

## **WYOMING**

Wyoming ranks 36th among the states in number of local governments, with 726 as of October 2007.

### **COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (23)**

There are no areas in Wyoming lacking county government. The county governing body is called the county board of commissioners.

### **SUBCOUNTY GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (99)**

#### **Municipal Governments (99)**

Municipal governments in Wyoming are the cities and towns. First class cities are municipalities with a population of 4,000 or more. Municipalities in Wyoming not designated as first class cities are designated as towns. The minimum population for incorporation is 200 within an area of three square miles or less.

#### **Township Governments (0)**

Wyoming has no township governments.

### **PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (55)**

#### **School District Governments (55)**

Four types of school districts are authorized in Wyoming:

- Elementary school districts
- High school districts
- Unified school districts
- Community College districts

Currently, no high school districts are operating and only Fremont County with two elementary districts still has elementary school districts that operate along with unified districts. The governing body is an elected board of trustees. School district revenues include state appropriations from a statewide ad valorem tax levy, appropriations from a countywide ad valorem tax levy as apportioned by the state

board of education, and a school district ad valorem tax levy. Subject to referendum, school districts may issue bonds for capital construction projects.

Community college districts may be created after petition to the Wyoming Community College Commission and referendum. The governing body is an elected board of trustees. The district may levy property taxes, may receive state appropriations, may issue revenue bonds upon resolution of the board of trustees, and may issue general obligation bonds with voter approval.

#### **Dependent Public School Systems (0)**

Wyoming has no dependent public school systems.

#### **Other Educational Activities**

Boards of cooperative services may be established to provide educational services including but not limited to postsecondary education, vocational-technical education, adult education or services for children with disabilities by agreement between any combination of two or more school districts and community college districts. The board members are appointed by the boards of trustees of participating school and community college districts. The activities of the boards of cooperative services are financed by ad valorem taxes levied by the participating school and community college districts. Boards of cooperative services are classified as joint educational service agencies of the participating school districts and are not counted as separate governments. As of October 2007, there were 12 boards of cooperative services reported in operation.

### **SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (549)**

Wyoming statutes authorize the creation of a variety of special districts or authorities that are counted as governments. These are discussed in detail below.

## **Cemetery Districts**

These districts are established by the board of county commissioners on petition of landowners and after local referendum. An elected board of trustees governs each district. The district may levy taxes and sell lots and with voter approval, issue bonds.

## **Conservation Districts**

These districts are established by the state board of agriculture on petition of landowners and after hearing and referendum. An elected board of supervisors governs each district. The districts may require contributions from benefitted landowners, may accept donations, and may levy taxes upon voter approval.

## **County Improvement and Service Districts**

These districts finance and provide various improvements and services, such as streets, parks, water supply, sewerage and solid waste disposal. Districts may be created in unincorporated areas by petition of majority land owners to the county commissioners. An elected board of directors governs each district. Board resolutions for proposed improvements are subject to approval by property owners at public hearing. Districts may levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments including benefit assessments, fix and collect user charges, receive contributions from public or private sources, and after voter approval, issue bonds. The district board has the power to create local improvement districts.

Local improvement districts created by county improvement and service districts are administered by the creating district. They are not counted as separate governments.

## **Drainage Districts**

Drainage districts are created by the district court on petition of landowners and after hearing. A board of commissioners, appointed by the district court or locally elected if the landowners so demand, governs each district. The district may issue bonds and levy special

benefit assessments.

Subject to petition and referendum, the boards of commissioners of two or more drainage districts may cooperate in the operation and maintenance of their respective systems. These joint operations are governed by a board of district managers composed of either one or two members representing each participating district.

## **Fire Protection Districts**

These districts may be established either by petition and subject to hearing and referendum or in unincorporated areas of the county, by resolution of the board of county commissioners and subject to referendum. An elected board of directors governs each district. The board of county commissioners may levy ad valorem taxes in support of fire protection districts. Subject to voter approval, districts may issue bonds.

## **Hospital Districts**

Hospital districts may be established by the board of county commissioners on petition of landowners after local referendum. An elected board of trustees governs each district. The district may fix charges and levy ad valorem taxes. The district may issue revenue and general obligation bonds; general obligation bonds require voter approval. Districts are authorized to engage in shared services, participate in cooperative ventures, enter partnerships, and form or be a shareholder of corporations; however, tax revenues may not be used for any of these purposes.

