



OCTOBER 2023

IDAHO ORGANIZING REVIEW

Newsletter of the Idaho Organization of
Resource Councils

A word from the Chair

BY ELAINE KAZAKOFF

The past 12 months have been the most challenging months that the Board and Staff of IORC have experienced in our 10 years. In August of 2022 the IORC Board was preparing for a planned change of leadership. Since August of 2022 we have seen our staffing fall from four full-time and one part-time to two full-time staffers today. We experienced funding shortfalls which threatened our ability to meet our monthly commitments. Our office has flooded, and our bank account was mistakenly closed due to an internal banking error.

Breland Draper, who had built IORC from the ground up, had long envisioned a leadership change when we entered our second decade. Our planned change was upended by a financial crisis brought on when a highly anticipated grant was not awarded in August of 2022. Breland left IORC immediately to reduce costs. With support from the Board of Directors and leadership from Western Organization of Resource Councils, Senior Staffers Irene Ruiz and Doug Paddock were able to quickly take the reins. Irene immediately began what has become a very successful search for new sources of grant funding. Doug focused on cost controls, developing the 2023 budget, and office management. By necessity, campaign work for both Doug and Irene was curtailed at that time. Samantha Guerrero, an organizer hired in early 2020, voluntarily added the role of comms coordinator to her role ensuring that IORC still had a social media presence and could keep followers updated on important campaign work. Her efforts also contributed to the success of the year-end Giving Tuesday fundraising event.

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A letter from the Director

BY IRENE RUIZ

Dear IORC member and supporters,

My name is Irene Ruiz, IORC's new Executive Director. I am pleased to be able to take on this amazing opportunity with a great organization that has worked towards grassroots organizing to support Idaho's communities around environmental and sustainability issues. A little bit about me. I am a first generation daughter of Mexican immigrants who was born and raised in rural Idaho. I am also a former farmworker who has knowledge of how our agricultural system works. I moved to Boise, ID, to attend Boise State University where I received my Bachelors degree. I also have a Masters degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago. I have done advocacy work for over twenty years, focusing on immigrant, reproductive, racial, and climate justice.

I have been at IORC since 2018. I was hired to be the organization's first Bilingual Community Organizer where I had the opportunity to do an assessment of Canyon County to see the need to organize Latinx communities around the issues we work with. Visión 2C Resource Council came out of this project and was kicked off in February 2020 right before the COVID-19 pandemic. I have learned so much these last five years and I am excited to usher IORC in a new era where we will continue to do amazing grassroots work.

Our membership and supporters have always been on our minds through all of the struggles and transitions we have been through the last few years. Especially this last year where we saw a sudden change of leadership. It has been a bumpy road where many hard decisions had to be made in order to ensure that IORC survived this period of transition. IORC's board of directors have been instrumental in ensuring that IORC was able to continue doing what it needed to do to survive as an organization. I want to give a heartfelt thank you for

the dedication and service that I have seen from them. I would also like to acknowledge our parent network, The Western Organization of Resource Councils who provided much needed administrative support and assistance to get us through this. IORC is lucky to have dedicated people who want to see us succeed.

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As we look towards the future, we understand the need to start focusing on those who are directly impacted by climate change. IORC hopes that in 2024, we will be able to update our strategic plan to reflect our shift in the communities we serve in the next five years. IORC's goal is to be an inclusive and diverse organization where we serve those who provide for us and sustain our food system as well as ways to continue sustainability issues such as renewable energy and regenerative agriculture. Our chapters and teams such as Portneuf Resource Council, Visión 2C Resource Council, The Ag/Food Team, and our newest service-based team the Idaho Immigrant Resource Alliance.

I truly hope that you will continue to support IORC as we enter this new decade and leadership transition. IORC has been here since 2012 and we hope to continue advocating and organizing for a healthy environment and community in Idaho.

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“The past 12 months have been the most challenging months that the Board and Staff of IORC have experienced in our 10 years. 2024 will be a year of rebuilding and continued stabilization.”

ELAINE KAZAKOFF

BOARD CHAIR CONT...

The first quarter of 2023 was a period of both stabilization and upheaval. Even as our financial position strengthened, we were again challenged by a staff departure. After nearly 10 years with IORC, Doug Paddock received an offer for a position with another organization and left IORC at the end of April. Irene took on the role of Executive Director with strong support from both the IORC board and leadership at WORC.

