

ANNUAL REPORT 2015





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A Message from the President & CEO

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE: BACKCOUNTRY SPORTSMEN AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICA’S PUBLIC LANDS

PICTURE YOUR PLACE. Your spot in the backcountry. The hidden thicket 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 waters. BHA had a seat at the original 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 Browns 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 render 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.



Onward and Upward,

Land Tawney
President & CEO

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



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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 shortsighted 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’s requests.

BHA also took on legislative language that would enable 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



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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 hunting opportunity.

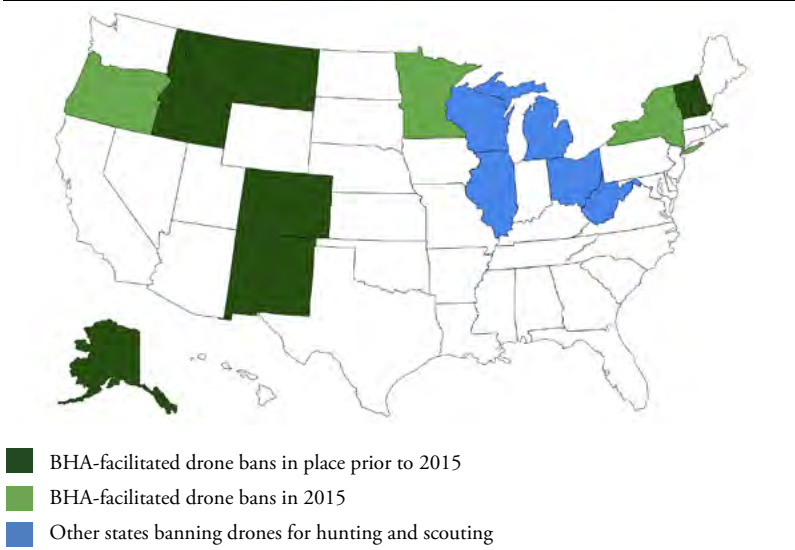
BHA maintains that hunting should involve an element of skill, woodsmanship and challenge. Consequently, BHA state chapters initiated a national grassroots movement to ban the use of drones in scouting and hunting and uphold the principles of fair chase.

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 have been instrumental in advancing a national movement in support of fair chase – and achieving results that benefit sportsmen, fish and wildlife, and the future of hunting and fishing in North America.



Bryan Huskey photo



IN THE WORDS OF OUR MEMBERS:

Dave Colavito, BHA New York Chapter Treasurer, Rock Hill

“Fair chase is central to our identity as sportsmen. Here in New York, we welcomed the news that state regulations will consider drones aircraft. 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.’”

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 aircraft and its use while 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.

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. Even 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. LWCF deserves more than a short-term fix. BHA is committed to achieving its full funding and permanent reauthorization. And we won’t rest until that happens.

LWCF BY THE NUMBERS:

- 5 million acres conserved over the LWCF’s 50-year history
- 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

IN THE WORDS OF OUR MEMBERS:

Hannah Ryan, BHA Montana Chapter Co-chair, Missoula

“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 ranks of outdoorsmen and -women who will continue this fight until LWCF is permanently reauthorized and fully funded.”



BIRD ON THE BRINK: GREATER SAGE GROUSE

ONCE NUMBERING MORE THAN 16 million birds, greater sage grouse populations have dramatically declined in recent years due to habitat loss, fragmentation and development. Sportsmen are united in support of conserving sage grouse and averting its listing under the Endangered Species Act – but not just 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 worked to head off legislative riders that would stymie sage grouse conservation. 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, we celebrated when, on Sept. 22, 2015, the USFWS announced that listing the greater sage grouse as endangered was “not warranted” at that time. The battle, however, is not won. Continued implementation of grouse conservation plans, as well as vigilance against attempts to derail them, are critical to sustaining healthy, huntable populations of sage grouse, upholding our outdoor traditions and bolstering economies that depend on sportsmen and other recreationists.



Scott Root photo



Chris Crockett photo

IN THE WORDS OF OUR MEMBERS:
Karen Boeger, BHA Nevada Chapter Co-chair, Washoe Valley
“Nevada sportsmen worked hard with other stakeholders, public lands agencies and the state to provide regulatory certainty, ensuring sage grouse remain off the endangered list – for now. Together we must prove we can conserve and restore sage grouse habitat. Doing so will be a win for the bird, sportsmen and ranchers alike.”

SAVORING A CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY
Days after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released its “not warranted” listing decision for the greater sage grouse, BHA convened a group of reporters and sportsmen in eastern Montana to discuss the decision, sage grouse management and conservation policy – and hunt grouse. The late September weather was fine, the dogs eager to please, the birds plentiful, and the energy palpable. Happening less than a week after the USFWS announcement, the BHA gathering had the feel of a celebration – a victory for forward-looking, collaborative, multi-stakeholder resource management in the United States.



