



VICTORY RESTORING CLEAN WATER ACT PROTECTIONS

When the Supreme court gutted the Clean Water Act, up to 95% of New Mexico's waters lost federal protections. Read about how we helped create a new state law to restore clean water protections.

> Victory for forests

> Climate justice and resilience

> Wins for grizzly bears

> Clean water wins

> Protecting owls, salmon, and beavers

> Defending enviro laws

DEFENDING ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND CRAFTING NEXT-GEN POLICIES

Bedrock environmental laws safeguard our climate, conserve public lands, wildlife, free-flowing rivers, and shield communities from pollution. Yet these laws now face great peril from the Trump administration, which is glibly wielding a deregulatory chainsaw with no care for the West's natural heritage. Seventy-two percent of Western voters want their political leaders to prioritize conservation over exploitation of public lands for fossil fuels, according to Colorado College's 2025 State of the Rockies survey. Channeling this support, we are standing tall against these attacks, leveraging every legal tool we have at our disposal.

But we're not just playing defense against the Trump administration. We're actively crafting next generation environmental laws and policies, in particular at the state level, that can take root and further an ecology of kinship with one another and the world around us. This forward-thinking work is essential, recognizing that bedrock environmental laws are living documents that need to be revitalized to address the West's immense challenges and opportunities. This approach—balancing defense with forward-looking action—keeps us steadily trekking towards our vision: a thriving, resilient West, abundant with protected public lands and wildlife, powered by clean energy, and defended by communities rooted in an ethic of conservation.



EMERGENT HORIZONS

To a significant part of America, Trump is not an aberration. He is the culmination of this country's deep, historical roots in corruption, oppression, and oligarchical power.

But his terrible reign is contested by those who embrace the kinship, gratitude, and joy that defines our aspirations as people and a country.

We demand, rightfully, that our political and economic systems serve the collective whole and, in the poetic words of our country's foundational environmental law, the National Environmental Policy Act, "fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations."

In this fraught moment, we must hold the line together against the Trump administration's transgressions to best safeguard the West's lands, waters, wildlife, and communities.

But just this isn't enough.

As the writer and thinker Dougald Hine teaches, we must also "work in the ruins," recognizing that "we stand near the beginning of a process that will take a thousand years, because that is how long it will be before the old growth forests have returned, how long it takes for the mother trees to grow back."

These words infuse us with a sense of possibility and, dare we say, hope. At the Western Environmental Law Center, we have chosen to embrace that possibility and hope with *Emergent Horizons*—a new, long-range, strategic effort to ensure that we not only fight, but fight with purpose.

With *Emergent Horizons*, we want to walk, step by step, to reach a future where rivers run wild, wildlife roams free, and the mother trees provide each of us with shade, belonging, and the truth that *we are not alone* on this glorious Earth.

Walk with us.

In Kinship,

Erik Schlenker-Goodrich
Executive Director

Sristi Kamal, Ph.D.
Deputy Director





VICTORY RESTORING CLEAN WATER PROTECTIONS IN NEW MEXICO

State-level advocacy remains a rich arena for progress. In New Mexico, we are celebrating a victory that restored clean water protections removed by a 2023 U.S. Supreme Court decision gutting the Clean Water Act.

That decision left up to 95% of New Mexico's waterways vulnerable to pollution for the first time in over 50 years. The anticipated harm to New Mexico was so grave, American Rivers identified ALL of New Mexico's waters as the "most endangered river" nationwide in 2024.

Thankfully, Senate Bill 21 has created a durable legal framework to protect clean water across New Mexico.

This April, Gov. Lujan Grisham signed the bill, sponsored by Sen. Peter Wirth, Rep. Kristina Ortez, and Sen. Bobby Gonzales, into law.

Soon, the New Mexico Environment Department will assume control over the federal discharge permitting system, shielding the state against

the Trump administration's hostility to environmental protection.

This new law will empower the state to restore the protections for New Mexico's precious water resources eliminated by the Supreme Court's problematic 2023 decision.

