

FIELD NOTES

NEWS FROM WESTERN RESOURCE ADVOCATES

Ripple Effect

04 Donors Making Waves

Join us as we reflect on our biggest fundraising year yet and the collective impact of our donors.

10 Powering Progress in Arizona

Learn how we are working to get Arizona's largest utilities on track with emissions reduction targets that align with climate science.

About the Artist

Kate Lindsey captures the power and tranquility of Abiquiu, New Mexico's natural wonder in "Abiquiu Dream." Inspired by the majestic landscapes and vibrant hues of Santa Fe, her art embodies the strength, beauty, and mystery of the environment. @klindsey | klindsey.com



NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Wins Rippling Across the Region

Healthy Rivers

Prohibiting nonfunctional turf to conserve water in Colorado

New legislation in Colorado – Senate Bill 005: Prohibit Landscaping Practices for Water Conservation – **fosters water-wise landscaping** by prohibiting the use of nonfunctional turf, artificial turf, and invasive plant species on commercial, institutional, and industrial sites, as well as parking lots and medians. This measure builds upon the work of WRA in 2021 to establish a state-level fund for the voluntary replacement of water-thirsty grass. By restricting water-intensive grasses on seldom-used spaces, the bill not only conserves a significant amount of water but also diminishes reliance on harmful pesticides and gas-powered lawn equipment.



And it paves the way for native plants and local wildlife, such as **birds and bees, to flourish.**



Western Lands

Securing historic funding for land conservation in New Mexico

After leading the establishment of New Mexico's first dedicated state fund for conservation, the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund, during the 2023 legislative session, WRA set sights on ensuring the fund reached its full potential this year. The Legacy Fund is now poised to provide long-term support for land and water conservation, equitable access to outdoor recreation, and agricultural projects statewide. With the inaugural grants awarded this summer, **these critical funds will improve lives and lands across New Mexico for generations to come.**



We exceeded expectations by securing a historic **\$300 million investment.**

Clean Energy

Electrifying medium- and heavy-duty vehicles in Utah

Building on successes in Nevada in 2023, WRA pursued similar legislation at the 2024 Utah Legislature with the Clean Truck Incentive Program – a bill to establish a grant program encouraging the adoption of zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty (MHD) vehicles among Utah's business and public fleets to help combat climate change and enhance air quality.

When faced with implementation concerns, WRA brokered a deal directly with the Utah Department of Transportation and the Division of Air Quality to **allocate a portion of the millions of dollars the state receives from the federally funded Carbon Reduction Program to support MHD incentives.**

This funding agreement is still subject to approval by the Utah Transportation Commission, but with expedited implementation likely, Utah residents should see tangible benefits in the near future.



Donors Making Waves

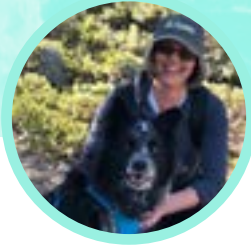
In nature, water harnesses energy and manifests in powerful waves that can carve majestic canyons, alter coastlines, reshape landscapes, and influence weather patterns. Similarly, WRA's

ability to drive state-level action is powered by many donors coming together to make an impact. While gifts vary in magnitude, each embodies a shared aspiration to be part of something greater.



DARCY MOREL

Most of Morel's favorite memories are from time spent outdoors with family.



CRYSTAL PARRISH

Parrish enjoys hiking in the Lost Sierra region of her home state, Nevada.



ELIZABETH O'CONNELL

One reason O'Connell feels lucky to live in the West is the variety of landscapes to explore.

Among the many achievements WRA celebrated in 2023 was a record-breaking fundraising year. **Raising \$18 million in a single year exponentially expands our capacity in future years to address complex conservation and environmental issues.** Our scope of work nearly tripled between 2017 and 2023, which means we have more experts on the ground developing and scaling winning solutions across the West. This growth also sets the development team up to evolve and maximize its capacity and outreach.

In 2024, WRA hired Darcy Morel as the development director and promoted Elizabeth O'Connell to associate director of donor relations and Crystal Parrish to associate director of foundation relations. Morel empowers the development team with needed strategy and tools, while O'Connell oversees individual donor outreach and Parrish manages ongoing and new partnerships with foundations. O'Connell and Parrish have a combined eight years of service to WRA and have built relationships that are fundamental to our ongoing success.

