

WILDERNESS WORKSHOP

2022 Annual Report



LETTER FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Protecting public lands requires a commitment to the long haul. Designating new wilderness, saving wild rivers, and galvanizing community support is most accurately measured in years, not days or months. **Moments of celebration and tangible progress can be few and far between, but 2022 was one for the record books!**

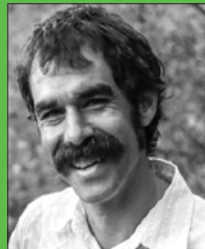
Most notably, in October President Biden designated the 53,800-acre Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument (page 3) and announced the start of a process to protect a quarter million acres of the Thompson Divide from oil and gas leasing and development (page 4). These actions cap off more than a decade of work by Wilderness Workshop to secure lasting protections for ecologically rich lands, highly valued by local communities.

Our policy and legal advocacy also achieved tangible conservation results across Western Colorado. We eliminated yet more leases from the spectacular East Willow Roadless Area on the edge of the Thompson Divide (page 8); in the North Fork Valley, our legal settlement stopped new oil and gas leasing across nearly a million acres in areas critical for both agriculture and wildlife (page 10). And in the Colorado River Valley we forced the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to re-prioritize conservation on almost 1.5 million acres of wildlands stretching from Grand Junction into the Eagle and Roaring Fork Valleys (page 12).

Our 2022 annual report is an opportunity to reflect on this brief moment in the long arc of our work to ensure an ecologically intact and biologically rich world. We're thrilled to share highlights from a year in which the dedication and commitment of Wilderness Workshop, its staff, and supporters resulted in substantial protections for wild places. **Thank you for being a donor to Wilderness Workshop and helping make these successes possible!**

With Deep Appreciation,

Allyn Harvey, Board President &
Will Roush, Executive Director



Cover Left: Gunnison National Forest, photo courtesy Sam Sheppard; Top - Aspen Stands; Bottom - Mule Deer, both photos courtesy Jon Mullen/ECOSTOCK.

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OUR WORK

Wilderness Workshop protects the wilderness, water, and wildlife of Western Colorado's public lands.





President Biden designates the **CAMP HALE-CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL MONUMENT**

“The area’s high peaks and alpine valleys contain rare and fragile native alpine tundra ecosystems that include species uniquely adapted to high altitudes....visitors might glimpse Canada lynx — a federally listed threatened species — or the boreal toad — Colorado’s only alpine species of toad.”

— FROM “A PROCLAMATION ON ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
CAMP HALE-CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL MONUMENT, OCT. 12 2022”

Long-time supporters might remember when we first started inventorying public lands across the White River National Forest for congressional protection. The dramatic peaks and lakes of the Tenmile Range were some of the most compelling and were included in the Hidden Gems Citizens Wilderness Proposal. Through years of careful work with communities we succeeded in getting these lands - along with 30,000 acres surrounding Camp Hale (where the 10th Mt. Division trained during WW II) - included as cornerstones of the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act. Recognizing the outstanding local support, in October 2022, **President Biden took executive action and designated the 53,800-acre Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument!**

Monument designation both honors the legacy of the 10th Mt. Division and gives meaningful protections to wildlife and wildlands, safeguarding areas we have long sought to shield from logging, mining, and other new development. As President Biden’s proclamation states, “...Camp Hale and the Tenmile Range form a geologically and ecologically linked landscape — rugged and stunning in appearance — that contains numerous features of scientific interest, including tarns, waterfalls, and alpine tundra...”

This new National Monument caps off years of work by Wilderness Workshop to protect these special places. Moving forward, we will continue to advocate for the CORE Act, which includes new wilderness and special management areas in the Continental Divide, and can only be designated by Congress.

Top: Snowmelt in the Tenmile Range, photo courtesy Jon Mullen/Ecostock. Below: Camp Hale and the Pando Valley, photo courtesy Ecoflight.

20 years of protection in the works FOR THE THOMPSON DIVIDE

In 2009, an *Aspen Times* headline - "Conservationists, cowboys team to oppose gas leases near Carbondale" - announced the formation of a new group: the Thompson Divide Coalition (TDC). Wilderness Workshop was a founding member and ever since we've played a critical role in the efforts to permanently protect some of Colorado's most spectacular wildlands from oil and gas development.

