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Abert's Squirrel

Abert's squirrel or the tassel-eared squirrel is a tree squirrel native to the southern Rocky Mountains from the United States to the northern Sierra Madre Occidental of Mexico, with concentrations found in Arizona, the Grand Canyon, New Mexico, and southwestern Colorado. It is closely associated with, and largely confined to, mature ponderosa pine forests. It is named in honor of the American naturalist John James Abert; nine subspecies are recognized.

Abert's squirrels in the US make almost exclusive use of ponderosa pine for cover, nesting, and food. Optimum Abert's squirrel habitat is composed of all-aged ponderosa pine stands with trees in even-aged groups, densities of 168 to 250 trees per acre, and 150 to 200 square feet per acre basal area. In optimum habitat average diameter of ponderosa pines is 11 to 13 inches, with Gambel oaks in the 11.8- to 14-inch range. Optimum habitat has some ponderosa pine over 20 inches, which are the best cone producers. Ponderosa pine 36 to 40 inches produced an average of 446 cones per tree per crop. Trees less than 24 inches produced fewer than 100 cones per crop.

Abert's squirrel summer home ranges averaged 18 acres and ranged from 10 to 24 acres. Ranges were somewhat smaller in winter. Abert's squirrel home range for spring and summer was 20 acres in Black Forest County, Colorado. Subadult males had spring home ranges of about 27 acres, and adult females had somewhat larger summer home ranges than adult males. The home range of an adult female can vary as much as 10 to 29 acres.

In Colorado, there has been found a density of 83 squirrels per square mile in spring 1970 but only 33 squirrels per square mile in spring 1971.

Plant communities

Abert's squirrel is nearly confined to cool, dry interior ponderosa pine forests. Abert's squirrels live in pure ponderosa pine stands or stands with Gambel oak, pinyon, junipers, quaking aspen, and Douglas fir.

Ecology and behavior

Abert's squirrels are diurnal. They are often active for a short time before sunrise and active for periods throughout the day, and they usually return to shelter before sunset. Abert's squirrel does not store food, as other North American squirrels do.

The most apparent causes of Abert's squirrel mortality are food shortage and injuries (such as broken teeth) that lead to mortality.

Reproduction

Breeding occurs from May 1 to June 1 and there are young in the nest from June 10 to July 27 with a 46-day gestation period. Eight litters were composed of two to five young each. Three or four young per litter is typical. Young Abert's squirrels are born naked, with ears and eyes closed. At 2 weeks thin short hair is noticeable and the ears are slightly open. By 6 weeks the pelage has developed and the eyes are open. By 7 weeks the tail has broadened and is held over the back, ears are held erect. Mushrooms and bark have been added to the diet at this time. Captive young first venture from the nest at about 7 weeks, but do not venture to the ground until about 9 weeks. By 10 weeks Abert's squirrels are weaned. Mature size is reached by 15 to 16 weeks. Female Abert's squirrels usually bear only one litter per year.

Nesting

Nests are built by the female Abert's squirrel out of pine twigs 0.5 inches or less in diameter and 6 to 24 inches long. Nests are lined with a variety of materials. Summer nests are built by Abert's squirrels on ponderosa pine branches, in Gambel oak cavities, and sometimes in cottonwood branches. Ponderosa pine seldom have cavities big enough for Abert's squirrels. Most nests are placed in the upper third of the tree crown. Nests are placed from 16 to 90 feet above the ground, usually on a large limb against the bole, or in the forks of smaller branches. Nests are most often built on the southern to

(Continued on next page.)



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Highlander Wildlife

southeastern side of the tree. Nests are built in trees occurring as part of a grouping of trees with interlocking crowns. Dwarf mistletoe infestations that cause the formation of “witches brooms” are often incorporated into or support Abert’s squirrel nests. Nests are roughly spherical and a small platform often extends beyond the bowl edge on one side. The nests are used year-round by most Abert’s squirrels for nightly shelter, although females often move the litter to a larger nest when the young are 3 to 6 weeks old. In winter, pairs of Abert’s squirrels, usually an adult female and one subadult (presumed) offspring, use the same nest for shelter.

Food habits

Abert’s squirrels consume ponderosa pine year-round. Parts eaten include seeds, which are the most highly preferred item, inner bark (particularly of young twigs), terminal buds, staminate buds, and pollen cones. Other foods include fleshy fungi (particularly hypogeous fungi), carrion, bones, and antlers. Severe weather is not always a deterrent to feeding activity. Where pinyon seeds are available, Abert’s squirrels consume them in preference to ponderosa pine seeds. Gambel oak acorns may also provide substantial food for Abert’s squirrels.

Ponderosa pines produce large cone crops every 3 to 4 years; cones are virtually absent about 1 year out of 4. Abert’s squirrels begin eating immature seed shortly after cone development begins in late May. Seeds are eaten through the summer as the cones mature. Seeds from up to 75 cones may be eaten per day per squirrel during the months when seeds form the squirrels’ major food. Seeds are disseminated from cones in October and November. Abert’s squirrels continue to consume seed from late

maturing cones and collect single seeds from the ground. The succulent inner bark of twigs is eaten all year, but most heavily in winter. Needle clusters are clipped from the twigs, the outer bark is removed, the inner bark is consumed, and then the twig is discarded. In winter a single squirrel consumes about 45 twigs per day. Most feed trees range from 11 to 30 inches. After seeds have been disseminated Abert’s squirrels are dependent on inner bark, which forms the bulk of the diet from November to April. The soft inner tissue of small apical buds is also a preferred item. In May, staminate buds and cones and immature ovules are consumed as available. New staminate cones are entirely consumed; only the pollen is eaten from dried cones. The bark of areas infected with dwarf mistletoe also appears to be preferred.

Fleshy fungi consumed include members of many types. Mushrooms poisonous to humans are consumed by Abert’s squirrels without difficulty, including destroying angels. Water is obtained mostly from food, but Abert’s squirrels sometimes drink at stock ponds or other standing water (i.e., rain puddles). *(Source Wikipedia.)*

Editor’s Note: Longtime mountain residents maintain that there used to be many more Abert’s squirrels in the Foothills until a pest control specialist in Denver was hired by the city to exterminate an overabundance of Fox Squirrels brought from Eastern States. It is said that this person could not do his job so he trapped and relocated much of the Fox Squirrel over population to the Foothills and since they are much more aggressive than Abert’s squirrels, they are responsible for a decrease in the Abert’s squirrel’s populations over these many years. Abert’s are notoriously shy and now somewhat rare.

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When Zoom Is Better: Engaged Learning Works!

By Valerie Wedel

There is a fiery debate about how/if/when to safely reopen schools. This writer has been teaching both online and - in very limited ways – in person. The online instruction is via Zoom. This has demanded time and work - and my students and I are thriving! If grades matter to you, most of them are scoring “A,” and turning in outstanding work. Most are also fully engaged during our time together.

Imagine students or faculty, contemplating icy roads and snow... is it safe to drive this day? And then... the car keys stay on their shelf. The student or faculty turns on their computer. Safe. What a wonderful benefit of online learning!

There are definite challenges. Educators speak of the Equity Gap in learning. This means that not every student has fair access to the tools they need. This usually is due to lower financial resources. Students and their families with less money are much more challenged to achieve a great education. Shifting online can sometimes make this even worse. What if you don't have reliable Internet? Or a computer device that will work, as you need it to? What if you are hungry? Or homeless?

Colorado has worked hard to help overcome these big challenges. There is still more to do. Personally, this teacher believes Internet should be free here in the States, as it is in much of Europe. Good national, free, high speed Internet would solve many of the equity problems in our country. Meanwhile, we improvise.

Moving online has another problem. What about all those dark icons on your screen... students who do not want to turn on their cameras... Will they learn? Will they show up?

There is a new term flying about the digital halls of academe: Engaged Learning. This is really a concept that has been around for a while. It means that students are


actively participating in their own education. When you achieve this, the results for students are amazing!

Let's say you have a classroom in your neighborhood school. All the students are stuck in desks with worksheets in front of them. Dull. Boring. What a terrible way to learn (say the artists, musicians, writers, scientists and mathematicians). Now let's say you have a group of students researching pyramids in the library, and putting together artwork in the style of ancient Egypt. Then they throw a dance party, making replicas of ancient Egyptian musical instruments and serving tasty treats from the days of the pharaohs. Which classroom would you rather be in? Who do you think will learn more, and have fun doing it?

When teachers achieve engaged learning online, the students – all the students- do better than they can in physical classrooms, when there is no engagement. Wild – and true! Creating this engagement supports all students to excel.

How do we achieve this? What a great question! Christine Greenhow, associate professor of education technology at Michigan University has some ideas:

(Continued on next page.)



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“Online learning can be as good or even better than in-person classroom learning. Research has shown that students in online learning performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction, but it has to be done right. The best online learning combines elements where students go at their own pace, on their own time, and are set up to think deeply and critically about subject matter combined with elements where students go online at the same time and interact with other students, their teacher and content.” (3)

Greenhow also believes that in K-8 grades, online learning may be here to stay:

...Since online learning — or a hybrid online/in-person model — continues, this new normal may prove better than the old. Having raced to close gaps to virtual teaching and learning in Spring 2020, K-12 education will likely seek to continue the expanded technology infrastructure, flexibility and virtual learning benefits to improve education long-term. For learners unable to attend school in physical classrooms for various reasons, the pandemic-initiated move to virtual learning could be a welcome and permanent improvement. (3)

As of this writing, Jefferson County, Colorado has announced plans to make online learning available side by side with in person for K-8 schools fall, 2021. Some families have found they like remote learning for many reasons. This includes families with younger children!

Students can really excel online, when supported with caring teachers and engaged learning. The best


situations combine both work in a group with the teacher, and individual work. The individual work is set up so students are learning to think critically. One of the best questions students can ask is “why.” If you are asking “why,” you are thinking!

