

THE COLORADO COLLEGE

# STATE OF THE ROCKIES PROJECT:

INFRASTRUCTURE, RECREATION AND THE ROCKIES EASTERN HIGH PLAINS

SUMMER FIELD WORK 2010



# Rockies Field Work 2010

While the summer 2009/2010 Rockies research team traveled south, all the way to the Mexican border for their field research on Food and Agriculture in the Rockies, this year the 2010/2011 project team headed north to Wyoming and Montana to visit important sites and talk to experts related to the three research themes. After eight days, over 2400 miles and numerous conversations and meetings the State of the Rockies Project Team of six students, one staff and one faculty returned to Colorado Springs to spend the remainder of the summer researching and reporting on their findings. Additional Front Range meetings helped firm up initial understandings of issues and the range of options by which each theme can be made stronger in the 8 state Rockies region.



## 2010/2011 Research Foci:

- Rockies Region Eastern High Plains: Decline and Potential Rejuvenation
- Nature-Based Recreation in the Rockies: A New Amenity Use for the Region's Resources
- Rockies Region Infrastructure: Essential Services in Need of Attention



## Fowler, CO: June 30th, 2010

Several State of the Rockies researchers traveled to Fowler, CO to meet with Wayne Snider. Wayne is Fowler's town manager and at the front lines of bringing new technologies, jobs and an improved economy to Fowler. All of this is based around renewable energy technologies that Fowler is implementing into their town, as well as bringing in companies which produce these technologies.

Wayne took the team around to visit the sites of the solar installations that are powering street lights, the local schools and even the town pool. In addition a solar company Helios is planning to start production of their solar-cubes in an empty canning factory in downtown Fowler. With potential for anaerobic digesters at the local feedlots, algae harvesting and wind energy, Fowler is at the forefront of a diversified energy portfolio and hopes to act as a template for other declining rural towns hoping to improve their future.



## Yellowstone, WY: July 10th-12th

Arriving in Yellowstone National Park on the evening of July 10th, the Rockies team spent two nights camping at Bridge Bay campground on Yellowstone Lake. On Sunday the team explored Yellowstone. Wildlife sightings of black and grizzly bears, Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep, bison, bald eagles, and elk, captured the Rockies attention for the morning and the afternoon included a climb of Mt. Washburn. In the evening the team witnessed the American classic, the eruption of Old Faithful.

On Monday the team packed up and traveled to Teton National Park where after meeting with Jackie Skaggs, the public affairs specialist for Teton National Park to talk about the issues of recreation in the park and region, they continued on to Jackson, WY.



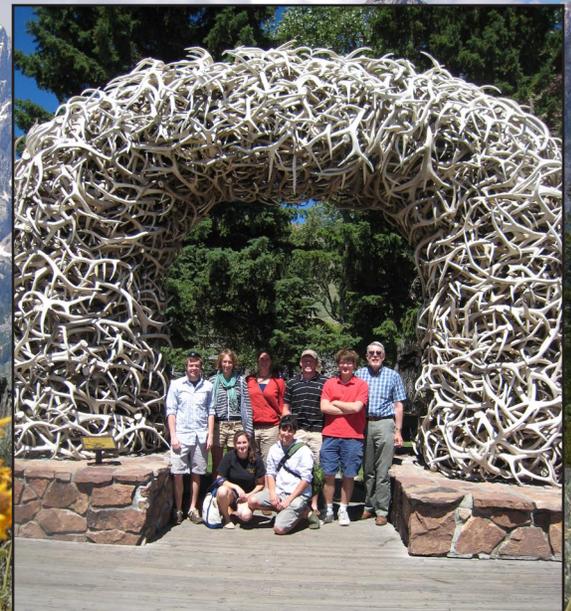
## Jackson, WY: July 12th-14th

In Jackson the Rockies Project met with Jon Shick, owner of High Mountain Heli-Ski to discuss the issues, opposition and restrictions he faces in the niche market of heli-skiing in Jackson Hole.

On Tuesday the team split up in the morning, the infrastructure group to meet with Paul Walters, operations manager at the Jackson Hole Airport, and the eastern plains and recreation groups to meet with Lori Iverson, the recreation planner at the National Elk Refuge.

In the afternoon the whole group sat down with the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance and spoke with Louise Lasley about the conservation efforts in the region. Later, the team traveled a few miles down the road to talk with Rick Knori, at Lower Valley Energy to discuss energy projects and transmission issues facing the unique utility company in Jackson.

In the evening the group had a drink at the Snake River Brew-Pub and talked with a couple Colorado College Alumni living in the area.



