

September 25, 2024, at 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

### Open Session:

Agenda #	Description:	Page #
1.	<p><b>Research Excellence Presentations:</b></p> <p><b>Director Dan McCoy</b> Update WORTH Annual Report</p> <p><b>WORTH ORTM 4903 Capstone Student Projects:</b></p> <p><b><i>Building Capacity for Wyoming Search and Rescue: Abigail Whitman</i></b> Degree(s) – BS in Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management BS Accounting and Finance Advisor: Aaron Freland</p> <p><b><i>Post Wildfire Recreation Recovery: Tommy Furland</i></b> Degree (May 2024) – BS Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Outreach Coordinator Wyoming Conservation Corps Advisor: Jonathan Brooks</p> <p><b><i>Douglas Tourism Enhancement Study: Riley Cooper &amp; Jack Seiloff</i></b></p>	<p>3</p> <p>24</p> <p>40</p> <p>47</p>
2.	<p><b>REDD Updates – Parag Chitnis</b> Vice President Chitnis Deputy Vice President Arun Pradhan Dr. Sarah Collins</p>	

**REDC**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING MATERIALS**

**AGENDA ITEM TITLE: WORTH Update with Annual Report – McCoy**

- ☒ OPEN SESSION  
☐ CLOSED SESSION

PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED BY COMMITTEE:

- ☐ Yes  
☒ No

FOR FULL BOARD CONSIDERATION:

- ☐ Yes *[Note: If yes, materials will also be included in the full UW Board of Trustee report.]*  
☒ No

☒ *Attachments/materials are provided in advance of the meeting.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Newly appointed WORTH Director Dan McCoy provides an update on the WORTH program along with a copy of the annual report, prior to introducing student projects from the WORTH ORTM Capstone course. The students presenting today were part of the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management (ORTM) Professional semester, a suite of courses students take typically in their senior year. Specifically, these students were in ORTM 4903 Capstone in the spring of 2024. This course is focused on building professional-level oral, written, and digital communication skills while working with a specific organization and mentor. Students work in teams to research and develop a report for their organization. The students will be presenting their work as part of that capstone course.

PRIOR RELATED COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS/ACTIONS:

NA

WHY THIS ITEM IS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE:

Information only

ACTION REQUIRED AT THIS COMMITTEE MEETING:

None

PROPOSED MOTION:

NA



Wyoming Outdoor Recreation, Tourism  
and Hospitality Initiative (WORTH)



# 2023-24 Annual Report

Wyoming Outdoor Recreation, Tourism and  
Hospitality Initiative (WORTH)

Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources



Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

I am pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report for the Wyoming Outdoor Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality (WORTH) Initiative. This report summarizes a year of significant accomplishments, impactful research, and strategic growth within Wyoming's second largest industry—tourism. Our mission at WORTH remains steadfast: to support and expand Wyoming's outdoor recreation, tourism, and hospitality sectors while ensuring sustainability and long-term benefits for our residents and communities.

None of the work in this report would be possible without the amazing work of our team of researchers, faculty, and graduate students. Thank you all for your contributions! You can see our team on pages 18-19 of this report.

Tourism continues to be a cornerstone of Wyoming's economy, generating \$4.8 billion in 2023 and providing over 33,000 jobs. This year's report highlights our focused efforts across applied research, educational services, and outreach—three pillars that underpin the WORTH Initiative.

Our applied research projects have provided invaluable insights into the economic contributions of outdoor recreation in Wyoming. Notable among these is our 2024 report on outdoor recreation, which underscores a remarkable 33% increase in the industry's contribution to the state's GDP. Additionally, our collaborative efforts with the Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Board have yielded comprehensive visitor satisfaction and responsible visitation studies, vital for informed decision-making in Teton County.

Educationally, WORTH has continued to empower students and professionals through various programs and initiatives. From increased scholarship funds and professional development opportunities to our innovative Outdoor Guide Certification Course, we are committed to fostering a well-equipped and knowledgeable workforce that will lead Wyoming's tourism and hospitality sectors into the future.

Our extension and outreach efforts have equally been robust. The 2024 Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Summit in Casper exemplified our commitment to fostering statewide collaboration and engagement. Through initiatives like hospitality and customer service training, we have strengthened community ties and enhanced service quality across the state.

As we look forward to 2025, we remain dedicated to our core values of sustainability, innovation, and collaboration. We will continue to expand our research portfolio, introduce new educational programs, and deepen our outreach efforts to support and grow Wyoming's tourism and outdoor recreation industries.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership. Together, we can ensure that Wyoming remains a premier destination for outdoor enthusiasts and a leader in sustainable tourism.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan McCoy".

Dan McCoy, Ph.D., *Interim Director*  
Wyoming Outdoor Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality (WORTH) Initiative  
University of Wyoming



## What is the WORTH Initiative?

Tourism is the second largest industry in Wyoming, generating \$4.8 billion in 2023. In addition, tourism is the largest private employment sector in Wyoming, employing over 33,000 people. The Wyoming Outdoor Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality (WORTH) Initiative supports this growing sector and seeks to expand it while focusing on sustainability. WORTH aims to diversify the state's economy and provide long-term benefits to Wyoming residents. The WORTH Initiative achieves its mission by focusing in three areas:



### **APPLIED RESEARCH:**

Delivering timely and relevant applied research for WORTH industries.



### **EDUCATIONAL PRODUCTS & SERVICES:**

Supplying diverse workforce training products and other educational services to students and working industry professionals.



### **EXTENSION & OUTREACH:**

Providing extension and outreach to the tourism industry across Wyoming.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2018, the University of Wyoming started the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management degree as a partnership with the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources and the College of Business. The degree program now boasts over 80 enrolled students. However, the 2020 UW Strategic Accelerated Review Process under the direction of UW President Edward Seidel identified a lack of tourism industry support. In response, the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, in partnership with the College of Business and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, proposed the establishment of WORTH. In 2021, President Seidel officially added WORTH as one of two other new strategic initiatives: The Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI) and the School of Computing (SoC). In January of 2022, WORTH received funding from the Wyoming Innovation Partnership (WIP). In March of 2022, the WORTH Initiative officially kicked-off.

## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT WORTH IS AN INITIATIVE?**

Initiatives are established at the behest of the University of Wyoming President or Board of Trustees to address a critical need or opportunity for the University. Initiatives differ from centers and institutes in that they may not be bound to one department, college, or campus beneficiary, but rather serve the campus and state.

# WORTH Statewide Impact

The educational, professional development, and training programs provided by WORTH's outreach and extension arm are wide reaching across Wyoming. The map below highlights some of the tourism, hospitality, and outdoor recreation activities that are helping communities thrive in our growing travel industry.



## INTERSHIPS AND AGREEMENTS

Locations of current internship agreements and summer 2024 interns.



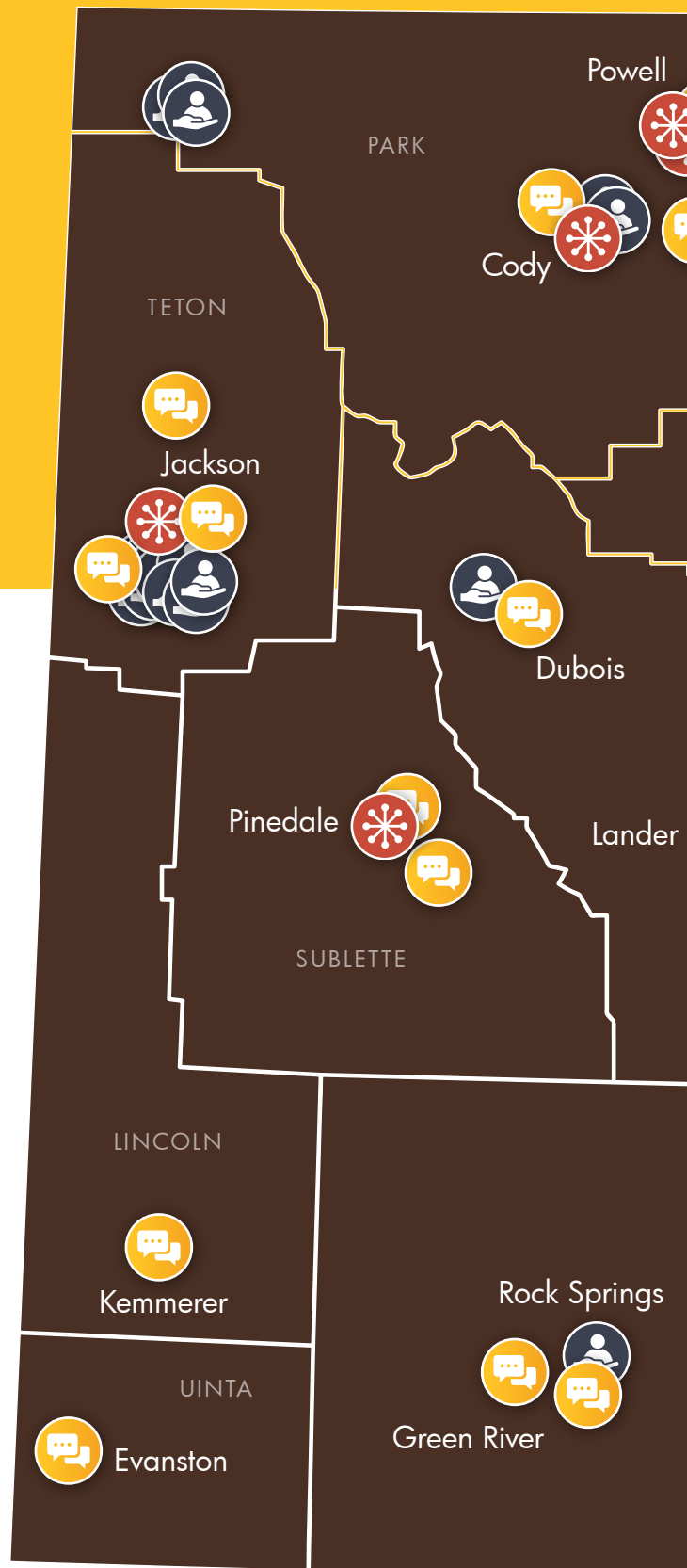
## WYOMING OUTDOOR RECREATION SUMMIT ATTENDEES

