

High Country News

A photograph of a winding asphalt road through a dense forest of tall evergreen trees. A white car is visible in the distance, driving away on the road. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter, creating a warm, hazy atmosphere.

Scientists need a new way
to predict wildfires

A small co-op
takes on Big Food

The lessons of
Redwood Summer

Vol. 52 / November 2020
No. 11 • hcn.org

When
the
Smoke
Clears

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/PUBLISHER
Greg Hanscom

INTERIM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Katherine Lanpher

ART DIRECTOR
Cindy Wehling

FEATURES DIRECTOR
McKenna Stayner

MANAGING DIGITAL EDITOR
Gretchen King

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Emily Benson, Paige Blankenbuehler,
Graham Lee Brewer, Maya L. Kapoor

PHOTO EDITOR
Roberto (Bear) Guerra

ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR
Luna Anna Archey

ASSISTANT EDITORS
Jessica Kutz, Carl Segerstrom, Anna V. Smith

EDITOR AT LARGE
Betsy Marston

COPY EDITOR
Diane Sylvain

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Nick Bowlin, Elena Saavedra Buckley,
Kalen Goodluck, Ruxandra Guidi, Jane C. Hu,
Michelle Nijhuis, Jonathan Thompson

CORRESPONDENTS
Leah Sottile, Sarah Tory

EDITORIAL INTERNS
Jessica Douglas, Victoria Petersen,
Eric Siegel

DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY
Alyssa Pinkerton

SENIOR DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
Paul Larmer

DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATES
Hannah Stevens, Carol Newman

DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT & MARKETING
Gary Love

**EVENTS & BUSINESS PARTNER
COORDINATOR**
Laura Dixon

IT MANAGER
Alan Wells

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
Erica Howard

ACCOUNTS ASSISTANT
Mary Zachman

CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER
Kathy Martinez

CUSTOMER SERVICE
Karen Howe, Shannon Kinne, Mark Nydell,
Pamela Peters, Tammy York

GRANT WRITER Janet Reasoner

FOUNDER Tom Bell

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Brian Beitner (Colo.), John Belkin (Colo.),
Seth Cothrun (Ariz.), Jay Dean (Calif.),
Bob Fulkerson (Nev.), Wayne Hare (Colo.),
Laura Helmuth (Md.), Samaria Jaffe (Calif.),
Nicole Lampe (Ore.), Marla Painter (N.M.),
Bryan Pollard (Ark.), Raynelle Rino (Calif.),
Estee Rivera Murdock (Colo.), Andy Wiessner
(Colo.), Florence Williams (D.C.)

DIRECTOR EMERITUS Luis Torres (N.M.)



The cemetery in Harshaw, in the Patagonia Mountains of southern Arizona. After 50 years, mining is returning to the area.
Roberto (Bear) Guerra

Know the West.

High Country News is an independent, reader-supported nonprofit 501(c)(3) media organization that covers the important issues and stories that define the Western U.S. Our mission is to inform and inspire people to act on behalf of the West's diverse natural and human communities. Beginning April 1, 2020, High Country News (ISSN/0191/5657) publishes monthly, 12 issues per year, from 119 Grand Ave., Paonia, CO 81428. Periodicals, postage paid at Paonia, CO, and other post offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to High Country News, Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428. All rights to publication of articles in this issue are reserved. See hcn.org for submission guidelines. Subscriptions to HCN are \$37 a year, \$47 for institutions: 800-905-1155, hcn.org. For editorial comments or questions, write High Country News, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428 or editor@hcn.org, or call 970-527-4898.



EDITOR'S NOTE



The road ahead

WHEN THIS ISSUE REACHES YOU, we probably still won't know who won the presidential election — or too many of the other races, either. It's hard to predict what the aftermath of Election Day will be. Our cover photo shows a driver trying to make her way through the smoke of the Riverside Fire in Oregon. But it could be any of us, really, looking through the haze to figure out the road ahead.

So many unknowns — yet there are still constants to be found. For inspiration, I look to the work of Beth Robinette, a rancher behind an innovative food hub for small ranchers and farmers outside Spokane, Washington. She and co-op co-founder Joel Williamson are the focus of this month's feature story. It takes a lot of grit to fight Big Food and set up an alternative distribution system for fresh local produce, meat and grains. When COVID-19 hit, and they wondered if their collective would go under, the community provided a clear answer: No. We need you.

Robinette isn't naive; she knows the agricultural system is broken. But she's doing what she can, where she is. As Assistant Editor Carl Segerstrom writes: "When people and land aren't seen as separate, but instead as essential and intertwined, then a more resilient food system can begin to take root in the Inland Northwest."

People and land that are "essential and intertwined" lie at the heart of every issue of *High Country News*. In this month's photo essay, that locus of land and people is heartbreaking on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, where families search for missing and murdered Indigenous women. Yet wonder endures; we also feature an essay by a hunter who has a coming-of-age insight while flattened in the Montana sagebrush, hunting for antelope.

Elsewhere, we take two very different looks at California. Thirty years ago, thousands of protesters gathered in the North Coast's forests to fight industrial logging. Today, we can see Redwood Summer for the turning point it was, the beginning of a new kind of environmental activism. Recent progressive history has also revealed the West's long legacy of racism. Historian Lynn Hudson's new book explores the civil rights struggles of Black California activists in the 19th and early 20th centuries. As one NAACP leader said, "I didn't see any difference in Pasadena and Mississippi except they were spelled differently."

It was my privilege to start my short tenure here as interim editor-in-chief with this issue. (*Please see our farewell to Editor-in-Chief Brian Calvert on page 25.*) I'll be around until HCN discovers its next great leader. There's a story for almost every iteration of the West in this issue. Read. Enjoy. And know that we're right there with you, step by step, figuring out the path ahead.

Katherine Lanpher, interim editor-in-chief

FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS



Nick Bowlin
Gunnison, Colorado
@npbowlin



Cassie da Costa
Ojai, California
@tooearnest



Sarah Keller
Bozeman, Montana
@sjanekeller



Bojan Louis
Tucson, Arizona
@bojanlouis



Lily Meyer
Cincinnati, Ohio
@lilyjmeyer



Clara Migoya
Tucson, Arizona
@claramigoya



Victoria Petersen
Anchorage, Alaska
@vgpetersen



Eric Siegel
Denver, Colorado
@eric_siegel1



Carl Segerstrom
Spokane, Washington
@carlschirps



FEATURE

Food Forward

How a co-op of small farmers and ranchers is taking on industrial agriculture.

BY CARL SEGERSTROM | PHOTOS BY RAJAH BOSE

ON THE COVER

Smoke from the Riverside Fire fills the air outside of Beavercreek in rural Clackamas County, Oregon, in September. Wildfire modeling of the past is failing in the face of the unprecedented conflagrations of today.

Kristina Barker

30

Dan Jackson harvests tomatoes grown on his small farm in Spokane Valley, Washington. Jackson was the first employee of the Local Inland Northwest Cooperative, where he also sells his produce (*above*).

Rajah Bose / HCN

Katie Runningwolf paints “MMIW” on Donna Kipp’s shoulder as they prepare for the Second Annual Ashley’s Walk in Browning, Montana, in June 2019. Red paint, handprints and ribbon skirts represent the movement for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (*right*).

Tailyr Irvine



Access to subscriber-only content:

hcn.org

hcne.ws/digi-5211

Follow us **@highcountrynews**

Boxing with ghosts

14

A Blackfeet father coaches women and girls on the reservation on self-defense, in the ring and outside of it. BY TAILYR IRVINE



Vegas goes back to school 7

The casinos are open but school is at home, and the brunt is on parents.

WHAT WORKS BY NICK BOWLIN

COVID-19 hits Oregon lottery sales — and native plants 10

When fewer people buy tickets, invasive gorse is the winner.

BY JANE C. HU

Fire models can't keep up with climate change 11

Scientists search for new ways to predict Western blazes

BY VICTORIA PETERSEN

Mining a family history 12

Will new extraction in Arizona end up as the same old boom-and-bust story?

BY CLARA MIGOYA

The private puzzle piece 18

Connecting private and public parcels for wildlife.

FACTS & FIGURES

BY ERIC SIEGEL

Indigenous data sovereignty shakes up research 20

In the COVID-19 era, tribal nations want research to better serve their people.

BY KALEN GOODLUCK

REFLECTION & REVIEW

30 years later, the lessons of Redwood Summer 41

A summer of protest became a turning point in environmental activism.

RECKONING WITH HISTORY

BY ADAM M. SOWARDS

The story of Jim Crow in California 42

A new history of the state traces early civil rights battles spearheaded by Black activists.

Q&A BY CASSIE DA COSTA

Love is an act of resistance 44

Heid E. Erdrich's new award-winning poetry collection, *Little Big Bully*, seeks resilience through human connection.

REVIEW BY BOJAN LOUIS

Two narratives, two homes 45

In *Aphasia*, the language of the internet mirrors one man's divided life in California and Colombia.

REVIEW BY LILY MEYER

Hunting for myself 46

A stretch of high Montana sagebrush marks a hunter's late coming-of-age.

ESSAY BY SARAH KELLER

#iamthewest 52

Juan Eduardo Morales Cazares in Victor, Idaho.

BY SOFIA JARAMILLO

DEPARTMENTS

3 EDITOR'S NOTE

6 LETTERS

9 THE LATEST

21 PHOTO CONTEST

22 DONORS / READER PROFILES

23 50TH ANNIVERSARY

26 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

50 HEARD AROUND THE WEST

LETTERS

High Country News is dedicated to independent journalism, informed debate and discourse in the public interest. We welcome letters through digital media and the post. Send us a letter, find us on social media, or email us at editor@hcn.org.

ENERGY, ELECTIONS, PUBLIC LANDS

I really appreciated the well-researched and in-depth reportage on the presidential candidates' public-land policies and how they would affect the Grand Junction, Colorado, community ("Grand Disjunction," October 2020). This critical issue is often overlooked and under-covered. I did take issue with the voices that were highlighted. The two conservationists were well-spoken and versed in public-land policy, while the two Trump supporters interviewed were focused on hyper-partisan politics and unaware of the Bureau of Land Management's move to Colorado. I understand having diverse voices, but I wonder if having this juxtaposition was helpful. Why not interview Trump supporters who work in oil and gas, or lobbyists within the extractive industry? Having this perspective would have given *HCN* readers a more nuanced perspective and a

move away from the deep divide and stereotypes that were reinforced in this article.

Jacob Mandell
Bend, Oregon

While tromping around for many years in such "awesome" places as the Colorado Plateau, the Northern Rockies and Alaska, I have struggled for words to describe their grandeur, and thus will be forever grateful to Paige Blankenbuehler for using the perfect phraseology in her article, "Grand Disjunction" — "the kind of landscape whose scale outflanks the mind's ability to absorb it."

Clayton Parr
Draper, Utah

GETTING OUT THE VOTE

Good job, *HCN*, and fine reporting by Jessica Kutz on the "Young and politically empowered" Latino canvassers like Fhernanda Ortiz, and their drive to register young

Latinos in Arizona to vote (October 2020). This is worthy of a shout of encouragement — a great cause essential to the survival of this democracy. Stay strong, and thank you!

Charles Dorsey
Prescott, Arizona

WHITE UTOPIAS

Jordana Rosenfeld's book review of *White Utopias* shows some serious confusion (October 2020). Rosenfeld's language conflates spiritual growth with the trendy issues of social justice.

I can answer the question posed by the review's title — "Is spiritual growth possible without confronting whiteness?" — in one word: Yes. That's because spiritual growth has nothing to do with confrontation. In fact, it has no social, racial, intellectual, academic or political prerequisites in order for it to occur.

Avram Chetron
Ashland, Oregon

TOO DARN HOT

Congratulations on an incredible piece of journalism, "Extreme Heat" (September 2020). The content, obviously, is compelling, but writer Jessica Kutz's language, style and structure made it read as a wonderful piece of literature. Clearly, you put a lot of work into the article, and it shows. Thank you for the work you do.

Trey Duffy
San Luis Obispo, California

ONLY CONNECT

"The Physics of Connection" by Barb Lachenbruch was a fine essay (September 2020). The author did a tremendous job of weaving together heartfelt sentiments. She eloquently took us through the arc of her life and her father's. Having lost a parent to Alzheimer's myself, the author's touching yearnings to connect with her father were emotions I could feel with her. I savored each word.

Dan Jones
El Prado, New Mexico

HOW DO YOU COVER THE WEST?

I enjoyed reading the interview with editors Betsy Marston and Paul Larmer, "A little paper with clout" (September 2020). There were two questions posed regarding *HCN*'s increasing coverage of social issues as opposed to strictly natural resources and public-lands issues. Please, please, please don't stop covering social issues and city issues.

HCN has its finger on the pulse: Intersectionality is becoming increasingly important and recognized, and there is a lot of movement toward recognizing how social issues and environmental/natural resource issues are entwined. This is what younger readers who care about the environment are looking for. If *HCN* covers strictly natural resource issues without recognizing the social component, it will become irrelevant and extinct. *HCN* has been a big part of my journey toward understanding intersectional environmentalism, so please don't stop doing what you're doing! Stay woke.

Ashley Saulsberry
Salt Lake City, Utah

I enjoyed learning about *HCN*'s history in the 50th anniversary issue (September 2020) and, in particular, Carl Segerstrom's interview with Betsy Marston and Paul Larmer. I agree with Marston that regularly including Native journalists and issues is a welcome improvement and also that *HCN* should "start with the public lands, because everything flows from that."

I'm not sure about "everything" flowing from the public lands, but one of the most important things to the future of the American West — water — clearly does. And that is why water and the public lands from which so much of it flows should be prime *HCN* topics for the next 50 years.

Felice Pace
Arcata, California

STORY UPDATES

Just after our October feature story, "**Grand Disjunction**," went to press in late September, a federal judge in Montana ruled that the Bureau of Land Management Acting Director William Perry Pendley served unlawfully for 424 days and ordered him to be removed; however, Pendley remains at BLM, refusing to comply with the order, and the Trump administration said an appeal is

planned. We have updated the story online and will continue to follow the saga.

Since "**Against 'one way' communication**" went to the printer, also in the October issue, the Forest Service issued a final environmental impact statement for a full exemption of the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule. We updated the story online.

Vegas goes back to school

The casinos are open but school is at home, and the brunt is on parents.

BY NICK BOWLIN

ROSA CORONA'S WORKDAY

as a janitor begins at 9 a.m. at the Encore and Wynn Las Vegas, two smoothly curving glass monoliths that comprise one of the Las Vegas Strip's largest hotel and casino resorts. Her husband, Daniel Guerrero, also works at Encore, but on the graveyard shift, cleaning carpets and dusting marble. He starts at midnight and gets off at 8 a.m., right around the time their two older kids, 12 and 14, log on to their digital classrooms. Their kindergarten-age daughter, however, requires the presence of a parent.

That hour between the end of his shift and the beginning of hers epitomizes the pandemic's burden on working parents. If everything goes according to plan, Guerrero gets home to help their kindergartener just as Corona heads out the door, with only enough time for a few words in passing. On a recent morning, however, the timing was off: Traffic was bad and Guerrero's shift ran late. Corona barely had time to set her daughter up for the digital classroom, hand her some Play-Doh and then rush out the door.

Their daughter's teacher called later that day: The child wasn't paying attention and had been kicked out of that day's digital classroom. Once Corona

explained the situation, the teacher understood, she told me in a recent phone call. But this is the family's everyday life now — Corona races off to work at the last second, where, masked and gloved, she cleans the casino, while her husband, equally exhausted, gets home from the night shift to care for their daughter. The schedule takes a toll

on everyone.

"I'm really stressed out," said Corona, a casino worker for 12 years. Still, she accepts the remote learning for her kids' sake. "I don't want them to get sick, so even though we have a lot of stress, it's got to be this way until things get better."

Schools and casinos are inseparable in Las Vegas: A sales tax aimed at tourism provides more than a third of CCSD's revenue. The district also receives money from a statewide gambling tax. But the city's dependence on the industry means that COVID-19's economic fallout has hit it especially hard. Even before the pandemic, Las Vegas had high levels of economic inequality. That inequality has only been exacerbated by the toll on service industry workers: Unemployment peaked at more than 30% in April, and now lingers at around 16%. Those without jobs struggle to make ends meet, while those who work — like Corona — must balance their jobs with the pandemic's unprecedented demands on families.

The problems with remote instruction and its inevitable challenges for families are particularly acute in Las Vegas. The Strip reopened June 4, yet the more than 300,000 students who attend the Clark County School District, one of the nation's largest, remain fully remote today.

Clark County has one of the nation's largest populations of students without a permanent residence, as well as one of the highest number learning English as a second language. The mobilization effort required to move students online, which forced the district to expand broadband access, has been enormous. Administrators work hard to reach every student and prevent any from slipping through the cracks, while teachers and other staff supply laptops and check in on families. But despite the district's efforts, it's been messy.

"The reality is that, in America, we have built a system where working adults depend on school to provide child care for eight hours a day," said Rebecca Garcia, president



Meredith Noce helps daughter Kaidence, 4, set up her virtual class as son Liam, 2, plays next to her at their home in Las Vegas in October. Noce balances work, assisting kids with online school and technology, preparing meals, defusing arguments and changing diapers.

Bridget Bennett / HCN

of the Nevada PTA. “Take that away, and what are you left with?”

SCHOOL BUSES STILL ROAM

Las Vegas’ neighborhoods. But they no longer pick up students. Instead, in the wake of the shift to remote instruction, the district has turned its buses into mobile Wi-Fi hot spots. They park in areas with poor connectivity, allowing students to tune into class or submit assignments.

The district set an ambitious public goal of ensuring that every single student has internet access and a Google Chromebook laptop. Last March, when Clark County sent its students home permanently, Superintendent Jesus Jara estimated that 120,000 students would be unable to participate in a fully online class structure. The remainder of the spring semester proved this. Mike Taak, a sixth-grade teacher at John C. Fremont Professional Development School, described the rest of that semester as occurring in “triage mode.” No grades were given, and teachers struggled to keep track of kids.

The school board voted for a fully remote fall class schedule in July. In August, the district approved a deal with Cox Communications, Nevada’s largest internet company, to provide in-home internet connections to less wealthy families. But handing a kid a laptop does not ensure successful learning, said Garcia, with the Nevada PTA. Low-income neighborhoods lag behind wealthier ones in access to strong broadband, especially in East Las Vegas, the heart of the city’s

Latino community. An extensive public health survey from NPR, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health found that 61% of U.S. families with children struggle financially due to COVID-19. Latino and Black families reported the highest levels of hardship.

“When you lay over maps — broadband access, housing issues, COVID-19 and job loss — it’s always the same neighborhoods with the hot spots,” said Garcia, an East Las Vegas resident with three children in Clark County’s public schools.

In addition to the Wi-Fi expansion and the school buses, the district created a directory of businesses, libraries, community centers and other establishments with internet access. Over the summer, parents could pick up laptops at district buildings; Taak said dozens of cars lined up outside his school many days in August, as parents waited for Chromebooks. More than 170,000 students remained unaccounted for after the district’s first attempt to survey family needs. But by Oct. 12, the school district confirmed that more than 309,000 students — 99% of the entire student population — either had a device of their own or had received one from the district. To date, the district has distributed 241,799 devices. This effort has been bolstered by Connecting Kids Nevada, a statewide public-private partnership that has poured money into connectivity issues.

Still, more than 6,990 students need reliable internet, and more than 3,000 lack a device. Around 3,000 students have not yet been



accounted for, a testament to the substantial number of transient students in Clark County. Students here are twice as likely to move during a school year as their peers in other large districts, such as Los Angeles or Chicago, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* reported in 2018. Whenever unreliable housing

makes the Cox Wi-Fi option untenable for students, the district tries to provide personal hot spots.

Taak said he has spent more time talking to parents this fall and last spring than ever before. He described the single parent of a girl in one of his classes, whom he talked to repeatedly, first about the class itself, but soon about the demands of the pandemic in general; Taak has three school-age kids of his own. They were soon swapping parenting advice.

“I think, for her,” he said on the phone, “it was feeling that there was someone out there in the world who cared about her kid and what she was going through. And as a parent, that was my first thought: How is the kid doing, how are the families doing.”

“When you lay over maps — broadband access, housing issues, COVID-19 and job loss — it’s always the same neighborhoods with the hot spots.”



