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2016 Annual Report/ 2017 Winter Edition

www.wyomingwildlife.org



History was made on Nov. 3 with the return of the bison to the Wind River Range! Shane Cross (Pres.), Chamois Andersen (WWF ED), Collin O-Mara (NWF CEO), Dot Newton (WWF Outreach/Membership), Jessi Johnson (WWF Public Lands), Joy Bannon (WWF Field Director), Brian Kurzel, (NWF, Rocky Mt. Region) (See details below).

Dear Members and Supporters,

Wyoming Wildlife Federation and its members achieved many feats in 2016.

At the forefront, we dedicated a large part of the year to keeping your public lands in your public hands by protecting the U.S. Forest Service and BLM land in Wyoming that provides habitat for our wildlife and open access for our members. The legislature introduced two bills related to transferring ownership of and restricting access to public lands during the 2016 session and sportsmen and sportswomen successfully opposed the bills. Later in the year, the state Legislature surprised us again by introducing a proposed constitutional amendment that opened the door to further discussions about transferring public lands to the State. We helped to organize sportsmen for a major public lands rally, held numerous public meetings, and talked with elected officials to help them understand why we believe it is vital to keep public lands in the hands of all Americans. In the end, the legislature listened to Wyoming's sportsmen community and did not move forward with the proposed amendment. More work remains, however, and we are taking an active role in working on solution-based approaches that help empower public participation in federal management processes to help elected officials move on from the transfer debate. As I write this opening, U.S. Representative Jason Chaffetz (R., Utah) announced that he is dropping his proposed bill to order the transfer of 3.3 million acres to western states, including 645,000 acres in Wyoming. With great optimism I note that he used the #keepitpublic hashtag in his announcement.



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On the conservation front, our big game migration corridors work took a huge step forward when the Game and Fish Commission adopted a set of definitions for the state's big game migrations policy, and a process to make recommendations to land management agencies on how actions will affect migration corridors in the future. WWF played a large role in the stakeholder process to develop the definitions and policy, and we will continue to work closely on developing a migrations management strategy.



On the ground, we secured funding for major grants for wildlife fencing along the Red Desert to Hoback migration route – a prime mule deer migration route in Wyoming. In addition, we held a wildlife watching tour in Sheridan and two fencing removal days, Laramie and Lander, with our members. The wildlife fencing days resulted in numerous miles of fence to help big game access vital habitats during their seasonal migrations.

Our leadership and collaboration with the Greater Little Mountain Coalition and Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development to protect the highest value fish and wildlife habitats continued its path of success. Most importantly, the Bridger Teton National Forest issued a final decision to protect nearly 40,000 acres in the Wyoming Range from energy development, a culmination of eight years of hard work. We teed up what we hope is a similar decision in the Greater Little Mountain Area through our efforts to gain support from local, state and federal land managers for the Greater Little Mountain Coalition Proposal for the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan (RSRMP). The RSRMP is expected to open for public comment this spring and we will be asking you to voice your support.

As we turn the page toward 2017, I want to thank you for your engagement and support of this organization over the past year. We are redoubling our efforts to bring our members together for habitat projects, educational events or simply having a conversation with you about important issues impacting our wildlife across Wyoming.



