers and ranchers from around the state and around the nation by participating in the YF&R Discussion Meet competition.

Collegiate YF&R Discussion Meet

This competition has been moved from the WyFB Annual Meeting to the WyFB YF&R Conference. The competition will be February 1-3, 2024 in Laramie, Wyoming. Any Wyoming college student with an interest in agriculture is eligible to participate. A major in agriculture is not required for competition. The state winner receives a \$1,000 cash prize and an expense paid trip to the AFBF national competition March 2024 in Omaha, Nebraska to compete for college scholarships. Save the date!

More information

Topics and rules are available at wyfb.org. Regular Discussion Meet applications are due by Oct. 16, 2023. Contact WyFB YF&R Coordinator Kerin Clark at 307.534.6175 or kclark@wyfb.org with questions. ■

YF&R Discussion Meet Questions

1. Production agriculture requires a lot of capital. Young farmers and ranchers face challenges gaining access to the capital they need to start or grow their operations. What tools are currently available, and what new programs could be introduced, to help young people access financial resources—and make sound financial decisions—to run their farms and ranches?
2. Working with elected officials, in all levels of government, is critical to advancing public policy that supports farmers and ranchers. How can Farm Bureau help elected leaders better understand the challenges of the agriculture sector and the importance of supporting the financial viability of America’s family farms and ranches?
3. What is sustainable agriculture and how can Farm Bureau help farmers and ranchers access market-based solutions that advance sustainability goals without restrict-

ing their ability to stock America’s pantries, help feed a growing population and maintain farm profitability?

4. Farmers and ranchers across the country are diverse in not only the goods they produce, but also in the ways they raise and market them. Farm Bureau’s role is to broadly represent all producers. How can our organization further welcome and engage diverse agricultural communities and cultivate dynamic future Farm Bureau leaders?

5. Agriculture uses water for everything from growing crops, raising livestock and moving products to and from farms and ranches. Water issues are often hotly debated, are unique to each region and can pose significant challenges to growers. How can Farm Bureau help address water management challenges and seek long term solutions for farmers and ranchers?

Young Farmer & Rancher Conference

Save the Date February 2-3, 2024
Laramie, Wyoming

The people of the Farm Bureau Federation

Meet the volunteer leader Lex Geer

County: Campbell
 Farm Bureau Federation Leadership
 Position(s):
 ● Campbell County Farm Bureau Federation President
 ● Former WyFB YF&R Committee Member

Wyoming Agriculture: Describe ranch background.

Geer: I was raised on my family ranch south of Gillette. As a kid you could find me on a horse, 4-wheeler or working with my 4-H projects. I am the fifth generation to stay and work on the ranch and am currently working the ranch with my parents.

Wyoming Agriculture: Education, Hobbies and Other Background.

Geer: I have been married 16 years and we are blessed to have two kids ages ten and seven. My wife, Amanda, and I work on the ranch together. After high school I attended Northwest Community College and then Gillette College. I received degrees in animal science and welding which I use daily on the ranch. Over the years I have enjoyed welding for neighbors and creating ranch toys for my kids. This past year my wife and I have been learning a new hobby of building and flipping a house, which was built by my grandfather in the 60s.

Wyoming Agriculture: How did you get involved in Farm Bureau Federation leadership?

Geer: I got involved in Farm Bureau years ago when my grandfather, Bob Geer, asked me to attend a meeting. He had held every position on the board over the years. After attending meetings, I was nominated for secretary. Shortly after I was nominated for president and have been president since. I enjoyed serving on the board with my grandfather for many years before he retired.

Wyoming Agriculture: Why do you make the time to be involved in Farm Bureau Federation leadership?

Geer: I make the time to be a part of Farm Bureau to help educate the public about agriculture. Over the years I have enjoyed going into the classrooms to help teach our youth where their food comes from. I have involved my kids in these visits and the Farm Bureau meetings to help show them to take a stand and let your voice make a difference in the world.

Wyoming Agriculture: Can you share an example of a policy that has had a positive impact on your farm or ranch?

