

# THE PLAINS TRUTH

VOICE OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS RESOURCE COUNCIL

Volume 47, Issue 4, Fall 2018

## 2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION PREVIEW



- **Citizen Lobby  
“Days of Action”**
- **Country-of-Origin  
Labeling (COOL)**
- **Clean Energy**
- **Coal Ash  
Removal**

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## 47<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING



2018’s theme of **Defending Democracy** brings lively sessions, stories from our past, local food, entertainment, and best-selling author, humorist, and rabble-rousing populist Jim Hightower as our keynote speaker!

**Join us November 16-17**



Northern Plains Resource Council is a grassroots conservation and family agriculture group. Northern Plains organizes Montana citizens to protect our water quality, family farms, and unique quality of life.

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THE PLAINS TRUTH

*The Plains Truth* is published by Northern Plains Resource Council. Northern Plains members receive *The Plains Truth* as one of the benefits of membership.

Membership Dues

\$500+ Riders of the Big Sky,    \$50 Range Rider  
\$200 Bottom Line Rider,    \$40 General Member  
\$100 Rough Rider

Endowment

The Northern Plains Endowment is a permanent fund established to help sustain Northern Plains' work into the future. If you want to make a donation, a memorial gift, or a bequest to this fund, please contact the Northern Plains office.

Western Organization of Resource Councils

Northern Plains is a founding member of the Western Organization of Resource Councils. WORC is a regional network of eight grassroots community organizations that include 15,200 members in seven Western states. WORC helps its member groups succeed by providing training and coordinating regional issue campaigns. Visit [www.worc.org](http://www.worc.org)

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# TO THE MEMBERS

## Calling of our Northern Plains Family to the Annual Meeting

There must be some kind of way outta here  
Said the joker to the thief  
There's too much confusion  
I can't get no relief...

– Bob Dylan

**M**y daily news feed, arriving from a variety of sources over the past years, has filled my inbox with variations of the following headlines:



Trump's EPA rolls back Obama-era coal ash regulations; NEPA, the environmental law that gives you a voice, is under assault; Montana net metering customers are overpaid; Trump's EPA proposes to weaken standards that limit the venting and leaking of methane pollution; Trump Administration moves to replace Clean Power Plan; Farm Bill

supports profits for corporate agriculture while family agriculture struggles to survive; Presidential permit issued for Keystone XL Pipeline; PSC gives Northwestern Energy waiver.

The voice of Northern Plains has been one of clarity during these challenging times. You, the Grassroots Power of Northern Plains, sprang into action. You held the "Clean Power to the People" hearing in Billings to comment to the EPA on its proposal to repeal the Clean Power Plan. You wrote letters to the editor on a range of issues, you delivered petitions to our representatives in Congress, you held rallies, testified at hearings, and educated others on the issues. You are the voice of the people and you made the people's voice heard.

November is Annual Meeting time. It's the time that our Northern Plains Family from around the state comes together to celebrate our work. We give one another

strength and hope to carry on for the long haul. We energize through education.

I invite YOU to our 47th annual meeting, "Defending Democracy."

Friday, November 16th, features the Meeting of the Membership. Our affiliates and task forces report on their work on campaigns that include community solar, supporting local food movements, radioactive waste rules, a Mayor's Commission on energy and conservation, and more. I sometimes hear that members think Friday is just for those on the Board. Not true! It is a time to learn about the work your Northern Plains Family is doing, to glean ideas, to make connections with members, and to be inspired. You can vote on (and debate) policy resolutions that guide our work. Your voice is important!

Friday night is the first sharing of a meal together at the infamous Cowboy Supper, followed by the Theatre of the West, which showcases our amazing and talented members and staff. The evening is a gathering of family that's filled with fun, laughter, and love.

Saturday's sessions bring focus to our work, increase our understanding of issues, and offer opportunities for involvement. Topics include protecting our First Amendment rights, our Colstrip groundwater cleanup study, clean energy, and more.

I'm excited to introduce our keynote speaker, Jim Hightower. Jim is a Texas author of 7 books including *Thieves in High Places: They've Stolen Our Country And It's Time To Take It Back*. He is a progressive political activist and co-founded the Agribusiness Accountability Project, a public interest project focused on corporate power in the food economy. As the late political columnist Molly Ivins said, "If Will Rogers and Mother Jones had a baby, Jim Hightower would be that rambunctious child, mad as hell, with a sense of humor."

-Becky Mitchell



# PEOPLE OF THE PLAINS

## Tom Tschida's cravings for community, satisfied by food, family, & farming



**Tom Tschida at his family's farm and ranch, Nash Farms, in Carbon County**

**Y**oung people returning to the land, thriving small family farms, restaurants serving delicious local foods, and a strong clean energy economy: this is the vision for Montana that brought Tom Tschida back to Northern Plains.

Tom grew up in Montana and was introduced to Northern Plains while in high school in Gardiner. His mom Carol was a member of Bear Creek Council, which was fighting proposed mines in Paradise Valley. A Montana kid, Tom grew up outside, finding excitement and learning from the natural world around him. When he left the state after college, Montana had a hold on his heart.

Three years ago, Tom was living in California employed as a photographer for NASA. He found himself craving a connection to place and missing the unique quality of life that we enjoy in Montana. Tom's family had purchased a small farm outside of Bridger that he would visit frequently. "When I took vacation I could have traveled anywhere, but I always found myself wanting to return to help on the farm," said Tom. His relationship to the land and deep

connection to place – that's what drew Tom back to the farm year after year.

When Tom returned, he found his mom involved with Carbon County Resource Council in the middle of a campaign to seek protections for Carbon County residents facing oil and gas development. Tom started attending County Commission and Planning Board meetings with CCRC in their efforts to pass protections. As a member of CCRC, Tom heard a presentation from a fellow member of Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council about the efforts to start a local foods hub that would serve the Yellowstone Valley. Tom was hooked.

