

LAYERS

2023 Impact Report

Rock formations at Valley of Fire
State Park, Nevada.

wra Western
Resource
Advocates.

A Word from the President



Last year, during my annual rafting trip along the Colorado River, I reflected on the many ways our work mirrors the path of this mighty waterway. The river has cut canyons over millennia, descending from majestic peaks and etching passages, uncovering the past through red, orange, and pink sandstone layers that future generations will treasure.



Photo captured by Kimball Nelson.
kimballnelson.com

Along one section of my journey, I saw the black Visnu Schist – a nearly 2-billion-year-old rock formation that is found in just a handful of the canyons carved by the river. Its stark black color, contrasting the red rocks that make up most of the canyon walls, provided a moment of awe and reflection. The nature of WRA's work is akin to these geological formations – steadfast, layered, and enduring.

Today's accomplishments are the result of 35 years of persistence and commitment to creating robust public policies to solve the climate crisis. Much like the layers of rock that tell the story of our planet's history, each layer of our work represents years of creating solutions and making measurable change – each building on the next.



We are, like the river, shaping the future of the environment, economy, and resilience of the West. By building critical layers of protection and preservation, we are positively impacting the environment and the communities that depend on it for life itself.

I'm proud to share WRA's 2023 accomplishments with you. In the stories that follow, we demonstrate how WRA's work continues to evolve to address complex conservation problems through

strategic, science-based policymaking. We share how advocacy with utilities can create outsized investments in electrification and rewrite the rules of energy planning. We'll show how careful research can inform critical decisions for our water future and how implementing decarbonization goals can generate outcomes for both public health and the economy.

I hope you see how our unique skill – driving state-level action – creates change at the scale and pace necessary to drive progress in solving the climate crisis. Our work today sets the stage for a viable tomorrow. The urgency of our mission has never been more apparent. Now is the time to address these threats to create a livable climate, thriving wildlife, and beautiful, protected landscapes for all to enjoy.

Our community of supporters has been instrumental in shaping WRA's past, present, and future. Your generosity and willingness to meet the scale of the crisis with tangible action has helped form the solid foundation we need to prepare us for the challenges ahead. Together, with perseverance and hard work, we are driving policies and carving out our impact across the West – with each layer bringing us closer to a bright climate future.



Photo captured by Nancy Maysmith.

JON GOLDIN-DUBOIS | PRESIDENT

A Year in Review

WRA is a growing community of engaged staff, advocates, supporters, voters, and more. As we grow, so does our ability to create change. We have more staff in more places to drive policies to address climate change and its impacts across the region. We have more people looking to us to learn how they can make a difference. We have more donors giving more than ever to support our work. And we have more decision makers relying on reports, information we prepare, and policies we craft to help them take effective action for Western communities. Each layer brings us all closer to a bright climate future.

Onboarded **27 new** staff members



84 staff at the end of 2023

153,736 website visitors

524,394 website views

3,365,422 social impressions

21% of 2022 donors increased their giving in 2023

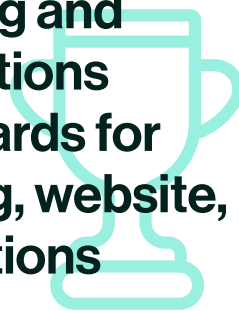
247 new donors in 2023

\$18M

raised – our biggest fundraising year yet



20 marketing and communications industry awards for our branding, website, and publications



5,127 report downloads



938 media stories featuring WRA

“Around the country, we need organizations fighting for landscape-level designations that protect areas from development and extraction working side-by-side with the folks who actively restore areas that already enjoy some level of protection.”

BRENDAN WITT, OUTSIDE MAGAZINE

“The bottom line is if we’re investing ratepayer dollars in emissions reductions, we want to make sure those reductions are real.”

MEERA FICKLING, COLORADO PUBLIC RADIO

90% of staff



received media and message training in person at our regional offices

Launched a new visual brand identity and rebuilt website



“Without swift, meaningful and sustained action these rivers and the Great Salt Lake are headed for catastrophe. Some might use the excuse of precipitation from recent storms as a reason for inaction. But it would take years of these storms to offset 22 years of drought, overuse of water from our rivers and an increasingly warmer and drier climate.”

