



2019 Annual Report



EXPLORE | VALUE | PROTECT

Photo: Mark Ronay



Message from Board President and Executive Director

The year 2019 was one of rejuvenation and celebration in the mountains, rivers and streams of the Roaring Fork Watershed. Following a record drought year in 2018 the winter of 2018/2019 was really winter, with abundant snowfall and sub-freezing temperatures enduring for weeks. The freeze/thaw cycle in late December and early January was active and ice jam releases were dramatic and frequent on the Roaring Fork River. On January 4, two separate ice jam releases roared through Basalt. The Fork surged and increased for a short time by nearly 700% (from approximately 200 cfs to 1,400 cfs) as a torrent of ice, wood and debris filled the river channel. The community rallied around this incredible natural occurrence, lining the bridges and high banks to watch the ice roll through. Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC) rallied around the science, education and safety concerns with ice jam releases. In collaboration with local emergency management agencies and the National Weather Service, a system was developed to predict releases, inform the public and send text and email alerts when ice jam releases were expected. One week later, a group of anglers reported receiving a text alert and exiting the river safely prior to an ice jam release.

Winter held on; the snow kept coming. Skiing was phenomenal, persisting well beyond expectation and the season

extended into June. Avalanches let loose throughout the Western slope in record numbers, several of which closed mountain highways for days and even weeks. The much-anticipated runoff arrived a few weeks later than expected but lasted for many weeks. The river was full, the Lake Christine burn scar and surrounding landscape was as green as Ireland, and water was abundant. Big whitewater was celebrated by boaters into the summer, and by mid-summer floating and fishing was as good as ever. The watershed rebounded robustly in this time of plenty and the river demonstrated its resilience.

The river's resilience and longevity no longer occur by chance, solely based on natural phenomenon and cycles. The endurance of the river requires a community who is vigilant - watching, listening, and acting with the river in mind.

In time, we hope RFC will continue to show the same resilience and longevity as the river. As we enter our third decade firmly established in The River Center, we continue to be the voice for the river and an asset to the community by continuing our outstanding educational programs, growing our science and policy work, and steadily monitoring the health of our rivers year in and year out. We're here to stay - and we hope you are too.

Your ongoing support and engagement make all our work possible. Thank you!



Pat McMahon

Pat McMahon
President,
Board of Directors



Rick Lofaro

Rick Lofaro
Executive Director

Photo: Mark Fuller

A Thousand Tiny Ways to Study Stream Health

There are three main categories for studying stream health: water chemistry, physical habitat, and biology. Within those categories many parameters can be measured, and the best overall picture of stream health comes from analyzing components of all three. One way to assess the biology of streams is by studying aquatic insects, worms, and crustaceans, known as macroinvertebrates (macros). These small organisms serve as valuable indicator species because they have long aquatic life stages where they are continually exposed to many components of stream health (such as temperature changes, dissolved oxygen levels and pollutants). The presence, absence, and diversity of macros provide important insights to stream health over time.

Macro samples are collected from the streambed, preserved, and sent to a laboratory where they are counted and identified. In many cases, samples contain hundreds or even a thousand specimens. This data reveals diversity and density of macro communities and a reflection of water quality.

RFC makes use of macro data in a variety of ways: they are periodically collected watershed-wide as an overall indicator of stream health and utilized in targeted studies to examine changing health along a stream or in response to changing conditions. Often, RFC's macro data is also submitted to the Colorado Water Quality Control Division for their statewide assessments of stream health.

This fall, RFC staff collected macro samples from the Fryingpan River as part of RFC's ongoing Comprehensive Fryingpan River Assessment. Learn more about this study at www.roaringfork.org/your-watershed/fryingpan-river.

Given the valuable data gained from examining macro communities, RFC will continue to utilize macro sampling as an important tool for studying long-term stream health.

Mayflies, like the one seen here (*Epeorus longimanus*), are indicators of healthy streams. Photo: David H. Funk

Water Quality



Cattle Creek

This marks RFC's fifth year of conducting targeted biological and chemical monitoring on Cattle Creek with funding from Garfield and Eagle Counties. Water quality and stream flows were measured throughout the year at three sites, documenting this year's above average snowpack and stream flow conditions.

In addition, at the request of Garfield County, RFC served as a technical advisor for a Colorado Department of Transportation project to modify the culvert structure where Cattle Creek flows under Highway 82.

