Inside:
- A word from our Chair......p. 2
- People of the Plains – Nathan Varley and Linda Thurston..........................p. 3
- Why become a Monthly Sustainer?.................................p. 3
- Ranchers say NO to animal ID program..........................p. 4
- White House tries to dismiss Keystone XL suit..................p. 4
- Exit from climate accord spurs states, cities to act.............p. 5
- How's Gianforte doing?........................................p. 5
- Summer events.................................................p. 6
- A blast from the past...............p. 7
- Hole in the wall repaired, and then some.........................p. 7
- Gov. delivers on vetoes........................................p. 8
- Court upholds methane waste rule...............................p. 8
- GNA faces challenges over new mine tailings.................p. 9
- Homegrown Energy Film Festival videos sought................p. 9
- Council Roundup..............p. 10-11
- Local Food Challenge........p. 12

Some ranchers have friends in low places

Soil Crawl teaches healthy practices

For many of us, it’s easy to overlook what happens below the surface. But for Montana’s farmers and ranchers, what’s happening below the surface is everything.

A growing number of Montanans are using innovative methods to create resilient soils, and they have a lot to teach us.

This June, more than 70 ranchers, farmers, and gardeners gathered for a day of learning, collaborating, and digging in the dirt. The 2017 Soil Crawl on the Indreland and B Bar ranches was an opportunity for people who grow food to learn from.

Continued on Page 4

White House budget hammers rural America

The Trump Administration's federal budget for fiscal year 2018 proposes more than $12 billion in cuts to the United States Department of Agriculture (a cut of nearly 21%), and $240 billion over a 10-year period. These cuts will affect small and large producers alike.

This year’s drought and extreme weather in eastern Montana is forcing producers to sell off herds, buy hay too early, or file to collect on crop insurance.

Crop insurance – a USDA program that helps farmers deal with lost crops or declining prices due to extreme environmental or economic conditions – is facing a cut of 36%. Without the support of crop insurance, some families may have no choice but to sell their farms if they can’t make their payments at the end of the month.

“This is looking very similar to our drought in 1988, very similar. I am seeing a lot of people at the bank

Continued on Page 5
Water quality, quantity is sacred

The drought in eastern Montana this summer reminds us, yet again, that ranchers and farmers depend on clean, reliable water sources for their livelihoods.

This summer, I’ve visited with producers in Dawson, Garfield, Fergus, Petroleum, and Phillips counties; and our conversations never stray far from this latest drought. When people aren’t racing out the door to fight yet another fire on a neighbor’s property or moving cows again to a less fragile pasture, they’re running the numbers over and over to figure out how they’ll ride this one out.

Individuals try to conserve water by stopping lawn watering, forgoing that car cleaning, and taking shorter showers. Individual actions are important but, sadly, the discussion often seems to stop there. The media and public ignore the enormous toll that extractive industry takes on our public water supply.

Recent research out of Carnegie Mellon University shows that energy power production is the largest single industrial consumer of water. Crude oil and coal industries require especially massive amounts of water at every stage of production – from extraction to waste disposal. Energy industry disasters often pollute our water (think pipeline bursts, coal ash pond leakage, etc.). Much of that water is ruined for decades or perhaps centuries.

Some folks have a misperception that agriculture is the biggest threat to our fresh water supply. It’s worth pointing out that agricultural producers aren’t all alike (small, conservation-minded family ranches are much more water-efficient than industrial citrus growers, for example). While meat production is said to be a carbon and water hog, it’s actually more water efficient than some fruit and vegetable production. Even more important, responsible agricultural producers don’t ruin the water supply permanently, taking it out of the hydrologic cycle.

This is a big deal. Placing the blame and responsibility solely at the feet of individual citizens and small-scale ranchers ignores the enormous toll that coal, oil, and gas projects inflict on our most sacred resource.

That’s why it’s so important that farmers and ranchers – along with all users along the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers – fight the Keystone XL pipeline. A pipeline break beneath the Missouri River, for example, would threaten the drinking water supply for 30,000 people in northeastern Montana, as well as irrigation for hundreds of agricultural producers downstream. The water from these rivers is critical for our region, and should not be put at risk.

