

Identify Your Enemies

How are enviro/eco groups funded? None of your business. By Dave Skinner

In 1991, then-League of Conservation Voters president Bruce Babbitt infamously wrote, “We must identify our enemies and drive them into oblivion.”

Two years later, Babbitt was America’s secretary of the Interior. For eight long years, he used every administrative weapon at his disposal, beginning with his abortive “Rangeland Reform” and ending with an orgy of unilaterally imposed, locally opposed national monuments covering millions of acres, to put his words into action.

Babbitt’s tenure brought a bitter dose of political reality to not only westerners, but to all Americans. In politics as in war, if you don’t figure out who your enemies really are, you’ll lose every time so let’s give it a whirl.

The Front Man

Earlier this summer, Beltway website “The Hill” posted a short opinion article lauding EPA’s “Waters of the U.S.” rule-making proposal as “balanced water policy,” while attacking the American Farm Bureau Federation for its “misleading” opposition. The writer, a “third-generation Wyoming rancher” and former BLM associate state director, declared that “these lobbyists do not speak

for me or countless other ranchers.”

Now, we all know that “countless” real Wyoming cowboys read Beltway political websites. A couple of phone calls confirmed our “rancher” is neither a Farm Bureau nor Wyoming Stock Growers member. Nor is he a rancher any longer, as his family sold their third-generation summer-graze outfit in 2011.

But the first page of a Google search revealed something critical about our rancher. He had help from the Western Voices Project, which is a “featured funding recipient” of the Western Conservation Foundation (www.wcfnd.org).

The False Front

Never heard of either, have you? Don’t feel bad. Western Voices Project has only two direct references in all of Google. One regards a \$224,000 Energy Foundation grant in 2003, part of a multigrant package given by Energy to green think tank Western Resource Advocates. The other is WCF’s website. Voices was “launched to empower organizations and individuals to share their personal experiences and opinions with the media. Western Voices staff flag opportunities for volunteer project participants to communicate with the media. Public relations services are provided pro bono to par-

ticipating organizations and individuals.” In plain English—Astroturf.

So, what is the Western Conservation Foundation? WCF is about “building leaders to protect the West’s land, air and water. How are leaders built? With cash, silly! WCF started in 2005 with over a half-million dollars in funding. But in 2012, the last year for which IRS documentation is available, WCF motored through just under \$8 million. The prior five years, it collected \$30.6 million in funding, \$6 million a year on average.

Does that money matter? Well, consider the budget for American Farm Bureau Federation, “the national unified voice of agriculture”: \$25.3 million. Everybody (or at least its six million members) has heard of Farm Bureau.

How can an outfit nobody’s ever heard of possibly raise \$8 million? Easy. Assume whatever position the client wants! WCF’s IRS Form 990 shows that of the \$30 million it raised from 2008 to 2012, fully \$17.8 million came from six “excess contributors.” The largest has given \$11.47 million.

Who are they? Sorry, peasants. While Lois Lerner’s bureaucrats in the IRS “non-profit” division surely know, that information in Schedule A is “not open to public inspection.”

Who’s Setting the Agenda

Simply put, anonymous charity is a noble thing. The book of Matthew writes, “There-



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fore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men."

Without getting too far into the legalistic weeds, federal law is built to encourage charity and protect real philanthropists from hordes of supplicants. The encouragement comes from tax breaks. The protection comes from regulations that allow almost all grant-making foundations and tax-exempt 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) "social welfare" grant recipients to keep their donors a secret.

Swimming up the Sewer

In short, the public (including the media) has no right to know where the money comes from. They can see where it goes, *if* they know where to look. But many donors prefer to be hard to find (for hellaciously good reason), and plenty of nonprofits respect their donors' wishes. Again, for hellaciously good reason.

So, humble citizen, here's how the non-profit disclosure requirements don't work for you: Picture yourself at the bottom of the political money sewer. "Oh, here comes a good one! Who flushed *that*?" Now, the originator might be proud of his/her donation, but it's a *secret* pride, best kept among friends.

