



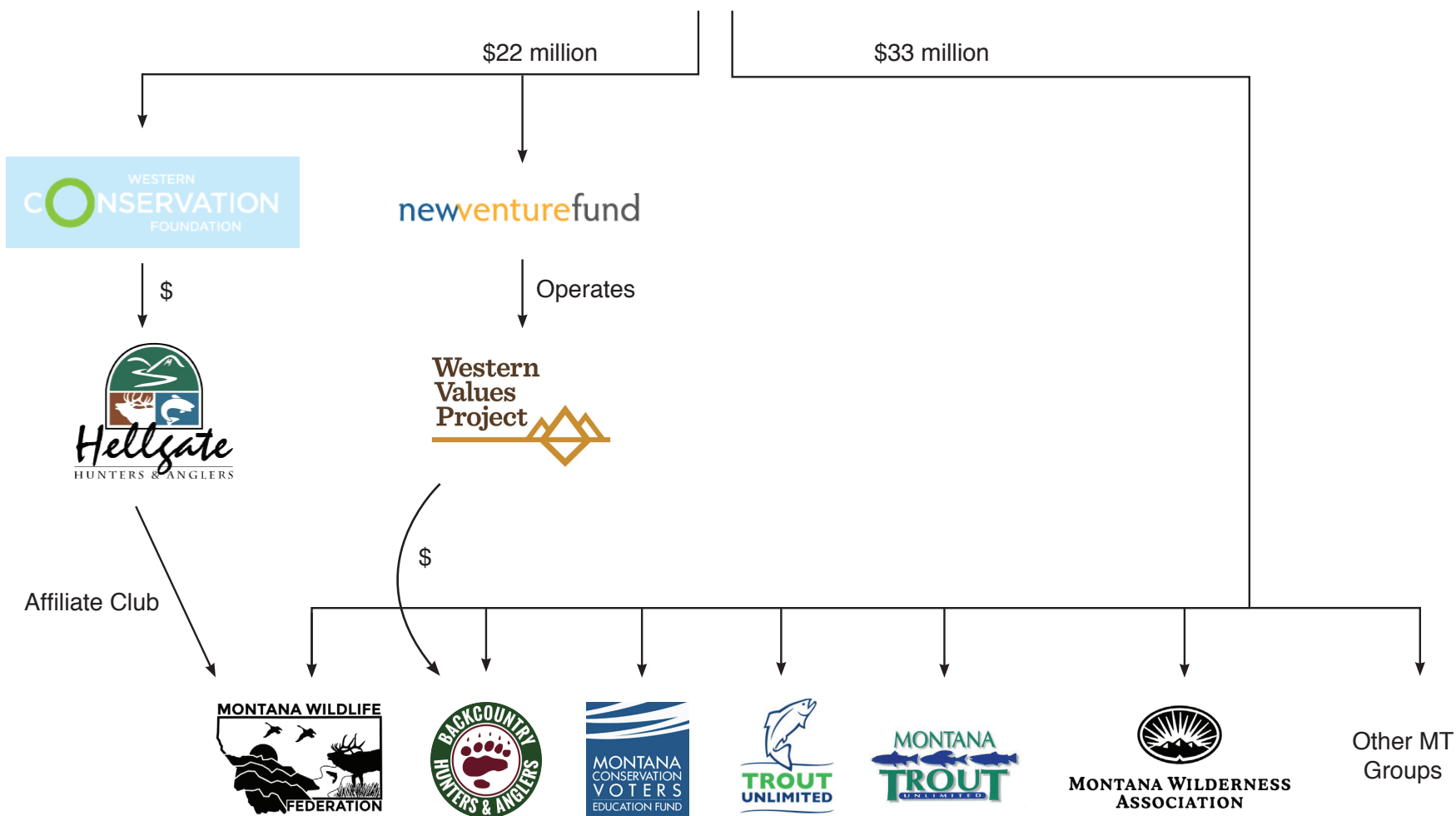
MONTANA IN THE CROSSHAIRS:

