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# ANNUAL REPORT 2009



## Mission Statement

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





## From the Executive Director

John Horning

From the wet meadows of the far western edge of the Sagebrush Sea desert to the forested slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and from the BioBlitz to the grazing buyout and beyond, WILDEARTH GUARDIANS' vision, scope, strategies and tactics continue to be big, bold and diverse. It's probably one of the reasons why 2009 was our strongest financial year ever, with more than \$2 million in income. The other, of course, is your generosity and commitment to our vision.

Our growth in difficult financial times is an accomplishment of which we are all proud, but it's the conservation work that remains the foundation for all of our success. We believe that social and political change to protect our environment is a complex process that involves incentives and mandates—namely carrots and sticks. So we push, cajole, plead and pay to protect the wild.

We continue to push the Interior Department to more aggressively respond to the biodiversity crisis and we expanded our scope in 2009 to include nearly 800 species on whose behalf we are advocating federal protection. Likewise we're pushing the Environmental Protection Agency to protect clean air, regulate the oil and gas industry and address the climate crisis by confronting our destructive dependence on coal. In doing so we've become a new force on energy policy in the American West. Finally we're working in an innovative fashion to protect wolves and wilderness throughout the West, but especially in the Gila, the birthplace of America's wilderness movement.

It's an exciting time to be at the helm of WILDEARTH GUARDIANS. Thanks for your belief in our vision.



## Guardian Giver

Alan Arkin

Acclaimed actor and long-time wolf advocate, Alan Arkin, began a collaboration with WILDEARTH GUARDIANS in 2009 to protect one of North America's most endangered species. Arkin, whose middle name is actually Wolf, first became interested in these majestic icons of the wild while making a film in Alabama. "They brought two wolves in and they fell in love with me; they must have known my middle name," says Arkin. "There is something majestic connected to the reality of that moment, like a great spiritual exercise."

When asked about environmental conservation in today's world, Arkin says that he tries to be positive. "Though we're in a very precarious place, a very divisive place, I am hopeful," he says.

But Arkin doesn't just hope. He is also using his voice to be an activist. He worked with WILDEARTH GUARDIANS to narrate a photo essay that raises awareness about the plight of wolves in the West and inspires hope for a more humane future. In addition, he recorded public service announcements that are airing in New Mexico and Arizona. After working with GUARDIANS, he says that the organization is "wonderful."

"There's hardly a better thing one can do than protect the life around us," he says. "And for WILDEARTH GUARDIANS to keep such a high ratio of money spent on conservation projects is commendable."



## Climate & Energy 2009 RECAP



The Climate and Energy Program built unprecedented momentum in 2009, staking out WILDEARTH GUARDIANS' leading role in confronting fossil fuels in the American West and accelerating our transition to clean energy.

Our accomplishments were many. In 2009, WILDEARTH GUARDIANS:

- Singlehandedly reformed the way the oil and gas industry is held accountable to clean air;
- Kickstarted a significant overhaul of federal air quality regulations for oil and gas drilling;
- Secured commitments from the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure state air quality plans throughout the West protect public health and our treasured landscapes;
- Launched major legal challenges against the operation of coal-fired power plants throughout the region;
- Spurred the development of renewable energy off the coasts;
- Helped spark a renewable energy vision for the City of Santa Fe;
- And, most importantly, we managed to rally more Coloradans than ever before behind our vision of a future fueled entirely by clean energy.



## Climate & Energy Vision: Keeping Safe from Coal

Coal-fired power plants are the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. So the key to solving global warming is to power past coal.

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS has taken direct aim to keep the climate safe from coal on two major fronts. First, by launching unprecedented challenges to the operation of some of the West's largest coal-fired power plants. And second, by tackling coal mining in the Powder River Basin of northeastern Wyoming, where 42 percent of the nation's coal is strip mined.

It's a powerful and comprehensive approach to confronting our generation's greatest environmental challenge. In the end, we expect major reductions in greenhouse gases, cleaner air, and healthier communities.

