

## Roaring Fork Conservancy

*Bringing people together to protect our rivers*

### THE RIVER CENTER

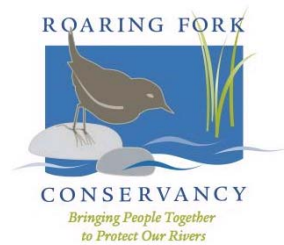
#### Watersheds: Source of Healthy Fresh Water

What is a watershed? How many of us can really describe a watershed? How well do you know your own watershed?

A watershed is an area of land where all the water drains to one point. About the same size as Rhode Island, the 1,451 square mile Roaring Fork Watershed is home to three spectacular rivers and numerous headwater streams. Nearly 80 percent of wildlife, from stoneflies to elk, depends on riparian areas during their lifetime, yet less than two percent of Colorado is riparian. As a testament to its healthy status, the Roaring Fork Watershed boasts 43 of the 179 miles of Gold Medal streams in Colorado. Part of the larger Colorado River Basin, Roaring Fork water helps sustain a growing population of over 25 million people in the arid west. An already precious resource, the value of water will only increase in the future. With two of the five largest transbasin diversions in Colorado and increasing demands, the Roaring Fork Watershed will be a focal point of this water debate.



#### Roaring Fork Conservancy: Leading the Way in River Protection



Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC) sprang to life in the midst of a watershed movement in Colorado during the 1990s as watershed groups organized around increasingly important water issues. In 1996, a unique public-private partnership established RFC as a non-profit conservation organization to promote water conservation practices and protection of the Roaring Fork River. Founding board members recognized that protecting the Roaring Fork River meant protecting all of the water that flows into it, which includes the entire Roaring Fork Watershed. Roaring Fork Conservancy was the first local organization focused solely on river and water issues in the Roaring Fork Watershed.

Roaring Fork Conservancy, celebrating ten years, has grown to be one of the most respected watershed conservation organizations in Colorado. As we move into our second decade, protecting our watershed will mean creating a place where community members, visitors, and students can gather to understand what a watershed is and how to protect it. Although its current programs work towards watershed protection, to completely fulfill its mission, Roaring Fork Conservancy needs a home.

## River Center Experience: You are part of your watershed



Since its inception, Roaring Fork Conservancy has envisioned opening a River Center to facilitate learning, understanding, and appreciation of our rivers. This state-of-the-art River Center will engage residents and visitors in hands-on exploration and interaction with rivers. Roaring Fork Conservancy purchased land to build a River Center along the Roaring Fork River in Basalt, the geographic center of the Roaring Fork Watershed. The central theme of the River Center is: You are part of your watershed. The River Center will serve as a launching pad

for watershed explorations. Its indoor and outdoor exhibits and classrooms, staff and volunteers, and interpretive resources will give community-members as well as guests, students as well as anglers, and citizens from all walks of life the tools to be watershed protectors.

The River Center is envisioned as an innovative, state-of-the-art green building (LEED-certified). It will be a destination in and of itself: containing a walkable watershed and other interactive exhibits, child and adult-friendly gather spaces, and water research, laboratory, and training facilities. It will allow visitors to interact directly with adjacent river, wetland and pond ecosystems; host educational seminars, meetings and classes about water issues; provide laboratory space for water quality monitoring and research; and bring people together for learning and discussion on river issues. River Center visitors will leave with the knowledge that the Roaring Fork Valley is a place not only about mountains, but also about rivers and streams.

## Take Home Message: We Protect What We Love, We Love What We Know

As Roaring Fork Conservancy begins organizing efforts to build the River Center, we seek your input to our plans. Your insights and guidance will prove invaluable to the ultimate protection of this spectacular watershed. No matter where you live, you are part of a watershed. The River Center will help connect every single visitor to their watershed.



For more information or to give us feedback on the River Center project please visit Roaring Fork Conservancy's website: [www.roaringfork.org/rivercenter](http://www.roaringfork.org/rivercenter).