




Annual Report 2014





“ WILDEARTH GUARDIANS
embodies the best of what
both the Wilburforce Foundation
and I believe in and support
across the west—vision,
boldness, tenacity, and creativity
in defense of the wild heart of
North America. They are skilled
at adapting to a diverse array of
conservation challenges while
staying true to their core. Their
leadership is strong and built to
win on the big, innovative
conservation campaigns that
they champion.

—DENISE JOINES
PROGRAM OFFICER, WILBURFORCE FOUNDATION

Mission Statement

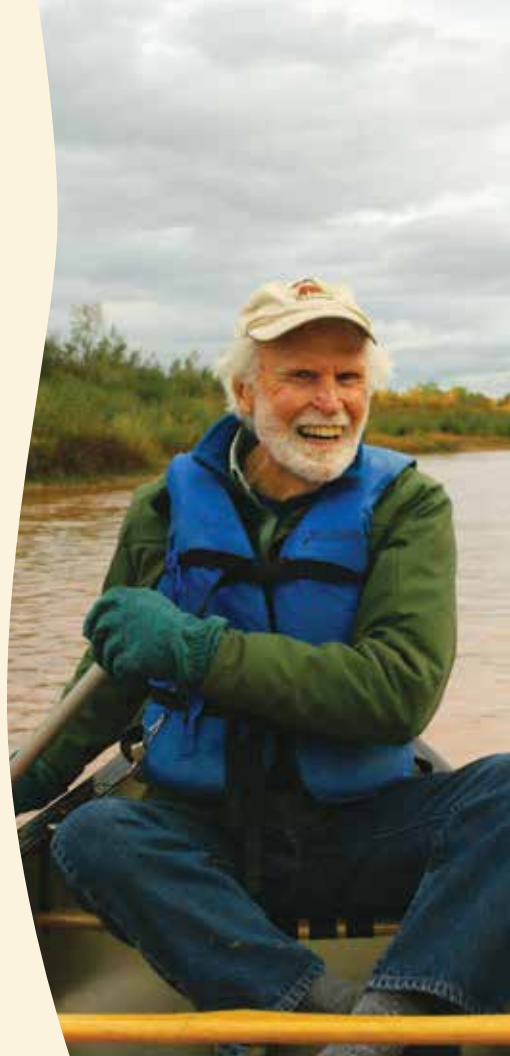
WILDEARTH GUARDIANS protects and
restores the wildlife, wild places,
wild rivers, and health of the
American West.

Guardian Giver

JESS ALFORD

When I moved from Texas to New Mexico and started looking for an environmental group that wasn't afraid of controversy that I could work with, I kept seeing Forest Guardians name in the paper. One day I met Sam Hitt, then Guardians' Executive Director, and we spent an afternoon talking about forest advocacy. In 1996 I joined the board and have been a GUARDIAN ever since. It's been 19 years now and I guess I'm getting older, but I'm not ready to quit fighting for what I believe in. For many years, I've given what I could at our gala celebration in September, and in memorial gifts throughout the year. About 10 years ago, I sat down with a lawyer and put GUARDIANS in my will. It's just one more way to give to what is important to me. I learned a while back that I don't have to hang on to every penny that comes my way and it feels good to know that I'm doing what I can.

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From Our Board President ROBIN SMITH

In March, I had the pleasure of meeting with Christine, an avid and long-time GUARDIANS' supporter. Christine is many wonderful things, including an award winning artist who understands the power of beauty and the value of gratitude. Each month she creates several exquisite, hand-made cards and sends them to GUARDIANS' members to thank them for their support. Christine not only designs and creates the cards, but also writes her own personal message of thanks.

Over tea, we got to talking about her cards. I was curious as to how she began sending them out for GUARDIANS. She told me that years ago she contributed to a biological research institution that was studying the migration of the semipalmated sandpiper—Christine is an avid birder. She received a letter from the director thanking her for her donation and informing her of the results of the research she helped fund. This letter acknowledging her gift and expressing the organization's gratitude was so meaningful to her that she had it framed and it still hangs on her wall. Christine wants to give the same acknowledgement to you, our members and activists, to thank you for participating in WILDEARTH GUARDIANS' mission to protect and restore wildness.