Fryingpan River

For the sixth consecutive year, RFC surveyed *Didymosphenia geminata* (didymo) levels in the Fryingpan River. Surveys of didymo stream bed coverage and basic water quality monitoring were conducted at 7 locations in the summer and fall.

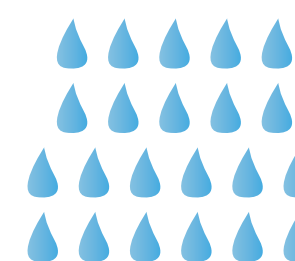
RFC maintained temperature loggers at 3 sites along the Fryingpan River. These loggers have operated year-round since 2013, providing 6 years of continuous water temperature data.

RFC's River Watch Program

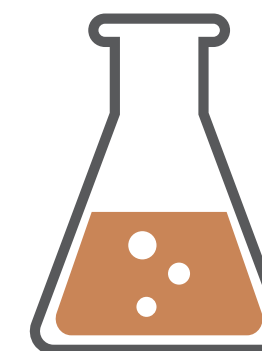
- Conducted a 7-hour water quality training for RFC's citizen science Stream Team volunteers, funded by the Aspen Skiing Company's Environment Foundation. Participants included new and existing volunteers who learned the intricacies of conducting precise and accurate water quality monitoring. The data collection by Stream Teams and RFC staff, is conducted in collaboration with River Watch of Colorado (River Watch), a state-wide water quality program.
- RFC and River Watch hosted their first Meet and Greet for local teachers and volunteers participating in the River Watch program. Attendees from Aspen to Silt connected with each other, met River Watch staff, and listened to Barb Horn, River Watch founder, speak about how their data is utilized throughout the state.
- Partnered with volunteer Stream Teams to conduct regular water quality monitoring at 22 Roaring Fork Watershed sites, including 106 sample events, and 18 volunteers working a combined 158 hours.



18
Volunteers



22
Watershed
Sites



106
Sample
Events



158
Volunteer
Hours
Worked

Long-term Planning for the Roaring Fork Watershed

Roaring Fork Watershed Plan Purpose:

To plan for and work toward an environmentally and economically healthy watershed that benefits all who have a stake in it.

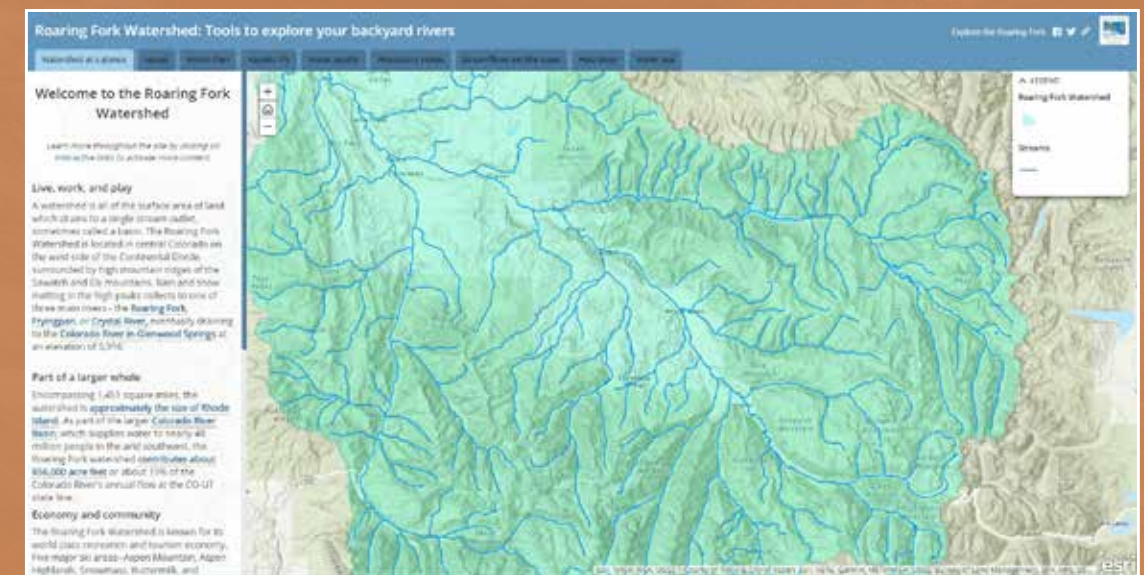
The Roaring Fork Watershed Plan, originally published in 2012, is the product of over four years of collaboration and effort by more than 100 people, representing dozens of agencies, governments, and interests throughout the Roaring Fork Valley. It is a compendium of proposals and recommendations developed by both experts and interested citizens, meant to be implemented by a variety of agencies, governments, and other entities, as resources allow. It details more than 250 action items, intended to provide guidance and direction on how best to cooperatively improve and protect the water resources of the Roaring Fork Valley ranging from identifying and protecting major wetlands to pursuing opportunities for improving natural and artificial water storage.