ENSURING LEGAL AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF OHVs



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 restoration.

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. Also in 2015, BHA chapters engaged in the development of travel management plans and resource management plans, helping guide decisions on motorized use in important landscapes. From northwest Colorado to the Tonto 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 OHV use, among other impacts. On-the-ground projects in states like Wyoming (see sidebar) proactively addressed OHV use in backcountry habitat. Most 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:
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.”

SPORTSMEN-LED OUTREACH IN WYOMING
All wildlife need the security provided by productive habitat. In particular, wide-ranging species like elk need habitat free from motorized disturbance. Frank Romero, district ranger for the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest and Thunder Basin National Grassland in Wyoming, wanted to install educational signs in critical winter range to inform users about the areas’ importance to big game and notify them of seasonal road closures. Lack of funds, however, had kept the project on hold for years. The Wyoming chapter of BHA provided seed money to get the ball rolling. Their initial \$3500 investment leveraged another \$37,000 to enable the project’s completion, and the signs were installed by winter.





Toni Ruth photo

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.



Getting Congress to agree on anything these days – much less unanimously, as the Senate did in its vote for the legislation – is rare. However, the diversity and breadth of the bill's supporters helped seal the deal.

Sportsmen were key in advancing the Boulder-White Clouds wilderness bill. BHA met with elected officials, mobilized local sportsmen and grassroots voices, and consistently pushed Congress to undertake legislative action to sustain the region.

In the Interior Columbia River Basin of Idaho, 60 percent of the most productive trout and salmon habitat, 85 percent of the healthiest Western cutthroat trout populations and 76 percent of healthy bull trout populations are found in backcountry roadless areas. These lands comprise one of the state's most valuable natural assets. Guaranteeing their permanent conservation is an investment that will pay long-term dividends – and proves that boots-on-the-ground solutions really do work.

IN THE WORDS OF OUR MEMBERS:

Ian Malepeai, BHA Idaho Chapter Co-chair, Boise

"When I was growing up, my family relied on the Boulder-White Clouds region for our time afield. Generations of Idahoans continue to access it for hunting, fishing, hiking and simple solitude. The fact that its conservation has resulted from a collaborative, grassroots movement by folks who appreciate and value all that it offers gives me hope for my kids and grandkids."

ONGOING 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.

NATIONAL MONUMENTS AND SPORTSMEN: A PATH FORWARD



Josh Duplechian/Trout Unlimited photo

RIO GRANDE DEL NORTE of northern New Mexico. Berryessa Snow Mountain in California. The Upper Missouri River Breaks in wild Montana.

All are American national monuments that conserve irreplaceable land and waters, wildlife habitat and fisheries, and varied opportunities for visitors to hunt, fish and enjoy our public lands. None would have been established without sportsmen's support.

The federal Antiquities Act provides a strategy for ensuring the long-term protection of significant landscapes. It also can sustain public opportunities to hunt and fish. To do this via national monument designations, however, monument proposals must engage important user groups, including sportsmen. Sportsmen likewise must vocally advocate for our priorities throughout the designation process.

In 2015, BHA mobilized the hunting and angling community to unite around conservation via the Antiquities Act, providing a

path forward for lawmakers invested in gaining sportsmen's support for prospective designations.

BHA produced a report on the history and potential usefulness of the act. Written by noted journalist Hal Herring, it includes a set of tenets – guiding principles for monument designations that can draw widespread support by sportsmen. Case studies feature monuments where sportsmen's engagement was key to their success. Logos of 27 other sportsmen groups and businesses that support this approach, including Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and Trout Unlimited, adorn the cover.

As sportsmen and other public lands advocates seek ways to permanently conserve important lands and waters, the Antiquities Act will remain a powerful tool. BHA has established a benchmark for future monument proposals – one that will be useful for years to come.

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."

**SPORTSMEN UNITE TO CONSERVE
BROWNS CANYON**

Upwards of 300,000 visitors come every year to Colorado's Browns Canyon. This stretch of river offers one of the West's best public trout fisheries.

The full quiver of Colorado big game inhabits Browns Canyon. The area encompasses a sprawling expanse of roadless habitat that helps sustain healthy populations of mule deer, elk and bighorns. Recreation here pumps an estimated \$55 million annually into central Colorado's economy.

