

SAN JUAN CITIZENS ALLIANCE



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

PHOTO - WEMINUICHE WILDERNESS BY MASON CUMMINGS



DEAR SUPPORTERS,

The demolition of smokestacks at San Juan Generating Station in 2024, simultaneous with the commissioning of the replacement San Juan Solar project, provided a memorable bookmark in our region's transition from burning fossil fuels to embracing a 21st-century clean energy economy.

The complementary events brought to life the vision of energy transition we embarked upon in 2019 with New Mexico's passage of the transformational Energy Transition Act. Just as anticipated, the legacy coal-fired generation is coming down, and replacement with solar energy and battery storage is coming online. Equally importantly, the half-billion dollar solar investment is located in the Central Consolidated School District, making up for lost property tax revenues. A construction force of almost 300 local workers was employed in the project, helping to mitigate the employment declines associated with closure of the coal plant and coal mine.

In Colorado, La Plata Electric Association took steps to cut ties with its long-time, coal-dominated energy supplier Tri-State Generation and Transmission. Adhering to the two-year timeline required by Tri-State, LPEA's board voted to terminate its long-term contract starting in 2026, fully 24 years ahead of the contract's end date. LPEA is expected to line up local solar, battery storage, and hydroelectric sources as replacement power while it explores the larger competitive energy marketplace.

Our long-running efforts to defeat the destructive Village at Wolf Creek suffered a setback in 2024, with a federal appeals court siding with the Forest Service to approve access across the Rio Grande National Forest for the development. But that only removes the first of many obstacles. Now, if the developers desire to move forward, they are looking at expending tens of millions of dollars to construct a highway interchange, water and sewer plants, and electricity generating plant – and that's only if they are able to gain approval by a myriad of state and local agencies. We'll stay laser-focused on preventing this monstrosity from reaching fruition.

Wolves gained a foothold in Colorado in 2024, and a litter of wild wolf cubs was born to the Copper Creek pack. Additional wolf releases will occur in 2025 and 2026, and stakeholders are gaining experience and comfort at coexistence between wolves and livestock.

San Juan Citizens Alliance maintained a strong financial position in 2024, thanks to the generous support of our members and donors, and strong partnerships with charitable foundations. As we continue to expand outreach across our region, we are growing our membership and influence.

In gratitude,



Mark Pearson
Executive Director





What's Happening with **WOLF CREEK PASS?**

20 YEARS AND COUNTING, THE FIGHT CONTINUES

For more than 20 years, SJCA has led the charge to stymie development of the Village at Wolf Creek, a massive development atop Wolf Creek Pass that could house up to 8,000 people in more than 1,700 housing units. It would have devastating impacts on the most crucial wildlife linkage corridor in the San Juans for lynx by creating intensive year-round human activity day and night with greatly expanded highway traffic. Unfortunately, in April 2024, the Forest Service prevailed with the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals and gained approval to issue an access right-of-way to the developers for the purpose of developing the project. For the first time since 1986, a court removed one of the key obstacles in the path of the Village's construction. Now, the fight moves onto state and local permitting agencies.

SJCA held community meetings in Pagosa Springs and Del Norte in 2024 to maintain and increase local awareness of the potential development, and kept close tabs with permitting agencies including Mineral County and Colorado Department of Transportation. SJCA also employed a legal intern to research the myriad of state and local permitting hoops still pending prior to any potential development. The developers have not as yet taken any steps towards development.

Winter Travel on **WOLF CREEK PASS**

Winter travel planning began on the Rio Grande National Forest in April, 2024, in conformance with a legal settlement reached between SJCA and the Forest Service. Winter travel planning will designate appropriate areas for snowmobile use, while protecting other areas for wildlife habitat and quiet recreation like backcountry and Nordic skiing. It will clarify parking, road access, and enforcement to reduce conflicts between user groups and protect critical habitat. As snowmobile technology,

particularly timber sleds, evolves, motorized users can access ever more terrain - including steep north facing timber important for wildlife like Canada lynx. SJCA, working in concert with Winter Wildlands Alliance, created an ad-hoc Backcountry Skiers Alliance to help identify key locations utilized by skiers. SJCA submitted this information, along with concerns about lynx and elk habitat, to the Forest Service for its incorporation into the planning effort.



Protecting **PUBLIC LANDS**

Minnie Gulch **PROTECTED**

SJCA gained a *significant victory in keeping Colorado's high country free of expanded motorized travel* in March, 2024, when the BLM withdrew its previous decision to authorize a new motorized trail in upper Minnie Gulch, a roadless alpine valley extending up to the Continental Divide near Silverton. The motorized trail posed an adverse effect on a traditional Ute cultural landscape owing to visual and noise impacts, as determined by the State Historic

Preservation Office and Ute cultural resources staff. As a result, the three Ute tribes objected to BLM's plan for the new motorized route through Minnie Gulch. SJCA also challenged BLM's approval at the Interior Board of Land Appeals back in 2021, and after several years of delay, BLM finally agreed to acquiesce to the concerns of the tribes, determining that the motorized trail was infeasible given tribal opposition, and terminated the trail project.

