

WESTERN VIEWS

Spring 2017

Countering Federal Environmental Rollbacks with Strong Leadership in the West

By now, you have undoubtedly seen the news that the Trump administration plans to dramatically cut the Environmental Protection Agency's budget and eliminate vital protections for rivers, streams, and wetlands. The administration is also planning to eliminate the Clean Power Plan, a landmark plan to reduce carbon emissions and air pollution.

There is no question that the administration's actions on environmental protections threaten conservation and our ability to confront climate change. Yet the reality is that virtually all concrete advancement to address climate change to date has come from states taking the lead. This means that our strategy of advancing fact-based, pro-conservation policies at the state level is now more important than ever.

Our experts are working to:

- Reduce carbon pollution and accelerate the transition to clean energy;
- Safeguard our public lands; and
- Protect our rivers and lakes.

We have already made significant progress in these areas. For example, since 2009, WRA has successfully stalled tar sands operations by US Oil Sands through legal action. Our work has helped keep the dirtiest fuel on the planet from contaminating groundwater and polluting our air in Utah. In our work to advance clean energy in the West, we recently coordinated successful efforts to advance an agreement that creates Colorado's largest wind farm, eliminating one million tons of CO₂ pollution annually, and saving customers up to \$443 million over 25 years.



We will stand up to the federal attacks on conservation and commit to advancing state-level clean energy, clean air, flowing rivers, and protected public lands.

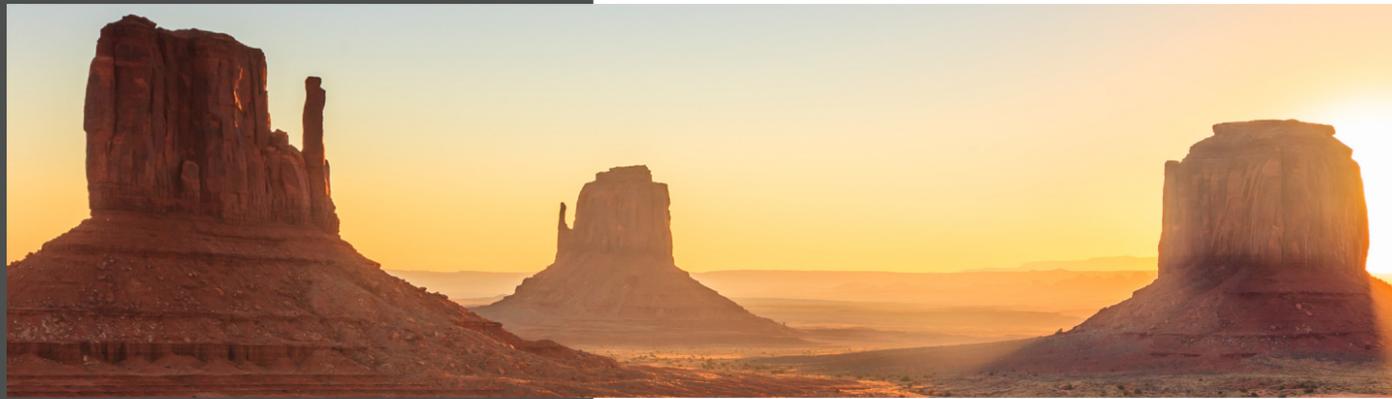
I believe that the best counter to fear is action. With our skilled economists, policy experts, and attorneys, WRA will serve as a critical line of defense and the driver of progress on conservation priorities.

Together, we can protect the environment and our quality of life—for our communities, for our children, and for future generations.



Jon Goldin-Dubois
President, Western Resource Advocates





WRA Welcomes a New Western Lands Team!

The new team will protect our natural, cultural, and outdoor heritage



Chris Scolari,
Western Lands Director

WRA is pleased to welcome Chris Scolari as our new Western Lands Director! Chris comes to WRA from the Western Governors' Association, where he worked directly with governors from both political parties and a variety of diverse stakeholders to develop initiatives on a number of lands and energy issues.

Chris, along with Lands Policy Analyst Rachael Hamby and in close collaboration with our Clean Energy and Healthy Rivers programs, will be working to build a smart and ambitious program that advances WRA's vision of protecting half of western landscapes in order to support thriving wildlife populations and our natural, cultural, and outdoor heritage. As part of this vision the Western Lands



Rachael Hamby,
Lands Policy Analyst

Program will be engaged in efforts to counter attacks from Washington, DC on bedrock environmental protections – attacks which are out of step with the values of westerners. WRA will also be focused on developing proactive land conservation solutions at the state level across the West.