Together, we've made the Divide a landscape known far beyond Colorado and had some major wins along the way: cancellation of 25 illegal leases in the heart of the Divide; adoption of an Oil and Gas Plan that closed tens of thousands of acres to future leasing; community-created legislation supported by Colorado Senators; and much more!

Building on this decade-plus of work, in October 2022, President Biden added his name to the long list of people who are "Unified for Thompson Divide!" He directed Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland to begin a two-year process to withdraw the Divide from future oil and gas leasing, as well as mining.

Called an administrative mineral withdrawal, it's the strongest form of protection the administration can provide and will secure important interim protections for the next 20 years.

This is a huge step forward - and begins a new phase in our ongoing work to protect the Divide! A comment period commenced in October and we've been busy conducting analysis, gathering letters of support, and turning people out to a standing-room-only public meeting.

As we ensure the proposed withdrawal is implemented, we will continue our advocacy for a permanent legislative withdrawal through the CORE Act. Additionally, though we've successfully cleared most leases from the books, the Divide still contains a small number we are working to make certain are never developed. Our years of legal, advocacy, and organizing work have set a strong foundation for this opportunity and the Thompson Divide will remain a key priority in 2023!

IN THE NEWS



ERIN RICCIO ADVOCACY DIRECTOR

This year was a pivotal one for the Thompson Divide - our success comes from years of enlisting and supporting an amazingly wide array of ranchers, hunters, elected officials, local business owners, and conservation partners in community advocacy for the Thompson Divide. Thank you for making this work possible!



The mid-elevation landscape of the Thompson Divide provides valuable wildlife habitat. Photo courtesy Jon Mullen/ECOSTOCK.



DEFIENDE NUESTRA TIERRA

Connects community to conservation

Our Defiende Nuestra Tierra (Defend Our Land) program - focused on engaging the Latinx community in the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys - continues to advocate for equitable and just public land conservation and management while building new partnerships with nonprofits, municipalities, and federal agencies.

This important - but often behind-the-scenes - work of the Defiende program includes everything from making sure the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) provide Spanish translation (both of materials and in public meetings) to ensuring tailored outreach to Latinx residents was a key component of the newly formed Roaring Fork Valley Wildfire Collaborative.

One very public example of Defiende's success was our local signature event for the nationally-celebrated Latino Conservation Week. A partnership between Defiende, the White River National Forest, and the Aspen Institute's Energy and Environment Program, this day-long celebration in July connected over 400 community members to public lands and our work to protect them. A series of events on public lands in the morning included whitewater rafting through Glenwood Canyon - a first for nearly all of the 90+ participants. The event culminated with a party at Glenwood Springs' Two Rivers Park in the afternoon - complete with activities for families, food, booths hosted by dozens of organizations offering more opportunities to learn about and connect with nature, and of course plenty of music!



GLADYS ARANGO-MARCON

LATINO COMMUNITY OUTREACH, CITY OF GLENWOOD SPRINGS

As a member of the Defiende Advisory Board, I'm excited we're building and growing support for public lands and their protection that we know exists within the Latinx Community. This means a lot to me and my loved ones - thank you for your support!

Scenes from Latino Conservation Week - whitewater rafting in Glenwood Canyon resulted in big smiles and a new connection to the river!