The Fort Peck Tribes have stood up against the potentially dire consequences this project could have for their people. Northern Plains’ lawsuit against the Trump Administration’s issuance of a “presidential permit” is another bold and important tactic to stop the KXL.

We recognize that the pipeline would bring some jobs and revenue to the region. But we also recognize that jobs and prosperity can be developed in ways that don’t threaten our precious water supply. A temporary bump in employment and taxes shouldn’t outweigh the extreme threat this project poses to our farms, ranches, and public health.

I encourage you to support the collective actions of the Assiniboine-Sioux Tribes and the Northern Plains Resource Council. Water is indeed sacred and we have a responsibility to defend it. Times of drought serve as a good reminder of this.

– Kate French
Northern Plains Chair
A long-term relationship
An uncertain future; A measure of security for
Northern Plains:
■ A well-structured gift offers
Northern Plains:
■ A measure of security for an uncertain future;
■ A long-term relationship with you;
■ An enhanced capability to work for what’s important to you.

Please call Steve Paulson at 406-248-1154.

Why be a Monthly Sustainer?
Have you ever considered paying your membership dues monthly instead of annually? Some dedicated members like you find it useful to spread their support over the course of 12 months.
Monthly giving helps Northern Plains, too. Here’s how:

Your gift can go right to work on issues and events
When you give a little each month, it means funds are available when timely issues need immediate attention. From an important federal ruling, to a hearing on short notice, your gift is ready to go to the most urgent need.

Stable, predictable giving
Your structured giving allows us to plan! In all that we do, we plan strategically. When we know what comes in each month, we can plan to have the most impact.

Reduced overhead
Northern Plains doesn’t have to use staff time, printing, envelopes, and postage to send out membership renewals or follow-ups. More of your gift is put to work on the issues that mean a lot to you.

Contact Caleb at caleb@northernplains.org or call 406-248-1154.
Ranchers say no to animal ID

Animal Disease Traceability hearing draws skepticism

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) came to Billings in May to get feedback from ranchers on the 2013 Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) program.

Many ranchers from across the region told APHIS officials there is no need for expanding identification for feeder cattle.

“This should be a question of disease prevention and preparation, not a question of identification,” said Gilles Stockton, a rancher near Grass Range who has experienced mandatory ID for his sheep. Gilles testified, “If we see a serious disease come to our herds, like foot and mouth disease, our current systems are not prepared. But expanding this ID program to feeder cattle isn’t going to change that. What we really need to focus on is preventing disease from getting into our herds, and preparing our nation to respond.”

TransCanada, White House try to bypass law

On July 11, Northern Plains, along with a coalition of groups, responded to an attempt to dismiss our lawsuit against the administration over its approval of the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline.

Northern Plains filed the lawsuit in March, in conjunction with the Sierra Club, Bold Alliance, Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of the Earth, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. The suit challenged the State Department’s inadequate and outdated environmental review of the pipeline.

In its motion to dismiss, the Trump administration claimed that the approval of the pipeline cannot be reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), one of our bedrock environmental laws which requires that government actions be reviewed based on their environmental impacts. TransCanada filed a similar motion days later.

Dena Hoff is a Northern Plains member and Glendive-area farmer whose water would be threatened with contamination if the Keystone XL pipeline were to break under the Yellowstone River.

“When it comes to the Keystone XL pipeline, the Trump administration must obey the law like all other American citizens,” she said. “Federal officials are trying to circumvent the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires review of projects that would have ‘significant’ environmental impacts.”

Soil

Continued from Page 1

one another about soil health and the methods used to achieve it.

At the Indreland Ranch, participants accompanied Roger and Betsy Indreland on a pasture tour. Less than 10 years ago, the Indrelands started working with Nicole Masters of Integrity Soils to improve soil health on their ranch. Using innovative seeding mixtures and no-till methods, the Indrelands have seen huge improvements in the water storage capacity of their soil.

The Indrelands also use dung beetles to increase the nitrogen content in their soil. Tony Hartshorn, a professor of Land Resources at Montana State University joined Masters in demonstrating how simple testing with inexpensive tools can allow producers to read the water capacity and nitrogen levels in soil. Later test results showed soil organic matter (SOM) levels near 22% (most pastureland is closer to 1-2%).

