



Western
Environmental
Law Center

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

YOUR IMPACT. YOUR DIFFERENCE.



THANK YOU.

From all of us to all of you—thank you. In 2016, we worked in all 11 Western states providing our legal services to more than 185 clients—for free. Thank you for making this possible.

DEAR SUPPORTERS

We are undaunted and energized. How can that be, given the uncharted political waters we must now navigate? Because over our 24-year legacy we have proven our ability to use the full power of the law to safeguard the wildlands, wildlife, and communities of the American West, regardless of who occupies the White House. That power remains undiminished and our bedrock laws—from the Clean Water Act and National Environmental Policy Act to the Endangered Species Act—will continue to provide a strong defense against all who would exploit the West's natural and cultural heritage.

The people and communities we work with offer us a deep reservoir of power and hope for change. Indeed, in the last few months, we have been inspired by the passion and energy rising from our grassroots communities. As we move forward, we will amplify this energy, working with you and our 185 partner groups to advance visionary strategies to defend the West, from the culturally rich Greater Chaco landscape of the Southwest to the ecologically rich ancient forests of the Northwest. And as we do so, we will stand with our wild cousins—the wolf, the wolverine, the lynx, the owl, and the salmon—just as we stand with you.



We welcome Karin P. Sheldon as the Western Environmental Law Center's new board president.

In Gratitude,

Erik Schlenker-Goodrich
Executive Director

Karin P. Sheldon
Board President



WE PROTECT RESILIENT WILDLANDS

WELC secured protection for 100,000 acres of the nation's wildest and most pristine rivers in Oregon's Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest from nickel strip mining.

We use strategic legal advocacy to build resilient communities and ecosystems that better respond to the threats of climate change.

VICTORY! WILD RIVERS PROTECTED FROM NICKEL MINING

In southwest Oregon's Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest 100,000 acres are now protected from mining for 20 years, thanks to decades of work from WELC and our partners. This area contains the highest concentration of designated Wild Rivers in the contiguous U.S., and we're continuing to work toward permanent protections.

VICTORY! MONTANA WATER RIGHTS DEFENDED

WELC won a huge victory before the Montana Supreme Court closing a loophole developers exploited for years to drill tens of thousands of unpermitted water wells across the state. Before our victory, a 200-unit subdivision could legally suck more than 650 million gallons of water annually without a permit. This is no longer the case.

VICTORY! STOPPING COAL TRAIN POLLUTION IN WA WATERWAYS

Rail companies have for years transported toxic coal in open-top train cars, spilling an average of 500 pounds per car per trip into waterways. We convinced BNSF Railway Company to clean up its mess, donate \$1 million to other environmental projects in Washington state, and study how to avoid this problem by covering the rail cars.

SAFEGUARDING NEW MEXICO'S WETLAND JEWELS

We're setting the stage for greater protections in the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests of New Mexico by mapping forest areas critical to the resilience of these ecosystems, known as wetland jewels. This will help forest managers prioritize protection of these areas that provide important ecological functions.

DEVELOPING NATIONAL FOREST POLICY

Ever wonder how national forest policy is developed? Since 2012, WELC has participated in and co-chaired a federal advisory committee tasked with just this assignment: to provide advice and recommendations on the implementation of the Forest Service's rules on forest management. WELC is your voice at the table.

WE DEFEND NATIVE WILDLIFE

*We protect and recover wildlife
indigenous to the American West and the
healthy, functioning ecosystems they call home.*

PROTECTING YELLOWSTONE'S GRIZZLY BEARS

We're preparing to stand up for Yellowstone's grizzly bears—a population essential to the survival of the iconic North American species and crucial to the health of the Yellowstone ecosystem.

VICTORY! LYNX SOUTHERN ROCKIES RANGE ELIGIBLE FOR CRITICAL HABITAT PROTECTION

We successfully challenged a Fish and Wildlife Service decision to exclude the Canada lynx's entire southern Rocky Mountain range, essential for the wildcat's recovery, from designation as critical habitat. Next, we'll ensure lynx habitat receives all the protections required by law, and needed for recovery.

VICTORY! DEFENDING WOLVES FROM WILDLIFE SERVICES

In 2015, we won an unprecedented victory against Wildlife Services in Washington state, stopping its wolf-killing program. In 2017, we're using the same legal strategy in Oregon to protect more wolves from this misguided wolf-killing program.

ENSURING PUBLIC INPUT ON FEDERAL FUR EXPORT PROGRAM

We're challenging a federal program that facilitates the export of pelts and parts of bobcats and wolves killed in the U.S. without public review.

STANDING UP FOR WOLVERINE ACROSS THE AMERICAN WEST

WELC successfully proved the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service illegally ignored science and violated the Endangered Species Act when it declined to list wolverine as endangered. Now, the agency must reconsider listing wolverine using the best available science.

