

## **2021 3rd Quarter Issues Report for Wyoming Public Media**

Prepared by Bob Beck

### **ISSUE: COVID-19**

**Topic:** The growth in COVID-19 state caseloads has put Wyoming in the top ten most cases nationally. A big reason for this is the spike of cases in Laramie County where the vaccination rate is slightly above 30 percent. County Health Officer Dr. Stan Hartman told Bob Beck what's going on.

Time: 5:15

Dates: 7/2/21 at 3pm and 7/4/21 at noon

**Topic:** Those living with compromised immune systems are facing a double whammy with the region's low vaccination rates and the possibility that the COVID-19 vaccine may not offer them the same protection as their peers.

Time: 4:30

Dates: 7/16/21 at 3pm and 7/18/21 at noon

**Topic:** As vaccination rates stagnate, new variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 are emerging and becoming more common. This is concerning to public health officials like State Health Officer Dr. Alexia Harrist, who sat down with Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel to discuss viral mutations and why an unvaccinated population is still a threat to those who are vaccinated.

Time: 7:30

Dates: 7/16/21 at 3pm and 7/18/21 at noon

**Topic:** Wyoming's cases of COVID-19 have jumped to over 1,300 active cases, mainly due to the highly contagious delta variant. But there's also this matter of low vaccination rates of roughly 35 percent of the population. A group of University of Wyoming (UW) researchers recently studied what messages did the best job of convincing people across the country to get vaccinated. UW Ph.D. student Madison Ashworth was the lead author of the paper that

appeared in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. It's the latest in a series of coronavirus-related research conducted by UW College of Business economists. She joins Bob Beck.

Time: 8 min

Dates: 8/6/21 at 3pm and 8/8/21 at noon

Topic: The last year was a tough one for the University of Wyoming (UW) athletics program, from budget cuts to major losses of revenue due to canceled games and limited fans. UW Athletics Director Tom Burman has his fingers crossed this year. Wyoming football is poised to have a strong bounce-back year and ticket sales have been brisk, but the Delta variant has him nervous. He speaks with Bob Beck.

Time: 11 min

Dates: 8/27/21 at 3pm and 8/29/21 at noon

Topic: Teton County is the most highly vaccinated county in the state, but at the time of year when the population in the community expands, COVID-19 rates are high. This week Teton County said it has met the CDC's red level for high-risk transmission. County Public Health Response Coordinator Rachael Wheeler told Wyoming Public Radio's Bob Beck that they are trying to be transparent about the risk level.

Time: 6 min

Dates: 8/20/21 at 3pm and 8/22/21 at noon

Topic: With students returning on campus for the fall semester this Monday, August 23, University of Wyoming officials are concerned about a COVID-19 outbreak. To mitigate this, UW is mandating masks on campus. Wyoming Public Radio's Adlynn Jamaludin talked to some students on campus about their thoughts on if the university should go another step and make vaccinations mandatory.

Time: 3:20 min

Dates: 8/20/21 at 3pm and 8/22/21 at noon

Topic: The Biden administration announced last month that it will require nursing home staff to get vaccinated, or facilities could face losing federal funding. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska reports state facilities are concerned this will increase the existing staff shortage.

Time: 4:15

Dates: 9/10/21 at 3pm and 9/12/21 at noon

Topic: Natrona County has had a tough time with COVID-19 with high numbers of people hospitalized. Meanwhile, only 35 percent of the county has been fully vaccinated. County Health Officer Dr. Mark Dowell joins Bob Beck to discuss the vaccine and what it might take to turn things around.

Time: 11:15 min

Dates: 9/10/21 at 3pm and 9/12/21 at noon

### **Issue: Health Care**

Topic: The Campbell County Health Board of Trustees has been working on a potential deal to affiliate the local hospital system with UC Health, a Colorado-based hospital system. The move has caused uproar in the community, with many asking questions about what this could mean for local residents. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler spoke with Board Chair Adrian Gerrits and board member Tom Murphy about the Campbell County Board of Commissioners' recent decision to not move ahead with the deal. Gerrits said it's a move trustees have been discussing for years. He speaks with Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler.

Time: 10 min

Dates: 7/2/21 at 3pm and 7/4/21 at noon

Topic: This past legislative session, lawmakers passed a bill that will change who community health care providers can serve. Throughout the summer, stakeholders are now figuring out how to actually implement these policy changes on the ground. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska spoke with Andi Summerville, the executive director of the Wyoming Association of

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Centers, on the current process. Summerville said the new system involves priority groups that so far have been separated into three tiers.

