





OUR STORY

For nearly a quarter century, the Western Environmental Law Center has proven itself one of our country's strongest public-interest environmental law firms. Shaped by the rugged American West that is our home, we have used the power of the law to build a strong legacy championing public lands, defending wildlife, challenging fossil fuel projects, and working collaboratively with communities.

In 1976, two environmental law professors at the University of Oregon added a clinical program to the school's law curriculum. The clinic's professors and students harnessed the power of our nation's bedrock environmental laws, providing free legal representation to grassroots conservation organizations across the American West.

OUR LEGAL TEAM FIGHTS IN COURT TO DEFEND THE AMERICAN WEST'S ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES. WE PROVIDE FREE LEGAL SERVICES TO MORE THAN 185 CLIENTS ANNUALLY.

However, in 1987, the clinic's relationship with the University of Oregon was forever changed when its law students challenged industrial timber sales in Oregon to protect the state's ancient forests and the endangered northern spotted owl.

The timber industry, in response, launched an unprecedented attack on the law school's academic freedom and a state legislature resolution was introduced to close down not just the environmental clinic, but the entire law school.

In 1993, the environmental law clinic chose to end the dispute and to become it's own nonprofit, public-interest organization—the Western Environmental Law Center.

Since then, WELC has expanded it's offices across the West, retaining our fierce independence, our commitment to training the next generation of public-interest environmental attorneys, and our focus on visionary, solutions-oriented, and high-impact environmental legal advocacy.







We use the power of the law to safeguard the public lands, wildlife, and communities of the American West in the face of a changing climate.

Our nation's environmental laws are critical in conserving the West's lands, rivers, and wildlife, while providing tools to address the challenge of climate change.

Just as importantly, our environmental laws function as a cornerstone of our democracy. These laws ensure that government agencies are transparent and accountable to the American people and act as a counterweight to the political and economic power of corporations.

When harnessed through campaigns with our partners and allies, the law is a force to be reckoned with. Our skill in leveraging that force enables us to swiftly adapt to changing political dynamics, to defend against attacks to our public lands, wildlife, and communities.



HOW WE WORK

We use a complete set of legal advocacy tools—including legislative and administrative engagement, litigation, and collaboration—to achieve our vision and mission.

We use these tools in service of 185+ partners and allies annually, leveraging the power of the law in support of aligned long-term goals and strategies. With our partners and allies, we build power for solutions commensurate with the scale of the problems we face.

Acknowledging the linkage between environmental and social justice, we adhere to our moral and ethical imperative to respect the communities our advocacy serves or impacts. We are also committed to ensuring equity, inclusion, and justice for all members of those communities.

As a public-interest law firm, we offer pro bono legal services to our clients and partners, and we rely on charitable gifts to accomplish our mission.

PROTECTING ICONIC WESTERN MII DI IFF

The future of the American West means little without its iconic wildlife. Apex wildlife are crucial to environmental health, providing checks and balances needed to prevent ecosystems from unraveling.

We fight in court to protect and recover Canada lynx, wolverines, grizzly bears, wolves, and other iconic wildlife. By using laws such as the Endangered Species Act, our savvy legal team secures legal victories that translate into real, on-the-ground protections for these imperiled species.

While we have had great success defending the West's wildlife, there is much work remaining. We continue to advocate for the conservation of wildlife habitat, to preserve the freedom of wildlife to roam across the West's open landscapes, to stop the harmful trapping of fur bearing animals, and to safeguard a future for all wildlife.



SAFEGUARDING THE WEST'S WILD RIVERS & WILD SALMON

We protect and restore rivers and watersheds in the American West that are habitat for wild salmon runs, provide clean drinking water, and support recreation.

The West Coast's wild salmon and steelhead trout runs have been and continue to be seriously threatened by the "four H's": habitat degradation, hydroelectric dams, harvest of depleted stocks, and hatcheries. Our wild salmon and steelhead program improves freshwater habitat, protects spawning grounds, and removes barriers to migration.

Most wild salmon and steelhead trout runs are at a fraction of their historic levels, and many runs are now less than 10 percent of historical numbers. Moreover, in many river basins, hatchery instead of wild fish dominate the runs.

WE PROTECT AND RESTORE RIVERS AND WILD SALMON RUNS BY ADVOCATING FOR DAM REMOVAL, REFORMING FISH HATCHERY OPERATIONS, AND PREVENTING AGRICULTURAL WATER POLLUTION.

