



Episode 126: Borderlands Connectivity - Conservation Challenges And Victories on the U.S.-Mexico Border

6-14-2024

[Rewilding Earth Podcast](#)

Myles Traphagen

Jack: [00:00:00] Miles, thanks so much for being on the Rewilding Earth podcast.

Myles: Thank you for having me, Jack. It's a pleasure to be here.

Jack: I want to know what it means to be a Borderlands Program Coordinator for Wildlands Network.

Myles: That's an amorphous term. Borderlands is a word that you find everywhere.

It's, the word is almost being abused. What it means for me is working on issues related to the U. S. Mexico borderlands, the U. S. borderlands. And connectivity and corridors and the current impacts that are impacting connectivity in the borderlands, meaning, that sounds repetitive, but I, what I mean by that is that we have a lot of threats on our international border.

A number one is the border wall, of course. And what's been happening over the last five years, but more than that, going back to the mid nineties and the, during the two thousands, when the first big border barriers are being built.

With the construction of, 458 [00:01:00] miles of border wall under the Trump administration, that means that many wildlife corridors are being impacted. And And this applies to larger animals. The most charismatic one that comes to mind is the jaguar. It's very popular among people.

[Please consider supporting the Rewilding Earth Podcast!](#)

And in fact, where I'm at right now in Mexico City I was standing next to a jaguar statue of a jaguar. And of course, the Aztecs and the Miztec people and Oaxacans held the jaguar in high regard. It was the apex species for their world. And currently in our world in the southwest, northern Mexico Arizona, New Mexico the jaguar is the apex predator and it's attained mythological status.

And I believe that's largely because you can't see a jaguar and I don't want to be a buzzkill and tell somebody, no, you're never going to see a jaguar, but the odds are quite low. And even folks who work in jaguar dense regions, [00:02:00] such as the Northern jaguar reserve have been working there for years.

And if you ask them if they've seen a jaguar, there's almost like a chuckle of course not. We have this animal, the jaguar, that is a roaming back and forth across the border. We've had eight over the last 28 years occur in the US and be documented. And nobody is actually, it's been seen twice.

Warner Glenn saw the Jaguar, photographed it live in 1996, and then exactly 10 years later, he photographed another one live. And Jack Childs photographed Macho B back in, I believe it was 2000 Seven. And then Janae Bruin saw Macho B in person out behind her house in the Bava Kivari mountains. So other than that's a pretty small sample size of people who've had a direct observation interaction with the Jaguar.

Jack: Yeah not including the cameras, just to make that clear that all the camera traps, there have been more [00:03:00] photos there, but you're talking about right there in front of them.

Myles: Exactly. If it weren't for trail cameras, we probably would not know about these animals.

Jack: Alright then tell me what it's like to work on an animal you may never get to see in the wild.

The wolf people, once wolves were reintroduced, they started little groups. I saw this pack over here. You could go out with your spotting scope and have a reasonable chance of maybe seeing wolves and especially if you stick to it in a lifetime, you most certainly will if you spend time between the Southwest and Yellowstone.

But what's it like working? And what does it mean to you to work for an animal? You're not going to get to greet in person. Most likely.

Myles: I think that's basically how conservation biology works, is I don't think that a lot of people are in this for selfish reasons and self serving reasons. I believe that they're doing this out of interest and altruism and the care and nurturing of our planet and all [00:04:00] of its inhabitants.

So you know, with Wildlands Network we work and advocate for animals, wildlife who don't have a voice. They can't go to Washington and lobby, they can't write letters, comment on federal projects they're not able to do that. And so we have to do that for them, and, what we can do is essentially protect their habitat.

Protect and restore and rewild the habitat, and do what we can to create a space for them to live in. That's really what we've been doing for a long time and that's the general state of things right now is trying to conserve as much habitat and open wildlife corridors and ability for them to move, find prey, water, mates, shelter, safety, et cetera.

That's essentially what our role is to do whatever we can at this point in time to create safe spaces for wildlife.

Jack: [00:05:00] And that it is not without challenge, especially as you mentioned the border wall there are places where the most likely places are that Jaguars would come over and we're not going to give coordinates or anything here.

