

TRAIL BREAK

2023 NEWSLETTER SPRING ISSUE

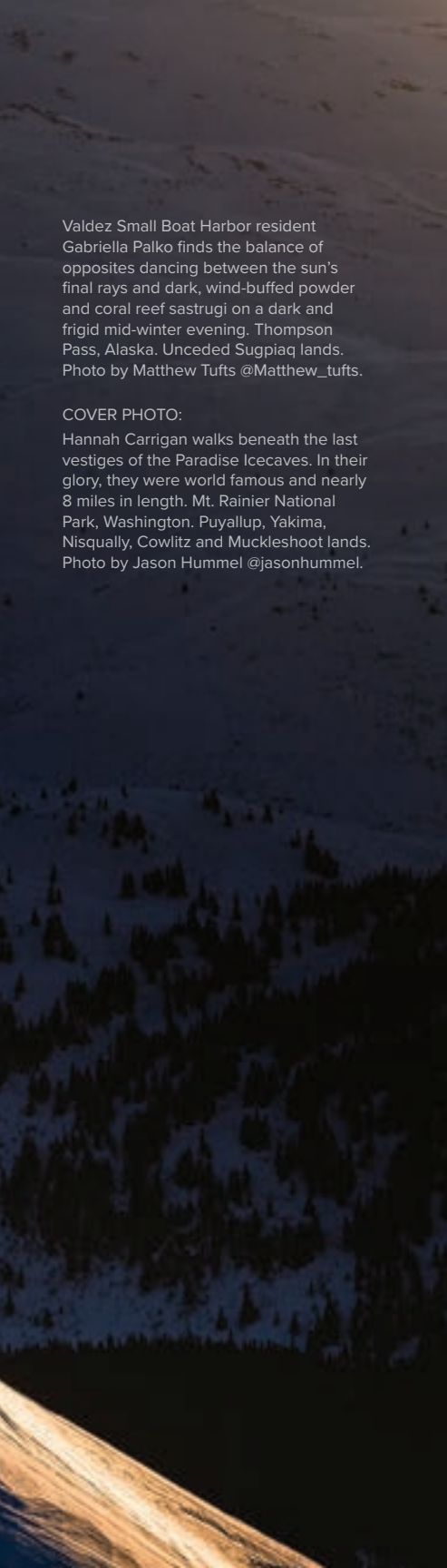
WINTER
WILDLANDS
ALLIANCE





WINTER
WILDLANDS
ALLIANCE





Valdez Small Boat Harbor resident Gabriella Palko finds the balance of opposites dancing between the sun's final rays and dark, wind-buffed powder and coral reef sastrugi on a dark and frigid mid-winter evening. Thompson Pass, Alaska. Unceded Sugpiaq lands. Photo by Matthew Tufts @Matthew_tufts.

COVER PHOTO:

Hannah Carrigan walks beneath the last vestiges of the Paradise Icecaves. In their glory, they were world famous and nearly 8 miles in length. Mt. Rainier National Park, Washington. Puyallup, Yakima, Nisqually, Cowlitz and Muckleshoot lands. Photo by Jason Hummel @jasonhummel.

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Trail Break, Spring 2023 Issue

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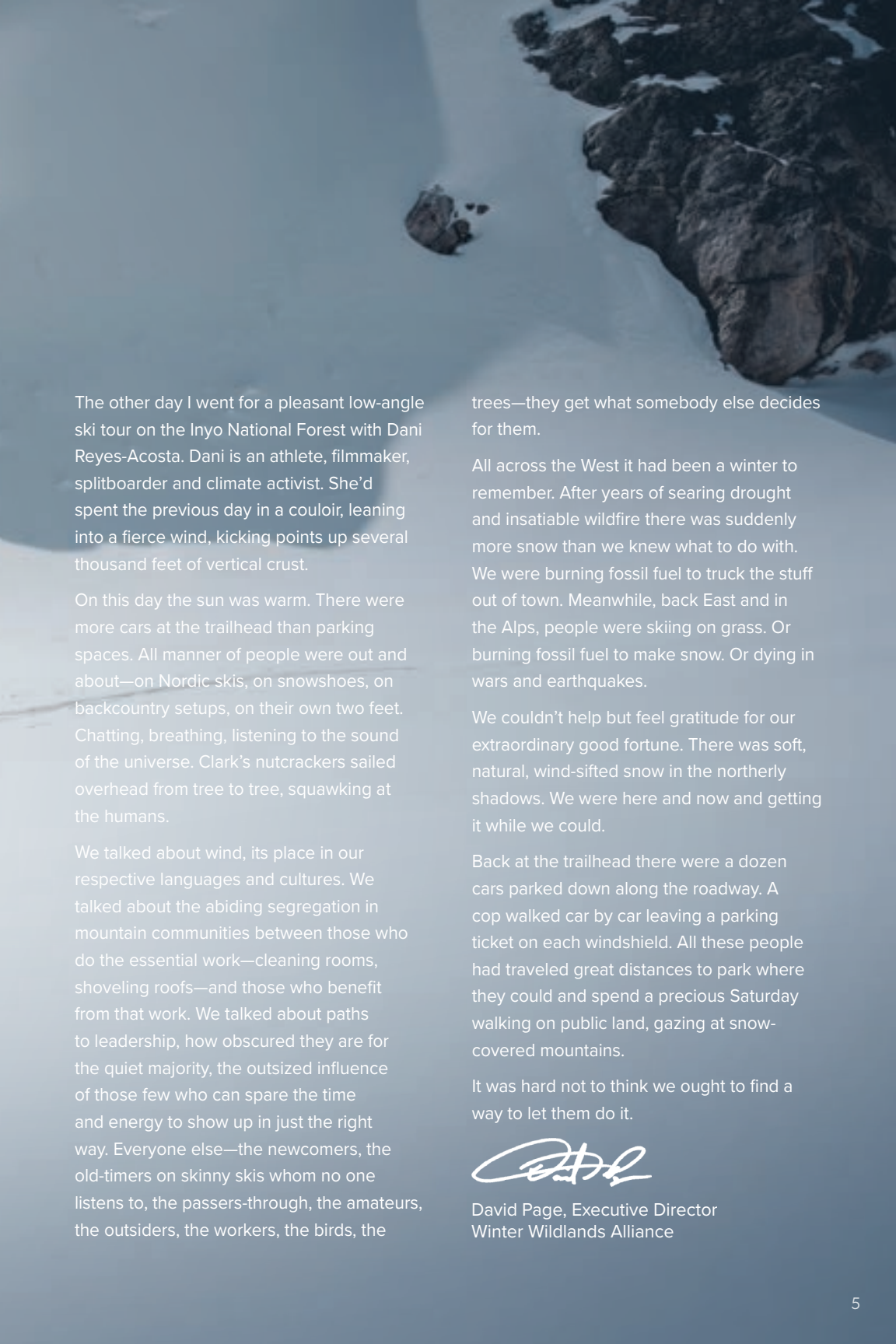
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Winter Wildlands Alliance is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring and empowering people to protect America's wild snowscapes.

