

The Green Insiders

Are big spenders being taken for a ride? Words by Dave Skinner. Illustrations by John Bardwell.

When RANGE dug into the Western Conservation Foundation's political Astro turf operations, we found far more than could be absorbed in one sitting. So we're including more fun items with this issue's story involving one of WCF's main funders, the Hewlett Foundation.

RANGE readers probably wonder why the Winter 2015 issue focused so much on the Environmental Protection Agency and crazy Green billionaires. How could either matter to green grass, big hats, and fat cattle?

Well, there are folks making it matter, but the good news is they're a tiny and shrinking few. As writer Darren Samuelsohn of *Politico* explained after the Republican recapture of the U.S. Senate: "The environment is one of the few areas where a president can act unilaterally and to broad effect. Rallying nations and individuals alike to curb greenhouse-gas pollution is one mountaintop that Obama can climb, with or without Congress."

How so? Samuelsohn reported that "Many in Obama's political operation see the China deal and new EPA regulations as opportunities for a legacy achievement." The "China deal," of course, signed with Chinese President Xi Jinping, committed America to cutting emissions by 26 percent to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025—while China promised to stop increasing its carbon output...in 2030. As for "legacy"—remember how Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt pitched national monuments to Bill Clinton in Clinton's second term.

Besides the prospect of higher electricity and fuel costs, another EPA rule seems directly targeted at ag producers—the EPA "Waters of the United States" rule. But opponents to the rule cover a truly broad spectrum: American Farm Bureau; National Stone, Sand & Gravel; U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and National Association of Counties. Of note: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is fronting a coalition of 301-plus trade and industry entities.

Unsurprisingly, the Natural Resources Defense Council and League of Conservation Voters organized an e-comment blitz in favor of the EPA water rule, with LCV announcing it delivered more than 700,000

supportive comments to the EPA. That sounds like a lot, but 300 million Americans didn't send that postcard.

And speaking of LCV, Samuelsohn also noted, "[m]any Democrats credit John Podesta [a former Clinton chief of staff who stepped into the crucial White House position of counselor to the president in January 2014] with relentlessly advocating a stronger stand on climate change."

Of course, savvy RANGE readers already know that Podesta moonlighted on the board of directors of the League of Conservation Voters from 2001-2014 while founding and running the Center for American Progress. Is there more? Yep, see the sidebar on Hans Wyss.

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Monumental Falsehoods

However, mountains of cash can't always buy genuine, broad-based political support, as revealed by a little digging behind the headlines over President Obama's efforts to build his legacy with new national monuments. On Oct. 10, 2014, the president designated 350,000 acres of California's Angeles National Forest, right next door to fabulous Los

Angeles, as the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

For decades, the Angeles has been a cheap date for 15 million Los Angelenos needing a break from smog, pavement, glass and stucco. Officially the forest sees over 3.5 million users annually, more than Glacier National Park. Tellingly, its San Gabriel River is notorious for its summer role as a mile-long swimming hole and picnicking ground for mostly Hispanic families.

As usual, the monument was sprung upon the public at the last possible second, with locals kept in the dark. Even the local congresswoman's office told the *Los Angeles Times* they were "waiting by the phone" for information on the president's announcement.

However, certain worthies were in on the secret. Alongside the usual suspects was Maite Arce, Hispanic Access Foundation (HAF) president and CEO. She declared, "The Latino community recognizes how important...accessible public lands are to the well-being of Southern California."

Fine, but how did Mrs. Arce become the voice of the Latino community? Her group is a seven-employee nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. HAF was only founded in 2010 to provide Hispanics bilingual help with tax preparation, cancer awareness and Obamacare sign-up.

But HAF has a minor yet tidy sideline—the environment. In 2012, it spent part of \$116,000 taking "over 60 young Hispanics" on a rafting trip to Browns Canyon (a monument candidate area on Colorado's Arkansas River), then chose a handful of the most articulate and photogenic kids for a lobbying trip to Washington. The remaining money went to "educate Hispanics about the possible side effects of oil-shale mining in Colorado."