Moving legislation of this kind is never easy. But with our partners, we kept the bill on track through a rigorous committee schedule, working doggedly to create this urgently needed state clean water program.

Throughout the fight to secure this legislation we worked constructively to build support while fighting off hostile amendments, including one that would have reduced water quality protections for Tribal waters. With the invaluable support of Indigenous allies, we got a clean version of the bill through the legislature and signed into law.

We are working to quickly create implementation rules ensuring New Mexico's waters enjoy the strongest protections possible.



THE ASSAULT ON THE WEST AND WHAT WE'RE DOING ABOUT IT

Each day, we witness new Trump administration attacks on public lands, wildlife, waters, and communities. It is exhausting, it is tragic, and we are fighting back.

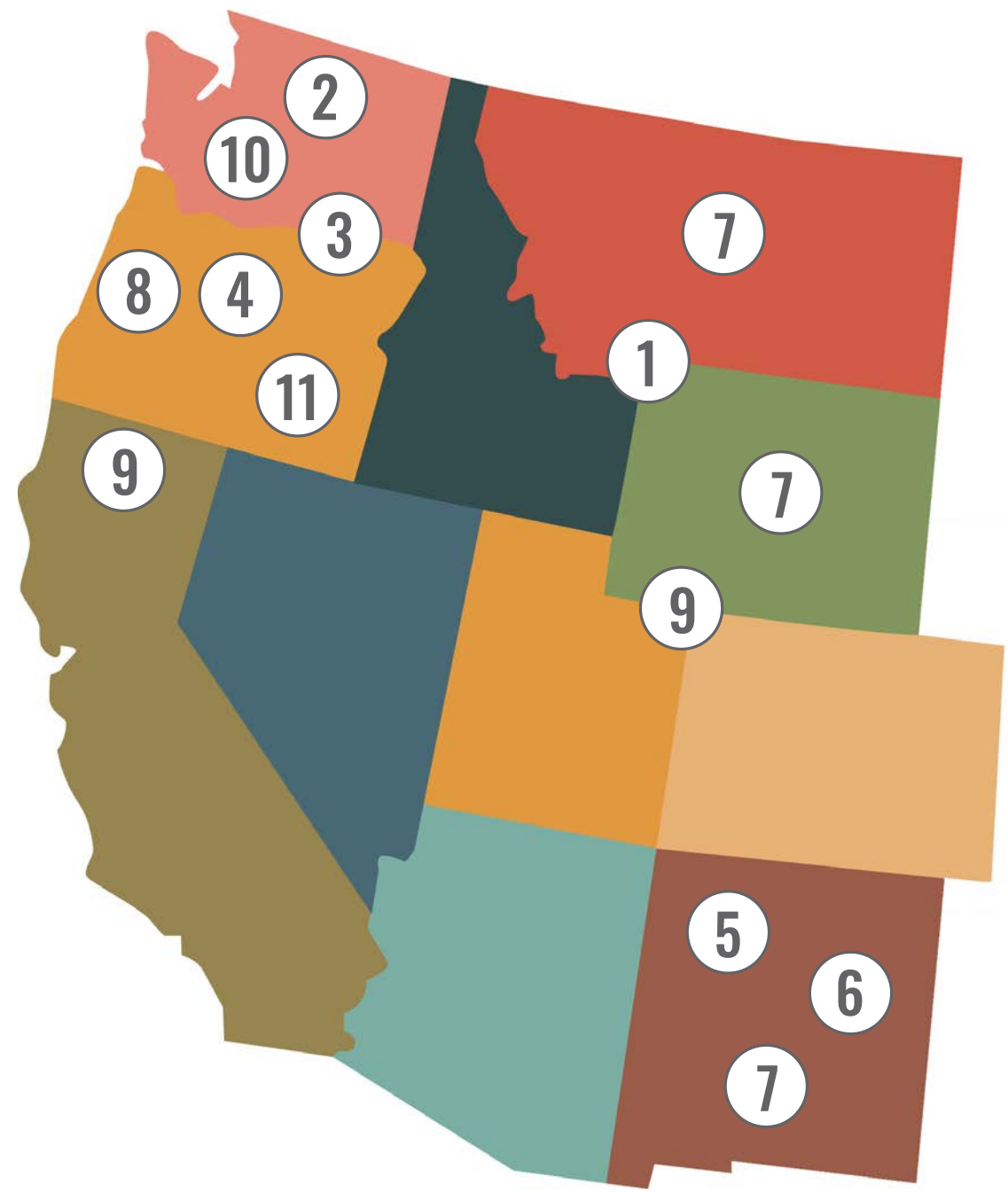
On the public lands front, the administration plans to rescind President Biden's Public Lands Rule, putting these lands' integrity—and all the values they hold, from clean air and water to wildlife habitat—at risk. We led a coalition of 30 groups that petitioned for the Public Lands Rule and we will lead opposition and resistance to its undoing.

