

2021 NEWSLETTER  
WINTER ISSUE

# WINTER WILDLANDS ALLIANCE

## TRAIL BREAK





# OF PEOPLE AND THE

## AN ALTERNATIVE LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

By Micheli Oliver



“ This story teaches many things, but most importantly a deep respect, love and compassion for the place we inhabit, as we are quite literally on the back of another creature. These days, the respect, love and compassion has been broken.”



# LAND

When I was a little girl my dad put me on skis and sent me down the hills at Winter Park, on land that is home of the Ute peoples, colonized today as Colorado. I bombed down, rarely turning to slow myself, my dad barreling after me in his Carhartt jacket and Wrangler blue jeans. My biggest role model in this world wore jeans. He poured all his money into my ski suit so I wouldn't be cold. It was always my dad making sacrifices for us, so that we could be outside.

Skiing in jeans was one of the coolest, most giving things I'd ever seen. Growing up, I didn't really understand what wealth or privilege was — just that we didn't have it. And that meant hand-me-downs, discounted lift tickets every chance we could get them, rental skis, borrowing everything we could. We made it work because my parents saw the joy that skiing gave me and my brothers. Skiing seemed like a right of passage in Colorado, so my parents made it work.

I'm forever grateful that we were able to play in the mountains, at least until 2012, my freshman year of high school, when ticket prices skyrocketed. Looking back, that was the year I stopped playing outside — for a while. Money was a barrier, and I didn't see the outdoors as a place for all.

The way I was raised was unconventional, to say the least. I come from a mixture of cultures, peoples, and ways of life. My ancestors are Indigenous, of the Blackfoot and Shawnee peoples, as well as Irish and Italian, so my life is an odd conglomerate of it all. Food and family was where everything came together. My father taught me the Indigenous ways his father had taught him: how to hunt and use every possible piece of the creature for feeding our family, how to be outside and give thanks for this earth. My mother was all warmth, family, unconditional love and art. So today I am an Indigenous photographer, part Blackfoot, Shawnee, Celt and Italian, a mixture of resilience and survival from very different oppressions both big and small. And at the core of me is love for this world.

Today, being outside on public lands isn't as simple for me as just being an athlete. It can't be that simple when we recreate, play, compete and adventure on stolen and unceded Native land. In winter time my preferred mode of transportation is skis, but I can't help listening to Indigenous ancestors who were there before me, and to relatives — more-than-human flora and fauna — everywhere I go. Listening to and learning about stories of incredibly strong peoples from all over, including mine.

Skiing isn't a space where you often see Indigenous people. When I'm on skis I'm in a white-washed world of privilege. A world not made for us, even though it's a sport entirely reliant on Native land. Skiing does not need to be like this. Being outside does not need to

be majority white. We, Black and Indigenous and People of Color, must begin somewhere. And so, in the Native way, I begin with a story of this Land.

Many Indigenous peoples will today refer to North America as Turtle Island. The name comes from an Ojibwe/Anishinabe story of creation. Although there are many different versions, the way I've heard it is that after a great flood covered the earth, Nanaboozhoo, an important figure to the Anishinabe, pledged to find land again. He dove and dove but could not hold his breath long enough to find the land. Many other creatures dove and tried to find the land, none of them successful. Finally, Muskrat dove for a very long time, almost to death, coming back with a small piece of the land. Turtle then offered to use their shell to bear the land and begin again. Because of Turtle's sacrifice, the island of North America grew and everything on it thrived.

This story teaches many things, but most importantly a deep respect, love and compassion for the place we inhabit, as we are quite literally on the back of another creature. These days, the respect, love and compassion toward Turtle Island has been broken. The United States was founded on the enslavement and removal of Black and Brown bodies, and thus a country born of these mentalities was created. Today we are sewing up deep wounds of oppression, genocide, erasure and removal of Indigenous peoples — wounds not easily healed. Non-native people have been doing their best, but simple solutions are never the answer.

Land acknowledgments are not enough to heal these wounds. I see them as an important first step to fight erasure, but we must do more. And so today I acknowledge the Indigenous peoples that stewarded Turtle Island before colonization and I acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who have survived, thrived, and are still stewarding Turtle Island today. I acknowledge the fight we all have for a better future and the steps we must take toward Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination on new kinds of homelands.

I acknowledge that in order to do so, allies and accomplices must learn what it means to stand in solidarity with Native people.

What does that solidarity look like? It looks like (but is not limited to) education, support of Native-run organizations like Natives Outdoors, revitalization of trust in Indigenous knowledge and the return of Native peoples to their ancestral homes. To the members, partners, directors and grassroots groups of Winter Wildlands Alliance, as we venture out on snow this winter, I ask for us all to step back and acknowledge that we are on Indigenous lands. And then to step forward to see what more can be done.

**Haa'wa iksookapi** (thank you)

Connor Ryan, a Húŋkpařha  
Lakŋóta professional skier  
shredding on Ute Territory.  
@SacredStoke  
@NativesOutdoors  
Photo: Micheli Oliver



“ There will be more people in the backcountry this season, and that isn't a bad thing. More people on skis and snowboards means more people who care about wildlands. Let's remember to be kind out there.”

— Sofia Jaramillo, pg. 14

Mt. Baker Wilderness, Washington, on the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish, Stillaguamish, Duwamish, Muckleshoot, and Suquamish.

Photo: Jason Hummel

## Trail Break, Winter 2021 Issue



**WINTER  
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*Winter Wildlands Alliance is a national nonprofit organization promoting and preserving winter wildlands and a quality human-powered snowsports experience on public lands.*

### COVER PHOTO:

Athlete Paul Romain plots his next move inside France's largest, and now vanishing glacier, la Mer de Glace. Image by Jake Holland from the film 'Awaken', excerpted in this season's 16th Annual — and 1st ever virtual — Backcountry Film Festival (see page 18).