Throughout 2017 and 2018, with funding from Pitkin County Healthy Rivers Board, RFC met with and interviewed numerous coordinating entities to determine and document projects or actions completed

that achieved Plan goals. Significant accomplishments in the past six years show measurable benefits to the watershed, valuable collaboration, and widespread dedication to the resource. This process led to the creation of the Roaring Fork Watershed Interactive Information System. Housed in the RFC website, the interactive tool hosts easily accessible information about the Roaring Fork Watershed so that every user, from grade school students to the seasoned scientist, can peruse research projects and recommended actions regarding a particular stretch of river, sub-basin, or the entire watershed.

As was originally intended, the Plan is a dynamic and flexible document to be periodically updated as projects are completed, new information is gathered, and priorities and plans change. Dedicated to fostering implementation, RFC and Ruedi Water and Power Authority will continue to serve as resources to participating entities, and check in with stakeholders to promote priority projects, connecting potential partners in action or funding, and celebrate accomplishments.

Read the Roaring Fork Watershed Plan at www.roaringfork.org/your-watershed/roaring-fork-watershed-plan/.



Watershed Science & Policy

Addressing water issues, river health, and related land management through participation in public processes.

City of Glenwood Springs

RFC continues to serve as a technical advisor for the City of Glenwood Springs and the Glenwood Springs River Commission on stream health and policy projects.

RFC is providing consultation for Glenwood's Three Mile Creek Confluence Comprehensive Planning and Design Project. This project includes erosion control, stream bank improvements, recreation access, and riparian restoration.

RFC continues to support the proposed Riparian Setback Regulations currently being reviewed by the Glenwood Springs Planning and Zoning commission. RFC staff regularly attends meetings and submits comments explaining the importance of riparian areas and providing the science behind the proposed regulations.

White River National Forest Fuel Management Plan

Submitted a comment letter to the U.S. Forest Service regarding the proposed Forest Health and Fuels Management Project. Primary goals of the project are to improve forest health, manage live and down fuels, and enhance tree diversity. RFC's comment letter encouraged protection of water resources, minimization of potential impacts, and related use of best management practices throughout project implementation.

Fryingpan River

The winter of 2019 was marked by extreme snowfall and intense cold. Coming out of the 2018 drought, releases in Ruedi Reservoir were scheduled to run at the minimum, 39cfs or inflow. Because of the concern for aquatic life and anchor ice formation, RFC worked with the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Colorado River Water Conservation District to procure a 3,500 acre-foot lease of water to be released as supplemental flow throughout the winter to benefit the Fryingpan ecosystem. Releases were held to around 65cfs, which is within the range found beneficial to macroinvertebrate life in a 2006 study.

Lake Christine Wildfire

The Lake Christine wildfire left behind a charred landscape, threatening water quality in the Roaring Fork Valley. RFC was approached by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and U.S. Forest Service as a regional entity to lead the local, long-term restoration effort. Since that time RFC has hosted several meetings with all jurisdictions involved to discuss individual and coordinated efforts, which continued through the spring and summer. RFC also worked with Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to coordinate a volunteer replanting effort that drew over 300 people. In addition, RFC initiated conversations with Ruedi Reservoir contract water holders to enable a flushing flow in the case of mud or sediment reaching the stream.

Crystal River

RFC, with the Town of Carbondale, and partners Aspen Valley Land Trust, American Rivers, and Public Counsel of the Rockies, completed the planning phase for restoration and enhancement of a one-half mile, 18-acre reach of the Crystal River as it flows through the town of Carbondale. The goal is to improve the efficiency of the town owned Weaver Ditch headgate and diversion. The project involves planning and design for: restoration of the riparian area along the west side of the river, in-river work for the Weaver Ditch diversion structure and in-river habitat and bank improvements. It also calls for enhanced user experience and passive educational opportunities.

With contractors DHM Design, River Restoration, and Lotic Hydrological, RFC and partners worked through several phases of site evaluation and design process. Extensive public comment was documented and used to shape the final design, which was approved by the Town of Carbondale Board of Trustees.

