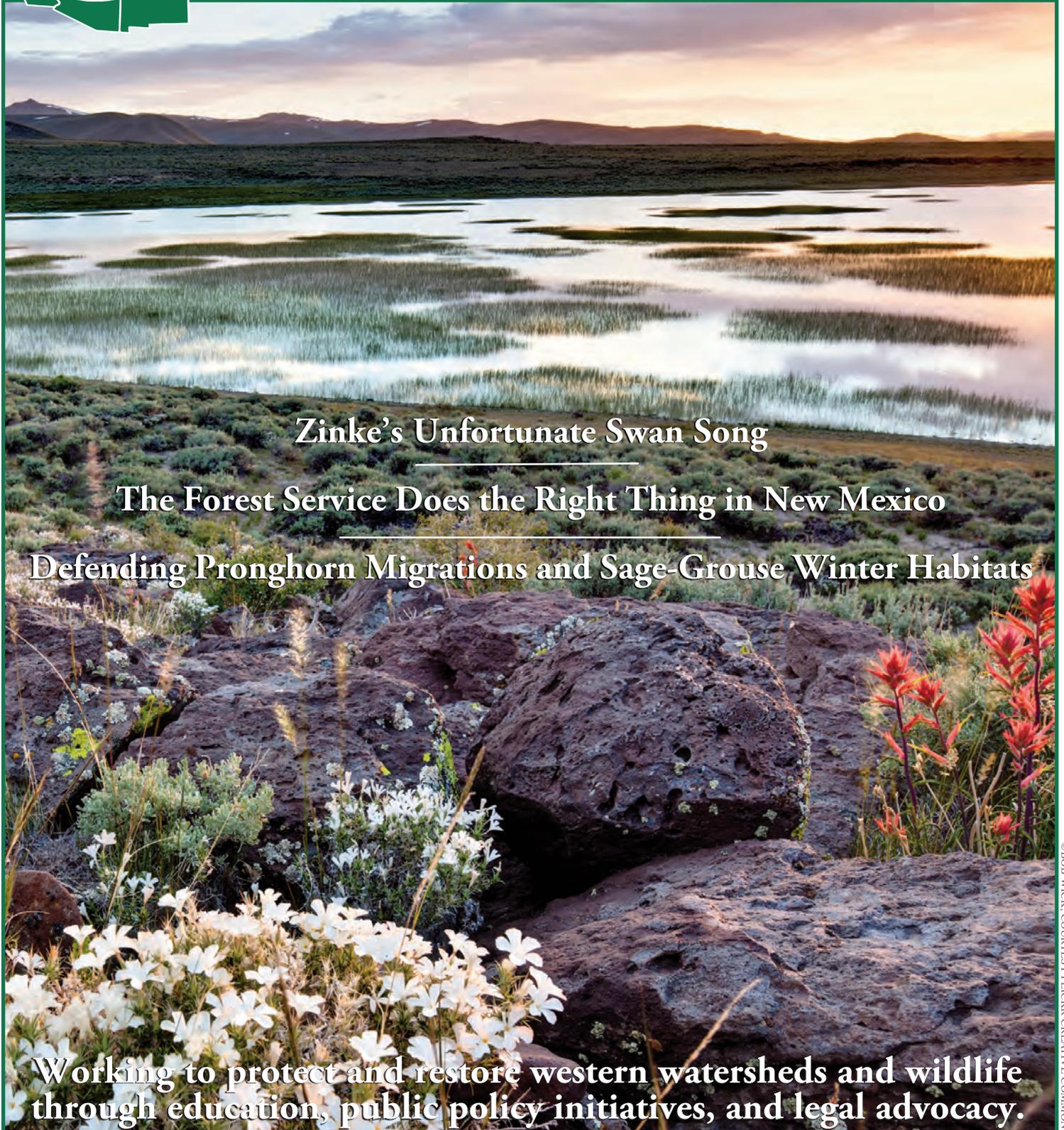




# Western Watersheds Project MESSENGER

Vol. XXVI, No. 1

Spring 2019



**Zinke's Unfortunate Swan Song**

**The Forest Service Does the Right Thing in New Mexico**

**Defending Pronghorn Migrations and Sage-Grouse Winter Habitats**

**Working to protect and restore western watersheds and wildlife through education, public policy initiatives, and legal advocacy.**

[www.westernwatersheds.org](http://www.westernwatersheds.org)

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## Western Watersheds Project Staff

Erik Molvar .....Executive Director  
Greta Anderson .....Deputy Director  
Talasi Brooks .....Staff Attorney  
Melissa Cain .....Bighorn Conservation Director  
Laura Cunningham .....California Director  
Kelly Fuller .....Energy Campaign Coordinator  
Jeremy Greenberg .....Operations Director  
Scott Lake .....Idaho Director  
Josh Osher .....Montana Director & Policy Director  
John Persell .....Staff Attorney  
Jonathan Ratner .....Colorado, Wyoming & Utah Director  
Paul Ruprecht .....Nevada & Oregon Director  
Cyndi Tuell.....Arizona & New Mexico Director  
Laura Welp .....Ecosystems Specialist

## Board of Directors

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## Western Watersheds Project State and Regional Offices

