


# 2021

**Western Leaders Network**

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ANNUAL REPORT





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On the cover: Grizzly 399 nurses her cubs in Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.  
Photo by Mike Cavaroc / Adobe Stock. Current page: San Juan Mountains, Colorado.

Photos by Charlene Anderson unless noted. Design by CreativeGeckos.com.



## FROM THE DIRECTOR

As Western Leaders Network turns five years old, it is with immense gratitude that I write this note. Over the past five years, I have been inspired by the dedication and resilience of local and tribal leaders across the West as we grappled with so many issues: a climate crisis that continues to grow in severity, four years of unbridled federal environmental rollbacks pausing momentum on climate action, a deadly pandemic and its economic fallout, political dissension and the unraveling of our democracy, and, in more recent months, a foreign conflict that has further complicated our energy future.

But through it all, we've accomplished much to be proud of. This annual report reflects the work that we achieved together in 2021. We've called on the Biden administration for bold climate action, reforms and accountability for fossil fuel industries, advancements in energy security, and better stewardship and conservation of the beautiful lands we call home. We held a record number of virtual events to educate and engage local and tribal leaders on climate initiatives. We've seen Colorado and New Mexico make huge gains on climate objectives by adopting nation-leading rules to limit oil and gas pollution.





## 2021 Getting the word out, by the numbers

12 opinion editorials

319 signatures  
on letters

14 letters

5 virtual events

We've built support in the Interior West for the "America the Beautiful" initiative to protect thirty percent of our lands and waters by 2030 to combat climate change. And we've called for investments in our climate future, quality jobs, and environmental justice, which Congress met with the passage of a \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package.

We've also made internal changes to serve our network of leaders better and heighten our power and reach as an organization. WLN welcomed two part-time staff members, including a Membership Outreach Coordinator to expand our numbers at WLN and a Major Donor Program Coordinator to raise funds to expand our organizational capacity. We've also expanded our board of directors. After five years of growing our local and tribal leaders network, our board officially decided to include state elected officials among our ranks at WLN.

These are troubling times but also exciting ones. We have much work ahead of us to safeguard our climate, local economies, public lands, and communities, but our network is up to the task. As Western Leaders Network celebrates its fifth birthday, I'm hopeful and ready for the next five.

Gwen Lachelt  
Founder & Executive Director

# CLIMATE

**U.S. WEST OFFICIAL**

## CODE RED

### Climate & Indian Country

WEBINAR  
EVENT AND  
DISCUSSION

*with*

Hilary Tompkins, *Former Solicitor for the U.S. Department of the Interior and Partner at Hogan Lovells*  
Tommy Jones, *Deployment Specialist for the Department of Energy – Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs*  
Amber Torres, *Chairman of the Walker River Paiute Tribe*  
Jordan Dresser, *Chairman of the Northern Arapaho Tribe*  
Randy L. Teton, *Public Affairs Manager of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes*

About Indian Country's leadership on Combating Climate Change and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations.

Tuesday, November 9, 2021  
1:00 to 2:00 p.m. MST

[register here](#)

westernleaders.org

## Launched CODE RED: Climate Action Series

Last year, WLN launched a series of virtual events dedicated to climate issues and solutions for our network leaders throughout the Interior West. These events featured high-profile speakers, including U.S. Senators Ben Ray Lujan (NM) and John Hickenlooper (CO). Series topics included federal funding dedicated to orphan well cleanup, the Build Back Better legislation and its climate benefits for western communities, and the role indigenous leaders can play in mitigating the climate crisis.

## Advanced Colorado Rules to Cut Emissions

Colorado officials within our network have been engaged for several years in state rulemaking efforts to improve transparency, protect public health, and cut emissions from Colorado's oil and gas industry. Last year was another milestone for Colorado. The state adopted nation-leading rules to cut emissions from pneumatic devices, which WLN's Colorado leaders advocated for through public testimony, sign-on letters, and opinion editorials.

# CLIMATE



## SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

### N.M. can still strengthen methane rule

Brian Vallo, Governor, Pueblo of Acoma  
July 17, 2021

Advanced New Mexico Rules to Cut Emissions  
WLN engaged its New Mexico leaders to support strong methane reduction rules through sign-on letters to state regulators, authoring op-eds, and testifying at public hearings. We also hosted a *CODE RED: Climate Action* virtual event with experts and community leaders on the rules and how local elected officials can get involved. The Oil Conservation Division adopted a nation-leading rule limiting venting and flaring in 2021. The Environment Department is poised to adopt a robust set of methane rules in 2022.

### Advocated for Federal Climate Rules

One of our first WLN victories was helping win a vote in the U.S. Senate upholding a BLM rule to reduce methane emissions. We have continued to advocate for strict EPA and BLM rules to reduce climate-damaging oil and gas emissions. In 2021, we sent a letter urging Senators to reinstate EPA methane pollution safeguards and organized leaders in Colorado, New Mexico, and Montana to participate in EPA listening sessions and submit public comments supporting a new rule.



