

High Country News

For people who care about the West

Trial *by* Fire

Women have made great strides
in the male-dominated world
of wildland firefighting, but
they still face harassment,
abuse and sexism

By Krista Langlois

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Shavaughn Cherino, 21, from Isleta Pueblo, left, and Veronica Dominguez, 18, from Peñasco, center, listen to directions during the Women in Wildland Fire boot camp near Albuquerque last May. KERRY SHERCK

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Women have made great strides in the male-dominated world of wildland firefighting, but still face harassment, abuse and sexism
By Krista Langlois

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On the cover

Stephanie Windle, a member of the La Grande (Oregon) Hotshots, on the 2011 Las Conchas Fire in New Mexico — at the time, the second-largest in state history.

KRISTEN HONIG/
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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Editor's note

Protecting the protectors

The public lands are arguably the West's most precious resource. These half-billion acres of forests, red-rock canyons, spectacular peaks and subtly beautiful seas of grassland and sagebrush are deeply important to anyone who cares about our region. To protect and manage these lands, we rely on a host of federal, state and local agencies, and on the dedicated people who work for them — men and women whose work often goes unnoticed, and who even face threats of violence from radicals who resent having to share with the rest of us.



That's why it is so disconcerting to learn that women in public-lands agencies are often harassed or abused by their male colleagues, making an already-hard job even harder. And it is not just occasional incidents. In January, *HCN* began investigating allegations into a long history of abuse in Grand Canyon National Park. In recent months, we've expanded that search, first focusing on the National Park Service, but now looking at other agencies as well.

We have received dozens of reports from readers, outlining myriad examples of harassment and abuse, and they keep coming. We've heard from people who have been silent for years, even decades, who have had their careers and lives disrupted and derailed. What has emerged is an unacceptable pattern of abuse, often ignored or mishandled by supervisors and leadership.

In this issue, correspondent Krista Langlois examines one of the public lands' most macho subcultures: wildland firefighting. Many women firefighters have found equal footing with men, but still face harassment and abuse. One woman recalls being labeled "The Whore" by anonymous colleagues and fending off a rape attempt by a superior. Unfortunately, her story is not unusual.

So, how pervasive is this problem, and what can we do about it? We need your help to answer these questions, and we'd like to hear from you — women and men alike. What problems have you experienced, and what solutions do you see? Eventually, we'd like to find a way to bring victims together with agency leaders, in an effort to make safer workplaces for everyone. You can read more about the issue at hcne.ws/harassment-legacy, and report incidents confidentially using an online tip form in those stories, or through the mail, via a form on page 17.

We can't safeguard the public lands unless we protect their protectors, the men and women who put their blood and sweat into preserving these very special places for all of us. They deserve gratitude, not disrespect.

—Brian Calvert, managing editor

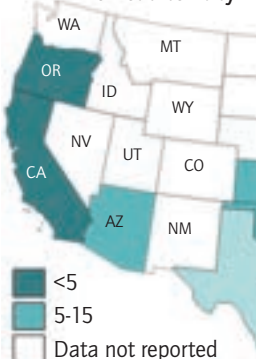
The monumental controversy over Bears Ears

In October, five Native American tribes formally asked President Barack Obama to designate a 1.9 million-acre swath of land in southeastern Utah as the Bears Ears National Monument under the 1906 Antiquities Act. The proposal is notable for the large amount of land it includes, as well as for its management structure, which would give tribes unprecedented control. The request gained the support of two-dozen tribal governments, as well as the endorsement of the National Congress of American Indians. But one of seven Utah Navajo chapters opposes it, with some members alleging that monument supporters are the pawns of "deep-pocketed outside groups." The conflict has grown increasingly strident, building on decades of tension over federal land management. Still, federal officials have indicated that pockets of local opposition may not be enough to stop the monument in its tracks. **JONATHAN THOMPSON**
MORE: hcne.ws/bears-ears



Lower Comb Ridge looking north into what may someday be the Bears Ears National Monument.
JONATHAN THOMPSON

Percent of children under 6 screened for lead toxicity



SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Lead's big unknown

The rural West's lead risks are often overlooked. Although the region doesn't have many lead-emitting industries, it harbors sources like mining sites, shooting ranges and game meat. However, the majority of Western states don't report information about children's blood lead levels to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, making this region's data the most elusive in the country.

LYNDESEY GILPIN
MORE: hcne.ws/lead-in-west

10

number of the 17 Glacier National Park lake systems west of the Continental Divide where native bull trout are being pushed out by invasive fish



USFWS/ JIM MOGEN

Glacier trout

Climate change exacerbates the threat to native trout by warming waters and disrupting precipitation patterns, so Glacier National Park managers have developed a new plan: Move threatened bull trout to colder, higher-elevation habitats previously inaccessible to fish. The plan would allow genetically pure populations to thrive in waters free from invasive fish species and insulated from rising temperatures. The effort is one of the first examples in the West of wildlife managers accounting for climate change in a more direct approach to save species. **BRYCE GRAY**
MORE: hcne.ws/glacier-trout

8,000 - 512,000

range in the acre-feet of water Nevada, California and Arizona could relinquish if the level of Lake Mead – which hit historic lows in mid-May – drops below targets.

Water talks

Lake Mead's water levels continue to sink amid the ongoing drought. A drop to 1,075 feet above sea level, as measured on Jan. 1, will begin harsh water rationing for California, Arizona and Nevada, as well as potential involvement by the federal government. In order to fend off intervention and boost the reservoir's levels, the states have returned to the negotiation table. All have agreed to make additional water cuts, on top of those they agreed to in previous talks. The three states' willingness to collectively ration their water use is yet another signal that new climate realities are re-shaping old confrontation-driven water politics. **SARAH TORY**
MORE: hcne.ws/lakemead-sinks

Trending

Hike like a girl

In an opinion piece, Liz Thomas, a Japanese-American long-distance record-breaking hiker, wrote about "the perception of the outdoors as 'not a woman's place.' " Women are often chided for travelling in the woods alone and were once barred from public-lands jobs. Thomas urged women to challenge that stereotype by getting out and hiking.

You say

JULIE WARE OLSEN:
"I'm gonna do it!"

OLIVIA BENTLEY:
"As a woman who has hiked and ridden horseback alone since early childhood, I have only rarely had an issue and only once felt 'in danger.' "

ANN SNYDER:
"Out in the outdoors alone, mostly you have to face yourself, and just be confident, careful and use common sense."

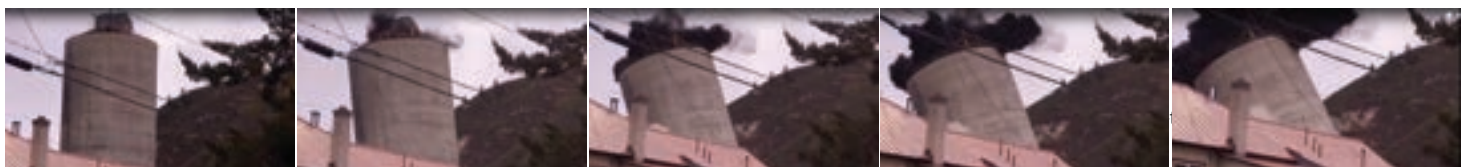
MORE: hcne.ws/outdoor-gender-gap and Facebook.com/highcountrynews

Liz Thomas treks on her own.

GLENN NELSON/
TRAILPOSSE



Video



JAY CANODE

End of an era

In late April, hundreds of sticks of dynamite toppled the historic coal silo at Oxbow's Elk Creek Mine in Somerset, Colorado, leaving the hillside covered in black dust. Mining operations there ceased in 2013, but many people clung to

the hope it would resume operations. Onlookers reflect on the community's history, and speculate about the future of their community.

JAY CANODE
MORE: hcne.ws/COcoal-video

"Families are leaving in droves. ... There's no other jobs in this valley."

—Tammy Mook, Paonia business owner

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GRIZZLIES NOT READY FOR DELISTING

It is premature to conclude that the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population of grizzly bears is recovered “to the point at which the measures provided pursuant to this (Endangered Species) Act are no longer necessary” (“Grizzly Face-Off,” *HCN*, 5/16/16).

Grizzlies have come a long way in four decades, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is to be applauded for its efforts. But grizzlies occupy only 2 percent of their historic range, and the bears of Yellowstone remain an isolated population. Where once there were 50,000 to 100,000 in the Lower 48, there are now approximately 2,000, with some 717 bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

They may be tenuously recovered, but compliance with the Endangered Species Act is about more than hitting pre-determined numeric targets. Compliance requires that the best available science be used to ensure that recovery can be sustained into the future, which means that appropriate policies and mechanisms need to be in place to keep the species recovered. The recent delisting proposal is lacking the necessary oversight mechanisms.

Current conditions surrounding grizzly recovery are surely a recipe to exercise the Endangered Species Act’s well-defined “precautionary principle,” which states that if there is doubt about an animal or plant’s exact conservation status, the approach that would cause the strongest protective measures to be realized should be chosen.

The cost to taxpayers to recover grizzly bears to the current levels is measured in tens of millions of dollars and decades of time. It would be irresponsible to risk all that time and money, unless we are certain that recovery that can be sustained over time.

*William Nelson
Wyoming Wildlife Advocates
Wilson, Wyoming*

TAINTED VALUES

National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis and his book about American values are forever tainted as he knowingly bypassed the National Park Service rules, a huge ethical error (“National Park Service centennial shares limelight with scandals,” *HCN*, 5/2/16). The Inspector General’s report documents how he also tried to mislead investigators regarding how he negotiated the book deal



with the concessionaire publisher and tried to cover his tracks so he would not get caught. Why would he not abide by the same set of rules his employees are required to follow? It’s very ironic that Jarvis chose to “cheat” to write his book on “American values.”

An honorable man with a sense of values and ethics would admit his error, but Jarvis openly says he would do it again. The ends do not justify the means, no matter how noble the cause. Requiring the director of the Park Service to attend monthly ethics training is absurd and a waste of our resources. He knew the ethics policy and chose to break the rules.

He claims he is not making any money and is donating all the proceeds, but yet he personally retains all the copyright interests in the book. Why not give up the copyright if his intentions were to donate the proceedings to a charitable organization? After reading the Inspector General’s report, I have more concerns and questions on all of this than the report answers.

*Marcia Ewell
Ophir, Colorado*

NO DRIFT HERE

After reading the Editor’s Note in the May 2 issue, I’m compelled to write you a note. You noted that some *HCN* readers express concern that the publication is drifting away from its core with stories like the one on the Malheur occupation crowd. I am not one of those readers. To me, that story, along with the vast majority of *HCN* articles, was consistent with the phrase on each issue’s cover:

“For people who care about the West.” So, too, was the article in that issue entitled “A Land Divided.” *High Country News* is the one journal I read cover to cover.