With 60% design complete, the project is moving the approved design forward and is currently in the fundraising phase to implement the design plan, which carefully balances the educational opportunities and accessibility with avian habitat and wildland environment preservation. With ADA accessibility and a gathering space near River Valley Ranch's South Bridge, this property will serve as an educational resource for the five Carbondale schools located within walking distance of the site as well as the community at large. Through thoughtful restoration, that preserves existing habitat, enhances areas of concern, and creates new habitat where it was lost due to human impacts, this project serves as an example to property owners looking to invest in riparian habitat. In addition, the in-channel work, particularly in the areas impacted by the Weaver Ditch diversion structure, both at the structure and downstream, will be a powerful demonstration of how rebuilding dated infrastructure can benefit both the water rights holder and the river.

Getting students ON the river

It's an amazing experience to watch a student's connection to the river grow with each set of rapids, each overturned rock, watching nature showcase other worlds through real-life adventures. Over the last two years, RFC was able to dive deep into watershed education with Glenwood Springs Middle School students. Through a semester-long program, students' basic, sometimes even fearful, perspective of our rivers was transformed. These middle school learners became stewards of the rivers, deeply entrenched in their protection.

For about 65% of the students, this would be their first time *on* a river. The excitement, nerves, and even a smidgen of fear, created an energy that could barely be contained by the school bus while traveling to the launch. Glenwood Adventure Company provided the rafts and guides allowing us to deliver this experience to 150, 6th grade students.

To start off, the River Adventure Week plunged students into watershed education by giving them authentic experiences on and sometimes in the water. Before getting on the rafts, students gathered around a Roaring Fork Watershed map to get a bird's eye view of the rivers that are the lifeblood of this valley. Once they were on the river, RFC educators guided students through chemical and physical water quality testing while rafting.

On the land, students used sand on the riverbanks to create the Roaring Fork Watershed. Students learned how to trace rivers back to their sources, high on the ridges that cradle our valley. Understanding how water travels helps students learn that we are all connected and every action we take, good or bad, floats downstream. Following the kick-off week, additional lessons and activities exploring even deeper into the complex issues that frame water in the west, were continued in the classroom.

After learning about our rivers, one student quietly whispered, "Before, I would just throw my trash on the ground, but now I think about what I've learned, and put the trash in my pocket because I don't want to hurt the river."

Groups of students turned their knowledge into action. One group designed a rain garden to absorb pollution from the middle school's parking lot. Another group created a design for an in-home gray water treatment system to help reduce the amount of water used. Students also illustrated macroinvertebrates and turned their creations into products that they sold, raising money for local, water-focused nonprofit organizations.

RFC is leading students through these impactful learning experiences because as our rivers are the lifeblood of the west, our children will be the guides of the future.

“Partnering with Roaring Fork Conservancy really helped to elevate student learning. It's one thing to read about something in a textbook, it's even more powerful if students can experience it firsthand. RFC made those experiences possible and we are so grateful for them.”

– Autumn Rivera, 6th Grade Science Teacher,
Glenwood Springs Middle School



“To learn about non-point source pollution, we had an expert speaker from Roaring Fork Conservancy come in and show us a plastic model called an Enviroscope. Our teacher poured water on it to show how the water flows through the model and where the headwaters (beginning of the river) started, where non-source point pollution (pollution that eventually makes it into the river) comes into the river and where that pollution might come from, for example, parking lots, gas stations, oil from cars and trucks, etc.”

– Finn S., 6th Grade Student at Glenwood Springs Middle School

EDUCATION IMPACTS

Roaring Fork Conservancy taught **259** education programs making over **7,000** contacts in 2019!

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

17 Watershed Explorations were offered in 2019, including river floats, hikes through riparian habitats, water diversion project tours, snowshoe hikes, and excursions to view fireflies in rare thermal wetlands.

307 Participants in 2019 Watershed Explorations.



TEACHER & COMMUNITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

22 Teachers and volunteers trained in the National Fishing in Schools Program.

26 Participants in our Women's Only and Adult Beginner Fly Fishing Clinics.

61 1st year raft guides received River Ecology Interpretation training.

5 presentations at state-wide professional conferences.



SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Roaring Fork Conservancy educators taught **174** river and watershed related school programs reaching

4,600 STUDENTS

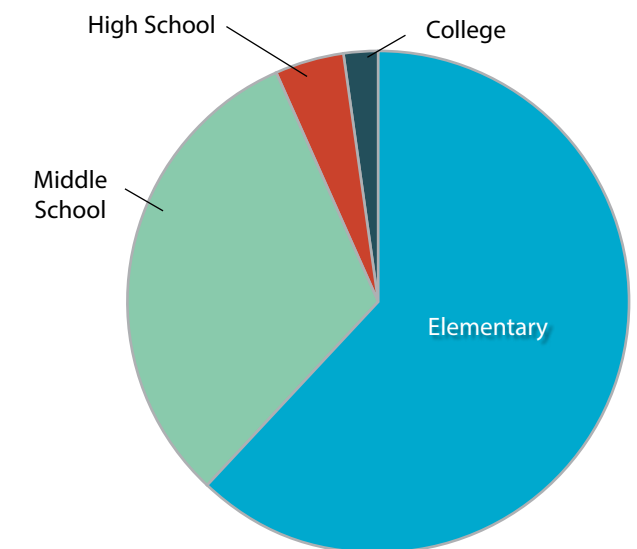
2,861 Elementary School students

1,445 Middle School students

198 High School students

96 College students

30% of school programs took place at The River Center.



Community Outreach and Engagement



Keep it Clean West Slope Partnership

Throughout Colorado, water providers developed Source Water Protection Plans to protect their drinking water sources with education being a major part of plan implementation. In the Eagle, Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys three watershed groups, seven water providers, three counties and the U.S. Forest Service formed the Keep it Clean West Slope Partnership to promote increased awareness and protection of our drinking water supplies. In an effort to get the word out on how to protect this vital resource, road signs reading “Keep it Clean ‘cause we all live downstream,” were placed alongside rivers on the western slope. In addition, bilingual brochures and coloring books for children are available to inform residents of ways they can protect water at their homes and at work.

Learn more at www.roaringfork.org/KeepItClean

Fryingpan River Cleanup

The 21st Annual Fryingpan River Cleanup drew over 230 residents and visitors to pick up trash along 14 miles of road adjacent to the Fryingpan River, the Roaring Fork River and through Basalt. Volunteers even cleaned up a few boat ramps throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed.

Annual River Float

We believe the best way to learn about the river, is to get on it! Since 2004, RFC has hosted an annual river float to teach participants about the local wildlife, water issues, riparian habitat, and a few of our conservation easements located along the way. Due to very high river flows from a delayed spring melt, the float was cancelled in 2019 (only the 3rd float cancellation in 15 years!). Never-the-less, about 100 people enjoyed the BBQ lunch and festival at Coryell Ranch.

Lake Christine Restoration Project

RFC partnered with Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers and Colorado Parks and Wildlife in the first public restoration project to help heal the Lake Christine burn scar. Over 300 volunteers, ranging in age from 4 to over 70, hiked steep slopes to hand-seed thousands of native plants and create rock check dams on over 500 acres.

Lake Christine Wildfire Panel

RFC hosted a panel discussion to describe how the Lake Christine Wildfire changed the local landscape and share completed, ongoing, and future restoration work. The panel was comprised of representatives from U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Basalt Police, National Flood Insurance Program, Eagle County Sheriff’s Office, Roaring Fork Fire and Rescue, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. About 100 attendees learned how to be prepared for post fire events and get involved in upcoming projects.

Rain Barrel Workshop

With support from Valley Gardeners, RFC taught 20 local residents about rainwater harvesting, rain barrel installation and maintenance, and rain barrel regulations in accordance with Colorado Water Law. One lucky attendee went home with an installation-ready rain barrel.

Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper

For the second year in a row, RFC partnered with the City of Aspen to present Colorado’s second Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) workshop. QWEL is an Environmental Protection Agency WaterSense professional certification program teaching landscape and irrigation professionals about water efficient and sustainable landscapes, especially in the arid west.