Donors are also fueling other trends that make WRA even more effective. One meaningful change we've seen has been the diversification of our sources of support. Funding from individuals,

including donor-advised funds and private and family foundations, **increased from 15% in 2017 to 58% in 2023.** The greater the number of supporters behind WRA, the stronger our collective impact becomes. "This transformation provides the financial sustainability and resilience needed to tackle the climate crisis," shares Morel.

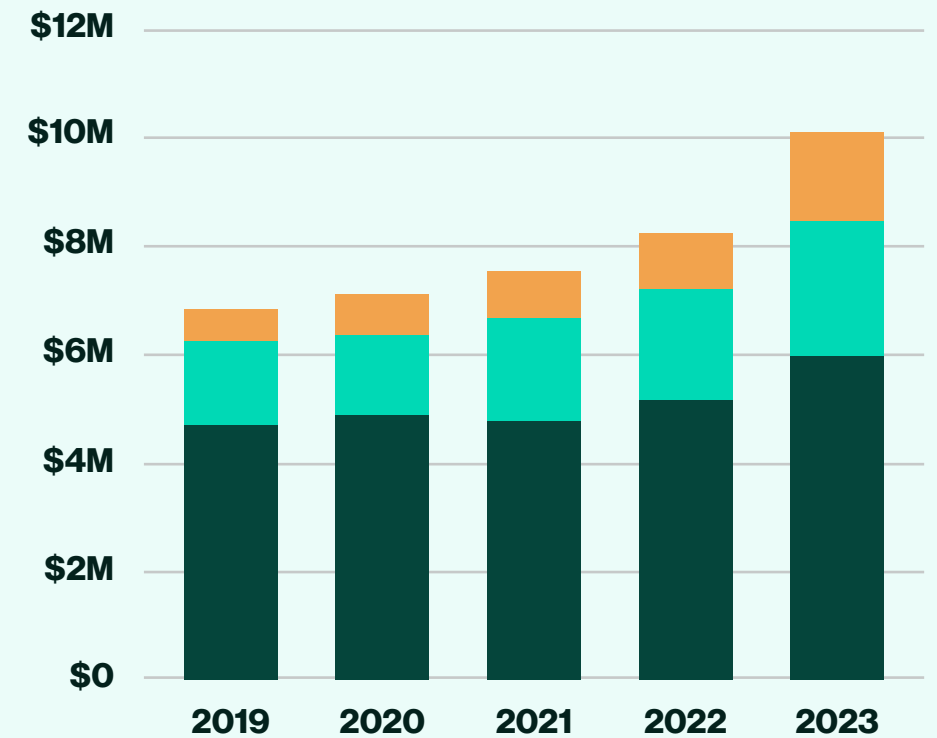
Foundations continue to be instrumental to WRA's work, **providing \$4.4 million in support in 2023.** In 2024, a new partnership with a foundation that funds clean energy work nationally is expanding WRA's power sector, markets, and building decarbonization efforts across our region – key strategies in the transition to a zero-emission future.

Early last year, a new funder to WRA made a seven-figure multi-year grant toward the strategic plan *For Home, For Nature*. **"They were clearly inspired by our vision for the future and plan to achieve it, and trusted WRA as a respected partner to invest in,"** Parrish reflects.

Larger Budget, More Impact

Increased donor support means more WRA experts on the ground developing and scaling winning solutions across the West. The chart represents WRA's budget growth in recent years. It reflects the actual spending for each of the three policy areas, rather than fundraising efforts.

- WESTERN LANDS
- HEALTHY RIVERS
- CLEAN ENERGY



Another shift comes from a larger percentage of donations made without restrictions, offering financial flexibility and stability. Unrestricted gifts position WRA to be nimble and responsive to the dynamic nature of our work. By supporting organization-wide efforts, such as the strategic plan, donors can amplify their impact. For example, expanded funding allowed WRA to grow its equity, government affairs, and marketing and communications teams, whose expertise complemented our lands policy development to fuel achievements like this year's historic investment in the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund in New Mexico.