Geer: We have state land sections around our house and within our property. We appreciate the policy that helps keep hunters from crossing private property. This policy not only helps us by keeping unwanted traffic out of our pastures but also helps to keep our hunters and us safe by knowing who is within our properties with firearms.

Wyoming Agriculture: What advice do you have on how individuals can make a difference for Wyoming agriculture through the Farm Bureau Federation?

Geer: All membership dues go towards helping this federation fight for us. It helps get our team to the legislative meetings to help work with our local politicians and stand up for our policies. You as an individual are able to make or amend policies that directly impact you and your ranch. The Farm Bureau Federation helps give your voice a place to be heard.

Wyoming Agriculture: How important is each member of the Federation?

Geer: Every member is important to the Federation. Each membership trickles down the line from your grassroot ranch to the national level. At the end of the day every member stands together to help each other. The more numbers we have standing behind our policies gives us a louder voice. ■



Lex Geer



Three generations branding at the Geer Ranch. The sixth generation, Perry, brands a calf while his dad Lex and grandpa Darel look on.



Haying Season.



Lex Geer is passionate about ranching and caring for their cattle.



The Lex Geer Family. Perry, Amanda, Lex and Macy.



Wintertime at the Geer Ranch.



Campbell County Ranching.

Cooking with the Modern Ranch Wife

Fluffy French Toast

Recipe by Connie Werner
Source: Allrecipes.com



INGREDIENTS:

- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk
- pinch of salt
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 12 slices thick bread

DIRECTIONS:

1. Measure flour into a large mixing bowl. Slowly whisk in the milk, salt, eggs, cinnamon, vanilla extract, and sugar until smooth.
 2. Heat a griddle to 350°.
 3. Dip a slice of bread into the batter and flip. Allow excess to drain back into the bowl. Repeat with each slice.
 4. Place onto the griddle and cook until golden brown.
- Enjoy!

FOR MORE RECIPES VISIT: www.modernranchwife.com



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ANNUAL MEETING... From Page 1

Meeting schedule snapshot

The annual meeting begins Thursday, Nov. 9 at noon with a luncheon. WyFB's four standing committees will meet Thursday afternoon to discuss resolutions pertaining to their areas and make recommendations. The committees include: Natural and Environmen-

tal Resources (NER), State Government Affairs (SGA), Agriculture Tax (Ag Tax) and General Issues (GI). The committees consist of one representative per county (county committee chairs), the state chair and state vice-chair.

Following the afternoon committee meetings, an invitational social will be held for "Century, Silver and Gold" club members.

We will begin the day on Friday, Nov. 10 with a county president's meeting. The general and business sessions of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation will begin at 8:30 am. Members will hear reports from the WyFB president and the executive vice president. Voting delegates will begin discussing the resolutions and determining what is in the best interest of farmers and ranchers.

Two guest speakers from the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) will address the membership. AFBF staff members Jessica Cabrera and Courtney Briggs will join the meeting and speak on engagement and national agriculture issues. Carbera is the AFBF Managing Director of Member Engagement. Briggs works in the AFBF Public Policy Division as a Senior Director, Government Affairs.

After a day of business work, Friday evening's banquet is a time to celebrate our farmers and ranchers. The Distinguished Service and Farm Bureau Leadership Awards will be presented. The evening will conclude with music entertainment by B.J. Jamison.

With appreciation and thanks to America's Veterans, Saturday Nov. 11 will include resolutions consideration, elections, and a WyFB YF&R report.

Foundation Auction

The WyFB Foundation will hold the second annual silent and live auction at the awards banquet on Friday, Nov. 10. All proceeds from the auction will go to the Foundation.

"Harvest for All" Fundraiser

The WyFB Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) 20th annual "Harvest for All" fund drive will take place at annual meeting. Monetary donations (we are unable to accept food donations) will benefit the Food Bank of Wyoming. Please bring your monetary donations to the registration desk at annual meeting. Additionally, the WyFB YF&R Committee will hold their annual playing card raffle so plan to buy your playing card raffle chances from any WyFB YF&R Committee member during annual meeting.