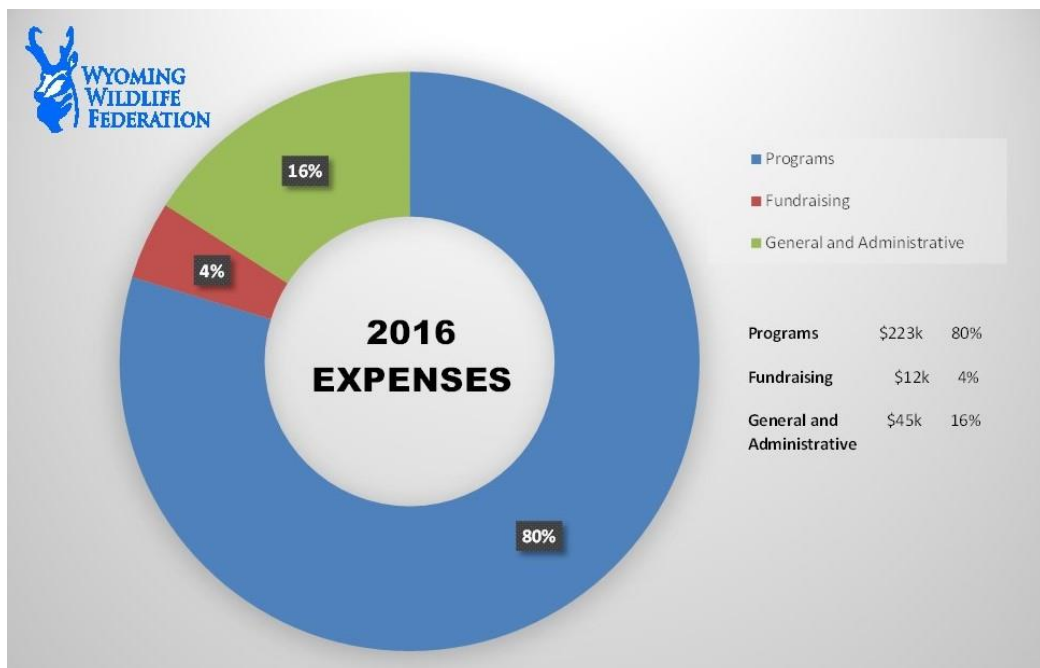
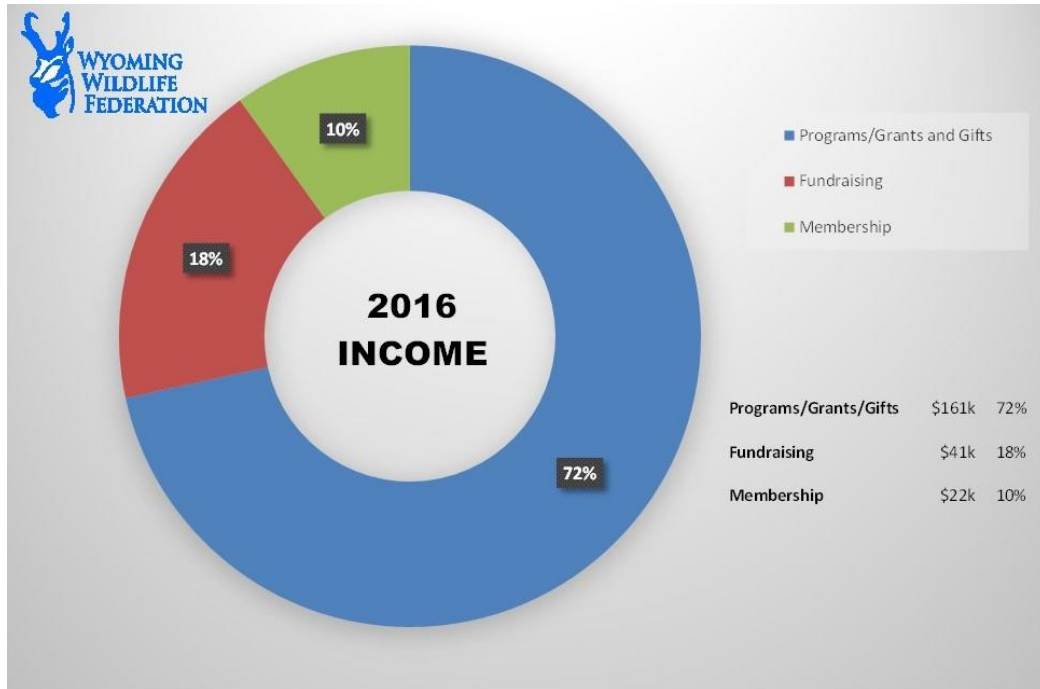
When you see notice of an event in your area please do join us – whether you are a teacher, firefighter, coal miner, rancher, banker or lawyer, we know you care about Wyoming's wildlife and open spaces and we want to continue to visit with you about how to continue helping WWF's work be successful.

Sincerely,

Shane Cross
Board President

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WWF Financials for 2016



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Public Lands Accomplishments – 2016

WWF 2016 accomplishments included:

- Legislation: Rallying members to kill two major land grab bills during the 2016 session. (HB 142, Transfer of federal lands; HB 126 - Public land access.)
- Hiring of Public Lands Coordinator; working with the Wyoming Sportsmen's Alliance; 8 groups, 30,000 members strong.
- Conducting economic impact of hunting and fishing studies, commissioned by WWF with the University of Wyoming (county-by-county), at <http://wyomingwildlife.org/public-lands/wpli/economic-impact/>).
- Campaign for state land exchanges: WWF was a lead opponent in a public lands victory, the Bonander land exchange, which would have impacted access to more than 8,000 acres.
- WWF hosted major public lands events (summer of 2016) across Wyoming, including Lander, Sheridan and Laramie.
- Engaging the public: WWF was the lead sportsmen organizer of a major public lands rally in November in Casper.
- Grassroots efforts: WWF engaged numerous sportsmen in the recent legislative hearing on a Wyoming constitutional amendment.