Things went so well that in 2013 HAF "designed a program to harness the Hispanic community's passion for public lands." After spending \$104,105, the most-visible result of that funding was a set of YouTube videos of a "family vacation" entitled, "Four Stops, One Destination: Young Latinos Supporting Conservation."



Maite Arce, Hispanic Access Foundation director, filmed a family movie that led to hundreds of thousands in ongoing Hewlett Foundation funding for her organization.

The 10-segment video series presents a “Latino” middle-class family from the Virginia suburbs: First-generation Mexican mom Maite Arce, Anglo bank executive dad Ted Argleben, with sons Luke and Noah Argleben.

Now the boys are bilingual with Latin good looks, but the Argleben family seems more melted pot than Latino. Ironically, as they hop into a van, go rafting, ride planes, and mountain bike in and around various western national monuments and parks—a fossil-fueled extravaganza—they all pointedly gripe about oil and gas production.

This spontaneous family event gathered a whopping 314 views on YouTube, hardly viral. But one viewer was Hewlett environmental program officer Michael Scott (formerly of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition). According to Hewlett’s website, Scott “had already been looking to cast a wider net for new grantees” and two grantees recommended he watch “Four Stops.”

Humble home movie? Nope, staged from the start. An August 2013 Web posting by Erika Pollard of the National Parks Conservation Association, who traveled to meet the Arglebens, explains that their 950-mile, 10-day road trip was “designed to engage Latinos with national parks, as well as to highlight the importance of protecting these iconic places from the negative impacts of oil and gas development—two huge priorities for NPCA as well.”

Aah—might that be why, upon watching the video, it “took all of 30 seconds to make a believer out of [Michael Scott]” and why HAF was the recipient of an \$80,000 Hewlett check in late 2013.

Hewlett funding was probably on Mrs. Arce’s mind as she wrote a *May Huffington Post* opinion praising the Organ Mountains monument’s supposed preservation of “Hispanic heritage” and explaining that HAF had joined another Latino sportsmen group funded by Western Conservation Foundation in “educating Hispanics about environmental issues and the importance of preserving parks and public lands.”

On Nov. 17, 2014, Hewlett announced another \$100,000 grant to HAF, which will “particularly target policies that reduce the expansion of oil and gas development on public lands and promote new protections for ecologically important land.”

So, what’s really going on here? Why would Mr. Scott jump at funding HAF?

Lucky Spam

Well, your intrepid correspondent got an email from an outfit he’d never heard of—the Raben Group, a “majority-minority” bicoastal (not flyover) public policy and lobbying firm with “deep roots” in “progressive public policy.” Its clients include Nanny Bloomberg’s Mayors Against Illegal Guns.

But this was a “lucky spam,” as it announced a Breaking the Green Ceiling press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Its topic was, “The State of Diversity in Environmental Organiza-

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Looking to “diversify” environmentalism’s image, Hewlett Foundation program director Michael Scott found a willing partner in the Hispanic Access Foundation.

tions,” a study funded by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (Congress’ matching grant program), Arcus Foundation (Jon Stryker, billionaire Stryker Frame heir, brother of Pat), and, not surprisingly, Sierra Club and Earthjustice.

The Green Insiders

The study was conducted by Dorceta E. Taylor, Yale School of Forestry’s first black

woman Ph.D. Presenting on the Internet at www.diversegreen.org under the heading, “The Green Insiders’ Club,” Taylor concludes, “Despite the fact that people of color are most affected by environmental ills and support environmental protections at a higher rate than whites,” they are almost completely absent from Environment, Inc.

For example, “a 1972 study of 1,500 environmental volunteers nationwide showed that 98 percent of them were white and 59 percent held a college or graduate degree.”

Things hadn’t changed much by 1990, when the *New York Times* noted an informal poll finding that only 14 of 745 workers (1.9 percent) of the Audubon Society, Friends of the Earth, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Sierra Club were minorities. Taylor notes other interesting environmentalist class, race and gender tidbits, such as how a 1988 Conservation Fund study of environmental volunteers determined only three percent worked as skilled laborers.

While environmentalism’s gender statistics have improved markedly, Taylor found “[w]hites held 1,528 or 88.7 percent of the leadership positions” in environmental groups. Funders do little better: “Ethnic minority interns constituted 36.4 percent of the interns hosted” by funders, but the minority interns “are not usually hired into staff positions by the environmental grant-making foundations.”

