

2020

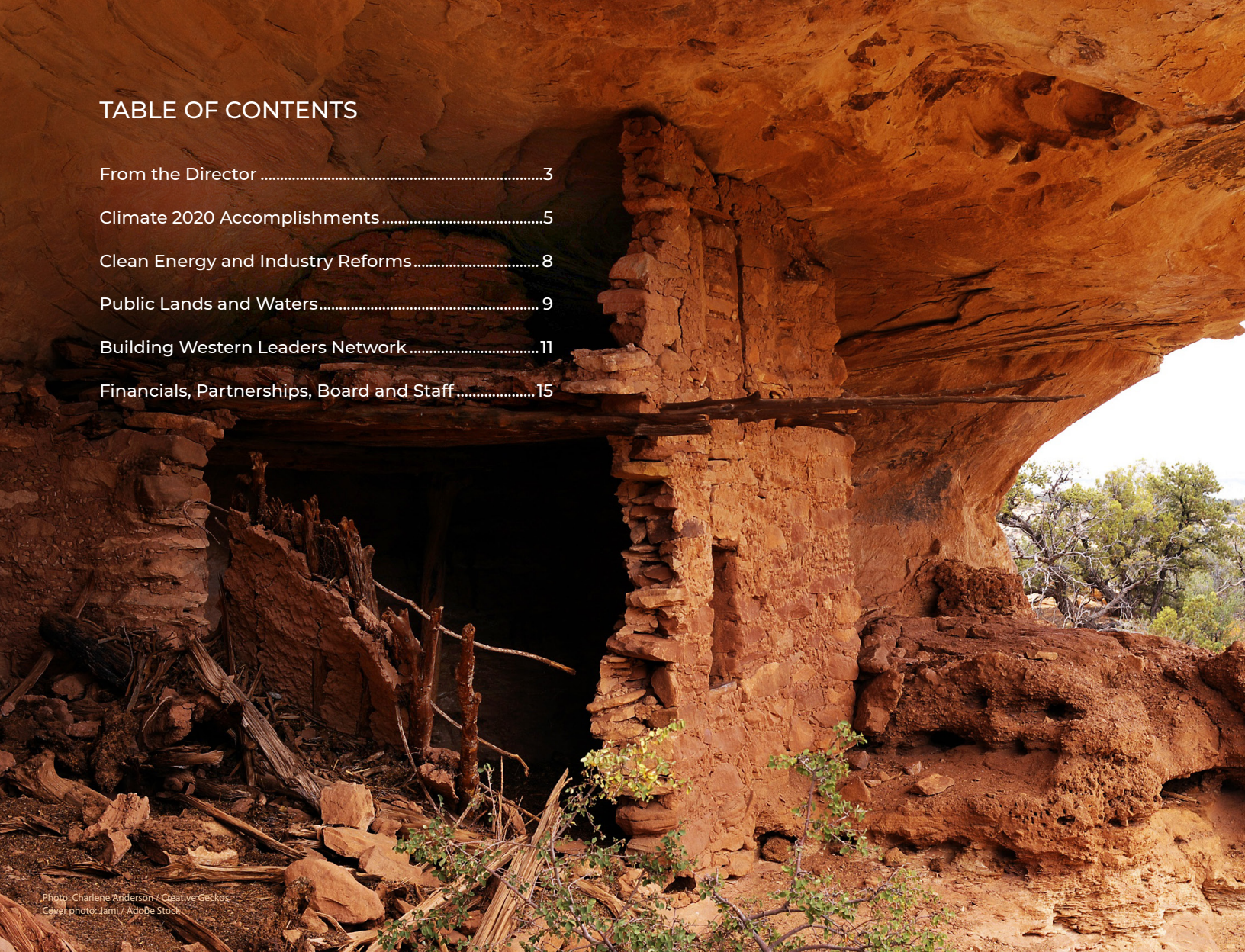
ANNUAL REPORT

Western Leaders Network



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

As Western Leaders Network turns four, I've been reflecting on our work since our formation and have to say, 2020 was one of our biggest years of growth, learning and success as an organization.

That may be surprising, given that 2020 was the year defined by a deadly global pandemic, resulting economic crisis, political upheaval and violence, a historically consequential election, and year four of an anti-regulation agenda that threatened our environment.