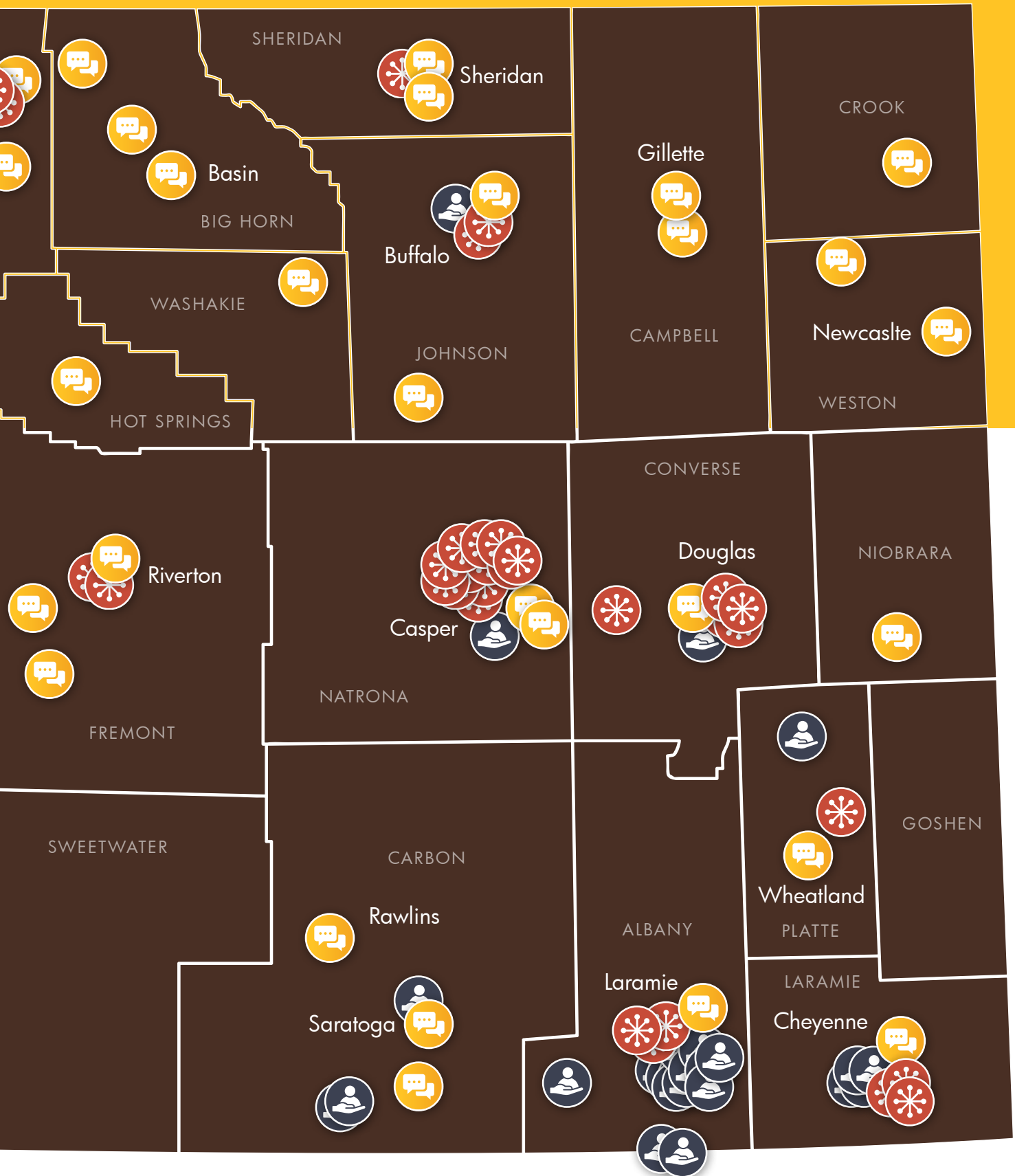
Wyoming cities represented through Outdoor Recreation Summit registration and attendance.



## EXTENSION AND OUTREACH

Locations of current activities including hospitality trainings, agritourism programming, and Wyoming Walks.









# Applied Research

The WORTH Initiative serves as a frontline resource by delivering timely and relevant applied research to businesses and organizations working in outdoor recreation, tourism, or hospitality around Wyoming. Here are a few examples of the research projects WORTH has undertaken and contributed to the industry.

## Completed and Ongoing Research Projects

### FACULTY RESEARCH GRANTS

The Wyoming Outdoor Recreation, Tourism and Hospitality (WORTH) Initiative at the University of Wyoming awarded grants for seven UW and community college faculty-led research projects that will benefit Wyoming's economy.



Faculty research grant funding was made possible through the Wyoming Innovation Partnership, a collaboration to align education and workforce development and support innovation, entrepreneurship and research to help drive Wyoming's economy.

WORTH received 10 proposals with \$779,000 in requests. Initially, \$250,000 was budgeted for the grants, but this funding was increased to \$432,000 given the strength of the applicant pool. In total, seven of the 10 project proposals were funded, benefitting 20 researchers both internal and external to UW. The grants further leveraged over \$50,000 from other sources. Faculty members (both internal and external to UW) who participate in research grants become WORTH-affiliated faculty.

See full announcement and project summaries at [bit.ly/4bYJKYK](https://bit.ly/4bYJKYK).

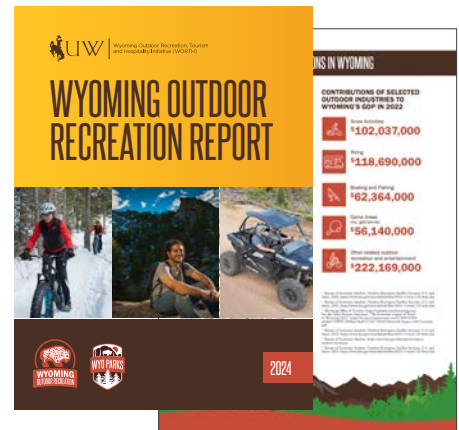
## 2024 REPORT ON OUTDOOR RECREATION IN WYOMING

WORTH, in partnership with the Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Office, released a report indicating that, in 2022, Wyoming's outdoor recreation industry contributed more to the state's gross domestic product than all but three states nationwide.

The Cowboy State's outdoor recreation industry generated \$2 billion in 2022, or 4.1 percent, toward Wyoming's GDP — a 33 percent increase from 2021. The percentage contribution is greater than in neighboring states Colorado and Utah, and trails only Hawaii, Montana and Vermont.

The report compares the economic contribution of activities such as snow sports, hunting, fishing and off-roading, and underscores how outdoor recreation directly supports more than 16,000 jobs in Wyoming.

The WORTH report documents several key elements of how the outdoor recreation industry contributes to Wyoming's communities and highlights recent work by Wyoming's outdoor recreation collaboratives statewide. Access to the digital version of the report can be found at [bit.ly/3yT8QJZ](https://bit.ly/3yT8QJZ).



Impact: the 2024 report so far has an impact of over 2,020 views, downloads, or print copies (mailed to 950 addresses, 450 handed out at events, and has been downloaded or viewed online 622 times since publication in February).

## TETON COUNTY SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN: VISITOR INTERCEPT SURVEYS

Through partnership with the Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Board, the WORTH Initiative designed and conducted a visitor intercept survey project based in Teton County, WY and split into two sessions, winter and summer. The survey has two goals:

1. Assessment of visitor satisfaction on various measures of tourism in Jackson Hole; and
2. Impact and perception of 'Responsible Visitation' messaging in Jackson Hole and alignment of this messaging with visitor values.

The first survey session took place in Teton County in December 2023–January 2024. Data from the winter session will be complemented with data from the upcoming summer session in July–August of 2024.



## TETON COUNTY SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN: TOURISM IMPACT DATABASE

During summer of 2023, WORTH began working with the Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Board to assist with data gathering for Teton County's five-year Sustainable Destination Management Plan. In support of this plan, WORTH has been assisting the JHTTB in identifying and tracking social, economic, and environmental indicators to be published on an online community dashboard. To date, WORTH has refined a list of 267 potential tourism impact indicators to 43 confirmed indicators to be tracked and monitored on the dashboard. Data collected through Visitor Intercept Surveys will supplement the online dashboard, as will a stakeholder survey that incorporates community input on the most important impact indicators to track.

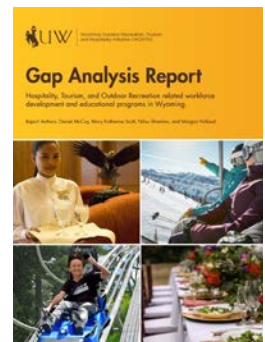
## LODGING FORECAST FOR JACKSON HOLE AND TETON COUNTY

The University of Wyoming Center for Business and Economic Analysis (CBEA), in conjunction with the WORTH Initiative and the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce have established monthly forecasts of key lodging sector indicators for Teton County. Indicators are forecast to a six-month horizon. Forecasts incorporate data on advance bookings and monthly lodging taxes provided by the Chamber. Forecasts available at a monthly frequency are average occupancy rates (OR), average daily room rates (ADR), revenue per available room (RevPAR), county, state, and total lodging tax revenues, and total lodging sector sales for Teton county. The forecast also uses data on monthly lodging tax collections for Teton County to forecast total monthly lodging revenue and sales tax collections for six months.

Lodging sector employment, employee compensation, output, and contribution to gross county product (GCP) are available at a semi-annual (six-month total) frequency. The forecast is updated monthly and can be found at [bit.ly/4efvblr](https://bit.ly/4efvblr).

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING NEEDS IN WYOMING'S TRAVEL INDUSTRY

In collaboration with several community colleges across the state, WORTH compiled a comprehensive report to reveal critical insights into the workforce development needs within Wyoming's robust travel industry. The resulting Gap Analysis Report underscored the urgent need for enhancing educational programs and training opportunities to sustain and expand this crucial economic sector in the Cowboy State. This study was supported by the Wyoming Innovation Partnership (WIP) Phase II funding. The report has been downloaded or viewed 150 times since publication in April. Find the full Gap Analysis report at [bit.ly/45pRznP](https://bit.ly/45pRznP).



## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE MUSEUM OF THE MOUNTAIN MAN

Using data on visitation and operation expenses provided by the Museum of the Mountain Man, WORTH estimated how the Museum of the Mountain Man contributes to the economy of Sublette County. Museum operations added 8.3 jobs, \$298,895 in labor income, \$409,383 in value added (gross county product), and \$964,005 in output to Sublette County. Visitors to Sublette County who go to the museum support 4.2 jobs, \$122,852 in labor income, \$222,692 in value added, and \$401,128 in economic output to Sublette County.



**MUSEUM of the  
MOUNTAIN MAN**  
Sublette County Historical Society

## Future Research Projects

### PRELIMINARY PROJECTS FOR 2025 INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Examining the economic impact of the State Fair and Fairgrounds in Douglas, WY
- Exploring the economic impact of the Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Grant Program
- Understanding the economic impact of search & rescue operations in Teton County
- Identifying the scope of Wyoming's creative sectors and film sectors
- Resident Sentiment Towards Tourism in Teton County
- NSF-CIVIC Planning Grant application in partnership with the School of Computing, Civil Engineering Faculty, Voices JH, and Teton County (notification pending this summer)





# Educational Products & Training

To support the workforce development needs of outdoor recreation and tourism sectors in Wyoming, the WORTH Initiative offers diverse training services and educational products to students and industry professionals.

## Educational Projects Delivered:

### **SCHOLARSHIP AND INTERNSHIP TRANSFORMATIONAL FUNDS FOR STUDENTS AT UW**

Thanks to the \$250,000 matching funds provided by the Wyoming Office of Tourism, we have successfully raised \$124,750 through the incredible generosity of several donors, including the Kemmerer Family Foundation and the Betts Foundation. With the matching funds, our total now stands at an impressive \$249,500.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our donors for their unwavering support of students at UW! These transformative funds are being utilized to:

- Support scholarships for students studying Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management or Hospitality.
- Support an innovative Wyoming internship scholarship; encouraging students to stay in the state and pursue an internship in the travel or outdoor recreation industries.
- Assist the functions of the WORTH Initiative. For example, we plan to use a portion of the funds to support a UW student tourism industry familiarization tour this fall of Cody, Yellowstone, Jackson, and Dubois.

Our donors' generosity is truly making a difference in the lives of our students and the future of Wyoming's tourism and hospitality industries.

## PULTE GATEWAY TO HOSPITALITY STUDENT TRANSFORMATION FUND

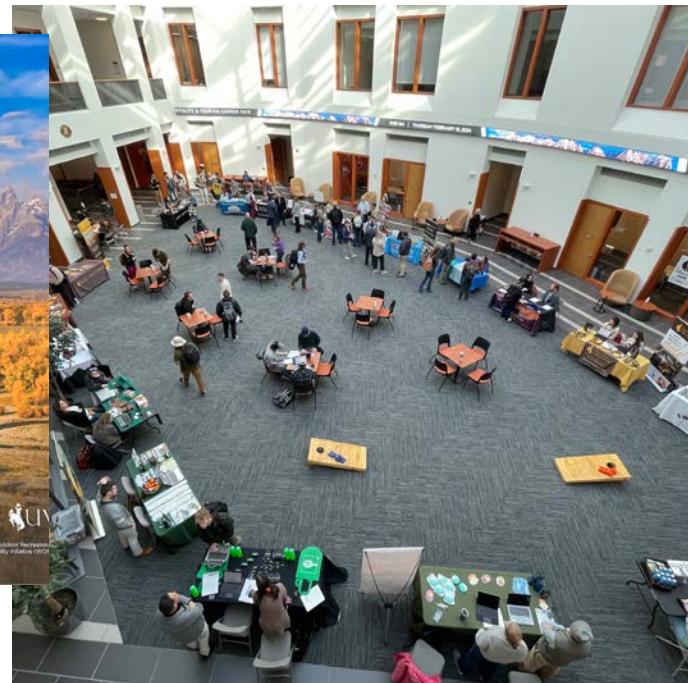
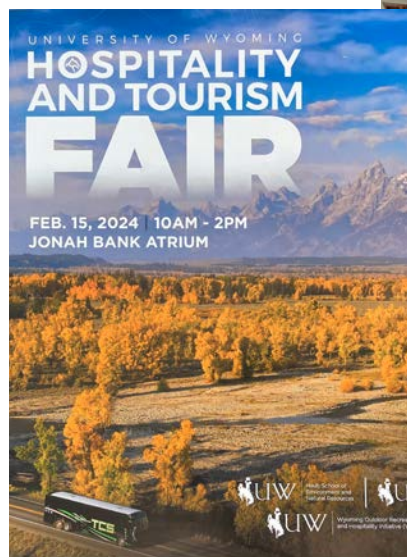
In May, the Pulte Family Charitable Foundation generously created the “Pulte Gateway to Hospitality Student Transformation Fund” to annually provide three Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management (ORTM) and/or Hospitality students up to \$17,500 of support for scholarships and internships. Students must be declared in ORTM or Hospitality and complete an internship in Wyoming. This scholarship helps students, who otherwise would not be able to accept a position, afford to participate in certain meaningful professional development opportunities around the state.



