

Western Slope Conservation Center's 2022 End of Year Appeal Letter

Here at the end of 2022, we want to thank you for being part of the Western Slope Conservation Center.

As a member of WSCC, you are part of a legacy that has served the North Fork valley for over 45 years. In those years our community came together to accomplish many remarkable things:

- Our creative advocacy in drafting the first formal appeal of a BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP) in the early 1980s. We not only won the case, but led to the creation of the formal BLM appeals process.
- This made possible our October legal victory for public lands resulting in an amendment process for the 2020 BLM's Uncompahgre Field Office RMP; it will include more public input in 2023!
- Also in the early 1980s we appealed one of the nation's first Forest Management Plans which led to productive negotiations with the Forest Service and timber industry that culminated in conservation-focused amendments to the Plan.
- We also have high hopes for a conservation focus Forest Management Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison (GMUG) forests to come in 2023.

The community can be assured that their voices have been heard.

- Our continual monitoring and engagement of all development activities is why there is no coal-fired power plant on the Gunnison River with power lines going up and down the valley.
- Our collaborative engagement with irrigation companies led to funding for permanent diversion structures along the river corridor, allowing farmers and ranchers to measure out their water decrees without tearing up the river channel by bulldozing gravel bars.

Our river is now a place of recreation and restoration.

Our decision to adopt a collaborative strategy as coal mine companies sought further development, led to the creation of the community-focused Coal Working Group. It was a neighborly way to work. We had regular conversations so that all could stay informed of plans, voice concerns and find ways to meet the needs of all the neighbors. Our work with community stakeholders to bring Coal Working Group ideas to completion led to many lasting improvements in the valley:

- Installing safety crossings in Paonia
- Preserving 20,000 acres of farms and ranches in permanent conservation easements
- Securing roadless status for a pivotal area on the north side of Mount Gunnison
- Capturing coal mine methane emissions through a methane power plant in Somerset and methane capture at the West Elk Mine

These are just a few highlights of more than 45 years of work WSCC and its predecessors are proud to tell you about. This organization has always been at the forefront of working creatively



and cooperatively to accomplish conservation work that includes all stakeholders. We have partnered with local, regional, and national groups to do much of this work. We have invested in ongoing monitoring to earn our reputation as a data driven grassroots group. We believe this approach is how we came to prevail in this latest round of legal wrangling by insisting that the public planning process followed the letter of the law as well as intent. Having the North Fork Alternative of the UFO RMP included in the final draft was no easy feat, but this community was up to the task.

By being a supporter of this organization, you are part of this impressive legacy. For that, we thank you. You can be proud to say that you are part of the solution and part of what makes living in this valley so beautiful. It's a sense of community and purpose. Our purpose is to conserve all that we can given climate change, species decline, and the bureaucratic realities we live in.

But the work is far from over.

Looking forward to 2023 together we will continue to fight for the protection of lands, air, water, and wildlife in the Gunnison watershed. Our community will mobilize again to protect the entire ecosystem and keep oil and gas out of our watershed by engaging in the Resource Management Plan amendment process. Added to that, the Conservation Center will continue with programs such as River Watch water quality monitoring, Conservation Days and River Fest in the Paonia River Park, Mike's Hikes and so much more.

We rely on your continued support to build on this legacy.

Please consider an end of year gift to the Conservation Center. You can find many options from appreciated stocks, to IRA distributions, to a one time or monthly donation. You can also choose WSCC on Amazon Smile or at City Market. Volunteering on projects is always needed as well, if a financial donation is not possible. Thank you to those of you who give monthly or have already given your annual contribution.

With deep gratitude and appreciation,

Allison Elliot, Board Chair and Tanya Henderson, Executive Director