Instead, minorities are “most likely to be hired into ‘out-of-office’ positions such as community organizer or outreach director.” (A biography for Arce highlights her “proven track record for executing successful grassroots outreach initiatives that reach Latino populations.”)

But are Greens serious about grass roots? One anonymous interviewee “still sees the mainstream environmental movement as a ‘proxy for what is sometimes called the Green Group’...a collaborative of about 33 people who are formally organized. Representatives from organizations such as NRDC, NWE, Audubon, and Population Connection belong to the Green Group.” Another says, “A group of large, powerful, environmental organizations control the agenda.”

Actually, the agenda is controlled by large, powerful funders, while recipient “organizations have to be concerned with deliverables and if diversity is not an explicit deliverable their funding sources may prevent them from undertaking

such initiatives.”

Dr. Taylor therefore warns, “In order to become an influential and sustainable movement for generations to come, [environmentalism] needs to successfully address its diversity crisis.”

Environmentalism’s Real Crisis

Certainly the oh-so-white, oh-so-educated, oh-so-wealthy, oh-so-small Green insiders are aware of their narrowing base of support. “If it’s just hunters or anglers or backpackers, it’s not a broad-enough constituency to prevail. We knew we had to have as many groups working together as we could,” says Scott as he bragged up bankrolling the Hispanic Access Foundation.

Other Green pros squirmingly admitted to Taylor that they were still concerned mainly with managing perceptions, not reality. “When [Sierra Club does] media, the media isn’t for us, we don’t stand out front. We are very serious in making [sure]...that issue [is] being owned by that community,

Greens are left only executive action, litigious court kabuki, and bureaucratic overreach as paths toward remaking America to their liking.

so they’re the ones who are out front. They’re the ones who are being interviewed. They’re the ones whose pictures are being taken.”

How is such a “Wizard of Oz” approach regarded? As one minority activist grumbled, “Minority environmental groups are contacted about collaborations only when mainstream organizations need their political support for campaigns.”

Perception, meet reality: Environmentalism as a political force is in big, self-inflicted trouble. Big Green has more cash than ever,

but spends it badly. After blowing through hundreds of millions promoting climate change, Americans rank “the environment” near the bottom.

Greens are left only executive action, litigious court kabuki, and bureaucratic overreach as paths toward remaking America to their liking. Now Greens find themselves “casting about,” buying expensive token support in hopes of fooling a few lazy journalists for an article or two. But everyone? All the time?

Environmentalism’s funders didn’t get rich by being stupid. Inevitably, funders will realize their money is being wasted—a day that for America’s sake can’t happen soon enough. Until then, however, expect to enjoy plenty more profiles in B.S. ■

Dave Skinner is probably white enough and educated enough to be a professional environmentalist, except for one serious character flaw: he never has been really fond of varmints.

The SWyss Connection

In Fall 2012, RANGE profiled Swiss medical billionaire Hans Wyss’ under-the-radar funding of environmental groups in the West. Since then, Mr. Wyss has been a busy fellow. He sold Synthes to Johnson and Johnson. Then what?

In winter 2014, U.S. Senate investigations produced a report on “Offshore Tax Evasion.” Mr. Wyss (“Client 5, a Swiss citizen who had lived in the United States for many years”) and his daughter Amy were peripherally mentioned.

The sale of Synthes produced “almost \$10 billion total assets,” including assets of a “charitable fund worth \$1.1 billion CHF [Swiss francs]” and notes “the client’s daughter [Amy Wyss, a dual citizen] transferred 1.7 billion CHF from another financial institution [Bloomberg reports Goldman Sachs] to Credit Suisse.”

In short, Wyss converted his Synthes stake into cash, paid U.S. capital gains taxes, then offshored the rest to Switzerland. The corpus for the Wyss Foundation is almost certainly the charitable fund. Not only is the money sheltered from inheritance taxes, but the Swiss franc is climbing against the dollar.



Secretive Swiss billionaire Hans Wyss has quietly given millions to western environmentalists, including at least \$10 million to one particularly “nimble and aggressive” group.