Hotel Reservations

A room block has been secured at the TownePlace Suites by Marriott in Cheyenne. Reservations must be made online or by phone at 307.634.0400 to be eligible for our group discount rate of \$119/night. Refer to "Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation" for the group rate. To book online, go to wyfb.org for the online booking link (click on "Events" tab and scroll for annual meeting). The reservation deadline is October 6. After that date, reservations will be subject to availability.

Registration

Pre-registration forms are requested by October 31. Please email Brooke Roes at broes@wyfb.org or call 307-721-7723 to register for the meeting. You may also contact your county Farm Bureau Federation president to learn more about attending the state annual meeting.

The meeting agenda will be printed in the November issue of *Wyoming Agriculture*. The agenda will also be available as the meeting gets closer at www.wyfb.org.



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8:00 AM: Chris Brown, Senior Assistant Attorney General, Wyoming Attorney General's Office, discussing how interstate compacts and court decrees affect Wyoming law


9:00 AM: Brandon Gebhart, Wyoming State Engineer, discussing Wyoming water law fundamentals and structure

10:00 AM: Wyoming Water Development Commission Staff, discussing water development


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Succession coordinators work with the family to identify:

- Where is the operation now?
- Where do you want it to be?
- How do you get there?

ESA REFORM... From Page 1

Hamilton emphasized that the federal government must acknowledge the importance of private landowners. "The federal government should work to develop trust with landowners," Hamilton said. "Incentives and more substantial guaranties for landowners who have species on their land are necessary for the ESA to work better."

Hamilton described Wyoming's climate and topography to the Working Group and noted cattle are the largest commodity raised in Wyoming. "Many of our members are 4th or 5th generation ranchers or farmers," Hamilton stated. "My parents were the 3rd generation and my nephew is the 5th generation to work on our family ranch purchased by my great grandfather."

Hamilton noted there are a multitude of species in Wyoming listed under the ESA that impact Wyoming citizens. His testimony focused on large predators listed as endangered, wolves and grizzly bears.

"It's a significant challenge to have protected predator species being introduced or moving into an area with livestock," Hamilton said. "Cattle and sheep are both on the list of food items for wolves and grizzly bears."

Hamilton knows this firsthand from both a policy perspective and a ranching family's perspective. He has worked for WyFB for nearly 40 years.

On the policy side, WyFB opposed the federal government's proposal to introduce wolves into Yellowstone National Park from the beginning. "We were actively involved in the process for introduction because our members had multiple concerns," he said. "While the introduction process identified the Greater Yellowstone Area

as the primary area for wolves, no one seriously thought wolves would be content to remain in that area."

From a ranching family's perspective, the Hamilton Ranch saw this come true. "This is exactly what occurred for my brother when a wolf attacked his sheep in July 2010," Hamilton explained. "That attack killed 18 lambs and one ewe, and then six nights later the wolf returned and killed five more lambs."

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) employee who investigated the incidents felt it was the work of one wolf," he continued. "It should be noted that none of the killed lambs or the ewe were eaten."

"For a time, the Defenders of Wildlife provided compensation for wolf depredation, and now the Wyoming Game and Fish Department provides some compensation," he stated. "But the actions of the federal government make it clear that impacts caused by species on the ESA are not considered."

Hamilton suggested Congress place state wildlife agencies on a more even footing with USFWS so the process is more a partnership with the state. "In Wyoming, most ranchers develop a working relationship with the state Game & Fish personnel," he explained. "These relationships are mutually respectful and afford a level of trust that is absent from working with USFWS personnel."

Another area that needs reform is the recovery process needed for delisting a species. "A concern for our members is that delisting will not occur once recovery levels are reached," stated Hamilton. "Moving the goal post is not uncommon when dealing with the federal government, and it has created distrust between Wyoming citizens and the USFWS."



