

Episode 66: We Elected A President, Not A Fairy Godmother | ...

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SPEAKERS

Kim Crumbo, Jack Humphrey



Jack Humphrey 00:00

Welcome to the 66th episode of The rewilding Earth podcast. In this episode, our own Kim Crumbo wildlands coordinator for rewilding Institute clarifies how the conservation community must lean into the 30 by 30 campaign. He reminds us while we have a friendly administration, we still have much work to do. And the rewilding Institute is ready to provide the underground plan for protecting at least 30% land and water by 2030 for North America. You're listening to the rewilding Earth podcast. The rewilding Earth podcast is supported by businesses such as Patagonia kotula and bio habitats, as well as the Wheaton foundation and listeners like you. If you love the work that the rewilding Institute is doing, please consider donating @rewilding.org and be sure to sign up for our weekly newsletter while you're there. As the rewilding Institute's wild lands coordinator, Kim Crumbo leads our efforts to restore native carnivores to their rightful place on landscapes across the west. He works closely with diverse conservation partners and regional Coalition's to engage scientists, communities and elected leaders in the effort to secure species recovery and public support for wolves, bears, Lynx, cougars and other native carnivores. Kim served 20 years with the National Park Service in Grand Canyon first as a river Ranger and later as wilderness coordinator. He also worked as a river guide for a decade as Utah wilderness coordinator for the Sierra Club for two years. Beginning in 2000. Kim assumed various roles with Grand Canyon wild lands Council, including a

stint as the northern representative for the Arizona wilderness coalition. Before working on rivers and wilderness activism. He spent four years with the Navy SEALs team one completing two combat deployments in Vietnam. You were here as a rewilding leadership council member, I believe the first time we talked, and now you've picked up a couple of new titles board member and



Kim Crumbo 02:21

well, I'm called a lot of things. But Wildlands Coordinator, probably the one I prefer so



Jack Humphrey 02:27

so you've taken on, in short, a more active role, big time with rewilding and a lot of different projects that you've been working on. Right away, just hit the ground running. You're a massive resource to rewilding and the conservation community. And I think that's why everybody was really excited to see you step into the new roles among your martini making skills.



Kim Crumbo 02:51

You know, competition is forming on that one. Right, right. The thing about rewilding Institute is it's, for me, it's an ideal environment, because it we're open to new ideas, new ideas and things. But it's also, you know, people have conversations about those things. So it's not, you know, I've been involved with Sierra Club, which is this giant black hole that you throw ideas into. Now, it's just to me, it's just been a real positive, positive change for everyone.



Jack Humphrey 03:21

I've I've taken a little census, and everyone is equally happy that you are here and doing this. And one of the things that you're working on, we have we are part of a coalition for 30 by 30, do you want to talk about that, first off, as we go through the things that you're involved with, at least with rewilding North America and our campaign ahead?



Kim Crumbo 03:46

Well, the whole 30 by 30 idea, you know, stems from the half Earth concepts that actually read das foreman and others, but fortunately, yo Wilson get picked up on that made it kind of a national international effort. But you know, we've been involved in that for a long

time. When you really think about it means 30% of the earth, protected by 2030 and 50%, protected 20 2050. And what do you mean, first of all, what do we mean by protected and that becomes an issue that you really have to spend some time on. There's some ideas about that. I think a lot of the discussion, at least in the United States has to do with what's called gap one, gap two, there's other classifications but gap, one, essentially wilderness areas gap. Two are the other areas that are reasonably well protected. But there's an international International Union, Conservation of Nature has their own criteria as well. And they're very compatible. You know, what do we really mean and if there's a consensus that at that 30% Sent and ultimately of that half percent, at least 10% of all that has to be strictly protected, which would imply, you know, wilderness happens to be one of the stricter designation, so you got to figure out, how do we go about doing that?