Tom now serves as vice chair of the committee of producers working to make the Yellowstone Valley Food Hub a reality. Asked why he's passionate about the food hub, Tom says, "I want to see my family's farm, and small family farms like it, exist into the future. Having a way to sell our product locally helps to ensure that existence. I have three nephews, and I want to see our family farm exist as a place for them to learn about this way of life, to get dirty, and see where their food comes from."

Tom believes in grassroots community organizing as a way to bring about his vision for Montana. In addition to being Vice Chair of the producers committee, Tom is Vice-Chair of Carbon County Resource Council. In both these roles, Tom is using the community organizing skills he learned through multiple trainings in Principles of Community Organizing. Tom found the love of place and the community he had been craving here at Northern Plains.

-Sydney Ausen 

# AGRICULTURE

## “Product of USA” isn’t what you think, and that’s not COOL

**W**hen Forsyth rancher Jean Lemire Dahlman goes to the grocery store and sees beef with a “Product of the USA” label, she has to fight the urge to warn other shoppers that their beef may not actually come from an American farm or ranch.

In 2006, the Food Safety Inspection Service (a department of the USDA) opened a loophole to allow any meat *packaged* in the U.S. to carry a “Product of USA” label. At the time, American ranchers (including Northern Plains members) were fighting for accurate Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) that would inform customers where their beef was born, raised, and slaughtered. Congress actually enacted a country-of-origin labeling law, but mandatory COOL labeling was undercut in 2013 by NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement).



**Montana ranchers are harmed by misleading “Product of USA” labels placed on beef that might be born and raised overseas.**

Dahlman says, “Imported meat labeled ‘Product of USA’ betrays American ranchers, rural communities, and consumers. Consumers deserve the right to choose, and ranchers deserve the right to an honest market. It is time to restore COOL.”

While the opportunity to reinstate COOL is still in question under NAFTA – now called the US, Mexico, Canada Agreement – local opportunities for *placarding* could give consumers transparency at the supermarket more immediately.

“Packers profiting at our expense by labeling imported beef ‘Product of USA’ is fraud,” said Lewistown rancher Peter Mickelsen, who has been fighting for COOL for over a decade. “Restoring COOL gives consumers what they want and creates a fair market for our product.”

Mickelsen and Dahlman are working together with Northern Plains to take a COOL placarding bill to the 2019 Montana legislature. They aim ultimately to challenge the federal “Product of USA” loophole. To get involved, contact [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org) or call (406) 248-1154.

-Maggie Zaback 

## Montana delegation tours Carolina coal ash sites

*“You have to haul it out of there.”*

*- Mike Hager, former North Carolina Speaker of the House, pointing to coal ash removal as the only permanent solution to groundwater pollution.*

In 2014, a pipe underneath a coal ash pond in North Carolina burst and spilled 39,000 tons of coal ash waste into the Dan River. Within 2 years, the North Carolina state legislature passed a law mandating the removal of high risk coal ash impoundments within five years. The law mobilized the nation’s first, large-scale coal ash removal projects and spread the practice around the region.

The Colstrip Power Plant’s ash pond complex is one of the largest in the nation, totaling 837 surface acres. The Montana DEQ will decide on a long-term closure plan within the coming year.

Curious about what Montana can learn from these projects, Northern Plains organized a tour of coal ash reclamation sites in North and South Carolina this October 2-5th. The group included organized labor, Montana DEQ, Montana Department of Commerce, two Montana community colleges, a retired Colstrip worker, and two active state legislators.



**Riverbend, NC coal ash excavation site.**



**Northern Plains staff and Montana delegates take in a presentation from North Carolina DEQ.**

Our group toured active ash removal sites at coal-fired plants in North and South Carolina and sat through a candid, two-hour discussion with the North Carolina DEQ. We finished by touring a recycling facility that has received nationwide acclaim.

Plant executives and regulators impressed on us that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Coal ash ponds pose many problems. The material forms a heavy, dark sludge that’s hard to move without dewatering first. For most ponds, the ash sits down close to the water table where heavy metals leach into surrounding waterways.

Mike Hager, former NC Speaker of the House representing the district where the Dan River Spill happened, drove home a recurring theme that removing the ash is the first step. Another key challenge comes in finding what to do with the ash once it’s moved. One site built a class 3 landfill close by the original landfill. Another put it in an old brick mine for long-term storage.

-Alex Cunha 

# LOCAL FOOD

## Thank you for building the Yellowstone Valley Food Hub



**Annika Charter-Williams, interim chair of the Food Hub board, speaking at the Chef's Dinner fundraising event this past August.**

**A** tip of the hat to the Northern Plains community for all of your support of the Yellowstone Valley Food Hub!

Because of you, we have met our initial fundraising goal and hired a General Manager. With a goal to launch in the New Year, we'll have an update for you and introduce the new General Manager in the next Plains Truth. Stay tuned!

## Local Food Challenge increases engagement in local food

**T**he third annual Montana Local Food Challenge wrapped up at the end of August with high participation numbers and engagement in the weekly challenges. We saw 152 new participants in 2018.

Weekly challenges included:

- Buy directly from a producer
- Use a part of an animal or vegetable you've never used before
- Ask a business to carry local food
- Go zero food waste for one week
- Submit a local food recipe

Janet Peterson from Red Lodge was drawn as the winner of a \$250 local food gift card.



Thanks to all of you who took part in the 2018 Local Food Challenge! Montana's local food economy continues to grow because of your interest and participation. Northern Plains' Ag Task Force is already planning for the 2019 Challenge to be bigger and better than ever!