*Charley Rosenberry
Vashon, Washington*

BLESSING THE MOUNTAIN

Leath Tonino and his buddies express their joy in nature by shouting obscenities and seeing body parts in rock formations (“Cursing the Mountain,” *HCN*, 2/08/16). The same spirit inspires people to show their enthusiasm for nature by writing obscenities on national monuments.

A better way to appreciate nature is to shout “Thank you!” for the gentle sun that warms your bones in the morning. “Thank you!” for the breathable blue sky that is also so pretty to look at. “Thank you!” for the green trees and the white clouds that carry the water to make them grow.

If you don’t believe in God, you still have to thank someone or something — thank your bacterium ancestor or his grandfather, the clever chemical that somehow clung to the lonely rock hurtling into space, which somehow became Planet Earth. Thank your parents and grandparents who brought you to such pleasant places.

We are instructed to return blessings for curses. It is even more appropriate to repay great blessings with thanks instead of curses. We owe somebody something for what we have been given.

*Terry Sullivan
Denver, Colorado*

High
Country
News



High Country News is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) independent media organization that covers the issues that define the American West. Its mission is to inform and inspire people to act on behalf of the region’s diverse natural and human communities.

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Under water

*Judge rules in favor of
San Francisco water needs
over valley restoration*

BY PAIGE BLANKENBUEHLER

Early 20th century visitors to Hetch Hetchy Valley, a few miles south of Yosemite Valley, saw a rich meadowland and green oak groves, with the clear Tuolumne River winding through them, embraced by towering granite walls. It's a landscape no one has seen since 1923, when the valley was drowned by Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, the main water supply for San Francisco, 180 miles west.

The reservoir's existence has long cast a shadow on the city's otherwise environmentally progressive reputation. "San Francisco, quite frankly, has a lot of guilt," says Robert Righter, author of the 2005 book, *The Battle Over Hetch Hetchy*. "You can't find anyone today that says that dam should have been built. There were alternatives."

But garnering support for restoration has been difficult. Hetch Hetchy Reservoir supplies 2.6 million Bay Area residents with some of the cleanest water of any Western municipality, plus a small amount of hydropower. The source has kept San Francisco from getting enmeshed in the wars over the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta, a much closer source tapped by Los Angeles and Central Valley farmers.

Yet the submerged splendor remains a poignant symbol of loss. Opponents of later big-dam projects, like Glen Canyon, evoke Hetch Hetchy as a reminder of what the arid West sacrificed for its water infrastructure. Activists have spent decades trying to drain the 430-foot-tall dam and restore the "Second Yosemite Valley." In May, Tuolumne County Superior Court dismissed the latest lawsuit filed by Restore Hetch Hetchy, an Oakland-based environmental group. The fight is far from over, though. "We believe we're on the right side of this argument," says executive director Spreck Rosekrans. "Restoration is doable. We hope that San Francisco will eventually come around."

In 1906, a devastating earthquake destroyed much of San Francisco's infrastructure. The city desperately needed water and power, and Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley, where two steep granite walls met in a narrow V, was perfect for anchoring a dam.

Paige Blankenbuehler is an HCN editorial fellow.
@PaigeBlank



In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson approved construction of the O'Shaughnessy Dam in the 23-year-old national park. Legendary naturalist John Muir and the Sierra Club fought furiously to stop it. The battle spurred a broader debate over park protection and helped lead to the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. Nonetheless, seven years later, the valley was buried under more than 300 feet of water. "It is still seen as sacrilege to the national parks," Righter says.

Conservationists fought for decades to overturn the Raker Act, which allowed the construction, but Restore Hetch Hetchy is the only group actively working to dismantle the dam today. Its proposed alternatives would either divert water about 35 miles downstream and store it in the existing Don Pedro Reservoir, upstream at Cherry Reservoir — or a combination of both. Hetch Hetchy Reservoir would be drained over three years, allowing incremental restoration of the valley. San Francisco would lose \$18 million to \$34 million worth of hydropower annually, but would receive just as much water, although at a slightly lesser quality, increasing treatment expenses. The estimated cost is \$2 billion, billed to the city and county over 50 years, but restoring the valley would make the amount much higher.

So far, Bay Area residents have resoundingly voted against draining Hetch Hetchy. In 2012, a ballot measure that proposed studying alternatives was nixed by more than three-fourths of voters.

In April 2015, Restore Hetch Hetchy sued San Francisco, arguing that the reservoir is "unreasonable" because the

value of restoring the valley is greater than the cost of moving the diversion point. This May, the Tuolumne County Superior Court dismissed the case, ruling that a statute of limitations on the dam had passed and the 1913 federal approval trumps state law.

In some ways, the effort's failure comes down to bad timing. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., has called restoration "insane," saying that the city should not risk a reliable water source during chronic drought. Meanwhile, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission has poured nearly \$800 million into the Hetch Hetchy system for a tunnel-refurbishing project, says Steve Ritchie, assistant general manager for water. "It has been the envy of water managers in California," Ritchie says. The reservoir "really serves its purpose. Why disrupt that?"

Despite the obstacles, Restore Hetch Hetchy remains undaunted — and legally speaking, it might have grounds for appeal. The California Supreme Court has established that "reasonable" use of water is an evolving standard, says Barton Thompson, professor of natural resource law at Stanford University, and "a decision made in 1913 certainly could be considered unreasonable now."

But even if Restore Hetch Hetchy wins the appeal, the group faces "an uphill battle," Thompson says. "Do (the courts) really want to make San Francisco remove the dam? Would that be reasonable? It would be great to see the restoration of Hetch Hetchy Valley, but it would come at a very high cost." The group plans on delivering its appeal in early June. □

California's Hetch Hetchy Valley, c. 1911, top, before the O'Shaughnessy Dam flooded it, and today.

MATT ASHBY WOLFSKILL/
LOC, TOP; DANIEL MAYER, CC
VIA WIKIPEDIA, ABOVE



Cats along the border

Conservation of the American Southwest's jaguars depends on their populations in Mexico

BY RICHARD MAHLER

Above, a researcher adjusts a collar on Macho B, the only U.S. jaguar to ever be collared. His initial capture may have led to kidney failure, which resulted in his euthanization. Right, a female jaguar named Ali lopes through her territory in Babisal, Mexico. If a male jaguar recently filmed in Arizona is to find a mate, he will likely have to migrate south across the border.

ARIZONA GAME & FISH DEPARTMENT; NORTHERN JAGUAR PROJECT

In February, a black-and-gold jungle cat became an internet sensation overnight. A 41-second video shows the jaguar prowling through a leafy forest and along a burbling stream, swiveling his boxy head in search of prey. Nicknamed *El Jefe* (The Boss), the charismatic cat was recorded on trail cameras in mountains near Tucson by two Arizona environmental groups. Most of the 22 million viewers were probably surprised to learn that this rainforest icon is actually a bonafide Southwest native.

First videotaped in November 2011, in Arizona's Whetstone Mountains, *El Jefe* is among six wild U.S. jaguars documented during the past two decades, all males. If he's looking for love, in other words, he'll need to cross the border: There have been no female jaguars recorded in El Norte since a hunter killed the last one in 1963. But finding a Mexican mate is not easy, either.

Panthera onca won U.S. endangered species protection in 1997, but its fate is inextricably tied to Mexico. About 4,000 jaguars are believed to remain in that country, mainly in its southernmost states, where conservation work by Mexi-

can authorities and nonprofit groups is concentrated. The northernmost population has gotten scant official attention, beyond a few incentives for private landowners, so non-governmental organizations are stepping in on both sides of the border. "In some ways," says Jessica Moreno, a biologist with Sky Island Alliance, a Tucson environmental group, "people working for NGOs have an easier time working on behalf of jaguars because they can ... move forward with less politics, red tape and bureaucracy" than government agencies.

Our knowledge of *El Jefe* and his kin derives mostly from trail cameras, scat collections and fleeting glimpses. The only radio-collaring of a U.S. jaguar was short-lived, ending, controversially, with the cat's death in 2009. The Arizona Game and Fish Department euthanized "Macho B" after a veterinarian determined he suffered from kidney failure, probably related to his initial capture. The jaguar was detected for almost 13 years within a 500-square-mile portion of Arizona.

Macho B's demise briefly ramped up government conservation efforts. Beginning in 2011, federal funds supported a four-year University of Arizona trail-cam and scat-dog survey of 16 Arizona and New

Mexico mountain ranges. Yet only one jaguar — *El Jefe* — was detected, along with three ocelots. That helped prompt the Fish and Wildlife Service on May 3 to OK the proposed Rosemont open-pit copper mine in the Santa Ritas, contending that, with mitigation, the operation would not significantly impact jaguars, other imperiled species, or their habitat.

Despite the lack of forensic evidence, Moreno believes it is "very, very likely" that other unseen jaguars roam near both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. "There has been at least one jaguar, sometimes three or four, known to be in the borderlands every year since 1996," she says.

In Teddy Roosevelt's day, jaguars prowled as far north as the Grand Canyon and Gila Wilderness. Today, the closest breeding population is about 125 miles south of Douglas, Arizona, in Sonora's Sierra Madre. Biologists believe all the U.S. jaguars are single males dispersing northward in search of mates and hunting grounds.

For U.S. jaguars to thrive, more cats of both genders must migrate from the outback. But that's only one variable, say experts, since Sonora's few breeding females are also threatened. A lack of genetic diversity heightens the risk of inbreeding, and wildfires, drought or disease could decimate jaguar numbers. Others worry that the link with bigger populations farther south is threatened by drug smuggling and habitat destruction. Though jaguars throughout Mexico are legally protected, several are lost each year under a loophole that allows ranchers to kill any preying upon livestock.

To lessen threats in northern Mexico,

WEB EXTRA See footage of *El Jefe*, a jaguar recently spotted in Arizona at hcn.org.

Richard Mahler is based in Silver City, New Mexico, and is the author of *The Jaguar's Shadow: Searching for a Mythic Cat* (Yale: 2009).



in 2003, the Tucson-based Northern Jaguar Project and Naturalia, a nonprofit headquartered in Mexico City, created and began co-managing an 86-square-mile sanctuary in Sonora's prime habitat. More than 50 individual jaguars have been photographed in the Northern Jaguar Reserve and surrounding ranches since then, including mothers with cubs. It's believed as many as 120 jaguars roam the greater area.

Heading north, however, is hazardous. Besides a scarcity of food, water and females, jaguars run a gantlet of border barriers, busy roads and well-armed humans. "It's amazing that they show up here at all," Sky Island Alliance's Moreno says. "But they do."

Prior to Macho B's initial sighting in 1996, Arizona's Game and Fish Department regarded the species as "an elusive mystery" for which little oversight was needed. In 2013, opposing federal designation of 765,000 acres as "critical habi-

tat" for jaguars in his state (along with southwestern New Mexico), Game and Fish Director Larry Voyles told Fish and Wildlife that "recovery of the jaguar is completely dependent on conservation within the 99 percent of its range that lie outside of the U.S." Indeed, most of the estimated 15,000 remaining jaguars live in tropic latitudes.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is primarily responsible for U.S. protection of *Panthera onca*. Dismissing pleas by conservationists — and hoping to dodge the controversy spurred by its reintroduction of Mexican wolves — the agency has no plans to release jaguars in this country. Instead, spokesman Jeff Humphrey says, its jaguar-related funds have supported stateside studies and limited conservation work in Mexico, including Sonora.

