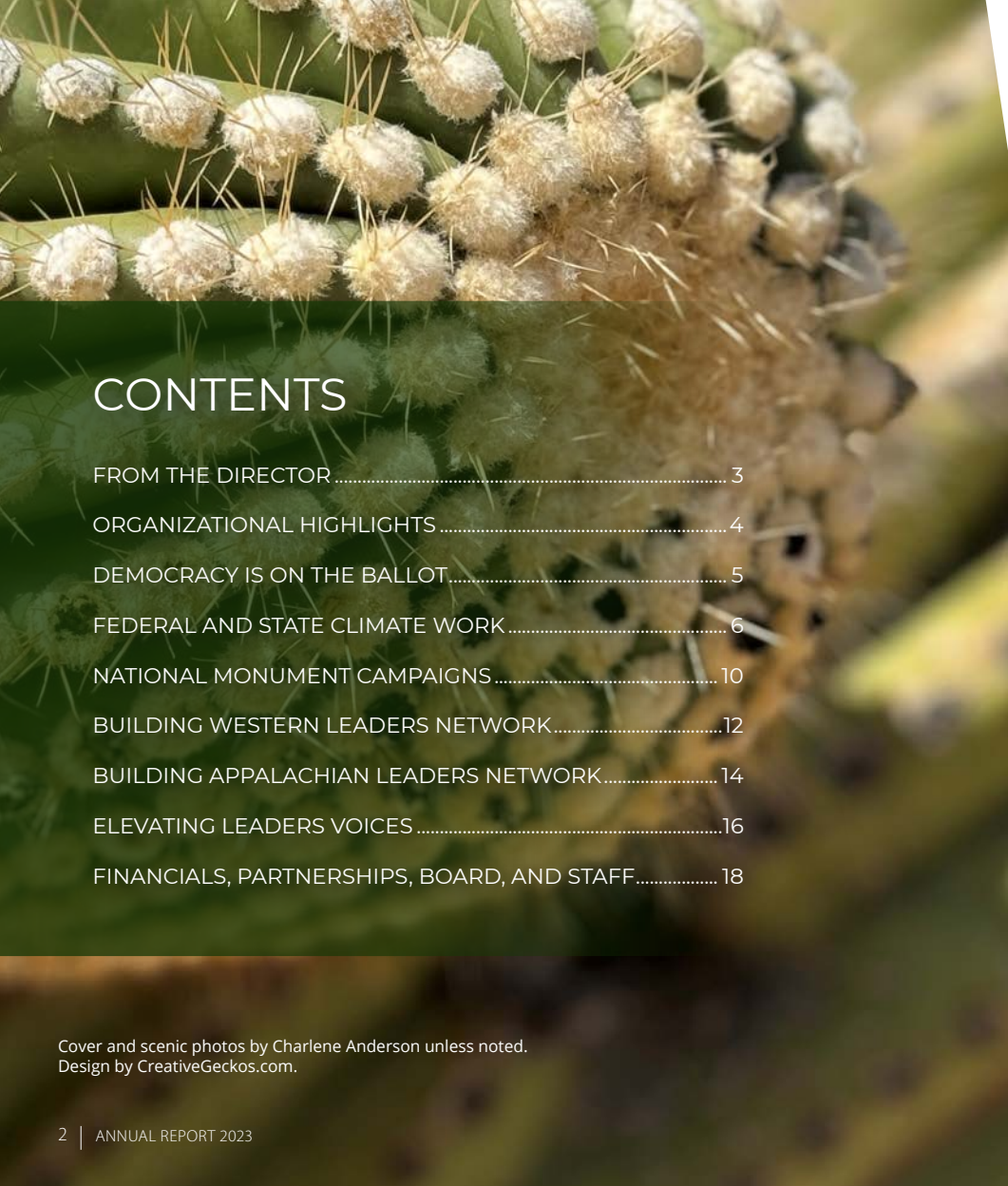


A scenic landscape featuring a rocky path leading through a valley. In the foreground, several vibrant pink cholla cacti are in bloom. The background shows rolling mountains under a clear sky, with some yellow wildflowers scattered throughout the scene.

