



High Country News

Dear Readers,

When I signed on last spring as *High Country News*' new executive director and publisher, I knew I was committing to lead an organization in a period of rapid growth and change. But I had no idea what the world, and the West, had in store for all of us. 2020 has been a year of adapting to relentless change and an ever-evolving news landscape.

In March, as COVID-19 blew up across the country, we quickly moved the staff out of our Paonia, Colorado, office and got everyone set up to work efficiently from home. To preserve the staff's sanity — and deliver the best journalism possible — we shifted to a monthly publication schedule. Meanwhile, the editorial team went swiftly to work, reporting on how communities around the region were responding to the pandemic.

Our 50th anniversary campaign — the most ambitious fundraising campaign that *HCN*'s staff and readers have ever undertaken — had to be postponed, as did the highly anticipated celebration that we had planned to hold at the Denver Botanic Gardens. And yet you surprised and delighted us by stepping up and pledging support for half of our \$10 million goal. **We have already begun to invest** that money to help prepare *HCN* for the next 50 years. If nothing else, these challenging times have reminded us just how much we, as a community of people who care about the West, value independent journalism.

The summer brought the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, and the nation was thrown into a state of upheaval as people grappled with injustice and spoke out to **advocate for change**. Again, our team pivoted to cover how the struggle for racial equity was playing out in the Western U.S., bringing the faces and voices of activists to the fore.

Late summer and early fall brought one of the worst fire seasons in our history, and the resulting heavy smoke forced Westerners already suffering from cabin fever to continue to stay indoors. And

this year's election season has proven to be one of the most high-stakes, polarized and nerve-wracking ones on record.

Throughout, *High Country News* has worked to **bring you the best journalism** anywhere about the West's lands, communities, water and wildlife — stories about making Western roads safer for wildlife, coping with wildfire and learning to share our space with large predators. We are proud of our unique and unparalleled coverage of Indigenous communities. And we've continued to broaden our scope and be more inclusive, seeking out diverse and rarely heard voices and perspectives. Witness our April cover story, which revealed the dark history of land-grant universities, or the May feature essay, a love letter to Los Angeles.

The West is many things to many people — a welcome refuge, a beautiful playground, a place to earn a living, a dearly loved home. To understand it fully is a lifelong undertaking, as *High Country News* readers well know, and it requires grappling with the darker chapters of our history, as well as with some uncomfortable truths about our present.

Thank you, readers, for joining us on this journey, and for fueling our questions, our reporting, and all of our work. It is your financial support that has kept us on the job, and we are humbly grateful. As you'll see in the following pages, the stories and outreach you've generously funded — with your subscriptions and donations — have been substantial.

We hope you're all staying safe and well. Here's to another year, and to rest and recovery. We all need it.



Greg Hanscom
*Executive Director/
Publisher*





Spread the News, Take Us Higher

For 50 years now, *High Country News* has informed and inspired all those who love the West. But it's only through our readers' support that we've survived this long — and even managed to thrive.

Today, we remain strong and committed, poised for another 50 years.

We need your help more than ever to raise \$10 million for our comprehensive campaign.

Invest now in our future, and support independent journalism for the West.

hcn.org/50moreyears

We've already raised \$5 million and begun investing in our goals:

1 DEEPEN & GROW OUR COVERAGE OF THE WEST

- Expand our team and diversify our staff of writers and editors **STARTED**
- Fund more of the deep-dive reporting projects that have long been our hallmark

2 ENGAGE A LARGER & MORE DIVERSE AUDIENCE

- Create new marketing initiatives to gain more subscribers **STARTED**
- Double our free student subscription program (HCNU)
- Put *HCN* in the hands of state and national lawmakers **STARTED**

3 ADVANCE TECHNOLOGY THAT SUPPORTS OUR READERS

- Improve customer service capabilities with new database technologies **DONE**
- Upgrade our website and digital archives to improve our readers' experience
- Enhance our cyber-security to ensure the integrity of our journalism

