



# western views



## AN INTERVIEW WITH KARIN SHELDON: Q&A with Western Resource Advocates New Director

Karin Sheldon officially took her place as the executive director of Western Resource Advocates on September 4.

During a recent interview, Karin expressed pride and enthusiasm about her association with WRA. She greatly looks forward to working with the staff and helping to ensure that the West retains its special character. We are very pleased to welcome her.

**Q:** How has your experience been so far working at WRA?

**Karin:** It has been wonderful, although a bit of a whirlwind getting to know the staff and the issues. I am proud and happy to be here.

**Q:** What are your goals for WRA, both short-term and long-term?

**Karin:** My primary goal is to ensure that the organization continues to be as effective as it is now in protecting the land and water of the West. I intend to support the staff to enable

them to continue their good work. I also want to build the financial support for the organization so it stays strong and healthy.

**Q:** What do you see happening for conservation in the West in the future?

**Karin:** I hope people in the West understand how closely their future is tied to the protection of the environment. Unless we all recognize the need to sustain and restore the lands and waters of this wonderful region, we will lose a great part of what makes this part of the country special.

**Q:** What is going to be our biggest challenge?

**Karin:** Our biggest challenge is the continuing growth of the human population in the region. This growth puts pressure on all of our natural resources—land, water, and air—and affects our choices for energy generation and environmental protection.

**Q:** What can we do to combat this problem?

**Karin:** All that we can—from individual actions through the efforts of environmental

organizations, like WRA, and governmental responses at the local, state, national, and international levels.

**Q:** What are you most looking forward to?

**Karin:** The opportunity to work with this amazing staff on the issues that are on WRA's agenda.

**Q:** What does your ideal West look like?

**Karin:** It would be a region where there is still wild country, wild rivers, and wildlife in abundance, a region where human beings live in balance with their environment.

**Q:** Is there anything you would like to add?

**Karin:** I'm a child of the West. I was defined by the western landscape. I have lived in New England for the last fourteen years and I'm very glad to be home.

*This interview was conducted by Ashley McPhee, who has worked at WRA for three years while attending the University of Colorado.*

## JUST SAY "NO" TO NEW COAL PLANTS: The West Makes Real Progress

by Jennifer Coken, Director, Western Clean Energy Campaign

Western Resource Advocates works with its partner organization, The Western Clean Energy Campaign, on one of its key program goals—stopping new coal-fired power plants that are proposed for the West. The past few months have been action-packed, and we'd like to share some of the successes with you.

In Nevada, Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) has pledged to use all of his power to stop the construction of three proposed power plants in the state. All three plants will be located in or very near White Pine County,

which is 12 miles from the Utah border. In response to an editorial by *The Ely Times*, the Utah Moms for Clean Air and the Utah Physicians for the Environment wrote a hard-hitting, fact-based letter to the editor outlining all the impacts of the air pollution on adults and children.

In Utah, a recent air permit issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the 110-megawatt Bonanza Power Plant drew ire from Congressman Henry Waxman (D-CA), Chairman of the U.S. House of Representa-



Three plants are proposed to be in or near White Pine County, Nevada, 12 miles from the Utah border.

PHOTO COURTESY KRISTI FILLMAN/HIGH DESERT WEST.

tives' Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Representative Waxman accused the EPA of violating federal clean air mandates and ignoring its own discretionary authority. The permit was the first such document the EPA issued since the U.S. Supreme Court narrowly ruled last spring that the federal government had the

## Colorado Habitat Stewardship Act: A Win for Wildlife



Mule Deer at Sunset  
PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

In a major victory for Colorado wildlife, Governor Bill Ritter recently signed the Colorado Habitat Stewardship Act of 2007.

WRA was the primary drafter and a lead negotiator on the bill. The legislation was based on the "Wildlife Management Guidelines for Oil and Gas Development," a collaborative effort endorsed by more than 60 wildlife, outfitting, and conservation groups plus local governments across Colorado. Two of the pri-

mary authors were Dennis Buechler, a retired federal biologist who was recently appointed to the Colorado Wildlife Commission, and Bob Elderkin, a retired federal land manager who currently chairs the Colorado Mule Deer Association and is an outfitter on the Roan Plateau.

