



WESTERN
LANDOWNERS
ALLIANCE

ANNUAL REPORT
2020

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WESTERN LANDOWNERS ALLIANCE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Jeffrey Laszlo



Dear Members, Supporters and Friends:

This past year will not likely ever be forgotten. Life as we knew it was upended by a global pandemic that brought tremendous human loss, suffering and enduring change. While some places experienced disproportionate impacts, COVID-19 spared no corner of the globe. By necessity “social distancing” became the norm, forcing everyone to limit activity and interaction that could spread a devastating virus. Yet while much of the world went “virtual,” ranch life forged ahead with winter feeding followed by calving, branding and preparing for the “pedal to the metal” spring and summer seasons.

Despite significant challenges, 2020 was our most productive and successful year to date, marked by strong membership growth and effective engagement at the highest levels of policy making.

Likewise, the dedicated team at Western Landowners Alliance put their collective heads down and dug in. Despite significant challenges, 2020 was our most productive and successful year to date, marked by strong membership growth and effective engagement at the highest levels of policy making. Our new *On Land* magazine carried the stories, challenges and successes of stewardship in the American

West to tens of thousands of readers. WLA has gained tremendous traction and is sought out for leadership and guidance on both matters of policy and law. We are also regularly asked to weigh in through media and keynote speaking appearances. Our voice is being heard on subjects ranging from governmental programs to predator conflict to public land usage and property rights.

Importantly, in a time of deepening social and political divides, WLA is successfully bringing people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives together around a collective love of the land and commitment to those who care for and depend on its health and productivity. We have spent the past year both reaching out and looking inward to explore how best we can serve the land, people and communities that make up one of the most beautiful, wild and ecologically important regions of our country. The challenges ahead are significant. Only by being open to varying points of view, deepening mutual understanding and working together can we hope to shape an economically and ecologically viable future. This is WLA's primary approach.

As life returns to a semblance of normal, WLA looks forward to hosting gatherings as we had done in the past. While there is something to be said for the wonders of virtual meetings, nothing can replace boots on the ground get-togethers where we can share our experiences, challenges and dreams. This has always been WLA's strength and where we have collected the best ideas. I personally have always taken away something important from our meetings and benefitted from the knowledge freely offered. Though we have hopefully "turned the corner" on the coronavirus crisis, fire and drought now present another daunting challenge. It is time to dig in yet again. WLA will do so and continue to provide the leadership beneficial to us all.



JEFFREY LASZLO

Chairman of the Board

Western Landowners Alliance is a West-wide organization dedicated to keeping working lands in the American West whole and healthy.

SUSTAINING WORKING LANDS, CONNECTED LANDSCAPES AND NATIVE SPECIES

OUR MISSION

Western Landowners Alliance advances policies and practices that sustain working lands, connected landscapes and native species. Join us on our mission.

OUR VISION

WHOLE AND HEALTHY WORKING LANDSCAPES

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 business and critical ecological services.

OUR APPROACH

- Ensure landowner interests are represented in policy matters affecting land ownership and management
- Provide peer-to-peer learning opportunities, information and resources to support on-the-ground stewardship
- Communicate the value and perspectives of private stewardship to policy makers and the public
- Strengthen mutual understanding, common ground and collaboration among diverse stakeholders

“You are the absolute best
spokesperson for people like me,
someone who is trying to help
wildlife and habitat but also has a
mortgage and an operating note.”

– Dallas May
May Ranch, Colorado



CONNECTING IN NEW WAYS

2020

Like the rest of the world, those of us in the rural West learned new ways of connecting this year, and Zoom became a household word. In fact, we're hearing from people that discovering new digital platforms like Zoom has made it easier to connect and engage without having to leave the ranch every time. It also made it easier for WLA to bring the voices of the West to the halls of Washington, D.C. as we did many times throughout the year.

Of course, broadband is still limited in many places, and there's no substitute for a warm handshake, a face-to-face conversation or a shared meal.