Time: 6 min

Dates: 7/2/21 at 3pm and 7/4/21 at noon

Topic: Suicide prevention education can offer hope and concrete strategies to help people prevent suicide among their friends and family members. Advocates argue that it should be offered in schools. Many policymakers agree, theoretically, but actually getting suicide prevention education into schools is complicated.

Time: 6 min

Dates: 7/9/21 at 3pm and 7/11/21 at noon

Topic: Outdoor recreation is a popular pastime in Wyoming. But when people spend time outside, they run the risk of being bitten by ticks that carry a variety of diseases. But the types of ticks, and the diseases they carry, changes across the country. To learn more, Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel spoke with Dr. Will Reeves, a medical and veterinary entomologist with the CP Gillette Museum of Arthropod Diversity in Colorado.

Time: 9 min

Dates: 7/30/21 at 3pm and 8/1/21 at noon

Topic: Fatal drug overdoses are skyrocketing, driven by synthetic opioids like fentanyl. And that potentially deadly drug has made it to the Mountain West – the last part of the U.S. to face the brunt of the opioid crisis. Madelyn Beck reports.

Time: 4:34 min

Dates: 8/27/21 at 3pm and 8/29/21 at noon

Topic: In the high-stakes fight against fentanyl-induced drug deaths, one remedy is fairly simple: blue and white strips of paper. Fentanyl test strips work like a pregnancy test. One line shows up if there's fentanyl in a solution. Two lines if there's none. But where are they needed most? Madelyn Beck reports.

Time: 5 min

Dates: 8/27/21 at 3pm and 8/29/21 at noon

### **ISSUE: NATIVE AMERICAN ISSUES**

Topic: Learning Indigenous languages became even harder during the pandemic. In some communities, language learning ground to a halt. And many tribal communities saw the tragic deaths of native speakers. The latest federal relief package includes \$20 million in emergency funding for Indigenous language programs, but advocates say it's not enough. Savannah Maher reports.

Time: 4:40 min

Dates: 7/2/21 at 3pm and 7/4/21 at noon

Topic: In 2017, Northern Arapaho tribal members traveled to Carlisle Indian Industrial School to bring home the remains of three children. These children were buried at a cemetery by a school in Pennsylvania. Home From School is a film that documents this journey. Wyoming Public Radio's Signa McAdams sat down with the film's associate producer, Northern Arapaho's Chairman Jordan Dresser, at the film's premiere in Lander. They discussed boarding schools, repatriation and generational trauma.

Time: 4:40 min

Dates: 7/2/21 at 3pm and 7/4/21 at noon

Topic: Willy Pepion had a cracked skull, and guards at the federal jail on the Blackfeet Reservation dismissed his pleas for help. He died in his cell. Three hours went by until anyone noticed. Nate Hegyi has more.

Time: 5:50

Dates: 8/6/21 at 3pm and 8/8/21 at noon

Topic: The National Congress of American Indians has urged the federal government to place medical personnel in its tribal jails, arguing that the current situation "exacerbates the already challenging problem of health disparities for American Indians." Nate Hegyi reports.

Time: 5 min

Dates: 8/20/21 at 3pm and 8/22/21 at noon

Topic: After months of repeated written questions and public records requests from NPR and the Mountain West News Bureau, Interior Department officials said they now plan to contract with an outside agency to examine the troubles plaguing tribal detention centers. Savannah Maher reports.

Time: 5 min

Dates: 8/20/21 at 3pm and 8/22/21 at noon

## **ISSUE: EDUCATION**

Topic: The University of Wyoming is embarking on five projects designed to improve the state. It's part of what is being referred to as the Grand Challenges initiative. The idea is for the projects to provide either solutions for a problem facing Wyoming or find a way to improve the state. Bob Beck has more.

Time: 6:00 min

Dates: 7/2/21 at 3pm and 7/4/21 at noon

Topic: This week the University of Wyoming (UW) announced some big plans. After already reducing \$42 million, the university had to cut another \$13 million. Those cuts will involve the loss of roughly 75 jobs. Along with that, UW announced it's consolidating a number of departments, and shifting science and math programs from the College of Arts and Sciences to the Colleges of Engineering and Agriculture. Bob Beck reports.

Time: 5:00 min

Dates: 7/16/21 at 3pm and 7/18/21 at noon

Topic: Residents of Campbell County will soon vote on the future of its community college. The vote will ask residents if they want to separate from the Northern Wyoming Community College District and become an independent one. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler explains how the issue came up for a vote and what it will mean if it passes.

