



**Goodbye,
Congress.**

**Hello,
Alliance!**

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WESTERN COLORADO ALLIANCE

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**Western Colorado Alliance
OPEN HOUSE**

134 N 6th Street
Grand Junction

Witnessing our mission in action, now and into the future

by Steve Allerton, Alliance President

Not long ago I was privileged to sit in on a meeting in which the staff were making decisions critical to the success of Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action. I was impressed and inspired by the collegiality and purpose with which business was conducted. Infused with the serious back and forth of

decision-making was humor and the ability to laugh. In addition, a shared value of risk-taking while expressing different ideas was clearly present.

I was also part of a planning session led by our Alliance, which included Citizens for Clean Air and the local chapter of the Sierra Club. We discussed next steps regarding how to respond to the BLM's recent decision to allow drilling

to proceed on the southwest flank of the Grand Mesa. This planning session ended with a clear direction based on the ideas and opinions of those present.

During a recent hearing in Rifle, our organization was well represented as members spoke clearly and respectfully for statewide air quality rules as they

See **President's Message** on page 6



Steve Allerton

Whitewater proposal stilled flawed, despite getting green light

by Emily Hornback, Staff Director

In early April, the Bureau of Land Management issued a "Finding of No Significant Impact" for a proposal to drill 108 oil wells on 12 pads in the Grand Junction watershed. Western Colorado Alliance members – who have challenged the short-comings of the plan for 10 years – are weighing the options moving forward.

The project, known as the Whitewater Master Development Plan, would span 26,000 acres around the base of the Grand Mesa, from Palisade to Whitewater.

One of those proposed well pads is on the ranch of Alliance member Don Lumbardy. The pad is close to Lumbardy's irrigation ditch – the only source of fresh water on his ranch, and on which he and his livestock rely for clean drinking water. He has been asking the BLM for years to assure him the water to his ranch will not be impacted by the project. Instead,

officials have acknowledged that drilling might affect his water supply.

"This tells me that they don't consider water important enough to be worried about," Lumbardy said.

Our analysis of the BLM's April decision shows that not much has changed since we first challenged the proposal in 2013. The operator has moved most of their activity out of the official boundaries of the Grand Junction watershed, and the trucking traffic has been re-routed off the popular "Fruit and Wine Byway." However, in addition to failing to address Lumbardy's concerns, we still see faulty analysis on air quality impacts and inflated estimated economic benefits of the project without fully accounting for the costs.

A large scale project that could impact a critical water supply for area ranchers and an entire city deserves the most rigorous analysis possible – in other words, a full Environmental Impact Statement.



Don Lumbardy, whose ranch would be impacted by one of the well pads proposed in the Whitewater Development Plan.

As western Colorado faces extreme drought conditions this summer, and as ranchers across the region are facing irrigation and hay shortages, we are reminded how critical water is to life

and livelihoods on the Western Slope. **Our Alliance will do what it takes to protect this critical resource in the Grand Valley.**



brings people together to build grassroots power through community organizing and leadership development.

Our Alliance's vision for the future is one where engaged local voices are leading communities across Western Colorado that are healthy, just and self-reliant.

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Goodbye, Congress. Hello, Alliance!

We've been sounding the trumpets on social media and in emails, so we hope you've heard the news — we're changing our name from Western Colorado Congress to **Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action**! It's not a decision we made lightly, as you can learn in the Q&A below.

Please plan on joining us in celebrating this milestone with an Open House at our office in Grand Junction (134 N 6th St) on Friday, June 1, from 3:00 - 6:00 pm! Besides learning more about our Alliance's plans for the coming months and meeting our new staff members, we'll be unveiling our new look and website, and serving some savory snacks and beverages.

Q: Why did we decide to rename Western Colorado Congress as *Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action*?

A: Let's face it: the word 'Congress' in our name has caused confusion with people outside our non-profit organization for nearly 38 years. Even though one of the definitions of 'congress' is "an association usually made up of delegates from constituent organizations", the U.S. Congress pretty much owns the word, and is what people think of when they hear it. Our leaders have thought about altering our name numerous times over the years, but were reluctant to lose the name recognition we had built here on the Western Slope.