These simple tests were replicated on the neighboring B Bar Ranch. Participants were able to compare results and talk with Wes Henthorne and Mihail Kennedy of the B Bar Ranch about the methods being used there.

One such method is the use of compost tea: a perfected mixture of nutrients steeped and brewed, then sprayed on the pasture land. Henthorne and Kennedy showed participants their compost tea facility and the spray truck that can travel across the pastures to spread microbiology onto the land to increase productivity.

In the same way that compost can increase activity and the overall health of the soil ecosystem, these meetings continue to increase activity on farms and ranches across Montana.
On June 1, President Trump announced his decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Accord. Under that agreement, the United States had pledged in 2016 to cut greenhouse gas pollution by about 28% below 2005 levels by 2025. Meanwhile, climate change continues to wreak havoc on our state’s farm and ranch economy. Just a few weeks after Trump’s decision, Governor Bullock declared a drought emergency in 19 eastern Montana counties facing record low precipitation and high temperatures.

“Montanans are in a war against climate change. We have experienced increasingly massive wildfires and our productive agricultural lands have run short on water,” said Steve Charter, past chair of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. “President Trump’s fear that we cannot meet the challenge of climate change not only puts us in danger, it damages the economy in our state. The future of Montana’s energy economy is in renewable sources, and we now risk being left behind.”

Fortunately, several Montana municipalities have joined a network of hundreds of cities, towns, states, and major corporations announcing their intent to take action and abide by the goals of the Paris Accord regardless of Trump’s decision.

The City of Bozeman was first to join the newly created U.S. Climate Alliance, with Mayor Carson Taylor signing the pledge to “increase our efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions, create a clean energy economy, and stand for environmental justice.” The City of Missoula was quick to follow, and Helena has also joined the effort.

Instead of running from climate action, President Trump should be leading the way. American businesses and researchers are at the forefront of innovative new energy solutions. Northern Plains will continue to mobilize and work with allies to embrace this opportunity to reduce pollution, improve public health, and create new jobs.

– Svein Newman

U.S. CLIMATE ALLIANCE

States, municipalities, and businesses are “committed” to meeting the goals set by the Paris Climate Accord and the Obama-era Clean Power Plan. Stay informed, go to the website: www.usclimatealliance.org

Montana member cities: Bozeman, Helena, Missoula

Founding member states: California, New York, Washington

Others that have joined: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia

Budget

Continued from Page 1

How is Greg doing?

Montana’s newly elected Representative Greg Gianforte has only held office for five weeks now, so he has yet to establish much of a record.

The U.S. military has, for several years, considered climate change to be a major threat to our national security. Nevertheless, Gianforte voted for an unsuccessful House resolution that attempted to strip requirements for the Defense Department to report on climate change effects on U.S. military installations and combat readiness.

The Montana Republican sits on the House Natural Resources Committee, so he is in a position to serve a leadership role on energy and resource issues.

– Svein Newman

With a net worth of approximately $315 million, Rep. Gianforte is the wealthiest member of Congress.

– Wikipedia: “List of current members of the United States Congress by wealth”

Maggie Zaback

and I can only guess that they’re in a hard place,” said Dena Hoff, a Northern Plains member who farms near Glendive.

In addition to crop insurance, meat inspection, conservation programs, job training, clean water, rural businesses, sustainable ag, and grant funding to promote soil health will be cut dramatically if the budget is approved; nearly $46 billion over 10 years. These cuts include the Ag Research Stations, parts of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Farm Service Agents across the state.

Cuts to the USDA’s Rural Development programs also threaten to damage rural communities. These programs provide low-interest loans to develop infrastructure and rural housing, energy projects, and technology (including rural solar, phone and Internet service).

Without Rural Development dollars, rural electric co-ops will face higher costs, as will other rural utilities. The Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP) that guarantees loans or grants to ag producers or small businesses for energy efficiency or renewable energy projects will also be cut.

Finally, a gaping $194 billion will be cut from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) over 20 years, affecting the 43 million Americans currently using it.