But there's a big border wall push still to this day. That is pressing in those very crucial areas where Jaguars would. Most likely come across, right?

Myles: Exactly. Not giving coordinates, but mountain ranges are safe to say we're talking in the watch, you go mountains, the Santa Rita mountains, the Pellen CEO, Chiricahua mountains the Baba Kavari, Atascosa is basically the entire Sky Island region that you find in and around Tucson and going into northern and central Sonora are places where Jaguar are known to occur.

And that there have been historical records going back for, the last 150 years of these animals occurring in generally the same location. There's always outliers. For example, Macho B is notable because he [00:06:00] was photographed in Sonoran Desert what they call Arizona Uplands, which is the classic, iconic Arizona desert that people think of with saguaro cactus, polyverde, and grasslands at the upper edge.

This is not typically seen as Jaguar habitat. So if you look at the Jaguar habitat and niche models, they are not including a lot of these desert areas, cactus and thorn scrub nor are they including grasslands. However, if you look at the recent photographic records these animals are occurring in pretty much all habitats.

And and so that, begs the question of how do we protect corridors and promote connectivity? Between these core areas. And what I mean by a core area would be Madre and evergreen woodland, which is known to harbor Jaguar seen a little one thorn scrub to the south where you start to get tropical species like ficus and [00:07:00] occasional willardii, non frost tolerant species.

And of course, all the associated fauna that comes with that, that are tropical animals. Since the jaguar at its northern edge appears to be utilizing all parts of the habitat that in itself presents a challenge of, how do you go about doing that? And what is feasible what's cost effective, and what's actually going to be effective on the ground?

And this is an important aspect of this because you can't predict very well where a jaguar is going to use these suboptimal, less than preferred habitats, such as grassland and Arizona upland deserts. So you know, where do you put your effort into conserving land, trying to create safe spaces and corridors?

It's simply a. challenging prospects to think of it in those regards and coupled with a [00:08:00] sample size of eight animals over the last nearly three decades, you don't have a lot to work with at this point.

Jack: Does it give you any sense of a heightened sense of Alertness, you and all of your friends in the movement, everybody that's doing their part the network of people that are concerned with jaguars that the border is a political football has been for quite a while and there's an awful lot of

collateral damage from that.

That. I don't think a lot of people know about. And if it wasn't the political football that it is, would you feel a little bit more at ease even though there are still challenges and things that you have to face? I

Myles: would. I think that's a really good point. It's obviously a political football.

And I predict this like hurricane season where we have election cycles coming up and this is going to be border wall season migrant, non American abuse season and the political ads start coming and then congressmen from border states of [00:09:00] Arkansas, Oklahoma and Wyoming and Nebraska start appearing at the border for photo ops in front of the border wall.

, the. This being a political football and a, an election stunt like I say, the border wall was the most expensive reelection campaign props in human history, totaling between 15 and 18 billion in cost and effectively doing nothing to stop migration since people are turning themselves in at the border.

However its impacts on the Jaguar are. Are probably not huge at this point, and I don't want to minimize the impact of the border wall because what concerns me most about it is the common everyday species that we all have a good opportunity of seeing any day in the field, such as mule deer, whitetail deer, javelina bobcats, mountain lion goulds turkey, these are animals that we're going to see out on the land any given [00:10:00] day.

I worry about those animals because they are the ones who are subjected to this dividing of the continent. And where the Jaguar has been documented happens to be in some locations where they did not build border wall. And specifically this would be the Huachuca Mountains, and the Palencio Mountains, and the Pajarito Atascosa Mountains, as well as the Patagonia.

Those places did not get border wall built across them. They were It was in progress, but fortunately the construction stopped and there's a very well known place called Sycamore Canyon in the Pajarito Mountains, which are south of Tucson and east of Sasabe, Arizona and west of Nogales. This was a known migration corridor for Macho A and B.

And that they stopped right at the edge of Sycamore Canyon. Literally the survey [00:11:00] stakes said January 20th as they were going down the slope. So we really dodged a bullet there and got lucky that president Biden stopped border wall construction on January 21st of 2021. So as far as connectivity and movement opportunities for the Jaguar they're still open.

