



Wyoming Agriculture

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Legislative interim topics to be discussed for 2023 session

BY BRETT MOLINE

The 2022 Wyoming Legislative Session wrapped up in early March. Now the Legislature is looking toward topics it will discuss, and potentially develop legislation, for the interim. The topics have been selected and meetings have been scheduled. The listed topics here are items the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation will be following during the interim.

Labor Committee

The Labor Committee will be, among other topics, discussing behavioral health. This Committee will identify gaps in and solutions to crisis care, including suicide. Suicide has been identified as a growing concern in Wyoming, including those involved in agriculture. Within this topic

is identifying ways to better coordinate available resources.

Minerals Committee

The Minerals Committee will look at energy issues which are affecting the state and identify ways to increase mineral production.

Judiciary Committee

The Judiciary Committee will study Wyoming trespass statutes. Two specific areas will be examined. One is trespass by drone. This type of trespass is becoming more of an issue. Currently, the law is not clear about what constitutes trespass by drone and what are the rights of the landowner. Also unclear is what a drone operator can and cannot do with a drone.

The other trespass issue deals with

fishing and hunting. The issue deals with going through or across property to hunt or fish. Some feel the current statutes do not adequately address this issue.

Appropriations Committee

The Appropriations Committee will examine state loan programs. This Committee will look to provide consistency of terms and conditions. Agencies included in this exercise are the Wyoming Business Council, the Office of State Lands, and the Water Development Commission.

Revenue Committee

The Revenue Committee will look at governmental property tax exemptions. This issue has been looked at previously. The issue is should all governmental property be exempted from property taxes, or is the

property being used by a commercial type of business and therefore should be taxed?

The Revenue Committee will also look at ways to increase revenue to schools by \$50 million per year. This Committee will continue to look at other taxes, including a corporate income tax, and ways to increase local government revenues.

Agriculture Committee

The Agriculture Committee will look at state land leasing, disposal, and exchanges. The discussion will focus on disposing of small, isolated parcels that are hard to manage.

The Committee will review and update Wyoming fencing laws and work to better define what constitutes a legal fence and where different types of fencing are authorized.

LEGISLATIVE TOPICS ... Page 16



Spring storms in Wyoming have been as varied as Wyoming's landscape. Whether it be in drought conditions or blizzard conditions, livestock come first for farmers and ranchers. These heifers are about to enjoy the green grass starting to grow after timely snow and rainstorms in Crook County. *RAENELL TAYLOR PHOTO.*

NEPA changes reverse 2020 commonsense reforms

BY KERIN CLARK

On the surface when one looks at the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) you see the purpose is to assess impacts to natural resources prior to a major federal action. This major federal action could be anything from infrastructure construction to grazing permits. Dig deeper into the 2022 revisions and you find cumbersome changes that will be time-consuming, costly and detrimental to the projects at hand while not benefiting the environment or the American economy.

"Unfortunately, NEPA has become mired in litigation where non-agency of-

icials make decisions on the adequacy of the document," said Ken Hamilton, Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) Executive Vice President. "This has in turn contributed to the ever-increasing volume by the agencies to try and make their analysis 'litigation proof.'"

Hamilton expressed disappointment in the recent announcement by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to rescind three major parts of the 2020 rules and revert the regulations back to the 1978 rules. According to an April 19, 2022 CEQ news release, this Phase 1 change is the first of a two-phase approach to NEPA reform by the agency.

NEPA CHANGES ... Page 16

Inside:

Help Wanted.....2
SEC proposal3
Member-CENTS.....3

A big job4
Animal Care IAC5
Meet the volunteer6

Cooking with the Modern Ranch Wife.....7
Gold, Silver and Century Member Recognition.....8-9

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CALENDAR
OF EVENTS

- May**
9-10 Joint Travel Legislative Interim Committee Meeting - Casper
11-12 Select Water Committee Meeting - Cheyenne
23-24 Joint Judiciary Legislative Interim Committee Meeting-Lander
- June**
1 WyFB Membership Committee Meeting - Casper
1 WyFB Board Meeting - Casper
- November**
10-12 WyFB 103rd Annual Meeting-Casper

Visit wyfb.org
for calendar updates

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Help wanted,
desperately

Zippy Duvall

American Farm Bureau Federation President



When I was a young boy, my dad would take me around with him on the farm. And as I got older, I started taking on more jobs and more responsibilities. I'd be out milking cows before school and helping get other things done when I got home. I've loved the work for as long as I can remember. While that's true for millions of farmers, fewer people are willing to do the work it takes to raise the food, fuel, and fiber we need.

A few weeks ago, I hosted Juan Cortina, president of Mexico's National Agricultural Council, on my farm in Georgia. His organization is similar to the American Farm Bureau and works on behalf of Mexico's farmers and ranchers. While discussing the challenges that faced members in our countries, I mentioned that the inability to find enough workers was our greatest challenge. And, to my surprise, he said that labor was also the most significant problem for farmers in Mexico.

Shortly after Mr. Cortina's visit, I flew out to Oregon and Washington to meet with our members and hear their stories. It didn't matter if the farmers I met with were dairy-

ing or growing tulips, pears, apples, cherries, blueberries or raspberries, they all said that their greatest challenge is finding workers.

Most of the fresh fruits and vegetables we find in our supermarkets, and canned and frozen ones too, have to be planted, cared for, and harvested by hand. Across the country, farmers and farm workers slowly make their way through the fields to ensure we can get the healthy and nutritious food we need. And in dairy barns, workers milk each cow two or three times a day.

On the slopes of Mt. Hood, I met with a group of pear growers who talked about the challenges they have finding workers. Some workers have lived in their community for decades and come back season after season. However, finding domestic workers becomes more difficult each year, leaving farmers to turn to H-2A workers from other countries to fill jobs on the farm. Nationwide, the use of the H-2A visa program has increased by 20% over the past five years, underscoring the domestic worker shortage.

In western Washington, I met with a group of farmers who grow raspberries, blueberries and strawberries. Like most

growers, they've struggled for years to find the labor they need for all of their farm work, especially harvesting. So they've invested millions of dollars into mechanical harvesting techniques to reduce the number of workers they need during peak season, but that doesn't eliminate the need for workers altogether on the farm. Machines can't currently plant or care for many of the fruits, vegetables, and nuts we consume, meaning most plants are touched by human hands many times throughout the year.

Farm and ranch work is hard, takes long hours, and you have to get your hands dirty. But, it is rewarding, and often you can see the fruits of your labor, literally. On my trip to Oregon and Washington, I spoke with farmers and farmworkers who love their work. They all mentioned that they are proud to play their part in ensuring we all have the food we need. But they also said that we need to focus on solving the farm labor crisis once and for all. We desperately need our elected leaders to come to the table, leave politics at the door and find a solution. ■

NEPA changes will
hinder decision making

Ken Hamilton

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Executive Vice President



Many of us saw the recent announcement from the Biden Administration about the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) recent roll back of the previous administration's revisions to our NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process. Both the American Farm Bureau Federation and Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation submitted comments on CEQ's proposal to change the 2020 rules. Frankly I wasn't too optimistic that our comments would have been adopted since many of those groups who supported this Administration were firmly on the side to reinstate the rules back to the 1978 version.

Those of us in the Rural West have seen firsthand what the NEPA process has become. Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation comments pointed out that ranchers and farmers cannot expend the time necessary to review the voluminous documents that are the result of agencies trying to "litigation proof" the environmental documents.