**PULTE FAMILY**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

## HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM FAIR

In February 2024, the WORTH Initiative Internship and Employment Coordinator organized the Hospitality and Tourism Fair. With the highest attendance yet, 19 vendors visited the UW campus to share employment opportunities with over 90 students. Hoping to gain momentum from this turnout, the next fair will occur in February 2025.



## WESTERN HOSPITALITY CERTIFICATE

Working in collaboration with the Center for Principle-Based Leadership and Ethics in the College of Business, we developed the Western Hospitality Certificate, a continuing education program designed for hospitality professionals to develop and enhance essential industry skills. This program, inspired by the “Code of the West” and core values such as integrity, trustworthiness, and respect, offers participants the opportunity to excel in their roles by applying these principles in their daily interactions. The program includes various interactive workshops and competency-based badges covering topics like ethical leadership, customer service, and organizational sustainability. Training sessions are flexible and can be conducted on-site or at the University of Wyoming, tailored to fit participants’ schedules and learning preferences.



College of Business  
Center for Principle-Based  
Leadership and Ethics



## STUDENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During AY23–24, WORTH supported many professional development opportunities for ORTM and Hospitality students. Employers visited campus for meet-and-greets and class presentations to discuss work opportunities. In addition, we brought 11 students to the Wyoming Governor’s Hospitality and Tourism Convention and paired them with an industry mentor. Mentorship pairing was very successful, and mentors expressed interest in participating in long-term mentorship for ORTM and Hospitality students.

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## CASPER COLLEGE TOURISM PRACTICUM

Over this past year, the WORTH Initiative Extension Educator has worked closely with the Casper College Tourism program as they redesigned their tourism practicum for their students. This practicum opportunity for students attending Casper College will bring tourism students into the community through shadowing, short-term employment, and volunteer opportunities.

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## OUTDOOR GUIDE CERTIFICATION COURSE

The Outdoor Guide Certification course is an online, standardized, competency-based training program, designed to provide aspiring or established guides with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in the industry, regardless of their area of outdoor expertise. In 2023–24, we hosted five courses on the WyoLearn platform with 64 students enrolled from across the globe.

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## RECREATION AND ADVENTURE LAW COURSE

In partnership with the College of Law and the Haub School, WORTH co-sponsored a graduate level Recreation and Adventure Law Course taught by Catherine Hansen-Stamp, an alumnus of UW, and an international expert and award-winning lawyer in this field.





# Extension & Outreach

The WORTH Initiative champions the University of Wyoming in becoming more engaged in outdoor recreation, tourism, and hospitality industries around the state. We achieve this by providing extension and outreach services to tourism-related small businesses and organizations across Wyoming.

## 2024 WYOMING OUTDOOR RECREATION SUMMIT

The Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Office and the WORTH Initiative partnered to convene the Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Summit (WORS) in April 2024. Centrally located in Casper, WY, the event highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts across the state with the shared goal of building outdoor recreation the Wyoming way. With over 180 people in attendance, more than 20 presentations and 50 presenters, a variety of outdoor recreation organizations and agencies were represented. General and breakout sessions were led by the Bureau of Land Management, the Nature Conservancy, the Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Business Alliance, Headwaters Economics, and more. Proceedings from this event will be released in the summer.



**WYOMING OUTDOOR RECREATION**  
*Summit*

**Save the date!**

Next year's Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Summit scheduled for May 1–2, 2025, in Laramie, WY.

## WYOMING SEARCH AND RESCUE SUMMIT

As part of the WORS, we convened roughly 80 Search and Rescue personnel from across the state, including Sheriffs, Senator Boner, the Department of Homeland Security, the Air National Guard, and private businesses that provide services to search and rescue teams. The goal of the summit was to increase awareness of the challenges that search and rescue teams face and to increase collaboration and coordination state-wide. We expect to continue to support the Wyoming Search and Rescue Council and teams in the years to come.



## FREE HOSPITALITY TRAINING PROGRAMS IN JOHNSON AND TETON COUNTIES

The Johnson County Tourism Association (JCTA) and the WORTH Initiative partnered to deliver a free hospitality training program Tuesday, June 4, 2024, in Buffalo, Wyoming. The event was held at the Johnson County Library and was open to those who work in lodging, retail, or any customer-service oriented businesses and organizations. Free of charge, this event offered an opportunity to enhance customer service and hospitality skills and knowledge. Over 20 people attended the training.



Working with the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce and the Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Board, WORTH Extension Educator Hailey Sorg provided a free hospitality and customer service training to the Welcome JH event on Wednesday, June 5. Over 20 people attended.

## ONGOING WORTH HOSPITALITY TRAININGS

The WORTH Initiative Extension Educator has been busy developing and implementing hospitality training program for communities, organizations, and individuals throughout Wyoming. Four other training programs have been delivered so far. This is a customizable training to meet the needs of those attending.

## WYOMING WALKS

In partnership with other UW Extension Educators around the state, the WORTH Initiative Extension Educator has been able to help to offer this free and fun summer walking series that encourages participants to partake in a guided walk with an expert for learning, health, and wellness. This walking series encourages participants to explore and be a “tourist” in their local community as well as expand their knowledge on several different topics and areas of their community. This program began in the summer of 2023 in Natrona County, and is planned to expand into six Wyoming Counties in the summer of 2024 through the help of other Extension Educators.

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## WYOMING WELL & WILD

This is a three-part program for participants to learn about outdoor wellness, Leave No Trace principles, and have fun through guided hikes or other outdoor activities. This program has been piloted in Converse County, with goals to expand into several other communities throughout Wyoming during the summer and fall of 2024.

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## OUTDOOR RECREATION AND 4-H

The WORTH Initiative Extension Educator has had several opportunities to partner with UW Extension 4-H Educators around the state of Wyoming to provide outdoor recreation education to youth. This has included ATV safety training, outdoor wellness, Leave No Trace principles, and other guided outdoor activities. Over the past year, the WORTH Extension Educator has held outdoor recreation programming in partnership with 4-H educators in both Laramie and Natrona County. Planned outdoor recreation partnerships with UW 4-H for summer 2024 include Natrona County, Converse County, and Albany County.

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## AGRITOURISM EDUCATION IN WYOMING

Over this past year, the WORTH Initiative Extension Educator has taught two programs discussing agritourism in Wyoming and agritourism 101 courses. These courses are designed to enhance understanding of agritourism for both producers and the public. Given that agriculture and tourism are among Wyoming’s leading economic drivers, these courses emphasize the significance of agritourism in Wyoming.

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## SUNRISE HISTORIC AND PREHISTORIC PRESERVATION SOCIETY (SHAPPS)

In December 2023, the WORTH Initiative Interim Director and Extension Educator conducted a site visit to the historic townsite of Sunrise, Wyoming to meet with the Sunrise Historic and Prehistoric Preservation Society (SHAPPS) to discuss the future of the site and ways the WORTH Initiative can support the work being done there. The WORTH Initiative Extension Educator has continued to work with SHAPPS to develop a case statement document to be used in future fundraising efforts to preserve the historic townsite of Sunrise, Wyoming.







# Worth in the News and Other Events

## JACKSON HOLE TOURISM INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE

In February, President Seidel, Interim Director Dan McCoy, and Dean Koprowski hosted a Jackson Hole Tourism Industry Roundtable with over 36 tourism industry leaders and professionals in attendance. They discussed the issues facing the tourism industry in Wyoming and how UW and WORTH can best support their needs.



## UW IN YOUR COMMUNITY EVENTS

Interim Director Dan McCoy presented at two UW in Your Community Events in Jackson and Buffalo, WY. He discussed the importance of the tourism industry in these communities and the ongoing work of the WORTH Initiative in these areas.

## MEETINGS WITH WYOMING CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION IN DC

Interim Director Dan McCoy traveled to Washington, DC in March with the Wyoming Office of Tourism's Executive Director and her board to meet with the Wyoming congressional delegation. They discussed the importance of the tourism industry and pending federal legislation that would support outdoor recreation in Wyoming sponsored by Senator Borrasso.



## JORDANIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY LEADERS AT THE AMK RANCH

This past fall, 14 tourism industry leaders from the country of Jordan visited the Tetons to better understand the US travel market, and especially the tourism industry in natural resource areas like the Tetons. Interim Director Dan McCoy helped organize their visit in partnership with the US State Department's Sports Visitors Exchange Program and UW Global Engagement.



## PRESENTATION TO THE TRWCR JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

In August, Interim Director Dan McCoy presented to the Travel, Recreation, Wildlife, and Cultural Resources Joint Legislative Committee about the WORTH Initiative and what UW is doing to support the travel and tourism industry in Wyoming.



## SPONSORED INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR

The WORTH Initiative sponsored an international scholar from Turkey who is completing her dissertation. Ipek Itir CAN is studying how outdoor recreation is marketed as a motivation for tourism activities. Her work is primarily focusing on Teton County and should conclude this August.



## WORKFORCE PANEL DISCUSSION

This past October at the Wyoming Hospitality and Travel Coalition Fall Summit in Yellowstone, Interim Director Dan McCoy hosted and moderated a panel discussion on today's workforce and how employers can better connect with students.



## GOVERNOR GORDON'S PODCAST—THE MORNING GATHER

In June 2024, Interim WORTH Director Dan McCoy joined Governor Mark Gordon, Director of State Parks and Cultural Resources Dave Glenn, and Clay Miller, owner of Paradise Guest Ranch for the Governor's podcast: the Morning Gather. The focus of the podcast was the Future of Outdoor Recreation in Wyoming. The podcast episode is available at [spoti.fi/4eoToFK](https://spoti.fi/4eoToFK).