City of Glenwood Springs

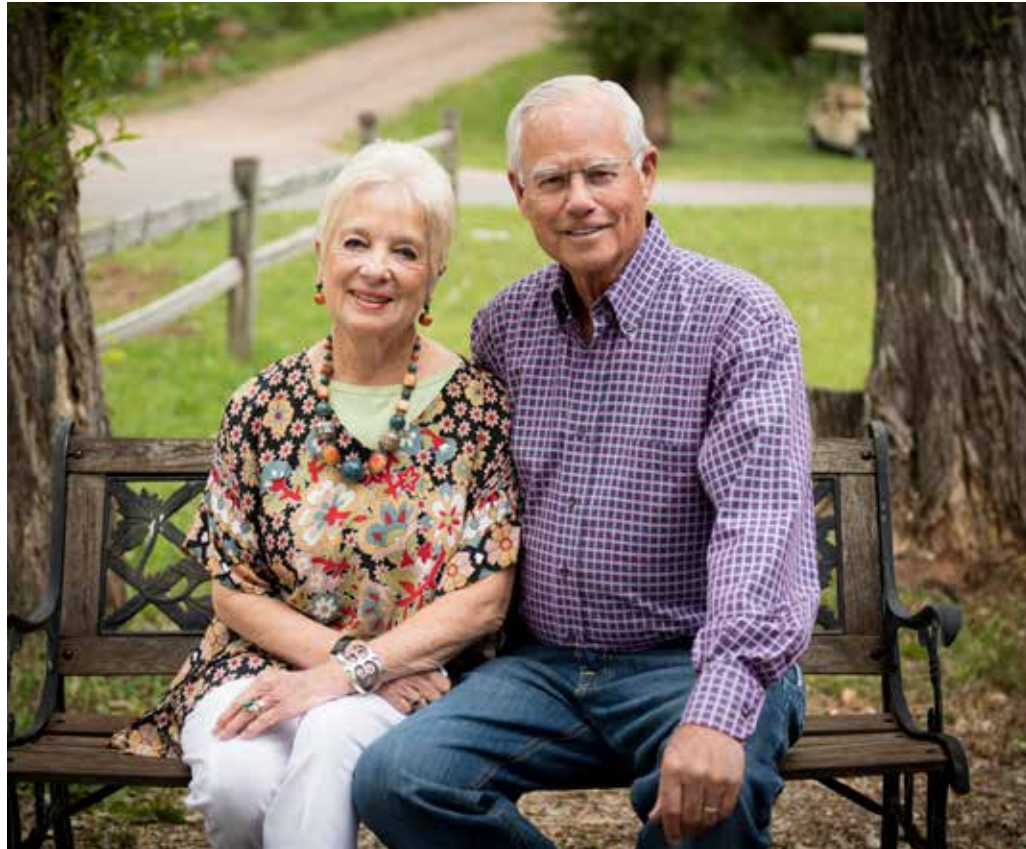
RFC partnered with Glenwood Springs River Commission on community outreach and education projects:

- Helped develop an interpretive sign highlighting streambank restoration and riparian work recently conducted in Veltus Park, along the Roaring Fork River.
- Joined the Glenwood Springs RiverFEST, a river cleanup and festival where over 100 participants walked along streams and floated on rivers throughout the city, collecting hundreds of pounds of trash.
- Participated in a riparian planting project, helping plant 80 riparian trees and shrubs along the Roaring Fork River on the city-owned Raymond Property.

River Stewards

RFC’s River Stewards, a volunteer group of young professionals, spearhead community engagement events to inspire young river enthusiasts to explore, value and protect the Roaring Fork Watershed. This dedicated group helps RFC staff plan and execute our two largest annual community events, the Fryingpan Cleanup and River Float. In addition, they represent RFC at local films and festivals such as the Fly Fishing Film Tour in Aspen and 5Point Film Festival in Carbondale. The Stewards also share their time and expertise with RFC, helping with fishing clinics and school fishing programs, photographing events and programs, or joining the staff for a day of field work. This fun, multi-talented group meets monthly.





Carter and Dane Brooksher have been an integral part of RFC's 23-year history. The Brooksher's experience with numerous nonprofit organizations combined with a passion for rivers and an undying devotion to RFC, provided vital support for this organization over the years. During Carter's 16-year tenure on the board she co-founded the National Council (formerly Rivers Council) and was instrumental in the creation of RFC's annual River Rendezvous fundraiser. After stepping off the board, she continued to serve on The River Center Steering Committee and, along with her husband, provide invaluable support to RFC fundraising, staff and events.

It was back in 1998 that Carter suggested RFC create a Watershed Institute – a series of presentations with water leaders that would discuss water at the regional, state, national and international levels. It was this vision, timed with moving into The River Center, that catapulted her dream into reality. Thus, in 2019 The Brooksher Watershed Institute was born.

RFC hosted seven speakers as part of The Brooksher Watershed Institute, engaging over 350 people in local, state and national water issues and providing opportunities for one-on-one dialogue with water leaders.