White House budget-writers have assumed states will take over where federal dollars disappear, but weak state tax receipts make that assumption unlikely.

– Maggie Zaback

The future of Montana’s energy economy is in renewable sources, and we now risk being left behind.

– Steve Charter, Bull Mountains rancher adjacent to Signal Peak coal mine

ASK THE MONTANA DELEGATION

This year Congress won’t get the entire month of August off for recess, but members will still be heading home to meet with constituents at the end of the month.

While no one from the Montana delegation has announced public meetings in August, you can reach out to ask questions about budget concerns, or other issues facing Montana right now.

Rep. Greg Gianforte
Phone: 202-225-3211
Online contact form: https://gianforte.house.gov/contact/email

Sen. Steve Daines
Phone: 202-224-9412
Online form: http://www.stevedaines.com/contact/

Sen. Jon Tester
Phone: 202-224-2644
Online contact form: https://www.tester.senate.gov/?p=email_senator
GAINING GROUND

Weather is hot and events sizzling

About 100 Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council members and friends attended the Summer Celebration at Bart and Emily Hannaman’s ranch south of Laurel in July. It included a potluck dinner, live music, and horse rides. AT RIGHT, Paige Hart (fearlessly turning 3 in August) hangs on for a fun ride.

Some of the remaining events for summer and fall:

**JULY**

- **Local Food Challenge Kickoff Potluck**
  - Cottonwood Resource Council
  - Monday, July 31, at 6 p.m.
  - The City Park
  - Big Timber
  - hannah@northernplains.org

**AUGUST**

- **Local Food Challenge**
  - Statewide
  - All of August
  - (See back page)
  - maggie@northernplains.org

- **CRC Annual Summer Picnic**
  - Cottonwood Resource Council
  - Sunday, Aug. 13
  - Home of Cindy and Ed Webber
  - 1140 Boulder Road
  - Big Timber
  - hannah@northernplains.org

- **Beartooth Alliance Summer Meeting**
  - Tuesday, Aug. 22, at 7 p.m.
  - Range Rider Lodge
  - Silver Gate
  - maggie@northernplains.org

**SEPTEMBER**

- **Wild and Scenic Film Festival in Billings**
  - Friday, Sept. 8, at 7 p.m.
  - Babcock Theatre
  - sarah@northernplains.org

- **Chokecherry Festival**
  - Central Montana Resource Council
  - Saturday, Sept. 9
  - Lewistown
  - adan@northernplains.org

- **Wild and Scenic Film Festival in Miles City**
  - Thursday, Sept. 14, at 7 p.m.
  - Montana Theatre
  - sarah@northernplains.org

- **Wild and Scenic Film Festival in Gardiner**
  - Thursday, Sept. 14, at 6:30 p.m.
  - Gardiner High School
  - sarah@northernplains.org

**OCTOBER**

- **YBCC Annual Celebration**
  - Yellowstone Bend Citizens Council
  - Oct. 5
  - Livingston
  - sydney@northernplains.org

- **Green Drinks**
  - Tuesday, Oct. 31, at 5 p.m
  - Billings
  - sydney@northernplains.org

**NOVEMBER**

- **Northern Plains Annual Meeting**
  - Friday and Saturday, Nov. 10-11
  - Doubletree Hotel
  - 27 N. 27th Street
  - Billings
  - sarah@northernplains.org

AT LEFT: Members of Dawson Resource Council enjoy their annual June Picnic at Dena and Alvin Hoff’s cabin on the Yellowstone River near Glendive.

AT RIGHT: Grant Jones prepares to entertain at a Billings Green Drinks gathering in June at the Home on the Range. Northern Plains has taken the lead in resurrecting Billings’ Green Drinks on the LAST TUESDAY of every month. Locations may vary so watch your inbox for information, or email sydney@northernplains.org.
Did you know that Northern Plains and Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council (YVCC) helped put in place Montana’s first-ever enforceable air quality standards?

It’s true. But if you’re under the age of 40, you might not know that air pollution was once a major concern in Billings. In the 1990s, Billings had the highest concentrations of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) of any city in America. Most of that sulfur dioxide came straight from the smokestacks of our three area refineries, the Corette coal power plant, and the sugar beet factory.

