



Western
Environmental
Law Center

2015 Annual Report



MISSION:

We use the power of the law to safeguard the wildlife, wildlands, and communities of the American West.

In 2015, we worked in all 11 Western states providing our legal services to more than 155 clients—for free. *Thank you for making this possible!*

Mary Oliver, in her iconic poem, *The Summer Day*, asks us to answer a fundamental question: “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” Working with you, we’ve answered this question over our 23-year history by building a legacy of conservation that we can all be proud of, and 2015 was no different.

As our annual report shows, we’ve made great strides. But as we celebrate 2015, we also look to the future through the lens of *resiliency*. That is, the ability of ecological and community systems to withstand, bounce back from, and effectively respond to ecological and community threats, like fossil fuel exploitation, degradation of wildlife, and climate change.

Through the lens of resiliency, we see an incredible opportunity: to imagine and then build a future where our children can and will thrive in a world grounded in wisdom, equity, and beauty. Because of your support, this future looks ever brighter and ever more possible. Thank you.



In Gratitude for the West,

Erik Schlenker-Goodrich
Executive Director

Lori Maddox
Board President





Similkameen River, WA. We're working to restore the natural flow of this river.

SAVING WILDLIFE & WILD PLACES

YOUR SUPPORT RESULTS IN REAL,
ON-THE-GROUND PROTECTIONS FOR THE
WILD CREATURES AND PLACES THAT MAKE
THE WEST SO SPECIAL.

SUSAN JANE BROWN, ATTORNEY
WILDLANDS & WILDLIFE PROGRAM DIRECTOR
Portland, Oregon

“Healthy rivers, forests, wildlife, and
communities make the Pacific Northwest
a crown jewel of the Americas. We’re
working hard to protect that legacy.”



VICTORY! SAVING FORESTS, SPOTTED OWLS & SALMON

WELC was appalled when the government approved a 50-year plan to intensify logging in northern spotted owl and salmon habitat, granting permission to kill endangered species and log old-growth forest on 150,000 acres in California. We stopped that plan, protecting owls, old-growth forest, and salmon.

VICTORY! SCIENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT PREVAILS

We have defended science-based forest planning for decades. In 2015, we fought back when the extractive industries challenged provisions requiring the Forest Service to use science and biology when creating new forest management plans. The court threw out industry’s case and science is still safe in our forests.

RESTORING RIVERS & FISH

WELC is working to open ~200 miles of steelhead habitat, potentially allowing the fish to be removed from the endangered species list. We’re challenging an attempt to restore power generation at Enloe Dam on the Similkameen River in Washington, where we also want to save the community from bearing the costs of an uneconomic hydroelectric project.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

In Washington, industrial dairies known as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) pollute groundwater and surface waters including Puget Sound. We’re contending with the formidable agricultural industry to protect salmon, public health, and jobs by securing strong Clean Water Act pollution protections for the state.

VICTORY! SONORAN DESERT

Arizona’s Sonoran Desert National Monument is famous for its saguaro cacti and archaeological relics. But target shooting, allowed throughout the monument, resulted in damage to centuries-old cacti and even more long-lived petroglyphs. WELC won a case forcing managers to reconsider the policy allowing shooting in the monument.

VICTORY! SAVING LYNX AND WOLVERINE FROM TRAPPING

WELC attorneys successfully tag-teamed indiscriminate trapping in Montana and Idaho this year. Thanks to our legal advocacy, Montana has adopted new, common-sense rules to prevent accidental trapping of endangered Canada lynx and wolverine, and we are pushing Idaho to do the same.

CASE HIGHLIGHT: DEFEATING WILDLIFE SERVICES

Protecting wolves is one of our toughest jobs, but it’s also one we’re most passionate about. WELC is, right now, working to protect wolves in a couple of different ways.

We’re taking on Wildlife Services, a controversial program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The program is responsible for killing millions of wild animals every year, including wolves, grizzly bears, otters, foxes, coyotes, and birds, with almost no oversight or accountability.

The program employs incredibly cruel tools to kill wildlife including aerial gunning, leghold traps, snares, and poisons.

