



western views

WRA FIGHTS BACK AGAINST MASSIVE EXPLOITATION OF GREAT SALT LAKE

The Great Salt Lake is one of Utah's most iconic places. It is profoundly important to migrating birds in the western United States, offering unique saltwater marshes and rich populations of brine shrimp that provide protein that birds rely on to complete their migration. Each year the lake also hosts thousands of human visitors, who enjoy boating, birding, and more. And yet this beautiful place is under siege from rampant industrialization and those who use it as a toxic dumping ground.

We have countered a lot of bad ideas for the lake over the years, but the latest proposal surprised even us. A grievous new threat to the lake is being posed by Great Salt Lake Minerals, a producer of potassium sulfate fertilizer. The company wants to use 91,000 acres of the lake bed as evaporation pools, annually consuming over 115 billion gallons of lake water in the process and causing lake levels to drop by several feet.

"We often say that Great Salt Lake is suffering a death by a thousand cuts," said Rob Dubuc, an attorney in WRA's Utah office. "But this expansion proposal threatens to cut deep by transforming the northern part of the lake into an industrial zone."

In partnership with Friends of Great Salt Lake, we are challenging this plan that would significantly impact wetlands and shorebird habitat and expose miles of lake bottom to Utah's notorious dust storms. The poor air quality along Utah's populous Wasatch Front, already considered a public health crisis, would be made even worse.

"This expansion proposal threatens to cut deep by transforming the northern part of the lake into an industrial zone."

—Rob Dubuc, WRA attorney

The Great Salt Lake Minerals proposal comes on top of mercury contamination, toxic selenium build-up, nutrient loading from farm run-off, and the dumping of 4.5 million tons of mining waste annually into the Bear River Bay portion of the lake. In our minds, enough is enough. If you would like to learn more or help defend Great Salt Lake, please call our Utah office at 801-487-9911.

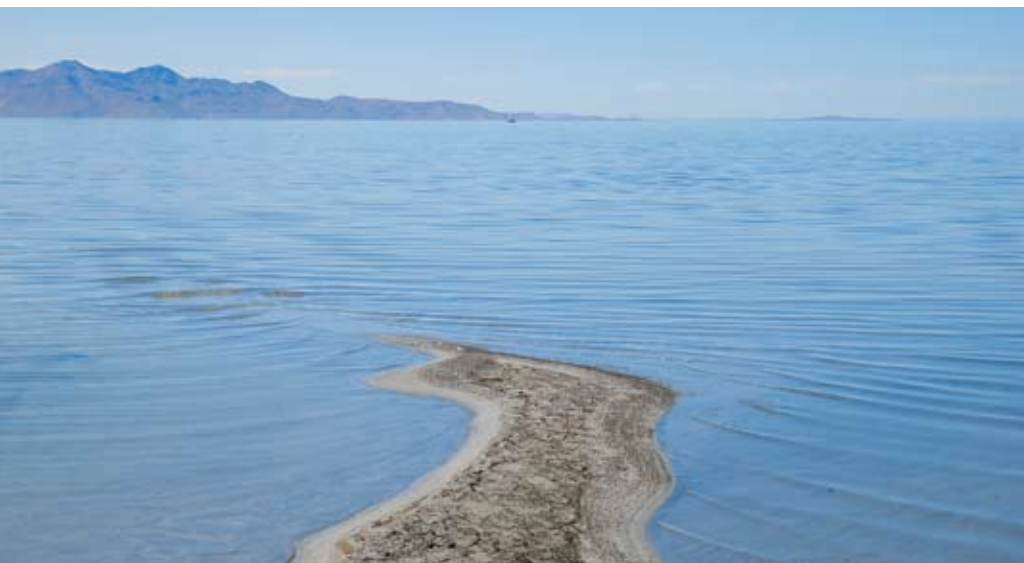


From the
President's
Desk

WRA recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Such a milestone is cause for reflection on past accomplishments and future challenges. In preparing remarks for our anniversary party, I read through stacks of old newsletters and reports of the organization's activities from its earliest days. I was able to get a good picture of the progress we have made in fulfilling our mission of protecting the land, water, and natural resources of our special part of the country. I saw the emergence of energy and then climate change as overarching issues and the recognition of the interconnections among our water, energy, and lands programs.