Founding members of YVCC, Eileen Morris and Nettie Lees, noticed these emissions. They both suffered from respiratory problems and saw that many others did, too. Nettie and Eileen formed YVCC, affiliated with Northern Plains, and got to work campaigning for local air quality monitoring and statewide air quality standards.

In the midst of their work, on their way home from a meeting, Nettie and Eileen drove through a dense cloud of pollution in downtown Billings. That smog triggered an asthma attack for Nettie – an attack from which she never recovered. She died 24 hours later.

Nettie’s work lives on in Eileen, and the many other members of YVCC who picked up the fight. And they accomplished a lot. They got standards passed at the Legislature that limited sulfur dioxide pollution, then worked for years to undo a cynical exemption the Legislature applied to Yellowstone County, and even helped shape the national Clean Air Act of 1990. What a list!

As we all know, this work is never over. Billings’ air quality is greatly improved, and we have Eileen, Nettie, and many other early members of YVCC and Northern Plains to thank for that. But refineries still discharge thousands of tons of sulfur dioxide into our air each year – even when they’re in compliance. It’s on the rest of us to be vigilant and to defend the achievements of all the people who fought so hard to make Billings a better place to live.

– Caitlin Cromwell

**Construction is just finishing up on a new annex to the Home on the Range large conference room. You may recall that on Sept. 19, 2016, a Dodge Durango busted through our conference room wall leaving a huge hole. We took the opportunity to build a storage room where the hole was. Now, two double doors lead to the newly built annex storage room. We also updated the conference room with new display boards, carpeting, blinds, and audio-visual equipment. New bike racks replaced the mangled racks under the awning of the new annex.**

**A generous donation in the memory of former Northern Plains staffer Bill Mitchell augmented the insurance, allowing us to add a much-needed storage space.**
Northern Plains members and fellow conservationists stopped a number of the egregious attacks on clean energy, Montana’s water resources, and our agricultural capability. Several ill-conceived bills, however, made it through the legislative process and to the Governor’s desk.

Fortunately, Governor Bullock stood up for Montana’s conservation and family agriculture values by vetoing or amending every bad piece of legislation that came before him. We appreciate the Governor’s work to protect and champion Montana’s water quality and quantity, as well as our access to clean and renewable energy. Here is a report on the bills scored by Northern Plains that the Governor vetoed:

Creating an exempt well loophole for subdivisions
HB 339 - Sponsor: Rep. Carl Glimm (R-Kila)

HB 339 would have allowed the expansion of unregulated and unmonitored groundwater wells that—individually—pump less than 35 gallons per minute and produce less than 10 acre-feet of water a year. These wells could be used for new large-consumption water uses, such as subdivisions, without a permit. This would wreak havoc on the water rights system that has conserved and allocated precious water resources for more than a century in Montana.

Weakening landowner notification requirements for oil and gas drillings
SB 93 - Sponsor: Sen. Tom Richmond (R-Billings)

SB 93 sought to undermine Board of Oil and Gas Conservation rules requiring oil and gas operators to notify owners of homes and occupied buildings, such as offices, hospitals, and schools, within 1,320 feet of a proposed oil or gas well. SB 93 would have lowered the minimum notification distance to 990 feet and removed notification for schools, hospitals, or other occupied buildings that are not private residences.

Repealing net metering incentives
SB 154 - Sponsor: Sen. Mike Lang (R-Malta)

SB 154 would have repealed the alternative energy production credit and made net metering systems ineligible for the alternative energy system credit. (This tax credit only increases general fund revenue by about $120,000 per year, compared to the $265 million in lost revenue for the state from the oil and gas tax holiday from 2008 to 2014.)

The Legislature again passed tax incentives for the oil and gas industry while repealing the meager incentives that exist for net metering.

Revival of Otter Creek coal lease
SB 235 - Sponsor: Sen. Tom Richmond (R-Billings)

SB 235 would have allowed coal leases on state lands to be extended indefinitely. If this bill had become law, the Otter Creek coal lease would have never expired, and Arch Coal could have tried to breathe new life into the proposed Otter Creek Mine and Tongue River Railroad at any time.

