

DAKOTA COUNSEL

Watchdogs of the Prairie



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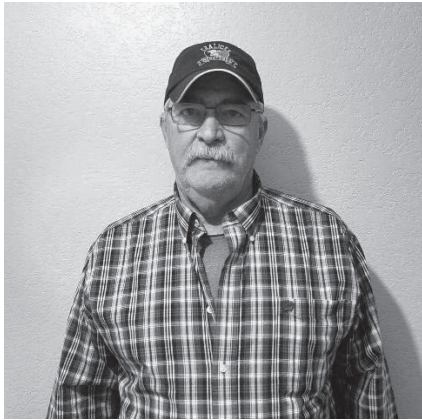
Dakota Resource Council and Dakota Rural Action teamed up with Farm Aid in early June to give farmers and ranchers a one-time, \$500 emergency household relief payment. The funds were provided by Farm Aid. Applications for North Dakota producers were accepted by a member appointed board of Dakota Resource Council. Funds for this relief effort were limited and were given to qualified applicants a first come first serve basis.

During the past year, North Dakota farmers and ranchers have had to weather storms from the trade war with China, flooding during harvest, spring drought conditions, and finally, market prices mixed in with the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated loss of market demand. In trying times like these, DRC knows that \$500 could help with out of pocket expenses like prescription medicine, groceries, bills and any other day-to-day household expenses.

DRC member, Dr. Madeline Luke is grateful for the assistance going to North Dakota producers. "DRC is very grateful for the support from Farm Aid so that we can help our smaller producers know that they have not been forgotten in these challenging times. We value our farmers and ranchers who try to work independently from corporate bosses and provide good, clean food."

(Story Continued on Page 3)

Letter From the Chair



Hello Everybody,

I would much rather be visiting you face to face than only writing a letter from the chair, but, here we are. With all of the difficulty and frustration we've experienced in these heightened COVID-19 months, let's hope we've all learned a few more techniques for patience.

Earlier this summer, DRC secured a grant from Farm Aid to be distributed to smaller agricultural producers in the state who have been adversely affected and need a little help. DRC, in coordination with Dakota Rural Action, made \$500 grants available for small farmers and ranchers to help folks with bills, groceries or prescription medications. Applicants applied online at dakotafarmrelief.com and a board awarded the applicants that qualified for the grant. To me, this is a typical example of DRC's philosophy, "helping those who need help".

As of now, all of the money has been awarded to qualified participants. The staff is working on securing more funding to help folks out and they will certainly let you know what they find.

I hope this summer has been going good for all of you and hopefully we'll see some much needed rain in western North Dakota soon. Also, don't hesitate to call the DRC staff if you have any questions or concerns that you have.

Take Care,

Curt

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Vacant, MVRC

DRC Affiliates

**Badlands Area Resource Council
(BARC)**

**Fort Berthold Protectors of Water
& Earth Rights (POWER)**

**McKenzie County Energies &
Taxation Association
(MCETA)**

**Missouri Valley Resource Council
(MVRC)**

**Dakota Resource Council
1720 Burnt Boat Drive, Suite 104
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-224-8587**

(Household Relief Payments Continued)

If you missed out or weren't able to apply for the household emergency fund in June, there may be other opportunities. DRC is exploring more funding options that might be available by late summer/early fall. For more information, or if you have any questions about this or other relief efforts, or if you want to donate to the cause please contact Mary Swanson at 701-224-8587, email at farmrelief@drcinfo.com or visit dakotafarmrelief.com.

Oil & Gas

Fort Berthold POWER Pushes for Air Quality Monitoring on Fort Berthold

Since 2007, the oil and gas activity on Fort Berthold Indian Reservation (FBIR) has created many problems for the members of the Three Affiliated Tribes (TAT), Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nations, who live there, one is air quality. Since the start of the boom there has been no active air quality monitoring within the boundaries of FBIR. Air quality monitoring does exist outside FBIR but those monitoring stations are too far away to represent the actual air quality on FBIR. DRC affiliate Fort Berthold POWER (POWER) has been working to get air quality monitoring on FBIR for years.

