

VICTORY REPORT

Together, we are making history. This year has been truly monumental, with our team at the Western Environmental Law Center at the forefront of many extraordinary victories across the western U.S. Our work is making an immediate impact on our communities, public lands, and wildlife, and is shaping the future of environmental protection and laws. We are honored to represent, partner with, and work alongside so many individuals, organizations, Tribes, and others each year. We are also grateful to you—our supporters—for your dedication, loyalty, and contributions over the past 30 years to allow the Western Environmental Law Center to thrive. Our wins, our advocacy, and our impacts this year and over the past three decades would not be possible without you—thank you.

HISTORIC CLIMATE WIN

We represented 16 young people in the first ever U.S. climate trial alongside our partners at Our Children's Trust and McGarvey Law, aiming to hold Montana's government accountable for worsening the climate crisis through a misguided devotion to all forms of fossil fuels.

During this landmark trial, the youth plaintiffs bravely testified about how climate change has harmed their health, livelihoods, cultural practices, psychological well-being, and the state they call home.

World-renowned climate experts testified that Montana's promotion of fossil fuels and suppression of renewable energy have aggravated drought, fueled megafires, and depleted natural resources.

In August, the court issued a historic ruling in the youth plaintiffs' favor, recognizing that the right to a clean and healthful environment is meaningless without a livable climate.

One expert called this "the strongest decision on climate change ever issued by any court."



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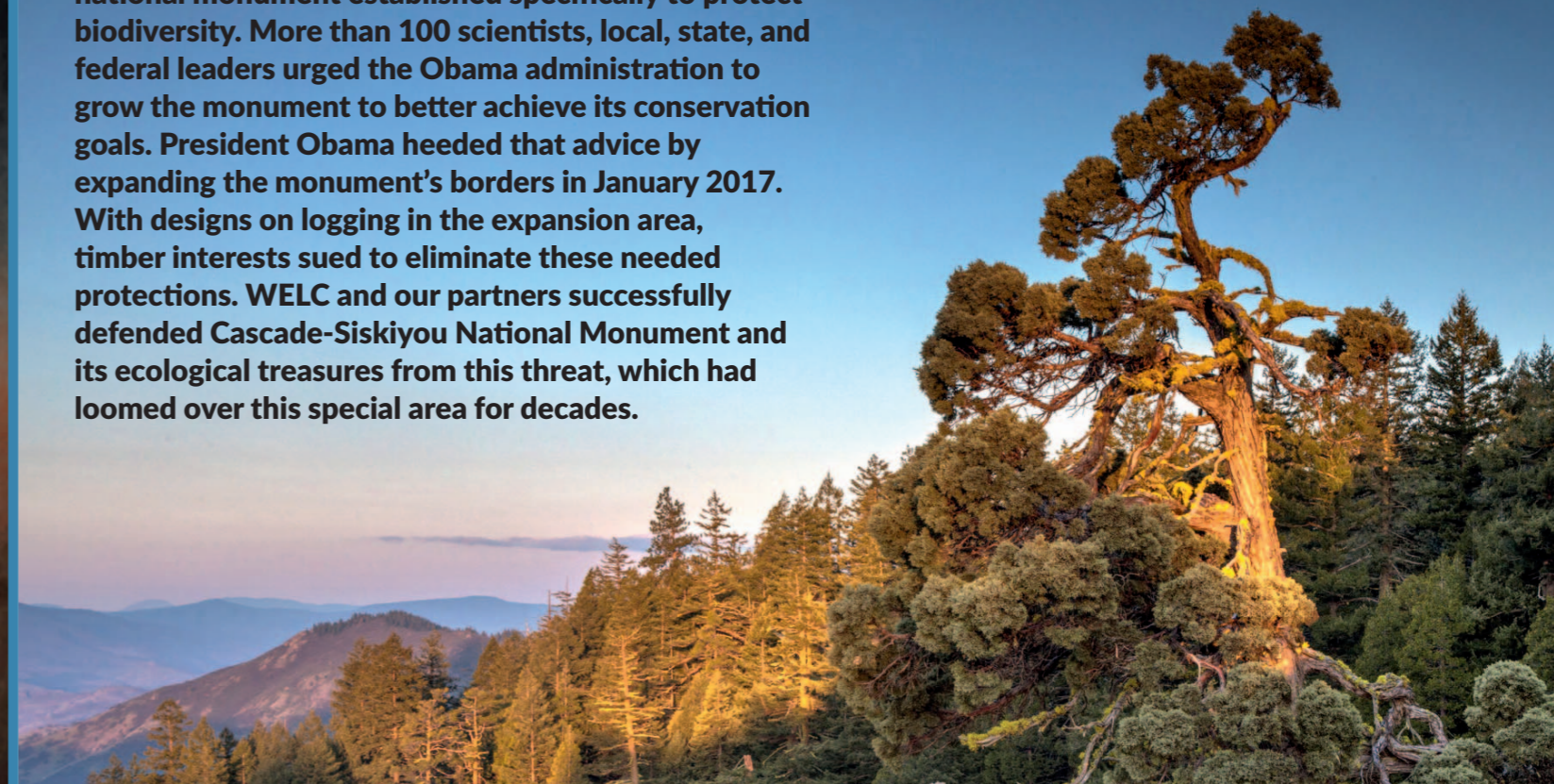
WINS FOR WILDLIFE AND SALMON

