

WESTERN VIEWS

Fall 2017

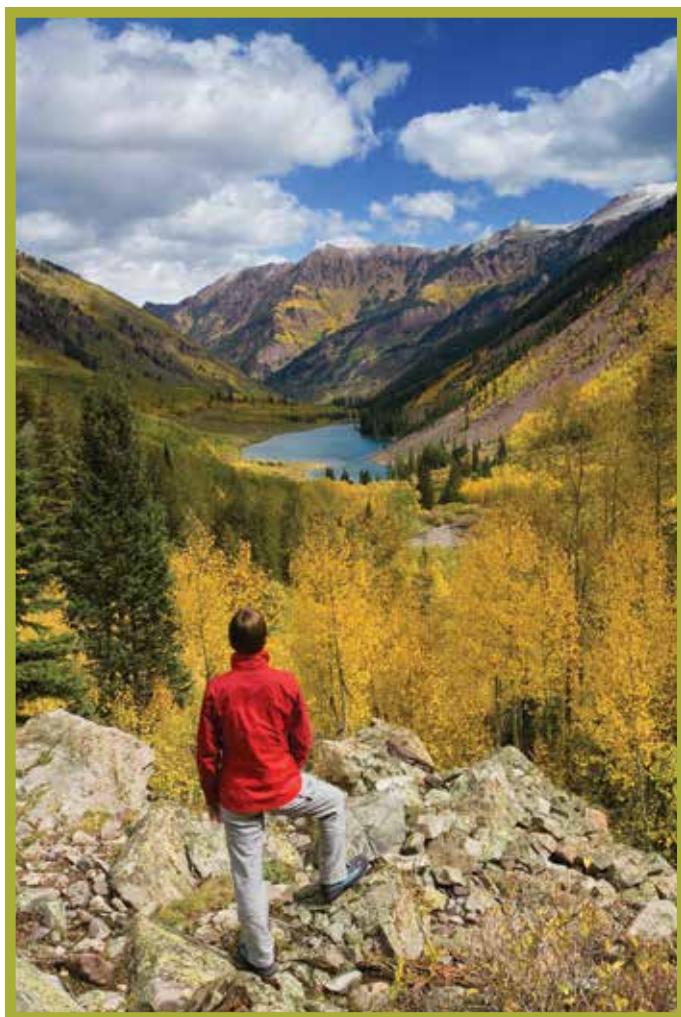
Working to Ensure Half Our Western Landscapes Are Protected and Connected

The West's unparalleled natural landscapes are an important part of our heritage and define who we are as a region. They also support this region's multi-billion dollar outdoor economy and provide a source of clean drinking water to millions of people. Not surprisingly, studies show that most people, regardless of politics or affiliations, support increased land protections. Unfortunately, despite this shared belief, Western lands are increasingly threatened by growing populations, climate change, and a federal administration determined to advance an agenda of unfettered development.

In the face of these threats, Western Resource Advocates believes Western states can and should play a larger role in achieving innovative land conservation objectives in order to help preserve the West's way of life, and the lands and resources we value.

WRA's long-term vision is that half of Western landscapes and habitat will be protected and connected to support thriving wildlife populations and unparalleled opportunities to enjoy the West's natural beauty. To advance this vision, WRA is working with partners across the region to develop, test, and advance innovative, proactive, state-based land conservation programs and securing financial resources to support them. We are engaged with the best thinkers in the land protection community, including members of the outdoor recreation industry, state government, and academia.

Our goal is to help multiple states across the West adopt or enact new programs to conserve land of the highest ecological, cultural, or historic value. Through this work, Western states will lead in land conservation nationally and will ensure that key resources are protected for future generations.



Together we can protect the West!

PROTECTING THE WEST'S LAND, AIR, AND WATER



Solar at UNM Campus



We need to drive carbon pollution reductions in transportation and other sectors

New Report Charts Path for Colorado to Drive Deep Cuts in Carbon Pollution

Western Resource Advocates, along with partner Conservation Colorado, released a report in September charting how the state can meet scientifically agreed-upon goals to reduce greenhouse gases. *Colorado's Climate Blueprint: Actions for Addressing Climate Change and Safeguarding Our Future* calls on Colorado to:

- Adopt statewide carbon pollution goals to reduce emissions by 45% below 2005 levels by 2030 and 90% by 2050.
- Advance policies that drive reduction of carbon pollution in key sectors, like power plants, transportation, and buildings.
- Enact market-based policies to drive deeper cuts in carbon pollution.

WRA President Jon Goldin-Dubois stated, "Our state, businesses, local governments, and communities need to get behind comprehensive state action on climate change to reduce carbon pollution and ensure a healthy and resilient economy. We have provided a clear and feasible path—we call on leaders to embrace the challenge and commit to action."

The West is Leading Action on Climate Change

With weeks of off-the-chart hurricanes leaving a wake of devastation and wildfires raging across the West, what scientists have been predicting is becoming clearer every day. These natural disasters are becoming more potent because of climate change. While addressing this challenge can seem overwhelming, there are several steps we can take to ensure that the West is front and center in the effort to address climate change.

This summer and early fall has been an exciting time for Western Resource Advocates, as we have stepped up our game with new proposals to reduce carbon pollution from the electricity sector. Electricity is a focus of action for WRA, not only because it powers our homes and businesses, but also because it's a linchpin to a cleaner transportation future. Transportation has become the leading contributor to greenhouse gases in the U.S.; therefore, it is imperative to transition to "clean" electric-powered transportation.

To do so, three key actions need to take place.