A high-angle photograph of two skiers ascending a vast, snow-covered mountain slope. The skier in the foreground is wearing a black jacket and dark pants, while the skier further up is wearing a bright yellow jacket and a red backpack. Both are using ski poles and leaving tracks in the pristine white snow. In the upper portion of the image, several large, dark, craggy rocks protrude from the snowfield. The overall scene conveys a sense of adventure and solitude in a high-altitude environment.

What Will We Do With Our Privilege?

Jim Ryan and Veronica Paulsen take advantage of a high pressure day as they make their way through the Teton backcountry, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming. Unceded Shoshone, Nez Perce, and Blackfoot lands. Photo by Elise Sterck @roundtheworldgirl.



The other day I went for a pleasant low-angle ski tour on the Inyo National Forest with Dani Reyes-Acosta. Dani is an athlete, filmmaker, splitboarder and climate activist. She'd spent the previous day in a couloir, leaning into a fierce wind, kicking points up several thousand feet of vertical crust.

On this day the sun was warm. There were more cars at the trailhead than parking spaces. All manner of people were out and about—on Nordic skis, on snowshoes, on backcountry setups, on their own two feet. Chatting, breathing, listening to the sound of the universe. Clark's nutcrackers sailed overhead from tree to tree, squawking at the humans.

We talked about wind, its place in our respective languages and cultures. We talked about the abiding segregation in mountain communities between those who do the essential work—cleaning rooms, shoveling roofs—and those who benefit from that work. We talked about paths to leadership, how obscured they are for the quiet majority, the outsized influence of those few who can spare the time and energy to show up in just the right way. Everyone else—the newcomers, the old-timers on skinny skis whom no one listens to, the passers-through, the amateurs, the outsiders, the workers, the birds, the

trees—they get what somebody else decides for them.

All across the West it had been a winter to remember. After years of searing drought and insatiable wildfire there was suddenly more snow than we knew what to do with. We were burning fossil fuel to truck the stuff out of town. Meanwhile, back East and in the Alps, people were skiing on grass. Or burning fossil fuel to make snow. Or dying in wars and earthquakes.

We couldn't help but feel gratitude for our extraordinary good fortune. There was soft, natural, wind-sifted snow in the northerly shadows. We were here and now and getting it while we could.

Back at the trailhead there were a dozen cars parked down along the roadway. A cop walked car by car leaving a parking ticket on each windshield. All these people had traveled great distances to park where they could and spend a precious Saturday walking on public land, gazing at snow-covered mountains.

It was hard not to think we ought to find a way to let them do it.



David Page, Executive Director
Winter Wildlands Alliance



There is no place that does not bear the imprint of humans; it's our choice what sort of prints we leave. Unceded Eastern Shoshone, Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla, Shoshone-Bannock and Cheyenne lands. Photo by Micheli Oliver @micheliphoto.

Beyond Land Acknowledgment:

WINTER STORIES

Finding Balance in Traditional Ecological Knowledge

By Geneva Mayall, Neshnabe (Citizen Potawatomi Nation)

The Bodwéwadmimwen (Potawatomi language) word for “winter” is *bbon*, which translates to “everything has stopped.” My ancestors come from the Great Lakes, a place where winter has a way of freezing time, agendas, egos, and forcing people to bundle up and be in community. This teaching is such a juxtaposition to the fast-paced, “get after it” attitude that I often see take over the growing mountain town that I live in, the town currently known as Bend, Oregon.

Being a multicultural woman in these types of communities has given me the gift to learn to walk in two worlds. My love for big days in the mountains, dawn patrols before work, and getting rowdy at the resort is balanced with my reverence for *Segmekwe* (Mother Earth). I believe it can be such a gift to get to play hard, go fast, and also find the moments to whisper *migwetch* (thank you) to the relatives—both plant and animal—that commune on Turtle Island.

Our tribe recognizes winter as a time to tell stories. When *gon* (snow) blankets the earth, it means the spirits are asleep so we are safe to tell stories about

them. These stories are not just for entertainment; they are our classrooms; they are what hold Traditional Ecological Knowledge; they teach us how to be in relation with the natural world. I listen to these stories and learn to be observant, to be humble, and to listen to and respect our plant and animal relatives.

When taking my Avy 2 course last winter, I had a realization that much of the curriculum is about making observations in the field: listening, trusting intuition, and putting ego aside. I remember a distinct moment of belonging and connection because it reaffirmed all of the teachings of my ancestors that I knew already. The lessons of backcountry safety are innately Indigenous. How we look at the slope, observe where the snow has been transported by wind—even observing the trees and how snow encapsulates their branches can tell us a story about the snow. These aspects of the backcountry are in their own way storytelling. This is my connection to winter, my connection to backcountry skiing, and my connection to my culture.

With a degree in environmental studies, I can't shake the weight of the climate crisis. I can't help but think about the implications of climate change on my culture. Without snow, we cannot tell our stories; without our stories we cannot share our traditional knowledge—both ecological and anthropological. Protecting winter is protecting culture and vice versa. It is a reciprocal relationship. A great first step to becoming involved in this protection is to acknowledge whose land we recreate on. Then we can take it a step further. As a storyteller and story seeker, I urge my communities to seek out the stories that make up the land we recreate on. Learning a story builds a deeper relationship. Building relation with the land and the original people who still reside on those lands only brings more knowledge and connection. It is through this community-based storytelling and seeking that we can help protect and preserve the traditional knowledge embedded in our endangered winterscapes.

Migwetch (thank you).

IN OUR PHOTO CAPTIONS THROUGHOUT TRAIL BREAK,

we acknowledge the ancestral and ongoing stewardship of Indigenous lands. We recognize that this acknowledgment is only a first, insignificant step toward addressing the many historical and ongoing injustices that underlie and undermine our current public lands system. Winter Wildlands Alliance is committed to improving our allyship with the Indigenous communities on whose lands we have the fleeting privilege to work and play, and to taking impactful action toward equitable access, environmental justice, and the restoration of Indigenous leadership in the stewardship of the Earth we all love and depend on.



GENEVA MAYALL is a multicultural woman who walks in two worlds, honoring her Potawatomi ancestors and living in a recreation-based mountain town. When she's not in the mountains with two skis on her feet, she's in a classroom helping Native youth find their voices and empowering them to graduate, hone their skills, and give back to their communities and Turtle Island.