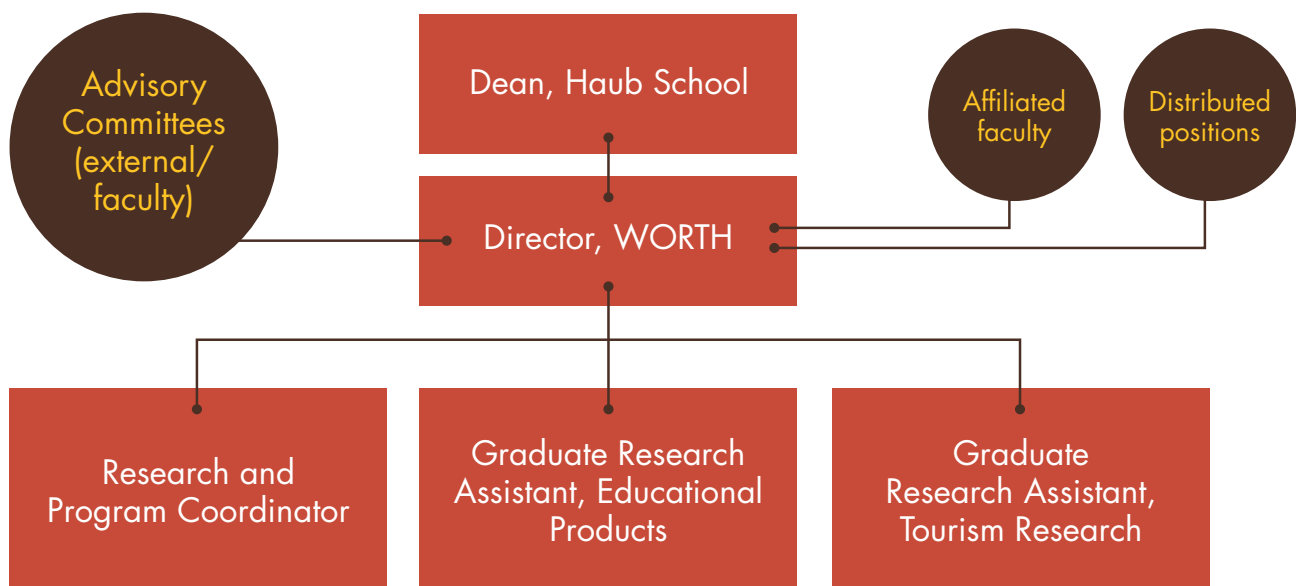






# Organizational structure

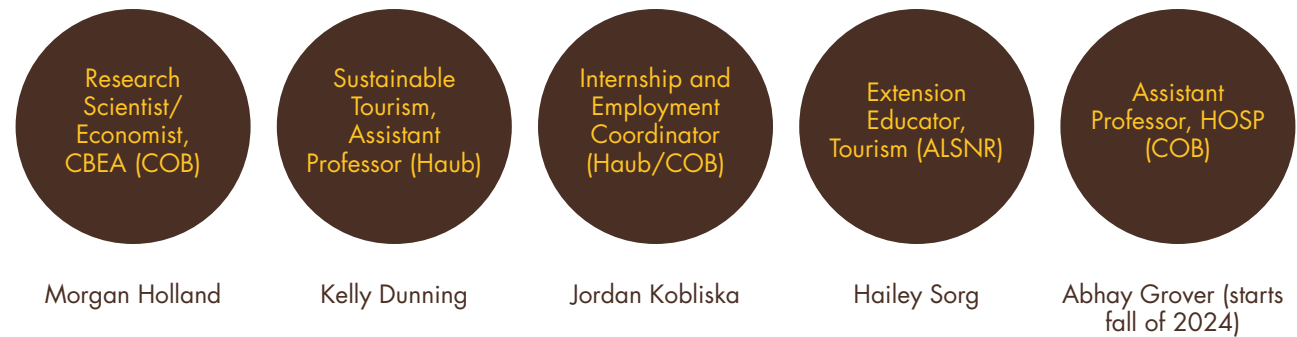
Given the interdisciplinary nature of the school and the close ties of the initiative to the ORTM degree, the WORTH Initiative is organized under the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources. However, the WORTH budget is under Academic Affairs and is managed by the Director of WORTH. The director reports to the Dean of the Haub School. See below organizational chart.





## Distributed positions

Distributed positions are financially supported by, and perform duties for, the WORTH Initiative, but report to their respective colleges/departments. These positions are allocated to colleges or schools through a Memorandum of Agreement with the WORTH Initiative.



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## AFFILIATED FACULTY

Affiliated faculty maintain appointments in other units; however, their work intersects with WORTH-related projects, research, or services. Current WORTH-affiliated faculty include:

- Ahmed Abdelaty, an Assistant Professor in Civil and Architectural Engineering and Construction Management, UW
- Melanie Armstrong, Director of the Ruckelshaus Institute and Associate Professor in the Haub School of Natural Resources, UW
- Eric C. Atkinson, Associate Professor of Biology at Northwest College, Powell
- Kayla Clark, Assistant Lecturer in the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources and the Communication & Journalism department, UW
- Curt Davidson, Assistant Professor in the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, UW
- Kelly Dunning, Timberline Associate Professor of Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation, UW
- Wes Eaton, Visiting Assistant Professor with the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, UW
- Sara Ghezzi, Professor of Practice of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management, UW
- Elizabeth Minton, Associate Professor of Marketing, UW
- Brian Linton, Central Wyoming College
- Christine Porter, Associate Professor and Wyoming Excellence Chair of Community & Public Health, UW
- Tarissa Spoonhunter, Assistant Professor in the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources and Director of the High Plains American Indian Research Institute, UW
- Temple Stoellinger, Associate Professor and Wyoming Excellence Chair with a dual appointment in the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources and the College of Law, UW
- Richard Vercoe, Assistant Lecturer in the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, UW
- Darran Wells, Central Wyoming College
- Chen Xu, Associate Professor in the School of Computing, UW

# Advisory Committees

The WORTH Initiative relies on the expertise, feedback, and input from both an external advisory committee consisting of industry professionals in Wyoming and a UW faculty advisory committee.

## WORTH EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The WORTH Advisory Committee supplies advice, support, and coordination between both private industry and agencies. A majority of the members represent various private industry sectors. Each member, appointed by the Dean of the Haub School, serves a two-year term.

*WORTH external advisory committee membership:*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	TITLE	INSTITUTION/ORGANIZATION
Budd	Betts	Owner	Absaroka Ranch
Domenic	Bravo	President & CEO	Visit Cheyenne
Curtis	Brown	Executive Director	Wyoming Lodging and Restaurant Association
Dave	Glenn	Deputy Director	Division of State Parks, Historic Sites, Trails, and the Outdoor Recreation Office
Tom	Holland	Executive Director	Wilderness Adventures
Sarah	Howe	Director of Sales and Marketing	Grand Teton Lodge Company
Mike	Keller	General Manager of Yellowstone National Park Lodges	Xanterra Parks & Resorts
Andrew	Way	Vice President, Marketing	Jackson Hole Mountain Resort

## UW FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Membership on the faculty advisory committee consists of a diverse array of campus constituents. The Director invites members to the committee through college deans, faculty senate (for the at large position), and the vice president for research and economic development, to serve two-year terms. The committee meets at least twice per year.

*Current WORTH faculty advisory committee membership:*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	TITLE
Chase	Thiel	College of Business
Curt	Davidson	Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources
Kelly	Crane	College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources
Curtis	Biggs	Office for Research and Economic Development
Caroline	McCracken-Flesher	College of Arts and Sciences
Jeff	Hamerlinck	At large



Wyoming Outdoor Recreation, Tourism  
and Hospitality Initiative (WORTH)

WYOMING  
INNOVATION  
*partnership*



The WORTH Initiative is supported in  
part by a grant from Governor Gordon's  
Wyoming Innovation Partnership

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**REDC**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING MATERIALS**

**AGENDA ITEM TITLE: WORTH ORTM 4903 Student Capstone projects – McCoy**

- ☒ OPEN SESSION  
☐ CLOSED SESSION

PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED BY COMMITTEE:

- ☐ Yes  
☒ No

FOR FULL BOARD CONSIDERATION:

- ☐ Yes *[Note: If yes, materials will also be included in the full UW Board of Trustee report.]*  
☒ No

☒ *Attachments/materials are provided in advance of the meeting.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Building Capacity for Wyoming Search and Rescue: Abigail Whitman

As a student at the University of Wyoming in the Outdoor Recreation Tourism and Management degree, and my team and I researched the issues Wyoming Search and Rescue is facing. With the help of SAR stakeholders, we found the main issues in Wyoming's SAR teams by sending out a survey to all the team members and sheriffs and taking personal interviews of a few key stakeholders.

Post Wildfire Recreation Recovery: Tommy Furland

Focusing on what happens during and after forest fires to assess any recommendations to streamline restoration incorporating land management agencies and local stakeholders. Restoration of public land is important to everyone, so we asked who the decision makers are and who they collaborate with to ensure rehabilitation is done safely, and timely. We used the Mullen Fire (2020), Medicine Bow Range just outside of Laramie focusing on Forest Service response and how the Visit Laramie office could become part of the Burned Area Emergency Response (BEAR) team to better represent stakeholder wishes, and how better collaboration between land managers and local tourism could help agencies make educated decisions on rehabilitation efforts.

Douglas Tourism Enhancement Study: Jack Seiloff, Riley Cooper

The mission of the Douglas Tourism Enhancement Team is to conduct an analysis of Douglas' current landmarks that bring in tourists, look for changes that could be made to help increase tourism to these locations, and make suggestions to city council. Our team will also look at locations that could be developed to try and increase a tourist's length of stay.

PRIOR RELATED COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS/ACTIONS:

NA

WHY THIS ITEM IS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE:

Information only

ACTION REQUIRED AT THIS COMMITTEE MEETING:

None

PROPOSED MOTION:

NA

University of Wyoming

Building Capacity for

# WYOMING SAR

➤ Abigail Whitman



# MITCHELL KNOCK



- Outdoor Recreation Tourism and Management
- Albany county SAR

# ABIGAIL WHITMAN



- Outdoor Recreation Tourism and Management
- Accounting and Finance
- Cross-Country and Track and Field team

# ERIK OLSEN



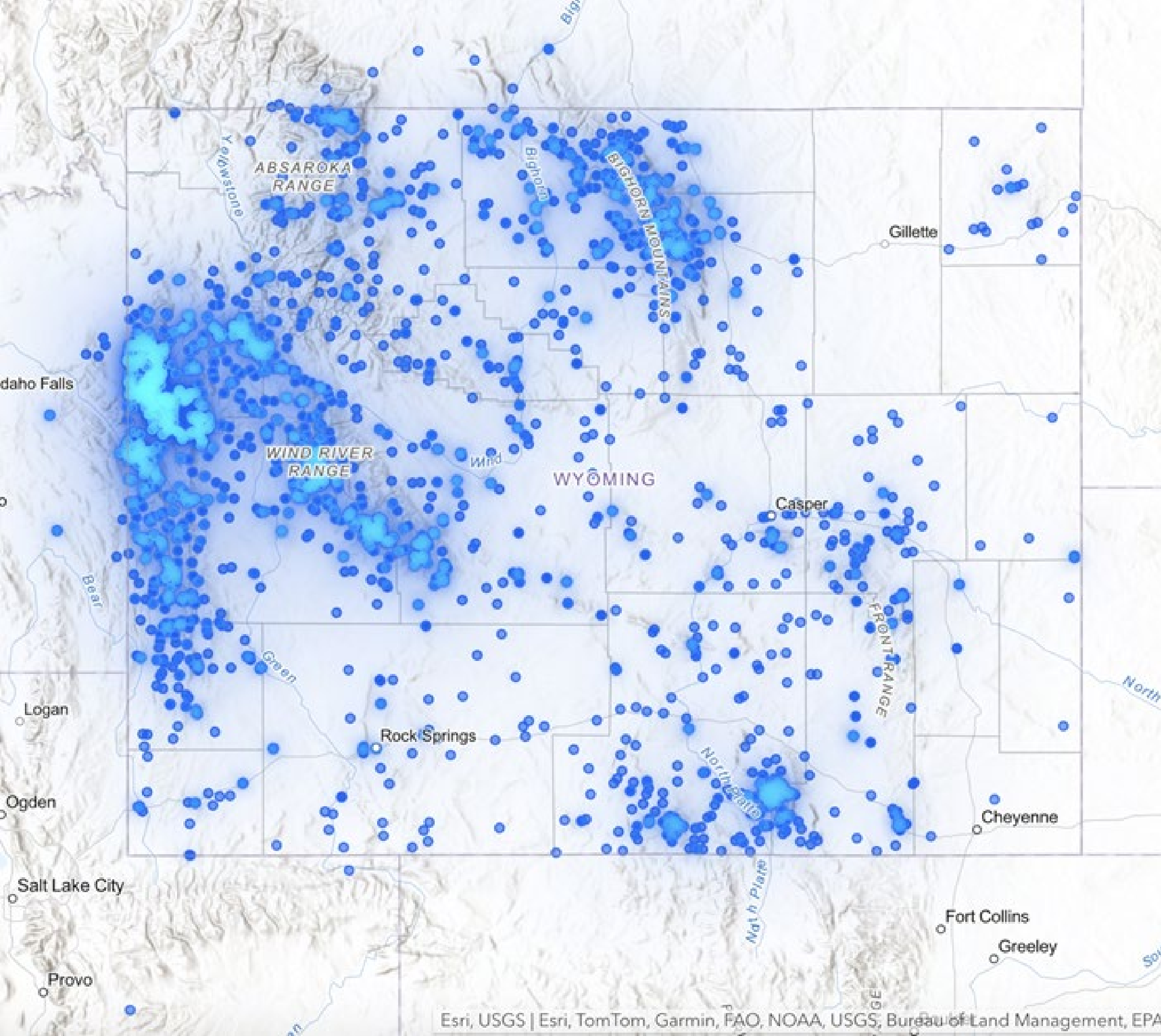
- Outdoor Recreation Tourism and Management
- Wyoming national guard



# How We Started.

Mitchell piqued our interest with Search and Rescue through his experiences, so we wanted to know more.

