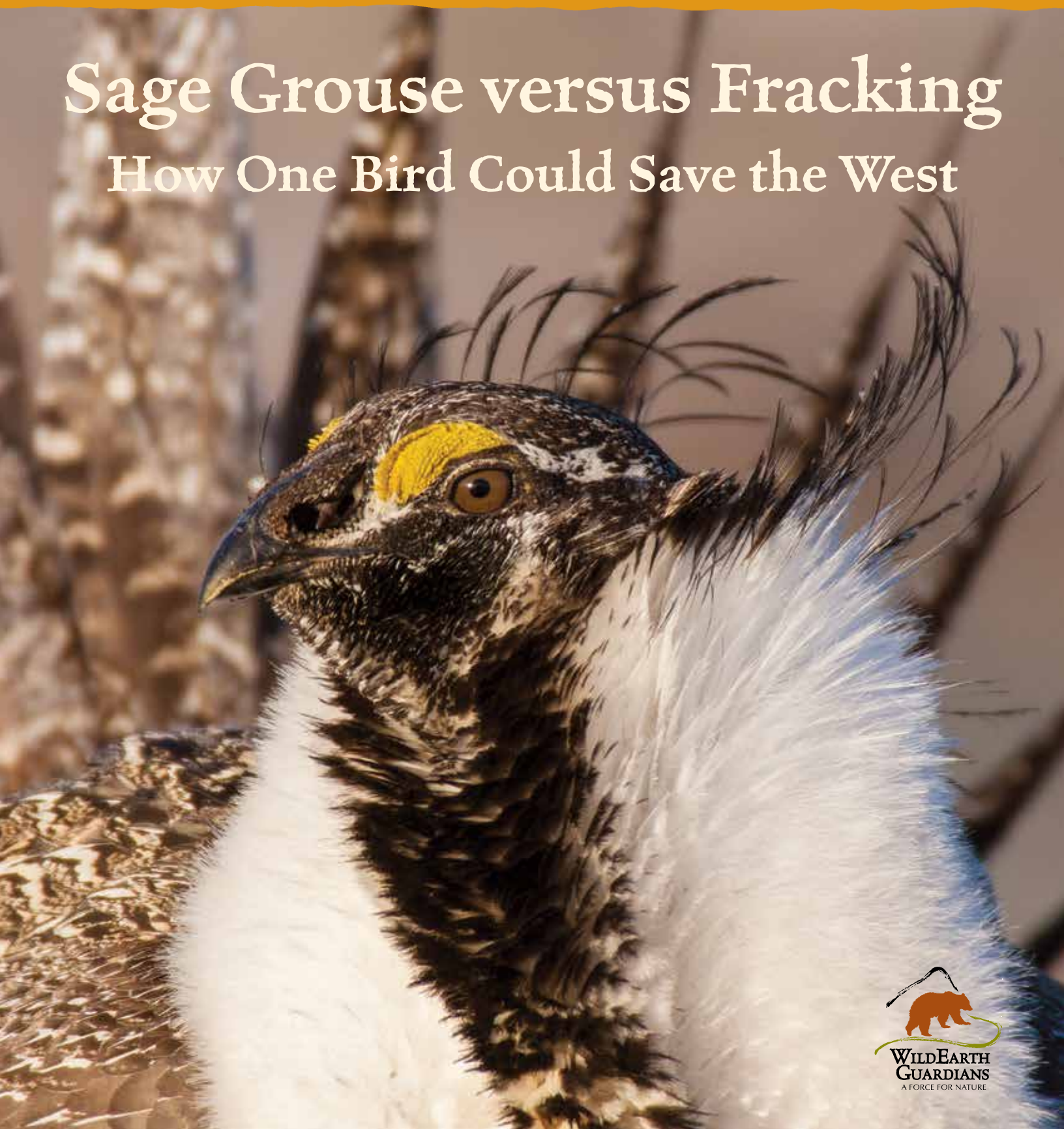


WILD AT HEART

THE WORD FROM WILDEARTH GUARDIANS

No. 22, Summer 2015

Sage Grouse versus Fracking How One Bird Could Save the West





MISSION STATEMENT

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

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A BOLD VISION

John Horning



WILDEARTH GUARDIANS

Unprecedented. A once-in-a-generation conservation opportunity. The largest land-use planning process ever initiated by the Bureau of Land Management.