We won a case protecting wildlife and their habitat along the Continental Divide in Montana's Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. We successfully defended a U.S. Forest Service plan to close 144 miles of off-road vehicle trails in roadless areas, recommended wilderness areas, and sensitive wildlife habitat important for grizzly bears, Canada lynx, and big game.

We also secured a win for threatened coho salmon in the Shasta River and for our Yurok Tribe partners who have suffered immeasurable loss from salmon declines. The court ruled against a federal Safe Harbor program on California's Shasta River that allowed a dam owner and water diverters to harm coho salmon in exchange for scant stewardship practices on private lands. Now, the National Marine Fisheries Service must reevaluate this program for the Shasta in a way that does more to help threatened coho salmon recover.

NATIONAL MONUMENT VICTORY

We won a huge victory for Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon and California. This is the only national monument established specifically to protect biodiversity. More than 100 scientists, local, state, and federal leaders urged the Obama administration to grow the monument to better achieve its conservation goals. President Obama heeded that advice by expanding the monument's borders in January 2017. With designs on logging in the expansion area, timber interests sued to eliminate these needed protections. WELC and our partners successfully defended Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and its ecological treasures from this threat, which had loomed over this special area for decades.



CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Together with Native and community partners, we defeated 199 oil and gas drilling permits in the sacred Greater Chaco region in northwestern New Mexico. This marks a momentous victory for the health of frontline Diné communities and a step toward environmental justice. Our victory creates new legal precedent, requiring the federal government to consider public health and climate effects of oil and gas drilling.

In another victory directly resulting from our litigation, federal land managers will reverse course by restoring the sacred Sisnaateel Mesa Complex and protecting it from fracking. EOG Resources, a major oil and gas operator in the San Juan Basin, is relinquishing nearly half a million acres of leases, forgoing the development of hundreds of drilling permit applications, and has agreed to begin with reclamation of all land disturbance from roads, pipelines, and well pads.



THANK YOU TO
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FOR MAKING THESE
VICTORIES AND MORE
POSSIBLE!



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CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

We are a nonprofit, public-interest environmental law center. We use the power of the law to safeguard the public lands, wildlife, and communities of the western U.S. in the face of a changing climate.

WESTERNLAW.ORG



Scan this code and donate to WELC today! It's a secure link. You can help our team achieve more victories!

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VICTORY FOR BEAVERS

We worked tirelessly amid many challenges to change Oregon state law to better protect beavers—and the climate. As a result of our advocacy, the Oregon legislature passed the “Beaver Believer Bill” with bipartisan support, which Gov. Kotek signed into law this summer.

This new law ends Oregon’s era of unlimited, year-round beaver killing on private lands without permits, and promotes non-lethal removal where conflicts arise.

Now, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife can begin to manage beavers on private land as it does for other wildlife. We are thrilled to help bring beaver management in the Beaver State into the 21st century.



OPEN TO LEARN ABOUT OUR 2023 VICTORIES—VICTORIES YOU MAKE POSSIBLE.