PICTURE YOUR PLACE. Your spot in the backcountry. The hidden throne on public lands where you kill deer year in and year out.

Picture your honey hole. The stream no one else knows about, where you never go five casts without a strike.

Now imagine that you’re never allowed to go to that place again. The land has been sold. Access has been lost. The habitat has been degraded.

Imagine these things … and imagine a life without hunting and fishing.

This is what drives Backcountry Hunters & Anglers.

We like wild country. We relish the solitude. We love the sweat. We seek the challenge. We are committed to handing down our traditions to the next generation.

BHA is the most dynamic and powerful sportsmen’s organization in North America focused solely on conserving our public lands and waters, sustaining and expanding our ability to access them, and upholding the principles of fair chase and our outdoor traditions.

2015 marked the year when BHA came into our own. Our reach as sportsmen-conservationists exponentially expanded. Our ranks grew by the day. Our members stepped forward as informed, engaged, passionate advocates for our public lands and waters. And never has there been more urgent need for our voice.

Our nation’s vast, publicly owned landholdings harbor a wealth of resources, everything from oil, gas and timber to drinking water and wildlife habitat. In 2015, a new movement to seize them gained momentum – a scheme perpetrated by well-moneyed interests committed to undermining America’s public lands system in the long term.

BHA is committed to stopping that movement through the growing force that is public lands sportsmen. In 2015, we organized sportsmen’s rallies at state capitol buildings across the West. Attracting thousands of attendees, the events united our community in support of America’s public lands – and prevented passage in those states of legislation referencing the sale or transfer of those lands.

In 2015, BHA redoubled our efforts to strategically protect important lands and water. BHA had a seat at the table when 275,000 acres in central Idaho were proposed as wilderness. In 2015 the Boulder/White Clouds Wilderness, home to crystal clear trout streams and high alpine meadows full of elk and mountain goats, was signed into law: BHA also worked to secure places like Birmingham Canyon in Colorado, which was designated a national monument in 2015.

BHA state chapters engaged in collaborative efforts to conserve habitat for greater sage grouse and species like elk, mule deer and pronghorn. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service faced a September 2015 deadline to make a decision regarding listing the sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act. By advocating for the implementation of proactive management plans, we helped avert the need for an ESA listing.

Upholding the principles of fair chase continues to drive our work. BHA is leading the way in advancing state legislation banning the use of drones in hunting or scouting – in so far – 11 states, including Oregon, New York and New Hampshire in 2015.

BHA expanded our capacity in 2015, adding staffers who have greatly increased our effectiveness and reach – enhancing our expertise in policy matters, engaging and growing our membership and bolstering BHA’s visibility in media outlets across the nation.

Our continued advocacy will be critical. BHA members are uniquely positioned to appreciate the value of our public lands – not just economically but for the breathtaking range of opportunities they present – hiking, camping, fishing and hunting, as well as the chance to enjoy simple solitude.

These qualities can be neither duplicated nor replaced. And until they – along with our finest wildlife habitat, pristine fisheries and most valuable lands and waters – are secured, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers will continue to rise to the challenge, seeking ways to proactively conserve them – and beating back those who would undermine their future.
Defending America’s Public Lands Legacy

“KEEP PUBLIC LANDS IN PUBLIC HANDS!” That was the rallying cry of sportsmen across the West protesting legislative efforts to seize ownership of the public’s lands.

BHA, whose mission centers on ensuring the conservation of and citizens’ access to our public lands and waters, planned the rallies, which took place early in 2015 while state legislatures met in five states. BHA members turned out en masse on behalf of American sportsmen. Dressed in blaze orange and camo, in pouring rain and snowstorms, these men and women traveled to Helena, Montana, from Billings and Great Falls and Missoula; to Boise, Idaho, from Riggins and Salmon and Twin Falls; to Denver, Colorado, from Pueblo and Grand Junction and Loveland – and all points in between.

We were resolved and united under one common cause. And we were angry.

FEW CITIZENS ARE BETTER ABLE to appreciate the importance of U.S. public lands than sportsmen. Three-quarters of us rely on them for access to valuable fish and wildlife habitat and top-quality hunting and fishing. BHA members understand perfectly the repercussions of legislating away our public lands birthright. This is why BHA was established: to defend these places and our ability to access and enjoy them.

The public lands rallies attracted thousands of passionate sportsmen, gained widespread media coverage and focused attention on the threats to our shared lands and waters.