So why change it now? We conducted an extensive strategic planning assessment in 2017, including a series of surveys and community meetings. As a result, we are launching some new and exciting work that we believe will refocus the organization on its original mission of creating a healthy and resilient Western Slope. It seems a perfect time to change our name as well, and eliminate the barrier it posed for new people to want to learn more about our work.

Q: What is new and exciting with the Western Colorado Alliance?

A: Our board recently adopted a new vision statement: Our Alliance's vision for the future is one where *engaged local voices are leading communities across Western Colorado that are healthy, just and self-reliant.*

If we're going to deliver on that vision, we need a strategy for creating progressive, transformative change.

We need to transition away from the Western Slope's legacy of a fossil-fuel dependent economy to one that is sustainable and just. And so, we'll be framing much of our work in terms of Homegrown Prosperity - a phrase that encompasses energy issues, economic development, economic justice and community health.

We're also beefing up our Grassroots Democracy program to build our power and presence in policy-making bodies across Western Colorado. Our Alliance will also be contracting with a sister organization, Colorado Rural Voters, which is focused on changing the political landscape here.

Our plan is to change our website and email addresses to WesternColoradoAlliance.org as of June 1. However, if you are a creature of habit and use our existing wccongress.org, never fear. Your emails and internet searches will forward automatically to our new location!

Q: Are there other changes on the horizon?

A: The Board is still assessing how the structure of the organization might be modified to make it more efficient and nimble in responding to emerging issues in our communities.

Q: What has stayed the same within our Alliance?

A: Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action is as committed as ever to working directly with people to get involved and affect change in our communities. Our Alliance's staff of community organizers will still be supporting our members to tackle issues at the local and regional level, and to develop their skills as leaders.

3 reasons why Western Colorado Congress is changing its name to



1

Let's face it. Even though 'congress' has other meanings, the U.S. Congress pretty much owns the word. It has caused some confusion since our alliance began.



2

If the word 'congress' in our name causes confusion, then it's a barrier to you coming through our door. We want you to feel welcome!



We've always been an *Alliance for Community Action*. As we re-focus our resources now to better achieve transformative change on the Western Slope, what better time to move the word 'Alliance' into the forefront?

3



**It's time to learn more about us.
Visit WesternColoradoAlliance.org today!**

A lighter moment on this year's People's Lobby Trip with (from left) Troy Redding, Don Bell, Ken Dolezal, Veniece Miller, Faith Anderson, Keira Havens, Abigail Kleppinger, Rep. Dylan Roberts (D-26), Leah Lopez, Lehua La'a, Gretchen Nicholoff, Marv Ballantyne, Aline Silva and Felipe Silva. Photo by Jeriel Clark



Teen puts 'democracy in action' on People's Lobby trip

by Veniece Miller, Grand Junction

Few students would label a lobby trip to the state Capitol during spring break as fun, however, I cannot think of a better way to have spent it!

This past March I attended the People's Lobby Trip with Western Colorado Congress staff and members. As a novice in all things lobbying, I came with no experience, but a desire to learn from and speak to my elected representatives. As a member of the WCC team, I spoke to legislators about

bills in committee, the Senate and the House. Some bill topics included rural broadband, oil and gas reporting, and youth homelessness.

I am 18 years old, and often it feels as if I do not have a voice in this democracy. Grassroots lobbying empowered my fellow students and I to speak out and stand up for policies we were in support of. As students, our experience matters.

Sitting down with Rep. Marc Catlin face-to-face made the interaction real; catching Rep. McLachlan in the hall

I have participated in marches, campaigns, and have made phone calls to elected officials, yet I can say grassroots lobbying with Western Colorado Congress was the most impactful engagement with government I have had. This was democracy in action.

was impactful, and running into Rep. Thurlow after session was important. As an institution, it is vital for Western

Slope senators and representatives to see Western Colorado Congress as the people behind it. WCC is an organization of community members working to preserve our beautiful Colorado and for progress. Our elected officials cannot forget that.

Having a beautiful home to stay in, great food, and brilliant company made this experience even better! An enormous thanks to Western Colorado Congress for working towards the interests of Western Colorado and making this important trip possible!