JON GOLDIN-DUBOIS, DENVER POST



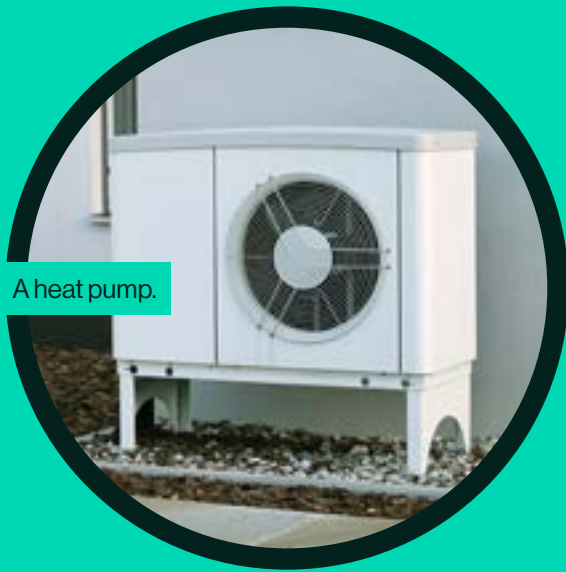
Together, with perseverance and hard work, we are driving policies and carving out our impact across the West – with each layer bringing us closer to a bright climate future.

**Research &
Develop**



Hear directly from the WRA team about our exciting work from 2023.

Aerial of the Colorado River near Blythe, Arizona.



Developing a Holistic Approach to Protecting the Colorado River

WINS AROUND THE WEST

A Path to Pollution-Free Buildings: Meeting Xcel's 2030 Gas Decarbonization Goals report recommended steep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from Colorado's largest gas utility and helped inform the first clean heat plan in the nation.

Aerial view of Lake Powell in Utah.



Policy wins don't happen overnight. Strong solutions are the result of rigorous research, extensive stakeholder engagement, thoughtful policy development, and careful fine-tuning. This is the approach WRA took in 2023 to prepare for negotiations on new guidelines for the Colorado River.

Water demands vastly exceed what the river can provide, and the situation is only expected to worsen as the West becomes hotter and drier due to climate change. The future of the Colorado River depends on our ability to implement equitable and forward-thinking strategies to conserve water and keep the river healthy and flowing.

But to develop innovative ways to address the challenges the Colorado River faces, we first needed to develop a new and more effective approach to protect the river. In 2023, WRA's team of policy experts reflected on the history

of the river – what has worked and what hasn't in the century since the Law of the River was established.

“History has shown that we need a more holistic approach to the Colorado River,” said John Berggren, WRA's regional policy manager.

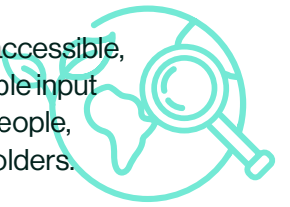
“We must embrace environmental stewardship, balance water supply and demand, ensure equitable access to water for Tribes in the basin, and protect the river that sustains our entire region.”

Based on our research and expertise, we identified guiding principles for our work to protect the river and the communities, fish, and wildlife that depend on it. And it starts by ensuring that the mistakes of the past are addressed by dramatically reducing the amount of water we use across all sectors of the economy and developing policies that are proactive, equitable, and sustainable.

Future guidelines must bring the river back into balance and reduce water use by 25% through strategies like incentivizing farmers and ranchers to use less, encouraging municipal water conservation, and retiring water-intensive coal plants. We also need to consider the current and future conditions on the river – there is less water in the river today and there will be less water in the river in the future – as climate change tightens its grip on the West. The river must be managed in a way that protects irreplaceable ecosystems and recreational uses.

Our principles also reinforce that future guidelines for the river and decision-making processes must address the historic and systemic exclusion of Tribes by promoting inclusion of Tribes in decisions about the future of the river and the protection of Tribal water rights. Decision-making

processes must be transparent, accessible, and meaningfully inclusive to enable input from a broad range of impacted people, conservation groups, and stakeholders.



Not long after we developed our principles, the Bureau of Reclamation requested input on the scope of the new guidelines that will govern the river for the next two decades. WRA seized this opportunity and put forth our plan for equitable and sustainable guidelines to protect the river. We, and our partners, have encouraged the Bureau of Reclamation to think more holistically about the river, setting the stage for guidelines that safeguard the future of the Colorado River.