How better to protect the core of both Mr. Wyss and his “charitable” entities from the risks of the American deficit and the economic fallout of Wyss’ enviro-political “philanthropy”?

Some other information about Mr. Wyss has come to light. In July, *Washington Examiner* reporter Richard Pollock found a mysterious line item in the disclosure forms for White House special adviser John Podesta:

\$87,000 in consulting fees from “HJW Foundation”—HJW being Mr. Wyss, of course. Bottom line: A small affair involving illegal human experimentation, deaths, federal prosecution, four jail sentences, and a fine of \$23.8 million, as well as after-the-fact malpractice settlements. All this was reported as local Pennsylvania business news, plus a 2012 award-winning *Forbes* exposé.

The surgical scandal also held a shock for westerners, buried in 2009 reporting by Miriam Hill of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. She wrote, “*Businessweek* estimated his total giving from all sources at \$277 million from 2004 through 2008.” She noted, “Wyss also donates heavily from his personal funds,” and went on to explain: “[O]ne of the biggest beneficiaries was the Center for Biological Diversity, which got a commitment for \$10 million over five years. The center focuses on protecting land and species and has a reputation for using tough tactics, often filing lawsuits to achieve its goals.” [See page 70]

CBD director Kieran Suckling told the *Inquirer* that Hans Wyss “liked that we were nimble and aggressive.”

Hill also wrote, “[Wyss’ money] gave the center a strong long-term foundation, Suckling said, noting that his annual budget is just \$6.9 million.” Gee, thanks, Hans.

—Dave Skinner

Beyond First Class

The only mainstream “news” item in the universe referring to Western Conservation Foundation begins with the statement that America’s “environmental movement has been dominated by upper-class whites.”

How upper class? Well, Western Conservation Foundation’s first executive director, Adam Eichberg, came from Trust for Public Lands (TPL), which employs WCF board director Deb Love.

After two years at WCF, Eichberg went to work as a policy and lobbying staffer for one-term Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter (D), leaving early to co-found Headwaters Strategies, a political PR house in Colorado. Cozily, Strategies’ clients include Conservation Campaign, TPL’s arms’ length open-space ballot-issue lobbying “conservation finance” surrogate. Other Eichberg clients include Everytown for Gun Safety (funded by Mike “part of Colorado where I don’t think there’s roads” Bloomberg), and yep, WCF-funder Walton Family Foundation!

However, in his spare time, Eichberg also volunteers an hour per week as treasurer of the New Venture Fund, which in 2012 got \$31,645 from WCF. NVF also landed \$650,000 from Western Conservation partner Rockefeller Brothers, \$400,000 of that focused on “fossil fuels reduction.”

NVF also landed \$450,000 for the Western Lands Communication Advocacy Center from Hewlett—this “Center” exists nowhere

except on Hewlett’s tax form or website, although WLCAC also got \$1 million from Hewlett in 2011. Here’s the fun part: New Venture Fund granted Western Conservation Foundation \$707,000 in 2012, after only \$56,000 in 2011.



Lobbyist and consultant Adam Eichberg is well-known in progressive circles. In public, however, he is best known as “the watermelon hunter.” Look it up.

New Venture Fund (briefly known as the Arabella Legacy Fund) is basically a mini-Tides Foundation clone created by Fel-Pro gaskets heir Eric Kessler. He worked as an environmentalist both in the United States and Russia, then spent time in a policy position for Bruce Babbitt’s Interior Department. Kessler then set himself up as a “philanthrop-

ic advisor” in Washington, D.C., beginning with attacks on off-road-vehicle trail use in the Southwest. The Wyss Foundation gave Kessler’s fledgling Arabella \$921,000 in 2007, fully 55 percent of Arabella’s \$1.658 million in total grants that year.

NVF’s 2012 Form 990 “independent contractors” disclosure shows how it all works: To manage 2012’s \$51 million worth of “effective public interest projects” NVF was funded for, Arabella Advisors (which has the exact same “Suite 300” physical address as NVF) was paid \$4.246 million for “management”—not too shabby considering NVF already has 53 employees on a \$3.9 million payroll. But in 2011, NVF had zero employees and zero payroll!

