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Horse running in snow
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50 Years, Already?

Wild Horse Education – By Laura Leigh

The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act was passed, unanimously, through Congress on December 15, 1971 and the Act was published in the federal register as law. It was signed by former President Nixon in a public ceremony on December 17, 1971. Public Law 92-195, established federal jurisdiction. After jostling among land management agencies to avoid compliance the National Parks Service and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service were omitted. Wild horses and burros were to be managed within designated territories on both Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands.

This law was part of a wave of environmental laws, rules and regulations that began in the 1970's. Many of these laws were statements of intention, belief, commitment that our natural world held a value to our nation and that things like clean air and water were not only important, but a right as a citizen of what was seen as a "great nation."

The WFRH&B Act is a federal law that was initially established as a framework in which to maintain a healthy continuity of our wild horses and burros and to also ensure their humane treatment. The Wild Horses (as they are described as wild in the WFRH&B Act) are a more challenging and complex subject to protect than federally protected, designated wildlife; wild horses and burros are not protected by what they are, but by the land they stand on. Legally and procedurally, they have remained at the bottom of the Department of Interiors totem pole, with minimal enforcement and a lack of science and accountability. The political and profit driven, intricate complexities of OUR Public Lands continue to threaten their lives.

"People think the Act protects wild horses and burros, but they have been misled and fail to recognize that the Act really only established jurisdiction and an intention. Taking the law into land management, integral to the system, has never happened."

Well, we all know where the road to good intentions leads; and the fate of our wild ones is no exception. The act has been relentlessly weakened with the additions of damaging amendments, and has progressed from a meager, but well-intentioned hint of preservation to a near remand of any intention. Mix in an additional amendment, or two, a meager budget and lack of science in comparison to other programs, and the law will disappear into the abyss of bygones with an unforgivable "price tag." The loss of their habitat, and the opportunity to remain genetically viable for

future generations.

Industry is bombarding our wild places, and not so wild places. Massive earth moving equipment speeding down old highways and off into new mine sites; you will pay to clean up arsenic and more left in waterways as legislation to reform mining laws from 1872 have tragically stalled. New fence lines within OUR demolished Public Lands add to the old barbed wire, as we increase the appeasement of private livestock permit holders and approve new projects on public lands that will increase the devastation.

On the Anniversary of the Act, please renew your commitment to set aside fear and fight. In 2022 it will take all your courage to avoid the pitfalls of the outright blackmail the opposition has always used "we will kill all the horses" if you do not bend. If you bend? The wild horses are headed for death either through outright sales to



Image credit: Sonny Carsello

kill or on range as they lose the resources they need to survive. If we protected the "land they now stand" there would be no immediate issue to address, no need for mass removal, massive holding costs, etc. We can do mapping and slow, or increase, reproduction as a protected range allows without cruelty of sterilization, mass removals and abuse.

It's a dream. One worth fighting for. Wild Horse Education will continue to run with and for the Wilds. On the Anniversary of the Act we honor the intention of the law and all those that fought for it. Join us as we promise to keep fighting for the dream. WHE needs a collection of voices and actions that are louder, and larger than all the hurdles that rise up to threaten their survival. Happy Anniversary.

Wild Horse Education founder, Laura Leigh, has a deep understanding of the law and over a decade of on-the-ground experience on public lands. Her work includes the only cases in history against abuse during capture of wild horses. One of her First Amendment court rulings, to open the world of wild horses to (Continued on next page.)

Highlander Horse

public scrutiny, is now used to protect civil rights nationwide. Her work on the range and in the courtroom has been featured in several books and countless news features. WHE's track record shows the value of its breadth of knowledge and experience. WHE is willing to share that with you.

Wild or Feral? A wild horse (or burro) is classified under United States law as a horse or burro (descendants) that was found on public land in 1971 after the passage of the Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971. However the term "wild horse" actually brings with it a fierce debate. The horse we know today, called *Equus* evolved in North America. Some believe that the horses brought by the Spanish repopulated the North American continent, along with animals introduced by settlers.

One of the most fascinating discoveries was that of Yukon horse (*Equus lambei*). This smaller (about 12 hands) evolved equid populated Alaska, Yukon and Northwest Territories (Yukon horse resembles Preswalski's horse). The origin of the horse is not in debate. But you will often hear a fierce debate using the terms "feral" in a versus argument to "wild." Feral is a term used to describe a domestic animal turned wild, almost exclusively to a species that is "non-native" to an area. We use the word "wild" almost exclusively to refer to a native species living in a wild state.

In the case of "wild horses," using currently accepted science, the most appropriate technical term would be "reintroduced native species." A reintroduced native species, living in an environment that evolved concurrently with that species, would create a harmonic wild existence. The debate rages (truly) not because of any debate of

origin, it rages because of a debate on how the animals are managed on the land and the underlying competition for public resources (minerals, grazing land, water). Those that want the resources utilized primarily for profit driven purposes use the term "feral" to attempt to get the animals removed from public land.

This debate becomes important when you look at the different jurisdictions that manage wild horses. The legal term "wild" is used in the management of horses and burros managed under the Act on Bureau of Land Management Land and also supposedly on Forest Service land. The term "feral" is used in management in Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge (Fish and Wildlife) and the plan is to eradicate horses from the Refuge. But in discussion of BLM and USFS management the debate is entirely irrelevant. Management processes Congress declared them as a wild species "integral to the system of public lands" and to be managed as such. If Congress declared Golden Retrievers to be managed as a wild species it would be the law. Management plans would need to be created to preserve the species (in the case of wild horses and burros BLM skips the planning that is "integral to the system" and simply removes them after giving away the resources they need on the range to rapidly expanding extractive industry, livestock, etc.

Many exceptions to managing any animal on public land exist. As an example a herd of longhorn cattle is managed and preserved for it's historical component to a wildlife refuge in Wichita. Domestic European cattle have absolutely no evolutionary claim, yet are managed because of their contribution to the history of European settlers in America.



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Embracing Digital Minimalism

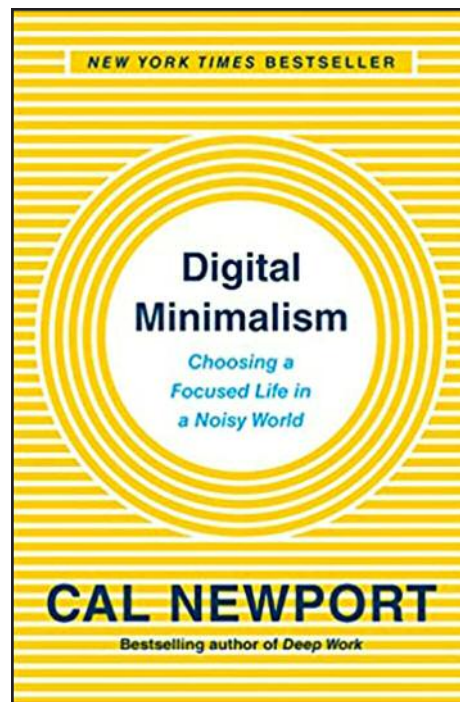
Technology is intrinsically neither good nor bad. The key is using it to support your goals and values, rather than letting it use you. This book shows the way.

In his new book *Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World*, Cal Newport applies the art of knowing how much is just enough to our use of personal technology.

Digital minimalists are all around us. They're the calm, happy people who can hold long conversations without furtive glances at their phones. They can get lost in a good book, a woodworking project, or a leisurely morning run. They can have fun with friends and family without the obsessive urge to document the experience. They stay informed about the news of the day, but don't feel overwhelmed by it. They don't experience "fear of missing out" because they already know which activities provide them meaning and satisfaction.

Now, Newport gives us a name for this quiet movement, and makes a persuasive case for its urgency in our tech-saturated world. Common sense tips, like turning off notifications, or occasional rituals like observing a digital sabbath, don't go far enough in helping us take back control of our technological lives, and attempts to unplug completely are complicated by the demands of family, friends and work. What we need instead is a thoughtful method to decide what tools to use, for what purposes, and under what conditions.

Drawing on a diverse array of real-life examples, from Amish farmers to harried parents to Silicon Valley programmers, Newport identifies the common practices of digital minimalists and the ideas that underpin them. He shows how digital minimalists are rethinking their relationship to social media, rediscovering the pleasures of the offline world, and reconnecting with their inner selves through regular periods of solitude. He then shares strategies for integrating these practices into your life, starting with a thirty-day "digital declutter" process that has already helped thousands feel less overwhelmed and more in control.



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Covid Booster Clinic In Coal Creek Sat. Jan. 15th

The Coal Creek Canyon Improvement Association has volunteered the local Hall as an immunization site for all mountain residents who call for a reservation to get the booster vaccine to help in protection against the Covid virus and its variants.

On Saturday January 15th you may come to the CCCIA Hall: 31528 Highway 72 in Coal Creek Canyon at the time of your reservation to get your booster shot. Depending on details yet to be determined at press time the Moderna and/or Pfizer will be administered.

9Health is partnering with Colorado State Public Health & Environment to oversee and provide staff and the vaccines. Local volunteers and CCCFPD staff may also become active in providing staff for this clinic. Thank you to all.



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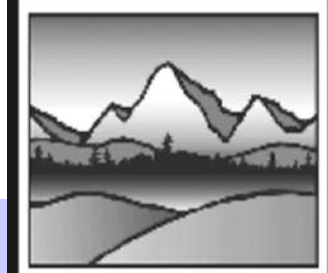
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Hero Or Villain?