“Previous river management guidelines focused on delivering water from one part of the basin to the other, but the Colorado River is not a simple water delivery pipeline,” said Berggren. “It is a dynamic, living system. As we develop new guidelines, we must consider ways to protect the health of the ecosystems that support our entire region. And after initial conversations, we were pleased to see Reclamation open the door to policy ideas that will build resilience and promote environmental stewardship.”

WRA also engaged with other federal officials, state decision makers, and environmental organizations to develop actionable policies to protect the hardest working river in the West. We developed plans for an innovative program to encourage conservation and to ensure that conserved water could benefit river health.

We must embrace environmental stewardship, balance water supply and demand, ensure equitable access to water for Tribes in the basin, and protect the river that sustains our entire region.

We developed computer modeling of the river to test our framework that would allow for water to be conserved and moved within the Colorado River Basin – wherever it is needed most to protect river health and support system stability, maximizing the environmental and community benefits of every drop of water saved.

Our research and policy development in 2023 prepared us to hit the ground running in 2024.

We drew on our principles and worked with our partners to submit a detailed proposal for governing the Colorado River – one of just a handful that were submitted to the Bureau of Reclamation.

At WRA, we embed deep expertise and research into our policy solutions. This forward-looking and detailed thinking in the months and years before enables WRA to quickly implement impactful solutions.



Hiker cupping water in hands.

Listen **&**
Collaborate

The Indigenous Women's Leadership Network poses on shore during their trip down the San Juan River.



WINS AROUND THE WEST

The Indigenous Women's Leadership Network (IWLN) was catalyzed by the Water & Tribes Initiative in 2021 and is now coordinated in partnership with WRA. IWLN supports a group of multigenerational Indigenous women working in natural resources in the Colorado River Basin. In September 2023, IWLN organized a three-day rafting trip in Utah, traveling **27 miles down the San Juan River, for 11 Indigenous leaders representing eight Tribes** in the Colorado River Basin.

Solar panels in Colorado with Rocky Mountains in the distance.

Siting a Collaborative Path to Sustainable Development





Wind turbines along a Colorado road.

WRA doesn't shy away from a challenge. In fact, we often face it head-on, leading the way.

In 2023, we embarked on an ambitious journey to address the challenges of clean energy siting in Colorado and across the West. This was more than a technical exercise; it was a deeply collaborative effort that sought to harmonize the urgent need for increased renewable energy generation with the equally pressing need to protect our natural landscapes and communities.

Energy siting – the process of selecting locations for renewable energy projects like wind and solar – poses a unique set of challenges. These projects are critical for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and combating climate change. However, if not carefully planned, they can disrupt local ecosystems, displace wildlife, and face resistance from the very communities they aim to benefit.

But before even starting the work, we faced our first challenge: starting the conversation. WRA recognized that getting people to understand why siting is an issue would require a layered approach, one that starts with extensive stakeholder engagement.

“This isn't something we can leave until it becomes a problem,” said Severiano DeSoto, WRA's energy siting policy advisor. “Because if it becomes a problem, it's too late to solve it. We must do these things fast, and we must do these things at a scale that's probably going to make people uncomfortable. Understanding diverse perspectives from the beginning really helped shape the ideas of policy that we would work toward.”

This emphasis on stakeholder engagement goes beyond gathering opinions – it helps build trust and helps identify common ground. Throughout the year, WRA and our partners organized

numerous meetings that brought together environmentalists, industry leaders, and local government officials. The meetings were facilitated by former Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter and the Center for the New Energy Economy. We engaged eight stakeholder groups – roughly 100 people – over the course of a three-meeting series. After an initial meeting to gain perspective, we hosted a second meeting to discuss policy ideas. These gatherings provided a platform for open dialogue, where every voice could be heard and considered.

One of the most significant milestones of this effort – and the final layer of the meeting series – was a summit held in Colorado in early November. “Getting to the point where the summit was widely viewed as a successful opportunity for people to come together and share perspectives was probably the most meaningful,” reflected DeSoto.

“It was such a different approach to policymaking. We're not going to be able to meet climate change goals if we can't get renewable energy projects built and on the ground, and we're not going to be able to get projects on the ground if we don't get communities on board in a way that minimizes conflict.”

— SEVERIANO DESOTO

A Western meadowlark perched on a fence.