4 STABILIZE OUR BUSINESS MODEL

- Bolster our fundraising capacity **STARTED**
- Increase our financial reserves to help us weather the changing economic environment **STARTED**

5 ENDOW OUR INTERN & FELLOW PROGRAM

- Train and inspire the next generation of media professionals **STARTED**
- Employ twice the number of interns to work with our team

Photo: **Matt Purciel**

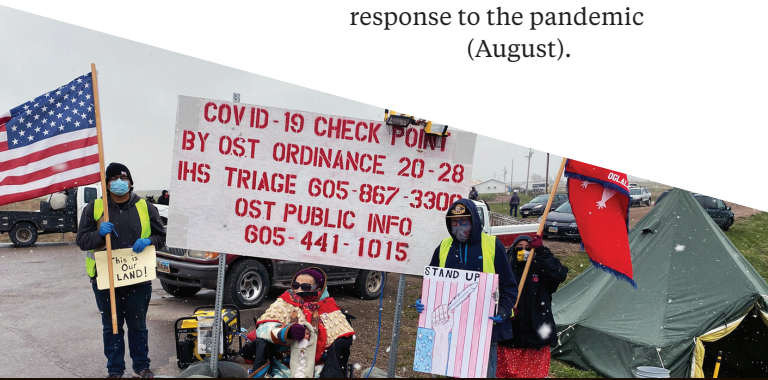
Best of 2020

CHANGING THE WAY WE LOOK AT THE WEST

HCN's journalists have always challenged our readers, just as we've challenged ourselves, to look past myth and stereotype and see the West as it really is. Because, as the saying goes, it's complicated — sometimes very complicated.

No story challenged us more than our April feature about land-grant universities. The two-year investigation, carried out by our Indigenous Affairs Desk, revealed the origin of the wealth that undergirds the nation's higher education system: expropriated Indigenous land. The project has inspired soul-searching at universities nationwide, leading a number of them to seek ways to set things right.

Jenny Liou, daughter of a Chinese immigrant, examined her own roots and interrogated the ways science perpetuates racist stereotypes, in her August essay, "Am I an invasive species?" Los Angeleno Lynell George celebrated her city's often-overlooked natural and cultural beauty even as it went into lockdown with the onset of COVID-19 (May). And *HCN* correspondent Leah Sottile continued her thoughtful exploration of far-right extremism, examining Ammon Bundy's residual power (March), the "don't tread on me" Gadsden flag, and the far right's response to the pandemic (August).





LIVING WITH CLIMATE CHANGE

The searing impacts of climate change are now a daily reality for people in the Western U.S. Assistant Editor Jessica Kutz described how robots are helping us understand, and learn to adapt to, extreme urban heat (September). In August, Mark Betancourt shed new light on the post-traumatic stress many wildland firefighters endure. And in July, Jenna Kunze told the story about how climate change is impacting the lives and livelihoods of the Alaska Native Inupiat people.

On the brighter side, one of our most popular stories this year, which was reprinted by multiple news outlets across the country, recounted the unlikely transformation underway in Delta, Colorado, near *HCN's* longtime hometown of Paonia (January). Here, the children of coal miners are learning to make a living via cleaner, greener technology: They're training to install solar panels.

STRUGGLES IN THE BORDERLANDS

Life along the U.S.-Mexico border has never been easy, and it has only become more difficult as the Trump administration removes protections on endangered species and begins bulldozing (literally and figuratively) a path for the president's signature border wall. In February, Assistant Editor Jessica Kutz reported that after 25 years of conserving rangeland along the border, the Malpai Borderlands Group was blindsided by the

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(Left) People demonstrate at COVID-19 checkpoints operated by the Cheyenne River Sioux and Oglala Sioux tribes. **Anna Salomon**

(Above) Students adjust a tilt-mount solar array, one of three a solar class has constructed outside of Delta High School in Colorado. **Luna Anna Archey/High Country News**



wall, which she dubbed the “country’s largest construction project.”