Dear EarthTalk:

Is Amazon.com an environmental hero or villain?
—J. West, Orange, CA

Not surprisingly, Amazon.com’s environmental performance is a mixed bag. One charge often levied by critics is that Amazon’s low pricing and expedited shipping encourages customers to spend more on more unnecessary stuff, further exacerbating our already rampant consumerism. Likewise, critics charge that the company’s “Prime” service encourages customers to order single items that must be rush-shipped to them instead of combining multiple orders in bigger boxes, which would be more energy efficient.

Others criticize Amazon for introducing huge commercial operations into hundreds of otherwise residential and predominantly minority communities across the country. An analysis by Consumer Reports found that 69 percent of Amazon warehouses have more people of color living within a one-mile radius than the median neighborhood in their metro areas. Residents complain of increased air pollution from the preponderance of trucks and vans going to and fro, more dangerous walking and biking conditions for neighborhood kids, traffic congestions and significant upticks in noise.

In 2019 the company’s carbon emissions were in the spotlight when hundreds of employees (“Amazon Employees for Climate Justice”) called on corporate leadership to commit to net-zero pollution by 2030. For its part, Amazon reports it is moving quickly toward net zero carbon emissions. It won’t practically be able to get there until 2040, but the company is aiming to run on 100 percent renewable energy by 2030.


Other green initiatives from the e-tailing juggernaut include a \$100 million investment in nature-based climate solutions like reforestation projects, a recent purchase of 100,000 fully electric delivery vehicles, and collaborations with manufacturers to improve and reduce packaging that has led to a 27 percent reduction in packaging weight and

the elimination of 810,000 tons of packaging material since 2008.

Another area where the company garners green kudos is its leadership in cloud computing. Amazon’s servers no doubt use a lot of electricity (much of which is derived from renewables nowadays), research suggests that companies who move their server infrastructure to cloud-based services—like industry leading Amazon Web Services—could save 87 percent on energy. The upshot is that as more and more companies ditch their own servers, energy consumption and carbon emissions can decline rapidly.

And let’s not forget Amazon.com founder and former CEO Jeff Bezos’ \$10 billion pledge to fund global warming resilience and mitigation efforts around the world over the next 10 years. So far, the so-called Bezos Earth Fund, while not officially tied to Amazon.com but built on Bezos’ wealth stream from the company, has donated some \$947 million to various programs, organizations and research efforts working on climate and environmental justice issues—and the philanthropic giving has just started.

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Hwy 93 Dangers ~ Gross Expansion

Dear Editor,

I just got your monthly magazine. I live in Gilpin County. I moved to Colorado in 1990. I was a third generation Californian. I saw what greed and uncontrolled growth could bring. I was driven out of my home State there. I lived in Coal Creek Canyon from 1991 to 1993. I saw back then what was going to happen to Colorado. I told people I-25 should be six to eight lanes on each side. Every one laughed at me. Are they laughing now? Sitting in their cars inhaling the fresh exhaust fumes from the thousands of cars in front of them? Crawling in bumper to bumper traffic every day.

Even here in Gilpin County, I will no longer go out of my home in the summer, Friday to Sunday as the traffic is so bad because of the rats crawling out of their cages down in Denver and totally wrecking the entire mountain area.

When I had just turned 18 years old I visited Colorado looking at Colleges to attend. I remember driving up Hwy 93 to see CU at Boulder. That was 1977. The highway has changed very little. Really. But what has changed is the volume of traffic. Tens of thousands of homes and other residences (I call rat cages) have now been built. Hwy 93 is now a nightmare. Still two lanes in most parts, a true highway of death.

So now my story about the Gross, (Gross is the appropriate word for it) Dam expansion. It all comes down to greed and money. Just what happened in my once beautiful home in California. I am afraid to inform you, for all your fine efforts is happening now to all of us. The Boulder County Commissioners who voted for this will become multi, multi millionaires. Denver Water will make sure they are very handsomely rewarded. \$\$\$

No doubt people will die driving Hwy 93 and 72 in Coal Creek Canyon. Have also no doubts this is all to fuel the uncontrolled sprawl and growth in the Denver Metro area. I heard on the radio, they expect four more million people moving to Colorado in the next five years.

Trust, that none of our roads will be improved to bear the traffic. I mean why spend the money. Just build and build. Line your pockets, take the money and tell every one living here to live with it. I cite an example for you (was Clear Creek improved after Gaming was approved in Black Hawk and Central City). It is still two lanes and full of potholes and ruts. Tag and bag the dead bodies.

I will tell you how bad it is. I studied "Water Quality Management" at Red Rocks College. This was a program to become an operator at a water treatment plant. One of my instructors worked for Denver Water. I asked him one day, how Denver Water could justify asking, no demanding, current residents here to conserve water but did nothing to stop providing all the water they could for new developments. I said if there is a water shortage, the water should be only for the people now living here. Not for all the new people moving in. His answer. Rather blunt to me. "That is how we make our money. From new taps."

So Colorado River, Lake Powell, Lake Mead, RIP. What we need are more people in Colorado. Trust me they are coming. We will all suffer to fill the greed and corruption that it brings. Some will die. The mountain wildlife will also. Enjoy the polluted air flowing in through the fresh air intakes in your car from the thousands of cars in front of you as you sit in traffic. Just remember Greed knows no bounds.

Gregg Gerich

Dear Gregg,

Thank you for taking the time to write to the Highlander with your thoughts and opinions. I've been complaining about Hwy 93 since the 1970's but CDOT has been holding out for a Jeffco Parkway in the hopes it would take some pressure off the arterial coming out of Boulder. But have actually put in features to create more congestion in the guise of helping it be safer. When asked, CDOT officials simply ignore the complaints and consider the deaths 'expected mortalities.' **(Their words.)**

Regarding Gross Reservoir: So many water professionals have gone on the record saying no more diversions to the East are justified i.e. Gross Reservoir Expansion through the Moffat Tunnel.

Editor



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To the Editor,

Is Save the Colorado and The Environmental Group saying... “We were forced into this because the laws and the courts are unjust.” At this point in time, I kind of doubt their sincerity. Shakespeare might have said “me thinks they doth protest too much.”

The agreement provides payoffs for the residents living nearest the project. Maybe that’s all these environmental groups were after all along. The elk and the birds and the fish, the Colorado River and South Boulder Creek, Mother Earth herself, this project is, after all, a desecration of our Mother Earth, what do they get? Where’s their payoff? Where’s that group Boulder Rights of Nature in all of this? Does nature have rights or not?

In exchange for the payoffs, Denver Water gets what it has been after for the last ten years or more. The operative sentence in the agreement is this: “In final settlement of Denver Water’s preemption claim and in consideration for Denver Water’s commitments for this Agreement, Boulder County agrees not to dispute that, under the unique circumstances particular to this case, it lacks the authority to require Denver Water to obtain a permit under Boulder County’s 1041 Regulations.”

If there are any other permits that would normally be required for construction and operation of a project like this, the settlement agreement provides that the county will grant them regardless of whether or not Denver Water or the project plans meet the requirements of the county land use code or other regulations. In other words, the county commissioners agreed that, as far as they are concerned, Denver Water is above the law.

The truly outrageous thing is that, in placing Denver Water above the law, the county commissioners placed themselves above the law.

I’m writing this over a month after the dirty deal was made. Why haven’t these groups challenged the settlement agreement in court if it’s such a bad deal like they say? I’ve given up on them. Where’s Boulder Rights of Nature? Is that just another one of these environmental groups that’s just full of hot air but takes no meaningful action?

None of these people have the excuse that the Federal Power Act and/or a FERC license for a hydropower project preempts local regulation. The dam and the reservoir in this case are not a hydropower project. It is well documented that the dam and reservoir in this case are part of a municipal water supply project and will not be operated for purposes of generating hydropower. The hydropower project in this case is a physically separate and distinct operation downstream from the dam and reservoir. For a long time, FERC’s well-documented policy has been to only license the hydropower project and not the dam and reservoir in cases like this in which operation of the hydropower project is merely incidental to the operation of the dam and reservoir. In fact, FERC has stated that one of

the reasons for this policy is that they don’t want license applicants to use a hydropower license to preempt local regulation of municipal water supply projects. That’s exactly what Boulder County is letting Denver get away with.

It is also well documented that Gross Dam and Reservoir operated for at least fifty years as part of a municipal water supply project without a hydropower project downstream. In fact, it is well documented that Gross Dam and Reservoir operated for municipal water supply purposes for at least fifty years before Denver water even so much as prepared a proposal to build a hydropower project downstream from the dam and reservoir. And, it is also well documented in the original hydropower license that the original hydropower license was issued, with the knowledge and complicity of FERC, as a gimmick, suggested by the Truman Administration way back in the 1940’s, to get around a presidential order setting aside land in the national forest for hydropower development.

Everybody knew then, that the dam and reservoir have nothing to do with hydropower. The obvious question here is: Why didn’t Boulder County bring those facts to the attention of the court in the preemption case? If they had done so, I certainly think the court would have seen that Denver Water’s preemption claim was a total sham.

I think the county withheld that information from the court because they wanted to lose the case or at least make it look like they would lose if the county didn’t agree to the settlement agreement they were offered by Denver Water.

I certainly think this whole fiasco screams for a criminal investigation. I made this information available to a couple members of the board of directors for The Environmental Group.

I had to go through a channel because they do not even respect me enough to give me their contact information. They indicated through the channel that they weren’t interested in any of this. There’s an old saying “Winners never quit and quitters never win.” Which are we going to be??? We can still stop that dam and reservoir if we want to.

Jeff Thompson

Editor’s Note: For future reference please keep letters shorter than these two. Thank you.

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The solstice felt like the right time to embody this process of death/transformation and rebirth on a massive scale. It is an opportunity to look at the darkness of humanity and what it has caused, love it, forgive it, and usher in the light that brings new beginnings, new life. A new consciousness and practice of Interbeing can emerge, if we choose it.