2023

Western Leaders Network
ANNUAL REPORT

AND INTRODUCING APPALACHIAN LEADERS NETWORK



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

2023 was an exciting year for Western Leaders Network and our sister organization, Appalachian Leaders Network!

After several years of engaging current and former elected officials in our networks to support a federal rule cutting climate-damaging methane emissions from the oil and gas sector, the Environmental Protection Agency announced its final methane rule at the United Nations Climate Summit in December.

We were thrilled to work with regional elected officials in the Ohio River Valley to launch the Appalachian Leaders Network. ALN will focus on energy transition, clean air and water, and democracy and election security issues in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

In this report, you will read about other highlights, including the victories we helped achieve for our climate and public lands, new partnerships we formed with organizations and leaders, and our work championing democracy and promoting election security. Through opinion editorials, public testimony, and letters, elected officials spoke out for oil and gas reform, advanced regulations to reduce methane emissions, advocated for Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, and supported federal climate investments.

Thank you to the current and former elected officials in our networks for taking action beyond the bounds of your immediate communities and imagining what is possible for our climate future. Thank you to the individual donors and foundations for your financial support and faith in our work.

While we face grave threats to our democracy and a long road ahead implementing and enforcing the EPA methane rule, the power of your voices and your determination to defend all we hold dear is inspiring a new generation of leaders.

With gratitude for your support and optimism for the future,



Gwen Lachelt
Founder & Executive Director



ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Our highlights in 2023 included:

- Achieving a groundbreaking EPA rule to cut climate-damaging methane emissions from the oil and gas sector.
- Working with regional officials to launch Appalachian Leaders Network, a sister organization to WLN focused on building climate resilience, advancing clean energy transitions, and strengthening democracy in the Ohio River Valley region.
- Advancing our Democracy is on the Ballot program to protect democracy, enhance election security, and promote free, fair, and safe elections.
- Increasing WLN's presence and visibility in Washington, D.C., by attending Vice President Kamala Harris' Earth Day event and the inaugural White House Methane Summit.
- Advocating for national monument status for the culturally and historically significant Avi Kwa Ame in Nevada.
- Establishing an Indian Country Fellowship Program to expand our work with indigenous leaders.
- Participating in state-level issue campaigns, including efforts in Colorado to cut greenhouse gas emissions and in New Mexico to expand voting rights.

In 2023 you helped us accomplish:

10 Action bulletins

6 Regional, national, and virtual events on climate and methane

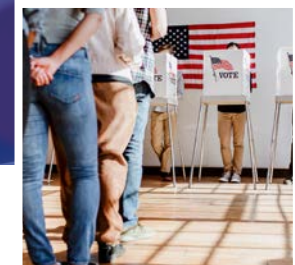
4 Letters to federal agencies, decision-makers, and Congress

6 Media statements about climate and health

13 Editorials, letters, and earned media articles

5 Videos highlighting historic federal climate funding and benefits of joining WLN

DEMOCRACY IS ON THE BALLOT



DEMOCRACY IS ON THE BALLOT

The United States needs strong leadership at all levels of government as the nation grapples with environmental, economic, and social changes. This work requires a thriving democracy and public faith in the electoral process. Support for democracy is an American value, not a partisan issue, and there are best practices leaders can — and already do — use to defend it.

WLN and ALN's Democracy is on the Ballot program engages secretaries of state, county clerks, and other election officials. Among other organizations, we partner with the Brennan Center for Justice to preserve democracy and free and fair elections in 2024 and beyond.

Our key priorities include:

- Protecting voting rights, expanding voter access, and engaging voters.
- Urging elected officials to enact more robust measures against intimidation of voters and election workers.
- Sharing strategies and resources to disseminate accurate election information, communicating with the public about the election process, and preempting misinformation and disinformation.