And our work is paying off. Colorado is poised to adopt legislation that will lead to the retirement of Xcel Energy's Valmont and Cherokee coal-fired power plants in the Denver metro area. Our pressure on Xcel to shutter these plants has played a key role in helping this legislation become a reality.

Powering past coal will continue to be a priority of WILDEARTH GUARDIANS as we get to the root of the climate crisis.



### 2009 Timeline: Guardians in Action

- January 6** Applauded Environmental Protection Agency for lawsuit challenging coal-burning cement plant in Boulder County
- January 12** Awarded funding to work with National Labs to build blueprint for renewable energy development in Santa Fe

- January 13** Overturned Forest Service decision to expand oil and gas drilling on the Santa Fe National Forest in northern New Mexico
- January 15** Filed suit against Environmental Protection Agency over failure to protect against air pollution caused by nationwide oil and gas drilling
- January 28** Officially requested Obama administration issue moratorium on the use of sharpshooters to kill elk in Rocky Mountain National Park



## Wildlife 2009 RECAP

**W**ILDEARTH GUARDIANS' Wildlife Program escalated its work on a multitude of species, from the most imperiled plants and animals on earth, such as the ocelot and the Yellowstone sand verbena, to wildlife in our midst, such as mountain lions and coyotes.

As a result of our energetic efforts, we obtained positive decisions from the federal government for 111 species for which we've pursued Endangered Species Act listing. Through our Prairie Dog Day celebration, Western Ark, Western Grouse, and Western Wolf campaigns, we raised public awareness, pressured policymakers, and represented imperiled species in the courtroom.



To promote coexistence with wildlife, in 2009 WILDEARTH GUARDIANS:

- Sought to outlaw the federal government's use of a variety of poisons, killing devices, and aerial gunning nationwide;
- Pushed for protection for a variety of mammals from trapping in New Mexico;
- Broadened efforts to safeguard mountain lions in Montana; and
- Led the charge to protect coyotes in the Denver metropolitan area from traps and guns.

## Wildlife Vision: Ending the War on Wildlife

**T**he Department of Agriculture's deceptively named agency, Wildlife Services, killed 272 wolves in the Northern Rockies in 2009. Funded with tax dollars, the agency is responsible for killing millions of animals every year and they especially target native carnivores for the benefit of agribusiness.

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS is taking our campaign to end the federal government's war on wildlife to a new level. For more than a decade, WILDEARTH GUARDIANS has been leading the charge to expose Wildlife Services and end the slaughter. We will continue to target Congressional appropriations bills that provide the agency with its wasteful budget. And we will continue to pressure the Department of Interior and the Obama administration to eliminate the agency's lethal programs and fund voluntary grazing permit retirement programs instead. We will continue to take the agency to court when it violates state and federal laws. And we will continue to raise public awareness of the issue across the West.

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS is driven by a vision of the future in which wildlife no longer suffer the cruelty of lethal poisons, traps, snares, dynamite, and aerial gunning. We see a future in which coyotes, wolves, and cougars are valued for their contributions to ecosystems and their intrinsic majestic beauty.



- February 2** Criticized continued giveaways to public lands ranchers when rock bottom annual grazing fees for 2009 were announced
- February 2** Released second annual *Report from the Burrow* on Prairie Dog Day—Groundhog Day for the West—which grades the protection of prairie dogs
- February 11** Challenged Bureau of Land Management push to lease more land in Colorado's Front Range for oil and gas drilling

- February 14** Launched an effort to protect coyotes from a private shooter/trapper hired by Greenwood Village, CO to kill coyotes in city parks
- February 17** Released *War on Wildlife*, a comprehensive report calling on Obama and Congress to abolish federal wildlife-killing agency
- March 3** With community members, openly criticized local coyote killing plan in Greenwood Village, CO at city council meeting

## Wild Places 2009 Recap

In 2009, WILDEARTH GUARDIANS' Wild Places program focused on protecting and restoring the Gila Bioregion, Chihuahuan Desert Bioregion, the Sagebrush Sea, and the Colorado Rockies.