THIS BEER GIVES BACK TO THE
ENVIRONMENT



Proceeds go to our National Stewardship Fund to help support local winter trailhead projects and backcountry ambassadors.





Photo by Chris Starling.



Jason Hummel on the Columbia Traverse in Washington. Unceded Yakama, Wasco and Wishram, and Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla lands. Photo by Chris Starling.

Adventure Photographer,
Skier, Bushwhacker,
RV Enthusiast, Winter
Wildlands Alliance
Ambassador:

JASON HUMMEL

GIG HARBOR, WA

Jason Hummel has spent decades skiing and exploring the vertical landscapes of Washington State. He has skied all ten non-volcanic peaks over 9,000 feet, pioneering 5 new ski descents and adding to nearly 100 others. He has skied across both east and west sides of the Olympic Mountains, across Washington State from Oregon to Canada (in sections), and circumnavigated four volcanoes—Rainier, Adams, St. Helens, and Glacier Peak—as well as Mount Olympus. He has curated a list of 300 glaciers throughout Washington that he calls “The Glacier Project.” It includes not just those officially named by the USGS, but also those with unofficial names from guidebooks, old maps, photographic documentation and word of mouth. At last count he had skied “250ish” of them, some of which no longer exist. He has been a primary mover in our recent coalition effort to re-establish sustainable winter recreation access in Mt. Rainier National Park. Aside from his propensity to drag his friends through tangled rainforest hellscape, he’s the nicest guy in the PNW.

“What’s important to me when ski touring is a wilderness experience. Through Winter Wildlands Alliance’s efforts, they work to maintain and create those spaces for future generations.”

@jasonhummel



Carson, Washington. Unceded Yakama Lands. Photo by Jason Fox.

Advocate, Conservation Attorney, Mother, Member:

MARLA FOX

CARSON, WA

Marla first learned about Winter Wildlands Alliance through her work at WildEarth Guardians on Forest Service Over-snow Vehicle (OSV) planning. Attending a WWA Grassroots Advocacy Conference deepened her connection to the organization and the Wild Winter community. Most recently, Marla has been involved on the Stanislaus National Forest

Winter Travel Plan, working to defend conservation gains achieved through the latest plan while also trying to secure improved protections for imperiled wildlife like the Sierra Nevada red fox. As the mother of a four-year-old, she is driven to do what she can to make sure he gets to experience the winter wildlands that she's enjoyed throughout her life.

“Winter Wildlands Alliance is one of the rare organizations that achieves major impact on multiple fronts: in the courts, with policy, and by building relationships with agency staff to secure sound management decisions.”



Wind River Range, Wyoming. Bridger-Teton National Forest. Unceded Eastern Shoshone lands. Photo courtesy Michael Lanza.

Writer, Photographer, Skier, Member:

MICHAEL LANZA

BOISE, ID

Founder of The Big Outside and former Northwest Editor at Backpacker Magazine, Mike has been an avid backcountry skier for over three decades and an outdoors writer and photographer for more than 25 years. He first heard of Winter Wildlands Alliance in the 2000's and immediately loved our commitment to protecting human-powered winter backcountry

recreation. He is inspired to protect America's wild snowscapes because of his love for skiing in the backcountry and sharing those places and experiences with friends and family. Mike supports WWA's SnowSchool program because it fosters a sense of wonder and curiosity in kids that they carry forever—an ethic he's worked to instill in his own kids.

“Winter Wildlands Alliance stands alone in its direct efforts to ensure that we can continue enjoying winter landscapes in the ways we love.”



Inyo National Forest, California. Payahuunadü, unceded Paiute (Nüümü) and Eastern Shoshone (Newe) lands.
Photo by David Page.

Retired Forest Planner,
Former Backcountry Ranger,
Educator, Skier, WWA's
Newest Board Member:

MARY BETH HENNESSY

BISHOP, CA

Mary Beth first worked with Winter Wildlands Alliance through winter travel management planning in California while she was with the Forest Service in the Pacific Southwest Regional Office (Region 5). She respected WWA's mission and approach to pushing for equitable winter access while working to resolve conflicts between motorized and non-motorized winter recreation in the Sierra Nevada.

A native of California, she found her love of the mountains early in life with annual family vacations in the Sierra Nevada. As a recreation staffer on the Pike-San Isabel National Forest in the 1990's, she was instrumental in the early days of the Colorado 14ers Initiative. She has completed multiple trans-Sierra ski journeys, including a 27-day north-to-south high traverse from Tioga to Cottonwood in leather boots and double-camber skis. When she's not skiing or helping us to understand the Byzantine workings of the United States Forest Service, she's probably gardening, backpacking, birding, or playing mountain dulcimer.

“The winter landscape has an important place in the ecology and future of our world. So even if you don't enjoy winter sports—or are unable to—know that supporting this organization has value to protecting a part of our environment that depends on winter.”

PARTNERING WITH NATURE

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

By Kayla Heidenreich

My skis clamber up a ridge in my new backyard, the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska. I slither between Sitka spruces towering over the snow-swept forest floor, and pass by Western hemlocks whose tops bow downwards as if they're greeting me. This forest oozes with life. The Tongass is not only a place for recreation, it's also commonly referred to as one of our greatest tools in the fight against climate change.¹

No matter how quickly we turn to renewable energy, the effects of climate change are already upon us. Our winters, snowy landscapes, and all things dependent on them, face the brunt of these impacts. The Tongass, for example, is a massive carbon sink—a natural environment with the ability to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it. Protecting areas like the Tongass is vital in the process of mitigating and adapting to climate change.

“Among the world’s temperate rainforests, the Tongass is one of the most important on the planet,” says Dr. Dominick DellaSala, chief scientist at Wild-Heritage, a conservation organization

1. “By the numbers: Why this ancient rainforest is an important climate solution.” The Wilderness Society, May 2021, www.wilderness.org/articles/blog/numbers-why-ancient-rainforest-important-climate-solution.

Tongass National Forest, Alaska. Unceded
Tlingit lands. Photo by Lee House @leehows.





Stanislaus National Forest. Unceded Central Sierra Me-Wuk lands. Photo by Megan Fiske @mkfiske.

focused on the protection of primary forests. “It represents 9% of the total area of our national forest system and yet it stores 20% of all the carbon.”

By tailoring conservation methods to a specific region and the exact needs of that ecosystem, nature-based climate solutions focus on protecting and healing the land. Ideally, these solutions follow the lead of local Indigenous knowledge, as Indigenous peoples are traditionally the most in tune with the landscape.

