

# Council watches environment, energy bills

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By TOM MORTON  
Star-Tribune staff writer

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What a difference a month makes: a \$650 million downward revision in projected surplus revenues, a lobbyist said Saturday.

"We're looking at how many more holes in the belt we have," Richard Garrett of the Wyoming Outdoor Council told the Natrona County Democratic Women's Forum.

Wyoming will still operate in the black, but the increased competition for projects will necessitate belt-tightening by lawmakers when the Legislature convenes Tuesday for its 40-day general session, said Garrett, WOC's outreach and legislative advocate.

Wyoming's Consensus Revenue Estimating Group's most recent report released Friday projected the state would have slightly less than \$260 million on top of the \$8 billion the Legislature approved in the 2007 budget session; down from the October projection of more than \$900 million.

Besides the competition for money, lawmakers and lobbyists also will spar over bills from the wild to the mild, with the WOC emphasizing environmental and related issues, Garrett said.

Lawmakers have presented two bills about wolf management, one bad and one reasonable from the WOC's point of view, he said.

The "bad" bill would reassert the dual classification of wolves: trophy game status -- meaning they would be hunted like other game -- for the animals in the northwestern part of the state, and predator status -- meaning they could be shot on sight -- everywhere else, Garrett said.

This bill is inconsistent with federal court rulings and will result in more lawsuits, he said.

The other, "reasonable," bill has been promoted by Rep. Keith Gingery, R-Jackson, which would promote trophy game status statewide, while allowing the killing of wolves preying on livestock, Garrett said. The statewide trophy status also would ensure genetic diversity with the wolves, he said.

The WOC also will be watching energy-related bills promoting clean coal, and energy efficiency in buildings and vehicles such as offering tax rebates for those who purchase vehicles such as hybrid cars, he said.

Looking at longterm energy issues, the WOC will pay close attention to legislation about carbon sequestration, Garrett said. "With global climate change, we have the opportunity to mitigate our carbon footprint."

Injecting carbon dioxide into the ground creates a liability issue if it escapes, he said.

Related to that, the law is unclear about who has the rights to the places with the pores to store carbon dioxide, Garrett said. This is somewhat different from the classic split estate issue of landowners having the surface rights but not necessarily the subsurface mining rights, he said.

The Wyoming Outdoor Council will work with the Powder River Basin Resource Council on more legislation to help mitigate the effects of water released during coal bed methane production, Garrett said.

Another longterm issue concerns landfills, he said.

New landfills need to conform to strict environmental regulations requiring linings to protect contaminants from reaching groundwater, Garrett said.

But some people want landfills far away from population centers to not be subject to the same

regulations, he said.

That way of thinking does not take into account where people may choose to live in the future, and it could open the door for other problems by relaxing groundwater standards, Garrett said. "It could be a stalking horse for in-situ uranium mining."

The WOC also wants more to be done about air quality monitoring, and providing for faster notification of ozone hazards for residents in areas such as Pinedale, he said.

Casper-area Democratic Party activist Jane Ifland asked whether monitoring is enough.

Garrett responded that monitoring has its own problems, such as an air quality monitoring station near Pinedale that had been out of service for eight months.

While not as profound as energy or pollution, Garrett said WOC favors a "cottage food industry" bill that would allow people to bake certain food items at home and sell them at farmer's markets.

"We never found an example of Aunt Mabel's banana nut bread killing anyone," Garrett said.

Reach Tom Morton at (307) 266-0592, or at [Tom.Morton@trib.com](mailto:Tom.Morton@trib.com).