Jack Humphrey 05:17

Now, there's a lot of, like you said, a lot of definitions. foreman, on more than one recent board and staff meeting, brought up the idea that there's a lot of talk out there a lot of interest, a lot of energy around this idea of, I mean, it goes all the way to Biden's new administration. And you'd all Introducing 30 by 30. initiative, right. But what foreman likes to talk about is that there's while there's a lot of interest, there are very few people out there saying what really constitutes protection and how a network actually gets put together of wild lands with corridors. And you just recently wrote at rewilding org, wildlife corridors, goals and objectives, and really trying to define or redefining where we had already defined foremen and suele and nos at all. Can you talk a little bit about that? Like, how do we set this upcoming standard that makes it a little bit more meat on the bone, when people are talking about 30 by 30, and what it really means on the ground,

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Kim Crumbo 06:25

is that is to kind of sitting back and seeing what's going on, you realize that the by the Biden administration embracing that idea, that gives us a lot of trash and a lot of opportunity. Now there is some debate what protected me so that gives us the an additional opportunity to enter into those discussions. And you know, we've given it a lot of thought it sometimes you just have to keep saying it over and over and over again. And finally, sort of like wildlife corridor, which, you know, finally, it started resonating in it, that it takes off. And of course, you know, when you're a small group like us, you got these great ideas, and then there's always the bigger guys that want to take credit for it. But you know, really, that's what we're trying to get going because they have a tremendous outreach. They're real clunky in terms of in terms of new ideas, but they're pretty effective and getting the word out. And we're talking net, not only nationally, but globally in pushing this idea. So a lot of room for discussion, I think we're given a lot of thought. And I

think we need to get that message out.



Jack Humphrey 07:35

What do you like to refer to so that people can get an idea of what maybe more of a completed if not a completed, but a more completed rewilling network looks like so they can see what maybe the future is going to look like?



Kim Crumbo 07:49

Well, then involved with that, well, the southern Utah wilderness Alliance is currently demonstrated, if they've got some papers that they're ready to release that show that the areas that are part of the American Americans Red Rock Wilderness Act really contributes to the total amount of protected areas within Utah. When you really look at the areas that are designated wilderness, or that qualify for wellness, you're looking up around, you know, 15 20% of the state, not 30%. But what they have done, the SU approached us with the you know, they've been working on protecting these areas, about 9 million acres for wilderness. But it it has dawned on everybody that you have to connect this. So that's where they asked us to step in and provide some background information, some ideas about what constitutes connectivity. And there's been a lot of work from like Carlos Carroll and Sue lay and and others that have pointed out areas that have already been demonstrated through computer modeling, and then someone on the ground effort that these are areas that would qualify as wildlife corridors that connect these protected areas, not only on a state basis basis, but on a regional and actually international level, like Yellowstone to Yukon, or ours, you know, from New Mexico up to the Yukon, those types of things. So it's gaining traction and largely through people finally realizing this is a great idea. And let's go with it so, so that that effort within Utah right now is one that we're just kind of wrapping up and there she was getting ready to release that those that those papers that report.



Jack Humphrey 09:48

It's kind of exciting to be on the front lines of this and find yourself after how many administrations have you. I won't put you on the spot. I know that you're You're in your 50s or so?



Kim Crumbo 10:03

Well, yeah,



Jack Humphrey 10:04

but I mean, after all of the all of the unfriendly administrations that you've been through doing conservation all these years, what's it feel like to have one that's taking, in some senses, your work the most seriously that it's ever been? I mean, we've never had anything close to an administration saying, yeah, that 3030 thing sounds great.