“It’s unfortunate that not enough emphasis is being placed on the value public lands have from a climate mitigation and adaptation standpoint,” DellaSala says. “This is where you find most of the important biodiversity, drinking water, highest mature and old growth forests, and carbon. This is where you want to build out your climate strategy around nature-based climate solutions.”

640 million acres of the land in the United States belong to the public, and each piece of public land is wildly different from the next. From the crested granite of the North Cascades to the sweltering depths of Death Valley, the unique qualities of each landscape are an innate part of their value. But according to a report done by the U.S.

Geological Survey, almost a quarter of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions come from fossil fuel extraction on those very lands.² By changing the way we manage our public lands, we can shift them from carbon emitters into carbon sequesterers and locally beneficial spaces. Our public lands will become our greatest allies in the fight against climate change; in turn protecting our beloved snowy landscapes.

“In terms of climate change mitigation, I feel like often winter gets forgotten,” says Winter Wildlands Alliance Policy Director Hilary Eisen. “Which is funny, because that’s the season we’re going to lose if we don’t do anything about climate change. It has to be part of the solution. We can’t just accept that we’re going to lose winter.”

Creating local mitigation measures that assure snow has places to collect where it won’t be disturbed, and sensitive wildlife have ample refuge in the most critical season, are fundamental steps toward protecting winter generally. In 2022, the

2. Merrill, M. D., Sleeter, B. M., Freeman, P. A., Liu, J., Warwick, P. D., Reed, B. C. (2018). *Federal Lands Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sequestration in the United States Estimates for 2005-14*. U.S. Geological Survey Science for a Changing World. <https://pubs.usgs.gov/sir/2018/5131/sir20185131.pdf>



U.S. Forest Service released an Over-snow Vehicle (OSV) Use Plan for the Stanislaus National Forest in California,³ the first in the country under the 2015 OSV Rule, in an effort to better and more thoughtfully manage winter motorized recreation on the Stanislaus and to minimize impacts to natural resources, wildlife and other recreation uses such as backcountry and Nordic skiing.

The Stanislaus is one of the oldest National Forests in the nation, located on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada on the ancestral lands of the Central Sierra Me-wuk peoples. It is a major component of the San Joaquin River watershed, which supplies clean drinking water for millions of people and irrigation for billions of dollars in agriculture.

The new plan stipulates that OSV use is only allowed within designated areas and with a minimum snow depth of 12 inches (certain sensitive areas require a minimum of 24 inches). This helps to ensure that no contact is made with native soil or vegetation, thus protecting their ability

to store carbon.⁴ By implementing such specific land-based policies, agencies seek balance: providing space for recreation while also protecting the resources, wildlife and natural systems that together sustain the health of the land itself.

“There’s a reason we are asked not to go skiing or snow machining in certain places at certain times,” Eisen told me. “We’re just one piece of this larger system and being respectful and humble in the face of that is important—if we want to be able to do what we do for the long haul.”

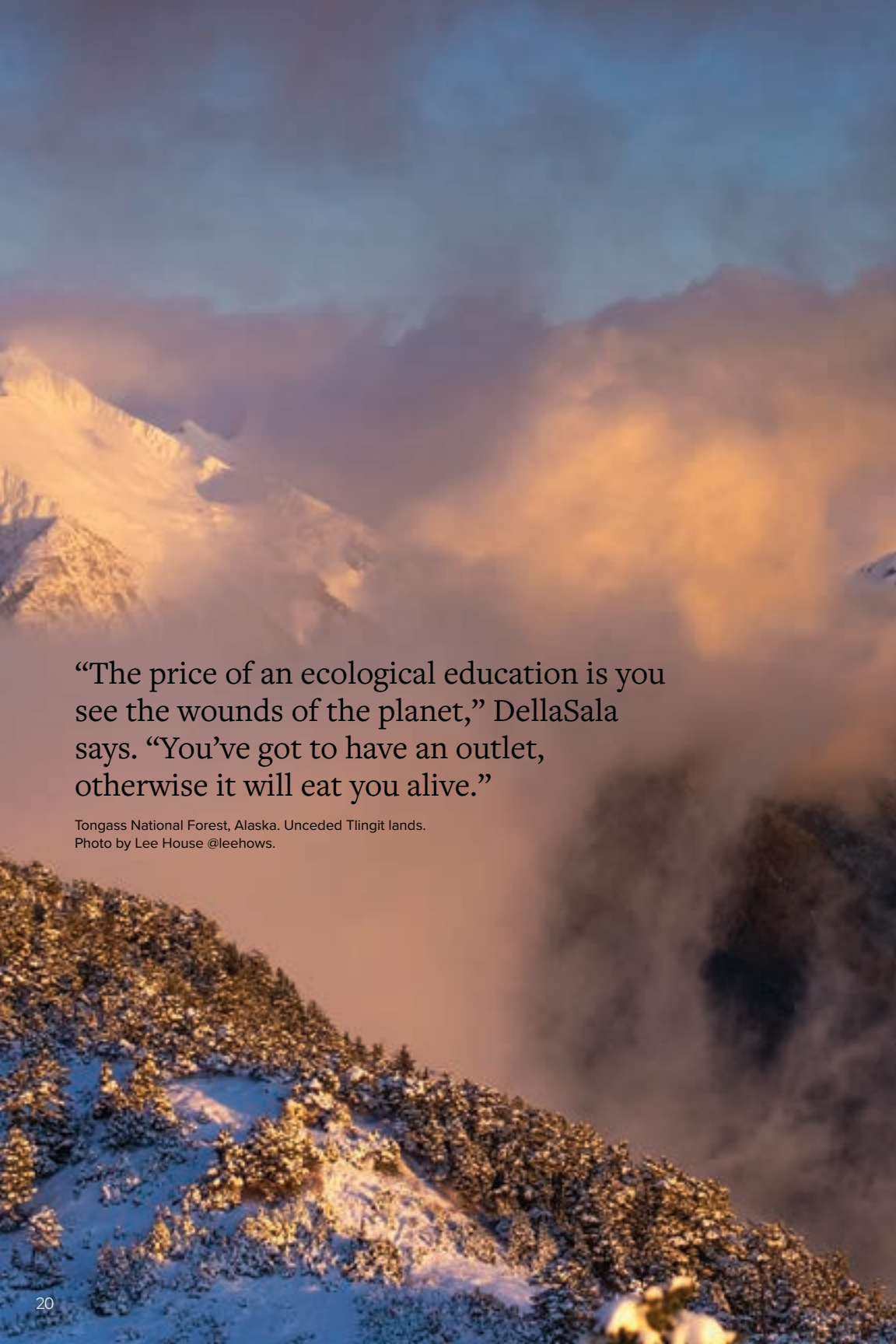
Indigenous peoples, who have lived in stewardship with the land since time immemorial, can lead the charge in climate mitigation with Traditional Ecological Knowledge—evolving knowledge from thousands of years of living in direct contact with the environment.