Sixth-grade teacher Mike Taak is pictured outside his home in Henderson, Nevada, in early October. Now that most of the school district is relying on remote learning, he teaches students from his home (opposite).
Bridget Bennett / HCN

Clark County School District buses are seen parked in a lot during an October school day in North Las Vegas (left).
Bridget Bennett / HCN

MANY OF THEM aren't doing so well.

On three separate occasions, parents interviewed for this story used the phrase "shit-show" to describe remote learning, including Meredith Noce, who was born and raised in Las Vegas. Noce regularly pulls 12-hour days, doing her state government job from home. Her husband, a heavy machine operator who has been laid off twice since March, leaves the house each day for work. Noce's

neighbors both work outside the home. The two families came up with a solution. Each school day, Noce has five kids in her house — three of hers, two from next door — all of them attending school remotely. The families pool their money to pay a tutor, who comes three hours a day, three days a week, to help the kids, especially the elementary school students, with submitting assignments and other online learning hurdles.

Noce knows that many families

are unable to pay for such help, but having five kids in the house while she works full-time is an ordeal. She's never "felt more exhausted for so long in my life." Though the pandemic has hurt the family's finances, they do not qualify for Cox's subsidized broadband deal. Their internet bill is huge. And she fears what the prolonged isolation is doing to the mental health of her children.

"When the internet goes down, or the website doesn't work, they

just sit there in silence," she said. "They can't play sports; they haven't seen their friends since March. I just think that if mental health of our kids is such a concern, and if you're really worried about it, close the damn casinos."

But there are hundreds of thousands of casino workers, and they need the income. Corona was furloughed in March, and her regular paycheck helps keep the family afloat. October's dysfunctional negotiations in Congress squashed the possibility for a second federal stimulus bill — aid that might have eased the burden on working families. Clark County hopes to return to in-person instruction this year, but no specifics have been given. Meanwhile, COVID-19 cases are rising in Nevada, as they are elsewhere in the West. So, for now, Corona will continue to leave for work each morning, just as her husband comes home, and her kids log on. ☀

THE LATEST

Land-Grab Cornell

Backstory

The Morrill Act of 1862 expropriated 10.7 million acres of Indigenous land to fund future colleges across the nation. Over a two-year period, *High Country News* located more than 99% of those acres, identified the original inhabitants, who represent nearly 250 tribes, bands and communities, and calculated the profit raised from land sales in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Among the top institutions involved was New York's Cornell University, which obtained almost 990,000 acres in 15 states and 202 counties ("Land-Grab Universities," April 2020).

Followup

Now, Cornell's American Indian and

Indigenous Studies Program has publicly acknowledged the university's moral obligation to address its legacy and its impacts. The program has created the "Cornell University and Indigenous Dispossession Project" to continue researching Cornell's Morrill Act lands and to discuss possible remedies with Indigenous communities. Notably, researchers highlighted the university's mineral rights on 420,000 acres in the Central and Southwestern U.S. They're asking Cornell whether those rights were received under the Morrill Act and for a full account of any revenues derived from them. Results will be shared at hcne.ws/cornell-landgrab.

—Jessica Douglas

COVID-19 hits Oregon lottery sales — and native plants

When fewer people buy tickets, invasive gorse is the winner.

BY JANE C. HU

THE LUSH, BRILLIANT yellow flowers of gorse stretch for miles on the dunes along the Oregon coast. The invasive bush was introduced to the area in the 1890s and has since dominated over 55,000 acres in Oregon. Its spread has pushed out native plants, hastening erosion on steep slopes and rendering fields once used for grazing or farming unusable. Because gorse's waxy leaves are laden with flammable oil, it's also a fire hazard: In the 1930s, a fire fueled by the plant destroyed the entire town of Bandon, and gorse fires have popped up along the southern Oregon coast as recently as 2015.

Gorse is also extremely tenacious — its roots are extensive, and some experts believe its seeds can remain viable for up to 70 years. Sherri Laier, the noxious weeds program coordinator at the Coquille Watershed Association in southwest Oregon, calls it “a really nasty plant” — its spiky stems deter easy removal and require years' worth of herbicide treatments, followed by regular monitoring for new growth. More extreme infestations require a team of workers using chainsaws and excavators. Typically, the association relies on grants from state agencies to fund this work, but next year, that funding may not continue. The culprit? An odd combination of factors: The coronavirus pandemic — and the Oregon Lottery.

Like other state lotteries, the Oregon Lottery gives a portion of its revenue to state agencies and funds. For example, the Oregon Lottery provides 15% of its net earnings — around \$107 million in 2019 — to the Parks and Natural Resources Fund. The fund is split evenly between the state's parks department and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, which offers grants to nonprofits, universities, tribes and conservation districts for projects benefiting natural areas and waterways. Those contributions were baked into the agencies' budgets long before anyone had heard of COVID-19 — or realized that the state's lottery revenue would drop drastically because of it. “We were hit pretty hard,” said Matt Shelby, the lottery's community and corporate engagement manager.

The pandemic has affected Oregon in particular due to the popularity of its video lottery games, which are stationed inside bars and restaurants. (State lotteries which rely on scratch-off and ticket-based games sold at gas stations and grocery stores, like Washington's Lottery and WyoLotto, have seen sales rise in recent months.) According to the Oregon Lottery's 2019 financial report, nearly three-quarters of its 2019 revenue came from digital games; when the establishments

hosting them shut down due to stay-at-home orders, that revenue fell to zero “literally overnight,” Shelby said.

That's put state agencies in a tough position with regard to funding. Oregon State Parks is facing a \$22 million budget deficit between now and next June — around 10% of its total budget — due in part to diminished lottery revenues (as well as lost revenue from park closures between March and June). “If the lottery's not bringing in sufficient funds to have a net profit, then the park share is in question,” said Chris Havel, associate director of Oregon State Parks. In response, the department has cut programs and staff — including Laier, who was let go on June 30 and subsequently found a job at the Coquille Watershed Association. “We're not sure when or if the lottery will recover to the point where it can once again play the role in our budget that we expect,” Havel said.

This year, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, which typically funds the Coquille Watershed Association's gorse work, will likely only be able to offer grants worth about half the \$45 million they usually provide, said Meta Loftsgaarden, the agency's executive director. Normally, the board would accept the next round of grant applications in

December, but due to lower lottery revenue, it's now waiting until at least March 2021.

That leaves a funding gap for many projects, as well as uncertainty regarding future support. Meanwhile, conservationists fear they'll lose ground in their fight against gorse. “Not having this funding next year will definitely give the gorse a leg up,” and could erase previous gains in managing the plant's spread, said Melaney Dunne, director of the Coquille Watershed Association. “With invasive weeds, there's a real return on investment by continuing to work on it year after year.” The association is trying to find ways to supplement the potential delay or absence of lottery funding, but many of its usual sources — foundations, donations and other government grants — are also strained as a result of pandemic-related economic turmoil.

Now that Laier's work has been threatened twice by the lottery shortfall, she's wondering what will become of the strides she and her colleagues have made in controlling gorse. “It's just sad, because a lot of us have done this amazing work,” she said, noting that there are still more treatments and follow-ups that she and her colleagues are eager to tackle. “All I can do is try to be hopeful that this will pass.” ☀



Dustin Williams, the vegetation management foreman with the Curry Watersheds Partnership, applies herbicide to gorse on a private ranch in Brookings, Oregon.
Erin Minster / Curry Watershed Partnership

Fire models can't keep up with climate change

Scientists search for new ways to predict Western blazes.

BY VICTORIA PETERSEN

OVER LABOR DAY weekend in the Pacific Northwest, high winds fanned wildfire ignitions in drought-ridden forests west of the Cascades. In a matter of hours, small fires erupted into about a dozen major blazes, destroying entire communities, displacing tens of thousands of residents and killing 10 people in Oregon and Washington.

The scale of the conflagrations, and the speed at which they grew, surprised even seasoned wildfire researchers. Large, fast and dangerous blazes have burned across the West this year, from California's August Complex to Colorado's CalWood Fire in October. The scientific models used to predict and understand fires worked well in previous decades, but given current conditions in the region, trying to use them now "just sucks," said David Saah, an environmental scientist at the University of

San Francisco and a leader of the Pyregence Consortium, a team developing new wildfire models. "You know how we keep saying climate change is going to change everything? We're there, we're in it (and) we don't know how to quantify it. We're trying to figure it out."

Fire has always been part of Western ecosystems; many animals and plants evolved to depend on periodic burns. And for thousands of years, Indigenous peoples have used fire to help keep forests healthy by reducing excess brush and encouraging new growth, a practice that continues today. But after a century of fire suppression — and with a rapidly changing climate that is drying out forests — Western wildfires are now much larger and more intense than before.

In the typically wet Western Cascades, wildfires require certain conditions to grow: low humidity and powerful easterly winds.

By early September, a 10-month drought had set the stage for dangerous blazes, and unusually dry and strong winds followed: Near Salem, Oregon, sensors logged the lowest combination of relative humidity and highest wind speed ever recorded at that location, said Larry O'Neill, the Oregon state climatologist. These conditions contributed to the "explosive" growth of the Santiam Fire, later renamed the Beachie Creek Fire, which has burned nearly 200,000 acres, destroyed thousands of homes and buildings in the towns of Detroit, Mill City, Gates and Santiam River, and killed five people, including Oregon environmentalist George Atiyeh. "(That) combination of conditions is essentially unheard of," O'Neill said. But it might become more common in the future, thanks to climate change. Scientists are "very concerned" about the possibility that such rare wind events could become "more frequent or extreme," O'Neill said.

When authorities are faced with major decisions — how to best protect homes and lives, and when to issue evacuation notices — they need to know how fast-moving, hot and severe a specific fire is likely to be, and where its perimeter might lie in the days ahead. For now, most state incident commanders and U.S. Forest Service firefighters rely on short-term wildfire models, computer-based calculations that forecast how a blaze might behave. The Rothermel surface fire spread model, developed in 1972, is the basis of many of the models used today. The basic inputs rely on knowing three main elements that drive wildfires: topography, weather and fuel flammability.

But the unusual easterly wind added an unexpected element to attempts to model the Labor Day

fires, said Meg Krawchuk, a fire and landscape ecologist at Oregon State University. "Rare events are hard to model because you have so few cases to build and learn from," she said. And wind in particular can stymie Rothermel-style models. Strong gusts can topple power lines, igniting new fires that build on the heat and vapor in the atmosphere, spawning an inferno large enough to create its own weather. When that happens, the original inputs are no longer accurate — and neither are the model's results.

Understanding such complicated interactions requires a new kind of model. Coupled, or physics-based, models, for example, explicitly examine the interaction, or coupling, between fire behavior and the atmosphere. These models, which are expensive to run, are still being developed; right now they primarily live in "research land," said Saah. They address the feedback cycle of what a fire consumes, how the heat released from that consumption impacts the atmosphere, how that in turn affects the weather, and how that weather then impacts the fire's behavior. "The (Rothermel-based) models don't capture that," Saah said.

A third type of wildfire model, used for long-term planning and research, looks at general wildfire activity on a scale of decades rather than days. These statistical models look at long-term vegetation and climatological patterns and how they interact in a particular place, then project what wildfires will look like in 50 or 100 years. The inputs are based on historical data, and as climate change dries out the West and increases the frequency and intensity of extreme weather, wildfires will also change, making modeling them more difficult. "When you want to build large-scale systems models, you need lots and lots and lots of observations," Saah said, something scientists don't yet have, as climate change alters conditions in ways they haven't seen before. "So that's why people are freaking out." 🌱



Izel Ramos-Gonzalez, 7, looks at the damage in her grandmother's backyard in Phoenix, Oregon, after the Almeda Fire swept through the southern part of the state in September. **Alisha Jucevik**

Mining a family history

Will new extraction in Arizona end up as the same old boom-and-bust story?

BY CLARA MIGOYA | PHOTOS BY ROBERTO (BEAR) GUERRA

CENTURIES-OLD SYCAMORE TREES tower over the dry riverbed of Harshaw Creek, in the Patagonia Mountains of southern Arizona. Where houses once stood, flat barren earth stretches to the base of nearby low oak-covered hills. A crumbling wooden building, relic of a mining supervisor's home, and a cemetery are all that remain of what was once one of the West's richest mining towns.

Now a ghost town, Harshaw was one of nine mining camps in the area that saw waves of prospectors come and go in the 19th century. It held some of the Arizona Territory's highest-grade silver, lead and gold ore, so when the U.S. government passed the General Mining Act in 1872, giving prospectors the right to claim mineral deposits on public land for no more than \$5 per acre, investors poured in. A patchwork of mining claims soon covered the region, with 40 operations in Harshaw alone. Within three decades, the Patagonia Mountains had produced 79% of all the ore processed in the territory, with a total value exceeding \$2.5 trillion yearly in today's currency.

With the mines came thousands of workers and their families, most of them Mexican Americans and Latinos. For nearly a century, they drilled and transported ore through tunnels for \$2 a day — half of what their Anglo counterparts earned. But in 1925, and again in the 1950s, the combination of collapsing metal prices and exhausted

mineral veins sent the mining companies looking elsewhere, leaving tons of untreated mineral waste behind and no future for the workers who'd powered the industry. Now, more than half a century later, mining is coming back to Harshaw: South32, an Australia-based polymetallic mining company, estimates that there are still at least 155 million tons of high-grade metals hidden deep underground. It is currently doing exploratory drilling half a mile away from the ghost town, acquiring permits and gearing up to operate in the near future. But whether modern mining — with its much greater profits and the promise of better environmental safeguards — will leave a better legacy this time around remains to be seen.

FRANK, HENRY, MIKE AND JUAN SOTO grew up in Harshaw in the 1940s and '50s with their parents and three sisters. On a recent spring day, they sat around their family dining table on the south side of Tucson, 70 miles north of Harshaw. Angelita Soto, the fourth oldest of the siblings, joined in by phone as the conversation flew back and forth in English and Spanish. The siblings laughed and reminisced about their childhoods: the pranks they played on each other, their backyard with its bounty of black walnuts, acorns, watercress and fruit trees. The Soto kids grew up running around barefoot, without tap water or elec-



Members of the Soto family — from left, Frank, his cousin, Pancho Rivera, and his brothers Mike and Juan — visit on a recent September afternoon at the family homestead in Harshaw, Arizona (above, above right).

tricity. “We were poor, but we had everything,” said Angelita.

“Harshaw was named after the guy (who) founded the mines, but it already had a name: El Durazno,” says Henry Soto. “We still call it El Durazno (the peach).”

The Sotos have been in the West for nine generations, since before it became part of the United States. They came from Mexico in 1775, with the Spanish expeditions that founded San Francisco and Los Angeles. However, after the Mexican-American War ended in 1848, they suddenly found themselves foreigners in their own land, when the U.S. failed to honor the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and took their property rights away. The Sotos believe this is what pushed Angel and Josefa, their great-grandparents, to leave California in the 1870s. During the gold rush years, the couple headed eastward, jumping from mining camp to mining camp

until they finally reached Harshaw — then a town bustling with 2,000 people, 30 saloons, several breweries and shops, a church, a school and a post office. Only 8 miles away, in the town of Patagonia, the Pacific Railroad connected the local mines to the rest of the West.

“Harshaw at that time was booming, and word got around,” said Frank Soto, the oldest sibling.

According to the Soto brothers, Angel's first job was probably at World's Fair, the district's deepest mine, extracting silver, gold, lead and copper with chisel and bar through nearly 2 miles of underground shafts, 500 feet below the ground. Less than two decades later, Angel's kids and grandkids would do the same work with air-pressure jackhammers, powder and dynamite.

Most mining companies relocated when the Great Depression took its toll, leaving toxic waste



The Soto family has had deep ties to Harshaw, known as “El Durazno” to Spanish speakers, since the late 1800s, when their great-grandparents left California and found work in the mines. In the 1950s, when the town was still vibrant, the family lived next door to this adobe dwelling, which is now crumbling (above).



rock that would leak acidic surface waters downstream for decades to come. The workers left town or survived by taking jobs in railroad and highway construction; the Soto family joined the Civilian Conservation Corps. The once-thriving town dwindled into a scatter of abandoned shacks. “There was nothing else, so people just packed up and left the houses,” said Mike Soto, the second of the siblings.

When the American Smelting and Refining Company (Asarco) took over in 1939, it resumed operations at the Trench and Flux mines, where Miguel, Mike’s father, pushed mineral-bearing ore wagons out of the shafts. Less than three decades later, however, Asarco halted operations and abandoned 2 million tons of untreated hazardous waste. The workers’ families moved away. The Sotos left Harshaw in 1956 and eventually relocated to Tucson’s south

side, where Miguel Soto and three of his kids found work in the nearby Pima Mine.

With mining in retreat and no one staking claims to the land, the U.S. Forest Service reclaimed Harshaw in the 1960s, knocking houses down as soon as the occupants moved out or passed away. Eventually, the entire town was bulldozed.

Today, half a mile from the Soto homestead, a third wave of mining is gaining speed. A dirt road passes the old Harshaw cemetery and climbs a four-lane drive to the hilltop where South32’s mining operation is located. Galvanized fencing and security cameras line the nearby roads.

South32, which purchased the Hermosa project in 2018, is currently doing exploratory drilling in what is probably the largest undeveloped zinc deposit in the world. The “Mine of Tomorrow,” as

South32 calls it, would be largely underground, 2,000 to 4,000 feet. Most of the mining will be on private property, but some of the tunnels will extend horizontally into the deposits of zinc, lead and silver that exist underneath Coronado National Forest.

Not everyone welcomes the prospect of renewed mining: The Patagonia Area Resource Alliance (PARA), a local environmental organization, fears that South32 could deplete the region’s water supply and pollute the surrounding environment. “They go through aquifers when they drill to get their core samples,” said Glen Goodwin, a longtime local resident and PARA co-founder, explaining that the company would need to draw large volumes of water in order to reach the deposit. “They claim that there is no cross-contamination. How they can guarantee that, I don’t know.” A South 32 spokesperson

has assured Patagonia residents that there will be little to no environmental impact.

While mining technology has evolved from what it was a century ago, environmental policy has lagged behind: The U.S. Government Accountability Office reports that, over a period of just 11 years, taxpayers had to pay \$2.6 billion for the cleanup of abandoned mines. Only in 2001 did the Bureau of Land Management start requiring mine operators to prove they can pay for their own cleanup, though the GAO later acknowledged that the requirements were insufficient and the system used to track financial assurances was unreliable.

Through it all, the Sotos have continued to visit El Durazno almost every week. In fact, they never really left: In the 1930s, their grandfather, Tata Mariano, acquired 60 acres on the edge of Harshaw through the Homestead Act, thereby ensuring his family’s legal claims to the land. Some of his descendants still live there today. “I have a theory of why my grandfather had the vision to get a homestead when other Chicanos didn’t,” said Juan Soto, the self-described family historian. “It was the memory of dispossession.” He went on to explain how the memory of the broken Guadalupe Treaty left Mariano Soto feeling wary, pushing him to get titles on land that others took for granted.

The Sotos keep a calendar to rotate visits to their homestead, where they spend the night, breathe the fresh air and pick acorns and wild oregano in the nearby mountains. Yet they, too, have mixed feelings about the resumption of mining.

“We are a mining family, so to me a mine is just another mine,” said Henry Soto, who worked as a surveyor at Pima Mine for about 10 years. Still, he can’t help worrying that the new venture will entirely transform the place where he finds peace. “But it is too close to home,” he said, “kind of a ‘not in my backyard’ thing.” ☀





In Browning, Montana, a town on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Browning High School students wear red skirts representing the movement for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women to school in October 2019.

In July 2019, during the North American Indian Days parade in Browning, a young woman holds a poster of Ashley Loring Heavy Runner, who disappeared in June 2018 (*right*).



Boxing with ghosts

A Blackfeet father coaches women and girls on the reservation on self-defense, in the ring and outside of it.

PHOTOS AND TEXT BY TAILYR IRVINE

Donna Kipp walks behind Kimberly Loring, Ashley Loring Heavy Runner's sister, right, during the second annual Ashley's Walk in Browning, Montana, on June 8, 2019. Kimberly organized the event to make sure her little sister was not forgotten (*below*).



Serenity Young Running Crane, Beatrice Kipp and Rhoxy Larson (pictured from left) wait for instruction at the All Nations Boxing Club in Browning in March 2019. All three girls say they box because they enjoy the competitiveness and intensity of the sport. One of them wanted an outlet for her anger, another wanted a sport to share with her father, and one said her goal was to get stronger, just in case she got stolen (*below*).