This fall, WWF held meetings with legislators about the merits of a transfer effort, a public lands constitutional amendment, including a meeting WWF/NWF arranged between Sen. Bebout and Sen. Hicks with Colorado Sen. Kerry Donovan. This meeting was about a solutions-bill that Colorado passed in 2015. Sen. Hicks invited the entire Wyoming Legislature to this meeting; more than 25 attended, showing a major interest in this issue. We asked Federal Select committee members Chairman Bebout



and Sen. Hicks to please consider alternatives and ways in which we can work together on the issues and concerns raised by the committee concerning federal lands management. These elected officials were more than receptive to this idea and we are thankful this dialogue has begun.



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Migrations Accomplishments – 2016

The Wyoming Wildlife Federation made significant strides this year concerning our work to conserve migration corridors in southwestern Wyoming. WWF's Migrations program includes our efforts to lead 14 groups in conservation efforts for the **Red Desert to Hoback Basin (RD2H)** mule deer migration.

In 2016, WWF secured more than \$300,000 in grant funding to implement fencing projects along the RD2H corridor. The Sublette Conservation District, one of our partners, served as the banker for these funds. WWF Field Scientist Steve Kilpatrick administered the grants and facilitated the work with private landowners for installing the wildlife fencing in priority areas along 130 miles of this migration route. Also in 2016, WWF launched a new website on the RD2H (www.rd2h.org) with details on this project and plans for the future.

Other progress related to migrations included WWF's work with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to craft new definitions for big game migrations in Wyoming. WWF served on a committee created to develop the definitions – vital stopovers and bottlenecks – which were adopted by the Commission and is now in their official Mitigation Policy. As a result, these specific areas along the corridor are protected when it comes to the impacts of energy development in proximity of big game migration corridors. This collaborative work with the department and our conservation partners also resulted in the first ever designated mule deer corridor in Wyoming, the Sublette Mule Deer Corridor (Mesa, Rye Grass and Red Desert herds). This designation is significant because it means this corridor will receive proper consideration in the draft Rock Springs Resource Management Plan. WWF is working with BLM on that plan and received information that our work on the migrations with Game and Fish and those recommendations will officially be included in their preferred alternative for future management.





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From the Field



Joy Bannon, Field Director

Earth has revolved around the Sun once again in 2016, and so have gone the days of WWF with our efforts to conserve Wyoming's wildlife and our hunting and fishing heritage. As I reflect on the past year, I am happy to report on several proud successes, including our continued pressure and advocacy efforts for ongoing campaigns, as well as the launch of some new projects.

Successes include:

- Garnering local government support from the Sweetwater County Commission, City of Green River, and the City of Rock Springs for the Greater Little Mountain Coalition's management proposal for the 522,000 acres in southwest Wyoming.
- A Washington, D.C. visit or "fly-in" concerning 3.6 million acres of public land currently undergoing management revisions through the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan. These D.C. meetings involved our the Wyoming delegation (Sen. Barrasso, Sen. Enzi, and Rep. Lummis), U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, and the Council on Environmental Quality.
- A final decision by the U.S. Forest Service not to lease nor develop oil and gas within nearly 40,000 acres of the Wyoming Range in the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

Ongoing campaigns:

- Migrations: Maintained pressure with the BLM and the Game and Fish Department for the designation of migration corridors and specific management needs for the Red Desert to Hoback mule deer migration;
- Highlighted our six priority habitats in southwest Wyoming - the Jack Morrow Hills, Big Sandy, Adobe Town, Greater Little Mountain Area, Red Desert to Hoback mule deer corridor, and lands west of Flaming Gorge, Devil's Playground and Twin Buttes, through social media posts, a full color postcard, and website updates;
 - Increased diverse group of advocates for these areas through conversations with Arapahoe and Shoshone tribal members, union members with Southwest Labor Council and the United Steelworkers, and grew our hunter and angler base of support;
- Continued on Wyoming's Sage Grouse Implementation Team (SGIT) working to implement updated management plans;
 - Brainstormed ideas on how to address winter concentration areas and working with scientists to gather data on relative studies.