Time: 5:00 min

Dates: 8/6/21 at 3pm and 8/8/21 at noon

Topic: Jackson Hole has a large and growing Latinx population. Local advocate organizations are starting to focus on gaps in opportunities for this community. This summer the community identified the need for paid jobs with career and college training for high school students. So, a program sprouted up to do just that. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska reports.

Time: 5:00 min

Dates: 8/27/21 at 3pm and 8/29/21 at noon

## **ISSUE: BUSINESS**

Topic: The headline this week is that American CryptoFed was the first legally recognized Decentralized Autonomous Organization in Wyoming and the nation. Earlier this year the Wyoming Legislature passed a law which offers legal protections to DAO's with the hopes that it would trigger blockchain businesses in the state. Marion Orr is the CEO of American CryptoFed which is part of the digital currency effort. She joins Bob Beck to explain all this and what they are hoping to accomplish.

Time: 10 min

Dates: 7/9/21 at 3pm and 7/11/21 at noon

Topic: Climb Wyoming is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year. Climb is an organization that offers job training to single, low-income mothers and helps them find work after they graduate

the program. Martha Harris spoke with Katie Hogarty, the incoming CEO for Climb Wyoming, about what Climb has done in the last 35 years and how the program works.

Time: 6:15 min

Dates: 7/30/21 at 3pm and 8/1/21 at noon

Topic: By just about any measure, Laramie, Wyoming is experiencing a housing crisis. There aren't enough homes available, the homes that are available are too expensive, and rental prices are high. As Wyoming Public Radio's Jeff Victor reports, all of this hurts the local economy.

Time: 5:20 min

Dates: 8/20/21 at 3pm and 8/22 at noon

Topic: Wyoming has entered the world of sports betting. Earlier this month the Wyoming Gaming Commission kicked off online betting in the state, while the Wind River Casino in Riverton became the state's only facility where people can bet in person due to its tribal affiliation. Bob Beck reports.

Time: 4:45 min

Dates: 9/10/21 at 3pm and 9/12/21at noon

## **ISSUE: ENVIRONMENT**

Topic: In the past, wildfire season in the Mountain West usually started in July and ran through September. But this past June saw an overwhelming amount of wildfires and it's taking a toll on the nation's firefighting resources like crews and helicopters. Kamila Kudelska takes a look at The Robertson Draw Fire along the Montana/Wyoming border.

Time: 5 min

Dates: 7/9/21 at 3pm and 7/11/21 at noon



Topic: Audubon Rockies hosts an annual BioBlitz somewhere in Wyoming. The event brings together scientists, naturalists and the general public to catalog as many species of insects, animals and plants in a particular area. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler brings us this postcard.

Time: 5 min

Dates: 8/20/21 at 3pm and 8/22/21 at noon

Topic: A recent University of Wyoming undergraduate is already making a name for herself. Megan Anderson published an article in the peer-reviewed journal Ecology and Evolution. It shed light on the value of badger burrows, among other findings. Wyoming Public Radio's Cooper McKim talks with Anderson about the project.

Time: 5:25 min

Dates: 8/27/21 at 3pm and 8/29/21 at noon

Topic: Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a deadly neurological disease that affects deer and elk. This year, to try to learn more about the disease, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is requiring deer hunters in areas 96 and 97 in Sweetwater County to submit their deer for CWD testing. This is the first time testing is being required in any area. Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel sat down with Lander Region Wildlife Management Coordinator Daryl Lutz to learn more.

Time: 6 min

Dates: 8/27/21 at 3pm and 8/29/21 at noon

Topic: When you think of Chihuahua, Mexico, it's probably a dry desert with little plant life. But it hasn't always been so arid. Now, ranchers there are trying to bring back the tall grasses, wildlife and rain using a holistic approach to land management, a method that could be used in the American West in the face of droughts and climate change. Wyoming Public Radio's Melodie Edwards spoke with Alejandro Carrillo who runs the family's Las Damas Ranch and started the advocacy group Pasticultores del Desierto.

Time: 6 min

Dates: 9/10/21 at 3pm and 9/12/21 at noon

Topic: Many places in the West have been enveloped in wildfire smoke this summer. Common advice for people living in these communities is to go inside, close the windows, and turn on the AC, if possible, to escape the smoke. But wildlife don't have an "inside" they can go to. Wyoming Public Radio's Ivy Engel has more about how far off wildfires can impact wildlife.

Time: 5 min

Dates: 9/17/21 at 3pm and 9/19/21 at noon

#### **ISSUE: ENERGY**

Topic: A utility has just put its largest wind farm in its system online here in Wyoming. The TB Flats wind farm, located in Carbon County in southern Wyoming, can create up to 503.2 megawatts of power from 132 wind turbines. Based on its original 2018 permit application, that could power around 152,000 homes. It's the last project to go online stemming from Pacificorp's Energy Vision 2020 plan that created more than 1000 MW of new wind energy. Wyoming Public Radio's Cooper McKim speaks with the utility spokesman Dave Eskelsen.