WyFB Executive Vice President Ken Hamilton visited the U.S. Capitol and also met with Wyoming's Congressional Delegation and staff in September. Hamilton testified at a Congressional Forum regarding ESA reform while in D.C. AFBF/SHELBY HAGENAUER PHOTO.

He gave an example of the moving goal posts with wolves. "The initial recovery goal for wolves of ten breeding pairs in each of the three states was changed several times by the Fish and Wildlife Service," he explained. "First the Service decided the 100 wolves in Yellowstone, which is primarily in Wyoming, should not count towards Wyoming's population. Then they decided that another 50 wolves, or five breeding pairs, should be allowed."

"Wyoming officials continued to negotiate with FWS and eventually reached an

agreement that resulted in a proposal for wolves to be delisted for Wyoming," Hamilton continued. "Of course, to no one's surprise, this decision was immediately challenged in the courts – another concern for our members. It would be helpful if judicial review of these decisions could be limited."

Hamilton also drew attention to the economic hardship ESA listings provide for landowners and urged the Working Group to consider the federal government stepping up with financial help.

He also urged the Group to see the importance of the FWS seeking partnerships with landowners. "Private lands are essential to many listed species," Hamilton said. "Think how much more could be achieved if the federal government would seek to work with landowners rather than create hardships for them."

"Our members typically live on the land they farm and ranch, and they work with a strong focus on both economic and environmental stewardship," he continued.

"Congress needs to step in and provide the framework that will allow partnerships to happen and not rely on the federal power to force landowners into situations which cost them money and possibly their farm or ranch," Hamilton said. "This isn't good for the landowners or the species."

According to a memo from the Working Group, the group will make policy recommendations to Congress that reform the ESA to the benefit of both landowners and species. The memo identifies that the Working Group "will examine how the ESA is being implemented by federal agencies, the practical impacts on the American people, how litigation is driving ESA decision making, and how success is defined under the ESA. ■"

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— LETTER TO THE EDITOR —

Wyoming property tax reform needed

Dear Editor,

There appears to be general agreement that Wyoming's current property tax structure is quite problematic. Where there is not agreement is in how to fix it. The current system, based predominantly upon real estate property values derived from recent sales, has escalated values inordinately higher than any time in the past. Assessors are then required to utilize such values when assessing property and thus estimate tax rates upon the same. This system is likely 'survivable' for the more affluent but is not sustainable for Wyoming's producers and labor force. The question is how to fix it.

Two solutions tend to predominate current discussions; (A) Establish annual percentage increase caps, say in the 5-8% range. This softens the blow but does not address the cause of current increases, inflated property sales values. (B) Establish a budget based system in which all entities funded via property taxes must develop a detailed budget of their needs for the forthcoming year. The collective total of these is met by adjusting tax rates to raise sufficient funds to cover all budget needs. A quite tedious process that does not preclude inordinate increases without very detailed and effective oversight.

I am proposing an additional option that protects Wyoming's producers and workers and addresses current drivers of escalating property values. This system would modify current property classifications dividing residential and commercial. It would also specify agricultural production enterprises and add one new classification. Value within each category would be based on a rolling average of values over the average ownership life of the property. The latter could be established from assessor, treasurer and/or clerk records in each county

and then utilized to determine mean ownership periods on a statewide basis. For the sake of this letter, I will assign ownership periods based on limited conversations with banking, mortgage lending and county officials to illustrate how the proposal would work.

1. Commercial: Business entities providing goods, services or accommodations, would be valued on a rolling average of the most recent 8 years valuation.
2. Residential Property – Full time occupancy: Homeowners who reside in the home or have direct family members that do so continuously throughout the year would have values derived on an average of the last 12 years tax valuation (See #5)
3. Industrial and Manufacturing: Mineral extraction entities would predominate in this category. Their term of ownership would likely be driven by acquisition or merger resulting in changes of ownership. Manufacturers would include any business that utilized raw goods to produce a product offered for sale in commerce. Properties in this category would be expected to have a 16 year span of ownership.
4. Agriculture: All farm and ranch lands to include any and all residences on the same occupied by family members or employees. Employee housing might be occupied full time or on a seasonal basis. To qualify for averaging such properties must be in active production at levels consummate with the nature and scope of like operations in the area. Such properties cannot be held for speculative or development purposes. Conservation easements could

qualify providing production levels are maintained. Estimated span of ownership for rolling average valuation would be approximately 24 year.