A trip to our library and some quick math illustrates the problem. For instance, the Big Horn Basin Resource Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2011 was a 1,500 plus page document. The Bridger-Teton National Forest Final EIS was 1,200 plus pages. The size of the document seems to indicate the agency's prediction on litigation.

The Yellowstone Park Bison Management Plan and Final EIS in 2000 had 2,149 pages.

Anytime you ask an agency to develop a document of the size mentioned above, that means the agency must dedicate huge amounts of hours to that task. Even with the increased staff levels evident in our local BLM and Forest Service offices, these undertakings will consume several years just to bring the document to the draft stage.

Meanwhile, those in the private sector who seek to utilize federal lands for their living are left hanging in limbo while the agency works to complete their herculean task. NEPA requires these documents be developed prior to a federal action. I almost said, "major federal action," but we all know that isn't the case. Courts have driven the level necessary for an EIS to a level that is far from major. The Medicine Wheel National Historic Landmark Draft EIS developed in 1991 was a measly 94 pages, but undoubtedly would need to have five to ten times that size of pages if the concern over a lawsuit would have been in the mix.

Speaking of lawsuits, the likelihood of an EIS on a controversial action being litigated is greater than a nudist getting bitten by mosquitoes in a swamp. This is then guaranteed to add more time to the process.

The time factor has become an effective tool for the NIMBY (not in my backyard) crowd because most businesses have a

time frame. The time factor was a major contributor to the timber industries decline in Wyoming. Timber sales were challenged and challenged and challenged again, which lead to enough of a time delay that sawmills soon closed as their supply of trees dried up.

This NEPA delay was exactly what anti-grazing groups were hoping would happen when federal grazing permit renewals were coming due and the necessary NEPA analysis was years behind. Absent action by Congress livestock operators in the West would have gone the way of the sawmills while waiting for the agencies to comply with NEPA requirements.

Unfortunately, efforts to try and bring NEPA back to what Congress originally intended the statute to be, i.e., an analysis of potential environmental consequences of an action, were turned back by this Administration at the behest of their environmental supporters before the idea could have even been given a try.

Under the recent action, resources and time will continue to be spent by agencies trying to avoid costly litigation. Those who benefit by delaying the NEPA process or getting money back when they litigate see this as too big of a tool to not fight to keep it around. Better decision making was a fatality of the process long ago and it doesn't look like it will return anytime soon. ■

Proposed SEC rule could reach nearly every farmer and rancher

WASHINGTON, D.C., APRIL 27, 2022 —

The American Farm Bureau Federation joined 119 other agriculture organizations in sending a letter to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) asking for an extension of time to comment on its proposed rule, "The Enhancement and Standardization of Climate Related Disclosures for Investors."

The SEC - whose primary purpose is to protect investors, maintain efficient markets and facilitate capital formation - now wants to require public companies to report data about their entire supply

chain. Nearly every farmer's and rancher's products eventually touch a publicly traded company, meaning that farmers and ranchers could be forced to report personal information and business-related data. This unprecedented overreach could create onerous reporting requirements for even small farms and ranches with few or no employees.

"This appears to be an example of overreach by the Securities and Exchange Commission," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "Farmers and ranchers are already heavily regulated by multiple

agencies at the local, state and the federal level. New SEC reporting requirements will no doubt make an already complicated patchwork of regulations even more cumbersome."

"Farmers and ranchers are focused on growing the food, fuel and fiber this country needs, and have never been subjected to SEC regulations. Unlike the large corporations currently regulated by the SEC, family farms and ranches don't have teams of compliance officers," Duvall continued. "We urge the SEC to extend the comment period to allow those

in agriculture time to understand the full impact of this proposal and offer meaningful input."

The proposed rule is 510 pages long with 1,068 technical footnotes and almost 750 direct questions, but the SEC has only allowed 39 days for review.

The proposed rule "may create multiple, new sources of substantial costs and liabilities," the letter states. "These include almost certain reporting obligations, technical challenges, significant financial and operational disruption and the risk of financially crippling legal liabilities." ■



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A Big Job with a Small Voice

BY LANE HAGEMAN,
WyFB YF&R COMMITTEE MEMBER/
GOSHEN COUNTY RANCHER

According to USDA statistics, as of 2017, the average age of all U.S. farm producers was nearly 60 years old. A fair assumption would say that age is likely higher as of today. By 2020, direct on-farm employment accounted for 1.4% of total employment in the U.S. The reduction in agriculture throughout the history of this country has been quite significant. These changes which have been recorded by the U.S. Census, show that in 1870, one-half of the population worked in the ag sector. By 1900, that reduced to one-third, and by 1950 it reduced to less than one-fifth. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, the average U.S. farm feeds 166 people annually. It is quite evident that folks in production agriculture are the minority with that becoming more so all the time. We have a big job, but do we have a big voice? In order to promote and protect agriculture, one must understand the proper scope of our governing body and realize the societal changes that are taking place. One modern day falsehood is that we are governed by a democracy. Under this notion, agriculture is extremely vulnerable to detrimental policy.

In a democracy, everything is decided by the voting majority. This has the potential to leave the rights of the minority largely unprotected and gives the majority limitless power over the minority. It is commonly described as two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner. As the agricultural community becomes smaller, the exposure of this false notion is critical. With simple majority/mob rule, modern day misinformed voters can dictate aspects of our lives and what we do on our own ranches and farms. Should the will of the majority be able to raise property taxes when most of them do not own large segments of property? Should the will of the majority be able to take private property away from those who they do not align themselves with? Should the will of the majority be able to halt the slaughter of animals or dictate whether we can brand our cattle or not? The possibilities are endless and with no link between those who made these decisions and the consequences, there is absolutely no accountability.

With a mind to establish a form of government which would resist mob rule, our founders created a constitutional/representative republic rather than a democracy. According to an article in an American magazine called "The Atlantic", Jeffrey Rosen points out that James Madison was particularly passionate about this debate. Prior to the Constitutional Convention, he and Thomas Jefferson had read numerous books about the failed democracies around the world. In the Federalist Papers, he wrote, "In all very numerous assemblies, of whatever characters composed, passion never fails to wrest the scepter from reason" (Rosen 2018). In other words, passion and emotion can begin to rule over reason. Even our representation can fall into this rut. When they choose to derive all authority from the people, and only communicate directly with voters, this can also cause decision making based on emotional appeals and a pandering to the mob. Madison identified mobs as factions. He described them as "united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent aggregate interests of the community" (Rosen 2018). He argued that public opinions form and spread quickly but can dissolve if the public is given time and space to consider long-term interests rather than short-term gratification. Framers such as Madison designed the American Constitutional system not as a direct democracy but as a representative republic, where enlightened delegates of the people would serve the public good (Rosen 2018). This meant equal opportunity for the little guy and is crucial for our agriculture businesses and the freedoms which we enjoy. We have forms of representation at the federal and state levels, all the way down to our local elected offices and boards with the intent to allow for the protection of the minorities rights, against the will of the majority.