The theme of death, transformation, grieving, accepting, creating afresh has been very alive in me lately. I am seeing it everywhere, from small scales to large scales. Looking back, I can say this has been a life-long awareness that became a much more conscious, embodied, powerful experience nearly two years ago. It continued very powerfully in an experience one night recently. I still cannot quite put it into words, but I can try to summarize by saying I fully embodied the dying/death/transformation process of Gaia, myself, all life, all existence. I experienced the fear, resistance, sadness, grief, letting go, accepting. I experienced relationships of these processes as parts of a whole that often, from our human perspective, seem disjointed, fragmented, purposeless. It left me weeping,

gasping for breath, certain I was dying in a very real sense, and resolved to experience fully whatever comes.

This was on the heels of a brief but intense reminder about the condition of the world 'Gaia' and all of the spirits residing with her in material form. Gaia is dying. (Why is Earth called Gaia? The idea of the Earth as an integrated whole, a living being, has a long tradition.) The mythical Gaia was-the primal Greek goddess personifying the Earth, the Greek version of "Mother Nature" (from Ge = Earth, and Aia = PIE grandmother), or the Earth Mother.

At least the Gaia we know is dying. We are in the throes of the sixth mass extinction on Earth, a mass extinction that humans are causing at a rate that is 100-1000 times faster than historical rates. We have literally decimated other-than-human life on this planet, save our own. Yet our own quality of life, as a whole, is far below optimal, with diseases and illnesses on the rise even as death rates fall, individual and collective happiness decreasing. We live less healthy, less happy longer. We have caused the alteration of climate patterns to the point that the above realities will continue to worsen quickly if we stay on our current trajectory.

The fate of the human population, as a whole, is also questionable. At the least, we can say future conditions will be much less favorable for humans to live comfortably on Earth. At the worst, humans will find it incredibly difficult or impossible to live here. How Gaia will emerge from this human-induced trauma is unknowable, but one thing is certain, even if humans go extinct, Earth will continue on without us, heal, evolve, grow, and flourish once again.

As if these atrocities were not enough to cause deep and nearly incapacitating grief, we have the added component of social traumas quickening. In the last ten years we, as a collective, have experience deadly pandemics, extreme social unrest, increasing inequities and injustices, climate-induced refugees, war, fraud on massive and public scales, big corporations getting away with heinous crimes

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against life, unimaginably huge transfers of wealth from the many to the few, and more. The sheer frequency and intensity of the combined environmental and social upheaval that is occurring is enough to put anyone into a state of depression, and indeed we see depression rates rising rapidly with numbing pharmaceuticals the only widely approved method of dealing with it.

And here's the kicker. We know how to 'solve' all of these issues. We know how to co-create a beautiful, thriving, abundant world. It is really very simple. Nature, when left to her own devices, manifests abundance, prosperity, more life, beauty. We are part of Nature, and ignoring her principles, continuing to play the game of separation when our true nature is Interbeing, is causing the entire Earth system, at all scales, to degenerate, degrade, destroy.

We can choose to align ourselves with Nature's principles, which, by the way, are also spiritual principles (Nature is Spirit in form). We even have the money. Just look at how much money has been transferred from the public into private hands over the last two years, how much money is transferred annually to the military industrial complex, chemical agriculture companies, oil companies. Allocating even half of these funds to regenerate Gaia would do the job.

But let's not overlook what really has to change here. We must change. Not just our morals, ethics, or behaviors, but our fundamental worldviews, paradigms, and even consciousness itself. We must experience and embody a consciousness of Interbeing rather than separation. Spiritual traditions have always told us that Interbeing, Oneness, is our true nature, the true nature of all of existence, seen and unseen. And now fields such as unified field physics, complex adaptive systems, and ecology echo that teaching with a different and complementary lens and perspective. When a consciousness of Interbeing is held in individuals and collectively, we can no longer harm the other, because the other is us. What we do to others we do to ourselves, literally and figuratively.

Now, just shifting consciousness will not be enough, but it is an absolutely necessary condition for any outer, behavioral changes that manifest in other physical changes to occur. We must couple a new way of being and thinking with a new way of doing. Fields such a regenerative development and design help shift our consciousness while also helping to show us what to do, how to live in

alignment with nature's principles.

I do hope the next focus of this process of death/transformation and rebirth is more in the creative phase, a renewal and rebirth after the destruction of the old. I hope beyond all hope that we can actually avoid the worst of this process and regenerate Gaia right now!

We are at a transformation point as a planetary whole. Either way we go at this point—toward new and more life, Source expression, and Interbeing as One, or toward less life (temporarily, of course, on a spiritual plane, but for quite a long time on the earthly plane), fragmentation, and destruction—the old and existing are dying, transforming to something drastically different.

We can decide and create where to go from here. But first, we must look honestly and lovingly at what is happening for Gaia as a whole and all of her life and elements. If we can, we must experience across dimensions to Spirit and Source in order to put this all into a bigger context. We must accept this transformation, grieve, release, and then create new, higher expressions of Source. This is the way of creation, and we must learn to roll with it, co-create with it.

This solstice feels like the right time to embody this process on a massive scale. It is an opportunity to look at the darkness of humanity and what it has caused, love it, forgive it, and usher in the light that brings new beginnings, new life. A new consciousness and practice of Interbeing can emerge, if we choose it.

Love and Light to All, Leah

Editor's Note: Looking honestly at our own life choices and making them reflect a choice for change is each person's challenge. Good luck in the New Year to do so.



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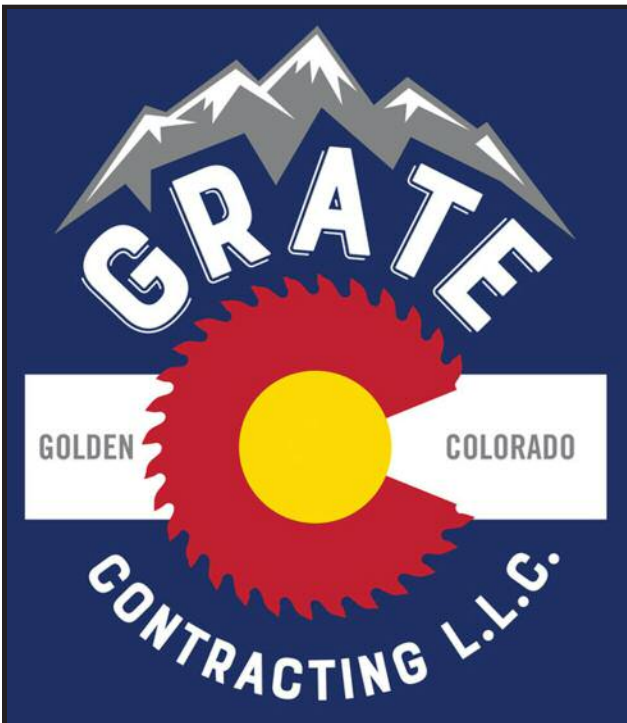
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Indoor Air Quality

From *mommypotamus.com*

Understanding and addressing air quality issues can have a profound impact on health. Health effects of VOCs (and why not all VOCs are dangerous). Common sources of VOCs such as cleaning supplies, scented candles and construction materials. How to reduce harmful VOCs in your home. Why low and no-VOC paints can still contain harmful chemicals (and what to look for instead).

Tips for maintaining indoor air quality after reducing VOCs. What are volatile organic compounds (VOCs)? You know how “organic food” means natural and free of synthetic fertilizers, harmful pesticides, etc.? Yeah, that’s not at all what it means when we discuss organic compounds. Here’s how they’re defined:

Organic compounds are generally any substance that contains carbon, which is the basis of organic life on earth. Volatile organic compounds are organic compounds that have a low boiling point. Because they boil at room temperature, they become gases and evaporate into the air easily. VOCs can be natural or synthetic.

For example: Plants create volatile organic compounds, which are responsible for the scent of freshly cut grass, roses, and pine. According to an article in *Science Daily*, “VOCs protect plants from stress, attract insects for pollination and seed dispersal, and even send warning signs

to neighbor plants and animals that predators are attacking. VOCs essentially mediate relationships between plants and the organisms with which they interact.” People create VOCs, too, usually by turning hydrocarbons into petrochemicals. (Hydrocarbons are organic matter deposits that have undergone transformation from intense pressure and heat.)

Health Effects of Volatile Organic Compounds - The important thing to remember about VOCs is that the one thing they all have in common is their boiling point. Other than that, each VOC has its own properties and health effects, which may be positive or negative. VOCs include a variety of chemicals, some of which may have short- and long-term adverse health effects.”

Environmental Protection Agency - In other words, not all VOCs are dangerous, and some are actually considered therapeutic. In one study, four volatile organic compounds (trans-anethole, estragole, eugenol and isoeugenol) that are constituents in essential oils such as anise, fennel, clove, basil and ylang ylang were found to actually counteract some of the negative effects of indoor air pollution.

On the flipside, not all naturally occurring VOCs are safe – it really comes down to the actual compound. Think of it like this: Zinc is a metal that’s essential for the human immune system, but another (Continued on next page.)

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metal – lead – is toxic and has no functional benefit whatsoever. Two metals, totally different impacts on the body. That said, many of the VOCs found in our homes are air pollutants, and the most common source of exposure comes from synthetic sources. Some of the most common harmful ones are: Formaldehyde, Toluene, Benzene, Acetone, Carbon Tetrachloride, Xylene, Vinyl chloride.