Main Office .....P.O. Box 1770 • Hailey, ID 83333  
(208) 788-2290 • [wwp@westernwatersheds.org](mailto:wwp@westernwatersheds.org)  
Executive Director • [emolvar@westernwatersheds.org](mailto:emolvar@westernwatersheds.org)

Boise .....P.O. Box 2863 • Boise, ID 83701  
(208) 429-1679 • [boise@westernwatersheds.org](mailto:boise@westernwatersheds.org)

Arizona ..... 738 N. 5th Avenue, Suite 200 • Tucson, AZ 85705  
(520) 623-1878 • [arizona@westernwatersheds.org](mailto:arizona@westernwatersheds.org)

California..... P.O. Box 70 • Beatty, NV 89003  
(775) 513-1280 • [california@westernwatersheds.org](mailto:california@westernwatersheds.org)

Wyoming, UT & CO ..... P.O. Box 1160 • Pinedale, WY 82941  
(877) 746-3628 • [wyoming@westernwatersheds.org](mailto:wyoming@westernwatersheds.org)

Montana ..... P.O. Box 1135 • Hamilton, MT 59840  
(406) 830-3099 • [montana@westernwatersheds.org](mailto:montana@westernwatersheds.org)

Nevada ..... P.O. Box 12356 • Reno, NV 89510  
(208) 421-4637 • [nevada@westernwatersheds.org](mailto:nevada@westernwatersheds.org)

WWP's Fax Number is (208) 475-4702



# Western Watersheds Project MESSENGER

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# Complaint filed in Colorado to Protect Bighorn Habitat

By Jonathan Ratner



Like bighorn sheep throughout the West, Colorado's bighorn populations are threatened by diseases transmitted from domestic sheep operations on public lands. Over the past decade, Western Watersheds Project has been working to elevate the profile of this risk and we've been successful in forcing the Forest Service to consider the impacts of domestic livestock permits, resulting in the closure of sheep allotments in

high risk habitats.

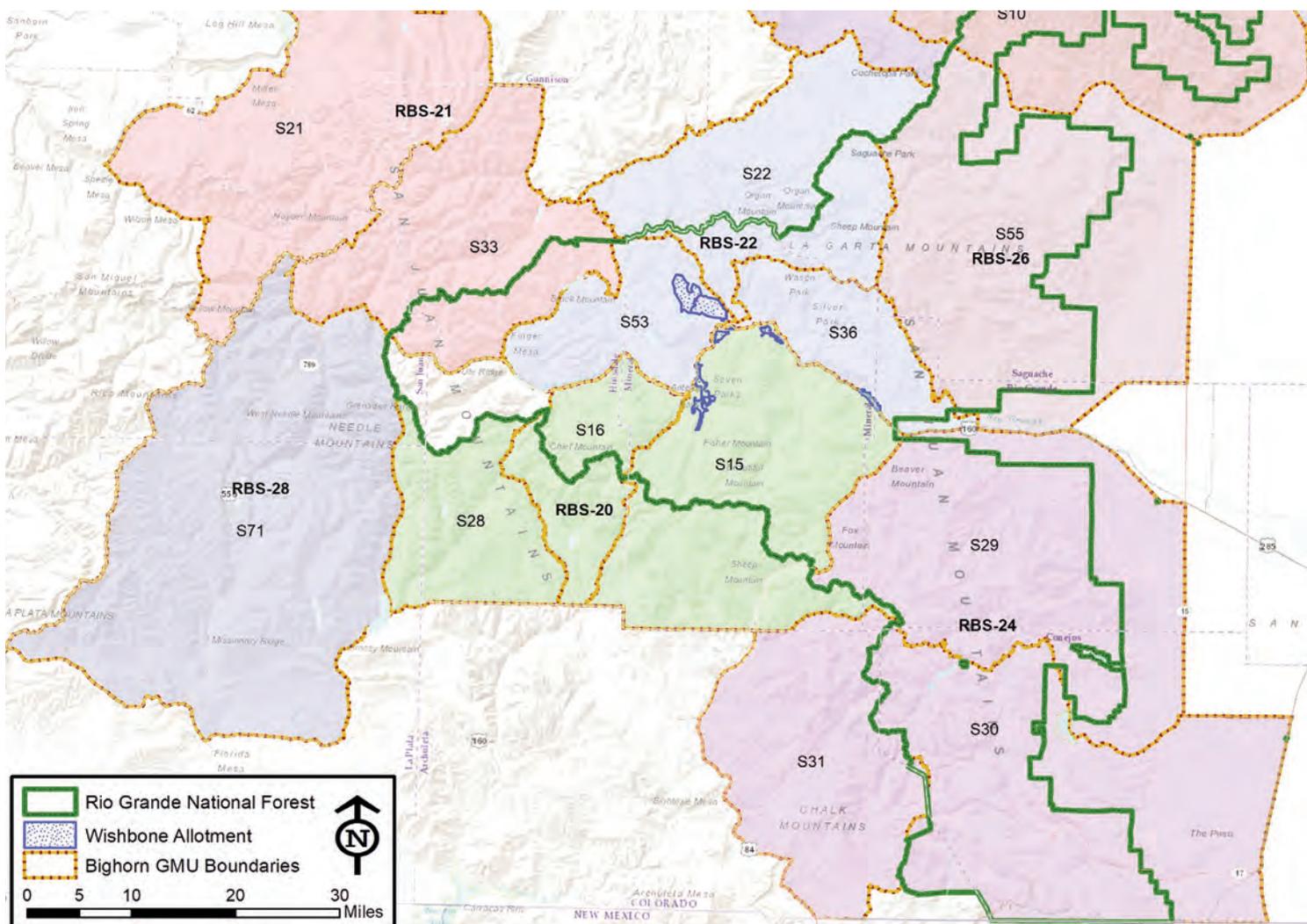
In January, we brought our advocacy to Colorado's courts when we filed a lawsuit over sheep authorizations on the Wishbone allotment in the Rio Grande National Forest. There are four bighorn herds near the allotment: the San Luis Peak, Bellows Creek, Bristol Head and Rock Creek herds. These four herds interact to form the larger Central San Juan bighorn meta-population. There are also three other bighorn populations within easy traveling distance for a bighorn, including the Weminuche population to the south, the Natural Arch/Carnero population to the east, and the San Juan West population to the west. The Forest Service had previously closed an adjacent allotment and vacated three others because of the high risk it posed to bighorn; authorizing sheep use