Our litigation and advocacy aims to address the various factors threatening the survival of salmon and steelhead trout.

Hatchery Reform

Within the last decade, the consensus among fisheries biologists is that hatchery fish can prey on, out-compete, or interbreed with wild fish. further diminishing their numbers. In many West Coast river basins, hatchery fish have come to dominate wild fish. Our attorneys are successfully reforming hatchery operations in California and Oregon to reduce the volume of hatchery fish released, to enforce best management practices, and to give wild salmon and steelhead a chance at long-term survival.

Mining Reform

Placer mining in Western rivers can seriously degrade aquatic habitat and harm salmon and steelhead runs. We played a pivotal role in the development of Oregon's moratorium on suction dredge mining in the

state's rivers and streams, and we have secured federal mining withdrawals in crucial salmon and steelhead trout habitat.

Sustainable Agriculture

In Puget Sound, unregulated manure waste from industrial agriculture and poorly regulated pollution from urban and rural infrastructure harms clean water, public health, wild salmon, and our environment. We are working to reform Washington's oversight of concentrated animal feeding operations and other pollution sources, to implement best management practices for salmon recovery, and to boost the resilience of Puget Sound.

Dam Removal

Our legal team has a history of using our expertise to win the removal of dams that harm salmon and steelhead. For the long-term survival of West Coast salmon and steelhead, the removal of fish-killing dams is paramount.



FIGHTING FOR OUR PUBLIC LANDS

Defending and protecting the American West's national forests, national monuments, and public lands is at the cornerstone of our mission.

We use laws such as the National Forest Management Act, the Antiquities Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act to safeguard our public lands from reckless resource extraction. We hold the timber industry, the mining industry,

and the fossil fuels industry accountable to the law. We also serve as a watchdog of federal and state governments that are tasked with managing our public lands.

Preserving National Forests

Forests play a vital role as sources of clean drinking water, habitat for wildlife, and places for recreational and spiritual renewal. Yet intact native forest ecosystems in the West are rare OUR LEGAL ADVOCACY PREVENTS DAMAGE TO THE WEST'S WILD PLACES, RESTORES PUBLIC LANDS, AND ENSURES OPPORTUNITIES FOR QUIET RECREATION ARE PRESERVED.

and quickly disappearing. In fact, less than 10 percent of pristine forests—interior western ponderosa pine ecosystems and coastal fir forests—remain unaffected by logging, roads, livestock grazing, or other disruptive activities.

Our objective is straightforward and ambitious: to protect native, ancient forests in the West; to help restore logged forests through scientifically sound management; and to prevent damaging post-fire salvage logging.

Defending National Monuments

We have successfully defended national monuments in the West including the Sonoran Desert National Monument and the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

We continue to protect our region's monuments and, equally important, we are arguing in court to ensure that the laws governing national monument designation remain intact and are adhered to.

Protecting Public Lands

Across the Southwest and the Rocky Mountains, the fossil fuel industry seeks to exploit our public lands for private gain. Much of the region's lands are managed by the federal government, namely the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service. These federal agencies have too often served as a rubber stamp for the fossil fuel industry's plans to frack, drill, and mine our public lands.

We are holding the federal government and industry accountable to the law for the pollution, the environmental destruction, and the harms to public health associated with fossil fuels. Our goals are to catalyze a just transition to clean, carbon-free energy, to herald a new era of public lands protection centered on climate resilience, and to phase-out public lands fossil fuels to constrain our planet's warming.





DEFENDING OUR CLIMATE BY ENDING RECKLESS FRACKING

The emergence of oil and gas fracking has transformed the landscape of the American West. Reckless, out-of-control fracking threatens our clean water, clean air, public lands, and the health of our communities.

And, while industry continues to promote industrial gas as a "clean" energy source, the best available science is clear that we need to transition away from all fossil fuels as quickly as possible to address the climate crisis.

Moreover, we know that fracking undermines the resilience of our public lands—resilience that will prove essential to the capacity of our communities to withstand and adapt to climate impacts. To address the threat that fracking presents, we've embarked on a visionary campaign with two primary goals.

WE PROTECT OUR CLIMATE, PUBLIC HEALTH, CLEAN AIR, AND CLEAN WATER. WE DEFEND THE REGION'S CULTURAL HERITAGE FROM HARMFUL OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT.

First, we seek to secure the phase-out of oil and gas drilling on public lands, with an end to all new oil and gas leasing by no later than 2026 and to the approval of all new drilling permits by no later than 2036.