That's how many observers characterize the nearly completed, multiyear process to revise 98 different BLM and Forest Service land-use plans affecting nearly 90 million acres of public land to protect the critically imperiled greater sage grouse.

When the BLM undertakes the largest—and perhaps the boldest—land-use planning process ever in its history, you have to wonder why.

I can think of two reasons: the power of the Endangered Species Act and the vision and tenacity of a current (Erik Molvar) and a former (Mark Salvo) WILDEARTH GUARDIANS staffer, both of whom care deeply about the sage grouse and pushed the Department of the Interior to provide a coherent and consistent framework for protecting the charismatic sage grouse and the stunning Sagebrush Sea.

The timing of the completion of this massive planning process is not coincidental. By September 30, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must (as a result of WILDEARTH GUARDIANS' historic legal settlement) make an initial decision about whether the grouse needs the protection of the Endangered Species Act to survive and recover. That decision will depend in large part on whether or not the BLM's plans adequately protect the grouse from drilling, livestock grazing, and other industrial uses of our western public lands.

Sadly, while the plans have a veneer of federal cohesion and scientific integrity, the reality is that industry-friendly politics dictated the plans' content.

Thus, in Wyoming a small 0.6-mile buffer exists around leks, while on the other side of the state line in Colorado, industrial facilities couldn't even be sited four miles from a lek. That's not biology. That's politics. And it's politics that's driving the sage grouse toward extinction.

While the BLM's plans are better than the status quo, we believe that better federal protections, both through BLM's land-use plans and the Endangered Species Act, are needed.

We'll be fighting in court, in Congress, and in the halls of the Department of the Interior in the coming months and years to ensure that the majestic sage grouse continues to dance.

For the Wild,

GUARDIAN GIVER

Charlotte Levinson

President, The Max and Anna Levinson Foundation



CHARLOTTE LEVINSON

"It's been a privilege to watch WILDEARTH GUARDIANS grow over the past 25 years. From protecting wild places, to wild rivers, and to endangered species, GUARDIANS represents my values and has my full support. The Climate & Energy Program is second to none. By developing key interventions, GUARDIANS has been able to successfully challenge coal mining in the Powder River Basin and shale oil fracking in Chaco Canyon,

while also winning precedent-setting climate justice victories and coalescing a national movement to end fossil fuel extraction on public lands everywhere. GUARDIANS' committed, expert staff offers the most strategic, uncompromising, and successful way forward. GUARDIANS' leveraged approach to the issues is a good match for anyone wanting to leverage their charitable giving."

ALLY IN THE FIELD

Tim Ream



Daniel Tso delivers community demands for a moratorium on fracking in the Greater Chaco area to the BLM district manager, Victoria Barr.

Daniel Tso has been studying the Greater Chaco landscape in northwestern New Mexico for much of his life. He has built a home there, farmed and ranched some there, and is an heir to some of that land. But lately he's had to alter his studies of an increasingly foreign landscape. That's because a fracking boom is changing the Chaco landscape before his very eyes.

Now Daniel looks for missing hills and canyons, where a bulldozer has scraped them into a giant, flat, dusty pad bigger than three football fields. He happens upon new and newly rutted roads congested with dangerous truck traffic. And he tries to follow a spider

web of pipelines marked for oil, gas, and wastewater—a web that isn't found on any map.

Daniel understands government—he was a Navajo Chapter Council Delegate for nearly 10 years—but he is finding it hard to get answers about all this development from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Land Management, even when it concerns his own land. Since the fracking boom took off a couple of years ago, hundreds of wells, flares, roads, and pipelines have

appeared without any plan for development and with little warning to the people. “They are just running over us,” he says.

Daniel's professional talents have turned him into half-sleuth, half-educator as he tries to take on what the feds have failed to do.

Free, prior, and informed consent is a bedrock international principle for good government anywhere, but it has been sorely lacking in the Greater Chaco area. Daniel's professional talents have turned him into half-sleuth, half-educator as he tries to take on what the feds have failed to do.