The other key ingredient in student success online is ... hope. Isn't it interesting that when students feel hopeful for their future, they learn better. Engaged learning and fostering human connections and caring works online, as well as in person. And these all foster hope.

What could be better?

References and additional reading, for educators and other curious ones among us:

1. *Reckmeyer, Mark. Focus on Student Engagement for Better Outcomes. EDUCATION, OCTOBER 30, 2019*
Link: <https://www.gallup.com/education/267521/focus-student-engagement-better-academic-outcomes.aspx>
2. *OCTOBER 22, 2019 Engagement and Hope Positively Influence Student Outcomes*
Link: <https://www.gallup.com/education/267740/engagement-hope-positively-influence-student-outcomes.aspx>
3. *MSUToday, Ask an Expert: Online Learning vs. Classroom Learning*
June 4, 2020 link:
<https://msutoday.msu.edu/news/2020/ask-the-expert-online-learning-vs-classroom-learning/>



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FERC Ignores Climate Change ~ Rights Of Nature

February 19, 2021 Jen Pelz, WildEarth Guardians

Gary Wockner, Save the Colorado

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) today issued a preliminary permit for a pumped hydropower storage project that would use Lake Powell Reservoir and a newly constructed hydropower station above the dam to pump and release water to generate electricity along the Utah-Arizona state line. The proposal by Navajo Energy Storage Station, LLC would cost \$3.6 billion and anticipates using the transmission lines and other infrastructure from the now shuttered Navajo Generating Station coal-fired power plant to distribute the power. “It’s deeply disappointing that FERC did not take advantage of this opportunity to acknowledge the severe impacts of climate change on the Colorado River and scrutinize the feasibility of this project,” said Samantha Ruscavage-Barz, Legal Director at WildEarth Guardians. “Basic climate science reveals that Lake Powell is not a reliable water source for this ill-conceived project.” Notice of the application was first published in the Federal Register in January of 2020. WildEarth Guardians and Save the Colorado jointly intervened in the preliminary permit process. The groups highlighted their concerns over the feasibility of the project given the already acute crisis of increasing demands and dwindling supply on the Colorado River and the downward spiral of the river flows due to climate change. Other parties that participated in or intervened in the preliminary permit process included the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service, the Navajo Nation, Southwest Transmission Dependent Utility Group, and the Center for Biological Diversity.

“This is just another example of how federal agencies continue to exhibit climate denial that threatens the sustainability of the Colorado River Basin,” said Gary Wockner. “We will continue our fight to stop this project from coming to fruition.” FERC identified in its order numerous and fatal flaws of this project including lack of access to tribal and federal lands, no consent from the Navajo Nation, failure to initiate government-to-government consultation with the tribe, infeasibility of the project due to climate change, and the effects of the project on water rights and water resources, threatened and endangered species, and water quality, among others. Despite these red flags, FERC cursorily dismissed each of the concerns as premature and inconsequential and granted the permit.

“Unsustainable use of the Colorado River has already taken this life source to its knees,” said Jen Pelz, the Wild Rivers Program Director at WildEarth Guardians. “If we intend to sustain this living river for future generations, we cannot ask the river to bear this heavy burden any longer. It is time for to wind, solar and other forms of power storage.

Earth Law Center & BRON

The Rights of Nature movement is accelerating around the globe in 2021! Save The Colorado has launched a “Rights of Nature” program to help put in place “Rights of Rivers” laws and regulations at the municipal level. Save The Colorado is partnering with the Boulder-based Earth Law Center on the new program; and with Boulder Rights of Nature to protect South Boulder Creek! They are developing a “Rights of Nature” toolbox that includes examples of ordinances that have been successful in the U.S. and around the world; and connections to other local groups in the U.S. that have organized around ordinances.

In the stack of executive orders signed by Joe Biden on his first day as number 46, the developers of the Keystone XL pipeline saw their permits revoked. How will this action impact the future of the project and what does it say about Biden’s environmental policy? Why are we still talking about Keystone XL? In 2011, the Keystone XL pipeline became a national controversy when protestors gathered at the White House. Among them were Indigenous leaders, religious figures, climate scientists, landowners, and environmentalists. The KXL pipeline would be used to transport tar (Continued on next page.)

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sand crude oil from oil fields in Alberta to refineries on the Texas coast. Tar sand crude oil releases up to 20% more greenhouse gas emissions than other crude oils. It is also more corrosive, which means pipeline leaks are not uncommon. These leaks are hazardous for the natural ecosystem and human communities. Supporters of the pipeline argue that it would create up to 60,000 direct and indirect jobs in the US and Canada.

After much hand wringing, Obama rejected the plans for the pipeline in 2015. But in 2017, it was brought back to life, not only reinstating the permits, but also clearing the way for developers by loosening regulations. Now, President Joe Biden has once again revoked the permits, blocking construction.

What has Biden's action accomplished?

By putting a stop to pipeline construction, Biden has drawn enormous public support but also enormous criticism, from both sides of the aisle. Rural counties, like Valley County in Montana, were counting on the tax revenue generated by the pipeline. Further, investors on the Canadian side of the project are disappointed and pushing for consequences. The province of Alberta invested more than \$1.5 billion in the project, and is calling for consequences.

President Biden's swift action to stop construction of the

KXL pipeline indicates his campaign commitment of taking climate change seriously. Hopefully he will act ambitiously; he is up against a lot. Keystone XL is only one of several contested pipeline projects in the US today, like the Dakota Access and Line 3 pipelines. Only time will tell if he will continue to make policy steps forward to protect the environment.

What does this mean for the Earth Law Center?

Leaders, activists and communities are listening to see how much action Biden is willing to take against climate change. Biden has the power to create federal programs that would fund institutional and frontline action to better preserve our planet. Will he use it?

At Earth Law Center, we hope to see the rise of a new generation of law that recognizes the interconnectedness between humans and Nature and our responsibility to protect and defend Nature.

To this end, we provide frontline support to the very same communities standing up against projects like the KXL. New generation of laws that recognizes the interconnectedness between humans and Nature and our responsibility to protect and defend Nature.

Get involved by volunteering for us, donating, or even subscribing to our newsletter. We're counting on you!

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Victim Advocates - Training Provided

The Sheriff's Office is seeking volunteers to serve as victim advocates

Deadline to apply is April 1

Boulder County, Colo. - The Boulder County Sheriff's Office is seeking volunteers to serve as victim advocates to provide assistance to victims of crime, accidents, trauma and other critical events.

Working as a victim advocate offers the opportunity to touch the lives of others by providing a valuable source of support and information to those who have had their lives altered by traumatic events.

No prior experience is necessary, training will be provided. The deadline to apply is April 1. Ideal volunteers are at least 21 years old, calm, compassionate, emotionally mature and non-judgmental.

Sheriff Joe Pelle said, "Our victim advocates provide direct and follow-up support to the victims of crime and tragedy in our communities. This is a much needed, much appreciated service. The opportunity for personal reward and growth for the advocate is rich as well. Please consider joining us. We need people with a caring heart and who are willing to listen to and support victims and their families." If accepted into the training program, advocates attend 40

hours of training in crisis intervention, grief response, legal procedures, law enforcement and resource information.

Training will be held in Boulder on Tuesday and Thursday evenings (6-9:00 p.m.) and on Saturdays (8-4:30 p.m.) from April 13 through May 1.

For more details about the program, a volunteer description or an application, please visit the Boulder County Sheriff's Office website or contact Danette Tye at dtye@bouldercounty.org or 720-564-2881.



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Pikas Are Adapting

By Andrew Smith Jan. 19, 2021 High Country News

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Climate change is harming many special places and iconic species around our planet, from Glacier National Park’s disappearing glaciers to California redwoods scorched by wildfires. But for the animal I study, the American pika (*Ochotona princeps*), there’s actually some good news: It’s not as threatened by climate change as many studies have warned.

I have studied pikas, small cousins of rabbits, for over 50 years and never tire of watching them. These tailless, egg-shaped balls of fluff live primarily in cool mountainous environments in piles of broken rock, called talus.

During summer, observers can see pikas industriously gathering caches of grass and leaves into haypiles that will serve as their food supply through the winter. Their light brown coats blend well with their surroundings, so they are easiest to spot when they perch on prominent rocks and call to alert other pikas of their presence.

When fellow hikers see me observing pikas in California’s Sierra Nevada, they often tell me they have read that these animals are going extinct. I have collected a stack of press releases that say exactly that. But based on my recent research and a comprehensive review of over 100 peer-reviewed studies, I believe that this interpretation is misleading.

Constrained by climate

As I showed in my early research, pikas’ biology suggests that they are likely to be affected by a warming climate.

Most important, their normal body temperature is high, and this puts them at risk of overheating when active in warm environments. When temperatures are warm, pikas retreat into the much cooler depths of their talus habitat.

Temperature also plays a role in pikas’ ability to move from place to place. Warm weather inhibits their movements, while cooler temperatures allow them to more freely colonize new habitats. A little ancient history is instructive here. Pikas originally came to North America from Asia and spread across the continent some five million years ago, during colder times. Their remains have been found in caves in the Appalachian Mountains and in the Mojave Desert – sites where pikas no longer live. As the world’s climate warmed, pika populations retreated to the high mountains of the western U.S. and Canada. Today they occupy most of the available talus habitat in these areas – evidence that challenges the pikas-on-the-brink narrative. For example, in recent surveys, pikas were found at 98% of 109 suitable sites in Colorado, and at 98% of 329 sites in the central Sierra Nevada. One study of historic pika sites across California’s Lassen, Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks found no evidence that pikas were moving to new sites or higher altitudes due to climate change.