In early Dec 2019 the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) met with DRC director, Scott Skokos, and suggested a plan to work with the TAT government to establish a tribally led air monitoring program. Following the meeting with DEQ, POWER members discussed this possibility with TAT Environmental Director, Edmund Baker. Director Baker was very interested in the idea and so, initiated a meeting with the DEQ, and other tribal and state officials in March. This meeting included representatives from: DEQ, TAT Tribal Business Council, DRC and POWER, TAT, Director Baker, and the North Dakota Governor's Office. The meeting was held so that the DEQ could outline the steps needed to implement an air quality monitoring program on FBIR. Following the meeting, Director Baker reported back to the Tribal Council regarding how this partnership would benefit the tribe. Ultimately, Director Baker was

able to bring four motions to the Tribal Energy Committee.

The four motions are: **1)** TAT Environmental Director to research and do a cost analysis/budget for air quality monitoring, **2)** TAT tribal attorney in coordination with the TAT Environmental Director to draft and present a tribal air quality code to the full council, **3)** TAT Environmental Director to develop a budget for both air quality monitoring equipment and technical personnel to maintain the equipment, **4)** Provide a letter of support to the DEQ for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the state and the tribe regarding the creation of an air quality monitoring program on FBIR.

These motions were passed unanimously by the Energy Committee, and then placed on the agenda for the full Tribal Business Council in mid-March.



Since the birth of the Bakken boom, flaring has diminished the air quality in the Northwest portion of the state

Unfortunately, the full Council has not yet voted on these motions because COVID-19 dominated the meetings and shifted the priorities of the Council. In addition, the Council has had to deal with the historical drop in oil prices and budgets became a working priority for the Council. The motions are still on the agenda but have not been addressed yet

It was the work of POWER members that helped get the discussion to its current place. When the four motions are finally up for a vote, POWER members will be present to encourage the Tribal Business Council to make the right decisions and bring air quality monitoring onto FBIR.

COVID-19 Impacts North Dakota Oil Industry

With foreign countries increasing output of oil, COVID-19, and significantly reduced travel because of worldwide stay at home orders, the demand for oil has dropped exponentially. This combination of unprecedented events caused oil prices to drop to the lowest point ever. Oil companies are acquiring more debt at a quicker rate than they have in the past years. These companies were on pace for a record bankruptcy rate even before the current crisis. Dakota Resource Council and its members across the state are feeling the impact of the crisis on this already deeply indebted and overleveraged industry.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis DRC and its leaders have been trying to react as best as they can to find solutions to push for policies that support an economic recovery that benefits working families. DRC has pushed back against direct bailouts to the oil industry. In addition, DRC has also urged for policies that put oil workers back to work cleaning up abandoned oil and gas wells and other environmental issues facing the oil fields.

In an April meeting, our state's leaders, particularly from the Industrial Commission talked about solutions for a Bakken restart that were well intentioned but the policies they discussed failed to take the steps necessary to protect working North Dakotans. The solutions presented by leaders were in large part oil industry bailouts, without any conditions to require oil companies to reduce their emissions or to increase their reclamation bonds. DRC will continue to oppose direct bailouts to the industry. In our view, taxpayer dollars should not be used to aid the oil industry, rather taxpayer dollars should be used to benefit working North Dakota families.

Hearing to Consider to Define Oil Production as Waste or Not

The North Dakota Industrial Commission (NDIC) held a hearing in May to get public input for: "Consideration of how to determine the oil price at which the production of oil in excess of transportation or marketing facilities or in excess of reasonable

market demand constitutes waste. Also, how to consider consequences of determining that waste is occurring, and determine what relief may be appropriate and necessary to prevent the waste of North Dakota crude oil production." Some of the considerations the NDIC asked for input included: 1. How will considering oil production as waste impact mineral owners, and 2. How will considering oil production as waste impact existing leases and contracts?



Gov. Burgum, Attorney General Stenehjem and Ag. Commissioner Goehring all sit on the NDIC

DRC and several of our members opposed defining oil as waste because such an action would negatively impact the private contracts between mineral owners and oil companies just to benefit the oil companies. While the outcome of the hearing is still yet to be determined, our hope is that our North Dakota leaders will take DRC's and the rest of the public's comments into account when making their final decision.

