



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILD

Rocky Mountain Wild 2015 Annual Report

Our Mission

Rocky Mountain Wild protects, connects and restores wildlife and wildlands in the Southern Rockies.

We envision a biologically healthy future for our region - one that includes a diversity of species and ecosystems, thriving populations of wildlife, and a sustainable coexistence between people and nature.

Rocky Mountain Wild

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Together we can stop the 6th Mass Extinction

A note from the Executive Director

Biologists around the world agree that our planet is on the verge of the 6th Mass Extinction. Plant and animal species are disappearing at a rate of 100 to 1,000 times faster than they did just 200 years ago. In fact, three out of every four species that you are familiar with could be gone by the time your grandchildren are adults. And, the cause of this great die-off is us – the human race.

It is easy to get depressed when contemplating a world without bees, wolves, lynx, and pika. But, there is good reason for us to keep fighting. **The 6th Mass Extinction is not a done deal.** So far, we've lost less than one percent of the species on our planet – which means that with a lot of hard work and dedication we can still fix this thing.

For Rocky Mountain Wild, our role in this epic fight is crystal clear – **protect the over 500 rare and imperiled plant and animal species that call the southern Rocky Mountains their home.** With more than 22 million acres of forests and open spaces, and 54 peaks soaring above 14,000 feet, our region provides critical refuge for species faced with urbanization, fragmentation, and changing climate.

This year we slowed oil shale development in rare wildflower-habitat, gained increased habitat protection for the remaining several thousand Gunnison sage-grouse, and made many more positive gains toward protecting biodiversity. I hope you will be heartened by a few of our success stories from 2015.

Tehri

Success Stories from 2015

Front Range Pika Project

The American pika is a small cold-loving mammal that lives in the high elevation talus fields of western North America. Pikas have unique adaptations that allow them to live in their harsh environment. Rather than hibernating, pikas rely on a thick coat, a high metabolic rate and the insulating effects of winter snowpack to keep warm. Their adaptations to winter cold make them sensitive to summer heat. Unfortunately, these characteristics may make them susceptible to the negative impacts of climate change.

Rocky Mountain Wild, and our partners at the Denver Zoo, developed the Front Range Pika Project in 2010 to help scientists find out if populations are declining in our region. The project has trained more than 100 citizen scientists and collected thousands of points of data on the species. In 2015, our 50 volunteers spent more than **67 days in the field**. The data they collected is now part of national database that will help us find out if pika are vulnerable to climate change, and if so, find ways to protect the species.

Take Action: Volunteer for the 2016 Pika Patrol and help us collect valuable data on pika distributions along the Front Range. Email frpp@rockymountainwild.org for details.

Greater Sage-Grouse

The sun rises on an empty snow covered field in northern Colorado. As your eyes begin to adjust to the light you start to hear a popping and gurgling sound, almost like water running, but not quite. And then you see them, appearing out of seemingly nowhere. Brown crested birds with spiky tails are strutting in the field, inflating and deflating air sacks in their chest to make noises to attract potential mates. It is the strange and beautiful mating dance of the greater sage-grouse.

Unfortunately, populations of this iconic species have been decimated by sprawl and oil and gas drilling in their sagebrush habitat. The species has been lost from almost half of its historic range. RMW has worked closely with land and wildlife managers to develop innovative range-wide plans aimed at reversing this trend. The Northern Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Plan, which was implemented in 2015, puts in place measures that **protect more than 1,589,000 acres** of public land from new energy development. That is news that should keep the grouse dancing for many years to come.

Take Action: Help us make the sage-grouse plan even stronger. Email the Bureau of Land Management at sagebrush_withdrawals@blm.gov and ask them to designate sagebrush focal areas in Colorado and withdraw these areas from mining and mineral development.

Success Stories from 2015

I-70 Wild Byway

The I-70 Mountain Corridor, spanning from Golden to Glenwood Springs, has earned a reputation as the “Berlin Wall for Wildlife.” With up to 30,000 cars per day speeding across six lanes of pavement, this highway has completely severed wildlife habitat and stopped crucial species movement along the spine of the continent. The highway isolates wildlife populations, weakens the biological integrity of ecosystems, and kills hundreds of animals each year.