COLORADO WILDLANDS PROJECT

Dolores to Dinosaur and BLM wildlands in between

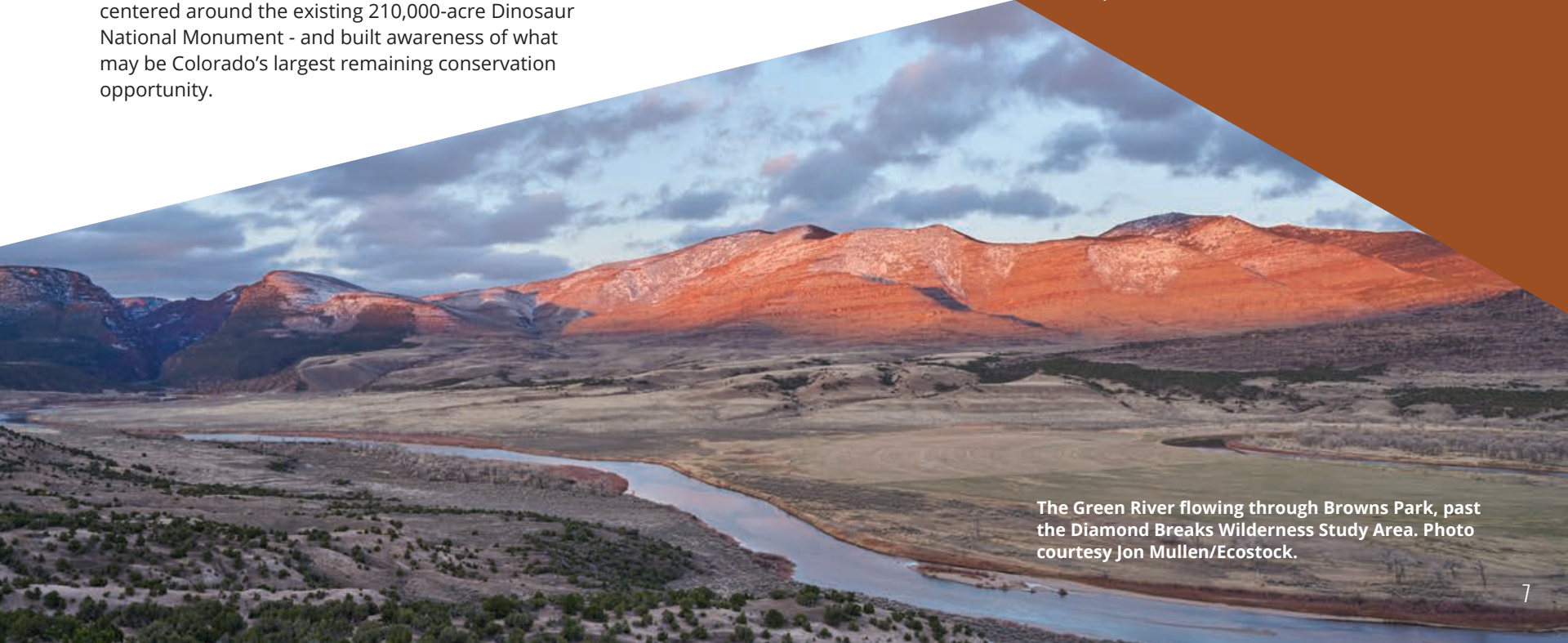
The Colorado Wildlands Project is now two years old! Created in strategic partnership with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), the Wildlands Project has a unique focus on conservation opportunities for wildlands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Western Colorado and works towards their protection. Highlights of the Wildlands Project work in 2022 include:

- Inventoried and identified wilderness-quality public lands with substantial cultural and historic resources deserving of permanent protection in the **Dolores River Canyon Country**.
- Built relationships with key stakeholders and agency staff in the **Greater Dinosaur landscape** - located in the far northwest corner of Colorado and centered around the existing 210,000-acre Dinosaur National Monument - and built awareness of what may be Colorado's largest remaining conservation opportunity.

- As part of ongoing efforts to achieve long-term administrative protections for BLM wildlands, supported a regional and national coalition urging the BLM to use its existing authority to designate new **Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)**.
- Partnered with Wilderness Workshop to advocate for increased protections in the Colorado River Valley and Piceance Basin as part of a 1.5 million acre BLM planning process (page 12).

WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS: A CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY

In Colorado, the BLM manages over 2 million acres of wilderness-quality lands that contain important wildlife habitat and migration corridors, provide backcountry recreation experiences, and serve as climate refugia for species adapting to a changing planet. The Wildlands Project is advocating for the BLM to designate some of these deserving wildlands as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), the agency's most powerful and durable conservation tool.



