



# Desert Advocacy Media Network

Annual  
Report  
2024

# Welcome!

*"The Great Basin and Northern Mojave Desert resource extraction boom is accelerating with far reaching consequences for biodiversity and communities. Mining for lithium gold, rare earths, hell, even absorbent clays, oil and gas, solar, geothermal and wind energy, piñon-juniper removal for biofuels, harebrained pumped storage projects, nuclear waste dumps and large scale planning efforts meant to accelerate all of the above and caught in the middle is the most arid region in the country, one of the most biodiverse regions in the country, one of the least understood and least appreciated regions in the country, one that most Americans are perfectly content to put on the chopping block.*

*"Also caught in the middle is my beloved home."*

*– Patrick Donnelly, [sageandsand.substack.com](http://sageandsand.substack.com)*

**I**n the passage above, Mr. Donnelly writes of the Amargosa Basin, home of Death Valley National Park and Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. But he could be talking about just about any place in the North American deserts.

For a century and a half, the deserts of North America have been treated primarily as an obstacle, a place from which speculators can extract wealth, or a remote location to dump things we'd rather not live near.

That has changed in the last few decades, as more and more people start to recognize that deserts are unique and diverse ecosystems with hundreds of endemic species, which live nowhere else. Deserts sequester carbon. They can clean the air of dangerous particulate matter. They are home to ancient but surviving indigenous cultures. And they are undeniably, heart-stoppingly beautiful.

The desert has more potential defenders now, in 2024,

than it ever has before. But how will they learn what issues are out here to work on? It's no secret that the news media are facing an existential crisis. News outlets are shutting down, journalists are being laid off, and news organizations are making severe cut-backs in budgets for research and reporting.

This is disastrous news for the American deserts. Despite the fact that North American deserts make up the most intact ecosystem on the continent, our arid lands are coming under increased pressure by the solar and lithium mining industries, by corporations that would deplete ancient groundwater to support unsustainable sprawl, by destructive forms of recreation, and many other threats. And without a thriving press, many people who might otherwise take action to protect the desert won't know there's a problem.

The Desert Advocacy Media Network (DAMN) works



to change that by bringing in-depth coverage of desert issues to the public free of charge. But we need your help.

Millions of Americans love our deserts and want to help protect them. Sadly, the sources many of us turn to to stay informed about desert issues are drying up:

- In 2023, 10 American newspapers went out of business each month, a pace that has only quickened since.
- More than 2,600 journalism jobs were lost last year, with hundreds more journalists laid off in the first quarter of 2024.
- Since 2005, the United States has lost a third of its newspapers and two thirds of its journalism jobs.

Even those news outlets that remain have become increasingly inaccessible to the average desert-loving news consumer. Paywalling news is a reasonable reaction by struggling media outlets, but those paywalls still block the vast majority of readers from

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staying informed about the desert issues they care about. Making matters far worse, social media companies have turned their backs on news. Facebook and Google have tweaked their algorithms to make it harder for news companies to get their information in front of readers. Twitter/X, until recently the single best social media source of breaking news from skilled journalists, has become nearly useless as a source of accurate news of any kind.

Non-profits like ours have been working to fill the gap. There are a handful of wonderful outlets covering desert news on a local or state-wide basis. We strongly support their work. But the Desert Advocacy Media Network is the only non-profit media company specifically working on environmental coverage across the entire North American desert.

An annual report is generally used to laud the accomplishments of an organization. And we've accomplished much to be proud of. Since 2022, DAMN has covered desert environmental stories from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles to West Texas, on topics ranging from the political and economic structures affecting the desert, to appreciations of desert wildlife and landscapes, to tips for staying sane in the face of bad news. We've done all that with no paid staff and an annual budget under \$15,000. And we provide everything we do to the public, free of charge.