The result: not a single bill involving the transfer of public lands was passed in those states.

We took the BHA mission to Capitol Hill, as well. In the spring of 2015, BHA members flew to Washington, D.C., to urge their elected leaders to reject any misguided proposals to sell America’s public lands heritage. These efforts bore fruit; for example, a proposed amendment to the draft Senate FY 2016 budget would have prohibited the sale of federal public lands to reduce the deficit. The language directly responded to BHA requests.

BHA also took on legislative language that would have enabled the sale or transfer of public lands. While non-binding, the measure passed the Senate in a 51-49 vote. BHA’s condemnation of specific lawmakers’ votes – punctuated by a flood of negative media attention generated by BHA – produced some very desirable outcomes, including changes in course by those members of Congress. Ultimately, it demonstrated that BHA can coalesce sportsmen under the public lands banner – and effect positive change in the name of our outdoors legacy.

Our resolve will be tested in the battles to come. Nationally, an organized, concerted movement is underway to sell and limit access to America’s public lands and waters. BHA is doubling down to fight back against this ill-conceived idea. Public lands are the fabric that binds America together – and BHA is the force that can unite sportsmen and others who love our public lands.

In the Words of our Members:

Ed Putnam, BHA Oregon Chapter Chair, Bend

“Losing public lands was a big issue for sportsmen in Oregon in 2015 with the pending sale of the 84,000-acre Elliott State Forest. We pushed the issue hard with a petition drive, lots of print and social media coverage, and a white paper detailing sportsmen’s contributions and the social and economic costs of losing the Elliott.”

BHA’s 2015 Social Media Milestones:
- Exceeded 1 million people engaged on BHA’s Facebook page each week
- Doubled the number of BHA Facebook fans, which now exceeds 115,000
- Launched an Instagram account mid-year that now has more than 15,000 fans
- More than doubled BHA’s YouTube presence – both in subscribers and videos; our channel now has close to 5,000 subscribers
- Increased our online grassroots database by more than 25,000 individuals through online giveaways, action alerts and petitions

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 2015 Annual Report
Championing Fair Chase

Drones ARE EVERYWHERE. In recent years, use of “unmanned aerial vehicles” has skyrocketed – even in the backcountry. Increasingly, and worryingly, there are sightings of drones being used to scout and stalk big game. While many users operate drones responsibly, this technology presents easy opportunity for abuse, and without regulation it threatens ethical hunting and the fair distribution of game. BHA maintains that hunting should involve an element of skill, woodsmanship and challenge. Consequently, BHA state chapters initiated a national grassroots movement to ban the use of drones in scouting and hunting and upheld the principles of fair chase.

In 2015, this effort continued to gain momentum, with BHA successfully facilitating drone bans in Minnesota, New York and Oregon. Prior to 2015, BHA already had advanced bans in Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico and Vermont. BHA chapters in Nevada, Washington and Wyoming are working to implement bans as well.

This is what happens when BHA comes to the table. Our victories in 2015 attest to the commitment of BHA’s grassroots volunteers in upholding ethical hunting and fishing. BHA chapters are working to implement bans as well.

SUCCESSES BY STATE:
- Minnesota: 2015 hunting regs state that drones and other wireless devices cannot be used to take big game and small game.
- New York: State interpretation of hunting regulations states that hunting is revised to encompass the use of drones; use of drones for hunting as well as the harassment of wildlife in general is prohibited.
- Oregon: Use of drones for hunting, scouting or harassing wildlife is banned.

In the Words of Our Members:

"Fair chase is central to our identity as sportsmen. Here in New York, we welcomed the news that state regulations will consider drones as decoys. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation should be commended for taking this proactive stance, which makes it unlawful to hunt big game ... with aircraft of any kind, including drones." — Dave Colavito, BHA New York Chapter Treasurer, Rock Hill

CONSERVATION FUNDING ON LIFE SUPPORT

IN 2015, BHA RESOLVED not to let the sun set on America’s oldest and most successful conservation program. Established in 1964 through a bipartisan act of Congress, the Land and Water Conservation Fund uses royalties paid by energy companies drilling for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf to conserve important natural resources and expand public access.

Nevertheless, LWCF is in danger. While $900 million has historically been authorized to the fund annually, Congress consistently diverts most of it to other uses. And in 2015, without action by Congress, the program was set to expire.