on the Wishbone is just as risky.

The Forest Service's decision to allow sheep grazing contradicted known science about bighorn sheep and disease, and ignored recent telemetry data that demonstrates the severity of the risk. The agency's flawed analysis and conclusion violated its legal duties to present reliable information to the public and to protect this iconic species. We expect to prevail in court and provide accountability for Colorado's recovering bighorn population.

Western Watersheds Project and WildEarth Guardians are represented in the litigation by Laurie Rule at Advocates for the West and Maya Kane of Durango.

*Jonathan Ratner is WWP's Wyoming, Colorado & Utah Director. He lives in Pinedale, WY.*



The Wishbone allotment surrounded by bighorn population ranges on the Rio Grande National Forest.

# Zinke's Unfortunate Swan Song

By Paul Ruprecht



Former Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke's legacy includes reckless oil and gas development, reversal of national monument designations, gutting sage-grouse plans, ethics scandals, and favors to industry, among many other attacks on the public interest. But one of his final acts will have lasting implications for public lands livestock management: On January 2, 2019—his very last day of office—Zinke ordered the Bureau of Land Management to issue a grazing permit to father and son ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond, the scofflaws who lost their grazing privileges after they were convicted of arson on public lands

The Hammonds are notoriously bad actors, with a history of serious grazing violations; harassment, threats, and intimidation of public servants; and criminal charges that date to the time they began ranching near Frenchglen, Oregon in the 1980s. Over the years, the Hammonds were widely reported to have allowed their cattle to chronically trespass on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, intentionally damaged federal equipment, destroyed fences, and even shot coyotes on the Refuge from their private airplane. They threatened Refuge staff and their families with violence on numerous occasions. Ultimately, Dwight and Steven Hammond were charged with multiple federal crimes stemming from fires they set in 2001 to hide poaching, destroying 139 acres of public lands, and endangering the lives of firefighters with a fire Steven Hammond set in 2006. These crimes required mandatory minimum sentences of five years, but



Fire on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in 2014.

© U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

they were convicted and sentenced to just a few months of prison in 2012.

When the appeals court ordered the full mandatory sentences in 2015, the Hammonds were sent back to prison to serve out their terms. This resentencing is why, in early 2016, anti-government and militia groups, egged on by Ammon and Ryan Bundy and Ryan Payne, descended on Harney County and occupied Malheur NWR for 40 days. Though the Hammonds were not directly involved with the Oregon standoff, their story was inextricably tied to the broader anti-

public lands movement that has gained traction in recent years.

Separate from the criminal proceedings, in 2014, the Hammonds lost their expiring grazing permits for BLM land because the agency's regulations require "a satisfactory record of performance" during a permittee's previous term. Given the Hammonds' arson convictions, the Burns BLM reasonably found that the Hammonds did not meet this requirement, and declined to issue them new permits for four allotments on the west side of the Steens special management

**Join us for Western Watersheds Project's 2019 Board Meeting at the Greenfire Preserve in Central Idaho**

**Save the date for Saturday, May 4th. Please visit [westernwatersheds.org/boardmeeting](http://westernwatersheds.org/boardmeeting) for more information on location and how to RSVP.**

The East Fork of the Salmon River near the Greenfire Preserve

area. Though the Hammonds appealed BLM's decision, and that appeal was still wending its way through the long administrative process, no grazing had been authorized on the allotments since. The government attorneys defended BLM's decision and the four allotments, much of which are sage-grouse habitat, were rested.

In July 2018, President Trump pardoned the Hammonds—a shocking move, since typically convicts must wait for five years before they can even apply for a pardon—and they were flown home to Burns on billionaire Trump-supporter Forrest Lucas' private plane. Secretary Zinke had also proclaimed his support for the Hammonds and lobbied President Trump to have them released from prison, signaling perhaps his future plans to let them graze again.

Then, in fall of 2018, rancher lawyer (and now-Interior Deputy Solicitor for Parks and Wildlife) Karen Budd-Falen filed an amicus brief in the Hammonds' appeal of BLM's decision, arguing that the Hammonds' pardons for their arson convictions also removed the BLM's basis for denying them a grazing permit. It was apparently convincing, even though Budd-Falen had to reach back to the Civil War to find precedent for her argument.