-Caroline Canarios 

# OIL & GAS

## Slow and steady towards fracking fairness

**W**hat do you do when oil and gas drilling is proposed for your land? For many landowners, the answers to this question are complex and hard to find. What's the going rate for a lease? Who should I talk to? Do I have a say? And perhaps most important: how do I ensure that my water is protected?

One of the best ways landowners can protect themselves is by getting a baseline water test done. While it doesn't actually prevent contamination, establishing a baseline is necessary if you want to link the drilling or fracking operations on your property to specific chemicals that may show up in your water afterward.

But if you suspect your well water has been polluted, what exactly do you test for in order to prove damages? Different companies use different combinations of chemicals to frack. And, until this fall, oil and gas companies could simply disclose the generic or trade names for fracking fluid – names like “SlickFrac 2000.”



**Northern Plains member Deborah Hanson testifies before the Board of Oil & Gas on their proposed fracking chemical disclosure rule.**

There's good news, though. Thanks to September rule-making at Montana's Board of Oil & Gas Conservation (BOGC), oil and gas companies now have to disclose the specific chemical ingredients being used for fracking.

Prompted by a lawsuit by Earthjustice, the Montana Environmental Information Center, and Natural Resources Defense Council, the BOGC proposed changes to our state's existing laws around fracking chemical disclosure.

What else is different about how fracking chemicals get disclosed? Companies are now required to disclose their fracking chemicals before and after fracking, not just after. Finally, the process by which companies request to keep their chemicals “trade secrets” is more rigorous. Oil and gas companies will now have to provide justification for why they need that status, or evidence that their chemicals are not already public in another state. While we fundamentally disagree with the existence of trade secrets for fracking chemicals in general, these changes are major steps along the path toward full transparency.

However, the new fracking chemical disclosure rules reflect one important failure: the BOGC opted not to include a requirement specifying when pre-fracking disclosure must be made.

Northern Plains members had pushed the BOGC to require disclosure of chemicals at least 45 days in advance of fracking – a window that would give landowners enough time to get their water tested for the exact list of chemicals (or good indicators for those chemicals) planned for use on their property. Certified lab testing for the specific chemicals being used is what gives you the legal tools you need for recourse against any company that pollutes your well.

This round of rule-making has ended, but there is no shortage of opportunities to push for transparency and increased protection for water. Stay tuned! Northern Plains will let you know about the next opportunity to speak out for protections against oil and gas development.

-Caitlin Cromwell 

# CLEAN ENERGY

## Keeping PACE in Montana

The energy that's the cheapest is the energy we don't use. Energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades to buildings conserve energy and save property owners money. Still, the upfront costs pose a barrier for many of Montanans.

At Northern Plains, we have a solution to overcome this financing gap so that we can save money, conserve energy, and create jobs – Commercial Property-Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE).



**Small businesses across Montana could save money and energy if C-PACE were implemented.**

C-PACE is an innovative energy efficiency financing tool that allows commercial property owners to obtain 100% upfront financing to make meaningful energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation upgrades to businesses, multi-family housing, agricultural properties, and more. C-PACE will allow property owners to pay back the cost of those upgrades as an assessment on the property's annual tax bill.

C-PACE allows local banks to fund upgrades such as new HVAC systems, LED lighting retrofits, solar installations, with financing attached to the property through a lien, not a loan to the property owner. When the ownership of the property changes hands, the assessment stays with the property and the new owner takes over repayment.

C-PACE establishes that clean energy improvements serve a public purpose and allows us to finance these upgrades just like we do streetlights, parks, sidewalks – as an assessment on our property tax bill. Assessment financing has been used in the United States for decades to fund improvements to private properties that meet a public purpose. Saving energy while creating jobs is such a purpose.

Montanans of all walks of life support C-PACE because it's a solution to save money, create good-paying local jobs, drive economic development, and fight climate change.

C-PACE is an all-around win for Montana, but it will need public support to become a reality. We need you to join our movement for a cheaper, cleaner energy future in Montana!

- If you are a business owner who wants to save money on your utility bills and grow your business – C-PACE will benefit you.
- If you are a contractor who wants to create more local jobs – C-PACE will help you.
- If you are a community member who wants to see your downtown thrive – C-PACE will help that happen.

C-PACE is a real solution for a brighter energy future in Montana. Contact [sydney@northernplains.org](mailto:sydney@northernplains.org) to join the effort!

-Sydney Ausen 

# KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

## All eyes on Nebraska

All eyes are on Nebraska, where a lawsuit against the new Keystone XL route will continue in November. Because TransCanada failed to actually apply for a permit for the route the Public Service Commission eventually approved, landowners along the approved route were left out of the permitting process.

In the meantime, this key Nebraska state permit could be negated another way, depending on the outcome of this November's election. The Public Service Commission's open District 1 seat could flip the previous 3-2 decision which approved the pipeline permit. Candidate Christa Yoakum, in announcing her candidacy, said she is "concerned about the environmental impact [of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline and] even more troubled by the lack of due process for landowners in the most recent proposal. People should not have their land taken away for the interest of a for-profit, international corporation. Renewable energy provides the clearest path for a brighter environmental and economic future."

Source: *Lincoln Journal Star*, 1-16-18

And in June, a husband and wife who don't want the proposed Keystone XL pipeline to run through their Nebraska farm have deeded a plot of their land over to a Native American tribe, creating a potential roadblock for the project. Art and Helen Tanderup, who attended Northern Plains' rally in Great Falls in May, signed over a 1.6-acre plot of land to the Ponca Indian Tribe on Sunday. The Ponca enjoy special legal status as a federally recognized tribe.



**KXL Rally preceding Great Falls hearing last May.**

-Olivia Stockman Splinter



## The Alberta Tar Sands: where KXL's destruction begins

The Alberta Tar Sands underlie the Northern Boreal Forest in Alberta. This isn't really oil, but a mixture of sand, clay, water, and a tarry substance termed "bitumen." Bitumen coal is a crude form of hydrocarbon molecules historically used to manufacture asphalt and roofing material.