However, the drumbeat for the border wall goes on and it's probably just a matter of time before they want to build across these places. And so it's really an all hands on deck moment for people to really get organized and advocate and fight against these border walls because once they get put in place it's not likely that they're going to be taken down anytime soon.

Jack: What I think is really crazy is if anybody's ever seen pictures when they started building over the, what Chuca's or over the mountain range.

I can't remember where we got the picture. It was so weird because we're building a 12 foot thing or a 30, whatever [00:12:00] it's tiny and ineffectual over this mountain range, that is the best and most bad border wall you could ever have in terms of humans wanting to use that place to get over. And I was like, there's nobody else see this.

How ridiculous this whole thing is to build a wall where there's already a wall the better wall than human kind could ever build to be formidable and turn off people from going at least that route

Myles: yeah, you're exactly right. And there's a lot of grist there. And a lot of money involved. And you have to remember that Tommy Fisher went on Fox News to basically do a sales pitch for the border wall. And he said, oh, we can do this block mining techniques where we can, blast away certain sections of the mountain.

They blasted Notches through mountain ranges that are four and five times the height of the border wall to stick a border wall in this trench to go over the mountain. And Guadalupe Canyon is a notable example and Coronado [00:13:00] National Memorial, where they built switchbacks up the mountain that they actually had to use other D9 cats, caterpillar tractors to pull another one over the other side.

They were basically counterbalanced because it was so steep that. Not even these bulldozers could go up on their own. If you look at the Tinajas Altas Mountains out of Cabeza Prieta, Barry Goldwater Refuge area those are the steepest, ruggedest mountains that only bighorn sheep can get to.

Over those, and it's an eroded granite where when you start walking, trying to get up this, it's crumbling away, and it's not like that Yosemite granite where you can get a good grip, this is old stuff that's, crumbling in your hands, and the sheer slope of these things, 80, 90 percent that is a border wall.

And the sad, horrible irony of it all is that in places where there was basically limited human access and mobility, [00:14:00] they created roads to enter these places, and now there is very easy ingress and egress of human movement in places, wilderness areas that. Formerly had very limited access and mobility. And if you talk to border patrol agents on the ground, a good majority of them were not supportive of the wall and didn't think it was very effective. And especially some of the older agents. And I had the opportunity over my career here in the borderlands which started in 1996 at San Bernardino national wildlife refuge, east of Douglas and west of the Palencio mountains.

I knew a lot of. Special agents with customs because they would gather on the refuge and what these people would do would be to use the landscape to their advantage. They basically had a least cost path model in their brain and, supported by years of data, which would be A record would be like, how many pounds [00:15:00] of marijuana did they see?

How many people did they apprehend? And so they knew that certain drainages are where people go and that they are going to highway 80 at this particular point. And, when they would find people crossing, they'd be like, okay, I've got, two or three hours till I need to go up to highway 80 and get to mile marker X where they're going to emerge for their pickup spots.

And they were very effective at apprehending people. Here in this part of the world. They have a road and back in 2007, when they built the first vehicle barrier, which at that time, it seemed horrible to us. Just Oh my God, what are they doing? And now it seems so benign this three foot high vehicle barrier.

They lobbied against their own organizations within homeland security customs and border patrol. To not build that because they said that once you get a road that is designed for a high speed 60 mile per hour, road to drive on Now all people do is they [00:16:00] get across and they can blast down

that road as fast as they can and that's exactly what happened.

It went down to a tee what these agents were predicting. This just underscores that our country is not operating and managing its problems and issues with data. If we had actuaries involved, predicting, insurance rates and, they model, what the true threats are in the world because it comes down to dollars and cents for them.

They would have definitely said why are you spending, 4 billion to build a border wall when we have no data on migrations that is excessive and that this is causing, harm to our communities and, causing violence. Most of the places where they built the border wall were simply not places of excessive human migration or smuggling.

And, [00:17:00] if we put our energies into making our ports of entry and our legal migration system effective and rapid to handle the influx of people that are coming we could solve that problem for a fraction of the population. What we have spent on the border wall and the damage that it has done, and not including the the snowball effect, what's going to keep on happening downhill as they have to maintain this border wall as it's head cuts on the south side to the north side and drainages as it starts to fall down as it's chronically cut in urban areas where people can take a reciprocal saw and Cut right through it in about five minutes.