More multi-year commitments are driving the sophisticated policy needed to solve complicated conservation problems through sustained support. Often, WRA's strategies require foresight and patience that take time, but that result in compounded success. The 2024 legislation prohibiting nonfunctional turf in Colorado built upon a bill WRA passed in 2021, and illustrates the cumulative effect of policy change. Donors recognize the strength in leveraging these gifts to multiply wins across the West.

For Home, For Nature accelerates WRA's efforts at a pace and scale aligned with what our challenges call for – and donors are scaling their investments as a result. A donor made a **\$4.5 million multi-year pledge in support of the plan last year, the largest gift WRA has received.**

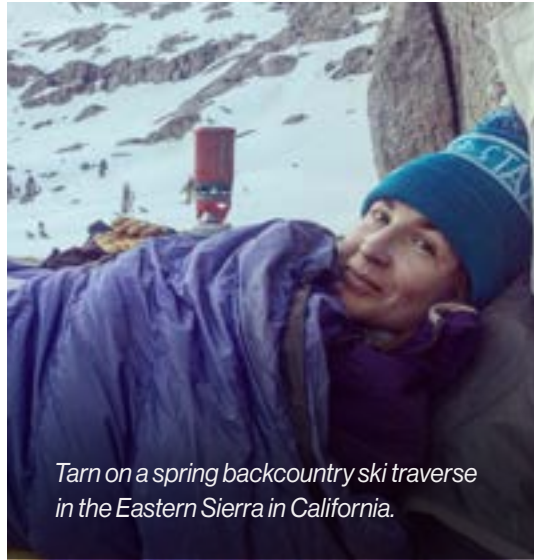
O'CONNELL SHARES, "It's been so energizing to witness donors respond to the ambition in our strategic plan."

In fact, donor support nearly doubled from 2022 to 2023, illustrating the magnitude at which philanthropy is responding to climate change along with a trust in WRA to move the needle.

WRA is harnessing the invaluable support of donors to expand our work across the West, effectively reducing emissions and protecting rivers and lands in the face of climate change. We can meet the moment we are in thanks to the collective energy and resources of many people and partners. **Together, we are making waves of impact that are leading to a brighter climate future.**

MEET OUR EXPERTS

Tarn Udall: Protecting Western Lands



Tarn on a spring backcountry ski traverse in the Eastern Sierra in California.

Colorado, with its breathtaking landscapes and diverse ecosystems, holds a special place in the hearts of its residents. For Tarn Udall, a proud lifelong Coloradan, conserving and protecting the natural beauty of her home state is not just a passion, but a mission.

To Udall, life in Colorado is synonymous with outdoor adventures and cherished family moments spent amidst nature's wonders. From the majestic red rocks of the Colorado National Monument to the

serene expanses of the Elk Mountains, she finds solace and inspiration in the diverse landscapes that her home state offers. With her husband Alex, their two young children, and their faithful dog Flick, Udall embraces a lifestyle centered around outdoor activities like camping, hiking, fishing, rafting, and skiing.

Her deep-rooted connection to the outdoors traces back to her formative years, where she found herself drawn to the vast wilds of the West.

One standout memory includes a year spent as a field instructor for Outward Bound in Moab, Utah, where she immersed herself in nature, spending over 200 nights sleeping under the open sky. These experiences, including traversing the High Sierra in California and connecting backcountry huts in Colorado, instilled in her a profound appreciation for the beauty and resilience of the natural world.

Equitable access to lands holds paramount importance for Udall, especially for the wellbeing of future generations. Recognizing systemic barriers that hinder many children from experiencing the outdoors, she advocates for inclusive environmental initiatives that ensure everyone can enjoy the transformative benefits of nature. She believes environmental advocacy is stronger if it is community-centered and focused on environmental justice. As WRA's senior attorney for the Western Lands team, Udall plays a critical role in advancing equitable access to conserved lands and fostering inclusive decision-making processes.



The urgency to protect Colorado's lands stems from the alarming rate of development encroaching upon its pristine landscapes. With nearly one-third of the state's lands already altered by human activity, Udall emphasizes the need for swift and decisive action to conserve vital habitats and recreational spaces. She is focused on developing and implementing state-level policies to safeguard 50% of Western lands from further development.