Short-term exposure to these chemicals has been linked to headaches, difficulty concentrating, irritability, brain fog, depression, dizziness, nausea, allergies, asthma, and irritated skin, eyes, nose, and throat. According to the EPA, long-term exposure is linked to liver, kidney and central nervous system damage, along with some types of cancer. According to the Minnesota Department of Health, “People with respiratory problems such as asthma, young children, the elderly and people with heightened sensitivity to chemicals may be more susceptible to irritation and illness from VOCs.” People with an impaired ability to detoxify, such as those with MTHFR genetic mutations, may also be more likely to react to VOCs.

Sources of Volatile Organic Compounds - Building Materials - Paint and paint strippers - Varnishes and finishes - Glues and adhesives - Carpet and other types of flooring - Engineered wood products (particle board and plywood) - Home and Personal Care Products – Furniture - Cleaning supplies and disinfectants - Air fresheners and scented candles - Perfume, nail polish remover and other personal care items - Stored gasoline and automotive products - Other Sources: Dry-cleaned clothing, Tobacco smoke, Computers and office printers, Moth repellents.

What are SVOCs and how are they different?

The upside to VOCs (especially the beneficial ones) is that you can smell them when they’re present. Once an item has aired out and lost its odor, it’s a pretty good indicator that most of the VOCs have evaporated. However, there’s another subtype of VOCs that are odorless and therefore more difficult to detect. Semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) have a higher boiling point than VOCs and therefore don’t evaporate easily. However, they can escape from products on dust particles, and then settle on surfaces that increase our exposure. Because they’re heavier and don’t evaporate, SVOCs can accumulate over time. The best way to address this is to manually remove dust and opt for low-SVOC products when possible.

14 Ways To Reduce VOCs & SVOCs In Your Home - Of course, the best way to keep VOCs low in your indoor environment is to avoid or limit the use of products that contain them. Fortunately, even when they’re unavoidable, there are ways to reduce their impact on human health.

Here are some of the best ways to do that:

Use Natural Cleaning Products - According to a new study, regular use of cleaning sprays can have as much of an impact on health as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. Natural cleaning products are a much better option.

Homemade Dishwasher Detergent, DIY Natural Dishwasher Rinse Aid, Citrus Infused Cleaning Vinegar, Make Non-Toxic Granite Cleaner, Streak-Free Homemade Window Cleaner, DIY Vinegar + Hydrogen Peroxide All-Purpose Cleaner, Homemade Scouring Powder, DIY All-Purpose Cleaner With Lemon & Lavender, Homemade Bleach Alternative, Homemade Soft Scrub, Natural Laundry Detergent.

Sleep On A Non-Toxic Mattress - Your face is right next to the sleeping surface of your mattress for approximately 1/3 of the day, making it a significant source of potential exposure. Many mattresses offgas compounds like chlorinated tris – which is currently being used in increasing amounts due to PDBE’s being phased out. Chlorinated tris is a semi-volatile organic compound that was removed from children’s pajamas more than thirty years ago after it was found to cause cancer in test animals. However, if a new mattress is not an option, you can wrap your current mattress in a low density polyethylene cover. It’s fairly inexpensive, and polyethylene is considered an inert plastic that does not contain phthalates or unsafe plasticizers.

Opt for Solid Wood Furniture When Possible - Pressed-wood products like particle wood and plywood contain formaldehyde and other VOCs, so opt for solid-wood furniture with non-toxic finishes when possible.

Upcycle And Reuse Furniture - When solid wood furniture is not possible due to budget or availability constraints, another good option is to buy used furniture that has already off-gassed. If desired, refinish it with non-toxic paint.

“Bake” A New Home - The home my husband and I recently bought was not part of our original plan. Our Plan A was a home that had already off-gassed for a couple of years when we put an offer on it, and our Plan B was to build a home with non-toxic materials (which didn’t work out due to our budget). As I mentioned earlier, the home we bought is wonderful in so many ways, but it was built with conventional building materials that contain VOCs. For that reason, I’m using this method to accelerate the off-gassing process. It’s called a “bake-out,” and it basically involves heating the house for five days (or more) to get it to release VOCs. During the heating period, windows are opened 2-3 times per day to prevent the VOCs from being reabsorbed. During the last few days of the bake-out, I’m renting a commercial air scrubber to get the air as pristine as I can. I’ll be using an optional carbon filter that will specifically deal with VOCs.

Use A Quality Air Filter - Even though a “bake-out” will accelerate the off-gassing process, more VOCs and SVOCs will slowly be released over time. One that has a medical-grade HEPA filter that helps with allergen particulates, and its activated carbon is infused with a special blend of potassium iodide for additional adsorption of VOC

chemicals, including formaldehyde.

Avoid Conventional Scented Candles & Air Fresheners - Beeswax candles burn clean and bright while releasing a faint honey scent. This candle is handmade with 100% beeswax and will burn for up to 45 hours, and you can make beeswax candles, too. (It's easy!) For scent, I use diffused essential oils and homemade air freshener instead of conventional options.

Choose Non-Toxic Paint & Building Materials (Low-VOC Doesn't Mean Toxin-Free) Unfortunately, low-VOC and no-VOC paints are often misleadingly labeled. When it created its definition of VOCs, the EPA specifically focused on compounds that create smog when mixed with nitrogen oxides and sunlight. Some VOCs, which have negative impacts on human health but don't contribute to smog, are therefore exempt from classification as a VOC by the EPA. To make matters even more confusing, many manufacturers of low or zero VOC paint have just replaced VOCs with SVOCs, which take much longer to offgas. With that in mind, I recommend asking manufacturers about the presence of exempt VOCs and SVOCs in their formulas. Based on my research, my top choice for non-toxic paint is AFM Safecoat.

Air Out New Furniture & Household Items Before Bringing Them Inside - If non-toxic materials are not available (or not in your budget), let new carpet or other materials offgas outside before bringing them indoors.

Open Your Windows - According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, a house that is well-sealed for energy efficiency "may have higher pollutant levels than other homes." If too little outdoor air enters a home, pollutants can accumulate to levels that can pose health and comfort problems. Unless they are built with special mechanical means of ventilation, homes that are designed and constructed to minimize the amount of outdoor air that can 'leak' into and out of the home may have higher pollutant levels than other homes." Fortunately, one inexpensive way to improve indoor air quality is open up the windows as often as possible. If there isn't much wind outside, make sure to turn on fans to circulate the indoor/outdoor air better. Also, keep in mind that if you're sensitive to pollen it would be a good idea to wait until pollen counts are low.

Take Advantage of Warmer Months - Try to plan painting and renovations for warmer months so you can open the windows frequently and air out your home.

Avoid Flame Retardants - Although legislation no longer requires the use of chemical flame retardants in furniture, many couches and other pieces of furniture are still manufactured with SVOC-containing flame retardants.

Don't Feed The Dust Bunnies - Another weird thing I learned from the mold remediator is that mold feeds on dust – who knew? Dust is also a source of SVOCs, so I've been paying a lot more attention to my cleaning routine.

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Previous page top left: *Paint, by Olga Itina*
Top right: *Foal face.*
Bottom left: *From Kingdom of Horses.*
Bottom right: *Paint by Cecyia Leszczak.*
This page top left: *Jette & Rockette from Jay.*
Top right: *Purrmyster.* Middle right: *Grey cat.*
Middle left: *Greyhound from Adrianna.*
Bottom left: *Hosico cat.*

Newer Vehicle's Safety Systems

From Jim Plane – State Farm Insurance

What is electronic stability control?

When cars slip on frozen roads in the winter, drivers can get a little help from the stability control system.

Sometimes drivers experience a loss in the stability of their cars while driving due to icy road conditions, by turning too quickly at a high speed or by trying to avoid a hazard on the road. Now they can get a little help maintaining control, thanks to the electronic stability control (ESC), a standard feature in all vehicles under 10,000 pounds since 2012.

How ESC works

ESC works in tandem with your vehicle's other safety features, including the anti-lock braking system and traction control. Using sensors and a microcomputer, the

ESC monitors the direction the vehicle is headed and its steering wheel position. When the two do not match up, the ESC works to correct under-and over-steering by applying the brakes to one or more of the wheels and, in some cases, reducing the engine throttle to adjust the direction the vehicle is heading.

Lifesaving technology

ESC is designed to prevent single-vehicle crashes that result from loss of control at high speeds or on icy roads; it is not intended to stop small fender-benders. This technology has been a standard feature in cars manufactured in the United States for some years now. As a result, the risk of fatal accidents due to rollover or instability has been reduced. Some stats show that vehicles with ESC technology have 32% less single-car accidents, and 58% less roll-over incidents.

Stability Control Systems (ESC) and Traction Control Systems (TCS)

It is important to know that ESC and TCS are two different systems, and ESC can't work without a Traction Control System. Per Autoevolution: "TCS only limits wheel slippage, whereas ESC also prevents lateral skidding, thus maintaining the car's trajectory."

Vehicles that have ESC technology allow the driver to disable this function — usually with a switch or button. It is recommended that you leave the ESC engaged unless your vehicle is stuck and you need more traction.

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CSU Attends The National Western Stock Show

Jan. 15 is CSU Day at the National Western Stock Show, CSU Spur grand opening event.

CSU Day at the National Western Stock Show is right around the corner on Jan. 15, and with the family-friendly grand opening event for the CSU System’s new Spur campus scheduled for the same day, it promises to be a can’t-miss collection of events.

The Stock Show, set for Jan. 8-23 at the National Western Complex, was established in 1906 and features one of the largest indoor rodeos in the world. The agenda includes livestock exhibitions and judging, several rodeos, art exhibitions, live music, merchandise and dozens of food vendors.

CSU’s events with the Stock Show begin on Jan. 6, when the CSU Alumni Association hosts a parade viewing luncheon for the National Western Stock Show Parade. The free lunch will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the CSU Denver Center, where alumni can watch the parade pass by, shortly after its noon start.