Since the worldwide depletion of liquid oil reserves beginning in the 1960s, the industry has turned to the more expensive (and environmentally devastating) practice of extracting tar sands from vast open pits. The process involves complete deforestation and scraping away of the soil to get at the bitumen coal beneath it.

Extracting bitumen demands immense amounts of water to transform it into sludge. The entire process of extracting, upgrading, and refining one gallon of gasoline from tar sands requires 5.9 gallons of fresh water, a finite resource.

Surface mining creates toxic storage ponds of up to 30 square miles, some of the largest man-made structures on the planet. They are horrific scenes of devastation on lands that were once great forests.

Pipelines that carry diluted bitumen have experienced numerous leaks and ruptures. When that happens, bitumen presents a harder cleanup task than oil, in part because of the natural gas condensates (benzene, toluene, hexane) added to the bitumen sludge to allow it to flow through a pipe.

As Northern Plains continues to keep the Keystone XL pipeline from transporting this dirty bitumen across our heartland, we must also fight to protect the integrity of the Boreal Forest. It's arguably the largest carbon sink on Planet Earth, and something we can't afford to lose.

-Metta RavenHeart  
Keystone XL Task Force



# KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

## KXL: a legal timeline

### MARCH 2017

Northern Plains leads lawsuit against TransCanada and U.S. State Dept. challenging the Presidential Permit for Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, which was based on a stale and insufficient Environmental Impact Statement.

### OCTOBER 2017

Our lawsuit withstands TransCanada and Government's motion to dismiss.

### MAY 2018

Oral arguments on our case in Great Falls, Montana.

### AUGUST 2018

Judge Morris rules on one claim in the lawsuit, mandating a new supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, particularly due to the route change in Nebraska. (Note: keep an eye on your email for guidance on submitting public comment into this record, which is open until November 8.)

### SEPTEMBER 2018

Additional lawsuits regarding Keystone XL are filed in the same court – one from ACLU, one from The Rosebud Sioux, Fort Belknap Indian Community, and Gros Ventre tribes.

### NOVEMBER 2018

Rulings expected on the remaining claims in our lawsuit.

### FEBRUARY 2019

TransCanada's stated start of construction in Montana.

# 2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

## Protecting our land, water, and democracy depends on you!

Organizing citizens to participate in the Montana legislature has been a central activity for Northern Plains since our beginning, and we'll be busy again this session. We are building momentum to pass proactive bills and are tracking other legislation – both good and bad – to be ready to support or to fight. Our success in protecting our land, water, and democracy, however, depends on you!



**Northern Plains chair Becky Mitchell lobbying in Helena in 2017.**

One of the proactive bills that we're working on would require thorough cleanup of the coal ash ponds at Colstrip that leak millions of gallons of pollution into the region's groundwater each year. Such top-notch remediation would protect the water quality for residents and area landowners and provide jobs to help Colstrip transition to its post-power plant future.

The second bill we are advancing would re-instate a Montana Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) program for meat to give consumers the information they need to buy 100% American beef and support Montana producers. Third, we are building on our experience in the 2017 session to pass a bill to create a Property-Assessed Clean Energy program for commercial properties (or "C-PACE"). C-PACE would enable business owners to finance clean energy and efficiency renovations that will save them money, create jobs, and spur the growth of renewable energy.

In addition to our proactive bills, we anticipate working on good bills that would improve net-metering policies

for utility customers who install solar or wind generation on their properties, as well as legislation to encourage community solar projects, make large renewable energy projects more viable, and to protect Montana landowners, communities, and water quality from radioactive oilfield waste disposal.

Of course, for every good bill we work on, there will be many more bad bills that threaten to weaken water quality standards and environmental protections, undermine existing water rights, and subvert our democratic rights. We anticipate fighting a handful of bills that would criminalize protesting pipelines and other energy infrastructure, and we will be vigilant in defending our ability to participate in the decisions that affect Montanan's health, land, and water.

But whether we are working to clean up Colstrip, promote Montana agriculture, spur on the clean energy revolution, or defend our democracy, our success depends on you! There are many ways to participate:

- Read the legislative email bulletins and action alerts
- Sign up to be part of a phone tree to call legislators on important votes
- Sign up to receive action alert text messages
- Come to Helena!

We plan to hold at least two "Days of Action" and weekly citizen Lobby Days. Contact me - [cody@northernplains.org](mailto:cody@northernplains.org) - to get involved.

-Cody Ferguson



**Get ready for the legislature! Citizen lobbying is central to how we make change but it can be intimidating. This year we're kicking off the Annual Meeting with a workshop that will get you trained up and feeling confident to track down legislators in Helena and lobby them on the bills we support and oppose.**

**Join us at the Annual Meeting for this engaging, informative, and fun workshop!  
Friday Nov. 16, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM**

# DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

## Trump puts fossil fuels above the public interest, health, and planet

On August 21, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued its proposed Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) Rule replacing the Obama-Era Clean Power Plan. The Clean Power Plan was designed to reduce carbon dioxide pollution from power plants to curb greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

While the Clean Power Plan was focused on the fight against climate change, its benefits went far beyond that strategy. The EPA estimated in 2015 that the plan would have net economic benefits of between \$25 and \$45 billion per year by 2030 by preventing up to 150,000 asthma attacks among children and up to 6,600 premature deaths per year by reducing smog and soot.

Soon after President Trump was inaugurated, however, he announced his intention to “review” the plan – and most observers expected that the Clean Power Plan’s days were numbered. This August, the EPA announced its replacement. The Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) Rule has nothing to do with clean energy. It sets no quantifiable pollution targets and is limited to only heat-rate improvements at coal fired power plants. It does not address pollution from natural gas plants, which produce roughly 25% of all greenhouse gas pollution within the energy sector.

