



**WESTERN
GOVERNORS'**
ASSOCIATION

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The West has seen its fair share of boom and bust, but the COVID-19 pandemic stands alone in modern times for the challenges it presented every citizen of our region and country.

And yet, as I write this, it is becoming increasingly clear that the extraordinary efforts of our front line workers, heroic nurses and doctors, and medical researchers are helping us turn the corner. As Governors, we salute their efforts as we also work to enable the continuing recovery in our states.

Pandemic response in the past year has consumed much of Western Governors' time. As Chair of the Western Governors' Association (WGA), however, I have been heartened to have the opportunity to lead other policy efforts that benefit the citizens of the West.

WGA's launch of the *Western Prosperity Roundtable*, for example, has created a new platform to work on policies that advance Western Governors' vision for expanded prosperity throughout the West. I was privileged to open its virtual rollout in May with remarks and honored to be joined in that effort by WGA Vice Chair and **Idaho Gov. Brad Little**, and immediate past Chair, **North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum**.

One path to greater prosperity in the West is through expanded broadband availability, so that everyone – everywhere – can participate in the digital economy. Thanks to WGA's advocacy in the past year, we've seen an expansion in broadband funding flexibility by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a revision of rules related to TV white spaces devices by the Federal Communications Commission, and significant appropriations funding to improve broadband mapping.

The Governors also continued their long-standing policy work to protect the natural resources that make the West a place like no other. For example, WGA earned a significant victory in support of states' authority and autonomy to manage and protect water when the US Army Corps of Engineers withdrew its "surplus water rule." And as part of their *Working Lands Roundtable*, WGA hosted "Local Groups in Land Management," an event that featured Gov. Little and extensive discussion on a cross-boundary approach to resource management.

When it came to developing the central policy initiative of my year as Chair, I had one overriding focus: It needed to put the people of the West above all else. The *Electric Vehicles Roadmap Initiative* didn't represent the policy of one side or another. Instead, it promoted collaboration across the aisle and across the West to elevate and energize an issue that states are already working on, both individually and collaboratively.

Collaborating on electric vehicles (EV) infrastructure isn't a new idea. The first charging stations for the West Coast Electric Highway were installed in 2011 and the Regional Electric Vehicle Plan for the West was established in 2017. But like any big idea, EV infrastructure planning and deployment requires continued coordination and shared investment across multiple parties to keep growing efficiently. It was our goal to determine how best to do that. That work started with a series of Initiative work sessions that assembled the brightest minds from the public and private sectors, including utilities, and focused on the hard questions of infrastructure, finances, and logistics that impact EV planning.

An overview of that work is included in this Annual Report; find the complete report of the *Electric Vehicles Roadmap Initiative* on the WGA website. We all recognize that a robust and efficient transportation sector is key to meeting future economic goals and connecting businesses to regional and international markets. This initiative creates a roadmap to that future.

Speaking of the future, there's always more that can be done in the West. Let's get to work!

With warmest regards,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Brown".

Kate Brown,
Governor, State of Oregon





Like many western governors, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, shown surveying the destruction of the Beachie Creek Fire in September 2020, had to respond to the twin challenges of wildfires and the pandemic.

Dear Friend of the West,

Although we all have all been profoundly affected by the pandemic, Governors have spent more than their fair share of time in the COVID-19 barrel, working tirelessly to keep their residents safe and their economies afloat. They have exercised heroic leadership and have made incredibly difficult decisions.

At the same time, their other weighty responsibilities did not magically disappear. They still have had catastrophic natural disasters to manage, strained state budgets to balance, and students to educate under wildly challenging circumstances.

Largely because of their efforts, light is appearing at the end of the COVID tunnel. Showing inhuman stamina, Western Governors are approaching that light with optimism, with energy, and with enthusiasm. Based on my experience with these Governors and their recent involvement with the Association's activities and policy-making efforts, I have no doubt that they, and WGA, will emerge from this experience stronger and more united than ever.

And thank goodness for that, because Western Governors are the best hope for level-headed bipartisan leadership in this deeply divided country.

Western Governors reflect WGA's bipartisan ethos and take a practical approach to the challenges facing our region and country. They are pragmatic and evince a preference for

solutions over rhetoric, results over politics.

I am pleased to offer special acknowledgement to WGA's 2020-21 Chair, the Honorable **Governor Kate Brown** of Oregon. Her outstanding leadership and collegial spirit helped keep Governors together and moving forward. Her Chair Initiative to create an *Electric Vehicles Roadmap* for the West resulted in an umbrella agreement on charging infrastructure among many western states and will have positive effects on the region for years to come.

I am also indebted to WGA's incomparable sponsor community for its unwavering support during a challenging time. As we emerge from the pandemic, I look forward to reuniting in person with friends, supporters, and partners of WGA. In the meantime, with gratitude for all you do on behalf of the West, I am

Respectfully,



Jim Ogsbury

James D. Ogsbury,
WGA Executive Director

CHAIR INITIATIVE

Oregon Governor Kate Brown launched the *Electric Vehicles Roadmap Initiative* in July 2020 to examine opportunities to improve the planning and siting of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in western states.

This Chair Initiative assembled states engaged in the West Coast Electric Highway (which includes California, Oregon and Washington) and the Regional Electric Vehicle Plan for the West (REV West, which includes Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming). Together, they assessed opportunities for enhanced coordination on voluntary technical standards related to EV infrastructure hardware, payment methods, signage, and best practices for siting and location.

The work of the Initiative has resulted in an umbrella agreement among the states participating in these sub-regional efforts. States have developed a shared set of principles regarding EV infrastructure planning and identified a suite of voluntary standards to optimize the effectiveness and accessibility of public and private EV infrastructure investments.

In addition to facilitating western states' discussions, WGA brought together key stakeholders at work sessions to explore important issues affecting EV adoption and infrastructure deployment in the West.

WGA also hosted webinars and a podcast series that provided a public forum to explore grid infrastructure, as well as financing and workforce issues influencing EV infrastructure planning and investment.

The Special Report of the Initiative presents findings from these work sessions, webinars and podcasts, and examines state programs and coordination opportunities; grid infrastructure planning and the role of utilities; medium-duty (MD) and heavy-duty (HD) EVs; EV fleets; permitting and siting practices; and economic and workforce development opportunities associated with EVs.

In addition, the report contains targeted recommendations on federal policy issues that affect public and private



Initiative Work Session Series

WGA designed and facilitated a biweekly, virtual work session series during the fall of 2020. Work sessions examined key EV topics raised by state officials. Work session participants included representatives from Governors' staff and state agencies, utilities and electric cooperatives, EV manufacturers, charging station network operators, and nonprofit organizations with EV expertise. WGA hosted sessions on:

1. Exploring the Battery EV and Hydrogen Fuel Cell EV Sectors
2. Supporting the Medium and Heavy-Duty EV Sectors
3. Examining Utility Investment and Rate Structures
4. Streamlining Permitting and Siting
5. Exploring Charging Station Inconsistencies Across States
6. Coordinating State Investments Along Tourism Corridors
7. Expanding EV Fleets in Urban and Rural Areas
8. Identifying Opportunities for Coordination between States and Clean Cities Coalitions

investments in EV infrastructure across the West. The recommendations encourage Congress and the Administration to:

- Leverage multi-state partnerships to effectively deploy federal EV infrastructure funds;
- Promote flexibility within the Federal Highway Administration's Alternative Fuel Corridors Program;
- Enhance EV infrastructure deployment opportunities at federal rest areas;
- Support the U.S. Department of Energy Clean Cities Coalition program; and
- Create efficient permitting and siting practices for EV infrastructure installations on federal lands.

Throughout the Initiative, WGA examined EV topics of critical interest to western states, such as differences in EV use cases in urban and rural communities and the availability of tailored utility program offerings for EV drivers. WGA and Initiative participants also looked at access to EV dealerships and maintenance technicians, and states' capacity to support EV investments. These issues speak to disparities in EV adoption and infrastructure deployment across the West. The report's findings and recommendations provide useful insights for Governors, states, utilities and local entities evaluating possible EV policies, programs and investments.



