

We are in an accelerating moment of change, powered by a collision of political, social, economic, and ecological crises. The seemingly steady path of the United States is gone. Now, we are in an intensely contested space, where many new paths are possible. Some dangerous, reckless, and terrible. Some abundant with kinship, gratitude, and joy. Which path (or paths) our country takes is far from certain. But we have the responsibility, agency, and capacity to guide us toward the good.

The Western Environmental Law Center is strong and committed to meeting this moment. Actively “at work in the ruins,” we know existing systems are crumbling. This is why we are rising to embrace something new: Emergent Horizons. With this approach, we envision a kinship-centered system, grounded in the well-being of people and place, and the protection of natural resources for the benefit of all. With your support, we can fight this fight and secure wins that make a difference in the here and now and for the future.

We are pleased to share our 2025 victory report with you. This is a reminder that we have power and that together we will chart a new path to the horizons and rise above the ruins. Thank you for your continued support—especially in this moment.

BEAVERS, WATER, AND OUR CLIMATE PROTECTED

In Oregon, we helped pass the Beaver and Water Quality Bill—a significant victory for beavers, waterways, and our climate. This new bill cements the role of beavers in improving water quality and mitigating climate change by prohibiting hunting and trapping of beavers in impaired waterways on public lands. Together, we protected over 106,000 miles of waterways in Oregon; waters where people recreate and derive their drinking water. This first-of-its-kind policy honors the ecosystem benefits of beavers, a true climate ally.



WINS FOR WATER AND PUBLIC HEALTH

STATE-LEVEL WATER PROTECTIONS

Our team worked with the New Mexico Environment Department and legislators to craft SB 21, a bill to establish a state framework to protect New Mexico's waters from pollution and safeguard communities, wildlife habitat, and the outdoor recreation economy. Our efforts responded to the 2023 Supreme Court decision that devastated the federal Clean Water Act, exposing 95% of New Mexico waters to pollution risk. This year, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed SB 21 into law, restoring critical protections for New Mexico's waters.

BANNING FRACKING WASTEWATER DISCHARGE

Thanks to our intensive involvement, the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission adopted a rule prohibiting the discharge of treated fracking wastewater into New Mexico's ground and surface waters. This waste contains thousands of chemicals, many toxic to human health and the environment. Big Oil is already trying to reverse this state ban on fracking wastewater discharge. We are fiercely engaged to defend the ban to protect New Mexico's waterways and public health.

PROTECTING WATER FROM TOXIC POLLUTION

In response to our steadfast legal advocacy, the Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board ordered the Department of Ecology to—again—rewrite pollution discharge permits for concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) to better protect water resources and public health. The prior permits still failed to control the heavy pollution from these factory farms. Our win will help protect drinking water and ensure public health in the context of a changing climate.

WINS FOR WILDLIFE

WESTERN WOLVES

Our legal team achieved a courtroom victory that makes a significant difference for wolves across the entire West. The court ruled that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service violated the Endangered Species Act when it denied federal protections to wolves in western states. Western wolves, including the currently delisted Northern Rockies wolves, will now be re-evaluated for Endangered Species Act protections and will have another chance of receiving the federal protections they need to recover across the West.

GRIZZLY BEARS

We proved that science—not politics—prevails in grizzly management. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service denied petitions from Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming to eliminate Endangered Species Act protections for grizzly bears. This decision allows grizzlies to keep their federal endangered species protections, affirming a prior WELC win. In another victory, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service created a new habitat conservation plan to prevent grizzlies from being killed by trains in the Northern Continental Divide in Montana. This new plan affects BNSF Railway Company trains on 206 miles of track through grizzly recovery zones.

CANADA LYNX

We secured a legal agreement with the U.S. Forest Service to protect important Canada lynx habitat in the Kettle River Mountains of northeast Washington from a proposed logging project. This logging project would also have impacted three roadless areas, logged 5,980 acres, and thinned 8,106 acres. Thanks to our involvement, the Forest Service will apply conservation measures in more of the Kettle "core" Canada lynx area and preserve the recreational and ecological values there.



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

ENCLOSED: VICTORY REPORT

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: Below by Robin Loznak, courtesy of Our Children's Trust.
Others © iStockPhoto.com. Cover/Brittany Crossman. Inside left
/AndyMagee, /Dean_Fikar, /BDphoto. Inside right /Gerald Corsi, /Gerald
Corsi, JohnPitcher. Envelop /Fly View Productions.

Western Environmental Law Center, Our Children's Trust,
Gregory Law Group, and McGarvey Law received Public
Justice's 2025 Trial Lawyer of the Year Award for their
landmark victory in *Held v. State of Montana*—the first
constitutional climate case brought by youths to go to trial in
the United States. Congratulations, team!