## Bozeman, MT July 14th-16th



On Wednesday the team traveled to West Yellowstone, WY to meet with Mark Pearson, National Parks Program Director for the Greater Yellowstone Coalition to discuss the friction between ranchers and the public lands over the movement of bison outside the park boundaries and their interaction with cattle.

The next day the researchers met with numerous organizations. First was Bill Bryan, involved in both Off the Beaten Path concerning tourism and The Rural Landscape Institute concerning Eastern Plains rejuvenation. The infrastructure group met with Debbie Arkell, the Director of Public Services for the City of Bozeman. A visit to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to meet with Sarah Olimb built upon the team's existing knowledge of the efforts to conserve and revitalize the Great Plains ecosystem. In addition to the WWF, the Rockies met with Ganay Johnson from the American Prairie Foundation to discuss their Prairie Reserve initiative in eastern Montana.

A final late afternoon meeting brought Rockies researchers to the Sonoran Institute. Discussion with Alison Berry and Cameron Ellis focused on planning issues in the Northern Rockies.

A "TGIF" at Montana AleWorks, around great beer and delicious food, brought together regional CC alumni and parents as well as a State of the Rockies alumnus, Brandon Goldstein.

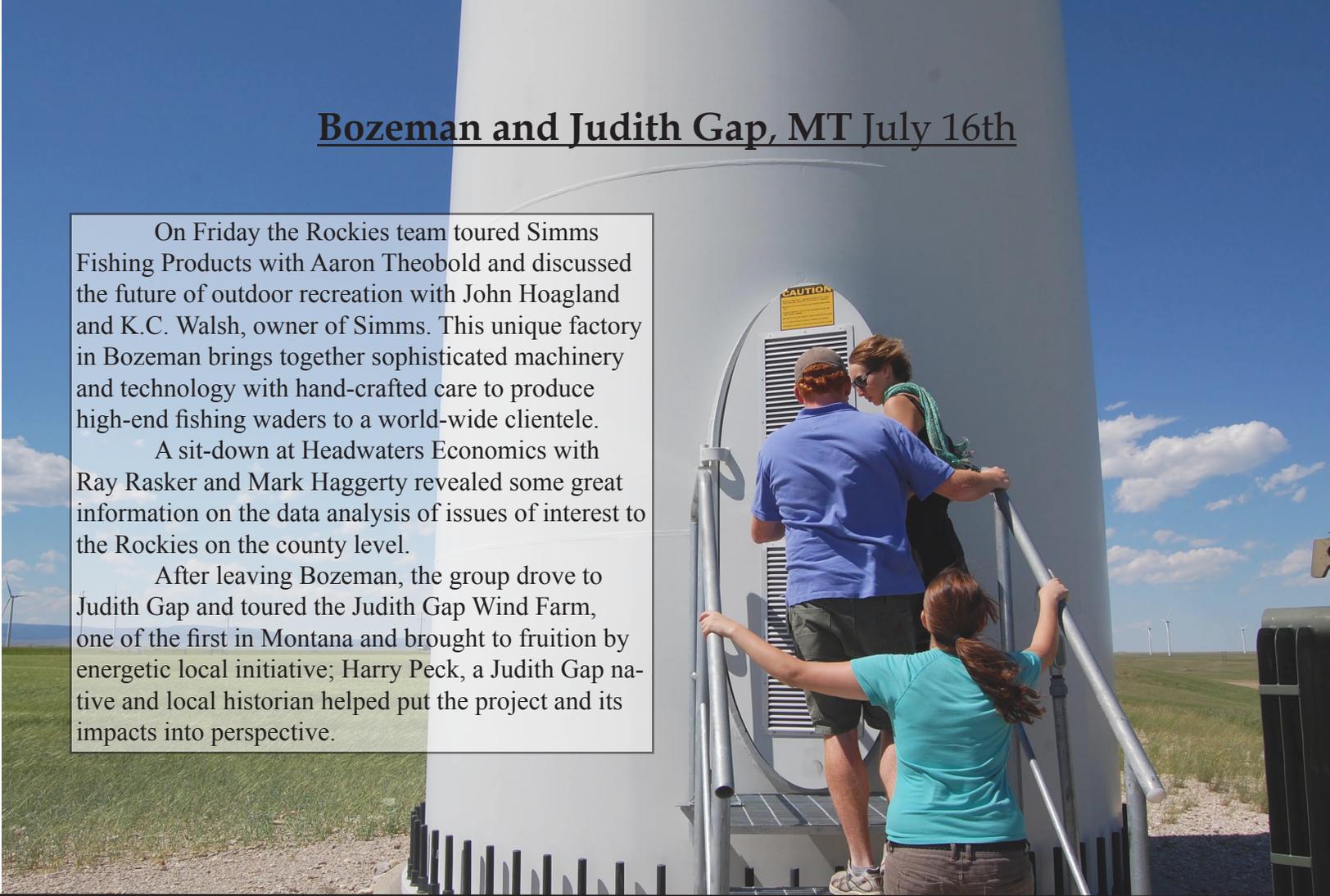


## Bozeman and Judith Gap, MT July 16th

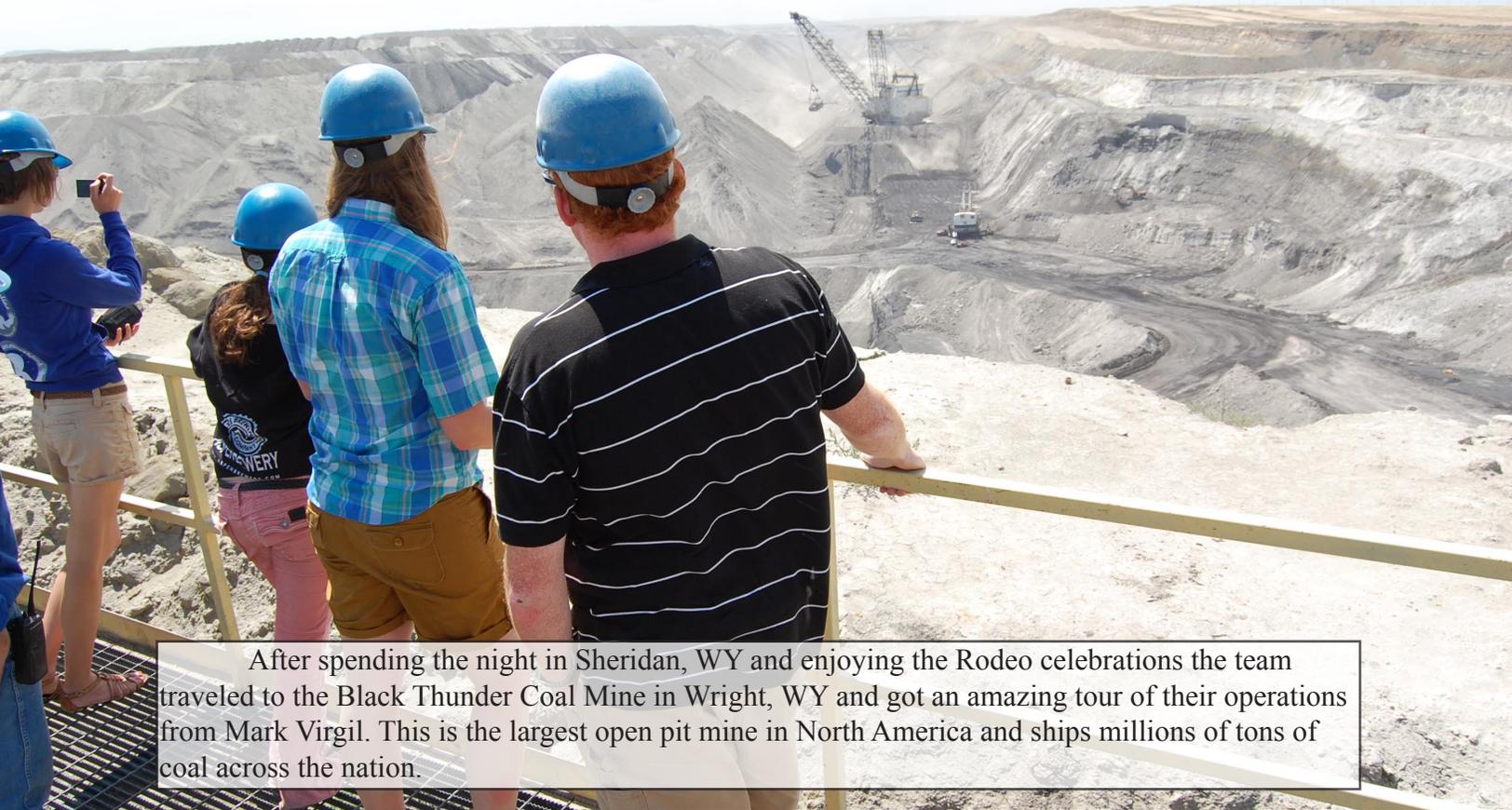
On Friday the Rockies team toured Simms Fishing Products with Aaron Theobald and discussed the future of outdoor recreation with John Hoagland and K.C. Walsh, owner of Simms. This unique factory in Bozeman brings together sophisticated machinery and technology with hand-crafted care to produce high-end fishing waders to a world-wide clientele.