Worried about the impacts to air and water quality, he helped pass a resolution by his former chapter to allow third-party monitoring for toxics. He is working now to get three chapters to pass a collective oil and gas ordinance. He wants noise barriers for homes, warnings so people can get out of the area when fracking is happening, and safety training for people living next door to a disaster waiting to happen.

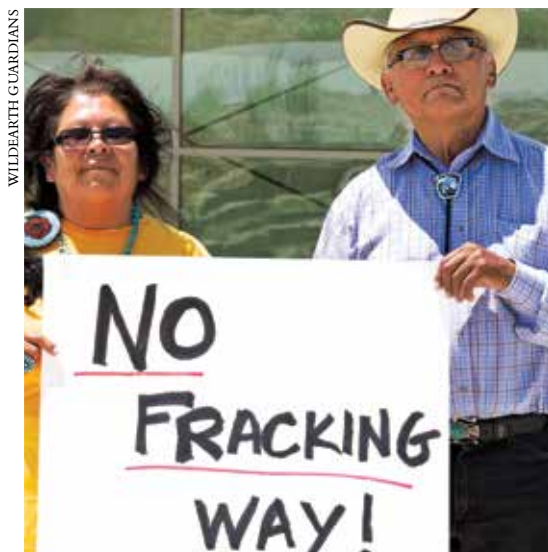
It doesn't seem like much to ask, and GUARDIANS is proud to help in any way we can. Daniel is glad to have us around, too. With GUARDIANS on the case, he says, the federal government and the oil companies know somebody is watching them.

Visit wildearthguardians.org:
Take Action / Activist Spotlight



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Daniel Tso and Etta Aviso protest outside the BLM's Farmington Office.

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JEFF TROEGER



"I'm a monthly supporter of WILDEARTH GUARDIANS because of their dogged defense of our natural world and our health. They hold our government's feet to the fire, ensuring they enforce our environmental laws and hold coal, oil, and gas companies accountable to protecting our climate. WILDEARTH GUARDIANS is one of the few groups willing to stand up directly to confront the fossil fuel industry and lead a true charge for clean energy. I admire their guts, their passion, their honesty, and their integrity. They're making more progress in making the world a better place than any other organization I can think of."

—JEFF TROEGER,
Steamboat Springs,
Colo.

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BIG WIN FOR CLIMATE!

Jeremy Nichols



WILDEARTH GUARDIANS

Colowyo coal mine in northwestern Colorado.

In May, we scored a major court victory for the climate and new hope for reining in coal mining on our public lands. Our lawsuit targeted the U.S. Department of the Interior's approval of the expansion of the Colowyo and Trapper mines in northwestern Colorado. Both mines fuel a massive coal-fired power plant that every year chugs millions of tons of carbon and other toxic pollution into the air.

In 2012, we discovered that Interior had approved the expansions with no public notice. Even worse, they relied on environmental analysis that was prepared in the 1970s. To boot, they completely ignored the climate, clean air, and other devastating impacts that would result from burning the coal that would be mined. This problem isn't isolated. Throughout the American West, the Interior Department is greenlighting more mining with no thought to the consequences for our climate. In spite of President Obama committing our nation to reducing carbon emissions, Interior is opening the door for more coal. That's a recipe for disaster.

Shortly after our discovery in 2012, we took action. Filing suit in federal court, we challenged Interior for rubberstamping the mine expansions. Our aim: to compel the agency to honestly disclose the environmental impacts of more coal mining and the consequences of burning coal. This spring, we won. In a stunning rebuke, the court held Interior's mining approvals in Colorado illegally ignored the impacts of coal burning and excluded the public. The judge

ordered the agency to go back and fix its mistakes or else it would shut down mining. With cleaner energy taking hold throughout our nation, providing more jobs than ever and boosting economies to new heights, the ruling is groundbreaking.

The ruling also underscored how effective and important our work at WILDEARTH GUARDIANS is. During a hearing in the case, the judge commented: "I think that...all of us...ought to be glad that there are people like the WILDEARTH GUARDIANS that care enough about the environment to be...the sand in the wheels sometimes."