It is clear, as folks who live in rural America, we have become the minority. We must work to expose the falseness of the notion that we live in a democracy and stress the importance of our true form of government and its intent for which it was written. We have to educate our youth and ourselves and enhance our knowledge of civics in order to stand on truth and



WyFB YF&R Committee member Lane Hageman works on his family's ranch near Ft. Laramie, Wyo., where they run cow/calf pairs and raise horses.

reason. False education is polarizing to a society. Sound education is uniting to a society. We must express the importance of living in a representative republic and squelch the "democracy" buzzword that has become so commonly used. Be proud to be the minority, but be ready to fight for your existence. We should have a big voice. After all, we have a very big job.

God Bless. ■

About the author: Lane Hageman graduated from the University of Wyoming in 2018 with a bachelor's degree in ag business as well as a minor in economics. He works on his family's ranch near Ft. Laramie, Wyo., where they run mostly cow/calf pairs and raise horses. He also currently serves on the Goshen County Farm Bureau Federation Board and as the director-at-large on the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Board.

WyFB YF&R 2022 Discussion Meet questions announced

This year's Discussion Meet questions have been announced! The 2022 Regular and Collegiate Discussion Meets will take place this fall. Great opportunity to compete for great prizes and network with young farmers and ranchers!

1. How can Farm Bureau effectively support and equip young farmers and ranchers to successfully manage economic and infrastructure challenges to ensure healthy and sustainable farms and ranches across the country?

2. Due to current economic demands, many farmers and ranchers spend a lot of time outside the "fence rows" on off-farm jobs. How can Farm Bureau become more accessible and welcoming to members who are working in related fields and juggling responsibilities on and off the farm?

3. Climate has become a major topic among business leaders, policymakers and consumers. As an industry that depends on the weather, what role do we as farmers and ranchers play in shaping climate initiatives to bene-

fit society overall as well as our own farms and ranches?

4. Advancements in autonomous equipment and drone technology offer solutions to challenges farmers and ranchers have faced for years. How can Farm Bureau improve access to, and help farmers and ranchers deploy, these emerging technologies on their operations?

5. Many external influences are causing supply chain disruption for agricultural goods. How can Farm Bureau reduce the impact of external influences through policy development and programming? ■

Animal Care AFBF IAC meeting report

BY KERIN CLARK

“Meeting and working with livestock producers and veterinarians from other areas of the country was a great opportunity to provide input to a broad and diverse group as well as learn what issues are important to them and their constituents,” said Dr. Jim Logan, retired Wyoming State Veterinarian. Dr. Logan was appointed to the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Animal Care Issues Advisory Committee (IAC), which consists of 17 members from 17 different states.

The AFBF IACs are specialized groups of Farm Bureau voting members from around the nation who serve as a direct contact for the AFBF Board for the specific interests of their committee. Committee members are nominated by their state Farm Bureau and approved by the AFBF Board of Directors. There are 14 specialized IAC committees who meet annually to discuss policy issues. They met Feb. 17-18 in Arlington, Va.

“The meeting was interesting to me,” Dr. Logan explained. “I heard the issues from some perspectives other than just the regulatory veterinary medicine mindset.”

“Some issues are universal, and some are regional or only local,” he continued.

Key issues discussed at the 2022 meeting included bighorn sheep/domestic sheep interactions; overtime work issues; antimicrobial resistance; EPA restrictions on Pyrethrin use; CDL time of service; cervid farming; and shortage of food animal/large animal veterinarians.

“The bighorn sheep/domestic sheep interaction conflicts remain an issue for the sheep producers in the Western United States,” Dr. Logan stated.

Discussion about the Food and Drug Administration’s Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) regarding antimicrobial resistance highlighted the importance of having a business relationship established with your local veterinarian. In 2017, the VFD took effect with certain antibiotics. A new directive has now been issued bringing all over the counter drugs under veterinary oversight by summer of 2023.

“It won’t be impossible to access care for your livestock, but it will look much different with prescription requirements in place than what animal health care has done for a long time.”

Regarding CDL time of service, Dr. Logan stated that it should be recognized that hauling livestock is much different than hauling non-perishables.

Dr. Logan mentioned that cervid (deer) farming was discussed in detail with many states having issues with Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in captive herds. “Thirty years ago, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department said no to cervid farming and as time has gone by I’ve learned that was a good move for the state of Wyoming,” he explained. “Even though we find CWD in wild cervids in Wyoming, it doesn’t affect agriculture.”

The shortage of food animal/large animal veterinarians across the United States continues to be a concern. Dr. Logan em-

phasized the need to push for appropriations for education loan relief to food animal vets when the state budget begins to look up again. “For the few years we had this appropriation in Wyoming, we were able to help somewhere in the vicinity of 25 food animal vets with student loans and helped establish a few vets in some of the more underserved communities in Wyoming,” he explained.

Dr. Logan clarified that none of these issues were solved at this meeting. “Good discussion took place to provide information and ideas moving forward,” he said. Following the issues discussions, the committee received various issues updates and an advocacy and media training program was presented by AFBF.

“I appreciate the opportunity to serve in this capacity and stay involved in the issues that affect Wyoming and animal health in the United States as a whole,” Dr. Logan concluded. ■



Dr. Jim Logan (retired), AFBF IAC Committee Member

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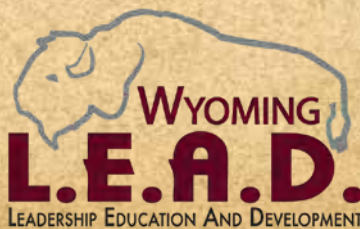
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The People of the Farm Bureau Federation

Meet the volunteer leader Cole Coxbill

County: Goshen
Farm Bureau Leadership Positions:
● WyFB Vice President
● Goshen County Farm Bureau Federation Board Member

Wyoming Agriculture: Describe your farm/ranch background.

Coxbill: I'm the fourth generation on my family's farm/ranch/feedlot business that my great-grandfather homesteaded in 1926 and received the patent for the homestead in 1929. He was a WWI veteran. On top of helping my Dad with the family business, my wife and I have our own ranch, commercial crop spraying business and a trucking business hauling livestock, hay and equipment.

Wyoming Agriculture: Family, education, hobbies.

Coxbill: Wife – Sammie Coxbill, daughter of Larry and Debbie Ellsburg, from Sundance, Wyo.

Our kids, Emmett (15), Connor (13) and Carlee (10), all go to Southeast Schools in Yoder, Wyo. where I graduated from in 2001.

Sammie and I both went to the University of Wyoming, graduating in 2006. She received her Bachelor of Science in Dietetics and works for the State now as the Goshen County WIC Clinic Supervisor and Nutritionist. I received a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering.

I like snowboarding, snow skiing and snowmobiling in the winter, and in the summer like going to the lake as a family where we water ski, wake board, tube and hang out. I like designing/drawing things and building them for the farm. For example, we just finished remodeling a shop/house we bought four years ago that I drew the new house layout design and then made it happen in my spare time, and that's why it took four years to complete.

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

Coxbill: First I was asked by a county board member to attend a joint Wyoming-Nebraska Farm Bureau Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) conference in Scottsbluff, Neb., where the hotel and registration was paid for by the Goshen County Farm Bureau Federation. Sammie and I attended thinking we might have to sit through an insurance presentation not knowing really anything about the Federation. We met some great people our age that shared with us the real truth of the conference we were attending and what the Farm Bureau Federation was all about, and that was the first Farm Bureau Family story of which we now have many stories and memories. We soon thereafter ran for and were elected to the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation YF&R Committee, and then a few years later I was elected State YF&R Chair. Sammie and I went to our first national American Farm Bureau (AFBF) YF&R conference in Virginia Beach,



The Coxbill Family: Emmett, Connor and Carlee. Cole and Sammie.