Not quite a month later, the Trump administration rescinded the 2016 Bureau of Land Management Methane Waste Prevention Rule. This practical rule would have required natural gas producers to fix leaks and stop the flaring and venting in their operations that result in the release of roughly 180,000 tons of methane gas to the atmosphere – the second largest industrial contributor to climate change in the United States.

This wasted methane – enough to power more than 6 million households each year – means that taxpayers lose

out on more than \$32 million in royalty payments to federal and state governments. The rule was the product of years of grassroots work supported by Northern Plains and other WORC member groups. It included multiple listening sessions and hearings and it generated 330,000

public comments. Trump’s move rolls back requirements which some oil and gas companies had already begun to meet through leak prevention and replacing faulty equipment.

These are just two of the many tangible ways in which the Trump administration is systematically dismantling necessary and common-sense standards aimed at improving

efficiency, preventing waste of the public’s natural resources, protecting public health, and combating climate change. Trump’s desire to undo Obama’s legacy is often cited as the animus behind such actions, but we cannot forget that Trump has filled key agency and cabinet positions with ex-energy industry executives and advocates – former EPA chief Scott Pruitt and his successor Andrew Wheeler are prime examples. To a degree that we have not experienced in modern history, the proverbial “foxes” are guarding the hen house.

The only check on such apparent corruption is the steadfast vigilance of citizens – folks like you – who pay attention, ask hard questions, organize, and challenge the subversion of the public’s interest at every step. We’ve gotten pretty good at it over the years, and your help makes us stronger. There are many additional ways you can get involved – writing letters to the editor, showing up at public hearings, calling or meeting with your legislators, attending a rally or protest, and more. Contact Cody Ferguson at Northern Plains to find out how: [cody@northernplains.org](mailto:cody@northernplains.org) or (406) 248-1154.

-Cody Ferguson 



# 2018 ANNUAL MEETING

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## What you need to know

**A** year of growth, big wins, and hard work marks 2018 for all of us in Northern Plains. This year, we will gather again to celebrate the year's successes and take a hard look forward at the work of defending democracy in 2019.

Our bylaws define the Annual Meeting as a time to conduct Northern Plains' business. It's your best opportunity to help steer Northern Plains through the coming year, and to adopt resolutions on important public policy questions. The Annual Meeting is also a time to get to know one another better, learning together from our speakers and programs, and socializing with fellow members. If you're not able to make it for all the fun, you can register for individual sessions.

Join us for the one time a year that our membership comes together for a weekend of fun, fellowship, and learning!

### Meeting of the Membership

On Friday afternoon, Northern Plains' membership is invited to come together in the annual "Meeting of the Membership." Being a member means you have the right to vote on policy resolutions at this meeting that help guide Northern Plains' work in the year ahead. Because policy resolutions undergo many changes during the course of debate, you must be present in order to vote.

### Brochure and Election Ballot

The slate of candidates put forward by the Nominations Committee will appear on a ballot mailed to each member whose dues are current. There is also space for write-ins. The seats you can vote on include officers and at-large delegates.

### Silent Auction Items

Can you contribute to this year's Annual Meeting auction?

- Homemade foodstuffs... Yum!
- Products or services from your business!
- Items you've made with your own hands!
- Vacation stays and memory-making experiences!

If you can donate an item, PLEASE LET US KNOW AHEAD OF TIME. Even if you can't get the item here until the Annual Meeting, please give us advance notice (by November 9 would be real nice!) Thank you!

Remember that the purpose of our auction is to strengthen Northern Plains' work in the year ahead. We all appreciate whatever help you can give to make it a success! If you have something to donate, please contact Karen at (406) 248-1154, or email [karen@northernplains.org](mailto:karen@northernplains.org).

### Something New: Childcare Available

This year, we will have childcare available in the Northern Hotel. Interested? Contact Claire at (406)248-1154 or email [claire@northernplains.org](mailto:claire@northernplains.org).

### Bring your dancin' shoes

Cap off the meeting with in-house DJ and former Chair, Kate French, on the dance floor Saturday night!

### Cowboy Supper

Join local affiliate, Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council, on Friday evening at Billings First Congregational Church for their annual Cowboy Supper!

-Claire Overholt 

# 2018 ANNUAL MEETING

## Populist firebrand Jim Hightower to deliver keynote speech



**Author, commentator, and humorist  
Jim Hightower**

For decades now, Jim Hightower has been spreading his populist message via books, newsletters, radio programs, and television shows. A delightfully cantankerous rebel by nature, Hightower brings wit, humor, and an earthy sense of well-earned outrage to his many pursuits. He also brings a passion for politics, though he scoffs at the usual dividing lines of *right vs. left* preferring to frame the debate as *top vs. bottom*.

Hightower comes by his attitude of applying common-sense for the good of common people honestly. He was twice elected the Texas Agriculture Commissioner and co-founded the Agribusiness Accountability Project that worked to address the rise of corporate power in the food economy. Despite the success of his newsletter, *The Hightower Lowdown*, and his best-selling books such as *Thieves in High Places* and *There's Nothing in the Middle of the Road But Yellow Stripes and Dead Armadillos*, Hightower hasn't strayed from the down-home values he acquired growing up around working people and farmers in Denison, Texas. He's also retained the plainspoken humor of a man who's probably had to scrape more than a few cow patties off his boots.

Hightower will bring his free-wheeling, grassroots politics to our Annual Meeting where he will deliver the keynote speech at 11 AM, November 17. Don't miss it!

-Dustin Ogdin



### ANNUAL MEETING DEADLINES

#### October 31

Nominations due for Bob Tully and Mary Donohoe awards. Contact Caleb at (406) 248-1154 or email [caleb@northernplains.org](mailto:caleb@northernplains.org). Please include your reasons for making your nomination.