Read the Special Report at:

**Westgov.org/
reports**



WESTERN PROSPERITY ROUNDTABLE

The *Western Prosperity Roundtable* is a new platform for WGA’s work on policies that expand prosperity throughout the West. The Roundtable was launched in May 2021 with a two-day virtual event featuring keynotes by Western Governors and roundtable discussions on broadband connectivity, telehealth, data sharing, workforce training and disaster resilience and recovery.

INAUGURAL FORUM

Keynotes by WGA Chair and **Oregon Gov. Kate Brown**, Vice Chair and **Idaho Gov. Brad Little**, and North Dakota **Gov. Doug Burgum** kicked off this two-day event in May 2021.

Highlights from the Governors’ remarks:

- **Gov. Brown** urged participants, “to be creative and ambitious (and) pursue a more sustainable and equitable vision of western prosperity ... The Roundtable will encourage the cross pollination of ideas ... and amplify successful strategies.”
- **Gov. Little** noted that, “market driven changes in critical western sectors (are) causing the dislocation of workers through no fault of their own. We must ensure our workforce development systems are prepared to deal with these changes.”
- **Gov. Burgum** highlighted that the, “pandemic amplified the opportunity for the rural West and accelerated attention on the need for 21st century infrastructure, including high-speed broadband for education, telehealth and remote work.”



North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum was one of three Western Governors delivering keynotes at the Western Prosperity Roundtable Inaugural Forum.

Forum roundtables examined: how broadband infrastructure investments can enable everyone to work, learn, and receive medical care from their homes; how states can best provide upskilling and lifelong learning opportunities to ensure that workers aren’t left behind by technology or shifting workforce

demand; how states can leverage data to support economic development goals; how western communities can augment their capacity to prepare and respond to crises; and how telehealth can advance physical and behavioral health care access among underserved populations.

WESTERN PROSPERITY ROUNDTABLE



CONNECTIVITY

COVID-19 highlighted the importance of broadband and exposed the growing digital divide for policymakers, resulting in substantial broadband investments at the state and federal levels. Western Governors continued their successful advocacy for increased access to high-speed broadband across the region (particularly in rural areas) to better enable education, telehealth and remote work. Successes in the past year included expansion of federal broadband funding flexibility and significant Congressional appropriations to improve broadband mapping.

BROADBAND MAPPING

Issue: Improved broadband mapping is essential to closing the digital divide. Current maps overstate availability, which prevents many underserved communities in rural areas from getting the funding needed to expand broadband.

Action: The Governors persistently advocated for improved mapping before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation embraced this gubernatorial priority and supported full funding for the Broadband DATA Act to enable better mapping.

Result: Ultimately, \$98 million was appropriated to the FCC to improve its broadband maps and implement the Broadband DATA Act.

TRIBAL BROADBAND

Issue: Tribal Nations, the majority of which are in western states, face many barriers to the deployment of communications services, including challenges in securing funds through federal broadband deployment programs.

Action: Consistent with Policy Resolution 2020-08, *Broadband Connectivity*, Western Governors have consistently advocated for federal programs to allocate a designated portion of available funding to support connectivity projects on Tribal lands.

Result: In June 2021, the National



Western Governors' advocacy aims to increase access to high-speed broadband across the region, particularly in rural areas.

Telecommunications and Information Administration addressed the Governors' recommendations by establishing a \$1 billion grant program for tribes, funded by COVID-19 relief provisions. The grants will be directed to Tribal governments for broadband deployment, telehealth, distance learning, broadband affordability, and digital inclusion.

OTHER POLICY VICTORIES

The Governors achieved several other significant successes in the past year, including:

- The FCC, in line with recommendations from the Governors, launched the Emergency Connectivity Fund in April 2021. The program addresses inequities in connectivity access, especially in

rural areas, by assisting schools and libraries in purchasing equipment (as well as telecommunications and information services) for use by students, school staff, and library patrons at offsite locations. WGA urged the FCC to continue to promote this flexibility within its E-Rate Program beyond the pandemic.

- At the urging of Western Governors, the FCC revised its rules related to TV White Spaces devices to promote expanded wireless broadband connectivity in rural and underserved areas. TV White Spaces are unused portions of wireless spectrum between television

Continued on next page



WESTERN PROSPERITY ROUNDTABLE

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channels that can carry wireless internet over vast distances to western rural communities. The Report and Order approved by the Commission in October 2020 adopted WGA's recommendations related to permissible power and antenna height.

- The Governors in October 2020 lauded the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development's (USDA RD) final rule for its support of broadband infrastructure in line with their policy resolution, *Broadband Connectivity*. In particular, the Governors appreciated that the rule allows USDA RD electric, water and wastewater, housing, energy,

and economic development program participants to devote a portion of their allocated funding to broadband facilities and equipment.

ONGOING ADVOCACY

The Governors continue to advance their broadband priorities by:

- Supporting the USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) adaptation of an "eligible rural areas" definition and funding eligibility for areas slated to receive satellite service through the Connect America Fund Phase II. The Governors also have pressed the RUS regarding the current definition of "broadband" (25/3 Mbps), arguing it does not

correspond with needed speeds for business, education and health care applications.

- Pushing for "robust" broadband connectivity for advanced agriculture technologies, as advocated in April 2021 comments to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) about the design of the 2022 Census of Agriculture and regarding agricultural producers' "high speed" internet access. "It is unlikely certain technologies would support effective integration of many precision agriculture technologies," the Governors noted, encouraging NASS to solicit information on whether producers' current internet connectivity could support the use of advanced, data-intensive technologies.

DATA

Western Governors recognize the crucial role that state data must serve to inform the decision-making processes of federal agencies. In December 2020, Governors adopted Policy Resolution 2021-02, *Utilizing State Data in Federal Decision Making*, urging the federal government to consult with states and state agencies as partners, not as ordinary stakeholders, in the development and implementation of policies, programs, and strategies to effectively incorporate state data into federal decision making.

MSA THRESHOLD VICTORY

Issue: The Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) designation was created to standardize the units of geography for which different federal agencies produce and analyze data. An MSA is often used to delineate urban and rural America. In March 2021, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed to increase the population threshold for MSAs from cities with a population of 50,000 or more to cities with a population of 100,000 or more.

Action: The Governors immediately raised concerns with OMB about the increase, asserting the change could have unintended consequences for dozens of western MSAs that would lose their status and for rural

communities, as federal agencies allocate funding based on MSA designation or make funding for rural entities available to all non-MSA communities. Additionally, some federal datasets, including employment and labor statistics, are only produced at the MSA level.

Result: Western Governors earned a policy win when OMB announced in July 2021 that they had decided to leave the current Metropolitan Statistical Areas core population threshold in place. That decision ensures that western communities will continue to have access to the data and resources on which they rely to support their economic development.

OTHER OUTREACH:

- WGA will continue to seek opportunities to promote more effective and efficient data sharing among state and federal agencies.
- WGA will further engage with Congressional leaders regarding legislative efforts to ensure that state and local partners have access to timely and reliable federal datasets for purposes of informing state and local decision making.
- Through the *Western Prosperity Roundtable*, WGA will identify challenges related to privacy regulations and data interoperability and facilitate discussions on standardization to increase the utilization of state data.

WESTERN PROSPERITY ROUNDTABLE



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Western Governors are building a more vibrant regional economy through the expansion of training and education opportunities for high demand, good paying careers. The Governors have focused on ensuring these efforts are inclusive of all, including those with disabilities, and closing the skills gap for workers in critical sectors with fast-growing demand.

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT PODCASTS

An inclusive workforce is essential to economic resilience and vitality. The COVID-19 health emergency disproportionately impacted workers with disabilities and altered workplaces in ways that presented challenges and opportunities for disability employment.

To promote inclusive workforce policies and practices during the pandemic and beyond, WGA spoke to experts on disability employment for three episodes of the WGA podcast, *Out West*. These episodes:

- Highlight *Work Matters*, a repository of best practices for inclusive workforce development policies;
- Share insights on employment trends during the pandemic and considerations for policymakers and employers as people return to work; and
- Explain how technology and design can help employees succeed in all types of careers.