BHA has long been invested in LWCF’s future. Staff and volunteers worked to educate the public, sportsmen and decision-makers about its importance – and, with expiration only hours away, BHA members from across the country traveled to Washington, D.C., in support of LWCF. This tenacity is what makes BHA the most effective conservation group active today. From after LWCF expired, our members rallied. We joined in condemning legislation that would have dismantled it. We secured strong and consistent media coverage of LWCF’s importance to sportsmen and the general public. We helped advance legislation that would permanently reauthorize the fund. Finally, we celebrated when Congress passed a December budget deal that revived LWCF – but only temporarily. Congress must move towards a short-term fix. BHA is committed to achieving its full funding and permanent reauthorization. And we won’t rest until that happens.

IN THE WORDS OF OUR MEMBERS:

"Until I started hearing from groups like BHA, I never realized how much I rely on places made accessible by LWCF dollars. On a weekly basis you’ll find me fishing, running with my dog or duck hunting on a public space made possible by this program. You can count me among the duck hunters and sportsmen who will continue this fight until LWCF is permanently reauthorized and fully funded." — Hannah Ryan, BHA Montana Chapter Co-chair, Missoula

LWCF BY THE NUMBERS:

- 98 percent of U.S. counties have benefitted from LWCF funds.
- Every dollar invested in the LWCF quadruples in economic value.
- 82 percent of Americans support reauthorization of the LWCF.

LWCF BY THE NUMBERS:

| LWCF BY THE NUMBERS: | 50 million acres across the country since the LWCF’s 50-year history.
|----------------------| 82 percent of U.S. counties have benefitted from LWCF funds.
|                      | Every dollar invested in the LWCF quadruples in economic value.
|                      | 82 percent of Americans support reauthorization of the LWCF.

IN THE WORDS OF OUR MEMBERS:

"Since I learned how many other groups of backcountry sportsmen have made use of LWCF dollars. On a weekly basis you’ll find me fishing, running with my dog, duck hunting or just enjoying a day out in the open. LWCF is critical for ensuring that these places remain accessible and that our sportsmen who will continue this fight until LWCF is permanently reauthorized and fully funded." — Hannah Ryan, BHA Montana Chapter Co-chair, Missoula
Bird on the Brink: Greater Sage Grouse

Once numbering more than 16 million birds, greater sage grouse populations have drastically declined in recent years due to habitat loss, fragmentation and development. Sportsmen are united in supporting conservation of sage grouse and asserting its listing under the Endangered Species Act – but not because of the grouse. Sage grouse habitat shelters more than 350 species of fish and wildlife. For years, a diverse group of stakeholders – including the federal government, Western states, landowners and ranchers, as well as BHA – has worked to sustain both grouse and sagebrush ecosystems. BHA remained an outspoken advocate of this coalition-based approach as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service deadline to render an ESA listing decision approached. BHA staff, ranchers, as well as BHA – has worked to sustain both grouse and sagebrush ecosystems. Our members urged their elected officials to support activities that would improve sagebrush habitat. 

We collaborated on a series of editorial board meetings at influential newspapers across the West. And, ultimately, as we concluded when, on Aug. 22, 2015, the USFWS announced that listing the greater sage grouse as endangered was "not warranted" at that time. The battle, however, is not over. Continued implementation of conservation plans, as well as vigilance against attempts to derail them, are critical to sustaining healthy, sustainable populations of sage grouse, upholding our waterways, re- mains are issues that depend on sportsmen and other recreationists.

Ensuring Legal and Responsible Use of OHVs

Sportsmen-led outreach in Wyoming and other states successfully protected the priority habitat. In particular, wide-ranging species like elk need habitat free from motorized disturbance.

Since its inception, BHA has led the sportsmen’s community in safeguarding intact habitat from fragmentation and disturbance from motorized abuse. In 2015 we intensified our work to ensure the legal and responsible use of OHVs. Led by BHA chapters, our efforts focused on a few key areas: enforcement, engagement and innovation. BHA has pioneered an innovative program that rewards information leading to a conviction for illegal motorized use. In 2015 we advertised the program widely – and presented $2000 in rewards. Between 2014 and 2015, BHA chapters engaged in the development of travel management plans and assisted in management plans, helping guide decisions on motorized use in important landscapes. From northwest Colorado to the Tetons National Forest in Arizona, BHA shaped the future management of thousands of acres of backcountry habitat.