Mid-term elections lend drama to 2018 legislative session

by Jeriel Clark, Community Organizer

And that's a wrap for the 2018 Legislative session in Colorado! Filled with drama and unexpected turns, 2018 has been a year at the Capitol not just to watch, but to participate in. Following the success of this year's People's Lobby Trip (see adjacent article), where our members helped persuade a Western Slope legislator to change his vote in committee, WCC members have continued to have a vocal presence at the Capitol through phone calls, emails and remote testimony.

Midterm election years at the Colorado legislature can be notorious for few meaningful bills being passed. For our legislators, their votes can be a deciding factor in their bid for re-election come November. For this reason, they run strong messaging bills to make a statement, knowing they aren't likely to succeed. With split chambers at the Capitol, this situation results in bills being born out of dreams and

nightmares.

Bills that packed that kind of political punch included:

- a requirement to transition to 100% renewable energy by 2035;
- a requirement of local governments to pay damages to mineral interest owners if a fracking ban is implemented;
- the creation of a Class 4 felony for state or local elected officials who create, enforce or implement sanctuary policies; and
- the creation of a purple card which would allow undocumented individuals to work legally in the state.

Governor Hickenlooper is not running for re-election this year. So, when he announced during his final State of the State address that among his top priorities was support for rural economies, he meant it -- and the State Legislature responded. Our Western Slope legislators sponsored and passed

financing for rural broadband by re-allocating money from a largely unused fund. Following that lead, a bill passed that will allow secondary providers the ability to install rural broadband if that location's primary provider fails to install it. Additionally, we helped pass a bill to allow electric consumers the right to install, interconnect, and use energy storage systems on their property, allowing Colorado residents the ability to save money.

Yet even in bills WCC supported, including renewable energy, alternative fuel vehicles, and rural broadband, the devil was in the details. With compromises and amendments made in both the House and the Senate, we dug into the bills, testified in committees, met with our legislators, and watched them closely as they evolved, moving through the chambers.

While bills that have been political hot spots in the past have unexpectedly sailed through, other seemingly safe bills have been held hostage in

To join our Legislative Action Team and find out more about what you can do, contact community organizer Jeriel Clark at jeriel@wccongress.org

partisan battles. A bill to create a taskforce to address youth experiencing homelessness died in committee along party lines. A House bill to extend the Colorado Civil Rights Commission was sent to Conference Committee following disagreements between the House and the Senate. Teetering between life and death, the bill passed in the final hours, giving the Commission an additional 9 years of life.

Some things remained status quo this year as bills introduced to implement common sense oil and gas regulations headed to the Senate to die, while a bill to remove tax incentives to purchase innovative vehicles made it

See **Legislature** on page 5

After 11 year stall, GMUG Forest Plan back on track

by Leah López, Community Organizer

On April 3, the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests opened a public comment period for a few foundational parts of its upcoming revised Forest Plan. *Your comments can help shape what the Forest Service introduces in the next phase of its planning process. Comments are due by June 2 on this round of scoping documents.*

In an effort to organize a cohesive vision for the GMUG Forests that will protect and significantly expand diverse wildlands, Western Colorado Alliance and our allies have developed a Citizens' Wilderness and Designations Proposal as part of this planning process.

Learn more about the Citizens' Proposal for the GMUG Forests and sign the petition of support at:

www.gmugrevision.com/contact/

To view the GMUG's planning materials, visit:

www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gmug/landmanagement/planning/

Those of you with a keen memory may recall that in 2005, we announced

the release of *Mountains to Mesas (M2m)*, a citizens' management alternative rooted in conservation biology for this same GMUG Forest planning process. Unfortunately, in 2006 the GMUG put the entire effort on hold until the Colorado Roadless Areas were defined and a final planning rule was established for the US Forest Service.

Now, after over a decade of waiting, the gears are once again moving on this important planning process. If it stays on schedule, the final Forest Plan will be released in Fall 2020. The GMUG's current 34-year-old plan is increasingly irrelevant and unable to manage the rising demands on its resources.

Because Forest Plans are revised at most every fifteen years, this process will likely shape management decisions and on-the-ground conditions for decades to come across 3,161,900 acres of public land.