This phase-out would help the U.S., despite the Trump administration's actions, conform to the Paris climate agreement's 2.0°C (and ideally 1.5°C) guardrail and weaken the power and social license of the fossil fuel industry.

Second, by removing the threat of oil and gas, we intend to herald a new era of landscapelevel public lands protection initiatives across the West.

These initiatives would foster ecological and community resilience in the face of climate change and amplify existing public lands protections, harnessing the iconic power of public lands as a cornerstone of the West's future while

accounting for the challenges presented by climate change.

These goals are critical because public lands in the American West, from New Mexico's Greater Chaco region, to Colorado's Gunnison and Colorado River valleys, to Montana and Wyoming's Powder River Basin, have suffered the brunt of unchecked fossil fuel development.

We will achieve these goals by accelerating the ongoing evolution of the federal legal framework governing our public lands through tenacious legal, policy, communications, and organizing advocacy.



MOVING AWAY FROM COAL & TOWARD CLEAN ENERGY

Coal has powered the U.S. for decades, but it's time to move beyond coal to a new generation of clean, renewable, carbon-free energy sources and technologies.

Such action is critical for a simple reason: the mining and burning of coal is simply not compatible with the health and well being of humanity or the planet.

Our legal team plays an active role in speeding the American West's transition from dirty coal to the responsible use of clean energy from the sun and wind.

Our goals are to retire coalfired power plants and mines as soon as possible to protect our climate, facilitate a transition to the responsible and efficient use of clean energy, and prevent the export of the West's coal. WITH THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ALREADY BEING FELT, WE MUST QUICKLY TRANSITION AWAY FROM COAL AND TOWARD A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE.

We're achieving this by targeting coal mines, coal-fired power plants, and other coal infrastructure, holding them accountable for the social harms that, for too long, have been borne by the West.

We're also working to create opportunities for clean energy, ensuring that when coal mines and coal-fired power plants are closed, we're taking care to spark a new, more durable energy foundation for the region.

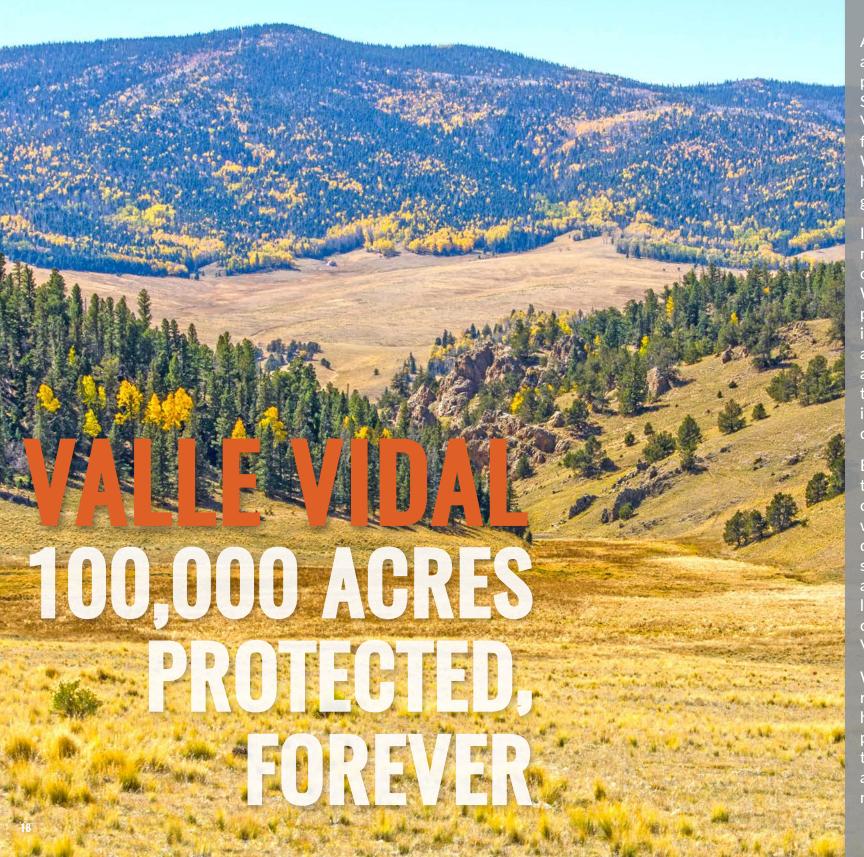
Our attorneys have already secured the retirement of coal-fired power at Western power plants, including at the 1,800-megawatt San Juan Generating Station in the Southwest.