On December 26, 2018, during the government shutdown, Zinke used an obscure regulation to assume jurisdiction over the appeal, taking the process out of the hands of the Administrative Law Judge and letting him have the final say. Only seven days later, on his final day as Secretary of the Interior, Zinke ordered BLM to reissue the Hammonds' permit. BLM issued the Hammonds a permit in February, 2019, which allows them to turn out their cows this spring.

*Paul Ruprecht is WWP's Oregon/Nevada Director. He lives in Reno, Nevada.*

## New faces at WWP

Western Watersheds Project is proud to announce the addition of three new staff members, expanding our ability to tackle more issues in more places.



**John Persell** is our new staff attorney, working primarily in the 10th Circuit states of Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado. John hails from northern Minnesota and grew to love the West during family trips to wild places like Yellowstone and the Black Hills. He graduated from Lewis and Clark Law School in 2009, litigated oil and gas and planning decisions in Wyoming as a staff attorney with Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, and returns to environmental law to ramp up the legal pressure in states that have historically gotten less litigation attention than the Pacific Northwest.

**Talasi Brooks** is also joining us as a staff attorney, focusing on the 9th Circuit States of Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and the Pacific Northwest. She's been working at Advocates for the West for the past four years and she's very familiar with WWP's work, having been lead counsel on several of our cases. She'll continue working on our campaign against Wildlife Services, on sage-grouse issues, and on reforming livestock grazing that threatens stream habitats important to trout and salmon. [Talasi is replacing Kristin Ruether. More on that below]



And finally, **Cyndi Tuell** is our new Arizona/New



Mexico Director. Cyndi is an environmental lawyer who has been working part-time in our Tucson office for over a year, focusing on desert grazing decisions and endangered species issues. She's been so good at her part-time work, we decided to bring her on as staff and let her take the lead in the region. She's a well-known activist in the area and WWP is proud to "power up" by making her part of our staff. (Greta Anderson will continue to serve as Deputy Director and retain involvement in special southwest projects.)

In February, we said farewell to Senior Attorney **Kristin Ruether** who has moved into the field of immigration law. Kristin has been working with refugees in Boise and her professional shift is a boon for that community as she helps people with green cards, getting benefits, and adjusting to the U.S. We'll miss Kristin's deep knowledge of livestock grazing law, but we wish her the best of luck on her new job and journey! Thanks for all your hard work Kristin!



# Trump Undermines Sage-Grouse Protections

By Greta Anderson



The saga of the greater sage-grouse has filled the pages of *Watersheds Messengers* for many years. As our readers know, we've been

advocating for Endangered Species Protection for the bird since the very first petition to list the species was filed in 2002, filing our first lawsuit to secure those protections in 2004, our organization has remained at the forefront of fighting for this iconic western bird. From challenging site-specific grazing decisions, to fighting bad legislation, to raising the species' profile to a national level, Western Watersheds Project is one of the sage-grouse's staunchest allies.

It's also true that we're one of its fiercest lawyers. We've been in and out of court on sage-grouse issues dozens of times. From fighting to get the bird listed to fighting to get the bird on-the-

ground protections, we've kept *Centrocercus urophasianus* front and center in the legal battles for the future of the western landscape. When the Obama Administration ultimately declined to provide Endangered Species Act status to greater sage-grouse in 2015, WWP and our allies and attorneys at Advocates for the West took a hard look at the underlying land use plan amendments supporting this decision and went to court. We challenged the Obama-era plans as inconsistent with the scientific evidence defining the adequate level of protection the birds need from livestock grazing, energy development, noise, vegetation treatments, and other human disturbance. We stood apart from the bigger crowd that was optimistic that the plans would be implemented in the most meaningful ways; WWP could see the loopholes in the language that offered an opportunity for public lands habitat to be destroyed. We were skeptics of what was being touted as "The Grand Bargain," because science.

Our litigation blocked the leasing of sage grouse habitats, and our appeals forced agencies to apply plan protections in the interim.

And sure enough, as soon as the Trump Administration came into office, both the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service started considering how to most efficiently dismantle the few protections the 2015 plans contained. In mid-March, the BLM came out with its final plan revisions and WWP went back to court (represented by Advocates for the West and joined by co-plaintiffs WildEarth Guardians, Center for Biological Diversity, and Prairie Hills Audubon) to fight the Trump Administration's energy dominance agenda and unfettered industry access to our public lands. We filed an amended complaint to add to the lawsuit over the 2015 plans showing that the Trump plans took the earlier protections from "too weak" to "far worse."

Because the new plans are even farther from the science than the old plans, and because the sage-grouse populations continue to decline across the west, we'll keep fighting.

*Greta Anderson is WWP's Deputy Director. She lives in Tucson, AZ.*



*Greater Sage-grouse in flight*

© NOPPADOL PAOTHONG

# The Forest Service Does the Right Thing in New Mexico



By Cyndi Tuell

The animosity of the livestock industry for the Mexican gray wolf is well-known. Having once succeeded in extirpating this native predator from the U.S.

southwest, the ranchers who reign over the public lands of Arizona and New Mexico have opposed the reintroduction and recovery of the lobo with vitriol and threats. Their collective resentment has undermined the recovery program and kept lobo populations at low enough numbers as to have created an inbreeding problem in the wild wolves.