## **Irrigation Districts**

Irrigation districts are established by the district court on petition of landowners and after hearing. An elected board of commissioners governs each district. The district may levy special benefit assessments, fix and collect charges, and issue bonds. Amendments in 1963 authorize irrigation districts to develop and distribute hydroelectric energy and power.

## **Joint Powers Boards**

Boards of this type are established by agreement between any two or more county, municipal, school district or special district governments upon approval by the governing bodies of the respective governments. The composition of the appointed joint powers board is specified in the agreement establishing the board. The board may fix fees and charges, receive appropriations and grants and issue revenue bonds. Member governments also may issue bonds for the benefit of the board.

Regional transportation authorities formed by more than one county are formed by joint powers agreements.

Surface water drainage utility boards governed by joint powers boards are classified as subordinate agencies of the joint powers board. They are not counted as separate governments. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below

## **Predatory Animal Districts**

Each county in Wyoming is automatically a predatory animal district. A board of directors elected by the sheep and cattle ranchers in the district governs each district. If the county board of commissioners provides a county appropriation, the county board of commissioners appoints a seventh person to the district board of directors. Revenues include predatory animal control fees paid by stock owners on all sheep and cattle inspected within the district, county government appropriations, and donations.

## **Recreation Districts**

Recreation districts may be established by school district governing bodies either independently or jointly for the purpose of providing a system of public recreation. Such districts are governed by a board of trustees appointed by the school board(s). Revenues include gifts and donations and a tax levied by the school district and transferred to the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES)

for administration and accounting purposes.

## **Resort Districts**

Districts may be established following petition and subject to vote of landowners and timeshare owners in unincorporated areas within a single county where there is a permanent population of less than 500 people; where no real property is used for manufacturing, electricity generation, or the extraction or processing of minerals; and where the major economic activity is catering to the recreational and personal needs of visitors to the area. The district is governed by a three-member board of directors elected by property owners and timeshare owners. The district may levy ad valorem taxes and benefit assessments; may impose an optional sales and use tax; and may establish and collect charges for water, sanitation and related services and for the use of improvements or services provided by the district. Subject to referendum, the district may issue bonds. As of 2007, one resort district has been established.

## **Rural Health Care Districts**

Districts to provide health care in rural areas are established by petition to the county commissioners after public hearing and referendum. An elected board of trustees governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes and after voter approval, issue bonds. Districts are authorized to engage in shared services, participate in cooperative ventures, enter partnerships, and form or be a shareholder of corporations; however, tax revenues may not be used for any of these purposes.

## **Senior Citizen Service Districts**

One or more districts to provide senior citizen programs may be organized following resolution of the county board of commissioners and public referendum or citizen petition and public referendum. An elected five-member board of trustees may levy an ad valorem tax subject to referendum. Districts may accept gifts and grants.

## **Solid Waste Disposal Districts**

These districts are created upon resolution of the board of county commissioners. A board appointed by the county commissioners governs each district. The district may fix rates for the use of its facilities and upon voter approval, levy an ad valorem tax.

## **Special Museum Districts**

Special museum districts may be established by the board of county commissioners on petition of landowners and after public hearing and local referendum. An elected board of trustees governs each district. The district may levy ad valorem taxes and make any necessary rules and regulations for operation of the museum. Bond issues must have voter approval.

County owned and operated museums or collections of exhibits are classified as subordinate activities of the respective county government.

## **Water Conservancy Districts**

Water conservancy districts may be established by the district court on petition of landowners and after public hearing. Districts may be established for the purpose of conserving, developing, and stabilizing supplies of water for domestic, transportation, industrial, manufacturing, irrigation, power, recreation, and other beneficial uses. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may fix rates for the sale or use of water and levy taxes and benefit assessments. Bond issues must be approved by the voters.

## **Water and Sewer Districts**

These districts may be established by the board of county commissioners on petition and subject to referendum. Districts may be created for either or both purposes and may include all or a portion of the unincorporated area of the county. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may levy ad valorem taxes and special

assessments, fix rates and charges, and issue bonds with voter approval.

