In the coming weeks, people in Montrose and Grand Junction will climb, fall and fly — and love every minute of it.

Mountainfilm On Tour returns! On November 9 in Montrose at the Montrose Pavilion, and then on November 16 at the Avalon Theatre in Grand Junction, Mountainfilm On Tour will once again offer heart-stopping adventure and heart-warming inspiration, to benefit Community Options and the Uncompahgre Valley Alliance (in Montrose) and Western Colorado Alliance (in Grand Junction).

In the words of Mountainfilm’s website, “Mountainfilm is a documentary film festival that showcases nonfiction stories about environmental, cultural, climbing, political and social justice issues that matter. Along with exceptional documentaries, the festival goes beyond the film medium by bringing together world-class athletes, change makers and visionary artists for a multi-dimensional celebration of indomitable spirit.” The ultimate goal of the film festival is “to inspire audiences to action on worthy causes.”

This year, among the films being shown at both locations are “Danny Daycare,” a hilarious look at why parents should never let a stunt mountain biker take care of their infant for a day. Also on tap will be a profile of grizzly bear specialist and eco-activist Doug Peacock in “Grizzly Country” and a look at the cholita climbers of Bolivia.

In Montrose, the audience will also enjoy the story of “The San Juan Dance Club,” which shows what fun formal dancing can be for singles and couples in that area. And in Grand Junction, a highlight will be “Life of Pie,” which spotlights bicyclists and pizza chefs Jen Zeuner and Anne Keller, who own and operate the popular Hot Tomato Cafe in Fruita. Zeuner and Keller are expected to appear for a 10-minute question-and-answer session following the presentation of “Life of Pie” on November 16.

In Montrose, doors open on November 9 at 4:30 pm for a silent auction and cash bar, with the show scheduled to start at 6:30 pm. No tickets are required, but there is a suggested donation of $10.

In Grand Junction, doors will open at the historic Avalon Theatre on Main Street at 5:30 pm on Saturday, November 16. There will also be a silent auction at this event. Tickets for the Grand Junction event are $15.60 if you buy at the box office on Main Street. (They will cost a few more dollars if you purchase them through the Avalon’s website: avalontheatregj.com.)
Western Colorado Alliance

President Steve Allerton

Mountainfilm: Seeing our vision enacted

by Steve Allerton
Alliance President

It’s been my honor and pleasure to have served on the Mountainfilm on Tour planning committee since 2014. As a major fund/friend raiser for Western Colorado Alliance I am proud of and appreciative of the relationship that has been built over the years. This year is no exception. WCA believes in the creation of healthy, just, and self-reliant communities across the Western Slope. It’s a vision aligned with Mountainfilm’s vision that “motivates individuals and communities to advance solutions for a livable world.”

Our Alliance has been in the process of developing a platform which guides and supports the work we do. It can be found on our website under “What we work on.” As an organization, we support Grassroots Democracy, a Clean and Healthy Environment, Social Justice, Homegrown Economic Prosperity, a Sustainable Energy Future, Public Lands, Local Food and Agriculture, and that local communities have a fair say in how Natural Resource Extraction occurs.

Mountain Film on Tour offers us an opportunity to see these visions enacted upon everyday by people like you and me. (With the exception, of course, of those thrilling and unbelievable films that leave my toes tingling and my mouth agape in amazement). The influences of women, the diversity of regions, rural, urban, local, and global all come together in an experience that truly reflects the nature of our shared humanity.

Through these films we strive to connect people and cultures, build community, create grassroots leadership, and embrace the adventure to be found on this planet Earth.

Hope to see you all there… wherever “anyone can be anything.” – “The Life of Pie”

Western Slope Youth Vote: A new name, an expanded purpose

by Jeriel Clark
Community Organizer

In 2018, Western Colorado Alliance hired a summer intern to help develop a pilot program for students to engage their peers in the voting process in high schools across the Western Slope. Having never attempted to run a program solely around the interest of high school students, we weren’t sure how successful it would be. But in mere months, the program was running across three counties with 36 active interns. And by the end of the year, they had registered over 300 high school students to vote.