While many ranchers tacitly or verbally approve of extra-legal wolf “takings,” in May 2018, one rancher on the Gila National Forest pleaded guilty to having done so. While Craig Thiessen, permittee of the Canyon del Buey allotment, stopped short of saying he intended to trap and kill the young male lobo in 2015, he did admit that he bludgeoned the 10-month old wolf with a shovel while it was snared in a trap he set on his allotment and that this wolf later died. Though Mr. Thiessen only got a relative slap on the wrist for this violation of the Endangered Species Act -- \$2300 fine and probation -- Western Watersheds Project demanded a much more significant penalty for this egregious action.

In June, Western Watersheds Project led an effort by 30 organizations and many individuals to call upon the Gila National Forest to revoke the public lands grazing permit of this rancher. Under Forest Service regulations, the agency is authorized to, “Cancel or suspend the permit if the permit holder



*Mexican Wolf, Canis lupus baileyi*

©JTSHEARS, COURTESY WIKIMEDIA

is convicted for failing to comply with Federal laws or regulations or State laws relating to protection of air, water, soil and vegetation, fish and wildlife, and other environmental values when exercising the grazing use authorized by the permit.” Our letter laid out not just the facts of Mr. Thiessen’s plea and the federal authority to revoke the Canyon del Buey permit, but also described Mr. Thiessen’s use of federal subsidies, having taken nearly \$400,000 from programs that include depredation and disaster compensation.

After months of pressure from Western Watersheds Project and our allies, and hundreds of social media users who contacted the agency to demand justice, the Forest Service took our advice and issued a decision to cancel the permit. The November 27, 2018 decision was appealed by Mr. Thiessen and his lawyers at the Falen Law Office (known as the Budd-Falen Law Office until Karen Budd Falen had to remove herself upon

her appointment to the Trump Administration’s Deputy Solicitor for Wildlife and Parks in the Department of the Interior), and as of this writing, the appeal is in a closed-door mediation process. Western Watersheds Project firmly stands behind the agency’s original decision and is optimistic that the Forest Service will hold the line against this wolf killer and we continue to watchdog the agency’s process for holding Mr. Thiessen accountable for his actions.

In addition to canceling the grazing permit, Western Watersheds Project is actively pushing the agency to leave the allotment vacant pending a new National Environmental Policy Act analysis. The last environmental assessment of the allotment was conducted in 2004 and the impacts of grazing on these public lands should be scrutinized again before turning out livestock.

*Cyndi Tuell is WWP’s Arizona & New Mexico Director.*

*She lives in Tucson, Arizona*

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*From left to right, Talasi Brooks (WWP), Erik Molvar (WWP), and Michael Saul (Center for Biological Diversity)*



*From left to right, Talasi Brooks (WWP), and Erik Molvar (WWP)*



*From left to right, Paul K...*

# WWP at PIELC!

Watersheds Project participated in the 37th Annual Public Environmental Law Conference (PIELC) in Eugene, Oregon in early March. Four of our staff participated in three panels: “Life + Fracking: recent litigation and best practices for combating the climate impacts” (Kelly Fuller), “Wildlife Conservation and the Future of the Sagebrush Sea” (Erik Molvar and Paul Brookes), and “Organizing to Get the Bull Out of Regenerative Agriculture & Beef: Strategies for Advancing the Sustainable Beef Industry to Advance Environmental and Climate Change Solutions” (Paul Brookes).



*From left to right, Brooks Fahy (Predator Defense), Erik Molvar (WWP), Danielle Clair (Citizen whose dog was killed by M-44), Kelly Nokes (Western Environmental Law Center)*



*Paul Brookes (WWP), Jonathan Gelbard (Conservation Value Solutions), and Chris Wile (Independent Sustainability Consultant)*

## In Memoriam By Jon Marvel



**Barbara Adams Dargatz** died on November 14, 2018, just shy of her 93rd birthday. Originally from Kansas, from 1955 she was a middle school and high school teacher in Boise who moved to Hailey in the early 1970's to be nearer the mountains and later became principal of Wood River Junior High School. She was Idaho Teacher of the

Year in 1974.

Barbara and her late husband Bob were supporters of Idaho Watersheds Project/WWP from the very start in 1993. Barbara was an early Board member of the organization and its very first fundraiser. Barbara was very adept at raising people's understanding about public lands ranching and so was extremely helpful in finding donations for the early days of WWP.

For two decades Barbara and Bob also paid the annual lease fee for WWP's 640-acre Lake Creek state grazing lease which was the very first grazing lease that WWP applied for in 1993 and finally won at auction. That lease was a state school section inholding in the now-retired 65,000 acre Herd Creek allotment adjacent to what is now the Jerry Peak Wilderness on the Challis BLM and Salmon-Challis National Forest Yankee Fork Ranger District. Barbara always referred to it as her and Bob's lease! WWP still holds the lease.

Barbara left a bequest to WWP in her will and asked that her friends and family to contribute in her name.

Barbara and Bob were both critically important supporters of WWP in the early days. I miss them both.