Ag & Food

DRC Hosts Right to Harm Web Panel

For the first time in DRC history, Dakota Resource Council held a web panel on May 19th featuring Right to Harm director Matt Wechsler and Dr. John Ikerd, professor emeritus of agricultural economics, University of Missouri. The web panel was moderated by longtime DRC member Curt Stofferahn. About 20 people were in attendance, including US House of Representatives candidate, Zach Raknerud. The panel discussed the film and factory farms in general, which features Dr. Ikerd amongst others.

Prior to the panel, DRC received the rights to allow our members to view Right to Harm. More than 250 people viewed the film through an online link. **(Story Continued on Page 5)**

DRC plans to do more events like the panel and movie screenings during this time of social distancing. As soon as we are able, we look forward to holding in-person panels and film screenings.

Hemp Update



Hemp can be refined into a variety of commercial items, including paper, textiles, clothing, biodegradable plastics, paint, insulation, biofuel, food, and animal feed.

DRC's work on hemp has been ratcheting up over the past several months. DRC has been working with member Michael Graalum and students at University of North Dakota studying the feasibility of building a hemp paper mill in Hillsboro North Dakota. In addition, we helped get DRC members and business leaders to attend an educational seminar in April. Lastly, by working and organizing with leaders across the state we've been able to organize a meeting with Ag Commissioner Doug Goehring to discuss policy changes on both the state and federal levels.

We are hopeful about our meeting with Commissioner Goehring. Because bringing the hemp industry to North Dakota will not only diversify our crop rotations and add new potential sources of income for our farmers, but add quality high paying jobs to our economy.

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DRC PODCAST

Catch the DRC Podast! The Dakota Resource Council podcast is an update with organization news, member profiles & interviews. We also talk with experts that are involved with issues that affect our members. You can download our podcast on iTunes, visit drcpodcast.buzzsprout.com, go to drcinfo.com and scroll to the bottom of the page or watch for updates on our Facebook Page!

Farmers and Ranchers in Crisis

Dakota Resource Council will launch our new campaign, "Farmers and Ranchers in Crisis", June 2020. This campaign takes a personal look at the stories of our farming and ranching members across North Dakota who have been affected by multiple economic crises including the trade war with China, droughts, flooding, low commodity prices, COVID-19, and the fallout from all of the events combined.

Dakota Resource Council started this project as a campaign to tell the stories of DRC farmer and rancher members who are being affected by the trade war with China. As we saw the COVID 19 pandemic destroy the futures market, it became clear that we needed to expand the scope of the project beyond the trade war.

We wanted to address all of the factors impacting agriculture right now. "Farmers and Ranchers in Crisis" will be housed on DRC's blog and on our Facebook page. Please keep an eye out for the release in late June or early July.



Bill Hejl, a beet, soy, and corn farmer, is one of the farmers featured in the project.



Visit our website at drcinfo.org to join, renew or to catch up on news and updated blogs!

Solving the Climate Crisis Through Soil Management

Keeping North Dakota's soils healthy is vital to farming and ranching remaining viable. Keeping soil healthy has other benefits, including soil carbon sequestration which helps mitigate global climate change. In order to learn more about the work being done to promote healthy soils and to share our members' stories regarding soil management techniques, DRC joined the National Healthy Soils Policy Network (NHSPN) in April. By joining this network, DRC will have the ability to share information with groups in 27 states, and have access to resources on soil management and public policy options promoting a health soil agenda.



National Healthy Soils Policy Network shares models, lessons learned and strategies related to policies that incentivize agricultural practices with climate benefits, in particular, those that build healthy soils.

In addition to DRC joining NHSPN, DRC Executive Director, Scott Skokos was named as a member of the REAMP Ag Hub Team. The REAMP Ag Hub Team was formed in order to work with the agricultural sector in the Midwest to help solve the climate crisis. As a member of the REAMP Ag Hub Team, Scott will work with members of the REAMP network to develop an agriculture centric climate agenda for the Midwest. This agenda will likely include soil management techniques and public policy supporting innovative soil management techniques that mitigate climate change amongst other policies.

Meat Packing Issues Build Momentum in Congress

Here is a breakdown on the many federal bills that have been introduced in Washington in the last 3 months.

New Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) Resolution-

This bill is similar to the Tester resolution (<https://www.agweb.com/article/cool-resolution-introduced-senator-tester>) that was introduced in October of last year. It is non-binding but is being used to gauge how much support COOL has in the Senate. The main difference between this and the Tester bill is that it addresses beef but not pork. The resolution also calls to begin the trade negotiations necessary to reinstate Mandatory Cool.