This summer, we brought on more interns to help us evaluate and expand the program for the 2019-2020 school year. Over two months, they worked hard to connect with and train our incoming students, as well as develop a report to share with students and legislators alike. Our interns asked the question, “What worked and what didn’t in the prior year?” They determined the program was strong but wanted to update their brand to better appeal to peers their age. After working with our students, the West Slope Youth Voter Initiative has formally changed its name to West Slope Youth Vote, fresh with a new logo and expanded purpose.

So what’s new this year? Last year’s program was a good start, but being new, it took a lot of time to introduce the program to individual school’s staff and administration. Some of our students found immediate success, and others found administrations that were a little more hesitant to help them get started. This year, in Mesa County, we went to the School Board first, and following a presentation from the students, found resounding support with a promise to help the West Slope Youth Vote program make it into every school in the district. Along with Garfield, Mesa and Montrose, we have now expanded the program into Ouray County, where the students have already registered over 90% of their seniors to vote, and are now eligible to receive the Eliza Pickrell Routt award given by the Secretary of State.

Perhaps the biggest change has been the shift away from solely focusing on voter registration, to an emphasis on voter activation, to encourage students to turn out at the polls. Over the summer, our interns developed a report

Continued on page 7
Extolling the “handshake diet”

On just one acre of land, Dawn Trujillo and Brian Adams can feed 500 to 700 people per week. Dawn and Brian’s farmstead, Green Junction Farmstead in Clifton, Colorado, is a beacon for all things fresh, local, and delicious. Brian and Dawn grow 50 varieties of vegetables and produce for their 73 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) members, two farmers’ markets, a handful of local restaurants, the homeless shelter, and a community food bank. All of the food grown at Green Junction Farmstead stays in Mesa County. Dawn and Brian are firm believers in small scale done right. They want their community and other farmers to know you can grow a lot of good food, on a little bit of land while regenerating the soil.

Regenerative agriculture is one of their guiding principles. “To me, regenerative agriculture means growing instead of killing.” Brian said.

Soil is the foundation of all growth at Green Junction Farmstead and Dawn and Brian want to reflect that in everything they do.

Brian and Dawn explained that they want to look their customers in the eyes and show them exactly what it is they’re purchasing. They want their customers to know them, their farm, their practices, their values, and their product. Raw, local honey from Little Canyon Ranch Honey, Alpaca meat from Dreamcatcher Alpacas, artisan breads and jams from Currier Hill Creations, grass-finished beef from Brand 2S Meat, are offered to Green Junction Farmstead CSA members. All of the producers that Dawn and Brian work with are within a 25-mile radius from their own market garden. The producers they work with abide by the same regenerative, ecologically minded principles that Brian and Dawn utilize in their own practices.

“It’s called the ‘handshake diet,’” Brian said, “That’s really what we’re trying to participate in and create by bringing together all the food sources of people we can go shake hands with and know where that food came from. That’s kind of what this is going into is bringing more good growers and producers together in one place. People can come here and trust and know what they’re getting.”

By Jeriel Clark
Community Organizer

Between the Barn Dance, various membership celebrations, and our Annual Conference, we’ve seen a lot of our members these past few months. But one just keeps coming around week after week.