Conservation finance plays a pivotal role in this work, enabling the acquisition of land for protected areas, funding restoration projects, and leveraging resources to support conservation efforts. By advocating for legislative measures and securing public funds, she hopes to accelerate the protection of critical habitats and biodiversity in the face of climate change.

Despite the challenges inherent in her work, Udall finds inspiration in the landscapes she strives to protect, as well as in the communities she serves. Whether it's spending time with her family outdoors, nurturing her garden, or delving into creative literary works, she remains driven by her commitment to create a more sustainable future for the West.

WHO REPRESENTS YOU?

The first step in advocacy is knowing who represents you.

There are many people elected to represent you and your interests at the federal, state, and local levels. A key aspect of effective advocacy is knowing who these people are, what their role is, and how they are using their position of power. *Are they working to build a brighter climate future for all our communities? Do they represent your interests and values?*

Most of us know who our federal elected officials are, but this election year, we're encouraging people to dig deeper into who represents them at the state and local levels. These governmental offices significantly impact our daily lives and environmental and climate policy. State and local governments can often act more nimbly to address some of the key issues in our communities – like access to affordable electric vehicles and well-maintained local trails and parks – and can be more responsive to direct feedback from constituents.

Want to know who represents you and how to get in touch with them? Visit the Bright Climate Future section of our website to start your advocacy journey!



“Too often climate change messaging is depressing. Happily, WRA's Bright Climate Future Pledge is based on optimism and the belief that advocacy around good climate policies – like the ones WRA creates – and individual actions will lead to outcomes for the collective good. Our world, its species and ecology, will be better if we stand up for these policies to create a bright future.”


Lee White, WRA donor



Learn more at
BrightClimateFuture.org

The view from a 21-day winter rafting trip on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Tarn with her son and dog in the Wind River Range in Wyoming.



“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny **ripple of hope**, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” **SENATOR ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JUNE 6, 1966**

Hannah Vega, a nature-loving landscape photographer, evokes the allure of Lower Blue Lake in Colorado's Mount Sneffels Wilderness in "Blue Lake." Tucked into the mountains, this gem was discovered during Vega's adventurous hike on the Blue Lakes Trail. It showcases the serene beauty of nature and Vega's dedication to amplifying Black presence in natural spaces.

[@vegaventures](#) | [@afroforagers](#) | [hannahvega.com](#)

Powering Progress in Arizona

The electricity sector – heavily reliant on fossil fuels and a major contributor to greenhouse gas pollution – stands in the way of progress toward fighting climate change. This means we need to take urgent action to secure a sustainable future. WRA is working across the region to put the major utilities on a pathway to meet the science-based standard of reducing greenhouse gas emissions at least 80% by 2030.

However, the challenge we face is not just about reducing emissions; it's about understanding that climate change is a **cumulative emissions problem**. As greenhouse gases accumulate in the atmosphere, the impacts snowball, intensifying and compounding with each passing year as new emissions are added. This underscores the urgency of our mission – we must curb emissions now, before it's too late.

Every ton of carbon dioxide avoided today is infinitely more valuable than one avoided in the distant future.

In Arizona, this urgency is exacerbated by a unique blend of complex political dynamics, regulatory challenges, and the need for decisive action. **With no formal targets to combat climate change and no dedicated energy department, the state stands at a crossroads, poised to either embrace change or remain shackled to outdated practices.**

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Arizona's energy landscape is marked by contradictions – it is a state rich in renewable energy potential yet lacking a comprehensive vision for how to transition to a clean energy future.

The Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC), historically leaning toward fossil-fueled generation, poses a significant barrier to progress. However, recent developments, including the establishment of the Arizona Office of Resiliency, offer new avenues for collaboration and investment. It's an opportunity to harness federal support and channel it into initiatives that accelerate the state's decarbonization journey.

Arizona's three largest utilities – Arizona Public Service (APS), Tucson Electric Power (TEP), and Salt River Project (SRP) – hold the key to the state's energy trajectory. But their current approaches fall far short of the targets necessary to address the climate crisis effectively. APS and TEP are regulated by the ACC, while SRP is largely self-regulated. Each faces its own hurdles, but they all are focal points for driving emissions reductions and advancing clean energy initiatives.

