

# Who is the reclusive Hansjorg Wyss?

By Lauralee O'Neil | April 3, 2019



*“Nobody knows me, and I hope it stays like this.”*



The owner of Halter Ranch Vineyard in west Paso Robles recently launched a \$1 billion campaign to protect 30 percent of the world by 2030. Joe Johnston JJOHNSTON@THETRIBUNENEWS.COM

He was born September 19, 1935 in Bern, Switzerland, and some say he resides in Wilson, Wyoming. According to Wikipedia he is an entrepreneur and a philanthropist.

***“Nobody knows me, and I hope it stays like this.”*** - Hansjorg Wyss



The reclusive Hansjorg Wyss, one of the Democrat's most shadowy donors, is ranked by Forbes among the richest men in the world, with a net worth of \$5.8 billion as of 2018. He established The Wyss Foundation in 1998, whose main focus is on the protection of public lands, particularly in the American West. And since its inception the foundation's support has increased that protection by well over 20 million acres. In just one huge gulp, Wyss funded a campaign led by The Wilderness Society to withdraw 26 million acres from productive uses in resource extraction, grazing, and outdoor recreation.

Capturing land in the Western States (Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and more) has always been a primary cause *celebre* for the illusive philanthropist. He made an [undisclosed contribution](#) to the Trust for Public Land, to buy and retire oil and gas leases on more than 24,000 acres in Wyoming.

Among his foundation's biggest gifts:

- ◆ \$35 million in 2010 to help purchase 310,000 acres of private timberlands to protect grizzly bear and wolverine habitat in northern Montana, stitching together a checkerboard of federal, state and private lands.

- ◆ \$4.25 million in 2013 to help buy back 58,000 acres of oil and gas leases in Wyoming's Hoback Basin, a prized retreat for rafters, fishermen and hunters, and a major migration route for wildlife.
- ◆ Between \$1.5 and [\\$2.5 million](#) to the [American Prairie Reserve](#) (APR). The APR project has aroused profound resentment in surrounding agricultural communities, where it is seen as a move to [boot ranchers from land](#) they've stewarded for generations.
- ◆ \$2 million in 2013 to remove the century-old Veazie Dam and restore fish passage in Maine's Penobscot River.
- ◆ \$35 million in 2010 to help purchase 310,000 acres of private timberlands to protect grizzly bear and wolverine habitat in northern Montana, stitching together a checkerboard of federal, state and private lands.

In 2018, Wyss was presented with the National Environmental Visionary Award by the League of Conservation Voters (LCV). And guess who presented him with the award? None other than John Podesta.



And there's more. Wyss was [under investigation](#) for a 2011 sexual assault, and has deep ties to Hillary Clinton, the [Clinton Foundation](#), and John Podesta. He also [sits on the board](#) of the progressive Center for American Progress, founded by Podesta. And, Podesta also sat on the board of The Wyss Foundation from 2019 to 2013. Cozy, huh?

According to the Washington Examiner (July 23, 2014) one of Wyss's holdings, Synthes Inc., and Norian Corporation (its wholly owned subsidiary) conducted illegal human experiments that [resulted in the deaths](#) of three elderly patients.

In 2012 Wyss sold Synthes Inc. to Johnson & Johnson for [\\$20.2 billion](#). Today he uses his vast wealth to assist nonprofits and conservation groups in preserving land and ocean habitats. His stated goal is to "protect 30 percent of the planet's surface by 2030."

***"We need to embrace the radical, time-tested and profoundly democratic idea of public-land protection that was invented in the United States, tested in Yellowstone and Yosemite, and now proven the world over."***

As a Swiss citizen Wyss can't legally make political contributions, but he certainly [contributes generously](#) to *charities*—and gets big tax breaks. And, he seems particularly interested in Montana, donating \$168,742 to the University of Montana Foundation, \$52,800 to Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, and \$127,800 to the Greater Yellowstone Coalition.

[According to E&E News](#), Wyss promotes radical environmentalists who block energy development and destroy jobs in the Western lands. "Wyss's foreign money -- tens of millions of dollars of it -- takes American natural resources out of productive uses," according to a [profile](#) of Wyss by the Center for Organizational Research and Education.



Oh, and one last charity; our big-hearted philanthropist, through his Foundation, made a \$3 million grant to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Sorry, Mr. Wyss, we know you now!