With the climate crisis upon us, it's not enough to rely on rhetoric to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We have to aggressively move away from fossil fuels, and that means we need to start keeping coal in the ground. Our win is a big step in that direction. Certainly, the challenge isn't over. The coal industry continues to fight to mine, and Interior continues to accommodate. At the end of May, the agency proposed to make 80 billion tons of coal available for mining in Montana and Wyoming.

Still, we're making significant progress. And our latest court win emphasizes the importance of our leadership in advancing a true shift from fossil fuels and securing real hope for the climate and the American West.

Visit wildearthguardians.org: Top Priorities /
Power Past Coal

Tim Ream

Chaco: Culture, Communities, Climate

We are fighting the Greater Chaco fracking boom to protect three cherished values: culture, communities, and climate. Protecting the ancient Chacoan culture is about more than just the Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Chaco Great Houses and ceremonial roads occupy more than a thousand square miles on our public lands, often without any protection whatsoever from rigs, roads, and pipelines.



Living Navajo communities are spread equally across this landscape. It has been a pleasure to travel to Chaco to share stories, strategies, and prayers with the front line community at the center of this struggle. After all, it is their air and water, their sacred sites and livelihoods at stake.

For all the local values, this fight is also one thread of an ever-growing global climate justice movement. Indigenous people around the world are leading efforts to end coal mining and oil and natural gas drilling that are ruining both their lives and the climate we all depend upon. So let's protect the Greater Chaco and Keep It in the Ground!



Visit wildearthguardians.org: Programs / Climate and Energy / Fact sheets / Saving Greater Chaco from Fracking

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ANTHONY DECKOFF-JONES

"When I daydream and the question 'If I could be anywhere in the world, where would I be?' flutters through my mind, the answer is 'enjoying the view from the top of Atalaya or Sun Mountain with my pups' or 'pedaling up the Windsor [trail] with the love of my life! Thoughts like these are why I give to WILDEARTH GUARDIANS, for without the wild, I would have nowhere to be in my dreams."

— MARISSA D. BALLANTINE, Santa Fe, N.M.

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THE CONSERVATION BATTLE OF OUR LIFETIME

Sage grouse takes center stage

Erik Molvar

ALL PHOTOS THIS ARTICLE COURTESY OF NOPPADOL PAOTHONG



In the shadows of the snowcapped crags of Wyoming's Continental Divide, sage grouse once gathered to dance each spring near Stud Horse Butte. Along came the invention of fracking, and suddenly the ancient riverbed sandstones 11,000 feet below the surface became the nation's hottest drilling target.

In 1998, there were 31 dancing males at the Stud Horse Butte sage grouse mating site, or "lek." The same year, the Bureau of Land Management approved the first 500 of 3,600 gas wells to be drilled in the Jonah Field. In under a decade, Stud Horse Butte was overrun with roads, pipelines, and well sites.

By 2009, the Stud Horse Butte lek was silent except for the thrum of machinery emanating from the industrial gas field that now stretches toward the southwestern horizon. The sage grouse were gone.

This ecological catastrophe has repeated itself all over the American West, sometimes with strip mines and drilling rigs driving grouse populations to extinction. Other times, chronic habitat damage by livestock was the primary culprit. Responsible management of commercial uses on public lands would have stopped these tragedies and put sage grouse and other native wildlife on the road to recovery. But for decades the government has failed to act.

Thanks to a Sept. 30, 2015, Endangered Species Act listing deadline secured by a

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS lawsuit, the clock is now ticking for federal agencies to strengthen sage grouse protections.

Federal agencies are drafting new sage grouse plans that cover 90 million acres of remaining sage grouse habitat across 10 Western states. Almost 57 million acres of public and private lands are designated as Priority Habitats with elevated grouse protections. One of the largest conservation initiatives in our nation's history, this massive planning effort has triggered a battle royal between plucky nonprofit conservationists and heavy industry to decide the future of the American West.

For decades, fossil fuel development on Western public lands was a free-for-all.

The sage grouse plan amendments could change all that.

For decades, fossil fuel development on Western public lands was a free-for-all: The oil industry called the tune, and federal officials danced. By law, extraction of oil and gas is only one of many multiple uses of our public lands. Yet oil corporations get to decide which lands are auctioned off, and once public lands are rented, it is the oil industry that dictates the pattern and intensity of development—usually without much input from land managers. The sage grouse plan amendments could change all that.