#### November 9

Last day for Early-Bird Registration (\$109). Register early and save money! Call Northern Plains at (406) 248-1154, email [karen@northernplains.org](mailto:karen@northernplains.org), or register online at [www.northernplains.org](http://www.northernplains.org).

#### November 15

Election ballots must be returned to Northern Plains' office. **BALLOTS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING.**

#### Resolutions

**NOTE: The deadline to submit resolutions to the Resolutions Committee has passed. If you wish to introduce a resolution at the Annual Meeting, the members present need to vote to add it to the meeting agenda. You also need to bring enough copies of your draft resolution so that everyone can have one to reference during debate.**

# 2018 ANNUAL MEETING

## Schedule

**SOMETHING NEW!** We will feature a number of “flash talks,” short presentations on specific topics, throughout typical full-length sessions this year.

### Friday, November 16, 2018

- 9:30-11:30** Legislative Workshop: Citizen Lobbyist Training
- 12:00** Registration Opens
- 1:00** Meeting of the Membership
- 5:00-6:30** Reception with Jim Hightower (*off-site & extra charge*)
- 6:00** Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council Cowboy Supper
- 8:00** Theatre of the West!

### Saturday, November 17, 2018

- 8:00** Registration Opens
- 8:30** Opening Remarks
- 8:45-9:30** Session 1: Blast From the Past
- 9:30-10:00** Session 2: Good Neighbor Agreement, Still Going Strong
- 10:00-10:15** Break
- 10:15-11:00** Session 3: Montana’s Clean Energy Future
- 11:00-12:00** Keynote Speech: Jim Hightower
- 12:00-1:15** Luncheon (and awards)
- 1:15-1:30** Flash Talk 1: The Yellowstone Valley Food Hub, Moving Forward
- 1:30-2:45** Session 4: Colstrip Two-Part Session
  - Part 1:** Challenges Facing King Coal
  - Part 2:** Doing It Right: Remediation and Colstrip’s Future
- 2:45-3:00** Break
- 3:00-3:15** Flash Talk 2: Where’s the Beef... From? (Country-of-Origin Labeling)
- 3:15-4:30** Session 5: Suppression of Legal Protest: Keystone XL Pipeline and Beyond
- 4:30-4:45** Flash Talk 3: Soil Health: What, Why, and How?
- 4:45-5:00** Children’s Feature
- 5:00** Social Hour
- 6:00** Northern Plains Rendezvous & Banquet
- 7:00** Silent Auction Section 1 closes
- 7:30** Silent Auction Section 2 closes
- 7:45** Annual Meeting closing & adjournment
- 9:00 or so** **Celebration time!** Join Kate French as she DJs music to dance to and enjoy!

*Schedule subject to change.*

# DEEPENING OUR ROOTS

## HELP US STAY ON THE ROAD!

**Trading up your vehicle? If you're looking for a good home for your other roadworthy car, consider donating it to Northern Plains.**

Our staff need to drive all over Montana and some of our staff cars have a lot of miles on them. ("Queenie," our silver Subaru, is at 285,000.)

We're not looking for cars to sell, but rather cars for our staff to use!

Your donated car would need to be safe, roadworthy, and reasonably economical. All-wheel drive is a plus, since our people drive on a lot of country roads at all times of the year.

**Call Caleb at the office, (406) 248-1154, if you have any questions or are considering such a gift. Thank you!**

## BECOME A SUSTAINING MEMBER

**Are you ready to deepen your commitment to Northern Plains? Become a sustaining member!**

Monthly sustainers are very special to Northern Plains. With your monthly gift through either your bank account or credit card, you will:

- Provide consistent support for Northern Plains throughout the year
- Help sustain our work for the long term
- Plus, you never have to get a renewal letter again!

**To sign up as a monthly sustainer contact Claire Overholt at (406) 248-1154 or email [claire@northernplains.org](mailto:claire@northernplains.org).**

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PUT NORTHERN PLAINS IN MY WILL?

**Your will is a directive you make about how your estate should be handled. It is revocable – you can change your mind at any time about how to distribute your estate.**

**It's also a legal document that must pass legal muster. Your attorney can help you make sure your plans follow the law and help you clarify your intentions.**

**And there are ways to make a bequest without involving your attorney.**

**We'd be happy to send you a brochure with more information. Just contact Steve and he'll put one in the mail to you.**

**Phone (406) 248-1154**

**Email [steve@northernplains.org](mailto:steve@northernplains.org)**

# HOMEGROWN PROSPERITY

## New NAFTA, New Challenges

The North American Free Trade Agreement may be getting a new name, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's getting any better for farmers and ranchers.



**Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) did not make it into “NAFTA 2.0,” the U.S., Mexico, and Canada Agreement.**

September 29 marked the final negotiations for the newly named U.S., Mexico, and Canada Agreement (USMCA), or NAFTA 2.0. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer has boasted of advantages for dairy farmers, wheat farmers, and labor. Upon closer look, however, farmers and workers are just getting crumbs compared to the economic advantages conceded to multi-national corporations in this deal.

While many details have yet to be finalized, a few things are clear: the boasted benefits may not be as great as they sound. American dairy farmers are getting an increase of 2.6% in access to the Canadian market. However, the entire Canada dairy market is smaller than the market in the state of Wisconsin alone. Similarly, U.S. wheat producers will earn greater access to the Canada consumer market, but Canada is already a net exporter of wheat, which begs the question of whether there is additional demand for wheat in Canada. Still, this may provide some growth and opportunities for American wheat producers.

In theory, trade will make prices lower for consumers, and as a result, will push prices down for farmers and ranchers. More recently, prices have gone down for producers, but prices haven't gone down for consumers; meanwhile the concentrated middlemen (multi-national agribusinesses) continue to pocket record-breaking profits off the backs of both producers and consumers.