Carlee and Connor Coxbill helping out with ranch duties.

Va. The couple we met at that first conference in Scottsbluff, Zach and Anna Hunnicutt, were there and Zach was the retiring AFBF YF&R National Chair that year. At that conference, we met two other couples, which we had the pleasure of serving with the next few years during our time on the National YF&R Committee. Then, I had the great honor and privilege to be elected by my committee to be the AFBF YF&R National Chair. This position gave me a position representing the committee on the American Farm Bureau Board of Directors, which consisted of 34 state Farm Bureau presidents, the chair of the American Farm Bureau Women's Committee and the then newly elected Vice President Mr. Scott VanderWal and President Mr. Zippy Duvall. When it was my turn to retire from the National Chair position, I had a great opportunity to run for Wyoming vice president where I could continue being involved in the Federation.

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

Coxbill: Because it is a lot of fun and at the same time important to be a part of the conversations about agriculture's future and in doing so give my kids the opportunity to be the fifth generation on our family's place. It's fun traveling and meeting with others in agriculture across the state and nation. I find it real fun learning how similar agriculture is from coast to coast but at the same time so different. We all face five main issues across the country – Taxes, Government Regulations, Labor, Land Prices and Water (east of the Mississippi drain the water and west conserve and account for every drop). I find it still hard today to get into my car and drive down the driveway leaving for the next Farm Bureau event thinking all the while about all the things that need to be done. How-

ever, when I drive back into that driveway from that Farm Bureau event, I am always glad I went and more charged up and ready to tackle that list than I was before. I view it as a privilege to serve in a leadership position. It is very fun and rewarding serving with the other board members that are great, smart individuals and friends!

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

Coxbill: Become a member and get involved. We need you and your knowledge to come represent your piece of Wyoming at your county meetings all the way up to the national meetings. Farm and ranch families now make up less than two percent of the U.S. population, so we need everyone to be involved and help us as a group to be heard.

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

Coxbill: The many policies that we have for clear and concise rules and the limiting of government. This all came together specifically when promoting the WOTUS rule that the Trump administration was able to implement and unfortunately was overturned by the Biden administration and now at the Supreme Court. Being a part of the AFBF - Ditch the Rule campaign showed the power when we all come together to push back on government overreach and regulations. That campaign effort all came from resolutions that were submitted by individual members to their own counties, then working up through the grassroots Farm Bureau resolution process all the way up to the AFBF policy book.

Wyoming Agriculture: What are some of the issues facing farmers and ranchers in your county/district/state?

Coxbill: There are almost too many issues to list that we face in agriculture as it seems like there is a new issue every day that demands one's attention and a new answer. Some that have been demanding the most of my time thinking about lately are private property rights, government regulations and government overreach. The WOTUS rule that is going before the Supreme Court will affect private property rights vastly, I believe, either way their decision falls. Hauling livestock there is a long list of regulations the government has imposed trying to fix problems they have created. Just recently they imposed a new rule that first-time applicants for CDLs and the DOT medical cards that are required will have to go through a class that costs \$3,000 plus. In my opinion, this will shrink the number of new applicants to an industry that is already short of drivers. This will really hurt the small businesses the most and not the bigger business because the bigger trucking companies will take care of the classes in house and can spread the cost over many drivers where the small companies won't have this size of scale.

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

Coxbill: Each and every member is important to the Federation because everyone has their own experiences that shape their opinion that they bring to the group's discussions on the resolutions. The resolutions which then shape the group and our future. I believe the more minds from production agriculture we get together, the bigger and better impact we can have for production agriculture. ■

Cooking with the Modern Ranch Wife

Cheeseburger Soup

BY: CONNIE WERNER

This is a wonderful hearty soup filled with ground beef, cheddar cheese, carrots, and potatoes. Perfect for any time of year. I use Watkins chicken soup base for the broth and it gives an amazing flavor.

Ingredients

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 lbs ground beef | 1 1/2 teaspoons | 1/4 cup flour |
| 1 cup onion, diced | parsley | 2 cups milk |
| 1 cup diced carrots | 4-6 cups chicken broth | 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese |
| 1 cup chopped celery | 4 cups potatoes, peeled and diced | 3/4 cup sour cream |

Directions

1. Brown ground beef with the onion, carrots, and celery. Drain.
2. Add the basil, parsley, and potatoes. Pour in the chicken broth until covered. Cook on medium until potatoes are tender.
3. Mix together the milk and flour. Pour into the soup and stir. Turn to medium low. If it thickens too much add more broth to thin.
5. Add the cheese and stir until melted. Turn off the heat and mix in the sour cream.
6. Add salt and pepper to taste. Enjoy!



Source: www.allrecipes.com

For more recipes visit www.modernranchwife.com

National Columbia Sheep Show comes to Cheyenne

The city of Cheyenne, Wyo., and the Event Center at Archer will host the National Columbia Sheep Show June 6-11. This year, the organization heads to a western location. The Columbia Sheep Breeders Association is sponsoring the event. They are rolling out the red carpet for the approximate 200 sheep enthusiasts traveling to Cheyenne.

Columbia sheep are a large, dual-purpose breed of sheep. They are known for their superb mothering and milking ability, as well as for producing a heavy, medium fleece with a long staple length which is highly sought after by textile manufacturers. Columbia wool is easily blended with other materials and is also desired

by spinners and fiber artists. This year will also feature the second annual online Fleece Sale where wool and fiber enthusiasts can buy top fleeces from Columbia breeders across the county.

Activities begin on Wednesday, June 8, 2022 with the Junior Fitting Contest. The Open Show is featured on Friday with the National Sale on Saturday. The Juniors have their own show as do Production Sheep and Natural Colored Columbias.

The public is invited to attend and see the events. Interested buyers can visit www.columbiasheep.org to request a sale catalog. Or call the Columbia Sheep Office at 507-360-4243. Like us on Facebook for the most current information. ■

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

The Farm Bureau Federation is organized, controlled and financed by members who pay annual dues. Each voice added to the united Farm Bureau voice helps keep agriculture strong. Gold Club, Silver Club, and Century Club memberships are available to Farm Bureau Federation members, associate and regular, who want to increase their level of support. In addition to the standard member benefits, members in these three tiers receive a weekly legislative update during the Wyoming Legislature and annual recognition in *Wyoming Agriculture*.

We thank all Farm Bureau members for supporting the work of the Federation.

GOLD CLUB MEMBERSHIP

You feel agriculture is one of the economic keystones for Wyoming and you want to help support the farmers and ranchers who help keep our state strong. By becoming a Gold Club Member for only \$1.37 per day you show the greatest level of membership support for your county, state and national Farm Bureau Federation as well as your Wyoming neighbors who work the land.

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- Kathy & Ken Hamilton, Laramie
- Melissa & Matthew Stroh, Newcastle
- Martin Winchell/W&W Land & Capital LLC, Torrington
- NextEra, Juno Beach, Fla.

SILVER CLUB MEMBERSHIP

The 2 percent of our population that grow food for the rest of us face daunting issues. Issues affecting agriculture include regulatory pressures, private property rights and access to important tools to keep growing food for our country. Your contribution of only 69¢ per day supports an organization that supports you and works to keep agriculture strong in Wyoming.