Eliminate the Board of Environmental Review
SB 337 - Sponsor: Sen. Duane Ankney (R-Colstrip)

SB 337 would have eliminated the Board of Environmental Review (BER) from every section of the Montana Code. The BER serves as an important check on decisions made by DEQ, and has enabled increased citizen participation in DEQ decision-making processes. Northern Plains successfully opposed the Otter Creek Mine at the BER, leading to the eventual suspension of Arch Coal’s permit application.

Thank you, Governor Bullock!

—Adam Haight

U.S. appeals court upholds EPA rule limiting methane waste … for now

The Trump Administration cannot merely decide not to enforce an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rule limiting methane waste and pollution from oil and natural gas drilling, a federal court ruled on July 3.

The ruling, issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, is an early court loss for President Trump’s agenda of environmental deregulation and rollbacks. In many cases, the Trump Administration is unilaterally delaying environmental, safety, and taxpayer protection, such as rules on ozone pollution or an Office of Natural Resources Revenue rule preventing fossil fuel companies from using shell companies to dodge royalty payments.

This ruling is a blow to the Administration’s legal theory, as the Court found that the Administration cannot merely decide not to enforce existing rules and law, and that the EPA had failed to provide adequate justification for refusing to enforce this rule.

While this legal ruling is an important step toward protecting our air, climate, and public health, it is just a first step. President Trump is seeking to repeal the rule administratively through a longer EPA process. The agency held a hearing in Washington, D.C., July 10 on its concurrent proposal to delay the rule for two years while it is rewritten in weaker form.

Northern Plains member Sue Beug of Red Lodge joined other conservationists and public health advocates from around the country in testifying against the Trump EPA’s plan. Supporters of the existing methane rule outnumbered those favoring the EPA’s “stay and repeal” by more than 50 to 1.

Sue noted in her testimony: “Oil and gas companies could comply with the EPA’s rule incredibly cheaply. By cutting methane emissions by 40 percent, the cost of production for every thousand cubic feet would only increase by a penny. Any costs to the industry associated with the methane capture would be more than offset by savings on health care for those living in areas of oil and gas development. It’s unconscionable to allow an industry to risk the health and well-being of vulnerable populations, such as children and seniors, by not controlling the release of methane and associated gases.”

—Svein Newman

TAKE ACTION
The EPA is taking public comment on the proposed two-year delay of the methane waste rule through Aug. 9. Take action to protect the rule online at https://www.northernplains.org/contact-the-epa/
Tailings a problem for GNA communities

This next year is going to be even bigger than we thought for the Good Neighbor Agreement. The new owner, Sibanye Gold, is planning to significantly increase production at the mine in Nye on the Stillwater River.

Faced with the already monumental task of assuring a safe tailings facility at the East Boulder Mine, this increased production at Nye means the company now wants to submit permitting for another tailings facility as well. That means permitting for two tailings facilities in the next year – one near the Stillwater River and one near the East Boulder River.

Why do tailings facilities matter?
Tailings are a byproduct of hard rock mining – the disintegrated leave-behind from extracting metals from ore rock. They are contaminated with chemicals from explosives and the mining process. Once tailings are separated from the valuable metals, they are stored in giant man-made dams, filled with water. In this circumstance, tailings become a very mobile sludge.

Tailings dams have breached at a frightening rate, causing environmental catastrophes second only to a nuclear detonation, and at times killing workers and people living in downstream communities.

At least 37 tailings facilities have failed since 2000, killing more than 400 people, wiping out communities, and damaging clean water sources. The most recent massive failure was in Israel on June 30, 2017, at Mishor Rotem.

Even when they don't fail, traditional tailings impoundments leak chemicals into surrounding groundwater which eventually reaches rivers and streams. Lining an impoundment slows the leak, but does not prevent it, as we have seen at both of Stillwater's mines, where leaks have been a persistent problem.

What can be done to make tailings safer?
Tailings are traditionally stored “wet,” where the tailings slurry is stored in a large man-made lake. There are other options for storage, however.