Starting Jan. 7, CSU Spur will also open its first building to the public as a new, year-round, free educational destination in Denver. CSU Spur is located on the grounds of the stock show, as part of the reimagined National Western Center.

CSU Day

On Jan. 15, the Alumni Association will host a National Western Stock Show Member Breakfast from 8-10 a.m., before the 11 a.m. rodeo. In addition, CSU Day volunteers will receive a free NWSS pass for helping staff the CSU booth on the third floor of the Hall of Education, handing out swag to families as CAM the Ram poses with visitors for photos.

Discounted tickets for CSU Day include admittance to the 11 a.m. rodeo, seating in the CSU section, all-day admission to the grounds and trade show, and access to the baby animals exhibit and mutton bustin’ competition, featuring children of CSU alumni. Ticket prices range from \$24 to \$37.

CSU always has a prominent presence at the NWSS, including the popular Ag Adventure, where guests of all ages can engage with agriculture alongside CSU College of Agricultural Sciences students serving as “Ag Tour Guides” through the interactive exhibit. Each year, more than 20,000 people visit the Ag Adventure during the stock show’s run.

Registration and more information are available at the Alumni Association’s events calendar.

CSU Spur opens to the public starting Jan. 8 and will be open every day from 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. during the National Western Stock Show. There are several events to open the new CSU presence in Denver, including a family-

friendly grand opening event will be held from noon to 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 15, and registration is available online. Attractions at CSU Spur’s Vida building during the event include:

- Horses walking on underwater treadmills
- Photos with a 9-foot kitten statue
- Viewing veterinarians doing surgery on dogs and cats
- Interactive mock veterinary exam room
- Educational demos
- Free CSU Spur swag

CSU Spur is a new, free educational year-round public destination in Denver offering K-12 students, families and visitors opportunities to learn about food, water and health. CSU Spur is built upon the belief that students can be anything they want to be, and will showcase real science and real careers. Learn more at CSUSpur.org.

The Vida building at CSU Spur opens to the public in January and has more than 600 volunteer shifts to fill during opening month. Please sign up to volunteer for a couple of shifts to be part of bringing this important place – and representation of CSU – to life in Denver.

Learn more about volunteer job descriptions and sign up to volunteer at CSU Spur.



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Winter In Rocky Mountain National Park

Article and photograph by Diane Bergstrom

It's been an odd winter so far with more wind than snow for the Front Range and the park but the mountain snow pack is starting to build while most of our state remains in drought status. The park is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year depending on weather and, in recent years, fires. No timed entry reservation permit is needed during the winter months! Reservations will return in May so grab your park pass and just go when the winter spirit moves you! The park fees are under review for increase so buy your yearly pass now for RMNP or an America The Beautiful pass for access to all national parks and historic sites for the year. Buy them at the entrance fee stations to avoid mail delays. If your child is currently in the 4th grade, s/he can get a FREE national pass (for the whole family's entry), valid through the end of August. Appy at www.everykidinapark.com - download the forms and bring them to a park entrance fee station to get your pass. Consult the park website for various pass options and extensive park information, www.nps.gov/romo. Masks are required in all federal buildings, which means every park building, and crowded outdoor areas. Consult www.nps.gov/coronavirus.maskrequirements for the latest updates. I saw a great mask sign that simply added, "Don't make it weird." Ditto.

Though the weather has been unseasonably dry and warm, it's very important to prepare, prepare, prepare for a park visit. The majority of hypothermia cases happen not when the temperature is below 0 but when it is between 30-50 degrees. If you've been in Colorado for any amount of time, you are familiar with temperature drops of more than 30 degrees in a day. This can be threatening when you're exercising during the winter in the park, working up a sweat in the sun then adjusting to the colder dropping temperatures while still out on a trail. Layer, layer, layer and bring a weather proof layer as well. This year wind proof layers are also prominent. Hiking poles and traction devices for your boots are highly recommended as trail conditions can vary greatly. Pack hydration, high calorie

snacks, hats, scarves, gloves and an extra pair of socks in case of wet boots. The roads have patchy ice and snow so vehicle snow tires, 4WD/AWD are recommended. Consult the National Weather Service link for conditions inside the park at www.weather.gov/bou/rmnp.

Hidden Valley snow play area, the only area permitting sledding within the park, is open but at the time of this writing, the high winds had blown away the snow. Check the hill condition status on a recorded message at (970)586-1333. Snowshoe walks with volunteers or rangers will reinstate in January! (Bring your own snowshoes or rent them at Estes Park outfitters.) They will be held on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and group size will be limited. Reservations are needed. Time is to be determined and pandemic conditions could change this so keep checking the park website or call the Information Office at (970)586-1206 and speak with a volunteer, M-F 8-4:30, Sat/Sun 8-12.

To help you plan ahead and be prepared, you can check snow reports through SNOTEL and add specific areas of interest by adding SNOTEL's unique site numbers. For instance, to check Bear Lake, which is site number 322, you go to SNOTEL's website, <https://wcc.sc.egov.usda.gov/nwcc/site?sitenum=> and add 322 after the = marks. The numbers for various other sites are: Long Draw Reservoir (Site #1123); Stillwater Creek (Site #793); Copeland Lake (Site #412); Never Summer (Site #1031); Wild Basin (Site #1042); Lake Irene (Site #565); Phantom Valley (Site #688); Willow Park (Site #870). At the time of writing, the east side lakes were only partially frozen. Use caution and stay off the lakes until you have confirmed otherwise. Also be aware that the park remains at Stage 1 fire restrictions and familiarize yourself with them. If you're thinking of bringing your pup along for a snowshoe hike, think again. Dogs are not allowed on trails or roads that have been converted to winter trail status. Several roads have been converted to winter road status and are open to bicyclists and leashed pets beyond winter gates and closures. They are Upper Beaver

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Meadows, Endovalley Road, and all park campground roads. Remember, only on the roads, not on the trails, and they must be leashed to protect your animals and the wildlife.

Maintaining a safe distance from wildlife is important year round, 75 feet for non-predators, over 100 feet for predators. This is even more important during the winter months as we don't want to impact or alter their behavior in any manner. They burn more calories and stored fat trying to forage or avoid us and that is fat they need to survive the winter. Speaking of fat, don't feed the wildlife, no matter what the prowling Golden Mantle ground squirrels on Bear Lake visitor trails tell you. Their natural food intake, i.e. pinecone seeds, creates "brown fat" which is healthy and keeps them alive through the winter. Pretzels create "white fat" which does not sustain them and harms their organs and systems, literally threatening their survival. And it makes them dependent on humans and downright aggressive. Last summer, I helped an out of state visitor who chose to enjoy a quiet picnic with companions next to Bear Lake. Within seconds, several GM squirrels ran circles around her, crawled into her lunchbag, hopped on her leg, and reached for her food. The squirrels can carry diseases and pests and now have a new health threat of becoming habituated to humans. Keep your snacks to yourself and tell them to go eat a pinecone. You'll need the carbs and they need to give up junk food.

The largest squirrels in the park, marmots, have gone into hibernation but there are many winter wildlife viewing opportunities. A small percentage of elk remain in the park and surrounding areas, while the majority have migrated to lower elevations to feed on meadows and farmlands. They have grown a thick woolly undercoat for protection covered by long guard hairs which cut cross-wise, reveal a honey-comb structure that traps warm air. This enables them to comfortably rest in a snow-covered field. Pikas will also be out but only above 11,000 feet. Mountain lions, coyotes, foxes, rabbits, bighorn sheep, deer, hawks, falcons, owls, magpies, Stellar's jays, eagles, and more are all active during the winter. Learn to identify tracks in the snow and teach your kids for a winter project. Walk the length of Moraine Park trail for track observation and animal viewing. Black bears, the only bear in the park, "should" be hibernating now but there have been sightings. Be bear aware. Black bears can be black, brown, blonde or cinnamon. Visitors sometimes have reported seeing brown bears, or grizzlies, but they were hunted to extinction in the early 1900's. The black bears mated in May and June and




by the fall, ate 20,000 calories a day to prepare for hibernation. The fertile egg won't implant until fall and only after the mother has put on enough weight to

hibernate. If she hasn't, she'll reabsorb the egg for her own survival and that of future cubs.

If you'd like to learn more about the park, the trails, and the wildlife, stop at the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center or Fall River Visitor Center to purchase books, guides and maps. Ask questions of the volunteers staffing the desks.


The non-profit Rocky Mountain National Park Conservancy operates the stores and funnels proceeds into park restoration projects, which the park sorely needs. During the pandemic, national naturalist book sales on flora and fauna dramatically increased, as people perhaps took more


interest in their natural surroundings, spent more time locally outside, traveled to natural places, and maybe realized, nature heals. Here's to a healthy 2022 for you, your loved ones, our park, and our planet! Get outside!




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Study About Airborne Respiratory Particles

From Colorado State University

Study finds that singing, being male, and being an adult tend to produce more respiratory aerosols.

It's become clear throughout the COVID-19 pandemic that airborne transmission of infectious respiratory particles plays an important role in how the virus spreads. The performing arts – from Broadway to Colorado State University's University Center for the Arts – took a brutal hit early on, as it was suspected that singing, talking, and playing instruments in packed venues could put both performers and audience members at high risk of exposure. Those suspicions were borne out in a CSU study that measured respiratory particles produced from people singing or playing instruments. Is singing worse than talking when it comes to how many particles are being emitted? Yes, according to the study. And the louder one talks or sings, the worse the emissions. A person's age and whether they are male or female also affects their respiratory emissions, with males and adults emitting more airborne particles, on average, than females and minors.