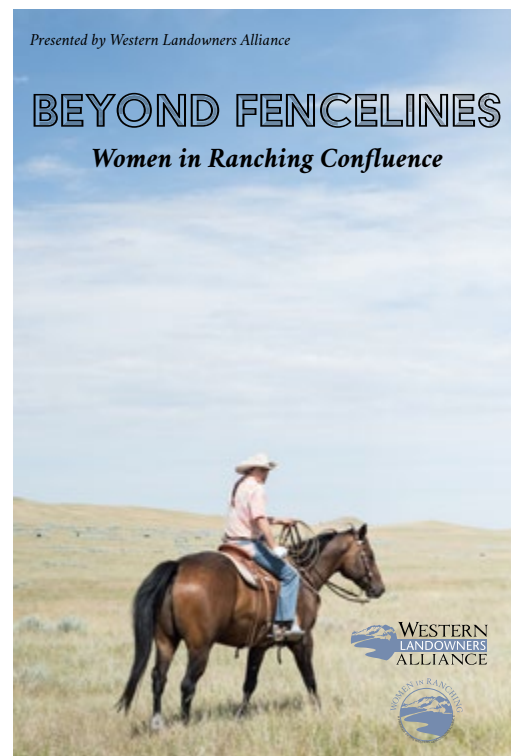
Going forward, we anticipate a blend of virtual and in-person events, and we look forward to spending time together in all these different ways.

ENGAGING ONLINE

1,000+
virtual program attendees

VIRTUAL EVENTS IN 2020

- Women in Ranching's first "Virtual Confluence," *Beyond Fencelines*, attracted 140+ women from around the West and the world.
- Fire and drought preparedness webinar featured ranchers in conversation with the Idaho BLM director and Colorado Forest Service leadership about how to work with agencies to mitigate fire and drought risk, and recover from wildfire on grazing allotments.
- Aspen restoration and care webinar and landowner guide: **Aspen Next Generation** publication presented by its authors in two open Q&A sessions online, providing continuing education credits for members of the Society of American Foresters.
- Twice-monthly Working Wild Challenge "Practitioners' Calls" allowed ranchers in areas with large carnivores to exchange ideas and develop solutions.
- Weekly Women-in-Ranching Community Check-ins supported our WinR community through many of the pandemic's unknowns.
- Monthly Conflict Reduction Consortium meetings gathered landowners, agency leaders, researchers and NGO staff to tackle the pressing challenges of managing working lands with large wildlife.



"I learned so much this weekend that I'll be processing it for the next year! Thank you again. It was so positive, uplifting, friendly and supportive. I feel like I have been starving for years, and it fed me in ways that nothing else has. I am so grateful."

– Ellie Gage, Oregon

WORKING WILD CHALLENGE

Impacts in the Rockies and Beyond

Wolves and grizzly bears are expanding into agricultural lands, and WLA is leading efforts to reduce conflicts and losses. With Colorado voters in November narrowly approving the reintroduction of gray wolves to the Western Slope by 2023, the work only grew in importance.

WILDLIFE CONFLICT REDUCTION INNOVATION

WLA led a coalition that secured nearly \$900,000 from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to support scientific trials of conflict-reduction practices directly with more than 600 ranchers over the next three years. The research and refinement of these practices is anticipated to lead to the eligibility of non-lethal practices for NRCS cost-share assistance and increased adoption by producers.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR IMPERILED SPECIES

WLA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service launched a partnership effort to improve regulatory assurance agreements for landowners willing to help conserve and restore imperiled species. The effort centers on the Upper Rio Grande and South San Juan region of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, where landowners are engaged in restoring three species of native trout, one of which was thought to have been extinct until recently rediscovered. This joint learning project is designed to make it easier for landowners in this region and beyond to partner with confidence in recovering imperiled wildlife.

Photo at right:
Pounding posts for
new turbo fladry
fencing in a pasture
in Montana. Photo
by Louise Johns.