The agency lost three separate lawsuits that forced it to establish a recovery plan and designate critical habitat for jaguars. But before then, it found an unlikely ally in zoologist Alan Rabinowitz. "There is still no area in the U.S. essential to the conservation of the jaguar," wrote Rabinowitz, CEO of Panthera, a group devoted to saving big cats, in a 2010 *New York Times* essay. The U.S. population, he reiterated in a recent email, is so marginal — and male — that resources are better spent on jaguars in Latin America.

Some area ranchers echo the sentiment. Last May, several livestock associations filed a lawsuit seeking to overturn the existing critical habitat designation as "unlawful, arbitrary, and capricious," claiming it would place an unnecessary burden on landowners. The Center for Biological Diversity countersued in August, asking the court to uphold the critical habitat designation.

Farther south in Mexico, a strong conservation effort seeks to link increasingly isolated jaguars with bigger populations and better habitat in Central America. Last year, government and nonprofit groups, including Panthera, announced a plan to create migration corridors for jaguars and other wildlife, running from Sonora to Chiapas in the west and Tamaulipas to Yucatán in the east. New policies would help the cats cross private lands safely and educate the public on how to co-exist with them.

Meanwhile, the non-governmental Northern Jaguar Reserve continues to be the largest conservation effort near the border. Much of the landscape is matted with low-lying thickets of thornscrub, but there are also tall palms, oaks and water-loving sycamore trees that shade deep, green canyons — home to favored jaguar prey like deer and javelina. Continuing land purchases by the group and its partners are adding thousands of additional acres to the reserve.

The reserve also seeks to reduce the

biggest current threat to jaguars — conflicts with livestock. "We understand that the local economy is based on cattle," says Javier Valenzuela Amarillas, a Sonora native employed as a "jaguar guardian" at the reserve. "We respect that, and try to help ranchers and wildlife co-exist." A nine-year-old alliance called *Viviendo con Felinos* (Living with Felines), provides cash payments to ranchers who allow researchers to set up camera traps on their lands. The reward is 5,000 pesos, or about \$290, for each proof of jaguar presence, and lesser amounts for other felines. Twelve ranches participate, placing a total of about 55,000 acres under *Viviendo con Felinos* protection.

Sonora's successes may eventually spread across the border to Arizona and New Mexico. But it will probably take decades or even centuries, according to the Jaguar Reserve's late science coordinator, Peter Warshall. The ecologist wrote in a 2012 scholarly article that Sonoran females, like others of their species, stay relatively close to their mothers from one generation to the next, resulting in a painfully slow expansion of territory over time. "It may be reasonable to speculate," Warshall concluded, "that the fastest female intergenerational lineage might return to the U.S. sky islands (such as the Santa Rita Range) in 45 to 70 years, conservatively 60 to 85, and if many of our assumptions are too optimistic, from 100 to 250 years."

Since Warshall wrote his report, several more ranches between the Northern Jaguar Reserve and the border have volunteered to serve as research sites and protected areas. Working with the U.S.-based Sky Island Alliance and Wildlands Network, along with Sonoran educators and Mexico's Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (a federal park service), they may help jaguars of both sexes move into the U.S. more easily.

Some biologists believe that the jaguars migrating north may possess unique adaptive traits that make them especially valuable to the species' survival. They speculate that the cat is among several species — including ocelots, coati, javelina, Mexican brown-nosed opossum and hog-nosed skunk — that are moving north in response to climate change. As the Southwest gets warmer and its vegetation becomes more like that of northwestern Mexico, these neotropical animals appear to be expanding their range.

"Maybe the genetic composition (of the border-crossing jaguars) is special," says Chris Bugbee, the biologist who compiled the gone-viral clip of El Jefe for Conservation CATalyst and the Center for Biological Diversity. He monitors four camera traps of his own in hopes of discovering more such animals in the Santa Ritas. "I'm frustrated," he says, "with those who say U.S. jaguars don't matter." □



Gas flaring produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions, such as methane, than just releasing the natural gas.

WILDEARTH GUARDIANS

THE LATEST

Backstory

Last August, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed the first-ever rule targeting methane leaks from oil and gas infrastructure. **Environmentalists lauded its potential for keeping the greenhouse gas, which is 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide, out of the atmosphere. Yet the rule had flaws:** It did not apply to existing wells and facilities, or to low-producing wells, and therefore did little to address methane plumes emanating from areas with a history of production, such as the hot spot over the Four Corners region ("Unlocking the Methane Mystery," *HCN*, 8/31/15).

Followup

On May 12, the EPA finalized the rule, nixing the exemption for low-producing wells, increasing the frequency of leak detection and otherwise tightening up last year's proposal. **The new regulations should keep some 11 million tons of methane out of the air by 2025,** and also lay the groundwork for extending regulation to existing wells and infrastructure. JONATHAN THOMPSON



SOURCE: ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
MAP: BROOKE WARREN

On the road with Melanie Gleason

A lawyer drives across the West, helping immigrants pro bono

BY LYNDSY GILPIN

Uncommon Westerner

Name Melanie Gleason

Vocation Licensed public interest attorney

Age 34

She says "There was a window, and I figured, maybe this is an opportunity to do something bold."

Favorite road snack Pretzels

Favorite song to sing in the car "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey, also her favorite karaoke song.

Favorite campsite during her trip Glacier National Park, for its majesty and peaceful isolation.

Website attorneyonthemove.com

Melanie Gleason put her Smartcar in drive and watched as her Oakland, California, apartment disappeared in the rearview mirror. It was July 1, 2015: the first day of her new life as a traveling immigration lawyer, working pro bono across the country for the next year and a half. She had left most of her belongings behind and had no official itinerary or place to sleep. "There was definitely a fear this wouldn't work out," she says. "But I felt deeply aligned with what I was about to do."

Ever since that day, Gleason, a 34-year-old second-generation immigrant, has been roaming the West's highways, representing undocumented immigrants and refugees in rural communities and detention centers for weeks to months at a time.

Each Tuesday, she blogs about her experiences and what she's learned about the justice system. And this July, she'll open a virtual law office, focusing primarily on family and youth immigration issues and using online video to represent rural residents — especially in states like New Mexico and Arizona — who can't travel for hours to visit an attorney.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of immigrants are detained in federal centers and county jails, both on the U.S.-

Mexico border and far from it. Gleason is determined to draw attention to the corrupt immigration detention center system and fight for immigrant rights. "I would think if most people learned what's actually going on with asylum seekers," she says, "they would be pretty shocked."

Gleason has always been keenly aware of race and immigration issues. Growing up, she saw her mother face discrimination as a Thai immigrant in white suburban Massachusetts. At 18, she went to the University of Texas at Austin to study political communication, and then taught middle school special education in South Central Los Angeles — one of the most segregated, isolated areas in the country. "It was eye-opening," she says. "I was doing something individually, but the larger systemic issue was overwhelming."

So she became involved with community organizing and legislative campaigns. While working full-time for MoveOn.org — which organizes online campaigns for progressive issues — she attended law school part-time at Golden Gate University. Thoughtfully observant and fiercely dedicated to her ideas, Gleason had no desire to pursue a traditional career. She graduated in 2014 with a specialization in public interest law, and began planning this adventure, crowdfunding it through online contributions.

The journey began in California's Central Valley, where Gleason represented undocumented farmworkers in housing claims. During the first six months, her work took her from the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, where she assisted the town's sole attorney with tribal law, to Tacoma, Washington, and the West Coast's largest immigrant detention center. One of the detainees Gleason represented there was a young woman who was only a year old when she came to the U.S. as a refugee from Laos. She was in rehab following a couple of nonviolent drug offenses when someone reported her to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Though she had no relatives left in Laos, she faced possible deportation. Gleason couldn't stay long enough to see her through the trial, but the experience stuck with her and she decided to focus more intently on immigration issues. "The facts just didn't add up," she says.

Heading south to Santa Fe, Gleason worked with the Santa Fe Dreamers Project, which helps immigrant youth and families find schools, jobs and supportive communities. "She shared a vision with me of creating better communities (for immigrants), with legal services being a piece of that but not the complete solution," says director Allegra Love. Unlike many lawyers who get caught up in case-work and rarely think about the values and philosophies of law, says Love, Gleason is "taking a huge chunk of time to listen and reflect while working."

Writing helps Gleason cope with the challenges she faces. She is both blunt and thoughtful in her blogs, describing making new friends through Couchsurfing.com, a website that helps people find places to crash for the night; trying to get her little car up snowy mountain roads; and the most memorable moments in the hundreds of cases she has handled.

When this project concludes at the end of 2016, she plans to focus full-time on her virtual office, which she says is also a campaign to connect rural immigrants with proper legal resources. "I really see it as an intersection between my community organizing and law background," Gleason says.

At times, Gleason feels overwhelmed by the number of immigrants who need legal help. The work can be frustrating, she says. But when she thinks of the many invisible but extraordinary people she has met, she rolls up her sleeping bag and hits the road again. "These injustices fly under the radar," she says. "There aren't a lot of watchful eyes looking at this." □

Lyndsey Gilpin is an HCN editorial intern.

🐦 @lyndseygilpin

Attorney Melanie Gleason is driving her Smartcar around the West to do legal work for the public good. MICHAEL FAGANS





People attend a workshop in Greenough, Montana, with Bureau of Land Management staffers to discuss their vision for the Missoula Field Office's Resource Management Plan. DAVID ABRAMS/BLM

BLM rethinks land-use planning

Agency aims to increase public involvement and collaboration

BY ELIZABETH SHOGREN

Mary Rogers, a historical researcher for the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes, left northwestern Montana's Flathead Reservation in the middle of an April snowstorm, headed for a public meeting in downtown Missoula, 62 miles away. The Bureau of Land Management is unveiling a new approach to planning how to manage its 245 million acres, one that invites diverse viewpoints much earlier in the multi-year process, and the Missoula field office was one of the first to try it.

The spring snow became a driving rain, slowing Rogers down, and by the time she arrived, the Holiday Inn conference room was packed with people: miners, pilots and snowmobilers, who all talked about their differing priorities for the public lands. Rogers shared her hopes, too: "My ancestors used all of western Montana — to live, to play, to make sure their children were fed. I want to make sure my nieces and nephews can use it after I'm gone."

Bringing people with different perspectives together is one of the goals of Planning 2.0, the BLM's proposed new strategy for developing resource manage-

ment plans, the big-picture blueprints that guide the agency's on-the-ground decisions. It's the first time in 33 years that the BLM has overhauled its planning procedures. The agency hopes to democratize planning — making it more collaborative, inclusive, transparent and reflective of landscape-wide priorities.

