



We hit the ground running this year—thanks to your support. Our attorneys and policy experts at the Western Environmental Law Center are approaching 2024 with courage, humility, and adaptability: **COURAGE** to conserve the western U.S. as an enduring element of our country's heritage against powerful interests; **HUMILITY** to honor our responsibility to people and the environment, acknowledge the scale of the challenge ahead, and advance strategies that make a real and lasting difference; and **ADAPTABILITY** to account for political events, integrate lessons learned, and transform challenge into opportunity.

We envision a thriving western U.S., abundant with protected and interconnected ecosystems, powered by renewable energy, and cared for by communities brought together in an ecology of kinship. This report highlights our 2024 cases—all made possible through your support. **THANK YOU!**

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## RESILIENT WESTERN LANDS AND COMMUNITIES

We put climate action, ecosystem resilience, and the protection of intact lands at the heart of our legal framework to protect the western U.S. We are using the power of the law to wind down the federal public lands fossil fuels program and to protect, at a landscape-scale, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, and waters that comprise the western U.S. public lands system.

As one part of our program, we are advocating for a just and equitable transition away from extraction-based land management systems. In New Mexico, we are holding the oil and gas industry accountable to its duty to clean up inactive and abandoned wells. On behalf of community partners, we are also addressing the environmental and economic impacts of coal-fired power plant retirement. We are focused on affected communities, with people at the forefront of our efforts.

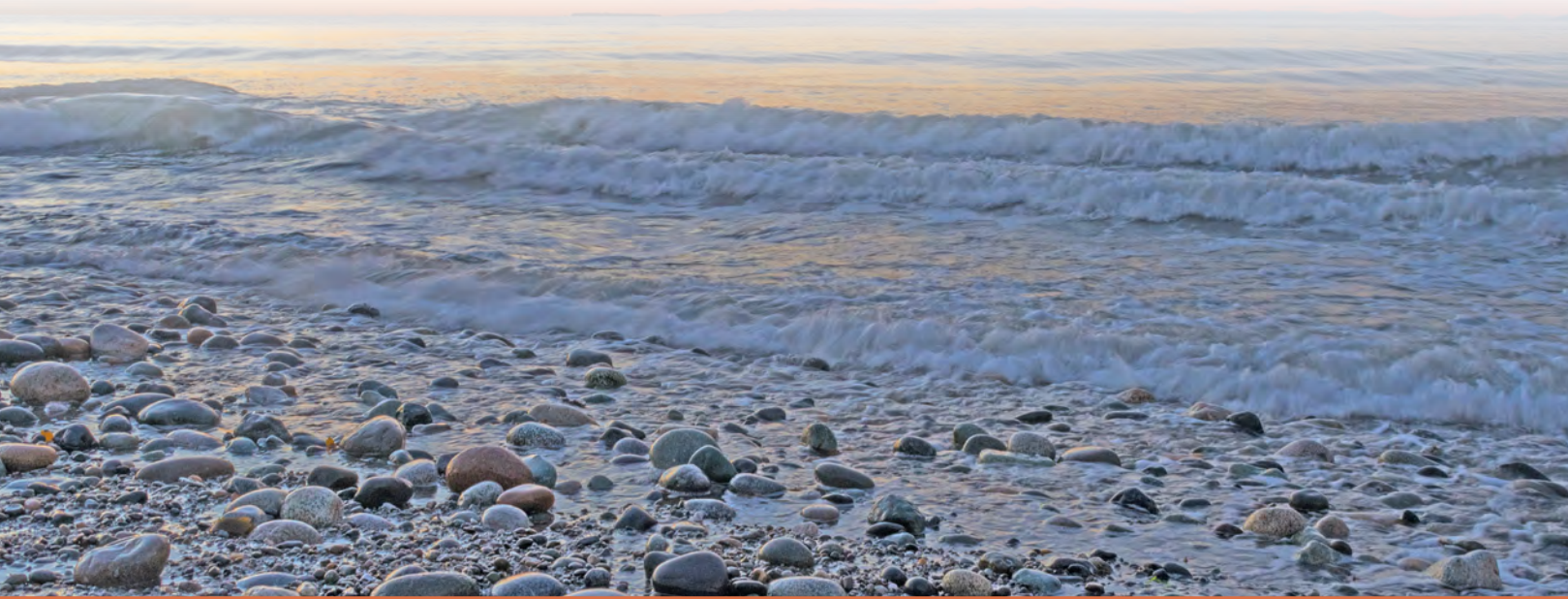




## WATER

Clean water is a life necessity, and we are taking action to force Washington state to address toxic pollution in Puget Sound. These water quality problems are harming salmon, orcas, other marine life, and communities of Puget Sound.