Wildlife isn’t having it any easier. In July, Associate Editor Maya Kapoor wrote about efforts by land managers and Indigenous people on both sides of the border to save the imperiled Yaqui catfish. And emails obtained by Jessica Kutz via the Freedom of Information Act revealed managers pleading with the administration to stop pumping groundwater for wall construction, lest they dry up the San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge (August).

A YEAR WE WILL REMEMBER

No one will look back at 2020, of course, without recalling two stories that dominated the headlines, and our lives, through much of the year: The COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide unrest over racial justice sparked by the death of George Floyd under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer.

Contributing editors Nick Bowlin and Kalen Goodluck covered the pandemic with stories about an emergency room doctor in Gunnison, Colorado, and the far-reaching impacts of the novel coronavirus on the Navajo Nation. Our coverage also put a spotlight on community response to the pandemic. Jessica Kutz wrote about mobile health clinics that have popped up from Nogales, Arizona to Denver. Contributing

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A community health representative talks with a man at his home on the Navajo Nation, which has nearly 200 contact tracers spread across numerous health-care agencies. **Jim Thompson/Albuquerque Journal**

Chuck Minckley and Thomas Hafen check netting for Yaqui catfish that escaped into a holding pond at Rancho San Bernardino in Sonora, Mexico. **Roberto (Bear) Guerra/High Country News**

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Editor Jane C. Hu told the story of a nonprofit in Seattle that uses donations to purchase food for frontline workers.

Photos in our July issue bore witness to participants in the #BlackLivesMatter protests that overflowed the streets of Los Angeles. Assistant Editor Carl Segerstrom covered the local and federal responses to demonstrations in Portland, Oregon, while Assistant Editor Anna V. Smith wrote about a novel program in Eugene, Oregon, designed to de-escalate the kind of situations that provoke a violent response from the police.

LIGHTER FARE

Heavy times sometimes call for a little levity, and we delivered that, too. Ecologist Jennifer Campbell-Smith wrote about the adorable viral video of the friendship between a badger and a coyote. Associate Editor Maya Kapoor, trained as a scientist herself, provided some pro tips on physical distancing from fireflies, grasshopper mice and gooey snail relatives called California aglajas. And every month, Betsy Marston made us chuckle with her insights into the quirkiest corners of the far-flung West.

Finally, we've had a delightful time traipsing down memory lane this year, as we've celebrated *HCN's* 50th anniversary. One of the highlights: a never-before-seen photograph of a young Robert Redford reading a copy of *HCN* in the early 1970s. We're famous! Who knew?



Awards

2019 Northwest Excellence in Journalism Award

Magazine category, for environment and natural disaster coverage for “Losing Lake Coeur d’Alene” by Emily Benson

2020 Excellence in Features Awards

Second place in the food category, from the Society for Features Journalism for “An Indigenous way of life for these California tribes breaks state laws” by Debra Utacia Krol

Society of Professional Journalists Dateline Award

Finalist for “When disaster strikes, Indigenous communities receive unequal recovery aid” by Allison Herrera

Best Shortform Science Writing

From *Medium* for “In Oregon, a mysterious tree grove conjures a colder time” by Sarah Gilman

23 awards for our Indigenous Desk stories

From the Native American Journalists Association 2020 National Native Media Awards: 10 first-place, four second-place, nine third-place awards, plus two honorable mentions

Impact & Metrics

HCN's journalism is making a difference by amplifying voices, inspiring a larger, more diverse audience and moving more people to act on behalf of the West.

OUR AUDIENCE

Subscribers	2019	2020	
Total	35,745	36,004	↑ .72%
Digital only	5,874	8,824	↑ 50%
Print + digital	29,781	27,180	↓ 9%

 **67,712**
 **39,007**
 **10,938**

OUR REACH

This past year, more than **350** HCN stories were republished in publications like *Wired*, *The Atlantic*, *Mother Jones*, *Adventure Journal*, *Grist*, *Navajo Times*, *Atlas Obscura*, *Hakai Magazine* and more, exponentially increasing HCN's reach.