The summit underscored the importance of integrating environmental goals with community needs. For Colorado and the broader Western region, this balanced approach is vital. The state's diverse landscapes, from its sprawling plains to its rugged mountains, are home to a rich array of wildlife and natural resources. At the same time, Colorado's communities are increasingly aware of the urgent need to transition to renewable energy to address climate change. The path to achieving this balance requires thoughtful planning and a willingness to adapt and learn from each step.

Our approach in 2023 reflected this adaptability. By engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders, we were able to define the challenges faced by various entities in promoting renewable energy while being sensitive to the unique environmental and social contexts of Colorado's varied geography. Incorporating these perspectives into policy will help mitigate potential conflicts and ensure that the benefits of renewable energy projects are widely shared.

The lessons learned in 2023 will continue to guide WRA's efforts in energy siting beyond our work in Colorado. With our sights set on implementing smart renewable energy siting *(Continued on page 20)*





Much like the layers of rock that tell the story of our planet's history, each layer of our work represents years of creating solutions and making measurable change.



Group of friends hiking.

Advocate & Influence

frameworks across the West, we understand that the most effective solutions arise from collective effort and mutual respect.

“Listening and collaborating is an important part of our work because if you take a narrow approach and only consider a small sliver of perspectives, you’re going to miss the bigger picture,” said DeSoto. **“If you don’t take into account those different perspectives, you’re ultimately going to put forth a policy solution that only works for**

a small segment of stakeholders and doesn’t consider the broader impact of this work.”

By bridging diverse perspectives and fostering collaboration, we know that it is possible to advance renewable energy while preserving the natural beauty and integrity of our landscapes. Each layer of our work – each meeting, discussion, and policy proposal – builds upon the last, creating a cumulative impact that resonates through communities and ecosystems alike.

Electric car charging stations.

Transmission power lines.



WINS AROUND THE WEST

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved the Extended Day-Ahead Market, the first wholesale electricity market of its kind in the West – one that may save customers as much as **\$1.2 billion annually** and reduce reliance on polluting fossil fuels.

The Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund was established as New Mexico's first-ever dedicated conservation fund in the state with a **historic \$100 million appropriation.**

Advancing Clean Transportation





Several cars polluting the air in Denver, Colorado.

WRA's commitment to environmental stewardship is reflected in our relentless pursuit of policy solutions that pave the way for a cleaner, greener future, and in how we navigate intricate layers of policymaking to effect real change on the ground. In 2023, our focus on transportation electrification was a pivotal force driving change across the region.

“Our work is about decarbonizing all sectors of the economy, with transportation being a significant contributor to greenhouse gases,” said Deborah Kapiloff, WRA's transportation electrification policy advisor. “It's crucial we tackle this sector head-on to meet our climate goals.”

Central to these efforts are the Advanced Clean Cars and Trucks standards, a cornerstone of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality in our communities. Transportation is the largest source of climate-warming emissions in the country, and emissions

from on-road vehicles that are regulated by these standards account for over 80% of those emissions.

WRA dedicated substantial effort to passing these rules in Colorado and New Mexico in 2023, providing expert testimony, conducting thorough research to effectively influence decision makers, and activating a passionate group of community advocates. The successful adoption of these standards in both states marked a major milestone for our work and for transportation electrification.

These policies will ensure that an increasing number of zero-emission vehicles are being sold for every vehicle class on Colorado and New Mexico roads – from passenger vehicles to delivery vans to 18-wheel semi-trucks. And these policy wins will translate into cleaner air, substantial cost savings, and increased accessibility to zero-emission vehicles for consumers – creating tangible benefits for communities across the West.

“The decision to implement these rules in Colorado and New Mexico will rapidly accelerate the adoption of zero-emission cars and trucks in these states, critical for addressing climate change threats,” said Aaron Kressig, WRA's transportation electrification manager. **“From improved air quality to billions saved at the gas pump, these policies are a win for both the environment and our economy.”**

Throughout 2023, our approach was marked by strategic engagement with legislators, stakeholders, and partners – allowing us to effectively advocate for and influence positive results for our communities and environment.

Building broad-based support for our policies ensures they have the best chance of becoming law.

An electric van.



“Building broad-based support for our policies ensures they have the best chance of becoming law,” said Kapiloff.