When COVID-19 struck the U.S. early last year, causing lockdowns and chaos, we knew it was going to change our priorities and how we worked at Western Leaders Network. We also thought it was going to be difficult to work toward our mission of



protecting our air, water, public lands and public health. Instead, we found that our local leaders were more engaged and ready to work than ever. And though it was tough to move the dial on climate and conservation with Congress focused on pandemic response, we were still able to accomplish a lot, thanks to the commitment of local and tribal leaders across the Interior West, and expand and build relationships within our network.

COVID-19 also taught us a lot about how we must think about conservation

Getting the word out, by the numbers, 2020

- 12 editorials and op-eds published
- 14 verbal and written public testimonies
- 13 local and tribal resolutions passed
- 9 sign-on letters
- 4 webinars hosted

and climate solutions going forward. This pandemic has been and is a stark reminder of how infectious disease is closely connected to climate change, and underscored just how prevalent environmental injustice is in our country. These are critical lessons that must be integrated in our plans and policy to address the climate crisis and ensure that all communities have clean air and water, and access to the outdoors. In other words, when we work toward a healthier environment, we're also working toward justice and equity.

Unfortunately, the pandemic forced us to indefinitely postpone our Annual Summit, which was scheduled to take place in May 2020 in Santa Fe, so we missed seeing you last year. This is one of our major annual fundraising events, and a time when we get to meet with many of you in-person, discuss issues that affect western communities, and share ideas for effective leadership.

Hopefully, we won't have to wait another year before we can all gather again, but in the meantime, we've got a lot of exciting work in front of us. WLN kicked off 2021 with a letter to the new President and Vice President, calling on the administration to prioritize conservation and climate action in the term ahead. Specifically, we've requested that the administration: restore the boundaries of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase national monuments; sign an executive order to protect 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030; enact strong federal regulations to reduce methane and other greenhouse gases from the oil and gas industry; enact a freeze on federal fossil fuel leasing; develop a rule governing fracking on federal land for existing oil and gas development; sign an executive order advancing environmental justice and equity across all federal agencies; and reform the Mining Act of 1872.

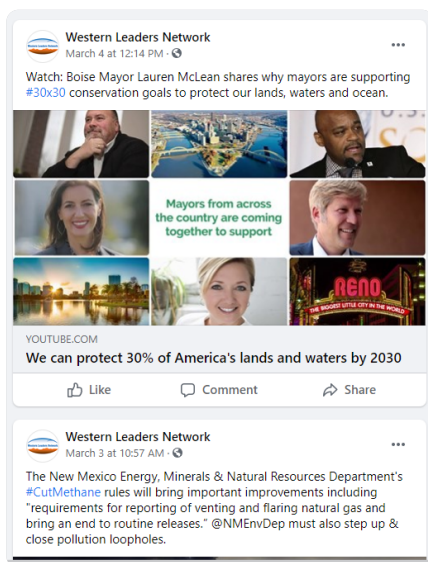
Everything WLN accomplished last year, from the big wins (achieving full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund) to the small (expanding our Western Leaders Voices program), couldn't have been done without your passion and dedication to your communities and your vision for a better, stronger West. I'm inspired by your leadership and ready for the work ahead.



Gwen Lachelt
Founder & Executive Director

CLIMATE 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Photo: Paule Hjertaaas



Promoted the 30x30 Campaign

The *30x30 Campaign for Nature* is a U.S.-led, science-based initiative to preserve 30 percent of our lands and water by 2030 to fight the climate crisis and protect our wildlife, waterways and natural places. WLN published a toolkit for local leadership to learn more about the campaign goals and what they can do to advance it. To date, 25 local and tribal elected officials took the pledge to support the 30x30 initiative, and 10 local and tribal boards passed resolutions of support.

Advanced Colorado Rules to Reduce Methane, Protect Climate

2020 was a watershed year for air quality regulations and accountability for the oil and gas industry in Colorado. The state adopted the nation's strongest wellbore integrity regulations to protect groundwater and air quality from oil and gas pollution. WLN sent letters signed by more than 60 Colorado leaders to the Air Quality Control Commission and Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, two state rulemaking entities, calling for new air quality regulations to be applied statewide to protect the airshed and public health of all Coloradans.