The Trump administration is also targeting place-based protections. It came as a relief when Interior Sec. Haaland protected the area within a 10-mile radius of the Chaco Culture National Historical Park from new drilling. President Trump, however, is following through on a Project 2025 action item to reverse that decision. We are working to maintain protections of these sacred lands and are hopeful that the New Mexico congressional delegation's legislation

to codify those protections will achieve permanent protection. Not content with weakening public lands protections, the Trump administration is also attempting to redefine the Endangered Species Act's prohibition against "harm" to weaken protections in designated critical habitat. This would allow logging, drilling, and building antithetical to the recovery of these imperiled wildlife. This wrongheaded move *will* be challenged.

The Trump administration is attacking the West's public lands and wildlife—and unraveling the federal agencies charged with their protection. Sec. Burgum, for example, has ceded control of the Department of the Interior to Elon Musk's "Department of Government Efficiency." We anticipate sweeping cuts to staff and resources for the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs, all housed in Interior. For us, this is a moment to stand with our dedicated civil servants and to plan for rebuilding once the Trump administration is gone.

WE DEFEND THE WEST



- | | |
|--|--|
| 6 Win for clean water protections, p. 2 | 9 Protecting owls from logging in CA, p. 7 |
| 7 Climate justice and resilience, p. 6 | 10 Protecting salmon and trout in WA, p. 7 |
| 8 Win protecting forests in Oregon, p. 7 | 11 Environmental protections in OR, back |

- 1 VICTORY FOR YELLOWSTONE GRIZZLY BEARS**
In a preliminary finding, a court concluded the Forest Service violated the law when it authorized expanded livestock grazing on six allotments in Montana’s Absaroka Mountains, just north of Yellowstone National Park. Several of the allotments are in grizzly recovery zones and within an important connectivity area for grizzlies moving north out of Yellowstone. The court recommended requiring the agency to prepare a more robust environmental analysis. Until then, grazing here will not increase—a victory for Yellowstone’s grizzly bears.
- 2 VICTORY FOR CLEAN WATER IN WASHINGTON STATE**
This spring, we won our challenge to Washington state’s pollution discharge permits for industrial dairy operations, called concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). These enormous dairies cause nutrient, bacteria, and other pollution in Washington’s waterways and aquifers, threatening public health and the environment. Practices and technologies to control this pollution are available and affordable. The state Department of Ecology must now rewrite these permits to better protect water and public health.
- 3 MIXED RESULTS IN 2024 PACIFIC NORTHWEST WOLF SURVEYS**
Two Pacific Northwest states released their annual wolf counts for 2024. In Oregon, wolf populations increased 14%, while in Washington, wolves fell by 9.4%. We are cautiously optimistic about Oregon’s increase. Threats such as poaching and wolf killings in response to wolf-livestock conflicts persist as the main threats to recovery. Oregon’s increased wolf numbers and reduced conflict cases demonstrate that a growing wolf population does not increase conflict events, especially when coexistence tools and strategies are used.
- 4 BUILDING ON BEAVER PROTECTIONS IN OREGON**
In 2023, we helped pass Oregon’s “beaver believer bill” to reduce lethal beaver management on private lands. But there is more to do. Over 100,000 miles of Oregon’s waterways are deemed impaired from pollution, sedimentation, and/or high water temperatures. Oregon is required to restore these waterways, which can be costly. Fortunately, beavers can help do it for free. We are working to pass a bill to close beaver hunting and trapping in impaired waterways on public lands.
- 5 BANNING FRACKING WASTEWATER DISCHARGE IN NEW MEXICO**
We are participating in an important rulemaking in New Mexico to ban the discharge of toxic fracking wastewater to surface and ground water. The fossil fuel industry creates over 60 million gallons of this toxic soup daily, containing over 1,000 known and unknown chemicals. There are no water quality standards for many if not most of these, and no proven treatments to remove pollution. Public and environmental safety depends on banning all “produced water” discharges.

