

Open spaces Issues List 1st Quarter 2016 – Wyoming Public Media

Issue: Energy

Topic: Wyoming gets 90% of its electricity from coal-fired power plants. A series of new regulations from the EPA requires those plants to install new pollution controls - its either install, or close down. Nearly half of the electricity currently generated by coal in Wyoming is now either in compliance with mercury rules, or racing towards a compliance deadline. It is an expensive job. Reid Frazier reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1-8-16 at 3pm and 1-10-16 at noon on WPR. 1-10-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Across the country, there are thousands of abandoned coal mine sites needing cleanup. And around HALF of the money collected to do that work comes from Wyoming coal production. Over 100 million dollars in 2014. But that funding is getting harder to come by largely because the government pays to reclaim old mines by exacting a fee on *new* mines. With coal production slowing down in Wyoming and other energy-rich regions, there's less money to clean up the sins of coal mining's deep and dirty history. For Reid Frazier reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1-22-16 at 3pm and 1-24-16 at noon on WPR. 1-24-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: A massive methane leak from a gas storage facility in southern California has been making headlines recently. There are millions of plugged and abandoned oil and gas wells in the U.S. and recent studies show some of them are leaking small, but measurable, quantities of methane. Wyoming Public Radio's Stephanie Joyce reports for Inside Energy.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2-5-16 at 3pm and 2-7-16 at noon on WPR. 2-7-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Earlier this week, the U.S. Supreme Court blocked a major part of President Obama's climate change agenda... the Clean Power Plan. That rule, which would limit carbon dioxide emissions from existing coal fired power plants is now on hold until legal challenges against it are resolved. Wyoming is one of the 27 states to sue the federal government over the regulations. Our Inside Energy reporter Leigh Paterson joins Caroline Ballard to talk about what it all means.

Time: 6 min

Date: 2-12-16 at 3pm and 2-14-16 at noon on WPR. 2-14-16 at 9am on WPM

Topic: In many parts of the West, areas that are now houses and schools and shopping centers were once oil and gas fields. There's little in the way of a visible legacy, but in Wyoming alone, hidden underground, there are 50,000 abandoned wells. An Inside Energy investigation has discovered that in many communities in the region, new development is happening on top of those old wells.

Time: 4 min

Date: 2-12-16 at 3pm and 2-14-16 at noon on WPR. 2-14-16 at 9am on WPM

Topic: The oilfield is notoriously dangerous. But even there, it is unusual for a healthy 21 year old to drop dead on an oil well pad. Yet that's exactly what happened to Dustin Bergsing. Inside Energy's Emily Guerin has the story of the journalist who teamed up with a doctor to help solve the mystery of Dustin's death and that of at least 8 other oil workers.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2-26-16 at 3pm and 2-28-16 at noon on WPR. 2-28-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Peabody Energy's senior lenders recently recommended it file for bankruptcy. If the coal giant goes under, it would be the latest in a string of major producers filing for bankruptcy. But if you drive through one of the country's most productive coal regions - Wyoming's Powder River Basin, dynamite blasts still shake the earth and miners in gigantic trucks are still scooping up coal. So what does bankruptcy actually mean on the ground? Our Inside Energy reporter Leigh Paterson has more.

Time: 4 min

Date: 3-4-16 at 3pm and 3-6-16 at noon on WPR. 3-6-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Historically, electricity pricing has been relatively straightforward: the more you use, the more you pay. But today, that simple equation is not so simple. Increasingly, the time of day when you use electricity factors into the cost as well. As Wyoming Public Radio's Stephanie Joyce reports, so-called time-of-use pricing saves money and energy, but it's not always popular.

Time: 4 min

Date: 3-4-16 at 3pm and 3-6-16 at noon on WPR. 3-6-16 at 9am on WPM.