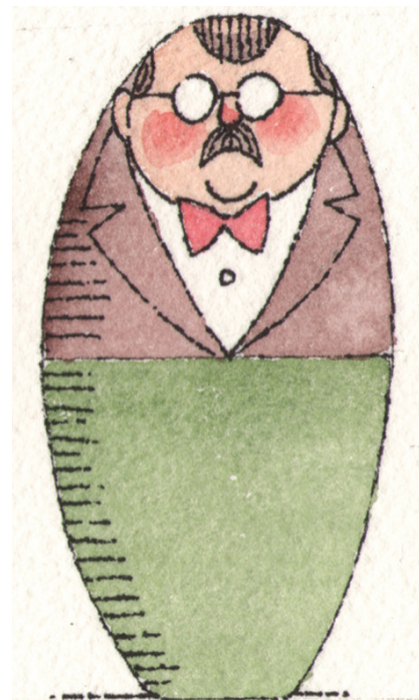
In keeping with that theory, WCF's public website reveals nothing of import, offering only about 10 arty images, one high-production, scripted video from WCF grantee Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and under a thousand words of content, including, "We provide grants to nonprofits to support their public education activities," and "Our grant making is by invitation only." No names, no phones, just a Denver street address and an "info" email.

Sewers Do Leak

Fortunately, like most plumbing, the non-profit world leaks, even brags. One leaky brag is "A Strategy Planning Tool for Western Conservation," prepared in 2011 by the Redstone Strategy Group for the Hewlett Foundation.

Boulder-based Redstone pitches "helping people solve urgent social problems," people such as Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Moore Foundation, Environmental Defense Fund, The Nature Conservancy, Packard Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Walton Family Foundation, World Wildlife Fund, and ClimateWorks.

Redstone's website explains that it "assisted a foundation's program team as it developed a strategy for preserving the ecological integrity of the western U.S." and links to the Tool report, which "compared investments based on estimates of expected return to identify the most efficient strategies to realistically achieve the foundation's targets."



A Team Effort

Redstone also reveals Hewlett is not the sole Western Conservation backer, but "already shares significant co-funding with the Packard and Wyss foundations, each of which contributes significant funding in the region, as well as the SeaChange, Wilburforce, Pew, Walton Family, and Rockefeller Brothers philanthropies. In addition, there are shared priorities with ClimateWorks around many of the energy-related investments in the West. While funding from other institutions does not overlap perfectly with Hewlett Foundation priorities, coordination is continuing to grow."

Now, keep in mind that political coordination between PACs and political candidates is completely illegal. If businesses got together to secretly pool their resources in front corporations to "share priorities," that would be monopolistic collusion, completely illegal. But "policy" support for Hewlett's many priorities—the "foundation has invested \$215 million in the West. Currently, it spends about \$25 million on the topic each year"—oh, that's philanthropy.

Furthermore, the strategy "suggests specific philanthropic investments to help the foundation achieve its western conservation goals," an unknown list of "75 place-based

The Partnership

Hewlett still heavily funds Western Conservation Foundation according to its website: \$2.5 million in March 2014. Packard gave \$500,000 in 2013. Wyss, however, has backed off. After \$1 million each in 2007, 2008, and 2009, WCF got zero from Wyss in 2010, and only about \$80,000 the next two years.

There are other notable contributors besides the Redstone "strategy" entities. Kresge Foundation (Kmart) donated a total of \$400,000 in 2010-11. The anti-coal, anti-fracking, stop-global-warming Energy Foundation gave WCF two 2013 grants totaling \$250,000; this is WCF's first Energy money.

Energy, for its part, gets boodles of cash from something called ClimateWorks: in 2012, 17 grants of around \$60 million, about half of which went to China, half staying domestic, \$18.8 million specifically in one grant for Energy's "U.S. projects."

