

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation sets policy

BY CALLIE HANSON

Livestock identification, wildfire response, water protection and election integrity were among the many topics addressed in policy adopted at the 106th Annual Meeting of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB). Held in Gillette November 13-15, the meeting continued the grassroots policy development process that shapes the organization’s advocacy work each year.

“Our grassroots policy development process provides a solid foundation for the advocacy work we do for our members,” said Kerin Clark, WyFB Executive Vice President. “The work we do is guided by a process that begins with members discussing policy issues of concern at their county meetings. Those resolutions passed at the county level are forwarded to the district level. Those passing the district phase are discussed and voted on at the state level.”

Livestock branding and disease traceability were major areas of discussion. Delegates reaffirmed Wyoming’s brand program should remain the primary form of identi-

fication for livestock ownership and health tracking.

“Wyoming Farm Bureau member policy has long supported retaining traditional methods of livestock identification with the option for voluntary, market driven solutions,” Clark said. “Members spoke up to continue recognizing the importance of Wyoming brand law and its use to identify livestock and trace disease, emphasizing brands have been the identification for livestock for over a century and want to ensure that system continues.”

Wildfires across Wyoming over the past two years brought forward significant discussion about suppression, coordination and post-fire reclamation. Members stressed the importance of working partnerships between landowners, grazing permittees and state and federal agencies.

“The impact wildfires this summer and last had on the resources and private landowners were top of mind,” Clark said. “Working partnerships are crucial as landowners and livestock grazing permittees work the land and have important knowledge and tools

to work with federal and state land managers to fight the fires.”

Clark added that financial responsibility after fires remains a concern. “Reclamation post-fire is also a key consideration for the land and those landowners impacted by fires,” she said. “Members expressed concern with the financial responsibility of reclamation on private lands due to suppression and containment lines built on private lands to fight fire on federal lands.” She noted that members also stressed that coal seam-caused surface fires should fall under the responsibility of land management agencies.

Water use and energy development surfaced in several discussions. Delegates reaffirmed opposition to producing hydrogen fuel from Wyoming water.

“Our members reaffirmed policy opposing the production of hydrogen fuel from water in Wyoming expressing the concern of preferred water uses being impacted,” Clark said.

Members also adopted a resolution requesting temporary or long-term storage of radioactive materials occur



Delegates from across the state gathered to discuss and vote on policy for the coming year. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

only in the county where it was generated or outside the state, reflecting long-standing concerns about importing radioactive waste.

WYFB POLICY ... Page 9

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation elects leadership, honors retiring board members

BY CALLIE HANSON

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) recognized both new and retiring leadership during its 106th Annual Meeting, held Nov. 13-15 in Gillette. Members from across the state gathered to elect officers and board members who will help guide Wyoming’s largest general agriculture organization in the coming year.

Laramie County farmer Todd Fornstrom was elected to his 10th term as WyFB President, continuing his long-standing leadership on behalf of Wyoming’s farm and ranch families.

“It’s an honor to continue serving this organization alongside such dedicated leaders,” Fornstrom said. “I’m grateful for the trust our members place in us, and I look forward to another year of working in good company to move this organization ahead.”

Goshen County farmer Cole Coxbill was elected to his 10th term as Vice President and shares in Todd’s excitement for the coming year.



Todd Fornstrom Cole Coxbill Tucker Hamilton

Delegates also selected a new member to the state board. Tucker Hamilton of Weston County was elected to his first term as Director-at-Large on the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors. Hamilton previously served on the board as the Young Farmers & Ranchers State Chair in 2024.

In addition to the statewide officer elections, the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors includes five District Directors elected within their respective districts, as well as the Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) Committee State Chair, who is selected by the YF&R Committee.

WYFB ELECTIONS ... Page 9

Leadership highlights change, growth and grassroots strength at WyFB Annual Meeting

BY CALLIE HANSON

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) members gathered in Gillette for the 106th Annual Meeting, opening the weekend with remarks from WyFB President Todd Fornstrom and Executive Vice President Kerin Clark. Both leaders focused on the year’s theme, Saddles to Solutions, tying the pieces of a saddle to the many individuals, ideas and efforts that shape the organization’s work.

A Year of Change

President Fornstrom began by acknowledging the multitude of changes across the Federation in 2025.

“This year has been a year of change,” he said. “But change can be for the good, and I believe it has been.”

Fornstrom discussed the merger between Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s insurance company and Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company. While the merger represents a major shift for the insurance side of the Farm Bureau family, he emphasized that federation members will see very little change in their day-to-day experience.

“Your insurance bill will look the same except for the name ‘mutual’ coming off,” he said. “Rates always change—sometimes because of weather, sometimes because of good years or bad—but the stability behind your policy is stronger than ever.”

WYFB LEADERSHIP ... Page 15

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| December | |
| 15 | Wyoming/Colorado Farm Bureau Federation YF&R Conference Registration Opens |
| January | |
| 9-14 | American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Convention - Anaheim, CA |
| 15 | Wyoming/Colorado Farm Bureau Federation YF&R Conference Registration Closes |
| February | |
| 5 | WyFB Collegiate Discussion Meet - Cheyenne |
| 6-7 | Wyoming/Colorado Farm Bureau Federation YF&R Conference - Cheyenne |
| 9 | Wyoming Legislature Budget Session Convenes |
| 19-20 | Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Legislative Meeting - Cheyenne |
| March | |
| 1 | WyFB State Scholarship Deadline |
| 20 | Ag Books for Kids County Deadline |
| April | |
| 6 | Ag Books for Kids District Deadline |
| November | |
| 12-14 | Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting - Casper |

Visit wyfb.org for event updates



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Farm State of Mind Alliance: A New Chapter in Taking Care of Our Own

Zippy Duvall

American Farm Bureau Federation President



Farming has always taken resilience. But it takes honesty, too. Honesty about the stress, worry and exhaustion, which so many farmers and ranchers carry quietly.

When I talk with farmers and ranchers across the country, I hear stories that are both familiar and deeply personal. Markets swing overnight. Weather doesn't cooperate. The cost to raise a crop keeps rising. And even on the good days, there's the constant weight of responsibility—to our families, to our land, and to the legacy we're building for the next generation. That's a lot for anyone to shoulder.

We don't always talk about the impact these pressures have on our mental wellness, but we should. Because, sadly, the truth is farmer suicide rates are two to five times higher than the national average. Behind those numbers are people we know—neighbors, friends and family members—who have struggled in silence for too long.

At Farm Bureau, we believe that strength is not measured in bushels or bales. It's measured in our willingness to look out for one another. To admit, "I'm not okay," and to say, "You're not alone." That belief has fueled our work to make mental

health resources accessible and practical for farmers and our rural communities. And this year, we're taking another big step forward.

I'm so proud that American Farm Bureau is joining forces with Farm Foundation's Farm Family Wellness Alliance to create the new Farm State of Mind Alliance. This is the next phase of our ongoing commitment to rural mental wellness. This expanded coalition brings together agricultural organizations across the country with a shared goal: to make sure every farm family has the resources they need to take care of their mental health.

The Alliance builds on the progress we have made through Farm State of Mind, advancing access to tools, training and support that meet people where they are. Our resources include programs like Togetherall, a 24/7 online peer-to-peer community moderated by licensed mental health professionals, and Personal Assistance Services, which provides confidential counseling, financial consultations, and stress management resources to anyone who needs them. These services are completely free to farm families nationwide.

What makes this effort powerful isn't just the programs themselves. It's the fact that agriculture is coming together to lead the charge. We are combining the trusted voices of organizations farmers already know, starting with our founding members—Farm Bureau, National Farmers Union, National 4-H Council and Farm Foundation—to reach further and respond faster. The Alliance will amplify the impact of Farm State of Mind, allowing for greater reach into rural communities.

Whether you're looking for help, or just want to support the cause, there's a place for you in the Farm State of Mind Alliance. Partners, advocates and neighbors can all play a part by sharing these resources, starting conversations, and helping to break down the stigma around mental health.

We've seen the difference it makes when one person reaches out. All it takes is asking a friend how they're really doing, or sharing a resource that might just save a life. Those small steps are how we show each other: "It's okay not to be okay, and it's okay to ask for help."

The health of our farms depends on the health of our farmers. Together, we can make sure that when the next generation takes over the fields and herds we have built, they inherit a culture that values mental wellness just as much as hard work. ■

Looking forward to 2026

Kerin Clark

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Executive Vice President



Strengthening Wyoming agriculture, enhancing Wyoming communities. We have a new mission statement as we enter the organization's 106th year of representing Wyoming's farmers and ranchers. These new words emphasize the focus for our work as we continue building on the strong foundation of our organization.

Rooted in community, the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation was created to serve the agricultural communities around the state with the main objective of sharing information from the Agricultural Extension Service and solving problems. Founded by members in 1920, the organization remains driven by grassroots members who join together to serve as a united voice for agriculture across Wyoming.

Looking back at year 105, my heart is filled with gratitude for what we have accomplished together as an organization. It takes a lot of different puzzle pieces and people to advocate on behalf of and with our members. Members, volunteers, volun-

teer leaders, and staff join together to lead the way in agricultural advocacy through policy implementation, outreach, communications, leadership development and community events.

Each year brings new opportunities to strengthen Wyoming agriculture and enhance Wyoming's communities. Looking forward to those opportunities, we are excited to implement a strategic plan developed by a member-driven committee and approved by the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) Board of Directors.

We appreciate the volunteer leaders who served on the WyFB Strategic Planning Committee. They invested time and shared their talents and ideas to develop a strategic plan to serve us into the future. This plan designed a strong mission statement and a strong vision as well as putting words to our core values. The strategic plan will guide us as we continue the great work of the organization in 2026.

We believe in our core values – Integrity – Advocacy – Service – Dedication – Family –

Leadership. We see the vision of "...a prosperous Wyoming with thriving agriculture, communities and families."

The common denominator of everything we do for agriculture is you, the member. I invite you to read more about it in our annual report linked on our website (wyfb.org) on the "Who We Are" tab. Make sure to scroll down the page to see a glimpse of how we served Wyoming's farm and ranch families in our 2025 Annual Report link within the text.

2025 has been quite a ride. I invite you to saddle up with us for another great ride in 2026. Remember those puzzle pieces I referenced earlier...it takes a myriad of pieces and people from membership to advocates to engagement at the local, state and national levels. I am so thankful and honored to serve each and every one of you through the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation.

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas as we celebrate the good news of great joy. Luke 2:10 ■

National News

KELLY CARPENTER, WYFB
POLICY ADVOCACY DIRECTOR

Federal Agencies Propose Endangered Species Act Regulatory Revisions

Two federal wildlife agencies have introduced proposed changes to Endangered Species Act regulations that would reverse Biden-era modifications and return to policies similar to those implemented during the first Trump administration.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service jointly released four proposed rule changes affecting how the landmark environmental law is implemented. The proposals focus on two critical sections of the Act: Section 4, which governs species listing procedures and critical habitat designations, and Section 7, which establishes requirements for interagency consultation.

Key provisions in the proposed regulations would modify the process for designating critical habitats and restructure how federal agencies collaborate with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service on endangered species matters.

One significant change would eliminate a regulation that automatically provided threatened

species with the same level of protection as endangered species under Fish and Wildlife Service management. This distinction would create different protective standards between the two classification levels.

The proposed rules represent the latest shift in endangered species policy, which has fluctuated between the Trump and Biden administrations' differing approaches to environmental regulation.