Donna Kipp paints "MMIW" on the neck of her younger sister Beatrice, while Katie Running Wolf braids her hair in preparation for the annual Ashley's Walk to bring awareness to the MMIW movement. Native women go missing and are murdered at rates higher than any other race. Many are never found, and many of their cases have not been properly investigated (*above*).

Lee Looking Calf helps his daughter, Dustilee, 7, put on her boxing gloves at the Blackfeet Boxing Gym on Oct. 12, 2019. Lee said he wants his daughter to learn the sport not only for self-defense but to give her the confidence to become an unapologetically strong woman (*right, center*).

Frank Kipp weighs the female boxers at the All Nations Boxing Club in Browning in March 2019 (*right*).



Lissa Loring takes a moment to herself after finding bones during a search for her cousin, Ashley, in June 2019. A closer inspection revealed that the bones were from an animal, most likely a calf. Not only are the searches emotionally exhausting, they are physically challenging as well. The crew walks for miles across rugged landscapes filled with steep hills and drop-offs, holes, grizzly bears and rattlesnakes.

Family and friends of Ashley Loring Heavy Runner continue the search in a field with underground caves, after hearing a rumor that Ashley's body might have been placed in a tight space. Since Ashley's disappearance, her family follows every rumor and has conducted hundreds of searches on the Blackfeet Reservation's vast 1.5 million acres.



Frank Kipp knows that teaching children to box is no more than a Band-Aid for the epidemic of missing and murdered Native American women, who are slain at 10 times the national average. However, options are limited when the justice system fails to protect the country's most vulnerable populations.

Individuals are forced to defend themselves. For Kipp, that means using his boxing gym to teach young women, like his daughters, to fight. For the community, it means using every holiday, parade and event to not only celebrate but to also demand justice for their relatives.

The ghosts of the missing and murdered women refuse to be forgotten. They are silent guests at every function on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation — present in Kipp's boxing gym, watching from the sidelines of celebrations, waiting in every parent's darkest fears.

A group of teenage girls in colorful ribbon skirts — led by Kipp's daughter, Donna — gathered in the cafeteria of Browning High School to talk about the crisis. They're not quite adults, but they know the statistics that surround them.

Some girls box, some wear ribbon skirts, and some think nothing will happen to them. But whether they learn to fight or face the ghosts does not matter. What matters is why this crisis has gone largely unexamined by the justice system since this country's inception. It is crucial that Indian Country does not accept teaching Indigenous children to fight as an answer to the epidemic. It is a Band-Aid, and Band-Aids cannot heal murder. ☀



The private puzzle piece

Connecting private and public parcels for wildlife.

BY ERIC SIEGEL

FOR GENERATIONS, elk and mule deer in the remote South San Juan Mountains along the Colorado-New Mexico border have migrated from summer's alpine meadows down to the grassy lowlands where they spend their winters. Most of the higher portion of this major migration corridor lies on U.S. Forest Service lands — even in a wilderness area — but the ungulates' path also cuts directly through some of the largest privately owned properties in the region. If those parcels were sold and developed, their loss would cut off the seasonal wildlife flow.

Similar situations exist across the region, where huge ranches sprawl across wildlife habitat at the feet of mountain ranges and sometimes take up entire valley floors. Land-management agencies can help protect the adjoining public lands from development, but they have little say about what happens on these private parcels, which have become critical pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of wildlife conservation.

This is especially true in the Intermountain West, where population growth and soaring land values have put a premium on undeveloped private lands. Rarely can governments or conservation

organizations afford to buy these properties outright. But landowners, land trusts, nonprofits and public agencies can often cobble together enough money to purchase development rights to the land — thereby creating a conservation easement, often at a fraction of the overall property value. The property owner retains ownership but agrees to work with the state to manage the land for ecosystem health.

That's exactly what happened in the South San Juans. In July, private landowners working with the Chama Peak Land Alliance, The Conservation Fund, the U.S. Forest Service and the Colorado State Forest Service put a conservation easement on the 16,723-acre Banded Peak Ranch — the final piece of a 30-year, 65,000-acre effort that permanently protects this entire wildlife corridor.

Thanks to the Great American Outdoors Act, which passed this summer, such deals could get a significant boost. The act fully and permanently funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund, thereby doubling the amount of cash available for purchasing private inholdings or funding conservation easements on them. This infographic highlights a few of these public-private partnerships. 🌿



SHIFTING BIOMES

Climate change drives species into higher elevations and latitudes. The Nature Conservancy mapped the potential migration routes that could result as habitats shift.

Sources: Jicarilla Game and Fish Department; Jicarilla Apache Nation; The Conservation Fund; EcoConnect Consulting; Teton County, Wyoming; Tack, J.D., et al., "Beyond Protected Areas," *Biological Conservation* 234 (2019), 18-27.

Source map: Dan Majka / The Nature Conservancy; Infographic design: Luna Anna Archey / HCN

MONTANA

71,116 acres

The amount of agricultural land the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program protected in Montana in fiscal year 2019. The remaining 49 U.S. states combined secured 51,915 acres of agricultural land through the program.

Sage Grouse and Pronghorn in the Northern Plains

In the Northern Great Plains, pronghorn and greater sagegrouse share an important migratory corridor. The area is a patchwork of federal, state, tribal and private lands. Securing conservation easements on the private parcels protects the sagebrush steppe and grassland ecosystems from development. The Nature Conservancy has currently secured 55,000 acres of private land; combined with public holdings, it protects more than 230,000 acres of critical wildlife habitat.

PUBLIC LAND
PRIVATE LAND
TRIBAL LAND
SAGE GROUSE MIGRATION
PRONGHORN MIGRATION



Elk Corridor in the Jackson Hole Valley, Wyoming

At the southern end of the Jackson Hole Valley, huge herds of migrating elk get bottlenecked between steep slopes, water bodies and other natural features, into a narrow passageway mostly made up of private, undeveloped lands. The state of Wyoming, The Conservation Fund, the Jackson Hole Land Trust and others have partnered to secure conservation easements on these lands, known as the Munger Mountain Corridor Initiative, to keep the elk's path clear.



\$37 million

Total amount federal, state and private partners pitched in to complete the Navajo River Watershed migration corridor project.

Elk Corridor in the South San Juans, Colorado

A public-private partnership in the Navajo River Watershed has put huge chunks of private land into conservation easements, thereby permanently protecting a crucial stretch of an elk migration corridor, stretching from the Jicarilla Apache Nation to Colorado's South San Juan Mountains. Large private inholdings surrounded by public lands, as indicated here, host multiple pathways.

Indigenous data sovereignty shakes up research

In the COVID-19 era, tribal nations want research that better serves their people.

BY KALEN GOODLUCK

AS U.S. GOVERNMENT scientists work to understand how COVID-19 affects the human body, tribal nations are still struggling with the impacts of the federal government's inadequate response to the pandemic. Now, through a National Institutes of Health program called "All of Us," tribal nations across Indian Country are pushing federal scientists to conduct disease research that serves Indigenous peoples in a meaningful way. But developing research practices in accordance with tribal consultation takes time. Meanwhile, tribal citizens are missing out on the program's coronavirus antibody testing.

The All of Us study aims to collect, sequence and catalog DNA representative of the United States' diverse communities. This vast project will enable research on diseases, including Alzheimer's, diabetes and autoimmune disorders, from across the country. But tribal nations are concerned about the ownership and control of this data, which can affect a number of things: patents and intellectual property rights, the privacy of tribes, future research and even access to basic information and health care.

"We're concerned about access to data as well as release of data without tribal permission," said Dr. Stephanie Russo (Ahtna-Native Village of Kluti-Kaah), University of Arizona public health professor. "What the pandemic has shed a light on is the need for tribes to have access to external data."

The coronavirus pandemic

has given the Indigenous data sovereignty movement a new sense of urgency. As pharmaceutical companies, researchers and governments scramble to create COVID-19 tests and vaccines, many tribal leaders and Indigenous data and public health experts are wary of participating in research that may have little benefit for their communities.

The Indigenous data sovereignty movement emerged in 2015, when Indigenous researchers convened in Australia to discuss research on Native peoples and Indigenous rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. They concluded that Indigenous nations retain ownership over their citizens' data, as well as the power to decide how that data is used. All this made news earlier this year, when the U.S. was widely criticized for a major data breach that leaked the financial data of tribal nations that had submitted applications for COVID-19 relief.

What's more, in the past, medical researchers have stigmatized and harmed Indigenous communities. In some cases, they did not report their findings to the tribes who participated. A 1979 study on an Inupiat community in Alaska resulted in widespread publicity on the community's alcohol use, encouraging harmful stereotypes. Researchers who took blood samples from the Havasupai Tribe in 1989 conducted a diabetes study and allowed other researchers to access the samples without the tribe's knowledge or consent. The federal

government's past use of ancestry, such as blood quantum, to terminate tribal nations and limit tribal sovereignty, means there is little trust today for government-funded genetic research. This is why tribes insist on sharing ownership of the data collected by All of Us. It would empower them to have input regarding future research that makes use of Indigenous data.

"Understand: Data is a resource," said Keolu Fox (Kanakanaka 'Ōiwi), an assistant professor of anthropology at University of California-San Diego who studies genome science and Indigenous communities. Fox has argued that unrestricted access to genome data by state governments and pharmaceutical companies is a threat to tribal sovereignty and may have little direct benefit aside from individual test results — meaning tribes will likely not receive subsidized medications, intellectual property rights or royalties in return for their data. During a May National Institutes of Health tribal consultation, NIH researchers recognized the minimal community benefits of Indigenous participation, as Fox noted, stating that the primary gain would be

those individual test results.

After tribes and Indigenous experts began voicing their concerns about All of Us over a year ago, the NIH prohibited researchers from collecting data on tribal lands. It has also halted release of data results from participants who identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native. The researchers also agreed not to publish tribal affiliations of participants without the consent of the tribal nations. This means that All of Us is currently prohibited from studying tribal citizens — at least until it finishes consulting with tribes — even for coronavirus antibody testing. Given the tragic realities of this pandemic, health experts say addressing past ethical concerns and securing data rights in federal research institutions is crucial for both NIH and tribal nations to propel disease testing and research. Russo, who has been watching NIH's tribal meetings closely, says institutions like NIH need to build better relationships and partnerships with tribal nations to help repair the damage of history's mistakes. "The onus is on researchers and institutions, which fund them and support them, to change practices." ❁

"What the pandemic has shed a light on is the need for tribes to have access to external data."



EDITOR'S CHOICE:

A summer moon, mountain lake and night swim in the Swan Range, Montana.

James Chapman

READERS' CHOICE:

Aaron Henriquez climbs an ice pillar in Rollinsville, Colorado, while Ellie Stanton belays. **Austin Nash**



The West: familiar and phenomenal

See winners from our annual photo contest.

Even when a pandemic limits how far Westerners can travel, our region provides plenty of inspiration. For this year's photo contest, we asked readers to share notable nearby sights, perhaps glimpsed in their backyards or on a hike in the back hills. From intimate shots of hatchlings in a nest and snails stretching across sidewalks, to vast landscapes and star-strewn skies, we received more than 120 entries, proving that beauty can be found even in the most difficult of times. See more entries at hcn.org/photo-contest2020



RUNNER UP:

Joshua Tree National Park, California.

Lena Luna



RUNNER UP:

Roadrunner, Las Cruces, New Mexico. **Bob Hamre**

HCN readers: Funding our work for 50 years

THANK YOU. Readers pay for about 75% of what it costs to produce High Country News. You can join our supporters here by donating \$50 or more. Mail a check to P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428; call 800-905-1155; or contribute online at hcn.org/support.

**INDEPENDENT NEWS GUARDIAN
(\$25,000 - \$49,999)**

In memory of Paul Rudd | Albuquerque, NM

MEDIA LEADER (\$10,000 - \$24,999)

Anonymous
Johnson Family Foundation | Telluride, CO
Peter & Dawn Larmer | Fort Collins, CO
Bill Roach & Julie Bryant | Salt Spring Island,
British Columbia, Canada
Nancy Stephens & Rick Rosenthal and the
Rosenthal Family Foundation | Stamford, CT

PUBLISHER'S CIRCLE (\$5,000-\$9,999)

Christine Bourdette | Portland, OR

The Goodrich-Patton Charitable Fund | Palo Alto, CA

PHILANTHROPIST (\$2,500 - \$4,999)

Charla Brown & Robert Burnett | Crested Butte, CO
Tim & Kathy Crawford | Bozeman, MT
David Frane & Charla Gabert | Alamo, CA
John P. & Laurie McBride | Aspen, CO

STEWARD (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Anonymous | Paonia, CO
Jill C. Bryson estate | Hailey, ID
Stephen Miller & Mary Rook | Bend, OR
Flavio Ribeiro | Bellevue, WA
Jordan & David Smith Fund, Santa Fe Community
Foundation | Santa Fe, NM

GUARANTOR (\$500-\$999)

In memory of Ed Marston | Paonia, CO
Ruth Benton | Chapel Hill, NC
Buck Drew | Ketchum, ID
Kim Elton | Halfway, OR
Jack Godard | Sisters, OR
Alexander Kinsey | Denver, CO
Charles Knight | Boulder, CO
Ken Kramer | Chappell Hill, TX
P. Marion Lennberg | Salt Lake City, UT
Jim & Susan Oates | Gunnison, CO
Elizabeth Storer & Luther Propst | Jackson, WY
Carole & Gordon Segal | Winnetka, IL
Jim Stratton | Eugene, OR
Alex Takasugi | Eagle, ID
Mark Winogron | Venice, CA
George Zvyoloski | Beaufort, SC

BENEFACTOR (\$250-\$499)

In honor of Tom Bell
In memory of Fred Anderson | Chevy Chase, MD
Susan Adams | Aurora, CO
Michael Dunsdon | Aspen, CO
Doug Fix | Moab, UT
Alan Gourley & Sarah Brown | Steamboat Springs, CO
Jean Helm | Arlington, WA
David & Phyllis Kliger | Cottonwood Heights, UT
Scott & Becky Lehmann | Storrs Mansfield, CT
Jay & Marian Mancini | San Francisco, CA
Urs Ochsner | Boulder, CO

Merton Preston | Petaluma, CA
Michael Pretz & Marilyn Maskell | Fort Collins, CO
Barrie Ryan | Tucson, AZ
Terri Slivka | Carbondale, CO
Mike Stuart | Clinton, WA
Jim Walseth | Bozeman, MT
Penelope Wheeler-Abbott | Falmouth, ME

SPONSOR (\$150-\$249)

Anonymous (4)
Jeff Anderson | Red Lodge, MT
Joe Armijo | Bozeman, MT
Marc Beyeler & Elena Eger | Calabasas, CA
Lauren & Ron Beyerinck | Sisters, OR
Elizabeth Carver | Denver, CO
Ramona Colwell | Carlsbad, CA
Charles & Louise Conrad | Tucson, AZ
Darla Damerell | Paonia, CO
Charles & Mary George | Orange, CA
Judy Gould | Boulder, CO
Melinda Grant | Seattle, WA
Terry Haynes | Fort Collins, CO
Bill Jenkins | Leavenworth, WA
Susan Kramer | Glendora, CA
Jim Longley | Olympia, WA
David A. Lucia | Denver, CO
Karen Mockler | Tucson, AZ
Tom & Anna Rudd | Seattle, WA
Rob & Dianna Sampson | Boise, ID
Yvonne Thomas | Corvallis, OR
Colleen Truly | Golden, CO
Brian Upton | Missoula, MT
Beverly Vasten-Wilson | Montrose, CO
Dave Walp | Springfield, OR
Kathy & Dennis Wellman | Boulder, CO

PATRON (\$75-\$149)

Anonymous (5)
In memory of John Freemuth | Boise, ID
In memory of James Gigstead
In memory of my daughter Jennifer Hancock |
Durango, CO
In memory of Woody Hesselbarth | Leavenworth, WA
In memory of Stewart Udall, Interior secretary |
Berkeley, CA
In memory of Donald B. & Ida Webster | Red Bluff, CA
In memory of Chuck & Betsy Worley | Cedaredge, CO
William N. Aldrich | Napa, CA
Charles Aschwanden | Lakewood, CO
Bo Baggs | Port Arthur, TX
Denise Bell | Boulder, CO
Bruce Berger | Aspen, CO
Ellen Bloedel | Cottonwood Heights, UT
Barbara Bolles | Bainbridge Island, WA
Charles Bordner Jr. | Colorado Springs, CO
Charles Brandt & Timothea Elizalde | Belen, NM
Patti Brennan | McKinleyville, CA
Rodger & Diane Brown | Norman, OK
Carl Brown | Boise, ID
Janis Burger | Port Angeles, WA
Carolee Campbell | Sherman Oaks, CA

James Cavin | Seattle, WA
Jeffrey Clark | Portland, OR
Liz Crain | Duvall, WA
Lonnie J. Dale | Missoula, MT
Judy Dixon | North Bend, OR
Katy Duffy | Gardiner, MT
Joe Dunn | Carbondale, CO
Lynn Dwyer, Dwyer Greens & Flowers | Gearhart, OR
Sally Falkenhagen | Atherton, CA
James D. Finch | Basalt, CO
Patricia Flores | Northridge, CA
Robert & Nancy Follett | Highlands Ranch, CO
William & Ann Ford | Boulder, CO
Margaret Fuller & Matthew Scott | Stanford, CA
Elizabeth Gemmill | Conshohocken, PA
G. Alexander Gray | Franklinton, NC
Amiya Gupta
Jim & Peggy Gutmann | Broomfield, CO
Marshall Hamilton Fund | Media, PA
Linda K. Healow | Billings, MT
Michael Howard | Reno, NV
Diana Howison | Burbank, CA
Marcia Hudson | Monmouth, OR
Howard & Holly Huff | Mackay, ID
Roger & Karen Innes | Bloomington, IN
Kathy Jacobs | Tucson, AZ
Peter Jacobsen | Davis, CA
Sarah Jaeger | Helena, MT
Nora Jaffe | La Jolla, CA
Greg James | Bishop, CA
Robert Jaworski | San Jose, CA
Tom Jellar | Lewisville, NC
Justin Jensen | Salt Lake City, UT
Sara Jane Johnson | Orcas, WA
Donald Jordan | Prescott, AZ
Valerie Kaminski & Joel Gladstein | Salem, OR
Douglas Kane | Salida, CO
Alan & Sharl Karpf | Salt Lake City, UT
Richard Katz | Sherman Oaks, CA
Elizabeth Kelsey | Garden City, ID
Edward Kennedy | Boulder, CO
Lois Khairallah | Falls Church, VA
Lindi Kirkbride | Meriden, WY
Trude Kleess | Boulder, CO
Stephen & Yoshie Koester | Boulder, CO
Phil Korzilius | Goodyear, AZ
Christine & Tony Kovacic | Montrose, CO
Robert Krieger | Riverside, CA
Christine Laney | Boulder, CO
Cindy Lantry | Seattle, WA
Glenn Launchbaugh | Moscow, ID
Viki Lawrence | Louisville, CO
Julie & Stephen Lawton | Monument, CO
Bob & Cathy LeFevre | New Auburn, WI
Stuart Levy | Champaign, IL
Jerry Lidz | Eugene, OR
Harold Lindmark | Denver, CO
Jeremy & Allene Littell and Allene Whitney |
Anchorage, AK
Ann Lockett | San Francisco, CA
Elizabeth Loy | Marysville, WA

Amanda Lucier | Portland, OR
Kathryn MacKay | Ogden, UT
Eleanor Marks | Cambridge, MA
Kathleen Masis | Billings, MT
John & Lynn Matte | Albuquerque, NM
Louisa & Bob Matthias | Boulder, CO
McAfee Fauver Family Fund | Boulder, CO
Charles McDaniel | Grand Junction, CO
Doris McDill | Baltimore, MD
Jonathan McDonagh | Anchorage, AK
John C. Metcalf | Boulder, CO
Anne & Jack Middleton | Mount Vernon, WA
Floyd & Barbara Miller | Portal, AZ
Libby Mills | Mount Vernon, WA
Peter Mintzer | Seattle, WA
Sally Moore | Berkeley, CA
Lucy Moore | Santa Fe, NM
Judith Moores | Davis, CA
Nancy Moran & Howard Ochman | Austin, TX
Larry Morgan | Sterling, CO
Eva Nachmanson | Seattle, WA
Michelle Napoli | Las Vegas, NV
Jan Nespor | Columbus, OH
Doug & Denise Newbould | Soldotna, AK
Mary O'Brien | Moab, UT
Deedee & Dick O'Brien | Holladay, UT
Wendy Beth Oliver | Milwaukie, OR
Ken Olsen | Portland, OR
John & Diana Oltman | Wheaton, IL
Stuart Halpern | Whitefish, MT
Jerry Packard | Seattle, WA
Malcolm Parks | Lakewood, CO
Ronald Parry | Houston, TX
Kris Passie | Bishop, CA
Megan Jones Patterson | Boulder, CO
Martha Pavlat | Eugene, OR
Devon Pena | San Luis, CO
Mark Perrin | Bothell, WA
Mary Y. Peters | San Diego, CA
Lynne & Michael Peters | Coeur d'Alene, ID
Ann Petersen | Burien, WA
John Petrarca | Centennial, CO
Peter Petrie | Aspen, CO
Nancy Pobanz | Eugene, OR
Carl & Barbara Popp | Socorro, NM
Stella Portillo | Sandy, UT
Vic Prislipsky | Hot Springs Village, AR
Bettina Proctor | Denver, CO
Leslie L. Resnik | Kula, HI
Dennis G. Rice | Salisbury, MD
Stephanie Ridley | Boise, ID
Jim Ridley | Santee, CA
Daniel Robinett & Linda Kennedy | Elgin, AZ
Jacquelyn Robins | Albuquerque, NM
David M. Rose | Silver City, NM
Martin & Joan Rosen | Carmel, CA
Ellen Rosenau | Berkeley, CA
Bill Ross | Seattle, WA
Rob Russell | Quincy, CA
Ryan Family Charitable Fund | Wynnewood, PA
John & Cherry Sand | Boulder, CO



High Country News in the '80s

THE ANTI-ENVIRONMENTAL BACKLASH

The 1980s witnessed a fierce anti-environmental backlash from industries and politicians, who resented the new regulations brought by the landmark laws of the 1970s. The movement was personified by James Watt, President Ronald Reagan's Interior secretary, a longtime advocate of unfettered mining, grazing, drilling and logging on public lands. Environmental groups lawyered up to fight back.