The Green River flowing through Browns Park, past the Diamond Breaks Wilderness Study Area. Photo courtesy Jon Mullen/Ecostock.



Years of hard work culminating in

CANCELLATION OF THE EAST WILLOW LEASES

Filled with verdant aspen forests, beaver streams, and abundant wildlife, the Willow Creek area straddles portions of Pitkin and Mesa counties and includes three roadless areas originally prioritized for protection by the Thompson Divide Coalition. **Despite the area's rich ecology, 6 oil and gas leases covering more than 8,600 acres were issued in 1996.**

Recognizing the threat and looking for opportunities to protect this place, in 2008 we started filing Freedom of Information Act requests to learn everything we could about why the 12-year-old leases hadn't expired. Oil and gas leases are issued for 10-year terms and are extended only by proven production, but operators often use loopholes to extend their hold on public lands.

Though two wells were drilled back in the early 2000s, they never produced any oil or gas, and the leases should have expired. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was doing a poor job administering its own regulations, enabling the leaseholder to hold onto thousands of acres by manipulating the agency and its regulations.

Aspen stands deep within the Willow Creek area. Photo courtesy Jon Mullen/Ecostock.

In 2012, responding to years of our advocacy, the BLM acknowledged most of the Willow Creek leases should have expired years earlier. This decision removed all leases except for lands surrounding the two gas wells, beginning years of appeals and litigation as WW defended the BLM's decision and the leaseholder fought it. In 2020, a Federal District Court upheld the agency's decision, confirming the expiration of thousands of acres of leases. Four leases remained on the books, purportedly held by the two wells that had never produced oil and gas.

In late 2022, our work paid off! The operator never responded to a letter from the BLM - requiring the wells, now more than 15-years idle, be put into production or plugged and abandoned - and three more leases were eliminated. Today, only one 1,280-acre lease remains, set to expire in November 2023. **Our work in the Willow Creek area has resulted in the elimination of more than 7,000 acres of leases.** And, by this time next year, we hope to have eliminated all of the Willow Creek leases preventing oil and gas development from harming this special place!



PETER HART

LEGAL DIRECTOR

Through changing agency staff, litigating leaseholders, and endless paperwork, Wilderness Workshop has stayed true to our goal of eliminating the Willow Creek leases. The lessons we've learned have been invaluable in our efforts to protect public lands all across Western Colorado. Thank you for making this work possible!

A young Joona Hart in the Willow Creek Roadless Area. Field visits with family and friends are always an important part of our work.

THE LONG FIGHT FOR EAST WILLOW

1996	Six Willow Creek leases issued, each with a ten-year term.
2001	First well drilled, never produces any gas.
2003	Seventh lease issued.
2004	Second well drilled; after testing the well's production for one day, it is shut-off.
2009-2012	WW requests termination of expired leases. Leaseholder appeals.
2013	Responding to our advocacy, BLM demands wells be put into production. Leaseholder does not comply.
2015-2019	WW supports BLM's attempt to expire leases. Litigation follows.
2021	WW calls for BLM to send a letter to the leaseholder, notifying them that if the wells don't produce gas they will expire.
2022	Three more Willow Creek leases eliminated!



Protecting the

NORTH FORK VALLEY & GUNNISON NATIONAL FOREST

Surrounded by public lands - including Wilderness Areas, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, and the Gunnison National Forest - the North Fork Valley is unlike anywhere else in Colorado and even the world. It contains the largest concentration of organic, sustainable growers in the state and is home to the West Elk American Viticultural Area, one of the highest wine-growing regions in the world.