If we put our energies into effectively managing the problem and having an honest conversation about what we need to do to manage that problem versus just optics and political stunts, which is what the border lands have [00:18:00] become a victim of, and it only seems to be accelerating, like I said it's when they.

Talk about hurricane season. Okay, june is coming and we're seeing invest One forming off the west coast of africa so we can predict that x number of hurricanes may be Coming this year and their predicted strength. If this happens with our election cycles. Now it's just like that. I can predict, I go, Oh no, we're going to start seeing ads.

We're going to hear about, people invading the country. It's all the way here in Indiana.

Jack: People in Indiana. Have nothing immediate to fear From whoever they say which is not who is usually coming over at all Are coming. It's like we live in The way they're running their ads up here is like we live on a border in a border town because all it just is it's a fear thing.

It's fake. It's not even a real Concerned even to the people who are [00:19:00] using it as political ads. They just know it's got weight

Myles: Exactly. There seems to be a an inverse correlation occurring here It is that the farther one lives from the border the stronger their opinion becomes With the fewest data points, so that's a really sad.

Yeah

Jack: Another thing, just getting people thinking about what it would take to get listeners really up to date and ready to counter things if they're able to do that in letters or in meetings or whatever, however they might contribute, which we'll get around to here in a minute.

Another 1 of the weird things is that there are border agents likely probably getting ready to retire. Who remember how hard they work to get night vision, very expensive night vision stuff, monitor the border, which only works in close to absolute darkness. But they have now I've seen a proposal and they're probably building it already.

Cause as soon as you see, there's a proposal that's [00:20:00] probably already going on or prepping for lights, stadium lighting along the border, which ruins dark skies border used to be even with the old System pretty dark, pretty, pretty guaranteed place for no light pollution. And I'm thinking, okay we spent all this money on all this night vision equipment, and then somebody else comes along a new department head or whatever and says, Nope, we need to light it all up.

And they just burned all that money and probably a much more effective way of seeing people at night than all of that light. What else does that do to the natural world? When we're putting a big, several miles long. Beam of stadium lighting on the border.

Myles: Yeah, I'm glad that you mentioned that because a lot of lighting is in place already.

I'll give an example of the San Bernardino Valley, 30 miles of border wall was constructed from Douglas to almost the New Mexico state line. And with that, they installed stadium lighting. So at intervals of about [00:21:00] 120 meters slash yards there are 500 watt lights that are about 40 feet tall.

And I estimate that there's 480 of these along the border. Now they have not turned them on. They have not flipped the switch. And that would be another layer of impact on the border beyond the physical barrier that's already there, especially because the San Bernardino Valley is known to be a location that has the highest number of native bees and pollinating insects in this part of North or all of North America.

In the U. S. I just hope that they don't turn those on. And like you said, from a tactical perspective, and there's a lot of times you've got to put yourself in the shoes of Border Patrol. And this is something that you know, a lot of scientists and scholars over time have You know, promoted, they [00:22:00] say, you really need to learn the technologies and terminology of your adversary or the machine that you're going against.

Carl Sagan said, it's really important to learn all the military technology, really geek out on it so that you understand the magnitude of the situation. And, you see this with Rachel Maddow too. She's a real, Tech nerd and it's not because we wanted that to happen, but it's because you need to understand that And once you realize that on the border In the San Bernardino Valley, they had a system of what they called integrated fixed towers, and on these towers are night vision heat sensors, and ground scanning radar.

Here's the kicker. I've talked to two agents that said that before the border wall, we could actually see people coming on the other side before they even crossed, and then after they crossed, we could see them at night. He says, but now, especially in the warmer months and summer we can't see them because this big steel border wall, 30 feet tall with [00:23:00] six inch diameter beams now hold heat well into the night.

And so it's essentially obliterated their view shed for this technology that, It itself cost, a billion dollars. But, slightly less invasive. So basically, they've put in, another piece of medieval era infrastructure

that has now obliterated the modern technology that was put in place to actually provide agents on the ground with up to date, very accurate information.