Photo: Charlene Anderson

CLIMATE 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SANTA FE • NEW MEXICAN

NEWS OPINION OPINIONS COMMENTARY LOCAL NEWS CLASSIFIED REAL ESTATE JOHN JONES

MY VIEW WALLY TOLEDRO

Virtual hearing to consider draft methane rules

By Wally Toledo

On Thursday, Aug. 6, the New Mexico Environment Department and Department of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources will host a virtual public hearing on statewide draft rules to reduce methane and other pollutants from oil and gas production.

While the draft rules are a step in the right direction, they also include major loopholes and exemptions for polluters. So we do not support these definitions, we will be pressing our most vulnerable populations – including Native communities – for relief.

While Native lands methane emissions among the highest in the U.S. and the Theraps Native one of the production basins for the COVID-19, due to a rise in cases in New Mexico's tribal communities, research shows pollution and climate change disproportionately impact children, poor and rural communities, and Native Americans. Communities like mine are suffering more and have been slow to address the climate.

To address climate and environmental justice for our state's oil and gas fields, and all New Mexicans, we must lead by example industry responsible with comprehensive rules to address our pollution problem.

I appreciate the effort of our state agencies to developing these rules in a timely and transparent way but we need to have that conversation to ensure these methane and gas climate to strengthen these draft rules and enforcement measures. Surely, these regulations should include but not limited to: stronger permit requirements, better siting of facilities, and require enforcement of gas operation. Other if we have, communities and necessary that will be the best of the best of the best of the best.

Though we see the climate action on Earth, so many of our Native communities are marginalized and excluded from the voice of public health and climate change impacts.


Farmington Daily Times

The Four Corners methane hot spot is the most concentrated cloud of methane pollution in the United States. It is a 2,000-square-mile problem that is affecting the quality of life for tens of thousands of people in Aztec. Farmington and other communities across the Four Corners region.


That is why I strongly support Governor Lujan Grisham's efforts to meet nationally leading regulations in the next 12 months that will dramatically reduce methane pollution and waste from oil and gas development. Her state Environment Department and Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department are already hard at work and have released a comprehensive white paper on methane reduction opportunities for public comment. I look forward to them moving forward on comprehensive rules in 2021.

Methane waste and pollution from oil and gas operations is impacting air quality, damaging the climate for future generations and wasting millions of dollars in taxpayer-owned revenue for needed services.

In 2014, NASA discovered a cloud of methane the size of Delaware hovering over the Four Corners region. The pollution was attributed largely to the oil and gas industry, and subsequent studies have confirmed this fact, despite efforts by some intentionally misleading statements from industry-funded groups in the Daily Times recently ([Op-Ed: Reducing methane regulations without undermining the role of natural gas?](#) Daily Times, 02/10/2019).



Las Cruces Sun News.



Anything that hasn't changed in a century is probably due to a maverick — especially if it would bring more revenue to New Mexico communities. That's certainly true of our federal oil and gas fiscal policies, which currently shortchange taxpayers and allow operators to lock up public lands for sale to drilling. It's oil and gas.

For 100 years, the federal royalty rate for onshore oil and gas development has remained stagnant, and the recent rate and national minimums hit are also extremely outdated — falling to account for inflation and increased production, and leaving the federal state rates. As a result, taxpayers are not receiving fair

Supported New Mexico Rules to Reduce Methane, Protect Climate

When Governor Lujan Grisham took office, she pledged to enact nationally leading rules to cut methane emissions from the oil and gas industry and mitigate climate damage. State agencies spent most of the year working on those rules, and network leaders in New Mexico have remained consistently engaged and provided public comment in the ongoing public rulemaking process, which will continue into 2021. In a letter to the administration, more than 50 New Mexico leaders expressed support for the rulemaking, and WLN published four op-eds from New Mexico leaders in Aztec, Las Cruces and Santa Fe, calling for strong state methane regulations and climate action.

CLIMATE 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Launched Climate Action Campaign to Governors

WLN launched an ad campaign to communicate to the public, media, western governors and their staff the catastrophic damage of the climate change-fueled wildfires that devastated the West in 2020. WLN ran ads on social media and in state news outlets targeting the governors of Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada, sent letters to the governors and legislators in those states, and published opinion editorials by local elected leaders, calling on western governors to advance enforceable climate action.