For example, the Nooksack Indian Tribe is working on building climate resilience in Northwest Washington State. In 2020, the Tribe released a Climate Adaptation Plan that includes 140 high priority actions to be implemented to support species and

Continued, pg. 24

3. U.S. Forest Service. “Stanislaus National Forest Over-Snow Vehicle Use Designation, Record of Decision.” Pinyon Public, 28 Mar. 2022.

4. Mengmeng Ai et al 2018 IOP Conf. Ser.: Mater. Sci. Eng. 394 052028.



“The price of an ecological education is you see the wounds of the planet,” DellaSala says. “You’ve got to have an outlet, otherwise it will eat you alive.”

Tongass National Forest, Alaska. Unceded Tlingit lands.
Photo by Lee House @leehows.



TAKE **PRIDE** IN THE
SKINTRACK YOU SET.



Join or donate to **Winter Wildlands Alliance** today. Dedicated to protecting America's wild snowscapes.



www.winterwildlands.org/join

Tongass National Forest, Alaska. Unceded Tlingit lands.
Photo by Lee House @leehows.

Continued, from pg. 19

habitats that the Tribe deemed vulnerable in their 2017 climate vulnerability assessment.⁵

Sitting in the South Fork Nooksack River valley, shaded by old-growth Douglas fir, privately-owned Stewart Mountain is located on ancestral lands of the Nooksack. The Tribe, along with key stakeholders like Evergreen Land Trust, have formed local coalitions to put ownership of Stewart Mountain back into the public's hands, and to implement pieces of the Tribe's adaptation plan.

"We've been able to purchase the first 550 acres, which we think of as phase one," Evergreen Land Trust's Holly O'Neil told me. "It is so powerful for a community to actually have control of managing the resources their world is dependent on."

The goal is to turn Stewart Mountain into a community forest. According to the initiative, this means managing the land as a working forest that balances ecological, economic and community benefits such as watershed health, improved water quality, increased water quantity, sustainable forestry jobs, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational access, while also offsetting the projected impacts of climate change.

One of the main objectives of the community forest is for the effects to be felt throughout the whole ecosystem. The icy headwaters of the Nooksack River's south fork stem from peaks in publicly-owned Mt. Baker National Forest. The Tribe and surrounding local communities

depend on the South Fork, which has been deemed vulnerable under the Tribe's assessments.

"The importance of the forest is really becoming clear to everybody," O'Neil says. "There are all these different strategies for how to promote watershed health [in the Nooksack] and the one that we see having the biggest impact is to restore the upland hydrological function, which is Stewart Mountain."

Building climate resilience is not something that can be done in a silo—it requires on the ground action, intimate knowledge of different ecosystems, and building local coalitions.

"The price of an ecological education is you see the wounds of the planet," DellaSala says. "You've got to have an outlet, otherwise it will eat you alive."

For DellaSala, his outlet is the blues band he plays in at night: "The Pozitronics." As I sit overlooking the Tongass, feeling the sharp wind bite my flushed cheeks, I feel thankful that my outlet is embedded in my splitboard and the piece of public land right in front of me.

Editor's note: In January 2023, the Biden Administration restored Roadless Rule protections to the Tongass. Previously, in 2020, the Trump Administration had opened 9.37 million acres of roadless lands across the forest to logging and road building. Congressional action is still needed to permanently codify the Roadless Rule and ensure that the Tongass—and other roadless lands across the nation—retain their contributions to nature-based climate solutions.

5. *Nooksack Indian Tribe Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Key Species and Habitats* (n.d.).https://cig.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/Nooksack-Adaptaiton-Plan-FINAL_errata_11.24.21_v2.pdf



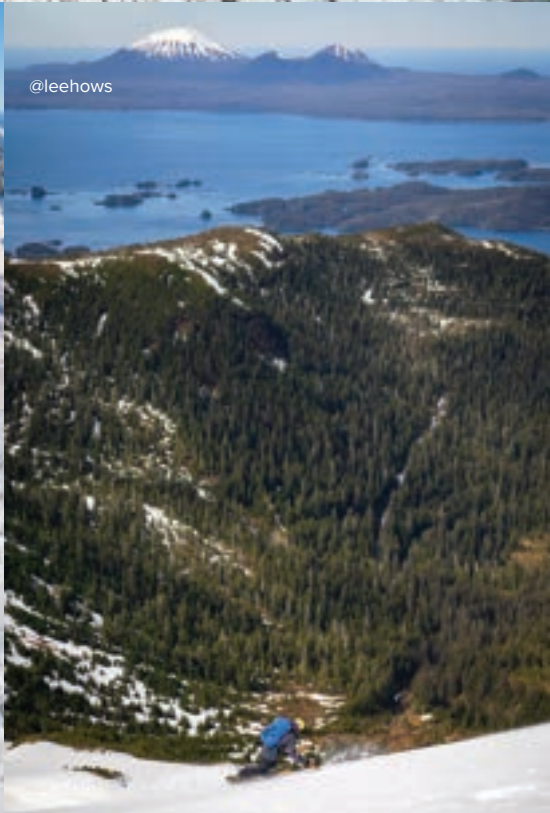
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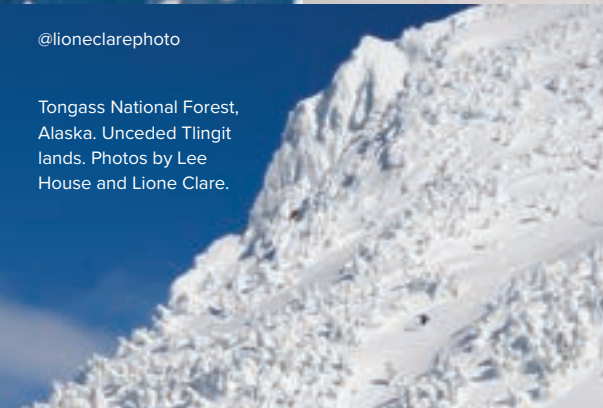
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Tongass National Forest,
Alaska. Unceded Tlingit
lands. Photos by Lee
House and Lione Clare.



KAYLA HEIDENREICH is an outdoor educator, freelance writer and public lands lover. She spends most of her time exploring mountains, rivers and crags, learning from the land as she goes. She currently lives in Juneau, Alaska, on the traditional lands and territories of the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian people.