2024 is a window of opportunity to address climate change with each of the utilities in the process of planning their energy needs and setting sustainability goals. These formal processes provide a strategic avenue to shape utility plans and steer them toward emissions reduction targets necessary to combat climate change. This is the time when utilities and regulators chart their energy future and offers us a chance to advance the transition to clean

energy in Arizona. By engaging with utilities, businesses, and local governments, we are actively shaping Arizona's energy landscape. It's not just about reducing emissions; it's about ensuring affordable, reliable, and clean energy for the future.

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR CHANGE

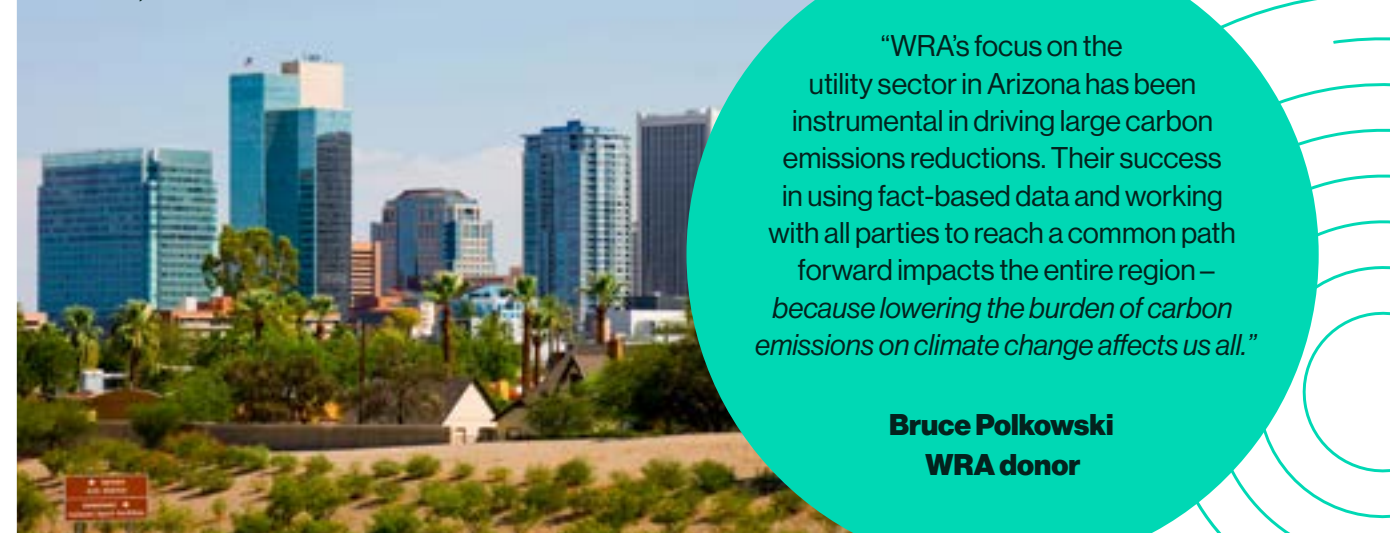
Across Arizona, there's a groundswell of public support for a clean energy transition. Recent polling tells us that Arizonans are overwhelmingly in favor of this shift.

80% of voters support their utility investing in **clean energy sources**.

61% of voters express a **preference for powering their homes with clean energy**, given the choice.

62% of voters acknowledge clean energy investments **would improve public health and reduce emissions**.

Phoenix, Arizona.



"WRA's focus on the utility sector in Arizona has been instrumental in driving large carbon emissions reductions. Their success in using fact-based data and working with all parties to reach a common path forward impacts the entire region – because lowering the burden of carbon emissions on climate change affects us all."

Bruce Polkowski
WRA donor

ARIZONA PUBLIC SERVICE LAGS BEHIND

APS – the largest energy utility in Arizona – has existing plans to reduce its carbon pollution just 60% by 2030, making it one of the least ambitious of the major electric utilities in the West.