2019 Brooksher Watershed Institute Speakers



How to Manage the Colorado River for the New Normal (Drought)
Chris Treese, External Affairs Manager, Colorado River Water Conservation District

1,000 Miles Into the Future: 150 years after John Wesley Powell's journey into the arid West
Tom Minckley, Ph.D., Professor of Geology, University of Wyoming



Plant a Seed, Grow a Snowpack: A discussion of cloud seeding in the Upper Colorado River Basin
Dave Kanzer, Deputy Chief Engineer, Colorado River Water Conservation District

Science Be Dammed; How ignoring inconvenient science drained the Colorado, and its relevance to the future of the Colorado River
Eric Kuhn, Retired General Manager of the Colorado River Water Conservation District and coauthor, with John Fleck, of *Science Be Dammed: How Ignoring Inconvenient Science Drained the Colorado River*

Restoring Critical Riparian Habitat in the Age of Invasives
Cara Kukuraitis, Outreach & Education Coordinator, RiversEdge West

Predicting Powder and the Science of Snow
Joel Gratz, Founding Meteorologist, Open Snow

50 Years of River Protection
Nicole Silk, Executive Director, River Network



Gifts and Contributions – *Roaring Fork Conservancy acknowledges our generous donors and program sponsors.*

\$100,000+

Carter & Dane Brooksher

\$50,000 - \$99,999

Barb & Pat McMahon

\$25,000 - \$49,999

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National Council members are the backbone of our support, fulfilling an integral role in our efforts to protect and enhance the Roaring Fork Watershed. Representing all parts of the United States, these dedicated supporters recognize the importance of the wetlands and river corridors that make our watershed a special place. Their generous contributions enable us to serve as a voice for the rivers, execute sound river science, inform decision-makers, and educate the next generation of river stewards. *2019 National Council members made specific membership contributions of \$1,500+ OR served as River Rendezvous sponsors at the \$6,000+ level.*

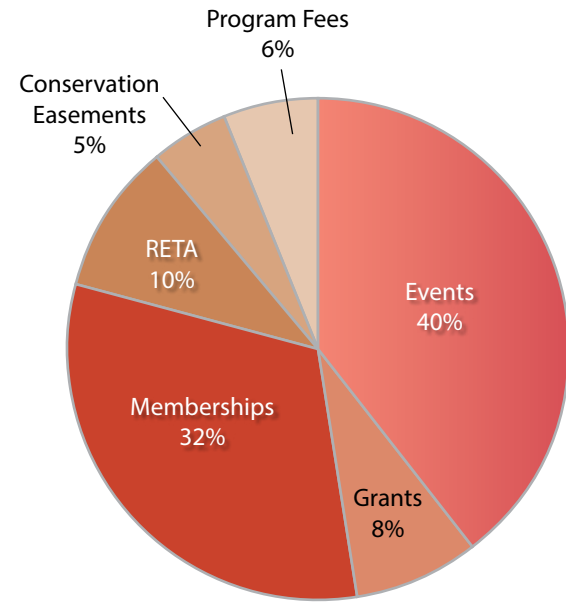
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2019 OPERATING REVENUES



2019 Revenues

Events	\$443,177
Grants	87,792
Memberships	360,299
RETA	106,840
Conservation Easements	53,360
Program Fees	65,032
Total	\$1,116,500