# ALWAYS MOVING FORWARD

## One Foot in Front of the Other

A letter from our Executive Director

This year we celebrate our 20<sup>TH</sup> year as an alliance.

As I look back at all the incredible progress, programs, campaigns, and people that have brought us this far, my heart is full of gratitude. I know I speak for the Winter Wildlands Alliance teams through the years in expressing pride in our efforts and in the integrity of our organization and mission. We recognize our past success and honor the positive work, people and progress — and what we've learned from the challenges, mistakes and setbacks in order to move forward in a better way, stronger and more resilient than ever.

The skin track is set and our mission is clear.

It's going to be a banner season in the backcountry on every level. Winter is upon us and there is no shortage of excitement as the darkest days are followed by longer, lighter days and deeper powder. From the Northwest to the Wasatch, Red Mountain to Tuckerman's Ravine, and everywhere in between, the data from spring sales numbers and summer outdoor recreation trends indicate what we all know — the backcountry is amazing and people love the experience. Avalanche courses and backcountry essentials are sold out or selling out across the U.S. This winter we'll have more people, less parking, newer users, and plenty of folks who are not really sure what it's all about.

But we are inspired by new friends and our growing community getting into the backcountry. We were all new to a wild winter

experience once — remember that and pay it forward. Ski Kind out there. The cornerstone of Winter Wildlands Alliance is community — people who are dedicated to winter wild spaces and backcountry experiences. You are part of the Alliance, and as you head out this winter, bring a friend along. By supporting Winter Wildlands Alliance, you support the backcountry experiences you love. Our new merchandise store directly funds our work and it's a great way to show that you are a part of what we all do together, and that you love and care about the backcountry (see pg. 12).

The land we protect, the environment we fight for, the issues we stand up for, being an advocate and building our community isn't a season, but a passion and our North Star. It's ahead of us and we are always headed there. Join us.

**Join us and keep  
winter wild!**



Todd Walton, Executive Director



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# we are here

A SnowSchool educator and program director finds her place within the Winter Wildlands Alliance, and in the process makes the organization stronger and more inclusive.

By Ilyse Sakamoto



Ilyse teaching SnowSchool at Bogus Basin, Boise National Forest, ancestral lands of the Shoshone and Bannock.

My introduction to Winter Wildlands Alliance was as an outdoor educator at Bogus Basin SnowSchool in Idaho. I'd been an alpine skier from a young age, but as an adult working with kids I found myself connecting more deeply with snowshoeing than I ever had with skiing. I remember my heart being full of joy and peace as I worked with students who'd never been to the mountains or strapped on snowshoes. As they dug snow pits to take measurements, as we "made our own snow" and acted out how snow crystals form, as we glissaded effortlessly down a freshly blanketed hillside, I witnessed the power of experiential education.

I'll never forget sitting with a group of young refugee women in our igloo, each sharing her first experience with snow. One recounted how she'd slipped on the ice at school, how nervous she'd been, how she hadn't wanted to come. But there, shoulder to shoulder in the protection of the igloo, she shared how glad she was, how much she was enjoying the snow.

A little over two years ago, as the sun set on my time up at Bogus Basin, I went to work at the Winter Wildlands Alliance office in downtown Boise. I was excited to stay connected to SnowSchool, but also to support conservation, and the work to keep public lands accessible for all. I was looking forward to the next chapter in my professional life.

I was warmly welcomed; everyone was kind and well-meaning. And yet it wasn't long before I started to have a kind of identity crisis. I found myself — a Japanese-American woman who doesn't backcountry ski — working for what I, and seemingly everyone else, thought of as a backcountry ski organization. I found myself feeling not included or represented, like I didn't belong. Images on the website mostly featured white male backcountry skiers. Conversations were thick with insider lingo. Certain interactions struck me like lightning, reminding me I wasn't part of the club.

Fast forward to my first Outdoor Retailer Show, a massive winter sports trade show held at the Convention Center in Denver, Colorado, attended by tens of thousands of hard-core people in the latest brightly-colored technical outerwear. This was where I truly began to question what I was doing—not only at the event, but with this organization. I felt like a total fraud. I



weighed myself down with self-inflicted pressure to fit the part; to become a backcountry skier and to be able to share a similar passion with so many of the organization's members and partners.

I tried hard to convince myself that I enjoyed my first backcountry skiing experience. It seemed like an important part of my job. Everyone was very supportive, but it was obvious I was holding everyone up. The skins kept slipping off the rental skis. (I didn't feel like I could afford my own equipment; I didn't even know where to start!) I fell. I rolled the whole way down the ungroomed hillside. Then I had to climb back up. The more I sought to feel included, to assimilate, the more I was losing my true self. I was overwhelmed with my lack of authenticity.

Sadly, I'm a master at assimilating. Growing up in a very white community in Boise, Idaho, I never acknowledged — or even denied — my Japanese background. My childhood goal was to fit in, to just be "white." And in general I succeeded, but at the heavy cost of losing touch with my roots. I remember being so embarrassed when friends would overhear my mother speaking Japanese on the phone with my grandma.

As I got older, however, and started to understand more about the world and myself, I found myself wanting to connect with this cast-off part of my identity; I was ready to embrace my whole self and be proud of who I am. But my new role at Winter Wildlands Alliance rocked that new-found confidence. I once again felt the old embarrassment, the familiar desire to change myself, to erase my difference.