Wilderness and other conservation designations on the GMUG safeguard public lands, protect our communities' heritage, sustain healthy wildlife and habitat, support a strong and sustainable economy, and preserve our quality of life for generations to come.

For more information on upcoming activities, contact Leah Lopez at 970-256-7650.



Ridgway-Ouray Community Council members hosted a comment-writing session for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest Plan in late April. Photo by Leah López.

Legislature

Continued from page 4

through the Senate, only to die in the House. The Senate disliked a House bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions so much it was assigned it to multiple committees, just to see it die three times.

And the battle continued with the latest version of school setbacks, a bill which would require oil and gas facilities be located a minimum of 1,000 feet from school property lines. As expected, it died in the Senate's kill Committee, but is guaranteed to be back again.

Another dominant topic of discussion had nothing to do with legislation, but with the environment in the Capitol. Both the House and the Senate were rocked with sexual harassment allegations raised against sitting legislators. Following several investigations, the

House chose to oust Democrat Steve Lebsack, but not before he switched party affiliation, leaving his vacant seat to the Republicans. Unlike the House, a resolution to remove Senator Randy Baumgardner from the Senate failed, and Senate leadership stripped Baumgardner of his committee assignments and leadership positions just a few days before the end of session.

Setting the stage for this year's midterm elections, the legislative session forecasts an interesting shake-up come November.

Now that session is out, the work doesn't end for our Legislative Committee here at Western Colorado Alliance. We'll meet face to face in June to debrief and discuss the year ahead, as well as meet in-district with our Western Slope legislators.

San Juan wilderness bill reintroduced in Congress

by Leah López, Organizer

People across western Colorado cheered as US Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) re-introduced the San Juan Wilderness Act on April 19. This bill is the result of years of collaboration and local input and will provide better management and protections for lands in San Miguel, Ouray, and San Juan Counties in southwestern Colorado.

The San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act is long overdue. Call Sen. Bennet and thank him for his efforts. Then, call Sen. Gardner and Rep. Tipton and ask them to support this bill!

US Sen. Michael Bennet

(Durango office): (970) 259-1710

US Sen. Cory Gardner

(Grand Junction): (970) 245-9553

US Rep. Scott Tipton

(Grand Junction): (970) 241-2499

The legislation would secure protections for nearly 60,000

acres in the heart of the San Juan Mountains.

Half of the acreage would expand or create wilderness for Sneffels Range and Lizard Head. The other half would ensure management protections for Ice Lake Basin, Hope Lake and Naturita Canyon. These are all beloved parts of the Western Slope that WCC members have been working for almost a decade to protect.

The bill was carefully crafted with input regarding private property, water rights, mountain biking, snowmobiling, commercial heli-skiing, and other established uses.

Even though the bill is supported by all three counties where the lands are and the municipalities of Telluride, Mountain Village, Ouray, Ridgway and Silverton; local ranchers and outfitters, and over 120 local businesses, we are still working hard to move the bill forward to a full Senate vote, and to find sponsorship to introduce similar legislation in the House.

Community Center feasibility study nears completion

by Andrey Krievs, Grand Junction

PLACE (People for Local Activities and Community Enrichment) is getting closer to presenting a plan for a potential community center in Grand Junction. The plan will include a conceptual design for the center as well as costs, location, amenities and programming options. The plan will be released to the City of Grand Junction and the public this summer.

The final plan will be shaped by input from hundreds of Grand Junction residents who have participated in public input meetings, as well from local community and business leaders in meetings facilitated by PLACE and the Grand Junction Parks and Recreation Department. Residents were also able to participate in a survey released in April that allowed them to weigh in on how to prioritize potential locations, amenities, and funding options.

It is important to PLACE, a working group of the Western Colorado Alliance in Mesa County, to ensure that this grassroots effort reflects the opinions and voices of our neighbors in this great community.

Once the feasibility study is completed this summer, PLACE and the Grand Junction Parks and Recreation Department will present the final report to the Grand Junction City Council for review, and determine next

steps for getting a community center on a ballot for residents to decide.

If you are interested in learning more about the community center effort, or if you'd like to get involved, send an email to gjcommunity-center@westerncoloradoalliance.org. You can also check out PLACE on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GJCommunityCenter/

President's Message

Continued from page 2

pertain to the oil and gas industry.