Waters of the United States

On November 17, 2025, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) issued a proposed rule defining Waters of the United States (WOTUS). The proposed regulation is promising in the sense that it would reduce federal oversight of private lands by aligning agency policy with the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Sackett vs. EPA.

How did we get here after the 2023 Sackett decision? The clear directive from this case was not followed by the Biden Administration's implementation of the decision that left jurisdictional boundaries unclear and imprecise, so the new rule will define critical terms like "relatively permanent" and "continuous surface connection". ■

Legislative Update

BRETT MOLINE,
WYFB POLICY ADVOCACY DIRECTOR

Select Water Committee

This committee worked two draft pieces of legislation dealing with management of land to prevent wildfires and to enhance snow pack runoff. The goal of both bills is to support better management of trees and fuels to help prevent wildfires and lessen fire severity when they start. Another goal is to increase snowpack runoff. Increased space between trees would allow more snow to reach the ground instead of resting on top of the trees.

Where the bills differed was funding source of the projects. One bill proposed using water development funds and the second proposed bill would request funding from the general legislative fund. WyFB supported both proposals but gave stronger support for the proposal to utilize general funds as opposed to water development funds due to demand typically exceeding funding for water projects. In the end, the committee voted to forward the bill which uses general funds.

This committee also worked on a bill allowing voluntary conservation of irrigation water in the Colorado River Basin. The bill aims to demonstrate Wyoming's commitment to conserving water in the Colorado River Basin by reducing usage and improving flows. Water conserved would be put into storage and used to augment flow in the river system. Concerns were raised that not irrigating land could result in lower economic impacts, with lands not being irrigated going out of production. A SW Wyoming producer noted land would not go out of production but would more

likely shift from irrigation to grazing. This bill will be heard again at the next Select Water Committee meeting. WyFB supports the voluntary conservation concept noting the importance of state efforts to determine how to protect agriculture's access to Colorado River water.

Revenue Committee

The Revenue Committee has worked several bills of interest to WyFB members. One bill would allow the State of Wyoming Revenue Department to communicate using electronic methods. Given the rural nature of Wyoming, internet access can be an issue and WyFB worked to ensure this would be an opt in system, persons working with the Revenue Department would have the option to use either the current paper system or the electronic notification system.

This committee forwarded a proposal to eliminate property taxes on residential property. This change in tax policy would need a constitutional amendment. Another bill was attached to this proposal that would increase the State levied sales tax from 4% to 6%. Funds collected from the increased sales tax would be used to offset elimination of residential property tax. The county optional sales tax would be affected by this proposal.

Under this proposal, funds collected from the increased sales tax would be allocated back to the counties to be distributed to the entities previously receiving the property tax, including counties, cities and other taxing entities. If the funds collected from the sales tax are less than what would have been collected by the property tax, all entities would be reduced by a percentage. ■

Editor's Note: The 2026 Wyoming Legislature Budget Session will convene February 9, 2026.



Cooking with the Modern Ranch Wife

Sweet Potato Casserole

Recipe by Connie Werner adapted from www.tastesbetterfromscratch.com

INGREDIENTS

- 4-5 large sweet potatoes
- 3 large eggs
- ½ cup cream or milk
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp nutmeg
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- Topping
 - 3 tbsp butter
 - ¼ cup all-purpose flour
 - 1 cup light brown sugar
 - 1 cup pecans, chopped
 - ¼ tsp cinnamon

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large pot, place your potatoes and bring to a boil. Cook 20-40 minutes until they are fork tender. Drain and allow to cool.
2. Remove peels and slice potatoes into a large mixing bowl. Add eggs, milk, sugar, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and butter. Using a mixer combine until smooth.
3. Put into a 13x9 inch casserole dish. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
4. Prepare the topping. Add flour, brown sugar, and pecans to a mixing bowl. Cut the butter into this mixture until it appears crumbly.
5. Sprinkle the topping over the potatoes. You can also substitute the topping for marshmallows.
6. Bake for 35-40 minutes or until the center is set.
7. Enjoy!





Farm Bureau RECOGNITION

Farm Bureau Members Receive a

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1 Available on the purchase or lease of an eligible new 2024/2025/2026 model year Ford Maverick[®], Ranger[®], F-150[®], Super Duty or F-150 Lightning[®]. Not available on any other Ford or Lincoln vehicles, or F-150 Raptor[®], F-150 Raptor R[®], Ranger Raptor or F-650[®] and F-750[®] Super Duty. Vehicle eligibility may change at any time. Available to U.S. residents only. Place a new retail order or take new retail delivery from an authorized Ford Dealer's stock by 1/05/26. Limit of five purchases or leases per household during the program offer (PGM# 32524). Offer subject to dealer participation. May not be used/combined with most other Ford private offers. See an authorized Ford Dealer, or go to www.fordrecognizesu.com, for complete details and eligibility (PGM# 32524). Due to high demand and global supply chain constraints, some models, trims, and features may not be available or may be subject to change. Check with your local dealer for current information. Offer subject to confirmation of eligibility.

2 Available on the purchase of an eligible 2020-2026MY Ford Blue Advantage Gold, EV (F-150 Lightning only), or Blue Certified, Ford Maverick, Ranger, F-150, Super Duty or F-150 Lightning with under 80,000 miles. Not available on any other Ford or Lincoln vehicles, or F-150 Raptor, F-150 Raptor R, Ranger Raptor or F-650 and F-750 Super Duty. Vehicle eligibility may change at any time. Available to U.S. residents only. This offer is not eligible for customers purchasing a vehicle in the state of Texas. Take delivery from an authorized Ford Dealer's stock by 1/5/2026. Limit of five purchases per household during the program offer (PGM# 32678). Offer subject to dealer participation. May not be used/combined with most other private Ford offers. See an authorized Ford Dealer, or go to www.fordrecognizesu.com, for complete details and eligibility (PGM# 32678). Due to high demand and global supply chain constraints, some models, trims, and features may not be available or may be subject to change. Check with your local Ford Dealer for current information. Offer subject to confirmation of eligibility.

My experience at the 106th WyFB Annual Meeting

BY JOHN WERNER,
WyFB YF&R COMMITTEE MEMBER

This year was the 106th Wyoming Farm Bureau annual meeting where members gathered from all across the state. This was my first year going to annual meetings as a YF&R committee member.

Wednesday morning I drove up to Gillette to begin with the YF&R Committee meeting where we discussed the work that had been done so far and what our plans for the coming year. After the meeting was done, we prepared the books for ag books for kids for distribution to counties with stickers promoting Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. Once the stickers were done, we sorted them by county. These books will be distributed to local elementary schools to help promote ag literacy across the state. We also organized cards for our annual raffle benefiting harvest for all.

On Thursday morning I went to the mine tour. After getting a little turned around we arrived at the Caballo mine. Our tour guide thoroughly explained the mining process and how they remove the soil in layers. They make shelves by clearing the ground layer by layer digging down until they get to coal. They sort all of the cleared earth into different piles for reclamation. To clear the rock and coal, they have blasting crews they use explosives to loosen them up. We got to see a coal layer that was around 70 feet tall which I was told was on the smaller side for the coal seams that they go for in the mines around Gillette. They take the coal from these coal seams and take it to a crusher to get it to a more manageable size. Then it goes on to a conveyor to be put up into storage.

Thursday I also went on to participate in the State Government Affairs standing committee. In this committee we discussed the resolutions that were brought up from each district to the state level. We discussed the wording, meaning, and effects of the resolutions. Some were just passed as is, but most had debate on the wording and if they conflicted or overlapped on any existing policy. All in all it was exciting to have engaging debate with the members from all over the state.



John Werner serves the YF&R committee representing the central district. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO



The concert and dance is a highlight of the meeting for all after and a chance for members to mingle. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO



The YF&R committee hosts a raffle drawing each year to support the AFBF Harvest for All program. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

Thursday still had more in store for me because there was a trivia night at the Railyard. We had the pleasure of having Andy Schwab as the host. Members had their agricultural knowledge put to the test. From Saddle terminology to statistics of American agriculture our knowledge was put to the test with Jimmy John's gift cards on the line. My team did not win, but we had a great time competing.

Friday was an extremely busy day between the guest speakers and the start of the general session. Our first guest speaker was

Danny Munch. He is an economist from the AFBF. He talked about the recent changes in the economy with the tariffs and how the economy has changed overall. He also talked about how America's market share in ag commodities has changed over the course of history. That night was wrapped up with Music from Tris and Sam Munsick. They played great country music and members danced to their hearts content.

Saturday the whole thing came to a close. We really started to hammer out the resolutions that came from the committees. We discussed the resolution that passed from the committees. Members were also able to bring resolutions back to the floor that didn't make it through committees by getting a majority vote at the general session. Then on Saturday we had Heather Maude come and speak on her victory against the U.S. government. She talked about the tribulations that her family had to go through over a fence dispute with the US Forest Service. Through her speech she also informed us on how we needed to get in contact with our representatives at the state level to help ensure that what happened to the Maude family never happens again.

The 106th annual Farm Bureau meeting was an exciting event to go to. I got to experience perspectives from members all over the state. Learning what difficulties they are experiencing and what their thoughts are on how to improve agriculture and daily life. I heard from some great speakers on some important topics. However, the best part was catching up with friends from all over the state. ■

Guild elected to YF&R Chair

Hannah Guild of Ft. Bridger will take the reins of the WyFB Young Farmer & Rancher Committee as the State Chair and is excited to get started. She and her husband Zack are ranchers in Uinta County and have been involved with the YF&R committee for several years. This position holds a seat on the WyFB Board of Directors.

In her first report to the WyFB Board, Guild stated, "I am excited and grateful for the opportunity to serve as YF&R Chair and contribute our organization's future. My time with YF&R has been really rewarding, providing me with personal growth, development of leadership and public advocacy, and has helped me see the diverse issues facing agriculture in the state." ■



Hannah Guild

Collegiate YF&R discussion meet competition in February

Develop your leadership and advocacy skills while connecting with other young farmers and ranchers from across the state and nation by participating in the YF&R Collegiate Discussion Meet competition.

The competition will be February 5, 2026, in Cheyenne, just prior to the start of the WyFB/Colorado Farm Bureau Joint YF&R Conference. Any Wyoming college student with an interest in agriculture is eligible to participate. A major in agriculture is not required and

students do not need to be a member of a collegiate farm bureau.

The state winner receives a \$1,000 cash prize and an expense-paid trip to the AFBF national competition in March 2026 in Portland, Ore., where competitors vie for college scholarships.

Topics and rules are available at wyfb.org. Collegiate Discussion Meet applications are due January 2, 2026.

Contact WyFB YF&R Coordinator Alexis Lake at alake@wyfb.org or 307-721-7716 with questions. ■



Harvest for All

The WyFB Young Farmer & Rancher Committee is in its 23rd year of joining with the American Farm Bureau Federation YF&R Committee in the Harvest for All program. Since 2002, the WyFB YF&R Committee has partnered with Farm Bureau members to help those facing hunger in Wyoming. YF&R members sold raffle tickets throughout Annual Meeting to raise funds for the program.

TOTAL RAISED:
\$2,690







Conference Agenda

(TENTATIVE)

Thursday February 5

- 4:00 p.m. Wyoming Collegiate Discussion Meet Round 1
- 5:00 p.m. Wyoming Collegiate Discussion Meet Round 2
- 6:00 p.m. Committee Mixer

Friday February 6

- 8:30 a.m. Wyoming Collegiate Discussion Meet Finals
- 8:30 a.m. Registration/Check In
- 9:45 a.m. Optional Tour of Wyoming State Capitol
- 11:00 a.m. Committee Meeting
- 12:30 a.m. Welcome

- 1:00 p.m. Breakout Sessions
- 4:45 p.m. Happy Hour
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner
- 6:30 p.m. **Open Horizons**
Cassidy Johnson
– Keynote speaker
Wanting to break into a certain industry? Looking to ranch as a career, but not born into it? Questioning how to make connections? Cassidy walks you through how to get started and what to do to make your dreams a reality.