The study was called Reducing Bioaerosol Emission and Exposures in the Performing Arts: A Scientific Roadmap for a Safe Return from COVID-19. Launched early in the pandemic before vaccines were widely available, it was led by John Volckens, professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering with appointments in the CSU

Energy Institute, the Colorado School of Public Health, the School of Biomedical Engineering, and the Department of Environmental and Radiological Health Sciences. His team partnered with Dan Goble, director of the CSU School of Music, Theatre and Dance, to determine the extent to which singers, musicians and actors emit aerosols (tiny airborne particles less than 100 microns in size), and whether those emissions could be quantified.

The collaboration's first peer-reviewed paper, published recently in Environmental Science and Technology Letters via open access, confirmed what the engineers had suspected about airborne particle emissions that pertain to certain activities. Singing produced 77% more aerosols than talking; adults produced 62% more aerosols than minors; and males produced 34% more aerosols than females. The recent paper only contains results from the study's singing and talking experiments; results from wind instrument-playing are pending further data analysis and peer review.

Goble and colleagues raised nearly \$100,000 in support of the study, including gifts from the United States Institute for Theatre Technology, Conn-Selmer and the Yamaha Corp.

The centerpiece technology of the study was an aerosol testing chamber in Volckens' Powerhouse Energy Campus lab, only a few of which exist in the U.S. About 100 volunteers ranging in age from 12 to 61 sat or stood in the chamber and sang, talked or played instruments while sophisticated equipment captured and measured the



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respiratory particles they were producing. They took measurements while subjects were both masked and unmasked.

Key findings

Among their key findings was that while there were differences between how many particles were emitted by minors (children aged 12-18) vs. adults, or males vs. females, those differences were largely driven by participants' voice volume and total exhaled carbon dioxide. In other words, a man might produce more particles by talking normally compared with a 12-year-old child; but the child singing or yelling might produce more than or as many as the man.

These observations were important, Volckens said, because they lend credence to the idea of measuring carbon dioxide levels and noise levels in an enclosed space as a means to gauge transmission risk.

"If there were significant differences after accounting for CO2 between males and females and kids, then you'd have to know how many males, females, and minors were in a room to estimate transmission risks," Volckens said. "Our data suggest that you don't need to know that if you just measure CO2 and noise levels, because those measures are an equalizer for these demographic differences."

CO2 and noise level monitoring together, say in an indoor performance venue, could act as a simple, low-cost risk indicator of airborne transmission of disease – and not just COVID, but any airborne disease like the seasonal flu or the common cold, Volckens said.

How results have been implemented

Goble said that working with the CSU engineers helped

his team better understand how visual and performing arts could re-implement their programming after being completely shuttered or virtual for many months. Goble and colleagues presented physical distancing, room occupancy caps, room ventilation and masking protocols to the Pandemic Preparedness Team in fall 2020. He and Volckens gave webinars providing preliminary study information to groups like the National Association of Schools of Music who were eager to learn what the CSU researchers were finding out.

"We wanted to put some of that information out as soon as possible so people could make informed decisions based on their situations," Goble said.

At CSU, the performing arts look a little different but are largely back to full operation after going completely virtual in spring 2020. Their current protocols include things like extra time between classes for performance rooms to undergo sufficient air exchanges between rehearsals, physical distancing of at least 6 feet for voice lessons, and restrictions on occupancy times for venues. The use of masks, the wide availability of vaccines, and CSU's 90% vaccination rate have changed the game for the performing arts, Goble said, allowing program leaders to implement layered risk mitigation while allowing rehearsals, performances and lessons to take place.

"We are so fortunate to have experts like (Volckens) who gave us some really wonderful information to help us make decisions about what we can and can't do in the (University Center for the Arts)," Goble said.




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What We Do

We work to keep cellular signals out of wilderness areas so that everyone can have somewhere to truly get away from it all. Wilderness is sacred, and allowing cellular signals into it is a desecration of our last bastion of disconnectedness.

President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act into law in 1964 to preserve the wild qualities of 5,000+ acre parcels of federal land that are untrammelled by human development, provide opportunities for unconfined recreation, and have educational, scientific or historical value. Wilderness parcels are to remain free of not only mechanized vehicles but also industrial infrastructure and machinery as well as commercial ventures of any kind.

Cellular signals — even though you can't see them, feel them or hear them — are both commercial ventures and industrial infrastructure. We think they have no place in the 2% of the land base of the Lower 48 now federally designated as wilderness — as well as in other wild and natural areas across the country and around the globe.

Furthermore, we need to keep cellular signals out of wilderness areas for our own sanity. The existence of true wilderness, whether we go there or not, is a tonic for our everyday lives now dominated by screens and endless access to information. Hardly any kids go play outside anymore let alone explore the natural intricacies of their immediate neighborhoods given the siren song of online

gaming, YouTube videos and social media.

Adults are likewise screen-addled these days; we can't tear ourselves from the dopamine-generating din(g) of incoming messages and notifications that cellular service delivers on a minute-by-minute basis to our devices. Wilderness just isn't wilderness with a screen in your face or a phone buzzing in your pocket.

How We Do It

As a nimble, volunteer-based non-profit we are experimenting with different methods to achieve our objectives. Initial efforts include: Launching an advocacy campaign to educate the public as well as elected officials and other decision-makers about keeping wilderness free of cellular incursions.

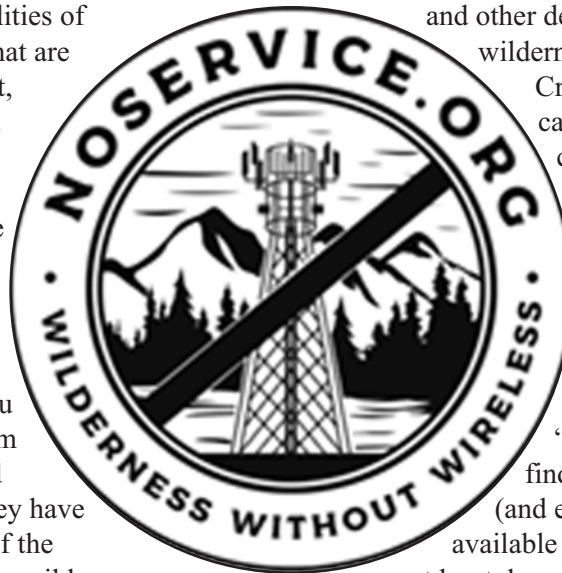
Creating an online advertising campaign to draw more attention to our cause and solicit volunteers, donations and other support.

Certifying parks, campgrounds, lodging and other vendors as "NoService Certified" to give travelers looking to "get away from it all" help in trip planning.

Creating and publishing "No Service Maps" showing where to find "No Service" areas across the U.S. (and eventually around the world) —

available free to supporters to use in planning, or at least dreaming about, off-grid getaways.

Initiating discussions with major cellular providers about working in concert with us to keep their towers far from existing wilderness areas.



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NoService.org is a campaign of EarthTalk, a 501(c)3 non-profit based in Washington State.

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Update: *BuffaloFieldCampaign.org*

West Yellowstone, Montana -

Yellowstone National Park is recommending the slaughter of 900–1,100 Yellowstone Bison this winter— over 20% of the total population. The Park's recommendation was adopted by state and federal officials on December 1st in Missoula, MT.

The Park's recommendation follows in lock step with the directive issued by former Sec. of the Interior Ryan Zinke who told managers in 2018 to have "Yellowstone bison managed more actively like cattle on a ranch."

Wild Yellowstone bison are slaughtered every winter due to the livestock industry and the State of Montana exaggerating fears of brucellosis transmission to cattle. Government mismanagement interferes with the migration and reproduction of Yellowstone's Central and Northern herds – endangering their genetic viability and continued survival.

There has never been a recorded case of brucellosis transmission from wild bison to cattle. Wild elk have been implicated in transmitting brucellosis to cattle, yet Montana and Yellowstone National Park do not trap elk for slaughter or

draw a boundary line beyond which they are killed like bison. Elk migrate freely across 38 million acres in Montana with an estimated population of over 140,000 (*PDF, Montana FWP*).

Wild bison number just over 5,000 and seasonally occupy about 0.1% of the land base in Montana. Why aren't wild bison treated like wild elk in Montana? Montana Livestock interests want to maintain their monopoly on public land grazing and refuse to share the land with our national mammal. The livestock lobby has successfully created a no tolerance policy for wild bison on public lands in Montana. Every winter, Yellowstone National Park baits bison to the entrance of the Stephen's Creek trap with fresh hay. Bison are funneled into the high walled steel bars of the park's trap where they are injured, gored, and die in captivity.

Bison that survive being trapped are shipped to slaughter houses. This inhumane management is funded by the

American taxpayer.

The government's proposed slaughter is unwise and dangerously presumptive. What's at stake is the genetic health of Yellowstone's Central herd—a distinct breeding group that traces its lineage to the 23 bison that survived extinction at the end of the 19th century. Only 1300 of the central herd remain, but 2,000- 3,000 individuals are necessary to avoid inbreeding (*Hedrick, 2009 pp. 419*). The fragility of the central herd is largely ignored in the government's plan. The slaughter of 900–1,100 individuals could decimate the central herd and managers wouldn't know it until the following summer when Yellowstone National Park conducts a census of the central and northern herds.

BFC Executive Director James Holt Sr. summarizes the State of Montana's and Yellowstone National Park's faulty



plan, saying "for 25 years BFC has witnessed the artificial suppression of wild bison populations and monitored the negative impacts in the field. The Central Herd of Yellowstone bison is gravely imperiled, ecosystem health is diminished, and resilience to climate change is inhibited. Ongoing bison management fails a keystone species and violates the public trust. Yellowstone bison management must reflect the values of the American People."