HOW FOREIGN/OUT-OF-STATE MONEY IS TRYING
TO INFLUENCE TREASURE STATE VOTERS



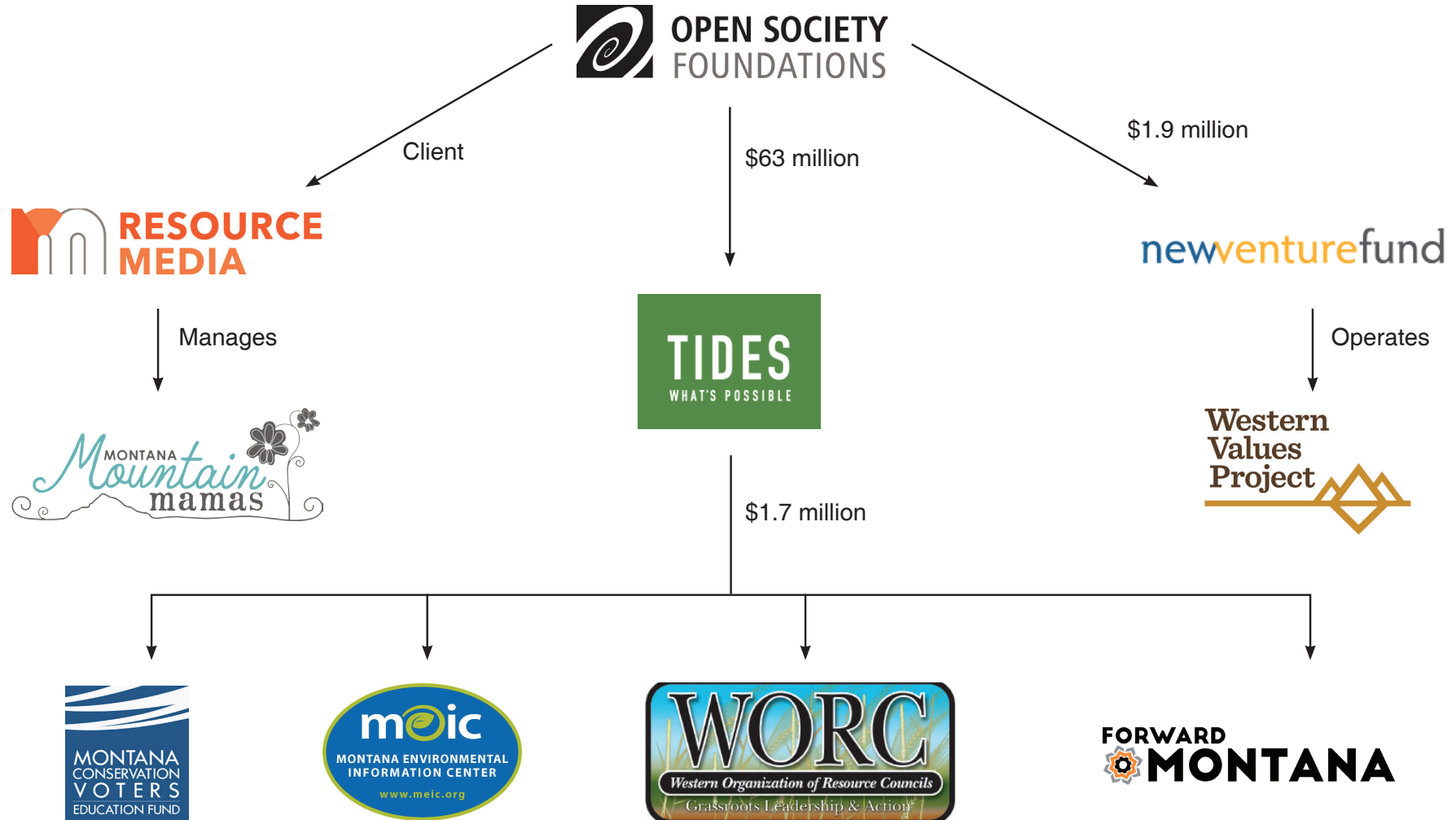


Hansjorg Wyss



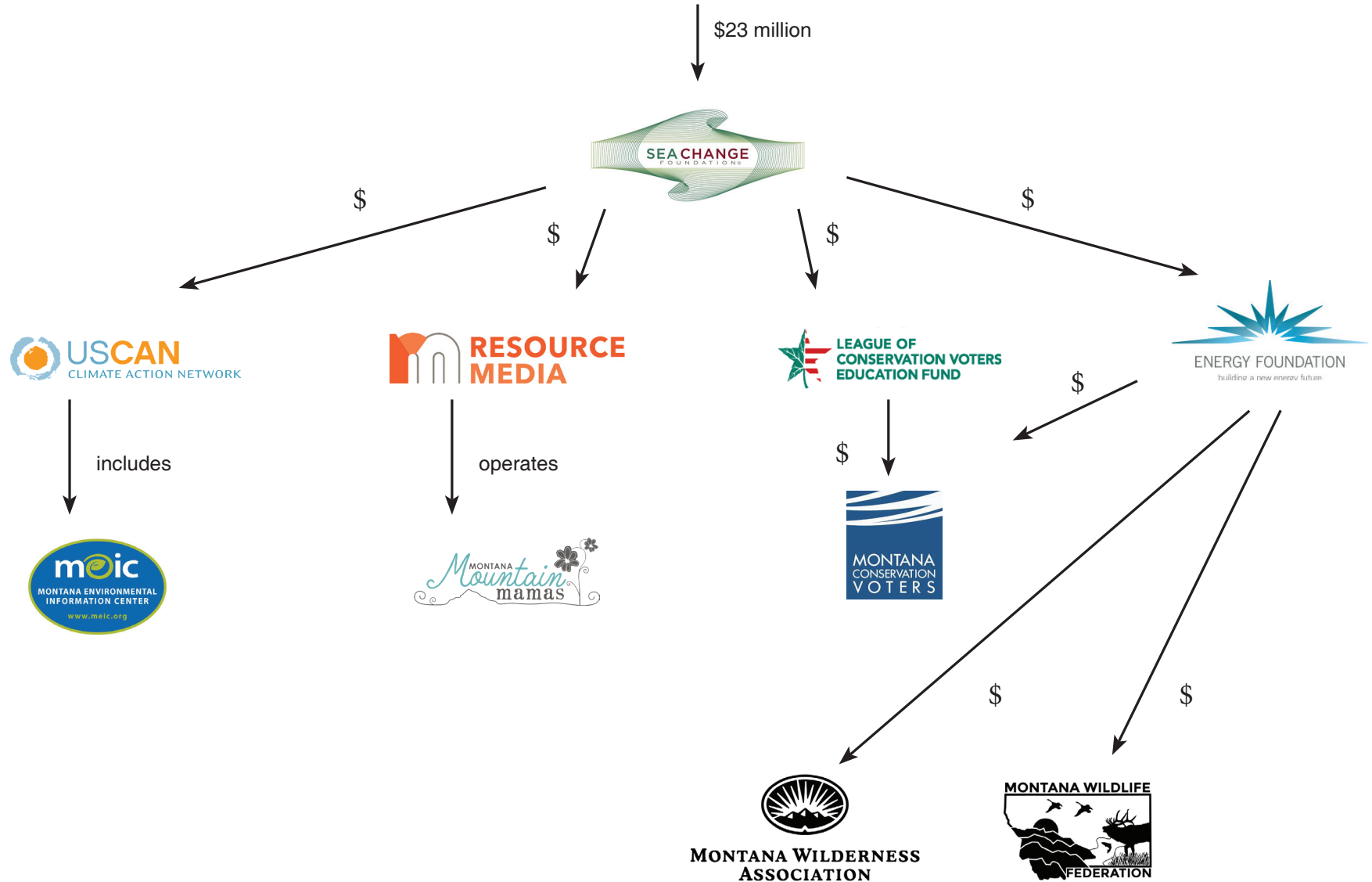


George Soros
(Hungarian billionaire)



Note: Open Society Institute also funds NRDC, Earthjustice, and many other environmental groups. Foundation to Promote Open Society also funds Climate Policy Institute, Defenders of Wildlife, and others.

KLEIN LTD (LINKED TO RUSSIAN \$\$)



Note: Klein Ltd. is a shell company based in Bermuda. Klein is operated out of the offices of Wakefield Quin, a law firm that also manages money for a number of Russian state oil interests. WQ was also linked to a Russian money laundering case in the British Virgin Islands. Sea Change Foundation also gives money to Sierra Club, NRDC, Energy Foundation, etc.



SUMMARY

Montana is being flooded with money from out of state to influence its politics and economy—money that may even be traceable back to Russia. The goal of this money is to promote a radical environmental agenda and weaken Montana's economic sectors that utilize natural resources. Ultimately, these environmental benefactors want to stop logging, mining, modern farming and ranching, natural gas extraction, and other resource utilization in favor of land untouched by human activity.

The tens of millions of dollars flooding into Montana comes in several forms. Some groups are boilerplate environmental advocacy outfits. One group, Resource Media, acts as a PR firm for leftwing causes and runs the “Montana Mountain Mamas” project. Other cloak themselves as hunters and anglers to try to attract the support of Montana's largest—and generally more conservative—voting bloc that might reject messages from openly environmental groups.

This report highlights three wealthy sources of money and the Montana groups they are linked to. Of particular concern is the possibility of foreign influence in environmental groups. On June 5, 2018, the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources announced it was probing the relationship between the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), a major U.S. environmental group, and the Chinese government.