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Jessi Johnson, Public Lands Coordinator

I came on staff here at the Wyoming Wildlife Federation (WWF) in May, it has been an incredible journey from then to now. The Public Lands Coordinator position covers a gauntlet of issues, after all our public lands cover 48% of Wyoming and include a whopping 640 million acres in the entirety of the United States. The passion runs deep with public lands in western cultures; accessibility, a mosaic of well managed uses, wildlife sustainability and the protection of what makes Wyoming so unique are just a few of the many issues to juggle.

WWF has been working on multiple fronts to address many of these points. We have thrown our weight full force behind the process of the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative (WPLI). This effort involves helping to educate and provide resources and data in regards to wildlife needs, habitat sustainability, and sportsmen values. Many counties have their process in full swing; Park, Fremont, Teton, Sublette, Johnson, Carbon, Washakie and a specific committee for Fortification Creek. These committees include a broad range of stakeholders who are close to the land and participating in an incredible opportunity to have direct impact on federal lands management. The Wyoming County Commissioners Association has completed the first steps of a critical process; however, these processes only work when people who care invest their time, sitting at the table and discussing solutions. WWF encourages public involvement from not just sportsmen but the general public. You can find out more about WPLI on our website at, <http://wyomingwildlife.org/public-lands/wpli/>

Our public lands in the West are important to our quality of life so it is paramount for us to stand up for what we believe when it comes to their management and as American's public lands. WWF has had its nose to the grindstone working against what I believe is a short-sighted idea to transfer our federal lands to state ownership. We took part in the Keep it Public, Wyoming rally held in Casper on Nov 5th, and came out in opposition when a constitutional amendment was proposed that would have paved the way for transfer; conversely we started a dialogue with legislators about solutions. Our voice was heard against the Bonander land exchange which would have impacted access to nearly 8,000 acres of public land. The report we commissioned with UW on the economic impacts of hunting and fishing, \$25 million in Albany County in 2015, helped sway the final decision by the State Land Board voting against this exchange.

We have long been an organization that believes in the conservation of Wyoming's wildlife and the wide open spaces with habitats so vital to their survival. This protection includes looking at solutions to the many policy issues that comes with multiple use management. This system of federal land management only works when it works for all Americans.



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Steve Kilpatrick, Field Scientist

In 2016, WWF made progress with its partners on allotment buyouts in areas of wildlife conflict. Partners included the National Wildlife Federation, Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, Bridger-Teton National Forest, livestock permittees, funders and a plethora of stakeholders. WWF Field Scientist Steve Kilpatrick serves as our program lead on the Allotment program, as administered by WWF.

This past fall two allotment complexes were addressed, one in the Wyoming Range and one in the Upper Green River drainage. The Wyoming Range project, called the Roberts allotments, consisted of a seven-allotment complex grazed by domestic sheep and considered important habitat for mule deer, elk, moose, big horn sheep and many other species. This allotment retirement effort will address ecological concerns over disease transmission between domestic and wild sheep, and the degraded condition of tall forb vegetation communities on this 67,000 acre allotment complex.





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WWF Seeks New Executive Director

By, Hiring Committee



Wyoming Wildlife Federation (WWF), Wyoming's oldest and largest sportsmen and conservation group, is seeking a passionate, dynamic hunter/angler/ wildlife advocate to lead our organization as Executive Director. WWF works to empower sportsmen and women and to conserve wildlife and outdoor opportunities by advocating for science-based policy and management. Our programmatic focus areas are protecting our public land recreation opportunities, conserving big game migration corridors, and advocating for sensible land use decisions that may affect wildlife and habitat. The Executive Director is WWF's key management leader and is responsible for overseeing the organization's administration, strategic plan and programs. The Executive Director also leads the organization's fundraising, communication and community engagement. For details on job description and how to apply, please visit, <http://wyomingwildlife.org/ed-job-announcement/>.

Wild Bison Return - "Boy-zshan Bid-en"!

Wild Bison Return to the Wind River Reservation! History was made on Nov. 3 as the herd ran out on the prairie grassland, the first of what many hope will be more on this vast landscape, marking the return of wild bison ("Boy-zshan Bid-en"). The nationally-designated mammal was virtually wiped out from historic populations of near 30 million in North America back in 1500s. This project is to return the species to its native grassland, adding balance to this ecosystem. The release was to honor the bison as a connecting symbol and for healing between the Eastern Shoshoni and Arapaho tribes -- and with this release, in some small way, to have some retribution for a past that included the destruction of buffalo and for our atrocities against Native Americans. The National Wildlife Federation and the Wyoming Wildlife Federation worked with the Eastern Shoshone Tribe and USFWS to once again see bison return to the Wind River Reservation.





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