Photos on pages 6-8 by award-winning photographer Noppadol Paothong. He is the photographer for *Save The Last Dance: A Story Of North American Grassland Grouse*, written by Joel M. Vance.

Watch the shrinking Sagebrush Sea at wildearthguardians.org: Top Priorities / Saving the Sagebrush Sea / The Shrinking Geography of Sagebrush Habitat.

Sage Grouse by the Numbers

57 million
acres of Priority Habitats slated for increased grouse protections

10
states covered by sage grouse plan amendments

350
species of sagebrush wildlife that will benefit from grouse protections

98
BLM and Forest Service plans being amended

160 million acres of remaining sage grouse habitat of all ownerships

Scientific studies have shown that oil and gas development is devastating to sage grouse, driving them away from preferred habitats and harming their ability to successfully nest and raise their chicks. Populations are impacted if there is a well site or road within two miles of a sage grouse lek, if well pad densities exceed one per square mile, or if more than three percent of the land is disturbed. Any one of these factors by itself can cause sage grouse populations to nosedive.

And nosedive they have. Historically, sage grouse numbered about 16 million, with flocks that darkened the skies. Today, perhaps 180,000 birds remain; almost 99 percent of the original population has disappeared. Between 2007 and 2013 alone, the remaining sage grouse population across the West plummeted by more than 40 percent. The states with the heaviest oil and gas development saw the steepest declines.

Federal experts reviewed the science in 2011 and recommended that sage grouse Priority Habitats be off limits to future leasing for oil, gas, and coal. For existing leases, the experts found that to halt the declines, stringent restrictions are necessary, including no industrial facilities within four miles of leks and limits on the density of industrial sites. Based on these recommendations, GUARDIANS submitted our Sage Grouse Recovery Alternative, which became one of the federal plan options to apply across 98 national forests and BLM field offices.

But the Obama administration ignored its own scientists, proposing instead to keep Priority Habitats open to future leasing for fossil fuels, under protections riddled with loopholes. As it stands today, the new plans allow industrial development to invade even the most pristine remaining habitats under terms hostile to sage grouse survival. This must change.



WILDEARTH GUARDIANS is leading protests against 11 of the 14 flawed proposed plans, paving the way for a legal challenge if federal agencies don't improve protections.

Jonah natural gas field in western Wyoming.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFORM LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Cattle and sheep are invasive species in the arid West. Although many Western sagebrush ecosystems evolved without heavy grazing pressure of any kind, now almost every acre of Western sagebrush is heavily grazed by cattle or sheep.

For more than a century, federal officials did nothing to stop livestock from pounding fragile desert soils, denuding the land of native grasses, and degrading wildlife habitat. In the wake of chronic overgrazing, a virulent nonnative weed known as cheatgrass has invaded and taken over vast acreages of once-productive habitats, converting them to a biological desert that burns every several years. The fires destroy sagebrush, the most important plant for sage grouse.

Western ranchers are fond of blaming





Sage Grouse Timeline

- DECEMBER 2003** WILDEARTH GUARDIANS and our many allies petition to list the greater sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), citing major population declines and the drilling boom
- JANUARY 2005** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issues ESA “not warranted” finding, based on President George Bush appointee Julie MacDonald’s rewrite of scientists’ findings
- DECEMBER 2005** An industry-funded study by Matt Holloran discovers that oil and gas fields cause severe harm to sage grouse
- DECEMBER 2007** Federal judge overturns sage grouse “not warranted” ESA decision
- AUGUST 2008** Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal signs executive order creating expansive but flawed Core Areas for sage grouse conservation and proposes compromise measures
- MARCH 2010** Fish and Wildlife Service finds sage grouse “warranted, but precluded” for ESA protection. Grouse becomes a candidate species
- MAY 2010** Federal agencies begin land-use planning process to ramp up sage grouse protections across the West, slated for completion in August 2015
- DECEMBER 2011** Federal National Technical Team issues final science-based recommendations for sage grouse planning
- SEPTEMBER 2015** Deadline for Fish and Wildlife Service to publish a proposed decision on ESA listing for sage grouse based on WILDEARTH GUARDIANS’ 2011 legal settlement that compelled government to set deadlines for 252 candidate species

predators for sage grouse declines. But sage grouse require abundant grass—at least seven inches tall—as hiding cover to avoid their natural predators. When livestock graze down the grass below this threshold, sage grouse are exposed, and predation skyrockets.