In the above four categories, change of ownership would still provide for the same averaging as others in the category provided prior use is continued. Any residential home, including those on agricultural operations, offered as a rental unit would be assessed on a commercial basis.

5 The new classification: Residential Part Time and/or property held for speculation, development or any other nonproduction purpose. This would include any residence not occupied on a full time basis by the owner or their direct family members, any open farm or ranch lands taken out of production and held for investment, 'conservation', development or any other nonproduction agricultural purpose. All of the foregoing would not benefit from value averaging but would be subject to value and tax rates established by sales within the last year as is the case with the current system.

OK, somewhat of a different idea but in reality it just modifies the current system in the definition of tax categories and the means by which valuation is calculated. As with any new proposal, the devil is always in the details. To that end, it is hoped a working group might be formed to define steps that would need to be taken to be able to present a fully prepared plan to the Wyoming legislature for their formal consideration and implementation in 2024.

**Bill Bennett
Powell, WY**

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It starts with you! Annual meeting traditions!

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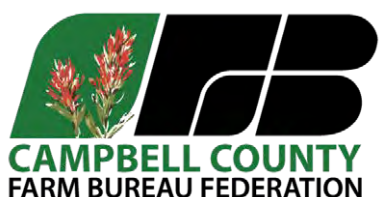
WyFB Director of Public and Governmental Affairs Brett Moline visits with Senator Dan Dockstader at the Lincoln County Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting. BROOKE ROES PHOTO.



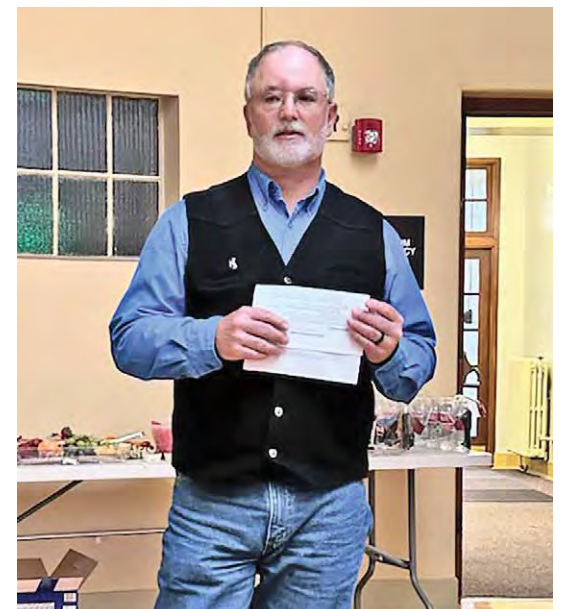
Crook County Farm Bureau Federation Vice President J.W. Moore runs the resolutions process at the county annual meeting. KERIN CLARK PHOTO.



The Goshen County Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors recognized retiring secretary Barb Erickson at the county annual meeting. Left to right: Joe Campbell, Lori Schafer, Jake Buckhaults, Cole Coxbill, Barb Erickson, Kody McClun, Lane Hageman, Kent Hunter, Shawn Dovey and Tami Greenwald. KERIN CLARK PHOTO.



At the conclusion of their county annual meeting, the Campbell County Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors thanked retiring board member Mathew Reno for his years of service. From left to right: Lex Geer, Amanda Geer, Matt Avery, Penny Allemmand, Mary Jo Joslyn, Mathew Reno, Toni Swartz, and Troy Swartz. KERIN CLARK PHOTO.



Southeast District Director Kevin Baars, of Niobrara County, speaks to members attending the annual meeting and dinner of the Laramie County Farm Bureau Federation. KERIN CLARK PHOTO.