It is possible to compress or filter the water out of the tailings material in order to store it completely or partially dry. “Dry” tailings don’t have the potential to turn into a massive chemical mudslide should a dam fail, because it is no longer a mobile liquid. Drying tailings does increase costs, as employees are required to run the drying facility and place the dry tailings in the impoundment, and energy is required to dry the tailings material.

Our Good Neighbor Agreement Task Force will be advocating for the safest facility. We have already begun important first steps with the mine to make sure that no facilities are ever left “wet” after the mine closes, even though that is allowed by law. The end goal is to continue to find alternatives that work better for the community and protect our watersheds.

– Cameron Clevidence

Send us your clean energy videos, and win!

Clean energy innovation is alive in Montana, and we want to share that story! So we’re calling on YOU to share your story with us.

We’re seeking video submissions about clean energy projects.

Whether it’s your rooftop solar array or energy efficiency upgrades on your home or in your community, WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR ENERGY STORY!

Selected submissions will be entered to win $200 and will be shown this winter in towns across Montana during the Homegrown Energy Film Festival.

For more information, email sydney@northernplains.org or call 406-248-1154.

– Sydney Ausen

Northern Plains members travel the country, and REPRESENT!

Marguerite Jodry attended the Montana Cooperative Development Center (MCDC) Conference on behalf of Northern Plains and the Yellowstone Valley Food Hub project. The MCDC is a non-profit that helps promote and develop cooperatives through technical assistance and project planning, and its winter conference focused on both food and housing cooperatives.

Susann Beug, of Carbon County Resource Council and the Oil and Gas Task Force, traveled to Washington, D.C., with the Western Organization of Resource Councils in early July to testify in opposition to the EPA’s efforts to delay implementing methane pollution protections for two years. While in D.C., Sue also met with numerous Senate and Bureau of Land Management staffers to advocate for strong protections against methane pollution.

Ed Gulick of Billings traveled to Chicago in May to represent Northern Plains at the New Economy Coalition’s member gathering.

Northern Plains Chair Kate French attended the April 2017 “Decarbonizing our Future” conference hosted by the Sierra Club and Energy Foundation in New Orleans. She presented on how Northern Plains is working to study how many jobs could be supported in the clean-up of the leaking coal ash ponds and reclaiming the groundwater in Colstrip.

– Maggie Zaback

Stillwater Mining Company’s tailings impoundment in Nye.
COUNCIL ROUNDUP

Yellowstone Bend Citizens Council members kicked off the summer with a potluck at the home of Tom and Bonnie Murphy. More than 20 members gathered to share good food, drinks, and conversation.

YBCC’s committees are hard at work generating support for renewable energy in the Livingston area. YBCC is gearing up to launch the Yellowstone Bend Carbon Challenge (YBCC02) – a fun, community-wide challenge to educate residents about the many ways they can reduce their climate impact, from carpooling to energy efficiency upgrades!

YBCC is working with the Park County Senior Center to secure funding for a renewable energy installation and energy efficiency upgrades to the historic Senior Center building in downtown Livingston.

– Sydney Ausen

Cottonwood boosts food challenge

Cottonwood Resource Council kicked off the summer by raising awareness in Big Timber of the Montana Local Food Challenge. CRC members tabled at the Sweet Grass Fest in June and will host a July 31 potluck to kick off the Local Food Challenge in Big Timber.

CRC will host its annual Summer Picnic on August 13.

– Hannah Hostetter

Bear Creek couple win national award

Bear Creek Council will be hosting the Wild and Scenic Film Festival on Sept. 14 at Gardiner High School.

BCC President Nathan Varley and partner Linda Thurston will be traveling to Washington, D.C., this fall to accept an award from Defenders of Wildlife for their work on wildlife advocacy in the Gardiner Basin and Montana. BCC hosted a celebration of their award in Gardiner on July 17.

– Maggie Zaback

POCO up!

Thirteen Northern Plains members took the Principles of Community Organizing (POCO) training July 19-21 in Billings. It was offered by the Western Organization of Resource Councils. Front row from left are Leah Berry, Kate French, Beth Williams, Sydney Ausen, and Anne Kreder. Back row, Tom Tschida, Ken Decker, Katie Sutton, John Woodland, Maggie Zaback, and Emma Kerr-Carpenter. Not pictured are Heather Leach and Rachel Torres.
**Sleeping Giant run helps solar projects**

It’s that time of year again! The third annual Helena Sun Run – a 5K run and 1-mile walk/bicycle parade – is Saturday, Sept. 16.

