Here we are, already started into a new year, chock full of opportunities as well as enough challenges to make anyone a bit apprehensive. It's been a considerable time since our last newsletter, so with this edition, we'll try to catch you up and give you a little "heads up" as to what is in the works for the new year!

We're off and running with lots of politics heating up the various media outlets and what's shaping up to be a contentious primary run for the Republicans looking to unseat President Obama. As usual, government overreach is staring us right in the face. Every week, new rules and regulations are promulgated by the EPA, Dept. of the Interior, or some other agency, and imposed on the freedoms we've enjoyed for so many years.

At least we can say we are having an open winter here in Hot Springs County. The almanac seems to have predicted right on target this year, tho spring is still quite a ways off.

Legislature is about to begin their 20 day budget session beginning February 13. There are a number of issues that could affect agriculture and we will address some of those in another article within this publication. Of concern to small communities is the tightening of funds for distribution back to the counties. With the falling market for natural gas to the $3 level from previous $5 levels, resulting in a projected $135 million reduction for distribution, expect a very conservative legislative session.

Of course redistricting is a hot topic and will no doubt see some discussion during legislature. Hot Springs County led a successful effort last fall at annual convention to restate FB policy to say that we support House representation to remain based on population, but to return to equal representation from each and every county in the Senate. Currently we are living under edict of the courts, rather than the will of the people.

We have elected the new board of directors for 2012. They are:

- President...Paul Ward
- Vice President...Carl Dockery
- Secretary...Carol Dockery
- Treasurer...Carol Shaffer

Committee Chairmen:

- NER........John Baird
- Membership....Ray Shaffer
- Ag Tax....Jack Baird
- SGA....Ray Shaffer
- Gen. Issues...Open (R U Interested?)

(Read On)
The past year has been a fairly busy year for the local federation. We manned a very well received booth at the local health fair last spring, presenting information on zoonosis as well as West Nile. More than just useful info, we had a shooting gallery for all passersby and rewarded nearly everyone with some sort of prize.

The Board decided to award 3 scholarships to graduating seniors last spring. Those receiving a $500 scholarship each were Sash Ann Daniels, Shay Starkey, and Alanna Freel. All are enrolled in college and doing well.

The County Fair saw us providing cash awards to the youth in 4-H and FFA for their achievements. Winners this year were Harley Rhodes and Jenn Cramer in FFA and Jessie Penoyer and Jeremy Gibbel in 4-H.

The Federation also helped sponsor the FFA Alumni awards last fall. Congrats to local centenarian ranchers Ken Harvey and family, and Spring Longwell and family on the award recognizing ranches in continual operation for 100 years or more under one ownership. Also kudos to Billie Jo Norsworthy and family for winning producer of the year honors. It was encouraging indeed to see the next generation coming along and excelling in the ag industry. In this day when we are seeing the graying of ag producers all across America, it is good to see the future stepping up to take the mantle handed off from the previous generation!

The Board has met and prepared a Plan of Work and accompanying Proposed Budget to be presented before the membership for approval at our Spring membership meeting in March. See details elsewhere in this newsletter.

One of the projects for the new year will be providing our membership and the public in general, an opportunity to meet the political candidates in a couple of events of that nature as the candidates are revealed in a few short months. Stay tuned for dates and times.

The Board encourages you to get involved in the strongest comprehensive ag organization in America, and doing so at the grass roots level... Hot Springs County Farm Bureau Federation!

2012 Board of Directors
Jack Baird, Ag Tax Chair; Paul Ward, Pres.; John Baird, NER Chair, Carl Dockery, V.P.; Carol Dockery, Sec; Carol Shaffer, Treas.; Ray Shaffer, SGA & Membership Chair
Private property rights and multiple use of state and federal lands are the main concerns for newly elected Hot Springs County Farm Bureau President Paul Ward. His concerns are well founded as we see a daily attack and an over-reaching agenda to strip western landowners of long help principles of incorporating public lands into nearly every viable operation.

Paul, along with his wife Ginger and 5 children, farm and ranch on Cottonwood Creek, where they manage their cow/calf operation and put up their own hay.

Paul, an Ekalaka Montana native, received his education at Chadron State College, majoring in Ag Business and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from that school. He also is a Master electrician, and as so many in agriculture do today, supplements his ag income by operating a second business out of his home.

A Farm Bureau member for 12 years, Paul says, "Farm Bureau gives a man an opportunity to express himself and voice his concerns at the grass roots level, where all good ideas are spawned and common sense is still the rule of the day!" A conservative in his views, he is alarmed at the direction our economy is headed in and the debt our country is compounding almost daily.

Melissa, Jules, Will, James, and Hannah are Paul and Ginger's stair steps, following them on their operation. It's not hard to understand why Paul is concerned, for their sakes, with the national debt and future access to ag land. Though the older girls are involved in 4-H and actively helping on the ranch, Paul is naturally concerned for their future in the agriculture industry.

Paul is not only involved locally in Farm Bureau, but has recently taken the position as vice-chair of the AgTax Committee on the state level.

Congratulations Paul! Wishing you every success as you mature into a leadership role in Farm Bureau.

