



Western
Environmental
Law Center

LEGAL DOCKET

We are “at work in the ruins” of U.S. democracy. While this is a provocative assertion, it is difficult to dispute given the collision of political, social, economic, and ecological crises that U.S. institutions and systems have accelerated and failed to remedy.

As a result, bedrock environmental laws have withered, compelling us to seek new paths that lead us away from the ruins of what was to the promise of what can be: A just and thriving U.S. West, abundant with protected and interconnected ecosystems, powered by renewable energy, and cared for by communities brought together in an ecology of kinship.

This effort—which we call **EMERGENT HORIZONS**—is our enduring commitment to serve as a pathfinder for a movement-wide effort to revitalize the domain of environmental law.

Emergent Horizons is premised on the logic of emergence. Emergence embraces the world’s complexity as the basis to repair and harness the relationship between people and the Earth such that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. With this clear-eyed understanding of the opportunity (an emergent but fragile kinship-based system) and challenge (an entrenched but failing extraction-based system) in hand, Emergent Horizons is our guide as we forge ahead.

Our mission remains the same, but our focus on Emergent Horizons will best empower us to work with courage, purpose, and strength as we make steady forward progress in these turbulent times.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP.



EMERGENT HORIZONS

Revitalizing Environmental Law in Service of a Just, Thriving, and Abundant Earth



LANDS AND WATER

Ecological systems have the right to thrive independent of human use and valuation. Put more simply, the world around us is more than just human.

Staying true to our mission, we employ a bioregional approach as the basis of advocacy to compel government action squarely centered on climate, ecological, and community values.

We prioritize legal and policy actions within keystone landscapes across three bioregions—the Pacific Northwest, Northern Rockies, and Southern Rockies/Southwest—to spark national and region-wide change.

By litigating destructive timber sales and creating cutting edge policies that ensure clean water access, we are building ecological resilience. It is through resilience that we best safeguard nature's wildness and create the conditions necessary for humanity to reconnect with the Earth.

WILDLIFE

We believe in the inherent value of wildlife, and the importance of laws and policies that safeguard all species—not just those that are imperiled—as well as the ecological relationships between all animals and the places they call home.

Through wildlife and habitat conservation advocacy, we protect carnivores and the fragile but critical ecosystems they inhabit while strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to address foreseeable climatic and ecological shifts. Legal protections are only as strong as the agencies that implement and enforce them. Our team is therefore also advocating for the reform of federal and state wildlife regulators to protect wildlife consistent with landscape health, integrity, and resilience.

Wolverines depend on snow, beavers mitigate wildfire risk, and salmon live in sacred rivers and streams. Our team is using every legal tool in the toolbox—from legislation and litigation to direct engagement with agencies—to protect the West's interconnected web of life.

CLIMATE

We are dedicated to an ecologically and socially just transition from an economy grounded in extraction to one grounded in reciprocity and respect for ecology and people.

Despite the headwinds, we seek to phase out fossil fuels with an approach that leverages national, regional, and place-based action. This demands rigorous, sustained policy strategies. By holding the line against the Trump regime's erosion of bedrock environmental protections and challenging coal mine permits in Montana, as well as reckless oil and gas development in New Mexico, our advocacy is lighting the path to a climate-secure future.

Looking ahead, we intend to secure federal support to reduce state-level dependency on federal fossil fuel revenue and other extractive industries. We also intend to recover climate damages from fossil fuel companies and use those funds to support public-interest priorities including economic diversification and protecting and restoring ecological systems.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

People and communities must be at the heart of decision-making. It is for this reason that we invest in relationships, building, supporting, and participating in coalitions and strategic partnerships that are rooted in the West's geography of hope.

Our expertise will prove critical to strengthen coalitions and partnerships to counter corporate and entrenched insider power, and to conceive of new systems, institutions, and laws to emerge from the political moment's ruins. This includes bold new environmental laws that account for the lessons we've learned over more than 30 years of work and the imperative to act with imagination. These new laws can then serve as inspiration to rethink and strengthen government capacity to serve the public good, not corporate profits.

It is in this way—by centering people and place—that we can further an ecology of kinship in service of a just, thriving, and abundant Earth.



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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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EMERGENT HORIZONS

It is time for big ideas in service of a just, thriving, and abundant Earth. Our Emergent Horizons campaign seeks nothing less than the revitalization of our country's bedrock environmental laws. Premised on the logic of emergence, we've diagnosed the root causes of the crises we are all living through: Human institutions and systems fixated on extraction and exploitation. We've also identified a solution: An ecology of kinship that reconnects humanity with the world around us.

The importance of Emergent Horizons cannot be overstated. Environmental laws level the playing field against extractive interests and provide people with the opportunity to hold federal and state governments accountable to the public interest. They also compel us to consider the wild array of life—and the ecological systems they form—with which we share the world.

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