The Nevada Clean Trucks and Buses Incentive Program, passed into law in 2023, exemplifies this important layer to effective advocacy. The program provides incentives that empower school districts and small businesses to transition to clean medium- and heavy-duty vehicles – and WRA's close work with the bill sponsor, Assemblyman Howard Watts, played an instrumental role at the legislature. We worked closely with Assemblyman Watts and stakeholders to build broad support for the bill, which passed with nearly unanimous, bipartisan votes.

WRA's clean transportation work seeks to increase electric vehicle model availability, with policies like Advanced Clean Cars and Trucks standards, and ensure that electric vehicles are accessible to communities across the West through programs like the Nevada Clean Trucks and Buses Incentive or utility transportation electrification plans.

Transportation electrification plans in our region serve as a cohesive layer to our strategy, linking advocacy efforts and policy outcomes. These plans outline how an electric utility will facilitate the move toward a clean and equitable transportation system, addressing the reduction of climate emissions and air pollution with deployment of charging infrastructure, optimized rate designs, and other programs.

Utility commitments – and, importantly, the investments to back up those commitments – are fundamental to our efforts to decarbonize the transportation sector.

WRA secured \$375 million in utility investments in transportation electrification infrastructure and programs in Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico in 2023. This means more programs to support electric vehicle adoption by low-income customers, more residential and commercial charging stations in communities, and more improvements to strengthen the electric grid.

By strategically advocating for robust policies, influencing legislation, and securing funding for infrastructure, we’re laying the groundwork for a future where electric vehicles are the norm rather than the exception – and where they are accessible to all.

“We’re not just advocating for more electric vehicles on the road; we’re ensuring that the benefits of transportation electrification reach everyone,” Kapiloff explained. “It’s about equity and ensuring that communities with limited resources can also participate in building a sustainable future.”

Our commitment to advancing transportation electrification is driven by the belief that each policy victory builds on the next, bringing us closer to a cleaner, healthier future for all.

\$375M
in utility investments in
transportation electrification



Reno, Nevada.

Implement & Measure

State capitol building in Salt Lake City, Utah.

A razorback sucker.



WINS AROUND THE WEST

Increased protections for three streams totaling **41 stream miles** in the Gunnison Basin in Colorado in a novel “bank full” instream flow rights decision which protects healthy riparian habitat as well as native fish that use the creeks for spawning.

High priority habitat maps created by Colorado Parks and Wildlife – which play a **crucial role in safeguarding important wildlife habitat** – were upheld against a relentless oil and gas industry challenge.

Implementing Decarbonization Goals

It's one thing to talk about the need for climate action, but it's another thing for states and the utilities they rely on to implement concrete steps necessary to get it done. This is why WRA strategically focuses on resource planning processes, where critical long- and short-term forecasting from each utility identifies exactly how it plans to generate electricity.