I didn't realize how much weight I was bearing — how much baseline discomfort; how much sadness, stress and loneliness — until I acknowledged it, and then slowly began to let it go. I recognized that there was privilege in being able to work through this. There was privilege in working for an organization where I felt safe enough to share my story and express my feelings of exclusion and isolation. I started to think about what could be done to create a more welcoming, inclusive, diverse, and safe space that a true diversity of people — like me and not like me — would want to be part of.

I was inspired by a film about Yesenia Castro called "I Am Here" that was in the 2018 Backcountry Film Festival. I

was inspired by conversations I had with others on their own journeys to make their workplaces and organizations more just, equitable, diverse and inclusive. At Winter Wildlands Alliance, we started having candid conversations around the lack of diversity and representation in winter sports and conservation.

Winter Wildlands Alliance is ultimately made up of a bunch of individuals. As we continue to have and commit to these conversations, and to identify tangible actions to start weaving justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into the work we do, I've felt a positive shift in organizational thinking and decision making. I see it in my colleagues' efforts to reach out to tribal communities on policy work, to collaborate with equitable access groups and advocate for ALL non-motorized snowplay experiences (not just the raddest backcountry skiing experiences), in ongoing efforts to diversify imagery on our website and publications, and to broaden our ambassador team.

The most empowering experience so far came from a recent chance meeting with a fellow educator at our first SnowSchool Virtual Conference in November. A virtual conference is not the most personal way to meet new people, but it did allow me to see the faces of many other SnowSchool educators. And seeing another face like mine, another Japanese-American face — Kurt Ikeda's (see p. 9) — shifted everything. I felt an immediate sense of kinship and relief. Turns out there are others just like me, non-white, non-backcountry skiers, out there doing work in outdoor education and conservation. Now I'm hopeful that through intentional community building and outreach, connections like this won't always be left up to chance.

I recognize that Winter Wildlands Alliance was founded by backcountry skiers. I'm thankful for their hard work and passion. They helped set the foundation for what this organization has grown to be, and how it advocates for a wide variety of human-powered winter experiences for all types of people. Looking to the future, remembering how my own story at Winter Wildlands Alliance began, I'm hopeful that our sincere efforts to build a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization will empower others to feel welcome and included. It's a slow journey, and a journey without end. But it's necessary.

**And I am here.**



Dani Reyes-Acosta on points in Wyoming, on ancestral lands of the Shoshone-Bannock, Eastern Shoshone and Cheyenne. Photo: Sofia Jaramillo



Lilia Hedlof and Sandra Pecina explore the Carson National Forest, ancestral lands of the Pueblos, Jicarilla Apache and the Navajo. Photo: Emily Sierra



# IT TAKES A S



## WINTER DISCOVERY IN TAHOE: Keeping It Hands-on in a Virtual Winter

**A**mong the stout pines and firs on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe is a large yurt surrounded by miles of Nordic trails. This is the Sierra Watershed Education Partnerships' Winter Discovery Center. In a normal winter, hundreds of K-12 students flock here from classrooms across the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District to explore hands-on science, wildlife monitoring, winter ecology, snowpack analysis, winter survival skills, and other snow science investigations that connect to classroom science curriculum.

This season will be a little different. To meet the challenges of the current pandemic reality, SnowSchool and its partners at over 70 sites across the North American snowbelt, including SWEP, have rolled out an entire winter-long series of outdoor science activities that can be completed independently in a snow-covered backyard, park or schoolyard. Short videos demonstrate hands-on activities such as examining snow crystals or identifying animal tracks, and then prompt students to

go outside and find examples in their own backyard wild. In a future, non-pandemic winter, these resources will help create a much needed connection between organized field trip experiences and the students' home and family life.

"Teachers will sign up with us to join their virtual classroom to ours, and we will deliver an adapted version of our traditional program," says SWEP's Program Director Ashley Phillips. Operating out of the Winter Discovery Center yurt (equipped with Wi-Fi, laptops, video cameras and snow science equipment), the adapted version of SnowSchool will feature educators presenting virtually to students and prompting kids at home to go out into their backyards to do hands-on science activities such as collect samples of snow for experiments. The goal is to lean heavily on technology, but still honor the most essential goal of SnowSchool — connecting kids to the outdoors and the wildness of winter.

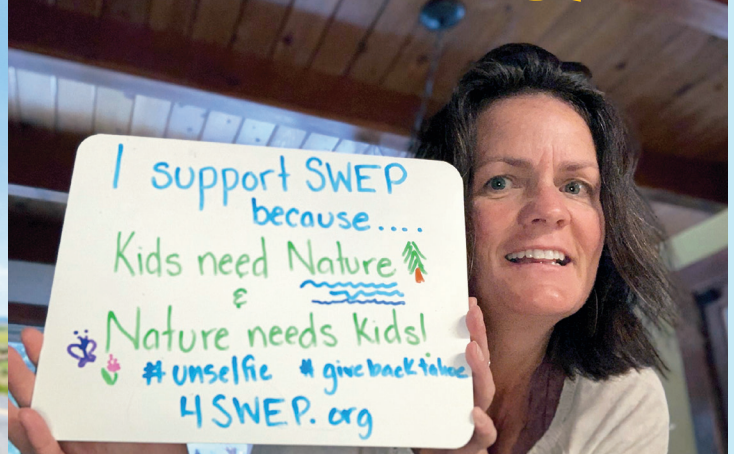


# SNOW VILLAGE



## KURT IKEDA NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

In February of 2020, Kurt joined the National Park Service as the Education Specialist at three parks in Southern Idaho, on ancestral territory of the Northern Shoshone and Bannock peoples, including Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, a longtime SnowSchool site that annually engages hundreds of students in the region. "I grew up in LA, and this is my first real winter ever, so I'm very excited to be leading SnowSchool as a novice!"