Chris Campbell is a member of Western Colorado Alliance in Mesa County and has been actively involved since 2018. As an employee of Atlasta Solar, Chris’s passion lies in clean and renewable energy. And he turns this passion into action every chance he can — from testifying in support of bills during the legislative session, to speaking before the Air Quality Control Commission and Public Utilities Commission. Chris says “It’s fun to be engaged, and if your mouth isn’t moving, you aren’t being heard.” Chris interacts with Western Colorado Alliance’s work in many ways, recently as a participant in our Clean Tech Business Summit and our Homegrown Prosperity workshops, and as an advocate at the youth-led Climate Rally. Chris believes in showing support in many forms, from holding a sign at a rally, to working a booth, or standing in a room full of legislators. He says all actions make an impact. Chris is outgoing and charismatic, and needless to say, he’s a people person. And he’s found an outlet for his activism through organizations like Western Colorado Alliance. He says it’s easy to make a difference. In the same amount of time he could spend at a business networking event, his time is better spent putting action into place to make a positive change. The organizers at Western Colorado Alliance are all lucky to have him, cause we think he’s pretty amazing.
Reflections on a Revolutionary Year

by Joel Dyar
Community Organizer

As a millennial, I’ve spent three decades of my life watching climate news grow ever more dire as the U.S. political system refused, year after steady year, to do a thing about it. My generation was told time and again that one day, someday, we’d see renewables beat dirty fuels on cost, that the country would come to its senses, that something would have to give.

It was, in a sense, poetic justice that that someday came for Colorado in 2019. On the heels of a year where historic fires scorched one sickened Colorado forest after another and a winter of unprecedented snows teased the return of water — only to see much of the state plunge into drought conditions just this month — the dam finally broke on climate action in our state.

The transformative policy achievements you’ll learn about below didn’t come easy. Western Colorado Alliance members, staff, and allies across the state spent many relentless years working to bring them home. A new generation of community and political leaders boldly stood up to some of the most powerful and cynical interests in modern society — and won. To everyone out there who ever knocked a neighbor’s door, sent a message to policymakers, made a perilous winter drive over Vail Pass, or sat through tedious hearing after tedious hearing, thank you. You got this done.

The Top Line
Just how revolutionary was 2019 for climate action in Colorado? If you only take two facts away from this article, let it be these:

1. Wind and solar in Colorado are now cheaper than coal and on track to beat natural gas on price within a few years. Let me say that again — Colorado renewables are not just cleaner, they’re now hands-down cheaper.

2. Colorado now has a Climate Action Plan with a roadmap to 90% greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 2050. This puts us boldly at the top of the national pack, presenting both challenge and opportunity for us to become a leader in new technology, policy, and careers.

A Historic State Legislative Session
State legislators were elected across Colorado last November on a promise of climate action. They delivered with over a dozen bills on energy and climate, with many legislators fighting to withstand a months-long onslaught by big polluters at the capital and on the airwaves. When the dust cleared at session’s end, Colorado had passed some of the nation’s most innovative energy legislation:

- HB19-1261 created a Colorado Climate Action Plan that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions 50% by 2030 and 90% by 2050, tasking the CO Air Quality Control Commission with implementation.

- SB19-236 placed Tri-State Generation and Transmission — a major power supplier to rural Colorado and the nation’s 6th dirtiest G&T entity — under the authority of the CO Public Utilities Commission for the first time ever; created a market-based bonding mechanism for fossil fuel power plant owners to retire facilities early and to finance new renewables investments; and authorized the Public Utilities Commission to factor the social and environmental

AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL ELECTRICITY PRICE (cents/Kwh)

- Tri-State Member
- Competitors

11.35 Xcel Energy
14.07 Delta Montrose Electric Assn.
14.32 Grand Valley Power
15.38 La Plata Electric Assn.
15.66 San Miguel Power Assn.
17.05 Gunnison County Electric Assn.
cost of carbon pollution into electric utility planning decisions.

- HB19-1314 created a state Just Transition committee to write a statewide plan for coal community transition and requires every utility retiring a coal-fired power facility to craft a transition plan for affected workers and communities.

- SB19-096 authorized the CO Air Quality Control Commission to begin collecting climate emissions data from emissions sources within the state and to publish a state inventory of emissions sources accessible to the public.