LUC'S TIPS

GETTING THROUGH THE HARD PARTS



Luc Mehl manages a broken ski midway through a traverse of Iceland. Photo by Dan Rea-Dickens.

Our northernmost ambassador, photographer, author, educator, wild ice and packraft guru, Luc Mehl has traveled over 10,000 miles of remote Alaska by foot, ski, paddle, pedal, and ice skate. “Most people are largely motivated to have fun,” he writes. “But, typically, sprinkled between the fun are hard parts.” Often it’s these that turn recreation into adventure. If you start to reach your adventure limit, here are some of Luc’s tips for getting through those hard parts.

MUSIC: I prefer nature’s sounds when I’m outside, but when needed, music can be an incredible mood booster. My earbuds are like caffeine pills; I save them for when I need a boost. I strongly prefer earbuds—not all of my partners want to hear [my] music, and I’m careful not to use speakers when I’m around other groups. This is Leave No Trace’s “let nature’s sounds prevail” guideline. Some of my mood-boosters have uplifting lyrics, like Bill Withers’ *Lovely Day*. Others, like MSTRKRFT and John Legend’s *Heartbreaker* have a fast and prominent

tempo that keeps me moving. Below is a playlist of my favorite electro-pop uppers.

FOOD AND FUEL: I think of food as fuel for a fire, and I can’t afford to let the fire go out. Just like a fire, my fuel needs vary during the day. I carry quick-access fast-burning tinder in my pockets, like candy and dried fruit. I eat moderate-burning fuels like chips, crackers, cookies throughout the day, rather than at set meal times. Slow-burning fuels like cheese, meat, and nuts, are an investment in the future—anticipating energy needs later in the day or night.

I struggle to stay hydrated during winter days, and drinking calories with water is a double-win. My go-to liquid fuel source is Tailwind (tailwindnutrition.com/collections/endurance-fuel).

PARTNERSHIPS: Nothing soothes a tough situation as well as a good group dynamic. I actively work to be the best partner I can be. I use a one-step plan to make myself a better partner. Shift the focus from myself: Is my partner comfortable expressing a



SKIN TRACKS

Scan the QR code to access Luc’s **WWA Trail Break** Spotify playlist. Please listen kindly and responsibly. Below is a sampling of songs. See the full playlist on Spotify.



Heartbreaker, **MSTRKRFT, John Legend**
Arty Boy, **Flight Facilities, Emma Louise, Ninajirachi**
Higher Ground, **ODESZA, Naomi Wild**
Unusual, **RAC, MNDR**
We Just Wont Be Defeated, **The Go! Team**
Don’t Move, **Maggie Rogers**
Adderall, **Max Frost**
Free, **BROODS**
Youth, **Glass Animals**

If U C My Enemies, **Rubblebucket**
We Belong- Odesza Remix, **RAC, Katie Herzig**
Legendary, **Powers**
La Cuidad, **ODESZA**
Good Day Bad Day, **Elohim**
Halfway Home, **Broken Social Scene**
Let Go, **RAC, Kele, MNDR**
D.A.N.C.E., **Justice**
Lovely Day, **Bill Withers**



Upper: Eben Sargent at camp during a ski traverse of Wrangell St. Elias National Park. Unceded Upper Tanana, Ahtna Nenn', and Dënéndeh lands. Photo by Luc Mehl @lucmehl. **Lower Left:** Josh Mumm and John Sykes navigating blocks of ice along Nabesna Glacier. Wrangell St. Elias National Park. Unceded Upper Tanana, Ahtna Nenn', and Dënéndeh lands. Photo by Luc Mehl @lucmehl. **Lower Right:** Kate Fitz with a broken leg and makeshift splint near Valdez, Alaska. Unceded Sugpiaq lands. Photo by Luc Mehl @lucmehl.

concern? Can they keep climbing for an hour? When was the last time they had a snack? Am I prepared (mentally, physically, energetically) to help them through a bonk/injury/scare? Of course, you have to listen to your own needs as well. But hopefully, everyone in your group is practicing being their best partner too, and checking in about your needs.

“THE EXPECTATION ANCHOR”: A

common source of frustration is when conditions don't meet our expectations. By being clear about expectations from the start, an “expectation anchor” can help keep perspective on decisions during the day. Is the point to take pretty pictures in a beautiful setting, or to climb three summits in six hours? I'm in the habit of having this conversation before we meet at the trailhead.



Keeping It Kind in the Tetons

Grassroots Partner Profile: Teton Backcountry Alliance

Bridger-Teton National Forest, Wyoming. Unceded Eastern Shoshone, Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla, Shoshone-Bannock and Cheyenne lands. Photo by Andy Cochrane, courtesy Teton Backcountry Alliance.

Teton Backcountry Alliance (TBCA) works to promote backcountry skiing and splitboarding education and safety in the Teton area, and to promote a conservation ethos in the Teton backcountry community. Founded in 2017 by a group of avid backcountry skiers from Jackson Hole, Wyoming and Teton Valley, Idaho, TBCA has grown from its initial all-volunteer steering committee to also include two part-time winter seasonal employees, a cadre of trained volunteers who serve as Winter Backcountry Ambassadors, and an advisory board. Together, this crew of passionate skiers ensures that the backcountry ski community actively participates in land management and access conversations, and decision-making processes in the Teton region.

TBCA works closely with Winter Wildlands Alliance on conservation issues of note to Teton-area skiers, such as preventing the expansion of Grand Targhee Resort into backcountry terrain, and protecting the Teton bighorn sheep herd. TBCA helped to host several community workshops to develop community-based recommendations for protecting sheep while preserving opportunities for backcountry skiing, and also supported production of the short film about Teton bighorns, *Denizens of the Steep*, which was featured in last season's Backcountry Film Festival. TBCA and WWA continue to work with the Teton Bighorn Sheep Working Group to raise awareness about Teton bighorn sheep.

Throughout the snow season, TBCA cooperates with the Bridger-Teton Avalanche Center, Teton Search and

Rescue, and KHOL radio to produce a weekly Backcountry Snow and Safety Report. And, after purchasing a beacon park for the west side of Teton Pass last year (with support from WWA), TBCA partnered with a local guide service to host a series of Snow Safety Clinics. These clinics provide affordable and accessible opportunities for individuals to brush up on their beacon search and rescue skills.

TBCA also continues to grow its successful Backcountry Ambassador program. This program plays a critical role in preserving backcountry access on Teton Pass. Each winter, selected volunteers work as Backcountry Ambassadors at key areas in the Teton Pass corridor to provide information about responsible recreation (including parking) and snow conditions to users, and to help maintain winter infrastructure where needed. These Backcountry Ambassadors work with and complement the efforts of longtime Teton Pass Ambassador, Jay Pistono, who has been talking with skiers on Teton Pass since the Bridger-Teton National Forest created the seasonal position in 2006.