Though wildlife, agriculture, and the local economy depend on intact and thriving ecosystems on these public lands, substantial

threats - primarily from oil and gas development - remain. 2022 saw major progress by Wilderness Workshop:

- During the Trump administration, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved a Resource Management Plan for the area, opening up 95% of public lands to oil and gas leasing, including the entire North Fork Valley. We sued and in 2022, the BLM agreed to settle and draft another plan. Our legal settlement stipulates that in the



new plan the BLM will evaluate reducing the amount of land open to oil and gas leasing, and increase or add protections for wildlife habitat, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

- In 2021, we sued the BLM over the North Fork Mancos Master Development Plan, which would have allowed 35 new fracking wells in the North Fork Valley and Thompson Divide. Thanks to our lawsuit, in May 2022 a federal judge stopped this plan that would have allowed fracking across 35,000 acres of Colorado's Western Slope.
- We continued our advocacy for new land and water protections as part of the Gunnison Forest Plan Revision. Our proposal - for recommended wildernesses and special management areas in places like Huntsman Ridge, Clear Fork Divide, and Pilot Knob - would protect over 130,000 acres of important wildlife habitat, water resources, and wilderness-quality land while shielding these special areas from logging and fossil fuel leasing.

WHAT IS A FOREST PLAN REVISION?

A Forest Plan sets the overall management direction and guidance for a national forest; it guides management activities at a large, forest-wide scale, providing direction regarding the types of uses that may take place within each part of the forest. Generally revised every 20 years, Forest Plans are important conservation tools and provide the opportunity to ensure wildlife habitat, ecological values, and clean water are prioritized over extractive uses. The Gunnison National Forest is currently undergoing a Forest Plan Revision and we anticipate a White River National Forest Plan Revision will begin as early as 2024.



Public lands and waters surround the North Fork Valley; the BLM administers the mineral development rights underneath bountiful agricultural fields. Photo courtesy Jon Mulen/ Ecostock.





New planning efforts underway for the

COLORADO RIVER VALLEY & PICEANCE BASIN

Back in 2015, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) finalized the Colorado River Valley and Grand Junction Resource Management Plans, dictating how nearly 2 million acres of public lands and the minerals beneath them in Western Colorado would be managed. The BLM prioritized oil and gas over all other uses and the plan opened 80% of the planning area (1.5 million acres) to oil and gas leasing and development.

As a result of lawsuits filed by Wilderness Workshop and our conservation partners in 2016 and 2019 - challenging the BLM's failure to analyze the climate impacts of its decision or to consider alternatives that would limit new oil and gas leasing in order to protect other public lands values - the agency is now revisiting oil and gas management for the entire region. In the summer of 2022, they began developing a new plan that will determine where and how oil and gas leasing and development in the Colorado River Valley and Piceance Basin will occur for the next 20 years or more.

Because of our legal work and advocacy, the BLM is now taking a hard look at the climate impacts of oil and gas drilling and will make decisions to minimize and mitigate those impacts, while at the same time putting in place important protections for public lands.

We're advocating for new protections in the Colorado River Valley, which includes well-known local geographic landmarks like the Grand Hogback. Photo courtesy Sam Sheppard.

We rallied our members and submitted detailed, technical comments over the summer, focused primarily on convincing the BLM to incorporate key conservation priorities into the plans, including:

- Durable protections for wilderness-quality lands that benefit wildlife habitat, recreation, and climate resilience. We're advocating for the BLM to increase the amount of land protected to offset existing oil and gas development and designate new Wilderness Study Areas.
- Protecting water resources from oil and gas development. We worked with hydrology experts who identified groundwater resources and potential pathways for contamination of those aquifers during oil and gas development and are encouraging the BLM to use this scientific data.
- Implement innovative planning decisions to support local economies transitioning away from fossil fuel and other extractive industries.



SAM FEUERBORN

FIELD COORDINATOR

This summer, our field inventories of wilderness-quality lands identified tens of thousands of acres eligible for protection. This data will be invaluable in our advocacy to ensure oil and gas is not the dominant use of our public lands and continues the Workshop's commitment to knowing our wild public lands inside and out. Thank you for making this work possible!

Mule Deer on BLM wildlands. Photo courtesy Jon Mullen/ECOSTOCK.

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

As part of the comments submitted by Wilderness Workshop on the BLM's new oil and gas plan, we submitted an extensive inventory of undeveloped public lands with wilderness values. This ensures the agencies know where wilderness-quality lands exist and can take that information into account when making decisions. Some highlights included:

Total acres inventoried & eligible for protection:	43,456
Miles driven	776
Photos submitted	167
Points of Interest noted in comments	149
Units of potential Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	5
Calf Elk Being Born	1



OUR DONORS

Wilderness Workshop is lucky to have a generous community of supporters, business sponsors, and partners, some who have given to us for over 5, 10, 15, and even 20 years! Donors listed below gave to WW between January 1, 2022 and January 31, 2023.