WORKFORCE WEBINARS

WGA hosted two webinars on workforce challenges in sectors of increasing importance to western states: cybersecurity and electric vehicles.

- *Solving the Cyber Workforce and Skills Shortage* focuses on ways to strengthen the cybersecurity talent pipeline and build a sufficient and sustainable workforce as cybersecurity threats become more complex and widespread.
- *Electric Vehicle Workforce Needs and Opportunities* explores the many jobs and skills that are necessary to build out the West's electric vehicle infrastructure and support increased use of electric vehicles.

WESTERN GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

WEBINAR

Solving the Cyber Workforce and Skills Shortage

April 16, 2021

MODERATOR
Laura Bate
Senior Director, U.S. Cyberspace Solarium Commission

PANELISTS
Dr. Dawn Beyer
Senior Fellow, Lockheed Martin

Dr. Mark Hagerott
Chancellor, North Dakota University System

Dominique Walsh
Program Manager for the Apprenticeship: Closing the Skills Gap Grant Program, Cybersecurity Center for Business

Rodney Petersen
National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education

ELECTRIC VEHICLES ROADMAP INITIATIVE

Electric Vehicle Workforce Needs and Opportunities

April 21, 2021

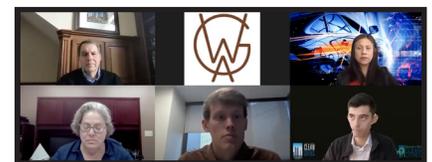
WESTERN GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

MODERATOR
David Torry
Executive Director, National Association of State Energy Officials

PANELISTS
Dr. Linda Little
Assistant Director, IBEW/NECA Electrical Industry Training Center

Jannet Malig
Statewide Sector Navigator for Advanced Transportation and Logistics at California Community Colleges

Michael S. Graham
Director of Policy & Communications, Columbia-Willamette Clean Cities Coalition



Participants share their expertise in webinars on developing the cyber workforce, left, and how to build skills for electric vehicles workers.



WESTERN PROSPERITY ROUNDTABLE



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Western Governors focus on ensuring their states take advantage of opportunities to develop their economies in both rural and metropolitan settings to ensure a high quality of life for their citizens.

RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Governors' Policy Resolution 2020-07, *Rural Development*, raises concerns about the difficulty of targeting federal resources for rural communities and the challenges rural areas face in accessing these resources.

In August 2020, Western Governors voiced support for USDA engagement with states and stakeholders in the development of the **Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE)** program to ensure that it meets the needs of rural communities, including the creation of high-wage jobs and accelerated business creation. The final RISE program rules, implemented in June 2021, will help build local capacity so that rural communities are better able to

address their economic development needs, a priority of Western Governors.

In October 2020, the Governors backed proposed modifications to the definition of rural areas by the Health Resources and Services Administration, which expanded the number of counties eligible for the **Federal Office of Rural Health Policy** rural health grant programs. The changes responded to the Governors' concerns by expanding eligibility to communities that are rural in character and lack health care services, but are excluded under the existing definition. The new definition, going into effect in FY22, will increase access to health care for underserved populations and build capacity in rural areas.

PILT & SRS FUNDING

Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) programs are vital to the provision of state and county public goods and services, such as roads, emergency response, and wildlife and natural resources protection. Accordingly, the federal government must honor its historic PILT agreement with states and counties in the West, as well as provide predictable and full funding for SRS programs. Thanks to the Governors' continued advocacy, the Department of the Interior fully funded PILT in FY21, including an additional \$14.2 million over FY20 levels. There are also multiple bipartisan efforts in Congress to reauthorize SRS through FY22.



COVID-19 AND DISASTER RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to be a significant concern for Governors over the past year. In western states, COVID considerations needed to be integrated into efforts to solve a host of challenges, from coordination of wildfire response personnel to rebuilding economies affected by the pandemic.

Applying lessons learned over the past year, including those stemming from the COVID public health emergency and the extremely destructive western wildfire season, the Governors approved the updated WGA Policy Resolution 2021-06: *Disaster Preparedness and Response* (**Learn more about the resolution** on page 20.)

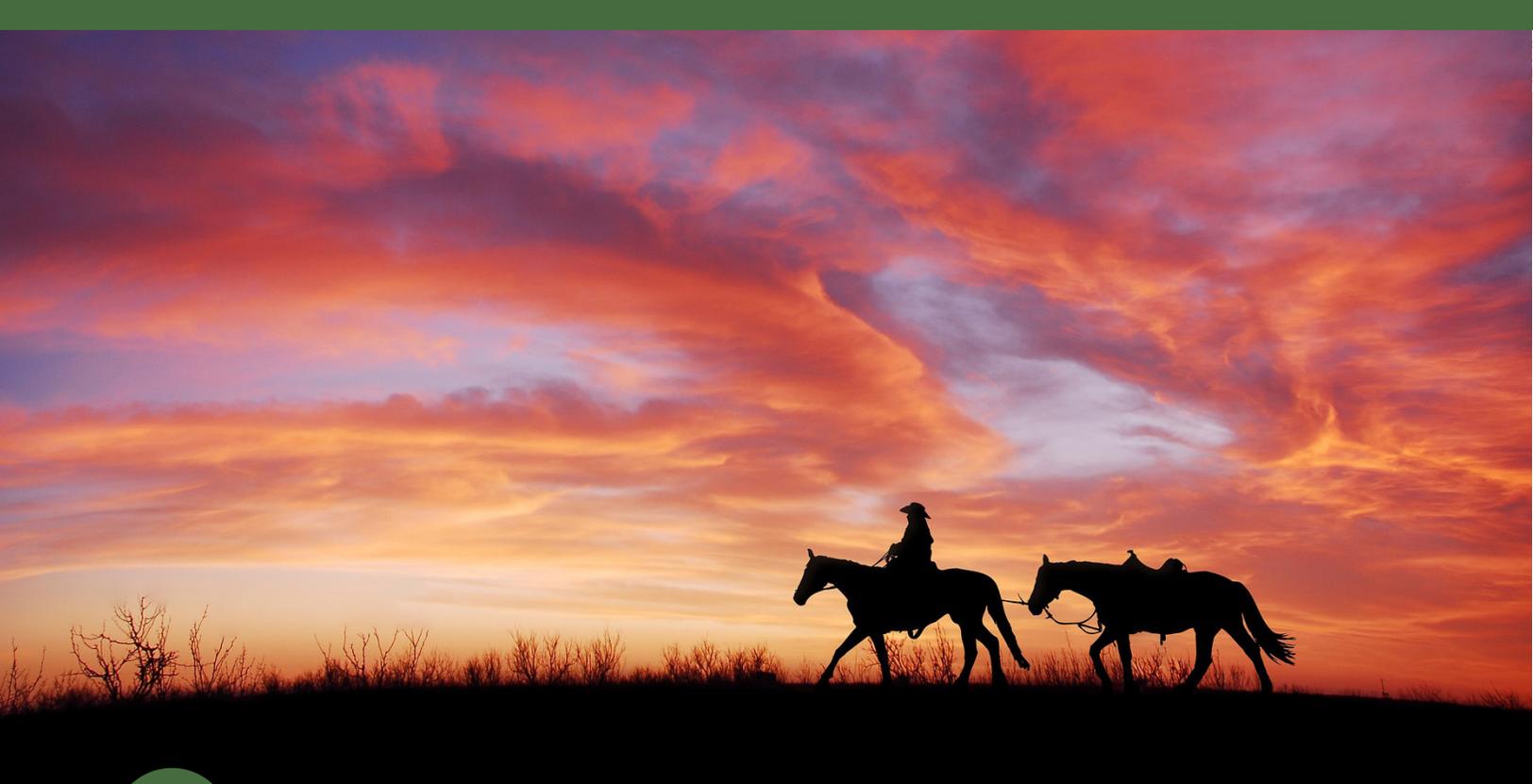
The Governors helped shape the federal response to COVID, especially by encouraging the White House and Department of the Treasury to give states maximum flexibility to use American Rescue Plan funds to mitigate

the economic effects of the pandemic.