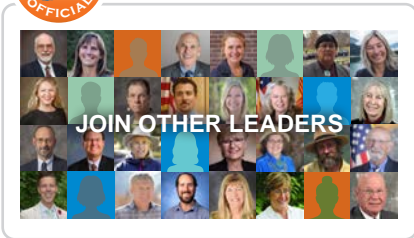
## Missoulian

### Support Build Back Better

Juanita Vero, Missoula County Commissioner,  
November 8, 2021 | Updated October 27, 2021



### America the Beautiful



## ARIZONA Daily Sun

### Coconino Voices: Flagstaff Mayor Supports Biden's 30x30

Paul Deasy, Flagstaff Mayor  
August 2021 | Updated October 2021

## Engaged in Build Back Better

WLN supported the Build Back Better plan through meetings with members of Congress, publishing opinion editorials, and a letter to Colorado's federal delegation signed by 118 elected officials. We organized a CODE RED: Climate Action virtual event with Senator John Hickenlooper to discuss the climate provisions in BBB. We also worked with two county board supervisors in Arizona to publish an op-ed urging Senator Kyrsten Sinema to support Build Back Better. Though the spending package has stalled in Congress, WLN will continue advocating for the critical climate components in the plan.

## Advocated for America the Beautiful — Protecting 30% of Lands and Waters by 2030

WLN provided numerous resources to network leaders on how they can advance 30x30 in their communities. We also worked one-on-one with several southwest Colorado municipalities educating local officials about 30x30, issued a media statement applauding New Mexico Governor Lujan Grisham's 30x30 executive order, and hosted a virtual 30x30 event featuring Congressman Joe Neguse and USFWS Director Martha Williams. WLN worked successfully with the *Denver Post* and *Durango Herald* to publish editorials in support of America the Beautiful.

# CLEAN ENERGY and INDUSTRY REFORMS

## Oil & Gas Reform

The federal oil and gas program is long overdue for an update that will ensure oil and gas companies are held responsible for plugging, restoring, and remediating orphan wells; taxpayers receive a fair return for the development of publicly owned resources; and leasing is permitted through a public and transparent process.

WLN partnered with The Wilderness Society to organize a virtual fly-in to Washington, D.C., with leaders from Colorado, Montana, Nevada, and New Mexico to meet with their respective U.S. Senators to discuss how western communities will benefit from modernizing the federal oil and gas program. WLN also recruited New Mexico and Colorado leaders to author opinion editorials on the pause in federal oil and gas leasing and efforts to overhaul the industry's fiscal policies. Additionally, WLN engaged its Colorado network in the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission's reform efforts, including a financial assurance rulemaking for federal lands to prevent orphaned oil and gas wells.



### **Coloradans need a reformed federal oil and gas leasing system**

Tim Corrigan, Routt County Commissioner  
*Mar 7, 2021 – Updated Apr 11, 2022*



### **SANTA FE + NEW MEXICAN**

### **Use leasing pause on public lands to rethink energy future**

Rosalyn Fry, former Aztec Commissioner  
*July 17, 2021*





## Hard Rock Mining Reform

The hard rock mining industry continues to be governed by a 150-year-old law that has not been modernized since its enactment, and communities throughout the Interior West continue to pay the price of this industry's pollution. WLN has advocated for legislative reforms to the General Mining Act of 1872, and administrative updates to regulations under the Bureau of Land Management. These reforms are needed to ensure mining companies are held accountable for pollution and communities and environmental and cultural resources are protected. WLN submitted a letter signed by 60 local, state, and tribal elected officials to Interior Department leaders, calling on the agency to update its rules for the mining industry, ensure companies pay for reclamation, and protect communities affected by pollution from both active and abandoned mines.

# PUBLIC LANDS and WATERS

## Salmon Restoration

In summer 2021, WLN formally decided through a board vote to expand its issue work to include salmon restoration, a significant economic, environmental, and cultural issue in the Interior West state of Idaho and the Pacific Northwest region. Former WLN Indigenous Leaders Organizer Rudy Soto authored an op-ed on the importance of removing four dams on the lower Snake River to restore native salmon populations to the Columbia River Basin and protect cultural traditions, strengthen economic security, and promote clean energy for the region's tribal communities. Soto and Executive Director Gwen Lachelt met with the Shoshone Bannock Tribal Council in Idaho to discuss the salmon restoration issue. WLN also sent a letter to members of Congress urging support for federal salmon restoration initiatives, including a federal funding proposal spearheaded by Congressman Mike Simpson.



## THE DENVER POST

**Opinion: The Bureau of Land Management belongs in Washington, D.C.**  
Gwen Lachelt, WLN Executive Director  
*September 28, 2021*



Bob / Adobe Stock



## Support for Federal Public Lands Leaders

When responsible management and protection of our public lands, waters, and wildlife has never been more urgent, WLN advocated for several vital nominees for public lands leadership positions within the Biden administration this year. WLN wrote letters to federal decision-makers and members of Congress, urging them to swiftly confirm these nominees, which included Tracy Stone-Manning as Director of the Bureau of Land Management, Martha Williams as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chuck Sams III as Director of the National Park Service, and Laura Daniel-Davis as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management.