THE SAGEBRUSH REBELLION GETS POLITICAL BACKING

President Reagan openly allied with the "Sagebrush Rebellion," a conservative Western movement spearheaded by ranchers and backed by industry. Supporters demanded that federal lands be ceded to Western states, but such legislation failed to gain traction.

ENDURING LEADERSHIP

In 1983, *High Country News*, now a nonprofit, hired Ed Marston, a former physics professor, and his wife, Betsy, an Emmy-winning TV journalist, both New York City transplants, to run the newspaper out of Paonia, Colorado. By that time, the paper had a circulation of 4,000 stalwart subscribers. With fresh eyes, the Marstons fearlessly tackled the region's complex issues.

In 1986, the paper published "Western Water Made Simple," a four-part series on issues facing the West's major watersheds — the Colorado, Columbia, Missouri and Rio Grande. The series won the prestigious George Polk Award for environmental reporting. 🌞

In celebration of HCN's 50th anniversary, we're looking back through the decades, one issue at a time. To scroll through HCN's full timeline, visit our webpage: hcn.org/events/50-years-timeline



Betsy and Ed Marston pose with the George Polk Award they received for *High Country News*' groundbreaking 1986 series, "Western Water Made Simple," which was later published as a book. **HCN photo**

TAKE US HIGHER

From its inception as a rare environmental voice in an ecologically fragile region, to its increasingly nuanced coverage of the country's most rapidly growing and diverse populations, *High Country News* has, story by story, unveiled the real and complex West behind the beautiful scenery. Now we're raising \$10 million to spread the news and launch HCN into the next half-century. Please make a pledge or contribution today: hcn.org/support50more



Lee & Keira Eddy | Menifee, CA
Renee Eder | Moscow, ID
Daly Edmunds | Fort Collins, CO
Sara Edwards | Leadville, CO
James Ehlers | Bayfield, CO
Evonne Ellis | McCall, ID
Litzi Engel | Santa Fe, NM
Tamara Enz | Wheeler, OR
Peter Enzminger | Los Angeles, CA
Susan Erickson & James Dannenberg | Tucson, AZ
Gaynell & Jahan Fakharzadeh | Park City, UT
Buck & Chelsea Farley | Durango, CO
Ned Farquhar & Janis Finelli | Vallecitos, NM
Cheryll Faust | Salida, CO
Lindsay Fendt | Denver, CO
Catherine & Christopher Filardi | Missoula, MT
Larry Frank | Fort Collins, CO
Debra Gallegos | Prather, CA
Barbara Ganley | Weybridge, VT
Dennis Ghiglieri & Rose Strickland | Reno, NV
Laurie Gibb | Denver, CO
Jacob Gibson | Yuma, AZ
Tim Gilmore | Sonoma, CA
Ben Goldfarb | Hastings-on-Hudson, NY
Caroline Goodman | Taos, NM
Ann Grediagin | Bend, OR
Dana Gulley | Bozeman, MT
Lynne Hanford | Missoula, MT

Tom Kaesemeyer | Denver, CO
Keith Karoly & Kirstin LaBudda | Portland, OR
Katie & Jesse | Aurora, OR
Elaine Kazakoff | Boise, ID
Richard Kelley | Goodyear, AZ
Marilyn Kemp | Centennial, CO
Mary Kenney | Menlo Park, CA
Faye Keogh | Berkeley, CA
Saanen Kerson | Napa, CA
Frank Kinder | Loveland, CO
Major King | Columbia, MO
Kathie Kinzie | Philo, CA
Gwen Kittel | Boulder, CO
Molly Kittleson | Dedham, MA
Geoff Klise | Albuquerque, NM
Dennis & Penny Knuckles | Custer, SD
Lisa Knudsen-Porte | Minneapolis, MN
Gina Knudson | Salmon, ID
Mary Alyce Kobler | Brooktondale, NY
Bob Kohut | Ithaca, NY
Kate Kramer | Temecula, CA
David Kreutzer | Boulder, CO
James Kruidenier | Amherst, MA
Bryant Kusy | Eagle, ID
Tom La Point | Fort Collins, CO
David G. Laidman | Albuquerque, NM
Jason Landers | Granada Hills, CA
Melissa A. Landon | Fort Collins, CO

“I remember the story about Lake Powell and how it almost broke free of the Glen Canyon Dam. It was a big scoop for Ed and Betsy, who had just taken the reins in 1983, and just a terrifying and amazingly well-told tale.”

—Greg Hanscom
Current HCN executive director and publisher

Sally Hardin | Washington, DC
Eben Harrell | Durango, CO
Rod Harris & Jane Slusarski | Fort Collins, CO
Kelsea Harris-Capuanio | Teton Village, WY
David Havlick & Marion Hourdequin |
Colorado Springs, CO
Spenser Havlick | Boulder, CO
Rosemary & Brian Hayes | Victor, CO
Nick Hazelbaker | Harpster, ID
Dan Heepke | Fort Morgan, CO
Sherron Helms & Stan McNeese | Grand Junction, CO
Karla A. Henderson | Estes Park, CO
Jim & Jackie Hertel | Yakima, WA
Ken & Karen Heuer | Denver, CO
Herbert Hipple | Westminster, CO
Max Hoefer | Albany, OR
Marie Hoffman | Sacramento, CA
Maia Hoffman | Seattle, WA
Constance Holland | Spokane, WA
Ying T. Hong | Boulder, CO
Thomas G. Hood | Santa Fe, NM
Charles Hoover | Los Angeles, CA
Jeffrey Hunt | Salt Lake City, UT
David Hunt | Bent Mountain, VA
Lynne Hyerle | Seattle, WA
Lori Iliff & Mitchell Broadbent | Denver, CO
Brian Inouye & Nora Underwood | Tallahassee, FL
Eric Irvin | Clinton, WA
Ken Irwin | Beulah, MI
Peggy Isakson | Loveland, CO
Carolyn Jackson & Michael Haviken | New York, NY
Sego Jackson & Raven Jirikovic | Clinton, WA
Nancy Jarchow | Steamboat Springs, CO
Tricia J. | Austin, TX
Ronald M. Jones & Genevieve Hannon | Kanab, UT
Kelly Jones | Fort Collins, CO
Jo & Rusty Jones | Missoula, MT
Jeff Kaas & Pat Blue | Denver, CO

Don Lane | Seattle, WA
Mark Lane | Broomfield, CO
Jean Larson | Batesville, AR
Richard V. Laursen | Carmichael, CA
Cat Lazaroff | Silver Spring, MD
Dick & Suzanne Linford | Bend, OR
Steve List | Durango, CO
Sheldon & Christine Litwin | Charleston, SC
Richard Llewellyn | Boise, ID
Ron Loehman | Albuquerque, NM
John Lovie | Clinton, WA
Alston Lundgren | Santa Fe, NM
Debra Lutje | The Dalles, OR
Clay MacDonald | Paonia, CO
Bruce Madden & Susan Ostlie | Albuquerque, NM
David Maguire | Pocatello, ID
Donal Mahon | El Cerrito, CA
Susan & Spencer Martin |
Park City, UT
Andy & Rita McAuley | Durango, CO
Joan McCarter | Boise, ID
Dee McCarthy | Park City, UT
Dylan McDonald | Las Cruces, NM
Alex McKiernan | Martell, NE
Allison Melton | Crested Butte, CO
Erica Meltzer | Denver, CO
Gerald Meral | Inverness, CA
Beth Mills | Old Chatham, NY
Arthur Min | San Carlos, CA
Ron Mizia | Idaho Falls, ID
Robbie Monsma | Denver, CO
Erin Moore | Bellingham, WA
Mary Moran & Dennis Silva | Moab, UT
Rodney Morgan | Steamboat Springs, CO
Denise Moss | Carbondale, CO
Alexander Muir | Chicago, IL
D. Munro | Rockville, MD
Ari Murdock | Portland, OR

Kirstin Neff | Denver, CO
Maria Nemethy | Salt Lake City, UT
Jeff Odefey | Grass Valley, CA
Rebecca Oertel | Los Alamos, NM
Dan O’Keefe | Vashon, WA
Rebecca O’Neil | Portland, OR
Deanna Parker Kent | Goldendale, WA
Hylah Patton | Charlotte, VT
Elizabeth Payton | Boulder, CO
Mark Personius | Bellingham, WA
Jack & Sharon Petersen | Glenwood Springs, CO
Daniel Phillips | Sterling, VA
Miranda P. | Olympia, WA
Joseph Potts | Tallahassee, FL
Stephen Powell | Central, SC
Myron & Lavona Price | Dove Creek, CO
Felicia Probert | Santa Fe, NM
Susan Putnam | Aurora, CO
Bill & Jane Quinn | Bozeman, MT
Mayra Radzinski | Dripping Springs, TX
Randall Rasmussen | Albany, OR
Molly Redmond & Steve Ring | Roseville, MN
Deb Reimann | Montrose, CO
Mark Resetarits | Salt Lake City, UT
Lynn K. Richardson | East Lansing, MI
Rio de la Vista | Monte Vista, CO
Andy Robinson | Plainfield, VT
Rhonda Robles | Jackson, WY
Roger | Palmer Lake, CO
Don Rogers & Paula James | Ridgway, CO
Ronald Rogers | Bend, OR
Jane Ronca-Washburn | Bellingham, WA
Bill Ross | Louisville, CO
Thomas Rottler & Margie Mulligan | San Diego, CA
Troy Ruiz | Colorado Springs, CO
Sarah Ryba | Durango, CO
Derek Ryter | Durango, CO
Peter Salter | Lincoln, NE
Richard Sanders | Boise, ID
Richard & Kathlee Sayre | Los Alamos, NM
Liz Schackmann | Boise, ID
Sarah Schanz | Colorado Springs, CO
Lois Schiffer | Washington, DC
William Schmidt | Eureka Springs, AR
Erica J. Schneider | Littleton, CO
George Schovajsa | Hotchkiss, CO
Faye Schrater & Dick White | Durango, CO
Jennifer Schwartz | Avalon, NJ
Turko & B.J. Semmes | Atascadero, CA
Maura Shannon | Oakland, CA
Mark Shapley | Pocatello, ID
Joel Sholtes | Grand Junction, CO
Bob C. Sivinski | Santa Fe, NM
Douglas Slaton | Burlingame, CA
Mark E. Slovak | Bozeman, MT
Courtney G. Smith | San Francisco, CA
Cheryl & Brian Smith | Richland, WA
Virginia Smith | Corrales, NM
Ann Smith | Portland, OR
Kendra Smith-Howard |
Albany, NY

Chris Snell | Ridgway, CO
Gary Snider | Lakeside, AZ
Martha Somers | Flagstaff, AZ
Douglas Sporn | Placitas, NM
Adam & Anneliese Steel | Louisville, CO
Emily Steinmetz | Chestertown, MD
Muriel Strand | Sacramento, CA
Steve Strom | Sonoita, AZ
Jim Stubblefield | Hamilton, MT
Gary & Cindi Stuckey | Belfast, ME
Louise Suhr | Seattle, WA
Cody Sullivan | Washington, DC
Priya Sundareshan | Tucson, AZ
Susan Swanberg | Tucson, AZ
Steve Swanson | Glenwood Springs, CO
Beth Szwiec | Fountain Hills, AZ
Kirk & Nancy Taft | Gig Harbor, WA
Michael Tanksley | Woodinville, WA
Eric G. Thiel | Ketchum, ID
Tim & Robin Thompson | Avon, CO
Ben Thompson | Durango, CO
George & Lee Thornton | Oroville, WA
Gene Tison | Santa Fe, NM
Stuart Todd | Eugene, OR
Luis Torres | Santa Cruz, NM
Marjorie True | Paonia, CO
Bruce Tsuchida | Honolulu, HI
Jill Turner | Albuquerque, NM
Michael Turner | Bend, OR
Rebecca Valasek | Boise, ID
Elizabeth A. VanHorn | San Rafael, CA
Susan & Mark Vaniman | Hotchkiss, CO
Jesse Venable | Fairbanks, AK
Russell Volksen | Sacramento, CA
Gemma Waaland | Davis, CA
Marilyn Walker | Boulder, CO
Louis Warren | Davis, CA
Nick Waser & Mary Price |
Tucson, AZ, and Gunnison, CO
Mike & Jane Washington | Park City, UT
William Wehner | Colorado Springs, CO
M.P. Weidman | Boulder, CO
Shannon Welch | Sandy, UT
Michael Welsh | Greeley, CO
Tyson Wepprich | Corvallis, OR
Dale Werkema | Corvallis, OR
Terry M. Whitaker | Fort Collins, CO
Brooks White | Santa Fe, NM
Nicole Whiting | Berkeley, CA
Larry Wiesner | Minneapolis, MN
Kale Williams | Oakland, CA
Sharon Wilson | Homer, AK
Kent Winterholler | Park City, UT
Katie Woodward | Park City, UT
Dave Worley | Reno, NV
Susan Yates | Kirkland, WA
Glenn Yocum & Emelie Olson | Taos, NM
Rebecca Young | Carbondale, CO
Thomas Zaworski | Tempe, AZ
Jennifer Ziegler & Todd Cedarholm | Victor, ID
Kent Zimmerman | Port Townsend, WA



“Jim Robbins’ article ‘Crying Wolf: Restoring the “Rapacious Predator” to the Rockies’ was written 14 years before the wolf was reintroduced to

Yellowstone. As is usual in a HCN article, it was substantive, interesting and ultimately effective. We can’t point to it alone for the successful reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone, but it is that sort of in-depth reporting that educates a public still fuzzy on the actual issues. Armed with the sort of information HCN provides, the public can make much better policy decisions for its public lands.”

—Mark Harvey, Former HCN intern and board member

Gordy & Tina Sanders | Coeur d'Alene, ID
 John Santangini | Denver, CO
 Susan P. Schaezel | Denver, CO
 Tim & Anne Schaffner | Tucson, AZ
 Marshall Schecter | Denver, CO
 Alan G. Schmidt | Silverthorne, CO
 Nat Scholz | Langley, WA
 Sara Scoles-Sciulla | Las Vegas, NV
 Tom & Anne Scott | San Diego, CA
 Don Shaff | Boise, ID
 Edwin Shaw | Camano Island, WA
 Robert Shedd | Denver, CO
 Kathy Shimata | Honolulu, HI
 Clinton & Rosita Shormaker | Castle Rock, CO
 Susan Skinner & Tom Duncan | Astoria, OR
 Dan Slack | Centennial, CO
 Peter Slattery | Salinas, CA
 Stephen King | San Francisco, CA
 Robert Spitz | Santa Fe, NM
 Patricia Spoerl | Oro Valley, AZ
 Francis Stanton | Madison, WI
 Tory Starr | Sacramento, CA
 David Steensen & Karen Griffin | Medford, OR
 Alan L. Stewart | Bellingham, WA
 Dean Stoker | Walnut Creek, CA
 Roger Stokes | Aurora, CO
 Jenefer Stowell | Bolinas, CA
 Sharon L. Strachan | Berkeley, CA
 Bill Sutherland & Judy Gilbert | Crestone, CO
 Mary Swanson & Peter Murray | Emigrant, MT
 Ray Temple | Salem, OR
 Diana F. Tomback | Denver, CO
 James & Gael Treible | Danville, CA
 Judith Turley | Santa Fe, NM
 Peter Tymstra | Tiburon, CA
 Ren Udall | Tucson, AZ
 Jim Ulvestad | Wallkill, NY
 Mark Valentine | San Francisco, CA
 Don Van Wie | Nederland, CO
 Stephen Villano | Denver, CO
 Vintage Homes of Denver | Littleton, CO
 Patricia Walter | Albuquerque, NM
 Gates Watson | Missoula, MT
 Mike Webb | Boise, ID
 Rex & Judy Wells | Sparks, NV
 Anne & Dennis Wentz | Bozeman, MT
 Joyce Westerbur | Alto, NM
 Charles White | Denver, CO
 Peter Wilcock | Logan, UT
 Keith & Dolores Willett | Stillwater, OK
 Frank S. Wilson | Portland, OR
 Thatcher Wine | Boulder, CO
 John C. Wise | Ashland, OR
 Earl Withycombe | Sacramento, CA
 Randy & DAndre Worrall | Ashton, ID
 David Yamamoto | Superior, CO
 Homer Yates | Portsmouth, OH
 Gregory Young | Cupertino, CA
 Bob Zimmerman | Eagle, CO

FRIEND (\$50-\$74)

James Crowley | San Jose, CA
 Bill Curtsinger | Port Townsend, WA
 Cliff Dahm & Rhea Graham | Placitas, NM
 Dale Dalrymple | San Diego, CA
 Ashley DAntonio | Corvallis, OR
 Tony Davis | Tucson, AZ
 Tim & Sabrina Davis | Indian Hills, CO
 Tony Davis & Joyce Westerbur | Alto, NM
 John Dean | Travelers Rest, SC
 Lisa McManigal Delaney | Paonia, CO
 Rick Derevan | Atascadero, CA
 Ian Descamps | Arlington, MA
 Susan Detweiler | Teton Valley, ID
 Bill Dinklage & Betsy Phillips | Santa Barbara, CA
 Joseph Doherty | Los Angeles, CA
 Bob Dolloff | Statesboro, GA
 Michelle Dong | Oakland, CA
 David Downer | San Marino, CA
 Russell Draper | Beaverton, OR
 Myrl Duncan | Topeka, KS
 Bre Eagleson | Laguna Niguel, CA
 Ebisch Law Firm | Lakewood, CO

HCN COMMUNITY

Reflecting on the 1980s



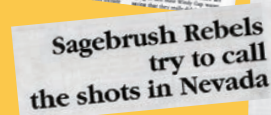
"I've always thought that one of HCN's best, most ambitious and informative projects was its 1986 four-part series 'Western Water Made Simple,' which lays out the history of water development in the West, the big players and the small, and the state of affairs in the mid-1980s. It sweeps from the Colorado River Delta in Mexico and Imperial Valley in California to the remote upper reaches of the Missouri River in North Dakota. The fourth issue focused on the Colorado River and led off with some of the most interesting graphics, 'The Colorado River as Plumbing.' The series was later published as a book that I still have."