DRC Analysis: This is a good resolution. DRC has always supported mandatory COOL. It would be better if pork was included. It's little more than feel good legislation that doesn't change anything however it could help us understand where the support for COOL is.

Sponsor: Sen. Tester [D-MT] Sen. Rounds, Mike [R-SD], Sen. Daines, Steve [R-MT], Sen. Thune, John [R-SD], Sen. Booker, Cory A. [D-NJ].

Spot market reform, S. 3693-In order to increase transparency in cattle pricing, this bill requires that a minimum of 50% of a meat packers' weekly volume of beef slaughter be purchased on the open or spot market. It would "amend the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 to foster efficient markets and increase competition and transparency among packers that purchase livestock from producers."

DRC Analysis: DRC supports the measure. Industry experts estimate that only 5-10% of meat packers' weekly volume is purchased on the spot or open market. It still allows the meat packing industry 50% of their product to manipulate the market but it would require packers to take more of the risk when buying their meat.

Sponsors: Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Sen. Tester, Jon [D-MT], Sen. Ernst, Joni [R-IA], Sen. Hyde-Smith, Cindy [R-MS], Sen. Rounds, Mike [R-SD], Sen. Smith, Tina [D-MN], Sen. Daines, Steve [R-MT]



PRIME Act-This bill would loosen regulations to allow non state or federally inspected slaughterhouses, known as custom slaughterhouses, to process and sell meat such as beef, pork, and lamb to consumers, restaurants, grocery stores, etc. It would allow small shops that process wild game to sell meat as long as it came from in state producers. This is a permanent regulation change and gives small businesses a chance to compete. It has bipartisan support in the House of Representatives. Only Republicans have signed on to it in the Senate. This bill is not new this session.

DRC Analysis: This Act could give ranchers another option for selling their meat and could give restaurants, grocery stores and the like access to local, more affordable locally sourced meat. This is a good bill for long term recovery, but it will take time for new butchering shops to open or existing shops to grow. State inspection laws are an issue because states don't have the uniformity from state to state that the federal government does. If states can make their standards meet minimum federal requirements this bill would be a good step towards creating a more fair market. With bi-partisan support there's a good chance this bill will pass.

Senate, S. 1620 Sponsors: Sen. Angus King [I-ME], Sen. Paul, Rand [R-KY], Sen. Alexander, Lamar [R-TN], Sen. Blackburn, Marsha [R-TN], Sen. Cramer, Kevin [R-ND], Sen. Hoeven, John [R-ND], Sen. Lee, Mike [R-UT] House, HR. 2859 Sponsors: 43
(Meatpacking Bills Continued on Page 8)

New Markets for State Inspected Meat and Poultry Act, S. 1720—This bill that would allow state inspected, processed meats to be sold across state lines. This would open up more markets for ranchers to sell their products. This bill could be used in tandem with the PRIME Act to open more markets. This bill has bipartisan support.

DRC Analysis: This bill would change little in North Dakota because it already has an interstate meat selling contract. For states that don't have such an agreement this could, in tandem with the Prime Act, expand markets and create more competition. While not a quick fix, this bill would make it easier for small businesses to compete in the long term. This bill has the support of our North Dakota Senators.

Sponsors: Sen. King, Angus S., Jr. [I-ME], Sen. Thune, John [R-SD], Sen. Enzi, Michael B. [R-WY], Sen. Manchin, Joe, III [D-WV], Sen. Barrasso, John [R-WY], Sen. Tester, Jon [D-MT], Sen. Daines, Steve [R-MT], Sen. Cramer, Kevin [R-ND], Sen. Smith, Tina [D-MN], Sen. Capito, Shelley Moore [R-WV]

U.S. Beef Integrity Act, S. 2744—This is a bill that has been around since October. It would change the USDA rules on what specifically can be labeled "Product of the USA." These guidelines fall short of mandatory COOL. The USDA has initiated the rulemaking process to define what can be labeled as "Product of the USA." They have not initiated a timetable for that process though.

DRC Analysis: The USDA is already rewriting the rule and the bill's sponsors, Senator Thune and Senator Rounds, have indicated that they have support for Mandatory COOL. To pass this bill would be a step in the wrong direction.