## ASHLEY PHILLIPS SIERRA WATERSHED EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS (SWEP)

Ashley is Project Director at SWEP near Tahoe City, on ancestral lands of the wašiw, or Washoe, people. She moved to Tahoe in 1998 with a B.S. in environmental geology and geological oceanography, and joined SWEP in 2011. In a normal season she runs two variations on SnowSchool: Winter Trek, a schoolyard program for all fifth graders across the region; and the Winter Discovery Program. "Registration usually books up in the first hour," she says.

# THE PEOPLE OF SNOWSCHOOL



Photo: Stephanie Wong

## MEGAN MASON NASA SNOWEX

In addition to collecting snowpack data in the field, Megan is also helping SnowSchool finalize data collected by students as part of last year's citizen snow science project with NASA SnowEx. "It's really hard to measure snow because it varies throughout the season and the location you are measuring," she says. "Because of these challenges, SnowEx is especially appreciative of efforts to acquire more observations. Citizen science from all ages has allowed us to gap fill our data sets and offers more insight between storms and melt cycles."



Photo: Kim Scott

## FLETCHER ANDREWS MOUNTAIN SAFETY RESEARCH (MSR)

Fletcher's been in the snowshoe business since 1999. Over the years, MSR has provided SnowSchool sites across the country thousands of discounted and donated snowshoes and equipment, helping introduce kids to the magic of on-snow exploration. "We're glad we can contribute," he says. "SnowSchool is a unique program, and we've absolutely valued the opportunity to support the mission of getting kids outdoors, making it fun to learn on so many levels."





2020 Snow Rangers Chris Snell and Cricket Olin on Colorado's Uncompahgre National Forest, ancestral Ute lands.

# The Rise of SNOW RANGERS

NEW PROGRAMS ARE SPRINGING  
UP ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO  
HELP PEOPLE ENJOY THE WINTER  
BACKCOUNTRY SAFELY  
AND RESPONSIBLY.

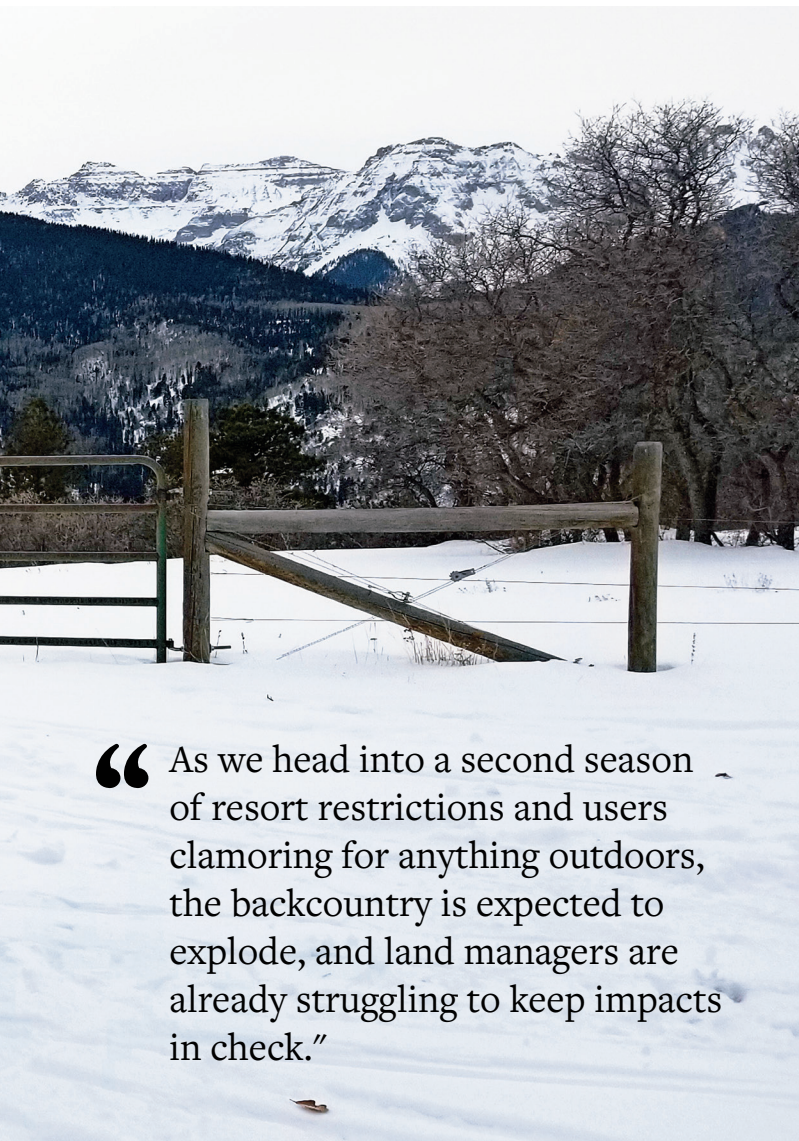
By Julie Mach, Conservation Director  
Colorado Mountain Club

**A**t 8pm on Saturday, March 14, Colorado's Governor announced an executive order to close all ski resorts in the state. Immediately. The COVID-19 pandemic was making its preliminary destructive foray right at the height of the ski season, at the beginning of the spring break rush. With the lifts shut down for the rest of the season, I knew the backcountry was in trouble.