Without going into all our experiences this past year, it's fair to say that in the space of 10 months, IORC experienced more challenges than in the previous 10 years. But adversity can bring out the best in people and I'm happy to say that Irene Ruiz and Samantha Guerrero have continued to rise to the challenges.

As we approach the last quarter of 2023 we are not back to where we were in 2022 before all the challenges began, but we have a small yet impressive team in place to explore the future. Here are some ways they have been recognized for their work.

In September of 2022 both Irene and Samantha were honored by the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs with their Humanitarian of the Year Award for the work they have done through the Idaho Immigrant Resource Alliance (IIRA). Since 2021 both have also participated in The Heal Food Alliance's School of Political Leadership (SoPL). In June of this year Irene was in Washington D.C. lobbying Idaho's delegation as part of the culmination of her SoPL program in which she developed a Farmworker Justice Campaign. Irene was one of seven women nationwide awarded the Resilience in Climate Equity (RICE) Award for 2022. In late 2022 Irene was selected as one of 28 women to be a part of the U.S. Grassroots Accelerator Program from the Women's Earth Alliance which will support her work on environmental justice for Farmworkers while building alliances with other powerful leaders across the country.

2024 will be a year of rebuilding and continued stabilization. This newsletter is the first installment in the communications plan for all that is to come. Thanks to everyone who has supported IORC over the years from members, board members, chapters, and staff both past and present.

Program update

Agriculture and Food

BY SAMANTHA GUERRERO

Once every 5 years, one of the most powerful pieces of legislation expires and is revised which determines what farmers can grow, how it is grown, and who grows our food that we have access to. At IORC our members want to make sure this bill is good for our Idaho families, small farmers, farmworkers, consumers, and the environment. This year we have had the privilege to send 3 of our

leaders to Washington D.C. and advocate for those who feed us yet tend to be forgotten, our local farmworkers.

Marielena Vega represented the Idaho Organization of Resource Councils with HEAL FOOD Alliance in Washington D.C. at the Farmers for Climate Action: Rally for Resilience, to elevate the voices and demand prioritization of our communities in the creation of the 2024 farm bill.

IORC Director Irene Ruiz along with our member of

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AG AND FOOD CONT...

Visión 2C Alejandra Hernandez also got the opportunity to meet with members of Congress to advocate for a better Farm Bill.



IORC Director Irene Ruiz along with our member of Vision 2C Alejandra Hernandez also got the opportunity to meet with members of Congress to advocate for a better Farm Bill.

Idaho Immigrant Resource Alliance

At the beginning of June, the Idaho Immigrant Resource Alliance launched its Heat and Smoke Relief Fund. This year the coalition of nonprofits raised \$2,554 for direct aid to local farmworkers in Southwest Idaho not including the countless donations from the community such as water, coolers, hats, bandannas, and clothing. Successful distribution of items donated was made possible by working with member leaders of our coalition such as the Latinx Workers of Southern Idaho, Visión 2C Resource Council, Future Hispanic Leaders of America's mentor Rick Godina, and Community Council of Idaho.

“This year we have had the privilege to send 3 of our leaders to Washington D.C. and advocate for those who feed us yet tend to be forgotten, our local farmworkers.”



Learn more:

<https://healfoodalliance.org/heal-food-alliance-shows-up-big-dc-for-a-transformative-farm-bill/>

Watch her Speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSbYcvSLh40>

<https://idahocapitalsun.com/2023/05/18/after-lobbying-in-d-c-idaho-activist-shares-experience-advocating-for-immigrant-right>

<https://www.boisestatepublicradio.org/environment/2023-08-17/groups-work-to-get-water-other-supplies-to-farmworkers-toiling-in-summer-heat>
idahocapitalsun.com/briefs/idaho-immigrant-resource-alliance-continues-heat-and-smoke-relief-fund-through-2023/

<https://www.kivitv.com/news/idaho-immigrant-resource-alliance-is-working-on-a-heat-and-smoke-relief-fund-for-agriculture-workers>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRPii09_7Jo

DIRECTOR'S LETTER CONT...

2C Resource Council came out of this project and was kicked off in February 2020 right before the COVID-19 pandemic. I have learned so much these last five years and I am excited to usher IORC in a new era where we will continue to do amazing grassroots work.