It's a praiseworthy effort, says Boise State professor John Freemuth, but he cautions that, given the intensity of current struggles over public lands, an improved process can only go so far. "It has the potential to raise the trust level, but I don't think the battling over the red-flag issues will decline. It's sort of in the fabric of the West these days." The BLM also needs to better train its managers to handle the complicated politics of land-use planning, Freemuth adds, because without strong leaders, "the whole thing can still fall apart."

The Planning 2.0 initiative came in response to the unanticipated pushback the BLM received over Bush administration plans that prioritized oil and gas drilling and motorized recreation. The BLM "always dealt with people who used public lands as businesses. All of a sudden, all these other people cared," says

Nada Culver, director of The Wilderness Society's BLM Action Center. Some controversial Bush-era plans never got finished. Others were overturned in court, and some are still being litigated.

All the conflict made planning increasingly unwieldy. And the agency was often caught off-guard by scientific data or objections it had not considered. Current BLM Director Neil Kornze described his staff's "counterintuitive" solution — to add more opportunities for public input up front. "Let's start by raising our hand and saying, 'Please bring your best information and your best science to the table,' so that we don't get surprised by somebody with information two-thirds down the road and have to start over — which we have to do a lot," he told a congressional subcommittee in March. Rewriting a draft plan adds a year or two, increasing costs and devouring scarce staff time, says Shasta Ferranto, the Planning 2.0 project manager.

Previously, the public had a chance to highlight conflicts early on. But the management plans were drafted behind closed doors by BLM staffers, and there was no time for more feedback until a draft was finally released, sometimes years later.

Planning 2.0 would offer more chances for involvement. The BLM would provide three documents to the public after the agency got initial input and data but before it drafted a plan. One would outline the various options the agency is considering in its preliminary alternatives. Another would explain the rationale behind those options, and a third would list the scientific methods used. The rest of the process wouldn't change much; a draft environmental impact statement and a draft plan would still be presented, triggering a formal written comment period, which the agency hopes to shorten from 90 to 60 days. Next come the final versions, then a protest period and consistency review. Finally, an approved resource management plan and record of decision would be released.

Initial reactions to Planning 2.0 have been fairly positive, says Culver. She has participated in BLM planning processes for over a dozen years and says that, previously, "a lot more was behind closed doors. There wasn't an effort to say we'd like to hear from all comers."

The BLM had already begun seeking earlier public involvement to forestall conflict. The draft Moab Master Leasing Plan, for instance, which was released last August, designates which areas of southeastern Utah will be open for oil and gas development and which will be preserved for their wildlife and scenery. The BLM changed course after receiving public input; it now proposes to bar oil, gas and potash leasing near Arches and Canyonlands

Please see BLM 2.0, page 22



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

THE LATEST

Backstory

Overfishing and habitat destruction from mining, logging and dams have devastated Columbia Basin salmon. **From 1992 to 2011, federal agencies wrote four recovery plans to restore habitat and protect fish, but environmental groups sued over each, saying dam removal and spillover were necessary to save salmon.** The courts repeatedly told the agencies to re-do the plans. In January 2014, yet another version was released ("The great salmon compromise," *HCN*, 12/8/14).

Followup

In May, the Oregon U.S. District Court rejected that 2014 plan, saying tactics used to manage dams and protect salmon "have already cost billions of dollars, yet they are failing." This plan is the fifth to be invalidated because it violates the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The judge called for a full analysis of how dams affect salmon, plus a new plan, by March 2018. Earthjustice attorney Todd True said management "must change dramatically — and very quickly — if wild salmon are to inhabit these rivers in the future."

LYNDSEY GILPIN

Correspondent Elizabeth Shogren writes *HCN's* DC Dispatches from Washington. [@ShogrenE](#)

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Top, *San Gabriel Park, Albuquerque, 1983*. Bottom, *Holy Thursday Pilgrimage to Chimayó, Nambé Road, 1981*. KEVIN BUBRISKI

LOOK INTO MY EYES: NUEVOMEXICANOS POR VIDA, '81-'83

By Kevin Bubriski
139 pages, hardcover; \$39.95.
Museum of New Mexico Press, 2016.

From religious traditions and lowrider car shows to downtime for late 20th-century teens, photographer Kevin Bubriski documents intimate and nostalgic scenes of Hispanic New Mexicans, or Nuevomexicanos, in *Look into My Eyes: Nuevomexicanos por Vida, '81-'83*.

Taken around Albuquerque and northern New Mexico from 1981 to 1983, Bubriski's photography stands out in a realm where photographers tend to gravitate toward dramatic scenery rather than everyday people. As the foreword notes, "In the early 1980s, a photographer seldom looked at Nuevomexicanos, a group that was, and continues to be, marginalized."

Bubriski writes that his fascination with his subjects spurred him to attend "every fiesta, parade, celebration, and religious observance I heard about and had the gas money to get to." His work in New Mexico captures a culture as distinct as any he'd go on to encounter throughout his international photography career. **BRYCE GRAY**

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HCN's board meeting on the horizon

Our biannual *HCN* board meeting is fast approaching. We hold "virtual" electronic meetings each year as well, but they can't compete with the energy of our face-to-face real-life gatherings. That's why staff and board are venturing out from our widely scattered burrows to convene in Basalt, Colorado, June 10-11.

We'll welcome six new board members: **John Echohawk**, co-founder of the Native American Rights Fund and a member of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma; **Samaria Jaffe**, executive director of the Point Reyes National Seashore Association; **Chad Brown**, Portland-based founder of the nonprofit Soul River Inc., which brings young people and veterans to the river as nature ambassadors; **Osvel Hinojosa**, director of the water and wetlands program for Pronatura Noroeste, a conservation organization based in northwestern New Mexico; **Raynelle Rino-Southon**, a Bay Area environmental educator and ecologist; and **Estee Rivera Murdock**, who has worked for the National Park Service for nearly a decade. Thanks for your commitment, all!

And we'll celebrate two major *HCN* anniversaries: **Andy Wiessner** of Snowmass, Colorado, has served 30 years on the board, and **Luis Torres** of Santa Cruz, New Mexico, has been a member for two decades now. Thank you both for your invaluable wisdom and counsel over the years.

HCN will also host a public forum on "The Fate of Our Public Lands" at the Rocky Moun-

tain Institute Innovation Center in Basalt. *HCN* editors **Brian Calvert**, **Jonathan Thompson**, **Jodi Peterson** and **Tay Wiles** will lead a discussion of the future of our public lands, which face unusual pressures from local-control and anti-federal movements, as memorably demonstrated at Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge earlier this year. The June 10th talk starts at 6:30 p.m. and is followed by food and drinks. Tickets are \$25 at the door.

Meanwhile, we've been busily sprucing up the office in Paonia, Colorado, during our annual spring clean. A little rearranging, painting and dusting have made a big difference, and we're ready to welcome more visitors. The next time you visit you won't have to use the office machete to chop through the cobwebs. Or at least we hope not.

We just caught up with long-time subscriber **Jim Robinson**, from Jackson Hole, Wyoming, who spotted our sign during a recent swing through Paonia. We also had a nice chat with **Carolyn Free**, a writer from Palisade, Colorado, who reminisced about her days at the *Kodiak Daily Mirror* in Alaska, years ago. Thanks for stoppin' by; you're always welcome!

A correction: In a May 2 review on the novel *Black Creek*, we incorrectly named the author. It's S.M. Hulse, not S.E. Hulse. We regret the error.

—Paige Blankenbuehler
for the staff



HCN interns Lyndsey Gilpin and Bryce Gray help repaint the office bookshelves during our spring cleaning. **BROOKE WARREN**

TRIAL



Women have made great strides in the male-dominated world of wildland firefighting

FEATURE BY
KRISTA
LANGLOIS

On a warm March afternoon last year, 18 women in flame-resistant pants, yellow shirts and hardhats were marching single-file through the piñon-juniper hills outside Tijeras, New Mexico. A radio crackled: “We’ve hit our trigger point. Follow your escape route out.”

The women about-faced. There was coughing. “The smoke is getting thicker. We’ve been cut off from the safety zone. Drop your packs, grab your shelter and go!”

Within seconds, 18 fire shelters were yanked from packs. The women were almost jogging, their boots stirring up sun-warmed pine needles and dust. “The fire is coming. You’ve got 10 seconds to deploy your shelters. Deploy, deploy!”

Minutes later, 25-year-old Kate Lacey — a senior firefighter with the Sandia Helitack Crew — walked through what appeared to be a herd of giant orange and green caterpillars. The caterpillars were fire shelters. This was a training exercise and there was no blaze in sight, but for the women facedown in the dirt, sweating and panting, the heat — and the pressure — were real. All were part of an all-female version of wildland firefighter training for the U.S. For-

est Service. And all dreamt of becoming like Lacey, on track to get a coveted permanent position on a helicopter crew.

Lacey shook the shelters to confirm they were set up properly. “How’s everyone doing?” she asked. A few muffled voices replied: “Hot!” Then Lacey gave the all-clear and the women emerged, strands of hair matted to their dirt-smudged cheeks. “It was kind of scary,” admitted 24-year-old Tatiana Espinoza. “It’s hard to think fast. You can’t see anything under there.”

The simulation was the first of many trials the recruits were to face. Like all Forest Service firefighters, bootcamp participants must undergo five days of training and pass a written exam and fitness test. But women who want to make a career in the overwhelmingly male-dominated world of wildland firefighting also face unique challenges, longer odds and sometimes outright hostility.

That’s why former firefighter Bequi Livingston started these Women in Wildland Fire bootcamps in 2012: to give women a supportive place to get started. Her own first day of training, on Sept. 1, 1979, was far less welcoming: She was a 102-pound Texas track star in a roomful of burly men,

BY FIRE



and firefighting, but still face harassment, abuse and sexism

and the office manager kept giving her funny looks. “Who are you, honey?” she asked.

Livingston replied, “I’m Bequi!”

“She looked on her sheet and back at me and said, ‘Oh my gosh, we’ve made a terrible mistake.’ ”

The manager had thought “Bequi” was a man’s name and tried to give Livingston an office job — women didn’t work fire in those days. But Livingston refused. She went on to become an elite firefighter called a hotshot, an engine operator, and the Forest Service’s Southwest fire operations health and safety specialist, her current job. Among her friends, she counts members of Apache 8, an all-female Native American crew, and Margarita Phillips, a now-retired smoke-jumping grandmother from Montana.

The path these women carved looks like unqualified progress. They battled discrimination, ascended to leadership positions and obliterated barriers. Women today hold some of the industry’s top jobs and have proven themselves on the West’s biggest fires. “We stand on the shoulders of women who came before us,” one told me. “They had it harder than we do for sure.”