Time: 5 min

Dates: 8/6/21 at 3pm and 8/8/21 at noon

#### **ISSUE: WATER**

Topic: Another dry year has left the waterway that supplies 40 million people in the Southwest parched. A prolonged 21-year warming and drying trend is pushing the nation's two largest reservoirs to record lows. For the first time this summer, the federal government will declare a shortage.

Time: 6:30

Dates: 7/9/21 at 3pm and 7/11/21 at noon

Topic: Wyoming's mountains sit at the headwaters of some of the most important rivers in the American West, including the Colorado and the Missouri. Wyoming Public Radio's Melodie Edwards sat down with Journalist Anne MacKinnon to discuss her book *Public Water: Lessons from Wyoming for the American West*. The book tackles the fascinating history of how we came to manage all that water, and what other states could learn from us as we face greater droughts and climate change in the future.

Time: 8 min

Dates: 7/9/21 at 3pm and 7/11/21 at noon

This summer, drought reigns supreme across the West. A reminder that, here, water is valuable. One source, though, seems safely tucked away--groundwater. But is it? Ranchers in southeast Wyoming are fighting to protect their groundwater, as one family aims to pump billions of gallons out of it. Wyoming Public Radio's Melodie Edwards reports.

Time: 6 min

Dates: 7/30/21 at 3pm and 8/1/21 at noon

Topic: The National Science Foundation has awarded \$1.77 million to a team of University of Wyoming researchers. They aim to make more of the earth's water potable by improving the purification, or desalinization, process. Cooper McKim spoke with UW chemistry professor John Hobert about the years-long effort.

Time: 4:20 min

Dates: 9/17/21 at 3pm and 9/19/21 at noon

## **ISSUE: POLITICS**

Topic: Former Wyoming U.S. Senator Mike Enzi has died following a bicycle accident near his home in Gillette. Enzi had been life-flighted to a hospital in Colorado where he died a few days

later surrounded by family. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler brings us this remembrance of his life.

Time: 7:30 min

Dates: 7/30/21 at 3pm and 8/1/21 at noon

Topic: Wyoming's Emergency Rental Assistance Program has awarded \$4.7 million to more than 1,400 households. That money comes from a large pool of funding from the federal government. Recently, Wyoming and other small states were criticized for spending only a fraction of their funding so far. But Wyoming Public Radio's Jeff Victor spoke with Department of Family Services Director Korin Schmidt who said the program is accelerating after a rocky start. But that rocky start, Schmidt said, was necessary to get out as much assistance as possible to all the people who needed it.

Time: 5:30 min

Dates: 8/10/21 at 3pm and 8/12/21 at noon

Topic: DACA recipients, also known as dreamers, who have lived and worked in Teton County for at least a year are now eligible to qualify to buy affordable housing. Teton County has a growing Latino population and it's estimated that many of the 510 DACA recipients in Wyoming, live in Teton County. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska has this story.

Time: 4:16 min

Dates: 9/17/21 at 3pm and 9/19/21 at noon

#### **ISSUE: ARTS AND CULTURE**

Topic: Jason Tyler Burton wrote the song "Headwaters" and the album with the same title while working as a seasonal park ranger at the South entrance of Yellowstone National Park. The entrance is located near the headwaters of the Snake River. That summer he thought a lot about the river's journey and his own, and how it gave him a sense of belonging during this transitional time in his life. Oliva Weitz has this profile.

Time: 5:30 min

Dates: 7/2/21 at 3pm and 7/4/21 at noon

Topic: After a year off due to COVID-19, the "Daddy of 'em All" finally gets to celebrate its 125th year as Cheyenne Frontier Days returns. General Chairman Jimmy Dean Siler and PR Chairman Mike Smith join us to discuss the two-week event which kicks off next weekend.

Time: 6:30 min

Dates: 7/16/21 at 3pm and 7/18/21 at noon

**ISSUE: LEGAL**

Topic: The Wyoming Supreme Court has a new chief justice. Kate Fox has been a justice on the court since 2014. She took over for former chief justice Mike Davis this month. Wyoming Public Radio's Catherine Wheeler spoke to Fox about her new role. Fox started by describing what it feels like to be only the second woman to have the position in Wyoming state history.

Time: 5:30 min

Dates: 7/16/21 at 3pm and 7/18/21 at noon