Pikas in warm environments

In contrast, most sites where researchers believe that pikas have disappeared are small, isolated and often compromised by human activities, such as grazing by livestock. These sites generally are lower and warmer than sites in pikas’ core range. Many of these areas are in the

Great Basin – a large desert region spanning most of Nevada and parts of Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon and California. A series of studies on a small number of marginal Great Basin sites formerly occupied by pikas has disproportionately contributed to the narrative that pikas are likely to become endangered.

To investigate the big picture across this region, I worked with state and federal officials on a 2017 study that identified 3,250 site records of pika habitat. Pikas were present at 2,378 sites, not found at 89 sites where they had been seen as recently as 2005, and absent from 774 sites that contained only old signs of pika occupancy.

The extirpated and old sites had the same temperature and precipitation ranges as sites where pikas still were



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present. This suggests that non-climatic factors may have caused pikas' disappearance from the vacant sites.

Pikas are still present in other remarkably hot places, such as the ghost town of Bodie, California, the nearby Mono Craters and Idaho's Craters of the Moon National Monument. At these sites, pikas retreat into the cool nooks of their talus habitat during the warmest part of the day and often forage at night.

In my research, I also found that pikas were much less active and uttered far fewer calls at these low-altitude sites compared with high-elevation pika populations. At low-elevation sites, pikas consumed a diverse diet of Great Basin plants, such as big sagebrush and bitterbrush, that was markedly different from the plants they ate at high-elevation sites. Some even failed to construct their characteristic large haypiles.

Another atypical pika population lives near sea level in Oregon's Columbia River Gorge. Here, too, they have adapted well to a very different habitat, surviving year-round on a diet that consists mainly of moss. They defend the smallest territories of any pika, and when it gets hot, they simply move off the talus and hang out in the shade of the nearby forest.



Highlander Wildlife

A future for pikas

Based on my review of dozens of studies, pika populations appear to be secure in their core range – the mountains of western North America that have large and fairly well-connected talus habitat. In these areas they can move from one habitat patch to another without having to pass through areas that are dangerously warm for them.

The fact that pikas have also adapted to a number of

marginal, hot environments suggests to me that they are more resilient to climate change than many past studies have concluded. Most species exhibit losses near the edges of their geographical ranges, simply because individual animals in those zones are living in conditions that are less than ideal for them. This does not mean that they are going extinct.

Climate change is the most critical issue facing the world today, so it is particularly important that scientists communicate accurately about it to the public. In my view, the fact that pikas are coping and altering their behaviors in response to changing conditions is encouraging news for future naturalists setting out to observe one of nature's most charismatic mammals.

*Above: A pika stocking up food stores. Sunny /CC via Flickr
Andrew Smith is a professor emeritus of life sciences at Arizona State University.*

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Correction & Contemplation

Apologies to our loyal readership, a correction to the February issue is mandatory. In the Article on page 12, Change is the Only Constant - 5th paragraph a glaring oversight and mistake (*head of Monsanto get appointed to the FDA*) appears and the correct line should have been: Tom Vilsack and he was a candidate for appointment to head the Dept. of Agriculture. Failure to refer to notes late at night on deadline is an occupational hazard in this business.

Not caught before going to press but painfully aware of during distribution, this type of thing happens to Monthly publications, what may be true on the 22nd of the month before may not still be true ten or fifteen days later. While this particular oversight does not fall into that category, every publication - even daily newspapers can be capable of making mistakes. What is important is to accept responsibility and correct the error as quickly as possible.

An intellectually astute reader also took the time to email and point out this mistake, but was unwilling to have their comment printed as a Letter to the Editor. A true loss for this publication since what he had to say was both critical and positive for this magazine. It is nice to know people like him are out there reading our work and unafraid to take us to task when any error occurs.

The Highlander Monthly goes to Golden, Boulder, Nederland, Central City and Golden Gate Canyon in addition to all the Rural Routes in Coal Creek Canyon every month and before the time of Covid was distributed to many businesses and locations that are currently closed to the public. We plan to go back to regular distribution

once it is safe but are currently just mailing to more homes and alternating rural routes north of Golden and into Black Hawk areas.

Some changes have been made recently, advertisers may pay via PayPal and new distribution locations are being tested. Anyone keeping alert can assess the drop in printed news i.e. starting with the failure of the Rocky Mountain News. But this means someday your Highlander may only be available via soft copy and loyal readers can either get accustomed to reading it online or pay for a subscription as we plan to at least print enough for a few hard copies to go out to those without computer capabilities that pay for a hard copy to be mailed to them with a subscription that doesn't even cover our costs but what we want to provide.

With rumors that the U.S. Post Office may be forced to do away with First Class Mail (depending on how Federal Officials value our Postal Service in the future) we will try to roll with the punches so readers that wish to help to support their Highlander Monthly Magazine with a subscription - we will try to accommodate them all.

I suggest loyal monthly readers go to our Website www.HighlanderMo.com and try to appreciate the online issue. Home Page has a box at the top: Current Issue, click on it and download a PDF version and save it (to your desktop, or a designated File) so you can open it in Adobe Reader. Once you have the PDF it is easier to read at your convenience and the top Menu Bar has VIEW click and choose PAGE DISPLAY to find Two Page View and then you can read it as it appears in the hard copy (on a Mac). This may be different on a PC & open in the browser.

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Over this last year there has been much time to contemplate: to get a vaccine or not, how to understand if wearing a mask can be a political issue, what to do to protect yourself and loved ones from being exposed and still have lives. These issues do not have to be political, just think about it - Republicans especially do not like big government to tell them what to do i.e. regulations. All vaccinations are a personal decision and while I don't believe the hype of big Pharma getting rich off this pandemic - it is in the best interest for us all to protect ourselves and our loved ones from something we know so little about the long term after effects- referring to the virus.

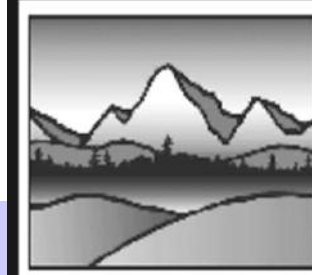
I hate shots, had a horrible experience as a young child that gave me PTS about needles. But as much as I hate them and have my own misgivings about Emergency FDA approvals for these new vaccines, I have been getting a flu shot for at least 20 years just to avoid getting the flu. These Covid vaccines use the flu shot base and have just had added top layers to address the Covid virus. I will get the vaccine as soon as all essential workers and at risk folks get theirs, but will not pressure anyone else to get it. This is a personal decision and should be made available but not mandatory. It is my hope though that most folks just step up and try to help the world beat this virus down so we can get back to semi-new normal.

I do not agree that we must all get the virus, that is what some think and I respectfully disagree. Doing all we can to avoid getting it is a better goal and the fact that researchers and scientists are working on a vaccine we only get once (not once a year like the flu) is a hopeful outlook I can embrace. This endeavor is driven by the mutating ability of Covid and an overreaching vaccine could kill the mutating strains of the virus that try to kill us worldwide.

If we can look for a silver lining to this time of Covid it would be that our planet has benefited from what the virus has forced us to do and accomplish. I've been a proponent of telecommuting, even educationally for years because I studied the greenhouse gas effects our growing world and overpopulation has on our environment since the late 1970's. We all need to scale back: driving, flying, consuming, and choices about housing. Saving more money - well the list goes on and on but we need to minimize in our lives in every way we can. Bottom line it will benefit not only our peace of minds but also every person on the planet. Think, before you act and decide not only what you want but how it will trickle down to what will help us all live safely and be environmentally responsible for the quality of our lives and our planet.

By A.M. Wilks

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Public Lands No Longer On Sale To Oil & Gas

By Carl Segerstrom Jan. 29, 2021 High Country News

On Jan. 27, President Joseph Biden planted a continent-sized “not for sale” sign on the public lands and waters managed by the federal government. In an executive order — part of a sweeping set of orders focused on climate change — Biden directed Interior Secretary nominee Deb Haaland to reassess the federal oil and gas leasing system and, at least for now, to pause the sale of development rights to private companies.

The move upends the bipartisan status quo of selling vast stretches of the Western U.S. to fossil fuel companies. Currently, those companies hold leases to more than 26 million acres, more than half of which have yet to be drilled. (About 10% of that untapped land was either auctioned off at the minimum bid price of \$2 per acre or sold post-auction for even less by the last administration, according to BLM data compiled by The Wilderness Society.) That means that the pause on new leases won’t stop drilling on federal lands. “We have a deep inventory of approved federal drilling permits in hand that essentially cover all of our desired activity over the next presidential term,” said David Harris, an executive vice president for Devon Energy Corporation, a major leaseholder in New Mexico’s Permian Basin, on an investor call in October. “The dirty

little secret is (a moratorium) may not have much of an immediate impact on production,” said Erik Schlenker-Goodrich, executive director of the Western Environmental Law Center.

Still, pumping the brakes on the sale of federal fossil fuels marks a major policy shift. It sets the stage for a transition away from fossil fuel development, which has had major impacts on air pollution, water quality and wildlife in the Western U.S. It also could put a major dent in climate warming emissions — fossil fuel production on federally managed land accounts for more than one-fifth of carbon dioxide emissions in the United States.

THE OIL AND GAS leasing moratorium cuts off one important source of income for Western states. They won’t entirely lose revenue from federal fossil fuels: While no new leases will be sold, drilling under existing leases — and its accompanying royalties and other taxes — will continue. But the states will lose the income from bonus bids on federal leases, which come when oil and gas companies drive up the auction price of certain parcels with particularly promising deposits. While bonus bids are typically much smaller than royalties, they can bring huge paydays: In 2018, one frenzied round of lease sales in southeastern New Mexico brought in nearly \$1 billion.

Meanwhile, the federal government will reassess the federal oil and gas leasing program. In a press release, the Interior Department said the goal of the leasing freeze is to “provide a path to align the management of America’s public lands and waters with our nation’s climate, conservation, and clean energy goals.”