Jack: And to think all of this started with floating the idea of something for a campaign trail speech

Myles: It did. It came out of a political consultant in Manhattan who came up with the phrase, build the wall. And if you notice, if you watch I'll just call them out. If you Republican events, they're, they have three word chants. It's the most base thing you can do. It's based upon, our football mentality here in [00:24:00] the U S but it's, it ranges from lock her up to build the wall.

Finish the wall. It's always these three word chants that they can get the masses to beat on in, the most primitive form of music you can think of, which is just, three syllable grunts. And that's where it came from. It was never Trump's idea. It was just like, Oh, Hey, if this can get me elected, Great.

And then when you tack on Atlas Steel saying, Hey, I'll give you a million dollars for your super pack. It was the biggest gift given by one individual. And you look at the steel beams, the bollards on the border wall. And what do they say? Atlas Steel.

Jack: It's almost like a movie. I would think I was in a movie if I didn't know I can't act.

That's the only reason I don't think I'm in some weird alternate universe or some Dark sitcom. So yeah when you have that kind of a situation, you're really, you couldn't have picked a better job to be in the thick of it where the lightning strikes the most in this country, at least [00:25:00] politically.

Um, what's your outlook? What do you why do you get up in the morning and face all of these challenges every single day?

Myles: Yeah I try to stay positive. i'll be totally frank. i'm mostly Pessimistic. I don't have a lot of optimism towards things. I The way it's been from my experience is between storm systems. If you have, these periods where you know you're getting monsoon storms or if you live in the Pacific Northwest, you get three days of, 10 inches of rainfall and it's gray and cold, and then oh, great, we've got, three days of sunshine.

It's those periods that I wake up and I sing. Great song from the 60s, I can see clearly now the rain is gone So I you know, I try to operate off that. As well as continually working scientifically With data and justifiable means [00:26:00] to oppose the border wall and get wildlife openings and mitigation efforts put in.

And fortunately, I've had the opportunity to get pretty deeply involved in that portion of it. And I'll give a short story here, but there was a lawsuit initiated by the Sierra Club and Southern Border Communities Coalition and the state of California and New Mexico and 17 other states against the border wall and the harms that it was causing.

I was hired by the state of California to do their GIS mapping work on the border wall, since I had already mapped the border, all the border wall proposals. And then the state of New Mexico also hired me for that. This lawsuit took The course of about five years, it was finally settled in July of 2023 and part of the settlement was to place wildlife openings in the border wall for for wildlife, but [00:27:00] for specifically certain species of concern, and that would be the peninsular bighorn sheep, desert bighorn sheep, Sonoran pronghorn, Mexican gray wolf even a bison herd down in the boot

heel of New Mexico.

And other associated wildlife, but there was definitely some umbrella species that were driving this. And most notably, it was the Mexican gray wolf. And this is the only animal that we've got very strong data points for the border walls impact. And there are only two. Data points.

One is in 2017 where a wolf came out of the Mexico reintroduction program in Chihuahua and traveled 600 miles over a period of 32 days. And it came up and across the border South of Las Cruces, went up into the city, went across interstate 10, spent two or three days in Las Cruces, and then went down the Rio Grande and spent two more days on Mount Crystal Ray at Sunland park.

Right where [00:28:00] Monument 1 is. That's the border monuments. These obelisks that they have along the border. So here it was in an urban environment, and then it returned to Campo Verde Chihuahua where it had been released from. And we know all this because it had a satellite GPS collar that was transmitting four times a day.

Let's fast forward to 2021. And here Mr. Goodbar is what they called him a wolf outta the Gila Mountains in New Mexico. He travels about oh 300 kilometers over a period of a week, and he goes down and intersects within 100 meters, one of the same data points that the wolf from Chihuahua.

Had been at in 2017 how that happened over this huge, large landscape of grasslands and volcanic cinder cones is just mind blowing. But then it went down along the border wall in the same location, exactly where the wolf from Chihuahua had crossed. Now, we've got another set of data points. This time, it's going back and forth, 12 miles [00:29:00] west, 12 miles back east, another 12, 14 miles back west again, and this repeats for three days.