This engagement led to Western Governors having constructive conversations with the White House on implementation of the legislation, including an April 2021 Governors-only conversation with **Gene Sperling**, Special Assistant to the President. The discussion about implementation of the American Rescue Act included Governors **Kate Brown, Doug Burgum, Laura Kelly, Spencer Cox** and **David Ige**.

Western Governors also explored how to best use American Rescue Plan funding to increase community resilience. Many western states have used funding to expand and accelerate broadband deployment, increasing community access to telehealth services and educational opportunities and increasing economic development opportunity in rural areas.

WGA also published, on multiple platforms, "COVID-19 in the West," a weekly state-by-state breakdown of the Governors' policy work.



WORKING LANDS ROUNDTABLE

The *Working Lands Roundtable* is WGA’s platform for natural resource policy work. It focuses on cross-boundary and multi-disciplinary resource management issues in the West and strategies to enhance the resiliency of western working landscapes and the communities they support.



FALL FORUM

In October 2020, under the auspices of the *Working Lands Roundtable*, WGA hosted the virtual forum, *Local Groups in Land Management*.

The event opened with a keynote by Idaho Gov. **Brad Little** on a cross-boundary approach to resource management in the West. Among other things, he discussed examples of effective local partnerships in Idaho, including Rangeland Fire Protection Associations.

The Governor’s remarks were followed by a discussion with representatives of the Western Landowners Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, and Colorado Counties. They shared examples of effective cross boundary management and discussed the role that the Working Lands Roundtable plays in their work on western policy issues.



Idaho Gov. Brad Little spoke at the virtual forum, “Local Groups in Land Management.”

WORKING LANDS ROUNDTABLE



WILDFIRE

The Governors have a long record of effective policy work on wildfire in the West. Those efforts continued during the past year, with significant focus on encouraging the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Department of the Interior (DOI) to ensure that wildfire restoration activity receives the same priority as mitigation and suppression work.

The Governors' efforts included outreach to leadership of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council in November 2020. Governors asserted that while "this is a long-term endeavor, it will reduce the reliance on suppression infrastructure ... and result in sustainable resilient ecosystems and safer communities."

The letter, signed by WGA Chair, **Oregon Gov. Kate Brown**, and Vice Chair, **Idaho Gov. Brad Little**, urges the agencies, "to prioritize the funding of these important efforts," and emphasizes that Western Governors are committed to shifting the focus from wildfire suppression to both short- and long-term activities that will produce safer, fire adapted communities and landscapes that are healthy and resilient.

FY21 APPROPRIATIONS

- The FY21 omnibus appropriations measure seized upon the Governors' restoration recommendation, directing the USFS to include dedicated funding for restoring

wildfire affected areas in future budget requests and to provide a detailed plan for creating a Burned Area Rehabilitation program.

- Requiring the USFS to begin budgeting for restoration in its annual budget requests is a significant step toward shifting the emphasis away from wildfire suppression and toward restoring burned landscapes and mitigating wildfire risk on other lands. Western Governors discuss wildfire management and post-fire restoration in WGA Policy Resolution 2021-03, *National Forest and Rangeland Management*. (Learn more about the resolution on page 19.)
- Congress also agreed with the Governors' recommendations to address wildfire challenges. Congressional report language directs the USFS to examine actions to improve the process of approving qualified aerial firefighting companies so that those assets can be effectively used to fight wildfires across the western region. It also expresses

support for the DOI goal to convert more firefighters to full-time status, a move Western Governors have encouraged federal agencies to consider.

ADDITIONAL OUTREACH

In the past year, the Governors also:

- Supported the prioritization of new projects for forest restoration and community wildfire resilience reflected in S. 4421, the Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act of 2020. In particular, the Governors cited the legislation's plan to facilitate biomass removal on U.S. Forest Service lands at high wildfire risk and its requirement to conduct collaborative wildfire risk reduction projects in western states.
- Promoted their policy on wildfire, forest, and rangeland management to inform the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry's examination of the "2020 Wildfire Year: Response and Recovery Efforts."



The Governors' want to ensure wildfire restoration activity receives the same priority as mitigation and suppression.



WORKING LANDS ROUNDTABLE



In updated policy resolutions adopted in the past year, Western Governors continued to assert state primacy over water management and allocation, while also emphasizing states' role as a co-regulator in implementation of the Clean Water Act.

The WGA Policy Resolutions *Water Resource Management in the West* and *Water Quality in the West*:

- Offer specific support for the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Program;
- Communicate the importance of water resource information and forecasting to sound management; and
- Articulate priorities related to groundwater resources, emerging contaminants, and stormwater pollution.

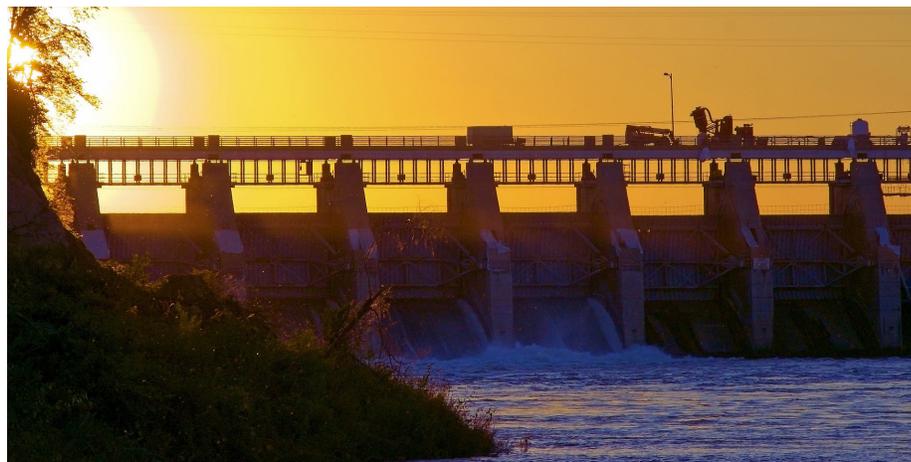
Learn more about both resolutions on page 20.

SURPLUS WATER

The Governors won a significant victory in their years-long fight to preserve state authority to manage, allocate and protect their water resources when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) announced the rescission of its policy guidance requiring municipal and industrial water users to acquire a water storage contract with the Corps before being granted access to Corps reservoirs.

The policy, which conflicted with state water laws and allocation systems, effectively prohibited water users from using their state-issued water rights if that water was stored in Corps reservoirs. The policy had significant impacts along the Upper Missouri River Basin, where Corps reservoirs store a substantial proportion of accessible surface waters.

The Corps tried to formalize this policy through a proposed 2016 rulemaking that sought to assert Corps authority



over all "surplus water" contained in Corps reservoirs, including "natural flows" of the river (that is, volumes of water that would exist regardless of the reservoir's construction) over which states have legal authority.

After extensive outreach from WGA and Missouri Basin states, the rulemaking was withdrawn by the Corps in March 2020. The action removes a major threat to state authority over water resource management.

ONGOING ADVOCACY

WGA continued to advocate for federal legislation and programs that advance the water policies of Western Governors through:

- Testimony to the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and submittal of Western Governors' policy to the USACE on the implementation of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020.
- Testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources regarding natural infrastructure and western water management.

- Requests in FY 22 House and Senate Appropriations testimony for:
 - Adequate and dedicated funding for federal water supply data programs, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting and Watershed Restoration Programs; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Integrated Drought Information System; and the U.S. Geological Survey's Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program;
 - Robust federal investment in water delivery and wastewater infrastructure;
 - Adequate and dedicated funding of EPA's Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and the Water Infrastructure Financing Innovation Act; and
 - Express prohibition of the use of FY 22 appropriations funds for any activity that would, or has the potential to, usurp states' plenary authority over groundwater resources, as well as language ensuring that state authority over groundwater resources is respected by federal administrative agencies.

WORKING LANDS ROUNDTABLE



SPECIES MANAGEMENT

States have extensive science and knowledge of species and habitats within their borders, helping Governors meet their goal to avoid listing of species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) through voluntary, collaborative conservation methods and early stakeholder engagement. Policy Resolution 2021-04, *Species Conservation and the Endangered Species Act*, adopted this year, reflects the Governors' proactive approach to species management.