In New Mexico, 95% of the state's rivers and streams, and 88% of its wetlands, are threatened by the U.S. Supreme Court's evisceration of the Clean Water Act. We are advocating for the state to create its own safety net of water protections. This would include safer water quality standards to reduce cancer risk, protection of people from despoiled oil and gas wastewater, and new protections for the state's wetlands and streams.



## WILDLIFE

Wildlife provide an outsized, positive effect on public lands and the broader ecosystems to which they belong. It's why we focus our advocacy on protecting wildlife as well as their habitats. With grizzly bears threatened with extinction, we are taking a strategic, multi-faceted approach across the western U.S. to help them recover and thrive in the wild. In Montana, we are using litigation to end the killing of grizzly bears by trains, challenging a livestock grazing plan in grizzly recovery zones, and fighting to rein in Wildlife Services' predator-killing program, currently authorized to kill or remove grizzly bears in recovery zones. We are also challenging the U.S. Forest Service's policy allowing the use of bait to hunt in national forests, a terrible practice that lures grizzly bears into a killing zone for hunters who mistake the grizzly for black bears.

In the Pacific Northwest, we are engaged in state policies and the legislature to support wolf recovery across their historical range in the region. We are also advocating for the removal of Murphy Dam which would restore unimpeded access for coho salmon, Chinook salmon, and steelhead trout to roughly 100 river miles in Oregon's Rogue River Basin. We are also working in California's Shasta River watershed to protect threatened southern Oregon/northern California coho salmon and in Oregon's Willamette River Basin to restore wild winter steelhead trout.



## CLIMATE

We are challenging more than 4,000 federal permits to drill in two major oil and gas producing regions in New Mexico and Wyoming. These fracking permits risk environmental and climate justice harms, endangered species, and more. This fight has proven difficult, requiring us—before we get to the merits—to appeal an interim court decision shutting the courthouse door to our clients. If left unchallenged, this decision would weaken the public's ability to bring large-scale challenges to fossil fuel permits. You can count on us to defend climate justice and communities' rights..

Last year, our attorneys achieved a huge, hard-fought victory in the landmark *Held v. Montana* case, ensuring a safer climate future for the state on behalf of 16 young people. The state government is now appealing our win to the state supreme court. We will fiercely defend our clients' constitutional rights and protect the climate. We are also building off that case to create opportunities to hold other state and local governments accountable to the law.



## LAND

In Oregon, we are challenging one of the largest logging proposals on public lands in decades, affecting forests that are home to northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and Oregon coast coho salmon (all listed species under the federal Endangered Species Act). The Bureau of Land Management has purposely obscured details surrounding this massive logging project from public review. Our team is working with local partners to protect these important forests.

Our attorneys are taking a stand against the nation's largest private landowner, Sierra Pacific Industries, over its plan to log much of its 1.5 million acres in Northern California and the Sierra Nevada. Most of these lands are occupied by northern spotted owls or California spotted owls, and the approved logging plan allows for the harm or killing of more than 750 owls during the 50-year permit term. We are fighting in court for more rigorous protective standards for these forests. A win would directly impact forest health and the future viability of these imperiled owls.



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120 Shelton McMurphey Blvd.  
Suite 340  
Eugene, OR 97401

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We use the power of the law to foster thriving, resilient western U.S. lands, waters, wildlife, and communities in the face of a changing climate.

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## REINTRODUCING WOLVES IN COLORADO

Our team used the power of the law to defend wolf reintroduction, and thanks to our efforts, livestock groups failed to block the state from releasing 10 wolves into the wilds of Colorado in late December. Our legal intervention made all the difference.

As wolves get back onto the land, we will continue to advocate for strong legal and policy measures to support their reintroduction. Proper management of wolves and their habitat across the western U.S. is essential for this apex animal to thrive in the wild once again.

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UPCOMING CASES  
INSIDE >>**