The moratorium is expected to kick off a multi-year public environmental planning process during which the public and affected stakeholders, including tribal nations and state and local governments, will have a chance to weigh in on the future of oil and gas leasing. Multiple alternative outcomes will be presented, likely ranging from leaving the program as it is to ending future leasing completely. To get an idea of what to expect, it helps to look back at a federal coal moratorium issued in the final year of the

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Obama administration. In January of 2016, the BLM started a process to evaluate the economic and environmental impacts of leasing federal land for coal mining. Following that initial fact-finding mission, the agency concluded that modernizing the federal coal leasing program was necessary. Proposed options for doing so included raising royalty rates, increasing minimum bids, ending new leases entirely and requiring leaseholders to offset their carbon emissions or fund climate adaptation programs. But when Ryan Zinke took the helm of the Interior Dept. during the last administration, he moved quickly to discard the comprehensive review and reopened federal land for coal leasing. (The legality of that move is still being argued in federal court.) Despite efforts to open up more federal land for coal leasing, the industry has continued to nose-dive as bankruptcies mount from Wyoming to Appalachia. Since the coal moratorium was lifted, companies have pulled out of leasing applications for 10 times more coal than filed for.

BIDEN’S EXECUTIVE ORDER will not upset an industry that’s thriving: Domestic oil and gas production has been in a major bust for the past year. Reduced demand during the coronavirus pandemic and price wars between Saudi Arabia and Russia have driven down the price of oil and gas. At times last summer, there weren’t any active oil and gas drilling rigs in Wyoming. Despite “energy dominance” agendas, it wasn’t worth the cost of pumping it out of the ground. Wyoming’s budget suffered from the lost revenue, and public services, including the state Department of Health, endured major budget cuts. (There were, however, some bright spots in a handful of counties and cities, where new wind installations bolstered local budgets.) Now, as Biden is in office, Wyoming has four active rigs — significantly down from 2019, when there were usually 30-plus active rigs.

Even as he slammed the executive order as a major blow to Wyoming, Gov. Mark Gordon acknowledged in an interview that international markets are largely responsible for the state’s current lack of oil and gas production. “That’s sort of the nature of the business,” Gordon said. Still, he argued that the delay in leasing and “byzantine federal

regulations” mean that companies will look elsewhere in the future, taking jobs and public funding with them: “Capital most likely is going to say, ‘Gee, we love Texas, because we don’t have to deal with any of that BS,’” Gordon said.

The new executive order sets up a tug of war over the future of fossil fuel production on public lands. It’s one that’s likely to last throughout the Biden administration: Oil and gas industry interests are already suing over the



freeze. In a lawsuit filed the same day the order was signed, the Western Energy Alliance (WEA), a regional oil and gas lobbying group, argued that the order exceeded presidential authority and overrides existing laws that order regular lease sales of public lands. “Drying up new leasing puts future development as well as existing projects at risk,” said Kathleen Sgamma, the president of WEA. (Former Interior Department solicitor John Leshy has argued the Interior Department has “ample legal authority to limit or call a halt to fossil fuel leasing on America’s public lands.”)

For advocates of climate action and leasing reform, it’s encouraging to see major changes starting in the second week of Biden’s presidency. “The Biden administration is way out ahead of where the Obama administration was,” said Schlenker-Goodrich. “There’s an urgency to move forward.” *Photo above: Paul Ratje/AFP via Getty Images*

Carl Segerstrom is an assistant editor at High Country News, covering Alaska, the Pacific Northwest and the Northern Rockies from Spokane, Washington.

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Previous page top left: *Calico Puppy.*

Top right: *Equestrian Dreams Paints.*

Middle left: *First night at home for a rescue.*

Bottom Right: *Dog & Cat suggle.*

Bottom Left: *Tiny baby Goat.*

This page Top right: *Julie's Rudy, mini mule.*

Top Left: *Equestrian Dream.*

Bottom left: *Lindsey's cats.*

Bottom right: *Paint, mini and donkey.*

Use Less Gasoline

From Jim Plane – State Farm Insurance

Use less gas with these tricks of fuel-efficient drivers. Regardless of the car you drive, these techniques will help you save gas.

Did you know you could save considerably at the gas pump just by modifying your driving habits? Regardless of the type of car you drive, good driving habits contribute to better fuel economy, which saves money and helps the planet, too.

Perform routine maintenance

Your car needs the right proportions of air and fuel to run efficiently. A well-maintained vehicle will run at its best.

Keep tires inflated to ideal pressure

Under-inflated tires tend to decrease mileage. (They're dangerous, too.) Check manufacturers' recommendations and make sure your tires are inflated to the maximum PSI, measured when cold.

Combine short trips

Warm engines run more efficiently than cold ones. Combining short errands (such as visiting the grocery store, dry cleaner, and bank) into one trip is an efficient way to save time, as well as gas.

Drive at moderate speeds

While every vehicle is different, mileage decreases quite rapidly over 50 MPH in most cases. To save gas, stay at or under the speed limit, and drive at a consistent rate of speed. Use cruise control on long trips.

Drive friendly

Aggressive driving habits such as gunning the engine, speeding, screeching around corners, and jamming on the gas pedal are major fuel wasters. Avoid jackrabbit starts, and generally drive in a measured and moderate fashion for top fuel savings.

Travel light

Extra weight in the car creates a drag on the engine and consumes extra gas. Don't haul around heavy loads if you don't have to. Check the trunk and back of the vehicle for unnecessary items that may be safely stored elsewhere.

Keep your car aerodynamic

Good aerodynamics affects your car's fuel efficiency by reducing drag, especially at high speeds. Keep windows and moon roof closed on the freeway. Even keeping the car's exterior clean can make a difference.

Use the highest feasible gear

Driving at high speeds in lower gears burns excessive fuel. On a manual transmission, pay attention to RPMs as you accelerate and shift into high gear as soon as you reasonably can. Use the overdrive gear whenever you can.

Avoid excessive idling

Idling uses a surprising amount of fuel — more than restarting the engine. If you need to wait in your parked vehicle for more than a minute or two, switch off the engine and only start up again when you're ready to continue driving.

Ride share

You'll cut per-person fuel consumption in half when you share a ride. Ask friends and colleagues who live near you or frequent the same places you do to share a ride. You can split gas costs, as many ways as there are passengers. (Which can become a habit after the virus distancing stops being a necessity.)



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Book: A Reference To Understanding

“With approximately one third of all people worldwide suffering from a psychiatric illness in their lifetime, essentially everyone is a friend or family member. This book is a wonderful reference for every compassionate loved one who wishes to have a framework or foundation of information to be of help. Dr. Barnes and Dr. Wills are exceptional professionals in psychiatry who draw on their profound knowledge base to connect with each reader in the community, by using language and concepts that are readily understandable and by sharing their own compelling personal life stories.” —Scott L. Rauch, MD, President, Psychiatrist-in-Chief and Chair of Psychiatry, McLean Hospital.

Dr. Carlin Barnes and Dr. Marketa Wills provide much needed information that educates and empowers the more than 40 million people in the U.S. who suffer from mental health conditions, especially during an ongoing pandemic. We are living in stressful times. From social unrest to an ongoing global pandemic, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues are on the rise. Two Harvard trained psychiatrists have authored a practical guide to help people better understand how to deal with the growing mental health crisis we are facing in America. In their book, *Understanding Mental Illness: A Comprehensive Guide to Mental Health Disorders for Family and Friends*, Dr. Carlin Barnes and Dr. Marketa Wills have provided an easy-to-understand guide to explaining mental illness in a conversational way for all readers.

According to Census Bureau data from last year, a third of Americans are showing signs of clinical anxiety or depression. Yet many do not get needed or adequate treatment. According to Drs. Barnes and Wills ignoring mental health illness can have devastating effects on our families and for society at large. “Many people living with mental illness go untreated, and as a result, people with untreated mental illnesses make up one third of the nation’s homeless population and can be imprisoned,” said Dr. Wills. “Study after study has shown that the longer one waits to begin treatment, the greater the severity of the

mental illness, and the more difficult it may be to effectively treat. Conversely, early treatment is highly likely to lead to much more positive outcomes.”

Even in the 21st century with the most advanced medical care in the world, social stigma still surrounds psychiatric problems, and this, combined with a lack of understanding, perpetuates a national mental health crisis affecting those in need and their families. To meet these challenges, Dr. Barnes and Dr. Wills wrote *Understanding Mental Illness* to educate and help everyone better understand and deal with mental health issues. Each chapter offers insights and wisdom concerning a variety of psychiatric conditions, including:

- Mood disorders
- Anxiety disorders
- Substance abuse issues
- Eating disorders
- Women’s mental health issues
- Suicide in America
- Geriatric mental health.

Dr. Barnes adds, “Knowledge is power. Being aware and informed is the first step in helping a loved one or family member get the proper treatment they need to begin the road to recovery and emotional wellness. Armed with the knowledge of clear and factual information, you will be able to begin the process of helping your loved one. Change will not happen overnight; recovery is a process that is a different journey for each person.”

2021 will see a continuation of mental health issues affect most Americans. With concerns ranging from homelessness, food insecurity and health, *Understanding Mental Illness* is the must-read to help us navigate through the rough times ahead. Dr. Carlin Barnes and Dr. Marketa Wills are the co-founders of Healthy Mind MDs, LLC – a wellness enterprise whose sole mission is to improve the emotional and mental well-being of all Americans. “Dr. Carlin Barnes and Dr. Marketa Wills have delivered a well needed resource! This book will help family and friends who struggle with loved ones suffering from mental illness. They have managed to take extremely complicated psychological concepts and deliver them in ways anyone can understand. This book is a real step forward in explaining how many people we care about can suffer from life-altering mental illnesses. (Continued next page.)