AMERICAN CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACT

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a fatal nervous system disease found in cervids (deer, elk, moose, reindeer) for which there is no known cure. The economic burden of monitoring and managing CWD in wild populations historically has fallen largely on state agencies. Western Governors appreciate the efforts of Congressional leaders to raise awareness of, and provide funding for, research and management of CWD.

In January 2020, WGA submitted a letter in support of the American Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act, commending the bill's efforts to combat CWD through establishment of a US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) task force. The letter supports the bill's establishment of a study to better understand funding flows for fish and wildlife conservation and implementation of conservation agreements. In October 2020 the bipartisan legislation (Public Law 116-188) was adopted.

ACTION ON FEDERAL HABITAT DECISIONS

In WGA Policy Resolution 2020-01, *Strengthening the State-Federal Relationship*, Western Governors emphasize that states are co-sovereigns with the federal government. In the case of fish and wildlife management, states have primary management responsibility for the majority of the species within their borders. While the federal government



Chronic Wasting Disease presents an enormous danger to deer, elk, moose, reindeer.

maintains certain management responsibility for species listed under the ESA, the Act itself is premised on a strong federal-state partnership in managing and recovering listed species.

Western Governors submitted comments on two proposed rulemakings concerning wildlife habitat in the fall of 2020:

- In September 2020 the FWS and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) proposed the rule: Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations for Listing Endangered and Threatened Species and Designating Critical Habitat. The rule sought to establish a regulatory definition of "habitat," which, the Governors noted, could have implications for state management of fish and wildlife.

Accordingly, they requested consultation from the FWS and NOAA in development of the rule.

- In October 2020 the FWS proposed the rule: Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations for Designating Critical Habitat. The proposed rule would establish a process for excluding areas of critical habitat under section 4(b)(2) of the Endangered Species Act. As with the "habitat" definition, the Governors appealed for ongoing consultation with FWS in the development of this proposed rule and all federal policies affecting state authority.

Learn more about the resolution, *Species Conservation and the Endangered Species Act*, on page 19.





WORKING LANDS ROUNDTABLE



FOREST AND RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Western Governors continued efforts to incorporate their western land management priorities into federal decision-making processes, using the WGA-U.S. Department of Agriculture Shared Stewardship Memorandum of Understanding as a foundation for federal collaboration. Western Governors emphasized the importance of cross-boundary coordination on forest and rangeland management, as called for in the new WGA Policy Resolution 2021-03, *National Forest and Rangeland Management*.

SHARED STEWARDSHIP

Western Governors conducted several activities under the WGA-USDA MOU:

- **Cheatgrass and Invasive Annual Grass Management:** Large-scale infestation of cheatgrass and other invasive annual grasses on

western forests and rangelands presents significant challenges to western working landscapes. Invasive grasses alter fire and hydrological regimes and can lead to significant habitat alteration or destruction of fish and wildlife species. In addition to releasing

the *Toolkit for Invasive Annual Grass Management in the West*, WGA formed a working group to examine the operation of cooperative weed management to improve efficiencies and long-term implementation outcomes.

- **Vegetation Management:** WGA facilitated a collaborative dialogue between utilities, arborists, and state and federal agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of vegetation management in or near transmission and distribution corridors to reduce wildfire in the West. It sought to address regulatory barriers to vegetation management activities and improve coordination and efficiency of such activities across jurisdictions.

- **Interagency Wildfire Disaster Response:** To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of restoration work in wildfire affected communities, WGA and federal agency partners have been developing a roadmap of assistance available to local governments and communities after a wildfire disaster. The roadmap will provide a comprehensive overview of available assistance and help federal, state and local governments in deploying assistance for disaster response and restoration activities.

LAND CONSERVATION OUTREACH

Western Governors engaged with the Administration on its “America the Beautiful” proposal to conserve 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030. In May 2021, WGA submitted correspondence to National Climate Advisor Gina McCarthy proposing the use of the *Western Governors’ Task Force on Collaborative Conservation* to facilitate state-state and state-federal collaboration on conservation goals related to the Administration’s proposal.

As noted in the WGA Policy Resolution, *Strengthening the State-Federal Relationship*, executive departments and federal agencies should provide states with early, meaningful and substantive input in the development of federal regulatory policies. Where authority has been delegated by the federal government to the states, states should be granted the maximum administrative discretion possible and should be treated as partners and co-regulators.

ADDITIONAL OUTREACH

- Western Governors shared comments with the U.S. Forest Service on its proposed revisions to directives on rangeland management, grazing permits and allotments. The comments recognize the importance of grazing as a resource management tool and an important element of supporting working landscapes in rural western communities.
- The Governors also provided input to Congress on markets for forest products and woody biomass. The lack of such markets, especially for low value biomass, is a significant impediment to mitigation activities that can reduce the severity of wildfire and improve ecosystem resilience.
- Western Governors also approved WGA Policy Resolution 2021-05, *Wild Horse and Burro Management*. The resolution outlines Governors’ policy on this difficult public lands’ issue. Mismanaging wild horse and burro populations has significant implications for ecosystem function and wildlife habitat in many western states.

Learn more about the new policy resolutions *National Forest and Rangeland Management* and *Wild Horse and Burro Management* on page 19.



The Governors seek to collaborate with the Administration on its “America the Beautiful” proposal.



WORKING LANDS ROUNDTABLE



ENERGY AND MINING

During the past year, Western Governors requested consultation with the Administration in the wake of the President’s Executive Order pausing new oil and natural gas leases on public lands. They also signaled support for legislation supporting states’ cleanup activities on abandoned and orphaned oil and gas wells and approved a policy resolution to protect “good samaritans” who voluntarily clean up abandoned hardrock mines.

EXECUTIVE ORDER CONSULTATION

President Biden issued Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, which in part requires the Secretary of the Interior to pause new oil and natural gas leases on public lands or offshore waters pending completion of a comprehensive review and reconsideration of federal oil and gas permitting and leasing practices.

Western Governors subsequently requested consultation with respect to the Secretary’s review. They also indicated an eagerness to work with the Administration on policies that involve energy development and use in the West, while also protecting the environment, wildlife and natural resources.

The outreach resulted in a meeting between western states and officials from the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to discuss the effect of the oil and gas leasing pause in western states and the need to consult with states on this and other matters affecting state authority and budgets.

The Governors also communicated their energy policies in testimony submitted to the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. The Governors reiterated their intent to work with the Administration on policies that involve energy development and use in the West and asserted the imperative for federal agencies to engage with states in early, substantive, and ongoing consultation in development of energy policies.



ORPHAN WELLS

Western Governors have advocated for legislation supporting states’ cleanup activities on abandoned and orphaned oil and gas wells and associated sites. Those efforts continued this past year:

- In April 2021, the Governors, noting that many western states engage in oil and gas well plugging and remediation, reminded leadership of the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources that, “this work could be significantly accelerated with federal assistance.”
- In June 2021, the Governors also shared their policy with the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining to inform its review of the REGROW Act. The Governors note that the bill, “would help amplify state and tribal efforts to conduct oil and gas well cleanup activities and promote high-paying jobs across the West.”

‘GOOD SAMARITAN’ ADVOCACY

Western Governors have consistently called on Congress to shield “good samaritans” (those who voluntarily clean up abandoned historic hardrock mines across the West) from potential liability under the: Clean Water Act; Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act; and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-09, *Cleaning Up Abandoned Hardrock Mines in the West*, enunciates the Governors’ continuing support for pilot projects if comprehensive legislation is not possible. It also provides recommendations for Good Samaritan remediation plans, permitting, reviews, and approvals that will facilitate the voluntary cleanup of abandoned mines and allow for responsible development on remediated mined land. ([Learn more about the resolution](#) on page 20).