Our recently hired organizers are jumping right in. Well-attended letter-writing campaigns have taken place in Grand Junction and Ridgway in order to impact the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest Plan.

In the office, our Alliance's staff are reaching out to new and lapsed members, organizing systems, and enhancing communication abilities.

To each member that has preceded me and participated in "the good fight", a huge word of thanks for creating a forward thinking and transformative organization that holds a unique place among so many others.

I realize I've only scratched the surface of what Western Colorado Alliance is all about. As our rebranding work comes to fruition on June 1 (see article on p. 3), I want to express my appreciation for the commitment displayed by the staff and members, and the way the organization develops leaders who impact their communities in positive and meaningful ways. These values are deeply rooted in the mission and vision of our Alliance and are reasons why I share my time and resources.

The mission is clear: *Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action brings people together to build grassroots power through community organizing and leadership development, now and into the future.*



More than 150 people attended the first community input meeting for a proposed community & recreation center in Grand Junction. Photo courtesy of PLACE.

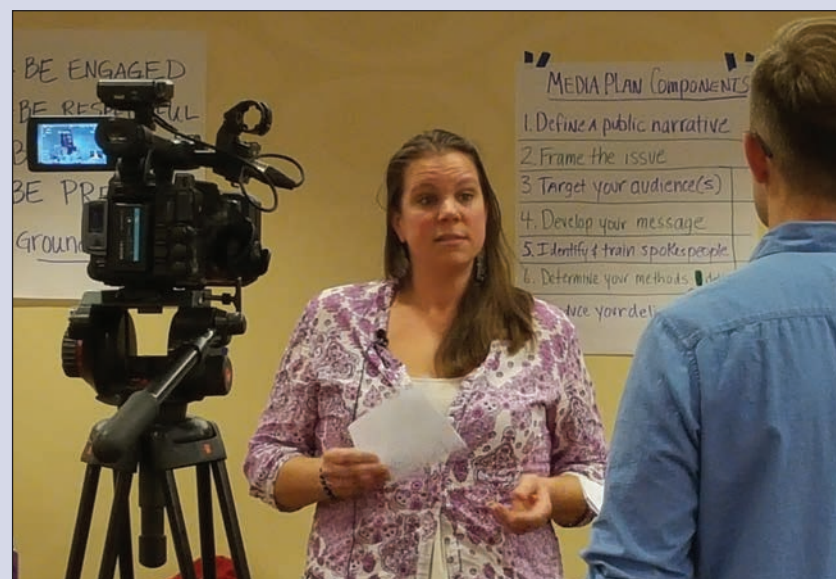
Principles of Community Organizing

July 17-20, 2018 ♦ Sioux Falls, South Dakota

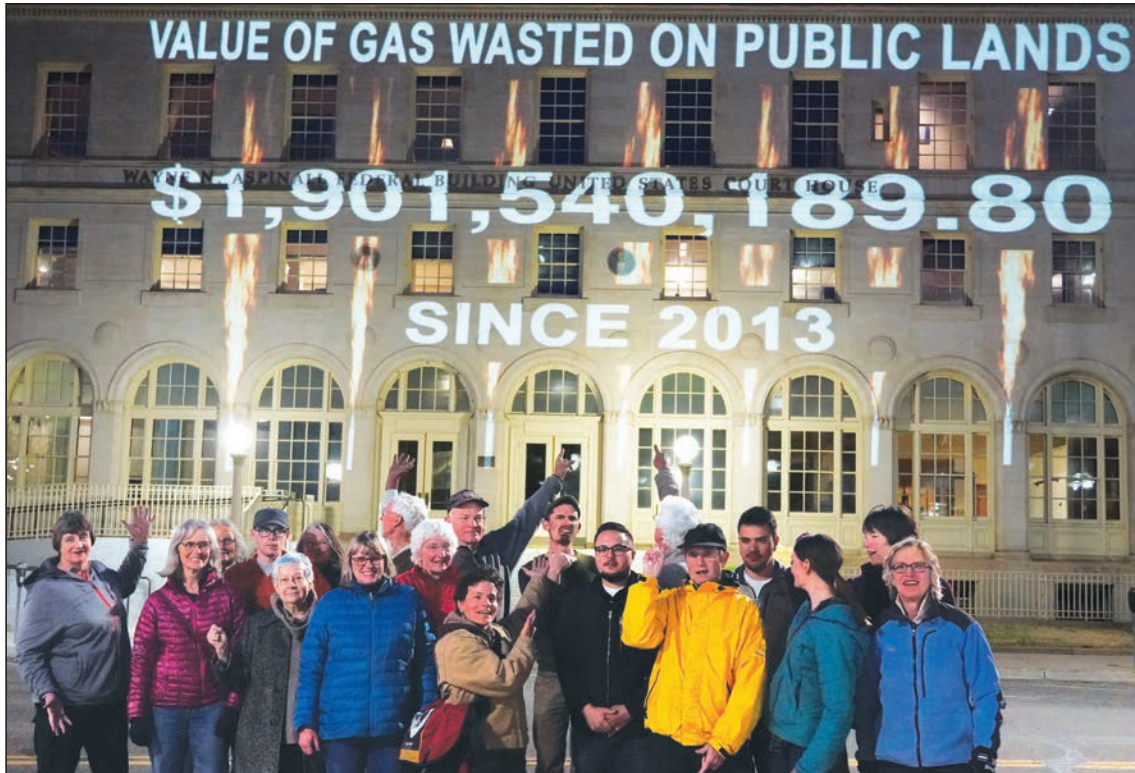
Grow your leadership skills and learn how to build political power in your community

Take advantage of this chance to attend the Western Organization of Resource Councils' (WORC's) nationally recognized Principles of Community Organizing! The training is hands-on and participatory, and covers the basics of leadership development, grassroots fundraising, organizational capacity building and community organizing. The same training will be offered in July in Sioux Falls, SD; exact dates to be determined.

Tuition for pre-approved WCC members is \$100 (travel not included). Space is limited. Contact the Western Colorado Alliance office at (970) 256-7650 if you're interested in attending.



Delay of 2016 methane rule ‘untethered to evidence’



Members of Western Colorado Alliance and Citizens for Clean Air gathered in front of the Mesa County Courthouse in April to draw attention to the mounting cost of methane gas being wasted on public lands. Surrounded by images of flaring gas, the dollar figure projected on the building was constantly increasing in a real-time accounting.