Accelerating the integration of wind, solar, and energy storage, as suggested by WRA, could not only help APS reach its emissions targets but also position it as a leader in clean energy. And the ripple effect of such actions isn't just good for the environment, it's good for Arizonans' energy bills. Expediting the retirement of the coal-powered Four Corners Power Plant by 2028, rather than the current 2031 projection, could save customers \$139 million, according to APS's own modeling.

TUCSON ELECTRIC POWER LEADS THE WAY

TEP is a frontrunner in decarbonization efforts with plans to reduce its carbon emissions 80% by 2035 – the most ambitious path to decarbonization of any Arizona utility. However, TEP's planned pace of emissions reductions doesn't scale up quickly enough to meet our national science-based 2030 climate goals and includes adding new fossil gas infrastructure.

WRA is advocating for a holistic approach, urging TEP to prioritize renewable procurement and retire outdated coal-fired plants to further expedite its transition to clean energy.



In doing so, TEP can serve as a model for APS and SRP and illustrate that a large Arizona utility can pivot to renewable resources without sacrificing reliability.

SALT RIVER PROJECT IS THE WEAKEST IN THE WEST

As a largely self-regulated entity, SRP presents a unique challenge in Arizona's utility landscape. SRP makes resource decisions driven by sustainability goals set by its elected board. It is the only major utility in the West without plans to fully transition away from coal plants, and thus SRP has one of the weakest strategies for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Central to SRP's shortcomings is its use of

intensity-based goals rather than mass-based metrics. This approach masks the true challenge of reducing overall carbon emissions. Although SRP boasts a goal to reduce carbon emissions per megawatt-hour generated by 82% by 2035, it also projects a significant increase in demand for electricity over that same period. As a result, it is possible that SRP could achieve its intensity-based goals while still increasing the overall amount of climate warming pollution it emits into the atmosphere.

It's not just about numbers; it's about impact. Transitioning from intensity-based to mass-based goals would push SRP to focus more on energy efficiency and clean energy technologies to meet customers' needs while also reducing total greenhouse gas emissions irrespective of demand fluctuations.

THE PATH FORWARD

Arizona's journey toward a clean energy future hinges on decisions made today. Given that electricity generation is such a significant source of climate pollution in the state, the clear solution is moving the power sector away from fossil fuels as quickly as we can. Each utility's commitment to this transition paves the way for cleaner air, healthier communities, and economic growth – **because every ton of emissions avoided today sets in motion a cascade of positive impacts, echoing through generations.**

THE CLIMATE FIX

Imagine a West no longer powered by coal, but by the boundless energy of the sun, the relentless force of the wind, and the steady heat beneath our feet. That's the vision driving WRA's Climate Fix, a seven-year initiative that began in 2018. In a region grappling with climate change, we're initiating a ripple effect of change that's transforming the way we generate electricity throughout the Interior West.

By targeting the eight largest utilities in the region responsible for the majority of power sector emissions, **we're on track to slash carbon emissions by 51% below 2016 levels by 2030. That's a staggering 105 million tons of carbon saved.** But we're not stopping there.

Our plan is about reducing carbon – and it's about reshaping our energy landscape for a clean energy future. We're modernizing the grid, investing in renewables like wind, solar, and geothermal, and prioritizing energy efficiency to keep demand in check. And we're doing it all by making clean energy the smart choice – appealing to the financial interests of utilities and their customers as we shape public policy.

Thanks to our advocacy, Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico have enacted groundbreaking laws to accelerate the transition to clean energy and the utilities in these states have committed to emissions reduction targets on track with the science – and now, in the Climate Fix's final year, our sights are set on Arizona. We're well on our way to achieving our goals and ready to raise the bar for the next phase of our work in advancing a carbon-free future for the West.



Learn more about our Climate Fix work.
WesternResourceAdvocates.org/climate-fix

Building a Brighter Future Through Giving

Just like the individual drops of water that form the Colorado River, the gifts of donors to WRA combine to provide a dynamic stream of support. To honor the vital role of our loyal supporters, we are excited to launch three giving societies. These societies pay tribute to the generous efforts of donors who are woven into our collective narrative and actively shape the present and pave the way for the future.

