One thing that all of us – Westerners who ranch, Westerners who don’t, Easterners who love the West – have resting heavy on our hearts and minds is the notion that we are losing the West right before our eyes. It’s being paved, sub-divided, bill-boarded; it’s drying out, it’s burning up, and it’s freaking us out.

But it’s still big wide open spaces, prancing pronghorn, green farm fields and postcard perfect mountainscapes – and it juices our lives. It is our lives. WLA is an alliance of landowners and others who are trying our darnedest to save the West.

Everyone knows what we mean by that. From the pronghorn to the cowboy, we’re trying to nourish all that makes the West the West. We’re not just trying to save the livestock industry – that’s for cattlemen’s associations. We’re not just interested in saving trees or regulating gas development – that’s for conservationists. And we’re not interested in fighting over land-use; that job is already taken.

We’re trying to sustain the communities and economies and wide-open landscapes and livelihoods and critters of all sorts that are the West. The whole darn thing. How? By applying our experience as landowners and land managers to offer productive solutions for the mosaic of challenges facing this place we love. We’re a growing network of people who are the West securing its own future. Come join us!

Kenyon Fields
Founding Board Member
Mountain Island Ranch

(Pictured with wife Mary Conover)
The Western Landowners Alliance was established by landowners to keep working lands in the West whole and healthy. Our mission is to advance policies and practices that sustain working lands, connected landscapes and native species. Simply stated, we recognize that ecological health and economic prosperity go hand-in-hand.

As private landowners, we are critical for meaningful conservation and a thriving western economy. Up to 80% of wildlife species depend on private land for survival. We bring nuanced and pragmatic insights based on real world experience to the table that can help reveal new paths forward.

Western Landowners Alliance advances policies and practices that sustain working lands, connected landscapes and native species.

We envision a future in which private and leased public lands in the West are resilient to stressors, healthy and biologically diverse, and provide for prosperous rural livelihoods and critical ecological services.

80% of wildlife species depend on private land for survival.
Protecting and improving the Endangered Species Act

As a nation, we must do more to proactively conserve threatened species. WLA champions the need for policies and resources to support landowners in proactive, voluntary conservation to conserve species so they don’t have to be listed in the first place, and to recover those that are listed more quickly. WLA brought landowner leadership to the table through our work with the Western Governors’ Association, the US Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and a national coalition of partners to ensure that any reform would work for both people and wildlife.

Important Farm Bill wins

Together with a diverse array of partners, we achieved three major priorities in the 2018 Farm Bill. First, we sought and won a specific change to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to create new opportunities to apply the program to conserving sensitive wildlife habitats and imperiled species in the West. Second, we defended nearly $180 million in conservation funding for western states through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). And finally, we fought to maintain funding for the other conservation title and working lands programs most important to the West. Despite these big wins, there is no time to rest on our laurels. The Farm Bill is the biggest source of funding for working lands conservation, so our goal-setting for the next edition has already begun.

In 2015, WLA set out to identify partnerships capable of winning three major victories on the 2018 Farm Bill. In December of 2018, we celebrated success on all three.

177,940

The value (in thousands of dollars) in fiscal year 2018 to western landowners of the Conservation Stewardship Program we defended in the 2018 Farm Bill.
Supporting a community of practice for working lands

We organized six field tours on ranches in Colorado, New Mexico and Montana, providing opportunities for private land stewards to exchange knowledge on grazing, forestry, managing conflict with large carnivores, and riparian restoration. We also co-hosted two regenerative agriculture summits with Holistic Management International and the Quivira Coalition in New Mexico and Colorado to kick off networks in both states dedicated to advancing regenerative agriculture practices.

1000+ download WLA guide on reducing conflict with grizzlies, wolves and elk

In this guide, WLA offers the collective knowledge and hands-on experience of over 30 land, livestock and resource managers constructively engaged in one of the greatest conservation challenges of our time: how to share and manage a wild, working landscape that sustains both people and wildlife. We continue to organize conflict reduction workshops in the Northern Rockies.

We support a community of practice that collectively stewards more than 15 million acres of land across the West.
Land & Livelihoods Conference

Billings, Montana
September 25-27, 2018

More than 150 participants, nearly 50% of them landowners, and a line up of notable speakers considered the current and future economics of working lands and conservation.

A unique, positive, and proactive conversation on a critical issue

“Very nice job on bringing together an amazing group of people to make progress on an important discussion. The conference was positive and proactive - a great combination for taking action!”

“It was great to network and learn about landowner concerns, successes and stories across the west. It was an excellent opportunity to re-connect with folks I have worked with in CO/WY/MT and meet new people. ...stands out in my mind as being one of the best!”
Voice

Earning media and shifting narratives to support hard working land stewards

The one thing we hear time and again from the landowner community across the West is the critical need to “tell our story.” In an increasingly urbanized world, fewer and fewer people, including our political leaders, have any experience or knowledge of land and natural resources management. This disconnect leads to bad social and policy outcomes for rural and urban dwellers alike. In 2018, WLA placed 72 stories or opinion pieces in outlets as varied as The Hill, Western Livestock Journal, Missoulian, Denver Post, Albuquerque Journal, E&E News, and the Associated Press.

WLA debuted four new films in 2018: Agua es Vida, and three new episodes of our award-winning Stewardship with Vision series.

7200 total views on YouTube of the four films we debuted in 2018. Hundreds more viewed them in person at our film festival in Santa Fe.

About Agua Es Vida

Based in Taos, New Mexico and focused on the Rio Fernando, this film begins up high in the Taos watershed and follows the water down into the Rio Fernando and through the acequia system that distributes water to farms and pastures throughout the community. The film takes us on a journey through the community of farmers and ranchers who depend on the acequias for their livelihood and helps viewers understand acequias as a system of governance that, when well-attended and maintained, helps ensure a healthy community, healthy lands and sufficient water for all.
Women in Ranching

Giving a powerful program a permanent home and a platform to grow

The Women in Ranching program began in 2016 at Paicines Ranch in California. Quickly, demand for more opportunities for women to gather in circle and grow together as land stewards, leaders, and friends became overwhelming. In 2018, Western Landowners Alliance adopted the program with the blessing of its founders and hosted the first circle outside California, in Montana. This powerful program now has a West-wide organization dedicated to its growth and success. WinR circle participants show us that the program has the potential to enable impressive land health benefits across the West.

“The WinR circles are so unique because they provide a safe place for women, living the agricultural lifestyle, to come together, share their stories, dream and create big leaps. There is nothing like Women in Ranching that both recognizes the importance of women in agriculture and also creates space to empower their important role in America.” - Beth Godbey, Equine Empowerment

Aiming to triple program impact in 2019

After she successfully organized the first Montana WinR circle in 2018, Montana rancher Amber Smith joined our team to lead the program to new heights in 2019 and beyond.
2018 Income
Restricted Foundation Grants: $487,500
Unrestricted Foundation Grants: $293,000
Individual Donations: $198,547
Event Sponsorships: $36,600
Total Income: $1,015,647

2018 Expenses by Category
Programs: $764,674
Administration: $162,011
Fundraising: $33,385
Total: $960,070

2018 Expenses by program
Stewardship: $322,159
Policy: $292,576
Communications/Voice: $149,938
Total Program Expenses: $764,674
Supporters

Thank you to all our donors, volunteers and partners for helping make 2018 an incredible year.