- Each Western state needs to set goals to drive effective emission reductions from electricity generation.
- We need to advance specific policies that drive carbon reductions across sectors.
- We need to enact market-based initiatives to drive innovations that will fill technology gaps and allow us to run on 100% clean energy in the future.

"We can transition the West to the clean energy economy of tomorrow," said Jon Goldin-Dubois, president of WRA. "Despite federal inaction, the West can showcase state-level actions that work and keep political and economic momentum moving to achieve climate goals that we have to reach."

This summer, WRA, along with New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas and Prosperity Works (a consumer advocacy group), proposed an innovative clean energy standard. The market-based program would lower carbon pollution from electric utilities by 4% a year, resulting in an 80% reduction by 2040.

In Colorado, WRA joined with Xcel Energy (the largest utility in the state) and others to advance a new Colorado Energy Plan. The plan would reduce customers' bills by retiring older, less-efficient coal-fired power plants, replacing them with lower-cost, clean energy resources, like wind, solar, and energy storage. These new resources would also create rural economic opportunities, investing billions of dollars in Colorado communities. This plan would improve air quality, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and help achieve Governor Hickenlooper's executive order on climate.

The Colorado River: Protecting an Endangered Resource

For decades, people have recognized the Colorado River as the lifeblood of our communities and economy in the West. Starting in the Rocky Mountains, the river is a critical source of water for seven states: Colorado, Wyoming, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and California. Although its path winds 1,450 miles to the Gulf of California, the river's waters no longer make it to the sea, and reservoirs filled by the river are at historic lows.



WRA is working to stabilize water levels and restore the health of the Colorado River for us all

With populations exploding in the West, the growing demand for water from the Colorado River already exceeds supply, a challenge that will only worsen as development continues to grow. Current projections show that by 2060, increasing demand and the effects of climate change will result in a significant deficit in river supply, jeopardizing nearly 40 million people's drinking water, agriculture, future economic growth, the \$26.4 billion outdoor recreational economy, and a quarter-million jobs. In addition, the river's imbalance is damaging natural ecosystems, harming world-class fisheries, and putting wildlife habitat at risk.

Western Resource Advocates understands the critical need to protect the Colorado River and is working with partners across the West to develop strategies and policies to bring human water uses back into balance with the amount of water the river actually provides. These strategies include innovative, affordable, and common-sense conservation solutions, like municipal conservation and reuse, agricultural efficiency, and water banking, combined with transitioning water management away from outdated and environmentally devastating methods, like building large dams and pipelines.

In the last few months, in particular, WRA's Healthy Rivers Program staff have been working to stop unnecessary dams in the Maroon Bells Wilderness Area near Aspen and made progress working with the City of Aspen to adopt better water strategies. In Colorado, we are developing a manual to help communities ensure new land use development is water-smart from the start and have been working to advance water reuse. In Arizona, we have been working to shape a statewide drought plan and longer-term planning to prevent water shortages. And across the West, we are creating better state protocols to enable a market-based approach to finance cutting-edge water-conservation retrofit projects that can save large sums of money for school districts, government, and others. All of these pathways lead to ensuring community water use is wiser throughout the West.

Clearly, water plays a critical role in all of our lives, and the fate of the Colorado River is closely tied to our communities' sustainability—now and for future generations. But its fate is not sealed...we are working to ensure the Colorado will once again flow to the sea!

Stepping Up to Make a Difference

Damon (Baz) Redd, owner of Kind Design, a Colorado-based apparel company, is stepping up to do what he can to help protect the Colorado River. "I worked as a raft guide on the Colorado River for many years," he explains, "and that lifestyle was one of the inspirations behind the brand. This river supplies water to an enormous number of people throughout the West. It deserves to be respected by humans, and we should do everything we can to protect it."

With a focus on designing and producing clothing, gear, and accessories that highlight a connection to Colorado, Baz decided to take the topography of segments of the Colorado River and overlay them onto board shorts. That decision not only celebrates the river, but also helps protect it. The shorts were an instant success, and Baz is donating 5% of all sales to support Western Resource Advocates' work to protect the Colorado River.



Kind Design is now working on new board shorts with different segments of the river. Order yours today!

www.kinddesign.co



2260 Baseline Road Suite 200, Boulder, CO 80302

Join our online community and let us know what you think!

 Find us on Facebook!

 Follow us on Twitter @WRADV

Regional Offices: AZ, CO, NM, NV, UT

If you want to receive our monthly e-newsletter, sign up at www.westernresourceadvocates.org



New policy expands solar gardens benefiting low income residents in Colorado

“We owe our success in Colorado to WRA’s efforts and advocacy—no one else provides the same level of regulatory wherewithal and legal expertise as WRA.” —Tom Figel of GRID Alternatives

Partnering to Advance Solar Access for Communities

GRID Alternatives, a national nonprofit organization, is one of the leading voices in renewable energy access, driving policy at state and local levels to support solar access for underserved and low income communities.

Working in collaboration with WRA’s experts, GRID Alternatives helped to secure an agreement with Xcel Energy, the largest utility in Colorado, which provided new incentives and program opportunities to create more solar options for low-income Coloradans.

“Targeted policies and incentives are necessary to jump-start the low-income market in Colorado,” GRID’s Tom Figel, Policy & Regulatory Manager testified, “because low-income customers do not have capital or access to financing to cover the up-front costs for solar.”

As a result of our collaboration, Xcel Energy has a new program that opened the door for GRID Alternatives to install solar gardens that will directly benefit about 3,700 low-income customers. Solar gardens are a shared solar array that individuals can subscribe to through their utility.