As we reflect on this past year, one word is top of mind: gratitude. First, a big thank you to all of you — our members and supporters who take action to advocate for public lands, attend our events, and participate in the community that makes our work possible. We are so appreciative of all of you who were able to support Wilderness Workshop financially in 2021. We are grateful for our network of conservation partners and allies at local, state, and national organizations. And finally, we want to share our deep gratitude for the public lands that sustain our ecosystems, wildlife, climate, and communities.

2021 was a big, bold year for Wilderness Workshop. Still grappling with the ongoing pandemic, we hired additional staff and took on new projects to ensure we will rise to the conservation opportunities in front of us and meet ongoing challenges head-on.

Our proactive protection campaigns — like work to protect the Crystal River (page 7) — engaged existing, passionate members and introduced us to new community members who know just how rare and precious a free-flowing river is in Colorado. Our longstanding defensive work to stop new oil and gas development had major successes this past year, and we are in a strong position to manage the critical challenges that lie ahead (page 4).

We launched the Colorado Wildlands Project (page 8) to protect Bureau of Land Management lands across Colorado’s Western Slope, and we are excited the Project has quickly become a respected leader, building relationships and contributing meaningfully to wildlands conservation efforts.

Wilderness Workshop began nearly 55 years ago as an all-volunteer organization inspired by wilderness and rooted in our community. These values remain at our core today, and we are proud to report we now have fourteen professionals working to conserve and protect our public lands. This growth has allowed us to both protect an expanded geography of public lands and work to ensure all in our community engage and build connections with these beloved places. An annual report can only capture a small part of the wide-ranging work our team does every day, but we hope it serves as a source of inspiration and a recognition of your support of our work.

Yours in gratitude,

Allyn Harvey, Board President &
Will Roush, Executive Director
Our advocacy for the Colorado Outdoor Recreation & Economy (CORE) Act remained a key priority in 2021. The Act—which includes protections for 400,000 acres of public lands—again passed the House of Representatives and for the first time, had a hearing in the Senate. Now with both Colorado Senators in support, we’re hopeful it will become law during the 117th Congress.

The Gunnison National Forest is developing its forest plan that will determine use and development throughout the forest for the next 20+ years. We’ve identified six landscapes with important ecological values and are advocating for their protection as recommended wildernesses and special management areas in the final plan.

The Bureau of Land Management proposed new oil and gas leases in Northwest Colorado; the lease parcels encompass wild public lands we are dedicated to protecting through our Colorado Wildlands Project. We activated our members to ensure these wildlands don’t get sold to oil and gas companies, and are advocating for the agency to comply with President Biden’s directive to pause all new lease sales.

The White River National Forest issued the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on this unpopular and ecologically disastrous proposal and is poised to approve a year-round, paved access road through critical wildlife habitat to facilitate sprawl. Thanks to our advocacy and public opposition, Colorado elected officials have urged the Forest Service to reconsider the decision and the project is in limbo.

From our home base in the Roaring Fork Valley, our team works to protect public lands and waters across Western Colorado—stretching from the Continental Divide to the Colorado Plateau and plenty of beloved places in between. This map highlights a selection of our key projects.

Some projects occur in multiple locations and have several locators.

1. Stopping new Oil and Gas development, page 4
2. No new dams in the Homestake Valley, page 6
3. Crystal River Wild & Scenic Designation, page 7
4. Colorado Wildlands Project, page 8
Our Defiende Nuestra Tierra (Defend Our Land) program celebrated its third anniversary in the summer of 2021! This program builds and deepens our relationship with members of the Latinx community, while activating our members and the public to make sure our elected officials and agency staff understand how much the Latinx community values public lands and their protection.

The undersigned businesses and organizations from the Western Slope support HB21-1318, which would create an Outdoor Equity Grant Program. It would support underserved youth, and their communities, by funding equitable access to outdoor experiences and education on our public lands and in nature.

Colorado provides abundant opportunities for residents and visitors to find connection to outdoor spaces through recreation. However, a lack of financial and economic resources often excludes many children and their families from fully experiencing the amazing array of outdoor opportunities and activities in our state.

We are calling on the Colorado General Assembly to pass HB21-1318 and for Governor Polis to sign it into law.

The Outdoor Equity Grant Program would help remove exclusionary barriers, benefit public health and the economy, and create an ethic of conservation and stewardship to protect our state’s life-enhancing public lands.

OIL & GAS

Stopping new oil and gas development

We’ve had a busy year working to protect public lands and our climate from the impacts of federal oil and gas development. Most significantly, after years of litigation, we convinced the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to re-write two massive resource management plans governing oil and gas leasing across 2 million acres of Western Colorado!

In 2021, the BLM rescinded the oil and gas portions of the Grand Junction resource management plan after years of Wilderness Workshop’s tenacious policy and legal work. This followed on the heels of a federal court rescinding the oil and gas portions of the neighboring Colorado River Valley resource management plan, also as a result of our legal work. The BLM’s previous plans prioritized fossil fuel production over all other values, such as conservation or recreation, on our public lands. Beginning in 2022, the agency will have to go back to the drawing board to consider a more balanced approach— one that will be fighting hard to ensure does not add to the climate crisis but instead contributes to the Biden-Harris administration’s ambitious 30x30 (protecting 30% of lands and waters in the US by 2030) goals.