Sponsors: Sen. John Thune [R-SD], Sen. Mike Rounds [R-SD], Sen. Steve Daines [R-MT]

Farm System Reform Act S. 3221 (Size of Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO))—This bill, introduced by Senator Cory, would immediately place a moratorium on CAFOs and other forms of factory farming and would phase out all CAFOs by 2040.

This bill reintroduces Mandatory COOL, and emphasizes the enforcement of the Packer and Stockyard Act.

DRC Analysis: This bill has a comprehensive phase out of CAFOs and stimulus money that could be offered to communities as they transition to a new type of farming. DRC supports the legislation. It's not likely this bill will have enough traction to pass. Sen. Booker is not on the Senate Ag Committee and the bill has little bi-partisan support.

Sponsors: Sen. Cory Booker [D-NJ] H.R. 6718, sponsors: Rep. Ro Khanna [D-CA], Rep. Haaland, Debra A. [D-NM-1], Rep. Blumenauer, Earl [D-OR-3], Rep. Raskin, Jamie [D-MD-8], Rep. DeFazio, Peter A. [D-OR-4], Rep. Lieu, Ted [D-CA-33], Rep. Norton, Eleanor Holmes [D-DC-AtLarge]

Coal Country

Coal Creek Station To Close In 2022; DRC Reacts

In early May, Great River Energy announced it would be closing Coal Creek Station in Underwood. This was a big announcement because it means that there will be a huge economic impact to North Dakota coal country, the associated jobs, and potential issues surrounding the reclamation of the coal plants and the adjacent coal mine.

Since its founding, Dakota Resource Council has worked to ensure that coal mining and power generation is done in a way that does not significantly impact North Dakota. Over the years DRC has pushed for improved reclamation standards for coal mines, for increased emissions controls at power plants, and increased standards regarding the handling of water pollution from the coal industry. With the announced closure, it is more important than ever for DRC and its members to step up and make sure that Great River Energy and the Falkirk Mine do not leave communities economically ruined with giant scars on the prairie landscape. For that reason DRC is committed to push for increased reclamation jobs as a way to reclaim the land and put North Dakotans to work.

(Story Continued on Page 9)



In October of 2019, DRC held an open community forum in Beulah, ND called, "Building Resilience in Coal Country", talking with local residents about the future of the area that is currently reliant on the coal industry which is seeing hardships around the country.

DRC will continue to talk to community members, local elected officials, and business interests regarding the future of Coal Country with the current economic situation surrounding coal power. It is DRC's view that reclamation jobs (jobs reclaiming the mine and power plants) can provide some temporary employment for Coal Country residents out of work while community members, businesses, and elected officials develop and implement a plan for the next phase for North Dakota Coal Country. DRC is committed to helping facilitate the planning and public policy needed for the next phase of Coal Country. In addition, DRC will work to ensure the land is cleaned up to be as good or better than it was prior to coal mining and power generation.



Coal Creek Station, Underwood, ND

ND Coal Plant Could Produce Jobs through Reclamation

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May 18, 2020

UNDERWOOD, N.D. -- North Dakota leaders want to find a new owner for the state's largest coal-fired power plant, which is slated to close in 2022. But environmental groups say that's the wrong way to go.

Minnesota-based Great River Energy has announced it will close the Coal Creek Station, citing a difficult marketplace for coal energy. Gov. Doug Bergum called the facility the state's most efficient and updated coal plant and said he'd like to preserve the 260 jobs there.

Gene Wirtz with the Dakota Resource Council said the best way to do that is to set the site up for reclamation, not keep it running.

"I think some of those workers that are doing the mining right now could also speed up the reclamation," Wirtz said. "There's a lot of dirt that has to be moved and a lot of soil to be regenerated, so it produces as much as it did before."



DRC Member, Gene Wirtz

Wirtz estimated reclamation jobs could last for several years. A recent study of a similar debate in Montana, where the Colstrip Power Plant is being phased out, found that a robust cleanup there would create hundreds of good-paying jobs and
(Story Continued on Page 10)

(Coal Reclamation Jobs Continued)

permanently improve local groundwater. Industry observers have said the report resonates with many other communities dependent on aging coal-fired plants.