Saturday February 7

- 8:00 a.m. **The Dividing Line,**
Martin Carcasson,
Center for Public Deliberation

Registration and Hotel Deadline

The conference is hosted jointly by the Colorado and WyFB YF&R Committees for farmers and ranchers; all ages are welcome (no membership necessary). Registration will run Dec. 15-Jan. 15. The general registration fee is \$125 and collegiate registrations will be \$75. Visit wyfb.org for the registration form. Hotel Reservations will be made on your own through the SpringHill Suites Cheyenne- 307-267-8955 mention Young Farmers and Ranchers for the group rate of \$109+tax when booking. Group rates close on January 20th and are available first come, first serve.

- 9:00 a.m. Growing the Grassroots Breakout Sessions
Collegiate Chapters Workshop
County Board Simulation
 - 10:00 a.m. **Can You Hear Me Now?**
Tori Graves,
USDA Rural Development
Ever had to apologize for poor service during a call? Or missed a big opportunity because your internet went out? Do you feel like your town is screaming for attention because it doesn't have adequate services? Maybe the USDA Rural Development programs can help! With priorities focused on infrastructure, energy, access, and electricity, places with low population can get the help needed. Not only do they offer guides to get stuff done, they also pony up the money. Take notes and lead your community to a strong future.
 - 11:00 a.m. Successful Succession Panel Discussion
 - 12:00 p.m. Lunch and Group Photo
 - 1:00 p.m. Activity TBA
- 2:00 p.m. Borders, Boundaries, and Barriers Breakout Session Round 1
Federal Policy Update
Handling Stress
Grant Writing Workshop
 - 3:00 p.m. Borders, Boundaries, and Barriers Breakout Session Round 2
Farm Credit
Handling Stress
Grant Writing Workshop
 - 4:30 p.m. Tour Cheyenne Frontier Days
 - 5:30 p.m. Happy Hour
 - 6:00 p.m. Dinner
 - 6:45 **Building Bridges**
Aaron Alejandro
– Keynote Speaker
Alejandro is Executive Director of the Texas FFA Foundation located in Austin, Texas. In his non-professional hours, Aaron consults with businesses, organizations, education and youth clubs about ways to improve organizational and individual performance. He has more than 30 years of experience in management, personal and professional training.

WyFB launches Ag Pen Pal Program to connect classrooms with Wyoming agriculture

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation is launching a new hands-on learning opportunity that brings the story of Wyoming agriculture directly into classrooms across the state. The WyFB Ag Pen Pal Program, beginning spring 2026, pairs Wyoming farmers and ranchers with elementary classrooms for a semester-long exchange of letters, stories and real-world agricultural insight. The program is designed to help bridge the gap between students and the people who grow their food. By connecting classrooms with Wyoming producers, students gain a better understanding of where their food, fiber and fuel come from, as well as the seasons and work that shape life on farms and ranches. Each participating classroom is matched with a farmer or rancher in their region. Throughout the semester, they exchange two to three letters that may include details about winter feeding, calving season, planting decisions, brandings and the everyday work that keeps Wyoming agriculture moving. Many participants also include photos, drawings or stories that help bring agriculture to life for students.

Classrooms respond with their own letters and questions, creating a meaningful back-and-forth exchange. At the end of the program, teachers and farmers and ranchers may choose to connect through a virtual visit or arrange an in-person classroom visit when possible. The program schedule is built with teachers and farmers and ranchers in mind. Pairings will be finalized in December, with the first letters sent by mid-February. Classrooms reply in early March, a second exchange takes place in April, and the program wraps up in May with a final letter or optional visit. The Ag Pen Pal Program aligns with WyFB's commitment to agricultural education and outreach. By opening a direct line of communication between youth and farmers and ranchers, the program helps strengthen understanding and appreciation for Wyoming's number one industry. It also reflects the longstanding tradition of community, connection and shared learning found across rural Wyoming. Those interested in participating should contact Alexis Lake at alake@wyfb.org. ■



FARM SUCCESSION

Navigate The Transition

Succession coordinators work with families and operations to navigate the transition of the ag operation to the next generation. The coordinators work in tandem with attorneys and accountants to make sure that the succession plan is feasible.



Succession coordinators are available as a service of the Wyoming Agriculture & Natural Resource Mediation Program.

For more information, contact Lucy Pauley at 307-777-8788 or email lucy.pauley@wyo.gov.

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?

Understanding generations and delivering value is the key to strong membership

BY CALLIE HANSON

American Farm Bureau Federation Senior Director of Membership and Organization Development Austin Large spent the day with Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation members delivering two membership-focused presentations—one to county presidents and vice presidents and another to the full delegate body during General Session.

Large opened the morning session by asking county leaders to think back to age 16 and name their favorite hobby, movie and piece of technology. The room filled with references to cassette adapters, first-generation internet service and long-forgotten shows.

“Your formative experiences shape how you interact with the world,” Large said. “That’s at the heart of understanding generations.”

He walked members through the characteristics commonly associated with Traditionals, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z. The goal, he said, was not to stereotype but to equip leaders with tools.

“You’re not trying to change people,” he said. “You’re trying to understand them so you can meet them where they are.”

Large connected that discussion to the membership life cycle, beginning with awareness. “People can’t join you if they don’t know who you are or what you do,”

he said. Recruitment, he added, should be personal and focused on the prospective member’s needs.

“It can’t be a fire hose,” he joked. “Lead with what you know about them and what they’re trying to accomplish.”

He emphasized that engagement is the strongest predictor of renewal. “The number one reason people don’t renew is lack of engagement,” he said. “If they don’t feel connected, they won’t stay.” Counties, he noted, should look closely at what keeps members active—events, committees, outreach or policy involvement.”

Large encouraged county leaders to go home and map how members move through their organizations. “You don’t have to fix everything at once,” he said. “Pick one part of the life cycle and commit to improving it.”

During the afternoon General Session, Large shifted to national trends. He shared Farm Bureau membership data from around the country, noting that every state faces changing demographics, shifting expectations and volunteer fatigue.

“Trends aren’t destiny,” he said. “What you focus on expands.”

Large pointed to national association research that mirrors Farm Bureau’s own experience. “The top reason people don’t join is they don’t see the value,” he said. “The top reason they don’t renew is they weren’t



AFBF’s Austin Large addressed both the president and VP breakfast and the general delegation. Large’s presentations were both rooted in membership and overcoming challenges. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

engaged.” Those points, he added, are consistent across industries.

He urged members to adjust how they talk about membership by highlighting impact, not just programs. “If someone says dues are too high, you don’t have a dues problem,” he said. “You have a value problem. They don’t see their return on investment yet.”

People join and stay, Large said, when they know belonging to the Federation strengthens their lives and their operations. “The features of Farm Bureau matter, but it’s the benefit—what it does for you—that moves people to action,” he said.

Large closed with leadership lessons drawn from the “Habitudes” framework. He encouraged members to be “cath-

edral builders” who see the bigger picture, “rivers” that channel energy toward what matters, “small sprockets” willing to start small changes and “trains on tracks” that rely on simple systems over time.

“You’re running operations, raising families and still volunteering to protect agriculture,” he said. “Systems and focus make that work sustainable.”

He reminded members that every part of the day’s discussion—generations, recruitment, engagement and leadership—comes back to one truth.

“At the end of the day, membership is about people,” he said. “When people feel seen, valued and engaged, they stay. And they bring others with them.” ■



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From drought to trade: AFBF economist breaks down pressures on U.S. agriculture

BY CALLIE HANSON

American Farm Bureau Federation economist Danny Munch met with Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation members to outline the economic pressures shaping today's farm and ranch landscape. Backed by data, he walked delegates through what he called "a tale of two farm economies," describing the contrast between struggling crop sectors and stronger livestock markets.

"Across the country, producers are facing turbulence from every angle," Munch said. "The goal is to understand the pressures and show how Farm Bureau's grassroots work is delivering real economic value back to our operations."

He began by outlining the divide between sectors. Crop producers continue to face low commodity prices with per-acre losses ranging from \$111 to more than \$300, depending on the crop. "Southern farmers are acutely feeling the pressure," he said. Specialty crop growers, he added, are seeing modest price increases erased by steep jumps in labor, fertilizer and pesticide costs.

Rising expenses are a central concern. USDA now projects farm production costs at a record \$467 billion. "Interest expenses are at record levels. Transportation is at record levels. Cash labor is at record levels," Munch said. Even as some inputs moderate, he noted that many prices "still aren't covering the cost of production."



AFBF economist Danny Munch discussed pressures on U.S. agriculture and the divide between different sectors. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

He also pointed to mounting regulatory burdens, using California as an example. "A lettuce producer once paid about \$100 an acre in regulatory costs," he said. "Now it's \$1,600 an acre. That puts American farmers at a competitive disadvantage with countries that don't have those compliance costs."

Exports remain essential. Munch noted that tree nuts, cotton and dairy rely heavily on foreign markets, with large percentages of production heading over-

seas. "American farmers are the best in the world at producing food," he said. "We produce more than our consumers eat, and that means exports matter."

Trade disruptions remain a major challenge, particularly with China. "We went from \$41 billion in ag exports to China to a precipitous drop," he said. While recent announcements suggest potential movement, Munch said follow-through remains uncertain.

He highlighted how rhetoric can influence markets, pointing to Canada's steep drop in American wine purchases following political tensions. "Words have consequences, even in trade," he said.

Turning to Wyoming-specific concerns, Munch discussed drought and cattle herd liquidation. "Every spike in drought corresponds with herd reductions," he said. He emphasized the emotional and economic strain of selling animals built over generations. Even with strong cattle prices, he reminded members that costs have risen 55% over the same period.

Record beef imports also complicate the market. "We already import 12 to 14% of our beef, and this year we're at record highs," he said. "That's not how you support producers."

Global competition is intensifying, especially from Brazil. "Brazil is massive," he said. "Their main crop region is the size of six Illinois, and they can grow two to three crops a year. We grow one." As Bra-

zil improves infrastructure, he warned, its competitive edge grows.

Transportation bottlenecks further limit U.S. competitiveness. "Ninety-five percent of containers are manufactured in China," Munch said. "We don't have a single U.S. port ranked in the top 50 for efficiency. Brazil does. That matters for exports and reliability."

Farm numbers continue to decline, with the U.S. losing 140,000 farms in five years. He cautioned that USDA income forecasts may be misleading because a significant portion reflects last year's disaster payments rather than true earnings. "More than half of producers had negative farm income last year," he said. "At the median, farms lost \$900. That's not sustainable without off-farm income."

He explained that farming families often rely on spouses or operators working outside agriculture for health insurance and retirement benefits. "Farm households earn 77% of their income off the farm," he said. "It's part of how rural communities stay viable."

Munch then shifted to Farm Bureau's Farm Bureau Advantage project, which measures economic returns from policy wins. He noted the California Farm Bureau's ag equipment tax exemption as one example. "The average farmer saved over \$2,000 a year," he said. "That alone covered the cost of membership."