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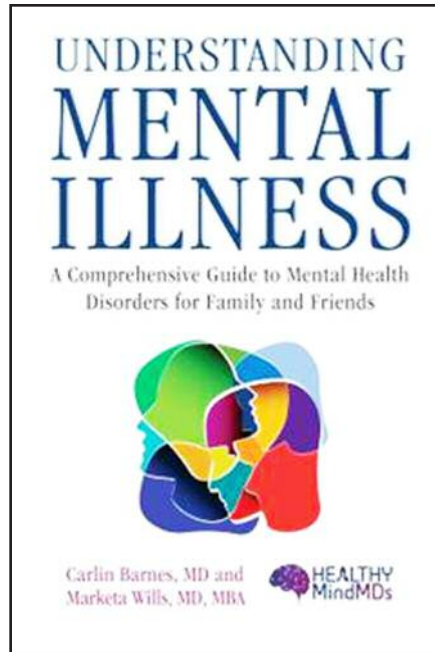
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Thomas Kerrihard, MD, practicing psychiatrist.

Carlin Barnes, M.D. is a double Board certified and licensed child, adolescent and adult psychiatrist. For the past twenty years, she has practiced child, adolescent, and adult psychiatry while delivering quality, compassionate, and excellent clinical care in a variety of settings. She is the owner of and psychiatrist at a thriving, diverse boutique private practice located in Houston, Texas. Dr. Barnes has previous experience as a physician executive and medical director at a Fortune 100 managed care company. She is the co-founder and co-owner of Healthy Mind MDs, LLC. Dr. Barnes earned her medical degree from Texas A&M Health Sciences Center. She completed a residency in adult psychiatry at Harvard’s The Cambridge Health Alliance. She completed a child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship at Emory University School of Medicine where she served as Chief Resident. She has received several accolades and awards which highlight her commitment to clinical excellence and dedication to the field of psychiatry. She is most passionate about delivering culturally sensitive and quality mental

health care to special populations. She is a member of several professional and civic organizations including The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, Zumba, and spending time with her son, Ryan.

Marketa Wills, MD, is a board-certified psychiatrist with a master’s in business administration from the Wharton School of Business and serves as a physician leader in a provider-led managed care organization. She currently sees patients in the student health setting. Dr. Wills earned her medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and completed a residency in adult psychiatry at Harvard’s Massachusetts General Hospital/McLean Hospital program. In her last year of the program, she served as chief resident. She has received numerous accolades and awards highlighting her clinical and community achievements. Originally from Dayton, Ohio, she currently resides in sunny Tampa, Florida.

Her passions include travel, community service and the arts. The doctors have been featured in numerous articles, posts and interviews such as GoodHousekeeping.com, Goop.com, CBS News Radio and CBS Morning Saturday. To learn more visit <https://healthymindmds.com/>



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Untested Chemicals Used For Disinfectants

By Annabella Farmer Dec. 17, 2020 High Country News

This article was originally published by Searchlight New Mexico and was reported in collaboration with the Institute of American Indian Arts' journalism program. It is republished here by permission.

When the college baseball season opened last February, the New Mexico Lobos were having one of their best years ever. Then COVID-19 hit. “We had a really good team and we were winning and then it just stopped — everything just turned off like it never happened,” said Ray Birmingham, the baseball coach at the University of New Mexico. A few months later, Birmingham was in Dallas when he heard about a new business, CleanSpray Technologies, that boasted that it could disinfect an area in 90 seconds or less with a safe and environmentally sustainable liquid system. Birmingham jumped at the opportunity to install the system at UNM and get the Lobos back on the field. “I thought it was a great chance to help,” he said.

A few weeks later, in July, CleanSpray was installed in the training room of the Tow Diehm Athletic Facility. The company donated the system as a favor to Birmingham, who knows the CEO, Tony Woods, through his son. The investment would typically carry a sticker price between \$10,000 and more than six figures; UNM paid only for the disinfectant liquid.

“When you stand in there, you look like you’re in a monster movie with the fog coming out of the ceiling,” said Birmingham, adding that the athletic department was pleased with the system. But there are concerns. CleanSpray has only been in business since July, and its four founders come from backgrounds in air-conditioning, accounting, hair salons and agriculture education. Like myriad new disinfectant businesses across the country, the company saw opportunity in the pandemic — an opportunity estimated at \$178.9 billion, according to the D.C.-based Household & Commercial Products Association.

Disinfectants are regulated as pesticides by the federal government, because they are intended to kill living organisms. Now, the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency is fast-tracking the review of hundreds of products that may be effective against the coronavirus — even as many experts warn that some of these products could be dangerous to consumers and the environment, especially when overused or used incorrectly.

“There’s not much chemistry out there that’s totally efficient at killing one type of organism, like a virus, but completely benign to a larger type of organism — i.e., humans,” said Ian Cull, president of Indoor Sciences, an environmental consultancy based in Chicago. That’s been borne out this year in New Mexico, where calls to the state Poison and Drug Information Center jumped nearly 15% from the same period (March through October) in 2019 — just for cleaning-product misuse.

Companies nationwide are rushing to get their products on List N, the EPA’s working directory of disinfectants approved to kill the virus that causes COVID-19. In the past, the process could take anywhere from several months to two years. During the pandemic, however, a spokesperson for the EPA said it has expedited review for List N candidates. This means the time frame can be as short as one to two weeks; instead of performing its own testing, the EPA is largely relying on test data provided by the company.

Since last July, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has recommended recall of 215 hand sanitizers that use toxic chemicals, as well as sanitizers that have insufficient alcohol content. These range from ineffective to potentially lethal. Many contain methanol or 1-propanol, both of which can be toxic when absorbed through the skin, and even more so when ingested. The list of symptoms includes skin reactions, nausea, vomiting, headache, blurred vision, permanent blindness, decreased consciousness, seizures, coma, permanent damage to the nervous system and death. The FDA is also warning consumers that some hand sanitizers are being packaged in food or drink containers like children’s food pouches, water and juice bottles, and beer cans and vodka bottles, and some contain food flavors like chocolate or raspberry.

Though the FDA is “strongly *(Continued next page.)*”

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PAGE 23

Highlander Science

encouraging” retailers to pull these products, many remain on the shelves, leaving the responsibility to consumers to monitor their own safety.

In August, the NFL’s Denver Broncos reported having players walk through a sanitizing-spray doorway much like a metal detector before entering the field to play. A Buffalo, New York, startup called EagleHawk has developed drones that spray disinfectant from above to sanitize large public and private venues. Public agencies are also experimenting with a number of different methods in response to the pandemic. In southern New Mexico, for example, Ruidoso Municipal Schools is taking extravagant measures; as KRQE reported, the district has invested in six Xenex LightStrike robots that emit pulsed UV light, each with a price tag of over \$100,000. Ruidoso’s superintendent declined to comment on a request from Searchlight New Mexico.

Some hospitals and hotels are using Xenex, and other UV light sanitizing technology is available for home use. Experts are divided on its efficacy. Some suggest that UV lamps, wands and boxes may be effective on small, smooth areas, but most agree they are not suitable for disinfecting large spaces. The FDA says that UV light technology has been shown to inactivate other similar viruses, but has not been proven to kill COVID-19. There is limited published

data about the wavelength, dose, and duration of UVC radiation required to kill this coronavirus. UV light only works when the surface has already been cleaned, because contaminants may protect the virus. This is also true of chemical disinfectants: “If [people] have a surface they want to disinfect they just go and spray the stuff on, and they think they’ve taken care of the problem,” said Jason Marshall of the Toxics Use Reduction Institute at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. “They’re using the chemical incorrectly — you have to clean first and then apply the disinfectant.”

While many people spray disinfectant onto surfaces and immediately wipe it away, Marshall stressed that it is critical to leave it on long enough to kill the virus sometimes as long as ten minutes. He added that rather than spraying disinfectant indiscriminately, it is far more effective to go through your normal cleaning routine and then apply disinfectant only to high-touch areas.

The owners of CleanSpray built a dispersal system that uses a cost-effective disinfectant solution created by NatuReal, the Florida company that created Joy Mangano’s Miracle Clean, which is also sold under the name Bioesque. “We wanted to make sure that the disinfectant we use is 100% botanical, all natural,” said Roger McElwrath, CleanSpray’s chief operating officer. The active ingredient is thymol — a pesticide derived from thyme — but this makes up only 0.23% of the solution by weight. The other 99.77% is inactive ingredients, many of which also have health concerns.

“It’s a great example of how someone would think, Well it’s natural, so it must be safer for you — but that’s not always the case,” said Marshall. CleanSpray’s disinfectant is probably safer than many chemicals used to combat COVID-19, including bleach. According to the company, its dispersal system runs on an automated timer and sprays from the ceiling, grabbing COVID particles as the mist rains down. “It takes it to the surface and kills it,” said McElwrath. There is, however, little evidence to support that claim. The American Association of Poison Control Centers warns that disinfectants for use against COVID-19 are not designed to kill viruses in the air, and excessive use increases health risks. Despite concerns, CleanSpray has done a steady business. The company has sold and installed systems in restaurants and office buildings in the Dallas–Fort Worth area, as well as at the Good Shepherd Center, a homeless shelter in Albuquerque. The staff at Good Shepherd report that they haven’t yet had a single case of coronavirus among staff or guests. “We’re incredibly pleased with the system,” said Heather Mattax, the center’s donor assistant. Health officials, meanwhile, warn that the coronavirus will be here indefinitely at low levels — just like the flu — and it is important to make sure that defenses against it are sustainable instead of some new disinfectants that if used could prove harmful over time.