Requiring ranchers to leave behind enough grass for sage grouse hiding cover eases the pressure of livestock on these fragile desert habitats, giving both the land and the bird an opportunity to recover.

THE BIRD THAT COULD SAVE THE AMERICAN WEST

Western communities have been wracked by environmental problems for decades. We’ve seen open spaces converted to industrial zones; thriving wildlife populations decimated by disturbance; treasured recreation lands disappearing before bulldozers and drilling rigs; air pollution in rural communities that rivals the smog in industrial cities; and fracking operations contaminating irreplaceable groundwater with toxic chemicals. The emergence of sage grouse as a potential endangered species changes the game.

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS is leading a coalition of hard-hitting conservation organizations to secure strong, science-based conservation plans from federal agencies.

The alarming decline of these charismatic birds is a wake-up call that triggers legal obligations to halt the destruction and restore the Sagebrush Sea to health. WILDEARTH GUARDIANS is leading a coalition of hard-hitting conservation organizations to secure strong, science-based conservation plans from federal agencies. These plans could halt the declines through advocacy, and as necessary, litigation.

If we succeed, we win the most important conservation achievement in a generation. Elk winter range, pronghorn migration routes, and habitat for 350 other species of native wildlife will gain protections. And the sage grouse will become the bird that saved the American West.

Visit wildearthguardians.org: Top Priorities / Saving the Sagebrush Sea

IN THE HALLS OF JUSTICE

Samantha Ruscavage-Barz, Kelly Nokes, Kevin Mueller



GUARDIANS GOES TO COURT FOR CLIMATE AND CHACO COMMUNITIES

MIKE HEISENFELD



On July 13, GUARDIANS went to court and asked a federal judge to halt the federal government's illegal drilling and fracking in northwest New Mexico's Greater Chaco Landscape. On March 11, GUARDIANS and our partners filed suit challenging the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's illegal authorizations of over 200 new fracking proposals across Greater Chaco. The agency has admitted that it never analyzed how this development will impact public health and the environment, and has no plan to protect

Greater Chaco's air, water, and communities. We asked the court to prevent BLM from allowing drilling and fracking to continue in Greater Chaco until the court resolves our lawsuit. A decision is forthcoming within the next month. Visit wildearthguardians.org: *Top Priorities / Frack-free Public Lands*

GUARDIANS SUES TO PROTECT LAST WILD MEXICAN WOLVES

In July, GUARDIANS sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over its deeply flawed new rules for managing critically imperiled Mexican wolves. At the heart of the lawsuit is the Service's insistence that the sole remaining population of wild wolves is "nonessential" to the species' recovery. By designating the population "nonessential," the Service avoids providing many of the vital protections necessary to recover lobos in the Southwest, southern Rockies, and Grand Canyon ecoregions. The Service's new rules illogically cap the population of Mexican wolves at 300-325, place arbitrary political boundaries on the wolves' range, and allow increased killing of wolves by federal agents and private landowners. With just 109 wolves in the wild, they need every chance to survive and thrive, not more limits and red tape.

Visit wildearthguardians.org: *Top Priorities / Wolves in the American West*



U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE, AZ GAME & FISH DEPT.

GUARDIANS CHALLENGES NEW BREED OF LOGGING TO PROTECT LYNX

GUARDIANS, represented by the Western Environmental Law Center, filed a lawsuit this spring challenging a new trend in Forest Service logging that will ruin world-class southern Rockies forests and threaten lynx use for denning. The Tennessee Creek timber sale in Colorado is the first of many of this alarming new class of logging plans in which the government doesn't identify where the heavy logging will happen. Tennessee Pass, the northern part of the logging area, is in forested slopes approaching valued 14ers in the

northern Sawatch Range. Given that the 20 square miles of approved logging involve denning habitat for lynx, this challenge is crucial. We're working to halt this new logging framework before it takes root and endangers more forests and protected species.