ECONOMIC PRESSURES ... Page 9



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



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WyFB honors retiring leaders Pexton and Taylor for their years of service

BY CALLIE HANSON

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation honored two long-serving board members at the 106th Annual Meeting as they stepped down from their leadership roles. Tim Pexton, Central District Director, and Raenell Taylor, Northeast District Director, retire after years of dedicated service that strengthened Farm Bureau's grassroots mission and its voice for Wyoming agriculture.

Tim Pexton: Three Decades of Steadfast Leadership

After 30 years on the WyFB Board — including one year as Director at Large and 29 years representing the Central District — Tim Pexton leaves behind a legacy defined by a deep commitment to member-driven policy.

Reflecting on his tenure, Pexton said he gained an appreciation for the caliber of people who pass through Farm Bureau leadership. "I have seen a lot of exceptional people pass through the ranks of delegates and leadership positions," he said.

He also emphasized Farm Bureau's strength in the legislative arena, grounded in policy that originates with members. "A lot of commodity groups tout the importance of grassroots policy making, but none take it more seriously than Wyoming Farm Bureau," he said.

Among his proudest accomplishments was helping launch the Young Farmer & Rancher program in Wyoming. "It was very satisfying," Pexton said, recalling the early days of building support for a program that is now a central part of Farm Bureau's leadership development.

Even as he retires from board service, Pexton noted he isn't stepping away from the organization. "Farm Bureau will continue to be a part of my life. There is more to be done," he said.

Raenell Taylor: Leadership Rooted in Grassroots Values

Raenell Taylor, retiring after her 6 years of service as Northeast District Director, reflected on how Farm Bureau shaped her leadership journey and deepened her commitment to grassroots advocacy. Prior to her tenure as a district

director, Taylor served the board as the YF&R state chair.

Taylor said her time on the board reinforced her belief that Farm Bureau's power lies in the voices of its members. "We are a federation built on the belief that local voices truly matter," she said. "Sound policy doesn't just come from far-away offices. It comes from kitchen table talks, county meetings, and conversations with neighbors who care about the future of agriculture."

She also spoke about how Farm Bureau connects everyday agricultural work to the policy decisions that affect producers. "Our day starts out in the saddle... but the other half of that equation happens in rooms where leadership, discussions and policy shape our future," she said.

2025 Retiring Board Members



Tim Pexton
Director-at-Large: 1994-1995
Central District: 1995-2025



Raenell Taylor
YF&R State Chair: 2013-2014
Northeast District: 2019-2025

Thank you for your service

Taylor credits Farm Bureau with helping her grow from a hesitant public speaker into a confident advocate. She often laughs about her first YF&R speaking attempt, when nerves kept her from reaching the podium — a moment she now calls the beginning of her leadership development. "Proof that Farm Bureau truly does grow leaders," she said.

As she moves into a new season focused on supporting her children's rodeo pursuits, Taylor said she will continue participating as a grassroots member. "Every season has a purpose," she said. "But every season contributes to the solutions we're building for agriculture."

A Shared Legacy

Together, Pexton and Taylor brought decades of insight, dedication, and practical agricultural experience to the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. Their leadership strengthened the organization's grassroots foundation and ensured the voices of Wyoming producers remained central to the policy process.

Their retirements mark the close of significant chapters, but both leaders leave confident in the future of Farm Bureau — and in the members who will continue carrying the work forward. ■



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Wyoming Farm Bureau Foundation Auction

Silent and live auctions were held at the WyFB 106th Annual Meeting. All proceeds went to the Wyoming Farm Bureau Foundation. Contributions to the Wyoming Farm Bureau Foundation help support agriculture efforts in Wyoming. Visit the Foundation tab at wyfb.org to learn more.

TOTAL RAISED:
\$8,501

A huge thank you to Andy Schwab for his auctioneer services, the County Farm Bureau Federations who donated items to the auction and the buyers who made this event a success!

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WYFB POLICY... From Page 1

Election integrity and access were another priority as delegates voiced strong support for maintaining in-person voting and local precinct polling places. “Support of in-person voting and the ability for citizens to travel to local precinct polling places led to policy opposing voting centers,” Clark said.

Members also weighed in on utility policies that affect daily life across the state. “Living in a windy state where red flag warnings are not uncommon led to members expressing opposition to power companies cutting power during those times,” Clark said.

Delegates also discussed taxation related to government-owned lands, supporting the position that only improvements—not the land itself—should be subject to property tax.

“Discussion following a court decision regarding leasing state-owned land for a private company’s use led WyFB members to ask for only improvements on government owned lands, not the land, to be taxed,” Clark said.

Proposed fuel tax increases and questions about Wyoming Department of Transportation (WyDOT) funding led delegates to call for a closer review of the agency’s spending.

“Earlier this year talk of proposed fuel tax increases and talk about shortfalls for WyDOT’s road maintenance led to policy discussion on fuel taxes and tolling,” Clark said. “Farm Bureau policy has long opposed increases to taxes which led to a resolution asking for an efficiency review into how the Department of Transportation is spending their money.”

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation continues its commitment to the principles that guide its grassroots work. The policies adopted at the annual meeting will direct the organization’s efforts in the coming year as WyFB remains focused on its mission: Strengthening Wyoming agriculture, enhancing Wyoming communities. ■



Prior to the general session, members met in committees to discuss and vote on policies brought forth by the districts. In these committees, policies can be amended or passed as is. Additionally, resolutions can be voted down in these committees. Those passing the committee will be voted on by the entire delegation. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO



Members are given the chance to voice their opinions and address the delegation during resolutions voting. The policies passed during this process are put into the WyFB policy book. Policies of national interest are sent to AFBF to be voted on by the national delegate body. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO



Justin Ellis



Kevin Baars



Matt Stroh



Quade Palm



Thad Dockery



Hannah Guild

WYFB ELECTIONS... From Page 1

This fall, the Central and Northeast districts elected new members to the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors. Quade Palm was elected to serve as the Central District Director, and Matt Stroh will represent the Northeast District after completing a year of service as the Board’s Director-at-Large.

Uinta County rancher Hannah Guild will take the reins as YF&R State Chair and is eager to get to work. Guild has served on the WyFB YF&R Committee since 2022.

The Board of Directors is rounded out by District Directors Kevin Baars (Southeast District), Thad Dockery (Northwest District), and Justin Ellis (Southwest District).

In addition to welcoming new leadership, WyFB expressed its deep apprecia-

tion to retiring board members Tim Pexton and Raenell Taylor for their years of dedicated service.

Tim Pexton (Converse County) retired after serving as the Central District Director from 1995–2025, marking three decades of commitment to the organization and Wyoming agriculture.

Raenell Taylor (Crook County) completed her service after two separate terms on the WyFB Board of Directors — first as

Young Farmers & Ranchers State Chair (2013–2014) and later as Northeast District Director (2019–2025).

Additionally, we would like to recognize and thank Cody Alps of Goshen County for his year of service as the YF&R Chair.

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation extends sincere thanks to all who serve and congratulates those elected to leadership positions for the coming year. ■

ECONOMIC PRESSURES... From Page 7

Nationally, Farm Bureau’s work in tax policy, disaster assistance and program enhancements delivers substantial returns. “For the average farm, tax savings alone are around \$5,000 a year,” he said. Economic assistance programs authorized last year brought an average payment of \$15,000 to participating farmers. Specialty crop marketing support averaged \$34,000. In Wyoming, drought-related assistance averaged \$14,000 per applicant.

“Even if you benefit from just one of these programs, the return on an \$80 membership is enormous,” he said. “Whether or not someone belongs to Farm Bureau, they’re benefiting from the work you do.”

He closed with Western-focused research on grazing, wildlife and pest im-

pacts. Munch highlighted the economic value of public lands grazing, estimating \$1 billion from forage alone and \$3.7 billion in ecosystem services. “If ranchers disappeared, the federal government would have to take over management,” he said. “It would cost billions.”

He also shared losses tied to depredation, weight loss due to predator presence and forage competition from grasshoppers and Mormon crickets. “Thirty pounds of grasshoppers eat the same amount as a 600-pound calf,” he noted.

Munch encouraged members to continue sharing their on-the-ground experiences. “Your data and your stories help shape better policy,” he said. “And Farm Bureau is working every day to make sure that value comes back to your operations.” ■

Season's Greetings

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SADDLES TO SOLUTIONS

106th Annual Meeting • November 13-15, 2025 • Gillette, Wyoming

Stories by Callie Hanson
Photos by Kadra Marie Photography/Kadra Lemmon



Staff Longevity
WyFB Membership & Outreach Director Brooke Settlemeyer celebrated five years of service at WyFB.



Parliamentarian
Sheridan College Collegiate Farm Bureau member Isabelle Loeffler served as the parliamentarian. Loeffler was selected from a highly competitive group of applicants from each of our collegiate farm bureau chapters.



U.S. Senator John Barrasso
U.S. Senator John Barrasso addressed the delegation and spent time visiting with members and answering questions. Barrasso is pictured with the UW Collegiate Farm Bureau.

Collegiate Farm Bureau
University of Wyoming Collegiate Farm Bureau and Sheridan College Collegiate Farm Bureau members attended the 106th annual meeting. The members participated in the meeting and assisted staff in several areas including the general session and foundation auctions.



University of Wyoming Collegiate Farm Bureau pictured with WyFB Executive Vice President Kerin Clark (Left) and President Todd Fornstrom (Center) from left to right: Rilee Clark, Cassie Fenske, Kyla Pachner, Klacie Groene and Courtney Beene



Sheridan College Collegiate Farm Bureau members, front row left to right: Lucy Moon, Becka Nutting, Mylie Mickelsen, Belle Loeffler, Cora Turner, Molly Lund, Brooklyn Greenwelt, Autumn Clark. Back Row left to right: CyLeigh Langton, Megan Sagner, Gary Brennemann, Evan Fox, Jacob Pesicka, Luke Durfee



Collegiate members assisted with various meeting tasks including the live and silent auctions benefiting the WyFB Foundation.



Coal Mine Tour

Members had the opportunity to tour the Caballo Mine in Gillette prior to the official start of the meeting.



Northern Ag Network Broadcast

Northern Ag Network recorded a broadcast show during the WyFB Annual Meeting. The broadcast team of Colter Brown, Andy Schwab and Colton Young interviewed staff, speakers, and attendees for their live broadcast. Shown in this picture is AFBF Economist Danny Munch (left) elaborating on his presentation from the morning session.



Concert

Proud Wyoming natives Tris and Sam Munsick entertained attendees during the banquet.



Vendor Fair

Vendors from across Wyoming set up during the meeting. Attendees who visited all the booths were entered in a drawing for a prize.



Trivia Night

Northern Ag Network hosted the annual trivia competition, with University of Wyoming Collegiate Farm Bureau members taking home the top prize!

Wyoming Classifieds

ALL CLASSIFIED ADS must be received by the 10th of each month to appear in the next issue. Members may place two (2) complimentary ads, up to 40 words each, per issue. Real estate sales not included. Complimentary ads will run for three issues unless requested otherwise. Non-members may submit an ad at a minimum rate of \$5 per ad (50 cents per word). The appearance of any ad in *Wyoming Agriculture* does not constitute an endorsement or approval of the product or service offered.