Defended Federal Methane Rules

In one of our first successes as an organization, WLN played a role in helping win the 2017 U.S. Senate vote to uphold the Obama administration's Bureau of Land Management rule to reduce methane pollution and waste from the oil and gas industry. WLN has worked ever since to defend federal BLM and EPA methane regulations from attempted rollbacks. In 2020, WLN issued statements of opposition when the Trump administration rescinded the EPA methane rule, and when a federal court declared the BLM rule unlawful. WLN also wrote a letter to the Biden administration, urging a reinstatement and strengthening of federal methane regulations.



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CLEAN ENERGY and industry reforms

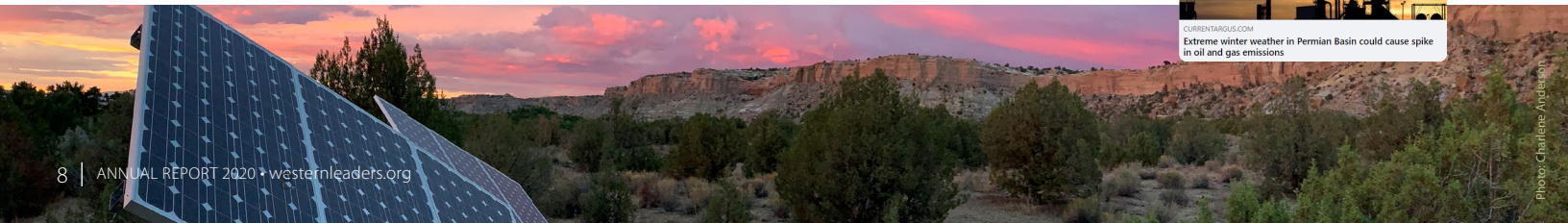
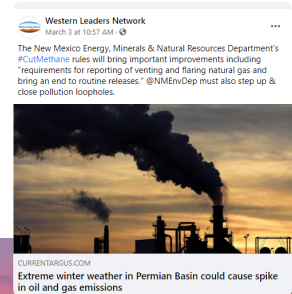
Photo: j Bentley09 / iStock

Advanced Oil & Gas Fiscal Reform

The federal onshore oil and gas fiscal program hasn't changed in over a century, which means taxpayers are not receiving a fair return on oil and gas leases, and speculators are able to lock up public lands for next to nothing. WLN sent a letter signed by 23 local leaders, urging Congress to modernize current fiscal policy and establish a fair federal royalty rate for onshore development, which would bring more revenue to communities. WLN leaders in Utah and New Mexico published op-eds advocating for these reforms. Additionally, local leaders from Colorado and New Mexico participated in an online meeting to discuss this issue with members of Congress.

Fostered Community Solar Projects in New Mexico

WLN partnered with other organizations to bring tribal leaders, community members and other stakeholders together to find ways to make solar projects possible in tribal communities. Through surveys and discussion, WLN and partners were able to garner statewide support for community solar projects and legislation.



PUBLIC LANDS & WATERS 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Photo: John Mirro / iStock

Garnered Support for Mining Law Reforms

The Hardrock Leasing and Reclamation Act of 2019 was among many pieces of legislation poised to advance in 2020 before COVID-19 response took precedence in Congress. While Representative Raúl Grijalva's bill did not go to the House floor for a vote as anticipated in 2020, local western leaders voiced their support for reforming the 1872 General Mining Act, which to this day governs the hard rock mining industry. Local and tribal boards in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho and New Mexico passed resolutions supporting reforms to protect communities from mine pollution and require mining companies to pay royalties to extract on public lands. Local officials in Montana and Nevada also published op-eds supporting reforms, and a letter signed by 57 western leaders from eight Interior West states was sent to Congressional leaders.

Engaged APCG on Methane, Mining Law Reform

In 2020, WLN engaged the All Pueblo Council of Governors on two key issues with major impacts on Indian Country and the Interior West. APCG, composed of 20 Governors of sovereign Pueblo nations in New Mexico and Texas, passed resolutions supporting mining law reform to protect communities and natural places from mine pollution, and statewide regulations in New Mexico to reduce climate change-causing methane pollution.



All Pueblo Council of Governors passed resolutions supporting mining law reform and statewide regulations in New Mexico to reduce methane pollution.

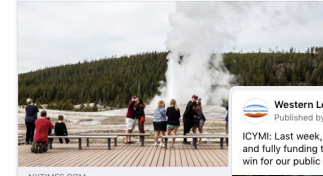
PUBLIC LANDS & WATERS 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Secured Full, Permanent Funding for LWCF

Since 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has funded our nation's parks, trails and outdoor spaces — assets that contribute to stronger, healthier communities, particularly in the West.