Buffalo Field Campaign urges concerned readers to email the National Park Service, voice your concerns on Yellowstone National Park Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), and to Take Action! with Buffalo Field Campaign to advocate for our national mammal.

Buffalo Field Campaign is the only group working in the field, the policy arenas and the courts to conserve wild Yellowstone Bison - All the other herds of buffalo contain cattle DNA and are therefore not genetically wild.

Mining Law Reform Stalls Due To Corrupt Senators

By Cody Nelson High Country News Nov. 18, 2021

Amid the recent skirmishes over revising the reconciliation bill, known as the Build Back Better Plan, lawmakers once again skipped a chance to reform the General Mining Law of 1872. Under this outdated law, hardrock miners can extract profitable minerals such as gold and silver from public lands without having to pay any federal royalties. Though it has been challenged several times over the past few decades, mainly by Democrats, the law has not been significantly updated in the nearly 150 years since its passage.

Last August, a House committee, chaired by Raúl Grijalva, D-Ariz., tried to modernize the legislation by adding language to the reconciliation bill to establish federal royalties of between 4% to 8% on these mines. This would have been the most consequential update that the mining law has received in the nearly 15 decades since President Ulysses S. Grant signed it into existence.

However, hardrock royalty reform never even reached a vote thanks to Democratic Sens. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev., and Joe Manchin, D-W.V., who made his personal fortune in coal mining. Manchin initially signaled support for the royalty provisions in October when he spoke in front of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, stating that he could “never imagine that we don’t receive royalties on so many things we produce in this country.” But he later reversed course and reportedly promised Cortez Masto that he’d block any mining royalties, effectively killing reform before it even reached the full Senate. On Nov. 4, royalty reform was officially out of both the House and Senate bills.

These senators’ actions all but guarantee that the U.S. public will continue to miss out on billions of dollars in revenue that could have supported the Build Back Better Plan’s priorities, including paid family leave and important climate investments. The bill also would have held companies accountable for cleaning up the abandoned mines that pockmark the West. Instead, mining companies will continue to exploit public land for their own financial gain.

THE GENERAL MINING LAW of 1872 law was passed in the wake of the mid-19th century California gold rush as part of a push to encourage white settlement of the West. Previously, prospectors sometimes staked claims to land without the permission of the federal government, let alone that of the Indigenous people who were being dispossessed of the land in question.

In order to regulate the blossoming industry, Congress passed a few early mining laws beginning in 1866. The General Mining Law of 1872 took their place. It established the location system, which permitted individual miners and corporations to stake claims to mineral discoveries on the public domain, on land that had never been in private ownership.

A long list of royalty-free minerals besides gold and silver fall under this “location-system” regulation, including lithium and copper, which are becoming more valuable due to their use in green energy technologies like solar panels and electric vehicles. The industry has extracted some \$300 billion worth of these minerals from public lands since 1872, according to Earthworks. And though mining companies have evolved tremendously since

the days of digging with pickaxes and now use some of the largest machinery on earth, the return they make to the American public remains as paltry as ever.

This is why a broad base of critics from conservation organizations to lawmakers think it is high time to reform the 1872 law. Currently, the government earns hardrock mining fees for things like registration and annual maintenance, which generated about \$71 million in revenue in fiscal year 2019, but it’s a small amount compared to the money that would be derived from royalties. The industry has extracted some \$300 billion worth of these minerals from public lands since 1872, according to Earthworks. Under the General Mining Law of 1872, hardrock miners pay zero

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royalties on profitable minerals extracted from public lands. *Loop Images/Universal Images Group via Getty Images-Kennecott Copper Mine near Salt Lake City, Utah.*

The mine is the largest man-made excavation in the world, and has produced more copper than any other mine in history. For example, in September, the House Natural Resources



Committee proposed a new royalty that would have raised \$2 billion over ten years. And that’s likely a conservative estimate: The federal government has no data on the amount or value of the hardrock minerals

extracted from public lands, which account for more than 80% of the mineral mines on federal lands, according to the Government Accountability Office. In contrast, mines operating under the more heavily regulated leasing system, for resources like coal and oil shale, account for just 17% of mining on federal lands, but generate much more revenue through royalties. In fiscal year 2018 alone, they brought in \$550 million. Coal is by far the primary revenue generator under leasing-system mining.

The proposed reforms also would have added a reclamation fee for abandoned mines and increased the yearly maintenance fee for claims from \$165 to \$200 per claim, adding another combined \$1 billion in revenue over the next decade. This money could, among other things, provide funding to address a myriad of environmental and health threats across the Western U.S. caused by past mining. Before the 1970s, for example, companies abandoned mines once work was complete — leaving behind tens of thousands of often-toxic scars on the land that could cost over \$50 billion to address.

ATTEMPTS TO REFORM the General Mining Law have been going on for years, but a well-funded network of lobbyists and special interest groups has continued to thwart any success. Mining interests regularly spend north of \$16 million annually on lobbying; last year, they’ve already spent over \$13 million. The National Mining Association spent the most in 2021, coming in at \$1.5 million, according to data from OpenSecrets, a

nonprofit campaign finance and lobbying watchdog organization. Several companies that would be directly impacted by mining law reform have lobbied against it, including

Newmont Corp., a gold-mining company that has invested over \$800,000 to fight efforts to change the law. This helps explain why one ongoing effort to reform the law — the Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act — has stalled in recent years. Democrats have introduced the legislation in Congress at least six times since 2007. The bill’s most recent iteration, in 2019, failed amid a major

industry-led lobbying blitz. Among those fighting it were mining giant BHP Group and the National Mining Association, which targeted the bill in a \$1.2 million lobbying campaign. And mining industry lobbyists have power beyond their financial influence: They are also intricately linked to the government. According to OpenSecrets, nearly 65% of the industry’s lobbyists previously worked in the government, many in positions related to mining. The lobbying campaigns help illuminate why Manchin, who said last October that it was time to bring the “outdated law into the 21st century” was willing to suddenly reverse course. According to OpenSecrets, he received more campaign donations from the mining industry than anyone else in Congress. *Cody Nelson is an independent journalist and audio producer based in Chicago.*

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Wyoming Looks Towards Nuclear

By Kylie Mohr High Country News Dec. 17, 2021

Is a new generation of nuclear technology a ‘shiny object’ or a solution to a faltering fossil fuel economy?

Silhouetted against an open-pit coal mine, steam billows from stacks at the Naughton Power Plant outside Kemmerer, Wyoming. For now, anyway; the coal units will retire in 2025. “I’ve been watching the town for a lot of years, since the railroad stopped using coal, and they said the town was dead then,” said John Sawaya, a longtime resident and retired shop owner. “Then one thing after another seemed to come in and keep the place going.” Now, the new thing is nuclear energy.

Wyoming produces more coal than any other state, but low natural gas prices and a push for renewable energy caused production to fall by 21% in 2020. As coal revenue declines, leaders are looking to nuclear for help. TerraPower, a nuclear reactor company co-founded by Bill Gates, is partnering with power company PacifiCorp to open a 345-megawatt reactor in Kemmerer by 2028 — with a multibillion-dollar price tag, some of which will come from federal funds.

The Kemmerer plant, called a Natrium reactor, is one of several “next generation” nuclear reactors in the works for the West, along with plants in southern Washington and at the Idaho National Laboratory, even as aging reactors largely built in the ’60s, ’70s and ’80s are being retired.

Both types of reactors generate power through fission, when uranium atoms collide with neutrons and split, releasing energy in the form of heat and radiation. But they use different materials to collect that heat and cool their cores: Traditional reactors use water, while a Natrium uses liquid sodium. (This is partly why older reactors are clustered east of the Mississippi River; they need access to surface water.) In a Natrium, heat is transferred to molten salt, to be either stored or used to generate power via steam turbines.

Liquid sodium is safer because its boiling point is much higher than water, which can help prevent meltdowns, said TerraPower spokesperson Jeff Navin. “We wanted to create a reactor that is going to dramatically improve on the safety case of existing conventional technology,” Navin said. But not everyone’s convinced: A 2021 report from the Union of Concerned Scientists states that when it comes to both the likelihood of a catastrophic accident and the creation of nuclear waste, the new reactors “fail to provide significant enough improvements ... to justify their considerable risks.”

“I think what’s really come together is a broader public recognition of the need to address climate change.” Sodium coolant can burn if water or air sneaks into closed chambers, and the reactors can experience hard-to-control rapid power increases, according to the group. TerraPower says its design will produce five times less waste by volume per megawatt hour than conventional reactors

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because of its fuel efficiency. But a recent analysis by geochemist Lindsay Krall, who studies reactor waste, found that reactors using sodium instead of water result in a higher quantity of radioactive materials that need long-term storage.