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BIG HORN
Stacy Cortez, Greybull; Debra Ward, Lovell

CAMPBELL
Frank Sanders, Gillette; Treasure & Jake Boller (REG), Weston; Galen Bortz, Gillette; Rebecca Reddie, Gillette; Helen & Andy Gerleman (REG), Weston; Ashley & Jack Greer (REG), Gillette; Penny Allemand (REG), Recluse; Anthony & Kayla Becker, Gillette; Jami & Jason Angelos, Gillette

CARBON
Thomas Sholar, Saratoga; Mario Rodriguez, Savery; Kyle & Charlie Fluty, Powell; Kassie & Shane Johnson, Laramie; Randy Flowers, Laramie; Terri Crawford, Rawlins; Rebecca & Tom Brannan, Rawlins; Kip Kerbs/Kerbs 4 Bar Herefords (REG), Saratoga

CONVERSE
Anna Grant (REG), Glenrock; Kimberly Barrett, Glenrock; Brian Retherford, Douglas; Gallagher NA-Animal Management (REG), Riverside, MO; Sara & Anthony Tolstedt, Cody

CROOK
Jess Driskill (REG), Moorcroft; Wade Dungey, Aladdin

FREMONT
Mary & Glen Enos (REG), Fort Washakie; Denise Hull, Pavillion; Kelly Wayne, Riverton; Rio & Katie Stafford (REG), Crowheart; Bruce Dempster, Lander; Debra McDonald, Lander; Ella Boese (REG), Bloomfield, MT; Ellen & Dillon Cotterman (REG), Riverton; Shawnta & Jobe Martinez, Riverton; Sarah Miller, Riverton; Staci Gonzales, Lander; Wade Dent, Lander; Robert & Marcia Lowry (REG), Crowheart; Debra Martin/Poor Farm Limited Partnership (REG), Lander; Laurie & Bret Gardner (REG), Shoshoni; Kelargo & Scot Blake, Riverton; Sherri & Randy Leseberg, Riverton; Katheryne & James K Tammany, Lander; Deborah & Scott Patrick, Lander; Hart Hedges, Lander; Robin Wiltshire/Turtle Ranch (REG), Dubois; Curtis Tronolone (REG), Lander; Paul Downey (REG), Shoshoni; Gary Huxtable (REG), Riverton; Michelle Jibben, Riverton

GOSHEN
Theron Hageman (REG), Jay Em; Darin Yates, Torrington; Emmett Coxbill (REG), Torrington; Samantha Coxbill (REG), Torrington; Zimmerer Land, LLC (REG), Torrington; Larry Haeffelin (REG), Lingle; Jennifer Reimers, Torrington; Glenda Kraus, Casper; Taya Sterkel, Lingle; David Johnson/AJ Bar Ranch Inc (REG), Lingle; Marilyn & Gene Hayes, Lingle

HOT SPRINGS
Ariel Allen (REG), Thermopolis; Leigh & Travis Dobbins, Thermopolis; Natalie & Griff Hodson, Thermopolis; Sandra & Ronald Luther (REG), Thermopolis; Jeff Hillstead, Evanston; Viviana Lopez, Thermopolis; Allen Bucher, Littleton, CO

JOHNSON
Sarah & Tanner Spade, Buffalo; Phyllis & Michael Young, Buffalo; John Gibbs (REG), Buffalo; Aaron & Casey Rodriguez, Buffalo; Christine Tellock, Buffalo; Rhonda & Alan Kiefer, Fort Bridger

LARAMIE
Saul Vasquez, Cheyenne; Tandi Bryant, Cheyenne; Lisa & Clint Taylor, CHEYENNE; Dawn & Frank Thompson, Cheyenne; Clark McInroy, Cheyenne; Betsy & Bernard Phelan, Cheyenne; Larry Johnson, Cheyenne; Madison Frauendienst, Cheyenne; Chelsey & Darin Weeks, Cheyenne; Tallgrass, Houston, TX; Devon Anderson, Cheyenne; Roxie Hayward, Cheyenne; Donald Edwards, Pine Bluffs; Rebecca & Robert Higgins, Cheyenne; Lisa & Steve Reynolds, Cheyenne; Nicoletta Hatch, Cheyenne

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NATRONA
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Cuthbertson, Casper; Melissa Eversfield (REG), Casper; Scott & Janet Hoversland, Casper; Terry Camp, Casper; Teresa & Roland Grannan, Casper; Kim & Derek Jones, Casper; Barbara Ralph, Casper; David L True/True Ranches (REG), Casper; Bryan Hebert, Casper; James & Karla Gallegos, Evansville; Walt Merschat, Casper; Nicole & Kasey Roby, Mills; Carol Stoeger, Evansville; Bruce Demchek, Evansville; Dorothy Hardt, Mills; Liz & Mark Cornett, Evansville; Genae & Davian Herbig, Bar Nunn; Reid Cruickshank, Casper; John Mark Bihl, Casper; Matt Adamson, Evansville; William Wilson, Bar Nunn; Chris Robinson, Casper; Bernadino Madsen, Casper; Beth Johnson, Casper; Wyatt Tarver, Casper; Shari Shaw/Spark307, Casper; Chris Bray, Casper; Lynn & Blake Hamar, Evansville; Judy & Ronald Valdez, Casper; John & Linda Walsh, Casper; Raeann Weber, Mills; Neal Ruebush, Casper; Cheryl Vonriesen, Casper; Gary Purcell, Casper; Wilma & Gary Pagel, Bar Nunn; Phil Willoughby, Evansville; Dave Cullison, Mills; Olie & James Farris (REG), Midwest; Kerrie & John Langmade, Casper; Robyn & Scott Stack, Casper; Ted & Denise Rasmussen, Casper; Carol & Kenneth Eggemeyer, Casper; Laura & John Gabrielson, Casper; Jim & Shawndee Gerhart, Casper; Dax Collins, Casper; Todd Kittel (REG), Evansville; Robert Danford, Evansville; Barbara & Edward McPherson, Casper; Jeffrey Jones, Casper; Brownwyn & David Dale, Evansville

NIOBRARA
Dusty & Brent Correll (REG), Lusk

PARK
Joby Young/American Farm Bureau Federation, Alexandria, VA; Billy Mckim, Cody; John & Kimberly Baggs, Cody; Walter Christler, Cody; J's Keys to the Kingdom LLC (REG), Cody; Sarah McKergow, Meeteetse; Shannon & Caleb Sauer, Cody; Rabe Wilson, Copperas Cove, TX; Kara Wipf, Cody; Flint Harvey, Powell; Gary Donovan, Powell; Lorna Kline, Cody; J Over Three Lazy B's LLC (REG), Cody; Sioux Green, Powell; Amanda Roth, Cody; Leslie & Brair Bigham, Powell; Patricia Childers (REG), Powell; Randall Gill, Cody; Ryan & Katie Roemmich, Cody; Shannon Brewer, Powell; Rachel Handley, Powell; Johnson & Schuebel Farms, Llc (REG), Cody; Brian Bragg, Cody

PLATTE
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NEW MEMBERS ... Page 13



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Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation updates mission, vision and strategic priorities

BY CALLIE HANSON

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) has adopted an updated strategic plan that sets the organization's course for the coming years, including newly revised mission and vision statements shaped through grassroots discussion and member input.

The updated mission — “Strengthening Wyoming agriculture, enhancing Wyoming's communities” — reflects the organization's commitment to serving farmers and ranchers while supporting the communities they call home. The revised vision looks ahead to “a prosperous Wyoming with thriving agriculture, communities, and families.”

Both statements were updated as part of the broader strategic planning effort.

The plan was developed by a diverse committee of Farm Bureau leaders representing districts, counties, and program areas. Committee members included Connie Werner, Kristi Ellis, Stacy Berger, Kevin Baars, Matt Stroh, Tucker Hamilton, Todd Fornstrom, Ray Shaffer, and James Ramsay.

Their work centered on evaluating WyFB's long-term direction, identifying opportunities to strengthen the organization, and ensuring the plan reflects the needs and priorities of members across the state.

The finished plan was shared with members at the 106th Annual Meeting in Gillette, where delegates received an overview of the updates from strategic planning committee members.

The strategic plan reaffirms WyFB's core values: integrity, advocacy, service, dedication, family, and leadership. These principles shape the organization's work in policy, leadership development, and community engagement.

Leaders emphasized the importance of connecting these values to the everyday experiences of members—from county involvement to state-level advocacy.



Members of the strategic planning committee met twice in person in the Laramie office to create the plan. AFBF's Elise Cruse facilitated the planning process and assisted the committee throughout the process. CALLIE HANSON PHOTOS



Members of the strategic planning committee addressed the delegation and presented the plan during the 106th Annual Meeting in Gillette. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

Strengthening and supporting membership remains central to the plan. The organization will continue looking for and creating meaningful opportunities for involvement at every state of membership. WyFB's grassroots process will continue to anchor

all policy efforts. Expanding WyFB's messaging to continue supporting advocacy and membership development will also be a key priority.

With updated mission and vision statements, a member-driven strategic planning committee, and a clear set of

priorities, the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation is well-positioned to continue serving Wyoming's agricultural community. The plan provides a framework for strengthening agriculture, supporting families, and enhancing the communities that make Wyoming unique. ■

NEW MEMBERS... From Page 12

SHERIDAN

David Smith, Sheridan; Leona & Donald L Pehringer, Big Horn; Christa & Brad Tietjen (REG), Clearmont; Matthew Cummins (REG), Clearmont; Amy & Stephen Leonard, Sheridan; Gloria Rinker, Sheridan; Virginia Connor, Sheridan; Eric Cross (REG), Sheridan; Robert Hathaway, Sheridan; Mary & Matt Jolovich, Sheridan; Becki & Travis Lanka, Sheridan; Bridger Heizer, Banner; Jacade Nygren, Sheridan; Mya Slack, Sheridan; Julie & Nathan Boyd, SHERIDAN; Thomas Hebert, Sheridan; Gilmer & Brandy Nielsen, Sheridan; Katherine & Raymond Hecker (REG), Sheridan; Beverly & Roger Reinke (REG), Sheridan; Amy Jolley Schafer, Sheridan; Cheryl Jensen, Sheridan; Aubrey Brennemann, Sheridan; Jase Wilson, Sheridan; Jordan Mouat, Sheridan; Lucy Moon, Sheridan; Evan Fox, Sheridan; Brooklyn Greenwalt, Sheridan; CyLeigh Langton, Sheridan; Mylei Mickelsen, Sheridan; Gary Brennemann, Sheridan; Kylie Bergum, Sheridan; Dawson Bergum, Sheridan; Autumn Clark, Sheridan; William Donald, Sheridan; Dalton Haase, Sheridan; David Onkka, Sheridan; Drue Fink,

Sheridan; Michael & Billie Jo Raneri, Cheyenne; Jordan & Jennifer Davis, Sheridan; Jolene Olson, Sheridan; Jane Gallagher, Sheridan; Christine McKenzie, Sheridan; Jeffrey Way, Wolf; Jakob Pesicka, Sheridan; Tagg Mickelsen, Sheridan; Luke Durfee, Sheridan; Isabelle Loeffler, Sheridan; Joan & Leon Eliason, Sheridan; Kendra Nelson, Sheridan; Phillip Garriffa, Sheridan; Barbara & David Hoyt, Sheridan; Kim & Marc Ketcham, Sheridan; Tracy & Kyle Eisele, Sheridan; Margaret Fletcher, Sheridan; Glenn Adams, Sheridan; Marshal Simonson, Sheridan; Joyce Laya, Sandy, UT; Mitch Horan, Story; Retha Moffett (REG), Kaycee; Terry White, Sheridan; Robert Becker, Story; Beth & Dennis E Shorma (REG), Sheridan; Margret & Donald Aksamit, Dayton; Tessy & Cristian Pessina, Big Horn

SUBLETTE

Wyoming West Investment Properties LLC (REG), Big Piney; Jeanene Esterholt, Pinedale