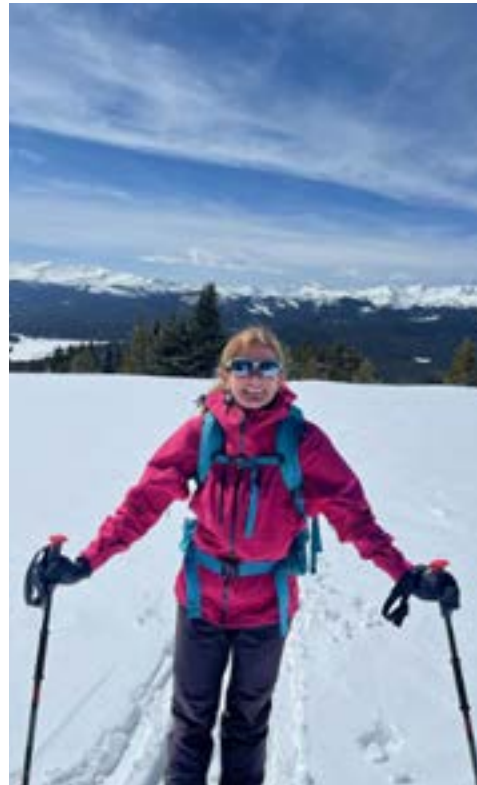
The Source honors donors who commit to making recurring contributions to WRA.

State-level climate action happens all year long – during and between legislative sessions – and WRA is there every step of the way. Members of The Source provide dependable support toward our persistent and focused efforts to safeguard the West and avert the worst impacts of climate change. Giving regularly is one simple way to activate hope and drive change.

Colorado resident Kim Kasic started giving monthly because she **“trusts WRA to be responsible stewards of donor support and to make a difference.”**

As a finance professional looking for meaningful employment, she joined The Land and Water Fund of the Rockies – now WRA. Kim stayed engaged over the years, including as a board member, and finds that recurring giving makes it easy to budget for philanthropy and spread it out over time.

Kim Kasic trekking to Vance’s Cabin near Leadville, Colorado. Kim and her husband have made an annual hut trip most of their 32-year marriage and now enjoy them with their adult children.