A photograph of two brown bears sitting on a mossy rock. The bear on the left is sitting upright, looking towards the camera. The bear on the right is lying down, also looking towards the camera. The background is a lush, green, mossy landscape.

WE HELP KEEP NATURE IN BALANCE.

WE ADVOCATE FOR CLIMATE & HEALTH

VICTORY! KEEPING COAL POLLUTION OUT OF MONTANA'S WATER

Our legal action stopped a permit that would have allowed the Rosebud Mine to dump toxic heavy metals and other harmful pollutants into state waters without limits; a huge victory for clean water and communities across the state.

FIGHTING RELENTLESS FRACKING ON PUBLIC LANDS

We're challenging 380,000 acres of oil and gas leases on public lands for which no accounting of climate impacts has taken place—a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

VICTORY! STOPPING THE JORDAN COVE LNG TERMINAL & PACIFIC CONNECTOR PIPELINE

Thanks to the tireless legal advocacy of WELC and our partners, the federal government officially rejected a proposed liquefied natural gas pipeline and export terminal in Oregon. We're watching this project and should it get revived we will use the power of the law to fight it again.

WE'RE HELPING TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS SAFEGUARD THE CLIMATE FROM DRILLING

The federal government has denied oil and gas lease bids from renowned author Terry Tempest Williams and her husband because they intended to develop those leases only if drilling proved compatible with climate science. We're challenging that rejection in court.

PROTECTING GREATER CHACO CANYON AND ITS COMMUNITIES

In northwest New Mexico, 91% of public lands are leased for oil and gas development. Much of the remaining 9% is in sacred Greater Chaco. WELC represents native communities and other groups that want to protect Greater Chaco and its living communities from unstudied fracking.

*We fight dirty energy while promoting a clean, renewable
energy future in the American West.*



VALLE VIDAL CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

102,000 ACRES. PROTECTED FOREVER.

Throughout the West, special places—enchantingly beautiful, priceless, and awe-inspiring—bring communities together. Imagine your favorite haven now: an ancient forest in the Northwest, a sweeping ridgeline in the Intermountain West, or a breathtaking desert canyon in the Southwest. Many of these lands are public lands owned by all Americans.

As westerners with home bases in New Mexico, Montana, Oregon, and Washington, we at the Western Environmental Law Center know our public lands well. Indeed, our public lands inspire us each and every day as we wield the full power of the law to safeguard the West's wildlands, wildlife, and communities. So when our public lands come under threat, we step in to defend them. That's precisely what happened a decade ago when the fossil fuel industry sought to lease and drill Northern New Mexico's beloved Valle Vidal, the "Valley of Life," for oil and gas.

A 100,000-acre paradise of rolling alpine meadows, aspen groves, high peaks, and forest in the heart of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the Valle Vidal—part of the Carson National Forest—rests atop fossil

resources that were hungrily eyed by a Texas oil and gas company. In 2003, rumors swept through northern New Mexico that this company had asked President George W. Bush's Energy Task Force to exploit the Valle Vidal.

Given the Bush Administration's coziness with the oil and gas industry, we were told that drilling in the Valle Vidal was inevitable and that we should try to cut a deal to protect what we could. But, with partners such as our good friends at Amigos Bravos, we talked with the community and received a crystal clear signal: these public lands weren't for sale. The community's determination in the face of seemingly impossible odds sparked an amazing, multi-year, community-based campaign that presaged the "Keep it in the Ground" campaigns of today. The result: permanent legislative protection of the Valle Vidal from the threat of oil and gas drilling.

We tell this story now for a simple reason: we've fought hostile administrations in the past, we know how to win, and we're prepared, now, to stand with you and other Westerners to fight the Trump administration.

The Valle Vidal campaign was grounded in several key principles.

First, know your community. We hired two excellent organizers to reach out to county and town officials, local ranchers, businesses, sportsmen, boy scouts, and others. And in these

conversations, we found common ground: a shared love of the Valle Vidal and the land's watershed, wildlife, recreational, and ranching values. It was this common ground that provoked the community's horror at the prospect of an oil and gas company turning the Valle Vidal into an industrial landscape for the sake of fossil fuel energy—energy we determined would power the country for a mere 30 hours. And it was this common ground that created the opportunity for a powerful community-based campaign that would be heard all the way in Washington, D.C.

Second, build a coalition. Designing a well-functioning coalition is essential to effective coordination and decision making. It allows you to secure resources for organizers, for education and outreach to media and political champions, for scientific and technical experts, and to integrate and harmonize different advocacy strategies. With the Valle Vidal campaign, we relied on a solid group of passionate, exceptional leaders to provide capacity and to navigate the coalition through complex community, legal, and political dynamics. Building off the community's core values, the coalition enjoyed the support of more than 400 organizations, businesses, and local governments as well as an astounding 70,000 individuals.

