Following a last minute flurry, the 2016 Wyoming Legislature adjourned. The Legislature finalized the $3 billion, two-year budget bill and the Governor signed it, and they finished up a few last bills and sent them to the Governor for his signature as well. The final budget bill contained cuts for almost all state agencies and education, and many programs that helped low-income residents were completely defunded. Many people are still wondering how legislators could possibly justify their refusal to accept hundreds of millions of dollars for Medicaid expansion, given the financial shortfalls facing the state, and Medicaid expansion supporters are already regrouping and planning the next effort. If you see your legislators around town, please keep asking them this question!

In the end, we fared reasonably well in this session, with some great wins but also a few disappointing losses. The bottom line is that we would not have come out as well as we did without your help, and I cannot thank you enough for getting involved when we alerted you to upcoming votes on high priority issues.

It has become increasingly clear over the last several years that we really need a change in our elected representation at the state level. Sierra Club Wyoming Chapter is committed to helping get better candidates elected, starting with the 2016 elections. Watch for more information, coming soon, on how you can help us with this critical work. Enough is enough - we must work together for a change!

I also want you to know there will be additional opportunities throughout the year to influence upcoming legislative decisions. Interim committees will meet during the summer and fall to learn more about certain issues and to consider possible legislation for next year. These meetings will be held around the state, and they provide a great opportunity for citizens to interact with legislators and learn what
they may be planning. We'll let you know when and where committees will meet to discuss issues we care about, and encourage you to attend if you can.

**Wins**

**Bills we opposed, that died:**

**HB 142: Transfer of federal lands.** Proposed to seize our public lands in Wyoming and would have set up a process for selling them off.

**HB 126: Public land access.** Would have required a $100,000 study that set Wyoming on a path toward taking over and privatizing public lands within the state's borders.

**HB 12: Mountain lion trapping.** Would have required the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to allow trapping and snaring of mountain lions. Trapping lions is not allowed now, and this bill would have overruled the judgment of our professional wildlife managers. Proponents claimed that lion predation is harmfully affecting mule deer populations, a claim completely unsupported by any factual information.

**HB 18: Wolves and grizzly bears-limited state action.** Would have prohibited Wyoming Game and Fish employees (game wardens, etc.) and other state law enforcement officers from helping federal employees investigate, arrest, or prosecute anyone for killing or harming wolves or grizzly bears, as long as these animals are protected under the Endangered Species Act.

**SF 78: Office of Consumer Advocate-repeal date.** Would have sunset the Office of Consumer Advocate, which represents the interests of ratepayers in Public Service Commission proceedings, in 2017. The bill's sponsor, Senator Bebout from Riverton, claimed this program should be cut to save money. But the agency is actually funded by ratepayers, not the general fund, so it wouldn't have saved the state any money to close the office. More importantly, this agency represents the public interest in complicated and technical proceedings that are very difficult for citizens and public interest organizations to engage in.

**Bills we supported, that passed:**

**Landfill cleanup bills**

Landfills leaking dangerous contaminants into groundwater are a significant problem across the state, and the legislature has been providing funding to local governments to clean up and close leaking landfills for the past several years.
These bills continued that progress. Funding in the budget bill: $17 million was appropriated for landfill cleanup.

**SF 7: Landfill remediation priority list.** Prioritized funding for landfills that need remediation.

**SF 39: Cease and transfer priority list.** Prioritized funding for regional waste transfer stations.

**HB 28: Cease and transfer program local government funding.** Allowed local governments to get more funding for waste disposal solutions, like transfer stations.

**SF 53: 2016 large project funding.** Funded 2016 projects by the Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

**SF 62: Homemade beverages.** Allowed tasting events for homemade beverages, such as beer and wine. While not a priority bill for us, we support local food efforts in general and this was a nice little step on that front.

**Losses**

**Bills we supported, that died:**

Medicaid expansion: not much more to say about this, except that we'll be back!

**SF 64: Industrial siting permit amendments.** Would have limited the number of times an Industrial Siting permit can be amended. Industrial Siting permits are intended to help local communities deal with the influx of workers when large industrial facilities are built in their town or county, but sometimes (think Two Elk and DKRW), permits can be renewed without being updated for years (almost 20 years in the case of Two Elk.)

**SF 88: State lands within Grand Teton National Park.** Would have provided a more clear pathway for Wyoming to sell state land located within the boundaries Grand Teton National Park to the Department of Interior or exchanged for federal mineral and land interests.

**SF 93: Electric utilities net metering.** Would have amended Wyoming's net-metering law to allow more opportunities for small-scale renewable energy projects. We have long supported reform of the net metering law and hope to see renewable energy and the net metering law as a topic for interim session discussion with a new bill next session.
Bills we opposed, that passed:

**SF 37: Boards and commissions-party affiliation.** Current law requires that appointed state boards and commissions not be dominated by one political party, by limiting the number of appointees from one political party to 50% plus one. SF 37 changed that to allow from 75% up to 100% of appointees to be from the same party, which will cause the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, Industrial Siting Council, Environmental Quality Council, and other important policy-making bodies to become even more partisan than they already are.

**Clean Power Plan**

The Senate passed an amendment to the budget to prevent DEQ from spending funds to develop a state plan to implement the Clean Power Plan, our nation’s first-ever set of standards to reduce carbon pollution from power plants, during a court stay of the rule. Although the final bill allowed DEQ "to attend meetings and otherwise be informed as to any potential need to develop and submit a state plan", we think the legislation is so vague and ambiguous that the DEQ will be severely hampered in what they will be allowed to do.

**HJ 4: Gray wolves and grizzly bears.** This resolution asked the US Congress to legislatively delist wolves and bears. The resolution is not particularly meaningful, but definitely an annoying statement since wildlife management decisions should be made by wildlife professionals and scientists, not by politicians.

Once again, thanks for your help. It is so important for citizens to be involved with our state legislature.

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*Sierra Club Wyoming Chapter is a non-profit, member-supported, public-interest organization that promotes conservation of Wyoming's wild lands by influencing public policy decisions - legislative, administrative, and electoral.*
Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet!

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