WELC’s lawsuit stopped the controversial federal wolf extermination program in Washington. Wildlife

Services’ cursory environmental assessment failed to provide data to support several of its core assertions. For example, they claimed killing wolves reduced losses of livestock, yet recent peer-reviewed research from Washington State University directly contradicts this conclusion.

The court stopped the wolf killing program until Wildlife Services completes a much more thorough and fair environmental impact statement analyzing *all* of the environmental impacts of its wolf killing program.

Thanks in part to our work, the state’s estimated 68 wolves in 16 packs will have a fair shot at recovery.

We’ve brought a similar case in neighboring Oregon, and look forward to extending our precedential victory there in 2016.



JOHN MELLGREN, ATTORNEY
Eugene, Oregon

“It felt amazing to be one of the first people and organizations to successfully limit the killing power of Wildlife Services—and we’re not done yet.”

WE ARE DEVELOPING PUBLIC POLICY TO PROMOTE RECOVERY OF GRAY AND MEXICAN WOLVES ACROSS THE AMERICAN WEST.





Together, we can achieve a legacy of conservation we can all be proud of.

BUILDING OUR CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

OUR LEGAL TEAM IS WORKING TO TRANSITION THE AMERICAN WEST AWAY FROM POLLUTING FOSSIL FUELS AND TOWARD CLEAN, RENEWABLE ENERGY.

LAURA KING, ATTORNEY
Helena, Montana

“I am proud to be part of the team that in 2015 kept more than half a billion tons of greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere and pointed the way to a cleaner energy future.”



VICTORY! YOUTH & CLIMATE

WELC helped some brave kids challenge the state of Washington on climate change. Our advocacy spurred the state to finally take action against greenhouse gas emissions through a landmark rulemaking process. Next, we will work to ensure emissions targets reflect the best available science so these actions make a real difference.

PROTECTING GREATER CHACO CANYON FROM FRACKING

We’re not letting up in our quest to protect Greater Chaco’s people, cultural resources, and environment from fracking. Our attorneys are arguing for an injunction on all drilling in the area. The greatest concentration of new drilling permits is just outside Chaco Canyon—a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

CUTTING METHANE EMISSIONS

Nearly a decade of WELC advocacy came to a crescendo when the Bureau of Land Management proposed a rule that would limit methane emissions from the oil and gas industry. Methane wasted from drilling on public lands represents the climate pollution from 14 coal-fired power plants and \$227 million of wasted tax revenue each year.

VICTORY! DRILLING PREVENTED IN COLORADO

We have battled plans to lease and develop public lands in Colorado’s fertile North Fork Valley for oil and gas since 2011. Each year since, we have beaten back new proposals and 2015 was no different—thanks to our efforts, the Forest Service withdrew its approval for drilling in the Gunnison National Forest.

STOPPING A LNG PIPELINE & TERMINAL IN OREGON

WELC continues to fight the Jordan Cove and Pacific Connector LNG terminal and pipeline, which would be the largest single emitter of greenhouse gases in the state if it were constructed. We are bringing our expertise to defeat—once and for all—this project that would harm communities and the environment.

VICTORY! MONTANA COAL MINE EXPANSION HALTED

In the Bull Mountains, we kept 170 million tons of coal in the ground. That equates to half a billion tons of carbon dioxide staying out of our atmosphere. We proved the mining company’s analysis violated the law, striking a victory for clean water, healthy air, and resilient communities.

CASE HIGHLIGHT: PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM COAL

We care deeply about public health as well as environmental protection. That's why WELC has repeatedly taken on northern New Mexico's Navajo Mine and Four Corners Power Plant complex—among the most notorious for coal contamination in the country. Most recently, we worked to hold operators accountable for mercury pollution from burning coal.

In March 2015, we convinced a federal court to reject a permit to expand Navajo Mine that would have allowed strip mining of 12.7 million tons of dirty coal. This helped keep almost 35 million tons of carbon dioxide out of our atmosphere. In an important case linking coal mining with coal combustion, we successfully argued that

the expansion would have violated the National Environmental Protection Act by ignoring toxic mercury pollution from burning the coal.