Third, work the process. The Valle Vidal Coalition countered the political pressure emanating from the White House not only with the raw power of

our coalition, but with savvy, orchestrated use of the law. We used Freedom of Information Act requests to tease out the role of the White House and its conversations with El Paso Corporation. We leveraged bedrock laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act to make sure the Forest Service was serving the public and not the White House. We creatively used the Clean Water Act to secure watershed protections from New Mexico's primary water quality regulator to outflank the Bush Administration and to fight back against the prospects of oil and gas drilling. Finally, we understood that for us to truly win,

litigation—while a key tool we would not hesitate to use if appropriate—would not carry the day; we needed federal legislation that permanently protected the Valle Vidal.

Fourth, have patience. Campaigns are difficult and

long, taking years of intense work to cultivate community and political support, to participate in agency planning and environmental review processes, to elevate the profile of an issue, and to introduce and pass legislation. With the Valle Vidal, serious advocacy began in 2003 but our conclusive victory—legislation—wasn't secured until the end of 2006, and that was lightning fast.

We think the story of the Valle Vidal campaign is helpful as we find ourselves facing the Trump Administration, which has moved aggressively to install pro-fossil fuel decision-makers in positions of power and to dismantle our bedrock conservation laws and policies essential to the protection of our public lands. We've faced similar threats in the past. To be clear, we do believe the Trump Administration presents new challenges, including to the very fabric of our democracy. But regardless of those challenges, we know that wielding the full power of the law hand-in-glove with communities is a tried-and-true strategy.

The Valle Vidal was protected 10 years ago despite a hostile presidential administration. That protection will last forever. At the Western Environmental Law Center, we know we will outlast the current administration and, with every ounce of energy we possess, we will resist the administration's attacks and continue our steady, strategic advocacy to secure lasting, durable protections for the West's wildlands, wildlife, and communities. Together, we are strong; we are unified; and we will prevail.

TWO WOMEN TWENTY-THREE YEARS THEIR VISION BECAME A TRUE LEGACY



*Lori Maddox is
associate director of
the Environmental
Law Alliance
Worldwide in Eugene,
Oregon.*

In 2016, WELC had the bittersweet honor of celebrating Corrie Yackulic and Lori Maddox, both of whom retired after serving on our board of directors for 23 years. Corrie and Lori were honored at their final annual meeting, high in the Colorado mountains, amid an outpouring of love and appreciation from WELC's staff and board.

These two amazing women helped found WELC in 1993, served as board president, and were instrumental in growing our organization in good times and sustaining it during the toughest challenges. It's rare to have board members stay with an organization for so long, and we're eternally grateful for Corrie and Lori's commitment and dedication to WELC and its mission of protecting and defending the West.

Thanks to their leadership, WELC is stronger and more effective than ever. We wish Corrie and Lori continued success and happiness in their day jobs, which, not surprisingly, are also dedicated to making the world a better place.



*Corrie Yackulic runs a
private law practice in
Seattle, Washington.*

WE ARE HUMBLLED BY YOUR SUPPORT.

We appreciate the generous contributions you make to support the Western Environmental Law Center's work defending the wildlands, wildlife, and communities of the American West. Your gift made an impact and made our victories possible—thank you.



As a public interest law firm, we do not charge clients and partners for services, but rely instead on charitable gifts from individuals, families, and foundations to achieve our mission.

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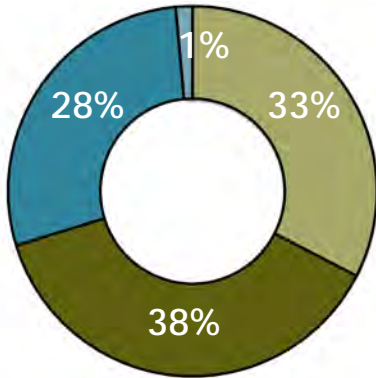
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FINANCIAL REPORT 2016

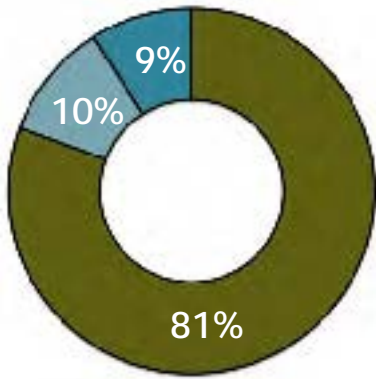
REVENUE \$1,969,189

33%	Program Services	\$641,213
38%	Foundation Grants	\$742,334
28%	Contributions	\$556,676
1%	Investment & Other Income	\$28,966



EXPENSE \$1,774,989

81%	Program	\$1,430,812
10%	Fundraising	\$184,908
9%	Administrative	\$159,269



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