Issue: Health

Topic: When someone is in a suicidal state often the first professional responders they see are law enforcement. This is true nationwide, but it's especially the case in Wyoming, where the suicide rate is double the national average, and which lacks the mental health resources of more urban areas. For a decade now Wyoming has been using "Crisis Intervention Training" to better prepare law enforcement. But the program has been slow to spread--especially in rural areas. Wyoming Public Radio's Miles Bryan reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1-8-16 at 3pm and 1-10-16 at noon on WPR. 1-10-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: The American Cancer Society has awarded a University of Wyoming Researcher nearly 800-thousand dollars for what he hopes will be groundbreaking cancer research. Daniel Levy is an assistant professor in molecular biology. He tells Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck that he's been studying cancer cells for a number of years.

Time: 6 min

Date: 1-8-16 at 3pm and 1-10-16 at noon on WPR. 1-10-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Suicide is hard to talk about everywhere. Here in Wyoming, where cowboy culture values strength and self-reliance, it can be even harder. That stigma can stop people who are considering self harm from getting the help they need. Recently a group in the city of Gillette launched an unconventional campaign to make it easier to talk about suicide. As part of our occasional series on suicide in the state, Wyoming Public Radio's Miles Bryan reports.

Time: 4 min

Date: 1-8-16 at 3pm and 1-10-16 at noon on WPR. 1-10-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Since the 1960s federal law has said people who have been committed to a mental institution, or found mentally defective by a legal authority, can't buy guns. This month the feds announced new rules clarifying that states aren't violating patient privacy when they submit mental health records to the national background check system. Without getting those records, that system can't catch people who aren't allowed to purchase firearms. But as Wyoming Public Radio's Miles Bryan reports, Wyoming is one of six states that does not regularly submit mental health records.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1-22-16 at 3pm and 1-24-16 at noon on WPR. 1-24-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: As we continue our series looking at serious mental health issues we turn our attention to a workbook intended to help those with these serious issues change their outlook. Doctor Victor Ashear was a long time clinical psychologist at the Sheridan VA who deals with those who have serious mental illness. He is joined by his editor and former Suicide prevention specialist Vanessa Hastings. Dr. Ashear's book is called Self-Acceptance: The Key to Recovery from Mental Illness.

Time: 7 min

Date: 1-22-16 at 3pm and 1-24-16 at noon on WPR. 1-24-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Legislators have been talking about reforming health care in the state for at least 25 years. Access to health care providers is difficult, finding affordable health care is a challenge, and so after another Medicaid Expansion defeat the legislature's Health and Labor committee spent the summer trying to find ways to improve health care in the state without spending much money. Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck reports that committee members tried to be creative, but it's unclear if their efforts will have an impact.

Time: 4 min

Date: 2-5-16 at 3pm and 2-7-16 at noon on WPR. 2-7-16 at 9am on WPM.

Issue: Education

Topic: incoming University of Wyoming President Laurie Nichols has a lot to do prior to taking over her official duties. She is already working with trustees and UW officials on a transition plan to get off to a fast start when she begins the job May 16th. Nichols plan to come to Laramie for a couple of days a month until that time and also plans to stop by the Wyoming legislative session. She tells Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck that she's working hard to make the transition smooth.

Time: 8 min

Date: 1-8-16 at 3pm and 1-10-16 at noon on WPR. 1-10-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Right now, most Jackson elementary students attend one school in kindergarten through second grade and another for 3rd through 5th grades. But with a new school in the works there, district officials are considering making all of the town's elementary schools K through 5. That raises a big question about the future of the district's popular dual-language immersion program. Next week, the school board will decide whether the program will move to become housed in a single magnet school. Wyoming Public Radio's Aaron Schrank reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1-8-16 at 3pm and 1-10-16 at noon on WPR. 1-10-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: One of the big things lawmakers have been discussing over the past month is funding for Wyoming's K-12 schools. The House and Senate have agreed to a budget that will cut about \$36 million dollars from education in the next two school years. That's a 1 percent cut for next school year, and a 1.4 percent cut for the following one. School districts say they'll feel it. Aaron Schrank spoke with Campbell County School District Superintendent Boyd Brown.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3-4-16 at 3pm and 3-6-16 at noon on WPR. 3-6-16 at 9am on WPM.