—Dan Luecke

HCN board member, 1994-2010

"Ed Quillen's glossary of water terms 'What size shoe does an acre-foot wear' still makes me laugh out loud. To point:

'ACRE-FOOT: The amount of water required to cover one acre, which is about the size of a football field, or 0.40468564 hectare, to the depth of one



foot, about the length of a football shoe, or 30.48 centimeters — that is, about 325,848.882718339 gallons or 1,233.43773084702 steres. Most popularly explained as the amount of water an average family of four uses in one year, but this definition is too fluid; only in desert regions is it appropriate."

—Betsy Marston

HCN editor since 1983, who now writes "Heard around the West"

"Reading the 1987 story 'Two views of Allan Savory' — about an outspoken proponent of public lands grazing, known as the 'Guru of Grass' — showed me that *High Country News* wasn't afraid to challenge orthodoxies. It made me want to read HCN and to be a part of it."

—Florence Williams

Former HCN intern and current board member



WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! Please share your memories and favorite HCN stories from the 1990s and we may post them here! hcne.ws/my-west

FAREWELL, BRIAN

High Country News Editor-in-Chief Brian Calvert is leaving the organization after six years on staff.

Brian was instrumental in creating HCN's new look and our broader vision of a publication that "shines a light on all the complexities of the Western U.S." He led the effort to put more editorial staff in the field, created the Indigenous Affairs desk, and expanded coverage of communities of color that too rarely found their way into our pages. Brian, a longtime journalist and a poet, mentored many of our current editorial staff, and we wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

We hope to have a new editor in place by the first of the year. Meanwhile, veteran journalist Katherine Lanpher will serve as our interim editor.



Brian Calvert and Contributing Editor Ruxandra Guidi speak to HCN readers at an event in Tucson, Arizona. **Luna Anna Archey / HCN**

GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP!

That membership you gave me fits perfectly!

**LEARN.
GROW.
EXPLORE.
PROTECT.**

Call us to set up a gift membership for your favorite Broad or Bro.

www.greatoldbroads.org • 970-385-9577

Open Daily

970.247.1438

960 MAIN AVE
DURANGO, CO

**maria's
Bookshop**

Bluebird Grain Farms

SOIL MATTERS.
Nutrient dense organic grains
Monthly CSA options delivered to your door
Visit us at www.bluebirdgrainfarms.com

The Hok [hawk]
Inspired by the traditional skis and skiers of the Altai Mountains. Ease of use, continuous travel, simplicity, and fun. For the wanderer in all of us.

altai skis

Available on the web and in specialty shops around the country.
www.altaiskis.com and blogging at www.skishoeing.com



Model: Hornet

Experience a handmade hybrid longbow designed for the purist seeking the true challenge of the hunt. Every MJS Archery longbow is elegant and made of the finest materials. The MJS Hornet is accurate, light in the hand, and is an easy shooting bow having no stacking or handshock. Options available. Each bow is handmade to order.

mjsarchery.com

**A more comfortable,
more secure wallet.**



MADE WITH
patience
IN MAINE

\$55

*with free shipping
for the holidays*

**THE ROGUE FRONT POCKET WALLET
IN GENUINE MOOSE LEATHER**

Bulky, rectangular wallets don't fit front pockets like they should. To give you a better fit and a more comfortable day, we reimagined what a wallet could look like. Our Front Pocket Wallet is one quarter inch thick, with a rounded profile to perfectly fit the front pocket of your favorite jeans. The bifold design holds currency, up to 12 cards, and is made from remarkable moose leather.

ROGUE-INDUSTRIES.COM

1-800-786-1768

EST. **ROGUE** 2007
INDUSTRIES
HANDCRAFTED LEATHER GOODS

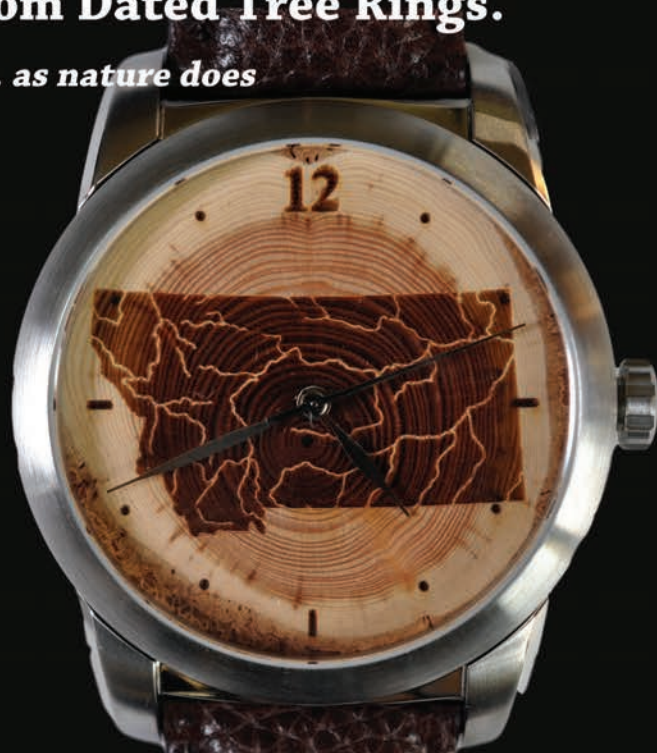
Fine Pens & Watches Crafted from Dated Tree Rings.

Made in Montana; See time... as nature does



**Personalize your pen or watch with a custom design,
or a birth or anniversary year.**

Tree Ring Co. treeringpens.com; 406.493.1490



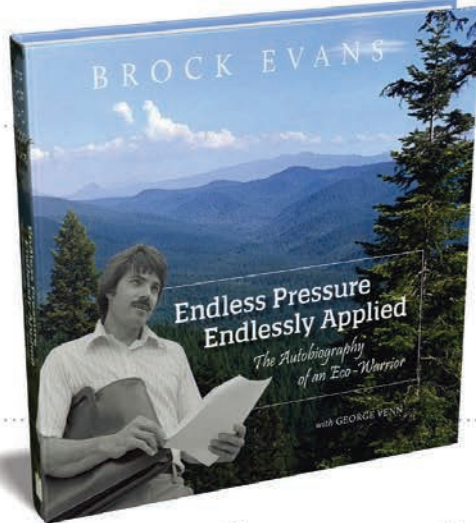
Rivers through Time

choose a watch w/ your state

“Brock Evans, a legendary figure in the environmental movement...”

He’s been a leader in achieving protection of Hells Canyon, Boundary Waters Wilderness, and many other natural areas around the country....”

—BYRON KENNARD, *You Can’t Fool Mother Nature* (2020)



Endless Pressure, Endlessly Applied highlights and documents Brock Evans’ 50-year career as a leader in the environmental movement. These nearly 500 pages form a unique 80-year autobiographical collage pieced together from three main sources: stories, documents, and photos. These sources come together to create a new whole—a rich and complex place to understand and appreciate Brock Evans’ life and work.

ORDER YOUR LIMITED EDITION COPY TODAY*

Endless Pressure, Endlessly Applied: The Autobiography of an Eco-Warrior by Brock Evans with George Venn
Hardback, ISBN: 978-1-946970-02-2, \$85.00 **SALE \$80.00*** • Paperback, ISBN: 978-1-946970-03-9, \$75.00 **SALE \$70.00***

Published by Wake-Robin Press • 492 pages (10.75” x 10.25”) with over 100 color and black-and-white photographs

*SALE PRICES are valid on all orders placed on or before November 24, 2020 • Net Proceeds Donated to Environmental Groups

For more information or to place an order, please visit:



WWW.WAKEROBINPRESS.COM/ENDLESS

TITANSTRAPS®

STRAP INTO ACTION — FAST, EASY, SECURE TIE-DOWNS



TITANSTRAPS.com

PHONE: 406-556-7234 | EMAIL: INFO@TITANSTRAPS.COM | ESTABLISHED IN 2010 BOZEMAN, MT





Archaeology Southwest

Exploring and protecting the places of the past.

Preservation Archaeology. It's more than protecting the past.

It's looking forward as well as back. It's respecting Indigenous history and honoring diverse ways of knowing. And it's joining in the fight to protect archaeological sites and cultural landscapes—at Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante, Greater Chaco, and countless other places under threat of development.

You can help.

When you support Archaeology Southwest, you sustain these places and the collaborative research that helps convey their meaning and value. Join us, and together we can help save these places and share what we're learning.

Donate today.

Enjoy the benefits of membership with your gift of \$25 or more (normally \$35) when you donate before 12/31/2020 at **archaeologysouthwest.org/fund2020** or with the form below. Benefits include a yearlong subscription to *Archaeology Southwest Magazine* and free digital access to all of our back issues.

Bears Ears buttes. IMAGE © JONATHAN T. BAILEY

MAKE YOUR GIFT

By Mail: Archaeology Southwest
2020 Fund Campaign
300 N. Ash Alley
Tucson, AZ 85701

Call: (520) 882-6946 x26

Online: www.archaeologysouthwest.org/fund2020

YOUR INFORMATION

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ (optional)

Email _____ (optional)

PAYMENT INFORMATION

☐ My check is enclosed
payable to Archaeology Southwest

Charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card # _____

Exp. _____ CVV _____

By Carl Segerstrom | Photos by Rajah Bose

FOOD FORWARD

How a co-op of small
farmers and ranchers is taking on
industrial agriculture.





Beth Robinette holds a bunch of beets from Urban Eden Farms, one of the independent producers for Spokane's LINC Foods cooperative.



J

Beth Robinette and her dog Tom move cattle on land near her family's Lazy R Ranch just outside Spokane, Washington. Robinette is a co-founder of the Local Inland Northwest Cooperative, or LINC Foods.

JUST OVER A YEAR AGO, on a brisk late September day in Spokane, Washington, two medium-sized cargo trucks backed up to the open garage door of a small warehouse in an alley behind a carpet store and a used-car dealer. Inside the warehouse, a forklift beeped incessantly as its operator stacked pallets of cardboard boxes full of meat, cheese and produce onto the trucks' lowered loading gates.

A farmer drove up in a faded red minivan. He unloaded bags and boxes of crisp red, orange and yellow bell peppers and tomatoes as big as softballs, the last in a procession of morning deliveries from farmers to the warehouse of the Local Inland Northwest Cooperative, or LINC Foods. The co-op is a marketplace, an online and physical hub where restaurants, schools, grocery stores, hospitals and individual shoppers can order produce and other food from small farmers in the region instead of relying on huge wholesalers.

Beth Robinette, one of LINC's co-founders, checked to make sure orders were complete. Then the trucks pulled out of the alley. One headed south toward the college towns of Moscow, Idaho, and Pullman, Washington. The other went east, to restaurants and health food stores in Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls, Idaho, before returning to Spokane to zigzag between businesses and schools.

The smooth operation that morning was a far cry from LINC's early days. In the summer of 2014, when the co-op was just getting started, Robinette and LINC co-founder Joel Williamson didn't have their own warehouse. Instead, the two received produce in an alley behind a downtown motel. They'd wait next to a dumpster, "hoping for someone

to throw us some carrots out of the back of their car so we could heap them into the back of Joel's Scion," Robinette said. Today, the co-op has nine employees and sells food from about 50 producers.

LINC is part of a growing nationwide network of local food companies that work with small farmers to help them reach bigger markets. These so-called food hubs allow producers to spend less time marketing and selling at venues like farmers markets and more time growing the food itself. LINC is unusual in that, unlike most food hubs, it is cooperatively owned by the workers who run it and the farmers who grow the produce it sells.

Food hubs like LINC serve as a breakwater against the rising tide that has been threatening — and often drowning — local farmers for five decades. That tide is powered by several factors: food industry

consolidation driven by international trade policies, lax enforcement of monopoly protections and federal subsidies that favor big farms at the expense of small growers.

Early this year, before the coronavirus pandemic began, LINC was growing steadily. It was able to offer locally grown fresh food year-round, including dairy and meat products, wheat and barley, and vegetables such as beets and purple potatoes, making the co-op a feasible alternative to supermarkets and industrial food suppliers. Then, in a single week in March, LINC, like so many other businesses, was abruptly and completely upended. Robinette and Williamson and their growing team faced the greatest challenge yet to the idea that a small co-op can help remake the food system of an entire region.

TWENTY MINUTES WEST of Spokane, in the Channelled Scablands — a sculpted landscape of basalt buttes and winding troughs carved by massive floods during the last ice age — is the Lazy R Ranch, the family spread that Robinette and her father, Maurice, run together. The term “scablands” does not evoke an environment hospitable to farming, but this unique region is dotted with islands of loess, a windblown silt that makes up some of the most fertile soil in the world. On the hills of loess, farmers plow extensive golden wheat fields; in the channels, where there’s less topsoil, ranchers run cattle. The Lazy R, which stretches over 800 acres of gently rolling hills, low-lying ponds and rock outcroppings ringed by ponderosa pines, lies in such a channel. The Robinettes raise cattle and a small flock of sheep; Beth Robinette lives in a house overlooking a pond full of cattails, while her parents live down a gravel road on another section of the ranch.

Between LINC and the Lazy R, Robinette stays busy. She is an affable woman, self-effacing and quick-witted, with a subtle gravity that draws people toward her.

Her tapestry of tattoos speaks to her relationship with food — one side of her forearm is inked with the silhouette of a cow divided into butcher cuts, the other with an intricately drawn beet. The morning I accompanied her to the co-op’s warehouse, she had already squeezed in a handful of ranch chores, reporter in tow: She’d fixed a switch in her parents’ well, rounded up a few escaped cows, mended a section of fence and moved her sheep to new grass with the aid of her overzealous border collie, Tom.

In the mid-1990s, when Robinette was in elementary school, Maurice Robinette began practicing a grazing strategy called holistic management. The idea is to mimic the natural relationship between migratory herds of grass-chewing animals like bison and the food they rely on. Instead of letting their cattle roam the entire ranch, the Robinettes move the animals to a different small pasture every few days, giving the grass behind them a chance to regrow. Since then, the Robinettes have seen healthier soil and more grass in their pastures. Those changes, plus others that have allowed them to sell beef directly to consumers rather than sending their cattle to industrial feedlots and meat processors, first steadied and then expanded the family’s profits.

LINC’s co-founder, Joel Williamson, also grew up in an agricultural family. But around the same time the Robinettes switched to holistic management, Williamson’s grandfather and father were closing their own business, a nearly 80-year-old flower-growing operation. “I was 16, it was 1998, the family business was failing, my parents got divorced,” Williamson told me. “It was like this idyllic childhood just crashing down.” What was once the family farm is now rows of aluminum mini-storage units.

We were sitting on bar stools in a corner of The Grain Shed, another cooperative that Williamson co-founded with a group of

bakers, growers and brewers who are reviving ancient grains and crafting obscure beers. (Like most small producers, including many of LINC’s farmers, Robinette and Williamson work multiple hustles to make ends meet.) It was February, a few weeks before the pandemic precluded such get-togethers, and a crowd buzzed around us. Williamson told me about how, when the family’s flower business closed, his grandfather chalked it up to foreign competition and higher operating costs brought on by federal policy. “They couldn’t have done a better job if they’d planned to destroy an industry,” he told the Spokane *Spokesman-Review* at the time. “Our government doesn’t give a darn is what it amounts to.”

The consolidation of American agriculture and the loss of economically viable small farms began in the wake of World War II. Nitrogen left over from bomb-making was put to use as fertilizer on increasingly mechanized, large, single-crop farms. Advances in agricultural equipment meant bigger, more expensive machines operated over increasingly vast tracts of land, and Cold War fears of nuclear disaster made producing shelf-stable food a priority. Federal farm investments focused on staples like corn, wheat, soy and rice that could be grown on a massive scale.

During the last two and a half decades, lawmakers poured hundreds of billions of federal dollars into large-scale farming of these crops; meanwhile, small, diversified farms were left with the dregs. Commodity payments — subsidies designed to keep farms in business and produce a steady supply of staple crops — make up the majority of taxpayer-funded agriculture aid. Between 1995 and 2019, nearly 80% of those payments went to the top 10% largest farms in the country, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture data compiled by the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit dedicated to environmental health.

In the late 20th century, the rise of neoliberal economic poli-

During the last two and a half decades, lawmakers poured hundreds of billions of federal dollars into large-scale farming of crops such as corn, wheat, soy and rice; meanwhile, small, diversified farms were left with the dregs.

cies increased competition among farmers. International trade pacts like the North American Free Trade Agreement removed tariffs and helped give rise to a truly worldwide agricultural system — pitting producers in places like Spokane against those in countries that offered both cheaper labor and better growing conditions for certain crops, such as tomatoes and flowers.

Up until a couple generations ago, Spokane was the focal point of the regional food system. Before the area was colonized and Northwest rivers dammed, the waterfall at the center of what is now downtown was an important location for tribal nations to gather and harvest salmon. Later, the city became a commercial hub. From the 1910s to the 1960s, independent vendors sold local produce at the Washington Market, a two-story brick building with awnings that stretched over the street on warm summer days. But as the city suburbanized and large distributors and chains claimed a bigger share of the market, communal downtown venues disappeared; the Washington Market became a specialty food store shortly before it burned down in 1978. Though LINC's transactions take place on an online cloud, its purpose is very similar to those brick-and-mortar produce markets. "It's a new way of doing a really old thing," Robinette said.

That day in The Grain Shed, the smell of bread toasting in the residual heat of the previous night's fire filling the café, Williamson talked about the history of the building, located in Spokane's newly hip South Perry District. Decades before he and his business partners renovated it in 2018, the café was a corner store, where a local courier would pop in with fresh flowers from Williamson's family's greenhouse. Now, that kind of market is a rare find. "As stores became chains and those chains started to buy in larger quantities ... all of a sudden it's cheaper to buy from thousands of miles away than here," he told me, maintaining eye contact so

intense that it drowned out the many distractions of the loud café. "That was kind of the downfall of our industry."

THE CONSOLIDATION of the agricultural system has made food cheaper and corporations richer. It's also driven family farms out of business. In the 1950s, the United States had nearly 3 million farms smaller than 50 acres; now, there are fewer than 900,000. Today, the majority of U.S. cropland is on farms larger than 2,000 acres, and many of the remaining small farms produce little in food or sales. At a dairy expo in Wisconsin last year, Sonny Perdue, the secretary of Agriculture, put it bluntly: "In America, the big get bigger and the small go out," he said. An editorial in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* called his speech "Darwinian thinking at its most brutal, with small, struggling farmers selected for extinction by a system that sees no place for them."

Most of the farms in the LINC cooperative are just a few acres in size and run entirely by family members. Larger commercial farms, especially those that grow fruit and vegetables that have to be hand-picked, depend on seasonal workers. The labor of migrant and immigrant farmworkers, most of them from Mexico, underwrites the growing wealth and power of big agriculture in the United States.

About half of those workers lack legal immigration status, according to U.S. Department of Labor data. (Other sources estimate the real number may be as high as 70%.) That leaves them with limited power to stand up to abuses in one of the deadliest industries in the United States — one that became even deadlier after COVID-19 outbreaks hit food processing plants and slaughterhouses starting this spring. As summer rounded into fall and wildfire smoke blotted out the sun, farmworkers in eastern Washington continued to labor with no employer-provided protection from the hazardous air. "My employer cares less about

its employees than it does about making sure that we are working, whether we feel sick or not," said "Mr. Gonzalez," a farmworker who used a pseudonym in a September interview with *The Counter*, a nonprofit newsroom that investigates the food system.

Despite the disadvantages laborers face, collective action led by Latino and Indigenous workers has helped improve conditions and pay in Washington's farming industry. In 2018, seasonal workers with H2-A visas walked off the job and filed labor complaints, leading to some payouts and a court settlement in favor of the laborers. And this year, in response to the hazards of COVID-19, a string of wildcat strikes in the Yakima Valley helped apple packing-house workers secure better pay and working conditions.

Industrial farming also exploits the environment, which is unable to collectively bargain for a better deal. Agriculture is responsible for one-tenth of the United States' greenhouse gas emissions, and agricultural runoff is the main source of pollution in the nation's unhealthy rivers and lakes. LINC's member farms distinguish it from industrial agriculture: Only a handful of the co-op's larger farms are big enough to employ anyone beyond the owners' families, and those few have educational on-farm internships and hire seasonal labor at minimum wage. Furthermore, because of the modest size of LINC's farms, most are worked by hand or small machines rather than massive tractors, which helps reduce runoff and boost soil productivity.