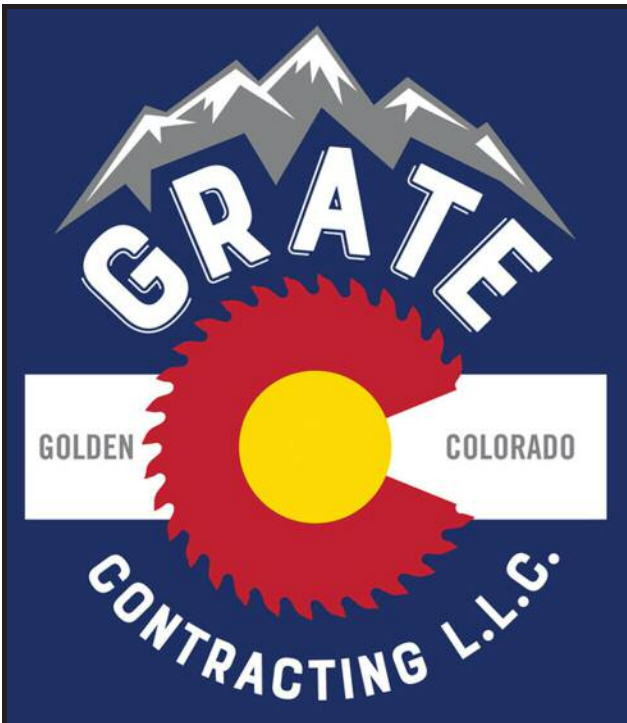
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Update: BuffaloFieldCampaign.org

Founded in science and principled in equitable governance, the Campaign provided the priorities to fix the faulty systems governing wild, migratory, Yellowstone bison. These recommendations must be swiftly implemented to appropriately honor buffalo as a keystone species, and improve the environmental health of the Yellowstone Ecosystem. As an enrolled tribal member with treaty-reserved hunting rights to Yellowstone bison and a former tribal council member, I understand the diverse relationships that provide for our indigenous spiritual, ceremonial, subsistence, and treaty lifeways. Therefore, it is my honor to share our recommendations with leadership across Indian Country.

Our Campaign priorities reflect a holistic approach to Yellowstone bison and ecosystem management that provides for the needs of wild bison, builds resilience against the harmful impacts of climate change and habitat degradation, protects the rights of the treaty tribes, and would bolster the long-term capacity of on-reservation bison restoration. During these turbulent times, wild bison and our Mother Earth need advocates from Indian country. Together we can do more. A primary recommendation is reinforcing federal jurisdiction and authority for Yellowstone bison as public trust wildlife on federal lands. Our science policy recommendations provide for adjusting funding levels for prioritizing bison as wildlife, and reasserting federal responsibility for the well-being of native species in the Yellowstone Ecosystem. It is time our National Mammal is managed as respected wildlife by wildlife biologists, not as livestock by state and federal managers.



Our priorities also address the growing adverse impacts of climate change and habitat degradation, by building resilience into the land and recognizing the mutually dependent relationship among species for survival. With the nomination of Congresswoman Deb Haaland to the Secretary of the Interior, the critically-important Yellowstone Ecosystem is a prime candidate for acting on President Biden's 30 by 30 Initiative to protect 30% of our natural world by 2030 thereby limiting climate change impacts, halting habitat loss, and reversing the global species extinction crisis.

The Campaign's recommendations strive to halt state and federal actions that are forcibly domesticating Yellowstone bison, and recognize the trust responsibility to tribes with a seat at the co-management table. The only continuously-wild herd of bison in the lower 48 states deserves more, and we provide a holistic framework for tribes to co-create policy, science, and provisions for securing a prosperous future for our brother buffalo. Reviving the government-to-government relationship between the United States and treaty tribes with increased consultation is necessary to rebuild trust, foster equity, and fulfill the national trust duties owed to tribes.

Thank you for acting upon these recommendations on behalf of wild, migratory bison in the Yellowstone Ecosystem. Buffalo Field Campaign

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Judge Revokes Protected Lands For Jaguars

By Paige Blankenbuehler Feb. 10, 2021 HCN

From Richard Mahler’s 2016 story about the Southwest’s last jaguars.

A female jaguar named Ali lopes through her territory in Babisal, Mexico. If a male jaguar recently filmed in Arizona is to find a mate, he will likely have to migrate south across the border. Northern Jaguar Project



BACKSTORY

Though male jaguars have been documented north of the U.S.-Mexico border in recent decades, no females have been recorded in their native U.S. range since 1963.

The Southwest’s last jaguars are protected under the Endangered Species Act. In 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated 765,000 acres of “critical habitat” in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico, hoping to lure stressed cats northward and expand their range. Opponents called the protections “arbitrary and capricious.” (“The tenuous fate of the Southwest’s last jaguars,” 5/30/16).

carefully re-designate the jaguar’s critical habitat so it can withstand the livestock industry’s cynical lawsuits.”

Paige Blankenbuehler is an associate editor for High Country News. She oversees coverage of the Southwest, Great Basin and the Borderlands from her home in Durango, Colorado.



Pictured in 2013, the jaguar known as El Jefe frequents the Santa Rita Mountains in Arizona. Other critical jaguar habitat in New Mexico has lost protections. University of Arizona and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FOLLOWUP

For years, ranchers complained that the protected habitat contained privately owned agricultural areas and made it harder to get grazing permits and build infrastructure like corrals and fences. In late January, a federal judge ruled that New Mexico land would no longer be protected for jaguars. The Center of Biological Diversity responded in a statement: “We will ask the Biden administration to



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Willful Ignorance Leads To West's Water Woes

By Laura Paskus - High Country News

The Lightest Object in the Universe

Kimi Eisele

321 pages, hardcover: \$26.95

Algonquin Books, 2019.

Science Be Dammed: How Ignoring Inconvenient Science Drained the Colorado River

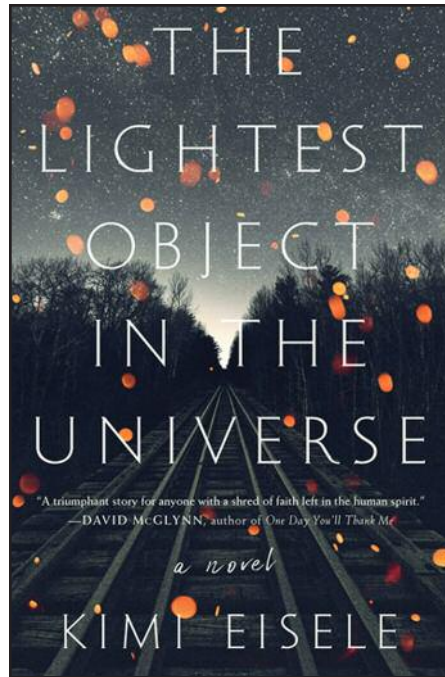
Eric Kuhn and John Fleck

264 pages, hardcover: \$35

The University of Arizona Press, 2019.

For someone like me who reports on the politics of water and the challenges of climate change in the arid Southwest, pilgrimages to places like Abiquiu Lake, with its reflection of Cerro Pedernal and backdrop of the Jemez Mountains, are a necessary rite of summer. If I want to keep ahead of despair, stave off cynicism — and remain present with the issues I write about — I need to submerge myself, often and diligently, in water that is cool and transformative.

That summer, I lugged two new books to my secret swimming spot and found that immersing myself in both fiction and nonfiction helped me make sense of the world we're facing today, as climate change demands that humans make better decisions — and as it's become entirely too easy to indulge fears of a dystopian future. Kimi Eisele's novel, *The Lightest Object in the Universe*, and *Science Be Dammed: How Ignoring Inconvenient Science Drained the Colorado River*, by Eric Kuhn and John Fleck,



are both powerful books. Kuhn and Fleck examine how politics exacerbated today's problems with the over-allocated Colorado River, which supplies more than 40 million people. And Eisele carries us into a future in which we see what happens when we refuse to heed the warning signs and commit to a more resilient path.

Together, these writers show what happens when we give urgent problems the side-eye and slink off down the road, hoping someone else will devise a solution. They also urge us to

reconsider what we think we know about the past, what we want to believe about the future, and what we need to decide — and accomplish — right now.

In *The Lightest Object*, her first novel, Eisele envisions a post-collapse United States. The economy has tanked, the electrical grid has failed, and people are left without governments and global food systems. The illusion that people can thrive independently of their neighbors — holed up and binging on Netflix and GrubHub — is gone.

She shows us how people survive this new world through her main characters, Beatrix and Carson, who long for one another — from opposite sides of the country — after everything falls apart. An organizer, Beatrix throws in with her neighbors, people she knew only casually before the collapse. They work together, try to protect and teach one another. And they aren't looking back; there's no reason to try to figure out what went wrong or how things might have gone differently. Surviving today and figuring out ways to thrive tomorrow are all that matter. Carson, meanwhile, embarks on a trip across the landscape, hoping to reach Beatrix. His journey enables Eisele to show the reader a smattering of what's going on in the region the coastal media once dismissed as "flyover country." He encounters bands of hungry kids, towns decimated by flu, and people willing to share what little food they

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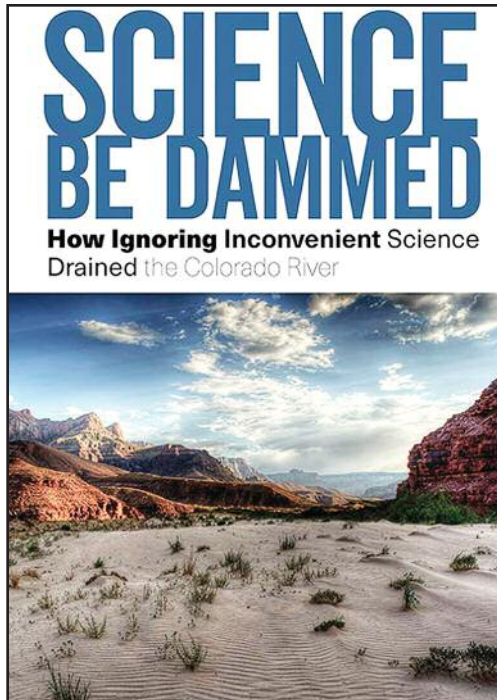
have with a stranger, frightened by rumors and at the same time fueled by hope.