Let me add my thanks too, particularly to those I haven't yet personally contacted for your contribution this past year. I am truly grateful for your support. As the following pages demonstrate, together we achieved many conservation victories in 2014 and where we did not succeed, we will not give up.

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many conservation
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Robin Smith



From Our Executive Director JOHN HORNING

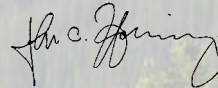
We're in the business of impact, but not just any impact. We want creative actions with lasting effects—game changers. We marked our 25th anniversary year with dozens of impactful actions, but two come to mind that, while vastly different, are linked because they typify how GUARDIANS does our work.

First, we made life better for wolves in the Greater Gila by paying a public lands rancher to retire his grazing permit. It's an action that is a stepping-stone towards our vision of making the Greater Gila a crown jewel conservation landscape in the West.

Second, we won a precedent setting lawsuit that will force the Interior Department to consider the full cost of digging up and burning coal. We believe that transparency around the real cost of burning fossil fuels will inevitably lead to our vision of keeping our publicly owned fossil fuels in the ground.

We also raised the most money ever to fulfill our mission: \$3.6 million. And you, our members and e-activists, who now number over 67,000, joined in the fight. While money and members are not the most important metrics by which we evaluate how we're doing, you make what we do possible.

As we look ahead we'll continue to bring a laser focus to winning big on the climate and biodiversity imperatives that define our work.



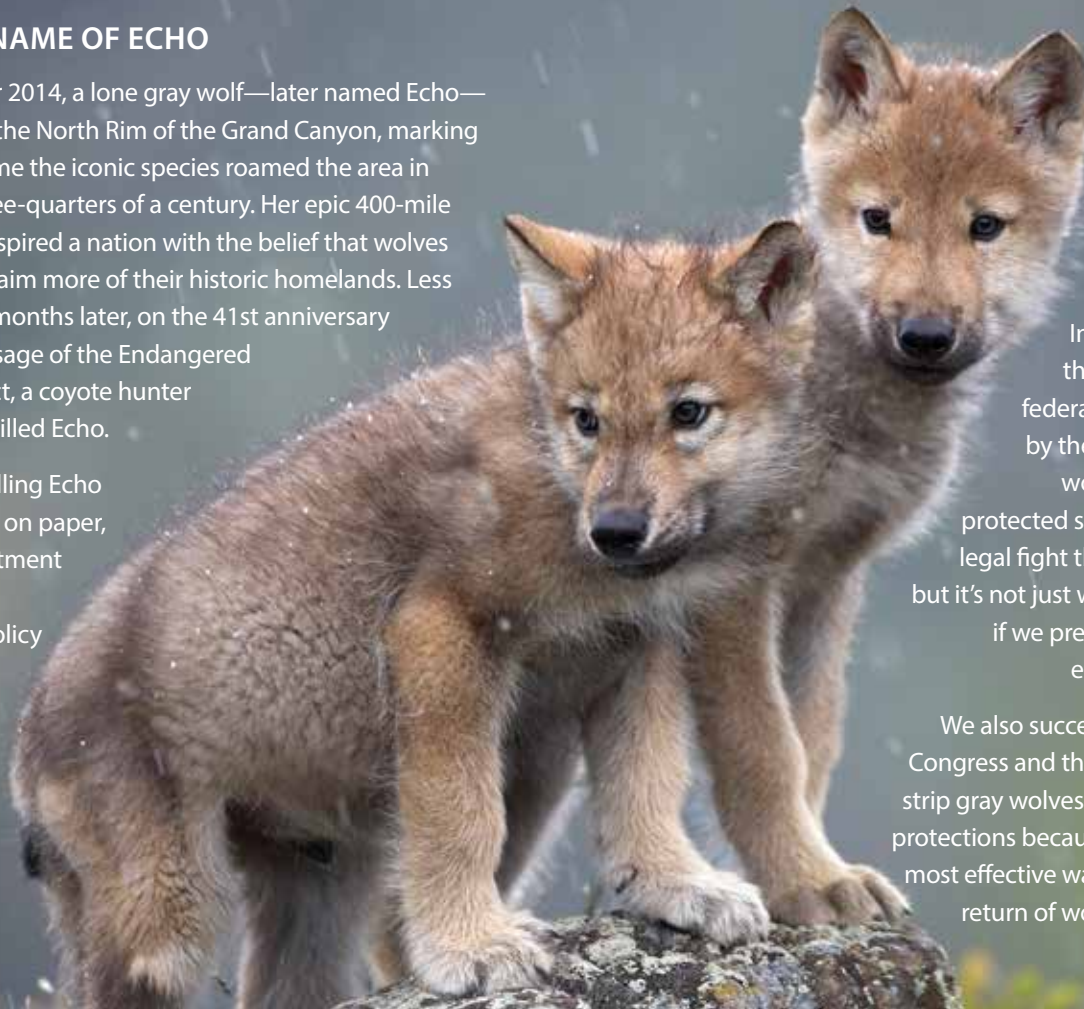
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IN THE NAME OF ECHO