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DONOR SPOTLIGHT



CHELSEA CONGDON

We sat down with Chelsea - a donor for nearly 20 years and a co-host of our annual benefit, Wild Feast - to learn more about why she so passionately supports our work.

Tell us about your connection to Wilderness Workshop.

I grew up in the Roaring Fork Valley and it's where I learned to read topo maps, get lost and found, feel at home, and be in love with wild places. In the early 2000s, James Brundige and I were invited to make a film about WW - Wild for Good - and we fell in love with Dottie, Connie, and Joy, the founders of the Workshop. We had a wonderful time learning how they got started and the Workshop's legacy since the 1960s.

Why is protected wilderness, water, and wildlife on public lands important to you?

I think about the web of life and how we are not separate or superior to nature - we are a part of it and we intimately depend on it for our well-being. The challenge of protecting wild places is a test of whether we can see beyond our momentary indulgences to preserve life for all of our kin on this planet, not just ourselves.

What sets Wilderness Workshop apart?

The Workshop is an effective organization because it is so connected with love of a place - and that love is the glue for our community. This enables the organization to do great advocacy, legal, and policy work; to be strategic partners with other organizations; and to engage the Latinx community, ensuring that love of place is a feeling everyone has.

Why should folks attend Wild Feast?

Wild Feast is the time to celebrate that love of place I mentioned before - it is the BEST fundraising event in the valley - filled with fun, energetic, passionate people united by their love of this place and all that is magical about it!

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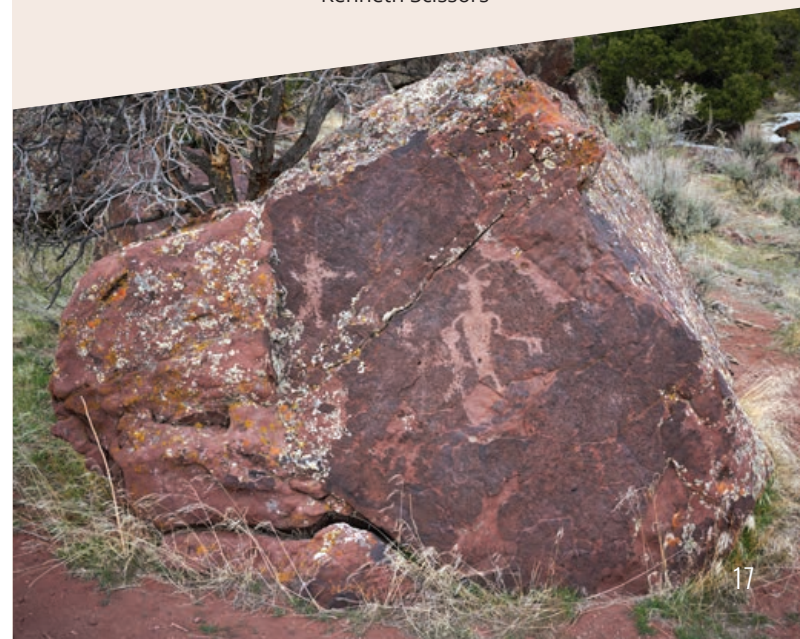


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The Colorado Wildlands Project is fiscally sponsored by Wilderness Workshop. *Learn more on page 7.*

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**Petroglyphs on BLM Wildlands
 near Browns Park National
 Wildlife Refuge. Photo
 courtesy Jon Mullen/Ecostock.**



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Marble Distilling Co.



MARBLE DISTILLING CO.
CARBONDALE, COLORADO

The tagline at Marble Distilling Co. is “the Most Sustainable Distillery on the Planet”, but we’d propose a change: “The Most Sustainable - and easiest to work with - Distillery on the Planet!” Located on Main Street in Carbondale, Marble has been a fabulous event venue, a financial supporter, Wild Feast sponsor, and even created a specialty cocktail to support our work called the Crystal River Cosmo!