KEY FIGURES

\$800,000
IN FEDERAL
FUNDS
MOBILIZED TO
STUDY CONFLICT
REDUCTION

600+
RANCHERS
ENROLLED IN
THE STUDY

3
NATIVE TROUT
BENEFITTING FROM
PRIVATE
STEWARDSHIP IN
THE SOUTHERN
SAN JUANS




BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER OUTCOMES

Landowner-led policy and funding solutions

Public policy shapes almost everything about the ownership and management of our working landscapes. As primary stakeholders with deep personal and financial investments in the land, we founded Western Landowners Alliance to ensure that landowners have a direct voice in the policy matters that impact us. We work to ensure that public policies support agriculture and rural livelihoods, sustainable stewardship and conservation of the lands and natural resources in our care.

POLICY SUCCESSES

- Delivered a platform of landowner policy recommendations to Biden and Trump campaigns prior to the election and subsequently to federal transition teams.
- Ensured federal directives on climate and biodiversity recognized the value and contributions of private and working lands, and included requirements that federal policies be locally supported and informed by those closest to the land.
- Championed improvements to farm bill working lands programs, including the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands (CRP Grasslands) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).
- Provided landowner input to state and federal wildlife migration policies to ensure better outcomes for both working lands and wildlife.
- Delivered landowner-informed, coalition-backed recommendations on federal lands grazing policy.
- Co-led a New Mexico coalition to create an agriculture and natural resource trust fund to conserve and enhance the state's lands and natural resources.
- Led collaborative development of policy recommendations for reducing conflicts between wildlife and livestock.



“Great keynote address...As you spoke your words were to me as the green-up of spring after a long, cold winter. Maybe there is hope.”

— Merrill Beyeler, Idaho

NEW MEXICO
ADVANCED
INNOVATIVE NEW
FUNDING
STRUCTURE FOR
CONSERVATION AND
RESTORATION

COLORADO
SUPPORTED
DEVELOPMENT OF
HEALTHY SOILS
PROGRAM
LEGISLATION

MONTANA
SUPPORTED
PASSAGE OF
IMPROVEMENTS TO
LIVESTOCK
DEPREDATION
COMPENSATION

COMMUNICATING THE VALUE OF STEWARDSHIP

Reaching across the rural-urban divide

LAUNCHING ON LAND

WLA's biggest communications accomplishment of 2020 was the launch of our new magazine,

On Land: The Voice of Stewardship in the American West. This publication features the voices and insights of experienced land stewards striving to keep land whole and healthy. The first print volume of the magazine was shipped to more than 10,000 landowners across the West. Our first issue's success led to agreement to sell copies of volume 2 in high-end grocers across the West in early 2021.

Content featured in volume 1 included:

- "Real Life With Wolves," a set of four essays from land stewards ranching in wolf habitat
- "Time to talk about regenerative recreation" by Lesli Allison
- "Katie Geary comes home" by Louise Johns
- "Parallel journeys to the Radical Center" by Laura Nelson and Becca Skinner
- "Ken Salazar: Shaped by the land," an interview with the former Secretary of the Interior and Colorado senator
- "New Mexico wades into troubled waters" by Lesli Allison