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CENTURY CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Increase your level of support for this centennial organization by joining or upgrading to a Century Club membership. Your contribution of only 27¢ per day supports an organization that supports you and works to keep agriculture strong in Wyoming.

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Farm Bureau Gold, Silver and Century Club 2022 Member Recognition

CENTURY CLUB MEMBERS ... From Page 8

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Judy Myers, Evanston; Mark Powers, Lyman; Michael Sims/Sims Ranch, Evanston; Angela & Justin Sweep, Lyman

Washakie

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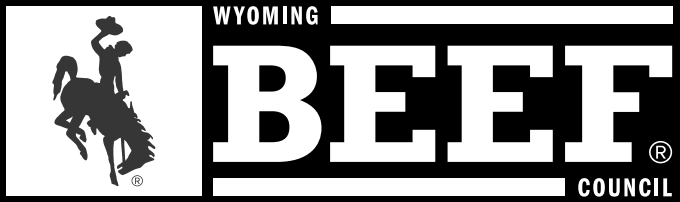
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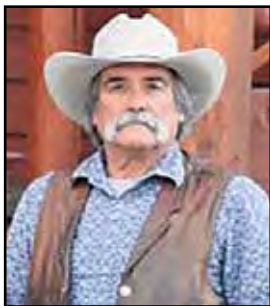
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Obituaries



Tom Mercer

July 15, 1936 – April 10, 2022

Thomas Merle Mercer was born in Basin, Wyo., on July 15, 1936, the second son to Ralph Donald and Catherine Jane (Hedrick) Mercer of Hyattville, Wyo. The morning of April 10, 2022, was spent with family and friends at Bonnie Blue Jackets Memorial Nursing home in Basin. He passed that afternoon. Tom made his choice to walk with God in 1978 when the gospel came to the Hyattville community.

Tom attended school in Hyattville, Wyo., and graduated from Basin in 1954. He then attended Northwest Community College where he played football and basketball on a scholarship. After graduating Northwest, he attended Eastern College in Montana where he played basketball on another scholarship for one year. He then served in the National Guard in Worland, Wyo., and went to basic training in Ft. Chaffee, Ark., for a year then

on to Ft. Leonard, Mo., for another year. He came back to Hyattville where he lived out the rest of his life raising Black Angus cattle alongside his family.

Tom had two daughters by his first marriage: Sally Hedrick and Julie Pflieger. On June 1, 1971, he married Mary Catherine Michelena. They had a son, Martin Don, a year later.

Tom's life was full of family, friends and cattle work. He was the 4-H beef leader for many years and was an active member of the Wyoming Angus Assoc. and the American Angus Assoc., where he sold many Black Angus bulls to cattlemen around the country. Tom and Mary turned over the ranching duties to Martin and his wife Kelli in 2010 but he remained an important role up until his last days at the ranch.

Tom is survived by his wife of 50 years,

Mary (Michelena) Mercer; his children: Sally (Karl) Hedrick of Billings, Mont., Julie (Charlie) Pflieger of Bozeman, Mont., and Martin (Kelli) Mercer of Hyattville; four grandchildren: Ben (Bailie) Barham of Billings, Mont., Royce (Skye) Mercer, Asa (fiancée Rachael) Mercer and Emma Mercer all of Hyattville, Wyo.; four great-grandchildren; two brothers, Dennis (Martha) of Lavina, Mont., and John (Mary Alice) of Glenrock, Wyo.; and a sister-in-law, Joan Mercer, of Suncity, Ariz. Also surviving is his 106-year-old aunt, Pauline Bower of Seneca, Kan., and many nieces and nephews. Tom was preceded in death by his parents, Ralph and Catherine, and his older brother, Ralph "Dick" Mercer.

There will be a pot luck memorial service on Monday, May 30, 2022 (Memorial Day!) at the ranch in Hyattville down on the creek by the old blue roof barn on Road 48, starting at noon until the stories run out! Please bring your own chairs!

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can sent to the Wyoming Jr. Angus Assoc., PO Box 595, Casper, WY 82602.

Atwood Family Funeral Directors, Inc. is in charge of arrangements. ■

2020 EPA Emissions Inventory demonstrates agriculture's advancements in sustainability

BY SHELBY MYERS, AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION ECONOMIST

The Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks has been published by the Environmental Protection Agency annually since 1990. It provides an annual accounting estimate of all man-made greenhouse gas emissions sources in the U.S. as well as estimates of the amount of carbon trapped in forest and vegetation soil. This report is submitted to the United Nations as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change reporting guidelines on annual inventories and is part of a global standardized process for reporting greenhouse gas emissions. Previous Market Intel articles have reviewed the emissions for 2017 (Agriculture and Greenhouse Gas Emissions), 2018 (Agriculture's Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks) and 2019 (Previewing 2019 Agricultural Emissions), as well as trends in carbon sequestration (Reviewing U.S. Carbon Sequestration).

Once again, U.S. agriculture consistently represents just 10% of total U.S. emissions when compared to other economic sectors. U.S. agriculture not only minimally contributes to the overall U.S. greenhouse gas footprint, but the sector also sequestered more carbon in 2020 compared to 2019. Additionally, overall U.S. greenhouse gas emissions decreased from 2019 to 2020 by 10.6%. The report emphasizes how voluntary, market- and incentive-based strategies to implement conservation practices help farmers and ranchers access finances for the research and technology needed to continue to take care of their natural resources.

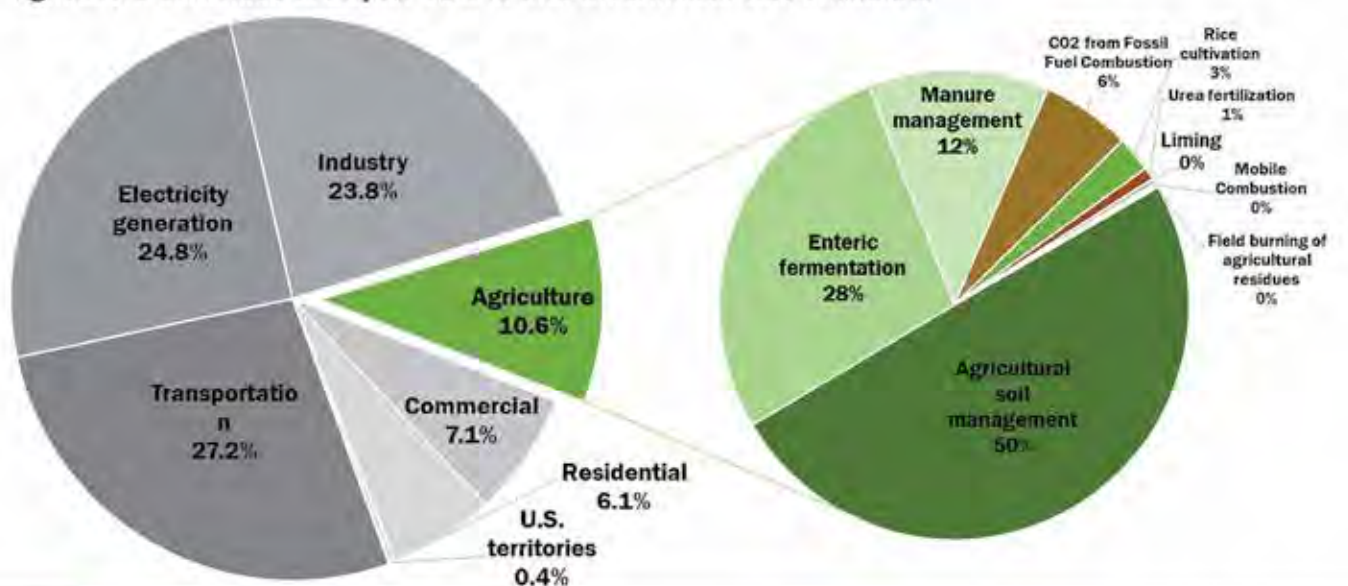
This article provides an overview of 2020 emissions published on April 15 in EPA's Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2020 report.