CLIMATE JUSTICE



CHALLENGING OIL AND GAS DRILLING IN NEW MEXICO AND WYOMING

We are in court to overturn the Bureau of Land Management's approval of over 4,000 oil and gas fracking permits in New Mexico's Permian Basin and Wyoming's Powder River Basin. Our case challenges 70% of oil and gas drilling permits approved by the BLM during President Biden's first year in office. The agency failed to take a hard look at greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts or even consider climate justice for overburdened communities. It also failed to consider fracking's harmful effects on over 100 climate-threatened wildlife species and their critical habitat.

INVESTING MILLIONS IN CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN NEW MEXICO

This year the New Mexico legislature created two excellent climate investment funds to help address the climate crisis. The Community Benefit Fund will invest \$210 million in communities disproportionately affected by climate change, facilitating worker retraining, renewable projects, energy efficiency, and pollution control. The \$13.5 million Innovation in State Government Fund will train workers in clean energy fields, reduce state government reliance on fossil fuels, and enable agencies to cut climate pollution and promote clean energy initiatives. WELC supported these funds and is eager to help them blossom.

HOLDING MONTANA ACCOUNTABLE ON CLIMATE

In the wake of our historic youth climate victory, we are gearing up to fight efforts to weaken environmental analysis. Instead of complying with the Montana constitution, legislators have attempted to circumvent this win by passing laws to try to limit agencies' consideration and disclosure of climate impacts in fossil fuel permitting decisions and weaken air quality regulations. Montana's legislature also passed bills attempting to weaken water quality standards, undermine public interest litigation, and limit access to justice. We stand ready to challenge these laws and defend our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment.

WILDLANDS & WILDLIFE



WIN PROTECTING CRITICAL FORESTS IN OREGON

The Bureau of Land Management targeted an expanse of mature forest stretching west of Eugene, Oregon, into the Coast Range for a decade of continuous logging. When the agency told the public it would promote old-growth characteristics through a series of timber sales in areas reserved for imperiled forest dwellers and riparian ecosystems—without considering the many ways this might do more harm than good—we sued. And this spring, we won, ensuring the Bureau will do its homework before tampering with this sensitive forest ecosystem.

PROTECTING SPOTTED OWLS FROM LOGGING IN CALIFORNIA

We're fighting two 50-year permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that allow logging companies to harm hundreds of threatened spotted owls on over 700,000 acres of private, northern California forestland. Briefing concludes this May in our case challenging Sierra Pacific Industries' permit, and we recently brought another case challenging a similar permit held by Green Diamond Resource Company. With the species at imminent risk of extinction, we won't let the Service consign such wide swaths of the spotted owl's forest home to another half-century of clearcutting.

NEW CASE TO PROTECT SALMON AND STEELHEAD IN WASHINGTON

We are representing the Cowlitz Indian Tribe and The Conservation Angler in a case challenging Tacoma Power over its failure to provide safe and effective downstream passage for threatened salmon and steelhead past three Cowlitz River dams. The utility company is required to achieve "95% survival or at least 75% with the best available technology" for fish migrating downstream after spawning. After years of delay, the utility company reported that from 2017-2023, average fish passage rates were only between 55% and 64%, a clear violation of the Endangered Species Act.