New Venture Fund also paid \$1.52 million to Global Flight Relief (GFR), which operates a nonprofit medical airlift program supporting the World Pediatric Project’s mission to “heal critically ill children and build indigenous health-care capacity in developing nations.” That money went to “transportation and logistic services.”

NVF reports another \$586,000 for “transportation and logistic services” paid to Tempus Jets. It seems Tempus “leases” jets to GFR, a nonprofit Tempus entity. But the for-profit Tempus is not just any flying service. Tempus Jets is a “global luxury lifestyle brand” company and “global leader in private aviation services supporting governments, corporations, and high-net-worth individuals.” Clients (such as NVF) are promised an “exceptional experience—from booking to destination and beyond.”

Beyond first class, that is.—*Dave Skinner*

Maximum Impact

Among Hewlett’s partners in the Western Conservation strategy is an entity called the Sea Change Foundation. Never heard of them? Of course. You’re not supposed to.

However, Canadian researcher Vivian Krause (look her up, she’s doing epic stuff on American-funded Canadian Greens) connected the dots and further hit on Hewlett’s allied strategy: “Putting land off-limits by creating parks or conservation areas is a key strategy of the Hewlett Foundation approach

to reducing fossil-fuel development. Call it strategic parkification.”

Sea Change’s one-page website reveals almost nothing: “Sea Change Foundation is dedicated to achieving meaningful social impact through leveraged philanthropy that addresses the most pressing problems facing the world today. The foundation’s initial focus is addressing the serious threats posed by global climate change. The foundation is in the process of determining how its grant making can have maximum impact, and is

not able to accept unsolicited proposals.”

Okay, back to the darned IRS forms. Hmm. Part of it is true: Sea Change has three program strategists (average pay \$200,000 plus) doing a bunch of “determining” under executive director Stephen Colwell, who works a 32-hour week for \$430,000 per year (\$268.75 per hour).

The Gatekeepers series from subscription website *Inside Philanthropy* (\$297 a year, \$37 a month) explains: “Once executive director of the Coral Reef Alliance, [Colwell] was constantly scrambling for funds. Now he gives out tens of millions of dollars a year to promote clean energy and fight climate

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MAXIMUM IMPACT

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change as executive director of the Sea Change Foundation, which is funded by [hedge-funder] Nathaniel Simons and his wife, Laura Baxter-Simons.

“No more fund-raising, just lots of check writing to some of the top organizations in the environmental world. Big checks, too. And all without dealing with the infamous bureaucracies of the large legacy foundations.”

What sort of checks? Well, Sea Change had assets of \$124 million at the end of the 2011 fiscal year after making \$48 million in grants. Included is at least \$4 million to the Sierra Club Foundation, the Sierra Club’s “charitable” arm. No less than 23 grants (about \$15 million) went to the Energy Foundation, which, like Western Conservation Foundation, is a funding intermediary (money laundry) for the actual funders. Then Sea Change paid Energy another \$74,400 for “consulting”—like those grants weren’t enough?

However, in Club of Billionaires, Senate staffers note something really odd about Sea Change: Besides three trusts held by the Simons, \$10 million comes from Klein, Ltd., based in offshore tax/disclosure haven Bermuda. According to an exposé by the *Washington Free Beacon*, Klein was created in March 2011 and exists only to use its profits funding American and international not-for-profit entities.

Who is Nathaniel Simons? Son of multi-billionaire James Simons, a mathematician who was one of the first to apply blunt-force computerized math to Wall Street trading. James Simons founded the famous Renaissance Technologies hedge fund and is now worth, according to *Forbes*, \$12.5 billion.

The elder Simons is fighting the U.S. government over taxes payable on futures’ arrangements made with overseas banks in order to cloak short-term trades made by his Medallion hedge fund into a long-term bracket—39.6 percent down to 20. Oh, and *Inside Philanthropy* writes: “Along with his father, [Nathaniel] Simons is a big-time donor to the Democratic Party.” You know, the same Dems lathering about Burger King’s merger with Tim Hortons of Canada, supposedly to evade taxation?

—Dave Skinner