But in our first annual report it seems more appropriate to

focus on ***what else we should be doing***. There are dozens of desert environmental issues that merit their own podcast *series* rather than a single episode of our flagship podcast 90 Miles from Needles. There are skilled, passionate reporters in the desert who would like nothing better than to provide us with their investigative journalism. We need to work with those activists working to protect the desert and its people. We should be advertising in desert newspapers to reach new listeners and readers. We could be producing daily email news updates, story maps, print magazines and books. We could be working in that large portion of the desert that lies south of the Mexican border, providing reports in Spanish as well as English.

We want to do more to promote the idea that deserts are unique and irreplaceable treasures worth defending. But we can't do it without help. That's where you come in.

Your donation of any amount will help us reach the people we want to reach, and

to cover the stories we want to cover. We've made it easy to chip in in amounts from modest to generous, either one-time or on a recurring basis. Please consult the information on page 12 to see how you can help. Your contributions are tax deductible, and every dollar raised goes to help us elevate the voices of people working to protect the desert.

We cannot thank you enough for your support. The desert faces unprecedented challenges this year. Together, we can boost public awareness of those challenges and help keep the deserts thriving.

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**Silver  
Transparency  
2024**

**Candid.**



# Message from the Executive Director

**"Science and sentiment, politics and philosophy, hiking and history, culture and creativity all go into defending the desert. Be forewarned: We are out to recruit you to the cause."**

**W**hile there are hundreds of thousands of podcasts being published around the world, none that I could in 2021 find focused on environmental issues in the deserts of North America. This was a serious void. As the last large ecologically intact landscape on the continent, our deserts – from the sagebrush and snow of the Great Basin to the semitropical southern Chihuahuan Desert – are under unprecedented pressure from climate change, from habitat destruction, from pollution and invasive species and wildfire, from sheer human pressure even within theoretically protected lands.

That realization and a bit of hard work resulted in the first ever desert protection podcast, *90 Miles from Needles*. Those of us working on the podcast realized in a very short time that in order to do things right, we needed to form a legal structure of some kind for purposes of insurance, tax compliance, hiring contractors, and so on.

And so the Desert Advocacy Media Network (DAMN) was born, and the Internal Revenue Service granted us non-profit status on July 6, 2023. (EIN 93-1999054). It will likely surprise no one that we have endless fun with that acronym in internal conversations.

In the year since our formal establishment, we've changed and grown. *90 Miles from Needles: The Desert Protection Podcast* has increased its production schedule to (roughly) weekly. Our podcast's companion email newsletter, the *90 Miles From Needles Newsletter*, has grown to more than 600 subscribers. *Desert News*, a free weekly emailed roundup of environmental news from all over the deserts, began in May with minimal promotion and already has hundreds of subscribers. We added my decade-old email newsletter *Letters From the Desert* to the roster of DAMN projects, bringing another couple thousand pairs of eyeballs to the DAMN universe.

Perhaps most excitingly, our real-world activities have stepped up and won us some serious support and new friendships. I've been asked to represent DAMN at local desert town halls and book release parties. We will be giving public presentations later in the year in

different communities across the desert. With the assistance of our Board of Directors, we will be branching into video production soon as well.

In February I had the good fortune to take the DAMN show on the road, meeting with environmental activists in desert communities from Las Vegas to El Paso. We got several great episodes from that trip, on topics ranging from groundwater policy in Nevada to border politics to new and proposed National Monuments in West Texas, southern Nevada and western Arizona. Some of the episodes resulting from that trip are still in production, which means that trip is a gift that will keep on giving.

Best of all, we've been hearing from readers, listeners, and desert lovers around the world that we're bringing them something they value, and something they wouldn't find elsewhere. Those friends and supporters are what makes our work both necessary, in that we know we're filling a need, and possible, in that about 200 of our supporters have been paying our bills through their donations. And that makes it possible to get out and meet more people, share their stories and their hard work, and inspire others to work likewise to protect the deserts we love.

We said it right up front when we started the podcast in 2021: "Science and sentiment, politics and philosophy, hiking and history, culture and creativity all go into defending the desert. Be forewarned: We are out to recruit you to the cause."