ClimateWorks is a real outlier in the world of green money. It was born with a

bang. It had no assets at the start of 2008, but had \$490 million at year-end. Hewlett (surprised?) planted the biggest seed check, a cool \$100 million, an amount that in 2012 was an even cooler \$150 million.

In only five years, ClimateWorks gathered \$895 million, of which \$820 million came from "excess contributors," with only \$75 million ostensibly from "the public"—peons donating less than \$17.9 million each.

One striking WCF grant series comes from the Denver Foundation, a "donor-advised" fund like Tides and WCF: \$901,000 in 2010, fully 17 percent of WCF's total intake that year, followed by \$400,000 in 2011, but then zero in 2012. The source? Forget it, peasants.

Finally, here's something to ponder as you head to town to spend money. The Walton Family Fund (Walmart) supports WCF: \$300,000 in 2012, and \$800,000 in 2013.

—DS

and 19 West-wide investments [money dumps] were recommended from a much longer list.”

What's the Payoff?

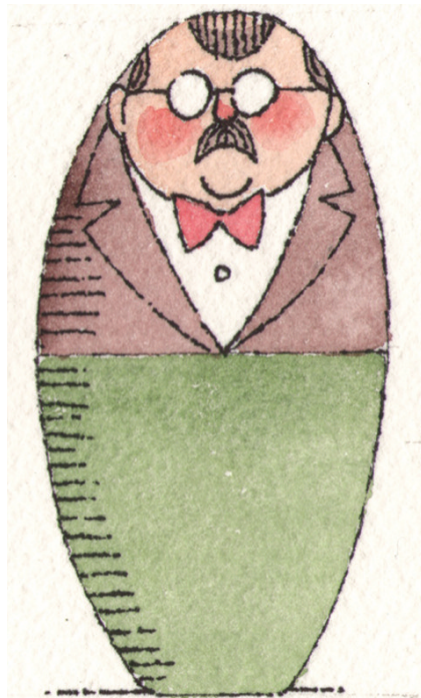
Here's the best part. The Western Conservation strategy “includes targets for ecosystems, species, core areas, connectivity corridors, greenhouse gas emissions, and sustainable human uses.” Using data such as the government-funded Natural Heritage Program, the strategy splits up North America's West (basically from Tijuana to Nome) into 12,000 chunks of greater or lesser “ecological integrity”—defined for Hewlett as where “natural systems function similarly to their cycles in the absence of human activity.”

Yep, you read that right. Absence of human activity. Yours.

Your Money, Too!

Even better, WCF's backers don't focus strictly on maximizing their investment. You're supposed to invest in their scheme too.

Redstone's Tool report explains the prioritization metrics used “exclude public costs, which are expected to be paid mostly by governments. For example, the policy



development cost of encouraging full funding of the Land & Water Conservation Fund is included, but the government cost to actually fund it, in the hundreds of millions of dollars per year, is excluded.”

Well, of course, politics is all about fooling Paul into paying for Peter's goodies, and encouraging full funding of LWCF is 24-karat politics, period.

The Tool report coyly footnotes, “the [Hewlett] Foundation does not expend funds or earmark its funding for prohibited attempts to influence legislation, but may engage in public education, nonpartisan research and analysis, or other permissible activities.”

As a charity, Hewlett enjoyed 2012 gains of \$556 million on its \$7.7 billion asset base, “taxed” at a one percent rate. Compared to capital gains' taxation (15 percent), Hewlett enjoys an extra \$83.4 million to play with each year. Direct lobbying would endanger Hewlett's “charitable” tax treatment.

So Hewlett's safest option is to make “philanthropic investments” in political front organizations like Western Conservation Foundation. If WCF ever gets crossways on lobbying or loses street (actually, media) credibility as it deserves, no problem! The funders will just create and fund other fronts, protecting their deep pockets from any public or fiscal exposure or scrutiny, take your pick.