In New Mexico, WLN advocated for expanded voting rights protections. The state legislature passed the New Mexico Voting Rights Act, which includes the first-in-the-nation Native American Voting Rights Act. Among other provisions, it increases access to voting and facilitates broader voter participation throughout New Mexico's many indigenous communities.

FEDERAL AND STATE CLIMATE WORK

FEDERAL CLIMATE RULES

In 2023, our nation achieved a significant and hard-won victory with the Environmental Protection Agency's finalization of a groundbreaking rule to limit methane emissions from new and existing oil and gas facilities across the U.S. Leading up to the EPA's announcement on December 2, WLN staff and leaders advocated for the most robust possible standards through public testimony and opinion editorials.



Yaacov Dagan / Alamy Stock

WLN Executive Director Gwen Lachelt testified before agency leaders and the Office of Management and Budget, urging the EPA to strengthen its proposal. She also testified at an EPA hearing in support of the Methane Emissions Reduction Program, funded through the Inflation Reduction Act to reduce methane emissions. WLN and ALN submitted letters signed by elected officials in the organizations' respective regions, called on the EPA to finalize a robust rule, and released media statements to amplify the letters.



SANTA FE + NEW MEXICAN

Interior Department should strengthen methane rule

Former Navajo Nation Shiprock Chapter President Duane "Chili" Yazzie

April 15, 2023



Director Lachelt participated in the White House's inaugural Methane Summit in Washington, D.C., in July. At the summit, the Biden administration announced the formation of a cabinet-level Methane Task Force dedicated to addressing the climate crisis through methane mitigation. WLN released a media statement following the announcement, and Director Lachelt was interviewed by Colorado public radio station KUNC about the task force and methane pollution's effect on western communities.

STATE CLIMATE RULES — New Mexico

WLN actively engaged in efforts to improve New Mexico's air quality, protect frontline communities, and hold the oil and gas industry accountable for pollution. In 2023, WLN advocated through public testimony and opinion editorials for the New Mexico Oil and Gas Justice Reform Act, designed to modernize the state's oil and gas regulatory laws. WLN staff also testified before the New Mexico Environment Department's Environmental Improvement Board in support of standards to set New Mexico on the path to zero-emissions vehicles. We released a media statement supporting the state's pursuit of federal funding to reduce climate pollution.

FEDERAL AND STATE CLIMATE WORK

STATE CLIMATE RULES — Colorado

Throughout the year, WLN engaged in Colorado's Greenhouse Gas Intensity Verification Rulemaking, an effort to cut greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector through more precise and accurate measurement of methane pollution. WLN staff and Colorado elected officials testified before the Air Pollution Control Division to support a robust rule to improve state regulatory transparency, hold polluters accountable, protect frontline communities, and meet state climate objectives.



ALBUQUERQUE
JOURNAL

Oil and Gas Act overdue for climate, health update

Rio Arriba County Commission Chairman Alex Naranjo

March 4, 2023





Missoulian

Funds could create jobs

Nevada Assemblyman Howard
Watts and Missoula County
Commissioner Juanita Vero

November 9, 2023



FEDERAL CLIMATE INVESTMENTS IMPLEMENTATION

The historic Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law contains crucial federal investments to build climate resilience, create jobs, and achieve environmental justice. WLN produced a series of videos with leaders across the Interior West to elevate blueprints for success and illustrate how communities are utilizing funding for projects such as utility-scale solar and electric vehicle charging stations.

In fall 2023, WLN staff traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with members of Congress to share these success stories from western communities and ask them to continue supporting climate resilience funding. WLN also collaborated with elected officials in Nevada and Montana to publish an opinion editorial urging Congress to maintain the federal funding programs.