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Chapter Updates

Visión 2C Resource Council

V2C has been busy working on its first campaign to support farm workers that deal with climate change called the Farmworker Justice Campaign. The campaign will include a storytelling piece on how climate change has affected Idaho's farmworkers. The storytelling project started in June in conjunction with a Boise State University team. This will be a filmmaking project that will tell the stories of those who are directly affected by climate change. The goal is to be able to show the general public and public officials how extreme heat, smoke inhalation, and

pesticide poisoning affects farm workers who are working the the fields.

V2C has donated specialty gloves and safety glasses to farm workers from the campaign fund, La Cosechas, which was started in the Winter of 2023 in the Wilder, ID, area. V2C has continued to support IIRA with the Heat and Smoke Fund to provide farm workers items for the heat and smoke.

Irene Ruiz and Alejandra Hernandez were part of the 2023 HEAL Food Alliances School of Political

VISIÓN 2C RESOURCE COUNCIL CONT...

Leadership where they learned skills on advocacy around V2C's Farmworker Justice Campaign and strategies to implement it. They both went to Washington D.C. to lobby for the Farmworker Justice Campaign and the Farm Bill to promote the health and safety of Idaho's farm-working community in June. They met with Senator Crapo and Risch's offices to talk about the work they have been doing to support farmworkers. Irene and Alejandra graduated from SoPL in June. IORC was eligible for a small \$5,000 grant to continue the campaign.

SAVE THE DATE

Join us as IORC enters into our second decade with exciting changes as we look toward a new year.

IORC's 2023 Annual Meeting
Saturday, November 18, 2023
Via Zoom - Register: <https://bit.ly/499L62a>
10:00am - 12:00pm



Portneuf Resource Council

PRC Website goes live!

Thanks to the hard work of new members Terry Lay and Elizabeth Mandela, PRC launched a new website. It highlights our two campaigns, "Put Water First" and "Clean Energy & Electrification" and showcases PRC's award-winning Sustainable Idaho podcast on KISU public radio. Check out the [new PRC Website](https://www.portneufresourcecouncil.org) (<https://www.portneufresourcecouncil.org>).

Put Water First Campaign and the Portneuf Valley Aquifer

The "Put Water First" team scored a major win by submitting science-based written and verbal public testimony on the City of Pocatello's 2040 Comprehensive Plan. In the draft version, Protection and Enhancement of Water Resources was the fifth

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"Our membership and supporters have always been on our minds through all of the struggles and transitions we have been through the last few years."

IRENE RUIZ



PRC CONT...

Environmental Resiliency Goal. PRC members advocated to elevate clean water's priority and encouraged the City to include pursuing a Sensitive Aquifer Designation. Their strong recommendations were adopted in the final draft; City planners put Water Quality as the first goal in the Environmental Resiliency section when they presented it to the Pocatello City Council. Now that's putting water first!

Sustainable Idaho, KISU Weekly Podcast on Public Radio

Sustainable Idaho is an award-winning environmental podcast sponsored by the Portneuf Resource Council and Idaho State University (ISU) which airs twice weekly on KISU. Funding is always tricky and originally PRC provided all the funding for the program. Fortunately, ISU's Center for Ecological Research and Education (CERE) has helped fund the lion's share of the program with ongoing grants for the student intern hosts. Recently, the CERE Board and ISU professor Colden Baxter agreed to roll over the SI grant to next year.

Electric Vehicle (EV) and Electrification Advocacy

For 2023, PRC is kicking off a new campaign related to our Clean Energy objectives. PRC is advocating for and disseminating information on the benefits and incentives of Electric Vehicles and home electrification. PRC prepared materials on recent federal initiatives, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, and gave several presentations to Rotary clubs in Idaho.

PRC is planning an EV Expo in Pocatello to be held on September 30th in conjunction with National Drive Electric Week. The EV Expo will be held in the south parking lot of the Marshall Public Library and adjacent to the Saturday Farmer's Market.

Rooftop Solar Advocacy

PRC continues to oppose Idaho Power Company's recent petitions to the Idaho Public Utilities Commission on a general rate increase and to lower the export credit rate for rooftop solar. PRC, working with the Solar Mobilization Team, helped create informational graphics and talking points and will reach out to members and regional solar supporters to attend the workshops and encourage formal testimony to the IPUC.

We'd love to hear from you!

www.iorcinfo.org

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Bringing people together
through community organizing

Support IORC today!



With your help, we can make real change in Idaho.

Will you join our many leaders who work hard every day to make Idaho the place we all want to live? We're enthusiastic about what the future can be if our members and supporters come together to support grassroots change.

Please give today at www.iorcinfo.org



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