*The Lake Creek lease in central Idaho sponsored by the Dargatzs*



On February 28, 2019 **Lawrence "Larry" McLaud** died in Silver City, New Mexico at the age of 70. Known to his many friends in conservation circles under his self-moniker of "Lorenzo Trout", Larry lived and worked in conservation primarily in north Idaho. He worked for years with Friends of the Clearwater, bringing his economics

background to Forest Watch, and helping lead projects to protect old growth forests and native species. A former forest lookout, Larry often talked about the sacredness of wild places, and the wild Clearwater River Country was one of his favorites. Over the years Larry also worked as the Conservation Director of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council in eastern Oregon and was responsible for north Idaho while working for several years for the Idaho Conservation League. He helped start the Wild Clearwater Coalition and was awarded the Macfarlane-Plank Award for conservation work in the Clearwater County and north Idaho in 2008 by Friends of the Clearwater.



*Larry next to a giant cedar in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness*

After Larry retired to Silver City, he did some field work for WWP in the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Areas. Over the years I spent quite a few days exploring parts of northern Idaho's public lands with Larry and will miss his strong advocacy for wildlife and wildlands.

**Thanks Lorenzo and Barbara for your dedication to conservation and Western Watersheds Project!**

# Defending Pronghorn Migrations and Sage-Grouse Winter Habitats

By Erik Molvar



You may have heard of WWP's lawsuit to challenge oil and gas leasing in sage-grouse habitats, and our initial win to pull a million acres of grouse habitats

off the auction block. This lawsuit now includes a legal challenge of the 3,500-well Normally Pressured Lance drilling project in Wyoming, which threatens the irreplaceable Path of the Pronghorn migration corridor and most of the wintering habitat for one of the nation's largest remaining sage-grouse populations.

This is the first major oil and gas project of the Trump administration, and it affects some prime wildlife habitats. While it incorporates some novel methods (clustering multiple wells on fewer well-sites), the protections for wildlife are sub-par. In priority habitats designated for sage-grouse conservation, sensitive lek sites get buffers of only 0.6 mile, even though 5-mile buffers are needed to encompass key nesting areas and 3.1-



*The Normally Pressured Lance project area has some of the most pristine unindustrialized sage grouse habitats left in the Upper Green River Valley.*

mile buffers are required to protect the breeding and dancing activity at the lek itself.

Winter habitats here are a huge concern, and there was an effort to designate these 'winter concentration areas,' used by virtually the entire population of sage-grouse in the Upper Green River Valley, as priority habitats as well. This was defeated by the oil industry and its allies and so instead, they get only seasonal restrictions, just during the winter, but which allow full-scale industrial development in the exact same places as long as construction and drilling occur during

some other season.

Perhaps most shockingly, the BLM declined to even consider an alternative that would have protected the Path of the Pronghorn, one of the nation's longest land-mammal migrations. This migration corridor runs right through the middle of the proposed drilling project, an area slated for the greatest density of facilities. WWP sought setbacks to protect the migration, but our recommendations – and the science behind them – were ignored. These are the pronghorns that summer in Grand Teton National Park, and if they are unable to complete the migration to their traditional winter ranges, this population may dwindle away to nothing.

Wildlife migrations have become a cause célèbre, with many groups and agencies paying lip service to the need to protect them, but Western Watersheds Project (and our allies Advocates for the West and the Center for Biological Diversity) are actually doing something about them. Stay tuned as we work to protect these invaluable wildlife habitats.

*Erik Molvar is WWP's Executive Director.*

*He lives in Laramie, Wyoming.*



*Pronghorn inside the Normally Pressured Lance drilling project boundaries.*

# Ranchers a Threat to Washington's Wolf Recovery

By Josh Osher



Western Watersheds Project has always been a staunch advocate for the rights of wolves to exist and thrive on federal public lands. It is our perspective that if

grazing permittees cannot figure out how to coexist with wolves, then the privilege of grazing on our public lands should be revoked. Recently, we've been trying to bring this vision to Washington.

Wolves were once common throughout most of Washington but were func-



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*This Togo Pack alpha wolf was outfitted with a radio collar last summer for tracking and was ultimately shot last fall.*

tionally exterminated by the 1930s. Now, as a result of expanding wolf populations in neighboring states, wolves have recol-

onized parts of Washington and it is now estimated that there are at least 122 wolves in 22 known packs. Most of these wolves are in the eastern part of the state with a few documented sightings of individual wolves in the North Cascades.

Though the wolf population appears to be expanding modestly each year, recovery is hampered by the state's management actions to kill wolves after livestock depredations. Unlike nearby Montana where most livestock depredations occur on private land, in Washington, most of these wolf/livestock conflicts are occurring on public lands in the Colville National Forest that are leased for commercial livestock grazing.

Unfortunately, the Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has chosen a path of capitulation to the livestock industry rather than working with the U.S Forest Service to manage grazing in ways that are compatible with expanding wolf populations. In 2013, the state created the Wolf Advisory Group made up primarily of livestock advocates and livestock apologists to guide wolf policy in the state. Using a significant consensus model, which essentially ignored the opinion of wolf advocates,



"Lethal Control" is a documentary about the indiscriminate poisons that U.S.D.A. Wildlife Services uses to kill predators in the name of livestock protection. WWP is teaming up with Predator Defense and filmmaker Jamie Drysdale to bring this important film to venues around the West. Check out the trailer and the screening schedule on our website at: <https://www.westernwatersheds.org/lethal-control/>

WWP is bringing the film to the following Idaho locations:

- Ketchum - May 16th, 7 pm at the Community Library
- Boise - May 17th, 7 pm at the Bishop Barnwell Room, Boise State Student Union Building
- Pocatello - May 18th, 7 pm at the Bengal Theater

the advisory group developed a policy of lethal control as retribution for wolf killings of livestock. Lip service was given to non-lethal measures to prevent predation but the general practice has been to cover for the rancher's ineptitude or unwillingness to effectively implement these measures and approve the killing of wolves.