NATIONAL MONUMENT CAMPAIGNS

NATIONAL MONUMENT CAMPAIGNS

On the heels of another public lands victory in 2022 — the designation of Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument in Colorado — President Biden declared national monument status for Nevada’s Avi Kwa Ame in March 2023. Also known as “Spirit Mountain,” this historically, ecologically, and culturally rich expanse of desert landscape is the ancestral homeland of regional tribes. Avi Kwa Ame provides critical habitat for the desert tortoise, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife species. WLN advocated for federal protection for Avi Kwa Ame through media statements and by working with tribal elected officials in the region to publish an opinion editorial conveying the importance of Avi Kwa Ame as a sacred site that protects biodiversity and supports the local outdoor recreation economy.

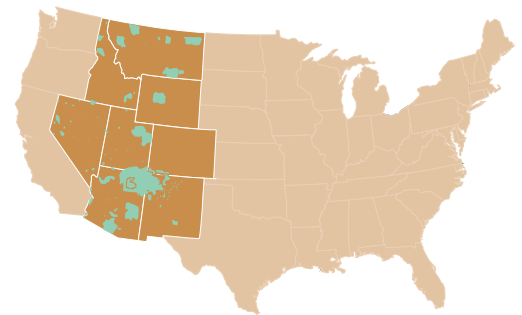




BUILDING WESTERN LEADERS NETWORK

BUILDING WESTERN LEADERS NETWORK

Growing Western Leaders Network capacity is vital to making the organization effective. WLN kicked off the year by launching the Indian Country Fellowship Program and welcoming Kianna Pete as WLN's first Indian Country Fellow. Kianna is a Columbia University student and a Diné (Navajo) Nation member from Farmington, New Mexico. At the university, she serves as the Native American Council President. Before joining WLN, Kianna interned with her Navajo Nation Chapter in Newcomb, New Mexico, Senator Ben Ray Luján, and the Association on American Indian Affairs.



With 89 indigenous tribes, pueblos, and nations throughout the Interior West, indigenous leaders and their perspectives are critical to WLN's mission and success. WLN launched the fellowship program



to help guide the organization's work in Indian Country, build tribal representation within the network, engage tribal officials on climate and conservation issues, and provide young leaders with mentorship and professional development opportunities.

In October 2023, WLN hosted a reception for regional leaders and our first in-person board and staff retreat since 2019 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The post-pandemic return to events and gatherings was a welcome tonic for organizations like WLN, which thrive on strong relationships and great ideas sparked by in-person conversations.

WLN also co-hosted an event in Boulder, Colorado, to bring together regional partners to build relationships, gather new ideas, and make connections to advance our shared missions.



westernleaders.org | appalachianleaders.org



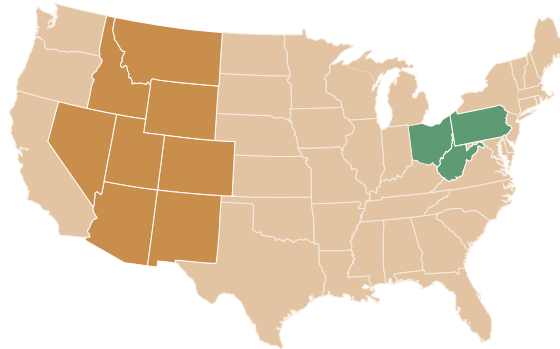
Grizzly by Mike Cavaroc / Adobe Stock

BUILDING APPALACHIAN LEADERS NETWORK



APPALACHIAN LEADERS NETWORK

In 2022 and 2023, WLN staff worked with elected officials in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia to launch Appalachian Leaders Network. The mission of ALN is to harness the power of elected officials to advance energy transition, advocate for clean air and water initiatives, and strengthen democracy in the Ohio River Valley region.





ALN engaged leaders throughout the region in 2023 with a letter signed by 90 elected officials calling on the EPA to adopt a crucial rule cutting climate-damaging methane emissions from the oil and gas sector.