Big Money, Small World

Leaderships of “charitable” nonprofits are a matter of public record. A quick look at the board of directors for Western Conservation Foundation is revealing.

Molly McUsic: Credited with breaking trail for Bill Clinton's national monuments' blitz and president of at least three foundations funded by Swiss billionaire Hans Wyss.

Chris Killingsworth: WCF president, Wyss Foundation vice president, she came directly from BLM staff at the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Sam Tucker: WCF treasurer, senior program staff for Packard Foundation's “time-limited, six-year strategy”—the Western Conservation Subprogram, “\$125 million to advance land conservation, public policy and conservation” in the Southwest.

Arabella Advisors associate (next issue).

David Donelly: Common name, apparently a Canadian environmental lawyer.

Aileen Lee: Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation salmon program director, past

board chair of Environmental Grantmakers Association.

Deb Love: Senior vice president, West Program, Trust for Public Land, board of directors Headwaters Economics (spinoff of the Sonoran Institute).

Tom Steinbach: Director of the Hewlett Foundation's Environment Program, board member, League of Conservation Voters Education Fund.

Four of seven WCF directors are high-end supervisory staff for WCF donors named in the Redstone strategy paper. Further, Deb Love is vice president of a group funded directly not only by the large foundations, but indirectly via WCF pass-throughs. A random selection of talent? Not on your life.

The Hired Help

WCF has had four executive directors. The first was **Adam Eichberg** (next issue), but his successor, **Courtney Cuff**, is most significant.

As Cuff's LinkedIn page explains, she spent six years with Friends of the Earth and four years as a National Parks and Conservation Association executive. In June 2005, Cuff left NPCA to consult on “strategic campaign development” for the Hewlett and Wyss foundations, then was put in charge of WCF at the beginning of 2007.

Cuff writes: “In the fall of 2013 I left an organization I co-founded—the Western Conservation Foundation. I'm proud to say that we built the organization into an almost \$8 million operation with a clear mission, strong team, and measurable impacts.” Co-founded? Obviously in on the fix from the start.

Cuff now fries different fish as executive director at the \$227 million Gill Foundation, aka the Gay and Lesbian Fund of Colorado. She was briefly succeeded by WCF subordinate **Robin Hubbard**, who soon jumped to join Cuff at the Gill Foundation.

Today WCF is run by **Brendon Cechovic**, most recently political director of Washington Conservation Voters and currently on the national board of the League of Conservation Voters.—DS

Pawns of the Kings

Even at \$8 million per year, the Western Conservation Foundation is merely a regional pawn in a global chess game. Hewlett's agenda is huge. In 2012 alone, Hewlett needed 81 pages to list about 1,150 grants totaling \$381 million. Next after Hewlett's whopping \$150 million to Climateworks was \$13 million to endow 100 faculty chairs at UC Berkeley. Assuming what passes for education in Berkeley is charitable, that's probably okay.

Nonetheless, Western Conservation Foundation shares second place with Yale University for Hewlett's largest single check: \$2 million—plus \$228,000 for WCF's "emerging leaders project." Who will be the leaders WCF "emerges" with that money?

Also of note, Hewlett gave the fine sportsmen at Trout Unlimited \$1.875 million, plus another \$150,000 specifically for "prevention of development of Pebble Mine" in Alaska. Nothing political about that. Nothing coordinated, either. WCF also gave TU another \$51,000 or so that year.

The End of the Beginning

There it is: Secretive zillionaire trusts funding surrogates to drive an elitist vision. America's peasants weren't supposed to know, much less understand. And thanks to IRS's Lois Lerner, there's more good news. Congress is finally paying attention to the blatant (and yep, bipartisan) politicization of the tax-sheltered charitable sector, despite the best efforts of America's news media to ignore the issue—or misdirect public attention toward comparatively minor players like the conservative Koch brothers. Wonder why Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) seems so obsessed with the brothers? Not anymore.