Visit wildearthguardians.org: *Newsroom / Press Releases / Clear Cut Logging ...*

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JOSEPH DUMONT

Nancy and her dog Towa Bear among wildflowers, Pecos Wilderness

"What I love about New Mexico is its rich culture, the climate, the people, but most of all, I love hiking in the pristine wilderness. I am grateful to WILDEARTH GUARDIANS for guarding and protecting our most precious natural resource: our wildlife and its habitat. I am proud to support GUARDIANS as a monthly donor."

— NANCY DAHL,
Santa Fe, N.M.

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WILDEARTH GUARDIANS



CAMPAIGN UPDATES

Jen Pelz, Sarah McMillan, Bethany Cotton



CORPORATE GIVER

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS



"I take Aveda's mission seriously: to care for the world we live in. I believe that animals and trees are vital to our existence. I am a water warrior! With GUARDIANS, Aveda is protecting the water in our Rio Grande. Our responsibility is to leave the planet in good shape for young generations. Planting trees with GUARDIANS was a learning experience. It gave me a feeling of purpose. Thank you!"

— KATHERINE GARZA,
Mark Pardo An Aveda
Lifestyle Salon and Spa,
Albuquerque, N.M.

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PROTECT THE CUCKOO—SAVE AN ICONIC RIVER

ADRIEL HEISEY



Our fight continues to preserve the wildness of the Rio Grande as it winds through the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in central New Mexico. In May, we amended our lawsuit against

the Army Corps of Engineers, challenging its overzealous plan to build 43 miles of levees by invoking the protections of the Endangered Species Act on behalf of the yellow-billed cuckoo. Key habitat of the newly listed cuckoo—the Rio Grande Bosque—is threatened by the levee infrastructure that prevents the river from inundating its once vast floodplain. GUARDIANS is working to bring flood control into the 21st century in a way that supports safe communities, a healthy river, and its beautiful inhabitants like the yellow-billed cuckoo.

Visit wildearthguardians.org: *Newsroom / Press Releases / Rio Grande Levee Lawsuit ...*

FIGHTING FOR THREATENED WOLVERINE & LYNX

PHOTOS.COM



On June 4, we filed our opening brief challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's failure to protect wolverine under the Endangered Species Act. Climate change is a significant issue for wolverine, because, among other reasons, they need deep late-season snow to den. In deciding not to list wolverine, an administrator at the Service rejected the agency's own biologists' opinion that wolverine are threatened by climate change, small population size, trapping, etc. We intend to hold the agency accountable for ignoring the best available

science when it chose not to protect the imperiled wolverine. In February, our challenge to the State of Montana's trapping program, which fails to protect threatened Canada lynx from trapping, ended in a settlement. The settlement was finalized after approval by the state's Fish & Wildlife Commission, which came on July 9. Among other provisions, in the "lynx zone" (all critical habitat and more), bobcat trappers must now regularly check their traps, use only smaller traps, and stop altogether using certain traps, such as body-gripping traps. Additionally, the wolverine-trapping season will be closed for at least two more years. Our settlement will result in fewer lynx trapped and killed.

Visit wildearthguardians.org: *Newsroom / Press Releases / Montana Approves Restrictions on... OR wildearthguardians.org / Species Conservation / Mammals / Wolverine*

FEDS FAILING TO PROTECT WANDERING WOLVES

SAM PARKS



Journey, the famed wandering wolf, has a second litter of pups in the wilds of southern Oregon, the only recent bright spot in otherwise dim news for wolves trying to repopulate their historic territories across the West. In the past year, coyote hunters' bullets killed both Echo, the Grand Canyon wandering wolf, and her nameless counterpart in northern Colorado. Though the Endangered Species Act protects wolves in Utah and Colorado, the government is not prosecuting these wolves' killers because of the so-called McKittrick policy, under which people are only charged if the government can prove the person intentionally killed a protected animal. GUARDIANS is in court in Arizona challenging the deeply flawed policy and advocating for its abandonment in Washington, D.C.