WORKING LANDS ROUNDTABLE

INVASIVE SPECIES

Western Governors in the past year launched the *Invasive Species Data Mobilization Campaign*, which encourages land managers to share previously unavailable data more widely. WGA also published the *Toolkit for Invasive Annual Grass Management in the West* to combat the spread of invasive annual grasses and continued to exercise leadership in the battle against aquatic invasive species. Much of the Governors' recent work on invasive species has been coordinated through the Western Invasive Species Council, a Governors-appointed panel of western state invasive species experts.

INVASIVE SPECIES DATA MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN

High-quality information is an essential weapon in the fight against invasive species in the West. Land managers, conservation groups, industry and private landowners need accurate, current invasive species occurrence data from across the region. Technological barriers and standardization issues, however, often prevent widespread sharing of useful invasive species occurrence data.

WGA addressed that challenge with the launch of the *Invasive Species Data Mobilization Campaign*, which encourages national, state and local land managers and conservation groups to enter previously unavailable data into new or existing invasive species data management platforms pursuant to WGA-developed recommendations.

The campaign was promoted with a launch webinar co-hosted by the North American Invasive Species Management Association and two episodes of *Out West*, WGA's official podcast: *Conservation Districts* and *Invasive Species Data Collection and Coordination*.

INVASIVE GRASS MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

The *Toolkit for Invasive Annual Grass Management in the West* helps land managers address the spread of invasive annual grass species such as cheatgrass, medusahead and ventanata.

The toolkit, which addresses the large-scale infestation of invasive grasses on western forests and rangelands, is an outgrowth of the collaborative work

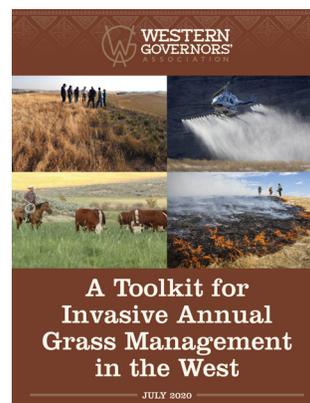


The state of Washington's Department of Agriculture removed a nest of invasive Asian Giant Hornets in October, 2020.

of WGA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) under a Shared Stewardship Memorandum of Understanding. It is comprised of three elements:

- A roadmap for invasive grass management in the West, including best management practices for the identification and protection of relatively intact "core" areas;
- Case studies highlighting the application of these practices in Idaho and Wyoming; and

- A new geospatial data layer to help state and local officials manage invasive annual grasses at home, while also offering opportunities to identify new cross-boundary collaborative projects.



WGA and USDA released the toolkit during a webinar featuring members of the interagency committee that developed it. Webinar participants included representatives from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation

Service, the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the University of Wyoming, and the National Audubon Society.



RESOLUTIONS

Western Governors formally approved 10 policy resolutions during FY 2021. They include:

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-01, Strengthening the State-Federal Relationship: Improving state-federal communication and coordination is among the Western Governors’ highest priorities. In the absence of a Constitutional delegation of authority to the federal government, state authority should be presumed sovereign. Each executive department and agency should have a clear and accountable process to provide states with early, meaningful and substantive input in the development of federal regulatory policies. The updated resolution also notes that, where authority has been delegated by the federal government to the states, states should be granted the maximum administrative discretion possible and should be treated as partners and co-regulators.

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-02, Utilizing State Data in Federal Decision Making: Western Governors recognize the crucial role that state data can serve to inform the decision-making processes of federal agencies. The Governors urge the federal government to consult with states and state agencies as partners – rather than ordinary stakeholders – in the development and implementation of policies, programs, and strategies to more effectively and consistently incorporate state data into federal decision making. Federal agencies must recognize the existence and limitations of state privacy and data stewardship laws, regulations, and policies. They must also work with states to develop strategies to encourage effective state-federal data sharing while appropriately protecting data under state law.

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-03, National Forest and Rangeland Management: This resolution renews



Western Governors support thoughtful and science-based herd management decisions for wild horses and burros.

and expands Governors’ policy positions on a variety of national forest and rangeland management issues. It supports sound forest and rangeland management policies that maintain and promote environmental, economic, and social balance and sustainability for rural communities. It includes Governors’ policies to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health and resilience, and incorporates WGA policy on public lands grazing. The resolution articulates the Governors’ response to the reduction or removal of domestic livestock from federal lands and expresses support for sound, science-based management decisions for federal lands.

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-04, Species Conservation and the Endangered Species Act: This resolution updates the Governors’ policy positions on species management and conservation issues. The new policy incorporates

language from WGA Policy Resolution 2019-08, *Wildlife Migration Corridors and Habitat*. The resolution expresses the Governors’ support for increased voluntary and proactive management efforts and use of best available science, while acknowledging the variability in state approaches to wildlife and habitat conservation.

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-05, Wild Horse and Burro Management: This renewed resolution notes the increasing demand on federal agencies to adequately manage wild horse and burro populations and offers support for thoughtful and science-based herd management decisions. The resolution updates estimates of the growing number of wild horses and burros on BLM- and USFS-managed rangelands in the West and recognizes certain federal, state and local plans as sensible alternatives to current wild horse and burro management practices.

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-06, Disaster Preparedness and Response:

An updated and expanded resolution that recognizes the important role Governors have in coordinating the emergency management phases of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. It recognizes the important federal role in preparing for and responding to disasters and emergencies, and emphasizes the need for cooperation and clear communication between federal, state, territorial, local, and tribal governments and between governments and their constituents. In any disaster or emergency situation, good communication is key to developing and executing an effective response from governments, promoting public confidence in those response actions, and empowering citizens to make informed decisions about their safety and welfare.

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-07 Transportation Infrastructure in the Western United States:

This updated resolution emphasizes the importance of a long-term federal funding mechanism for the maintenance and expansion of surface transportation networks and highlights innovative infrastructure advancements critical to the unique needs of western

communities. It also expands governors' policy on multimodal systems, including high-speed passenger rail, transit systems, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, air service, and safe biking and pedestrian options as all are essential to the West's transportation infrastructure.

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-08, Water Resource Management in the West:

In this renewed resolution, Western Governors reassert that states have primary authority over water management and allocation, and that federal investment is critical to meeting water infrastructure needs. The Governors offer specific support for the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Program and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Planning Assistance to the States Program. The resolution also communicates the importance of water resource information and forecasting for informing sound water management.

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-09, Cleaning Up Abandoned Hardrock Mines in the West:

Western Governors call on Congress to protect "Good Samaritans" that voluntarily clean up abandoned mines from potential liability under the CWA, CERCLA, and RCRA. This updated policy enunciates the Governors' continuing support

for both federal and state-led pilot projects if comprehensive legislation is not possible. It also provides recommendations for Good Samaritan remediation plans, permitting, reviews, and approvals that will facilitate the voluntary cleanup of abandoned mines and allow for responsible development on remediated mine land. It also calls for increased federal funding and workforce capacity dedicated to addressing the backlog of abandoned hardrock mine inventory.

WGA Policy Resolution 2021-10, Water Quality in the West:

In this updated resolution, Western Governors emphasize states' management authorities and role as co-regulators in implementing the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act. This also communicates Western Governors' shared perspectives and priorities related to groundwater resources, emerging contaminants, and stormwater pollution.

Western Governors enact new policy resolutions and amend existing resolutions on a semiannual basis. All of WGA's current resolutions may be found at west.gov.org/resolutions/



Transportation infrastructure in the West moves agricultural and natural resource products from source to national and world markets.



MEETINGS AND OUTREACH

Western Governors successfully employed “virtual gatherings” to lead spirited public conversations with influential thought leaders and U.S. Cabinet Secretaries regarding some of the region’s most pressing public policy issues.

MEETINGS

2020 Winter Meeting December 10

The “virtual” Winter Meeting featured the Governors in discussions about their ongoing work to contain the spread of COVID-19, manage the economic impacts of the pandemic, and respond to this year’s catastrophic wildfire season. They also engaged experts and industry leaders in conversations about broadband, training workers for the new economy, and healthcare.