WRA is now moving a number of significant environmental issues from concept to reality. An energy future based on conservation, efficiency, and renewable resources is no longer just an appealing idea; it is also economically and environmentally achievable. Wise management of our limited water supplies, including releases of water for rivers and fish, can be accomplished, and the values of wild lands and wildlife can be recognized as paramount to fossil fuel resources. We know the work to implement our vision will be tough and complicated. Over our 20 years, we have learned a lot about problem tackling. In fact, that is what we do best. You will see the evidence in the pages of this newsletter.

Karin P. Steldor



THE SAGE GROUSE CATCH-22

Fate of Wyoming Wind Energy Linked to Grouse, and Vice Versa

Wyoming is home to over half the greater sage-grouse in the world. But decades of rampant oil and gas development and coal strip mining have destroyed much of the bird's former range and drastically reduced its population.

A new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey has raised alarms about the severity of recent declines in sage-grouse in Wyoming, increasing concern that the bird could soon be listed as a threatened or endangered species. Such a listing, however, would complicate development of wind energy projects in Wyoming, a state that has some of the nation's best wind energy potential.

The irony of putting the brakes on wind power is that increased use of renewable energy is an answer to yet another grave threat to the sage-grouse—climate change.

Climate change contributes to sage-grouse population declines through increased incidence of drought, loss of habitat, spread of invasive plant species, and broadening the range of lethal West Nile virus due to warmer temperatures.

"Development of Wyoming's wind power, as long as it is outside of core habitat, can help the sage-grouse population to recover," stated WRA Wyoming Staff Attorney Dan Heilig.



photo: US Fish & Wildlife Service

"We need to look at well-sited wind projects as part of the solution—not part of the problem."

WRA is collaborating with the National Audubon Society to keep sage-grouse populations from reaching a point where a critical listing would be necessary. Our methods include preventing oil and gas development in core habitat, and reducing the disruptive impacts of mining and other surface activities. Together, we can protect sage-grouse core habitat while building a renewable energy future in Wyoming.

GREATER CHACO CANYON OFF LIMITS TO OIL AND GAS DRILLING:

Conservationists and Tribes Succeed in Pulling Parcels from Auction Block

Western Resource Advocates has convinced the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to withdraw eight proposed lease parcels, covering 10,361 acres, from the October 21 lease auction. These proposed leases are located within five miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park in northwest New Mexico, a World Heritage Site that is one of the top attractions on the "Trail of the Ancients" through the Four Corners region.

"It's hard to imagine a more inappropriate location for gas drilling," said Western Resource Advocates' Lands Program Director Mike Chiropolos. "Visitors from around the world are drawn to this area because of its signifi-



photo: National Park Service

cance. Their experience of mystery, culture, and history would be shattered by industrial development on the park's doorstep."

erty under federal law. The rich archeological sites on these lands include ancient masonry dwellings, kivas, middens, and hearths.

"It's hard to imagine a more inappropriate location for gas drilling,"

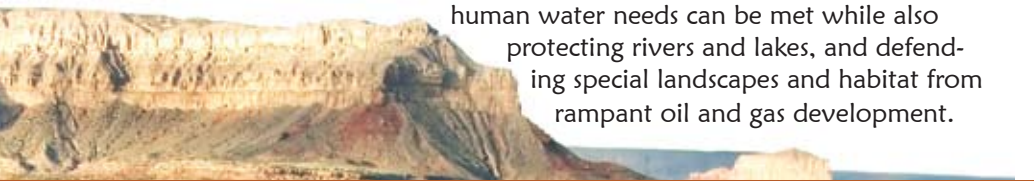
—WRA Lands Program Director Mike Chiropolos