2020 Emissions and Sinks

In 2020, EPA reports that the total U.S. emissions from all man-made sources was 5.9 billion metric tons in CO₂ equivalents, which is a reduc-

U.S. and Agricultural Emissions By Source, 2020

Agriculture continues to be just 10% of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions



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Source: Environmental Protection Agency, Farm Bureau Calculations

tion of 590 million metric tons compared to 2019 when U.S. emissions totaled 6.5 billion metric tons in CO₂ equivalents. Land use, land-use changes and forestry trapped 759 million metric tons of carbon in the soils, representing 12.7% of total U.S. emissions. 2020 net emissions, which combine total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions with the sequestered greenhouse gas emissions, totaled 5.2 billion metric tons, down 10.6% from 2019, the lowest emissions on record since 1990.

The largest emissions source was the transportation sector, representing 27.2% of total emissions and totaling 1.6 billion metric tons. Transportation emissions decreased 13.2%, or 246.7 million metric tons, from the prior year, largely a result of COVID-19 reductions in travel and economic activity. Following transportation, electricity generation repre-

sented almost 25% of total emissions at 1.4 billion metric tons. Emissions from the electric power industry were down 10.2% from 2019 after an 8% reduction compared to 2018. Electricity emissions continue to move lower, setting another record low in 2020. The industrial sector, which includes the production of iron and steel, as well as other input materials like cement, represented over 23% of all emissions at 1.4 billion metric tons. Emissions from the industrial sector decreased 6.3% compared to 2019. The commercial and residential sectors and U.S. territories represented over 13% of all U.S. emissions, decreasing nearly 6% in 2020 compared to 2019, again heavily impacted by COVID-19 interruptions.

AG ADVANCEMENTS ... From Page 12

Agricultural Emissions in 2020

By its own methodology, emissions from agriculture totaled 635 million metric tons in CO2 equivalents during 2020, down 4.3%, or 28.8 million metric tons, from 2019; the drop follows a (relatively small) 6 million metric ton uptick between 2018 and 2019.

EPA also estimates agriculture emissions using another methodology consistent with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. By this measure, U.S. agricultural emissions for 2020 totaled 594 million metric tons, down 4.5%, or 28.2 million metric tons, from 2019, representing 9.9% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. The largest source of U.S. agricultural emissions was agricultural soil management, e.g., fertilizer applications or tillage practices, at 316 million metric tons, an 8.4% reduction compared to 2019, decreasing by 29.1 million metric tons. Agricultural soil management represents approximately 50% of all agricultural emissions, but only 5% of total U.S. emissions.

Following agricultural soil management, livestock-related emissions from enteric fermentation and manure management contributed 175 million metric tons and 79 million metric tons, respectively, to total U.S. emissions. These two emission sources represented 40% of agricultural emissions, but only 4% of total U.S. emissions. Other agricultural emissions sources include carbon dioxide from fossil fuel combustion at 39 million metric tons, rice cultivation at 15 million metric tons, urea fertilization at 5.3 million metric tons, liming at 2.4 million metric tons, mobile combustion at 1.3 million metric tons and field burning at 0.6 million metric tons. Combined, these categories represented less than 8% of agricultural emissions and 1% of U.S. emissions. As a percent of total U.S. emissions, and depending on the estimation methodology, U.S. agriculture represents approximately 10% of total U.S. emissions.

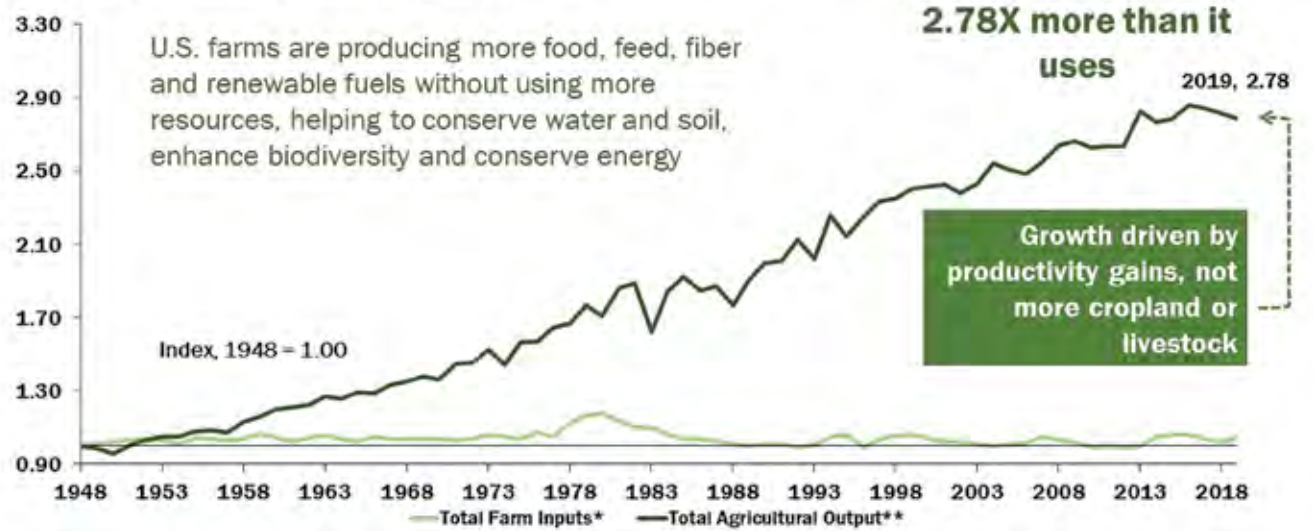
Agricultural Productivity and Emission Trends

A comparison of 2020 emissions to 1990 emissions shows U.S. agricultural emissions have increased by 6%. However, that's not the full story. Productivity is increasing, as is the global population, while emissions are on the decline. Innovation and advancements in technology have also allowed farmers and ranchers to increase their productivity while using the same amount of inputs. Compared to 1948, farmers and ranchers are producing 2.78 times more in output per unit of input they use, according to USDA's Economic Research Service estimated indices of farm output, input and total factor productivity. Even more impressive, productivity is rising, while cropland is declining – by 30 million acres over the last three decades. This means that farmers and ranchers continue to produce more using fewer resources and the additional decrease in agricultural emissions shows that voluntary, market-based incentives are helping farmers and ranchers accomplish this milestone.

For agriculture, production of food is important not just for farmers and ranchers, but also for the millions of families in the U.S. and around the world that U.S. agriculture feeds. When considering productivity gains compared to agricultural emissions, agriculture has been remarkable at sustainable intensification, in addition to adding practices that even further shrink its environmental footprint. These improvements have been in crop yields, animal nutrition and breeding. When compared to 1990, the U.S. is producing 77% more pounds of pork, but decreasing its emis-

Agriculture Productivity in the U.S.