Newsletter subscribers

133,961

Website

440,990 average monthly unique page views

282,230 average users/month

4:06 average time on page

Intern Program

HCN's intern program started back in the early 1980s, when Ed and Betsy Marston put out an appeal and the first of our remarkable *HCN* interns arrived in Paonia, Colorado.

Our renowned “journalism bootcamp” has trained hundreds of young writers since then and the program continues to evolve. Like everyone else, we’ve had to respond to the challenges of a global pandemic. Welcome to our first-ever, fully remote class of interns:



Jessica Douglas

Indigenous Affairs Desk (Oregon)

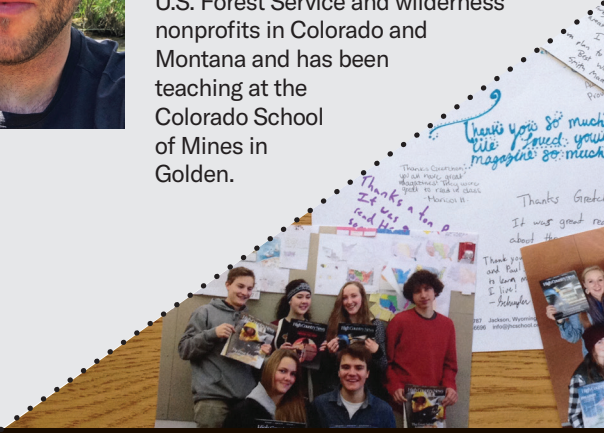
Jessica has a keen interest in fine art and Indigenous studies, as well as in food, health and sovereignty issues. She has reported for the Eugene Weekly and worked with a language revitalization project at the Northwest Indian Language Institute.



Eric Siegel

West-South Desk (Colorado)

Eric has written for *HCN* previously and brings to his work years of experience with public lands issues. Eric worked for the U.S. Forest Service and wilderness nonprofits in Colorado and Montana and has been teaching at the Colorado School of Mines in Golden.



Victoria Petersen

West-North Desk (Alaska)

Victoria has a great love and knowledge of her home state of Alaska and brings two years of experience as a small-town newspaper reporter to the desk. She has reported extensively on education and from both cities and extremely rural communities in Alaska.

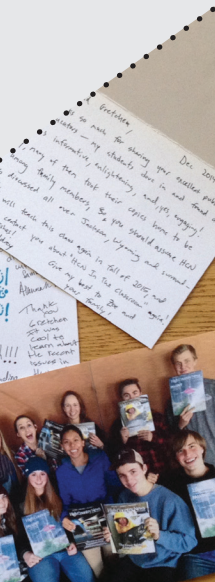


We couldn't provide this remarkable program without the support of the generous donors who enable us to do the work we do. We'd especially like to thank:

- Rosenthal Family Foundation**
- Johnson Family Foundation**
- BF Foundation**
- Anonymous (2)**

HCNU

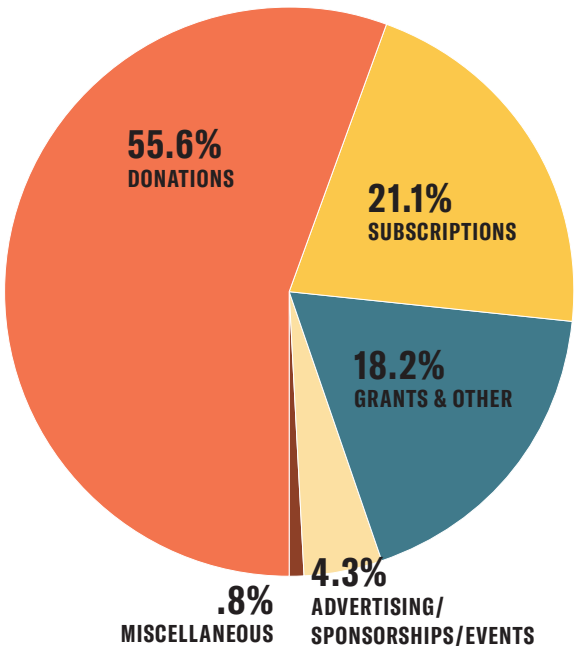
The HCNU Classroom Subscription Program has been a valued resource for students and teachers for seven years now. Donor support has made it possible for us to distribute subscriptions to the magazine and give online access to our 50 years of archives to high school and college classrooms. This past year we were able to share the magazine with 16,301 students in 490 classrooms across 32 states. Due to concerns about COVID-19 and uncertainty within schools, we quickly transitioned to fully digital subscriptions for now, and look forward to continuing to expand our outreach to students.