Covering vast swaths of the West's special and most imperiled places, in 2009 WILDEARTH GUARDIANS:

- Commemorated the 110th anniversary of the Gila National Forest by advocating for permanent livestock elimination and designation of 2.2 million acres in the national forest as wilderness;
- Submitted a bid of \$50,000 to graze just a few bison on the Valles Caldera National Preserve and

thereby protect the landscape from the ecological devastation from continued cattle grazing;

- Organized volunteers who succeeded in removing miles of historic barbed wire that impeded wildlife movement on the Valles Caldera National Preserve;
- Filed a lawsuit challenging logging in the Rio Grande National Forest in order to protect the Canada lynx and its forest home in southern Colorado;
- Successfully challenged a Bureau of Land Management proposal for 1.5 million acres of herbicide spraying in the Chihuahuan ecosystem of southern New Mexico.

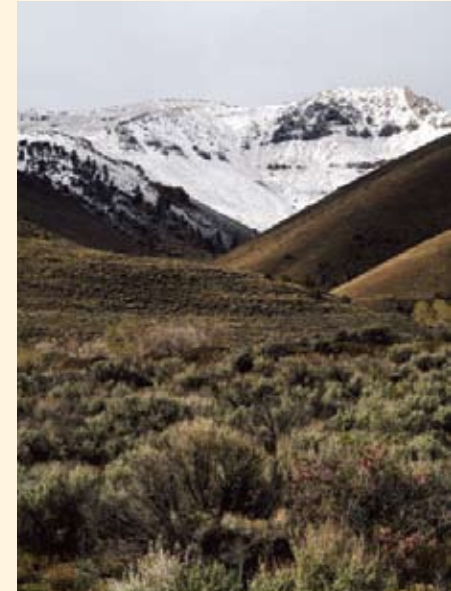
- March 4** Celebrated 110th Anniversary of Gila National Forest with release of report envisioning renewed commitment to the area
- March 6** Criticized Department of Interior decision to strip gray wolves of legal protection under Endangered Species Act
- March 11** Filed petition to overturn air pollution permit for coal-fired power plant in Hayden, CO

## Wild Places Vision: Protected Reserves in the Sagebrush Sea

Despite its vastness, the Sagebrush Sea is one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America. The landscape has been reduced by half since European settlement of the West and myriad land uses continue to damage or destroy much of what remains.

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS' Sagebrush Sea Campaign is working to conserve and restore the Sagebrush Sea and its inhabitants, including the charismatic sage-grouse. We envision healthy, expansive sagebrush habitats, teeming with birds, large and small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and fish. We want to see the Sagebrush Sea free from oil and gas development, livestock grazing, off-road vehicle use, and other degrading land uses. We hope to protect watersheds that provide water to hundreds of western communities. We envision increased opportunities for recreation and solitude across this landscape.

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS' decade-long effort to list greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act elevated the species to "candidate" status in March 2010. We will leverage the candidate listing to improve the management of the Sagebrush Sea's public land, including retiring federal grazing permits and designating sagebrush reserves to protect sensitive flora and fauna.



- March 12** Critical habitat for endangered invertebrates proposed on Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge in response to our litigation
- March 17** Called on CO Division of Wildlife to stop killing coyotes in Denver metro area
- March 20** Cited *State of the Birds* report to urge Obama administration to protect native western grouse
- March 24** Contested Cibola National Forest plan to spray toxic herbicides

## Wild Rivers 2009 Recap

Rivers across the Southwest continue to be threatened by urban development that has encroached on floodplains, depriving rivers of the room that they need to roam and endangering fish and wildlife habitat. To address this threat we filed two separate lawsuits in 2009 to restrict development along rivers. The National Flood Insurance Program threatens a host of endangered plants and animals along rivers in New Mexico and Arizona like the Rio Grande, Pecos, San Pedro and Verde would benefit if our lawsuit succeeds. It's our hope that the lawsuit will limit development and better protect endangered species that depend on river ecosystems throughout the Southwest.