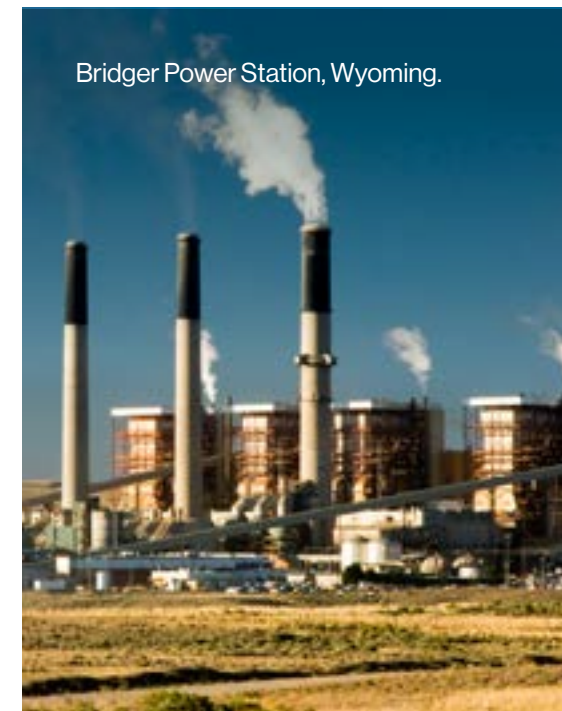
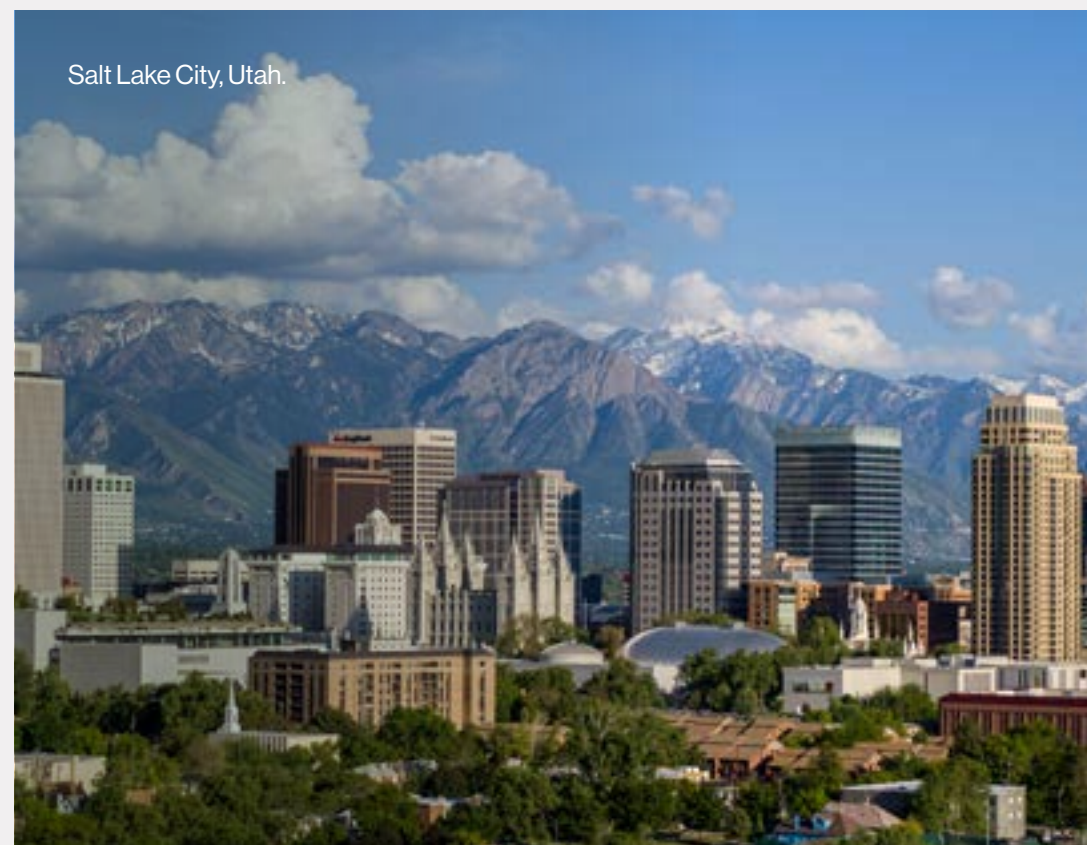
“Effective resource planning processes can align utility procurement decisions with public policy goals like reducing pollution, while also ensuring reliable and cost-effective service for customers,” said Erin Overturf, WRA’s clean energy director.

Ultimately, we are working to put utilities on a path to reduce emissions at a pace and scale consistent with what the best available climate science tells us is necessary to protect our communities and our economy from the devastating impacts of climate change.

WRA worked tirelessly in 2023 with utilities, regulatory agencies, and lawmakers to drive the transition to clean energy and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Due to WRA’s ongoing work, nearly all of the eight major utilities have goals to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050. A key aspect of our current policy work is ensuring the effective implementation of these goals and that they deliver the intended outcomes.

One of the largest utilities in the Interior West, PacifiCorp, operates in multiple states, including Utah and Wyoming. Despite its stated commitments, PacifiCorp has been reluctant to move away from coal-fired generation and advance renewable energy acquisitions necessary to reach 2050 net-zero goals.

In April 2023, PacifiCorp published a plan that would reduce its greenhouse



gas pollution 78% from 2005 levels by 2030, eventually reaching 100% carbon-free resources by 2050. The plan included new wind resources, solar, and energy storage over the next 10 years, and represented an exciting milestone in WRA’s years-long effort to shift PacifiCorp away from coal and other fossil fuels.

WRA supported PacifiCorp’s progress in planning for a low-carbon future while also raising questions about unreasonable and insufficiently vetted modeling assumptions and recommending changes to the process that would facilitate better collaboration with stakeholders.