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Kim Crumbo 10:25

It's been a long time coming. But there have been inroads all along, I'd say with the exception of the Trump administration, who already made this such a critical issue by ignoring that, I think we're finally to a point where we've got to do something we just can't talk about it and think about, we just got to start the action. Now. I think that's been helpful. Like I, you know, I've said before, you know, we elect the president, not our fairy godmother. And I think we got made a lot of progress. During Obama's administration. He came in, you know, this was not on his, you know, something he was aware of, but ultimately became aware of the necessity of protecting areas. But there's been a lot of effort made over the years that have contributed that have resulted in where we are now. So let's not discredit that, but let's go with it, what the options we have now, it's up to us to make this happen. History has sort of been on our side, but time is not. And there's just a lot of good people involved in this. A lot of dedicated people that make it will make this happen. I believe



Jack Humphrey 11:34

you're listening to the rewilding Earth podcast. Did you know we also publish insightful and inspirational content from leading rewilding scholars, poets, artists and organizers from around the world? You can visit rewilding.org and sign up for our weekly digest to receive brilliant, fresh insights on everything rewilding. You'll find over a decade of articles and news from the frontlines of wild lands, protection and all kinds of restoration efforts. Check us out at rewilding.org. And don't forget to share it with friends. Other news, there's a lot of really actually good news coming out. In fact, you just shared an article with us this morning via email on the National Geographic story of the 10 good things that have happened among those 10. We're used to hearing such bad news. And it doesn't mean that the bad news goes away. But it does help to balance a bit. The Colorado wolf reintroduction is on and that was one of the things that National Geographic highlighted is their top 10 conservation victories of this year. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

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Kim Crumbo 12:34

Well, yeah, it was a major, major accomplishment. And to the folks that have been working on it in Colorado, there's a coalition was Rocky Mountain wolf project and a lot of affiliates, including the Defenders of Wildlife, and the Colorado chapter for the Sierra Club, and a lot of others that made this happen. It's now the word real work begins, because one is that they've got to get wolves on the ground within the next couple of years before the governor, you know, before the election comes up, we need get another Nazi in there. But right now we've got an ideal political situation to make progress on this. So it's great, but we've got a lot of work ahead of us. And there's a lot of good people involved in that efforts.



Jack Humphrey 13:18

You work with Dave Parsons, also on our board, and he had worked an awful lot with the Mexican wolf recovery. We know what's probably ahead. We've been here before we've gotten moves on the ground before, just because that happened. And it was an immense, enormous amount of work to make it happen. did not mean that everything was nobody whip waved a wand over the healer and southern Arizona and made everything okay, the problems in some sense only just began. What can we learn from that? going forward? What would you like people to have learned from that going forward and maybe making the reintroduction in Colorado better?

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Kim Crumbo 14:02

Their reintroduction, Colorado's tied to reintroduction of wolves, Mexican wolves, you know, there's issues that overlap. One of the things that we've done is this impatient patience, you know, we got to get things done, you know, there comes a point where you just can't wait for the good to happen. And there's some lawsuits involved in terms that they Parsons and others are involved in to get the Fish and Wildlife Service to remove that boundary between Mexican wolf populations and the rest of the world. We have very good science panel involved with the official Wildlife Service's Recovery Team that made recommendations for three recovery areas in the United States. Those are the only areas that we can we have any control over. One of them was the current area where the Mexican ones are inhabiting. The other one was the Grand Canyon eco region which you includes Northern Arizona and southern Utah, and one of the others was Colorado, in the San Juan mountains. So we have to make sure that we continue to press for recovery in those areas. And we do have a lawsuit that may resolve that, that that one boundary issue, we have to be very careful in terms of political situation in terms of particularly southern Colorado, we want to make sure that we're facilitating wolf recovery without jeopardizing Mexican wolf recovery, and that's something that we're working on. That's

where people like Dave Parsons, and and others are very aware of it, we really got to make this work.



Jack Humphrey 15:44

What are some ways that this push for the reintroduction, Colorado could help the Mexican wolf situation where there's still there's been pretty much relentless pressure applied to those wolves with illegal shootings and the the other side always wreaking havoc in that and also from within the agency, some decisions made here and there that didn't really help the reintroduction to continue to grow the way it was intended. Could the Colorado could this turning of the tide help with the Mexican wulfric? recovery?