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Obituary



Jeanette and Nels Smith

September 1, 2023

Jeanette Rae Smith, daughter of George and Adelaide Keener, was born on January 20, 1938, in Newcastle, Wyoming. Nels Jensen Smith, son of Peter and Helen Smith, was born just over a year later on January 29, 1939, in Newcastle, Wyoming. They lived a full life, side by side, including when they left us to be with our Lord and Savior on September 1, 2023.

Together, Nels and Jeanette were pillars of their community, not only Crook County, but the entire state of Wyoming. They shared a love for ranching in the west and serving the Cowboy State, whether it was through politics and committees, or volunteering with local organizations, or just talking to friends, new and old where they would offer "suggestions" that made the world a better place. However, what they will be remembered for most is their unwavering love for each other and their family.

Nels and Jeanette's lives will be forever cherished by their family: son Doug (Pam) Smith, son Garrett Smith, their seven grandchildren, four great-grandchildren along with Jeanette's brother, Doug Keener and longtime friend Maureen Hill, and sister Sally (Patrick) Morton.

A private burial was followed by a memorial service on September 19, 2023 at Ranch A, Beulah, Wyoming.

In lieu of flowers, we ask that donations be made to Nels and Jeanette Smith Memorial c/o Isburg Funeral Home, PO Box 487, Spearfish, SD 57783 which will be presented to an Autism charity at a later date.

Online condolences may be written at www.fidler-isburgfuneralchapels.com

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University of Wyoming Collegiate Farm Bureau members Emma Hamlin and Jordan Anderson helped with the Wyoming Needs Agriculture event. Anderson is the new president of the UW Collegiate Farm Bureau. BROOKE ROES PHOTO.

WYOMING NEEDS AG... From Page 1

"I myself have learned so many things about ag helping during the Wyoming Needs Agriculture event," Mollett said. "I didn't grow up in ag so having the opportunity to share this information with others has been an enlightening experience."

The photo frame opportunity completed the event by providing fans a chance to visit one-on-one with Laramie County Farmer and WyFB President Todd Fornstrom.

Sharing the "Wyoming Needs Agriculture" message continued during the University of Wyoming (UW) football game with the scoreboard video that played during the second quarter of the game. Goshen County Ranchers Skyler and Makenna Miller had a conversation with UW Athletics Broadcasters Keith Kelley and Kevin McKinney to share agriculture's message with an even larger audience. Skyler is a former UW football player.

Farmers and ranchers, UW Collegiate Farm Bureau members and WyFB staff members combined forces to produce this great



Farmers and ranchers, UW Collegiate Farm Bureau members and WyFB staff members combined forces to produce the Wyoming Needs Agriculture event on September 9. Front row (l to r): Dee Brewer, WyFB; Jake Clark, Goshen County; Kerin Clark, WyFB; Todd Fornstrom, WyFB President; Laura Fornstrom, Laramie County; Taylen Mollett, Laramie County. Back row (l to r): Brooke Roes, WyFB; Ken Hamilton, WyFB; Brett Moline, WyFB; Shawn Mollett, Laramie County; Kelly Carpenter, WyFB; and Sydnie Fornstrom, UW Collegiate Farm Bureau. Not pictured: Eli Pierson, Albany County; Jordan Anderson, UW Collegiate Farm Bureau; and Emma Hamlin, UW Collegiate Farm Bureau.

event. "This event is something that I look forward to each year, I have either participated or volunteered for the last seven years and each year it gets better," Taylen Mollett concluded. ■

Editor's Note: To view the video and more pictures from the event, visit www.wyfb.org. Click on these tabs: Get Involved/Education/Wyoming Needs Agriculture.



WyFB President Todd Fornstrom and Pistol Pete. TAYLEN MOLLETT PHOTO.



The survey says...game show host Shawn Mollett and assistant Sydnie Fornstrom were all smiles as Cowboy fans played Family Feud-Wyoming Agriculture style. KERIN CLARK PHOTO.



University of Wyoming Collegiate Farm Bureau volunteer Emma Hamlin helped Cowboy fans with the roping station. KERIN CLARK PHOTO.