There have been 4,128 SAR missions since 2009.



# Problem

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN ISSUES?

Through external research we identified issues from Wyoming Search and Rescue (SAR), and some but not all issues are recruitment, outdated gear, funding, and outreach.

## HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THEM?

To see how true these issues are, we reached out to SAR stakeholders, to find their main issues in Wyoming's SAR teams by sending out a survey to all the team members and sheriffs as well as taking personal interviews of a few key stakeholders and working closely with Sheriff Ken Blackburn.

# Project Outline

## FIND COMMON THEMES

Through Qualtrics, we were quickly able to find themes in the survey results.

## INTERVIEW STAKEHOLDERS

We interviewed several key SAR members and Sheriffs that gave us insight on SAR issues and possible solutions.

## CREATE A SURVEY

Our goal of the survey was to find the basic information of what the main concerns were within each county.

## EXTERNAL RESEARCH

We researched sources to find possible solutions to the key issues we found.

## CREATE REPORT/SOLUTIONS

We are creating a report with the survey results, key insight from interviews, and possible solutions. This report will be free to use as a resource for Wyoming SAR.



# Key Stakeholders

## University of Wyoming

Dan McCoy, Emma Carlson, Taylor Kruger

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## Search and Rescue

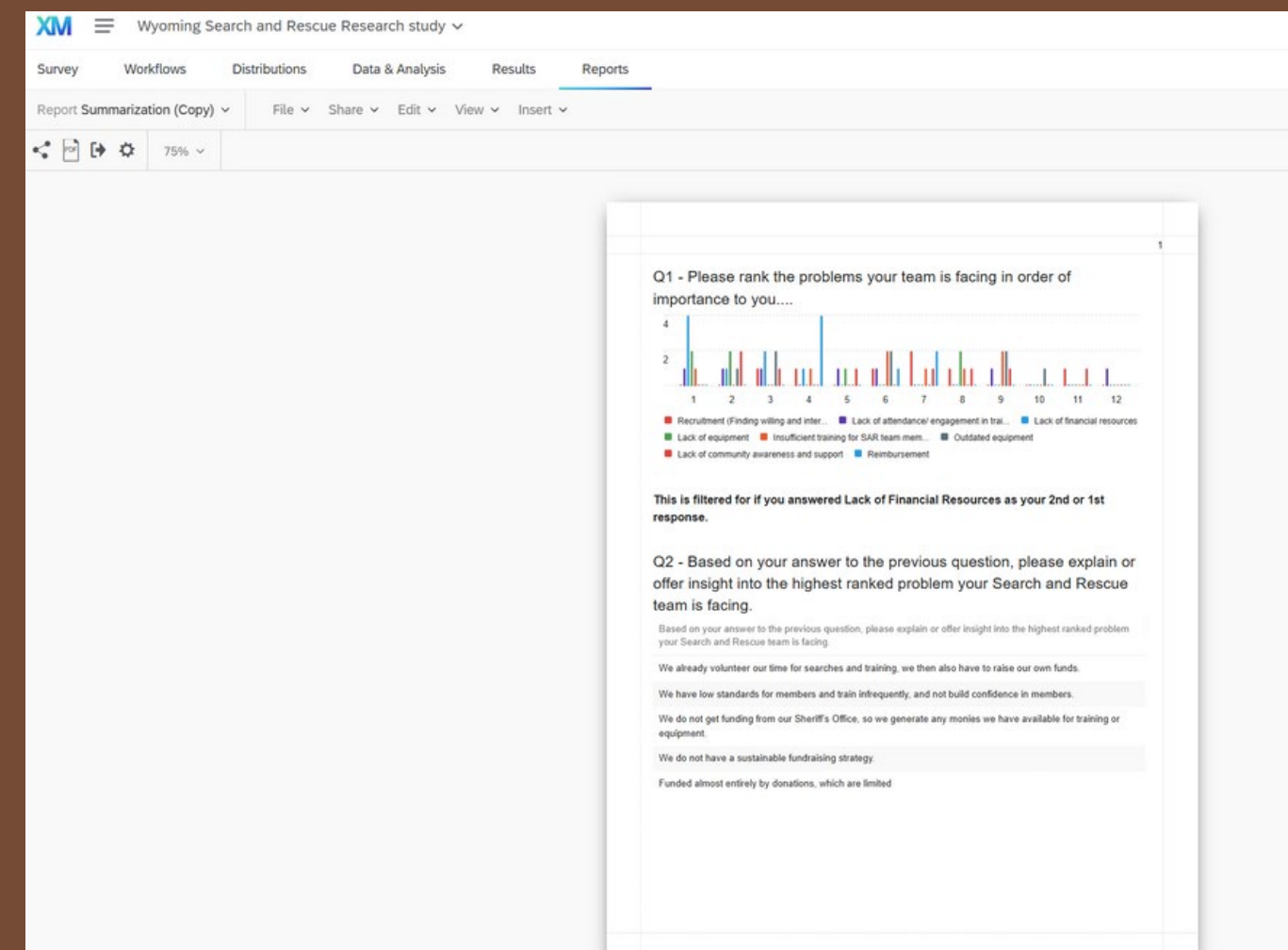
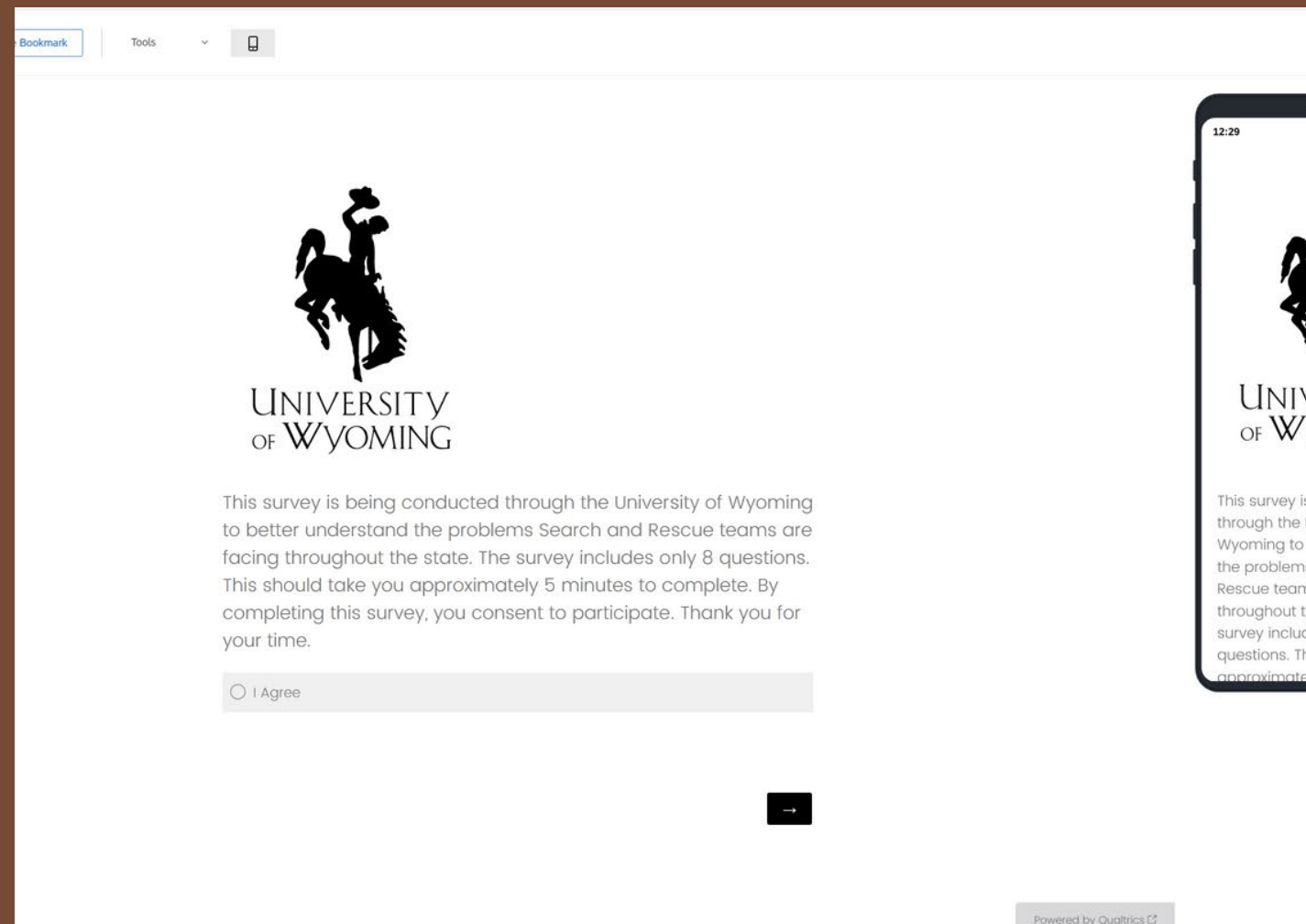
Sheriff Ken Blackburn, the 93 respondents to our survey, anonymous interviewees

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## Wyoming - Homeland Security

Lynn Budd, Cindi Shank, George Nykun, Kelly Ruiz, Spencer Pollock

# QUALTRICS



Qualtrics is offered by the University of Wyoming. We got 93 responses to the survey.

## Issue #5

23 PEOPLE  
VOTED  
OUTDATED GEAR  
AS A TOP 5 ISSUE.



Quotes: "Machines and climbing gear need to be updated"

"It's hard to obtain new equipment for our team"