- A group of bills advanced the market for electric vehicles in Colorado, including the extension of a hefty state-level $5,000 flat-rate tax credit for plug-in electric hybrid and battery electric vehicles, alongside new financing mechanisms for vehicle charging stations.

**Leadership from Below**

As the legislative session was unfolding, many rural electric associations and municipalities were stepping up to do their part. Here’s a roundup of the stand-out news from across the state:

- Glenwood Springs became the seventh city in the nation to be 100% powered by renewable energy, with an estimated savings to the city of $500,000 per year. Aspen achieved 100% renewable sources in 2015 and is now home to some of the lowest residential electricity rates in Colorado.

- Grand Valley Power, serving non-municipal residents of the Western Slope, announced plans to double its renewable supply to 60% by 2030.

- Holy Cross Energy, serving the Roaring Fork Valley and I-70 corridor, indicated it is likely to reach its 70% renewables goal a decade ahead of schedule.

- Pueblo’s City Council voted to enact a 100% renewable by 2035 pledge aimed to bring down soaring rates from Black Hills Energy.

- The Platte River Power Authority, owned by municipal utilities in Fort Collins, Longmont, Estes Park and Loveland — took a pledge of 100% renewables by 2030.

- Xcel Energy, Colorado’s largest utility, signed a memorandum of understanding with the city of Denver for 100% renewables as it moved forward with construction of the mammoth 500 MW Cheyenne Ridge Wind Project on 65,000 acres in eastern Colorado.

**A Regulatory Showdown and Demands for Tri-State Reform**

For decades, the rural electric associations that provide power to most of rural Colorado have relied on Tri-State Generation & Transmission for their power. The nation’s largest territorial G&T association, Tri-State has long relied on an aging fleet of coal-fired plants — financed by $3.4 billion in outstanding debt — that has left management “blinded by an almost religious dedication to fossil fuels,” according to former Colorado Public Utilities Commission Chair Run Binz. Coupled with Tri-State’s famously burdensome contracts that require local electric associations to purchase 95% of their total load from the organization, this has shackled many Colorado communities to increasingly expensive electricity that is simultaneously contributing to climate change.

2019 saw several historic breakthroughs in public opinion on Tri-State. The Rocky Mountain Institute released a report finding that Tri-State would save consumers over $600 million by 2030 with a shift to renewables. The Delta-Montrose Electric Association, one of Tri-State’s largest members, finalized a negotiated buy out of its contract, estimating that it will save consumers $150 million over 10 years and increase its renewable energy supply. Western Slope Tri-State member co-ops La Plata Electric Association and San Miguel Power Association subsequently began exploring options for their own exits.

Tri-State responded to this growing wave of potential exits — and new climate legislation in Colorado and New Mexico by abruptly seeking to move to Federal regulation. In less than two months, the association’s board voted to add a non-co-op member organization, triggering a change of legal status that would place Tri-State under the authority of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Management claimed this move to regulation under one Federal authority was needed to simplify planning while detractors saw a naked attempt to evade state authorities newly energized to demand reform from the organization. Despite opposition from several Western Slope member co-ops, the vote was successful, though whether FERC accepts Tri-State’s application is still to be determined. Many voices, including state and federal legislators, are pushing back.

Simultaneously, the Colorado legislature voted to place Tri-State under the authority of the state Public Utilities Commission for the first time. The Commission will begin creating an Electric Resource Plan (ERP) with Tri-State this year, just as it has with Xcel and other entities. This ERP spells out critical details of how Tri-State will operate and invest in the future. Public comment on this historic process is open until mid-November. Visit our website to learn more.

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**LEVELIZED COST OF ENERGY ($/Mwh) BASED ON LIFETIME ASSET COST**

**High and Low Ranges**

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**Want to learn more and make a difference?**

Western Colorado Alliance is building a **clean energy team** now!