Issue: Natural Resources

Topic: You might think of the Grand Canyon as one of the wildest places in the U.S. But the fact is, the Colorado River that runs through that canyon is not wild at all. The Colorado *starts* in Wyoming as the Green River, feeding an elaborate canyon ecosystems, not to mention several thirsty states. As part of our series on the Green River, Wyoming Public Radio's Melodie Edwards looks at the responsibility of headwater states to keep that river ecology healthy as the climate gets hotter and dryer.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1-8-16 at 3pm and 1-10-16 at noon on WPR. 1-10-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: For years, no one could figure out why birds of prey were turning up with extremely high levels of lead poisoning. The issue made headlines when the newly reintroduced condor in California began dying off from lead exposure. Craighead Beringia South is a group of

wildlife researchers in Kelly, Wyoming who were among the scientists who started studying the problem in other species, back in the early 2000's.

Time: 6 min

Date: 3-4-16 at 3pm and 3-6-16 at noon on WPR. 3-6-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: In an effort to strengthen Bighorn Sheep herds in the Seminoe-Ferris Mountains near Rawlins, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department has relocated 24 sheep from Devils Canyon. Transplants from Oregon in 2009 and 2010 and from Devils Canyon near Lovell in 2010 helped establish the Seminoe-Ferris Herd, but blizzards and years of wildfires reduced the herd. Game and Fish Wildlife Biologist Gregg Hiatt joins me to explain that the previous transplant has been a success...but they want to build on that.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3-18-16 at 3pm and 3-20-16 at noon on WPR. 3-20-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Let's face it: mountain lions are scary...the lone hunter stalking its prey, its scream in the night. But a research project shows that much of our fear is based on mythology and not science. Wyoming Public Radio's Melodie Edwards took a trek with the Puma Project's lead scientist to find out how they've been recording the intimate lives of mountain lions.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3-18-16 at 3pm and 3-20-16 at noon on WPR. 3-20-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Recently the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service announced that it was moving forward with a delisting of the Grizzly Bear. As part of that delisting Wyoming is to come up with a management plan that could include the hunting of Grizzly Bears. The Game and Fish Commission will soon be holding hearings across the state to discuss that issue. Game and Fish Director Scott Talbott joins us to discuss that option. He says getting federal officials to once again delist the Grizzly is good news.

Time: 6 min

Date: 3-18-16 at 3pm and 3-20-16 at noon on WPR. 3-20-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: This May, the University of Wyoming will award an honorary doctoral degree to Tom Bell. Bell is 92 years old, a writer, World War II Veteran, and renowned conservationist. In 1967 he founded the Wyoming Outdoor Council and in 1970 started High Country News. I asked him how conservation has changed since he first came to Wyoming.

Time: 4 min

Date: 3-18-16 at 3pm and 3-20-16 at noon on WPR. 3-20-16 at 9am on WPM.

Issue: Politics and Government

Topic: In Congress, Wyoming lawmakers are laying down their legislative priorities for the New Year, but the state's Republicans doubt they can get much done with a Democrat in the White House. Matt Laslo has the story from Washington of what to expect in this election year.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1-22-16 at 3pm and 1-24-16 at noon on WPR. 1-24-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Thanks to a downturn in energy prices, Wyoming lawmakers are in a bind. As legislators prepare for the upcoming legislative session they will likely have to cut the budget, dip into reserves, and possibly divert money from flowing into reserve accounts in order to pay for the next two years. The problem is that the economic downturn may last awhile. So how will the state find money to pay for things? Buck McVeigh is the Director of the Wyoming Taxpayers Association and he tells Bob Beck that the state may need to revisit its tax structure.

Time: 6 min

Date: 1-22-16 at 3pm and 1-24-16 at noon on WPR. 1-24-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: President Obama and Republicans in Congress are squaring off on the nation's spending priorities for the year. Wyoming Republicans are proving an especially pointed thorn in President Obama's side on the final budget he sent to Congress, as our correspondent, Matt Laslo, reports from Washington.