2019 OPERATING EXPENSES

2019 Expenses

Programs	\$625,078
Fundraising	240,415
Administrative	96,166
Total	\$961,659

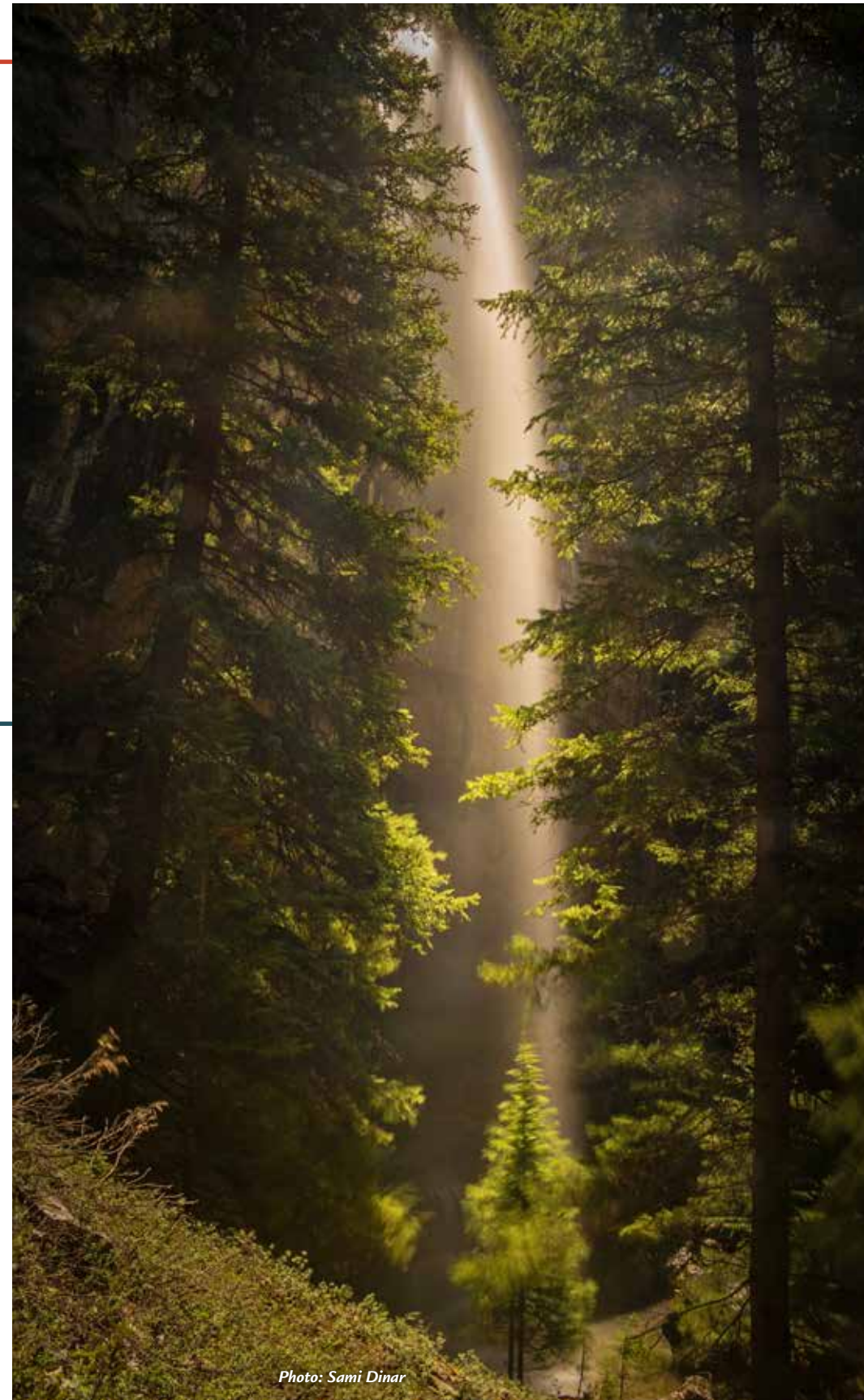
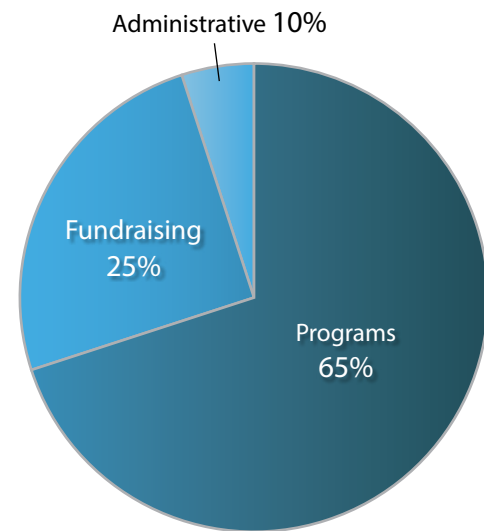


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Since 1996, Roaring Fork Conservancy has inspired people to explore, value, and protect the Roaring Fork Watershed. We bring people together to protect our rivers and work hard to keep water in local streams, monitor water quality, and preserve riparian habitat.

As one of the largest watershed organizations in Colorado, Roaring Fork Conservancy serves residents and visitors throughout the Roaring Fork Valley through school and community-based Watershed Education programs and Watershed Science and Policy Projects including regional watershed planning, water resource policy initiatives, stream management, and restoration.



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