SWEETWATER

Annette Wedgewood, Rock Springs; Seth Trafton, Rock Springs; Alysia & Jason Love, Green River; Kay & Kent

Womack, Rock Springs; Lynn & James Huckaby (REG), EDEN; Gilbert German, Green River; Gerhart Spalding, Green River; Susan & Richard Thoman (REG), Kemmerer; Teri & Gary Pallesen, Manila, UT; Adlia & David Christensen, Rock Springs; Joshua Abbott, Rock Springs; Sarah Kovach, Rock Springs; Austin Ortega, Green River; Jessica & Jeremy Burton, Rock Springs; Sally & Budd Allen, Green River; Ross Slagowski (REG), Rock Springs; Mary Schuck, Green River; Sherry & Sherry Vessels, Rock Springs; Shirley Jilge, Rock Springs; Travis Toomer, Rock Springs; James lever, Rock Springs; Andy Winters (REG), Green River; Edward Barlow, Rock Springs

TETON

Linda & Harold Williams, Wilson; James Stockhouse, Jackson; Susan Rauch, Wilson; Peter Karns, Jackson; Roy Kinsey, Jackson; Jason Wright, Jackson; Nick & Lani Orsillo, Wilson

UINTA

Shane Hurdsmann (REG), Mountain View; Catherine & Scott Lucas (REG), Salt Lake City, UT; Jayce Hunt, Lyman; Jamie Castillon, Green River; Ashley & Wesley Sibert (REG), Fort Bridger; Richard & Dana Stack,

Evanston; Elfride Tucker, Evanston; Harley Bradley (REG), Evanston; John Caldwell, Evanston; Sandra & Lee J Pierce (REG), Evanston; Clay Benedict, Mountain View; Karl Allred, Evanston; Chevy Huffaker/Huffaker Cattle Company (REG), Evanston; Billie Peterson JR, Evanston; Todd Hurd, Evanston; Jean Cook, Evanston; Carey & Robert Lewis, Mountain View; Seth Heller, Evanston; Amy & Russell Jensen, Fort Bridger; Bronson Foianini (REG), Lyman; Chris McMannis, Evanston; Scott Higgs, Evanston; Stewart Cook (REG), Evanston; Esther Aimone (REG), Fort Bridger; Duke Eardley, Mountain View; Bradi Day, Evanston; Tonya & Jay Thomas, Lyman

WASHAKIE

Rickey Robertson, Worland; Janell & David Donley (REG), Worland

WESTON

Lee Habeck (REG), Sundance; Carolyn & Brent Fowler, Sundance; Lisa Lam, Newcastle; Justin Francis, Newcastle; Glenn Gordon (REG), Newcastle; Jon Carr (REG), Newcastle; Marty Borgialli (REG), Newcastle; Dwight Elliott (REG), Newcastle; Rob Humes, Newcastle ■

Maudes' legal battle highlights risks to western landowners — and a rare win

BY CALLIE HANSON

When Heather Maude spoke to Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation members, she opened with a simple truth: nothing in her background prepared her for the legal fight her family would face — except the skills she gained through agriculture and the organizations that shaped her early life — notably her time in the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmer and Rancher Program.

Those skills became essential when a long-standing fence line on her family's ranch in western South Dakota led the U.S. Forest Service to pursue criminal felony charges against her and her husband, Charles — charges that carried a maximum of 10 years in prison and \$250,000 fines each.

The Maudes ranch on land Charles' family began purchasing along the Cheyenne River in 1910 and 1912. The fences across that landscape were built generations ago, long before modern surveys, and sit where the terrain allowed. "There's a weight that comes with being the fifth generation on a place," Heather told the crowd. "This is our feed base, our only irrigated ground, and it's the center of the operation."

On March 29, 2024 — Good Friday — a U.S. Forest Service special agent and a patrol officer arrived at the Maude home unannounced. They said a "No Trespassing" sign near a gate above the Cheyenne River breaks sat on a fence that did not match the surveyed line. Heather and Charles explained that the boundary line lay halfway down a steep hill and the fence was placed where equipment could be used safely. They removed the sign the next day.

Heather said the agent also admitted he had walked across multiple parts of their private property while examining the fence. When he reached another stretch of fence farther down the drainage, he told them he believed that section also might not fall on the official line and asked if the family could prove they were

entitled to use the land behind it.

"We told him, 'We've been here long before the agency existed, and no one has ever questioned this fence,'" she said.

The agent instructed them to meet with their district ranger. That meeting took place May 1. The Maudes had already signed their 2024 grazing permit with no issues noted. In the ranger's office, they were told the Forest Service believed about 25 acres of federal land lay on the Maudes' side of the fence.

Heather and Charles had consulted a land professional and suggested a possible land trade, noting they had roughly 20 acres of deeded ground on the Forest Service side of the same fence. They also mentioned the Small Tracts Act — a mechanism that allows the government to sell small, isolated parcels that do not fit agency needs.

The ranger said any solution would require a survey, which could take months or more than a year. The ranger agreed to visit the site for the next meeting. The Maudes left believing they were headed into a typical civil land-boundary discussion.

But Heather said the tone of the May 1 meeting shifted when the special agent began posing what felt like accusatory hypotheticals. He repeatedly asked what they would do if a neighbor entered their property without permission.

"We kept telling him, 'This isn't that. We have a permit. We pay to use this land,'" she said. When the agent named a specific neighbor, Heather asked him directly: "Do you mean, what would I do if my neighbor did what you have done to this point?"

The exchange, she said, "did not land well." The agent also insisted he had told them not to plant the field in question — something Heather said never occurred — and, on the spot, forbade planting.

Five days later, on May 6 at 4:45 p.m., the agent emailed the Maudes stating he would be out the next morning to "survey" the land and "go where I want, do what I want."



Heather Maude is a Wyoming native and proud product of the YF&R program. She credits her time in the program for preparing her to go through the grueling legal process with the Forest Service.

KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

The Maudes had already told him that, to use their private property for access, he would need permission. He declined and cited federal authority.

The next day, he and a Forest Service crew drove across the Maudes' planted field, staked a proposed boundary and told Charles, "I found your line for you."

Concerned about the escalation, Heather contacted the sheriff and reached out to elected officials in South Dakota. Two offices did not respond. A staff member from Sen. Mike Rounds' office agreed to monitor the case and asked to attend the next meeting with the Forest Service.

When Heather tried to reschedule so the senator's staff could attend, the district ranger stopped responding. Then, on June 24, the special agent called to say he was on his way to the ranch with paperwork. A neighbor came to the house so Charles would not meet the agent alone.

"He served us with separate federal felony indictments for theft of government property," Heather said. "They had never brought criminal charges over a fence-line dispute."

Heather's name was included even though she is not on the deed to the land or the grazing permit. "There was no explanation except that I had made him mad," she told members.

With only days until their July 7 indictment hearing, the family scrambled to find legal representation. They sold fall-calving cows to cover attorney retainers. They put a conservatorship agreement in place for their children. At the hearing, the court revoked their right to possess firearms and barred them from discussing the case with others.

"This is our only irrigated ground," Heather said. "Losing access to it would cost six figures in feed. And we couldn't talk about it with anyone."

Heather took on the research herself, digging through decades of family records, including Forest Service documents from the 1950s labeling the fence in question as the "cornfield boundary fence." The history, she said, contradicted any notion that the fence's placement had been unknown.

The case quickly gained attention from attorneys, media outlets and policy leaders. Rounds' office remained engaged. Rep. Harriet Hageman pushed information to USDA leadership. A former U.S. attorney from Utah called Heather after examining preliminary details and told her he believed the criminal charges could be dismissed.

"He told me, 'Between 95 and 99 percent of felony cases end in conviction. What you're trying to do is almost impossible,'" she recalled.

Within days, he contacted USDA and the Department of Justice. The criminal charges were dropped.

The Maudes were then invited to Washington, D.C., for a USDA press event. While meaningful, Heather emphasized that the underlying land issue was not resolved.

"You cannot resolve a land dispute with an agency while criminal charges are pending," she said. "A picture on the steps doesn't fix it."

When the family returned home, USDA leaders directed the Forest Service to issue a temporary use agreement allowing the Maudes to continue their existing practices. The first version, however, would have required them to convert their hay field to native vegetation — a permanent change to their permit.

"Had we signed it, we would've been in violation immediately," she said.

The document was rewritten, using language Heather drafted, allowing continued use until a permanent resolution was reached.

In July, Heather spoke with the chief of the Forest Service, who asked how they would like to resolve the boundary once and for all.

"I told him, 'I'll buy it,'" she said. "I shouldn't have to — but I will."

They agreed on the Small Tracts Act. Because the disputed parcels totaled 54 acres, exceeding the 40-acre cap, the land was split into two lots and sold separately to Heather and Charles. The appraisal was completed, and the Maudes went through a title company and lender like any other buyers.

On Sept. 3, as the process moved forward, Charles replanted the field under the temporary agreement. Shortly before Heather addressed Wyoming Farm Bureau members, the sale officially closed.

"I now own my first little piece of South Dakota," she said. "It's hard-won, but it has my name on it."

Heather told members that while her family's fight is resolved, the implications extend far beyond their ranch.

"If they had set this precedent, they could have come after any landowner with a fence over the line," she said. "Instead, we pushed back — and for once, agriculture has a win. Now we need to use it to strengthen private property rights so government is encouraged to do what is right." ■



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President Todd Fornstrom opened the meeting, highlighting the positive changes and strides forward the federation has made in the last year. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO



Executive Vice President Kerin Clark addressed the delegation, with a focus on the future and the grassroots foundation of WyFB. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

WYFB LEADERSHIP... From Page 1

Fornstrom also highlighted what the merger means for the organization’s long-term footing. “Our forefathers wanted an insurance company that would stand behind members in times of need,” he said. “With this merger, we have more stability and a stronger base. It’s a win-win in my opinion.” He encouraged members to reach out whenever questions arise. “My phone number is always open,” he said. “I might not speak long at the podium, but it may take you an hour to get me off the phone.” Despite the changes, Fornstrom underscored the lasting strength of the Federation. “We’re going to be good. We’re actually going to be better. And hopefully we’ll keep moving forward for another hundred years—because of you, the members.” “We’re a true family,” he said. “People of all ages, laughing and enjoying being Farm Bureau members—that’s what makes nights like that special.”

Carrying the Work Forward

WyFB Executive Vice President Kerin Clark opened her remarks by welcoming members to the Annual Meeting and returning to the theme, Saddles to Solutions. “A saddle is made of many parts—each crafted with purpose,” she said. “When all those pieces come together, you have something strong and useful to help get the work done. That’s how I see this organization. Each of you brings a piece. Together, you build the solutions.” Clark reminded members that WyFB is truly grassroots—from the first idea raised at a kitchen table, to county discussions, to the resolutions brought forward each November. “You’ve heard it from your president: it begins with you,” she said. “One member can start an issue that moves from local to district to state, and eventually becomes the work we implement on your behalf.” Reflecting on her first full year as Executive Vice President, Clark noted that 2024–25 was defined by member-driven action. “Let’s get to work,” she said, referencing last year’s closing message. “And get to work we did.” One week after the 105th Annual Meeting, WyFB testified before the Wyoming Livestock Board supporting Memorandums of Understanding to ensure ranchers could continue interstate livestock movement without additional restrictions tied to electronic identification.

“That is still a work in progress,” she said. “It shows what policy implementation looks like—testifying in hearings, submitting comments, agency meetings, phone calls during resolutions discussions. Driving your message forward in every setting.”