Whether in the city — where Eisele doesn't spend much time — in small communities or in rural places, people need one another, intimately. Only together can they eat, trade information, fix problems and start telling new stories. Not everyone's intentions are good, of course. There are crooks, creeps and charlatans in Eisele's world. And two characters leave the makeshift community Beatrix and her neighbors have cultivated to embark on a journey toward The Center, the promised land hocked by a charismatic radio personality who regales his listeners with tales of ice cream, utopia and redemption.

Eisele's writing shines most when she's exploring landscapes — no surprise, since she's a geographer as well as an artist — and the emotional pull between Beatrix and Carson. Through Carson in particular, Eisele considers the natural world. "The morning brought dampness and more aches," Eisele writes. "Carson didn't want to move. He opened his eyes as a large crow flew overhead. The birds were so fortunate. They could see the sprawl and order of cities. They could take in a long strand of coastline, the blur of white waves crashing. They could drift over the green-gold quilt of farmland. If only he could have that view of the landscape, a more coherent geography, to see clearly where he was going, where he had been."

But even when that is the case — when we have at our fingertips everything from paleoclimatic reconstructions to snapshots of the planet from the International Space Station — we human beings still ignore the facts.

In *Science Be Dammed*, Kuhn and Fleck remind us of that, taking us back to the early 20th century, when seven Western states and the federal government divided the waters of the Colorado River between farmers and cities from Wyoming to California, in the grand bargain known as the Colorado River Compact of 1922. (It took two decades more to negotiate with Mexico over the river's waters.) The common narrative has been that the compact's signatories



over-allocated the river's waters because they'd tracked its flows during an unusually wet period almost a century ago. The poor schmucks, the story goes, just didn't know better. That's the tale we've told ourselves, over and over again. It's not an accurate one.

Kuhn is the now-retired general manager of the Colorado River Water Conservation District, while co-author Fleck directs the Water Resources Program at the University of New Mexico. Both are keen and active observers of what's happening today, as the seven states that rely upon the Colorado work to provide all the river's users with water even as they grapple with a drought contingency plan meant to address its declining (Continued next page.)

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flows. In their book, they point out that multiple studies in the 1920s showed flows that were significantly lower than the 17.5 million acre-feet parceled out at the time.

This means that the river's deficit isn't a baffling, unforeseen problem: The natural flows of the Colorado were even in the early 20th century less than the amount of water promised to users. And men consciously decided to use up more water than the river actually carried, rather than heed studies based on U.S. Geological Survey stream gauges, drought data, and some limited paleohydrologic studies. One hydraulic engineer in particular, Eugene Clyde LaRue, repeatedly warned commissioners and politicians about over-allocation.

That commissioners chose to ignore the facts isn't necessarily surprising, given the pressure they felt from powerful interests, both agricultural and political. In the introduction, Kuhn cites Rolly Fischer, his predecessor and mentor at the Colorado River Water Conservation District: "One of Fischer's favorite sayings about the river was that the tried-and-true method to solve disputes on the Colorado River Basin was to promise the combatants more water than was available in the river, then hope a future generation would fix the mess."

We don't even have to look to Eisele's imagined future to know that doesn't work. "Before the Compact Commission even began its meetings, the path had been chosen," write Kuhn and Fleck. And LaRue wasn't the only one who "put commissioners in a tight spot" by pointing out the facts. Kuhn and Fleck note that three different estimates prior to the compact's signing pegged the river at somewhere between 14.3 million acre-feet and 16.1 million acre-feet annually. (Annual flows have dropped even further, thanks to warming, and a 2017 study showed that between 2000 and 2014, they averaged 19 percent below the 1906-1999 average.)

But commissioners preferred to listen to those who told them what they wanted to hear, and, the two authors write, "they saw no advantage in asking too many questions about whether the numbers were right."

Kuhn and Fleck write: There was now credible science that the river's long-term flows might be much lower than

they assumed. Yet in the short term, conditions on the Colorado River remained wet. Pushed by U.S. commerce secretary Herbert Hoover and Colorado lawyer Delph Carpenter, the commissioners chose to either ignore this information or challenge the credibility of the messenger. Ultimately, a review board of distinguished engineers and geologists would endorse LaRue's view that the water supply was insufficient, but by that time there simply was too much momentum for ratification of the 1922 compact and the authorization of the Boulder Canyon Project.

The decisions men like Hoover made in the 1920s killed off native species of fish; inundated canyons, sovereign lands and archaeological sites; favored the powerful over the vulnerable; and sucked the Colorado River dry. They also set the stage for how future "water resources" would be managed.

This isn't just another tale of the West's unenlightened past: We're still dealing with its fallout, and that shortsightedness threatens to repeat itself today. In New Mexico, for example, the future of an important tributary of the Colorado River, the Gila, is uncertain. The state's plans to build a diversion on the river, just downstream of where it flows out of the nation's first wilderness area, are outside the scope of *Science Be Dammed*. But it's hard not to connect the willful ignorance of science with what's happening in the Colorado River Basin today. Yet there are always ways to pry ourselves loose from the narratives that bind us to our past mistakes. Kuhn and Fleck remind us we can excavate the past and hold decision-makers accountable, in part by making sure that science isn't ignored, diminished or squelched altogether. And Eisele shows us why it's worth deciding now to create a future that doesn't damn future generations with the consequences of our mistakes. *Note: This story has been updated to correct the number of people who depend on the Colorado River. Laura Paskus is a reporter in Albuquerque, NM.*

Editor's Note: A new study reported by Tony Davis at Tucson.com Feb. 21, 2021 finds that both basins: upper river and lower must sustain severe cuts in river water usage now - meaning no more diversions to the Front Range - or catastrophe is imminent. Windy Gap & Gross Expansion projects should be on the chopping block.



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Learning To Live Above Your Demons

By Frosty Wooldridge

You've got them. I've got them. Everybody's got them. They haunt our dreams. They foment our insecurities. They make us doubt ourselves. They play with our subconscious. They cause us to make silly choices. What are they? Answer: our demons.

How do we get them? Reply: mostly from our childhood experiences. Growing up, if you enjoyed good parents who loved, respected and gave you ample security—you enjoyed fewer demons. But even with great parenting, certain moments in your life created demons that haunt your subconscious 24/7.

As a farm boy, I milked cows near dark with my grandfather in LeRoy, Michigan. At the end of my work time, I walked down a 150-yard dirt road headed toward home, carrying a gallon of milk. With every step on a moonless night, I figured "monsters" of every description would grab me, bite me or kill me. They flooded my imagination. Talk about demons!

As a teenager, I disliked my Uncle Scott because he proved a mean drunk who beat the dogs and cows with sticks. I couldn't figure out why anyone would abuse defenseless animals. Later in my teens, my mother, in a fit

of anger yelled at me, "You're going to be just like your Uncle Scott."

"No," I said. "I will never be like my Uncle Scott. I will never drink." To this day, I remain a teetotaler. I didn't want Scott's demons invading my life.


In my college years, I cut hair for a buck a head on weekends. I listened to guys tell me about their insecurities. They told me how they got bullied, but were afraid to stand up for themselves. I discovered that many young men endured horrible teen years. I knew many college kids afraid to ask a girl out on a date. I'm sure many coeds questioned themselves when never asked on a date.

My roommate in college suffered terrible abuse by his dad. From the age of 15 to 18, his farmer father disciplined him by loading two shells into a 12-gauge double barrel shotgun, click the hammers, and point the weapon at his son, "You've been really bad today. You're going to sleep with the pigs tonight for your punishment."

I never figured out why my roommate suffered so many insecurities and so much distrust. Years later, he admitted to me why he was such a terrible roommate. When he told me, I cried. He cried. He suffered from PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, as a *(Continued next page.)*


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teenager. It colored his self-concept his whole life by causing him to suffer low self-esteem.

One of my clients in the haircutting business endured a father who made him eat everything off his plate whether he wanted to or not. The poor guy felt obligated to eat and eat. It cost him dearly in obesity and finally, diabetes. All of that caused low self-esteem from being fat and unattractive to women.

So, if you look about you, everyone walking around carries specific demons that impede if not degrade their lives. Everyone carries his or her own secret hurts. Girls may not feel attractive. Boys may not feel athletic.

I'm sure you, the person reading this vignette, possess your own demons and you've heard enough of them from your friends. So, how do you learn to fly above your demons? How do you extricate them from your mind?

In his book, *Power of Your Subconscious Mind*, author Joseph Murphy shows how your subconscious mind "runs" about 90 percent of your life. He describes how your demons affect your well being, your choices and your reactions to life. When you allow your demons to dominate, you suffer self-fulfilling prophecies. You drain away your good. You cause your own unhappiness. Some of the ways I dealt and deal with my own demons:

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I practice to rewrite my mental scripts of insecurity and uncertainty. If someone can do something, I tell myself that I can do it, too. I read affirmative quotes daily. Trust your unfolding good. Look on the bright side of life. Rewrite your former scripts to create a whole new “positive hard drive” in your brain. Adjust your sub-consciousness to think of your highest and best in all things you do. Hold a higher view of living and hang with “highest and best” kinds of people. Trust your unfolding good in your life. Expect everyday to be a winner for you. It’s a mental choice to override your demons.

One day, my friend and I backpacked in Canyonlands, Utah. We got to arguing about some inane political event. After much heated discussion, we came upon Druid’s Arch. A 100-ton rock with vertical slits in it rose 150 feet into the blue sky with the sun shining through one of the slits. We stood beneath it—awestruck.

Exactly what were we arguing about? In the end, live your life as if you feel awestruck by your greatest good



fortune to be alive, healthy and passionate on your life journey.

What about my roommate? He used his demons to write three best-selling horror novels before turning to write a fabulous romance novel. He’s writing another novel as we speak. May the Great Spirit bless him and bless you.