Issue #4

24 PEOPLE  
VOTED  
RECRUITMENT AS  
A TOP 5 ISSUE.

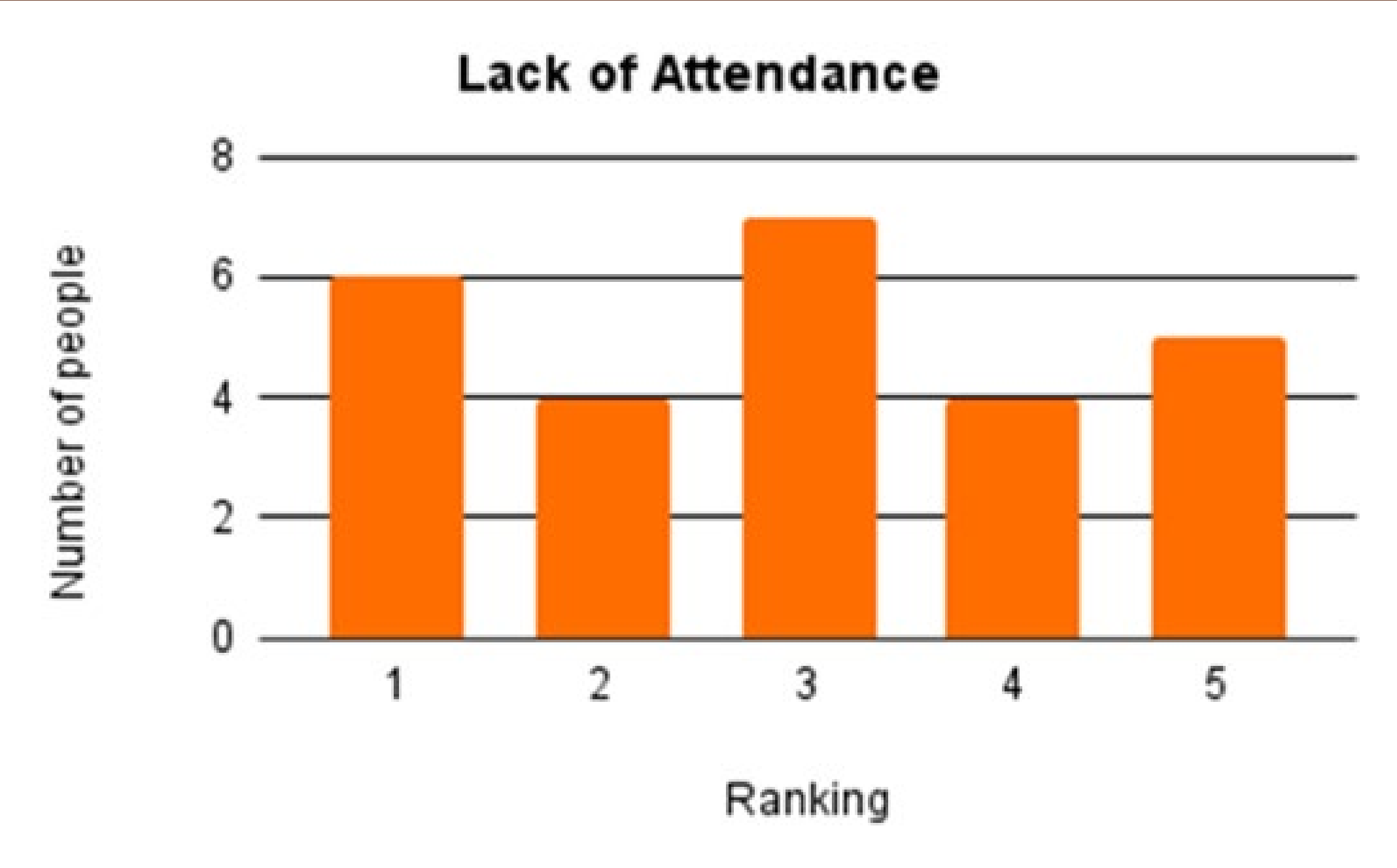


Quotes: “Most applicants are unwilling to endure the vetting process, maintain training, and provide their own equipment for the limited call outs. It is challenging to keep people excited with limited callouts.”-Campbell County

“Volunteerism seems to be on the decline. There are very few people willing to put time into non-paying jobs.” -Weston County

Issue #3

26 PEOPLE  
VOTED LACK OF  
ATTENDANCE AS  
A TOP 5 ISSUE.



Quotes: “Volunteering with no pay and long missions not knowing when you will return makes it hard for people to commit” -Bighorn County

“We have people who join but don’t go to meetings or missions.”-Bighorn County

“Hard to always juggle volunteer responses in conflict with other life responsibilities.”-Teton County

Issue #2

31 PEOPLE VOTED  
LACK OF  
EQUIPMENT AS A  
TOP 5 ISSUE.

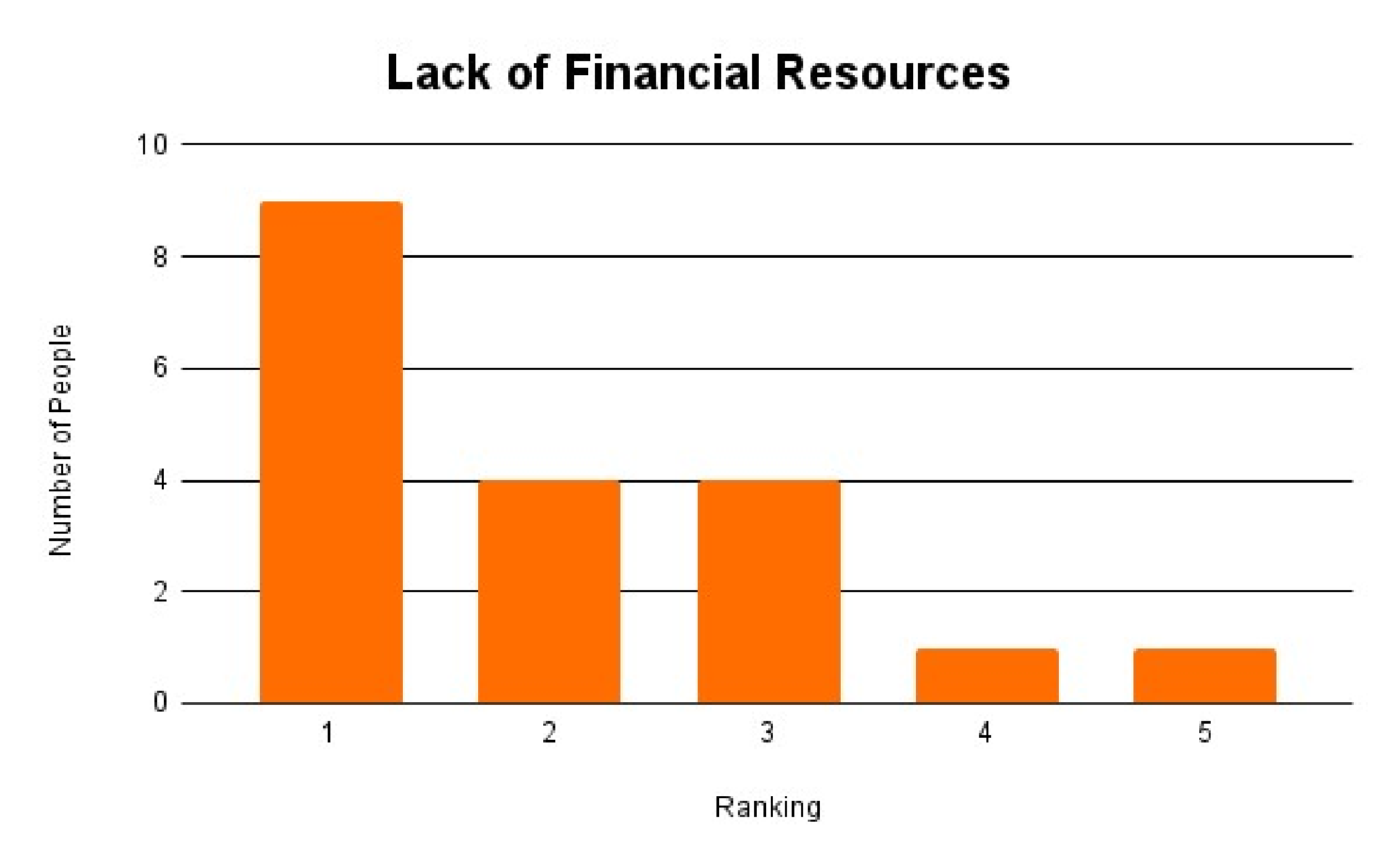


Quotes: “The equipment teams have is typically in good shape, some teams could update to newer technology, but reall  
its having more gear that can outfit more people on the crew.”



Issue #1

40 PEOPLE VOTED  
LACK OF  
FINANCIAL  
RESOURCES AS A  
TOP 5 ISSUE.



Quotes: “Financial issues affect much of not every aspect of track effectiveness. Many members find it absolutely necessary to use personal funds to have the gear necessary to make them effective in the field. Recruitment suffers. Safety suffers. At the end of the day patients suffer.”Park County

| ORTM 4903- CAPSTONE PROJECT

# **BUILDING CAPACITY FOR WYOMING SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAMS**

Abigail Whitman, Mitchell Knock, Erik Olson

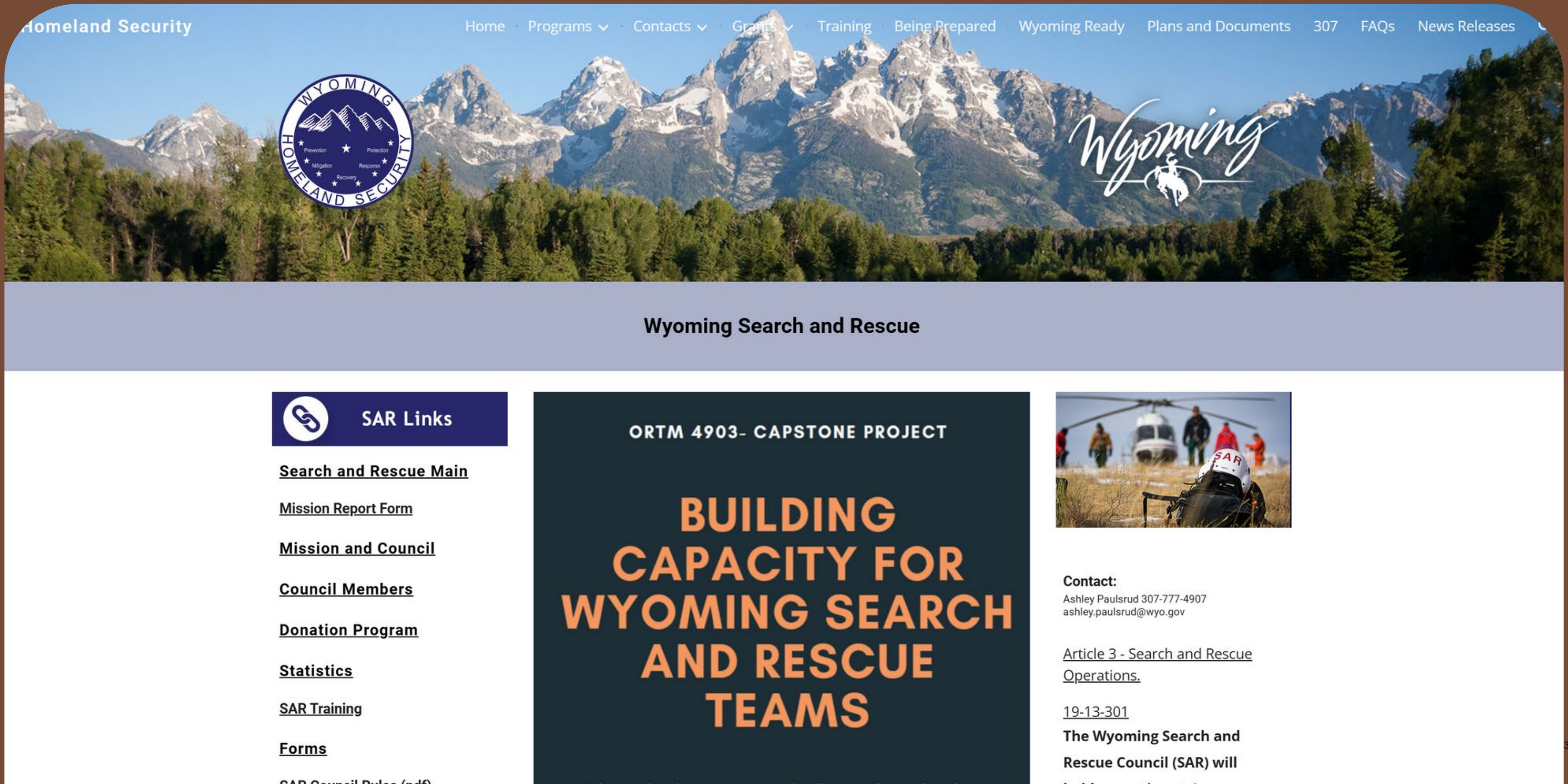


Presented at the Wyoming  
Recreation Outdoor Summit  
in April 2024

Finished our Final Paper in  
May 2024



# Front Page of the Homeland Security Website





Thank you!

A scenic landscape photograph showing a mountain range with a lake and snow patches. The foreground features a rocky, rocky slope. The middle ground shows a lake and a mountain range. The background shows a hazy sky.

# Post Wildfire Recreation Recovery

Tommy Furland



A large forest fire is visible in the background, with thick, dark smoke rising into the sky. The fire is concentrated in a line across the middle ground, with bright orange and yellow flames visible. The foreground shows a dense forest of green trees, and a grassy clearing is visible in the lower right.

# Intent

We set out to understand what happens during and after forest fires to better understand the intricacies of agency response, with the intent to find recommendations to better streamline their processes that could ultimately benefit all shareholder groups.