Email Joel Dyar if you have an interest in helping:

joel@westerncoloradoalliance.org
Hiking Lone Cone Peak

by Tom Acker
Alliance Member

On Saturday, September 28, 2019, Leah Lopez, our intrepid organizer for Western Colorado Alliance, met my wife Diana and me in the wilds of Norwood, Colorado.

I am ashamed to say, if it had not been for the invitation that Leah sent out, it would never have occurred to me to pile my wife into the car for the 2.5-hour trek out that way to Lone Cone Peak from Grand Junction. I am so glad I did!

We had the option of doing the summit hike, which would have required we arrive in Norwood by 8 AM (a little too early for my wife and me) or arrive at the leisurely hour of 10 AM. We chose the latter, and there was Leah waiting with coffee and waivers in hand.

We were given handy and accurate driving maps to get to the trailhead from Norwood and invited to carpool because parking at that remote spot, Lone Cone Peak, was limited.

While we waited in Norwood, Wink Davis and George Lewis arrived.

So we then jumped into two high clearance vehicles that would handle the terrain up to the trailhead.

We drove for about another hour, give or take, but I found it a privilege to share that time with such a great group of inspiring folks, each with their particular reason for wanting to protect our public lands.

At the trailhead, we met Doug and his faithful hound Rusty who managed to startle a blue grouse into flight (Rusty did) making trip to all the more special.

As we made the hike, I guess four miles round-trip, we celebrated the wonderful gift of conversation. Of course, we might have met each other earlier at Western Colorado Alliance annual meetings, but this was a different vibe: more comfortable, natural. Each interested in the other, while at the same time reveling in this marvelous, unique piece of Colorado public land.

Once we made our way to the rendezvous point with the earlier hikers, we took some pictures commemorating the event and the land. Upon finishing the hike, Leah handed out comment sheets, enabling all of us to explain to the National Forest folks what we loved about this place and what we want them to do to protect it. What a great way to spend a Saturday! Thank you Leah and Western Colorado Alliance for getting us out there!

Conversation is the Most Important Action

by Dr. Annie Grogan
Alliance Member

“Listening is an art requiring discipline and training. This art includes asking the right questions about families, neighborhoods, and work. Questions that encourage a person to speak about what they feel is important. In articulating one’s own concerns, a person may for the first time be making clear to themselves what those concerns are.” — From the IAF’s Organizing for Family and Congregation

In September 2018, the Uncompahgre Valley Alliance membership voted to focus our work on systematically working through the organizing cycle, which is to:

• Rebuild and revitalize UVA membership.
• Identify issue(s) we can focus on to work toward a public action that we can win.

Some of our members have been involved in our Alliance for a long time, some only more recently. Yet we have all been involved, to some extent, in the effort to return to best practices of grassroots organizing. There’s been lots of excitement and certainly some challenges. We are now in our Issue Identification Conversation (IIC) Campaign. Issue Identification Conversations can have three purposes:

• To identify issues.
• To identify leaders.
• To mobilize organized people for an action.

Issue Identification Conversations are meetings of 8-12 people hosted at a member’s house to answer the question:

“What are the pressures on you, your family, your neighbors or friends that keep you (or them) from providing your family with the life you would like to be able to provide? or that keep this from being the community you would like it to be? Think of an experience you have had that will show us how you have been affected by telling us that story.”

Over the course of these conversations, we are looking for themes that come up repeatedly to help us identify an issue. At this point in the process, we are not looking for solutions. That will come once we have met our goal of having this conversation with 200 people. In this context, an issue is something specific we can work to hold our elected officials accountable to change for the common good. As we begin, the first step will likely be a small one. Our Alliance has scheduled 14 IICs in various neighborhoods of Montrose County, including one to connect with CASA youth, ages 18-24 years old.