The biggest lost opportunity was that Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) was not included in the USMCA. The big packers still have the ability to manipulate markets through cross-border movement of cattle.

While new opportunities may be limited, there is one big win in the USMCA: a phase-out of ISDS. Investor State Dispute Settlement – a provision included in NAFTA and other major trade agreements – has long allowed corporations to sue foreign governments for enacting laws that may affect their “expected future profits.” ISDS will purportedly be phased out entirely with Canada in the next three years, while special exceptions in Mexico were made for oil and gas interests.

-Maggie Zaback 

# GAINING GROUND

## Permanent Paradise?

Given his efforts to open some of the country's most treasured public lands to mining – spaces including Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante – Ryan Zinke is not known for his conservationist bona fides. Montanans should be grateful, however, that the Secretary of the Interior has a soft spot for (or future political aspirations within) his home state. On October 8, Zinke declared the public minerals in Paradise Valley off limits to mining for twenty years, the maximum amount of time allowed for mineral leasing withdrawal.

Knowing these 30,000 acres just north of Yellowstone National Park will be protected for two decades is a huge relief for the many small business owners whose livelihoods depend on clean water and unspoiled landscapes to support the world-class outdoor recreation that defines Montana. The farmers and ranchers whose properties stretch from Livingston to Gardiner on either side of the Yellowstone River – not to mention those much further downstream – can also rest more easily knowing their irrigated water is less threatened from mining-related pollutants.

This twenty-year withdrawal is great news, no doubt. Let's hope, however, that Zinke's action doesn't provide an out for lawmakers who have the power to provide permanent protections. Grassroots efforts reached a milestone on that front recently, a major turning point in a story that began eighteen months ago.

In April of 2017, Senator Jon Tester introduced the Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act to provide Paradise Valley permanent protection from mineral leasing. In December of 2017, Representative Greg Gianforte introduced a House version of the bill.

Senator Steve Daines, however, simply sat on his hands, doing nothing with the bill despite serving on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee (which is responsible for bringing forward legislation of this type). The ball was squarely in Daines' court for well over a year, but he chose to sit the bench.



**Sunset in Emigrant, MT, within Paradise Valley.**

After an aggressive grassroots awareness campaign by Northern Plains which followed the longstanding grassroots work by businesses in the region, Senator Daines finally advanced Tester's bill out of his committee in early October. The week prior, Gianforte had moved the House version out of the House Committee on Natural Resources.

At this point, the bill needs passage on the full House and Senate floors before it can be signed into law.

On the day Zinke announced his twenty-year withdrawal, Senator Daines claimed partial credit and issued a press release saying, "Some places are just too special to mine, and the Paradise Valley and Gardiner Basin near Yellowstone, is one of them." Despite his inexplicably long delay in getting legislation out of his own committee, one can only hope that statement is sincere.

Our bipartisan delegation should continue to push for final passage of Senator Tester's Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act. Montanans need more than a brief flash of support, we want to keep Paradise Valley's recreation and agriculture viable forever.

-Dustin Ogdin 

# COUNCIL ROUNDUP

## DRC launches recycling program

In September, Dawson Resource Council members held Glendive's first-ever cardboard recycling drive. We invited the community of Glendive to come recycle their cardboard and they did it in a big way! We filled five trailers with cardboard that were delivered to Miles City for recycling (instead of ending up in the landfill).

Our next recycling drive is on Monday, October 22, from 4:30 to 6:30 at the Eastern Plains Event Center (EPEC).

In August, DRC met with Senator Jon Tester's chief of staff, and briefed him on issues affecting family farmers and ranchers, the Keystone XL pipeline, the radioactive oil waste landfills popping up across eastern Montana, and more.

-Caitlin Cromwell 



**Dawson Resource Council members partnered with volunteers and organizations from around Glendive to pull off last month's cardboard drive.**

## CCRC focuses on community-based solutions



Carbon County Resource Council held the first-ever Red Lodge Soil-to-Sun Eco Fair this September. Members put together this community event to highlight the city's recently completed Energy Conservation Plan. It focused on several community-based solutions identified in the plan to conserve energy and provide savings for the city – composting, recycling, and clean energy.

CCRC invited other community groups working on these issues to table at the event, share resources, and gather public support and input. Event attendees were eligible to win several great composting raffle prizes, including "do it yourself" compost tumbler kits!

-Sydney Ausen 

## Beartooth Alliance talks sustainability in park

Beartooth Alliance's Annual Meeting in August hosted Dylan Hoffman, Director of Sustainability for Xanterra, the concessionaire at Yellowstone National Park. Xanterra is developing a world-class sustainability plan for guests in the park that includes using furniture made of mountain pine beetle lumber, stopping the sale of disposable water bottles, sourcing local food, and updating buildings for energy efficiency.

-Maggie Zaback 



**BA discussed sustainability strategies in Yellowstone.**

# COUNCIL ROUNDUP

## Yellowstone Bend celebrates another year!



**The Park County Senior Center solar array being installed, a project in partnership with YBCC.**

Members of Yellowstone Bend Citizens Council gathered in September to celebrate another year of working to bring more clean energy opportunity to the Livingston area. There were many accomplishments to celebrate!

This year YBCC was successful in our campaign to get the City of Livingston and Park County to invest in an EnergyCorps service member. This person will help to chart a path toward long-term energy conservation policies in the area. In the last year, YBCC partnered with the Park County Senior Center on a solar installation on the roof at the center. This installation will help reduce the utility bills for the center and the low-income residents residing there.

With another great year behind us, members are excited to plan for the year ahead. At the annual meeting, members discussed additional ideas for implementing long-term sustainability planning in the Livingston area.