While Appalachia and the Interior West are culturally, economically, and geographically distinct, WLN and ALN collaborate and join forces when appropriate to influence positive change for the climate and democracy. ALN's Advisory Council of leaders from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia informs and guides the organization's issue work and growth.

Learn more at appalachianleaders.org.

TRIB LIVE



**Pittsburgh Tribune-Review
Better oversight of U.S.
pipelines needed**

Pittsburgh City Councilor
Erika Strassburger and
former La Plata County
Commissioner Josh Joswick
August 16, 2023

AMPLIFYING LEADERS' VOICES

SPOTLIGHTING ELECTED OFFICIALS

WLN and ALN amplify the voices of local, tribal, and state elected officials through publishing newsletter profiles, opinion editorials, media interviews, and selfie videos. Broadcasting their opinions and calls to action to a wider audience provides elected officials with an opportunity to share what is going on in their communities, advance issue campaigns, inspire other public servants, appeal to decision-makers, and illustrate how issues like climate change and election subversion impact communities at the local level.



“From Pittsburgh, where nearly half of the state’s top 12 polluters are based, to Southwest Colorado, home to one of the largest concentrations of methane pollution, we are reminded that when it comes to climate change, we can’t afford to leave a single stone unturned.”

— Pittsburgh City Councilor Erika Strassburger, Appalachian Leaders Network Chair and former La Plata County Commissioner Josh Joswick, WLN member



“The federal government’s historic investments will help us strengthen water security, climate resilience, and economic and public health in the years to come.”

— Nevada Assemblyman Howard Watts and Missoula County Commissioner Juanita Vero for the *Missoulian*, November 9, 2023



“Strong federal standards to reduce methane waste are a crucial opportunity for the President to honor this promise and protect tribes who are often disproportionately impacted by pollution and climate change.”

— Former Navajo Nation Shiprock Chapter President Duane “Chill” Yazzie for the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 15, 2023

“I believe it is time to modernize the New Mexico Oil and Gas Act to reflect the realities of oil and gas production in 2023 and prioritize our climate and public health. The New Mexico Oil and Gas Act, our state’s bedrock oil and gas law, was originally written in 1935.”

— Rio Arriba County Commission Chairman Alex Naranjo for the *Albuquerque Journal*, March 4, 2023



FINANCIALS

Financials

2023 REVENUE

Grants: \$443,086

Membership/Contributions: \$36,462

Total Revenue: \$479,548

2023 EXPENSES

Programs: \$270,601

General & Administrative: \$46,770

Events/Travel: \$16,704

Total Expenses: \$334,075

Foundations, Organizations and Corporations

Energy Foundation

Environmental Defense Fund

Maki Foundation

Methane Partners Campaign

The Denver Foundation

The Galloway Family Foundation

Board of Directors

Elise Jones, Chair

Former Boulder County Commissioner
(2012–2020)

Executive Director, Southwest
Energy Efficiency Project
COLORADO

Lauren Pagel, Vice Chair

Policy Director, Earthworks
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Don Schreiber, Treasurer

Rancher
NEW MEXICO

Daniel Corona, Director

Former Mayor, West Wendover
NEVADA

Shelly Fyant, Director

Former Tribal Council Chairwoman,
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Arlee
MONTANA

Victor Snover, Director

Former Mayor, Aztec
NEW MEXICO

Juanita Vero, Director

Commissioner, Missoula County
MONTANA

Amber Torres, Director

Former Chair, Walker River Paiute Tribal Council
NEVADA

Staff and Fellows

Gwen Lachelt, Founder and Executive Director

Jessica Pace, Program Coordinator

Kianna Pete, Indian Country Fellow



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Western Leaders Network is a nonprofit under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. We unite, support and cultivate local, tribal, and state elected officials to protect western lands and build healthy, sustainable, and resilient communities. Donations to Western Leaders Network are tax-deductible.

EIN #82-0625994