If you’re not familiar, Marble Distilling Co. is a family and friends-owned company built on a model of sustainability. With an ever-growing list of recognition for both craft spirits and innovative sustainability practices, they are a pioneer of sustainable and zero-waste distilling, having created a one-of-a-kind closed-loop water reuse system that annually saves 125.1 metric tons of carbon, 1.8 billion BTUs, and more than four million gallons of water. In a nod to their name, they filter spirits through crushed Yule Marble from the famous Colorado Yule Marble Quarry in the pristine Crystal River Valley, which is the source of water for Marble’s spirits. Thank you for your support, Marble Distilling Co.!



Left: In early April, a District Court approved a legal agreement conservation groups – including Wilderness Workshop – secured with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service compelling the agency to revise its Canada lynx critical habitat rule to evaluate territory in the southern Rocky Mountains range essential to its recovery.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

January 1 – December 31, 2022, *unaudited*

OPERATING INCOME

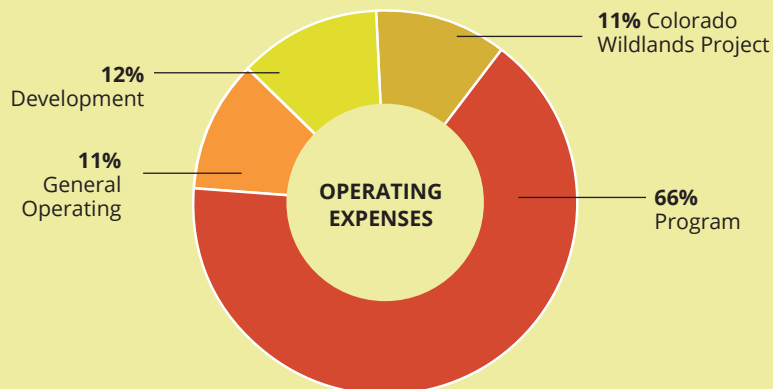
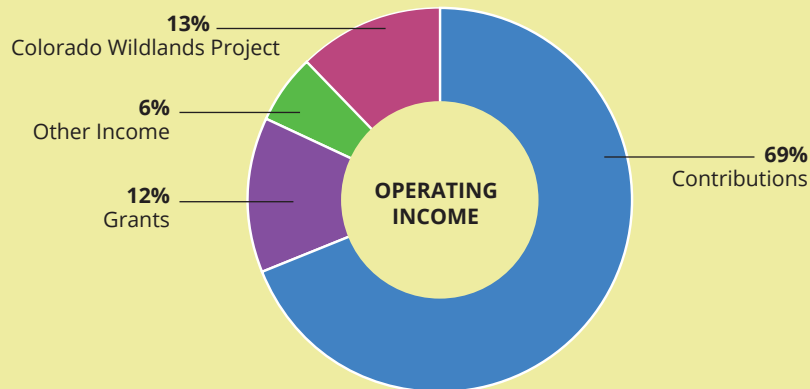
Contributions	\$1,164,313.02
Grants	\$209,772.65
Colorado Wildlands Project	\$226,963.67
Other Income	\$94,871.03

Total Income **\$1,695,920.37**

OPERATING EXPENSES

Program	\$1,087,830.07
General Operating	\$178,692.51
Development	\$199,965.58
Colorado Wildlands Project	\$191,599.73

Total Expenses **\$1,658,087.89**



WILDERNESS WORKSHOP

Wilderness Workshop's mission is to protect the wilderness, water, and wildlife of Western Colorado's public lands.

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SAVE THE DATE

WILD FEAST

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9

The St. Regis Aspen Resort - Aspen, Colorado



“we may not be able to change
the past but we can help to shape
the future”

To join the Host Committee or reserve your table,
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emily@wildernessworkshop.org

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Artwork by Thomas W. Benton generously donated by Fat City Gallery. Benton, known for the artwork he created for Hunter S. Thompson's campaign for Pitkin County Sheriff, sought to achieve change and inspire all who saw his pieces.



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