In October 2014, a lone gray wolf—later named Echo—arrived at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, marking the first time the iconic species roamed the area in nearly three-quarters of a century. Her epic 400-mile journey inspired a nation with the belief that wolves might reclaim more of their historic homelands. Less than two months later, on the 41st anniversary of the passage of the Endangered Species Act, a coyote hunter shot and killed Echo.

Though killing Echo was illegal on paper, the Department of Justice's current policy (known as



the McKittrick policy) allows a hunter to claim ignorance and get away with murder. And that's just what Echo's killer claimed, that he thought he was shooting a coyote.

In 2014 our case challenging the McKittrick policy stalled in federal court, awaiting a decision by the judge, but we continue to work to ensure those who kill protected species are prosecuted. It's a legal fight that we know won't be easy, but it's not just wolves that stand to benefit if we prevail, grizzly bears and other endangered species will too.

We also successfully fought off efforts by Congress and the Obama Administration to strip gray wolves of Endangered Species Act protections because we believe it's the single most effective way to ensure the permanent return of wolves to the American West.

KEEP IT IN THE GROUND

In July 2014, on the same day that the Environmental Protection Agency hosted a public hearing in Denver about the Agency's plan to reduce on greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants, the Department of the Interior announced a plan to allow more coal mining in western Colorado.

We called out the Obama administration for its climate hypocrisy. Because we linked the two events, we led the national media to highlight the hypocrisy, forcing the White House to respond to its senseless policy of allowing more coal mining. The event was an important

milestone in our work to keep the coal we all own in the ground.

Then in September we won a major legal victory that not only prevented a coal mine in western Colorado from expanding into roadless national forests but also established a legal precedent that requires the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service to consider the full "social cost" of burning carbon prior to finalizing any decision to mine coal.

With fully 50 percent of our nation's coal coming from our public lands and new science indicating that we need to lock down carbon reserves, including approximately 92 percent of coal reserves in the United States, our energetic legal and political advocacy against the Interior Department's shameful pro-coal policies continues to grow in importance.



KEEPING GREATER CHACO FRACK-FREE

For decades the remote public lands in the far northwestern corner of New Mexico have been little more than a sacrifice zone for fossil fuel extraction and combustion, with only occasional community resistance to the destruction of the region's air, water, and wildlife.

That changed in 2014 with the formation of a new coalition of native peoples, climate activists, and concerned citizens, all of whom responded to a massive new threat: fracking of the Mancos Shale. The scale of this new fracking push threatens to destroy Navajo communities and the unique cultural resources of the Greater Chaco region, as well as ratchet up global climate change. WILDEARTH GUARDIANS

helped bring together the coalition last fall and continues to provide glue to keep the coalition running smoothly.