Time: 4 min

Date: 2-12-16 at 3pm and 2-14-16 at noon on WPR. 2-14-16 at 9am on WPM

Topic: The Wyoming legislative session is about to get a little more heated as members begin debating a number of budget bills. The Republican majority has embarked on a series of budget reductions and borrowing from the legislature's rainy day fund to help pay for the next two year budget. Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck reports that things could get tense.

Time: 4 min

Date: 2-12-16 at 3pm and 2-14-16 at noon on WPR. 2-14-16 at 9am on WPM

Topic: Wyoming lawmakers are addressing a revenue shortfall that could reach 600 million dollars by 2018, by making some budget cuts and using some of the nearly 2 billion dollars they have in savings. But things could get worse very soon, especially since the state is losing a major source of income for school construction. Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck reports that lawmakers will have to find a way to make up for declining revenue.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2-26-16 at 3pm and 2-28-16 at noon on WPR. 2-28-16 at 9am on WPM

Topic: The 2016 Wyoming legislative session has come to an end and few seem to be leaving Cheyenne feeling satisfied. Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck has more.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3-4-16 at 3pm and 3-6-16 at noon on WPR. 3-6-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Across the United States, women make up just under a quarter of state legislators. In Wyoming, the statistics are even worse – only 13 percent of legislators are women. That

makes the “Equality State” 50th in the nation. Wyoming Public Radio’s Caroline Ballard reports that part of the problem is no one is asking them to run.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3-4-16 at 3pm and 3-6-16 at noon on WPR. 3-6-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Last year a couple of Wyoming judges ruled that state law does not have specific penalties for marijuana-laced edibles. Because of that, a legislative committee raced to try and address the issue. Wyoming law enforcement officials say that ever since Colorado legalized marijuana they are seeing more of it than ever before. But lawmakers got hung up on how much edible marijuana constitutes a felony and the bill died. As Wyoming Public Radio’s Bob Beck reports...the issue is far from settled.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3-18-16 at 3pm and 3-20-16 at noon on WPR. 3-20-16 at 9am on WPM.

Issue: Native American Issues

Topic: For victims of violent crime on the Wind River Indian Reservation, finding help and safety after an attack can be hard. A lack of funding means there are very few services for crime victims there. Recently, the only safe house for victims of sexual assault on Wind River closed down when its funding went dry...forcing victims to risk traveling to shelters in nearby towns off the reservation. But as Wyoming Public Radio’s Melodie Edwards reports, a new bill recently introduced in Congress would make it easier for tribes to get money to run their own safe house.

Time: 5 min

Date: 1-22-16 at 3pm and 1-24-16 at noon on WPR. 1-24-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: Thursday in Fort Washakie on the Wind River Indian Reservation, tribal and non-tribal community members will gather together to talk about escalating racial tensions in the area. The U.S. Justice Department offered to sponsor the meetings following the shooting of two Northern Arapaho men by a white man last summer in Riverton. Aaron Schrank reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2-7-16 at 3pm and 2-9-16 at noon on WPR. 2-9-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: A century ago, children were stolen from their parents and taken to federal boarding schools, where they were abused and stripped of their tribal cultures. In the past several decades, most of those schools were closed or handed over to tribes—as the U.S. shifted away from its policy of forced assimilation. But the Bureau of Indian Education still runs four off-reservation boarding schools around the country. But they look much different today—and as Wyoming Public Radio’s Aaron Schrank reports, they remain a popular destination for students from Wyoming’s Wind River Reservation.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2-26-16 at 3pm and 2-28-16 at noon on WPR. 2-28-16 at 9am on WPM