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Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393
Mountain Home CO pg 27 303.618.9619
Peter Palombo, Surveyor-pg 29 720.849.7509
RedPoint Construction pg 23 303.642.3691
Steel Structures America ins cov 970.420.7100

BUSINESS SERVICES

Doskocil Photography pg 6 817.223.6122
Graphics Galore 303.642.0362
Karen Schwimmer, CPA pg 8 303.642.0628
Wondervu Consulting Serv. pg 15 303.642.0433

CHIMNEY SWEEPS

Chimney Service of CO pg 9 720.515.0416
MidTown Chimney pg 29 303.670.7785

CIGARS

Foss Company pg 10 303.963.5693

CLOTHING

The Rustic Moose - pg 16 303.258.3225

COMPUTER SERVICE & REPAIR

Wondervu Consulting Serv. pg 15 303.642.0433

DRIVEWAYS/ GRADING SERVICES

Benchmark Land Care pg 7 303.485.1001
Rock Creek Civil, LLC pg 28 720.583.4555

ELECTRIC

United Power - Inside back Cover 303.642.7921

ENTERTAINMENT

KGNU Radio pg 32 303.449.4885
Jaime Mezo Scuba Diving Cozumel pg 20

ENVIRONMENTAL

TEG - tegcolorado.org

FARRIER

Forbes Farrier Service pg 11 303.642.7437

FIREWOOD & FOREST MANAGEMENT

High Timber Mtn Tree Serv. pg 26 303.258.7942
Lumber Jacks - pg 30 720.212.1875
Pruins Pruning/Tree Care pg 14 303.653.7967
Rock Creek Civil, LLC pg 17 720.583.4555

GIFTS

The Silver Horse - pg 16 303.279.6313
The Rustic Moose - pg 16 303.258.3225
Doskocil Photography pg 6 817.223.6122
Nature Photography Notecards pg 7

GROCERIES

B & F Mountain Market pg 13 303.258.3105
5280 Meat Processing pg 11 303.650.7471
Golden Poultry & Meats 720.697.0508

HEALTH & FITNESS

Hands, Hoofs & Paws pg 8 303.503.6068
Clarity Water Services pg 17 303.717.9110

HEATING

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HOME IMPROVEMENT

ACE Indian Peaks Hardware pg 24 303.258.3132
Benchmark Land Care pg 7 303.485.1001
Caribou Painting pg 22 303.641.7964
Grate Contracting pg 25 303.579.9519
Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393
Mountain Home CO pg 27 303.618.9619
Pruins Pruning/Tree Care pg 14 303.653.7967
Redpoint Construction pg 23 303.642.3691
Rock Creek Civil, LLC pg 28 720.583.4555

HORSE BOARDING

Rudolph Ranch, Inc. pg 30 303.582.5230

HORSE TRAINING

Timberline Sporthorses pg 12 720.999.7235

INSURANCE

Jim Plane-State Farm- pg 20 720.890.5916

LIQUOR

Foss Company pg 10 303.963.5693
Mid-County Liquors pg 13 303.642.7686
Underground Liquor pg 8 303.582.6034

MUSIC LESSONS

Piano & Harp in CCC pg 6 303.642.8423

PROPANE

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Carl's Corner pg 7 303.642.7144

REAL ESTATE

Byers-Sellers Mtn Properties pg 31 303.642.7951
Mock Realty-Kathy Keating -Back cov 303.642.1133
Mountain Home CO pg 27 303.618.9619

RETAIL

ACE Indian Peaks Hardware pg 24 303.258.3132
B & F Mountain Market pg 24 303.258.3105
Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393
The Silver Horse - pg 16 303.279.6313
The Rustic Moose - pg 16 303.258.3225

REVERSE MORTGAGES

Universal Lending Corp. pg 21 303.791.4786

ROOFING

Independence Roofing pg 3 720.399.0355

STEEL STRUCTURES

Steel Structures America ins cov 970.420.7100

TAXES

Karen Schwimmer, CPA pg 8 303.642.0628

WATER & WELL

Arrow Drilling pg 32 303.421.8766
Clarity Water Services pg 17 303.717.9110

Power Update

March
2021

Democracy at the Cooperative

United Power members have the unique opportunity to have a say in the future of their electric cooperative. Each year our members' votes in the director election determine who will represent them on the co-op's Board of Directors. As an electric utility, your participation in the annual election is critical to helping the co-op better serve its members.

Every Vote Matters Equally

United Power is a not-for-profit cooperative owned and controlled by the members it serves. When you become a member, you automatically receive the benefits all other members share, including the right to vote for board representation. As a member, your vote carries equal weight as any other member's vote, regardless of what kind of account they have or how large it is. This is a cooperative principle known as "one member, one vote." Director candidates must also live within United Power's service territory, so you know you'll be voting for someone who understands your community's needs.

Voting in the Election

The cooperative mails director ballots in March and encourages all members to cast votes in the election. Although directors live in a specific

geographic district, they represent all members and are therefore elected on an "at-large" basis. This means members may cast a vote for a director in each district and not just their own. Directors serve in geographic districts to ensure adequate accessibility for members and to provide a representative cross-section of United Power's member base in their leadership role.

To learn more about a director candidate, consider attending one of our Meet the Candidate events. Candidate statements are also available online at www.unitedpower.com/annual-meeting.

2021 Director Election

The director candidates for the 2021 Director Election have been announced. Four positions on the cooperative's board are up for election, one in each district (South, East, West and Mountain).

The director candidates are Bradley Joseph Case and Ken Kreutzer in the South District; Steve Douglas and Tim Erickson in the East District; Vicki Hutchinson and Brian McCormick in the West District; and Stephen Whiteside in the Mountain District.

Information about the 2021 Annual Meeting & Director Election and how to vote your ballot is detailed in the sidebar to the right.



Virtual Annual Meeting & Director Election

Wednesday, April 14, 2021
6:30 p.m.

REGISTER FOR THE MEETING

All members are invited to join us for our Virtual Annual Meeting. Members will be able to participate over the phone or watch the livestream online.

Register for the virtual meeting at www.unitedpower.com/annual-meeting or call us at 303-637-1300.

VOTING YOUR BALLOT

Directors are elected on an at-large basis. Four positions on United Power's eleven-member board are up for election this year.

Balloting in the 2021 Director Election will be via mail-in vote only. Please return your ballots in the postage-paid envelope. Ballots must arrive at the P.O. Box by 12 p.m. on April 14, 2021.

Candidate Forums



If conditions allow, United Power will host **Meet the Candidate Forums** where you can hear directly from each of the candidates vying to serve on the Board of Directors. The following events are free to members. RSVPs are not required.

THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2021 | 6:30 p.m.

Riverdale Regional Park, Rendezvous Room
9755 Henderson Road
Brighton, CO 80601

FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2021 | 6:30 p.m.

Carbon Valley Service Center
9586 E. I-25 Frontage Road
Longmont, CO 80504

MONDAY, MARCH 19, 2021 | 7:30 a.m.

Coal Creek Canyon Community Center
3158 Highway 72
Golden, CO 80403

TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 2021 | 7:30 a.m.

Fort Lupton Recreation Center, MP Room 3
203 S. Harrison Avenue
Ft. Lupton, CO 80621

**Dates and locations may be subject to change.*

**UNITED
POWER**
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Member Services: 303-637-1300

Coal Creek Office: 303-642-7921

www.unitedpower.com

St. Patrick's Day Dinner March 13, 5-7 pm

Easter EGGSTRAVAGANZA March 27, Noon - 2 pm

Drive-Thru Style

CCCIA Hall 31528 Hwy 72



29319 Spruce Canyon Drive
Amazing Mountain Home
3 BD/ 3 BA 2,744 sq.ft. 1.55 Acres



Coal Creek Canyon
Gorgeous Updated Log Home - 1.82 Acres
4 BD/ 4 BA 3,817 sq.ft. **\$1,100,000**



206 Lone Ponderosa
Remodeled Throughout 1 Acre
2 BD/ 1 BA 1,175 sq.ft. **\$429,000**



723 Boxwood, Longmont
Light and Bright
3 BD/ 2 BA 1,508 sq.ft.. **\$419,000**



20193 Goins
Wonderful Log Home - 5.17 Acres
2 BD/ 2 BA 1,907 sq.ft. **\$595,000**



Coal Creek Canyon
Fabulous Luxury Home, Views
4 BD/ 4 BA 4,697 sq.ft. **\$950,000**



3497 Coal Creek Canyon #18
Adorable Summer Cabin
3 BD/ 1 BA 1,184 sq.ft. **\$249,000**



11470 Ranch Elsie Road
Horse Property! 3.8 Acres
2 BD/ 1 BA 1,948 sq.ft. **\$455,000**



198 Range Road
Solar Powered & Secluded "Treehouse"
2 BD/ 2 BA 1,652 sq.ft. 2.7 Ac **\$569,900**



TBD Pine Road
Excellent 1.2 Acres next to conservation
easement. **\$99,000**



1257 / 1316 Chute Road
Secluded 5+ acres, Divide, City,
and Gross Dam Views **\$139,000**



11440 Inspiration Road
Amazing Views at Road's End
3 BD/2 BA 2,341 sq.ft. 1.5 Ac. **\$540,000**



Coal Creek Canyon
Luxury Mountain Living 59.4 Acres
4 BD/ 5 BA 3,661 sq.ft. **\$1,744,750**



Coal Creek Canyon
Custom Log Home - 4.2 Acres
3 BD/ 4 BA 3,300 sq.ft. **\$900,000**



85 Valley View Drive
Breathtaking Divide & Lake Views
4 BD/ 4 BA 3623 sq.ft. 1+Ac. **\$775,000**

**"Thinking of Selling?
Please call for a complimentary
market evaluation."**



Kathy Keating
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