2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Working Beyond Boundaries for a Healthier West
Dear Friends and Partners,

Five years ago, we sent out a call for landowners who shared a vision for a healthy and abundant West—one that provides for people and wildlife, for intact lands, clean water and the open expanses that keep us rooted here. We wanted to know if there were other landowners and managers who share the conviction that ecological health and economic prosperity can and must go hand in hand.

Those who responded to the call at that first meeting represented the ownership and management of more than eight million acres of deeded and leased public lands. We came from different backgrounds, resources and geographies. We represented livestock operations, guest and game ranches, conservation properties and forest lands, but we held in common a land ethic and a desire to steward these lands well for the benefit of both current and future generations. Out of this common bond, the Western Landowners Alliance was born.

Today, thanks to your support, the acreage represented by WLA has nearly doubled, and ranches and farms continue to enroll from around the West, building the momentum necessary to fulfill this vision. We know first-hand that there are few easy solutions. Yet we also believe there is much ground to be gained by gathering together, sharing knowledge and working collectively to keep working lands whole, healthy and economically viable.

As reflected in this Annual Report, one of the things we are most proud of is our commitment to improving public dialogue and relationships among people. Your support has been the foundation of this and all of our work.

Together, we can bring landowners together in powerful new ways that will make a difference to future generations.

Sincerely,

Lesli Allison
Executive Director

Jeff Laszlo
Board Chair

Please go to www.westernlandownersalliance.org for more. If you aren’t already a member, please join us!

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WE BELIEVE...

• Working lands are an essential component of the Western landscape.
• Economic prosperity and ecological health of working lands go hand in hand.
• Wild places, working lands and human communities all have legitimate places in the landscape and must be considered together.
• The desire to achieve long-term prosperity while conserving our lands, water and wildlife for future generations is a common-ground, non-partisan goal.
• An urgent need exists to make significant changes in policy, land use and management to secure a positive future.

“As we look at the West’s remaining intact landscapes, at its open land and vast working ranches, it can appear at first glance a pretty empty and lonely place. That first impression, however, is quite deceptive and actually wrong. While one may notice cattle dotting the countryside or buildings seemingly in the middle of nowhere, what isn’t as readily apparent, is the careful stewardship of these lands that produces clean water, healthy soil and vibrant wildlife communities. This is the quiet work of private landowners around the West.”

—Jeff Laszlo, WLA Board Chair, Granger Ranches, Ennis, MT
STEWARDSHIP

WLA is a West-wide network of landowners and managers working to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information among peers. In 2016 WLA:

• Co-hosted a ranch stewardship tour on forestry, stream restoration, sagebrush and pinon-juniper treatments and timed grazing.

• Hosted two webinars, one on mitigation banking opportunities for landowners and the other on the NRCS’s Working Lands for Wildlife Program.

• Developed an online forum where members can share knowledge and access expertise. The forum launched in early January 2017.

• Co-hosted a landowner forum with the TomKat Ranch in California on grazing certification programs and a stewardship tour with Point Blue Conservation on rangeland management.

• Connected landowners with information and resources on a number of different topics through our Stewardship Services program. This included providing WLA’s in-house expertise to members and connecting landowners to one another.

• Completed a multi-year rangeland monitoring study in partnership with Open Range Consulting, Courtney White and the Quivira Coalition. The study employed field data and remote sensing to evaluate the outcomes of different grazing management practices on rangelands in northeastern New Mexico.

VIEW FROM THE LAND

“The Beyond Boundaries Symposium served as the perfect setting to dive into the emerging science and new policies that influence the conservation and management of migrating wildlife. It was so energizing to sit down together with other landowners and scientists to explore solutions to challenges we commonly share on working landscapes in the West.”

Wendy Millet, WLA Board
Ranch Director, TomKat Ranch, Pescadero, CA

From pioneering aspen management to restoring wetlands and streams, private landowners are leading a new era in conservation.
WLA was founded in large part to provide a direct voice for landowners in the public policy arena. In 2016, WLA brought that voice to the table at both state and federal levels, including:

- Development of a federal policy platform in advance of the new federal administration, new Congress and upcoming Farm Bill negotiations. WLA staff, board and advisors met twice with policymakers in Washington, DC in 2016 to advance recommendations that will help wildlife, landowners and rural communities.

- Engagement with the Western Governors’ Association (WGA) on Wyoming Governor Mead’s wildlife conservation and ESA initiative, submitting detailed recommendations, attending in-person forums and participating on a WGA webinar panel on landowner incentives. WLA’s advocacy has focused on increasing support for landowner engagement in species conservation and recovery efforts. WLA also participated in WGA’s initiative on improving forest and rangeland health led by Montana Governor Bullock.

- Leading a property tax reform initiative in New Mexico to help families retain ownership of open space lands and to better support the conservation of wildlife, water and other natural resources.