As the Chair of Uncompahgre Valley Alliance, I am excited by the conversations we have had and the response to this campaign. It is a connecting experience to hear the stories of friends and neighbors of what is important, challenging, and motivating to them about our community. At this specific time in our nation, and in the Western Slope, sharing in conversation is indeed the most important action.
A hero-filled October

OCTOBER 11, 2019
Over 5,000 people — including Western Colorado Alliance Organizer Jeriel Clark and West Slope Youth Vote interns Johneth Price, Lili Flanigan, and Jeeva Senthilathan — greeted climate activist Greta Thunberg in Denver...

OCTOBER 18-20, 2019
...and then, Jeriel joined Alliance Member Robyn Cascade and Alliance Membership Coordinator Kelly Dougherty in attending the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC)’s annual assembly in Grand Junction.

West Slope Youth Vote: A new name, an expanded purpose

Vote students are in the classrooms this year talking about the importance of voting based on the issues that directly impact youth. They will also be asking their peers what issues are most important to them, and gathering this information to take to their legislators at the Capitol during the 2020 legislative session. Beyond the classroom presentations, our interns will hold several community events for their peers to continue identifying issues most important to West Slope youth. And at the end of October, the interns were invited to host a workshop about their program at the Mountain West Youth Diversity Conference, an event that sees hundreds of students from across the Western Slope.

What started as an idea to fill a need in our communities, has become a large part of our everyday work. It’s rewarding to know that through Western Colorado Alliance, hundreds of students are not only registering to vote, but actively participating and contributing to our local democracy. These students are developing into the leaders of the future, and they’re bringing many of their peers with them. We want to thank our members for lending their support to these students. Theirs is a program to keep your eye on this year, because you’ll be seeing them!
With the passage of the Protect Public Welfare Oil And Gas Operations (SB19-181) the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) has changed its mission from fostering oil and gas development to regulating Colorado’s oil and gas industry. As a result, there are a number of rulemakings that the COGCC and the Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) will be conducting. Each of these various rulemakings will focus on a specific issue related to oil and gas development. These upcoming rulemakings will include flowline, mission change, cumulative impacts, and alternative site analysis rulemakings.

Western Colorado Alliance has been working for decades to protect public health and wellness in communities impacted by oil and gas development. We’re excited to continue this work as we come to the end of the year. With the help of our members, allies, and affiliate groups, the Alliance will engage in each of these upcoming rulemakings as they continue through March of 2020.

We have already begun to participate in some of the rulemakings. Most recently we worked with our members to provide comment to the Air Quality Control Division (who will be in charge of the air quality rulemaking). During this comment period a number of our members and allies provided written comment to the Air Pollution Control Department.

Additionally, some of our members provided verbal comment when the APCD staff came to the Western Slope to listen to the perspectives of residents of the Western Slope. After a presentation which explained a brief history of air quality regulation in Colorado, the APCD staff heard the public comments on behalf of the AQCC. At the APCD meeting there were slightly more people in favor of requiring local governments to adhere to statewide standards of air quality regulation than there were people who opposed these same regulations.

Our members explained why it’s important for Colorado to have strong statewide regulations protecting our air. We pointed out that people in Western Colorado have just as much of a right to breathe clean air as people living in the Front Range. It is our stance that local governments should not be allowed to lower the standards for oil and gas operators here on the Western Slope.

In addition to our work with the AQCC, the Alliance provided extensive public comment to the COGCC at a listening session in Glenwood Springs. Similar to the AQCC meeting, Alliance members explained why we need to have statewide regulations protecting our rural communities. Industry supporters claimed that Western Colorado shouldn’t be expected to comply with statewide regulations and that local governments should be allowed to regulate below the state standards.

Alliance members argued that the Western Slope deserves the same protections as the rest of the state when it comes to our health, safety, and environment.

Western Colorado Alliance will continue to engage in these upcoming rulemakings, where we are looking forward to working with the COGCC as they begin to regulate oil and gas development in Colorado. The next rulemaking will be a joint hearing between the AQCC and the COGCC on October 17. Additionally, we will receive a rulemaking update from the agencies at the end of October.