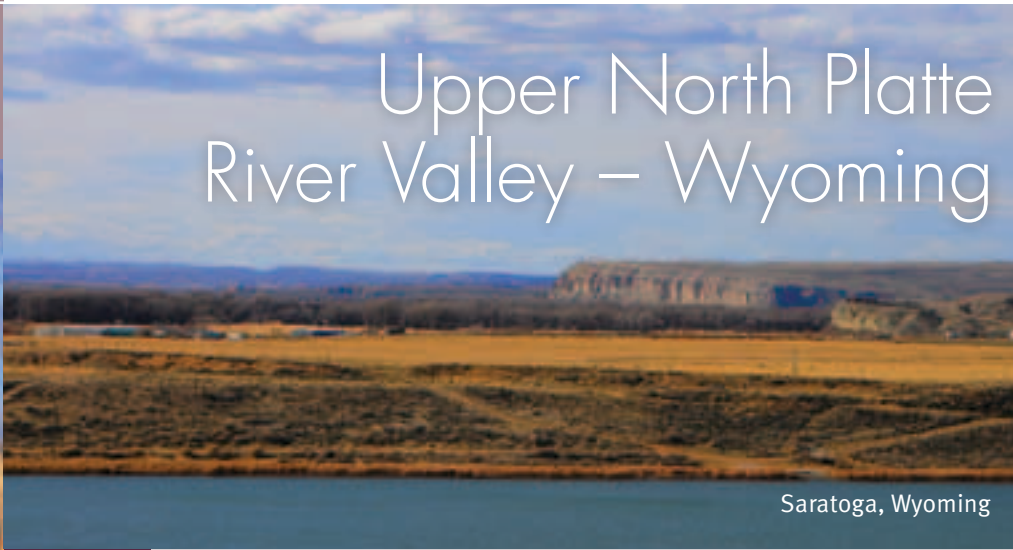


Upper North Platte River Valley – Wyoming



Smelter, Encampment, Wyoming



Saratoga, Wyoming

VISION & GOALS

The Sonoran Institute's Wyoming Program represents an enduring commitment to Wyoming's land and people. From our office in the Upper North Platte Valley, we work with partners to shape a more sustainable future for healthy landscapes, vibrant economies and livable communities.

The North Platte River Valley is one of the best kept secrets in the West. Abundant wildlife – including herds of pronghorn, mule deer and elk reside in the area. It is a recreational Mecca for outdoor enthusiasts, including anglers, wildlife watchers, hunters, cyclists and others. The Valley, framed by the Snowy and Sierra Madre mountain ranges, is sustained by the North Platte River. The area is noted for its vast landscapes, unaltered view sheds and its blue ribbon trout fishing. This landscape maintains numerous large working ranches and the three small communities of Saratoga, Encampment and Riverside.

Currently, the Valley's economy depends on tourism and agriculture with energy development emerging. The vibrancy and sustainable growth of the Valley's communities is threatened by the limitations of aging infrastructure, such as streets and sewer lines. Poorly designed subdivisions divide working landscapes. Lack of affordable housing discourages growth.

Passionate about preserving the character of the Valley and values of its residents, a citizen group, **Voices of the Valley**, was formed in 2010 to facilitate community dialogue. What started as a conversation about the natural resource issues affecting the Valley has transitioned to a community-wide discussion addressing the future of the Valley. Voices of the Valley's first year examined water use, agricultural operations, and wildlife that tie together the social fabric of the Valley.

The second year explored community development issues. We learned from other Wyoming communities about the importance of master planning, outdoor recreation within town limits and the value of strong leadership.

Next steps for Voices of the Valley include moving the community dialogue into action. Through collaboration, we hope to define the Valley's path to the future and begin taking steps toward our vision.

To achieve this vision, **Voices of the Valley** can:

- ❖ Identify opportunities and prioritize actions to address potential threats.
- ❖ Provide objective information and effective training to build local leadership capacity.
- ❖ Collaborate with local organizations, town governments and Valley residents to encourage sustainable growth.
- ❖ Advocate for local and state policies which reflect community values.



Shaping the Future of the West

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North Platte River Valley Project

Challenges & Opportunities



Working together, Valley residents will find innovative ways to bring new and diversified businesses to the area, while protecting natural resources and providing amenities that attract families and visitors.

Effective conservation and use of natural resources

Challenge: The North Platte River Valley has the opportunity to address development proactively. Valley agricultural operations provide valuable assets such as open space, water, and wildlife habitat. As development pressures increase, residents can decide how to balance new development while conserving the values they cherish.

Opportunities: Provide educational opportunities to the residents of the Valley regarding the importance of how to better understand the value of working landscapes, wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity, open spaces and view sheds.

Engage Valley residents in energy development decisions

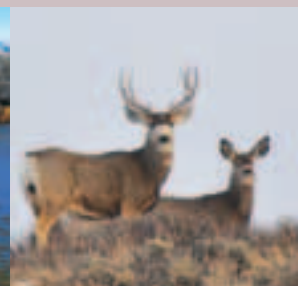
Challenge: Defining opportunities and impacts within energy development in a way that protects the character of the Valley and the values of its residents.

Opportunity: Work with Valley communities to diversify their economies while understanding the cyclical nature of energy booms. Voices of the Valley can provide information to help manage growth and change; and to put a face on what energy development may look like for our landscapes and communities.

Build local leadership capacity

Challenge: To maintain the character and values of the North Platte River Valley, growth will be most effectively managed by strong leadership. Strong leaders emerge from residents, business owners or local organizations.

Opportunity: Voices of the Valley can be a resource to provide support and tools to emerging leaders to help them effectively accomplish their community's goals. This support can take the form of training and workshops; targeting funding opportunities and sources, and defining networking opportunities.





The Time is Now

Due to the historical boom and bust cycles of Carbon County, the communities go from boasting large tax revenues, affordable housing prices and thriving small businesses to grappling with aging infrastructure, high housing prices and empty main streets.

The residents of the Valley have the ability to actively manage these cycles. By building partnerships and consensus, the Voices of the Valley committee can encourage and assist the communities of the Valley to be resilient places to live, work and build a business. Working together, Valley residents will find innovative ways to bring new and diversified businesses to the area, while protecting natural resources and providing amenities that attract families and visitors.



INSPIRING LEADERSHIP



Engaging a diverse and Valley-wide audience in constructive conversations can be challenging. All too often there is a sense amongst people in the Valley that “my opinion does not matter” – limiting the potential for more unique solutions. This challenge must be met with a patient, collaborative response. Voices of the Valley has always been an open forum for conversation, but needs to actively bring people together to find common ground on important issues affecting the valley; students, elderly and the disenfranchised. Leadership can be inspired through this process.



Encampment Riverside Lions Club Arena, Encampment, Wyoming

Current Voices of the Valley Initiatives

Saratoga Community Garden

Increase agricultural awareness in school-aged children and the general public, while providing healthy locally-grown fruits and vegetables.

Platte Valley Habitat Partnership

Voices of the Valley is an active partner in the Platte Valley Habitat Partnership: an initiative tasked with prioritizing wildlife habitat improvement projects throughout the Upper North Platte River Valley on both private and public lands.

North Platte River Restoration project

Partnering with the Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District and many others to create a stable channel with minimal bank erosion, and to reestablish a viable fishery.

How can you get involved?

Attend upcoming Voices of the Valley events and community meetings; volunteer to work on a project, or become a member of the Voices of the Valley Steering Committee.

The Sonoran Institute inspires and enables community decisions and public policies that respect the land and people of Western North America

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