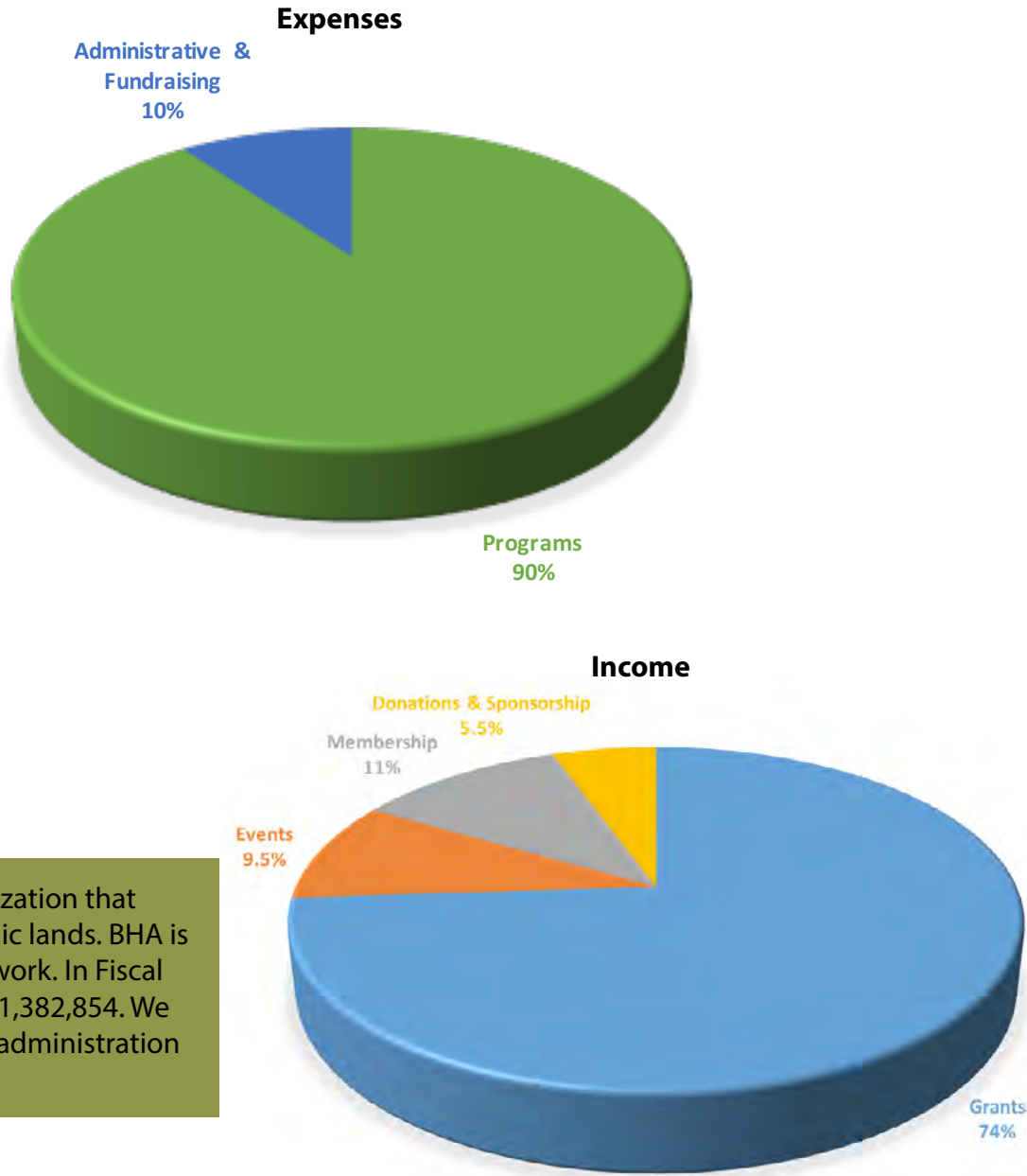
For years, BHA advocated for permanent protection of this rugged country. In 2015, we attended meetings alongside recreationists, business owners, state and federal lawmakers, and administration officials to advance the area's conservation, taking action via letters to the editor and columns in local and national news outlets. These efforts paid off in February 2015 when Browns was officially designated a national monument.



FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers Statement of Activities Year Ended Dec. 31, 2015	
	Total
Support and Revenue	
Grant Revenue	\$1,030,199
Business Sponsors	\$35,481
Events and Miscellaneous	\$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 Assests Beginning of Year	\$469,357
Net Assets End of Year	\$484,366

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.



DONORS

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.	Matt Hogan Tony Imthurn Adam Janke Bruce Kirke Jeff Klausmann Gary and Barb Lane David Lien Bert Lindler Jim Littlejohn Ryan Los Jack Lyon Ian and Hailey Malepeai Daniel Martel Bob Mason George McCloskey Charles McGlynn Sam Medcalf Mike Mihlfried Bob Mirasole Adam Neff Randy Newberg Dean Osterman Douglas Ouren Tyler Pattullo Mark Penninger and Family Grant Petersen Jim Posewitz Erin Clark and Rick Potts Jeff Quigley Edward Rebman Derrick Reeves John Rice Ryan Richards Kjell Risdal Michael Rogers and Family Tom Schirm Bruce Sillers David Simpson James G. Sloan Patrick Smeaton	Bailey Sory Casey Streepy H. Cody Tegart John Webster and Family Bradley Young Renee Young Bob Young	Michael Verville Joel and Kelly Webster Barry Whitehill Ryan Wynn Jim Yeo John Yost
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