According to analysis by Reuters, U.S. companies retired or converted roughly 15,000 megawatts of coal power last year - the second-fastest pace on record. Wirtz said the writing is on the wall for these plants.

"Natural gas is so cheap right now, and wind power has gotten cheaper, too," he said. "You can't compete. It's just economics."

The Coal Creek plant began operating in the late 1970s. Wirtz said it's a challenge for the surrounding communities that have to adapt their economies, but he noted these facilities weren't meant to last forever. Some states are working with brokerage firms to redevelop sites once they've been cleaned up.

Affiliate News



Badlands Area Resource Council is waiting for the state supreme court to reconvene so that we can get the decision on our process appeal relating to the Public Service Commission. In the meantime we continue to explore the viability of the refinery as oil prices fell to record lows and thousands of wells across North Dakota have been shut in. Plans are being made and options explored to keep the pressure on Meridian energy, Inc. to not build a refinery on the doorstep of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

In Gratitude

Our newsletter is not usually a place where an organizer speaks about personal matters but as many of you know I had to take several months off to help my dad with an intensive course of medication. That process went well. He is doing better and living independently once again which means I am back to work. I wanted to thank all of you who contacted me directly or through other staff members with well wishes and support. Your care and concern is much appreciated and bolstered me through some challenging times. I appreciate the understanding extended to me by the members I work most closely with including members of Badlands Area Resource Council and Missouri River Valley Resource Council. Finally, I appreciate the flexibility of Scott and our board. Few employers would be as flexible and open to an employee's needs as DRC was to mine.

Thanks again.

Liz Anderson

COVID Can't Stop WORC Summer Meeting

Since 1978, there are a few things that you can count on; the sun coming up, garbage day and the WORC summer meeting every June. Every year since the WORC network's birth, 41 years ago, all of the organizations in the network, Dakota Resource Council, Dakota Rural Action, Western Native Voice, Northern Plains Resource Council, Idaho Organization of Resource Councils, Oregon Rural Action, Powder River Basin Resource Council, and Colorado Western Alliance have come together to discuss issues going on in their states, get training, share ideas, and "council" each other during troublesome times.



WORC is planning on having the 2021 summer meeting in the Big Horn Mountains

This year was no different...except for the fact that there is a pandemic going on in the world and social distancing has become a new way of life. All of the organizations were going to meet at a dude ranch in the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming, but with social distancing forcing cancelations of large gatherings, the in person meeting had to be scrapped. The staff at WORC still felt it important to come together so they held the WORC summer meeting via an online video conferencing site called Zoom. The virtual meeting was held June 4th and 5th. Over 80 staff and members from each organization in the network joined in from the comfort of their own homes. The meetings featured special guest presenters and training for members and staff on how to organize in a pandemic, work/home life balance, sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and of course, sharing what each group has accomplished during

the past year with a particular focus on how we have responded to the needs of people during the pandemic. During the sessions, WORC was still able to do breakout groups. They would put a few folks from different organizations in a virtual room to discuss the topic being presented and then we would be brought back to the larger group to finish our discussions.



Staff and members in the WORC network were still able to see each other by using "Zoom" to run the summer meeting

WORC also took the time to recognize and discuss the current racial injustice and protests going on in the US and around the world. They held special open spaces during the day to talk about race and what we can do as a group to combat racial injustice. WORC took a moment of silence and reflection at the same time as George Floyd's memorial service in Minneapolis.

Even though we were not together on a dude ranch, watching our very own executive director Scott Skokos ride a horse, we were still together discussing issues, meeting new people and training for organizing in what seems to be our new way of living...for now.

WORC is scheduled to hold next year's meeting in the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming. As a DRC member, you're invited to come join us! If you are interested or would like more information on the WORC summer meeting, please call the DRC office at (701) 224-8587 and we can start planning!

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- ☐ \$250 Supporting
- ☐ \$100 Century Club
- ☐ \$55 Household
- ☐ \$35 Individual
- ☐ \$15 Student/Senior

2. I ALSO want to join my local affiliate, please choose one at \$10.00

- ☐ Badlands Area Resource Council
- ☐ Fort Berthold Protectors of Water & Earth Rights
- ☐ McKenzie County Energy & Taxation Association
- ☐ Missouri Valley Resource Council

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City, State, Zip _____

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