Rocky Mountain Wild (RMW) is pleased to report on the following major accomplishments in 2018. We have continued to hold the line on many key conservation issues even though we are faced with unprecedented challenges from our federal government.
Wolf Creek Pass

- Land Exchange Appeal. Last year we had a major victory in our defense of Wolf Creek Pass when Judge Matsch ruled in our favor and overturned the land exchange that provided the developers with direct access to Hwy 160. As was expected, the developers have appealed this decision. The Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife did not appeal the decision. Oral arguments on the appeal are scheduled for November 15.
- Forest Service Issues New Record of Decision. While we were focusing on the appeal process, the U.S. Forest Service issued a new Record of Decision (ROD) on the access issue, granting the developers access to their inholding by creating road access through Forest Service property (this was one of the alternatives outlined in the 2014 Environmental Impact Study). The Forest Service cites their legal obligation to provide “reasonable” access to inholdings based on Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. This decision, however, is based on the same EIS that Judge Match ruled was inadequate and termed it “artful dodge” of the Service’s responsibility to assess the impacts of the development on the forest and environment. We have filed our objection to this decision, and are preparing for a court battle.

I-70 Mountain Corridor

- Wild I-70 Audio Tour. In May, we launched the Wild I-70 Audio Tour that educates travelers about the wildlife and wild lands along the I-70 mountain corridor from Golden to Glenwood Springs. To date, over 3,000 people have listened to portions of the tour. Stories from the tour are currently being played on Aspen area radio KSNO-FM on Wednesdays at noon. The tour will also be featured in the Museum of Boulder starting in December. The goal of the audio tour is to introduce people to issues related to habitat connectivity and to build support for the construction of wildlife crossing structures along I-70. As part of the project we have been collecting signatures in support of wildlife crossing structures. To date, 211 people have signed our petition.
- Vail Pass Wildlife Bridge. This year saw some exciting movement on this project. First, the project was identified as the top connectivity priority in Summit County by a diverse group of stakeholders including the Forest Service, CDOT, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Summit County, the towns, ski areas, and general public. This group has formed an implementation team, contracted with Rocky Mountain Wild as the fiscal sponsor for the project, and secured the first $140,000 toward the design and engineering of the project. Second, we completed our fourth year of camera monitoring at the site to help promote the project, and to inform the design of the crossing structures. Through a new partnership with Wildlife Protection Services we were able to use video cameras for the first time and collected rare video footage of lynx at the site.

Connectivity Studies

- Statewide Connectivity Analysis. RMW completed a study to prioritize wildlife movement corridors and core habitats throughout Colorado. This project is designed to help the conservation community and general public evaluate and comment on projects happening on public lands across the state. It will also provide scientific background to build conservation alternatives for resource planning efforts undertaken by federal agencies. The final report will be posted in our online resource library by the end of the year.
- Habitat Fragmentation Analysis of Boulder County. RMW has been contracted by Boulder County Parks and Open Space to conduct a fragmentation analysis of wildlife habitat. This analysis will provide the County with a tool to evaluate how proposed projects impact habitat, and give scientific basis to the location of new trails and decommissioning of existing trails.
Oil & Gas Toolbox for Activists

This year we launched our new Oil and Gas Toolbox for Activists which is designed to help conservation organizations, citizen groups, and the general public to engage in the oil and gas leasing process. The updated tool box includes fact sheets, commenting tips (in English and Spanish), interactive online maps of upcoming lease sales, and a video tutorial of how to use the tools to submit comments. We have seen new groups submitting comments using these tools including the Colorado Native Plant Society, students in the University of Wyoming geology department, the National Park Conservation Association, and the Network for Responsible Mining. Notification on upcoming lease sales goes out to our network of over 6,000 people on email and social media.

Lease Sale Monitoring and Protesting

RMW reviewed each proposed federal oil and gas lease sale in Colorado, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming for conflicts between the proposed parcels and important wildlife habitat, wilderness, and other resource values. Since October 2017, we have performed 40 screens and created 26 sets of maps of 28 lease sales. Over 28,000 acres of land were withdrawn from lease sales based on issues raised in Rocky Mountain Wild’s comments and protests.