In addition, chapter-led restoration efforts rehabbed lands affected by irresponsible use – among other impacts. On-the-ground projects in states like Wyoming (see sidebar) proactively addressed OHV use in backcountry habitat. More sportsmen can describe stalks ruined, peace and quiet shattered, and pack strings spooked by illegal OHVs. By taking responsibility for ourselves as well as others, BHA is setting a new standard for ethical behavior in the field.

In the Words of Our Members:

Karen Boeger, BHA Nevada Chapter Co-chair, Washoe Valley

"Nevada’s sportsmen worked with state officials, public lands agencies and the state to provide regulatory certainty, ensuring sage grouse remain off the endangered list – forevermore. Now, more than ever, we must prove we can conserve and restore sage grouse habitat. During our two-weeks-on-the-foothill tour, we can serve as a model for the sportsmen and ranchers alike.”

Trevor Herrman, BHA Wyoming Chapter Treasurer, Cheyenne

"OhVs can be a great tool. But like any tool, used wrong they can be damaging and destructive. Given OHVs’ growing popularity, the Forest Service, BLM and state agencies need to hear from the public. Just because OHVs can go anywhere doesn’t mean they need to be everywhere. Stand up and protect the lands we love.”

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WILDERNESS IS CRITICAL to the identity of our nation – and to BHA.

At BHA, we celebrate the great American tradition of testing our personal boundaries amid the solitude of the wilds. Our members understand the urgent need to speak up for these irreplaceable places and experiences to sustain opportunity for future generations.

The establishment by Congress of the Boulder-White Clouds Wilderness, encompassing 275,000 acres of prime big-game habitat and fisheries in central Idaho, is a BHA success story.

**WILDERNESS IS CRITICAL**

Conserving Critical Landscapes National Monuments and Sportsmen: The establishment by Congress of the Boulder-White Clouds Wilderness bill. BHA met with elected officials, mobilized local sportsmen and grass-roots voices, and consistently pushed Congress to undertake legislative action to sustain the region.

In 2015, BHA mobilized the hunting and angling community in northern Minnesota. Berryessa Snow Mountain in California. The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument designation process. None would have been established without sportsmen’s support.

**In the Words of our Members:**

**In the Words of our Members:**

IanMalepeai, BHA Idaho Chapter Co-chair, Boise

“Sportsmen have been invested in permanently protecting Browns Canyon for years, both to sustain the area for hunting and fishing, and to protect important fish and wildlife habitat. The Browns Canyon National Monument designation is one that will be useful for prospective designations. Logos of 27 other sportsmen groups and businesses that support this approach, including Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and Trout Unlimited, adorn the cover. Sportsmen likewise must vocally advocate for our priorities throughout the process.”

**In the Words of our Members:**

Don Holmstrom, BHA Colorado Chapter Member, Boulder

“Sportsmen have been invested in permanently protecting Browns Canyon for years, both to sustain the area for hunting and fishing and to secure fish and wildlife habitat that is, quite simply, irreplaceable. Would the area have been designated a national monument without our support? I don’t have an easy answer – but I am confident that our efforts helped get a 40-year process across the finish line.”

**National Monuments and Sportsmen:**

A Path Forward

SPORTSMEN UNITE TO CONSERVE BROWNS CANYON

Upwards of 300,000 visitors come every year to Browns Canyon. This stretch of river offers one of the West’s best public trout fisheries. The full quiver of Colorado leg game inhabits Browns Canyon. The area encompasses a sprawling expanse of roadless habitat that helps sustain healthy populations of mule deer, elk and bighorns. Recreational anglers pump an estimated $55 million annually into central Colorado’s economy.

For years, BHA advocated for permanent protection of this rugged country. In 2015, we attended meetings alongside conservationists, business owners, state and federal lawmakers, and administration officials to advance legislation to permanently conserve the area. Our efforts paid off in February 2015 when Browns Canyon was officially designated a national monument.

**ON GOING ADVOCACY:**

- **Clearwater Basin Collaborative:** BHA remains an active participant in this Idaho-based collaborative, which is advocating for close to 500,000 acres of new wilderness.

- **Gunnison Public Lands Initiative:** BHA members are working with this diverse coalition to legislatively designate tens of thousands of acres of backcountry fish and wildlife habitat as wilderness.

- **Boundary Waters:** BHA is engaged in efforts to moderate industrial development in close proximity to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northern Minnesota.