All of Colorado deserves clean air!

by Emily Hornback, Staff Director

On April 17, dozens of Western Colorado Alliance members and Western Slope residents packed a meeting of Colorado’s Air Quality Control Division. Our message was loud and clear: all Coloradans deserve the right to breathe clean air no matter where they live in the state.

Folks made the trek to Rifle for this meeting because the state is currently considering proposals to strengthen air pollution standards for oil and gas facilities. Last year, regulators determined that the air in Denver continues to be unhealthy for people with sensitivities and adopted new rules to address the problem. However, they stopped short of applying the rules statewide.

The new rule in place on the Front Range requires **annual testing and prompt repairs** when leaks are detected. Most importantly this requirement helps protect the health of all who live in sight or smell of a gas rig — and all who don’t. *Ozone and other emissions from gas wells know no boundaries.*

At smaller well sites on the Western Slope

— of which there are hundreds, if not thousands — energy companies are required to test for and repair leaks of noxious gases like benzene, nitrous oxide, methane and the volatile organic compounds that make up ozone **just once in the lifetime of the well.**

The question at hand is whether those of us living in energy-producing counties on the Western Slope deserve the same protections as Coloradans on the other side of the mountains. Alliance members believe we do and will continue to work with the state to make sure new rules apply to Western Colorado and help us stop our ozone issues before they become worse. Rodger Steen of Steamboat Springs, the chairman of our Alliance’s Oil and Gas Committee, is sitting on the task force working on proposals for new rules.

If you love clean air and healthy communities, let the Air Quality Control Division know that you’re in favor of extending the Front-Range-only rule to the rest of the state at:

cdphe.commentsaqcd@state.co.us

by Kevin Dowling, WORC (Western Organization of Resource Councils)

You need a live scoreboard to keep up with the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) 2016 Methane Waste Prevention Rule - which has hit yet another roadblock after several conflicting court decisions. The rule, which survived an industry-led attack in the US Senate a year ago, would reduce the amount of taxpayer-owned natural gas that is wasted through flaring, venting, and leaking.