In the first example below, a vehicle for Russian money passing through Bermuda is explained. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has spoken about “phony environmental groups” that “were funded by the Russians.” And in 2014, the NATO secretary general warned of Russia secretly funding environmental groups to keep other countries dependent on Russian oil—which accounts for 40 percent of the Russian government's income.¹

While investigation is needed to look into any foreign influence in Montana, there's little doubt that foreign/out-of-state money is playing a big role in Montana. **The exact depth of their collusion is unknown. Are these tax-exempt groups operating in accordance with nonprofit regulations?**

RUSSIAN MONEY TRICKLING DOWN TO MONTANA?

In 2010 and 2011, a mysterious entity in Bermuda called Klein Ltd. gave \$23 million to the San Francisco-based Sea Change Foundation. Klein Ltd. appeared to only exist on paper; it is (or was) operated out of the law offices of Wakefield Quin in Hamilton, Bermuda. Wakefield Quin offers investment management services and has been linked to a number of Russian investment funds as well as a Russian money laundering case in the British Virgin Islands.²

The Sea Change Foundation, run by wealthy environmentalist Nat Simons (who commutes to work on his gas-guzzling yacht³), distributes money to a host of environmental groups. Recipients of Sea Change grants include Resource Media, The Energy Foundation, the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, and the U.S. Climate Action Network.

Each of these groups has ties to Montana:

RESOURCE MEDIA acts a PR firm for a host of leftwing/ environmental groups. One of its projects is Montana Mountain Mamas, an organization that has recently popped up to chime in on public lands and other issues. In total, Sea Change has donated \$6.5 million to Resource Media since 2009.⁴ Resource Media has also received grants from The Brainerd Foundation (\$917,000), The Packard Foundation (\$3.3 million), and the Hewlett Foundation (\$5.9 million), and the Wilburforce Foundation (\$3.6 million). It's unclear which of these groups, if any, is specifically funding Montana Mountain Mamas.

THE ENERGY FOUNDATION distributes money to a multitude of environmental groups involved in progressive politics. The Energy Foundation has given grants to Montana Conservation Voters, Headwaters Economics, Montana Wilderness Association, and Montana Wildlife Federation. The Energy Foundation also has given \$1.1 million to aforementioned Resource Media.

THE LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND gives grant money to the Montana Conservation Voters Education Fund. The League of Conservation Voters—a 501(c)(4) political affiliate of the Education Fund—gives money to Montana Conservation Voters. The League of Conservation Voters launched a dishonest \$244,000 ad campaign in Montana in 2018 attacking Rep. Greg Gianforte on public lands issues.⁵

THE U.S. CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK counts a number of environmental activist groups as members, including the Montana Environmental Information Center. MEIC has also received millions from out-of-state foundations such as the Brainerd Foundation and the Wilburforce Foundation that fund phony sportsmen groups that operate in Montana.

Sea Change also gives grant money to the Natural Resources Defense Council. The NRDC is the subject of a probe by the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources into whether it should be registered as a “foreign agent” due to its apparently cozy relationship with the Chinese government.⁶ NRDC has lobbied in Montana, such as Backcountry Hunters & Anglers.

GEORGE SOROS

Hungarian billionaire George Soros is a well-known financier of progressive politics across the globe. His two major foundations, the Open Society Institute and the Foundation to Promote Open Society, have billions of dollars in assets.

Both organizations have given millions to the environmental movement. Open Society Institute funds NRDC, Earthjustice, and many other environmental groups. Foundation to Promote Open Society also funds Climate Policy Institute, Defenders of Wildlife, and others.

Both of Soros’ foundations have given millions to the **Tides Foundation** and **Tides Center**, a “dark money” network that

has operated in San Francisco since the 1970’s to promote progressive politics. Tides operates by creating internal projects that it “lends” its nonprofit status to; since the money is managed internally, it’s impossible to know exactly which Tides donors are funding which project.

The **Tides Foundation** has made grants to several Montana groups:

Montana Environmental Information Center (\$176,000)

Grants funded a campaign for a “coal-free Montana,” among other advocacy.

Western Organization of Resource Councils (\$1.5 million)

WORC has partnered with NRDC in litigation against coal mining.

Montana Conservation Voters Education Fund (\$50,000)

Forward Montana/Forward Montana Foundation (\$25,000)

Soros’ Open Society Foundation is also a client of Resource Media, which a leftwing PR firm that runs Montana Mountain Mamas. Soros’ Foundation to Promote Open Society has also given \$725,000 to Defenders of Wildlife, which advocates for wolf repopulation in Montana, to the chagrin of sportsmen and ranchers. Soros’ groups also support the aforementioned NRDC, which has testified in the Montana legislature and is being investigated for its ties to China.

HANSJORG WYSS

Swiss-born billionaire Hansjorg Wyss has made his mark known on the environmental movement—even if he has escaped much of the media attention that George Soros has attained. He gives few interviews to the media.