The vast majority of these wolf killings are associated with the Diamond M Ranch's federal grazing allotments which are located in heavily forested areas with steep and inaccessible terrain. Most infamous for having been the impetus for the state's killing of the Profanity Peak wolf pack in 2016, the Diamond M has been involved in the destruction of 4 wolf packs and the killing of at least 19 wolves since 2012.

If WDFW won't insist on responsible livestock husbandry, Western Watersheds Project will. We are actively working with our regional and local allies in Washington state to hold the Forest Service, grazing permittees, and WDFW accountable to the law and the public by closely monitoring the Colville National Forest's grazing program and the state sponsored killing of wolves. This spring, we sent a letter to Forest Service demanding action against the Diamond M for repeated and willful trespass of livestock on federal lands. Those cows and calves, left out to die by the rancher, became easy prey for wolves who will then be the target of lethal removal by the state for killing livestock.

We won't stand by while public land permittees break the grazing laws and wolves pay with their lives. WWP will be watching to see how the agency reacts to our recent letter and determining the next steps in protecting wolf habitat in Washington.

*Josh Osher is WWP's Montana Director and Policy Director.*

*He lives in Hamilton, Montana*

## Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs)

When planning your IRA withdrawal strategy, you may want to consider making charitable donations through a QCD.

A QCD is a direct transfer of funds from your IRA trustee, payable to a qualified charity. QCDs count toward your required minimum distributions (RMDs) for the year.

The amount of the QCD is limited to the amount of the distribution that would otherwise be included in income. If your IRA includes nondeductible contributions, the distribution is first considered to be paid out of otherwise taxable income.

### QCD Requirements:

- You must be 70½ or older to be eligible to make a QCD.
- QCDs are limited to the amount that would otherwise be taxed as ordinary income. This excludes non-deductible contributions.
- The maximum annual amount that can qualify for a QCD is \$100,000. This applies to the sum of QCDs made to one or more charities in a calendar year. (If, however, you file taxes jointly, your spouse can also make a QCD from his or her own IRA within the same tax year for up to \$100,000.)
- For a QCD to count towards your current year's RMD, the funds must come out of your IRA by your RMD deadline, generally December 31.

Any amount donated above your RMD does not count toward satisfying a future year's RMD.

Funds distributed directly to you, the IRA owner, and which you then give to charity do not qualify as a QCD.

Under certain circumstances, a QCD may be made from a Roth IRA. Roth IRAs are not subject to RMDs during your lifetime, and distributions are generally tax-free. Consult a tax advisor to determine if making a QCD from a Roth is appropriate for your situation.

A QCD is not subject to withholding. State tax rules may vary, so for guidance, consult a tax advisor.

When making a QCD, you must receive the same type of acknowledgment of the donation that you would need to claim a deduction for a charitable contribution.

A tax advisor can help you determine if both your IRA and charity qualify for QCDs.

# The Sheep Station that Will Not Die

By Scott Lake



Western Watersheds Project is once again suing the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station for authorizing livestock grazing in Idaho's Centennial Mountains.

For years, WWP has opposed Sheep Station grazing because of its impacts to imperiled native species, including bighorns sheep, grizzly bears, and greater sage-grouse. In February, WWP and WildEarth Guardians, represented by Advocates for the West, began the latest

chapter in Sheep Station litigation by challenging a 2018 decision by the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to continue operating the Sheep Station and its public lands grazing programs. The decision is based on inadequate analysis, improperly dismisses reasonable alternatives, and relies on out-of-date information.

If you are feeling a bit of *deja vu*, you aren't wrong. WWP has been fighting the Sheep Station for a long time. In 2007 we successfully sued ARS because they had never analyzed the Sheep Station's environmental impacts. After a few revisions and many intervening incidents (see below), the agency finally issued a final decision in 2018. Although conflicts with native wildlife have plagued

the Sheep Station for decades, the 2018 decision continued "historical and ongoing" grazing in and around the Centennials. It ignored many of the changes that occurred during the seven years since scoping, including WWP's successful interim lawsuits that closed some of the Sheep Station's public lands allotments.

In 2013 we sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for issuing a Biological Opinion that allowed livestock grazing on Sheep Station property despite a history of conflict with grizzly bears. The court ordered the USFWS to prepare a new consultation and prohibited some of the Sheep Station's high elevation grazing. In 2014 we sued again over USFWS's revised Biological Opinion. This time the agency agreed to a settlement



*Sheep grazing on Sage-grouse habitat at the Sheep Station near Dubois, Idaho*

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# Western Watersheds Project 2018 Annual Financial Report



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that kept the high-elevation allotments closed until a new environmental analysis could be completed. In the meantime, BLM closed the Bernice Allotment—one of the Sheep Station’s public land leases—because of a high risk of disease transmission from domestic to bighorn sheep. And last year, WWP won another legal victory against the Sheep Station, this time forcing the closure of the Snakey-Kelly allotment on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest.