We mounted a legal and grassroots resistance movement to the Bureau of Land Management's plans to allow fracking on the doorstep of Chaco in defiance of the climate crisis and local community concerns. Our work to prevent more fossil fuel extraction took on added significance in November, when NASA revealed the existence of a massive methane "hot spot" hovering like a dark cloud over the region.

We also organized residents and our members across the country to oppose a proposed massive pipeline, we forced the BLM to withdraw more drilling plans, and we readied a series of lawsuits to prevent the industry from fracking in undeveloped areas.



LET THE GROUSE DANCE

Last November, after years of delay, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finally protected the Gunnison sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act.

The listing was finalized just days before Congress passed a rider that would have denied the beautiful dancing bird vital protections. The Service was legally mandated to make the listing decision under WILDEARTH GUARDIANS' historic

settlement agreement resolving the backlog of species awaiting protections.

Unfortunately, the Service indefensibly assigned the imperiled grouse the less protective "threatened" status, which we immediately challenged in court. With fewer than 5,000 Gunnison sage grouse surviving, we continue to feel tremendous urgency not just to prevent extinction, but also to advance recovery.

Powerful development, ranching, and oil and gas industry forces aligned against protecting the grouse meant that we contended with intense political opposition to the listing throughout 2014, both in Congress and from the Obama administration. Thankfully, we negotiated a commitment with the Bureau of Land Management to amend land-use plans to restrict further habitat-degrading activities in grouse habitat.

Between the signing of our settlement agreement in 2011 and the end of 2014, the Service listed nearly 160 species under the Endangered Species Act. Many of the species protected, like the Gunnison sage grouse, were denied protection for years or even decades.



2014 HIGHLIGHTS

CLIMATE AND ENERGY PROGRAM

- We defended the climate from coal mining in the American West, both spoiling plans for expanded mining on our public lands in western Colorado and preventing the federal government from selling more than one billion tons of coal in the Powder River Basin of Montana and Wyoming.
- We made it more difficult for the coal industry to pollute our air, successfully petitioning the federal government to limit toxic orange clouds produced from blasting at coal mines.
- We forced utility companies in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming to either risk spending millions to upgrade their existing coal-fired power plants or instead invest in more affordable solar and wind alternatives or greater efficiency and conservation measures.
- We thwarted fracking on 20,000 acres of public lands in the Greater Chaco region of New Mexico and are gearing up to defend hundreds of thousands of additional acres in the west from the oil and gas industry's greed.

WILDLIFE PROGRAM

- For the second year in a row, we prevented a wildlife killing contest targeting wolves and coyotes from occurring on over 3 million acres of public land in Idaho.
- We secured Endangered Species Act protections for key Sagebrush Sea species, including the Gunnison sage grouse and lesser prairie-chicken.
- After a decade of advocacy, we obtained Endangered Species Act protections for Canada lynx wherever the species roams in the lower 48 states, including the wilds of New Mexico and Colorado.
- We filed suit to overturn flawed decisions denying needed protections to imperiled species including the wolverine and Gunnison's prairie dog.
- We helped generate over 1.5 million public comments telling the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to keep gray wolves protected under the Endangered Species Act.

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS thinks big, challenges conventional “wisdom,” and embraces both conflict and cooperation to protect and restore the natural world. Here are some highlights:

WILD PLACES PROGRAM

- We succeeded in our bid to get the highest degree of protection for 200 miles of Colorado streams and rivers that provide pristine habitat for the Colorado River cutthroat trout.
- Our coalition work paid off when Congress increased the budget for road reclamation and fish habitat improvement by \$5 million (or 14%) boosting restoration of our National Forests.
- We completed the first voluntary grazing waiver on the Gila National Forest, giving wolves over 28,000 cow-free acres to roam.
- We planted more than 100,000 trees and other plants on public lands to improve watershed health and wildlife habitat.
- Along with our partners, we reached an agreement with the Forest Service that will save imperiled wildlife and plants, keep clean air clean, and safeguard 1.7 million acres of our public lands in Utah from damaging oil and gas drilling.