Teton Pass is an extremely popular backcountry skiing destination, but it's also a critical transportation link between Jackson Hole and Teton Valley. Thousands of commuters (and tourists) travel the pass each day. A skier-triggered avalanche can wreak havoc by closing the road, or worse, injuring or killing those driving under the pass's many slide paths. Thankfully the worst-case scenario has never happened, but minimizing the risk of avalanches on Teton Pass (skier-caused or otherwise) is

a top priority for the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT).

Skier parking is another concern; parking on the pass is limited and if cars spill out of the designated lots it impedes the flow (and safety) of traffic. Likewise, skiers walking up the highway and loose dogs running into traffic pose other traffic and safety concerns. As backcountry skier numbers on Teton Pass have grown, WYDOT has become increasingly nervous, and even threatened to shut

down recreational parking at the top of the pass (the parking area is technically a brake check pullout). The Teton Pass Ambassador and Volunteer Ambassadors help to allay WYDOT's concerns by educating skiers about safety and responsibility. TBCA is also working to reduce parking and traffic concerns by running a skier shuttle three weekends this winter. As backcountry use continues to grow, this work is more important than ever.

Bridger-Teton National Forest, Wyoming. Unceded Eastern Shoshone, Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla, Shoshone-Bannock and Cheyenne lands. Photo by Andy Cochrane, courtesy Teton Backcountry Alliance.



Backcountry Film Festival Presents:

SOÑADORA

Winter Wildlands Alliance's first-ever
human-powered film grant

By Melinda Quick, Events and Marketing Director

This past year, Winter Wildlands Alliance and Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. launched a new human-powered film grant program to foster the production of quality wild stories for the Backcountry Film Festival annual tour. With the goal of uplifting voices not typically heard in the outdoor community, we awarded the 2022 grant to a film project out of the Tetons called “Soñadora.”

“Soñadora” (Spanish for “dreamer”) follows the story of Vanessa Chavarriaga Posada, a mountain athlete, environmental sociologist, and Colombiana. After immigrating to Michigan from Medellín, Colombia, when she was six years old, Vanessa now resides in Jackson Hole,

Wyoming. The film shares moments from her favorite outdoor activities across three different seasons: backcountry skiing, trail running, and foraging. Poetically woven into these activities are stories of Vanessa’s struggle to maintain connection to herself and her culture in a predominantly white community. “Soñadora” ignites a conversation around the ingrained duality of life as an “outsider” in the outdoors and in this country.

Screened at over 70 Backcountry Film Festival tour stops this winter, “Soñadora” will also be featured at other film festivals and will be available to view online for Winter Wildlands Alliance members later this fall.

“I LEARNED TO LOVE IN SPANISH and I learned to fight in English. I’ve spent a lifetime looking for translations; knowing the name of something in one language but not the other. Even my voice sounds different when I switch between languages—one is warm and it sounds like a song, flows off the tongue like honey; the other is more calculated, exact, cold. Existing in these multitudes is confusing, contradicting, isolating. Instead of having to diminish my identities to this binary, I’m learning to expand myself to embrace all of it at once. My world is bigger because it has to be.” —**Vanessa Chavarriaga**

SOÑADORA CREW

Athlete: Vanessa Chavarriaga @vanessa_chav

Director: Jr Rodriguez @jrrdrgrz

Co-Director and Executive Producer: Sofia Jaramillo @sofia_jaramillo5

Director of Photography: Luke Kaneb @luke.kaneb

Stills Director: Micheli Oliver @michelipfoto





Film stills from production in Jackson, Wyoming. Unceded Eastern Shoshone, Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla, Shoshone-Bannock and Cheyenne lands. Photos by Micheli Oliver @michelipho.

Soñadora

a novel
by Rodriguez
Celia Jaramillo



SNOW EDUCATION'S

NORTH STAR



SnowEd Alaska and SnowSchool team up to create national impact

By Kerry McClay, National SnowSchool Director

Over the last five years, the NASA SnowEx campaign has been flying aircraft over America's wild snowscapes with the goal of improving remote snow sensing technology. Designed to lay the groundwork for a future snow sensing satellite, the campaign also has an outreach component that encourages public education and collaboration. In March of 2023, the final leg of the SnowEX campaign will take place in Alaska, with NASA flying aircraft and collecting snowpack data over boreal forests and frozen tundra. As snow scientists conduct tests with the latest airborne snow sensing instruments, people across the country have access to unique NASA-funded snow science education platforms to learn more about snow and even collect real snowpack data to help inform and improve NASA scientists' snowpack models.

In Alaska, a "SnowEd" team, composed of Serina Wesen and Matthew Sturm, is working to advance snow education across their state during this final year of SnowEx. Wesen is the education and outreach designer for the Geophysical Institute's Snow, Ice and Permafrost Group at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and Sturm is a snow scientist and geophysics professor at the University of Alaska. The upcoming campaign has heightened public awareness of snow

science in the state, giving the team a platform to inspire, develop and spread new snow education resources across Alaska and beyond. These resources include new education kits designed to help students and teachers explore snow science and Alaska Native culture, an online platform for educational snow science activities, and in-person snow education events.

Through collaboration with Winter Wildlands Alliance's SnowSchool, the positive impact of Serina and Matthew's work continues to resonate across Alaska and into the lower 48 states. SnowSchool is a national education program that last year engaged 32,000 kids and students nationally. By sharing the newly created resources by the SnowEd team, SnowSchool is able to deliver real science to thousands of kids and teachers in dozens of communities across the snowbelt.

Recently, WWA SnowSchool and the SnowEd team collaborated to create several instructional videos for kids, including a video exploring the 6-sided shape of atmospheric snow crystals. This was a particularly relevant topic as snow crystal shapes are explored by both the SnowEd snow science kits and the SnowSchool curriculum. Topics for future videos will include the temperature of snow/water, snow water equivalent and snowpack depth.

PHOTO LEFT: Serina Wesen of SnowEd at the University of Alaska Fairbanks holds up one of her team's COSI Connect Snow Science Kits. Fairbanks, Alaska. Unceded Lower Tanana Dene lands. Photo: JR Ancheta, UAF.





Get involved!

Winter Wildlands Alliance's SnowSchool and snow scientists everywhere are calling for students, educators, and the general public to collect and submit citizen science data to help advance the entire field of snow science! Two NASA-funded citizen snow science projects are easy ways for people to submit valuable data: Community Snow Observations (communitysnowobs.org) calls citizen scientists to measure the depth of their snow, and Mountain Rain or Snow (rainorsnow.org) calls observers to visually track precipitation.