In July, minority staff at the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee cranked out a revealing report on America's big green political money machine entitled "The Environmental Chain of Command," subtitled "How a Club of Billionaires and their Foundations Control the Environmental Movement and EPA."

On page 23, RANGE stalwart Dr. Mike Coffman discusses the billionaires club. He reveals more of Big Green's all-fronts political war against America's productive core, aimed at cutting out America's economic heart. With Coffman's article is a table listing the riches of the club of billionaires. Highlighted in the table are the six foundations that also bankroll Western Conservation Foundation.

Those organizations and their allies are your documented enemies, a matter of public record. To these "charities," whether you fork a horse, a Deere, or a Cat matters not. Even if you drive a keyboard—if that keyboard is hooked up to a device that actually produces wealth or does something to improve the human condition—they were hoping to quietly drive you into oblivion without anyone ever knowing about it, or

about them.

But now that you do know, very soon it will be time to take the rest of Bruce Babbitt's advice. ■

While growing up in northwest Montana, Dave Skinner learned to get where he needed to go without a map. Ever since, he's enjoyed following promising trails to wherever, or whomever, they go.

Willing Sellouts

WCF bills itself as a grant maker but spends more supporting itself. Its 2012 Form 990 shows it paid \$1.4 million in salaries to 16 employees (a nice \$87,500 average in a state with a \$34,283 average salary, according to the feds), plus \$1.9 million in other fees, explained in the Schedule O supplementary information section as "program consultants." Against that \$3.3 million in overhead, WCF's 990 shows the five "featured recipients" shared over \$3.2 million in grants with about 65 or so other charities. Impressed?

Small Business Majority: \$395,000 for "public lands education and business outreach," which included "communication with executive branch staff in support of the designation of national monuments." Even the *New York Times* (really!) marks SBM as Astroturf, noting it "has no membership," "depends almost entirely on foundation grants," and "has all the hallmarks of a shadowy interest group, starting with a name that conceals more than it reveals."

Clean Water Fund: \$269,250 to a CWF branch office in the same building as WCF. Supports EPA's "Waters of the U.S." proposal.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers: \$179,403, supposedly a "sportsman's group." A majority of its board directors are Trout Unlimited staffers.

Vet Voice Foundation: \$141,000 "featured" organization, "progressive" veterans who are "pro-environment" and promote "clean, renewable energy as a national security issue" with "targeted, grant-funded campaigns." Astroturf in camo, how cool is that?

Center for Public Interest Research: \$135,000. One of Ralph Nader's organizations.

Headwaters Economics: \$67,000. Voodoo economics think tank spun off from

Sonoran Institute, shares a director with WCF.

Pagosa Brewing: \$6,058 for "Colorado outreach"—apparently free beer qualifies as a charitable distribution.

Public Campaign: \$56,000 in general support of its mission to "dramatically reduce the role of big special-interest money in American politics." Yes, enjoy the irony.

Western Conservation Action: \$100,000. It is a fully controlled 501(c)(4) of which WCF is the sole member. WCA exists to "increase the strength, effectiveness and political power of Western Conservation Movement." In 2012, WCA made "monuments project" grants of \$35,000 to Progress Now Colorado (and New Mexico), in addition to \$98,000 in direct WCF "outreach" grants to the same groups. For all that shuffling, WCA needed to pay \$17,000 to program consultants, and \$23,000 for a share of WCF executive director Courtney Cuff's salary for one hour a week—overhead again.

Other recipients include Arizona/Colorado/National/New Mexico/Wyoming wildlife federations; Colorado/Montana/National Trout Unlimited—plus former TU "project" Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, for "sportsmen outreach." Even Ducks Unlimited got a few bucks, for "conservation education."

A couple of ag recipients were Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, for "energy education," and the National Young Farmers Coalition (Open Space Institute) in New York for "Colorado River outreach." Huh? OSI "emphasizes permanent protection on a landscape-level scale." Landscape-level scales—absent of human activities like young farmers?

Ah, that makes sense.—DS