In proposing these areas for oil and gas development, the BLM failed to consult with the many Pueblo tribes with ancestral ties to these lands, as required by the National Historic Preservation Act. Hopi tribe members objected to oil and gas leasing on lands they call "the Place Beyond the Horizon," entitled to protection as a Traditional Cultural Prop-

To defeat the leasing proposal, Western Resource Advocates worked closely with San Juan Citizens Alliance, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, Diné CARE, the Chaco Alliance, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. These groups are working toward permanent protection for Greater Chaco Canyon.

WRA was founded in 1989 to provide free legal counsel to grassroots environmental organizations in the West. Within four years, over \$1 million of pro bono work had been donated.

Today, WRA is a regional leader in protecting the West's land, air, and water. Our staff of 29 is involved in the most pressing environmental issues facing the West. We are guiding the region toward a clean energy future, ensuring that human water needs can be met while also protecting rivers and lakes, and defending special landscapes and habitat from rampant oil and gas development.



Highlights over 20 Years

1989

Western Resource Advocates founded.

1993

Won a case against an Asarco Globeville cadmium smelter, proving that it exposed a Denver neighborhood to toxic contamination.

1997

Protected a Montana tribe from gold mine pollution by turning back a cyanide heap leaching proposal.

1998



Started the "Grassroots Campaign for Wind Power."

Helped develop the nation's first solar energy portfolio.

1999



Prevented massive expansion of a ski area adjacent to Yellowstone National Park.

2001

Organized a coalition that secured designation of Arizona's Sonoran Desert National Monument.

2004

Created a Balanced Energy Plan for the West, a blueprint to move the West toward energy efficiency and commercial-scale development of renewable energy.



2005



Drafted Amendment 37 mandating renewable energy standards for Colorado. Its passage demonstrated broad public support for renewable energy.

2007

Secured the right of citizens to challenge approval of air pollution permits for power plants.

2008

Successfully advocated for environmentally protective oil and gas drilling rules for Colorado.

Helped Xcel Energy win approval for expanded use of wind and solar resources.

2009

Safeguarded the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park by leading negotiations that permanently secured healthy water flows for the Gunnison River.



Won a Utah Supreme Court victory that will help prevent public lands in wilderness-quality and roadless areas from being opened to motorized recreation.

Removed more than 700,000 acres in the West from the oil and gas leasing auction block.

Carter Harris, one of WRA's youngest members, presents WRA President Karin P. Sheldon with a bag of coins he saved for WRA.



This fall, Western Resource Advocates marked its 20th anniversary. The joyful celebration was attended by more than 100 people. We reflected on the many victories we have won over the years. We also remembered dear friends who are no longer with us, including our founder, Kelley Green, and a beloved wind energy advocate, Rudd Mayer.



Roger Alderman, WRA's 2008 annual report artist, with the painting depicted on the report's cover.



National Wildlife Federation lawyer Joe Feller, WRA board member Kim Kasic, her husband Jim Kasic, and WRA Utah Office Director Joro Walker enjoy the 20th anniversary party.

Former WRA Executive Director Bruce Driver catches up with a friend.



Artist Amery Bohling, whose work graces WRA's 2006 annual report, discusses her newest work with a guest.



Former U.S. Senator Tim Wirth, WRA board member Barney White, and WRA Board of Directors President Chris Wirth share a laugh.



University of Colorado professor David Getches toasts WRA.

Defending Public Lands

- ▶ WRA convinced the Bureau of Land Management to withdraw eight proposed lease parcels, covering 10,361 acres, from an October 21 lease auction. The proposed leases are located within five miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park in northwest New Mexico.
- ▶ The Bureau of Land Management withdrew nine proposed oil and gas lease parcels in Colorado, totaling nearly 13,000 acres, from the agency's September auction after WRA proved that future drilling and road construction would harm wildlife and plant habitat in federally protected areas.