But firefighting is still a men’s club, and for many women in the trenches, little has changed. Women make up 39 percent of the Forest Service’s workforce, but hold just 11 percent of permanent wildfire jobs. In other agencies that fight fire — the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — the figure is as low as 6 percent. Even the U.S. military has done a better job of recruiting and retaining women.

The reasons are multiple. Women tend to be primary caregivers, so having kids can derail a career — most jobs don’t require you to find childcare for weeks on end while you’re dispatched all over the country. And many women firefighters find themselves in places where they’re the only females for miles. Even with a supportive crew, the macho culture can make it hard to stick around long enough to ascend the ladder — becoming a type 1 incident commander, a position equivalent to a one-star general, for example, takes longer than becoming a doctor.

For many women, these are stumbling blocks. But for some, the problems manifest in much darker ways.

Three women help bring up the rear as the Gila Hotshots line out in New Mexico’s Valles Caldera during the Las Conchas wildfire in 2011. KARI GREER



Kate Lacey, above, a senior firefighter with the Sandia Helitack Crew, gives instructions on how to use a portable fire shelter during the Women in Wildland Fire bootcamp last May outside Albuquerque, New Mexico. At right, Ericka Alcaraz, 27, practices with a signal mirror used to communicate with a helicopter during a forest fire.

KERRY SHERCK



IN 2009, 26-YEAR-OLD ALICIA DABNEY was supporting three kids and an injured husband on the Tule River Indian Reservation when she landed her dream job as a wildland firefighter. She was the only woman on her crew, but figured as long as she kept her head down and did her job, she'd be fine.

Still, she felt isolated and uncomfortable. One coworker posted fliers around the barracks that said "Alicia Dabney The Whore." She says her supervisor insisted that she tell him when she was menstruating. Other coworkers left lewd voicemails on her cell, which she saved as evidence. Once, she tells me, a man sat on her head and "rode me like a horse" when she squatted to grab her pack. But because she needed the job, she stayed. "I didn't know you could tell anybody," she says. "I didn't know who to tell."

Then, about a year later, she alleges that a superior flung her onto a bed at a training session and put her in a chokehold. "He tried to rape me," Dabney says. "I had to beg and plead and fight."

Eventually, she says, the attacker backed off. (Her alleged assailant still works for the Forest Service, a branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which says it cannot respond to specific allegations because of privacy concerns or because cases are still pending.)

Soon after, Dabney broke down in the office of a female fire officer, who introduced her to Lesa Donnelly, vice president of a civil rights group called the USDA Coalition of Minority Employees. Donnelly helped Dabney file a complaint with the USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights in Washington, D.C., and brought her to a police station to give a statement to a USDA special agent. Over the next year, Dabney filed eight additional complaints with the Civil Rights Office. (Like many assaulted women, though, she never followed up with the police.)

Donnelly also helped Dabney realize that her experience was part of a pattern. In 18 years as a Forest Service administrator, Donnelly had heard dozens of similar stories. She connected Dabney with six other female firefighters who had recently experienced sexual harassment or discrimination on the job, and together they took the first steps toward filing a class-action lawsuit on behalf of all the female firefighters in the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Region, which covers California and the Pacific islands. Forty-eight percent of Forest Service firefighters work there.

The class-action complaint alleges pervasive sexual misconduct, discrimination and retaliation in the Pacific Southwest. Heidi Turpen, who joined the complaint later, says she was left alone in the wilderness without a radio or GPS after she reported harassment by a supervisor who had already been cited for workplace violence, including banging his head against a wall and making verbal threats. Another firefighter, Denice Rice,

says that a division chief followed her into the bathroom, asked to watch her pee and repeatedly groped her. Worried that she'd be ostracized, she stayed quiet for three years. "Once you become that person (who files a complaint), you're that person forever," she says. But in 2011, after he poked her breasts with a letter opener, she came forward.

The region isn't unique. Aili Johnston, who is not part of the complaint, says that when she worked as a firefighter in Oregon between 2008 and 2013, two women on her crew were raped by male colleagues, and another escaped an attempted rape. Bequi Livingston is aware of rapes in Arizona and New Mexico that went unreported because the victims were either too humiliated or didn't believe that the Forest Service would support them. And an ongoing *High Country News* investigation (see form on page 17) has found that sexual misconduct against women is rife in other public-lands agencies, too. Sexual harassment was common in Grand Canyon National Park's recently abolished river unit, and though the Park Service had been aware of similar issues since at least 2000 — when half of female Park Service rangers surveyed said they'd been harassed on the job — the agency failed to act until recently. "It's everything from benign neglect to outright abuse," Donnelly says. "It's systemic and it's institutional."

THE LATEST COMPLAINT is on its way to becoming the third gender-based class-action lawsuit against the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Region in 30 years.

The first was resolved in 1981 with a "consent decree" — a settlement in which neither party admits fault. The decree required the region to put women in 43 percent of positions within five years, to match the percentage in the civilian workforce. But many firefighters say it backfired: Qualified men were denied promotions, while unqualified women were thrust into positions that set them up for failure. By some accounts, hostility toward women increased.

So in the 1990s, Donnelly helped lead another class-action suit. A number of fixes resulted, including mandatory sexual harassment training and a special council that monitored the region's response to harassment and discrimination claims. Complaints were resolved more effectively, and conditions improved.

But after the agreement expired in 2006, the process regressed. Today, civil rights training for most crews consists of an hourlong lecture that several employees say is inadequate and sometimes treated as a joke. Anyone who is assaulted is supposed to inform a supervisor or regional civil rights officer, who should then inform law enforcement. But that's not always realistic in the field. "We're pretty isolated," says Johnston, the former firefighter. "Cellphones don't work, we don't have internet, and that's not at a fire — that's at government housing."



When a colleague first confided that she'd been raped, Johnston says, "I didn't know how to help them or who to tell. There's just no protocol."

If a situation involves harassment or discrimination rather than outright assault, the process is even more convoluted. An employee (or her supervisor) must file a complaint with the USDA Civil Rights Office in Washington, where the law requires it to be processed, investigated and resolved within 180 days.

But that didn't happen for Alicia Dabney. After she reported her experiences to the Civil Rights Office, she says, she waited. And waited.

A May 2015 report by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel shows that Dabney wasn't waiting alone. Between 2010 and 2013, the Civil Rights Office failed to investigate roughly half of equal opportunity complaints on time. According to the USDA's own data, the average number of days needed to investigate a complaint (not including resolving it or taking action) was 333 in 2010. It dropped to 212 days by 2014 — an improvement, but for women forced to keep working with someone who belittles, harasses or undermines them, still a disturbingly long time. Worse, the Civil Rights Office itself had an "unusually high number of com-

plaints filed against its own leadership," the Office of Special Counsel found. It "has been seriously mismanaged, thereby compromising the civil rights of USDA employees."

Some women get so frustrated they quit before the process is complete; others, uncertain of their rights or afraid of being blackballed, don't file at all. And when transgressions are reported, the agency's course of action varies. A Forest Service spokesperson told me sexual harassment charges can lead to the perpetrator being fired, but multiple employees say that men accused of harassment are sometimes just shifted to another forest or agency. (Privacy rules make this impossible to verify.)

In June 2015, the Pacific Southwest Region again took steps to improve its policy. Supervisors must now report sexual harassment to a superior and a civil rights officer within 24 hours, and a "sexual harassment intake inquiry coordinator" ensures that "assertive" safety measures — such as notifying police or separating employees — happen immediately. The region also recently distributed an anonymous survey to firefighters to learn more about patterns of discrimination. And there's a sexual harassment hotline. "The Forest Service maintains a

zero tolerance policy for harassment of any kind," spokesman Michael Illenberg wrote in an email.

Yet as with the measures implemented after previous lawsuits, many women have lost faith that these steps will lead to lasting change. "There's got to be a bigger solution than women filing complaints and them trying to pay us to settle and shut up," says Dabney, who settled her individual complaints for an undisclosed amount in court in 2013 after she lost her job. "You file a complaint and nothing gets done. That's unbelievable to me. On the 181st day, there needs to be a task force that says, 'This is one day out of compliance. Let's figure it out immediately.'"

JENAY NARANJO WAS HAVING TROUBLE

with her helmet. The 19-year-old from Española, New Mexico, was one of the 18 women taking part in the Women in Wildland Fire bootcamp. As they hauled shovels and pickaxes up the side of a scratchy hillside, Naranjo stepped out of line. "Ugh," she said, fiddling with her too-big helmet. "This is, like, pissing me off."

Kate Lacey tightened Naranjo's chinstrap and tugged the yellow helmet. It stayed put. "There," she said. "You got this."

Firefighter Michelle Bletcher works the initial attack with her crew from the Cleveland National Forest Engine 45 on a spot fire that ignited near the Wallow Fire in eastern Arizona in June 2011. The Wallow Fire went on to become the biggest in the state's history. KARI GREER

Division Group Supervisor Nicole Hallisey, right, stands next to her trainee Ken Dewitt and other colleagues after an evening briefing on the Little Queens Fire near Atlanta, Idaho, in August 2013.

KARI GREER



Bequi Livingston, instructs the Women in Wildland Fire bootcamp near Albuquerque in 2014. Livingston started the boot camps in 2012 to give women a supportive place to break into the overwhelmingly male wildfire corps.

KRISTEN HONIG



Naranjo fell back in line behind 27-year-old Ericka Alcaraz, a former whitewater guide with a dark braid who has wanted to be a firefighter since childhood. In front of them was 41-year-old Anella Russo, a volunteer structural firefighter and recently divorced mother determined to prove she could do something besides sit home and feel sorry for herself. “If I can raise seven kids by myself in the middle of nowhere, I can

do this,” she told me. “Even if I trip over every root.”

Russo and the others spent the day hiking, digging fire line and doing push-ups. They paused in the shade of a juniper to practice using signal mirrors and learn radio protocol. They peppered Lacey — who graduated from the first Women in Wildland Fire camp in 2012 — with questions: How’d you make sure a crew picked you up? Am I doing this right? No one seemed intimidated by working in a male-dominated field. The future looked bright.

Indeed, most women firefighters don’t experience the kind of abuse that Dabney endured. Altogether, an average of just five individual Forest Service employees per year submitted sexual harassment complaints to the Civil Rights Office between 2011 and 2015, though, again, many cases aren’t reported. Still, given that 46,000 people work for the Forest Service, the numbers suggest most employees don’t feel harassed or abused. Among the dozens of female firefighters I talked to for this story, most had positive experiences.

Yet because so few women make a career of fighting wildfire, even those who love their jobs say they face more subtle discrimination. One told me she worked with men who ignored her orders but readily followed orders from other men. Jessica Hilfers, who was the first woman ever to work on her engine when she arrived in New Mexico’s Jemez District in 2011, says men literally took tools from

her hands. And as a Colorado state fire employee bluntly put it: “There was a lot of sexism. You have to be able to trust the person you’re with, and I think a lot of guys just had it in their head that the girls were dead weight.”