LINC's producers are organized into several guilds — grain growers, fruit and vegetable farmers, livestock and dairy ranchers, and processed-food makers — that meet annually to share knowledge and compare best practices. Together, they agree on the co-op's standards, such as the proper conditions for keeping animals or how pesticides can be used. The fruit and vegetable guild, for example, has banned synthetic

pesticides entirely. New producers can join with the approval of LINC's board, a membership fee and a pledge to uphold the growing practices of the co-op.

LAST WINTER, LINC outgrew its downtown warehouse and moved into a new one, in an industrial park just east of Spokane. When I met Robinette there in February, she greeted me like an old friend, with a warm hug. Big rigs and smaller delivery trucks were lined up in rows alongside nearby warehouses and railroad tracks; inside the building, food-safety manuals lined the walls, and whiteboards were cluttered with meeting notes. Back outside after a quick tour, Robinette checked that the roll-down door on a sparsely loaded delivery truck was secured, then we both climbed into the cab.

Gravel-speckled slush melted in the median as we joined cars and trucks humming along Interstate 90 under low gray clouds. Our first stop was a food-processing business housed in an old red farm building, where Robinette traded a cardboard box filled with heads of cabbage for huge bags of shredded cabbage bound for local restaurants. Next, we visited a strip mall in Post Falls, Idaho, where Robinette picked up a few cases of kombucha. Then we were off to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, to deliver a couple of boxes filled with beets, cheese and cuts of pork through the back-alley basement door of an upscale restaurant.

In the truck, Robinette reflected on the rapid expansion of the co-op, and its growing pains. In the six years since it opened, LINC has nearly doubled its business every year: It started with around \$30,000 in sales in 2014, and is poised to bring in about a million dollars in 2020.

Despite that growth, the co-op generally operates at a loss. Distributing food the way LINC does requires a lot of labor and capital. To stay in business, it depends on federal grants, loans and wealthy investors who have pumped hundreds of thousands



9/14 MONDAY	9/15 TUESDAY	9/16 WEDNESDAY	9/17 THURSDAY	9/18 FRIDAY
11:00 Interview 12:00 USDA pick-up COA 12-3 Deliveries • Empire • Mead	Brian 8-4 Interm. del. Zac 8-4 Pte. warehouse Interim help COA delivery Janel 7:30-3 Interm. pick-up Janel 8-3 Linc Box training start Catholic Char. delivery w/ Interm.	Zac 7-2:30 Janel 11-7 Janel 11-7 Don 12 11:30-12:30 Linc Box pick-up	USDA Pack 8-2:30 2:30-7 Janel 11-7 Beth Janel 11-7 Brian Northwest harvest pick-up @ 2:00	Brian 8:30-11:30 Janel 7:30-5 Interm. delivered Zac 8-5 Interm. delivered Janel 11-7 Linc Box pick-up Beth 11-7 Linc Box pick-up Cath. Char. w/ Interm. Northwest Harvest @ 11 80 to Cath → milk @ 104 to go!
	8-4 8-4	8-7 2-7		



of dollars into the company in return for a share of future profits — making investments that, Robinette acknowledged, are motivated more by philosophical than financial considerations, from backers who are less interested in a future windfall than in seeing LINC and its local farmers succeed.

LINC and its investors want the co-op to help expand the local food economy. Its online marketplace functions much like the physical produce markets in downtown Spokane used to, albeit with a digital twist: Farmers submit lists and set the prices of available produce each week, and LINC uploads them to its online marketplace. Next, chefs and cafeteria managers scroll through and make their selections — spicy radishes and tender microgreens in the spring, or juicy tomatoes and crisp apples in early fall.

Farmers benefit because they can access a large market without having to maintain business relationships with individual restaurants, deliver to multiple locations or staff a farmers market booth. For buyers, the co-op offers the convenience of a one-stop shop: They can place bigger orders than a single small farm could fill, and purchase a wide variety of local produce in one place.

LINC has been a boon for Gonzaga University, a private Jesuit school in downtown Spokane. Around the same time the co-op was founded, Gonzaga publicly pledged to source at least 20% of its food from what it described as “ecologically sound, fair and humane, and local and community-based providers,” by 2020. Last year, produce from LINC accounted for more than a quarter of that 20%,

Scenes from LINC Foods in Spokane Valley, Washington: Brian Estes moves a pallet of onions at the LINC Foods warehouse; Beth Robinette and Estes load boxes bound for Northwest Harvest; Janel Davisson hands off a customer's LINC Box, a weekly assortment of food customers can pick up, in a parking lot in South Spokane; Robinette checks her messages against the scheduling board at the LINC warehouse (clockwise from upper left).

and Gonzaga reached its food sustainability goal a year early.

Jim Simon, who leads Gonzaga's campus sustainability efforts, has seen the benefits of LINC both in his work and on his breakfast plate. “I eat a lot of eggs, and you can see and taste the difference,” Simon said of the eggs he buys from the co-op, which also sells a weekly food box. “It gives you pause when you think about it. Why am I buying a higher volume at the store when I can get better quality from local farmers?”

AS LINC EXPANDS the market for local producers, the co-op's employees and founders are asking themselves how to make their food available to more people. LINC's products are expensive. Robinette doesn't harbor any illusions about what that means. “In general, our

customer is a more affluent person who is searching out local food,” she said. Access is often a matter of wealth or privilege, whether that comes from the ability to pay for Gonzaga’s \$46,000-plus annual tuition or a \$20 meal at a restaurant.

This system, in which fresh local food has become a luxury, stems directly from a food economy structured around producing cheap food by undervaluing labor and externalizing and subsidizing the true costs of production. Small-scale organic farming and paying farmworkers a living wage are far more expensive ways to produce food, said Ellie Bomstein, a project manager at The Wallace Center, a nonprofit that provides technical support for food hubs, including LINC. Creating a workable small farm economy and promoting access to healthier fresh foods would require “a big shift in what we subsidize and value,” Bomstein told me.

And enacting that shift would take a monumental effort. Though LINC has grown, it still accounts for only a tiny fraction of Spokane’s food economy: The city’s institutions and restaurants spend about \$2 million on food per day, twice what LINC sells in a year. That’s a huge gap that could only be closed by making serious changes to the structure of agriculture, both locally and nationally. As long as federal spending prioritizes large-scale farming of staple crops and refuses to regulate corporate monopolies, the overall model won’t change.

Building an alternative to the transnational corporate food system may seem like an overly ambitious project popularized by a generation of idealistic young people. But LINC’s founders are clear-headed about the limits of their project, and they aren’t particularly rosy about their ability to affect the kind of structural changes necessary to make the local food system more robust.

Robinette, in particular, takes a pessimistic view. She thinks the global agriculture system is already



Dan Jackson harvests tomatoes grown on his small farm behind his home in Spokane Valley, Washington. Jackson was LINC’s first employee and sells produce through the co-op.

broken — beyond the point of repair, in some ways — citing examples like the climate crisis, habitat destruction and the high suicide rate among farmers. Still, she is motivated by the slight counterbalance LINC provides to the system, simply by producing food in a more ecologically sound way and allowing her to mentor other growers to do the same. “I’ve always felt like this was something to do in case the world doesn’t end,” Robinette said.

That mindset relieves some of the pressure of her ambitions for LINC. Instead of taking on every messed-up aspect of the global food system, Robinette, Williamson and the other co-op members are doing what they can to make the situation in Spokane better. That way, Robinette said, even if LINC fails, some scaffolding will already

be in place. Farmers will still have the peer networks that LINC built; buyers will still know which farmers are producing the food they want; eaters will still remember that the plumpest blueberries they had all year came from a local farm in summer.

In the meantime, LINC has found ways to bring food and knowledge about local agriculture to people in the community. State-funded fresh food programs have paid for outreach to local schools, where kids learn how to shuck ears of corn and what carrots look like when they still have their green leafy tops, before they’ve been shaved down to carrot sticks. And the co-op shares any excess produce it has with local food security initiatives, such as the Catholic Charities Food for All Program. “They’re always looking out for us,” said Jesse Hansen, the program’s co-coordinator.

“We feel like all we can do is do our part,” Williamson told me. Once people and land aren’t seen as separate, but instead as essential and intertwined, a more resilient food system will begin to take root in the Inland Northwest. “You just hope that someday, if everything else is failing, we will have built this system here that’s more self-sustaining, and more just, and a little more sustainable for the environment,” he said.

AS THE COVID-19 pandemic spread across the United States in early 2020, cogs in the industrial food system faltered. Slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants became sources of major coronavirus outbreaks. Farmers who rely on selling their food to schools and restaurants were left without buyers as shelter-in-place orders went into effect. Some plowed under ready-to-harvest crops or left piles of squash to rot in their fields, swirling with flies. Around the country, millions of animals were killed en masse. With empty shelves in grocery stores and supermarkets imposing buying quotas, LINC saw a void it could help fill.

First, though, the co-op had to deal with the pandemic's immediate consequences. When Washington's statewide stay-at-home order went into effect in late March, LINC lost 80% of its business in one week as practically all of its wholesale customers shut down or began operating at a fraction of their normal capacity. "It was an 'oh shit' moment," Robinette said. The company's staff met via conference call to discuss their options. Some advocated for a temporary shutdown, while others wanted to figure out how to stay open and keep getting local food on peoples' plates.

They decided to adapt. But when they ran the numbers, they realized they couldn't afford to keep the full staff working. Three of the co-op's nine workers were furloughed; Robinette cried as she shared the news with them via conference call. "It was so impersonal," she said. "And it's not because they're shitty at their jobs; they're great. We just couldn't make payroll."

Remaining staff pivoted from focusing on sales to institutions to sales to individual shoppers. Within a week, they had created a direct-to-consumer online marketplace to augment their waning wholesale market. Robinette and the workers took turns working self-isolated shifts at the warehouse, breaking down hulking 50-pound bags of potatoes destined for cafeterias into 5-pound bags for stuck-at-home cooks.

The disastrous March put the company in a \$50,000 hole. Dan Jackson, a vegetable farmer and LINC's sales director, took to the local TV news to pitch the new online shop. "We still have farms in our region who have food available," Jackson said. "I think at these times, it's not only 'support your neighbors' and 'support your businesses,' (but also) 'support your farmers.'"

His plea seemed to work. Reduced labor costs, higher price margins from direct sales and the increased necessity of cooking at home meant that, "weirdly, we landed in a really good spot," Robinette said.

Even as items like eggs, meat and flour were being rationed at local grocery stores, LINC had a steady supply. In April, the co-op turned a \$20,000 profit. By May, with the help of a loan from the federal Paycheck Protection Program, LINC was able to rehire its full staff.

But they knew that their new customers couldn't absorb the coming deluge of summer produce. It's a lot easier and more reliable to sell a pallet of food to one restaurant, or a couple pallets to a cafeteria, than it is to market that same food to individuals used to shopping at grocery stores. With uncertainty over who would buy the summer's bounty looming over her, Robinette attended what seemed like an endless stream of conference calls with other food hubs around the state and region. Everyone had the same question: How could they find buyers for their farmers' food?

One of the topics they discussed was a USDA pandemic response initiative: The Farmers to Families Food Box Program, announced in April, which pays food companies to distribute produce, meat and dairy to local food banks. At a time when the co-op staff was already stretched thin troubleshooting its newly launched direct-to-consumer marketplace, they spent long nights writing up their bid for a contract. "It was a huge push," Robinette said. "I haven't pulled an all-nighter since college."

The effort paid off, and LINC won a contract to deliver hundreds of boxes of fresh food per week to three regional food banks. Between mid-May and September, it delivered nearly 8,000 boxes filled with fresh vegetables, fruit and local milk.

In Tekoa, Washington, a small farm town with a population of less than 1,000 nestled in the rolling wheat fields of the Palouse region, fresh and free food from LINC was a crucial resource as the pandemic wore on. The town has just a single small grocery store, and it lost one of its two restaurants during the

COVID-19 crisis. In March, there were about 45 households using the local food pantry, said Connie Marsh, who coordinates with the Council on Aging to distribute food in Tekoa. That number had doubled by August. "Their produce was absolutely vital," Marsh said.

WITH THE AID of the USDA program, LINC was succeeding in more ways than one: Not only was the co-op able to sell all of its farmers' produce during an unprecedented upheaval to the food system, it was also serving a larger and less affluent community at a time when the need was especially urgent. At the end of June, the USDA extended LINC's contract through August. And individual sales were expanding, too. Subscriptions for LINC's weekly food box, a reusable cardboard carton filled with in-season vegetables and fruits — peas in early summer, pears by fall — were up by 240%. The co-op was on pace to sell the most it ever has in a year. "It feels like we're tapping into a new way of doing things," Robinette said.

Then, in July, the USDA announced that distributors would have to submit a new bid if they wanted to continue participating in the food box program. The agency also tightened up the process, adding new requirements; in the initial, rushed rollout, companies with little experience or capacity had ended up winning contracts they couldn't fulfill. Suddenly, LINC's ability to continue stocking community food banks during the pandemic was in doubt.

Meanwhile, the pandemic itself was worsening. COVID-19 cases reached a second and higher peak in July and early August in eastern Washington and North Idaho. It felt like LINC was facing a repeat of the spring, but the season made the situation even more dire: It wasn't the local-food doldrums of March, when fields were just thawing out and there was nothing to sell but stored crops, dry goods, meat and dairy products. Instead, it was late summer, the most bountiful time of year for fresh produce

in the Inland Northwest. Crunchy cucumbers, sweet melons and spicy jalapeños were ready to harvest. Without sales to schools or through the USDA program, it was "heart-wrenching to think about what could happen for farmers," Robinette said. "We'd be turning away thousands and thousands of pounds of produce."

But the relationships that LINC had built among workers, community members and other food organizations proved crucial. The co-op is no longer a drive-by, carrot-toss-in-an-alley operation. Food bank managers reached out to LINC to strategize about how to fulfill the more demanding USDA program requirements and keep their shelves full. The Inland Northwest Farmers Market Association offered to partner with LINC: It would help with the USDA paperwork and food distribution and, in return, tap into the co-op's producer network. "It's the best of both worlds," Robinette said. "We can create a much stronger program than either of us were running separately."

With the clock ticking on the bid deadline, LINC and its new partner got to work. Under the hot August sun, Robinette propped her phone on fence posts at the Lazy R Ranch as she discussed the contract proposal's details over a series of video conference calls. She worked from post to post, stringing barbed wire and pulling it tight with a heavy metal tensioner, building new paddocks for her cattle to graze so the grass could regrow. A few weeks later, the USDA announced that LINC didn't win the contract. Robinette, downtrodden, told me that a lifetime in agriculture had prepared her for disappointment. All she could do was press on.

Then, in early October, a new solution emerged: Spokane County awarded the joint venture half a million dollars to continue supplying local food programs. The bonds LINC had fostered in the community held as firm as a newly strung fence, made strong by a thousand small actions, like ratcheting a tensioner again and again. ☼

Notice to our Advertisers —

You can place classified ads with our online classified system. Visit hcn.org/classifieds. Nov. 12 is the deadline to place your print ad in the December 2020 issue. Call 800-311-5852, or email laurad@hcn.org for help or information.

Business Opportunities

Conservationist? Irrigable land?

Stellar seed-saving NGO is available to serious partner. Package must include financial support. Details: <http://seeds.ojaidigital.net>.

Employment

Caretaker — Two-acre homestead, needing year-round caretaker in northeast Oregon. Contact boyd@eoni.com for details.

Executive Director — Powder River Basin Resource Council, a progressive nonprofit conservation organization based in Sheridan, Wyo., seeks an Executive Director, preferably with grassroots organizing experience, excellent communication and financial management skills, and the ability to problem-solve complex, environmental and socio-political issues. To see a full job description and learn how to apply, go to our website at: <https://www.powderriverbasin.org/prbrc-job-opportunities/>.



Pollinator oasis — Seeking an experienced, hardworking partner to help restore a desert watershed/wetland while also creating a pollinator oasis at the mouth of an upland canyon. Compensation: rustic cabin, an itty-bitty town and joy (if you harbor it). Write to me: C.J. Middleton, General Delivery, Petaluma, CA 94952.

Ruby, Ariz., caretaker — Southern Arizona ghost town seeking full-time caretaker. Contact acuvet43@gmail.com for details. 520-240-8652. acuvet43@gmail.com. rubyaz.com.

Community Organizer — Want to organize people to protect Montana's water quality, family farms and ranches, and unique quality of life with Northern Plains Resource Council? Apply now: northernplains.org/careers.

Executive Director —

The Public Lands Foundation, a nonprofit organization supporting the multiple-use management of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, seeks an experienced leader to assist the PLF in promoting its mission and activities before the BLM, Department of the Interior, Congress and other organizations. This part-time position will also direct and conduct PLF fundraising activities. Detailed qualifications can be found at www.publicland.org. To apply, send an application letter, résumé and three references to apply@publicland.org by Dec. 30, 2020.



Executive Director — Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition, based in Ely, Nev., is looking for a new Executive Director to replace the longtime Executive Director, who is retiring at the end of the year. ENLC is a 501C(3). For the full position announcement, go to the website. 775-289-7974. enlc@sbcglobal.net. www.envlc.org.

Merchandise

Western Native Seed — Specializing in native seeds and seed mixes for Western states. 719-942-3935. www.westernnativeseed.com.

Professional Services

Expert Land Steward — Available now for site conservator, property manager. View résumé at <http://skills.ojaidigital.net>.

Steve Harris, Experienced Public Lands/Environmental Attorney — Comment letters, administrative appeals. Federal and state litigation. FOIA. 719-471-7958. tinyurl.com/y5eu2t6q

Lisa Mackey Photography —

Fine Art Giclée Printing. Photo papers, fine art papers, canvas. Widths up to 44 inches. Art printing by an artist. 970-247-3004. www.lisamackeyphoto.com.



Publications & Books

Chuck Burr's Culturequake.com — Change will happen when we see a new way of living. Thinking to save the world.

Copper Stain — Tales from scores of ex-employees unearth the human costs of an economy that runs on copper. <https://www.oupres.com/books/15051942/copper-stain>.

Ellie Says It's Safe! A Guide Dog's Journey Through Life by Don Hagedorn. A story of how lives of the visually impaired are improved through the love and courage of guide dogs. Available on Amazon.

Real Estate For Rent

Coming to Tucson? — Popular vacation house, furnished, two-bed, one-bath, yard, dog-friendly. Lee: cloler@cox.net. 520-791-9246.

Real Estate for Sale

House for sale — Rare mountain property, borders National Forest, stream nearby. Pumicecrete, solar net metering, radiant heat, fine cabinets, attic space to expand, enclosed patio, garden, wildlife, insulated garage, broadband. 575-776-0024. pvb@taosnet.com.

Historic Hotel For Sale —

Centennial Wyo. Six suites plus two-bed, two-bath apartment. www.themountainviewhotel.com. Make this your home or buy a turnkey hotel. \$600,000. MVH4sale@mail.com.



Adobe home — Passive solar adobe home in high desert of central New Mexico. Located on 10,000-acre cattle ranch. 575-336-1316. sturney@mossyoakproperties.com. NMRanchandHome.com.

Log home in the Gila Wilderness

Beautiful hand-built log home in the heart of the Gila Wilderness on five acres. Please email for PDF of pictures and a full description. 815-684-5411. patiandmichael@gmail.com.

The Crazy Mountain Inn in

Montana offers 11 guest rooms with restaurant in a town-center building on seven city lots. Contact j.maslanik@murphy-business.com for more info and a virtual tour.



Tours and Travel

Canyonlands Field Institute —

Colorado Plateau natural and human history field seminars. Lodge, river, hiking options. Small groups, guest experts. cfimoab.org. 800-860-5262.



SIGNIFICANT GATHERINGS

...look a little different right now.

Announce your upcoming event in this focused advertising marketplace.
January 2021

To reserve, email laurad@hcn.org
HighCountryNews

Consider Us –
Be a Partner
in Justice



**NATIVE AMERICAN
DISABILITY LAW CENTER**

*Celebrating
25 years
of service*

www.nativedisabilitylaw.org
a not for profit 501c3



Spread the News, Take Us Higher

Launch *HCN* into the next 50 years of independent journalism for the West

hcn.org/50-years

HCN

BOB WICK / BLM



Give Curious, Authentic Journalism.