Finally, he beds down in one area, and and I visited that spot, and there's nothing special about it. There's no water, there's no burrows, there's no cover. I think he was just exhausted. And and so at that point, after three days of just resting there, he returns to the Gila Mountains where he is shot by somebody, survives, but loses a leg, and now he's back in a breeding recovery program not recovery, but a breeding program in one of the wolf recovery locations, I'm not exactly sure exactly where it is now but it's that set of data points where we were able to, Have a lot of leverage on getting wildlife gates put in and so I was lucky enough to do the gis work for this and to be able to have you know defensible information where we said, okay, we're going to need an [00:30:00] opening every 12 miles in order to facilitate movement.

So if an animal comes out of Chihuahua, paces along the fence, eventually, it could find an opening in there. It's not optimal, but it's the best we can get now. So at the end of the settlement negotiation between Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice and the Sierra Club and the states we were able to get in a lot of wildlife openings along the border.

Not as many as we would like. Nothing's perfect. However, it's a foot in the door. And if operationally from a border patrol situation, it's not, really causing a huge impact or influx of migrants and smuggling. I think further down the road we can say, hey, was that so bad? Maybe we could put another opening in here.

Yeah, so That's that gives me hope and when when I heard the news that it That the lawsuit was [00:31:00] being settled. I literally had tears running out down my eyes and we were all on a zoom call with the ninth district courts and there's about 20 some of us on the call and you could see people

reaching for glasses and here, I don't wear glasses, but I picked up a pair of, like my wife's reading glasses.

I just put them on because I was like, okay, my eyes are watering up here. I need to cover this up. So it just blew our minds. The lawyers and everybody when they said in very legalese, okay, yeah yes, the government agrees to have X number of wildlife openings along the border.

And then they flashed a map on the screen and it was just a mind blower of a moment and I had the realization that, okay, things work slow, the long arm of the law, it may take a while, but justice, when it was, I think Obama used to say, the long arc of justice takes time, but we must be vigilant and patient or something like that.

That was good. So that that, that helps me get up in the morning and keep on fighting.

Jack: Thank you [00:32:00] for telling that story that one, I hadn't heard about that and it wouldn't even cross my mind that in any political climate in the recent years, you could ever get something like that done.

So wow, right there. That's really cool. But the other thing is that you did that was accomplished. Means there is reason to hope because that's just unheard of. I don't think anybody listening would go. Wow. That's crazy that they would allow an opening because it just they don't know what they're doing.

They politically they just you know, amygdala response is no opening in wall. Good yeah, that's really doesn't that point to I mean you said it you can use this down the road, but it also just points to general possibility that maybe some of us had given up on.

Myles: Yeah. And there's something I think that either Lao Tzu or Confucius said, luck favors the prepared.

Although, you seen that thing Confucius says, I didn't say all that crap, but but essentially like [00:33:00] how this how we got set up for this was that I had originally mapped the border wall projects based upon. The information from the court documents and having a GIS background and also knowing the borderlands pretty well.

So I literally made GIS sausage, taking the coordinates, plugging those in, and then spreading all that information out to all the media sources around the country and the world, freely giving that away since the GIS information was not available on a dot gov website. After January 21st, 2021, I began what I call the body count where I went out and I ground truth, the border from California to the Rio Grande and mapped in fine detail where all the construction had started, where it had ended where the gaps and openings were.

And so we had a very high resolution map to work from. And when you have that information and information is very powerful and you are. In meetings with Department of Homeland Security and [00:34:00] Customs and Border Patrol, and you know what's happened with the border wall better than they do, it just puts you in a powerful position for negotiation.

So that was just a lesson in really being prepared, knowing your topic, and once you know it, you can stand there and boldly go where, nobody's gone before. So the power of the map was essential in this

exercise.

Jack: All right. All the GIS kids are proud of this moment. Listening to that.

All right. That is so cool. What do people need to know in your mind when you're trying to get the word out about current issues how they affect Jaguars And wolves we hardly ever talk about borders and wolves. So what do people need to do? Cause it, I think you've given us some ideas of where we could do some pretty hopeful work where it might've seemed bleak before, but in general, it just seems like a juggernaut.

What can little [00:35:00] old, any of us do?

Myles: I think that the general public and I should say, let me elevate this beyond general public, the informed public who are wildlife advocates, whether you're a scientist or just a member of a non governmental organization like Wildlands Network or Sierra Club or Center for Biological Diversity, et cetera just stay in, pay attention and stay in touch.