**WLN expanded its network to include state elected officials.**

# BUILDING WESTERN LEADERS NETWORK

## Grew Our Board of Directors

WLN welcomed four new leaders to join our board of directors, including Mayor Daniel Corona from West Wendover, Nevada, and Commissioner Juanita Vero from Missoula County, Montana.

In 2016, Daniel became the youngest and first openly LGBTQ+ mayor in the state of Nevada's history, inspired to run for office after meeting with voters in his neighborhood who were frustrated by the lack of transparency and access within City Hall.

Juanita has served on numerous community conservation-focused boards and committees, including as chair of Montana Conservation Voters, Missoula County Open Lands Committee, Big Blackfoot Chapter Trout Unlimited, Swan Valley Connections, and Sunset School Board.

To be as geographically and demographically diverse as possible, WLN will continue to expand its board of directors to help inform and guide our work as an organization and better serve and represent our network.



**Daniel Corona**  
Mayor of West Wendover, Nevada  
Elected 2016



**Juanita Vero**  
Missoula County  
Commissioner, Montana  
Elected 2020



**Cutting methane 1st step  
in tackling the climate crisis**  
U.S. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández, NM  
Victor Snover, Aztec Mayor  
November 4, 2021



In early 2022, WLN also added Walker River Paiute Tribal Chair Amber Torres of Nevada and former Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Chair Shelly Fyant of Montana to our board of directors.

Amber serves on the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada Executive Board, Equity Cabinet created by Congressman Steven Horsford, as Chair for the Congressionally Mandated Intergovernmental Executive Committee, and on the National Indian Health Board. She is also a former Western Regional representative for the National Congress of American Indians.

Shelly served on the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council for eight years, most recently as the chairwoman from January 2020-December 2021. During her tenure, the tribe's water compact passed through the state and federal processes and was the largest settlement at \$1.9 billion and nearly four decades of negotiations. It included restoration of the former National Bison Range to tribal hands.

**Amber Torres**  
Chairman,  
Walker River Paiute Tribe



**Shelly Fyant**  
Former Chairwoman,  
Confederated Salish and  
Kootenai Tribes



**Coconino Voices: Need Full  
Funding to Build Back Better**

Lena Fowler and Sharon Bronson,  
*September 20, 2021 | Updated October 27, 2021*

# BUILDING WESTERN LEADERS NETWORK

## Indian Country Advisory Council

Understanding and including the perspectives of tribal elected officials throughout the Interior West is integral to WLN's strength and success as an organization. As such, WLN is in the process of forming an Indian Country Advisory Council to inform and guide our work with tribal leaders in the Interior West, which we hope to convene and launch by the end of 2022.

## Expanded Staff to Grow Network Membership, Raise Funds

WLN recently added two part-time staff members to our ranks to help us grow as an organization. Paul Jolly joined WLN as a part-time major donor program coordinator in late 2021 to plan, organize and execute fundraising campaigns and solicit major donations from individuals who support WLN's work. In early 2022, we also welcomed former San Miguel County (Colorado) Commissioner Joan May as a part-time membership outreach coordinator to help WLN grow to include at least 1,000 local, tribal, and state elected officials throughout the Interior West and build relationships with these leaders to become more engaged partners with WLN.



**“For tribal communities, maintaining our way of life in the West is such a pressing issue because of growth and climate-related disasters. It’s so important to preserve our heritage, which for tribes means protecting our salmon and wildlife populations and public lands. It was a privilege to be a part of an organization that is focused on preserving our western ways of life.”**

—Rudy Soto, former WLN Indigenous Leaders Organizer



## FINANCIALS, PARTNERSHIPS, BOARD & STAFF

### Financials

#### 2021 REVENUES

Grants: \$260,000

Membership/Contributions: \$4,996

Other: \$6

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**Total Revenue: \$265,002**

#### 2021 EXPENSES

Programs: \$202,345

General & Administrative: \$34,228

Events/Travel: \$9,911

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**Total Expenses: \$246,484**

### Foundations, Organizations and Corporations

Earthworks

Energy Foundation

Environmental Defense Fund

Fidelity Charitable Trust

George B. Storer Foundation

League of Conservation Voters

Maki Foundation

New-Land Foundation

Patagonia

Resources Legacy Fund

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

Former Mayor, Aztec  
NEW MEXICO

Juanita Vero, Director

Commissioner, Missoula County  
MONTANA — Joined in 2021

Amber Torres, Director

Chair, Walker River Paiute Tribal Council  
NEVADA — Joined in 2022

Shelly Fyant, Director

Former Tribal Council Chairwoman,  
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Arlee  
MONTANA — Joined in 2022

### Staff & Contractors

Gwen Lachelt, Founder & Executive Director

Jessica Pace, Program Coordinator

Rudy Soto, Indigenous Leaders Organizer  
(May 2021 – January 2022)

Reyaun Francisco, Indigenous Leaders Organizer (2022)

Bonnie Rozean, Accountant & Bookkeeper

Paul Jolly, Major Donor Program Coordinator

Joan May, Membership Outreach Coordinator



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[westernleaders.org](http://westernleaders.org)

 [@westleaders](https://twitter.com/westleaders)

 [@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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