Stopping Oil and Gas Leases in Gunnison Sage-Grouse Habitat

We are currently engaged in two lawsuits to stop, or limit, oil and gas development in Gunnison sage grouse habitat. Both the March 2017 and March 2018 lease sales violated NEPA and ESA regulations by not adequately assessing the impacts of development on the threatened species. These cases are being led by Rocky Mountain Wild, with the following partners: San Miguel County Commissions, San Juan Citizens Alliance, and Conservation Colorado.
Healthy Habitats

Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan (BLM Royal Gorge Field Office)

RMW provided GIS and mapping expertise for the conservation alternative that was submitted to RGFO on May 5, 2017. Our work helped to identify biodiversity “hot spots,” Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and over 120,000 acres of land that is being considered for Lands with Wilderness Characteristics designation. We are currently waiting for the BLM to release its draft plan.

Rio Grande National Forest Plan Revision

RMW provided GIS and mapping expertise to support the conservation alternative that became Alternative D of the draft management plan. We promoted public participation in public meetings that were held during the first two weeks of November, and provided our supporters with talking points. We also assisted with comments from the conservation community on the draft plan and EIS. If selected, Alternative D would protect over 285,000 acres as new wilderness.

Grand Mesa Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest Plan Revision

RMW provided significant support for the conservation community comments on the Draft Assessments of forest health, aquatic ecosystems, and wilderness areas that were released by the Forest Service in November 2017. We also provided talking points to our supporters for supplying their own comments, as well as information on upcoming opportunities to participate. During 2018 we have been building upon this work by submitting comments during the scoping period, and hosting a comment writing party for the public.

Pike-San Isabel National Forest Travel Management Planning

RMW has provided maps and analysis on 500 miles of motorized roads and trails that have not been legally permitted by the Forest Service. We are currently waiting for the Service to release a draft EIS for the new management plan that addresses these roads and trails.
Key Species

Gunnison Sage-Grouse

- Tres Rios Resource Management Plan. RMW has nominated two areas in the Tres Rios Field Office for protection as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). If designated these areas would protect over 37,000 acres of Gunnison sage-grouse habitat. The BLM has taken no action toward this over the last year, but we are prepared for next steps.
- Gunnison Sage-Grouse Rangewide Resource Management Plan. The BLM released a draft plan for managing over 600,000 acres of Gunnison sage-grouse habitat in 2016. We submitted detailed science-based comments, and continue to wait for the BLM’s final plan to be released.
- Stand With Gunny Campaign. In 2016 we launched a public awareness and action campaign to involve the public in protecting Gunnison sage-grouse habitat. The campaign has been in a quiet phase this year as wait for the BLM to take action on the two plans mentioned above.

American Pika

In 2018, RMW and our partners at the Denver Zoo, conducted the 10th year of citizen science field research to measure the impacts of climate change on the American pika. This year we expand the project to be statewide in scope, with a concentration of new monitoring sites in Rocky Mountain National Park and the White River National Forest. This process included an update of our research methods, GIS studies to find new research sites, the inclusion ten new organizational partners to help with volunteer recruitment and training, and a variety of funding proposals to support the increase in work. We are now working with over 180 citizen scientists gather data on this sensitive species.

Canada Lynx

In January 2018, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the Canada lynx had fully recovered as a species and no longer needed protection under the Endangered Species Act. RMW has reviewed the decision and believes that it is not based on the best available science. We will be working with other conservation groups to challenge to this decision in court.
Our Board & Staff

2018 Board of Directors
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Katrina Loewy, The Butterfly Pavilion, Denver, Vice President
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2018 Staff
Alison Gallensky, GIS & IT Director
Paul Millhouser, Landscape Ecologist/GIS Specialist
Megan Mueller, Senior Conservation Biologist
Tehri Parker, Executive Director
Erica Prather, Campaign Assistant
Matt Sandler, Staff Attorney
Paige Singer, Conservation Biologist/GIS Specialist
Chris Talbot-Heindl, Communications & Membership Manager

Financial Report

January 2017 - December 2017

Income
Contributions & Grants $234,705
Program Services $121,672
Other $27,436
Total Income $383,813

Expenses
Personnel $331,936
Program Expenses $28,901
General Ops $2,628
Other $10,554
Total Expenses $374,019

Net Income/Expense $9,794
Net Assets/Fund Balances $298,320