WWP and its allies are not the only ones who have been critical of the Sheep Station. The federal government itself has repeatedly attempted to close the Sheep Station and move its research to more appropriate locations. In 2014, then Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack proposed closing the Sheep Station, noting that the Sheep Station wastes taxpayer dollars, represents a continuing legal liability, and has outlived its usefulness for research purposes. The Department of Agriculture also proposed closing the Sheep Station in 2018.

In each case Congress—under pressure from the sheep industry—blocked a attempt to close the Sheep Station, scuttling cost-saving plans that would have moved most of the Sheep Station’s operations to an ARS facility in Nebraska. This kind of political strong-arming defies logic. As many inside and outside the government have recognized, the Sheep Station is a huge waste of money and an unnecessary threat to imperiled wildlife species. It is also largely irrelevant to contemporary science. An independent analysis in 2015 concluded that of 144 peer-reviewed studies published by Sheep Station researchers between 2000 and 2015, nearly 75 percent did not require Sheep Station pastures and could have been conducted elsewhere. Only three studies during a 15-year period used data from the high elevation pastures.

Given the Sheep Station’s increasingly evident obsolescence, we hope that the federal government will do the right thing and shut down this incredibly harmful operation. In the meantime, we are pursuing our lawsuit against the Sheep Station’s latest authorization in hopes of protecting native wildlife from the impacts of domestic sheep grazing.

*Scott Lake is WWP’s Idaho Director. He lives in Boise, Idaho.*

## INCOME

Memberships and Major Donors.....	196,300
Grants.....	714,000
Events and Earned Income.....	8,200
Legal Fee Recovery.....	9,400
<b>Total Income.....</b>	<b>\$927,900</b>

## EXPENSES

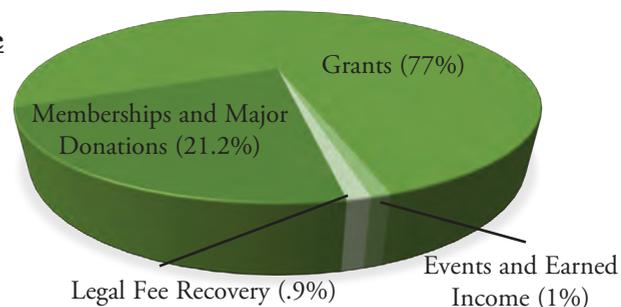
Accounting.....	3,200
Donation Processing.....	3,200
Conferences and Meetings.....	3,800
Contract Services.....	39,700
Employee Benefits.....	57,400
Equipment Rental and Maintenance.....	3,900
Grazing Leases.....	400
Insurance.....	32,100
Legal.....	25,600
Occupancy.....	24,900
Payroll.....	572,700
Payroll Expenses.....	42,600
Postage and Shipping.....	2,900
Printing and Publications.....	25,600
Supplies.....	6,000
Special Events.....	1,800
Telephone.....	6,000
Travel.....	39,500
Website.....	1,000
<b>Total Expenses.....</b>	<b>\$890,000</b>

**2018 Budgeted Expenses.....944,700**

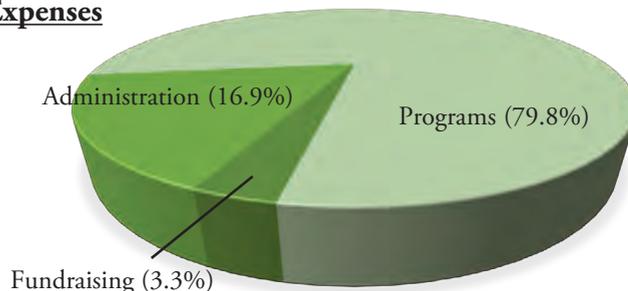
**2019 Budgeted Expenses.....980,050**

\*All figures rounded.

### Income



### Expenses





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### Thank You for Your Continued Support!

Every day the public lands, streams and wildlife throughout the West benefit because of the work done by Western Watersheds Project. The agency management plans we challenge, the allotments we monitor, and the lawsuits we file all help to protect and restore our western public lands.

- **Any size donation is greatly appreciated and makes a difference!** Everything WWP does to influence the restoration of western public lands is based on a vision that western North America may be one of the only places on earth where enough of the native landscape and wildlife still exists to make possible the restoration of a wild natural world.
- **Make a gift of appreciated stock.** Talk to your accountant or financial planner about the potential tax benefits of making this type of donation.
- **A gift through careful estate planning can make a lasting difference for WWP.** A bequest, an arrangement made in a donor's will, is a simple and uncomplicated approach to planned giving. Other methods to facilitate a planned giving donation include: charitable remainder trust, charitable lead trust and gift annuity. It may be wise to talk to your accountant or financial planner to fully understand the potential tax benefits of different giving options.
- **Help others learn about WWP!** Recently, WWP supporters hosted events to help us spread the word about our important work. You can host an event too and WWP will help. We'll supply informational materials, send out email/printed invitations combining your guest list with local WWP supporters, and even have a WWP representative attend a "meet & greet" which can be customized to your area of interest or concern.



The Western Watersheds Project Messenger is printed using vegetable-based inks on carbon neutral, 100% post-consumer waste.