- Partnering with National Geographic, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, scientists and ranchers to host the Beyond Boundaries Symposium in Cody, Wyoming. More than 70 people attended a two-day series of talks, panel discussions, facilitated sessions and site tours to explore solutions to keep working lands intact and profitable while also sustaining wildlife species in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Speakers included Robert Bonnie of the USDA, Jim Lyons of the Department of Interior, Mark Gordon, Wyoming State Treasurer, former US Senator Al Simpson, as well as leaders of landowner-led collaborative conservation groups such as the Malpai Borderlands Group and Blackfoot Challenge. Following the symposium, WLA compiled a detailed report on the findings.

“After the Dust Bowl, landowners came together to share experiences and helped create the original Farm Bill. Today, WLA is bringing landowners together to strengthen the “Conservation Title” in the Farm Bill to reward better stewardship of Western lands and native species.”

Jesse Juen, WLA advisor, retired BLM NM state director

The effort to save the greater sage grouse has resulted in the largest landscape-scale collaborative conservation effort in US history.
The health of our working landscapes and the vibrancy of our rural communities are entirely interdependent.

### VOICE

WLA highlights the experiences, successes and challenges of Western land stewardship through media hits, informational newsletters and in presentations at conferences and other public forums around the US.

In 2016, WLA:


- Produced biweekly newsletters on water, land and wildlife to provide landowners with news, resources, funding and educational opportunities.

- Represented the perspectives of conservation-minded landowners through engagement with the New Mexico Agricultural Resilience Task Force, Carpe Diem Healthy Headwaters Leadership Team, Colorado State University’s Center for Collaborative Conservation, the Wyoming Migration Initiative and the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Policy Council. In addition, WLA presented at a number of conferences and forums, including the Western Governors’ Association, the Western Association of County Governments, the Quivira Coalition Conference, the Oregon State University’s Conference on Global Pastoralism, the Idaho Water Summit, the Colorado Water Workshop, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Partners in the Outdoors forum, the 30th Biennial Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse workshop and the New Mexico Wetlands Roundtable.

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**VIEW FROM THE LAND**

“We do not own the land; we borrow it from our children. And so while I’m here, borrowing it from my children, I want to do all that I can to be ready to hand it over to them. It’s what we do when we love the land.”

Tuula Libby Crews, WLA member, Ute Creek Cattle Company, Mosquero, NM, quoting a Native American proverb.

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**2015 HIGHLIGHTS**

**2016 YEAR IN REVIEW**
TELLING THE STORY

Stewardship with Vision
Filmmaker Billy Collins interviews rancher Tuda Crews of the Ute Creek Cattle Company for WLA’s fourth episode of our “Stewardship with Vision” film series. The films are created in partnership with Montana State University’s graduate program in Science & Natural History Filmmaking.

Educational Video
WLA developed a multi-media educational video to help students, policymakers and general audiences understand the principles of watershed health management.

Eye in the Sky
WLA’s recently completed study assessed the effects of varying management strategies on rangeland health and productivity. Eye in the Sky explains the study and its findings for general audiences. A technical paper has also been submitted for peer review and publication.

Oil and Gas Guide
With substantial contributions from member Dan Perry, WLA produced a guide to assist landowners with questions about oil and gas development.

Beyond Boundaries Final Report
Following the Beyond Boundaries Symposium in Cody, Wyoming, WLA and Arthur Middleton compiled a Final Report detailing the progress made towards achieving the Symposium goals: 1) highlighting the role of working lands in the GYE; 2) strengthening landowner relationships; 3) discussing ways to keep working lands intact, healthy, and economically viable; 4) sharing experiences from landowner-led collaborations around the West; and 5) identifying next steps in fostering greater regional cooperation.
“WLA’s work with agencies, advisory groups, policy-makers, NGO’s, the Western Governors’ Association and more has positioned us well for continued and effective advocacy, especially at the federal level.”  
- WLA Landowner Member

WLA board member Mike Phillips hosts a visit at Ted Turner’s Ladder Ranch. Joining him for a tour of the ranch’s breeding facilities for the endangered Chiricahua leopard frogs are WLA’s executive director, Lesli Allison, and board member Bill McDonald.

Robert Bonnie, undersecretary of agriculture for natural resources and the environment, addresses participants in the Beyond Boundaries Symposium.

Hoodoo Ranch general manager J.D. Radakovitch hosts a field tour on the Hoodoo Ranch as part of the Beyond Boundaries Symposium. Here, participants discuss impacts of wintering elk herds while a wildfire burns on a neighboring ranch in the distance.

Sheep trail at the Deseret Ranch in Utah where WLA held its summer meeting. The Deseret Ranch is widely known for its successful work in blending ranching and wildlife conservation. Rick Durnie, formerly Deseret’s long-time wildlife manager, is a founding member and advisor to WLA.