\$12 | for 12 issues + \$2.95 shipping and handling

Visit hcn.org/holidaygift or call 1-800-905-1155.

HCN

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication Title: High Country News
2. Publication No.: 0191-5657
3. Filing Date: Oct. 1, 2020
4. Issue Frequency: 2019 - 22 times per year, bi-weekly skipping one issue quarterly; 2020 - monthly plus one additional issue March 2020
5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 2019/22 issues annually; 2020/12 issues annually
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$37, individual; \$47, institutional
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor
Publisher: Greg Hanscom, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia CO 81428; Managing Editor: Gretchen King, Western Colorado University/Attn Mem, High Country News - Kelley Hall, 600 N. Adams St., Gunnison, CO 81231
10. Owner: High Country News, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None
12. Tax status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
13. Publication Title: High Country News
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: 52.09 September 2020
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:
 - a. Total Number of copies: Avg. no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months/No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
Total No. Copies 30,970/30,678
 - b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Out side the Mail)
 1. Mailed Outside County Paid Subscriptions 26,557/29,087
 2. Mailed In-County Paid Subs. 0/0
 3. Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Dist. Outside USPS 0/0
 4. Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS 2,381/32
 - c. Total Paid Distribution 28,938/29,119
 - d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution by Mail
 1. Outside-County 871/451
 2. In-County 0/0
 3. Other Classes 96/130
 4. Outside the Mail 103/500
 - e. Total Free Distribution 1,070/1,081
 - f. Total Distribution 30,008/30,200
 - g. Copies Not Distributed: 962/478
 - h. Total 30,970/30,678
 - i. Percent Paid 96.43%/96.42%
 16. Electronic Copy Circulation
 - a. Paid Electronic Copies 3,327/3,130
 - b. Total Paid Print + Electronic Copies 32,265/32,249
 - c. Total Print Distribution+Paid Electronic Copies 33,335/33,330
 - d. Percent Paid (Print and Electronic) 96.79%/96.76%

I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.
 17. This Statement of Ownership is printed in the vol 52.09 Nov. 2020 issue of this pub.
 18. I certify that the statements made by me are correct and complete.
s/Kathryn Martinez, Customer Service manager, Oct. 1, 2020.

A photograph of two young children, a girl in a red raincoat and a boy in a green raincoat, both wearing red rubber boots. They are standing in a shallow stream, holding hands and looking down at the water. The background shows a rocky stream bed and lush green trees on a hillside.

WE DEFEND THE WEST



Western Environmental Law Center

We are a nonprofit organization that uses the power of the law to safeguard the public lands, wildlife, and communities of the American West in the face of a changing climate.

Join us at westernlaw.org

The Trump administration has severely undermined the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a vital law that safeguards our environment and communities.

Our savvy legal team is fighting back in court, representing a diverse coalition of environmental justice, recreation, and conservation groups. We are standing up to this administration's destructive attacks on NEPA—please stand with us!



30 years later, the lessons of Redwood Summer

A summer of protest became a turning point in environmental activism.

BY ADAM M. SOWARDS

THIRTY YEARS AGO, thousands of environmentalists answered a call to converge on California's North Coast — a landscape characterized by towering trees nurtured by the coastline's fog and rain — for a summer of resistance. They blocked roads, sat in trees and chained themselves to logging equipment to halt old-growth cutting in what came to be known as "Redwood Summer."

At first, the activists seemed to have failed: Their coalition unraveled, and the timber companies continued their logging plans. Yet, in the long run, Redwood Summer marked a

turning point in environmental activism — one that ultimately helped alter forest management. The episode was part of a multi-pronged challenge to industrial logging that also included more mundane approaches, such as lawsuits and legislation. In the end, it was this combination that brought lasting change.

Much of Redwood Summer targeted a private company, Pacific Lumber, and its vast holdings, including the Headwaters Forest, some 60,000 acres of redwoods near Fortuna, California. Until the 1980s, Pacific Lumber had a reputation for harvesting its forests conservatively, as well as for taking care of its employees, offering them benefits and bonuses. That changed in 1985, when financier Charles Hurwitz used high-risk financing to purchase the company, intending to liquidate the ancient redwoods to pay off debts. The project became an immediate target for environmental activists.

The radical group Earth First! issued the invitation to Redwood Summer. Its blockades, tree-sits and rallies grew in frequency and intensity over the summer of 1990, as did the accompanying shoving matches, screaming confrontations and fistfights between activists and timber workers. The incidents drew public attention to both the conflict and the destructive logging practices. Still, Pacific Lumber pressed forward, logging until legal injunctions stopped them.

Meanwhile, Earth First! faced internal turmoil. One of the group's leading organizers, Judy Bari, had a history of labor organizing and attempted to build solidarity with the loggers, believing they were exploited by the corporation. To support loggers, Bari disavowed tree-spiking, a controversial tactic in which activists drove metal spikes into trees, thereby forcing timber companies to either halt cutting or risk damaging saws and injuring workers. Bari's actions alienated many activists, who thought an alliance with loggers betrayed Earth First! principles.

One of those principles was a deep philosophical argument for biocentrism — the idea that humans and the non-human world hold equivalent moral value, as historian Keith Makoto Woodhouse explains in *The Ecocentrists*. At the end of Redwood Summer, Dave Foreman, one of Earth First!'s founders, left the organization because he felt that social justice should not be part of its mission, writing in the *Earth First! Journal*, "We are biocentrists, not humanists." Bari pushed back: "Earth First! is not just a conservation movement, it is also a social change movement." Such fissures over the proper focus of activism echo in today's debates over the Green New Deal, whose critics regard

issues such as "repairing historic oppression," education and health care access as out of place in climate legislation.

As the radical Earth First!ers quarreled, local environmentalists also tried to stop the company's ramped-up logging. They launched a statewide campaign for a ballot initiative, nicknamed Forests Forever, meant to sustain both forests and the logging industry. The law would have protected some mill jobs by banning raw log exports, provided funds to retrain loggers for different jobs and restructured the state Board of Forestry, which the timber industry had dominated for decades. But it failed to pass in November 1990, gaining only 48% of the vote.

In the subsequent decade, however, activists and policymakers transformed the North Coast anyway. The activists behind the ballot measure studied Pacific Lumber's harvest plans and filed lawsuits when the company violated state conservation laws. Routinely, Pacific Lumber filed timber harvest plans with inadequate environmental assessments — failing, for example, to survey potentially endangered species. When the state Board of Forestry approved the plans anyway, courts stepped in and halted the logging. Eventually, the company grew tired of the relentless protests and lawsuits and, in 1996, it sold the most contested section of the Headwaters Forest to California and the federal government. Meanwhile, court rulings strengthened state laws, such as the California Environmental Quality Act and the Forest Practice Act, that required stronger environmental and species protections and further weakened the corporate cast of the state's Board of Forestry.

Still, assessing Redwood Summer's impact after three decades is complicated. In *Defending Giants: The Redwood Wars and the Transformation of American Environmental Politics*, historian Darren Frederick Speece concluded that Redwood Summer further polarized the timber industry and environmentalists, a legacy that lingers today. The failure to find common cause with workers helped fracture Earth First! and now frequently characterizes environmental politics across industries. But Redwood Summer was also part of a complex set of political and legal strategies that gradually helped transform forestry in California and across the West, especially on private land. Ideology moved radicals, while it took lawsuits and persistent citizen action to move companies and legislatures. ☀

Adam M. Sowards is an environmental historian, professor and writer. He lives in Pullman, Washington.



A protester stands atop a car during an Earth First! blockade of the Fairview timber sale in the Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois. The Fairview occupation was in solidarity with Redwood Summer on the West Coast and the Oka Uprising in Mohawk territory in Canada.. **Orin Langelle / GJEP**



Lauren Crow / HCN

Q&A

DURING THE LATE 19TH and early 20th centuries, both freed and enslaved Black people came to the American West from the South, searching for lives free of the violence and oppression imposed first by slavery, and later by Jim Crow. In California, however, Black people often found equally calculated forms of disenfranchisement and segregation. Yet the state's reputation as progressive persists — despite regular incidents of racist state violence, from the police murder of Stephon Clark to involuntary sterilizations in women's prisons, where Black and brown women are overrepresented.

Historian Lynn M. Hudson's new book, *West of Jim Crow: The Fight Against California's Color Line*, traces the history of discrimination and state violence in California from the period leading up to statehood in 1850 through the post-emancipation Recon-

struction Era. Covering topics such as Ku Klux Klan assassinations, segregation at community pools and schools and the implementation of eugenics, the book catalogues the intellectual and activist history of Black resistance in California. The resulting portrait of anti-Blackness and

Black resistance challenges widely held beliefs about the history and sources of progressivism in the West and points toward an activism based in mass movements and mutual aid, such as today's Black Lives Matter movement.

High Country News recently spoke with Hudson about the

connection between early Black activism in California and today's Black-led movements, the different strategies activists used to counter racist pseudoscience and the stubborn persistence of California's progressive mythology.

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Your book offers a very sober look at Reconstruction as it relates to the Western United States, and specifically these dreams Black Americans had of a better future in the West. What drew you to start your research in Pasadena?

It's a personal story, because I grew up there and was a child when Pasadena was being sued for not adhering to *Brown v. Board of Education* and (for) maintaining segregated schools. So, while I was too young to really understand the lawsuits, I was a product of the school integration that resulted. I was in the fourth grade and went

The story of Jim Crow in California

A new history of the state traces early civil rights battles spearheaded by Black activists.

BY CASSIE DA COSTA

from having a very white-only experience to learning about Black history and having Filipino friends and Mexican American friends.

I also learned about the way that segregation continued to operate — I heard from my teachers and my parents about how segregated the municipal pool was and that Black people couldn't swim there. I wasn't sure about the significance of that specific history until I went to the Library of Congress and found all this correspondence about integration between Pasadena NAACP leaders — mostly women — and Thurgood Marshall (the first African American Supreme Court justice). That really blew my mind because when you hear stories growing up, you're not always sure about how they fit into the national context. At school, you learn about sit-ins in the South, you might learn about Chicago, but you don't hear stories about Los Angeles or about the West.

One of the central focuses in *West of Jim Crow* is on the legal methods Black Americans, particularly women, used to challenged discriminatory practices such as segregation — and their awareness of the limits to that approach. Do you see any connection to present-day movements led by Black women in California, like *Critical Resistance*, *Black Lives Matter* and *Moms 4 Housing*?

Yes. Many people tend to think that the protest movements that we're looking at today are a new thing, and that moms didn't

organize before. I try to show in my book that Black women were in the forefront of all of these organizations — of anti-lynching movements, of the anti-Klan movement.

Charlotta Bass (the first Black woman to be nominated for vice president) led the movement to get the Klan out of LA and out of California. Delilah Beasley (a historian and journalist) worked to stop lynching in the state. Those women were very different from each other: Bass was a socialist and communist, the editor and publisher of the *California Eagle* (a Black newspaper based in Los Angeles). Beasley was from the generation earlier; the politics of respectability would have weighed heavily on her. But both saw the limits of strictly legal strategies to end lynching or to get the Klan out of California.

I do see a lot of similarities in the work that African American women are doing today on the front lines, in the organizations you mentioned. And the women who started Black Lives Matter are very, very aware of class, as Bass was, and very aware of gender and discrimination around queer identity and trans identity. They take an intersectional approach. Now, that's obviously not the language that Beasley or Bass, or even NAACP President Edna Griffin, would have used, but they were very aware that these kinds of restrictions were hitting African Americans and other communities of color in different ways.

You write about different approaches taken by Black activists to fight issues like segregation and racist justifications for them. For instance, there was the question of how Black people should respond to the language of eugenics. How did these actions play out publicly among Black people?

African Americans were well aware of the scientific racism that was shaping their chances for citizenship in the 19th century. I was fascinated to find in the San Francisco Black press these references to scientific racism in the 1860s and records from Black conventions where attendees, mostly men, spoke out against it. The literature oftentimes focuses on the experiments being done on slaves or Black citizens, but in my book, I'm also trying to show that African Americans were pushing back against scientific racism and violence beginning in antebellum America.

When I got to (events) like the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, I found something very different. The ways that women fought back against that ideology that Black women were unfit to be mothers — and were intellectually, socially and physically inferior — was to really take up space at that parade celebrating Black domesticity and Black womanhood, showing off their physical beauty and social respectability by adorning floats with flowers and putting school children on them with American flags. ... That was also a counter-discourse, but not in the way historians oftentimes expect.

Historically, there has been a persistent idea that California is progressive in comparison to the rest of the country, particularly the South, beginning from its creation as a "free" state, where slavery was illegal. But when you look a bit deeper, anti-Black oppression has been legal in

California throughout its state history, along with other forms of racist oppression, such as anti-Indigeneity, that continue today. You write about this contradiction, and how free Black people who came to California in the 19th century pushed against this mythology. Where was it coming from, this desire to make California not merely just comparatively better, but actually live up to its values?

That's an important theme in the book, about the expectations held by free Black people traveling to California as well as enslaved people like Biddy Mason (a midwife who successfully petitioned a Los Angeles court for her freedom after being relocated from Mississippi to California), and others. They brought to the state these hopes of freedom because it was a "free" state. For Black people during the Reconstruction Era, their idea of California as a democracy was actually of a working democracy where justice would thrive, as opposed to the places they came from.

I think there's a tendency to read back this progressive mythology. But at the California Constitutional Convention (which coincided with the Fugitive Slave Law's expansion west in 1850) Black men were saying, "This is worse here than being in a slave state." Ruby McKnight Williams, when she's interviewed about her fight against segregation in Pasadena while she was president of the NAACP, said that when she arrived in the '30s, "I didn't see any difference in Pasadena and Mississippi except they were spelled differently." I think we have to take those words seriously.

Today, there's the same tension between seeing California as this progressive land of freedom and then the shortcomings around issues such as citizenship and segregation. African Americans in California continue to push it to live up to their dreams. ☀

"I didn't see any difference in Pasadena and Mississippi except they were spelled differently."

Two narratives, two homes

In *Aphasia*, the language of the internet mirrors one man's divided life in California and Colombia.

BY LILY MEYER

IN THE MID-1990S, THE CHILEAN NOVELIST Alberto Fuguet began championing a globalized, hyper-modern literary sensibility he called McOndo. Rather than pulling from the myths and folklore that influenced well-known writers like Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez, McOndo united Latin American writers who drew inspiration from pop culture and mass media. In a 2001 essay titled “Magical Neoliberalism,” Fuguet wrote that the word McOndo “began as a joke, a spoof of García Márquez’s magical and invented town of Macondo,” the setting of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In Macondo, history was doomed to repeat itself, often through surreal or enchanted means. But in McOndo writing, history hurtles forward. Fuguet and his cohort embraced a “global, mixed, diverse, urban 21st century Latin America” — a fast-paced, vibrant setting, written in colloquial language and symbolized by airports, movie theaters and malls.

In 2020, the internet is, arguably, the most McOndo place imaginable: global and diverse, “hectic and unmanageable,” the stuff of science fiction turned into unavoidable reality. Online, we can project ourselves into new spaces, test-drive new ideas and identities. Transnational existence becomes a possibility, connecting us in spirit to loved ones across borders — a gift, if sometimes a painful one. As Fuguet puts it, the internet is “more than magical.” And if the internet is McOndo, then the Ecuadorian writer

Mauro Javier Cárdenas’ excellent second novel, *Aphasia*, updates Fuguet’s turn-of-the-millennium ideas for the internet age — and an era of booming migration.

Cárdenas grew up in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and attended Stanford in California, where he still lives. He writes in English, but *Aphasia* uses occasional Spanish, and its spirit is one of blending and border collapse. Cárdenas contains this in a narrow plot: The protagonist, Antonio, is a Los Angeles-based data analyst and aspiring author struggling to keep his relationships on track while searching for his sister, Estela, who vanished after a schizophrenic break. Estela’s disappearance and reappearance are *Aphasia*’s main plot points; between them, the narrative shuttles between Antonio’s Californian present and his childhood in Bogotá, Colombia. Many novels have multiple settings and timelines, but in *Aphasia*, the jumps are constant. A single sentence — and Cárdenas’s sentences tend to be long — can start in present-day L.A., hop back a month, then pivot without warning to 1980s Bogotá.

This mixing of space and time is, astonishingly, neither confusing nor frustrating to read. Rather, it feels familiar. Reading *Aphasia* bears similarities to the split reality of living on- and offline. It also echoes the deeper divide of existing between countries, establishing roots in a new place while tending to connections in an old one. Antonio infuses his speech with phrases borrowed from his data-services job, as well as

with bits of Spanish. He conceives of himself as “simultaneously existing in Bogotá (and) inside a cubicle in the financial district of Los Angeles” — a physically impossible life, perhaps, but, in the 21st century, the kind lived by many in the United States, especially in California.

As befits a novel set partly online and using internet-derived language, *Aphasia* takes little interest in the physical aspects of life. *Aphasia* is set primarily in Los Angeles, but aside from its Hollywood-esque self-mythologizing impulses and references to vaguely hippie practices like “constellation therapy,” it could take place anywhere in the urban U.S. Antonio, like his creator, cares little for the off-screen world; “the outside world,” he comments, “barely exists for (me) in retrospect.”

No wonder, then, that he relies on technology to carry him back to Bogotá. Like many emigrants, Antonio depends on family members to tether him to home, but it is his iPhone that lets him figuratively travel there. He imagines trips to Colombia by listening to recordings of his mom, who is also in the U.S., reminiscing about her old life. Cárdenas presents these voice memos in chatty, naturalistic dialogue, providing a valuable companion to Antonio’s internet-infused narration. At one point, Antonio recalls a writing teacher who advised him “against writing sentences that seemed to contain two or more sentences from two or more narratives at once.” Cárdenas himself shirks this fictional character’s advice, presenting these liminal, technological spaces as the site of real, reliable connection — and, therefore, perhaps the most important landscape in Antonio’s life.

In the internet age, many people tell more than one story about themselves, or lead more than one life at once. This is true for teenagers who hide parts of themselves at home but express them online; it’s often true for internet trolls; until we have a COVID-19 vaccine, it will be true for nearly anyone whose work is deemed inessential. It can be especially true for anyone who lives, like Antonio, between countries, cultures or languages. *Aphasia* is a novelistic portrait of the internet’s ability to help us elide geographical and personal borders. It dramatizes our growing ability to occupy multiple narratives at once — and proves that literature itself can do the same. ☀

It echoes the deeper divide of existing between countries, establishing roots in a new place while tending to connections in an old one.

Aphasia

Mauro Javier Cárdenas

208 pages, hardcover: \$26

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.

Love is an act of resistance

Heid E. Erdrich's new award-winning poetry collection, *Little Big Bully*, seeks resilience through human connection.

BY BOJAN LOUIS



IN **LITTLE BIG BULLY**, award-winning writer Heid E. Erdrich (Ojibwe, enrolled at Turtle Mountain) turns to poetry for resilience, using well-crafted imagery, finely tuned language and sharp humor to navigate both stories of individual abuse and systemic oppression — subject matter that, poorly handled, could re-traumatize the writer or reader. Drawing from a lifetime of experience, Erdrich writes about everything from family history, to current events, to cultural appropriation, ultimately reminding readers that caring for ourselves gives us the strength to care for others.

Erdrich has long been an important voice of American Letters, alongside such respected and celebrated Indigenous writers as Joy Harjo, Luci Tapahonso, James Welch and LeAnne Howe. This new collection, a National Poetry Series Award recipient, is a testament to Erdrich's enduring career as a poet and teacher. Her first collection, *Fishing for Myth*, was published in 1997. Since then, Erdrich has not only written and published six other collections of stellar verse, but gone on to edit two anthologies of Native American writing, most recently *New Poets of Native Nations*. Her 2013 book, *Original Local*, celebrates Indigenous food, stories and recipes. The "Author's Notes" Erdrich includes at the end of her books share anecdotes about how each poem came to be, speaking to her determination to give her work additional layers of "intimacy and understanding."

Little Big Bully begins with the poem "How," which asks two central questions: "How did we come to this" — this rigged and damaged society that we have today? And how can Indigenous people claim a self-definition that pushes beyond caricatures and stereotypes? Throughout the collection, Erdrich's lyrical, intimate

poems fight harmful misrepresentations of Indigenous history. The book's title, *Little Big Bully*, is meant as "a passing echo" of the 1964 book (and 1970 movie), *Little Big Man*. A revisionist Western that sought to be sympathetic to Indigenous characters, *Little Big Man* is both celebrated by, and problematic to, Indigenous viewers. Erdrich writes of her interest in Indigenous names "successfully holding contradiction," even if seemingly lost in translation. This can most readily be seen in the poems "Little Big," "Stone Animate" and "We Singular."