Growth, Engagement and Service

Clark highlighted several key achievements included in this year’s Annual Report, including county-level scholarship contributions, expanded communications reach and significant membership growth. “County Farm Bureaus across Wyoming awarded \$60,000 in scholarships last year,” she said. “That is an incredible investment in the next generation.” Membership numbers also grew statewide. “We gained nearly 1,100 members this year,” she said. “That includes 256 new regular voting members. That is remarkable growth.”

Clark extended appreciation to Mountain West Farm Bureau Insurance Company and its agents for their close partnership in membership outreach. “Mountain West agents do incredible work sharing the story of the Federation and inviting people to be part of this organization,” she said. She then recognized WyFB’s staff—both veteran and newly added positions—and the teamwork behind daily operations, strategic planning, and policy implementation. “The 10 pages you’ll see in the annual report are only a glimpse,” she said. “None of it is possible without the work of this team and the dedication they bring every day.”

Looking Ahead

This year’s strategic planning process, led by a volunteer committee and facilitated through the American Farm Bureau Federation, also sets the stage for the organization’s future. Clark praised committee members for “rolling up their sleeves” as they refined WyFB’s mission, values and goals. “Our future is bright—and it’s bright because of you,” she said. In closing, Clark reflected on the heart of the organization. “When we talk about our legacy, it comes down to people,” she said. “You are our most Wyoming thing. Integrity, advocacy, service, dedication, family, leadership—that’s the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. Let us continue serving one another as we strengthen Wyoming agriculture and enhance Wyoming communities.” ■

Cowboy Poetry

BY BAYLA BERGER



The Sparrow

The song of a sparrow from early morn.
Is draped in infinite wonder,
The heart of man, so fallen and torn,
Is aroused in a passion the shudder.

To whom are the capturing symphonies sung?
To whom is she raising her voice?
What powerful notes for such tiny a lung,
Are these melodies brought forth by choice.

What pain she must feel in her quivering breast,
To bring forth the song that she sings.
But who can deceive her from bringing her best
To the alter of The King of Kings?

Though she shall never lay eyes on the face
Of The One whom her masterpiece served,
She surrenders her life in worship and praise,
What then for us whose spirits preserved?

Should we not praise more profoundly than she?
For how little she knows of our Lord!
Our Father has given us eyes that can see,
Should our worship not surpass her sweet chord?

Her devout trust in The One who gifted her life,
Is more than I am able to see.
He has provided for her, and relieved her of strife,
How more beloved His children than she!

Yet, as You lead us with Your sovereign hand,
Where is our trust and our peace?
For You have promised to take us into a land
Where our tears and our toil shall cease.

Where I shall bow before The Son,
In the infinite grace He brings.
And on the day, eternity won,
I shall soar on eagle’s wings!

For now, Lord, as I walk this temporal earth,
Along a path so steep and so narrow,
Daily give my soul rebirth
And the trust and the praise of a sparrow.

Wyoming Farm Bureau Membership Awards

BY CALLIE HANSON

Membership supports the Farm Bureau Federation's voice in strengthening private property rights, bolstering agriculture and supporting farm and ranch families. Membership acquisition and retention remain vital to the success of the Federation.

WyFB recognized county Farm Bureau Federations for their membership efforts at the 106th Annual Meeting held in November. The esteemed Bronze Boot and Bronze Hat awards are traveling trophies that highlight exceptional membership success.

The Bronze Boot award is given to the first county to reach membership quota and sign at least one new regular member between the ages of 18–35. Lincoln County Farm Bureau Federation earned this honor in 2025.

The Bronze Hat award recognizes the county with the greatest increase in Century Club members from the previous year. Albany County Ranch and Farm Bureau Federation received this traveling trophy for 2025.

MWFBMIC VP Memberships Awarded to Counties

Specific membership achievements are also celebrated through the Century Club memberships of Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance (MWFBMIC) vice

presidents, awarded to the winning county Farm Bureau Federations.

In 1948, members of the Federation recognized the need for reliable insurance options for farmers and ranchers. They formed an affiliated insurance company—now known as MWFBMIC. WyFB appreciates MWFBMIC's continued support in helping share the message of the Federation's work for agriculture.

Lincoln County won Jim Geesey's (MWFBMIC President & CEO) Life Dividend award for being the first county to reach quota.

Goshen County won Dan Bleak's (MWFBMIC Vice President of Analytics & Development) Century Club membership for having the most Century Club members (43 members).

Sheridan County won Erick Arens' (MWFBMIC Vice President of Sales & Marketing) Century Club membership for the county whose MWFB agents signed the most new members (130). Additionally, Sheridan County was awarded Jeff Suloff's (MWFBMIC Vice President of Claims) Century Club membership for having the most new Regular members (75).

Hot Springs county County won Jamie Terry's (MWFBMIC Vice President of Organizational Development) Century Club membership for retaining the greatest percentage (99%) of all members from the previous year.



Lincoln County Farm Bureau Federation earned the 2025 Bronze Boot, awarded to the first county to reach membership quota and sign at least one new regular member between ages 18–35. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO



Albany County Ranch and Farm Bureau Federation received the 2025 Bronze Hat, presented to the county with the largest increase in Century Club members from the previous year. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

Membership strengthens the work we do for agriculture and rural Wyoming. Thank you to all the volunteers—and to our affiliate insurance company—for helping share the Federation's message through membership acquisition and retention. ■

Recognizing excellence: WyFB honors 2025 outstanding membership workers

BY CALLIE HANSON

Membership work is driven by individuals and county Farm Bureau Federations dedicated to the mission of the organization. The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) annually recognizes those who share the message of the Farm Bureau Federation and help grow and retain membership. The 2025 WyFB Outstanding Membership Worker awards were presented at the 106th annual meeting in Gillette.

In the Volunteer category, Crook County Farm Bureau Federation's Cassie Pickrel took home the award. In her nomination, Crook County President Vance Steedley noted, "Crook County Farm Bureau Federation believes Cassie is an asset to our Federation in all ways. She is always willing to step up and take on any task the county needs done."

Additionally, Steedley commented you can "throw a lot Cassie's way and rest assured she will do it and do it well."

Merridian Walmsley with Holly Borton's Office was awarded in the county

office staff category. In her nomination, Weston County Vice President Matt Stroh noted, "Merridian has worked hard to recruit regular members on behalf of Weston County Farm Bureau Federation."

Stroh also noted her work put Weston County in contention to be the first county to reach quota in 2025.

"We appreciate the membership work of Cassie and Merridian," said WyFB President Todd Fornstrom. "Their dedication to sharing the benefits of membership in the Federation is appreciated."

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation is a grassroots advocacy organization founded in 1920. In 1948, members of the Federation saw a need for farmers and ranchers to have insurance, so they formed an affiliated insurance company now known as Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company (MWFBMIC). MWFBMIC is a separate entity. Policyholders are not required to have a Federation membership or vice versa. However, membership in the Federation offers benefit discounts to MWFBMIC policyholders. ■



Crook County Farm Bureau Federation's Cassie Pickrel accepted the Outstanding Membership Worker – Volunteer for 2025 from WyFB Membership Committee Vice Chair Matt Stroh. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO



Weston County Insurance Office Staff Member Merridian Walmsley received the 2025 Outstanding County Office Staff award from WyFB Membership Committee Vice Chair Matt Stroh. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

Agent recognition for membership acquisition

In the 2025 membership year, the Wyoming agency force for Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company acquired 982 new memberships for the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. Thank you to these agents and their staff for their year-round work to support the Federation through consistent membership acquisition.

Exemplary Category

Dave Craft, Sheridan County – 130
Dallas Turnbow, Lincoln County – 81
David Gilliatt, Park County – 75
Lloyd Meineke, Sheridan County – 73
David Stauffer, Sweetwater County – 72

Superior Category

Frank Kelly, Big Horn County – 62
Justin Hatfield, Converse County – 61
Nick Smith, Johnson County – 60
Sierra Booth, Uinta County – 50
Holly Borton, Weston County – 48
Cassidy Sottile, Sheridan County – 48
Lacey Bernard, Lincoln County – 46
Jake Huhnke, Fremont County – 46
Mark Whitt, Hot Springs County – 45

Outstanding Category

Grant Curry, Goshen County – 43
Andrea Robinson, Crook County – 41
Tamey Peternal, Lincoln County – 40
Sammi Hegwer, Fremont County – 39
Luke Hopkins, Park County – 38

Zack Jacobsen, Albany County – 38
Steve Moscinski, Uinta County – 38
Lauren Stelting, Teton County – 38
Alex Bear, Sweetwater County – 35
Jack Swanson, Natrona County – 34
Shelby Labuda, Carbon County – 32
Garth Simkins, Laramie County – 31
Bobby Pickle, Natrona County – 29
Jackson Ayala, Teton County – 28
Briggett Bunker, Carbon County – 27
Mike Smith, Campbell County – 27
Matt Thornton, Natrona County – 26

Excellent Category

Becky Pearson, Campbell County – 24
Kris Mull, Washakie County – 21

Nathan Rayl, Laramie County – 18
Justin Jeffers, Albany County – 17
Jak Tanner, Sublette County – 17
Abby Raymer, Carbon County – 16
Nacole Hanson, Teton County – 15
Tyler Mitchell, Albany County – 15
Alex Botero, Fremont County – 13
Jason Bell, Laramie County – 11

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation extends its appreciation to every agent and agency team for their continued commitment to sharing the value of Farm Bureau membership. Their efforts directly strengthen the grassroots voice of agriculture across Wyoming. ■

Stacia Berry highlights Farm Bureau roots, outlines direction for office of state lands

BY CALLIE HANSON

Stacia Berry, the recently appointed Director of the Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments, addressed members of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation during the opening lunch of the 2025 Annual Meeting held in Gillette.

"This truly feels like coming home," Berry said. "I would be remiss if I didn't thank you all for what you've given me personally."

Before discussing state trust lands, she opened by reflecting on her long-standing connection to Farm Bureau and the opportunities the federation presented her academically and professionally.

"When I was in college, I received Farm Bureau scholarships that helped pay for my education," she said. "And I had the great opportunity to compete in the Collegiate Discussion Meet. Listening was valued there, and that lesson has stuck with me. Being a good collaborator matters."

"It's fun to come back and see the same families involved in grassroots work," she said. "Farm Bureau has always done a great job preparing the next generation."

Berry also noted her own family's ranching background helped tie her work at the Office of State Lands back to the people she serves. "If you're from our area, and you know a Berry, you probably know the whole family," she said with a smile. "I'm proud to bring that background into this role."

Berry said she didn't expect to lead the Office of State Lands, but welcomed the opportunity when Gov. Mark Gordon called her earlier this year.

"When the governor asked if I'd ever considered working at State Lands, I told him, 'Yeah—for about 30 seconds,'" she said. "But after learning what this agency does, I can tell you how important this work is for Wyoming."

Since stepping into the position, Berry has centered her leadership on what she calls the "three Cs": communication, common sense and customer service.

"We know some folks have grown frustrated with the office," she said. "So we're rebuilding trust by being accessible. Call me before you're mad. If you reach out when you're mildly annoyed, we can work through it together."



Director of the Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments Stacia Berry spoke to members during lunch and credited WyFB for the opportunities presented to her academically and professionally. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

Berry said communication must be paired with predictability. "Nobody likes surprises," she said. "In an administrative agency, surprises are especially unwelcome. We are committed to a common-sense approach that is repeatable and legally defensible."

On customer service, Berry's expectation is simple. "When you call with a question, you deserve to be greeted by someone who's willing to help," she said. "That matters."