REMEMBERING DAVID MATTSON (1954-2025) BY WELC'S MATT BISHOP

They say you die twice: Once when they bury you in the ground, and again the last time someone mentions your name. If true, the life and work of our friend Dr. David Mattson will endure for generations to come.

David was one of the world's preeminent grizzly bear experts. We can't overstate his contributions to our efforts to protect and recover grizzlies. He helped us restore protections for Yellowstone grizzlies and thwart a state trophy hunt with a scientific, digestible, and forceful expert declaration on which the court relied heavily.

More recently, he helped us secure victories for grizzly bears over predator control in Montana, and against expanded grazing in Montana's Paradise Valley (pg. 4). David was a true academic and the level of effort, detail, and precision he put into his work was inspiring and frankly, a bit intimidating. But what set David apart was his unique combination of high intellect and immense generosity.

He was always available to assist with a case. He was willing to take the extra call, meet in person, or respond to an annoying follow-up email from an attorney struggling to understand a concept. This is because we shared the same goal: To ensure we got the science right on what grizzlies need to survive and recover.

These are troubling and uncertain times. But in the context of grizzlies, we know what's coming: Efforts to delist the species and destroy the little remaining secure habitat grizzlies need to roam and thrive.

David left a detailed road map for what needs to happen and what needs to change if we want to truly recover this magnificent species. This road map tells us where we need to go and how best to get there.

We will continue to rely on David and his life's work for many years.

His legacy lives on.

BECOME A KEYSTONE PARTNER MONTHLY DONOR

All the cases, advocacy, and wins highlighted in this newsletter are made possible by our generous supporters. Your gifts allow us to fight in court to defend the West.

Just as keystone species play a critical role in maintaining the structure of an ecological community, WELC's Keystone Partner Monthly Donors play a critical role in the protection of the western U.S.

Sign up to be a monthly donor and it's a win-win. You save time with monthly automatic donations, and you provide us with consistent, reliable support year-round. Now, more than ever, we need steady resources so we can use the power of the law to foster thriving, resilient Western lands, waters, wildlife, and communities in the face of a changing climate.

Become a Keystone Partner at westernlaw.org/donatemonthly

You can also contact Jenna Kloeppel at jennak@westernlaw.org or 575-305-3993 to join or learn more. You can cancel or change your monthly donation at any time, and your entire donation to WELC is tax deductible as a charitable contribution as allowed by law. Please become a monthly donor today!

YOUR SUPPORT EMPOWERS WELC TO DEFEND THE WEST—THANK YOU!





Western Environmental Law Center
120 Shelton McMurphey Blvd.
Suite 340
Eugene, OR 97401

Oregon | Washington | New Mexico | Montana | Colorado

NonProfit Org
US Postage
PAID
Eugene, OR
Permit No. 17

We are a nonprofit, public-interest environmental law center.
We use the power of the law to foster thriving, resilient
western lands, waters, wildlife, and communities in the face
of a changing climate.

WESTERNLAW.ORG



Printed on 100% post-consumer paper with soy inks.

Photo Credits: Cover by Jim O'Donnell, Page 2 by Tannis Fox. Others
© iStockPhoto.com. Inside cover/kapulya, Page 3/DVilfer and /Irina
Karpinchik, 4/Alliya23, 6/Bobbushphoto, 7/Nick Bossenbroek, 9/
RomanKhomlyak, back/bradleyhebdon, envelope/Fly View Productions.

FIGHTING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS IN OREGON

We are deeply involved in the 2025 Oregon legislative session. We are advocating for a 1% increase in the transient lodging tax to fund the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to conserve threatened species and habitats. We're also advocating for new funding for wildlife crossings, which 75% of Oregonians support. Plus, we're fighting to stop a bad bill to increase livestock loss payouts for wolf predation by up to five times the market rate, likely a ploy to bankrupt a fund for coexistence measures. You can count on WELC to defend the West.