(Sponsors of this Publication)
LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

Legislature is in session and once again we are firing up the calling tree. On issues that need our attention and comment, we will be contacting any of you, our membership, willing to send an email or make a call to our legislators. If you would be willing to get involved, please submit your email address or contact Paul or Ray to provide your contact info.

Of concern right now, is the need to support the Governor's initiative to address the wolf legislation sponsored by the Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Interim Committee, Senate File No, SF0041. After all these years of litigation and federal deceit, it appears we may NOW have an opportunity to come an agreeable agreement.

Of great concern is a bill sponsored by Senators Scott, Jennings, Landen, and Perkins, all from Natrona County and Representatives Gay and McOmie. (SF0053 Public Land Access,) is a bill supposedly improving access to public lands. This bill would give the power of eminent domain to the Wyoming Game & Fish Commission and the Board of Land Commissioners. This bill would also increase friction between private landowners and sportsmen. Farm Bureau DOES NOT support this bill! Please contact Senator Geis and tell him to NOT support consideration of this bill. Since this is a budgetary session, a 2/3 majority vote is required to introduce any bill not budgetary in nature.

Farm Bureau is one of the strongest and respected lobbyist groups in Cheyenne. As legislation of interest comes up, you will be notified if you so desire.
PREDATOR SURVEY

The NRPC is in the process of updating the Resource Plan adopted several years ago now, and one of the topics recently turned to collecting data to address future challenges to our plan. In an effort to be on the cutting edge of preparation, the Committee is asking if there would be any interest in asking producers and those who are out 'on' the land to submit eye witness accounts of predator activity. The following is the info forwarded to us:

The Hot Springs County Natural Resources Planning Committee (NRPC) is in the process of preparing a Predator Impact Questionnaire to help determine the extent to which impacts to livestock producers, landowners, outfitters, hunters and others from large predators (wolves, grizzlies, mountain lions, etc.) have changed over the past 40 to 50 years. We will hopefully be drawing on the long-term memories of many rural residents of Hot Springs County. To make certain that we do not miss the chance to include you in this survey, you can contact County Planner Bo Bowman at 864-2961, or by e-mail at hscplanner@hscounty.com.

Please respond if you think this is a worthwhile endeavor!

As a parting shot, please be advised that there are several openings on the Natural Resource Planning Committee (NRPC). This has proven to be a vital tool for the County Commissioners to use in fighting the good fight against state and federal agencies. We're asking you to step up and provide your help and point of view on this very active committee.

THIS N' THAT

SPRING MEMBERSHIP MEETING:
*WHEN:* March 17, 2012 6:30 P.M.
*WHERE:* Hot Springs County Fair Building
*WHAT:* Irish dinner (Corny beef, cabbage & all the trimmings). Bring your favorite dessert!
*WHY:* Approve budget and Plan of Work, legislative analysis, other speakers of interest, door prizes, rub elbows with your neighbors.

FOOD CHECKOUT WEEK:
The annual Food Checkout Week program, a Farm Bureau sponsored event, is scheduled February 19-25. Local activities will include providing fabric carryout grocery bags at the local grocery stores, each containing the Farm Bureau logo and a positive message on the face of it. We will also have 30 second spots on KTBE all week long telling the public what a bargain American food is to today's consumer. Look for an ad in the Independent Record celebrating the week, too. By coincidence, the FFA are celebrating FFA Week that same week, so we will also be supporting them in the local paper.

(Read On)
HEALTH FAIR:
The 2012 Health Fair is scheduled for Saturday, April 14. Once again we will be manning a booth. Please stop by and say hi and take part in the activities of the day!

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS:
Please be advised the Board has published the 2012 scholarship application and they are currently available from the High School counselor/financial aids director, from FFA advisor Britton VanHuele, or at the Farm Bureau office. We are offering $1500 in scholarship monies this year, and that is available not only to graduating seniors, but also to those already enrolled in a course of higher learning and wishing to continue.

AG BOOKS FOR KIDS:
Once again, we are placing "Ag Books For Kids" in the local elementary schools and County Library. We have donated 12 books to the various schools in town. This has proven to be a successful program and provides a positive agricultural message to those who may not have opportunity to get it anywhere else.

DEQ INITIATES TMDL LOCALLY

Are you aware of the TMDL project the Wyoming DEQ has initiated in the Big Horn Basin?

In an effort to promulgate the Clean Water Act, the DEQ has begun a program to regulate all impaired waters in the USA, but more specifically nearly all the waters within the Big Horn Basin. That includes the Big Horn River, Owl Creek, and Kirby Creek.

The next step in their process is a public hearing scheduled here on February 21, in the Big Horn Fed meeting room beginning at 6:00 P.M. until 8:00 P.M.. The meeting will consist of an opening statement approximately 20 minutes long with time after for meeting with reps and answering questions.

Please attend and inform yourself of your government's intention to use the Clean Water Act to impose more regulation on you and your operation!

Don't Forget:

SPRING MEMBERSHIP DINNER/MEETING
MARCH 17, 6:30 P.M.
FAIR BUILDING