# Summary of Research

- We conducted interviews with USFS contacts, Laramie Office of Tourism, and local stakeholders.
- We analyzed data from land management and tourism agencies.
- Attempted to find areas where amendments could benefit all stakeholders could benefit.
- Understand what investigations land management agencies use. (BAER)



# BAER

- Wildfires cause significant damage, requiring special efforts to prevent further issues. Loss of vegetation can lead to soil erosion, increased runoff, flooding, and sediment movement, which can damage houses, fill reservoirs, and threaten endangered species and water supplies. The Forest Service's Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) program addresses these issues by protecting visitors, employees, federal property, water quality, and critical resources. BAER teams share their findings with other agencies to help communities and private landowners affected by post-fire damage.



# Stakeholders and Roles

- USFS – Land management
- Recreationalists
  - Hikers, Bikers, Skiers, Runners, Horseback Folk, Off-Road Folk
- Local Economies- Lack of influx from tourism and locals to the economy related to Outdoor Rec,
- Displacement Areas- Increase of economic activity in places non-locally-Foot traffic, housing/camping, and food
- Major Business- Lack of economic activity going towards major companies that supply Rec equipment



# Findings

- Ultimately, we found that recreation efforts required collaboration between many groups.
- Collaboration ideas differed between agencies for many different reasons.
- Shared date is not always clear, especially between agencies and recreationists.
- Public communication (Post Fire Closures)
- Agency Limitations and Staffing



# Conclusion and Recommendation

- Communication gaps between stakeholders MUST be improved.
  - Streamline decision making for resource rehabilitation.
  - Allow for sense of inclusion between all parties.
  - Meet funding deadlines while meeting stakeholder wishes.
  - Facilitate discussions to help streamline future natural disasters
  - Include locals in BAER investigations



A scenic mountain landscape featuring a large, rugged mountain peak in the background, partially covered in snow. In the foreground, a calm lake reflects the surrounding scenery, with rocky terrain and patches of snow visible on the slopes. The sky is clear and blue.

# Thank You!

Any Questions We Can Address?



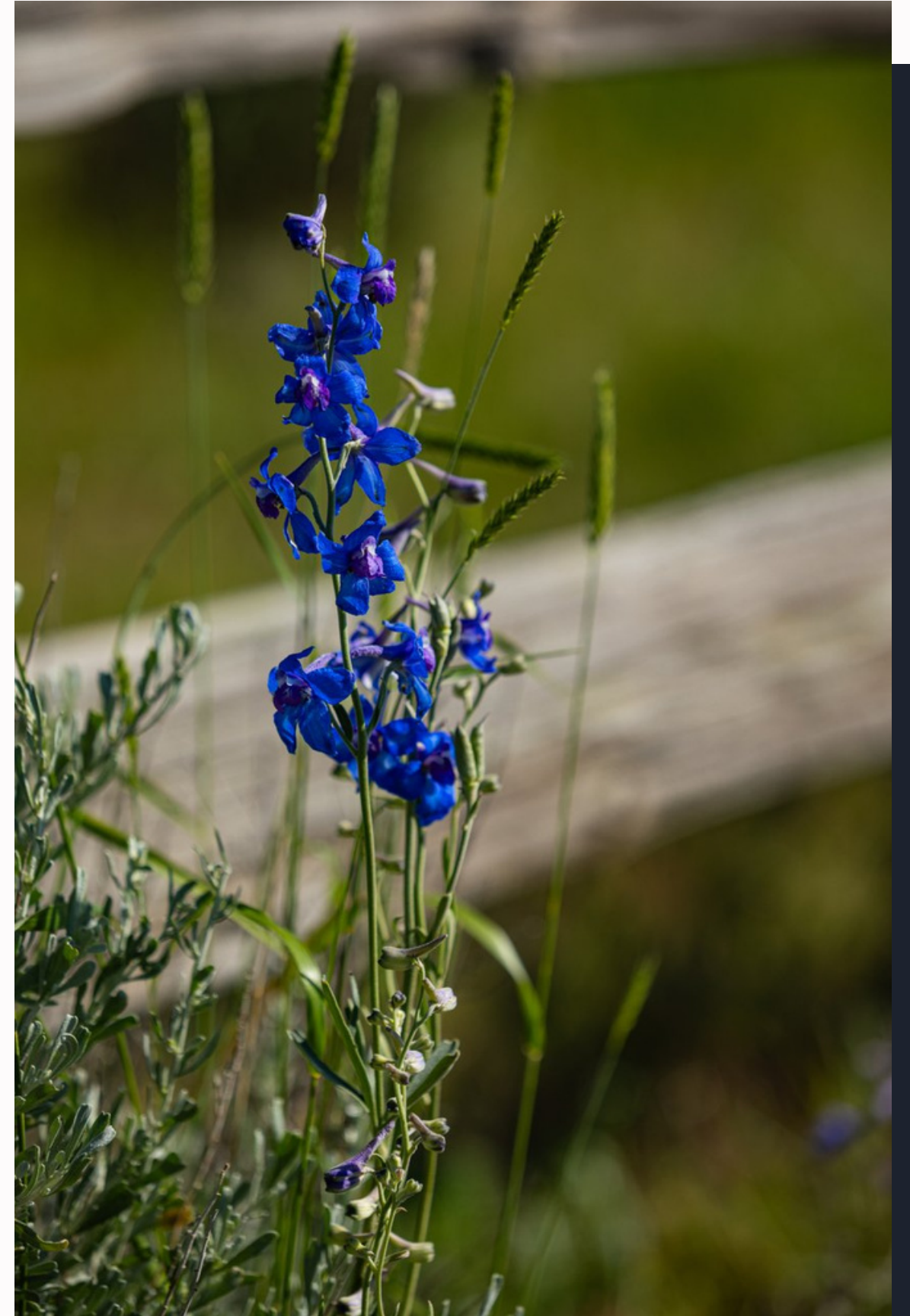


University of Wyoming

# DOUGLAS TOURISM ENHANCEMENT STUDY

# Content

- 01** Introductions
- 02** Our Research
- 03** Current Attractions
- 04** Interviews
- 05** State Fair
- 06** Downtown Density
- 07** River Recreation
- 08** Final Thoughts



# Introduction

## Who we are

We are a team of students from the University of Wyoming working on the Douglas Tourism Enhancement Study as our senior capstone.

## What we were tasked with

Our goal is to enhance Douglas' attractions to increase revenue for the town and increase the quality of life for existing residents.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Douglas Tourism Enhancement Team is to conduct an analysis of Douglas' current landmarks that bring in tourists, look for changes that could be made to help increase tourism to these locations, and make suggestions to city council. Our team will also look at locations that could be developed to try and increase a tourist's length of stay. We believe the recommendations we create will help tourist revenue in the city and increase the quality of activities the residents can enjoy themselves.





# OUR RESEARCH



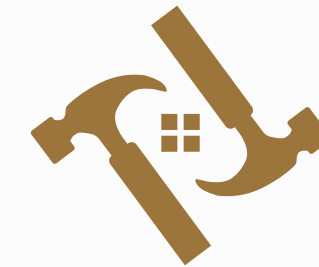
## Community Tourism Development

Creating an effective plan requires an understanding of what people want, as well as what services and activities already exist in a place. We looked at a traveler satisfaction thesis on people visiting Wyoming as well as sources focusing on community tourism development.



## Resident Participation

We want to focus on suggesting development opportunities that the locals want and would actually use. We found that changes to a place are much more successful when there is buy in and input from the residents that live there.



## Other examples

We looked at other towns who have also enhanced their tourism for inspiration. Understanding how to keep a town authentic while increasing the available amenities is key. One of our interviewees Berkeley Young shared insight into the process.





# Current Attractions

- Ayers Natural Bridge
- River walk trails
- Fort Fetterman SHS
- Douglas Railroad Museum & Visitors Center
- Camp Douglas SHS
- Wyoming Pioneer Memorial Museum



# Stakeholders/ Interviewees

- Morryah McCurdy
- Macey Moore
- Courtney Conkle
- Michele Carter
- Kim Pexton
- Berkley Young
- Paige Hughes
- Eli Geisler
- Jane Garber

## Questions asked

- 1.) Do you as an individual want increased tourism in the town?
- 2.) What do you think would be a good business to bring in a tourism pull to the area?
- 3.) What would your recommendation be to make the downtown area more lively (think of other towns like Cheyenne, Laramie, Lander etc.)
- 4.) How do you think that a mural project in downtown, promoting local and state artists, would impact visitation to the area and bolster revenues for existing businesses?
- 5.) What are your top three businesses you like to use?  
Please don't list corporations or large chains.
- 6.) Do you think that an events page for the city would help get the word out for activities occurring that typically locals would only know about? (Y/N)



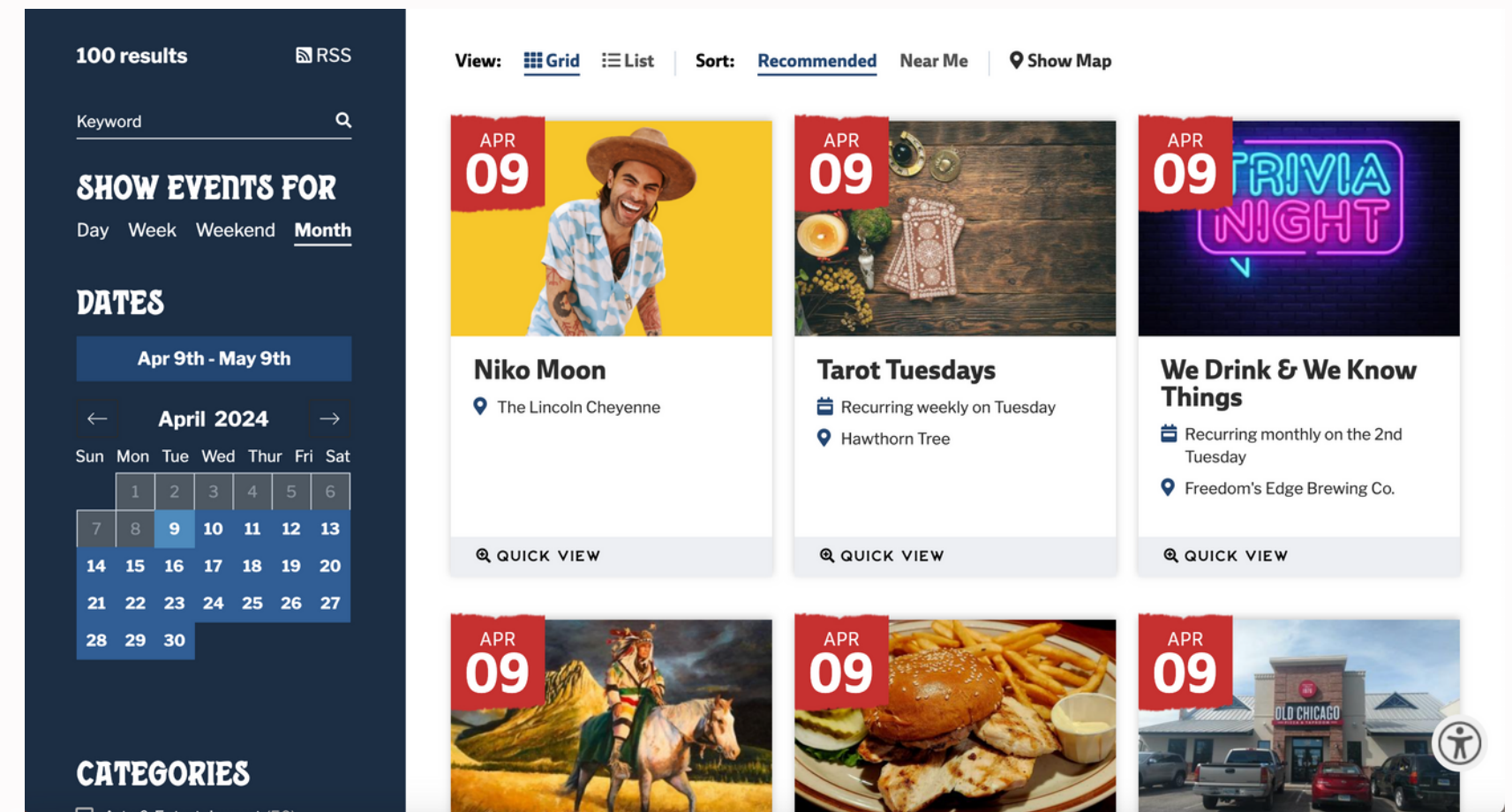
# Interviews

- Overall all of the interviewees said they would like to see an increase in tourism.
- These were some of the response from stakeholders. Downtown is “run down”, needs an “aesthetic upgrade”, improvement on the “look/ feel/ impression”, better “lighting, landscape, and curbing”, and upgrade the “old building facades.”
- There is a need for more business that are not tax or insurance related and operate at longer hours than a typical work day.
- Many patrons showed interest in utilizing the river to bolster tourism and the economy.
- Every interviewee said that an events page on the converse county tourism website would be beneficial.