Who Faces Water Cuts as Lake Mead Shrinks?

Collaborative solutions needed since business-as-usual will lead Arizona to large-scale water shortages

Colorado River water supplies are in jeopardy because of climate change and chronic overuse by cities, agriculture, and businesses. Current water management is leading Arizona to face large-scale water shortages and severe impacts.

Who will be impacted first when Arizona loses this water? Some Central Arizona new suburban development, groundwater used for drought protection, and central Arizona agriculture will all face cutbacks first. If Lake Mead levels continue to fall, central Arizona farmers will lose all access to Colorado River water, and even major cities' supplies could be cut. This would have devastating effects on Arizona's agricultural economy, and residential water rates would certainly go up in Phoenix and Tucson.

The good news is that this dire scenario can be avoided. In January, Western Resource Advocates released a report titled "Arizona's Water Future: Colorado River Shortage, Innovative Solutions, and Living Well with Less." The report documents shortage impacts and shares a number of collaborative solutions emphasizing water conservation, reuse and water sharing agreements building upon Arizona's history of water innovation.

WRA is now working with a variety of stakeholders to implement the identified proactive steps to keep Arizona's Colorado River supplies stable and rivers healthy for the benefit of both current and future generations.



Current efforts to protect Lake Mead are a good step forward, but we need to do more to address the chronic overuse of Colorado River water.

Building Water Smart from the Start in Colorado

State legislation will require new homes to include water conservation measures

For most of us in the West, we realize that water is scarce. Even with the occasional wet winter many of us had this year, we know that we shouldn't waste water. Our population is growing and climate change is predicted to reduce water availability, creating even more stress and pressure on our rivers and streams. So why should our state laws allow new homes to be built that are water wasteful? Short answer: they shouldn't.

The good news is that in Colorado WRA is working with State Representative Chris Hansen to close a loophole in our current laws that allows new home development to get approved without implementing any water conservation measures. If passed, this new legislation would require new homes to be built water-smart from the start. New developments would have to present their indoor and outdoor water conservation measures before being approved for construction by their local government.

WRA drafted the new legislation, is conducting outreach to stakeholders, and will testify in support of the bill at committee hearings. We know via polling that 82% of Colorado voters think we should solve most of our water problems through conserving water and reducing water waste. By May 10, 2017, we'll know if Colorado legislators agree with you, me, and their constituents.



Water-smart growth can use 40% less water than traditional housing.

Cleaner Air for People in Utah

Utah needs to provide public records on compliance and enforce its air quality laws

Dust sounds so harmless. In Utah's Wasatch Front however, dust from gravel pit operations is a substantial contributor to Utah's poor air quality. It turns out that gravel pit dust (Particulate Matter 10) can get deep in our lungs and lead to cancer and other serious health problems, including premature death. In our efforts to support clean air in Utah, WRA attorneys reviewed how two gravel operations were complying with state and federal clean air laws in controlling their dust -- and found that there were no records on compliance kept by the state agency available for review.

With an estimated annual premature death rate of up to 2,000 people as a result of all air pollution in this greater region of the state, WRA doesn't take this lack of public records on enforcement lightly.

For Erika Doty, a long-time resident of the community downwind of these operations, this isn't a theoretical problem. Her seven-year-old suffers from asthma and air quality is top of mind for their family. Erika shared, "I don't think the laws - or the enforcement - are nearly tough enough."

Stay tuned for the results of this litigation and WRA's many other efforts to clean Utah's air.



Nevada Can and Should do More with Clean Energy

Legislation in Nevada would increase clean energy to 50% by 2040



Nevada was one of the first in the United States to establish a renewable portfolio standard goal of producing 25% of its electricity from cleaner sources, such as solar and geothermal, by 2025. However, as of 2017, only 16% of its energy comes from clean sources. This is a state with a wealth of sunshine and geothermal potential and with recent polling showing Nevada voters preferring to see more solar, wind, and renewable energy jobs than any other type of business in Nevada. Western Resource Advocates staff attorney Bob Johnston and other conservation partners have partnered with Assembly member Chris Brooks and crafted a new clean energy standard proposing to boost it to 50% by 2030, and setting a goal of 80% by 2040. Visit our website and sign up for WRA's e-news to get updates and action alerts to help us pass this important legislation to clean Nevada's air, reduce carbon pollution and create more clean energy jobs.



PROTECTING THE WEST'S LAND, AIR, AND WATER

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