Complementing our legal and policy work is our hands-on river restoration program, which continues to be a powerful force to heal degraded streams in New Mexico. We planted more than 60,000 cottonwoods and willows and recruited more than 250 volunteers in 2009 to help restore small streams like La Jencia Creek,

Bluewater Creek, the Rio Puerco and a handful of other streams as part of our Stream Team events. Each of these streams has been severely degraded by cattle grazing and our restoration work is bringing these vital arteries back to life.



## Wild Rivers Vision: New Life on the Rio Grande

The mythic Rio Grande is one of the most well known of America's rivers. It is also one of its most endangered, suffering from the strain of population growth and a constant and growing demand for its limited water supplies. Inefficient irrigation technology and a poorly diversified and water-hogging agricultural crop base also remain a bane to the existence of this great river. In addition, development along the Rio's banks and within its floodplain, the border fence and proposals for expanded levees all threaten to further fragment the river and disconnect us from this vital artery.

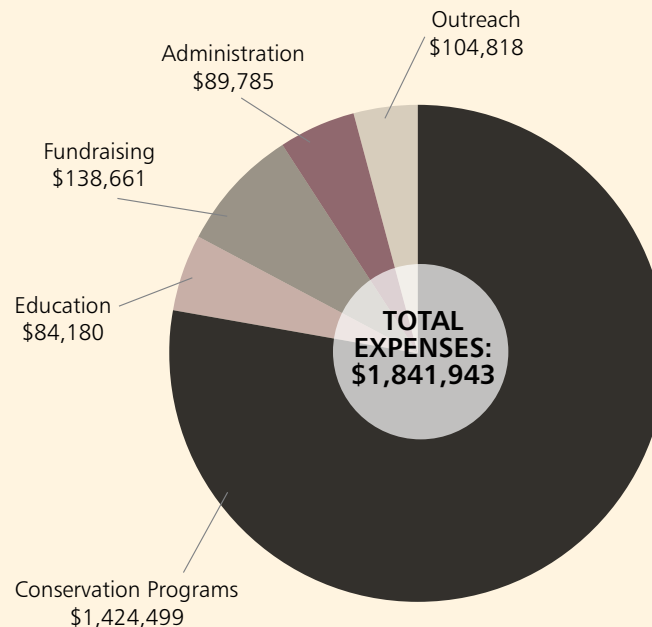
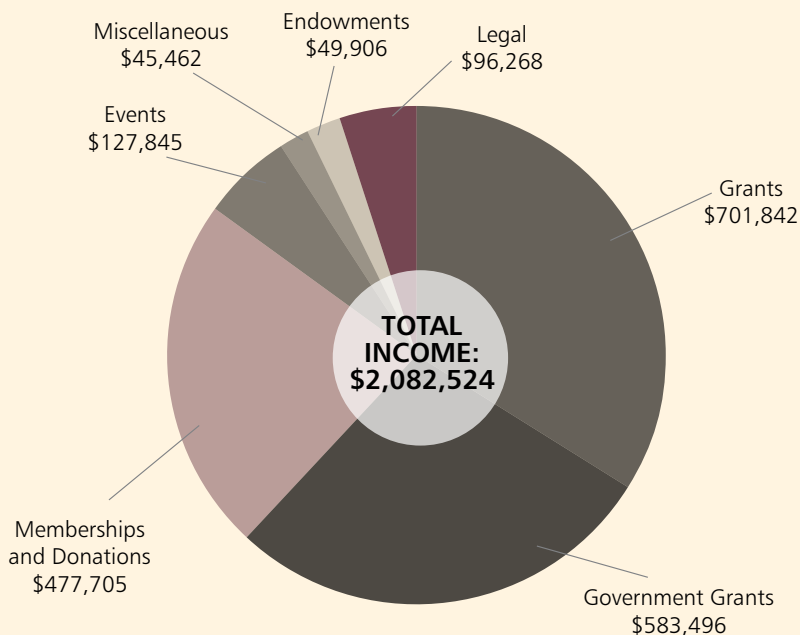
WILDEARTH GUARDIANS envisions a river that is given room to roam within its floodplain and that has enough rights to its own water to maintain its critical plant and animal communities, many of which are threatened with extinction. We continue numerous ongoing legal fights to secure a better day for the Rio Grande. One of our lawsuits seeks a halt on new floodplain development, while another seeks to require federal agencies to provide more of the river's flow for endangered species. We also are working to promote and expand a new agricultural water ethic with water efficiency as its cornerstone.