WILD RIVERS PROGRAM

- We worked with Senator Udall to secure federal funding dedicated to establishing a voluntary water acquisition program in the Rio Grande Basin that will allow the reallocation of agricultural water to support critical environmental flows.
- We reached out to and partnered with untraditional allies including farmers from the San Luis Valley, the six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos, and recreational boaters to find innovative opportunities to restore flows to support a living Rio Grande.
- We safeguarded the dynamic and perennial flows of the once mighty Rio Grande by filing suit against federal water managers for failing to ensure the survival and recovery of endangered fish and wildlife that depend upon the river for their survival.



FINDING WATER FOR THE RIO GRANDE

When you want to overcome the antiquated “Law of the River,” namely the 1938 Rio Grande Compact, which allocates the river’s water among states and nations and allows Colorado to divert over 90 percent of the flow in many years, you need to think creatively.

That’s why we developed a partnership with two small farmers in southern Colorado’s San Luis Valley who have senior water rights that they want to lease, or possibly even sell, back to the river. It’s an increasingly common tactic

that allows farmers to receive cash in exchange for their water. While our discussions haven’t yet resulted in water for the river, we are better positioned to overcome obstacles when the time is right.

There are plenty of obstacles that stem from the Rio Grande Compact, especially a provision that prohibits states and individuals from allowing environmental flows to benefit the river. To overcome the rigid, drought-stricken thinking that plagues water managers we filed a notice of intent to sue the State of Colorado for

allocating nearly all of the river’s flow to agriculture.

In the meantime, our battle for a living Rio Grande in central New Mexico carried on through the federal court system, as we filed suit in 2014 to hold delinquent federal agencies accountable for a series of broken water-management promises. Securing a living Rio Grande requires the patience, tenacity, and creativity that we continued to exhibit in all our actions for the river in 2014.



A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the middle ground, surrounded by lush green mountains. In the foreground, there are vibrant yellow wildflowers and some red ones, growing on a grassy slope. The sky is overcast with soft, diffused light.

A ROAD RUNS THROUGH IT

In the boom era of the 1970's, 80's, and 90's the U.S. Forest Service logged millions of acres of pristine national forests. And to cut and remove those trees it allowed logging companies to build more than 375,000 miles of roads—more than enough to circle the Earth 15 times.

Now those roads, most of them poorly located and shoddily built, are fragmenting grizzly bear habitat, bleeding sediment into salmon streams, and polluting the drinking water supplies of more than 123 million Americans in nearly 1,000 cities.

Working with cities, water utilities, anglers, and wildland advocates in 2014 we convinced Congress to allocate more than \$40 million for the Forest Service's Legacy Roads and Trail program whose sole purpose is to fund restoration and closure of old logging roads.

Roads, once viewed as assets by the Forest Service are thankfully increasingly considered liabilities—problems that have to be dealt with. That reality resonated with Congress and while we didn't feel good about much of what Congress did in 2014 we're grateful for the continued funding of the Legacy Roads and Trails program.

The news means that more places like the Trout Creek Basin on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in Washington, where the Agency used Legacy Roads and Trails funding to replace old culverts and restore prime spawning grounds for threatened steelhead trout, will be protected.