Wyss made his billions in the medical device industry through a company called Synthes. Shortly before Wyss sold Synthes to pharmaceutical conglomerate Johnson & Johnson, the Department of Justice charged Synthes and four executives under Wyss with offenses related to an off-label marketing scheme that led to the deaths of at least three people.⁷

Wyss has parked much of his wealth in three foundations: The Wyss Foundation (assets of \$2 billion), the Hansjorg Wyss Foundation (assets of \$300 million), and the Wyss

Medical Foundation (formerly the Wyss Peace Foundation) (assets of \$85 million). It is through these entities that he funds a variety of leftwing groups. Wyss has also given at least \$5 million to the Clinton Foundation, which has been accused of being a vehicle for foreign influence.⁸

The Wyss Foundation has made \$25 million in grants to Montana since 1999, according to public records. Recipients include:

BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

Led by progressive activist Land Tawney, tax records show this group gets the majority of its money from activist foundations, not sportsmen. Tawney's so-called Montana Hunters and Anglers received over \$1 million in dark money to influence the 2012 election.

MONTANA CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

MCV has received at least \$387,500 directly from the Wyss Foundation.

MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

The Wyss Foundation has given at least \$1.3 million to MWA.

MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Wyss has given at least \$1.4 million to MWF.

The Wyss Foundation has also funded front organizations that operate or fund groups in Montana:

The New Venture Fund has received at least \$14.8 million from the Wyss Foundation. New Venture Fund is a "dark money" hub. NVF operates has launched over 100 internal "projects" that it lends its tax-exempt status to. These projects may appear to be grassroots organization in the Mountain West, when they are in fact operated out of Washington, D.C.

For instance, the so-called **Western Values Project**, an NVF front group, lists its address as a P.O. Box in Whitefish, Montana. However, a recent job posting for the Western Values Project listed the job location as D.C.

NVF raised over \$360 million in 2016. Based on NVF's setup, it is impossible to tell who is funding what projects.⁹ That includes the Western Values Project's six-figure ad campaign in December 2017 against Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, as well as the \$113,000 NVF donated to **Backcountry Hunters and Anglers** in 2015.¹⁰

The Western Conservation Foundation has received at least \$7 million from the Wyss Foundation and gave \$1.6 million to Montana groups between 2014 and 2016. WCF operates a barebones website that notes its grant making is "by invitation only." WCF directs grants to groups such as Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (\$497,660), Hellgate Hunters and Anglers (\$24,000), Montana Wilderness Association (\$302,940), and the Montana Renewable Energy Association (\$92,428).¹¹

CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that millions of dollars from foreign/out-of-state interests has been pouring into Montana. While some of this money is traceable, it is easy for new front groups to sprout up with no discernible money trail for months, if not well over a year—if ever. In 2012, the Montana Hunters and Anglers PAC raised over a million dollars; efforts to trace this money led back to dark money groups.

As Montana has seen large ad campaigns over the past year and gears up for election season in 2018, it is worth asking where these groups are getting their money—and with whom they are colluding.

METHODOLOGY

We used public records (e.g. Form 990 tax returns) to construct financial links between organizations. Keep in mind that money is fungible.

Limitations: Information for 2017 is not readily available. Nonprofit organizations that ended their fiscal year on December 31, 2017 have until mid-November 2018 to file their tax returns. As such, some of the more recent money trail—such as who may have funded last year's ad campaigns in Montana—is not publicly available.

REFERENCES

¹<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jun/19/russia-secretly-working-with-environmentalists-to-oppose-fracking>

²For more information, see our "From Russia With Love?" report, downloadable at: https://www.biggreenradicals.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Klein_Report_12-2015.pdf

³<http://freebeacon.com/politics/dem-mega-donor-commutes-to-work-on-gas-guzzling-yacht/>

⁴FoundationSearch.com data.

⁵<https://www.greatfalls Tribune.com/story/news/2018/03/14/conservationists-anti-greg-gianforte/423567002/>

⁶<https://naturalresources.house.gov/newsroom/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=404881>

⁷http://www.philly.com/philly/business/20091206_Legal_troubles_for_local_billionaire.html?c=r

⁸<https://www.clintonfoundation.org/press-releases/wyss-foundation-joins-bill-hillary-chelsea-clinton-foundation-no-ceilings-full>

⁹<http://freebeacon.com/issues/left-wing-front-groups-make-anti-trump-money-untraceable/>

¹⁰<https://westernvaluesproject.org/new-tv-ad-blasts-zinkes-embarrassing-scandals-and-monumental-failures/>

¹¹Source: Form 990 tax returns for 2014-16.