Safeguarding Water Resources

- ▶ WRA released the "New House, New Paradigm" report, which shows how water-conserving housing developments can serve as a model for water-smart growth in the West.
- ▶ Comments from WRA and others on entrepreneur Aaron Million's proposed 560-mile water pipeline caused the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ask the project's proponents to prove that it has a legitimate purpose and need. The controversial project so far has no buyers for its water.

Protecting Air Quality

- ▶ WRA partnered with the Upper Green River Valley Coalition to ensure that emissions from oil and gas activities in the booming Pinedale Anticline field do not further degrade visibility in pristine wilderness areas, cause air quality violations, or create unhealthy levels of ground level ozone.
- ▶ With pressure from groups such as WRA, Wyoming's Governor Dave Freudenthal requested that the Environmental Protection Agency designate portions of southwest Wyoming in non-attainment for federal standards for ozone, a pollutant with harmful effects for humans. Prior to oil and gas drilling, this area of Wyoming had some of the best air quality in the nation.

Urging Caution on Oil Shale Development

- ▶ A WRA analysis on the economics of oil shale shows that the federal government has large gaps in understanding what economic repercussions commercial-scale oil shale development would have. Rather than being a boon to local economies, oil shale could actually work to undermine them.

WESTERN RESOURCE ADVOCATES RECEIVES A CHALLENGE GRANT

You Can Help Meet the Challenge

As you make your philanthropic decisions this year, please consider an exciting opportunity to significantly strengthen Western Resource Advocates environmental efforts in the West going into 2010.

WRA has received a \$100,000 challenge grant from an anonymous donor.

We have already secured a lead gift of \$25,000 to help us meet the goal and inspire us to raise the remaining funds needed.

In these times, everyone is looking for ways to make their dollars go further. By taking advantage of this matching gift opportunity, you will increase the value of your gift—and increase protection for the West's blue skies, flowing rivers, and magnificent lands.

Questions:

Please contact Anita Schwartz, Vice President of Development, at 303-444-1188 x.227, or email anita@westernresources.org.



PLEASE HELP US MEET THE CHALLENGE

- ✓ **New gifts of \$250 or more will be matched in full.**
- ✓ **If you are able to increase your gift this year, the increased portion of your donation will be matched. For example, if your last contribution to WRA was \$250, if you increase your gift to \$500, the total amount that will be matched is \$250.**



► **Inside Western Views:** Twenty Years of WRA Achievements • Photos from WRA twentieth anniversary celebration
No Drilling in Greater Chaco Canyon • Fight Industrialization of Great Salt Lake
Wyoming Sage-Grouse • Wyoming Air Quality • Help WRA Meet Challenge Grant!

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Restoring Wyoming's Air Quality

Wyoming used to have some of the best air quality in the nation. That was until rampant oil and gas drilling led to alarming levels of ground-level ozone pollution, which can cause severe respiratory problems in humans. To resolve this, the oil and gas industry agreed to undertake 15 measures to reduce air pollution. When WRA tried to determine if industry was complying with the rules, federal agencies in Wyoming stonewalled the requests.

WRA worked with partners in Wyoming to gain access to documents held by the Bureau of Land Management regarding air quality mitigation activities in Wyoming's Jonah gas field. Using the Freedom of Information Act, WRA dislodged 7,000 pages of information that will tell if gas operators in Wyoming are

"The health of thousands of Wyoming residents in the Upper Green Valley is at stake."

—WRA Wyoming Staff Attorney Dan Heilig

in compliance with mandates to reduce air emissions to healthier levels.

"The health of thousands of Wyoming residents in the Upper Green Valley is at stake," says WRA Wyoming Staff Attorney Dan Heilig. "WRA will stay involved to ensure that industry cleans up its operations if it is not in compliance with the rules."

A thick brown layer of haze hangs over Wyoming's Jonah gas field, a byproduct of extensive oil and gas drilling.

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