Participating Governors: WGA Chair, Oregon Gov. **Kate Brown**; WGA Vice Chair, Idaho Gov. **Brad Little**; and Governors **Jared Polis** (Colorado), **Lou Guerrero** (Guam), **David Ige** (Hawaii), **Steve Bullock** (Montana), **Michelle Lujan Grisham** (New Mexico), **Doug Burgum** (North Dakota), **Kevin Stitt** (Oklahoma), **Gary Herbert** (Utah), and **Mark Gordon** (Wyoming).

SPECIAL GUESTS: Microsoft President **Brad Smith** conversed with Governors Burgum and Ige about technology’s role in responding to the myriad challenges presented by the pandemic. **Dr. Sanjeev Arora**, founder of Project ECHO, spoke with Governors Lujan Grisham and Gordon about how his pioneering “tele-mentoring” model operates as a “multiplier” to share health care expertise across the West. Health and Human Services Secretary **Alex Azar** outlined the administration’s work to collaborate with states in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTIONS: The Governors approved policy resolutions on: *Strengthening the State-Federal Relationship, Utilizing State Data in Federal Decision Making, Wild Horse and Burro Management, National Forest and Rangeland Management, and Species Conservation and the Endangered Species Act.*



The Governors in May hosted a virtual meeting, above, with Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan. Governors Burgum and Ige, below left, took part in the Winter Meeting hosted by WGA Chair Kate Brown.



MEETING THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

The Governors prioritized outreach to the new Administration of **President Joe Biden**. That work began with the transmission of gubernatorial policies and priorities throughout the executive branch to foster relationships, encourage dialogue, and urge policy collaboration between states and their federal partners.

In April 2021 WGA facilitated a Governors-only conversation with **Gene Sperling**, Special Assistant to the President, concerning the implementation of the American Rescue Act. Governors **Kate Brown**, **Doug Burgum**, **Laura Kelly**, **Spencer Cox** and **David Ige** participated.

That outreach continued with a virtual meeting in May to discuss issues facing the region with **Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland**, **Secretary of Agriculture**

Tom Vilsack, and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan.

Participating Governors included WGA Chair, Oregon Gov. **Kate Brown**; WGA Vice Chair, Idaho Gov. **Brad Little**; and Governors **Jared Polis** (Colorado), **David Ige** (Hawaii), **Michelle Lujan Grisham** (New Mexico), **Doug Burgum** (North Dakota), and **Spencer Cox** (Utah).

TOWN HALLS

WGA innovated during the past year to expand the reach of sponsor interactions with Western Governors. The association hosted four well-attended “virtual” Town Halls.

Kate Brown, Doug Burgum: Chair Brown of Oregon and Immediate Past Chair Burgum of North Dakota discussed their central policy initiatives and other regional issues.

Continued on next page



Brad Little, Jared Polis: Vice Chair Little of Idaho and Incoming Vice Chair Polis of Colorado shared news of their bipartisan work in the Mountain West and regional perspectives on emerging issues.

Spencer Cox, Greg Gianforte: Sponsors had the opportunity to meet the new Governors of Utah and Montana and learn about their visions for their respective states.

Mark Gordon, Michelle Lujan Grisham: The Wyoming and New Mexico Governors discussed energy development, pandemic response, and challenges within their states.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Western Governors continued to receive extensive positive media exposure, as coverage of their policy work was

published in more than 100 stories and op-eds in more than 600 media outlets during the past year. Topics of such coverage included the virtual Winter Meeting, launch of the *Invasive Species Data Mobilization Campaign*, and the Special Report of *Reimagining the Rural West Initiative*.

DIGITAL OUTREACH

WGA continued to share its message across multiple digital platforms.

Out West Podcast: Since the launch of this podcast in 2020, WGA has published 21 episodes that have been downloaded more than 3,000 times from the WGA website and the platforms of Podbean, Spotify and Apple Podcasts. In the past year, the podcast featured a three-part series on

the *Electric Vehicles Roadmap Initiative* of WGA Chair, Oregon Gov. **Kate Brown**, as well as firefighting during the COVID pandemic, and the search for the dangerous Asian Giant Hornet in the state of Washington.

VIDEO: WGA's first-ever virtual Winter Meeting during December attracted more than 225 registrants. The WGA website, which hosted the meeting livestream, saw the highest web visitation of the year during that week. Over the course of the fiscal year, WGA videos on YouTube were viewed 4,563 times for a total of nearly 600 hours.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Aggressive social media outreach efforts also continued on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, which deliver up to 50,000 impressions a day to WGA's followers.



WESTERN GOVERNORS' FOUNDATION

The pace has quickened to a gallop during the past year at the **Western Governors' Foundation (WGF)**, the philanthropic arm of WGA. The Foundation's powerhouse Board of Directors is taking WGF to new heights. Under the leadership of its Chair, the Hon. **Dennis Daugaard** (former Governor of South Dakota), and Vice Chair, the Hon. **Brian Sandoval** (the former Governor of Nevada), the Foundation is engaged in an expanding number of projects to promote the welfare of the West. Other Board members include the Hon. **David Ige**, Governor of Hawaii, and former Governors **Steve Bullock** of Montana and **Matt Mead** of Wyoming.

The Foundation recently launched its flagship project, the **Western Governors' Leadership Institute**, a program designed to recognize, reward and encourage the effective exercise of leadership by young adults across the West. Every year the Institute will select one young adult from each western state and territory to attend the WGA Annual Meeting and a related leadership development

forum. The Foundation will cover all expenses associated with delegate participation, thanks largely to the generous support of **Western Governors University**, the Institute's premier partner and funder. The inaugural Leadership Forum will be held in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, July 24-25, 2022. For further information, contact Anna Thielen (athielen@westgov.org).

Also during the past year, the Foundation:

- Conducted the sixth annual **Celebrate the West** high school art competition, which challenges young artists to create original works inspired by their state or otherwise evocative of the West;
- Pursued an **Arts and Healthy Living Project** in partnership with Americans for the Arts and with the support of Share Our Strength.



The Leadership Institute was launched at the Annual Meeting.

WESTERN GOVERNORS' FOUNDATION

- Published its first podcast, *Get to Know the Western Governors' Foundation*, featuring a conversation with Governor Ige and former Governors Daugaard and Bullock about their goals for the Foundation.



CELEBRATE THE WEST



From left: Boise River in Spring, Paloma Link; As Long as the Sun Would Shine, Morgan Niemiller; Cameron Brown (with his family).

The fifth year of the *Celebrate the West* regional art competition, hosted by the Western Governors' Foundation, challenged high school students to create works inspired by their state or life in the West. More than 250 pieces of art from 17 WGA member states, as well as Guam, were entered in the competition. The Foundation also announced the first recipient of its Chairman's Award for Outstanding High School Art Teacher: Cameron Brown from Beulah High School in Beulah, North Dakota.

Top Two

- **Paloma Link of Idaho** won first place for the acrylic painting, *Boise River in Spring*.
- **Morgan Niemiller of North Dakota** earned second place for her colored pencil drawing, *As Long as the Sun Would Shine*.

2020 State Winners

- **Alaska:** Abby Carothers, Chugiak High School in Anchorage, *Land of the Midnight Sun*, marker and colored pencil
- **California:** Grace Kim, Notre Dame Academy, *California Dreamin'*, colored pencils and markers
- **Colorado:** Gace Holmes, Grandview High School, *The Essence of Colorado*, acrylic paint
- **Guam:** Antonelli Q. Salayon, Simon A. Sanchez, *Kulu*, colored pencil
- **Hawaii:** Avianna Morales, Kapolei High School, *Rainbow Wahine*, markers, acrylic paint, oil pastels, and colored pencils
- **Idaho:** Paloma Link, Boise High School, *Boise River in Spring*, acrylic paint
- **Kansas:** Katelyn Huddle, Elyria Christian School, *Simple Pleasures*, graphite pencil
- **Montana:** Audrey Rogge, Helena High School, *Recognized*, charcoal, graphite, and pen
- **Nevada:** Summer Sekula, Arbor View High School, *Origins*, pen and ink
- **New Mexico:** Jada Salcido, Cibola High School, *New Mexican Indian*, pencil, oil pastel
- **North Dakota:** Morgan Niemiller, Oak Grove Lutheran High School, *As Long as the Sun Would Shine*, colored pencil
- **Oklahoma:** Brock Bailey, Homeschool, *Steaming Through the Prairie Sunset*, pastels and colored pencils
- **Oregon:** Claire Bokovoy, Hood River Valley High School, *Tranquil Lost Lake*, acrylic paint
- **South Dakota:** Brianna Sandvig, Harrisburg High School, *Weathered Beauty*, acrylic paint
- **Utah:** Jane Wilson, Springville High School, *An Undiscovered View*, oil paint
- **Washington:** Oliver Rinne, Sedro-Woolley High School, *Cobain*, acrylic paint
- **Wyoming:** Li Platz, Lander High School, *Guardians of the West*, watercolor, pen and ink