Berry outlined the role of the Office of State Lands and Investments, noting the agency serves as the administrative arm of the State Board of Land Commissioners and the State Loan and Investment Board.

Both boards include the governor, state auditor, state treasurer, secretary of state and superintendent of public instruction.

"The mission is straightforward," she said. "We effectively manage natural resources and funds for future generations."

The work primarily supports K-12 education across Wyoming.

"The thing that gets everyone excited in our agency is that we generate revenue for schools," Berry said. "As a mom of three, that's easy to get behind."

Wyoming manages approximately 3.4 million acres of state trust lands and 3.9 million mineral acres. Many trace back to Sections 16 and 36—the historic school sections granted at statehood.

"Eighty-six percent of earnings from trust lands go to K-12 education," Berry said. "The remaining 14 percent supports beneficiaries like the University of Wyoming, the Veterans Home, the State Hospital and the Penitentiary."

Berry addressed a common point of confusion: state trust lands are not managed like federal lands.

"State trust lands exist to generate revenue," she said. "Federal lands are managed for multiple use and sustained yield. That's a very different mission."

While many state parcels remain open to public access, Berry said additional restrictions reflect the constitutional obligation to fund schools. Even so, she encouraged producers and land users to bring forward creative and practical ideas.

"We welcome all good ideas," she said. "Whether it's grazing, mineral development, power generation or other projects—we're here to help you navigate that process."

Berry offered gratitude to the agricultural producers who lease state lands and care for them.

"With only about 50 employees—and roughly half helping manage 3.4 million acres—we rely heavily on our partners," she said. "Knowing those lands are cared for like part of your own ranch gives us tremendous confidence."

She said she grew up with the same mindset. "I was raised to treat land with respect," Berry said. "I know our lessees do the same. Thank you for being such strong stewards."

Berry also highlighted the agency's lesser-known programs, including mineral royalty grants for community infrastructure, farm loans for both new and established operators, capital construction loans and state revolving funds for drinking water and clean water projects.

"There is a lot happening inside this agency," she said. "For many people, we'll just quietly exist—but for those who rely on us, we want you to feel comfortable asking questions or seeking help."

"Thank you for investing in young people like me," Berry said. "And thank you for what you continue to do for agriculture in Wyoming." ■

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FROM THE WYFB STAFF

Insurance leaders emphasize stability, strength and shared purpose in merger update



Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance CEO Jim Geesey discussed the state of the company and upcoming merger details. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO



Farm Bureau Insurance Company of Idaho CEO Todd Argall took to the stage to introduce himself, discuss details of the merger, and goals for the future. KADRA LEMMON PHOTO

BY CALLIE HANSON

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) members heard directly from the insurance companies involved in the proposed merger between Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company and Farm Bureau Insurance Company of Idaho during Friday morning's general session. Mountain West CEO Jim Geesey and Idaho CEO Todd Argall each underscored the long-standing relationship between the insurance companies and the Farm Bureau organizations they serve—reminding members that the merger's purpose is stability, strength and a future-focused structure that protects policyholders and Farm Bureau families across the West.

Geesey spoke candidly about the long history between Mountain West and the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation, noting that the company exists because Farm Bureau members once wrote checks on faith to help protect their neighbors.

"That relationship has been huge," Geesey said. "I never forget the folks who started us. They did it because they believed in helping one another, and that's still what we do."

Geesey reflected on the challenging insurance environment of recent years, from heavy weather losses to economic headwinds, while emphasizing that the company's focus has stayed squarely on serving the policyholders who depend on it.

"We've had headwinds—strong ones," he said. "But the important thing isn't dwelling on the past. It's looking forward. That's what excites me about this merger: the stability it brings and the strength it adds to our future."

He reminded members that not all parts of the merger process are in Mountain West's control, noting the significant regulatory review underway in both Wyoming and Idaho. He stressed this slow pace was normal and necessary.

"The regulators are doing their job," he said. "Their role is to protect policyholders, and we respect that. What we can control, we're moving forward quickly. What we can't will take time. But we'll keep communicating."

Geesey also acknowledged the retirement of longtime WyFB board members Tim Pexton and Raenell Taylor, expressing gratitude for their contributions and years of shared work on behalf of WyFB members.

Following Geesey's address Farm Bureau Insurance Company of Idaho CEO Todd Argall took the stage to introduce himself and share his thoughts on the upcoming merger.

Argall opened his remarks by focusing on relationships—the foundation, he said, that has always held Farm Bureau organizations and their insurance companies together.

"A strong insurance company supports a strong federation," he said. "And a strong federation supports a strong insurance company. We're in this together."

Argall shared his personal story, from his childhood in rural Wisconsin to his

25-year career with Farm Bureau insurance operations before moving to Idaho to assume the CEO role in 2019. He spoke of the humility and work ethic instilled by his parents, the experiences that shaped him, and the Farm Bureau culture he grew up in.

"I'm a Farm Bureau guy," he said. "I believe in the opportunities this organization creates for families, employees and agents. And I believe deeply in the relationship between insurance and the Federation."

Argall outlined how the merger came into consideration early this year, when Mountain West approached Idaho about exploring a partnership due to financial pressures tied to storms, weather patterns, and expenses that had reduced Mountain West's surplus. Idaho's board, he explained, was willing to consider it—if due diligence showed a sustainable path forward.

"We looked under the hood," Argall said. "We asked, 'Can this work?' And we concluded that yes, we can be stronger together."

Both boards voted to move forward, launching the regulatory and structural phase of the merger currently in place.

"Idaho is having one of the best years in our history," he said. "Mountain West is facing storms and challenges. Next year could be the opposite—that's the nature of insurance. But our risks are uncorrelated. When you put us together, we stabilize each other."

Argall noted that the combined entity would operate with approximately \$1.1–\$1.2 billion in assets and more than \$550 million in surplus—offering policyholders long-term confidence.

"The goal is simple," he said. "Protect our policyholders. Protect our employees and agents. Protect the relationship with the Federation. And position this organization for a bright future."

Both CEOs highlighted that policyholders will see little change and should expect the same local service and agent support they have always had. Agents, they emphasized, remain the face of the company in Wyoming communities.

"The number one goal," Argall said, "is minimizing the impact of the transition for policyholders, employees, agents and all stakeholders."

He also noted the ongoing integration planning between the companies—a coordinated effort to ensure a smooth transition on day one and a strategic direction for the new organization.

"We're working through 15 priorities as we develop our transition plan," he said. "It's disciplined work. Disciplined people, disciplined thinking, disciplined action. That's how you build an organization that lasts."

In his closing statement, Argall noted, "Good isn't good enough if it could be better. Better isn't good enough if it can be the best. Our job is to build something strong enough to last long after we're gone—to protect families, agents, employees and the Federation for generations."

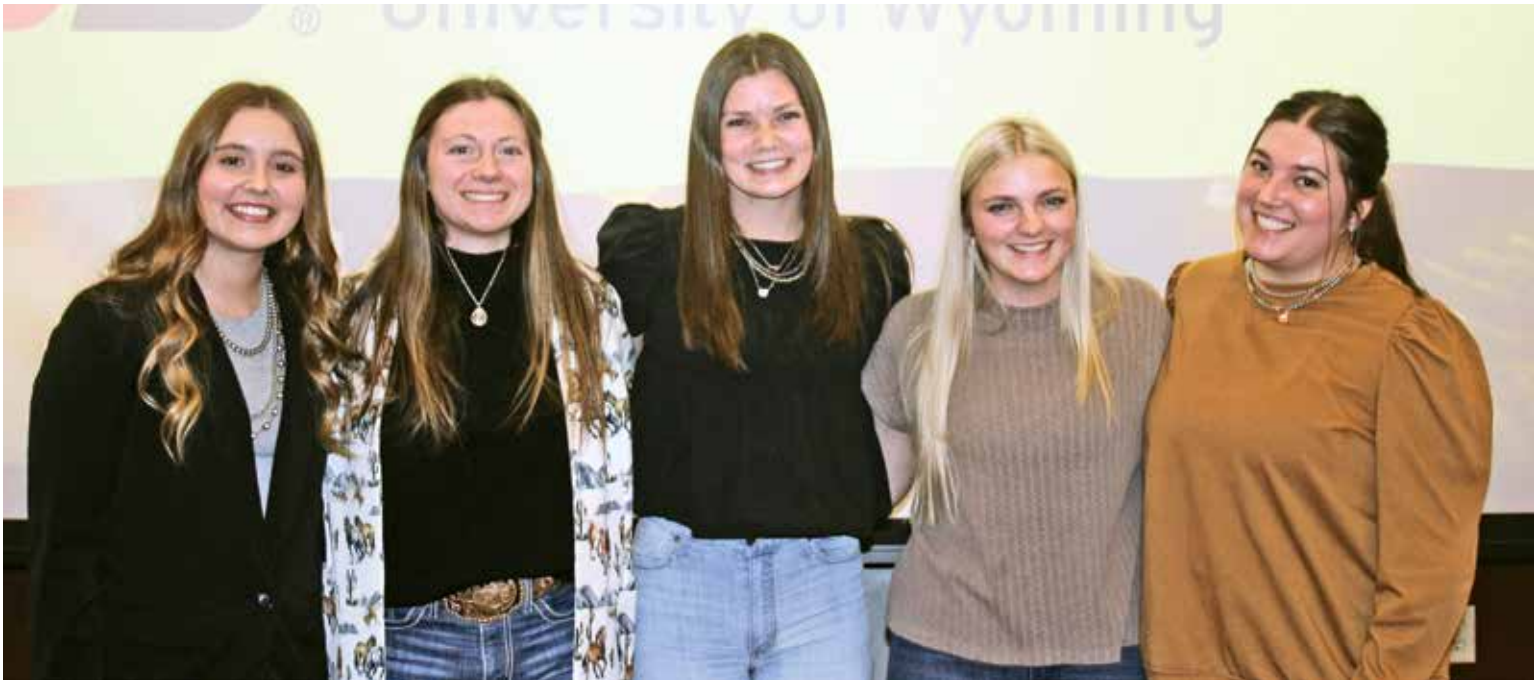


The University of Wyoming Collegiate Farm Bureau Chapter elects executive team

BY CASSIE FENSKE, UW COLLEGIATE FARM BUREAU REPORTER

The University of Wyoming Collegiate Farm Bureau (UWCFB) elected its 2026 executive team during the chapter's general meeting on December 1, 2025. 24 members and two advisors were in attendance. Jennifer Parker was elected President, following her service as Student Advisor on the 2025 officer team. Aspen Gair will serve as Vice President after previously holding the position of Reporter. Rilee Clark was elected Secretary, marking her first year on the executive team. Klacie Groene was elected Treasurer, also beginning her first term in chapter leadership. Cassie Fenske will serve as Reporter after completing her term as Secretary on the 2025 officer team.

"I am incredibly excited to continue giving back to a club that has given so much to me," said newly-elected President Jennifer Parker. "I am dedicated to continued growth within our club by involving members in meetings, bringing in guest speakers, and creating industry experiences. I know that this team is going to accomplish a lot this year!" The newly elected officers look forward to serving the UWCFB chap-



2026 UW Collegiate Farm Bureau officers (L-R): L to R:Cassie Fenske (Reporter), Aspen Gair (Vice President), Jennifer Parker (President), Rilee Clark (Secretary), and Klacie Groene (Treasurer)

ter in the year ahead. Their goals include increasing membership, launching new events, and participating in several state and national Farm Bureau conventions. UWCFB extends its appreciation to all members who participated in the December election. ■



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