- March 30** Filed suit to spur development of clean, renewable energy off US coasts
- April 1** Hosted Fossil Fools day rally in Denver to encourage powering past coal
- April 12** Submitted comments critical of Colorado's Gunnison's and White-tailed Prairie Dog Conservation Plan
- April 15** Filed suit seeking Endangered Species Act protections for two rare plants, a jackrabbit, and a salamander

- April 21** Filed petition requesting protection of the ancient largemouth sawfish under the Endangered Species Act
- April 22** Celebrated Earth Day by hosting rally for support of New Mexico Governor's commitment to clean water
- April 30** Released *America's Top 40* report, which showed many of the nation's imperiled but unprotected species are facing extinction



## WILDEARTH GUARDIANS 2009 Audited Financials



- April 30** Bid \$50,000 to minimize grazing on Valles Caldera National Preserve in an effort to protect long overgrazed area
- April 30** Released *Western Wildlife Under Hoof*, a report documenting the expansive overlap between grazing and iconic western species and the damage to biodiversity caused
- May 8** Reached settlement to obtain protected habitat for Chiricahua Leopard Frog

- May 28** Released *A Different Stimulus Plan*, a report detailing enormous benefits of returning wolves to the Southern Rocky Mountains
- June 1** Filed lawsuit seeking protection for Sonoran Desert Tortoise under the Endangered Species Act
- June 2** Filed lawsuit challenging massive logging project on national forest lands in the Rio Grande Basin of CO



## Sustaining Our Growth



## Diversity is the Key

**W**ILDEARTH GUARDIANS works to preserve the diversity of healthy ecosystems through all of our programs. We apply that same fundamental belief to our fundraising efforts and it helps explain how and why we've continued to grow our budget over the past several years, even in an economic downturn.

Our focus ranges from charismatic megafauna such as wolves to the tiny threads in the web of life such as the narrow-footed diving beetle. And our fundraising strategy does the same. With an unwavering eye on the big picture, WILDEARTH GUARDIANS has continued to broaden horizons while deepening our original roots. This means pursuing new gifts from foundations and major donors while always expanding our membership base, which sustains us with smaller gifts.

- June 5** Filed lawsuit against Environmental Protection Agency for failing to limit interstate transport of smog and soot in six western states
- June 17** Released government statistics that Wildlife Services exterminated 125% more animals in 2008 than before
- June 25** Kicked off tour aimed to heighten public awareness of the natural history and need for conservation of mountain lions in Montana

## 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, 2009.*



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- July 7** Filed lawsuit challenging proposed logging project that would damage soil and wildlife habitat north of the Grand Canyon
- July 14** Petitioned to overturn an air pollution permit for a massive oil and gas processing plant in Wyoming
- July 21** Filed appeal to stop toxic herbicide spraying of native vegetation on 700,000 acres in southeast New Mexico



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**August 6** Filed lawsuit over Xcel Energy's thousands of clean air violations at coal-fired power plant in North Denver  
**August 11** Reached settlement requiring Fish and Wildlife Service to consider protecting several of our Western Ark species under the Endangered Species Act  
**August 20** Released *Ponderosa Pine in Peril* report, documenting the threats of public lands grazing to dry forests

