

Jeremy Vesbach Western Lands Director



As the Western Lands Director at Western Resource Advocates (WRA), Jeremy Vesbach leads a team on a mission to protect at least 50% of the lands in the organization's seven-state region. In tandem with his staff of experts, he identifies smart policy solutions that will allow Westerners to preserve the wild places and wildlife populations that make the region so unique, all in the face of unprecedented growth and climate crises.

With a focus on state-level policy, Vesbach works with coalitions, community groups, and conservation organizations to protect lands through three key drivers: shielding wild lands from development, restoring and safeguarding the health of vital wildlife habitats, and guaranteeing equitable access to public lands for outdoor recreation opportunities.

Having spent his childhood in the rural West, Vesbach has long loved the outdoors. He grew up hunting, fishing, hiking, and more and he intimately understood how much better his life was a result of his time spent in nature. This love of the outdoors cemented his desire to preserve these lands so that they could be passed on to future generations.

Motivated by a passion to protect the West's strongest assets – its wildlife and wild places – Vesbach is determined to continue this critical work. But he doesn't rely solely on that passion to create meaningful movement in the right direction. Deploying the most up-to-date research and data, Vesbach gives voice to public lands and drives change. He was instrumental in the conservation effort to permanently protect the Valle Vidal (Spanish for the Valley of Life) from coalbed methane drilling. The research and solutions he provided helped to ensure that this incredible area stayed undeveloped.

Prior to joining WRA in 2019, Vesbach served as senior field director at the Conservation Lands Foundation, where he directed more than \$1 million in annual grant funding to local community organizations. Among other accomplishments, the group was the first grantor to support the tribal nation-led effort for Bears Ears to become a National Monument. Vesbach also led the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, which he and board volunteers rebuilt from a storied history of being founded in 1914 as the state's first conservation organization. It had nearly fallen apart when Vesbach took the reins as the first executive director in several decades, and it is now known as a powerhouse in the conservation movement. He also played an integral role in protecting the Marquez Wildlife Area in New Mexico after it was nearly sold for private development. Today, thanks to recent public land purchases to expand the area, the Marquez is poised to become one of the largest state wildlife areas in the nation.

Outside of his role at WRA, Vesbach sits on the board of directors for Amigos Bravos, a group working to keep rivers and streams in New Mexico clean, and for the New Mexico Wild Action Fund, a 501(c)4 organization dedicated to advancing policies that protect the state's wilderness, wildlife, and water. He has also served as vice chair of the state game commission and as a state mining commissioner in New Mexico.

Vesbach holds a Bachelor of Science from University of Wisconsin-Madison in Biological Aspects of Conservation (an early conservation biology degree designed by Aldo Leopold). He lives in New Mexico with his wife and two teenage daughters, where they enjoy all things outdoors.

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