WRA and our allies participated in dozens of meetings with industry and government officials to explain the purpose of the habitat bill and seek common ground. The resulting consensus bill sailed through the legislature without a single opposing vote.

This landmark act achieves unprecedented habitat protections in the gas patch. It empowers biologists at the Colorado Division of Wildlife to design energy development proposals to "avoid, minimize and mitigate" impacts to wildlife. It requires broad application of best management practices and geographic area planning to minimize habitat fragmentation.

This is enormously important in Colorado, which is on the front end of a drilling boom that saw an all-time high of 5,904 new wells drilled in 2006, more than double the 2,920 new wells in 2004. A growing body of scientific literature documents mortality, displacement, and habitat loss to mule deer, sage grouse, and other keystone species from oil and gas development.

This Habitat Stewardship Act generated interest for similar federal legislation after House sponsor Colorado State Rep. Dan Gibbs (D) testified in Congress this spring.



Male Sage-Grouse

PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.

## Oil and Gas Commission Reorganization Act

On May 29, Governor Ritter signed the Oil and Gas Commission Reorganization Act, which he called one of "his biggest accomplishments of the legislative session." The act was modeled on the Habitat Stewardship Act, described above, and WRA played a pivotal role in developing key provisions. It represents the culmination of more than 20 years

of efforts by concerned citizens to reform the commission. According to the governor's press release, the bill "expands the number of Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission members from seven to nine; brings a better balance of interests to the membership; and adds public health, environment and wildlife impacts to the commission's mission."

WRA looks forward to working with the governor's office, industry, and our conservation partners on the 2008 state rulemaking implementing these acts. A new day has dawned in Colorado, a day that promises collaborative approaches to responsible energy development that reduces habitat impacts and avoids compromising our quality of life.



## 'Tis the Season: A Note on Giving

All of us at WRA know that our successes would be impossible without the loyal support of our donors. By joining WRA, you directly support our programs and initiatives to protect the West's land, air, and water. If you have not already joined WRA or sent your annual gift, I invite you to do so now. As a WRA member, some of the benefits you will receive include:

- ✓ WRA's newsletter, as well as our e-newsletter, if you provide your e-mail address;
- ✓ E-mail updates sharing news of recent successes and, on occasion, important new developments;
- ✓ Advance notice of special events in your area; and
- ✓ Access to our website, where you may comment on our work, suggest projects that deserve our attention, and ask questions about current issues.

Our region faces enormous challenges, but with your support, we can protect air and water quality and preserve our public lands. There is much to do, but working together, we will make a difference, and we will remain proud to call ourselves Westerners twenty years from now. Please join us!

Christopher Wirth  
Chairman of the Board of Directors



## WESTERN RESOURCE ADVOCATES

Western Resource Advocates' mission is to protect the West's land, air, and water.

Our lawyers, scientists, and economists:

- 1) advance clean energy to reduce pollution and global warming;
- 2) promote urban water conservation and river restoration; and
- 3) defend special public lands from energy development and unauthorized off-road vehicle travel.

We collaborate with other conservation groups, hunters and fishermen, ranchers, American Indians, and others to ensure a sustainable future for the West.

I dreamt I saw an eagle

Flying to the West

But then it landed softly

To take a little rest

It was so regal

Don't you know

Then it said to me

Remember, angel, where you go

This earth is dear to me

Keep it always safe at hand

So I may always know

I have a place to gently land

Be it high or low

Please take care of Mother Earth...

REGINA NICHOLS 10-3-07



**spot  
light**  
**Regina  
Nichols**

*by Andria Bronsten,  
Human Resource Director*

"Don't sweat the small stuff" is a rule Regina Nichols has learned to live by. A Nevada native, Regina has been managing WRA's office in Carson City, Nevada, since May 2006. She has used her paralegal training and office management skills to help establish WRA's base in Nevada to work on issues ranging from the opposition to coal-fired energy plants to water conservation in that desert region.