The collection addresses the trauma too often inflicted upon one's community, tribal nation, body, or the natural environment. Despite the profound and tough subject matter of her work, Erdrich employs a dark humor that makes her poems songs of resistance; a poem that references the use of banned weapons and force against unarmed people at Standing Rock, for example, is called "Territory Was Not Virgin and Neither Was I (Virgin)."

Erdrich rejects the quick historical amnesia that too often follows insurrection and brutality, normalizing violence. In "Variations True," for instance, Erdrich reflects upon her German great-grandparents, killed in the firebombed town of Pforzheim during World War II. She recounts how commonplace the atrocities of war had become for her family, using long pauses to push readers to question that acceptance: "Normal they said I never knew how many variations of a vision we can spin." Erdrich reminds readers to resist complacency when faced with injustices unfolding today.

What's refreshing about Erdrich's new collection is that it asks questions directly, forgoing the flourishes often seen in contemporary

STONE ANIMATE

Whether creation carved them or not
my hands are some concretion
some tawn of rock washed over
and over in surf until sand encases the glow
of quartz hardness thrust up through earth's
crust
to tumble a hundred million years
and here we reach each other
I reach out with hands that match this skipping
stone
and I think a moment we know each other
and though
for the purposes of art I should I will not let
you go

This poem appears in the book Little Big Bully published by Penguin Random House (2020) and is republished here with the author's permission.

poetry about trauma. Instead, Erdrich experiments with sound and with simple repetition to create emotional complexity. For example, the deliberate repetition in the poem "Not" enacts a language of witness and, eventually, power. The poem's narrator grows up surrounded by incidents of what, as a young girl, she can only understand to be "bad things" happening to other girls and women. The experiences blur together until, as a woman, the speaker finds a way to resist:

Not the girl in the rambler staring out her
window every summer—not allowed out

Not the girl whose dad left his pistol
under the pillow where we jumped on
the bed ...

Not the girl another girl and then another
girl then so many many girls while I was
still a girl

Not the girl but a woman who was not
has not did not would not could not will
not not not

Alongside the darkness of this precarious and frustrating human condition, *Little Big Bully* tells readers, there exists the key to survival: connection. In "Reprieve," she writes, "Now this/ this shimmer// everlasting lake of time// when every child is born ours/ every child mine." The Earth will endure beyond current and historic harms — and, with the resilience that comes from community, so might we. ☀

Little Big Bully

Heid E. Erdrich
112 pages, softcover: \$20
Penguin Books, 2020.

Hunting for myself

A stretch of high Montana sagebrush marks a hunter's late coming-of-age.

BY SARAH KELLER | ILLUSTRATIONS BY SENA KWON

A WEEK AFTER ONE OF THE MOST important relationships of my life imploded, on a sunny November day last year, I went antelope hunting. I'd drawn a tag for my favorite spot, in an area I'll just call the Beaverhead, a stretch of high Montana sagebrush on the edge of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. From afar, the steep, grassy slopes dotted with cattle look like the "harsh Western landscape" of stereotypes, where private ranches and Bureau of Land Management parcels intermingle. But as in many such obscure spots, reality is much richer.

Here, for me, antelope hunting becomes a portal into a world of flushing sage grouse and Brewer's sparrows, golden eagles and elk, a landscape of secret coulees I can sink into, where I can nestle into the sagebrush and lose myself in its fragrance while tracking puffy clouds. The time I've spent in that place, alone and with the people I've loved the most, has marked my late coming-of-age as both a hunter and a human.

Antelope (technically the American pronghorn, but for many hunters, the names are interchangeable) are my favorite ungulate to eat, my least favorite to kill. They are deeply underappreciated in mainstream hunting culture and often dismissed as poor table fare. If someone treats an animal more like a target, it is less likely to receive the field care that this, or any game meat needs: being cleanly dressed and cooled quickly, often with ice. These attitudes and actions can mean the difference between a steak that is tender and flavorful, with a light touch of sage, and one that tastes like a tough hunk of rancid goat. Aging the meat and meticulously butchering it helps, too, and that again requires investment.

I prefer to stay away from throngs of hunters shooting within spitting distance of their pickup trucks, and instead look for pronghorn in the sagebrush, within the folds of the land. I try to meet them on their terms, on ground more like the Pleistocene savanna where they evolved. They've survived in North America nearly unchanged since the last ice age, and as the last members of their family, *Antilocapridae*, I believe they deserve rever-





ence. They are relicts whose ancestors shared the landscape with dire wolves, mastodons and long-horned bison. Their 80 mph speeds helped them outrun now-extinct predators, such as the American cheetah. They are champion migrants whose age-old movement corridors serve to remind me that I'm part of something much older and larger than my individual life.

When pursuing animals elegantly adapted to a world that no longer exists, I find that details gain new relevance. That fall day in the Beaverhead, I'd spotted a herd of about 20 antelope, and every dip in the micro-topography, every tree, shrub or grass clump was a potential ally in my attempt to stay concealed until I reached rifle range. As I belly-crawled up a gully, I reveled in the cactus jammed into my thigh, the rocks stabbing my shins, the fact that I was now as low as dirt in my pursuit of an ice age being.

My strategy was to creep through the vegetation as far as I could before it ran out, and hope the animals hadn't grazed out of range by the time I reached the end of the scrubbiest sage. I was finely attuned to how they held their ears and heads. They are always watching, and sometimes they spook even when I'm sure they can't see me. I concealed my rifle near a clump of sagebrush, chose an animal that was standing broadside, placed her heart in my crosshairs, inhaled, exhaled, and squeezed the trigger. And missed. Missed a shot that was well within my abilities. Then I lost my phone in the sage while checking for blood, trying to make sure this was a cleanly biffed shot.

Woe is the heart-broken hunter. I plopped down on the ground and pushed back tears, blinking at the lightly frosted peaks of the Bitterroot Range rising across the valley. Missed shots weigh heavily on me, and this seemed like another screw-up in a year that had already pushed me to my limit.

IGREW UP IN APPALACHIA, wanting to be a hunter like PapPap and

Dad, who taught me the word "larynx" as I helped him butcher a deer in the cold unfinished addition of our house. As a small child, I understood hunting through the smell of chilled meat mingling with cold air and sawdust, a deer transformed into meatloaf. But I never fully grew into a young hunter. Instead, I became alienated from even the periphery of my family's sporting traditions at the same time as I began to feel unsafe in my own skin.

In middle school, the outdoorsy boys I emulated became regulars at my family's back pasture pond. Together, we tossed lures from old inner tubes in pursuit of a large bass we called Carl who hid in the murk. The boys gave me fishing tackle for my birthday and nicknamed me "bass master." In the ninth grade, my best fishing buddy pushed me to be his homecoming date, and when I resisted, his friends turned against me and began making jokes about sexual assault when they saw me outside of school. I understood then that they saw my participation in masculinity as a form of sexualized flattery, not a bid for brotherhood. High school boys in loud trucks harassed me as I rode my bike on the back roads, forcing me at times to hide in the woods and wait for them to leave. By high school, I was enduring sexual abuse from an adult family friend.

Meanwhile, Dad was spending less time in the woods and more time drinking and fighting with Mom and me. On more than one night I hid in my room, wondering if I was going to have to drive him out of the house with the loaded handgun he kept under his mattress. It's taken me two decades to learn how dangerous my all-too-common situation truly was. For many reasons, I knew I'd be leaving as soon as I could, and going far away.

But part of me knew that I wanted to take some of the trappings of rural self-sufficiency with me. Dad was elated when I asked him for tips on how to handle chainsaws and firearms. He had

*When
pursuing
animals
with finely
honed
adaptations
to a world
that
no longer
exists, I find
that details
gain new
relevance.*

never longed for a son; to my father, a "butch" daughter who could do anything "like a man" was just as good, or even better. The spring before I left for a summer job in Colorado and then college in Montana, he and I went turkey hunting. He proudly photographed me in PapPap's old cotton camo fatigues buttoned to the collar and my bad small-town pixie cut, holding a 12-gauge shotgun and a turkey decoy. For a long time I hated that photo, but it took me two decades to understand why.

Until a handful of years ago, I'd silently rejected my rural background, my queer identity, my nonbinary gender. I internalized the transphobia and homophobia around me, and the wounds added up, leaving me ashamed. I erased my sense of self before anyone else could do it for me. Today when I look at that turkey-hunting photo, I see someone who was trying to reconcile two seemingly disparate cultures; I'm proud, now, to recognize a kid who was already one very queer redneck.

In my early 20s, in New Mexico, I met and married Jim, a kind, adventurous and stalwart computer engineer with ginger hair. When I began to understand my queer identity, I told him first. At the time, we were both growing into the adults we wanted to be, trying to balance our professions and build lives more centered on food, community and being outside. We picked up Michael Pollan's books, then Dad's hand-me-down rifles, recognizing the value in my family's hunting, foraging, gardening and food-preservation traditions. When Jim shot a cow elk in southern New Mexico's Gila region, a friend taught us to butcher in our tiny Albuquerque kitchen. Then we moved to Montana.

As self-taught hunters in a new state, we spent many days and many miles without seeing a patch of fur or spooking animals, dispirited in our self-doubt. Eventually, a fellow hunter in a small-town bar sent me into the sage hills of the Beaverhead with a tip that rolling terrain is good

for stalking pronghorn. By then, I wanted to shoot an animal as badly as I'd wanted anything. Not for the killing, but to honor my youthful self, the kid who had longed to be a hunter and never learned. I wanted to know that I could put food on our table straight from the ecosystem we loved, to know that I could revere a life, take it, and then pack it out on my back. The next day, I crawled through sagebrush and steadied my rifle on an unaware doe antelope as Jim waited patiently behind me on a hill. I fired at the doe, and when she fell, that act tied me to the Beaverhead forever. It felt like the rite of passage I never got as a kid.

Years later, I went back home to see my dad, and I decided to explain my life to him. There, in his 200-year-old farmhouse, next to the old woodstove where often as a child I'd watch PapPap sleep after his deer hunts, I came out to Dad as queer and polyamorous, telling him that Jim and I were doing great, and I had a new partner, M. I expected dirty jokes at best and full estrangement at worst, but he took the news in stride.

One of his first questions was whether M also hunted. I told him that they planned to start the next fall. He asked whether they had a firearm, and I said they didn't. Dad rummaged through his closets and brought out PapPap's old rifle, a lever-action .308 with acorn leaves etched into the stock. He gave it to me so that everyone in our household would be armed. The gesture sent a message that was very different from those I'd absorbed in my youth: I could be rural and queer, and my father was among the people who supported me.

The following autumn, Jim, M and I drew three antelope tags. I had offered to introduce M to the peace and clarity of my favorite hunting spot because we shared a love of sagebrush and pronghorn. We prepared for months leading up to the hunt. The first day was wet and rainy, and the three of us exhausted ourselves hiking through gullies and over grassy hills, chasing antelope to no avail. That evening, we passed

under the "Welcome Hunters" sign into a small-town bar, celebrating our first family hunt together with steaks, affectionately joking with each other in a room full of ranchers and old hunters. No one noticed the queers camouflaged in the corner.

The next day, M and I stalked a pronghorn buck. M took the lead, reading the wind and the terrain with one of Dad's old rifles in hand. We moved through brush and grass, closing in to 100 yards before the buck began trotting away. At 150 yards, he turned broadside, and I whispered to M to shoot if they felt ready. The rifle cracked, and the buck lilted and fell. M approached the dead antelope, and then knelt to study his shaggy black horn sheath, his long eyelashes, his straw-like hair. The wound confirmed a perfect shot through the lungs, a quick death and no wasted meat. We field-dressed the animal, peeling back the hide, feeling the heat leave its body, smelling the tang of blood and a musk that reminded me of my grandmother's goat pen. We all filled our tags that day, carrying three heavy packs to the truck, and we saved the hearts for a Valentine's Day treat.

Later that season, I found myself at an all-women deer camp set up by a friend. Women are the fastest growing demographic in hunting, one of its hopes for the future, yet it remains hard to find places that center women's experiences and voices. We swapped stories inside a wall tent on a blustery late autumn night. I swallowed my anxiety and shared the tale of my trip to my father's farmhouse, my coming out, the hunt with Jim and M. To my surprise, no one seemed ready to disown me. In fact, there in the warmth of the tent, I felt more myself than I ever had, at least around strangers.

LAST YEAR, THE SAME GROUP held a second deer camp. I returned from the gathering with a mule deer in the truck and fortified by new memories made with my now-friends from the wall tent. I was riding an emotional high from



being part of a supportive hunting community and looking forward to deer hunting with M the next weekend. But when I got home, they seemed distant and disinterested when I asked if they wanted to see my deer — usually a reason to jump up from the couch.

The relationship with M had felt uneasy for a while. For months, I'd accepted that I was the problem, that my open wounds from realizing that I was an abuse survivor made me too difficult to live with. Our communication grew increasingly strained, even as I was healing. We spent less time together in nature, and more time arguing over basic relationship logistics. Then, the day I came home from deer camp, we had an explosive fight, and M left Jim and I abruptly. It all took me back to my violent childhood confrontations with Dad.

And so, a week later, I found myself back in the Beaverhead again, alone this time and in tears at the base of the Bitterroot Range, having lost my phone and missed my shot. I took a few breaths and thought of all the people who loved and supported me: Jim, the women from deer camp, other friends who truly knew me. People I'd sat with in the snow, hauled elk with in bear country, stood by in the cold and dark. We were rewriting what hunting and queerness and rural culture looked like. I could now see myself through their eyes, as a whole, capable person, and hunter. I gathered my things and walked toward the hills where the herd had disappeared.

Eventually, I found a small group of pronghorn bedded down on a far hillside, then crawled close and hid behind a rock. My aim was steady, and this time I didn't miss. I quickly dressed the doe, and reconnected with myself through those practiced and functional movements. I slipped backstraps, hindquarters and front quarters into their game bags. By then it was dusk, the sky turning pink in the twilight as I hefted my pack and headed for the truck, ready for the long, moonlit walk ahead of me. ☀

Heard Around the West

Tips of Western oddities are appreciated and often shared in this column.
Write betsym@hcn.org.

BY BETSY MARSTON

MONTANA

Phillip Dupaul, 60, cleans the homes of elderly people in Great Falls, Montana, but never wears a face mask, telling the *Missoulian* that “it hampers his ability to breathe.” That’s also what he told Judge John Larson, when he reported mask-free for jury duty in late August. In response, Larson gave him two options: Wear a face shield instead, or be held in contempt of court and spend 24 hours in jail. When Dupaul rejected both options, making the novel argument that the judge lacked authority to enforce the statewide mask mandate, Larson promptly made Dupaul’s choice for him — jail. Unfortunately, right about the time Dupaul was being booked, the Cascade County Jail learned that it was facing a major outbreak of COVID-19 — with 55 cases so far, including 53 inmates and two staffers. Neither man was aware of that, nor did Larson know that jail officials would put Dupaul in with the general inmate population, rather than isolating him. Dupaul said that when he told his fellow inmates — none of whom wore masks — what he was in for, they erupted in loud laughter: “They had all been exposed to one inmate who had the virus.” Dupaul’s ordeal didn’t end there; after his release, he faced two weeks of self-quarantine. Cascade County Sheriff Jesse Slaughter has been outspoken about not wanting to jail people over mask use, calling the mask mandate “highly contentious and debatable.” When the story came out, he blamed the judge: “What I failed to anticipate was that an out-of-town judge from Missoula would not respect my



concerns for the values of people in Cascade County.” Three county judges, however, politely disagreed, issuing a statement saying that the policy of the Montana State Court was clear: Wear a mask in court or be subject to jail.

COLORADO

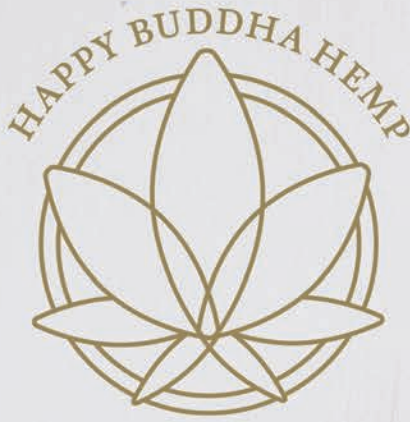
In Estes Park, Colorado, rutting bull elk are a hot draw for tourists, reports the *Denver Post*. Mayor Wendy Koenig says some visitors think “we just let them out of pens” to wander around town, where they look testy and ill-tempered. There appears to be some biological confusion, too, as more than one curious out-of-towner has asked: “When did the deer turn into elk?” Unfortunately, elk in urgent need

of love get cranky if people get in the way; a bull that’s eyeing a bevy of cows will tend to get jumpy about competition from rivals. As the mayor put it: “The bull, if he decides to do something — which they can do this time of year — people can get hurt.” Nobody wants to get stuck in a rut, especially if pointy antlers are involved.

CALIFORNIA

Staffers at Death Valley National Park sometimes brag about how hot and suffocating the air feels on summer days when the temperature soars to extremes — this August even reaching a record-breaking 130 degrees. Death Valley is the hottest, lowest and driest place in the country, getting maybe 1 or 2 inches of

rain a year. Still, reports *Sierra Magazine*, if there’s just enough rain at the right time, a “super-bloom” of tasty color will flow across the valley floor. This spring, all that beauty drew some surprising visitors: After an absence of more than a century, a half-dozen pronghorn wandered into Furnace Creek, “a busy area of Death Valley National Park,” reports *National Parks*, the National Parks Conservation Association’s magazine. The pronghorn apparently strolled down from Nevada, a 30-mile trek that’s a piece of cake for animals that will migrate “up to 150 miles for prime forage.” The pronghorn are helped these days by having a newly linked landscape, thanks to President Barack Obama’s designation of three California national monuments: Mojave Trails, Castle Mountains and Sand to Snow. But they face other threats, from a pipeline and huge proposed solar farms, not to mention major highways that cross the desert. Still, as writer Ben Goldfarb points out: “An animal that survived the Pleistocene can never be counted out.” Reminiscent of deer yet most closely related to camels, pronghorn have evolved enormous eyes with a 300-degree field of vision, oversized lungs and cushioned toes. And, as some competitive car drivers in Wyoming and Nevada can attest, a pronghorn can reach 55 miles per hour, making it “the fastest land critter in North America.” Bill Sloan, a National Park Service biologist, found it fitting that a creature that embodies superlatives could return to such an extreme environment: “It’s incredible that we can have the fastest, most keen-eyed mammal in the lowest, hottest, driest place in North America.” ☀



CBD for All Sale

30% OFF
For HCN Readers

Happy Buddha Hemp was founded in 2016 to provide organic, cost effective Spagyric CBD products that help people find a better quality of life. After 4 years our mission still remains the same and 10,000's of our customers have found relief & have been able to do activities they had left behind long ago.

This holiday season, share the gift of Spagyric CBD with friends, family, co-workers and all the special people in your life.

Visit HappyBuddhaHemp.com/HCN
enter coupon code **HCN** at checkout.

Coupon valid Nov 1st - Dec 1st 2020. Not to be combined with any other discount or promotion.



HCN

119 Grand Avenue
PO Box 1090
Paonia, CO 81428

U.S. \$5 | Canada \$6

#IAM THE WEST

Juan Eduardo Morales Cazares
Owner & Founder, Naughty Fruit
Victor, Idaho

I'm from Guanajuato, Mexico. I was raised in California, and we moved out here to the Teton Valley area in 1998. I stay here because of this community. I recently did a campaign fundraiser for Naughty Fruit, my company, and we raised \$19,000. That was based on this community. I started my company because I couldn't find any palatable or tasty dried fruit. So I was like, if I don't want to buy this, I might as well just make it. The West means opportunity. It means belonging. And if you're willing to make an effort to go to a school board meeting or become a part of a local group, people are really welcoming. So to me, it's like a big family, you know, right? I've always been involved with my family and so the community here, to us, is just like a bigger family.

Do you know a Westerner with a great story?
Let us know on social.

Follow us    @highcountrynews #iamthewest | hcn.org

Sofia Jaramillo / HCN