A week later, I was scouting some terrain for an advocacy project near Loveland Ski Area (one of the closest resorts to Denver, just off I-70) and the scene was shocking. Hundreds of cars were crammed along both sides of the road (the parking lot was closed) and thousands of skiers were descending upon the resort with uphill gear: AT skis, splitboards, snowshoes — many in use for the first time. The resort was tracked out by mid-morning. When I drove over Loveland pass that afternoon, the popular backcountry shuttle lot was overflowing, and more than 30 skiers were waiting, thumbs out, to hitch a ride back up the hill. This trend was consistent across Colorado, and forced most resorts along I-70 to fully close to uphill traffic for the remainder of the season, pushing even more folks into the backcountry.

As we head into a second season of resort restrictions and users clamoring for anything outdoors, Colorado's winter backcountry is expected to explode. A report from the Snowsports Industries of





“As we head into a second season of resort restrictions and users clamoring for anything outdoors, the backcountry is expected to explode, and land managers are already struggling to keep impacts in check.”



Snow Rangers leading a forest ecology program for youth near Grand Junction, CO.



Chris and Cricket snow ranging near Leadville, CO.

America (SIA) forecasts a 29% increase in participation for winter outdoor activities this season, but with so many new users getting out into the backcountry, land managers are already struggling to keep impacts in check. User conflict, safety issues, parking and human waste are just a few of the most acute.

### Enter: Snow Rangers

In an odd coincidence, at the height of the first COVID peak, the Colorado Mountain Club was just wrapping up the first year of a new program focused on winter recreation management in Southwest Colorado. Our two Snow Rangers – Chris Snell and Cricket Olin– worked on the Ouray Ranger District of the Uncompahgre National Forest to educate users, engage partner groups, install signage and monitor use in popular backcountry areas like Red Mountain Pass and the Cimarron Mountains. They connected with hundreds of backcountry users of all kinds (skiers, snowmobilers, Nordic skiers, etc.) to provide information about local regulations, trail etiquette, avalanche conditions and much more.

A typical day might include working with Avalanche forecasters to identify closures and danger zones, hanging in the parking lot at Red Mountain Pass to help with beacon checks, patrolling Wilderness boundaries to check for snowmobile incursions, or

working with a local school group as they learn about winter wildlife and snow science. According to local Forest Service staff, “having eyes on the ground” is one of the most helpful aspects of the Snow Ranger program. “We are able to interact, visit, and be present with recreational users on our district now,” says Forest Service Natural Resource Specialist Caleb Valdez. Snow Rangers are “invested in protecting a backcountry experience for the general public on these amazing landscapes,” he adds.

This season, the need for friendly, knowledgeable faces in the backcountry will be more important than ever. And so we’re excited to bring a team back to the Ouray district, and will be expanding the program in future years. We’re also interested in sharing experiences and best practices with other, similar programs across the country — including in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, California, Washington, even New Hampshire — and improving coordination across land management agencies and districts. To this end, we’ll be hosting our first Snow Ranger Summit in January.

We owe a huge thanks to the United States Forest Service, Weston Backcountry, Black Diamond and Winter Wildlands Alliance for their support of this program. To learn more, visit [cmc.org/snowranger](https://cmc.org/snowranger).



# WHY YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS



WWA MEMBER JERRY ISAAK  
*Troll Peninsula, Iceland*

Supporting a nonprofit organization is a profound way to amplify your voice and be part of a groundswell toward **change.**

Individual memberships and donations play a huge role in whether or not Winter Wildlands Alliance and its partners have the resources needed to do the work our mission defines. Together, we can get it done.

[winterwildlands.org/join](https://winterwildlands.org/join)



“I’m a member of Winter Wildlands Alliance because I believe in all of the work you are doing to protect wilderness areas and connect kids to the outdoors.”

WWA MEMBER ERIC MERIDETH  
Washington, DC

“Winter offers us a way to explore terrain that connects us to the earth, ourselves, and our friends. We are so grateful for your work to protect these spaces for us, and for generations to come.”

WWA MEMBER EMILY MULNICK  
Boise, ID

“The experience of skiing in the backcountry is precious. Powering my body uphill through untracked snow, I hear only my breath and the slide of my skis. My brain is quiet; my muscles wide awake. I feel strong, at peace, and completely one with the natural world. What a gift! The work done by WWA makes that gift available to anyone willing and able to receive it.”

WWA MEMBER CARYN GERBER  
Boulder, CO

## Gear That Makes a Difference

Working with partners like Truck Gloves, mountainFLOW eco wax, YETI, Flylow and others, we bring you backcountry essentials, clothing and accessories that keep you safe and warm out in the backcountry — and also support Winter Wildlands Alliance programs and grassroots partners. Buy the gear, look good, and support the places you love!

[winterwildlands.org/shop](https://winterwildlands.org/shop)





# Opening the **APERTURE**

Winter Wildlands Alliance  
is stoked to welcome two  
new ambassadors.

Photo: Sheena Dhamsania

## Sofia Jaramillo

**Adventure Photographer and Filmmaker**

Jackson, Wyoming

[sofijaramillophoto.com](http://sofijaramillophoto.com), [@sofia\\_jaramillo5](https://www.instagram.com/sofia_jaramillo5)

**Sofia is a regular contributor to National Geographic Traveler and National Geographic Adventure. In 2019, she was the first woman of color to shoot a snow campaign for The North Face. As a Colombian-American who grew up in Idaho, her mission is to uplift and tell the stories of BIPOC athletes and friends, and to make wild lands more accessible for everyone.**

“ I can't tell you how many times I've been told to hold my skis a certain way. 'Uh, you're carrying your skis wrong again... Dude! You look like a noob.' I've heard this from my friends and from professional skiers. It's often made me feel like I don't fit in, an instant reminder that if you don't look the part, you're not supposed to be there, which, as a woman of color, is a constant theme in my life. I know they

don't mean it, but the language is exclusive and uninviting. I once had a friend tell me that's how you tell the difference between a beginner skier and an expert. Well, I got news for ya: I've been skiing since I was 3 and I'll carry my skis however I like!”