Attitudes differ widely from crew to crew. Robert Moreno, captain of a California hotshot crew, says it boils down to who’s in charge and what kind of a culture is permitted. For his part, Moreno makes a point of nipping inappropriate behavior in the bud. “It starts out small,” he says. “But if people think they can get away with things, it tends to escalate.”

Other patterns, however, are harder to spot: captains who sign off on their male buddy’s training but are less likely to do the same for a woman, for example. One claimant in the latest class-action complaint, Candice Kutrosky, worked on nine hotshot crews in three Forest Service regions and was an assistant supervisor in eight. Her annual performance reviews consistently rated her leadership, safety skills and physical ability as excellent. Yet she was passed up for dozens of promotions in favor of less experienced men.

After submitting a Freedom of Information Act request, Kutrosky learned that at least two male supervisors had given negative references contradicting her written performance reviews. One wrote that she “demonstrates an extensive lack of neither (sic) physical ability nor a desire to improve.”

Given the already-challenging work conditions, this kind of treatment is

enough to drive women away. “It’s death by a thousand cuts,” says Brenda Dale, a Forest Service fire management officer. “So many things tip the scale for someone in wildland fire to decide to leave.”

DALE IS NOW COLLECTING DATA on women in fire for the Forest Service to help the agency track problems and adjust its response accordingly. But she’s already found major gaps: Because firefighters get lumped in with all Forest Service timber positions, the only way to determine who works in fire is to count those with permanent positions, who fall into a special early retirement category. Yet most firefighters — roughly 63 percent — are seasonal. That means Dale can’t get an accurate tally of the total number of women, which means it’s impossible to tell whether recruitment and retention efforts are working.

Still, permanent employee numbers are a start, and Dale’s project is just one of many aimed at making firefighting safer and more welcoming to women. In recent years, several Forest Service offices have started nonprofit daycare centers to help those with kids keep their jobs. One in Missoula, Montana, offers late evening and weekend care during fire emergencies. In the Intermountain Region — southern Idaho, Nevada, Utah and western Wyoming — employees of any gender can take a yearlong break

from the field if they have serious family issues. They’re often given a 40-hour-a-week office job instead, which makes it easier to care for aging parents or sick kids. Sue Stewart, who’s behind that effort, says it stems from her own struggle to balance her firefighting career with raising two sons. “The Forest Service is interested in retaining great employees,” she says. “And the fact that we lose people who can’t find that balance is troublesome.”

In the Pacific Northwest, Aili Johnston started her own company, Wilamette Public Health Consulting, and conducts four-hour sexual misconduct trainings for Forest Service employees. She teaches recruits about consensual sex and rape statistics, and familiarizes them with the byzantine Forest Service bureaucracy. She informs them of their responsibilities as federal employees and explains what resources are available if they’re harassed or assaulted. And though she has only reached about 1,000 employees so far, she hopes to expand by teaching Forest Service employees to offer the same trainings.

Then there are Bequi Livingston’s bootcamps.

On the surface, their impact seems minimal: Only a handful of the 129 women who have completed trainings in New Mexico and Arizona have gone on to work in fire. (Neither Livingston nor

the agency have exact numbers.) Yet the model has spread to Utah and California, and by Livingston’s measure, it’s been a success. That’s because her purpose isn’t just to recruit qualified women — it’s to give women a place to share stories and build a support network.

At the bootcamp, each recruit is paired with an experienced female firefighter with whom she can stay in touch. Then, if she finds herself alone in the field, she’ll know at least one other person who can relate to her situation — someone she can call up and ask: “Is this normal? What should I do?”

Perhaps the most sweeping change, though, is that the men who have run wildfire for decades are stepping down, making room for more women in leadership positions. On the first morning of the bootcamp, as Russo, Naranjo and the others milled around the dirt parking lot, Sandia District Ranger Cid Morgan climbed into the bed of a pickup. The women gathered in a half-circle, looking up to her. The sun was just peeking over the hills.

“When I started in ’78, they still wouldn’t let ‘girls’ go on fires,” Morgan began. “The supervisor never said, ‘No, you can’t go out,’ but there was always something way more important for me to do in the office.”

Now, she added, with a smile, “I’m in charge.” □



Correspondent Krista Langlois lives in Durango, Colorado. [@cestmoiLanglois](#)

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WEB EXTRA

This story is part of *High Country News'* continuing coverage of sexual harassment in the public-lands agencies. For more, see:

Investigations show extensive harassment history in Park Service
[hcne.ws/NPS-harassment](#)

National Park Service chief expands sexual harassment probe
[hcne.ws/NPS-harassment-survey](#)

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If you are a current or former federal public-lands employee who has experienced these, please consider filling out the following form and mailing it to: High Country News, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428-1090, Attn: Brian Calvert, managing editor. Your information will be kept confidential.

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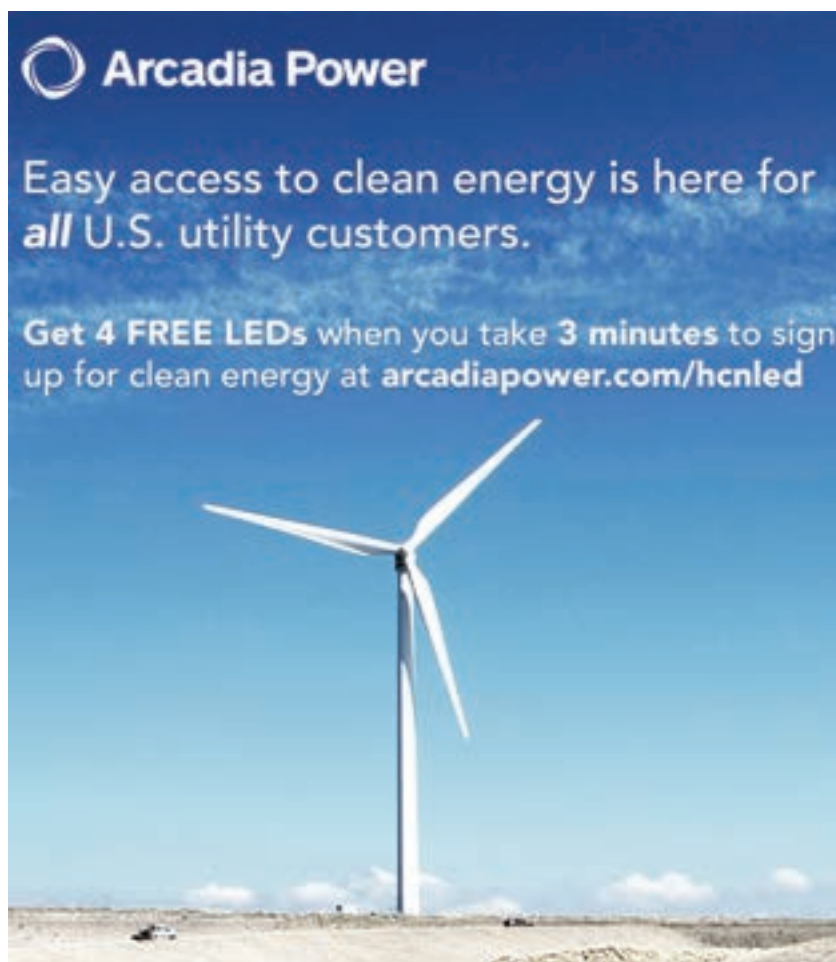
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BLM 2.0 continued from page 9

national parks and in some other areas to benefit recreation and scenic views.

BLM field offices also intend to work more closely together on landscape-wide planning, especially to tackle wildfire prevention, eradication of invasive species or protection of wildlife corridors.

"We have not done a great job of developing relationships between us and the public."

—Joe Ashor,
BLM field manager

The resource management plan rulemaking should be finished by the end of the year, says the agency. Updates to its planning handbook will follow. But some state and county officials are complaining they didn't have enough say in crafting Planning 2.0. In particular, they believe local county governments should still have more sway than interest groups. At a House subcommittee hearing in May, Humboldt County, Nevada, Commissioner Jim French said the 2.0 proposal "dilutes the voice" of county officials by expanding the planning to the regional level and

limiting the traditional requirement that BLM plans be coordinated with county policies. A group of counties in six Western states, organized by the Texas-based American Stewards of Liberty, echoed those complaints in a letter last month to Kornze. Planning 2.0 will be finished late in Obama's presidency, and the kerfuffle underscores the uncertainty of its future, says Freemuth: "Goodness knows what would happen to Planning 2.0 under a President Trump."

Meanwhile, the Missoula field office is testing Planning 2.0. Its staff interviewed 50 stakeholders, including ranchers, mountain bikers, conservationists and representatives of mining and timber companies. Then the field office held three workshops to present a draft assessment and give the broader public a chance to respond. Staffers will use that input as baseline information for revising the plan for the 150,000 acres they manage.

Field manager Joe Ashor says that in his 27 years with the BLM, he had never participated in anything like those interviews and workshops. He and his staff tried to convey the message that "engag-

ing the public early and often is going to be a normal way we do business," he says. "(In the past) we have not done a great job of developing relationships between us and the public."

Many locals seem enthusiastic, including Gordy Sanders, resource manager of Pyramid Mountain Timber, which he says depends on public land for its "continued existence." In his 45-year career, Sanders says, he's never seen the BLM seek public opinion so aggressively. Protests and litigation often delay timber harvests, and he hopes the new process will help forestall conflict. Western Montana is a good place to launch Planning 2.0, he says, because ranchers, loggers and conservation groups already work collaboratively: "We have a broad cross-section of interests that get along very well."

Mary Rogers is also determined to stay involved. She hopes to convince the BLM and other stakeholders to protect traditional tribal practices, such as hunting and gathering wild food — especially her favorite, camas, a bulb that she says tastes like a cross between a radish and an onion. "I also want to know what other points of view are," she says. "I do not believe there is one true way." □

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Photo by Andy Nelson/*The Register-Guard*

A cross marked the fence where Matthew Shepard was beaten and left to die in 1998. The fence has since been torn down.

ED ANDRIESKI/AP

It's still dangerous to be gay in Wyoming



OPINION BY
NATHAN C.
MARTIN

It was a Saturday night in Rock Springs, Wyoming, and 30 or 40 of us were partying in a derelict trailer house on a dead-end road. Suddenly, a queer couple we knew showed up and said a bunch of rednecks had been chasing them down Elk Street.

Sure enough, four pickup trucks pulled up moments later and a bunch of burly guys piled out. The encounter escalated into a full-blown brawl — teenagers rolling around in the muddy snow, beating on each other. There were more of us than there were of them, so we were able to whoop them soundly and run them off. Then we celebrated what felt like a righteous victory deep into the night.

This was in 2001, just a few years after Matthew Shepard's murder had made gruesomely public the anti-gay violence that was taking place throughout Wyoming. Shortly after, I left the state for about 14 years. During that time, it appeared to me that gay rights was making great strides — not least with the incremental support to legalize gay marriage nationwide.