Support those organizations. Your donations actually mean something. Let me give the example of a trail camera. You can buy a trail camera for about 200. That's the average cost of those. However, That's just the starting point. It's like when you get on a roller coaster and they pull the bar down over you and it starts to go up, you just go, Oh, no, now the fun is beginning.

Why did I get on this thing? That's how it is with trail cameras is that buying it is easy. Installing it is easy. Now you've got to travel every few months to go and get it. Get the car, change the batteries. Then somebody has got to look at all those photos and there are thousands of billions of photos and process those.

And then you've got to analyze the data. [00:36:00] We look at the actual cost of a camera, what's its full lifetime cost, and, you're talking thousands of dollars for each camera when you bring in all the real actual costs there, it's like owning a car, insurance, oil changes, all those sorts of things.

Supporting these organizations is important but also, letting your elected officials know things is very important. If you have the opportunity to go to DC and lobby you'd be surprised that you can really get face time with your representatives and senators.

Many of them really like to hear from their constituents if you're in DC. And but it's not just them when you're in the lobbying thing. There's nothing better than a really good staffer Who knows their stuff that you can get a dialogue and start getting information to. And this is another part of the work I have been doing is, what I would call behind the scenes type of lobbying.

Not going, to K streets and putting on the suit and marching into the office and Senator so and so we'd like this, but to, to get that [00:37:00] dialogue going with the congressional staff and feeding them accurate information, because what happens is they end up reaching out to you when they need something, and then you start developing a political dialogue.

So when you need to get a message to the Senator you can get it there. So it's all about the relationships and building those on the ground. And this has even happened for me with department of Homeland security, we've developed a level of communication and trust with officials high up in the, in that organization, which have been extremely beneficial in, in getting what we'd like to have

accomplished.

Just staying engaged at multiple levels and constructively I would urge people to not approach this with anger but be deliberate about it press some of those things down that you really want to scream out go with your ego, not your id

Jack: excellent advice. And and all true as an old lobbyist and [00:38:00] human nature, thankfully and unthankfully. Never changes really never has never been recorded to change whatsoever so one thing that we can also always say is that pretty much the best lobbying tactics back in the 80s and 70s and 60s are You know in play today Really?

It's really just about people's belief that their part in that is worth starting and worth doing I see a bunch of people like George Werthner and others as I've learned from lots of people over the years who who just never had that block. They just look at a problem and they just go and attack it no matter how David Goliath it is.

They just go and go after it. And that would be my encouragement to everyone, too, is like that's really where they started. They had nothing more than anybody else in terms of resources or not necessarily an education or anything. They just did it. The difference between them and everyone else is they just did it.

Myles: And also there are, there's still good human nature within some of these [00:39:00] agencies that are part of the beast and the big machine. And an example of this is that the partnership that we have with sky Island Alliance, our collaboration with our border monitoring Program at San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge where we have an array of cameras looking at small openings in the border wall.

These little 8x11s that they put in for mitigation. When we got some surprising data that even mountain lions were able to do downward facing cat and get through these things and in other animals, I sent those off to people in DHS and they responded wow, that is amazing. Because they had not been monitoring they put these in for just okay, we'll put these in for wildlife passage, but when we presented that Hey, they're actually using this.

And it surprised all of us. That was a watershed moment and there was real human excitement from their part. Getting, gov DHS emails with exclamation points on it [00:40:00] is not something you normally get. Even in these circumstances and even in the roles that people find themselves in their work there's still a human nature.

Not everybody, but in, in many that want to do the right thing or, do as well as they can to minimize harm and to benefit wildlife. If they can do that,

Jack: if you're inspired and you want to learn more and stay in touch with miles and follow his work, you can go to wild lands network dot org.

And and check everything out that, that awesome group that I've worked with since. A long time ago continues to do to this day and I'm so happy that you guys are there that you're doing the job and that the effort just continues to grow year after year. Miles. Thanks so much for taking the time.

I'd love to have you back. Thanks, Miles. Thanks. Look forward to talking again sometime, Jack.

Myles: Appreciate it.