In 2013 the Colorado Department of Transportation, working from studies conducted by Rocky Mountain Wild and our partners, identified a location for the first wildlife bridge to be constructed in the corridor. Called the I-70 Wild Byway, this overpass will help reconnect our mountain habitat. This year RMW conducted the first full year of pre-construction wildlife monitoring with our partners at the Denver Zoo to help inform the construction of the bridge. **Over 70,000** pictures were collected from camera traps, and more than **15 species** were seen, including the elusive Canada lynx.

Take Action: *Join our team of citizen scientists who are working to make the I-70 Wild Byway a reality. Contact wildlife@rockymountainwild.org for details on ways you can help.*

Oil & Gas Monitoring

Across the west, hundreds of thousands of acres of public land are offered up for oil and gas leasing each year. To some, these lands seem barren, empty, and underutilized – a resource waiting to be developed. But, to the plants and animals who live there, these areas are home. These unfragmented landscapes provide room to roam, resources for survival, and refuge from human activities.

At Rocky Mountain Wild, we monitor all oil and gas lease sales in CO, WY, UT, NM, and MT to ensure that the needs of wildlife are considered in leasing decisions. When we notice that a lease sale parcel conflicts with imperiled species like burrowing owl, sage-grouse, white-tailed prairie dog, or black-footed ferret, we work to get those parcels removed from the leasing process. To date, we have helped to defer over **1.9 million acres** from gas and oil drilling.

Take Action: *Sign up for our oil and gas email list to receive information on public comment and protest periods, as well as access to our maps that show wildlife conflicts. Contact alison@rockymountainwild.org for details.*



Wolf Creek Pass

For over 15 years, Rocky Mountain Wild has fought to keep the wildlife movement corridor at Wolf Creek Pass free from development. Every year of this battle has thrown us new challenges as the Texas developers maneuver to build an 8,000 person “village” on an inhaling surrounded by forest and wilderness. 2015 was an especially important year in this struggle. Here are some of the highlights:

- March – The Forest Service approves a land exchange with the developers that gives the proposed “village” access to the highway.
- June – RMW and our partners file suit to reverse the land exchange, claiming that the environmental analysis used to justify the decision was unlawfully narrow in scope.
- July – RMW and our partners file suit challenging the land exchange decision, claiming that the environmental analysis used to justify the decision was inadequate.
- August – RMW leads a BioBlitz on the Forest Service land adjacent to the proposed development. Citizen Scientists record over 70 plant and animal species including plants found only in rare fen wetlands.
- October – Court orders the Forest Service to release documents that it has unlawfully withheld from our Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.
- November – December – RMW prepares for our court case challenging the land exchange. Our case is expected to be heard in the spring of 2016.

Take Action: *Join over 80,000 people in signing our online petition urging the Chief of the US Forest Service, Tom Tidwell, to reverse the land exchange at Wolf Creek Pass: <http://bit.ly/NoPillage>*

Our Board and Staff

2015 Board of Directors

Juli Slivka, The Wilderness Society, Denver, CO, *President*

Jeff Parsons, Western Mining Action Project, Loveland, CO, *Vice President*

David Chapman, Stratus Consulting, Boulder, CO, *Treasurer*

Bart Miller, Western Resource Advocates, Boulder, CO, *Secretary*

Connor Bailey, The Wilderness Society, Denver, CO

Bruce Driver, Bruce Driver, LLC, Boulder, CO

Eric Krszjaniek, Student Member, Laramie, WY

Katrina Loewy, LoveAnimals.org, Denver, CO

Josh Pollock, Private Academic Coach/Tutor, Golden, CO

Travis Stills, Energy & Conservation Law, Durango, CO

2015 Staff

Alison Gallensky, GIS and IT Director

Lindsey Katapski, Membership and Communications Director

Megan Mueller, Senior Conservation Biologist

Tehri Parker, Executive Director

Matt Sandler, Staff Attorney

Paige Singer, Conservation Biologist and GIS Specialist

Julia Sullivan, Events Coordinator

Chris Talbot-Heindl, Membership and Communications Associate



Financial Report

January 2014 – December 2014

Income

Contributions & Grants	\$330,896
Program Services	\$20,364
Other	\$239
Total Income	\$351,499

Expenses

Personnel	\$265,716
Program Expenses	\$20,648
General Ops	\$10,908
Other	\$7,742
Total Expenses	\$304,714
Net Income/Expense	\$46,785
Net Assets/Fund Balances	\$160,139



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