**August 31** Prevailed in lawsuit to protect rare Mountain Plover under the Endangered Species Act  
**September 2** Filed lawsuit against Arizona plan to promote development along rivers in spite of harms to wildlife  
**September 9** Filed petition seeking true "endangered" status for imperiled black-footed ferrets

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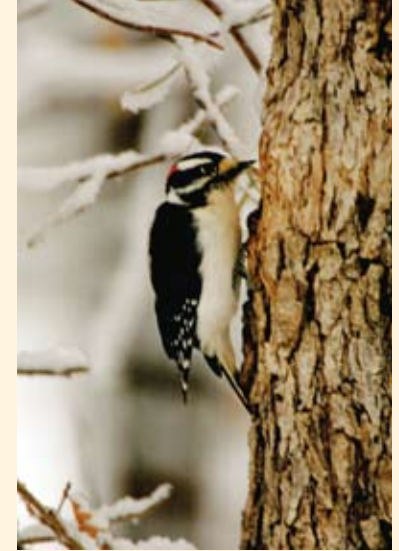
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**September 9** Filed lawsuit seeking elimination of illegal and dangerous loophole in Utah air quality regulations  
**September 22** Worked with Valles Caldera Trust to remove barbed wire fencing and open up the national preserve to the movements of deer and elk  
**October 15** In conjunction with partners, offered reward for information to track down killer(s) of Canada Lynx in Colorado

**November 6** Criticized Obama administration for failing to change abysmal record of federal protections for endangered species  
**November 18** Hosted rally to pressure Colorado Governor Ritter to “stop clowning around” and replace coal-fired power with clean, renewable energy  
**November 24** Released report documenting that coal mining in Powder River Basin in Wyoming and Montana is largest contributor to global warming in US



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**November 24** Extending a Thanksgiving tradition, requested Obama "pardon" endangered grouse by granting these cousins of the turkey protection under the Endangered Species Act  
**November 27** Filed formal request with the Interior Secretary and Obama administration to stop the deceptively named federal agency, Wildlife Services, from using aerial gunning and poison to kill wildlife on public lands

**December 1** Ran full-page ad in *Washington Post* to expose federal government's wildlife killing agency  
**December 8** Reached settlement that updates nationwide limits on air pollution from oil and gas drilling  
**December 16** Announced that the government, because of our petitions, cumulatively approved considering more than 100 species for federal protection



## Milestones in the Greater Gila Bioregion

The Greater Gila Bioregion, the landscape that inspired Aldo Leopold to successfully advocate for the creation of America’s first wilderness, is not thriving. Largely because of conflicts with the livestock industry and social intolerance, the Mexican gray wolf could become extinct in the wild for the second time.

However, WILDEARTH GUARDIANS sees the conflict between ranchers and wolves as an opportunity to reignite “the fierce green fire” that Leopold saw in the eyes of a mother wolf which inspired him to create one of North America’s greatest protected areas. We are working with willing ranchers to provide them financial compensation to relinquish their grazing permits on public land while also obtaining their support for the designation of more than 2.2 million acres of additional wilderness.

In 2009 we met numerous significant milestones in this campaign, building stronger relationships with ranchers who believe in permit retirement and convincing our congressional delegation that this is the best path forward. Our short-term goal is to pass federal legislation that authorizes a pilot program. Ultimately, we envision a Greater Gila landscape where wolves, jaguars and even, one day, grizzly bears are fully restored and the local culture celebrates and benefits from the presence of these iconic animals.

- December 22** Filed lawsuit to protect citizens in Lamar, CO against toxic air pollution caused by coal-fired power plant
- December 28** Celebrated 36th anniversary of Endangered Species Act with launch of “BioBlitz,” an eight-week effort to save imperiled species from extinction
- December 31** Filed petition to list the bumphead parrotfish under the Endangered Species Act

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