That's our mission and we're sticking to it. We're glad to have you along on this journey. This first Annual Report for the Desert Advocacy Media Network will show you just how much we can do with the support of desert lovers like yourself.

For the deserts,



**Chris Clarke**



# Podcast Reviews



**"Whether you are a seasoned desert activist, desert rat or someone new to the desert in need of a few reasons to become involved in the protection of a beautiful part of the world, this show inspires and really puts things into perspective with stories and descriptions that place you squarely in the scene being set. Eagerly awaiting new episodes every week!" – NotLeavingTheDesert**

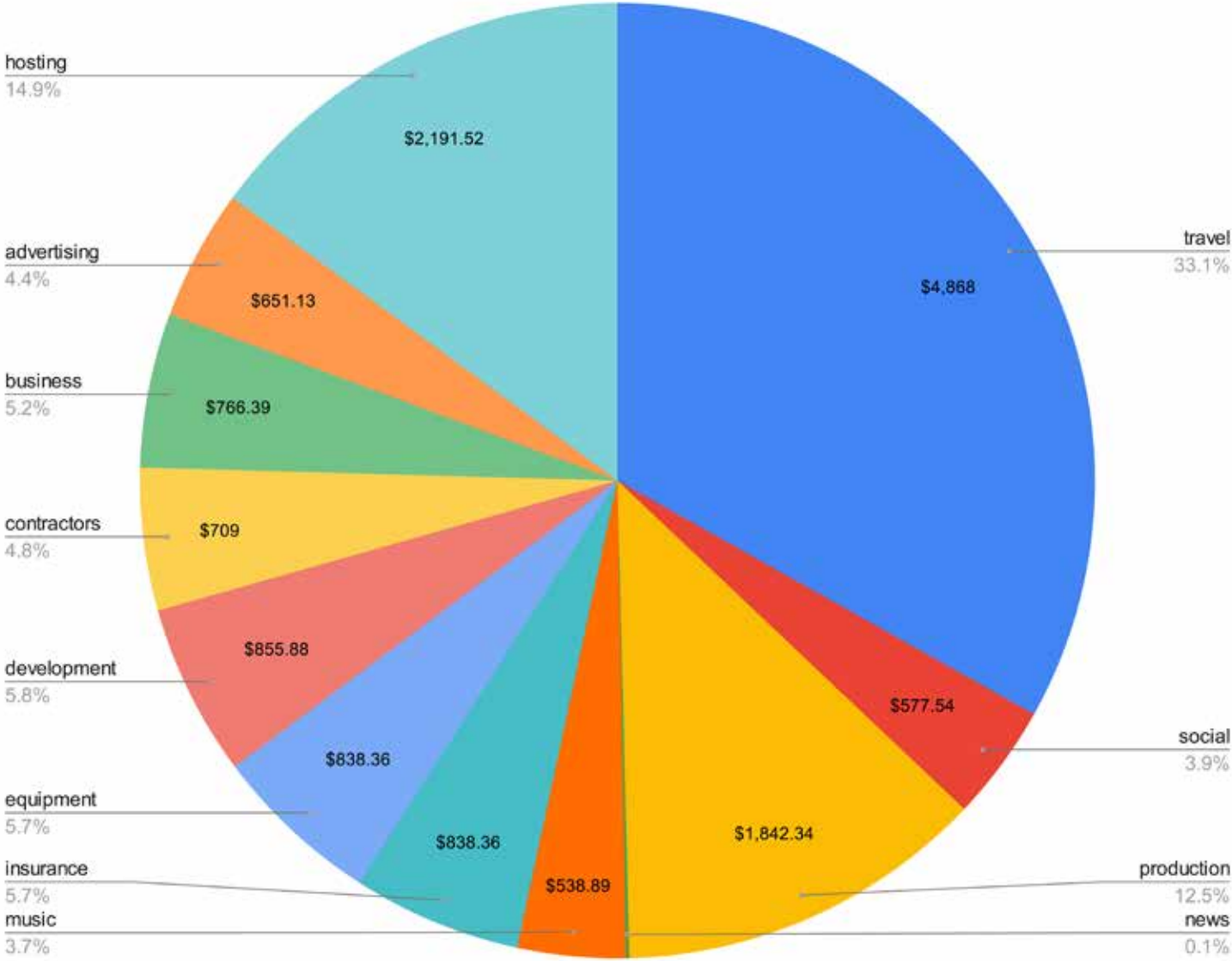
**"These folks are so informed, through research, experience, and community, and they share critical information for an engaging awakening. You can feel their love, respect, appreciation, and awe of desert nature in every word. Genuine and genius."– EverUpward**

**"A listen-to friendly podcast about American deserts especially the Mojave. A good substitute if you can't be there. A great way to learn about threats to the desert and ways you can help. Always listen to the end."– DCerk**

**"This podcast fills me with joy...[T]he perfect blend of digestible knowledge of all things desert, seriousness concerning environmental impacts via a tangible love and care for their desert home, and also levity. Any podcast that can bring me to tears about the dire state of our planet one moment, and in the next have me snorting out loud with laughter over a snarky comment or clever word play, is a big win in my book! This is the only podcast I've listened to every episode of! I always look forward to learning more in the next one, and am a proud Patreon supporter. Gratitude!" – muddyvter**

# Expenditures, FY 2024

total expenditures, FY 2024	\$14,878.18
total income, FY 2024	\$15,255.46
surplus, FY 2024	\$377.28



## By The Numbers:

<b>\$3,549</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>2,664</b>	<b>30,508</b>
Cash on hand, 7/12/24	Podcast episodes to date	Hours of podcast content created to date	Total email list subscribers	Total podcast downloads as of 7/15/24



# Expenditures, FY 2024

<b>Expenditure Type</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>social</b>	Fees for Linktree and similar services, some printing of stickers	\$577.54
<b>production software</b>	audio capture and editing software, virtual recording studio subscription, transcription software. Some purchases, most monthly subscriptions	\$1,842.34
<b>news</b>	subscriptions to local newspapers for Desert News newsletter and other uses (will increase in FY 25)	\$15.12
<b>music</b>	subscriptions for royalty-free music for use in episodes and related material	\$538.89
<b>equipment</b>	ergonomic office furniture, recording devices and storage media, mics, cables, a few office supplies	\$838.36
<b>development</b>	membership in Candid, Nonprofit Leadership Lab, and similar services	\$855.88
<b>contractors</b>	web designer for thedamn.org site, logo design for DAMN, voiceover for podcast	\$709.00
<b>business</b>	business license expenses, bank fees, Zoom account, mailbox rental	\$766.39
<b>advertising</b>	mainly Facebook and Taboola, plus printing of T shirts	\$651.13
<b>hosting</b>	Podcast audio host, podcast website, thedamn.org	\$2,191.52
<b>travel</b>	lodging, gasoline, and small <i>per diem</i> for reporting trips (Southwest/Big Bend, Amargosa, Salt Lake City)	\$4,868.00

# 90 Miles from Needles Episodes FY 2024

June 25, 2024

**S3E20: Desert Protection versus Climate Capitalism: Can we have both?**

June 18, 2024

**S3E19: Oh, those dark desert skies**

June 11, 2024

**S3E18: Don't Die Today! Staying Safe in Desert Heat**

June 04, 2024

**S3E17: Submerged No More! Restoring Chemehuevi Land and Traditions**

May 21, 2024

**S3E16: Ash Meadows Faces New Mining Threat**

May 14, 2024

**S3E15: The Surprising Longevity of Desert Plants**

May 07, 2024

**S3E14: Saving El Paso's Rio Bosque Wetlands**

April 30, 2024

**S3E13: Why Protecting Cultural Sites is Important**

April 24, 2024

**S3E12: Our 50th Episode**

April 16, 2024

**S3E11: Desert Stories**

April 02, 2024

**S3E10: Can the Wilson's Phalarope Save the Great Salt Lake?**

March 26, 2024

**S3E9: How Avi Kwa Ame Transformed My Life**

March 18, 2024

**S3E8: Border Wall: A Barrier to Wildlife and Humanity**

March 05, 2024

**S3E7: Saving the Chihuahuan Desert with Frontera Land Alliance**

February 26, 2024

**S3E6: Joshua Trees and Family Trees**

February 19, 2024

**S3E5: Protecting the Great Bend of the Gila**

February 04, 2024

**S3E4: Nevada Supreme Court Upholds Water Protections for Desert Wildlife**

January 29, 2024

**S3E3: The Fight Against Flamingo 640; How a Community Stood Up to Big Development**

January 22, 2024

**S3E2: Biden's Plan to Turn the Desert into a Solar Energy Complex**

January 14, 2024

**S3E1: Four Books That Will Change How You See The Desert**

December 24, 2023

**S2E16: Protecting Desert Bighorn Sheep from Habitat Loss and Disease**

November 27, 2023

**S2E15: On Giving Tuesday, Make a Difference for the Desert**

November 08, 2023

**S2E14: Obi Kaufmann and The Deserts of California**

October 23, 2023

**S2E13: Dealing With Loss**

August 25, 2023

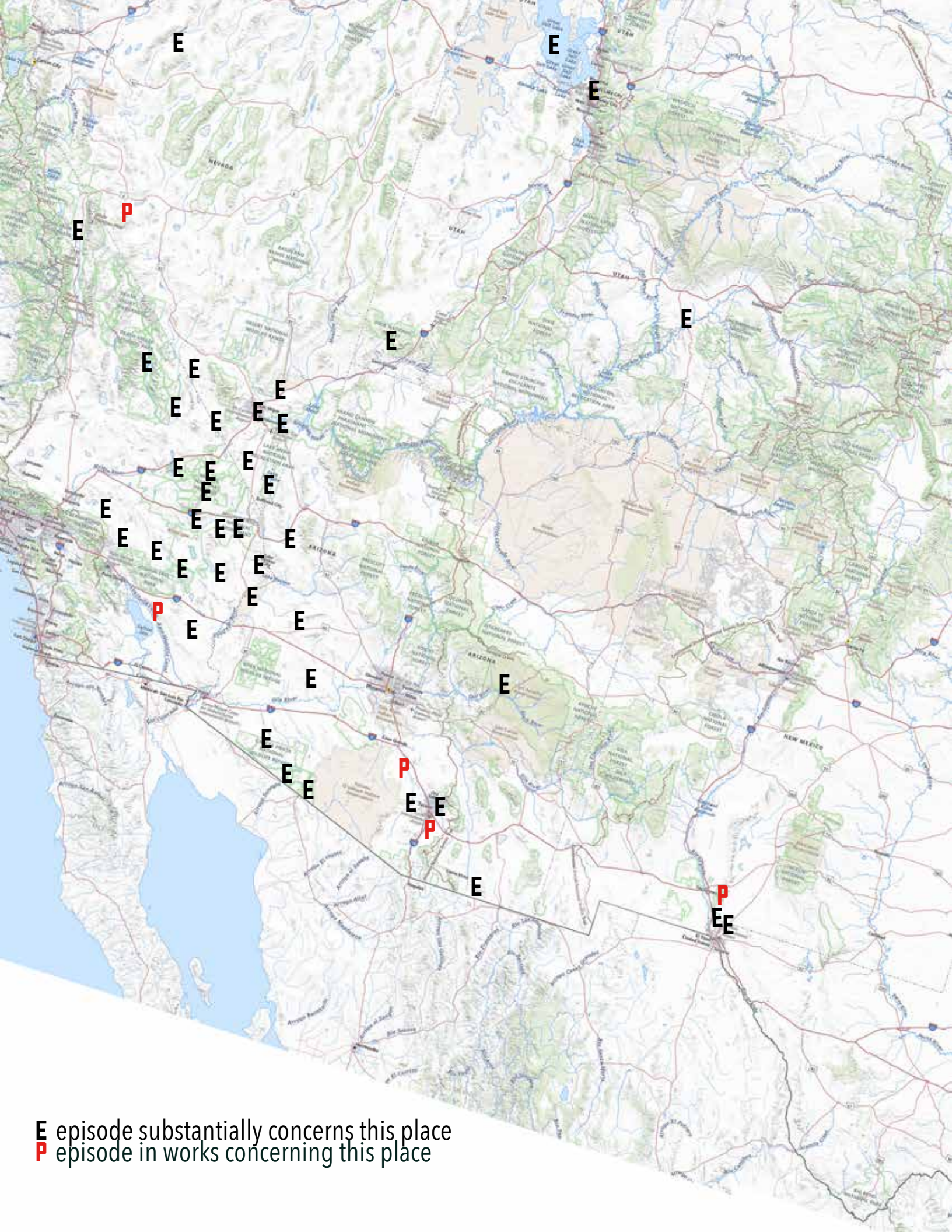
**S2E12: The Majestic Saguaro, Part 1**

July 26, 2023

**S2E11: Globemallow Binding the Desert's Wounds**

July 11, 2023

**S2E10: Save Ash Meadows!**



**E** episode substantially concerns this place  
**P** episode in works concerning this place

# Our Board



**Luke Basulto (Board President)** has deep roots in the Mojave Desert. He was born and raised in Barstow, California and grew up exploring the desert mountains around his little hometown. Luke has worked for numerous environmental agencies and organizations over the course of his career including the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Mojave Desert Land Trust, and The Wildlands Conservancy. He is currently the California Desert Program Manager for the National Parks Conservation Association in Joshua Tree, CA where he lives with his partner Gabrielle and their daughter Isabelle.



**Brooke Binkowski** is an award-winning veteran journalist whose most recent work involved taking on multiple global disinformation narratives and their worst purveyors. She worked for years as a humanitarian and post-conflict reporter at the U.S.-Mexico border, and as a breaking-news reporter for KPCC and the legendary KNX in Los Angeles. Her work has been published in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, *Foreign Policy* and the *Christian Science Monitor*, and aired on NPR, CBS, and CNN. She left daily reporting in 2015 in order to run counterdisinformation sites Snopes and TruthOrFiction. She also serves as an expert witness in high-profile cases against disinformation purveyors, most recently the Sandy Hook case against Alex Jones, which ended in nearly a billion-dollar judgment against him. In 2017 and 2018, Binkowski exposed Facebook's ties to destabilizing democracies throughout the world.



**Matthew Crotty** is a nonfiction producer, writer, director and founder of Ahra Films. He has a decade of experience crafting beautiful, socially conscious documentaries and multimedia projects. During his time working in public media, he created a wide range of original documentaries and docu-series including historical biographies, artist profiles, social movement histories, as well as films about environmental justice issues and Indigenous peoples. He has won 23 Los Angeles Area Emmy® Awards, 17 LA Press Club Awards and 10 Golden Mike Awards®.

# of Directors



**Audrey Scheere** is a marketing and management professional based in “It’s a dry heat” Tucson, Arizona. Her professional path has included global marketing, media strategy, and corporate event production. She is currently the studio manager at BRINK, an award winning creative agency specializing in provocative and impactful storytelling. Audrey is also an active Certified Tourism Ambassador through Visit Tucson & the TAI, Scrum Alliance Certified Agile Leader, and Certified Kanban Coach.



**Caroline Partamian** is a sound and visual artist living in the California High Desert. She is the co-founder of Other Desert Radio, a community arts radio station that is DAMN’s first community partner to rebroadcast 90 Miles from Needles. She also runs a small press, Weird Babes, and co-runs the Armenian Creatives collective and press.



**Chris Clarke (Secretary-Treasurer)**, Executive Director of DAMN and host of 90 Miles from Needles, is a longtime environmental journalist and desert activist. His work has been published in dozens of outlets in the US, Japan, and the United Kingdom. As editor in chief at Earth Island Journal from 1998 through 2007, Chris broke a number of stories that were subsequently picked up by mainstream publications such as the *New York Times*. As Environment Editor at KCETTV in Los Angeles, Chris reported extensively on the dawn of utility-scale solar in the California desert. His work prompted coverage of that issue in the global press. Chris lives in Twentynine Palms with his ecologist-idealist wife Lara and their dogs Heart and Jack (pictured, on left).

# Our donors

At the Desert Advocacy Media Network, our mission is fueled by the generous support of our dedicated donors. As we reflect on another year of impactful storytelling and advocacy through initiatives such as the “90 Miles from Needles” podcast, we are deeply grateful to those who have contributed to our cause. This donor list is a testament to the community that stands with us, ensuring that our deserts remain vibrant and safeguarded for future generations. Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to desert protection. We couldn't do it without you! *(Since this is our first Annual Report, we've calculated cumulative donations from our initial launch in 2021.)*

## \$1,000 and up

Laraine Turk  
Chris Clarke

## \$500-999

Robert Bagel  
Florian Boyd  
Bonnie Brady  
Brandon Braun  
Brendan Cummings  
Kim Garrison Means  
Leland Means  
Lisa Lynn Morgan  
Charles Peterson  
Mary Ann Ruiz  
Michele Simmons

## \$250-499

Deirdre Cerkanowicz  
Naomi Fraga  
John Griesemer  
Jacqueline Guevara  
Yaney Maclver  
Brian O'Connell  
Natalie Patch  
Susan Sorrells  
Gary Spiers  
Patrick Zuchowicki

## \$100-249

Anonymous  
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Cara Barbero  
Allison Baumhefner  
Fred Bell  
Deborah Bollinger  
Evelyn Brown  
Mary Buxton  
Sarah Cardin  
Moises Cisneros

Coral Clarke  
Caroline Conway  
Cathy Davies  
Louis Desprez  
Desert Protection Society  
Patrick Donnelly  
Sam Easley  
Kevin Emmerich  
Ken Genku Cleland  
Erickson

Darryl Evans  
Scott Fajack  
Judy Fenerty  
Thomas Fjallstam  
Peter Frigeri  
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Linda Gibson  
Michael E. Gordon  
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Cody Hanford  
Juniper Harrower  
Kathy Holmes  
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Madhusudan Katti  
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Michael Landrum  
Dan Lape  
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Ben Loescher  
Shelby Logue  
Adan Lopez  
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strum  
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Gloria Putnam  
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Lynn Sweet  
Lisbet Thoresen  
Mason Voehl  
Rebecca Ward  
Jose Witt  
Elizabeth Wolff  
Brandy Wood  
Karl Young

## Up to \$99

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Lucas Basulto  
Barret Baumgart  
Gloria Beetle

Cindy Bernard  
Carmen Brady  
Keith Brennan  
Riah Buchanan  
Kathleen Case  
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Lauri Costello  
Laura Cunningham  
Zoe Dagan  
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Dera Weaver  
Lori Witzel  
Matthew Woodman  
Russell Woodruff  
Kay C Wylie

### **Special recognition**

*We'd like to especially thank the following folks who made significant donations of goods, services, and labor!*

Thomas Alban  
Nancy Bates  
Eileen Lynch  
Derby Kim  
Martín Mancha  
Alicia Pike  
Alia Rafique  
Lara Rozzell  
Shiela Sasek  
Cher Townsend  
Stacey Villalobos



**Our donors' support is crucial** in helping us continue our vital work in protecting desert landscapes and raising awareness through programs like *90 Miles from Needles* and our other media work. Please consider making a donation today to ensure we can continue to advocate for our irreplaceable desert environments and the unique wildlife, plants, and people that call them home. You can scan the QR code here or visit <https://givebutter.com/l7bc3V> to donate, or text "Needles" to 53-555. You can also send checks to: **Desert Advocacy Media Network, PO Box 127, Twentynine Palms, CA 92277.**



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