And, after winning the retirement of coal-fired power, we work to ensure that sustainable, carbon-free

energy, rather than industrial gas obtained from fracking, fills the void. In this way, we are using legal advocacy to promote a transition from polluting fossil fuels to a clean energy future.

However, as the coal industry winds down, our goal is to minimize, and where possible eliminate, the harms associated with coal mining, coal burning, and the disposal of coal waste, and to work with communities to transition to a sounder economic footing.

Our expert attorneys will continue to use laws such as the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, to safeguard the American West's environment, air quality, clean water, landscapes, and public health from the coal industry.



A paradise of rolling alpine meadows, aspen groves, and statuesque high peaks in the heart of New Mexico's Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the Valle Vidal—the Valley of Life—rests atop fossil fuel resources that, if not for WELC's dedicated attorneys, would have been extracted by the oil and gas industry.

In 2003, rumors swept through northern New Mexico that a company had asked President George W. Bush's Energy Task Force for permission to exploit fossil fuels in the Valle Vidal. Given the Bush administration's coziness with the oil and gas industry, we were advised that drilling in the Valle Vidal was inevitable and that we should cut a deal to protect what we could.

But after discussing the issue with the local community we received a crystal clear signal: these public lands were not for sale! The community's determination in the face of seemingly impossible odds sparked an amazing, multi-year campaign led by WELC. The result: permanent congressional protection of the Valle Vidal from oil and gas drilling.

We tell this story now for a simple reason: we have triumphed over hostile political administrations in the past, and we're prepared, now, to use the full power of the law to fight back and defend the American West's natural heritage.

KEY STAFF & BOARD



Erik Schlenker-Goodrich, J.D. Executive Director

Erik joined WELC as a staff attorney in 2003 and became executive director in 2012. An expert in issues related to oil and gas development, Erik leads WELC's campaigns to reduce methane pollution and build climate resilience. He is a graduate of Cornell University and the University of Oregon School of Law.



Karin P. Sheldon, J.D. President, Board of Directors

Karin is president of Four Echoes Strategies, a consulting firm providing policy analysis and advice on Western land and water issues. She was president of Western Resource Advocates and The Wilderness Society, and the associate dean and director of the Environmental Law Program at Vermont Law School.



Peggy Nelson, J.D. Vice President, Board of Directors

Peggy served as New Mexico's 8th Judicial District Judge until her retirement in 2008. She began her career in Taos working for Northern New Mexico Legal Services and for 10 years provided low-cost and free legal services with the Community Law Center and as a Public Defender.



Susan Jane Brown, J.D. Public Lands Coordinator

Susan Jane joined WELC as a staff attorney in 2009. A nationally recognized expert on forest law, she has twice been appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture to co-chair the Federal Advisory Committee on the National Forest Management Act. Susan Jane leads our campaign to preserve Pacific Northwest forests.



John Mellgren, J.D. Wildlife Coordinator

John joined WELC as a staff attorney in 2011. He protects wildlife such as wolves, wolverines, and lynx, and preserves Western forests. He holds a B.A. in economics and political science from the University of Michigan and a J.D. with a certificate in environmental and natural resources law from the University of Oregon.



Kyle Tisdel, J.D. Energy and Communities Coordinator

Kyle joined WELC as a staff attorney in 2011. His docket focuses on safeguarding the West's environment and communities from the harms of oil and gas development. He previously practiced law in Washington and Colorado where his work focused on environmental, land use, and real property issues.



WAYS TO GIVE

We fight in court to defend the American West on behalf of our clients free of charge, but we can't do it without your support. As a nonprofit, public-interest law firm, we rely on charitable gifts from individuals, businesses, and foundations to achieve our mission.

Your donation to the Western Environmental Law Center is taxdeductible as allowed by law.

WELC's Federal Tax ID Number is 93-1010269.

Keystone Partner Monthly Giving Program: Automatic monthly gifts provide us with reliable support year-round to defend the West.

Legacy Society: Name WELC in your will, trust, or other estate plans.

Assets: Gifts of Securities, Stocks, Bonds, or Mutual Funds.

Charitable Gift Annuities: Payments are made to beneficiaries during their lifetime and WELC receives the remainder of the gift.

To learn more contact David Lawlor, Director of Development at (541) 255-0209 or lawlor@westernlaw.org.



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