High Country News Profit and Loss

Annual Support and Revenue

Donations	\$2,385,635	\$1,697,691
Subscriptions	\$906,781	\$921,644
Grants and	\$782,818	\$696,446
Other Contributions		
Advertising/Sponsorships/ Events	\$184,685	\$150,245
Miscellaneous	\$30,647	\$59,420
(single-issue sales, syndication sales, royalties, investment income, etc.)		
TOTAL	\$4,290,566	\$3,525,486



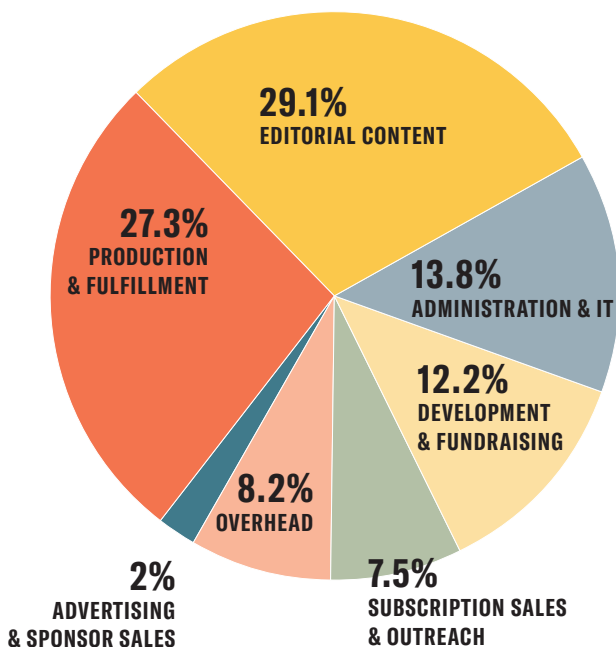
Note: These numbers are unaudited estimates.

October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020

October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019

Expenses

Production & Fulfillment	\$1,118,083	\$1,000,091
Editorial Content	\$1,190,760	\$1,048,606
Subscription Sales	\$306,771	\$321,901
& Outreach		
Administration & IT	\$565,978	\$470, 897
Development & Fundraising ..	\$498,985	\$477,964
Overhead	\$332,802	\$229,347
Advertising/Sponsor Sales ...	\$83,170	\$88,144
TOTAL	\$4,096,549	\$3,636,950
Net Income/(Expense)	\$194,017	(\$111,464)



Thank You for Your Support

Donors like you are the reason for *High Country News*' success and our ability to reach millions of readers every year. And unlike for-profit, advertising-driven news corporations or nonprofits that rely on just a handful of philanthropists to foot the bill, you give us a rare independence from outside influence. Your donations and subscription dollars help us bring award-winning stories to your door, inform and inspire students, policymakers and citizens across the country, and train the next generation of journalists.

We want to thank you for all the donations you've given — large or small, one-time or monthly, as a legacy gift for future generations or just an impulsive response to a story that moved you.

Though space constraints prevent us from listing all of you in the following pages, please know that every donation makes an important difference to the bottom line of our operation — to our journalists, artists, editors and teams that work to bring you news of the West.