WLN, in coordination with The Mountain Pact, sent a letter in May signed by more than 100 local, western leaders calling on Congress to invest in LWCF in a forthcoming stimulus package. In summer 2020, the Great American Outdoors Act was passed by Congress and signed into law, finally securing full and permanent funding for this program and dedicating \$2.8 billion annually for conservation, outdoor recreation and park maintenance.

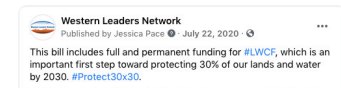
This was landmark legislation, as America's outdoor recreation economy supports over 7.6 million jobs, contributes over \$887 billion in annual economic output, and serves as the lifeblood for countless communities West-wide and across the country.



NYTIMES.COM
Senate Passes Major Public Lands Bill
Bipartisan legislation to fix up national parks a



HCN.ORG
The Great American Outdoors Act passes Senate with bipartisan support



DENVERPOST.COM
Congress passes Cory Gardner's public lands bill
The U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a maj...

BUILDING WESTERN LEADERS NETWORK



Expanded Network to 450 Leaders

WLN has grown from the ground up over the past four years to include a robust, diverse network of leaders in the Interior West. In 2020, we surpassed the 450-member mark. It's incredible that we are now approaching a membership of 500 local and tribal leaders from eight western states, representing tribes, urban and rural areas, extractive resource communities and outdoor recreation economies, and everything in between. Our strength as an organization is in numbers and the diversity of our voices, and we look forward to continued growth in 2021.

Grew Our Board of Directors

WLN was pleased to add Victor Snover, the Mayor of Aztec, New Mexico, to our board of directors in 2020. Victor lives in the heart of the San Juan Basin, which is home to one of the nation's largest concentrations of methane pollution, and he has been one of WLN's leading New Mexico-based advocates for stronger regulations to reduce climate change-causing methane and other pollutants from the oil and gas industry. Victor also serves on the board of directors for New Mexico's Economic Council Helping Others, the Aztec Airport Advisory Board and the New Mexico Workforce Solutions State Board.

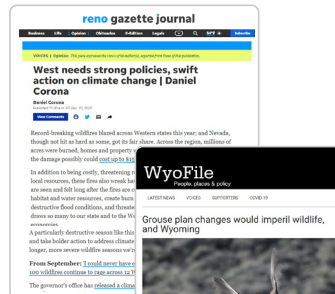


WLN expanded the network to more than 450 local and tribal officials in eight Western states

BUILDING WESTERN LEADERS NETWORK

Crew the Western Leaders Voices Program
Western Leaders Voices helps amplify the voices of local and tribal elected leaders on conservation issues in the West.

In 2020, Western Leaders Voices published a dozen op-eds and letters-to-the-editor in publications in New Mexico, Colorado, Montana, Utah and Nevada on issues including methane pollution and regulations, hard rock mining legislation, oil and gas fiscal reform, climate change policy, well integrity rules, and wildfire risk.



SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

Virtual hearing to consider draft methane rules
By Wally Toledo, Navajo Nation, Torreon Star Lake Chapter
Community Services Organizer
August 5, 2020 – Updated August 5, 2020

The Salt Lake Tribune

Utah deserves fair value for oil and gas leases
By Mary McGann, Chair of the Grand County Council
Special to The Tribune, July 30, 2020

ARIZONA Daily Sun

Coconino Voices: State must take action to protect against wildfires
Lena Fowler, Coconino County Board Supervisor
September 12, 2019 – Updated October 17, 2019

WyoFile

People, places & policy

Grouse plan changes would imperil wildlife, and Wyoming
Pet Gosar, Albany County Commissioner, August 6, 2019