FIVE NEW POLICY AND STEWARDSHIP PUBLICATIONS

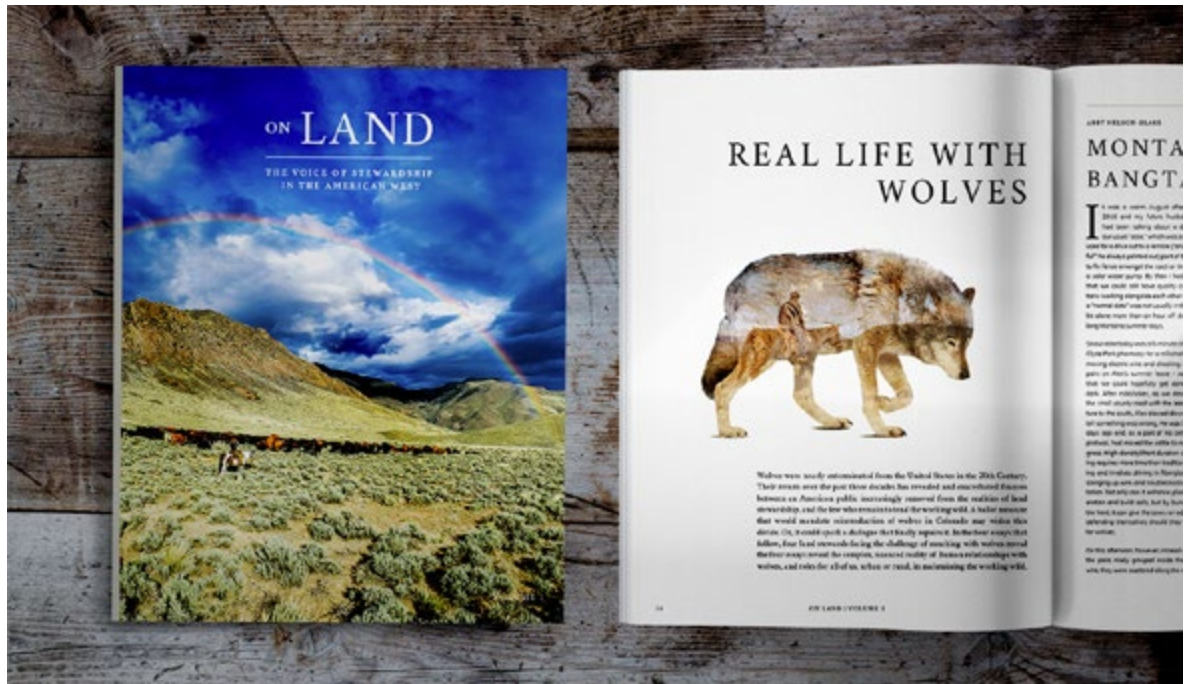
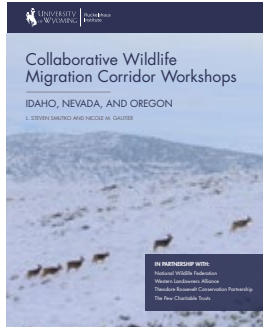
- Working Wild Challenge Policy Recommendations
- WLA Federal Policy Recommendations
- Aspen Next Generation
- Paying for Stewardship
- Collaborative Wildlife Migration Corridor Workshop Report

(See covers at top of following page).

SPREADING THE WORD THROUGH THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

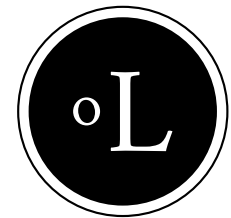
We delivered landowner stories and perspectives to the American public through 40+ media mentions, including in the following publications: *Colorado Sun*, *New Mexico Political Report*, *Denver Post*, *Wyoming Tribune Eagle*, *Salt Lake Tribune*, *Colorado Springs Gazette*, *Great Falls Tribune*, *Mountain Journal*, *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, *Huffington Post*, *The Hill*, *Casper Star-Tribune*, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*.

We placed opinion pieces and letters to the editor in publications in seven states and Washington, D.C.



KEY FIGURES

ON **LAND**
THE VOICE OF STEWARDSHIP
IN THE AMERICAN WEST



1,600+
FACEBOOK PAGE
FOLLOWERS

8,000+
VIDEO PLAYS
ON YOUTUBE

10,000+
ON LAND
MAGAZINE
RECIPIENTS

WORKING LANDS ARE THE FUTURE OF CONSERVATION

By Lesli Allison in *On Land* volume 1, August 2020

From the earliest indigenous peoples to later European arrivals, those who settled in the American West naturally staked out the best pieces of country they could find. They didn't settle on the high mountain tops or extreme deserts, places we've since designated as wilderness. Instead, they etched out homes and communities along waterways and fertile valley bottoms, places that were the most habitable for both people and wildlife. While the rights of control and ownership have been claimed, fought over, stolen, traded and sold, the fact remains that these lands have been continuously occupied by people for centuries. Some of these lands became cities, suburbs and transportation corridors. Where grizzlies once roamed, Seattle, Portland and San Francisco sit now. The remainder, consisting primarily of farms and ranches, are the last best pieces of intact, fertile, habitable open land. They are the cornerstones of both human communities and the ecosystems we all depend on. And they are disappearing.