Public Lands Travel Management and Quiet Uses

SJCA engaged in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) travel management decisions during 2024 to preserve opportunities for quiet recreation and undisturbed wildlife habitat.

60 Years of the **WILDERNESS ACT**

September 2024 marked the 60th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. When Congress passed it in 1964, the Act was a remarkable expression of human restraint and humility, setting aside landscapes where human manipulation would no longer dominate.

The idea of wilderness protection emerged in the early 20th century, as European settlement and resource exploitation swept across the continent—hunting big game to extinction, clear-cutting old-growth forests, mining mountainsides, and damming rivers. The concept began to take shape in the 1910s and 1920s, as advocates realized that only statutory protection from Congress could ensure a lasting wilderness legacy.

This effort culminated in the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964. The Act established a few key criteria for designation: lands must be at least 5,000 acres, roadless, and

offer opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. It prohibits mining, logging, and motorized use.

The Weminuche Wilderness, in the heart of the San Juan Mountains, is by far Colorado's largest wilderness area, stretching from Wolf Creek Pass to Molas Pass. Nearby, the South San Juan and Hermosa Creek Wilderness areas protect even more of Southern Colorado's rugged landscape. Nearly all of Colorado's wilderness areas were designated in the last 50 years, with Hermosa Creek added just over a decade ago, in 2014.

As Congress grows more divided, achieving new protections has become increasingly difficult. We remain strong supporters of the long-pending Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act, which would significantly expand the Mount Sneffels and Lizard Head wilderness areas near Telluride.





Witnessing the **ENERGY TRANSITION**

SAN JUAN GENERATING STATION DEMOLITION - BEN HUNTER

The Stacks Come Down at **SAN JUAN GENERATING STATION**

On August 24, 2024, the 400-foot-tall stacks at the coal-fired San Juan Generating Station near Farmington were demolished, bringing permanent closure to a facility once notorious for being part of the largest single-point source of pollution in the United States. In full operation, San Juan Generating Station emitted more than 12 million tons a year of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Demolition began once the plant retired in 2022, and the smokestack implosion was a capstone event in the region's journey to reduced pollution and associated public health impacts, less climate change inducing greenhouse gas emissions, and new economic opportunities embracing the benefits of a cleaner environment. The Alliance played a key role over the years as a local advocate for clean energy and just transition that creates new opportunities and provides assistance for fossil fuel workers.

The most tangible evidence of energy transition was the completion of the San Juan Solar Project, just northeast of the demolished San Juan Generating Station. San Juan Solar became fully operational in summer, 2024 and brought 200-MW of solar photovoltaic and 100-MW of battery storage online to replace the coal-fired electricity previously provided to Public Service Company of New Mexico. San Juan Solar represented a \$500 million investment in the community and is the first of numerous renewable energy projects that can utilize transmission and utility infrastructure and provide a vision for brownfield reclamation of former coal mine sites. The Alliance provided critical local support for permitting the project to help ensure that replacement power projects with associated property tax benefits were built within the Central Consolidated School District's boundary.

LPEA MOVES TO TERMINATE THEIR TRI-STATE CONTRACT

The La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) board of directors voted in March, 2024 to terminate its long-term power supply contract with Tri-State Generation and Transmission. The decision came after six long years of discussion and evaluation of alternatives for cleaner, cheaper and locally-generated electricity. Rather than be tied to Tri-State's restrictive limitations through 2050, LPEA instead will exit its Tri-State contract on April 1, 2026, and has

selected an independent power supplier to help devise a portfolio of replacement sources to reach its immediate goal of a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The Alliance over the years has encouraged this transition by rallying LPEA cooperative members to engage in this long-running process, and by supporting co-op members running for the board of directors that embraced a new vision of energy independence.



Watersheds to Wildlife **CONSERVATION**



EMELIE FROJEN ON THE ANIMAS RIVER

An Update on **COLORADO'S WOLVES**

At the end of 2023, Colorado wildlife officials reintroduced wolves into Colorado to implement the voter initiative that reversed a century-old policy of wolf extermination. Two of the released wolves mated and produced a litter of five pups in the spring of 2024, where they became known as the Copper Creek pack near Kremmling. The successful reproduction in this first wolf pack demonstrates how quickly wolves will once again find their place on the Colorado landscape, with a reasonable level of social tolerance. Owing to concerns about depredation on cattle, the new wolfpack was captured and later released back into the wild in a new area south of Glenwood

Springs at end of 2024, along with an additional 15 reintroduced wolves. SJCA staff participated in the Rocky Mountain Wolf Project to publicize the Colorado specialty wolf license plate, which is a voluntary effort for vehicle owners to contribute towards a conflict mitigation fund. By the end of 2024, the license plate generated \$600,000 for Colorado wildlife officials to use for funding tools and equipment to help prevent wolf conflicts with livestock. We expect wolves will eventually make their way to the San Juans Mountains, and re-establish themselves as part of the fabric of native wildlife.