-Sydney Ausen 

## BCC connects Yellowstone River users through Film Fest

At the 4th annual Gardiner Wild and Scenic Film Festival, the Yellowstone River was the star of the show. And for good reason, too – gold mine projects proposed near Gardiner could have a significant impact on the headwaters of the Yellowstone River if they are further developed. Bear Creek Council reached all 120 film fest attendees with an inclusive message of how water quality affects us all, and emphasized Northern Plains' role in connecting all these diverse interests together.

-Makenna Sellers 



**Film still from *The Shape of a River*, screened at the Gardiner Wild and Scenic Film Festival.**

## MAPO co-hosts Fall Bounty Benefit



**Peggy Ames-Nerud provided a fresh voice of stewardship to the BOGC.**

McCone Agricultural Protection Organization members got together in Glendive with neighboring Dawson Resource Council on September 22 for the Fall Bounty Benefit, a meal and auction to raise money for both affiliates. No one left empty-handed!

Member Peggy Ames-Nerud steps down from the Board of Oil and Gas this month, after serving as the public representative to that board. She brought a voice of reason, collaboration, fairness, and stewardship of the land and water to a board that had a history of open collaboration with the oil and gas industry. Thank you Peggy!

-Olivia Stockman Splinter 

# COUNCIL ROUNDUP

## YVCC preps for Cowboy Supper, pushes for energy conservation



**Attendees enjoying the Cowboy Supper in 2016.**

Billings residents and organizations to add their names to our sign-on letter demonstrating public support for energy conservation. To add your name to the letter showing your support for energy conservation, contact Caroline at [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org).

Calling all volunteers! Our membership is busy planning for our biggest fundraiser of the year, the Cowboy Supper. We would love to have you join our volunteer team to set up, sell raffle tickets, or help with cleanup on Friday, November 16th. If cooking is more your style, we are looking to add great stews, corn bread, salads, and desserts to the menu. Come see what all the fuss is about and get to know fellow Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council members. Call Caroline at the Northern Plains office, (406) 248-1154 to sign up (or email [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org)).

The Better Billings Sustainability Committee continues working to re-establish an Energy and Conservation Commission for the City of Billings. We are asking

-Caroline Canarios



## CMRC busy with outreach



**Joanne Berry, Lewistown resident and CMRC member, gives solar power a “thumbs up.” This solar panel powered a fan that helped cool attendees of the Chokecherry Festival.**

In August, Central Montana Resource Council held our fifth annual Dinner in the Garden at CMRC's GreenShare Garden. The dinner raises funds for our supplies and garden materials over the next year and allows us to keep donating delicious, healthy produce to local Lewistown organizations like the Community Cupboard and the Fergus County Council on Aging.

CMRC members tabled at Lewistown's Chokecherry Festival on September 8, passing out free ice water to highlight the clean, abundant Madison Aquifer. CMRC also set up a solar-powered cooling fan for festival attendees! We were proud to talk with people from central Montana about the work we do to promote clean energy and protect clean water.

-Caitlin Cromwell



# COUNCIL ROUNDUP

## CRC members seek solar array for high school



**CRC members capitalize on new interest for a solar installation at Sweet Grass County high school.**

Cottonwood Resource Council members have sought for several years to get a solar array installed on the Sweet Grass County High School, but with little success. Recently, a new high school principal and new teachers have shown interest in moving forward with the project. Sam Spector, the Head Custodian and a CRC member, met with John Palm from Bozeman Green Build to inspect the building and grounds. Sam and John, joined by John Baxter, a CRC member and student at the high school, presented the project to the school board on October 9. The School Board voted to move forward with applying for a grant from Northwestern Energy. Sam and John will be working together to get the grant application submitted by the October 31 deadline.

-Mikindra Morin 

## SGCC makes conservation gains

In August, Sleeping Giant Citizens Council held a forum for action at the Lewis and Clark Library. More than 30 members self-identified SGCC's strengths as an organization, and determined how to apply those strengths to make a positive impact on greater Helena issues. A follow-up forum will take place October 30th at the library to choose a new campaign from the top five issues identified.

Sun Run activities were in full swing all summer, leading to a record turnout of more than 250 people on the Carroll College campus (in rainy weather, no less!). The Sun Run is a collaboration of area organizations to raise money for placing solar panels on publicly accessible buildings in the community. SGCC worked with these other organizations and Carroll College students to bring more interactive and kid-friendly activities to the event. SGCC was recognized for their excellent work by Carroll College President Dr. John Cech.



**Volunteers celebrate a record-breaking Sun Run at Carroll College.**

-Makenna Sellers 

## SPA hosts 2nd Annual Good Neighbor Gathering



**Sibanye-Stillwater CEO Neal Froneman speaks at Good Neighbor Gathering.**

SPA members and the wider community gathered with officials from the Sibanye Stillwater mining company on August 7 for their second annual "Good Neighbor Gathering" at the historic Beartooth Ranch in Nye, near the Stillwater Mine. Sibanye Stillwater CEO Neal Froneman traveled from South Africa to attend. "I think it's world-class," Froneman said of the Good Neighbor Agreement. The hamburgers and fixings were world-class as well!

-Olivia Stockman Splinter 



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# VOTE!



## REMEMBER: ELECTION DAY IS NOVEMBER 6th!

A functioning democracy demands *your* participation! Northern Plains was founded on the principle that ordinary Montanans can do extraordinary things when they choose to organize and participate in the decisions that affect their communities.

No decision is more important than determining who will write and enforce the laws that protect our rights, our freedoms, and the things we value most!



## RETURN YOUR NORTHERN PLAINS BALLOT

The slate of candidates put forward by the Nominations Committee is on a ballot that has been mailed to each member whose dues are current. (The ballot is enclosed in your Annual Meeting brochure.) There is also space for write-ins. The seats you can vote on include officers and at-large delegates. **BALLOTS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING.**

**The Board has determined that ballots must be received in the Northern Plains office by the close of business on Thursday, November 15.**