A MILESTONE FOR THE GREATER GILA

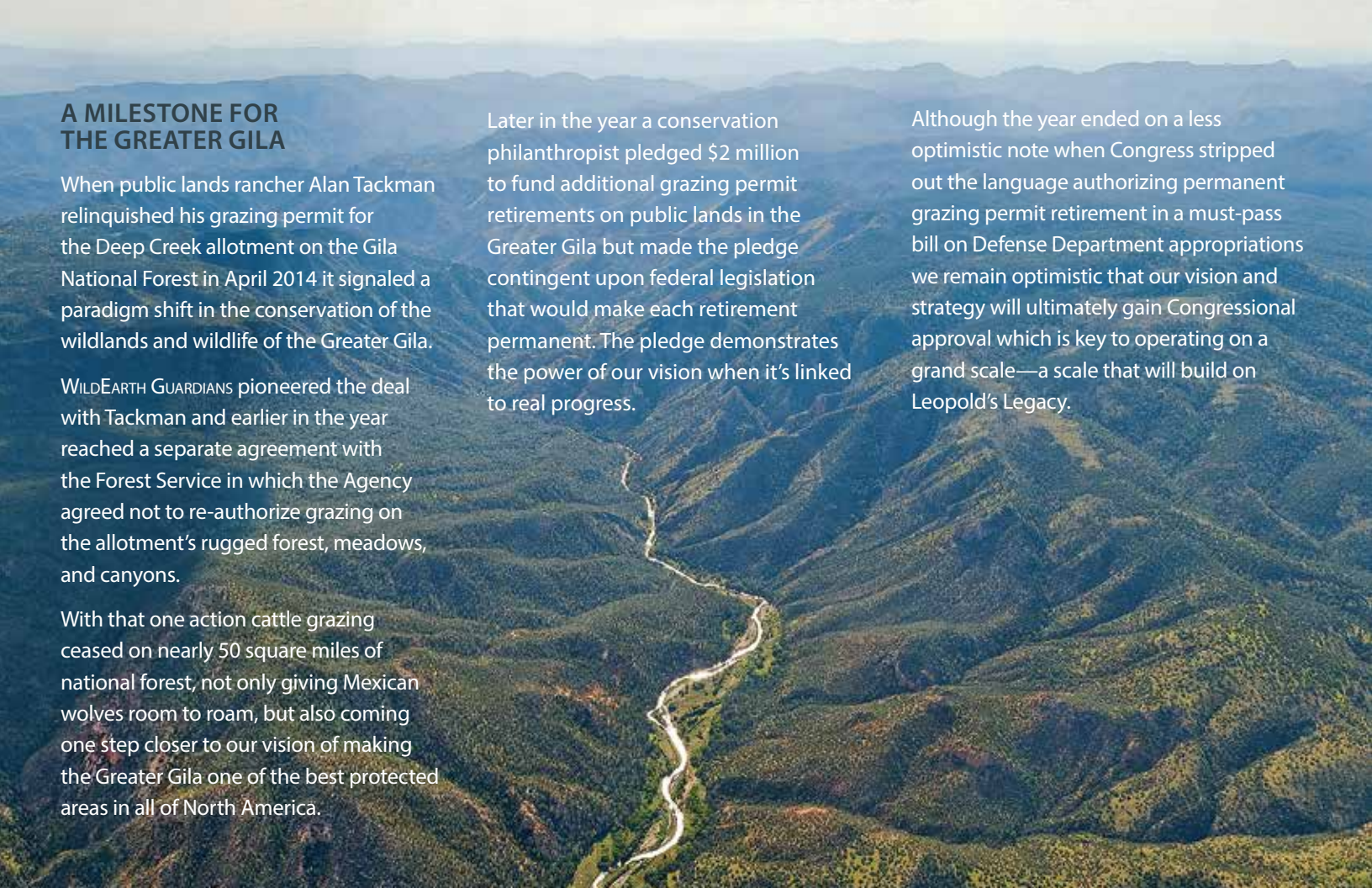
When public lands rancher Alan Tackman relinquished his grazing permit for the Deep Creek allotment on the Gila National Forest in April 2014 it signaled a paradigm shift in the conservation of the wildlands and wildlife of the Greater Gila.

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS pioneered the deal with Tackman and earlier in the year reached a separate agreement with the Forest Service in which the Agency agreed not to re-authorize grazing on the allotment's rugged forest, meadows, and canyons.