Western Colorado Alliance, participating in the regional WORC network, worked hard to see strong provisions in the rule. Not only would these provisions prevent the wasting of our natural resources, but also reduce air pollution. Without national rules, emissions from neighboring states with weak rules can blow across borders.

Methane is a greenhouse gas 86 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

However, last December Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke delayed implementation of the 2016 rule for a year.

Then on February 22, a district court in California shot down the Interior Department’s delay of the rule. The suspension was “untethered to evidence,” wrote judge William Orrick. He noted that the plaintiffs, including WORC and Fort Berthold POWER, could succeed in the lawsuit because the BLM failed to justify its decision to postpone provisions of the rule.

But a Wyoming judge turned the tables again. Judge Scott Skavdahl ruled on April 4 that BLM could suspend the 2016 rule. So, the rule is not in effect. WORC and the other plaintiffs are appealing this decision.

In addition, four WORC grassroots leaders affected by methane pollution traveled to Washington, D.C., in mid-April to bolster support for the 2016 methane rule through meetings with Congressional offices and Administration officials.

The team asked representatives of the Interior Department and the BLM to extend the comment period on the BLM’s proposal to gut the 2016 rule so public meetings could be held.

Ignoring the request, the BLM closed the comment period on April 23, but not before WORC and our allies delivered more than 400,000 comments urging Secretary Zinke to keep the 2016 rule. According to the Center for Western Priorities, 99.8 percent of all the comments supported the 2016 rule.

The BLM is expected to issue the new rule by the summer.

Save the date: **08 | 25 | 18**

**Western Colorado Alliance for
Community Action
Annual Conference
Two Rivers Convention Center
Grand Junction**

Our Alliance welcomes three go-getters to staff team

It's been a busy spring with hiring new staff, but we think we've found some "keepers"! Please stop by our office and make them feel welcome!



Stefanie Harville
Office Manager

Stefanie has been managing and organizing small businesses and non-profits for over 15 years. A fifth-generation Colorado native, her family homesteaded in Mesa,

Colorado, and she grew up in Grand Junction.

Most recently, she spent the last six years working for Grand Valley Catholic Outreach as their Director of Housing.

Most of Stefanie's spare time is spent hiking, backpacking, hot springing, stargazing from the hammock, traveling, gardening, making art, reading, baking, remodeling her home and spending time with loved ones.

Leah López

Community Organizer

Originally from Iowa, Leah has lived on the Western Slope for 18 years and considers Colorado her home.

She graduated from Colorado Mesa University with degrees in Journalism and Education.

Leah has been a high school art teacher, and currently owns and operates The Produce Peddler, a produce farm & CSA with her husband in Mack, CO.



When she's not planting, weeding or harvesting, Leah loves to backpack, flyfish, weld, and eat delicious food with friends and family.

Troy Redding

Community Organizer

Troy is our newest organizer and will finish up studying political science at CMU this month! He is passionate about working to ensure that oil and gas development is

handled responsibly in Western Colorado.

Aside from enjoying coffee and the outdoors, he is perhaps the world's greatest fan of the 90's television show, *Xena Warrior Princess*.

Troy is excited to work with our Alliance to ensure that his daughter will be able to enjoy the benefits of our public lands for years to come.



Yes, I want to join or renew my membership in Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action!

- \$10 Student
- \$35 Individual member (\$25 limited income)
- \$55 Family member (\$35 limited income)
- \$100 Business or organization



I want to help even more!

- \$200 \$500 \$1,000 \$2,500 \$5,000 \$_____
- I want to be a sustaining member - bill my credit card \$_____/month.
- I'd like to learn about leaving WCC in my will or other giving options.
- I'd like to remain anonymous.

If you live in a county with a local affiliate, or check one of the boxes below, you will become a member of that group as well. (optional)

- Grand Valley Citizens Alliance (Garfield County)
- Ridgway-Ouray Community Council (Ouray County)
- Uncompahgre Valley Association (Montrose County)
- Western Colorado Alliance in Mesa County

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