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Backcountry Hunters & Anglers is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that relies on private donations for our organization's work on public lands. BHA is fiscally transparent and strives to be efficient in our everyday work. In Fiscal Year 2015 BHA had a revenue of $1,397,863 and expenses of $1,382,854. We directed 90 percent of our budget to programs, 10 percent to administration and fundraising. Our tax ID number is 20-1037177.

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers would like to recognize the following individuals for their generous contributions that allow us carry on our mission as the sportsmen’s voice for our wild public lands, waters and wildlife.

$250 - $999
Steve and Katie Adelman
Ken Anderson
Jarrett Babincsak and Family
Lou Bahin
Jay Banta
Jeff Barney
Noam Ben-Ami
Jenny Blaylock and Family
Karen Boeger
Robert Bryan
Julio Cabrera
Sean Clarkson
Jock Conyngham
Derek Copas
Greg Cover
Eric Crawford
Generoso Cresta
Kyle Dale
Mark and Candy Farani
Matthew Fokson
Aaron Foster
Jason Franklin
Steven and Debbie Gale
William Gerl and Family
Keith Gortich
Joseph Giurfa
Chris Grove
Travis and Kylee Grub
Samuel Hawkey
Mark Heckert
Dan Herring and Family
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Jim Littlejohn
Ryan Los
Jack Lyon
Ian and Haley Malepeau
Daniel Martell
Bob Mazon
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Charles McGlynn
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Samantha Sorensen
Billy Spring
Steve Stanich
Mike Strong
Samuel Tucker
Troy Turner
James Uffer
Derek Vanhorn
Mark Vetter
Jim Wolfgram
Mark Young
Sherri Young
Doug Young
Diane Zanetti

$1000 - $2499
Ryan Callaghan
Sean Carriere
Evan Casey
Conservation Colorado
Anne Didier
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Matthew Grady
Bruz Hyatt
Donald Holmes
Tim Johnson and Family
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Ben Long
Robert Magill
James Montelith
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Brad Nicol
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Dan Parkinson
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Nathan Pugel
Ryan Rech
Shannon Scott
Steve Shannon
Kurt Smith
Cory Staniforth
John Stokes
Land Tawney and Family
Mark Thorsen
Lynda Tucker
Arne-Lee Verville

$2500 - $4999
Cidney Brown
Cinnabar Foundation
Mark Hirvonen
Peter Lupsha
Maki Foundation
James Young

$5,000 - $9999
Conservation Lands Foundation
Blake Fichler and Family
Bill Hanlon
Richard Sack
Pat Mundy
William Nichols and Family
Nonros WEBSITE Foundation
Bruce Pettit

$10,000 - $49,999
Lazar Foundation
Page Foundation
Few Charitable Trusts

$50,000 - $99,999
New Venture Fund
Wilburforce

$100,000 - $400,000
Western Conservation Foundation
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Wyss Foundation

Michael Verville
Joel and Kelly Webster
Barry Whitefield
Ryan Wynn
Jim Yost

Support and Revenue
Grant Revenue
$1,030,199
Business Sponsors
$35,481
Events and Miscellaneous Revenue
$133,605
Regular Membership
$154,035
Donations and Interest
$44,543
Total Revenue
$1,397,863

Expenses
Program Services
$1,250,666
Management and General
$31,934
Fundraising
$100,254
Total Expenses
$1,382,854
Change in Net Assets
$15,009
Net Assets Beginning of Year
$469,357
Net Assets End of Year
$484,366

Total

Income
Program Services
90%
Administrative & Fundraising
10%

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 2015 Annual Report

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, 2015 Annual Report
Partners

Corporate Partners
Alps Outdoorz
B.A. Fischer Sales Co.
CRKT
First Lite
Kenetrek Boots
Kimber
Kryptek
Leupold
onXmaps
RepYourWater
Seek Outside
Sitka
Under Armour
Vortex Optics
Weatherby

In-Kind Donors
Alps Outdoorz
B.A. Fischer Sales Co.
Cogburn Outdoors
Fly Vines
Glacier Distilling
Heritage Timber
Hilleberg the Tentmaker
Irish Setter Boots
Kiss n Release
Kryptek
MeatEater
Missoula Fishing Company
Mystery Ranch
NRS
Omn Bar
REI
Robertson Stykbob
Simms
Spotted Bear Distillery
Weatherby
Zeiss Optics

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Ben Long (Montana), Vice Chairman
Joel Webster (Montana), Chairman Emeritus
Sean Carriere (Idaho), Treasurer
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