Our legal and policy team has been busy on many other fronts as well—we intervened in national litigation to defend the Biden-Harris administration’s moratorium on oil and gas lease sales; challenged a drilling proposal for 35 new wells in the North Fork Valley; and continued our efforts to eliminate leases from roadless areas in the Thompson Divide.

Despite our progress with the BLM resource management plans, we’ve been disappointed by the pace of change under the Biden-Harris administration and even ended the year fighting potential new leasing in Northwest Colorado near Dinosaur National Monument. While a Department of the Interior report acknowledged something we’ve known for years—that the federal leasing program is antiquated, broken, and in need of holistic reform—the Department has been frustratingly slow to act and make much-needed reforms.

In 2022, we’ll continue to hold the Administration accountable as we work towards a managed decline of fossil fuel production on public lands in Western Colorado.

Looking towards the Ragged Wilderness from near the Pilot Knob Roadless Area in the Gunnison National Forest, which we’re working to protect from new oil and gas development. Photo courtesy Jon Mullen/Ecostock.

“ABOUT ONE QUARTER OF U.S. EMISSIONS CAN BE TRACED BACK TO OIL, GAS, AND COAL DEVELOPMENT ON PUBLIC LANDS AND WATERS. TO PUT THAT IN CONTEXT: PUBLIC LANDS WOULD RANK AS THE 5TH LARGEST SOURCE OF EMISSIONS IN THE WORLD AS THEIR OWN NATION.”

— THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY REPORT
A highpoint of our work fighting the proposed Homestake Dam and Reservoir - which would destroy rare fen wetlands and could inundate portions of the Holy Cross Wilderness - came when we organized a “Save the Homestake Valley Rally” in Red Cliff. With multi-generational community members marching in the street and creative signs on display, the energy was a sharp contrast to our disappointment from earlier in the year when the White River National Forest approved drilling test wells in the Homestake Valley. Many long-time residents know that the front-range cities of Aurora and Colorado Springs have already constructed one reservoir and transmountain diversion in the Homestake Valley. The 1980s and 1990s saw another proposal - Homestake II - which was successfully defeated. Instead of prioritizing water conservation and ecosystem health, the Cities are determined to squeeze every last drop from the Western Slope. As we wait for a formal dam and reservoir proposal to be submitted to the Forest Service, we’ll continue to work with the community to keep the pressure on and fight this short-sighted, ecologically disastrous project at every step.

While we often say Wilderness Workshop protects public lands, it’s more accurate to say public lands and waters. Due to their outsized value, rivers and their adjacent riparian ecosystems are a critical part of our work to protect ecosystems and wildlife habitat. Our work to stop dams and protect rivers took off in 2021!

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Community Members, led by Wilderness Workshop’s Director of Community Organizing Erin Riccio, marching in the “Save the Homestake Valley Rally” in Red Cliff.

Our team was proud to bring new momentum and expertise to community-driven efforts to designate the Crystal River, which begins in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness and flows through both Marble and Redstone on its way to Carbondale, as a Wild and Scenic River. This designation, which would protect the river from any future dams and out-of-basin diversions, requires Congressional action, but is fundamentally rooted in community decision-making and input. Wilderness Workshop has taken a leadership role in the Crystal Wild and Scenic Coalition, leveraging our deep community relationships and political savvy, as well as our connections with other conservation groups who have expertise with Wild and Scenic designations. We hosted a successful “Celebrate the Crystal” event in Marble in October and at the end of 2021, our petition supporting designation had 500+ signatures. Protecting the beloved Crystal River is clearly a local priority and we’re looking forward to keeping the positive momentum going in 2022!

As we seek to address the climate and biodiversity crises, conserving wild rivers and the ecosystems they sustain is a crystal-clear win. Photo courtesy Samantha Sheppard.

If you enjoy our work, please consider supporting our efforts and join us at our annual fundraiser, Wild & Scenic in Roundtop, on May 25th! Marker 1 Café, 145 E. Main, Roundtop, Colorado 81645.
COLORADO WILDLANDS PROJECT

Protecting BLM Lands

Colorado’s 8.3 million acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-administered public lands make up one-third of the federal public lands in our state, yet only 8% of these lands are permanently protected through conservation designations, dramatically less than other public lands types in the state.

Colorad’s at-risk BLM wildlands include a half-million acres of Wilderness Study Areas and over two million acres of additional wilderness-quality lands meriting wilderness designation or other permanent conservation measures. These diverse lands include the stunning redrock of the Dolores River, the sandstone canyons and rolling sagebrush steppe of the Dinosaur region, and some of Colorado’s most important wildlife habitat such as that found in Grand Junction’s Book Cliffs. In addition to BLM public lands being underrepresented in the conservation system, these lands are critical for climate adaptation and ecosystem resilience.

The Colorado Wildlands Project works to protect wild public lands managed by the BLM. Powered with coordinated support from Wilderness Workshop and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, the Project is dedicated to the conservation, climate resilience and equitable management of our public lands.