Unfortunately, in December 2015, the Office of Surface Mining issued a revised decision approving a plan to keep Navajo Mine and the associated Four Corners Power Plant operating through 2041 despite impacts from coal toxins to communities, the San Juan River Basin, its ecosystems, and endangered wildlife.

Therefore, that same month, we sent a notice of intent to sue over the plan. It's clear that this complex can't operate in compliance with the law, and with your support, WELC will keep hammering these peddlers of dirty energy to help spur the renewable energy transition we so profoundly need.



SHILOH HERNANDEZ, ATTORNEY
Helena, Montana

“Burning coal is the greatest threat to the livability of our planet. WELC uses the power of the law to accelerate our transition to clean, renewable energy sources—a moral obligation.”

WE KEPT OVER 12 MILLION TONS OF COAL IN THE GROUND BY BLOCKING EXPANDED COAL MINING AT THE NAVAJO MINE IN NEW MEXICO.



THANK YOU!

The board and staff of the Western Environmental Law Center appreciate the generous contributions from the following individuals, foundations, businesses, and organizations in 2015.

Your support allows us to use our expertise in addressing the most pressing environmental issues facing the West.

Thank you for helping us defend and protect the American West’s treasured landscapes, iconic wildlife, and communities.

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“The West's amazing natural places have provided many of our family's best moments.

WELC uniquely combines litigation, local alliances, technical knowledge, and wide practical experience to preserve those places.”



Photo by Pierson Bourquin



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“I sleep better knowing that WELC is defending the West’s wildlife and natural resources and is truly making a difference for future generations.”

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“We are proud to support WELC's place-based approach to legal and policy reform action in defense of New Mexico's statewide water quality standards and advocacy for the protection of wetlands in the Rio Grande's headwaters.”

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Thomas Singer, Ph.D.
WELC Senior Policy
Advisor
Santa Fe, New Mexico

“Climate change is the defining issue of our generation and our response to this challenge will be our legacy. That's why I am proud to work at WELC and am dedicated to fighting for a clean energy future.”

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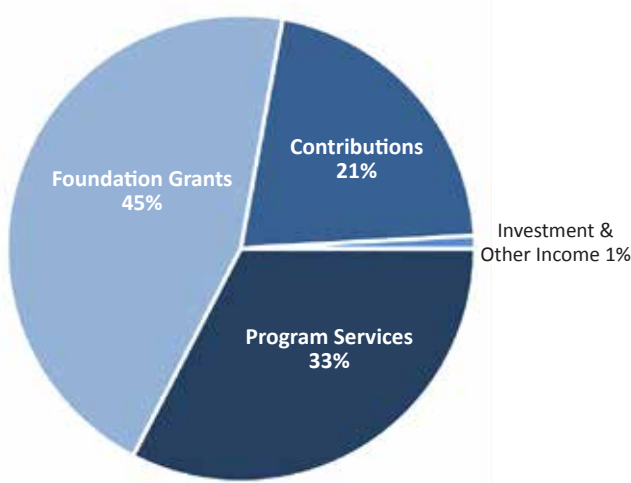
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FINANCIAL REPORT

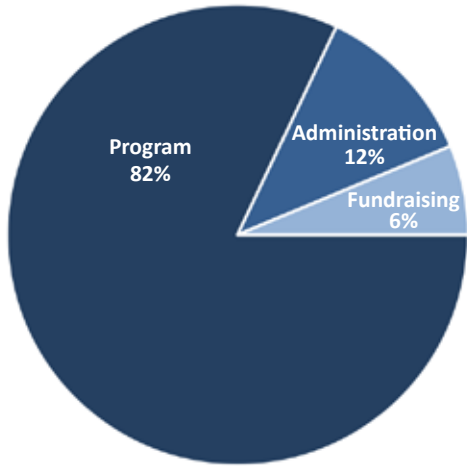
2015 REVENUES

Program Services	\$575,783
Foundation Grants	\$798,787
Contributions	\$375,129
Investment & Other Income	\$15,514
TOTAL	\$1,765,213



2015 EXPENDITURES

Program	\$1,442,434
Administration	\$204,903
Fundraising	\$110,477
TOTAL	\$1,757,814



A complete audited financial report will be available in August.

Thank you for partnering with us to make the American West such a truly special place—both today and in years to come.



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