We worked steadily to drive home the point that renewables and other clean energy technologies are more cost-effective than PacifiCorp’s aging coal plants. We used data gathered from Utah regulatory proceedings to show that the costs of running the Jim Bridger Power Plant in Wyoming, one of the largest in PacifiCorp’s fleet, were much higher than was being conveyed to regulators. Rather than being a low-cost resource, it was one of the most expensive – costing more than cleaner alternatives.

We educated Utah’s Public Service Commission about the real cost of the power plant and recommended PacifiCorp consider retrofitting it to run on gas instead of coal – dramatically reducing emissions without extending the life of the plant. This detailed and measured work resulted in PacifiCorp’s 2023 resource plan projecting Jim Bridger would stop burning coal before 2030. It also announced it would retire its two Utah coal plants, Hunter and Huntington, by 2032.

PacifiCorp was on the verge of a clean energy transformation that would benefit Utahns’ health and pocketbooks. Unfortunately, the next year was met with a wave of backlash from legislators. New legislation aimed at slowing the transition away from coal was passed despite WRA’s strenuous advocacy. Additionally, PacifiCorp’s 2024 integrated resource plan update drastically scaled back renewable acquisitions and extended the lives of the Hunter and Huntington coal plants.

“This decision is a step backwards on clean and reliable energy and ties Utahns to a very risky fuel source,” said Sophie Hayes, Utah clean energy manager and senior attorney.

“It’s why WRA’s dedication to implementing strong policies is so important. We have to remain diligent to overcome these types of setbacks in the pursuit of durable climate action.”

– SOPHIE HAYES





Capitol Reef National Park, Utah, captured by Emma Kulkarni. @emmaexpedition emmaexpedition.com

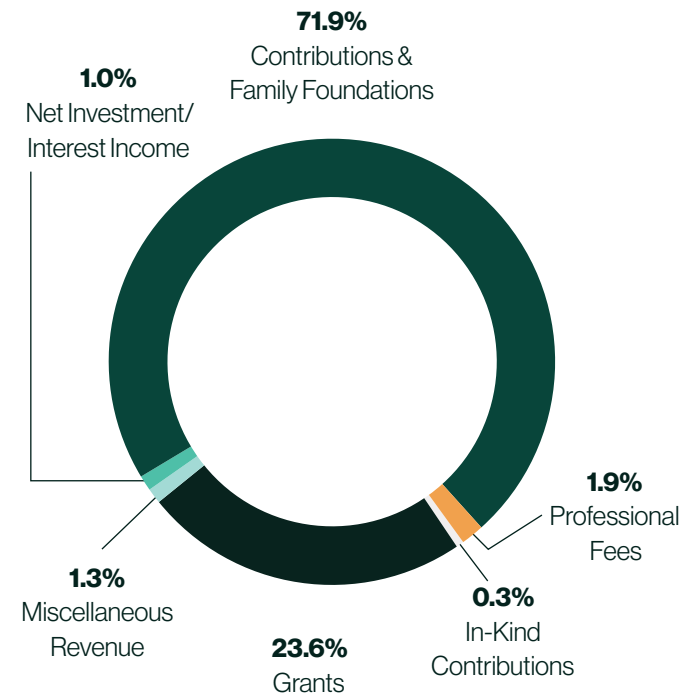
WRA will not give up, and we will not give in.

Our work in Utah shows how critical it is to devote sustained resources to the energy planning process – one of the most important venues for achieving the clean energy transformation necessary to protect our communities and hold utilities accountable to their commitments.

We don't just push utilities to set science-based goals, our layered approach includes tireless research, analysis, and in-depth stakeholder engagement to show how goals can be achieved in a way that benefits consumers and the environment – and we see things through to ensure full and effective implementation so that the policies and plans for which we advocate achieve their full potential.