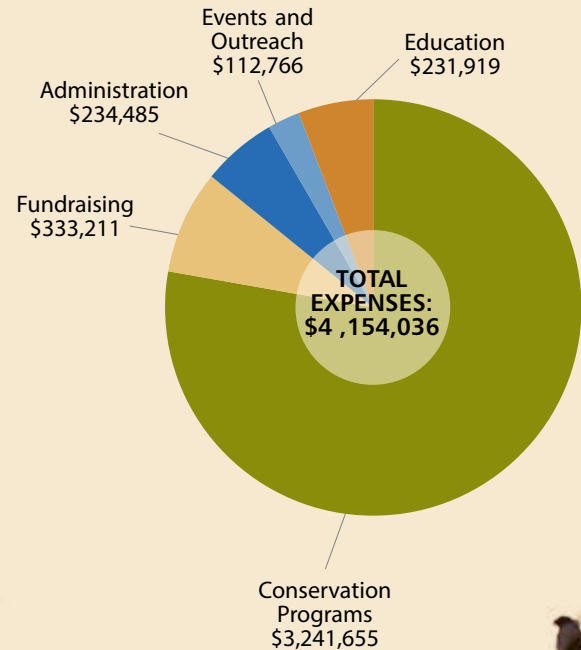
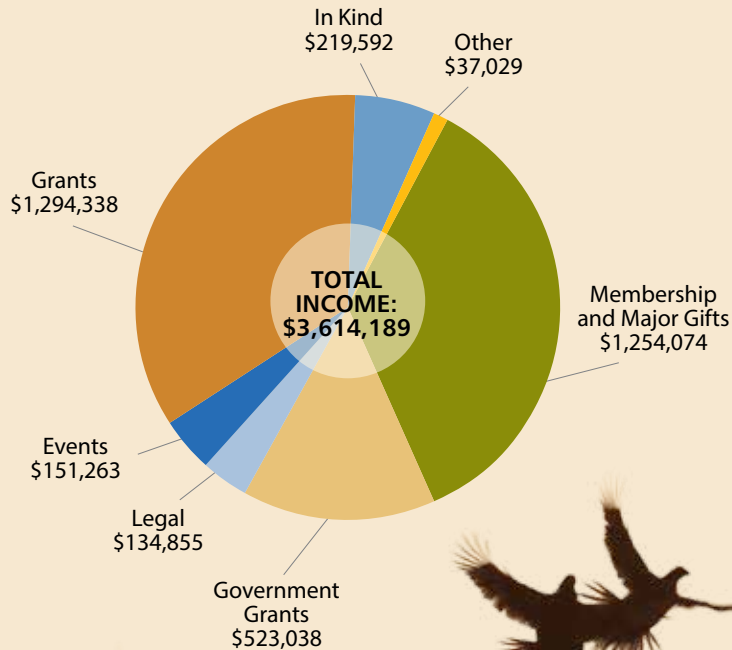
With that one action cattle grazing ceased on nearly 50 square miles of national forest, not only giving Mexican wolves room to roam, but also coming one step closer to our vision of making the Greater Gila one of the best protected areas in all of North America.

Later in the year a conservation philanthropist pledged \$2 million to fund additional grazing permit retirements on public lands in the Greater Gila but made the pledge contingent upon federal legislation that would make each retirement permanent. The pledge demonstrates the power of our vision when it's linked to real progress.

Although the year ended on a less optimistic note when Congress stripped out the language authorizing permanent grazing permit retirement in a must-pass bill on Defense Department appropriations we remain optimistic that our vision and strategy will ultimately gain Congressional approval which is key to operating on a grand scale—a scale that will build on Leopold's Legacy.



