

RITA MEYER



GOVERNOR

REPUBLICAN

Is the current system and process of how Wyoming manages its state lands, particularly as regards the grazing of livestock, fair, equitable and appropriate? What changes, if any, would you as Governor want to make in this regard?

RITA MEYER: Having voted on the State Loan and Investment Board and Board of Land Commissioners for the last four years, I have made decisions based on the Wyoming Constitution and have evaluated state land based on long-term growth in value and optimum, sustainable revenue production. Agricultural leases provide sustainable revenue and in most cases due to location of state lands within private lands provide optimum use. I make decisions – not just on state agricultural leases but on all issues – by weighing the proposals and consequences considering all of the state’s interests – that includes impacts to leasees, local communities and economies. When proposed uses of state lands and agriculture leases intersect, as they will, I am committed to promoting balanced solutions so that impacts are minimized.

Do we need any changes in how Wyoming manages our Water and particularly changes to our water statutes?

RITA MEYER: What I see in the future is not changing how Wyoming manages our water but fighting the federal government’s efforts through the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and other ill-conceived efforts to control our water. This issue will land on the desk of the Governor, who will have to work with Wyoming’s congressional delegation and other western governors to fight it. We also must carefully watch the efforts of those outside of our borders to change water allocations and potentially affect uses in Wyoming, like the large water pipeline being contemplated to take water from the Colorado River to the Front Range of Colorado.

While running for office, the current Governor promised to significantly increase the number of water storage projects across the state. This has not occurred. As Governor, what is your view as to water storage and what direction would you take us?

RITA MEYER: Water storage is important for many Wyomingites livelihoods from those in ranching to the general economic well being of municipalities. While supportive of increasing water storage projects, I recognize that this is difficult due to increased costs and a very difficult, complicated and sometimes redundant expensive federal process, which cost \$2 million and almost 20 years for the High Savery Dam to receive permitting. To help overcome the financial hurdles, I would support efforts to encourage project sponsors to partner with the Wyoming Water Development Commission to construct new storage facilities. I will work with appropriate federal agencies to expedite and streamline the process. As it stands now if the new Governor were to initiate a water storage project on her first day in office the project could take many years and many millions of planning dollars to get the necessary permits. This is not acceptable.

In recent years, the Legislature has increased the level of general funds going to the Wyoming Livestock Board. Would you say that level is too high, about right, or too low?

RITA MEYER: The funding levels are about right for the Livestock Board to keep up with its mission to safeguard the livestock industry.

The issue of animal welfare has been brought to the forefront across the nation in the past several years. Where does Wyoming stand in terms of animal welfare and what, if any, statutory changes would you seek to our animal welfare statutes?

RITA MEYER: Amending state statutes to better address animal welfare was raised in a Joint Agriculture, State and Public Lands and Water Resources Interim Committee meeting. I would be open to a solution that is supported by the livestock industry and local governments that amends the statutes to protect the animals, animal owners and the rights of animal owners. We must be proactive and develop a Wyoming solution before others force their solutions upon us.

The University of Wyoming is ostensibly a “land grant university”. Can you explain in your own view what that means and is the University meeting that definition and responsibility?

RITA MEYER: Having been a trustee on the University Board, I’m very familiar with the University’s land grant responsibility. A land-grant university educates and solves problems through academic, research and extension programs. I believe the University is doing a good job in that regard and would be supportive of investing funds to increase research to add value to our natural resources. Extension programs are critical to ensure that the research and academic pursuits of the university are, first and foremost, relevant to the people and industries of Wyoming and, second, relatable and accessible to our citizens and businesses.

Wyoming agriculture must now compete on a global level with our agriculture products. Are we competing on a “level playing field” and if not, what can the Governor of Wyoming do to “level it out”?

RITA MEYER: Competing on a level playing field can be difficult, especially in terms of access to international markets like Japan. Wyoming is making progress with programs like the animal verification program, offered through the Wyoming Business Council. Wyoming can go further by promoting its agricultural products through a “Buy Wyoming” campaign.

How can we facilitate better relationships between landowners and the Wyoming Game and Fish?

RITA MEYER: Even though conflicts may arise between landowners and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, these conflicts should not rise to the level where the relationship has to be adversarial. Certainly mutual respect and appreciation for what often times appears to be

opposing missions would go a long ways to facilitate better relationships. I would take a balanced approach in making decisions and would appoint someone to the Game and Fish Commission that understands agriculture's needs. Wyoming's wildlife rely heavily on private lands for cover and forage and the Game and Fish must be a partner to ensure that the landowners' interests are reflected in Commission policies and Department activities and needs and I would appoint people to the various agriculture boards who understand the needs of wildlife. Most farmers and ranchers are extremely proud of the big game herds and other wildlife that thrive on their lands and dedicated to the conservation of these populations. But at the end of it all, these are working businesses - and the policy choices by the Commission must recognize and respect this reality in its management of wildlife.

Paid for by the Committee to Elect Rita Meyer
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