Visit wildearthguardians.org: *Top Priorities / Wolves in the American West*

GOOD NEWS FROM THE GUARDIANS

Bryan Bird, Bethany Cotton



LYNX OUT OF HARM'S WAY FROM SNOWMOBILES

Wildlife finally get a break from snowmobiles in the Rockies. A three-judge appeals court sided unanimously with WILDEARTH GUARDIANS and partners Friends of the Bitterroot and Montanans for Quiet Recreation in our battle to secure stronger protections for moose, grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines, lynx, and a broad variety of “big game.” The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest had designated over 60 percent of the forest to snowmobiles, but our lawsuit reversed the decision. Tucked into the southwestern corner of Montana, the national forest forms a piece of the “spine of the continent” wild landscape where winter wildlife still thrives. This is the first-ever appeals court victory pushing the Forest Service to enforce its own requirement to minimize snowmobile impacts to wildlife.

Visit wildearthguardians.org: *Top Priorities / Off Road Vehicle Reform*



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GRIZZLIES' HOME FREE OF SHEEP THIS SUMMER



GREGORY "SLOBIRD" SMITH, FLICKR

The University of Idaho didn't graze sheep at a controversial research station on public lands in Montana this summer. This is due to an ongoing lawsuit brought by WILDEARTH GUARDIANS and partners Gallatin Wildlife Association, Western Watersheds Project, and Cottonwood Environmental Law Center. It's the second consecutive year that sheep have not grazed the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station in the Centennial Mountains, a critical grizzly bear migration corridor. In recent years, the

station has become a hot-button issue for federal land management and the focal point of several lawsuits, ranging from the illegal killing of a grizzly bear to insufficient scientific consideration of vital habitat for bighorn sheep. In November, the Secretary of Agriculture sent a letter to Congress requesting closure of the facility for environmental concerns and because it is facing \$4 million in costs for repairs and maintenance on top of its annual budget of \$1.9 million. However, Congress continues to slip funding for the obsolete research station into federal legislation.

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APPEALS COURT DEALS BLOW TO WILDLIFE SERVICES' SECRET CRUELTY

In August, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals made it clear that GUARDIANS is injured by the cruel wildlife killing activities of the USDA Wildlife Services program, and that we can challenge its operations. This precedent-setting victory has broad implications for GUARDIANS' and our allies' ability to confront cruelty and end the war on wildlife. Our case challenging Wildlife Services' reliance on a woefully outdated 1994 analysis of the environmental impact of its activities, which itself relies on largely disproven science from the 1970s and '80s, now moves forward. As more people become aware of and outraged by the cruelty perpetrated by this secretive program, we overcome its practice of operating without public oversight. We are forcing Wildlife Services out of the shadows and into the light.

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SPOTLIGHT ON STAFF

Kelly Nokes



KELLY NOKES joined WILDEARTH GUARDIANS as Carnivore Campaign Lead in June. She holds a J.D. and Masters of Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School and a B.S. in Environmental Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Leadership & Management from Northern Michigan University. Kelly has been an active advocate for wild creatures and wild places throughout her career. She previously served as a legal intern with Western Environmental Law Center and Trustees for Alaska and came to GUARDIANS with a strong background in environmental education and program administration from her prior work with Columbia Riverkeeper and the Columbia Gorge Ecology Institute. An avid mountain biker and trail runner, Kelly can often be found on the trails exploring Montana's beautiful mountain landscape when not in the office.

Marla Nelson



MARLA NELSON joined WILDEARTH GUARDIANS in June as the Rewilding Attorney. Her work focuses on developing strategic legal advocacy to reclaim places for the wild and reconnect wildlife habitat and waterways across the American West. Originally from Minnesota, Marla spent her formative years swimming and fishing in the many lakes up north. She received her B.A. in Spanish and Biology from St. Olaf College in 2006 and her J.D. from Lewis and Clark Law School in 2012. Marla worked as a legal intern with Earthjustice's California office and Earthrise Law Center. Before joining GUARDIANS, she got her legal feet wet as Legal Fellow and later Staff Attorney for the Northwest Environmental Defense Center. Marla likes to spend her free time exploring the West on backpacking trips, running, and gardening.