Indices of Farm Output and Input, 1948=1.00



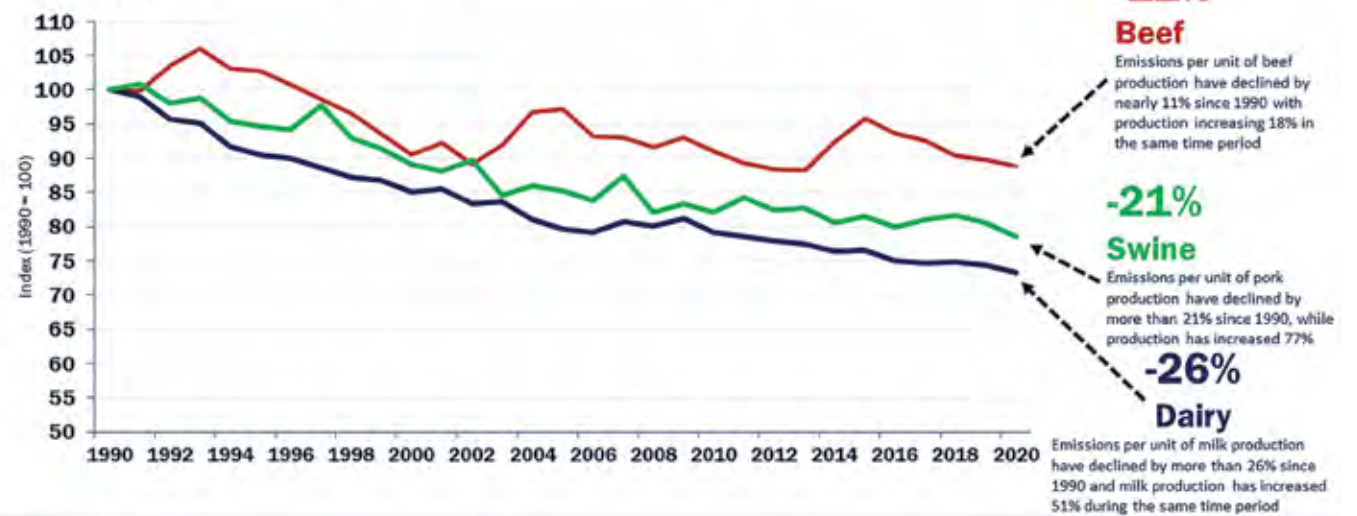
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Source: USDA ERS, Agricultural Productivity in the U.S. data product, updated January 2022, Farm Bureau Calculations

Innovation Helps Livestock Shrink GHG Footprint

Index of Methane Emissions Per Unit of Production for Beef, Dairy and Swine, 1990 = 100



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Source: Environmental Protection Agency, USDA FAS PSD Online, Farm Bureau Calculations

sions per unit of pork production by 21%; the U.S. is producing 51% more milk than in 1990 but has decreased its per unit of milk production emissions by 26%; and U.S. farmers and ranchers are producing 18% more beef while reducing beef production per unit emissions by 11% since 1990.

Not only have producers focused on improvements to production and sustainability, but they have also focused on feeding more families, in the U.S. and globally. Since 1990, U.S. agricultural emissions have increased by 6%, but the U.S. population has increased 33% in that same period of time, adding over 81 million people in three decades. This means U.S. agriculture has been called upon to feed more people than ever before. With the advancements in innovation and technology, agricultural emissions per capita have declined 20% since 1990.

Summary

During 2020, U.S. emissions from all man-made sources totaled 5.9 billion metric tons in CO2 equivalents, a decrease of 9% from 2019, largely due to impacts from COVID-19. When taking into consideration carbon trapped in the soils through forestry, grasslands, wetlands and cropland, U.S. greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by almost 13% to a net emissions level of 5.2 billion metric tons, a decrease of 10.6% compared to 2019, and the lowest emissions level on record.

Emissions related to agriculture totaled 635 million metric tons during 2020, down more than 4.3%

from the previous year. Based on Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change methodology, U.S. agricultural emissions totaled 594 million metric tons in 2020, a decrease of over 4.5% compared to 2019. As a percentage of total U.S. emissions, U.S. agriculture continues to be just 10% of all greenhouse gas emissions, with livestock-related emissions about 4%.

When factoring in productivity and population gains, however, both per unit and per capita agricultural emissions are declining. That means U.S. agriculture is producing more food, fiber and renewable fuel for more people while using fewer resources and emitting fewer greenhouse gases. The additional efforts to adopt conservation practices through voluntary, market-based incentives have helped farmers and ranchers trap 759 million metric tons of carbon in the soils, representing 12.7% of total U.S. emissions.

The latest report shows that when agriculture is recognized as a partner in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, farmers and ranchers have more opportunities to utilize voluntary, market-based incentives that work to reduce environmental footprints while helping farmers and ranchers economically produce the food, fiber and renewable fuel U.S. families, and the world, rely on. With additional investment in agricultural research, farmers and ranchers can be part of the development of new cutting-edge plant and animal technologies that capture more carbon in the soil and reduce livestock-related emissions, while generating multiple environmental benefits. ■

COUNTY NEWS

Johnson County Farm Bureau awarded six scholarships

SUBMITTED BY
CARMEN RODRIGUEZ,
JOHNSON COUNTY
FARM BUREAU FEDERATION



Two continuing college students:

Masen Jensen, son of Mr & Mrs Cory Jensen from Buffalo. He is majoring in pre-dentistry at Black Hills State.

Ashlynn Fennema, daughter of Mr & Mrs Jim Fennema. She is majoring in elementary education and animal science at Casper College.

Three graduating from Buffalo High School in May received scholarships:

McKinly Hepp, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Randy Hepp. She will be attending Sheridan College, studying rangeland management.

Kale Benton, son of Mr & Mrs. Tyler Benton. He will be attending Casper College, studying animal science.

Aiden Burke, son of Mr. & Mrs. William Burke. He will be attending Sheridan College, studying cyber security.

One graduating from Kaycee High School in May received scholarship:

Samuel Ramsbottom, son of William Ramsbottom and Allison Jarrard from Kaycee. He will attend Sheridan College, studying diesel tech and welding. ■

AFBF EVP Dale Moore announces retirement

American Farm Bureau Federation Executive Vice President Dale Moore announced on March 9 his plans to retire in 2022 after four decades as an agricultural leader in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. AFBF President Zippy Duvall commented on the announcement.

“Dale has been a tireless advocate on behalf of farmers and ranchers throughout his career and has certainly contributed to American Farm Bureau’s strength over the past four years. He has become a trusted advisor to me and to many state Farm Bureau presidents and staff,” President Duvall stated.

“More broadly, Dale has dedicated more than 40 years of his professional life to being a champion for agriculture through his work on Capitol Hill, at USDA and in the private sector,” he continued. “He certainly deserves to step back and enjoy time with family, but he will be deeply missed. I’m very happy for him and his wife, Faith, as well as their kids and grandkids as they open this new chapter together.”