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Kim Crumbo 16:23

Well, sure, and one of the things that was with this recovery effort was the passage of the ballot measure that allowed for this to happen. Now, we're well aware of that the Trump administration and previous administrations have tried to do this the wolf nationwide, and now we were looking at in early January were in fact, the wolf gray wolf will be delisted nationwide, we there's litigation involved in that there's efforts to work with the Biden administration to reverse that decision. But we have to do that that has the wolf has to be protected under federal law, for this to work. Now, what they've done in Colorado is that kind of, they've got their own state effort going, regardless of how this overall delisting works, Mexican wolves are listed are protected under the Endangered Species Act. And we have to make sure that they remain protected. Under that act, there has to be consequences for the illegal killings, there has to be consequences for the agency to fail to live up to the laws and policies that require them to do just that, to recover that species. That's our job to make sure that they're aware of it to make sure that happens. And when they don't receive their assets.



Jack Humphrey 17:49

I remember working with the Forest Service, I can't remember what it was a roads issue, way back in the 90s. With sky and Alliance and a forest service official. You know, we were I was trying to understand how you work with the government, I was pretty green, you know, back then. And I thought you just asked them, or I thought you showed up to, you know, a public hearing or something and, and a vote was taken or something. And we're gonna do this now. And basically, the Forest Service official told me you got to sue us if you want anything to get done. And that's when I first heard that whole thing was like, we don't move in any direction until you sue us. We don't look at something that you want us

to look at, or, or do anything, officially without. And it blew my mind. I'm like, he's



18:37

just,



Jack Humphrey 18:38

he's asking to be sued that I've never heard of that before.



Kim Crumbo 18:43

Well, you know, I worked for the Park Service for 20 years. And it's a pretty good agency. But I can't say that there weren't times when I was just livid with the, you know, the decisions that were made. But my role there was to point out that laws and policies regarding management of the park and particularly wilderness and proposed wilderness areas, and I just delighted in being a real pain in their ass by constantly pointing that out. But there are some really good people in all those agencies. And that's kind of what saved us from Trump, you know, but you really do have to be insistent, you have to stay engaged. You have to be respectful. And because there's a lot of good folks working there hard to do make the right decision. So you have to engage in that you just have to be involved in it and call it bullshit when there's bullshit. When they need to be reminded do that. When they need to get some bad press, make sure that happens when they get deserve some good press, make sure that happens. And when they totally blow it to their essence, I don't know why feelings but this is it's a country that's based on, in theory, the rule of law and we keep the good laws on the books



Jack Humphrey 19:58

and make sure they're enforced faithfully. Have people who have been there and done that? And know what to do in these situations where things get dicey. And at the time, I would have been no help to anyone. If anyone looked at me and said, What do we do? Now? I don't know that much more. But I have people like you I can point to Well, I asked him, I don't know. camel No.



Kim Crumbo 20:22

Well, that's that's what we need are networks of protected lands, but our networks of people and that wasn't what Michael Seeley and for a lot of other folks were really

emphasizing. There ain't no home plate. And this, you know, we were, we're somewhere between first and second. You know, and we keep on doing job security.



Jack Humphrey 20:43

I put something in a note to Dave not too long ago about need to declare when rewilding Institute is going out of business? Like what will the last thing be? Just kind of as a joke, because who would know that? We can't, you know, you can't pin it to anything, because you never know what people are going to pull as they get more desperate. The people who panic about what does 30 by 30 or 50 by 50 mean, for me as an oil exec or or landowner or something like that? I'm not sure that I'm seeing an awful lot of pushback, maybe you are this early? Do you think they're not taking it very seriously, it seems like this should be very shocking compared to the things that they've been shocked about in the past that are we're small potatoes by comparison.

