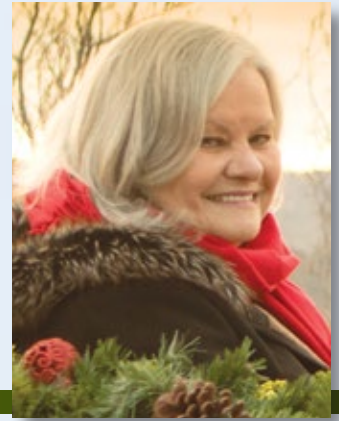


# How Many Bucks Does it Take?

By Christyann Olson, AWA Executive Director



One of December's pleasant tasks is to update our members in the December WLA about how we manage financially. Donors, especially individuals, make a tremendous contribution to our efforts. In our most recent fiscal year, individuals contributed 77 percent of AWA's total revenue. Whether your gift is a monthly donation, one-time donation, selling art cards, or the proceeds from a children's cupcake sale, it helps us make a difference in our conservation mission.

Margaret Mead is famous for her reminder: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." One could say her quote defines AWA. In today's challenging times where progress seems so very slow, our knowledge of how deeply our members care helps us more than you can imagine.

There are any number of stories we could tell you to highlight that our members/donors/supporters are our most valuable resource, to celebrate the difference people make. The following story began when a concerned member called AWA almost 16 years ago. The call was about motocross races in the Livingstone area on the southern eastern slopes of our Rockies. We walked the race course together, took photos and wrote to the government with our concerns. We knew native trout were in jeopardy. Together, we spread the word and created an awareness of the potential harm being done. More people like you our readers and supporters took an interest and began speaking up.

The racing continued. But, rules and restrictions were put in place. Fish and Wildlife officers and concerned conservationists took photos of a 2014 race that showed the race didn't follow the rules. You may remember hearing that late in 2018 the courts ruled that a motocross race which crossed North and South Racehorse Creeks several times seriously harmed and killed young bull trout and threatened westslope cutthroat trout. In June 2019, \$70,000 in fines was laid under the *Species at Risk Act* and the *Fisheries Act*. People who care make a difference; we owe a debt to those who made a difference in this story of persistently pursuing good stewardship over the years.

The financial support people give makes it possible for us to be out there, to learn more, to research, to work with colleagues, to alert officials, to cooperate on initiatives and to help people learn more about their natural world and how caring for it will be a legacy for all.

AWA's excellent, dynamic Conservation Specialists – Carolyn, Joanna, Nissa and Grace – made a difference in every corner of our province this year. AWA's engagement and untiring work creating awareness, defending wild Alberta and our wildlife is recognized and appreciated. Ian, AWA's outstanding editor for more than 10 years now, ensures the *Wild Lands Advocate* delivers important news about conservation in Alberta and brings us stories of people, passion and hope.

At the office, we have reflected on the past year and written our comprehensive annual report. As we assembled statistics and

photographs and reviewed our progress, we realized what an important and rewarding year it has been. One hundred and twenty-five volunteers donated more than 3,000 hours to AWA this year; staff presented the Wilderness Road Show 16 times and reached 576 individuals; another 3,154 individuals participated in 71 different meetings, hikes, events, and presentations where we increased awareness of wild Alberta. Our membership has grown and represents 208 communities in Alberta. We have members throughout Canada and around the world. Our complete annual report is available on our website; in it you can read about our work in every corner of Alberta.

I am particularly proud of the review of our operations we received this year from Charity Intelligence, a Canadian watchdog for charities. They gave AWA an **A and a four-star rating**. This vote of confidence means you can be assured your investment in the AWA team is well-used; you can be assured AWA's finances are well-managed. This is significant recognition for AWA; we are now included as one of the top 100 charities in Canada.

As I write this update the sky is clear, the stars are brilliant, and a fresh layer of snowflakes glistens. There is hope for tomorrow because of the strength of people like you who are inspired to care. Thank you for your help, for being part of the AWA Team, and for making our work meaningful and possible! Please call or write when you can. It is always good to hear from you. 🍀