View all the winning entries on the WGA website:

[Westgov.org/celebrate-the-west](https://www.westgov.org/celebrate-the-west)



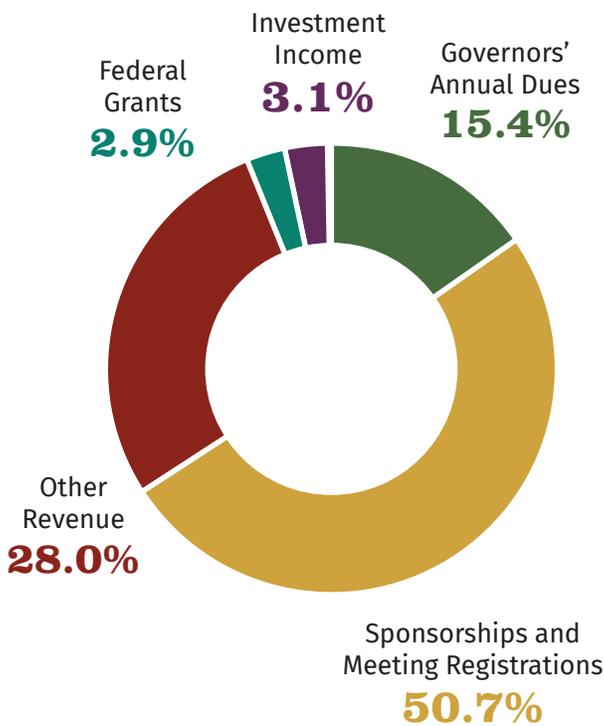


FINANCES

WGA income is derived from Western Governors’ annual dues, sponsor contributions, meeting registration fees, grants, investment income, and other sources. WGA income totaled \$4.5 million for the fiscal year, with approximately 28% of that amount received from federal agencies to provide technical assistance to states and other contractors. The following is excerpted from the audit report of JDS Professional Group, Certified Public Accountants, Consultants and Advisors. The information is for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020.

Revenues

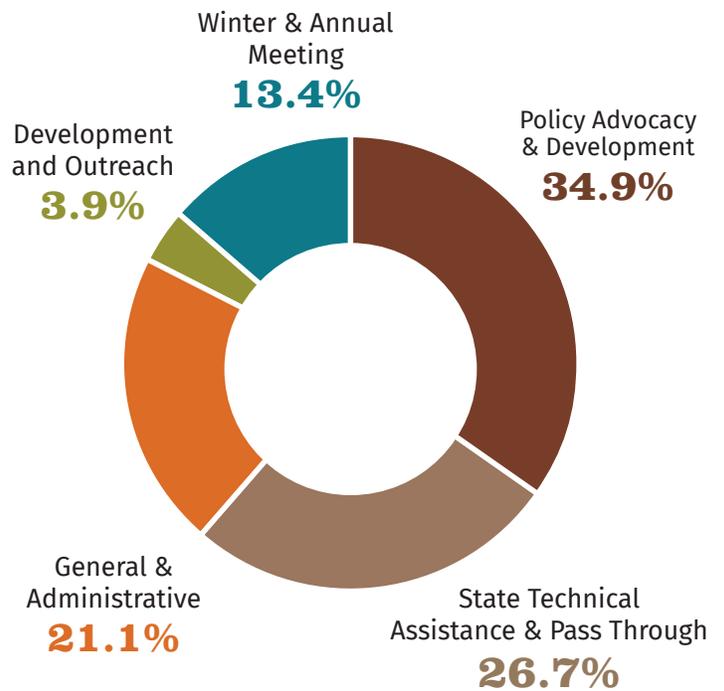
July 1, 2019—June 30, 2020



Governors' Annual Dues	\$689,400
Sponsorships and Meeting Registrations	\$2,272,890
Federal Grants	\$1,256,248
Investment Income	\$131,583
Other Revenue	\$136,962
Total	\$4,487,083

Expenses

July 1, 2019—June 30, 2020



Policy Advocacy and Development	\$1,418,033
State Technical Assistance and Pass Through Funds	\$1,086,064
General & Admin	\$860,300
Development and Outreach	\$158,087
Winter & Annual Meeting	\$545,326
Total	\$4,067,810

WESTERN GOVERNORS

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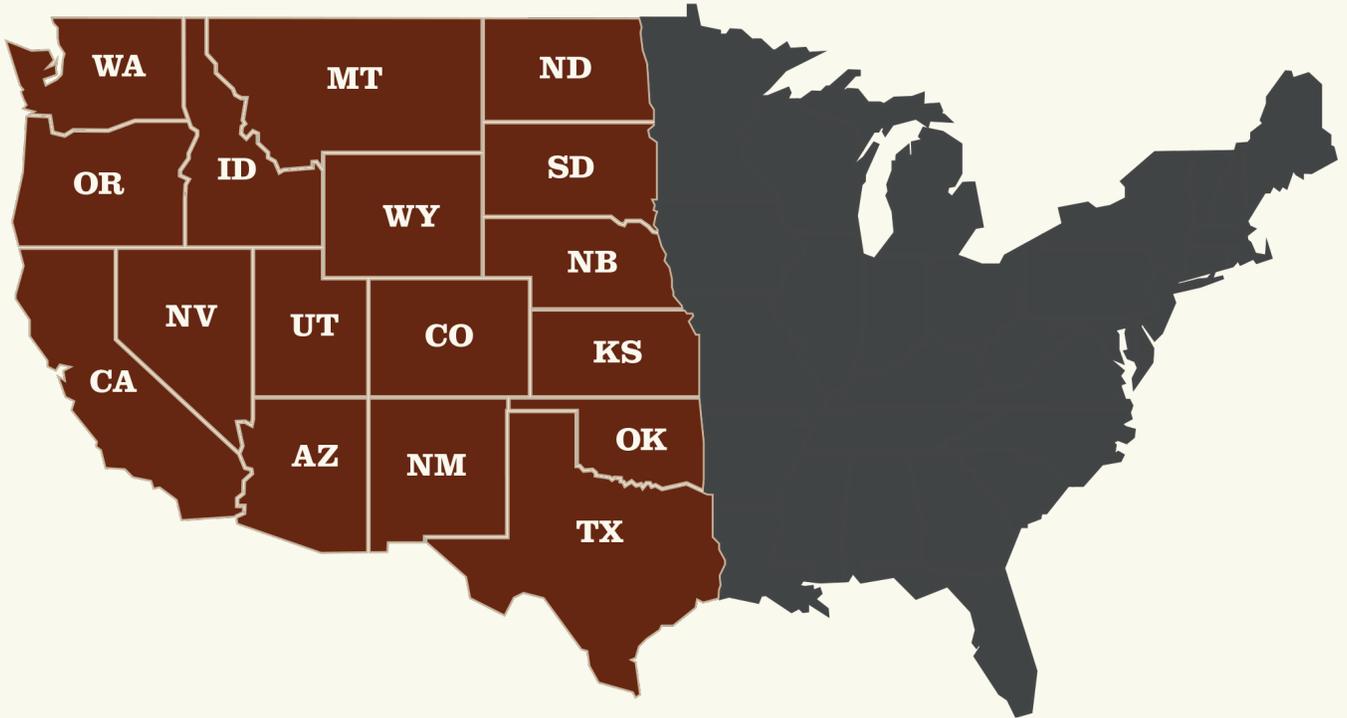
Brad Crowell

Nevada





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