PHOTO UPPER LEFT: ANSEP High School students at a SnowEd outreach event work to dig a snowpit. Campbell Creek Science Center, Anchorage, Alaska. Unceded Dena'ina lands. Photo by Serina Wesen.

PHOTO UPPER RIGHT: SnowSchool students at the National Flagship SnowSchool Site measure snowpack depth. Bogus Basin, Idaho. Unceded Shoshone-Bannock lands. Photo by Winter Wildlands Alliance.

PHOTO BOTTOM: SnowSchool students from Takshanuk Watershed Council in Haines Alaska examine snow crystal shapes. Haines, Alaska. Unceded Tlingit lands. Photo by Tracy Wirak-Cassidy.

YEAR IN REVIEW annual report



15,000+
ACTIVE
SUBSCRIBERS

34 **GRASS-ROOTS GROUPS**
working in **14** states

1 NEW
GRASSROOTS
GROUP

COLO
RADO

added to the WWA network:
San Juan Backcountry Alliance

32,000

kids
engaged
across
70 active
SnowSchool
sites (21-22 season)



50% of
SnowSchool
Participants
qualified as

UNDER-SERVED

60+ EDUCATORS



ATTENDED
3RD ANNUAL
NATIONAL
SNOWSCHOOL
CONFERENCE

33,000+

combined alliance members

124,000+

combined alliance subscribers



2022



Backcountry
skiing
participation
grew by
96% to

**4.3 MILLION
UNIQUE USERS¹**

Nordic and snowshoeing
participation grew by **60%** to

22.3M
HUMAN-POWERED USERS²

323,152 ACRES

protected
for winter
non-motorized
use on the



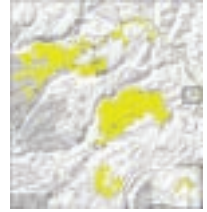
LASSEN NATIONAL FOREST

PARTICIPATED IN **5** **COLLABORATIVE PLANNING
EFFORTS**

1. Snowsports Industries America (SIA) Participation
Study 2021-2022.

2. Ibid.

**1st
OFFICIAL**



Over-snow Vehicle Use
Map (**OSVUM**): Stanislaus
National Forest

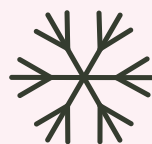
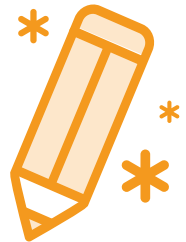
7 WINTER TRAVEL PLANS



PLUMAS, TAHOE, LAKE TAHOE BASIN,
ELDORADO, INYO, SHOSHONE,
KANIKSU NATIONAL FORESTS

1,880 LETTERS

sent by WWA
members
supporting wild
public lands
and quiet winter
recreation



**100 PLUS
MEETINGS**

with land managers & policy makers

278,804  acres of Colorado's Tenmile

Range and Thompson Divide, birthplace of modern backcountry skiing in U.S., protected through **Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument** designation


\$369 BILLION

in direct investments passed by Congress to reduce carbon emissions, support environmental justice, protect public lands and address

"THE CLIMATE CRISIS"



2 winter non-motorized backcountry areas designated on state lands near Wenatchee, WA thanks to grassroots group El Sendero



Despite opposition
BY 80% OF UTAHNS,

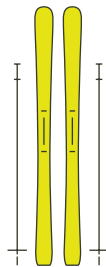
UTAH DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (UDOT) RELEASED PLAN TO BUILD \$550M+ GONDOLA SERVICING 2 COMMERCIAL SKI RESORTS IN LITTLE COTTONWOOD CANYON...
THE FIGHT CONTINUES

Custer-Gallatin Forest Plan published

-  **92,532 acres** recommended wilderness in Gallatin Range
-  **26,496 acres** designated backcountry areas in southwestern Porcupine Buffalo Horn
-  **22,632 acres** protected for wildlife habitat and mountain biking in West Pine
-  **17,642 acres** recommended addition to Lee Metcalf Wilderness
-  **50,000 acres** protected for water quality, wildlife, and recreation access in Hyalite Canyon and South Cottonwood Creek

 one new
WWA
BOARD MEMBER:
Mary Beth Hennessy
(see p. 14)

ONE NEW
**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**
DAVID PAGE



\$21,700 raised on Giving Tuesday
by 123 donors



\$43,600 raised for local policy work,
advocacy efforts and education



BACKCOUNTRY FILM FESTIVAL 2021-2022 SEASON

\$7,500 

Awarded for first-ever Back-
country Film Grant (see p. 32)

3,300

HOUSEHOLDS
tuned in for
virtual show



57 in-person Festival screenings in
19 STATES and **3**
countries



*Nb. BCFF in 2021-22 was still a pandemic
hybrid of in-person and virtual screenings.

\$15,000+
in-person attendees



Winter Wildlands Alliance Network

GRASSROOTS GROUPS

ALASKA

Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition
Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks
Tsalteshi Trails Association
Valdez Adventure Alliance

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
San Juan Backcountry Alliance
Silent Tracks
10th Mountain Division Hut Association

IDAHO

Idaho Conservation League
Leave Our Lands Alone Alliance
Nordic and Backcountry Skiers Alliance of Idaho
Teton Valley Trails and Pathways

MINNESOTA

Superior Highland Backcountry

MONTANA

Beartooth Recreational Trails Association
Montana Backcountry Alliance
Wild Montana

NEW HAMPSHIRE & MAINE

Granite Backcountry Alliance

OREGON

Oregon Backcountry Alliance

UTAH

Nordic United
Wasatch Backcountry Alliance

VERMONT

Catamount Trail Association

WASHINGTON

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

WYOMING

Teton Backcountry Alliance
Togwotee Backcountry Alliance
Wyoming Wilderness Association

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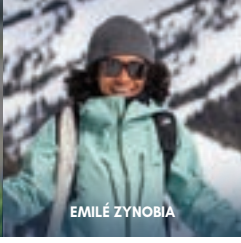
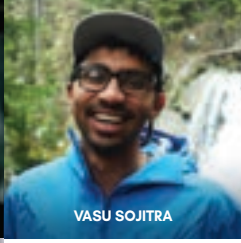
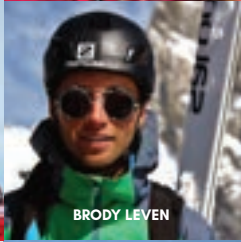
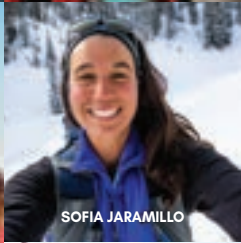
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