Dale Moore

“I’m also pleased that Dale has agreed to assist in the selection of his successor. I look forward to working closely with him in the months ahead as we position our organization for continued success,” Duvall concluded. “I know I speak for farmers, ranchers and elected leaders across the country when I thank Dale for his tremendous service.” ■



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Wyoming Emergency Poultry Rule due to highly pathogenic avian influenza

CHEYENNE, WYO., APRIL 22, 2022 —

With the continued spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) across the United States, biosecurity for poultry owners is a top priority. HPAI has been confirmed in domestic poultry in 29 states, affecting approximately 31 million birds. To decrease potential spread of the disease, the Wyoming Livestock Board (WLSB) has passed an emergency rule limiting poultry movement.

The emergency poultry rule was signed into effect by Gov. Mark Gordon on April 19. All poultry events, including exhibitions, swaps, tours, sales, and competitions, are prohibited. The prohibition does not include catalog or retail sale of poultry.

Wyoming's emergency poultry rule may be in effect for up to 120 days. The WLSB will review the rule in late May to determine if it is still needed. Following review, further guidance regarding the emergency rule will be provided.

Anyone involved with poultry production from the small backyard chicken owner to the large commercial producer should review their biosecurity activities to assure the health of their birds. Find guidance on biosecurity, along with recently confirmed locations, on the USDA APHIS website, <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai>.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the recent HPAI detections do not present an immediate public health concern. No human cases of these avian influenza viruses have been detected in the United States. Birds and eggs from the infected flock will not enter the food system. As a reminder, the proper handling and cooking of all poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165 °F is recommended as a general food safety precaution.

REPORTING

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is a highly contagious viral disease that can infect chickens, turkeys and other birds and can cause severe illness and/or sudden death in infected birds. Attentively monitor your birds for symptoms of HPAI, which include: coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge, and other signs of respiratory distress; lack of energy and appetite; decreased water consumption; decreased egg production and/or soft-shelled, misshapen eggs; incoordination; and diarrhea. Avian influenza can also cause sudden death in birds even if they aren't showing other symptoms. If these symptoms are observed in your birds, immediately contact your veterinarian. If you don't have a regular veterinarian, contact WLSB, 307-777-8270 or 307-777-6440. ■

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation accepting requests for charitable contributions

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation is accepting requests for 2022 charitable contributions. Each year, the organization is able to make charitable contributions thanks to a program offered by FBL Financial Group, Inc.

"Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation is happy to continue the tradition of offering financial assistance to Wyoming's ag-oriented organizations through our charitable contributions fund," said WyFB President Todd Fornstrom. "We hope the funds will be a resource that will benefit agriculture within the State of Wyoming."

Requests will be considered for organizations that meet the following criteria:

- The organization must be classified as 501 (c) (3) by the IRS.
- The organization must:
 - Serve Farm Bureau members; or
 - Be an industry educational organization that provides direct or indirect benefit to Farm Bureau; or
 - Be a health organization that promotes practices or educational programs beneficial to Farm Bureau.

Visit wyfb.org and click on the calendar date of May 15 for request proposal requirements. Charitable contribution requests must be submitted in hard copy format and postmarked by May 15 or received in the Wyoming Farm Bureau state office by May 15, 2022.

Mail hard copy requests to: Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation, Attn: Dee Brewer, PO Box 1348, Laramie WY 82073. For questions, call 307-721-7719 or email dbrewer1@wyfb.org

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation is the state's largest general agriculture organization. As a grassroots advocacy organization, our members work together to develop agricultural policy, programs, and services to enhance the rural lifestyle of Wyoming. ■



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LEGISLATIVE TOPICS ... From Page 1

The Committee will also review statutes concerning the Wyoming Livestock Board for clarification and updates involving veterinarian and animal health and wellbeing. Additionally, the Committee will work with the Select Committee on Tribal Relations, as needed, on legislation concerning livestock diseases on Tribal land with the assistance of the Wyoming Livestock Board and Wyoming State Veterinarian.

The Committee will research the role Veterinary Technicians play in the arena of veterinary medicine in the state of Wyoming, the scope of their allowed practice, and the parameters of their licensing.

The Committee will review statutes regarding slow-moving vehicles, which may in some cases be outdated and which may include amending lighting, signage, and marking requirements for agricultural equipment.

The Committee will follow up on enacted 2022 legislation and continue their efforts coordinating wild horse and burro management among interested government entities, tribes, other states, and organizations.

The Committee will review statutory definitions of livestock. These statutes affect anything from ownership of poultry within special districts to bee farming. The focus will be to review statutes that potentially place an undue burden on livestock ownership outside of traditional agriculture.

Corporations Committee

The Corporations Committee will look at telecommunications issues, including keeping universal service funding.

This Committee will also look at election issues, including how primary elections are operated, have redistricting done by an outside entity, and other issues.

A link to the complete list of topics for all committees is available at www.wyfb.org/legislative. ■

NEPA CHANGES ... From Page 1

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) also expressed the organization's disappointment with the reversal of the NEPA rules. "Farmers and ranchers share the goal of caring for the natural resources they've been entrusted with and were pleased that the updated 2020 regulations allowed them to protect the environment while meeting the demands of a growing nation," said Zippy Duvall, AFBF President.

"Continued challenges from the pandemic, supply chain issues and the drought in the West are impacting farmers, ranchers and the American public in the form of increased food and fuel prices," Duvall continued. "The situation will now be made worse by the return to a slow and cumbersome NEPA review process that, in many cases, takes years to complete."

WyFB provided written comments on this proposal last fall that emphasized the importance of not reverting to regulations that spend resources and time to avoid litigation rather than complete the intended environmental analysis. "It is critical that new rules seek to limit the number of pages these documents contain so ordinary citizens have the ability to participate in the process," Hamilton wrote in comments to the CEQ.

“Continuing a process that, if not broken, is badly injured will do little to accomplish the goals necessary to protect business, citizen health and welfare, and protect our environment.”

Ken Hamilton
WyFB Executive Vice President

The 2020 NEPA revisions were made to clarify the original intent of Congress and limit the number of pages used in Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). According to WyFB November 2021 comments, a look at EIS documents related to federal lands in Wyoming alone show a range of page size from 94 pages to 2,149 pages.

WyFB noted the importance of a timely process to allow land management agencies to respond to issues before they grow to problems. "Limiting the scope to a reasonable analysis window, reducing the volume of documents to allow greater public comment, and providing timely decisions can only help provide better environmental benefits and protect public health," Hamilton

wrote. "The air quality impacts from forest fires in the past years demonstrates that timely action must occur to help mitigate problems."

Without timely NEPA assessments, tasks like grazing permit renewals and infrastructure improvements remain in limbo. Hamilton notes the delay of the NEPA process doesn't benefit the environment but rather keeps decision making at a standstill while litigation is pursued.

AFBF also noted that the Biden Administration has made improving the nation's infrastructure a priority. "A modernized NEPA review process would help deliver projects to communities across the country. Safe roads, waterways and railways and expanded rural broadband access are crucial to the success of rural America," AFBF President Duvall stated. "Those, too, are now at risk because of outdated regulations."

"Continuing a process that, if not broken, is badly injured will do little to accomplish the goals necessary to protect business, citizen health and welfare, and protect our environment," Hamilton stated.

Hamilton notes "paralysis by analysis" has been a continual problem for decision-making by federal agencies. "Expanding the analysis process by reverting back to the 1978 rules will only exacerbate this paralysis," Hamilton concluded. ■

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