The Latest with our Rivers Program

The Alliance's river advocacy during 2024 focused on a couple of key elements. Our river program staff spearheaded ***volunteer water quality sampling efforts for Animas River sites*** downstream of the Bonita Peak Mining District Superfund site. This continued a decades-long effort to maintain a consistent record of water quality in the Animas River to assess what impact mining cleanup was ultimately having on downstream water quality. The effort entailed organizing volunteers to access remote sampling locations, including day-long hikes into the Animas River canyon at

Cascade Creek and Elk Creek.

Our river program continued progress at identifying options to maintain traditional access points to the Animas River, including the informal agreement to utilize the Trimble Lane boat launch 11 miles north of Durango. New owners of the Trimble Lane property have proposed a redevelopment scheme for the larger surrounding property, and the Alliance was able to elevate the importance of formalizing legal river access in whatever development plan is eventually adopted.

Internships at **SAN JUAN CITIZENS ALLIANCE**

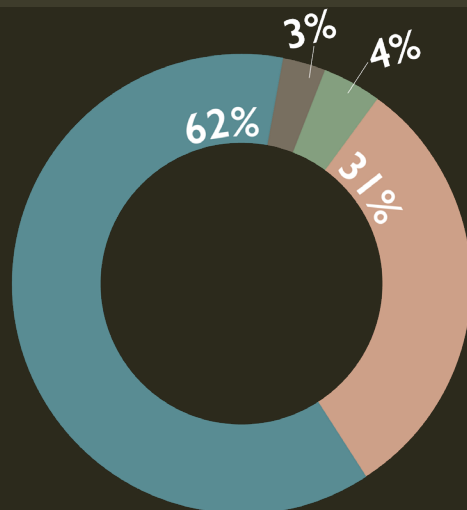
The Alliance launched a summer internship program in 2024, bringing on board two college students to assist with our energy and public lands programs, as well as one high school student through the Community Foundation's CAUSE Internship Program. Josephine Willman, a senior at Tufts University, completed a project telling the story of energy transition in the Four Corners, and created a compilation of county-level sustainability efforts around the West that could provide a template for La Plata County to pursue. Nathan Newberry, a second-year law

student at Lewis and Clark, dove into the state and local permitting requirements relevant to any potential future development at the Village at Wolf Creek, prepping the Alliance for prospective development applications if they occur. Andre Craig, a junior at Durango High School, joined us to aid in our outreach initiatives and learn the ropes of our financial and administrative duties. We appreciated the fresh perspectives and valuable work all of our interns provided us - plus it made for a lively, full house in the office.



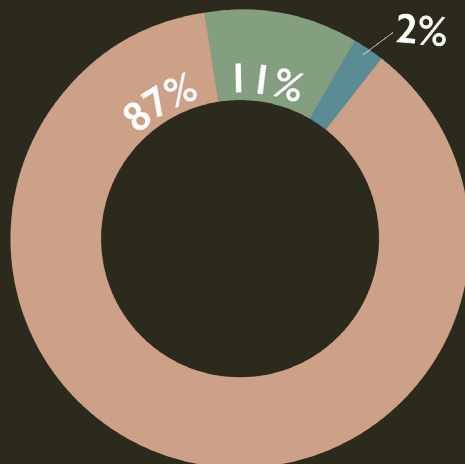
2024 FINANCIAL REPORT

REVENUE



GRANTS	\$609,000
MEMBERSHIP/CONTRIBUTIONS	\$304,251
EVENTS	\$36,674
OTHER	\$34,304
TOTAL REVENUE	\$984,229

EXPENSES



PROGRAMS	\$786,373
GENERAL & ADMINISTRATIVE	\$96,665
FUNDRAISING	\$13,774
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$896,812

BALANCE SHEET

(IN THOUSANDS)

ASSETS

Current assets:

Cash and cash equivalents	961
Donations receivable	13
Other, prepaid health insurance	1

Non-current assets:

Equipment and deposits	1
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TOTAL ASSETS 976

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities:

Accounts Payable	1
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Payroll Liabilities: 9

Accrued PTO	25
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Other Liabilities	
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TOTAL LIABILITIES 35

Equity:

Retained Earnings: Unrestricted	447
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Retained Earnings: Temporarily Restricted	406
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Net Revenue	87
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TOTAL EQUITY 941

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY 976



BOARD

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Visit our website to learn more about our 20+ active campaigns.

sanjuancitizens.org

*+ a special shoutout to Mason Cummings
 who has generously donated his photography.*

All other photos were shot by staff, donated, or from Pexels or Unsplash.