Living in places as different from each other as Buenos Aires, Chicago and New Orleans, I witnessed homophobia now and then, but not nearly as often as I saw jubilant demonstrations of gay pride — or, more frequently, plain old gay normalcy. Among the myriad people who are oppressed in this world, homosexuals seemed to be in pretty good shape, particularly white “cisgendered” men.

Then I moved back to Wyoming.

Trevor O'Brien couldn't escape to a friendly trailer house when five young men attacked him one night in December 2015 in Gillette, Wyoming. His mother told the *Casper Star-Tribune* that O'Brien had responded to the men's comments about his being gay with a

smart remark, so they threw him on the ground and stomped on his groin so hard he had trouble urinating for three days. O'Brien didn't report the incident, nor did he report the homophobic slurs someone repeatedly carved into his car.

In fact, few people beyond his closest friends and family would have known about any of this had O'Brien not killed himself in a park this March 8. He was 20 years old.

It is true that many factors likely contributed to O'Brien's decision to commit suicide. Likewise, the story of Matthew Shepard's murder is more complex than it might seem on the surface. Many people in Wyoming, for instance, have gone to great lengths to emphasize that both Shepard and his killers may have been high the night he was tied to a fence and pistol-whipped. But rather than adding nuance to the conversation — perhaps by acknowledging that anti-gay violence is sometimes drug-related, too — this emphasis is meant to silence people who might suggest Wyoming has a problem.

In Laramie, where Shepard was assaulted and where I now live, folks don't like to talk about him much. A student organizer here told me that even the gay community sometimes shies away from discussing Shepard's murder because of all the negativity and distortion people have heaped onto it.

But whenever horrifying instances of homophobia come to light, such as the attack on O'Brien — or an assault discussed on public radio last year, in which a Casper, Wyoming, man had his teeth kicked in for cross-dressing — any Wyoming citizen whose eyes aren't clouded by delusion or prejudice should be able to put the pieces together. Anti-gay violence in Wyoming is real, and it deserves a real response.

Shepard's memory was invoked in 2009 when the U.S. Congress passed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. This law, co-named for a black man murdered by white supremacists in Texas, strengthened federal law enforcement's ability to investigate and prosecute hate crimes, including those committed against people on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Forty-five states have passed similar laws that empower state-level authorities. Wyoming is not one of them. It is time we changed that.

Few of us believe that harsher criminal punishments can cure social ills. Hate-crime bills often include tougher sentencing provisions, but just as meaningful are the signals that enacting such laws send. Passing a hate crime bill in Wyoming would admit to the state's citizens that hate crimes persist. It would communicate that acknowledgement and honest discussion of the problem are necessary if we want to stop the violence. A bill would also tell those at risk that they are not alone in facing anti-gay violence or abuse. It would let them know that we, as a state, have their backs.

So far, the Legislature's consistent refusal to pass such a bill has sent a different message to anyone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual in Wyoming: This is the Wild West. Better run to your friends and hope they can protect you, because the rest of us don't really give a damn. □

Nathan C. Martin is a freelance writer in Laramie, Wyoming.

Writers on the Range is a syndicated service of High Country News, providing three opinion columns each week to more than 200 media outlets around the West. For more information, contact Betsy Marston, betsym@hcn.org, 970-527-4898.



WEB EXTRA

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César Chávez, head of the United Farm Workers Union, speaks at the headquarters for the state Agriculture Labor Relations Board board in 1975. Chávez was born near Yuma, Arizona on March 31, 1927, and died in 1993. ASSOCIATED PRESS



César E. Chávez National Monument

EXCERPT BY TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS

The sound of running water in the midst of drought is unnerving, a drought so brutal the curled leaves of the great oaks of California are crackling in the hot breezes. The soil is dry. Grasses are brittle. I hardly dare breathe for fear of starting a fire.

Brooke and I are visiting the César E. Chávez National Monument, established by President Barack Obama in 2012 in Keene, California. It is high noon, hot and dusty save for the sanctuary of this Peace Garden with its fountain flowing in the central plaza.

César Chávez, the great labor organizer and activist on behalf of farmworkers, is buried in this garden of roses with a stone-carved statue of St. Francis of Assisi in one corner and La Virgen de Guadalupe in the other. Chávez lived and worked in this community of Nuestra Señora Reina de La Paz located in the Tehachapi Mountains, 90 miles northeast of Los Angeles. Together with Dolores Huerta, he founded the National Farm Workers Association in 1962, which later became the United Farm Workers (UFW), to secure basic human rights and fair wages for the largely Latino community of laborers.

His grave is simple. A cross made of barn wood with a welded crucifix stands behind a slightly raised piece of granite bearing the carved words:

*CESAR ESTRADA CHAVEZ
1927–1993*

Offerings have been left: a small American flag; two eagle feathers that hang on each arm of the cross; a weathered Mexican flag; one red rose; and at the base of the gravestone, a bobble-headed mariachi figure playing the guitar. Next to the toy musician is a pair of red and black clippers used to cut grapes.

These 187 acres of rolling hills were once a rock quarry, but in 1918, they became the site of the Stony Brook Retreat, a sanitarium for those suffering from tuberculosis. The hospital could accommodate 55 adults, while next door, in the “preventatorium,” there was room for 44 children. After Kern County shut the sanitarium down in 1967, locals believed the place was haunted.

Chávez didn’t see it that way. He saw it as a perfect gathering place for the United Farm Workers — a place where they could organize and live in peace. The association had outgrown its national headquarters, Forty Acres, in Delano, California, and had been looking for the right piece of property. When word reached César that Kern County was planning to auction off these 187 acres in the remote high desert of Tehachapi, close to Delano and Bakersfield, it sounded promising. Representatives from the UFW asked the county officers to show the land to them. The county refused.

César solicited the help of his friend, Edward Lewis, a movie producer from Los Angeles. They hatched a plan: Edward Lewis would ask to see the land as an “interested party,” accompanied by César’s younger brother, Richard, posing as Lewis’ chauffeur. The men returned with the report that the site was perfect, with a number of houses, office buildings, and a large community center already in place, ready to be renovated and reinhabited.

The plan worked. Kern County sold the property to Edward Lewis for \$231,500. The state of California was stunned when Edward Lewis then turned around and sold the parcel to the United Farm Workers for \$131,000. The UFW named it Nuestra Señora Reina de La Paz, and it became indeed a place of peace, a refuge not only for César and Helen Chávez and their eight children, but for many other members of the movement. It was



The 300-mile march to Sacramento in 1966 unified a crowd of protesters so large parts of the highway had to be closed. The boycott and strike brought attention to years of poor pay and conditions for farmworkers. Chávez also brought Latino and Filipino strikers together, because growers historically pitted one ethnic group against another to break field walkouts.

JON LEWIS/YALE BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY

both a home and a sanctuary for strategizing, organizing, and keeping the dream of farmworkers' rights alive.

The history of our national parks and monuments is a history of subversion, shaped by individuals with either too much money, like John D. Rockefeller Jr., and held suspect in the cow town of Jackson, Wyoming, or by the too poor and too political migrant farmworkers led by César Chávez, working the fields of reform in California.

On Oct. 8, 2012, Obama designated the land at La Paz as one of our newest national monuments. The proclamation reads:

At La Paz, members of the farmworker movement celebrated such victories as the passage of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, the first Federal law recognizing farmworkers' collective bargaining rights. At La Paz, the UFW grew and expanded from its early roots as a union for farmworkers to become a national voice for the poor and disenfranchised.

Walking through the village, the spirit of collaboration remains among the empty buildings that once housed the conversations of struggle and reform. Emaciated California ground squirrels are barely moving in this land of little water, and I am having a hard time separating the welfare of farmworkers from the welfare of the biotic community who lives here now. I watch a black phoebe drink from the basin of the fountain and listen to the sound of water in this oasis surrounded by parched land.

Penance; paying penance. Chávez believed in penance, in part because he never felt he'd done enough. He led boycotts, strikes, and hunger strikes — gestures used to bring about greater justice and attention to the plight of the farmworkers, who were demeaned and used, who battled desperately low wages and exposure to pesticides. Leaning against an oak tree for shade, I can't help but confront my own ignorance regarding these issues. I remember the grape boycott, but little else. It was not my struggle. That was my privilege. Now, I see it differently. Acts of injustice undermine all of us. The privacy of hypocrisy is corrosive.

What if our national parks and monuments became places

of conscience instead of places of consumption? How many more T-shirts can we buy, let alone wear, that advertise where we've been? How many different forms of recreation must we create to assuage our adrenaline addictions, from wing suits to pack rafts to rollerblades? Is it not enough to return home with a fresh idea gleaned while walking in new territory? As I have been visiting our national parks, I keep asking myself: Who are we becoming?

In the end, it may be solitude that the future will thank us most for conserving — the kind of solitude born out of stillness, the stillness César Chávez and Dolores Huerta held for themselves at La Paz in the midst of their revolution. It is the kind of stillness that can still be found in each of our national parks, where a quieting of the soul inspires creative acts.

The Organic Act is the United States federal law that established the National Park Service as an agency of the United States Department of the Interior. The act was signed into law 100 years ago by President Woodrow Wilson; Congressman William Kent of California and Sen. Reed Smoot of Utah co-sponsored the bill. Stephen Mather, who was assistant secretary of the Interior at the time, had lobbied hard for a unified agency to oversee America's national parks, and so it was both logical and fitting that he became the first director of the National Park Service.

Mather was both an industrialist and a conservationist, a man who had become a millionaire through his family's Pacific Coast Borax Company. The singular image for Borax detergent, "20 Mule Team Borax," was Mather's brainchild. He applied his keen marketing skills to help promote the national parks in the early twentieth century.

Who could have imagined that the vision of our national parks, devised in 1916 by a privileged white businessman, could

If our national parks are to remain viable in the future, they must become sites of transformation where the paradigm of domination and manipulation ends, and a vision of unison begins.

be transformed a century later to include the vision of a black president, a former community organizer, to establish a national monument to honor a Latino labor organizer and a community of farmworkers who understood their privilege as the privilege of human dignity?

If our national parks are to remain viable in the future, they must become sites of transformation where the paradigm of domination and manipulation ends, and a vision of unison begins.

We have opportunities to expand this vision of environmental and social justice by establishing more national parks and

monuments. We can also enlarge the borders of the ones we have, like Yellowstone and Canyonlands, in the name of ecological connectivity, in an era when the last desperate cries of the fossil fuel industry are threatening to destroy not only our most revered public landscapes but the planet. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a shimmering example of a 50-year fight for protection. Native voices are now forcefully calling for a resolution in the form of a national monument. The Gwich'en see these lands as the birthplace of caribou, "The Place Where Life Begins," that must be held for future generations. "This is a human rights issue,"

says Sarah James, a Gwich'en elder. "Oil development there would hurt the caribou and threaten our way of life."