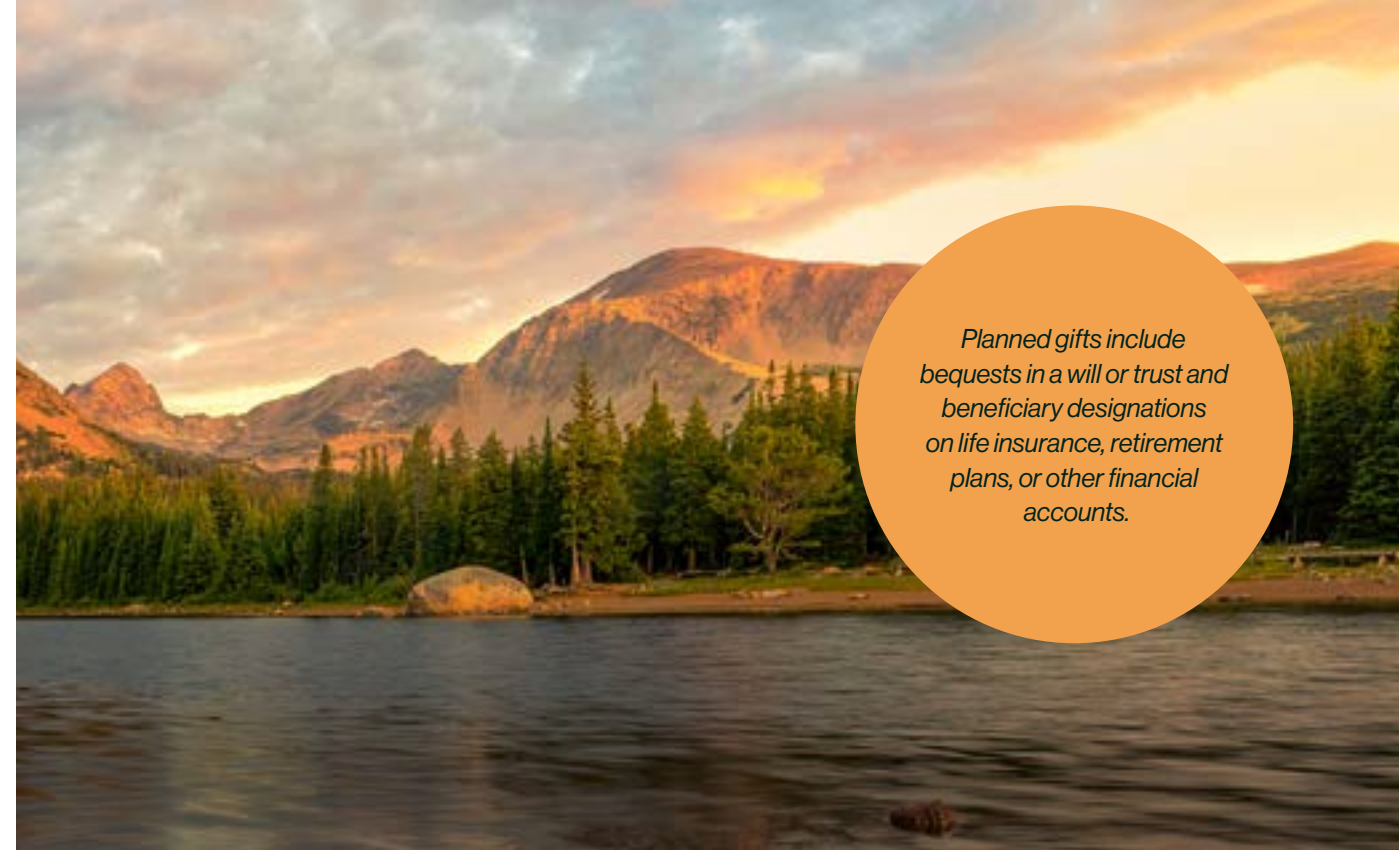


Donors who give to WRA for 15 years or more become part of the Green Society.

The namesake of this society is the late Kelley Green, an environmental lawyer who dedicated years of her life to the West and founded what has grown into WRA. The commitment of loyal donors sustains our team of experts, who develop innovative solutions that can take years to implement.

Jeff Pearson had the good fortune of meeting Green early in his law career. He later met and gained great respect for the professionalism of WRA’s lawyers and staff, and the importance of its vision. Annual giving is a priority for the Pearsons, who view it as **“a ritual, a duty, a necessity, and belief we’ve passed on.”** Their eight grandchildren inspire their continued commitment to generosity and protecting the West.

Jeff and Jessica Pearson enjoying a hike in the Weminuche Wilderness, accessed from the Williams Creek Trailhead near Pagosa Springs, Colorado.



Planned gifts include bequests in a will or trust and beneficiary designations on life insurance, retirement plans, or other financial accounts.

The 1989 Legacy Society honors donors who make a planned gift of any type to WRA.

WRA was founded in 1989 with the belief that the environment needed a strong community of dedicated advocates. This foundation propelled WRA into what it is today. While we can’t predict exactly what future environmental issues will be, 1989 Legacy Society members make it certain that WRA will have the resources to address them.

Kathy Van Dame and her late husband were introduced to WRA through activism on air quality issues in the Salt Lake Valley in the 1990s. When it came time for estate planning, Kathy included WRA as one of three nonprofits set to receive a portion of her remaining assets after her lifetime. **“I’ve seen how WRA continuously builds consensus and is solution oriented. I trust them to make good use of my gifts now and after I’m gone,”** she shared.

Kathy Van Dame and her late husband happened upon this huggable ponderosa pine in a canyon in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah.



Making recurring, annual, and planned gifts are some of the many ways donors are creating ripples of impact that reach all who call the West home.

Are you interested in leveraging philanthropy to increase your impact? To learn more, please contact Darcy Morel at darcy.morel@westernresources.org or 303.304.1543.





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FROM YOUR FIELD

WRA donors Tom Wilmoth and Heather Lundine captured the day's setting sun just off the South Platte River, near the Dream Stream portion. This section of the river is public and nestled in the high mountain plain of South Park, Colorado.



For more information about WRA or becoming a donor, please contact Associate Director of Development Operations Jenn Simon at jenn.simon@westernresources.org or 720.763.3725.

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