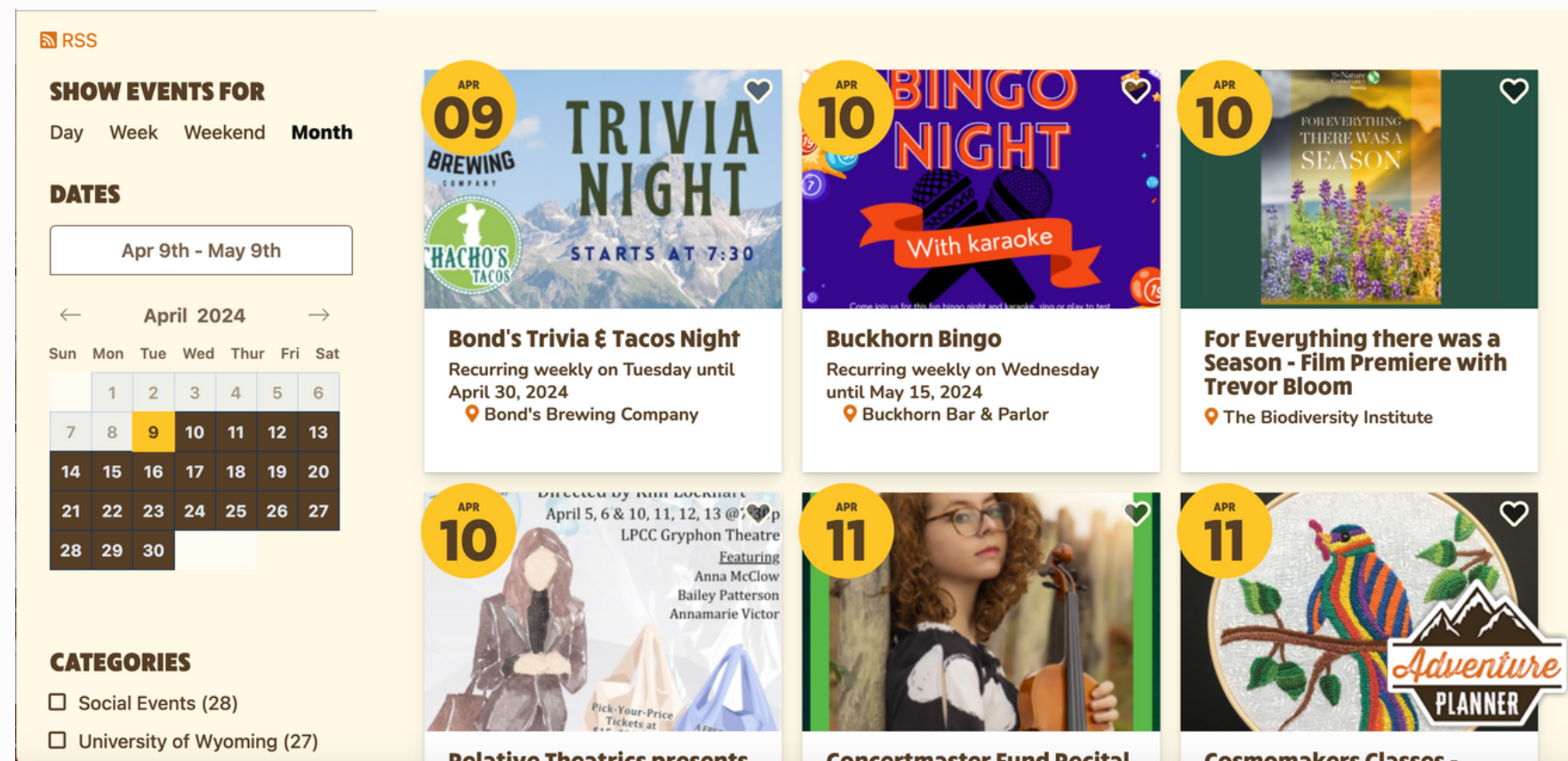
# Recommendations

## Converse County Tourism Website

Creating a “events calander” will help people traveling through and staying in town know what is going on.



<https://www.cheyenne.org/events/>

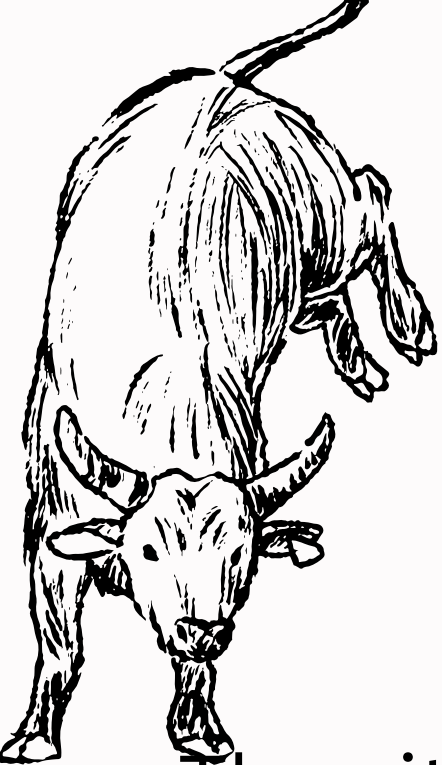


<https://www.visitlaramie.org/events/>

## Creating a ongoing events calendar of newly created community events

- Music at College Inn
- Local Business events (Trivia, Bingo, Karaoke)
- Sporting events (Club, High School)
- “Sip and Paint”
- Trade shows
- Ghost tours (College Inn, LaBonte Hotel etc.)
- Farmers markets
- Drag racing





# STATE FAIR

## and how it can be used

The city of Douglas has a great opportunity with the Wyoming state fair to improve tourism for the actual whole town of Douglas. The infrastructure that the state fair supports can provide new tourism opportunities with some examples being ecotourism with “dark night tourism” without light pollution this could be a very to bring in new groups to the town of Douglas. With this it can also provide things like agricultural tourism with it suiting to a “western style” of tourism.

However with most people staying at the Rv grounds and surrounding camping spots by the actual fair grounds I think new plans need to be in place to find out how we can get people too downtown Douglas and explore so they spend money in the actual town this can be an hard task however something like partnering with local hotels and coming up with some sort of discount or marketing opportunity to promote staying there.



# Downtown Density



**Encourage**  
retail and service  
industry businesses.



**Main Street**  
Concentrated walking area  
to create a visually distinct  
downtown.



**Cohesive Look**  
Restore historic downtown  
storefronts and commission local  
artists to put up murals around town.



**Community Engagement**  
Engage the community by  
hosting downtown specific  
events.

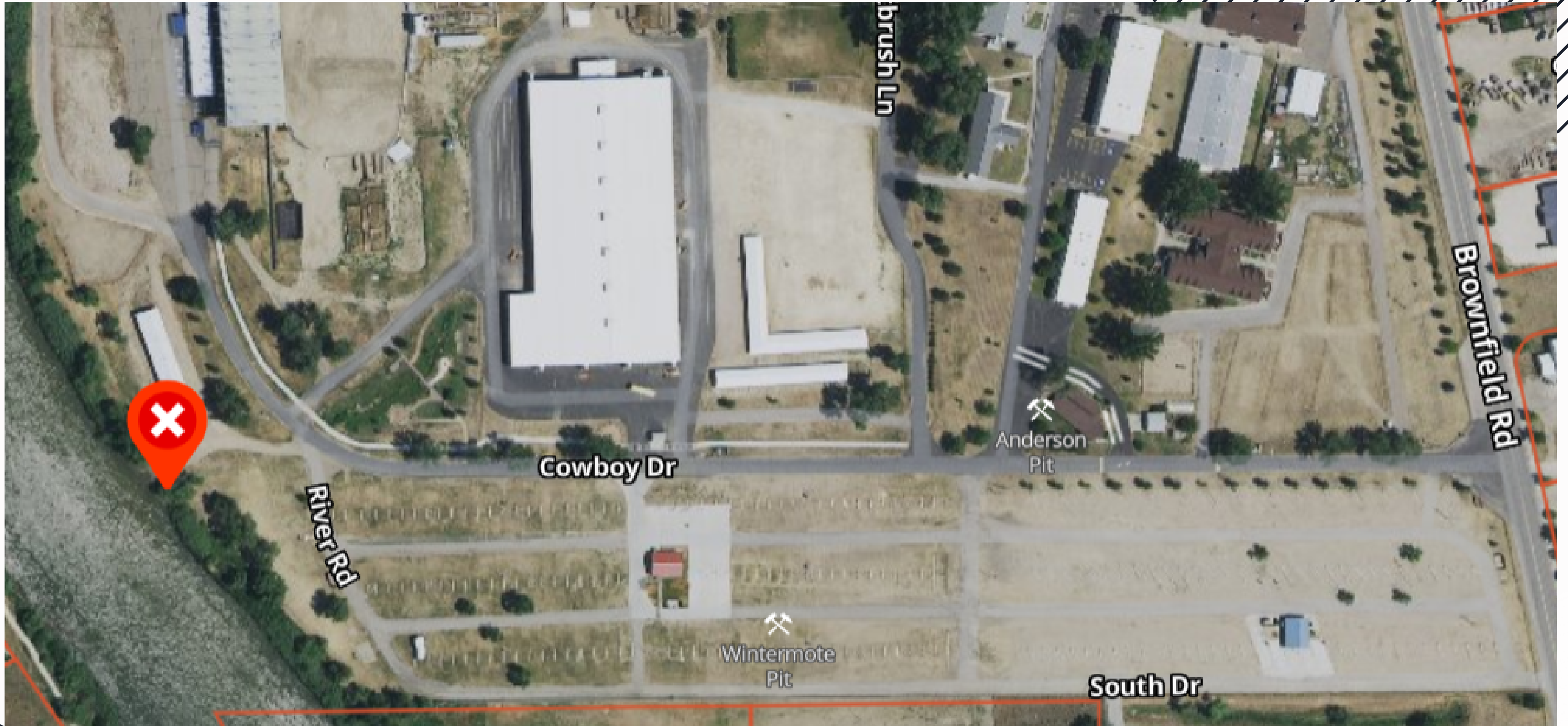


# River Recreation

- Wayfinding to the opportunities
- Proper signage along the river for simple/easy for all to understand
- Have images pull up when googling Douglas River float
- Ways for the River to have monetary value
- Cost of maintaining increase river use









**THANK  
YOU CITY  
COUCIL OF  
DOUGLAS**



**REDC**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING MATERIALS**

**AGENDA ITEM TITLE: REDD Updates– Chitnis, Pradhan, Collins**

- ☒ OPEN SESSION  
☐ CLOSED SESSION

PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED BY COMMITTEE:

- ☐ Yes  
☒ No

FOR FULL BOARD CONSIDERATION:

- ☐ Yes *[Note: If yes, materials will also be included in the full UW Board of Trustee report.]*  
☒ No

☒ *Attachments/materials are provided in advance of the meeting.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Vice President Chitnis and others will provide updates on activities within the division, including introduction of the Deputy Vice President Arundeepr Pradhan and Director of the UW research facility at the AMK Ranch Sarah Collins.

PRIOR RELATED COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS/ACTIONS:

Updates provided at each in-person meeting of the Research and Economic Development Committee

WHY THIS ITEM IS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE:

Information only

ACTION REQUIRED AT THIS COMMITTEE MEETING:

None

PROPOSED MOTION:

NA