COLORADO WILDLANDS
PROJECT DONORS

The Colorado Wildlands Project is a special, self-funded project housed within Wilderness Workshop. To learn more visit cowildlands.org.

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Resources Legacy Fund
Western Conservation Foundation
Western Slope Conservation Center

Left: Dolores Point as viewed looking west from The Palisade Wilderness Study Area, which is managed by the BLM. Above: Mule Deer are a common sight in landscapes the Colorado Wildlands Project is working to protect. Photos courtesy Jon Mullen/Ecostock.
OUR DONORS

Thank you to our generous community of supporters, business sponsors, and partners! Donors listed gave to Wilderness Workshop between January 1, 2021 and January 31, 2022.

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Wilderness Workshop is especially grateful for our Maroon Bells Circle members, who are donors giving $2,000 and up to support our work. Maroon Bells Circle members enjoy updates from our team on our most critical projects, invitations to unique events, and special acknowledgment at Wild Feast, our annual benefit.
I arrived in Aspen in 1968 having accepted an unsolicited job offer from architect Sam Caudill. I had just experienced the Chicago Democratic convention chaos firsthand and was ready for something new and different. The offer included a ski pass and Friday afternoon pool sessions after tumultuous margarita lunches at Toros.

Joy & Sam knew how to work hard and have fun. Sam regularly drove his semi-restored Model T in the July 4th Parade and headed up the “Golden Canine Brigade” which always stopped in front of the Hotel Jerome to demonstrate their talent to all sit down at once. The Caudills' had a clear vision of their priorities: first & foremost, imbue their love & deep appreciation for nature in others, something their children have continued.

Sam spent many years serving on the Colorado Water Conservation Board; Joy expressed her love for the natural world with the same laser focus. In 1967, she along with Dottie Fox and Connie Harvey, founded Wilderness Workshop in honor of Joy & Sam Caudill. He offered these remembrances:

From the Caudills I learned about a then-nascent movement known as “environmentalism” — a life-changing new word for a city boy. It put me on the path of designing and building some of the earliest solar houses in Colorado, as well as many great hikes and campouts.

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Thank you for allowing me to honor and remember Joy & Sam for their pioneering, inspirational, and tireless work on behalf of environmentalism. We need many more folks like them.

Photo Courtesy Chris Cassatt
MAGGIE MELBERG

Maggie Melberg is a broker with Aspen Snowmass Sotheby’s International. Melberg Properties. A new donor to Wilderness Workshop, we asked her to share why she’s chosen to support our work.

Growing up in Woody Creek, I knew the Roaring Fork Valley was a special place, but it didn’t really sink in until I moved out East for college and my first job. A deep connection to the outdoors is part of what called me back home, and now whether I’m backcountry skiing in the winter or biking in the summer, I know that public lands and waters are what makes the Roaring Fork Valley so extraordinary.

I love talking to new clients who are choosing a property because of the nearby protected public lands – I get to share my passion for a place I love, and I can tell them about an organization who’s working hard every day to defend it: Wilderness Workshop! I’m proud to support the Workshop and excited about their growing team and critical work.

Maggie matched her gift to Wilderness Workshop through Sotheby’s Matching Gift Program. If your employer has a matching gift program, let us know! Wilderness Workshop staff will happily assist with the paperwork and ensure you can maximize your donation! Email emily@wildernessworkshop.org with any questions.

An avid backcountry skier, Maggie is also a model for Strafe Outerwear. Strafe, based in Aspen, is a proud business supporter of Wilderness Workshop and provided financial and in-kind support in 2021.
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Casey Altman
Ben Armstrong
John Armstrong
Hilary Back
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January 1 – December 31, 2021, unaudited

OPERATING INCOME
- Contributions $1,217,170.02
- Grants $308,063.11
- Other Income $32,150.10
Total Income $1,557,383.23

OPERATING EXPENSES
- Program $950,343.28
- General Operating $204,856.03
- Development $162,237.52
Total Expenses $1,317,436.83

Mountain goats in the Tenmile Range of the Continental Divide. The Tenmile Wilderness is one of three new wilderness areas proposed in the Colorado Outdoor Recreation & Economy (CORE) Act. Photo courtesy Jon Mullen/Ecostock.

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Thank you to the following businesses and nonprofits who supported us in 2021, financially or through in-kind donations and special discounts.

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Stewardship and restoration projects are a key way we enhance ecological integrity on public lands. They are also an important chance to partner with federal agencies and give volunteers a way to roll up their sleeves and give back to the places they love!

On one of several projects this summer, Wilderness Workshop partnered with Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers, Independence Pass Foundation, and the White River National Forest on a restoration project along the Linkins Lake Trail and the upper section of the Lost Man Trail. Work on this busy section of trail off Independence Pass included trimming trees, installing and maintaining drainage structures along the trail, and installing 35 new steps.

Wilderness Workshop’s mission is to protect and conserve the wilderness and natural landscapes of the Roaring Fork Watershed, the White River National Forest, and adjacent public lands.

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“Coming Home” by Carbondale artist Bailey Haines, pinestreetprints.com