Financials

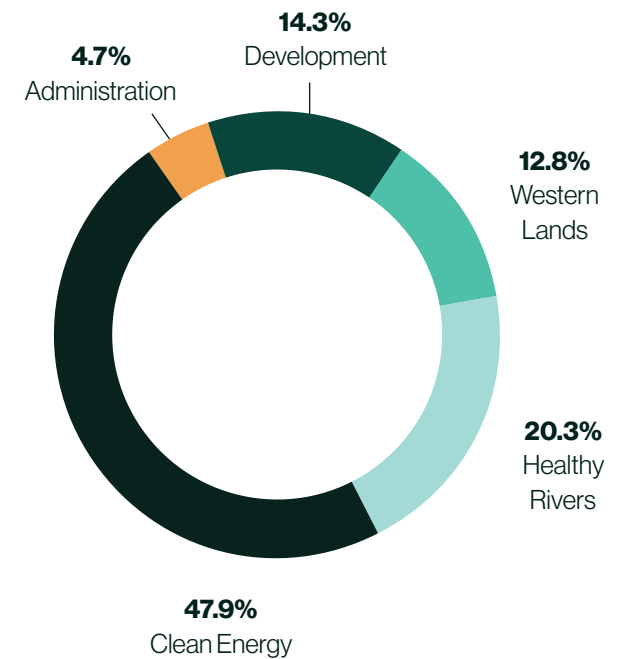
Revenue



Grants	\$4,397,678
Contributions and Family Foundations	\$13,409,221
Professional Fees	\$349,048
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$243,335
Net Investment/Interest Income	\$183,651
In-Kind Contributions	\$52,621

Total Revenues **\$18,635,554**

Expenses



PROGRAM SERVICES	
Clean Energy	\$5,977,584
Healthy Rivers	\$2,532,009
Western Lands	\$1,594,702
Total Program	\$10,104,295

SUPPORTING SERVICES	
Development	\$1,791,477
Administration	\$588,021
Total Supporting Services	\$2,379,498

Total Expenses **\$12,483,793**

Assets

Change in Net Assets	\$6,151,761
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$14,068,291
Net Assets at End of Year	\$20,220,052

Board of Directors

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Boulder, Colorado

Carla Johnson
Boulder, Colorado

Christopher Robinson
Park City, Utah

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Shiprock, New Mexico

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Heather Tanana
San Clemente, California

Carrie Doyle
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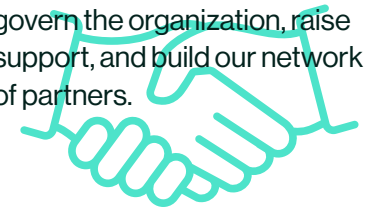
Portia Prescott
Aurora, Colorado

Felipe Vieyra
Aurora, Colorado

Martha Records
Denver, Colorado



Our board is one of our chief assets, providing exemplary leadership to further the mission of our organization. Board members guide our work fighting climate change and its impacts in the West. They help govern the organization, raise support, and build our network of partners.



Senior Leadership

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VP OF DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATIONS

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WESTERN LANDS DIRECTOR

Jeremy Vesbach

HEALTHY RIVERS DIRECTOR

Bart Miller

CLEAN ENERGY DIRECTOR

Erin Overturf



Our senior leadership is a team of experts with decades of experience working where decisions are made, sweating the details, creating evidence-based solutions, and holding decision makers accountable.



Photos of WRA's board and senior leadership.

Our Offices

ARIZONA

1429 North 1st Street • Suite 100
Phoenix • Arizona 85004
480.667.5625

NEW MEXICO

141 East Palace Avenue • Suite 220
Santa Fe • New Mexico 87501
505.919.7579

COLORADO | BOULDER

2260 Baseline Road • Suite 200
Boulder • Colorado 80302
303.444.1188

NEVADA

550 West Musser • Suite G
Carson City • Nevada 89703
775.841.2400

COLORADO | DENVER

1536 Wynkoop Street • Suite 500
Denver • Colorado 80202
303.444.1188

UTAH

307 West 200 South • Suite 2000
Salt Lake City • Utah 84101
801.487.9911

Resources Saved with this Project

1.6 TONS of fresh (green) wood,
which is equivalent to more than
9 trees.

4,078 POUNDS of CO₂, which
is equivalent to about 2 round-trip
flights from New York to London.

3.96M BTUS, which is enough
energy to power almost 5 residential
refrigerators operated for a full year.

32 POUNDS of solid waste.

760 GALLONS of water.

Western Resource Advocates is a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization (tax identification number 84-1113831) under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

For more information about WRA or becoming a donor, please contact Development Director Darcy Morel at darcy.morel@westernresources.org or 303.304.1543.

WesternResourceAdvocates.org