— *the staff of HCN*

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ANNUAL DONORS (\$500 or more)

In honor

Arthur Smidinger

In memory

Jill Bryson

Fred Anderson

Patsy Batchelder

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**You guys offer incisive
 thoughtful reporting on
 issues in the West that
 affect us all in the rest of
 the country and the world.
 I am honored to support
 your work.**

— Marilyn Cooper
 Houghton, MI

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Josephine Lopez

This publication keeps me informed and aware of so many important issues facing my home that I would otherwise be blind to. Thank you for keeping us informed. The West needs you!

— Juhlin Ellis
Park City, UT

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SUSTAINERS' CLUB MEMBERS (\$20/month or more)

Every month, a dedicated group of subscribers (and staff!) give to *High Country News*, providing a substantial and reliable stream of revenue. Founded in 2005 with only 37 founding members, the Sustainers' Club monthly giving program has grown to just over 900 donors. Thank you, monthly givers!

In honor

Sarah Bartelt
Chris Collins
Mayre Flowers
Ray Haertel
Paul Larmer
Farley Maxwell
Farley Mowat
Milo Nichols
Cate Ritchie
Robert Sargent, Sr.
Vernon & Wes Stewart
Dan Stonington &
Emily Stonington-Hibbard
John & Carson Taylor
Winston the Wonder Spaniel

In memory

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Dorthey & Stephen Beaver
Keeley Bihl
Dan Crawford
Laurel Dana
The Dobson ancestors
Rosemarie Goodbody
Eric Hare
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Patricia Gerrodette
Leslie Ferriel & Evan Simmons
Ann Fitzsimmons &
John R. Gould

“I particularly love *HCN* because it is the best damn magazine I have ever subscribed to. I like it because of its wide subscriber base that helps keep it from being an in a bubble news source, and I love that it covers the west and all its vagaries and complexities that both the corporate and ‘progressive’ press often fail to notice.”

— Tim Kingston
Cheyenne, WY



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Every day I am grateful for a publication that tells the authentic stories of our West and the truth of who we are. It feels like seeing a mirror for the first time.

— Anita Jackson
San Ramon, CA

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TOM BELL LEGACY CIRCLE

Tom Bell, founder of *HCN* in 1970, passed away in 2016, leaving a legacy of watchdog environmental reporting and a deep passion of the West. Readers who plan to leave a bequest to *High Country News* (and who've let us know about it) are honorary members of the Tom Bell Legacy Circle. Thank you for your invaluable commitment to nonprofit journalism.

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“With landscapes and communities changing across the West, we need *High Country News* on the beat — telling the stories that no one else will tell. We are excited to support the Tom Bell Legacy Circle, and we encourage others to join us. By including *HCN* in our estate planning, we help ensure that strong, independent journalism thrives in a very uncertain future.”

— Rick Tallman
& Lisa Flores
Denver, CO

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**“No one else has the depth
 AND breadth on the issues
 as HCN, and we look
 forward to continuing
 working with you.”**

— Meaghan Parker
 Executive Director,
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A Note from *HCN*'s Board

This year, we've missed meeting you in person, as COVID-19 has clipped our usual board-meeting travel to cities across the West.

The members of this board comprise an unlikely group of activists, writers, lawyers, businesspeople and nonprofit professionals. What brings us together is our deep love for the West — and our belief in the work of *High Country News*.

Last summer, each of us committed to extend our own personal giving to this organization. Collectively, we pledged more than a million dollars to *High Country News*' 50th anniversary campaign. It was a stretch for us, but we are 100% behind the vision and goals of this campaign, and we want to see *HCN* reach a larger, more diverse readership in the decades to come.

Thank you for your long-standing commitment to *HCN*'s nonprofit journalism. We wouldn't be here today without this dedicated community.

If you haven't yet made your pledge to *HCN* for this 50th anniversary campaign, we urge you to do so now.

Warmly,
HCN Board Members

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Our Mission

High Country News is a 501(c)3 nonprofit media organization that covers the important issues and stories that define the American West. Its mission is to inform and inspire people — through in-depth journalism — to act on behalf of the West's diverse natural and human communities.

HCN

Know the West.

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