“There will be more people in the backcountry this season, and that isn't a bad thing. More people on skis and snowboards means more people who care about

wildlands. Let's remember to be kind out there. Our words, even if they seem small, have significant impacts. Be encouraging instead of exclusive. It might seem funny to use language like gapers, jerries, kooks and noobs, but it can ruin someone's entire day and their whole experience skiing or snowboarding, especially if they already feel out of place as some BIPOC do in the outdoors.”



Emilé is pursuing her Masters at the Yale School of the Environment focusing on land management, ecosystem conservation, and climate change. She's also the executive co-director of the Yale Environmental Film Festival. She's worked for the Bureau of Land Management, NOLS and Teton Science Schools. She works with brands like Patagonia, The North Face, Vans, Smartwool and Rivian. As a black female outdoor enthusiast, she's deeply passionate about increasing accessibility for the BIPOC community to experience winter landscapes through winter sports.

“I've been thinking a lot about our insatiable growth, and the immediate and long term stress we put on these landscapes to fulfill our own ends. When it comes to imagining a new, more sustainable future, we seem unable to decouple growth from well-being. These are false equivalencies. You know, the town of Jackson doesn't even have a climate action plan or a conservation action plan, despite our endless vocal expressions of love for these spaces. Love takes sacrifice. I don't always know the right action, but I do know the lack of action now will define our lives and the lives of those to come. It's time to kill the status quo.”

“These mountains hold personal power for me as a woman and person of color. So much of my life is about being able to access that inner-joy, inner-play, inner-child as a form of healing. Brown women, Black women, Indigenous women — we carry a lot of pain. I can't speak enough about how healing it is to be outside. There's a generative power that comes with being in these spaces that we all need to access right now.”

# Emilé Zynobia

**Snowboarder, Environmentalist, Writer**

Jackson, Wyoming

@curlsinthewild

Photo: Sofia Jaramillo





# KEEPING IT COOL

## How public lands will help us address the climate crisis.

By Hilary Eisen, Policy Director

**P**ublic lands are a key piece of any climate solution, in part because a lot of energy development — be it fossil fuels or renewables — happens on public lands, but also because these large landscapes play a fundamental role in carbon capture and sequestration. President Biden campaigned on an ambitious climate agenda, and has set a goal for the United States to achieve a clean-energy economy and net-zero emissions by no later than 2050. But we're not going to get there without doubling down on public lands protections and on new climate-conscious land management scenarios.

### Keep it in the ground

One obvious way to combat climate change is to keep fossil fuels in the ground. Emissions from fossil fuels produced on Federal lands represent a significant percentage of the national total. For this reason, President Biden has pledged to end new leasing of public lands for oil and gas development, and we expect his Administration will take many other steps to reduce emissions tied to Federal public lands. But it's also important to consider the role public lands play in carbon storage and sequestration.

### Protect and restore carbon sinks

It may come as a surprise to learn that soils store most of the ecosystem carbon on public lands — almost double what is stored in live vegetation and dead organic matter, combined. To protect these fundamental carbon sinks, offsetting nearly 16% of our country's overall carbon dioxide emissions — we need to keep our remaining undeveloped lands just the way they are, which also happens to be just the way we human-powered winter recreationists like them.

Wilderness, National Monuments and National Parks are the “movie stars” of public lands conservation, but they're not the only actors on the set. For example, the Roadless Rule, which prohibits road building and commercial logging in old-growth forests and other roadless National Forest

lands, protects approximately one third of National Forest lands. But, in late 2020, despite massive environmental pushback, the Trump Administration revised the Roadless Rule to exempt the nation's largest forest — the Tongass — from protection. The Tongass National Forest's old growth forests hold 8% of all of the carbon captured by National Forest lands. But if this rollback stands, and the Tongass' roadless lands are logged, the forest will tip from a carbon sink to a carbon emitter, like we are starting to witness in certain overexploited tropical forests in places like Brazil and Malaysia — thereby accelerating rather than mitigating the climate crisis.

Forest planning can help us protect and restore carbon sinks on National Forest land by determining a big-picture plan identifying which lands to protect and where to focus active management and fuels reduction projects. While we need to protect unfragmented, wild landscapes — and also improve connectivity between discrete landscapes — active management in other areas can help boost forest productivity and carbon capture. Winter Wildlands Alliance tracks and engages in these projects and planning processes across the country to make sure that active management occurs in places where it's appropriate and that it doesn't interfere with winter recreation opportunities.

### 30 x 30

There's a bold new idea making its way through the halls of Congress that is built on the fact that protecting public lands is good for the climate, as well as for biodiversity: ‘30x30’. That is, the U.S. should protect at least 30% of its land and oceans by 2030. California — often a leader on environmental issues — has recently committed to doing this at a state level by governor's executive order, though there's still a whole lot to be determined with regard to what constitutes ‘protection’. Over the past 50 years we've protected approximately 15% of the nation's lands and waters using designations such as Wilderness Areas, National Parks, National

Monuments, and other tools. This is a great start, but to conserve another 15%, we'll all need to think big and to use all the tools in the toolbox — and likely some we haven't yet thought about yet.