## **Watershed Improvement Districts**

Watershed improvement districts may be established as subdistricts of one or more conservation districts upon petition to the board of supervisors of the conservation district(s) and subject to referendum. Districts may be established to provide for the prevention and control of erosion, floodwater, and sediment damages; for agricultural uses; and the storage, conservation development, utilization and disposal of water. Recreational use may be a secondary use. Watershed improvement districts are governed by an elected board of directors. Subject to the approval of the conservation district board, the elected subdistrict board of directors may levy benefit assessments and issue bonds after local referendum. Should the supervising conservation district be dissolved, the watershed improvement subdistrict continues to operate; however, supervisory duties are transferred to the state conservation commission.

## **Wyoming Municipal Power Agency**

This agency was formed by agreement of the participating cities and towns for the purpose of generating and transmitting wholesale electric power. The agreement forming the agency specifies the composition of its governing board. The agency receives revenue from the sale of power and may issue revenue bonds.

## **SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS**

Shown below are various governmental designations in Wyoming that have certain characteristics of governmental units but which are classified in census statistics as subordinate agencies of the state or local governments and are not counted as separate governments. Legal provisions for some of the larger of these are discussed below (See "Public School Systems," above, regarding educational agencies of this nature).

Among the subordinate agencies and areas

listed below, some represent "special taxing areas" within the territory of an established government. This method of financing additional services in limited areas by property taxation, while also used by some municipal and township governments in a few states, is more widely utilized by county governments. In the listing below of authorized county-related agencies, a bullet (\*) appears for each entity of this kind, i.e., any that may individually serve a portion rather than all of a county and for which a tax may be levied against the assessed value of property in the area served.

**Housing authorities (county or municipal).**

Each housing authority is created by action of the governing body of the county or the municipality it serves. In addition, two or more county or municipal governments may create a regional housing authority. A board of commissioners, appointed by the county governing body in the case of a county housing authority or by the mayor in the case of a municipal housing authority, governs each housing authority. Housing authorities may fix rents, receive contributions and grants and issue revenue bonds and notes. Housing projects, however, require approval by the parent county or municipal government.

**Wyoming Community Development Authority (state).**

This authority was established to finance the development of housing and economic development projects. The authority is governed by a board of ten directors, seven of whom are appointed by the governor, plus the executive director of the authority, the governor and the state treasurer, who serve in an ex officio capacity. The authority may lease or sell projects, make mortgage loans, receive fees in connection with its loans, accept grants and gifts and issue revenue bonds.

**Wyoming Infrastructure Authority (state).**

Created in 2004, this authority is charged with implementing improvements in the state's electric transmission infrastructure and facilitating the supply and consumption of electric energy by planning, financing, constructing, and operating electric transmission facilities and related advanced

technology facilities and supporting infrastructure. The five-member board is appointed by the Governor. The authority shall establish and collect fees, rentals, and other charges for use of its facilities. The authority, by resolution of the governing body, is authorized to issue revenue bonds.

Other examples include:

**State**

- Wyoming Building Corporation
- Wyoming Business Council
- Wyoming Capitol and State Building Commission
- Wyoming Environmental Quality Council
- Wyoming Higher Education Assistance Authority
- Wyoming State Loan and Investment Board
- Wyoming Natural Gas Pipeline Authority
- Wyoming Pari-mutuel Commission
- Wyoming Water Development Commission
- Wyoming Yellowstone Park Commission

**County**

- County airport boards
- County museums and collections
- Day care centers for special needs children
- Fair boards
- Health districts
- Industrial development project boards
- Library boards
- Livestock districts
- Local improvement districts (underground utilities)
- Rabies control districts
- Recreation districts (single county)
- \*Regional transportation authorities (single county)
- Road districts
- Surface water drainage utility boards (county)
- \*Weed and pest control districts

**Municipal**

- Boards of public utilities
- City airport boards
- Downtown development authorities
- Health districts administered by city
- Industrial development project boards

Local improvement districts  
Local improvement districts (underground utilities)  
Recreation districts (single municipality)  
Street lighting districts  
Surface water drainage utility boards (municipal)  
Urban renewal agencies

## **Other**

Grazing districts are areas for the administration of the Taylor Grazing Act, a federal statute. They are not counted as governments for census purposes.