



- [Close Window](#)
- [Print This Page](#)
- [Expand All](#) | [Collapse All](#)

Upper Missouri Watershed Protection Campaign - Grant

Grant Name	Upper Missouri Watershed Protection Campaign - Grant	Today's Date	12/15/2023
Staff Size	4	Organization Name	Resources Legacy Fund, as fiscal sponsor for the Western Energy Project
Total Membership		Annual Operating Budget	\$3,860,191.00
BIPOC-led	No	Operating Budget Year	
C-Suite Staff		Tax Status/Organization Type	501c3 Organization
Notes			

Project Information

Project/Campaign Name	Upper Missouri Watershed Protection Campaign	Project Address	
Project Location (State or Territory)	MT	Amount Requested from Alliance	\$50,000.00

Proposal Questions

1. Purpose/History Of Organization	<p>Established in 2009, the Western Energy Project (WEP) works to prevent oil and gas development in sensitive landscapes across the West and advance reforms that reduce development on public lands, which ultimately helps curb greenhouse gas emissions. Our campaigns are built on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Partnerships with Westerners: We form partnerships with hunters/anglers, business owners, Tribes, and others who can drive change. •Coalition Development/Leadership: We lead coalitions of national, state, and local stakeholders. •Policy Expertise: We use in-house policy expertise to inform all aspects of our campaigns and share that expertise with our grantees/partners. •Government Relations: We develop c3-appropriate political strategies to turn policies into law and ensure decision-makers are acting on conservation challenges. •Strategic Communications: We pursue aggressive communications tactics to elevate the perspectives of Westerners and to shape the national/regional narratives around our campaigns. 	7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes	<p>1. Oil and gas leasing is prohibited on most, if not all, of BLM-managed public lands in the Upper Missouri Watershed – BLM has already suggested publicly that its habitat management plans will evaluate leasing prohibitions as a means of protecting wildlife values. We will push the agency to go as far as it can in terms of taking lands off the table for future leasing.</p> <p>2. If some lands are made available for leasing, BLM adopts high-level protections for fish and wildlife, recreation, water, cultural, and other important values – If BLM makes some land available for oil and gas leasing, then we will work to ensure that high-level protections, such as surface disturbance prohibitions and robust stream setbacks, are adopted to protect key conservation values.</p> <p>3. Increase awareness and support within local communities for protecting the Upper Missouri Watershed from oil and gas development – We will accomplish this through the communications and outreach strategies identified above.</p>
2. Final Success	The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prohibits oil and gas leasing on a significant amount of the 1.1 million	8. Evaluate Your Progress	We will evaluate our progress and success based on the extent to which BLM's final habitat management plans

acres of public land within the Upper Missouri Watershed and adopts high-level protections for important fish and wildlife, recreation, water, cultural, and other conservation values on lands where leasing is permitted.

close public lands in the Upper Missouri Watershed to oil and gas leasing and, if some land is left open to leasing, then the strength of the protections adopted for those lands. We will also evaluate our success in increasing awareness within local communities by the number of supportive comments that are submitted on BLM's draft habitat management plan for southwestern Montana.

3. Location Details

WEP is focused on preventing oil and gas development within the Beaverhead, Big Hole, and Red Rock watersheds, which we refer to collectively as the Upper Missouri Watershed. Situated between the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and Crown of the Continent, the Upper Missouri Watershed provides habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife, supports recreation activities that generate over \$165 million in economic output every year, and contains nationally significant cultural resources. Notable values include:

- **Fish and Wildlife:** The Upper Missouri Watershed is a stronghold for many of the West's most iconic fish and wildlife species, including grizzly bear, elk, mule deer, Greater sage-grouse, native trout, and Arctic grayling. It includes several large blocks of winter range for elk and mule deer, along with several important migration corridors; Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks has also designated most of the Upper Missouri Watershed as one of five priority big game habitat areas across the state. The watershed supports several populations of native cutthroat trout and one of the last known populations of Arctic grayling in the lower 48.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** Tens of thousands of hunters and anglers utilize the Upper Missouri Watershed each year. The area receives significant use for big game hunting, which drives tens of millions of dollars in economic output every year. The watershed also supports blue ribbon trout fisheries which are among the most popular in all of Montana.
- **Cultural Resources:** The Upper Missouri Watershed is home to the Big Hole National Battlefield, as well as segments of the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail

The Department of the Interior is engaged in three separate initiatives that, if finalized, would provide lasting protections regionally, and specifically for this landscape: a broad habitat management planning process that would deliver significant conservation outcomes for southwest Montana; a nationwide "restoration landscape" program that will inject tens of millions of dollars in funding for ecosystem restoration and resilience in priority

9. TCA Funding Plan

Funding from The Conservation Alliance would allow us to bolster our ongoing support for several on-the-ground groups who work directly with landowners, hunters and anglers, and business owners, including recreation outfitters. It would also allow us to pursue additional communications, grassroots, and other tactics during the public comment period for BLM's draft habitat management plans that we will not be able to do otherwise.

landscapes throughout the West, including the Missouri Headwaters; and the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service's recently-proposed Missouri Headwaters Conservation Area, which, if approved, would help protect conservation values on voluntarily-enrolled private lands throughout the area.

4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

We are focusing and engaging on BLM's habitat management planning process that involves the Upper Missouri Watershed. This process is still in its early stages, but is moving on a fast-track, as we expect BLM to issue draft versions of its habitat management plans in early 2024 and finalize those plans by the end of 2024 (or shortly thereafter).