BUILDING WESTERN LEADERS NETWORK

Profiled Leaders

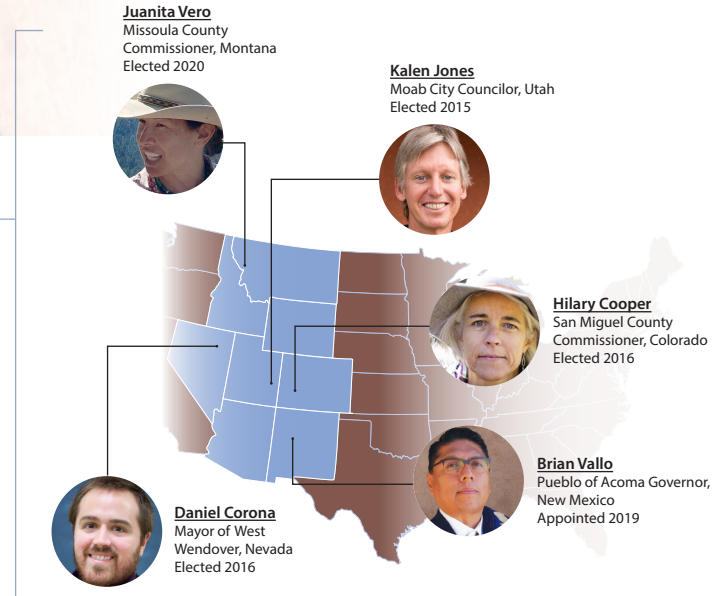
WLN featured profiles of network leaders in our monthly newsletters, interviewing local and tribal elected officials across the West about conservation policy, COVID-19 response, addressing social inequities in their communities and advice for newly elected leaders. See profiles at westernleaders.org/voices.

Hosted Quarterly Webinars

WLN hosted quarterly informational webinars for network leaders on emerging conservation issues in the West. Topics included public health impacts from oil and gas development in Colorado, legislation and current regulatory efforts; economic transitions and diversity in western communities; and conservation outlook and strategy for the West following the 2020 election.

Launched Social Media Campaign to Curb COVID

As COVID-19 surged across the country in early 2020, WLN sought ways to urge local and tribal elected officials to set an example for their constituents and work and lead from home if possible, to help prevent spreading the virus. WLN launched a social media campaign, #LeadingFromHome, to promote this message.



BUILDING WESTERN LEADERS NETWORK

Professional Development

WLN staff members completed the Western Organization of Resource Councils' Principles of Community Organizing training in fall 2020.



“This hands-on training series was very instructive and applicable to my work at WLN. I came away with a deeper understanding of membership building, which is especially critical to our relatively new organization, and the components of a successful issue campaign.”

—Jessica Pace, Program Coordinator



“I’m glad I was fortunate enough to join this training. The outline of it had a consistent, smooth flow from messaging to strategy to facilitation. These skills and techniques will stay with me, because the group was very interactive and shared memorable content. Even if it was all online, it was great to meet new, like-minded people.”

—Derrick Toledo, Indian Country Organizer

FINANCIALS, PARTNERSHIPS, BOARD & STAFF

Financials

2020 REVENUES

Grants: \$234,500

Membership/Contributions: \$3,086

Other: \$8

Total Revenue: \$237,594

2020 EXPENSES

Programs: \$200,779

General & Administrative: \$31,584

Events/Travel: \$1,017

Total Expenses: \$233,380

Foundations, Organizations and Corporations

Energy Foundation

George B. Storer Foundation

The Wilderness Society

Environmental Defense Fund

League of Conservation Voters

Patagonia

Resources Legacy Fund

Fidelity Charitable Trust

Maki Foundation

Western Conservation Foundation

— Thank you! —

Board of Directors

Elise Jones, Chair

Former Boulder County Commissioner
(2012-2020) · Executive Director, Southwest
Energy Efficiency Project
COLORADO

Lauren Pagel, Vice Chair

Policy Director, Earthworks
WASHINGTON, DC

Don Schreiber, Treasurer

Rancher
NEW MEXICO

Daniel Corona, Director

Mayor, West Wendover
NEVADA — Joined in 2021

Victor Snover, Director

Mayor, Aztec
NEW MEXICO

Juanita Vero, Director

Commissioner, Missoula County
MONTANA — Joined in 2021

Staff & Contractors

Gwen Lachelt, Founder & Executive Director

Jessica Pace, Program Coordinator

Derrick Toledo, Indian Country Organizer

Susan Etter, Accountant & Bookkeeper



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 [@westleaders](https://www.facebook.com/westleaders)

Western Leaders Network is a nonprofit under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. We unite, support and cultivate pro-conservation local and tribal elected officials to protect western lands and build healthy, sustainable and resilient communities. Donations to Western Leaders Network are tax-deductible.



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