

# Colorado–Wyoming Border Project

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The Colorado-Wyoming border is a critical area for big game migrations and sage grouse habitat. These days it is coming under intense pressure from energy development. For example, in Wyoming's Carbon County, a range of private companies are simultaneously pursuing plans for oil extraction, coal-bed methane drilling, deep gas drilling, coal and uranium mining, and the development of a wind farm with 1,000 turbines. At times it is hard to fathom how the land can withstand this type of sustained assault.

While we understand our country's need for energy, NWF believes it is also important to balance the needs of wildlife, and to honor the values, aspirations, and way of life of the people of the region. To this end, NWF's Public Lands Program has been working in conjunction with Wyoming Wildlife Federation and other conservation groups over the past year to hold a series of community forums on conservation in Wyoming's North Platte Valley. The discussions have included important and contentious talks on numerous land use issues. The conversations, called "Voices of the Valley," have provided a platform for open discussion about the future of the rural West and how it will approach conservation and growth issues in the future. NWF seeks to expand this effort to the Colorado side of the border, particularly since wildlife migrations don't respect state lines.

To complement the community dialogues, NWF commissioned a wildlife survey of big game and sage grouse movement patterns, habitats, and threats along the Wyoming-Colorado border. The study includes all lands along the border west of the Medicine Bow Range to the Green River.



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This study will be released this fall and will be an important tool for communities and agencies to take a better look at how to manage big game herds and sage grouse where cross-border migration takes place. For example, in the North Platte drainage deer move seasonally back and forth from North Park, Colorado to the Upper North Platte Valley of Wyoming. The relationship of pronghorn and elk movements between Wyoming's Powder Wash country and the lower Little Snake River Valley near the confluence of the Yampa River is another dynamic that needs to be better understood. Information about how these animals use the same area, and how human activities impact their movements and survival, is vital for effective management.

Ultimately the hope is that both the community dialogues and the scientific information that we are compiling will be used to help organize local conservation efforts be more effective, and at the same time be more responsive to the area's human residents.