While there are still Wilderness-quality landscapes that deserve protection as such, a lot of our most pristine landscapes are already designated as Wilderness, National Parks, or other big ticket designations. And 30x30 isn't just about Wilderness areas and Parks anyways. To achieve this ambitious — and critical — goal, we need to figure out conservation approaches that allow for a variety of uses and stakeholder interests. For instance, in forest planning, we talk about establishing Backcountry Management Areas, Recommended Wilderness Areas, and semi-primitive areas. These are all different ways to protect National Forest landscapes, and while some (like recommended wilderness) are quite restrictive, others allow a wide range of uses — but not the types of development that compromise carbon sequestration potential, or otherwise contribute to the climate crisis.

Most public lands are multiple-use landscapes, and 30x30 can't be achieved with a one size-fits all approach. There are a lot of considerations, including urban greenways, connected communities, wildlife corridors and wildland-urban interfaces. And a broad range of stakeholders that need to be at the table — conservation interests, of course, and recreation voices, but also Indigenous communities, equitable access groups, agricultural interests, sportsmen, commercial fishing interests, even logging and energy companies. We all need to work together to determine where to prioritize conservation and where future development may be appropriate, as well as what type of conservation designation to apply to a particular place.

It's definitely a long game, and will test our human capacity to collaborate meaningfully. But at Winter Wildlands Alliance we're thrilled to be able to get started on it in a meaningful way under a new Administration!





Roadless Areas in the Tongass National Forest represent a significant solution to climate change. Homelands of the Tlingit, the Haida and the Tsimshian people. Photo: Danita Delimont



“There are a lot of considerations, including urban greenways, connected communities, wildlife corridors and wildland-urban interfaces. And a broad range of stakeholders that need to be at the table.”

On foot in the Glacier Peak Wilderness, Okanagon-Wenatchee National Forest, ancestral lands of the Yakama, Okanagan and Chelan. Photo: Jason Hummel





Before April,  
engaged over

**32,500**  
**SNOWSCHOOL**  
**PARTICIPANTS**

across 70 sites  
nationally and  
hosted over

**33,000**  
**BACKCOUNTRY**  
**FILM FESTIVAL**  
**ATTENDEES**

WELCOMED

**OREGON**  
**BACKCOUNTRY**  
**ALLIANCE**

TO THE WINTER  
WILDLANDS ALLIANCE  
FAMILY

Received the largest  
number ever of human-  
powered winter

**FILM SUBMISSIONS**

for the

**20/21**  
**SEASON**



Launched the

**VIRTUAL**  
**Backcountry**  
**Film Festival**

and Best of Fest:

[winterwildlands.org/  
backcountry-film-festival](http://winterwildlands.org/backcountry-film-festival)

Launched the

**ski**  
**kind.**

**BACKCOUNTRY RESPONSIBILITY CODE**

with Granite Backcountry Alliance and 20 other  
partners nationwide. [www.skikind.org](http://www.skikind.org)

Helped get the

**GREAT AMERICAN**  
**OUTDOORS**  
**ACT**



across the finish line, opening up billions  
of dollars in public lands funding

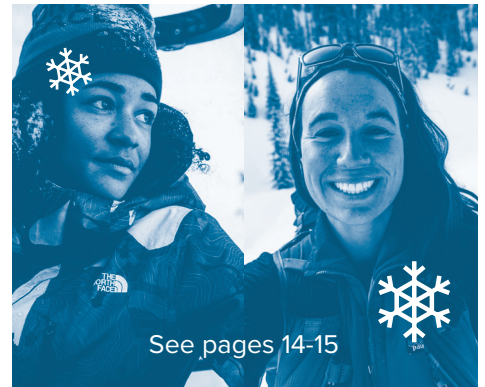




Launched  
**SnowSchool at Home**  
for K-12 remote learning:  
[winterwildlands.org/  
snowschool-at-home](http://winterwildlands.org/snowschoo-at-home)

Welcomed  
**SOFIA  
JARAMILLO**  
& **EMILÉ  
ZYNOBIA**

to the **Winter Wildlands  
Alliance Ambassador Corps**



See pages 14-15

HOSTED THE  
FIRST-EVER

**NATIONAL  
SNOWSCHOOL  
CONFERENCE (VIRTUAL)**

WITH 60 EDUCATORS  
FROM ACROSS THE  
COUNTRY



Launched the  
**WWA  
WEB STORE**

with sweet, co-branded,  
wild winter merchandise  
benefitting Winter Wildlands  
Alliance programs:

[winterwildlands.org/shop](http://winterwildlands.org/shop)

Celebrated the 9<sup>TH</sup> Circuit  
Court of Appeals' decision to  
uphold the

**Bitterroot  
Travel Plan**

affirming Recommended  
Wilderness and Wilderness  
Study Area protections in  
western **Montana**



Helped craft broad winter  
**#RecreateResponsibly**  
guidelines with national  
task force

Led the outdoor recreation community  
in defending the  
**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT**  
including taking the  
Trump Administration to court



**NEPA**

For more information, to get involved, to become a member or stay up to date on the broad range of work we do together as a national alliance, visit [winterwildlands.org/take-action](http://winterwildlands.org/take-action)



2020



Photo: Sofia Jaramillo



# ski kind.

It's how we do it. It's who we are.

Help spread the #SkiKind responsibility code. [skikind.org](http://skikind.org)



## FISCAL YEAR 2020

## AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

As presented by Harris & Co. P.A. Certified Public Accountants.  
For more information email [info@winterwildlands.org](mailto:info@winterwildlands.org) or call (208) 336-4203.