The Sun Run is a group initiative of the Sleeping Giant Citizens Council, Helena Vigilante Runners, and a growing multitude of amazing co-sponsors. Funds raised place large solar arrays on community buildings, making Helena a model for innovative climate solutions and civic engagement.

This year all proceeds from the event will go to purchasing a solar array for Carroll College. The 2015 and 2016 Sun Runs benefited solar projects on the Lewis and Clark Library and the Holter Museum of Art.

You can sign up to participate in the Sun Run at https://runsignup.com/Race/MT/Helen/HelenaRun

— Adam Haight

**YVCC keeping tabs on Billings council**

Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council members celebrated the bounty of summertime at their annual Summer Celebration on July 16 at Bart and Emily Hannaman’s Blind Dog Ranch outside Laurel.

Close to 100 people came out for live music, a silent auction, horseback rides, and to explore the Hannamans’ farm where they raise chicken and pork for the local market. The menu featured meat from three local ranches and was paired with local beer. It was truly a highlight of the summer!

YVCC is launching a new campaign to advocate for a Climate Action Plan in Billings and for the City Council to sign onto the Paris Climate Accord.

Finally, YVCC will take part in Billings City Council and mayoral candidate forums in late August with a number of other community groups, including Forward Montana Foundation, Billings Kiwanis, and the Billings League of Women Voters.

— Alicia Pettys

**Dawson launches recycling campaign**

Dawson Resource Council members remain vigilant in their fight to protect land, air, and water from radioactive oil waste. Members continue to pressure the state to adopt protective rules addressing radioactive oil waste, and all signs point to progress. Stay tuned in the coming months for more news.

DRC members are ramping up their recycling campaign. The city of Glendive doesn’t maintain a recycling program, and the only recycling facility in town burned down in 2004. Those interested in keeping their plastic, cardboard, and aluminum out of the landfill have to haul it 75 miles to Miles City.

DRC members began developing the best recycling solution for Glendive. There’s more! DRC celebrated another year of hard work in June, at its annual Summer Picnic. Members and guests gathered along the Yellowstone to announce new officers, mark the passing of another year, and honor the life and memory of the late Dennis Getz. He will be deeply missed.

— Caitlin Cromwell

**Stillwater members prepare zone review**

Stillwater Protective Association members continue work on their citizen-initiated zoning proposal to protect landowners from the impacts of oil and gas development.

Members have focused on ensuring the signatures they collected for the petition will be accepted by the County Clerk and Recorder. They are also planning ahead for the public hearing that will be held once the signatures are verified.

The decision on whether to enact the zone will be made by the Stillwater County Commissioners following that hearing. The date for the hearing isn’t set, but it will likely happen in late August or early September. We encourage you to plan to attend, especially if you live in Stillwater County or the near the Beartooth Front!

For more information, email cameron@northernplains.org

— Cameron Clevidence

**Building leadership**

ABOVE: About 40 Northern Plains members and staff enjoy a picnic at Frank Day Park in Lewistown as part of a Leadership Retreat on June 24-25.

Discussions centered on organizing and building power in the Trump era, encouraging new leaders within affiliates, and the importance of knowing and practicing our Northern Plains brand so that members are on the same page with messaging.

AT LEFT: Retreat participants pose for a group photo.

**Beartooth Alliance gathers Aug. 22**

Beartooth Alliance will hold its Annual Meeting at 7 p.m. on August 22 at the Range Rider Lodge in Silver Gate.

Please join BA to celebrate the summer, re-elect officers, and reconnect.

— Maggie Zaback

**Council Roundup**

COUNCIL ROUNDUP
Are YOU up to the Challenge?

• This August, we’re challenging YOU to eat local foods every day.
• Sign up and take weekly challenges to win a $100 local food gift card

Take the Challenge online at MTlocalfoodchallenge.org

Visit our “whole farm” partners for local goodness: