

Imagine a Wilder Future

In his quarterly note to *Alta*'s readers, publisher Will Hearst charts a course for the next West.

BY WILL HEARST | APR 7, 2021



CHRIS HARDY

Even at its silliest, Abbey's work, like Stegner's, never neglected that element that had gone missing in the writing of so many of their East Coast contemporaries: wilderness.

—David Gessner, from his book *All the Wild That Remains*

It's getting harder to find wild country around these parts, at least south of Alaska. Nature free from the impact of *Homo sapiens* is becoming a memory. Even wilderness areas are at risk of becoming like zoos, protected managed habitats for tourists and filmmakers. Never mind the fact that the land they set aside was once the home range of Native Americans. Big fauna is on the retreat everywhere.

The frontier is a shifting baseline, to borrow a term from Daniel Pauly, the marine biologist who first wrote about how each generation thinks of its era as the “original”

state of Nature. You can see the degradation in your own lifetime, but vastly underestimate how much damage occurred before you were even born.

We will have to rely on much younger people to change this planet's course. To define a new frontier.

We built this issue around the theme of “The Next West” to highlight the people and ideas that get us excited about the future, that push our sense of what can be accomplished, that exemplify the unceasingly imaginative spirit that has made our region synonymous with creativity and ingenuity.

So in this issue, we introduce a feature that will become a recurring component of the *Alta Journal* ethos: Trailblazers. We are seeking out extraordinary people who represent the best of the Next West across a broad range of fields, from environmentalism (a 20-year-old who successfully campaigned against oil drilling in her neighborhood; a third-generation Central Valley activist for farmers' rights) to fashion (the founder of a gender-neutral clothing line) to interior design (a wildly inventive decorator of hotels and restaurants).

We have filtered their work through the lens of design, and we're defining *design* very broadly. Everything is design: art, culture, innovation, social justice, even experiences.

We hope readers are as impressed—and inspired—as we are by their creativity and spirit.

After all, the future is the only thing we can change. •

BY WILL HEARST

Will Hearst is the editor and publisher of *Alta Journal*, which he founded in 2017.

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