This is why, in coming decades, conservation will inevitably focus on working lands. Distinct from wilderness, working lands are commonly



understood to be those lands tended by human hands. In the West, working lands are often composed of intermingled and interdependent public and private lands. These sparsely populated portions of the landscape are where wild and urban intersect and mingle, where elk spill out of the high country onto winter ground, where grizzlies and cattle forage in the same pastures, and where stock ponds provide the only water wildlife might find for miles.

To keep working lands intact and able to sustain both people and wildlife requires that we rethink conservation from the ground up. When we designate wilderness, we are segregating, effectively partitioning, people from a wild place. This can be done by drawing a line on a map, legislating and enforcing, and has often been done from afar. In the case of working lands, it is almost exactly the opposite. Here, we need to integrate people and natural systems.

READ THE REST OF
THE ESSAY AT
[WLA.SOCIAL/
WORKING-LANDS](https://wla.social/working-lands)



REAL LIFE WITH WOLVES MONTANA'S BANGTAIL DIVIDE

By Abby Nelson in On Land volume 1, August 2020

It was a warm August afternoon in 2016, and my future husband, Alex, had been talking about a date. Not our usual “date,” which was a word he used for a drive out to a remote (“and beautiful!” he always pointed out) part of the ranch to fix fence amongst the cacti or tinker with a solar water pump. By then I had learned that we could still have quality conversations working alongside each other and that a “normal date” was not usually in the cards, let alone more than an hour off during the long Montana summer days.

So our date today was a 5-minute stop at the Clyde Park pharmacy for a milkshake before moving wire and checking cow-calf pairs on Alex’s summer lease – something that we could hopefully get done before dark. After milkshakes, as we drove down the small county road with the leased pasture to the south, Alex slowed down. I could tell something was wrong. He was here two days ago and, as a part of his cell grazing protocol, had moved the cattle to new fresh grass. High-density/short-duration cell grazing requires more time than traditional grazing and involves driving in fiberglass posts,

stringing wire, and troubleshooting vegetation. Not only can it enhance plant regeneration and build soils, but by bunching up the herd, it can give the cows an advantage defending themselves should they encounter wolves.

On this afternoon, however, instead of seeing the pairs nicely grouped inside the electric fence, they were scattered along the meadow. Some were deep in the willows or way down the creek. These cows were usually as docile as you can get and highly trained to the wire. We got out and started walking. There was still plenty of grass inside what used to be the pasture, and the wire looked like it was stretched, dragged toward the willows and snapped on the east side, pulling posts out of the ground. Something had run the cows through it.

READ THE REST OF THE
STORY AND THREE OTHER
ESSAYS FROM THIS
SERIES AT

[WLA.SOCIAL/
REAL-LIFE-W-WOLVES](https://wla.social/real-life-w-wolves)

INCOME & EXPENSES REPORT

Your support makes a difference

INCOME AND CARRIED FUNDS

Restricted Foundation Grants	\$425,812
Unrestricted Foundation Grants	\$376,000
Donations and Dues	\$179,642
Program Income	\$19,805
Magazine Income	\$28,070
Subtotal	\$1,029,329
Carried from 2019	\$504,234
Total	\$1,533,563