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Kim Crumbo 21:31

Now, it is having an impact. You know, I think the probably the most positive impact is Trump losing the election. And but a lot of the oil companies, you know, groups like the Sierra Club and defenders and NRDC have really put pressure on banks not to promote not to fly and a lot of these drilling operations. And even Exxon admitted that, you know, the time schedule for fossil fuels is on the horizon to end that. So it was a lot of related efforts based on a lot of past efforts. And the work that's been going on with the protecting the Arctic, and all those things goes back goes back decades. So now we have the opportunity to do something about it. But again, it's not going to happen on its own. Fortunately, we have an administration that's very positive and about achieving those goals. But there's still a lot of work to be done. Yeah. Although we do have a timeline in terms of when we rewilding should be disbanded. And I think it has to do with the sun engulfing the planet earth and all its life and things in a couple of billion years down the road. I saw I that's a definite, hard boundary, I'd say that time lows.



Jack Humphrey 22:50

Thank you to all of our monthly supporters for continuing for the next billion years. We really appreciate you guys don't turn off your subscriptions. Thank you. One of the issues also that you're working on is wild horses. Can you tell us and that was didn't you do an article on that as



23:07

well?



Kim Crumbo 23:08

Sure. Yeah, it's a really complicated issue. But it really gets people fired up, which is kind of fun to watch. But I like horses, you know, I don't have one. But you know, horses have played such an important role in civilization. And they were, you know, he did evolve here in North America. But they've always been part of an ecosystem somewhere, when they brought them back here, you know, they've already gone through a lot of evolutionary processes based on what we thought horses should be. So but you do have quite a few horses on designated areas, and they're federally protected the area that horses are, and they're, they're causing problems, problems in the sense of impact on the environment. cattle grazing is by far the major impact, but I think there's a way out where we can actually make this work. So that they can still you know, have wild horses out there on the range, because they are they are impressive, and we can develop management strategies. So that the impacts are however you define acceptable, but it requires a major reduction in number of population in the population of wild horses, and that has to be done in a manner that's acceptable to decent human beings. So it's, it's an all involved process as a lot of players. But I think ultimately, we'll come up with some good solutions, but a lot of it depends upon getting livestock out of the areas that have been set aside for horses, getting the native predator predators back in play, you know, there's going to be a lot of active intervention required on on part of managers but I think it's doable and One thing that's I've been pointing out is that they're probably better off on the Great Plains. So let's just start thinking about exploring that option. Do you



Jack Humphrey 25:08

think it's it gets better, like give people a vision in your mind of what it looks like in the future, when we have an issue like the wild horse issue, how much better it would be to deal with it, then when we have the room to breathe, then now we're issues like that might be a lot more complicated and harder to deal with. Just because you're talking about one of the things that would be great to get rid of is the hardest thing in the world to get rid of in the West, which is cattle grazing, at least on public lands?



Kim Crumbo 25:35

Yep. Yeah. And that's the challenge. But the thing is, there's a lot of good people that are very dedicated and interested in this issue. And but you have to, you have to engage with

them to come up with a solution. Do we want to win ideological battle? Or do we want to have a healthy ecosystem with wild horses present. And that's, I think that's a goal we can agree on, I believe. But you want to harness the energy, they tremendous energy that loves wildlife, and loves horses in particular, and do it in a manner that we actually achieve those results. And sometimes I think that we're actually dealing with rational human beings when you start talking to these folks. So



Jack Humphrey 26:17

cam, thank you so much. I know we're gonna be hearing a lot more from you. as the year progresses, everyone can keep up with your work on rewilding.org. And make sure that you sign up for our newsletter so that you can get our weekly updates on everything that was published that week. Kim, thank you so much for being with us today. Again,



Kim Crumbo 26:37

it's always a pleasure. Thanks.



Jack Humphrey 26:40

Thanks for listening to the rewilding Earth podcast. We do what we do because of you. This podcast is supported by listeners like you who longed to live in a Wilder world. please consider donating at rewilding. org and subscribe to our weekly news and article digest while you're there. To go the extra mile you can follow and share rewilding Earth on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Bonus points for sharing this podcast with your friends. To listen to past episodes. Go to rewilding org slash pod that's rewilding. org slash pod