As Carson City is 300 miles from Las Vegas and 30 miles from Reno, Regina assists WRA attorney, Charles Benjamin, with his travels throughout the state to meet with regulators and colleagues. Filings before the Nevada Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and other administrative tasks often come with short lead times and close deadlines. Regina's cool head prevails, so WRA is able to track all those projects skillfully.

Before joining WRA, Regina worked for the Nevada PUC's general counsel and, prior to that, spent 21 years involved in probate and estate planning. She was looking to do something different and starting the WRA office provided that and more. New to conservation work, Regina says she has "learned a new language," complete with a cheat sheet to sort through dozens of acronyms for the new agencies, allies, and projects.

Regina is gratified to see environmental work more publicized and recognized in that traditionally conservative state and says, "I work with great people and it is very fulfilling. I feel I'm making a difference, having an impact."

Regina and her journeyman electrician husband, Ken, spend a lot of time with their two grown children and four grandchildren. "Nothing is as important in your life as your family and good friends," she says.

If WRA could just clone Regina, the world would indeed be a better place!

### **Just Say "No" to New Coal Plants, cont.**

authority to limit emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Governor Bill Richardson (D-NM), who has made New Mexico a leader among states addressing climate change and who opposes the proposed Desert Rock Power Plant, issued a press release on October 15th directing Environment Secretary Ron Curry to testify before a U.S. Congressional Committee examining the EPA's approach to addressing greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants.

The Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC), which receives a small amount of funding from the Western Clean Energy Campaign, has had two recent victories against coal plants in Montana. Opponents of the Bull Mountain plant at Roundup, including MEIC, filed three separate lawsuits against the plant in order to produce a recent ruling. The ruling, called "a very big victory" by MEIC, stated that the Montana Department of Environmental Quality lacked the

authority to extend an air quality permit for the plant, since the permit had expired in mid-June 2005. MEIC is also taking a stance against the proposed Highwood Generating Station.

Last, but certainly not least, working with advocates across Colorado and Kansas, we helped secure a major victory in our campaign to prevent Colorado-based Tri-State Generation and Transmission from building two new 700-megawatt coal-fired plants near Holcomb, Kansas. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment rejected the proposal to build the new coal plants. Its decision will protect the climate, benefit efforts to boost local clean energy resources and, in the long run, save ratepayers money.

We are heartened by this progress, and invite you to check Western Resource Advocates' website for an in-depth look at issues associated with coal-fired power.

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Please Join Us!

On November 8, Western Resource Advocates (WRA) will host the Top Drop awards at the Downtown Aquarium in Denver. WRA will be presenting awards to three Front Range communities that are doing great things for water conservation and the Colorado environment. Our goal is to share and honor successes, and to inspire all Coloradans to use water wisely.

The Downtown Aquarium is a fitting location for the event because of its state-of-art water processing system. The water treatment system cycles water through the exhibits, from every 30 minutes for the smaller exhibits to every 90 minutes for the larger ones. One exhibit has a volume of water equivalent to the water use of a city the size of Colorado Springs. The system moves the water through sand filters, ozone contractors, protein skimmers, and, finally, biological filters before returning it to the exhibit. This system is designed to recover, treat, and reuse the water. Water policy analyst Taryn Hutchins-Cabibi says, "This type of innovation in water efficiency helps to protect our natural resources while creating a unique educational environment in the heart of downtown Denver."

For more information on the Top Drop event, please contact Anita Schwartz at 303-444-1188 x277 or check out our website.

**the  
Top  
Drop  
Awards**

**Celebrating  
Water  
Conservation**

*by Carrie Pearse,  
Communications Coordinator*

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[www.westernresourceadvocates.org](http://www.westernresourceadvocates.org)



**WESTERN RESOURCE  
ADVOCATES**

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**Find out on November 8.  
Read more on flip side.**

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