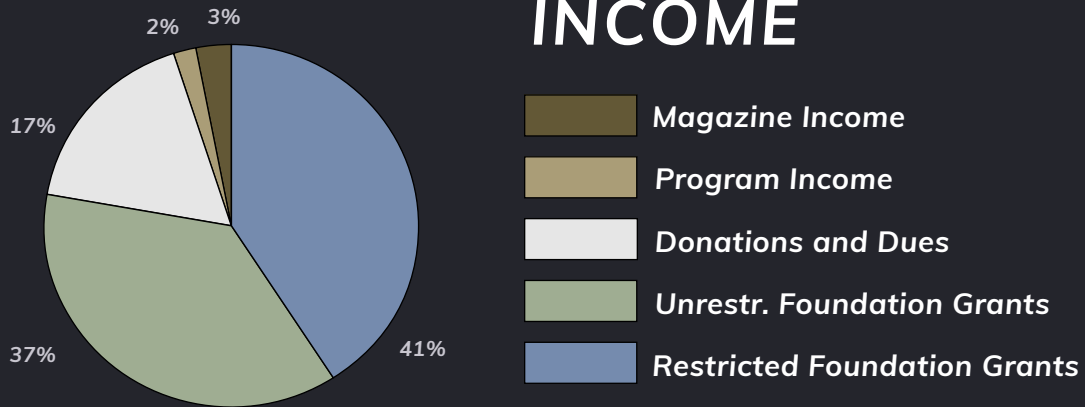
EXPENSES BY CATEGORY

Programs	\$949,753
Administration	\$150,482
Development and Fundraising	\$116,667
Total	\$1,216,902

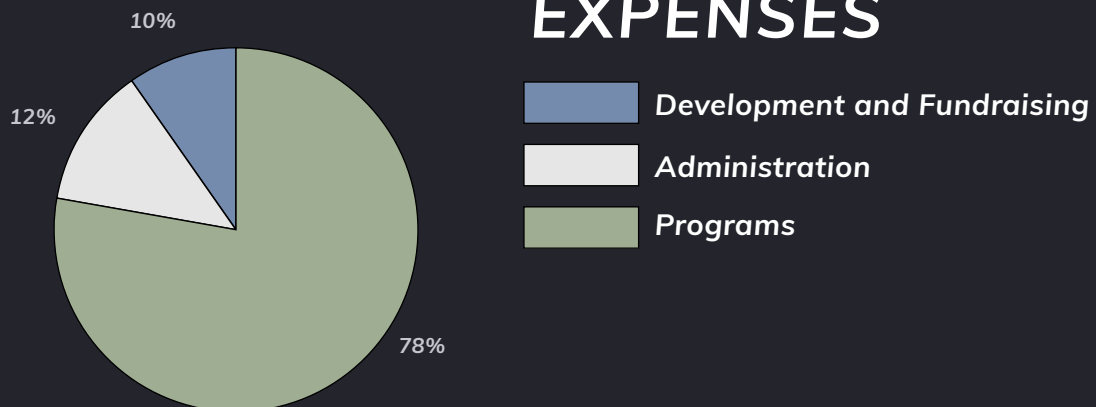
PROGRAM EXPENSES BY PROGRAM AREA

Stewardship	\$416,880
Policy	\$360,315
Communications	\$172,557
Total	\$949,753

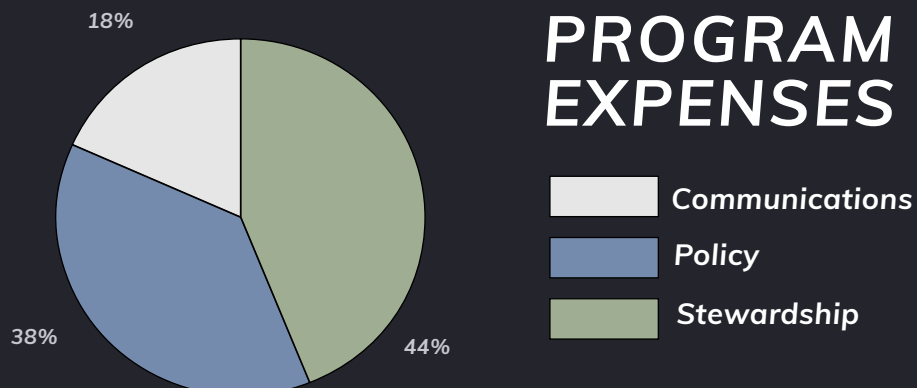
INCOME



EXPENSES



PROGRAM EXPENSES



2020 audited and approved financials.

Photo by Courtney Gerard.



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