The idea of traditional knowledge being embedded within traditional land management is both a revolution and a healing between Indians and the National Park Service. This is the vision behind the Bears Ears National Monument proposal, led by the Navajo, Hopi, Uintah and Ouray Ute, and Mountain Ute Coalition, and supported by 20 other tribes in the American Southwest. Willie Greyeyes, chairman of Utah Diné Bikéyah, said, "The tribes are determined to see the cultural values in this landscape protected." Close to 2 million acres of ancestral

lands adjacent to Canyonlands National Park would be secured through the Antiquities Act. "We can still hear our ancestors' songs being sung on the mesas," one of the elders told me. "Prayers have to be walked, not just talked," Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk said.

At the intersection of landscape and culture, diversity and inclusion, patterns of cooperation emerge in the name of community. The power of what binds us together, rather than what tears us apart, becomes a shared priority. A creative tension between needs, both human and wild, must be considered and negotiated. An unexpected harmony begins to emerge as something to be honored and safeguarded like water in the desert.

We, the people, have made mistakes. We have made mistakes in our relationships with those who came before us and the land that holds their histories. We have made mistakes in how we have managed and misunderstood the wild. But after spending a lifetime immersed in our national parks, I believe we are slowly learning what it means to offer our reverence and respect to the closest thing we as American citizens have to sacred lands. Our national parks are places of recognition. When I see a mountain lion's tracks on pink sand in the desert, I am both predator and prey. When I see the elusive Everglade kite hovering above the sawgrass, I am that manifestation of hope and survival. And when I visit the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York, and listen to Sojourner Truth's speech, "Ain't I a Woman," her voice becomes the voice I want to cultivate in the name of courage.

We are at a crossroads. We can continue on the path we have been on, in this nation that privileges profit over people and land; or we can unite as citizens with a common cause — the health and wealth of the Earth that sustains us. If we cannot commit to this kind of fundamental shift in our relationship to people and place, then democracy becomes another myth perpetuated by those in power who care only about themselves.

In my own state of Utah, there are those (including most of our elected officials) who want to see our federal lands returned to the states. At the Western Freedom Festival held in Cedar

We can continue on the path we have been on, in this nation that privileges profit over people and land; or we can unite as citizens with a common cause — the health and wealth of the Earth that sustains us.

César Chávez' mother, Juanita, gives him a drink of water as he ends a fast on Jan. 3, 1968, in Delano, California, while Robert Kennedy and Chavez's wife, Helen, look on. GEORGE BALLIS/ THE IMAGE WORKS



City, Utah, in 2015, in the proximity of Zion and Bryce national parks, devotees of the rancher Cliven Bundy, who refused to pay his grazing fees, gathered to protest what they see as an assault on their liberty. From their point of view, any more federal lands “locked up” in the name of wilderness or national parks is a threat to their values as Americans. Why? Because they are sick of the government telling them what to do. Threats of violence are real. Death threats were made. So much so that during the Freedom Festival, employees of all federal land agencies from the Bureau of Land Management to the National Park Service were advised not to wear their uniforms in public so they would not be a target, literally. The windows at the visitor’s center at Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument were replaced with bulletproof glass.

What are we to do with this kind of polarity of vision within the United States of America? How might we begin a different kind of conversation so that our public lands are seen as our public commons, instead of the seedbed of rancor and violence?

The time has come for acts of reverence and restraint on behalf of the Earth. We have arrived at the Hour of Land.

“All the world seems a church and the mountains altars,” wrote John Muir. But perhaps the naturalist’s most prescient words were these: “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

The world is intertwined. Life is evolving. We, too, are evolving. We revise our ideas over time. What John Muir advocated for in his lifetime — the protection of wild country and our national parks — is still, I would argue, a noble cause, worthy of our admiration and respect. When the environmental historian Donald Worster says that Muir started a new American religion, if I am honest, I am part of his congregation. When I saw Yosemite Valley for the first time, I felt I was standing in Eden. I have followed in his footsteps of environmental activism as an American writer. And when Richard White argued at the Aurora Forum at Stanford University in 2009 that “Muir’s vision for the 19th century ... is not going to be a vision for the 21st century,” I understand his point of view.

“Muir’s view that you can protect the mountains while everything else is opened up to development. ... Global warming has finished that. ... It’s all one world.” White goes on to say, “It’s not that I’m against wilderness areas, it’s not that I’m against national parks, but essentially, we’ve now instituted a system of change that is going to take over — the entire planet.”

What Muir could not see from the vantage point of Mount Ritter in 1872, the same year Yellowstone became America’s first national park, was the scale of changes that would be piled onto the Earth by modernity. How could he have imagined that the work of a backcountry ranger now includes picking up five pounds of toilet paper in a two-foot radius on the trail to Half Dome in Yosemite National Park? How could he have comprehended the appetite of an expanding global population and the carbon load now weighing heavy on all of us? We don’t need to denounce John Muir’s legacy, we need to broaden it.

When we enter places of grandeur and sites of suffering, and inhabit landscapes of historical import and ecological splendor, we stand on the periphery of awe. How did this happen? Who were the witnesses? And what are we seeing now? The American landscape has a voice, many voices. It becomes us. Our national parks are a burning bush of identities.

This deeper understanding of our individual and shared histories, both human and wild, allows us to touch and be touched by what has occurred in the past and what remains as we contemplate what we can create together by listening to one another with an open heart.

César Chávez said, “After 30 years of organizing poor people, I have become convinced that the two greatest aspirations of humankind are equality and participation.” If we can learn to listen to the land, we can learn to listen to each other. This is the beginning of ceremony. □

This essay is an excerpt from The Hour of Land: A Personal Topography of America’s National Parks, by Terry Tempest Williams, forthcoming from Sarah Crichton Books/Farrar, Straus and Giroux in June 2016.



Far left, Chávez walks in a field with grape pickers in support of the United Farm Workers Union in 1968. Left, women harvest table grapes in Delano, California. A field-packed box of grapes weighed about 26 pounds and workers were paid a piece rate — the faster you work, the more you earn — with no toilets, drinking water or rest breaks provided.

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HEARD AROUND THE WEST | BY BETSY MARSTON

ARIZONA

How much has Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio's controversial quasi-legal crusade against Latinos cost Maricopa County since he was first elected in 1993? An estimated \$142 million, says blogger Jeffrey T. Burgess, and it could get worse for the Phoenix-area county. Over the years, Arpaio became famous for racially profiling motorists and housing inmates in surplus military tents. But in 2013, U.S. District Court Judge Murray Snow ruled that Arpaio's office was being "overzealous" when it came to enforcing immigration laws — violating the rights of Latinos by targeting them for traffic stops and detention. The judge ordered the sheriff to permanently discontinue all discriminatory practices. But after learning that Arpaio had "willfully" ignored his order — and also withheld evidence — Judge Snow began contempt proceedings against him late last year. Odds are, says Burgess, that Arpaio will face criminal, not civil, charges, once the judge's ruling is issued. That could mean more fines for the county to cough up, and also the possibility that the sheriff himself might occupy a bunk in his own tent city jail.

THE WEST

When it comes to bold and surprising names for athletic teams, Montanan Dale Ackels challenges anybody to compete with the Northern Rockies. Try cheering for the Belfry Bats or stomping your feet for the Chinook Sugarbeetters, both teams in Montana. He's also partial to the Wampus Cats in Clark Fork, Idaho. For those not in the know, he says that a Wampus Cat resembles a cross between a "Tasmanian Devil and Jack Russell Terrier." Ackels also relishes the lovely team names at Montana State University: Northern Lights for guys, Skylights for gals.

CHINA AND THE WEST

It's a long way from the Rocky Mountains, but Jackson Hole, China, is a thriving community where more than 1,000 families enjoy American-style openness and warmth on the outskirts of smoggy Beijing. Residents may not know their neighbors by full name or occupation, but they



WYOMING Check your brakes. GARY COLES

enjoy their nicknames, including "Vanilla," "Little Lion" and "Hooligan." Streets boast classically Western names like Aspen, Moose and Route 66, and a town square features bronze statues of cowboys, a clapboard church and "a giant Victrola that sprays water," reports *The New York Times*. The mostly wealthy inhabitants are drawn by an American ideal of wilderness and freedom, said Qin You, "and also a big house." His own home has six bedrooms, a year-round Christmas tree and a koi pond. Jackson Hole's novel sense of community is enhanced by more than 100 free clubs known as "dream-gathering tribes," whose interests range from baseball to knitting and the Boy Scouts. And everyone sleeps well at night: A sense of security comes from guards "dressed as park rangers," who patrol the town and salute every passing car. But trouble is brewing in this paradisiacal pastiche of Americana: In March, the Chinese minister of civil affairs demanded that Western and "bizarre" property names be expunged, because they damage "national sovereignty and dignity," reports *The Economist*. Then in April, the Communist Party mouthpiece, the *People's Daily*, weighed in, warning that any property with a foreign name undermines the traditions of Chinese culture. However, it's unclear how much the government can crack down on the phenomenon: Housing developers all over China

have found that buyers are drawn by a foreign aura — thus buildings dubbed "Oriental Yosemite," "Thames Town," "Harvard Apartments," "Imperial Hall Boston," "Oriental Babylon" and "Florence Town." What happens next is anybody's guess, unless the government can somehow force the owners of buildings to "put socialist core values first."

THE NATION

Oh, no, say it's not so! Old Faithful, brought to you by Viagra? Have no fear, says Jeff Reinbold, the National Park Service associate director for partnerships and civil engagement. It's true that a policy going into effect at the end of 2016 will allow corporate logos to appear in parks, but Reinbold says it merely gives "new opportunities and new tools" to donors who want quicker deals, reports the *Washington Post*. Naming rights, for example, could be sold for educational, interpretive, research, recreation and youth programs and endowments, including naming bricks on the way to a visitor center. "And a donor will now be allowed to design and build a park building and even operate it long term." Another change, says Reinbold, is that park superintendents will be encouraged to use their expertise and "get more engaged" in the fund-raising process. Under the new policy, superintendents may "accept" gifts from park sponsors of \$100,000 or even up to \$5 million with certain conditions, though they cannot solicit money directly; that is prohibited for federal employees. The whole idea is outrageous, according to park watchdogs like Jeff Ruch, head of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility: "Every developed area in a park could become a venue for product placement." He charged Park Service Director Jon Jarvis with embracing the kind of commercialism that has no place in our national parks.

WEB EXTRA For more from Heard around the West, see hcn.org.

Tips and photos of Western oddities are appreciated and often shared in this column. Write betsym@hcn.org or tag photos #heardaroundthewest on Instagram.



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“Basically, anyone can float a navigable river. ... As long as you stay between the high-water marks, don't litter or start a fire, you're good to go. Not surprisingly, some property owners are not fond of this tradition.”

Ben Long, in his essay, "Note to politicians: Don't mess with fishing access in Montana," from *Writers on the Range*, hcn.org/wotr