AVERY C. ANDERSON SPONHOLTZ, TOMKAT RANCH, CA

WLA board, staff and guests explore soil health management with Wendell Gilgert of Point Blue Conservation during an event hosted by WLA board member Wendy Millet and the TomKat Ranch in California.

WLA’s vice chair, Nelson Shirley, advisor Jesse Juen, founding board chair, Paul Vahldiek and executive director, Lesli Allison, visit with Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell (center).
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JOSIAH AUSTIN, El Coronado Ranch, AZ
KELLY BENNETT, Hollowtop Ranch, MT
MARY CONOVER, Mountain Island Ranch CO/UT
KENYON FIELDS, Mountain Island Ranch CO/UT
JEFF LASZLO, Grangers Ranches MT
BILL MCDONALD, Sycamore Ranch, AZ
MARY CONOVER, Mountain Island Ranch CO/UT
KEN MIRR, Mirr Ranch Group

ADVISORY COUNCIL

RICK DANVIR, WY; AVERY C. ANDERSON SPONHOLTZ, NM; ROBIN KNOX, CO; MONIQUE DIGIORGIO, NM; KATIE DISTLER, NC; JESSE JUEN, NM; WHITNEY TIL T, MT; LUTHER PROPST, WY; GEORGE COOPER, Washington DC.

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ASHLYN PERRY, Troutstalker Ranch, NM
DUKE PHILLIPS, Chico Basin & Zapata Ranches, CO
MIKE PHILLIPS for Ted Turner, Turner Ranches, MT/NM
NELSON SHIRLEY, Spur Lake Cattle Company NM/AZ
PAUL R. VAHLDEIK, Jr., High Lonesome Ranch, CO
CRAIG TAGGART for Louis Bacon, Trinchera-Blanca, Tercio, & Sheep Camp Ranches, CO

STAFF

LESJA ALLISON, Executive Director – Lesli is a founding member of the Western Landowners Alliance and has served as executive director since 2014. Previously, she spent 16 years managing Banded Peak Ranch in southern Colorado. During that time, she helped found the Chama Peak Land Alliance, served on the Archuleta County Planning Commission and was a member of Colorado’s Prescribed Fire Council. Lesli holds a B.A. from Columbia University and an M.A. from St. John’s College, Santa Fe.

KATHLEEN WILLIAMS, Associate Director – Kathleen has enjoyed a 33-year natural resources career spanning the private, public, and non-profit sectors, specializing in water resource policy. She has also served three terms as a Montana state legislator. Kathleen holds a BS from the University of California, Berkeley, and an MS from Colorado State University, Fort Collins.

HALLIE MAHOWALD, Stewardship Services Director – As stewardship services director, Hallie helps connect WLA members with one another and with resources and expertise to support on-the-ground stewardship. Prior to joining the WLA team in 2014, Hallie worked as an environmental professional at Los Alamos National Laboratory, where she handled compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA.) She holds a B.A. in Environmental Science from the University of Denver and a M.A. in International Environmental Policy from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.

MARY VERSACE, Administrative Assistant – Mary joined WLA in 2016 as administrative assistant. Previously, Mary worked for Agave Mineral Management and St. John’s College in Santa Fe, NM.

NEW STAFF IN 2017

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DUKE PHILLIPS, Chico Basin & Zapata Ranches, CO
MIKE PHILLIPS for Ted Turner, Turner Ranches, MT/NM
NELSON SHIRLEY, Spur Lake Cattle Company NM/AZ
PAUL R. VAHLDEIK, Jr., High Lonesome Ranch, CO
CRAIG TAGGART for Louis Bacon, Trinchera-Blanca, Tercio, & Sheep Camp Ranches, CO

NEW STAFF IN 2017

LESLI ALLISON

Communications Director

COLE MANNIX

Director of Advancement

GRANT COLVIN

Policy Director

LESJA ALLISON

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2016 INCOME
- Event Sponsorships $16,000.00
- Restricted Foundation Grants $526,900.00
- Individual Donations $125,611.00
- Unrestricted Foundation Grants $96,000.00
TOTAL $764,511.00

2016 EXPENSES
- Communications $165,338.74
- Stewardship $209,782.08
- Policy $185,290.23
- Administration/Fundraising $85,991.80
- TOTAL $646,402.85

The Western Landowners Alliance (WLA) is a nonprofit organization, subject to an independent audit each year to verify the financial information contained in the annual report. Calendar year 2016, as evidenced by the chart below, is comprised of unrestricted grants and expenses ending December 31, 2016. All financial documentation is shown before 990 tax reporting and our annual audit. The difference between income and expenses above is attributable to the timing, funding and implementation of multi-year foundation grants.
Three members of WLA’s team, Lesli Allison, Avery Anderson Sponholtz, and Wendy Millet participated in the first cohort of “Women in Ranching” sponsored by the Paicines Ranch in California.