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

## ASSETS

## CURRENT ASSETS

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$215,939
Prepaid and Other Assets	\$9,264
Total Current Assets	\$225,203
Deposits	\$660

**Total Assets** **\$229,960**

## LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

## CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	\$8,761
Accrued Payroll and Related Costs	\$1,332

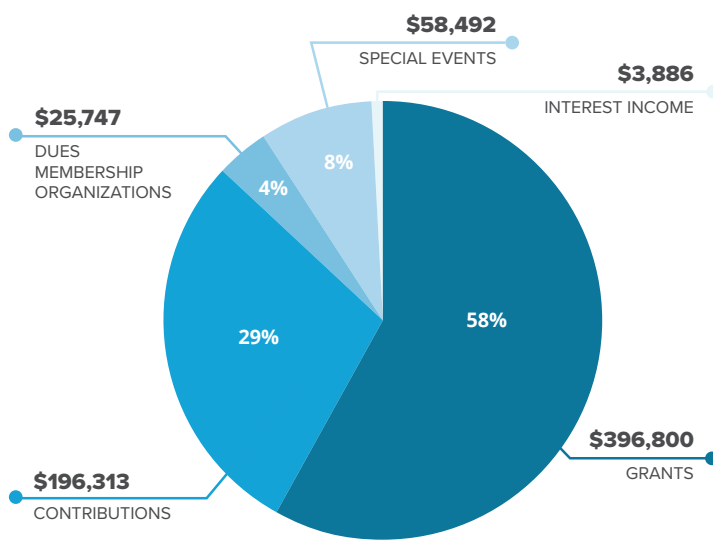
Total Current Liabilities \$80,603

## NET ASSETS

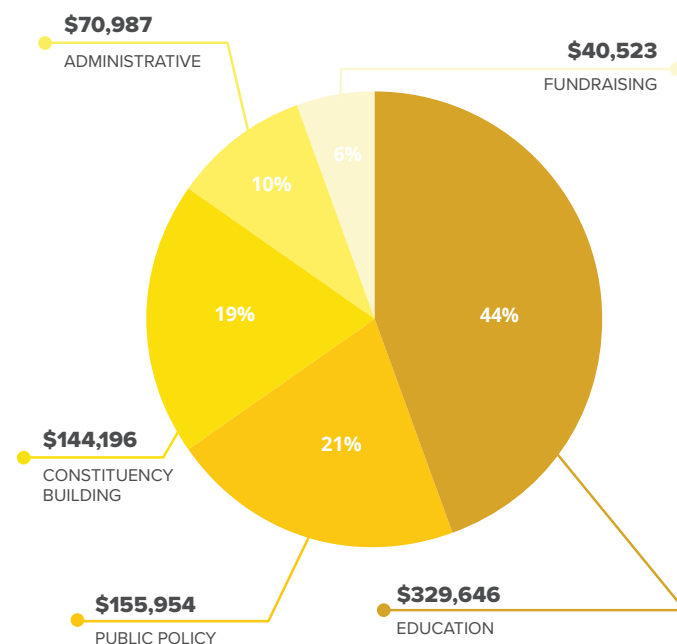
Without donor restrictions	\$99,434
With donor restrictions	\$49,923
Total Net Assets	\$149,357

**Total Liabilities and Net Assets** **\$229,960**

## TOTAL REVENUE: \$681,238



## TOTAL EXPENSES: \$741,306





# THANK YOU!

The Winter Wildlands Alliance thanks our many supporters, volunteers, members, grassroots partners, ambassadors and directors for their commitment and dedication to our work promoting and protecting the human-powered winter experience. We are proud and grateful to list here all of the individuals, foundations and partners who contributed \$100 or more between January 1 and December 1, 2020, without whose generosity our work would not be possible.

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Nate Abbott and Jenna Newgard  
Henry Abrons and Li-Hsia Wang  
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Judy Anderson and Galen Shaver  
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Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition  
All Good  
ATA/NASA  
Beartooth Recreational Trails  
Big Agnes  
Bonfire Collective  
Catamount Trail Association

The Dorothy Jordan Chadwick Fund  
El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Snowshoe Club  
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Snowlands Network  
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Superior Highland Backcountry  
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The Denver Foundation  
The Wilderness Society  
Yellowstone to Yukon  
Conservation Initiative Society  
Y2Y  
Yeti



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## GRASSROOTS GROUPS

### ALASKA

- Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition
- Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks
- Tsalteshi Trails Association

### CALIFORNIA & NEVADA

- Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association
- Friends of the Inyo
- Friends of Plumas Wilderness
- Snowlands Network
- Tahoe Backcountry Alliance

### COLORADO

- Colorado Mountain Club
- High Country Conservation Advocates
- Friends of the Routt Backcountry
- Silent Tracks
- Tenth Mountain Division Hut Association

### IDAHO

- Idaho Conservation League
- Nordic and Backcountry Skiers Alliance of Idaho
- Teton Valley Trails and Pathways

### MINNESOTA

- Superior Highlands Backcountry

### MONTANA

- Beartooth Recreational Trails
- Montana Backcountry Alliance
- Montana Wilderness Association

### NEW HAMPSHIRE & MAINE

- Granite Backcountry Alliance

### NEW MEXICO

- Chama Valley Outdoor Club

### OREGON

- Oregon Backcountry Alliance

### UTAH

- Wasatch Backcountry Alliance

### VERMONT

- Catamount Trail Association

### WASHINGTON

- Cascade Backcountry Alliance
- El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Snowshoe Club
- Inland Northwest Backcountry Alliance
- The Mountaineers
- Spokane Mountaineers

### WYOMING

- Teton Backcountry Alliance
- Togwotee Backcountry Alliance
- Wyoming Wilderness Association

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