Topic: For more than a century, the remains of hundreds of kids from the nation's tribes have been buried in a grave at the country's first Indian Boarding School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Many likely died of disease but for others, the causes are still unknown. Tens of thousands of Native kids were sent to Carlisle and other boarding schools, often against their will. Physical and mental abuse inflicted on them there has had lasting impacts on tribal communities. But Wyoming's Northern Arapaho tribe is now calling on a law that allows tribes to reclaim their ancestors' remains in hopes that a reburial of the children who died there could offer some healing. Wyoming Public Radio's Melodie Edwards reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2-26-16 at 3pm and 2-28-16 at noon on WPR. 2-28-16 at 9am on WPM

Issue: Social issues

Topic: Last month, communities across Wyoming spent one 24-hour period attempting to count their population of homeless people. It's called the "point-in-time count," and it's mandated by the feds, who use it to track the country's homeless population and divvy up funding. But some homeless advocates say the count is probably off. As Wyoming Public Radio's Miles Bryan reports, if a homeless person has somewhere to stay during the ONE NIGHT of the count, they AREN'T counted as homeless.

Time: 5 min

Date: 2-7-16 at 3pm and 2-9-16 at noon on WPR. 2-9-16 at 9am on WPM.

Topic: About a decade ago Wyoming jailed kids who committed crimes at rates higher than almost anywhere else in the country. In the last few years the state has taken steps to reduce the number of juveniles in detention. A program in Fremont County has helped lead that effort. Since 2013 many kids there that would have gone to jail now go to a program called the Wyo10 Day Reporting Center. Wyoming Public Radio's Miles Bryan reports

Time: 5 min

Date: 2-26-16 at 3pm and 2-28-16 at noon on WPR. 2-28-16 at 9am on WPM

Topic: The number of schools in the state that randomly drug-test students is on the rise. Right now, Sheridan County One is among the Wyoming school districts trying to put a policy in place. Administrators see testing as a way to keep students away from dangerous substances, but as Wyoming Public Radio's Aaron Schrank reports, the drug-testing trend is not without controversy.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3-18-16 at 3pm or 3-20-16 at noon on WPR. 3-20-16 at 9 am on WPM.

Topic: Spend a weekend in Jackson Hole and odds are good your restaurant server is from Ukraine or Moldova, while the housekeeper at your hotel could hail from Peru, or Argentina. Many are students in Jackson on what's called a J-1 visa. The program is supposed to allow to experience American culture, and earn a little money while they do it. But Jackson has struggled to fill its seasonal jobs, with local labor or through guest worker visas. So over the last decade businesses there have increasingly come to rely on J-1 visas to fill vital employment needs. Wyoming Public Radio's Miles Bryan reports.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3-18-16 at 3pm or 3-20-16 at noon on WPR. 3-20-16 at 9 am on WPM.

Topic: Family members and law enforcement in Gillette fear that the bullying of a gay man in Gillette may have led to a suicide. The issue has once again drawn concern about a variety of issues...including the treatment of LGBT people in the state and whether a hate crime is needed. Jason Marsden is the Executive Director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation and we caught up with him this week as he spoke in Gillette.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3-18-16 at 3pm or 3-20-16 at noon on WPR. 3-20-16 at 9 am on WPM.

Issue: Arts and Culture

Topic: The Wild West has been ruling the box office lately—with movies like mountain man epic 'The Revenant' and Quentin Tarantino's western mystery 'The Hateful Eight' drawing crowds and awards buzz. While the scenery in those films looks a lot like what many Wyomingites can see from their backyards or through their windshields every day, neither movie was made in the Cowboy State. Wyoming Public Radio's Aaron Schrank has more on why that is.

Time: 4 min

Date: 2-12-16 at 3pm and 2-14-16 at noon on WPR. 2-14-16 at 9am on WPM

Topic: The Grand Teton Music Festival is a major event for classical music in the summer. Now, the festival is expanding with an inaugural Winter Music event. Executive director Andrew Todd tells Wyoming Public Radio's Micah Schweizer this month's mini-festival is about two larger goals.

Time: 5 min

Date: 3-4-16 at 3pm and 3-6-16 at noon on WPR. 3-6-16 at 9am on WPM.