Our strategy for engaging on this process is multi-pronged:

1. Secure DOI and BLM support for adopting additional protections for the Upper Missouri Watershed through its habitat management planning process – When BLM releases its draft habitat management plans, we will work with our grantees to submit technical comments that outline how and why BLM can prohibit oil and gas leasing on public lands throughout the Upper Missouri Watershed. Following the end of the comment period on those plans, we will conduct outreach with DOI and BLM leadership to further educate them about our recommendations and the support they enjoy from key, on-the-ground stakeholders. Finally, we will work to educate other federal and state decision-makers about the opportunity to protect key recreation and conservation values in southwestern Montana through BLM's habitat management plans, and will encourage supportive decision-makers to convey their support directly to DOI and BLM leadership.

2. Develop fact-based products to support proactive media education and outreach prior to and after release of the draft habitat management plans – In conjunction with the draft plans coming out, we will update existing materials and develop new materials that amplify the conservation values and related economic benefits of the Upper Missouri Watershed and explain why those resources are not worth putting at risk through oil and gas development. More specifically, these products will be the basis of our messaging and tactics to promote the area's many values, including outdoor recreation, fish and wildlife, water resources, and cultural resources, that are at risk, as well as the economic and cultural benefits that would accrue to those values by prohibiting oil and gas leasing. This would include using the key findings of a

10. JEDI Efforts and Impact

WEP believes our Team must continually develop leadership skills and internal awareness of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and apply this knowledge to our own activities and those related to our re-granting strategy. While our internal development and efforts as a re-granter don't have concrete outcomes in the same vein as our landscape protection and policy advocacy activities, it is only through continual learning and application of leadership knowledge and JEDI principles that those activities will involve and reflect as many identities, communities, cultures, and perspectives as possible. This is important to WEP and to the success of our work.

Our Team holds monthly discussions, facilitated by Team members, to explore JEDI and leadership topics. Over the past year, we have explored a variety of angles of these topics, including public lands history through an Indigenous lens and LGBTQ+ participation in the outdoor recreation/conservation communities.

2021 report from the University of Montana’s Bureau of Business and Economic Research on the significant economic impact of outdoor recreation in Beaverhead County. We will use these products to educate ed-boards and local/state reporters about the robust local support for prohibiting oil and gas leasing in the Upper Missouri Watershed. This work would continue throughout the entirety of the planning process – from the release of the draft plans all the way to publication of the final plans.

3. Provide backing for proposed measures to reduce oil and gas development in the Upper Missouri Watershed following the release of the draft habitat management plans – Following release of the draft habitat management plans, we will work to frame measures that will reduce leasing and drilling in the Upper Missouri Watershed as a win for southwestern Montana’s communities, landowners, business owners, and hunters/anglers. During the prior administration, many of these stakeholders opposed and successfully fought off two lease sales that included thousands of acres in the Upper Missouri Watershed. We will do this by pursuing strategic and politically savvy communication tactics, including LTEs/op-eds from key voices and ed-board outreach. We will also work with our grantees to drive supportive comments from Montanans on those portions of the draft plans that deal with protecting the Upper Missouri Watershed. Finally, we will provide an alternative perspective if there is concern to protecting this landscape from oil and gas development. This work would also continue throughout the entirety of the planning process.

5. Key Decision Makers

We believe there is a significant opportunity to secure lasting protections from oil and gas development in the Upper Missouri Watershed, given the three DOI conservation efforts that overlap with this incredible landscape. For this reason, our primary targets are DOI and BLM leadership, both at the national and state levels. While it is evident that the Upper Missouri Watershed is a priority for DOI, it is not guaranteed that BLM will maximize, without an organized effort, conservation protections from oil and gas development for the Upper Missouri Watershed through its habitat management planning process. We will work to ensure this happens through direct outreach with DOI and BLM leadership, and also by supporting key voices on the ground, including landowners, business owners, and hunters/anglers, who are able to provide whatever political cover is needed. We

11. Confidential Items

Please check with Resources Legacy Fund in advance to confirm if specific information can be shared.

will also seek to shape the messaging and actions of federal, state, and local elected officials. We do anticipate that some elected leaders will oppose anything released by this Administration, including BLM's habitat management planning efforts. Thus, our primary aim will be to demonstrate that key, on-the-ground voices actually support what BLM is proposing with respect to the Upper Missouri Watershed area because of their documented concerns, including in the context of the prior administration's controversial efforts to sell leases in southwestern Montana, for the impacts of drilling on their way of life.

6. Elevate Voices

Over the past three years, we and our grantees have inquired with several Tribes about their interest in this landscape and whether they would like to coordinate with our efforts. None of these Tribes have indicated that they intend to engage in the southwestern Montana component of BLM's habitat management planning process. We have also worked to engage hunters, anglers, business owners, and landowners, and will continue to pursue similar grassroots efforts during BLM's comment period. We have a goal of at least 1,000 comments from Montanans in support of provisions to reduce leasing and drilling that may be included in the draft plans to protect the Upper Missouri Watershed.

Created By Jess Maher, 12/15/2023, 4:49 AM

Last Modified By Jess Maher, 12/15/2023, 4:49 AM

Copyright © 2000-2024 salesforce.com, inc. All rights reserved.