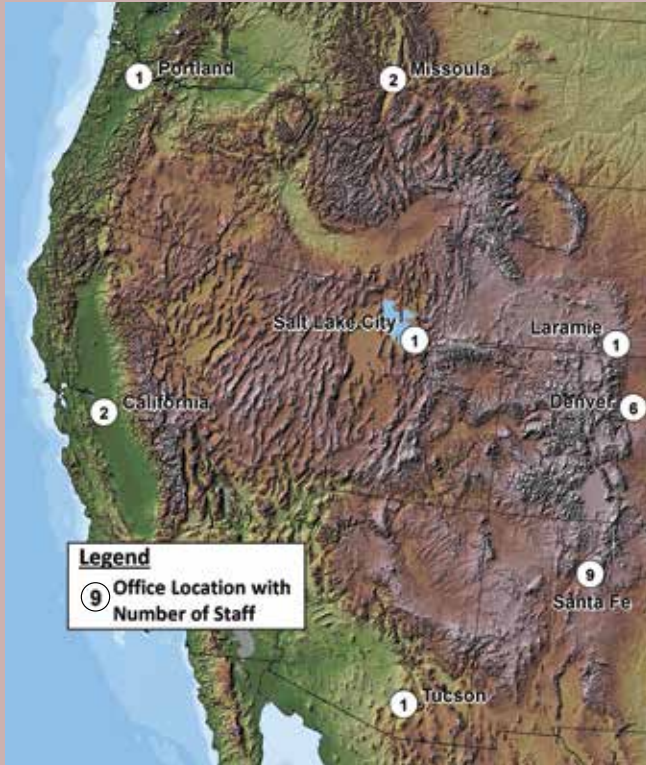
2014 Audited Financials



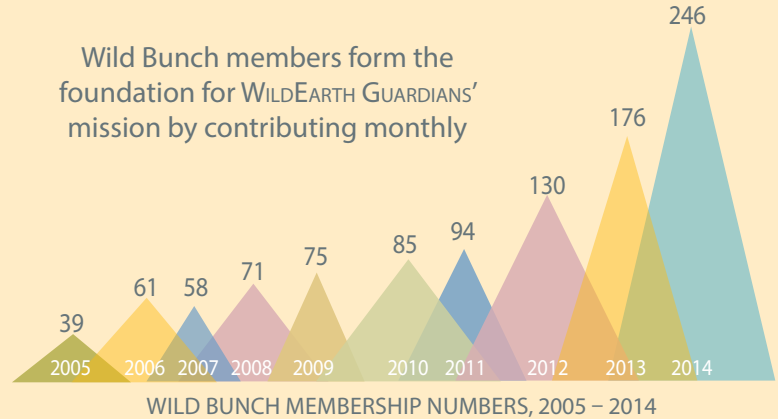
2014 was a year of robust growth for WILDEARTH GUARDIANS. We continue to earn Charity Navigator's top rating, a reflection of our efficient fundraising and administrative functions, solid systems, and transparent fiscal management. As projected, we ran a deficit budget in order to make key investments.

OUR MEMBERSHIP 26 Years of Your Support

WILD EARTH GUARDIANS' Office Locations



Wild Bunch members form the foundation for WILD EARTH GUARDIANS' mission by contributing monthly



Numbers to know

31,000 Facebook followers
10,000 Twitter followers
49,000 Email Activists

Thank You to Our Major Contributors

We are deeply grateful to the following supporters who helped make our work possible from January 1 - December 31, 2014.

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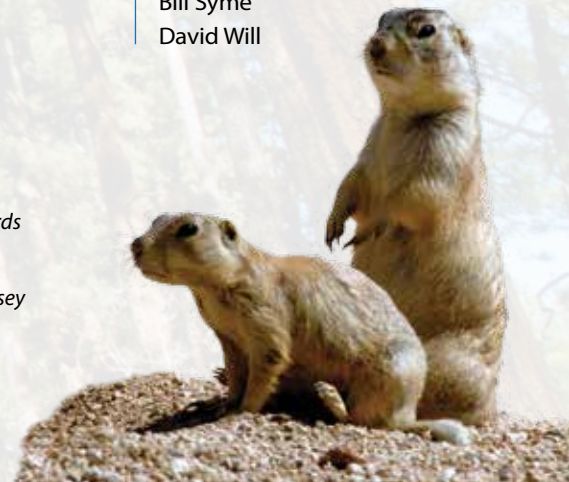
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WILDEARTH GUARDIANS 516 Alto Street , Santa Fe, NM 87501 505-988-9126
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