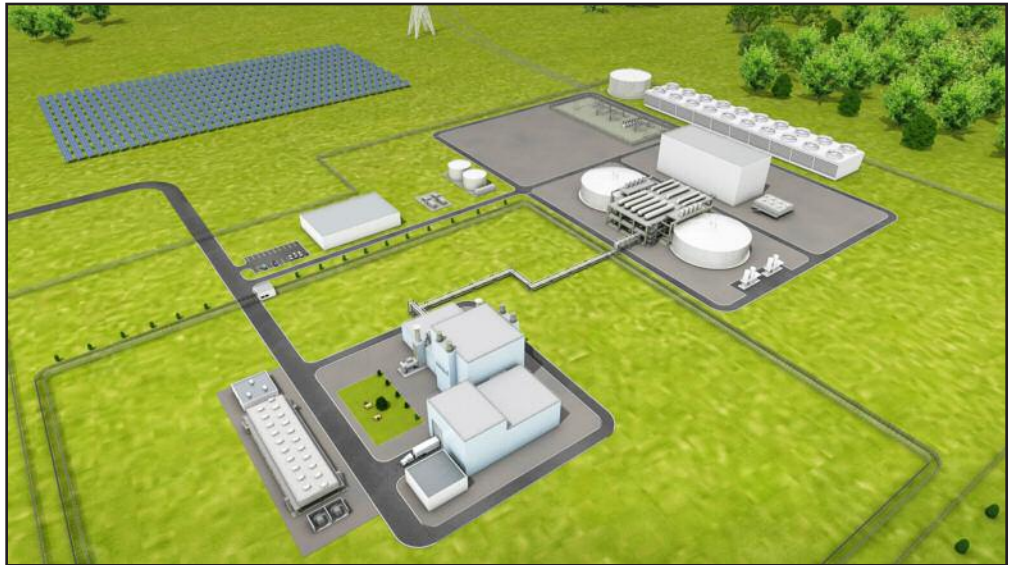
The project comes as utilities are trying to meet clean power goals across the Northwest. Wyoming supplies energy to states like Oregon and Washington, and maintaining those exports will require a shift toward sources that emit less carbon than coal does.

“I think what’s really come together is a broader public recognition of the need to address climate change,” said Alice Caponiti, who leads advanced reactor deployment for the U.S. Department of Energy. “I do think that’s a crystallizing focus.”

TERRAPOWER HONED IN ON Wyoming in part because its soon-to-be-retired coal plants offer infrastructure and a skilled workforce, according to Navin. In addition, many Wyomingites have already granted “social license” to industrial electricity generation. “There’s a bucking horse on everything and a pride for producing energy (in Wyoming),” said Scott Quillinan, the senior research director at the University of Wyoming’s School of Energy Resources. A recent city-run survey, for example, found that the vast majority of Kemmerer residents who responded support the nuclear plant. A statewide survey by the University of Wyoming, however, found that many people want more information to better understand the likely trade-offs.

That includes economic impacts. An estimated 1,600 coal jobs statewide could disappear over the next decade, and TerraPower says its plant will provide 2,000 construction jobs and 250 jobs operationally. But the bulk of coal revenue comes from sources other than jobs: coal bonuses, severance taxes and mineral royalties — to the tune of \$2 billion in 2020. Nuclear energy will only bolster local property taxes and state sales and use taxes. The Wyoming Legislature recently passed a bill to tax nuclear energy at \$5 per megawatt-hour, but TerraPower’s facility is exempt. “There’s going to be a revenue gap,” said Shannon Anderson, a staff attorney at the Powder River Basin Resource Council. “(Nuclear) is this shiny object that everyone seems really excited about, but it’s not the transition.”

Still, nuclear energy is giving Kemmerer residents hope. Sawaya believes the Natrium plant will be beneficial — unless construction workers crowd his favorite fishing



Artist’s rendering of the TerraPower Natrium Plant.

hole, that is. “I think the town will still be here at the end of the next century,” he said. “Things keep changing, and so far the town’s changed with ’em.

Kylie Mohr is an editorial intern for High Country News writing from Montana.

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Silence And Action

By Frosty Wooldridge

Silence and Action Are True Wisdom's Best Reply

As this world turns, each of us faces extraordinary challenges, ordeals, emotional pain, trauma, loss of loved ones and disappointments during our lives. It goes with the territory of living. Even at this point with a virus raging around the planet, we need to hold on to "hope."

I remember vividly when Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) the lead character in the "Shawshank Redemption" sat in the corner of the prison yard with his friend (Red) Morgan Freeman discussing how Andy got swindled into prison by another man's deeds. As they sat there, Andy gave instructions to Morgan Freeman to look him up at his hotel on a beach in Mexico as he worked on an old boat getting it ready for charter fishing for his guests.

The only problem: Andy faced life in prison for 'killing' his wife, which, of course, he didn't do the deed. And the

prison warden held Andy into a stranglehold of his life.

There was no chance for escape to a free life. But for Andy, "hope" made anything possible. Andy uttered these iconic words, "It's time to get busy livin' or get busy dyin'." With that statement, he decided to get busy living.

Later, Andy dug his way out of prison, and with brilliance, walked into the banks in Portland, Maine to claim his accrued money that he surreptitiously purloined off the warden as the warden was scamming his slave prison labor. He outsmarted the warden via the U.S. mail, crawled to freedom and skipped into Mexico. He left evidence of the warden's evil deeds with the newspaper. The warden committed suicide as the cops came to lock him up. Morgan Freeman reunited with his friend Andy in Mexico to show that Karma works. Stephen King's iconic book and movie will be seen 100 years from now by adoring audiences. It epitomizes our struggles out of the darkness into the light.

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Highlander Guest Opinion

At the same time, each of us enjoys the choices of creative thought, actions and deeds. Since I have stood astride my bicycle for over 65 years, there's a deep-seated joy in my soul. From my Schwinn Wasp and my paper route in my teen years to my fancy road bikes, to my sturdy touring bikes, I've enjoyed great energy, tremendous joy and soulful fulfillment via touring around the world on my bicycle.

The one thing about riding a bicycle, especially a touring bicycle, it calls for your best integrity, your true grit that comes from your sterling character. As you watch this movie of a man on a bicycle, you know how he feels. You know every movement, jump, 360-degree turn, balancing act, and total flow, even under water took his fortitude, many failures and countless mistakes to gain his expertise. From that, he gained his joy!

He will look back on his life and that video of him riding his bicycle through all the trials and tribulations as a metaphor for choices, and in fact, each of us makes those choices.

I am reminded of the great Roman philosopher Epictetus who said, "Tentative efforts lead to tentative outcomes.

Therefore, give yourself fully to your endeavors. Decide to construct your character through excellent actions and determine to pay the price of a worthy goal. The trials you encounter will introduce you to your strengths. Remain steadfast ...and one day, you will build something that endures; something worthy of your potential."

During this tenuous period in the United States, Canada, Europe and the world, let's all pull together, do our part, build our bodies, strengthen our minds and practice compassion. Let's let our actions, our minds and spirits triumph individually and collectively. May the God bless each and every one of us.

As it's been said, "May the road rise up to meet you, may the wind be ever at your back. May the sunshine warm upon your face and the rain fall softly on your fields. And until we meet again, May God hold you in the palm of his hand."

Be well for yourself and your family.

Latest book: *Zen Between Two Wheels: Eat, Pedal, Sleep* by Frosty Wooldridge

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Power Update

January
2022

No Rate Increase for Members in 2022

United Power has announced that there will not be a scheduled rate increase for residential or business members in 2022. This marks the second consecutive year rates have not been increased for members. The cooperative's Board of Directors made the decision in November upon approval of the 2022 budget.

Over the course of the past several months, United Power has focused its efforts to reduce spending where possible and control cooperative costs. It has also continued to monitor the pandemic's economic impact on the communities it serves and the members on its lines. While there has been a slow transition to normal functions, the result of the cooperative's cost control measures has enabled it to once again avoid a rate increase, providing a little additional relief for members who continue to feel the pandemic's affects heading into the holiday season.

Continued growth also played a significant role in the cooperative's ability to maintain its current

rate structure. Growth this year has exceeded expectations, and United Power became just the second Colorado co-op to surpass 100,000 meters earlier this summer.

United Power understands its members have different needs and use electricity in vastly different ways. Residential members have four different rates to choose from, each designed with slight variations that allow you to review your energy usage and pick a rate that works best for you and your family. However you use your energy, the flexibility of the cooperative's residential rates should meet most members' needs.

You can compare the demand and energy charges of each rate and choose one that most closely fits how you and your family use energy on the website at www.unitedpower.com/rates.



Scholarship Opportunities

Applications Due: Jan. 28, 2022

Each year, United Power awards academic scholarships to outstanding students served by the cooperative. Scholarships include awards for students attending an accredited university or college in Colorado or pursuing a specific degree program, as well as 10 book scholarships. New this year, the cooperative will also award one scholarship to a nontraditional student pursuing a degree in a technical or vocational program. United Power will award 19 scholarships worth more than \$20,000. Awards range between \$1,000 and \$2,000.

Eligibility varies for each scholarship, but in general overall academic achievement (such as GPA and ACT/SAT scores), extracurricular activities and community involvement rank high in the evaluation process. A brief written essay is required, and the applicants primary residence must be in United Power's service territory.

For more information, including a list of available scholarships, visit www.unitedpower.com.

Bundle Up for Winter Storms

Are you prepared for winter's cold grasp? The winter weather can wreak havoc on your home. By winterizing your living space, you'll be prepared for extreme cold and hazardous conditions. Here are some ways you can better prepare your home for winter weather before it officially arrives later this month.

- Remember to maintain and inspect heating equipment every year to ensure they're working safely and properly. Change out the filter on your furnace. Have your chimneys cleaned and inspected to make sure nothing is blocking the flue.
- There are many places in the home where heat can escape and cold air can enter, but windows are one of the biggest culprits. Consider installing storm windows for better insulation.
- If replacing windows is too expensive, sometimes a little caulk can do the work. Caulk and weather strip doors and windows to make the most of your heating system. Covering windows with plastic (from the inside) can also keep the cold out.
- Freezing temperatures often cause water pipes to burst. Remember to insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic. Allow faucets to drip during extreme cold to avoid frozen pipes.

United Power Coal Creek Office
5 Gross Dam Road | Golden, CO 80403

Member Services: 303-637-1300
Coal Creek Office: 303-642-7921



Payment Kiosk Location



EV Charging Site (CHAdeMO, CCS/SAE)



www.unitedpower.com



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