A sit-down at Headwaters Economics with Ray Rasker and Mark Haggerty revealed some great information on the data analysis of issues of interest to the Rockies on the county level.

After leaving Bozeman, the group drove to Judith Gap and toured the Judith Gap Wind Farm, one of the first in Montana and brought to fruition by energetic local initiative; Harry Peck, a Judith Gap native and local historian helped put the project and its impacts into perspective.



## Wright, WY July 17th



After spending the night in Sheridan, WY and enjoying the Rodeo celebrations the team traveled to the Black Thunder Coal Mine in Wright, WY and got an amazing tour of their operations from Mark Virgil. This is the largest open pit mine in North America and ships millions of tons of coal across the nation.



## Black Hills, SD July 17th-18th

On Saturday the Rockies researchers arrived in Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota. After talking with park biologist Dan Roddy about bison management issues, the team visited Mt. Rushmore and camped at Wind Cave. Wind Cave bison are known for their lack of introgression of cattle genes.

The next morning the team packed up and drove home to Colorado Springs, passing through Alliance, Nebraska to view the large Burlington Northern train yard. A solid week filled with field work left the group happy to be back in Colorado Springs to report upon the pressing issues that were further explored throughout the trip.

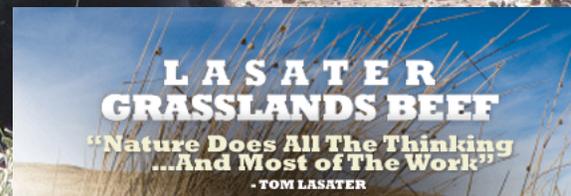
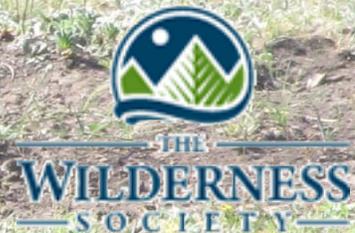
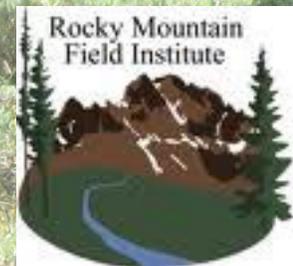
# Front Range CO: July 26 – August 13, 2010

While the northern Rockies is vast and hosts numerous experts and government as well as private sites and experts, the Front Range in Colorado is central to many regional and national offices. Student Researchers took advantage of these resources to obtain final data, explore concepts and expand their knowledge of a range of possible solutions that can improve the Rockies in the areas of recreation, infrastructure, and Eastern Plains rejuvenation. We are indebted to the following organizations for their assistance and hospitality in these discussions.



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## Students Researching, Reporting, and Engaging:

The Colorado College *State of the Rockies Report Card*, published annually since 2004, is the culmination of research and writing by a team of Colorado College student researchers. Each year a new team of students studies critical issues affecting the Rockies region of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

Colorado College, a liberal arts college of national distinction, is indelibly linked to the Rockies. Through its Block Plan, students take one course at a time, and explore the Rockies and Southwest as classes embark in extended field study. Their sense of “place” runs deep, as they ford streams and explore acequias to study the cultural, environmental, and economic issues of water; as they camp in the Rocky Mountains to understand its geology; as they visit the West’s oil fields to learn about energy concerns and hike through forests to experience the biology of pest-ridden trees and changing owl populations. CC encourages a spirit of intellectual adventure, critical thinking, and hands-on learning, where education and life intertwine.

The Colorado College State of the Rockies Project dovetails perfectly with that philosophy, providing research opportunities for CC students and a means for the college to “give back” to the region in a meaningful way. The *Report Card* fosters a sense of citizenship for Colorado College graduates and the broader regional community.



### Research

During summer field work, the student researchers pack into a van and cover thousands of miles of the Rocky Mountain West as they study the landscape, interview stakeholders, and challenge assumptions. Back on campus, they mine data, crunch numbers, and analyze information.



### Report

Working collaboratively with faculty, the student researchers write their reports, create charts and graphics, and work with editors to fine-tune each *Report Card* section. Their reports are subjected to external review before final publication.



### Engage

Through a companion lecture series on campus, the naming of a Champion of the Rockies, and the annual State of the Rockies Conference, citizens and experts meet to discuss the future of our region.

Each *Report Card* has great impact: Media coverage of *Report Cards* has reached millions of readers, and the 2006 report section on climate change was included in a brief presented to the U.S. Supreme Court. Government leaders, scientists, ranchers, environmentalists, sociologists, journalists, and concerned citizens refer to the Colorado College *State of the Rockies Report Card* to understand the most pressing issues affecting the growing Rockies region.

[www.stateoftherockies.com](http://www.stateoftherockies.com)

