

# RIVER CURRENTS

## There's Gold in that River!

By Rick Lofaro, Executive Director and Heather Lewin, Watershed Action Director

Legend has it, the Fryingpan River got its name when two early settlers out trapping beaver (or maybe panning for gold?) on the river were attacked by local Ute Indians. One settler managed to escape and sought help for his wounded partner. As the story goes, the rescue party returned to find only a lone frying pan hanging from a tree. With a history as rich as its waters, today the name "Fryingpan" is synonymous with world class fishing, spectacular scenery and outstanding recreation. In the last 35 years, the lower Fryingpan and the Town of Basalt have evolved into a fly fishing destination sought by anglers from around the globe. Located in the heart of the Roaring Fork Watershed, the intimate character of Basalt and 'the Pan' along with famed mayfly hatches, local legends and trophy trout fishing, have created a river of both Gold Medal quality and value.



Photo by David Lambroughton

For many years the Fryingpan River was like many other rivers in the west: stocked with trout as fast as anglers could remove them. Then in 1979, Dr. Barry Nehring of Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW, formerly Division of Wildlife) used his research to designate the Fryingpan River a Gold Medal fishery. Together, Nehring and CPW developed protective regulations, beginning with a two-mile stretch of catch and release fishing immediately below the Ruedi Reservoir dam. An additional 12 miles of river was designated Gold Medal Water by the Wildlife Commission on February 18, 1982, giving the lower Fryingpan River the same protections. The combination of special regulations, high water

quality, controlled stream flows and abundant trout have created a river of Gold Medal quality, meaning that any section of this 14 miles of river is capable of producing a trophy fish; if you're capable of catching one!

The beloved river that runs through our backyard and town faces similar challenges of many Western rivers – water delivery. While the construction of Ruedi Reservoir brought about a world class trout fishery, shaping the character of Basalt through passion, notoriety, and economic stimulus, fish are not prioritized in the management of Ruedi Reservoir. Built as compensatory storage for East Slope diversions, water in Ruedi is managed by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) based on contracts purchased by entities that may or may not be located in the Roaring Fork Valley. Therefore, Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC) regularly works

with BOR to ensure the voices of the community and the fish are considered as contract water is delivered downstream. In the most basic "buckets and pipes" analogy of water, we do not believe that the Fryingpan can be reduced to just a pipeline. We believe that the river is an invaluable piece of our valley and our community. Through open, consistent communication, RFC has built strong relationships with the water managers at the BOR and contract holders, including the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Colorado River Water Conservation District. Through these relationships, RFC ensures that our community voice is heard, and while we may not be able to change the contracts, we can, with persistence and creativity, help shape best management practices, so that the river's ecological function, including a spring flushing

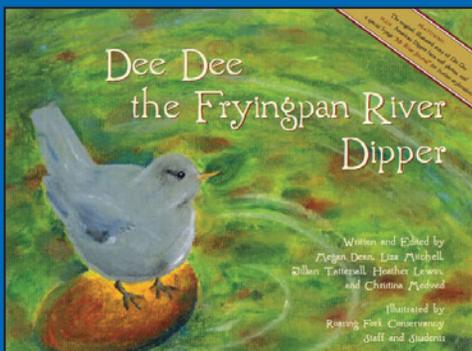
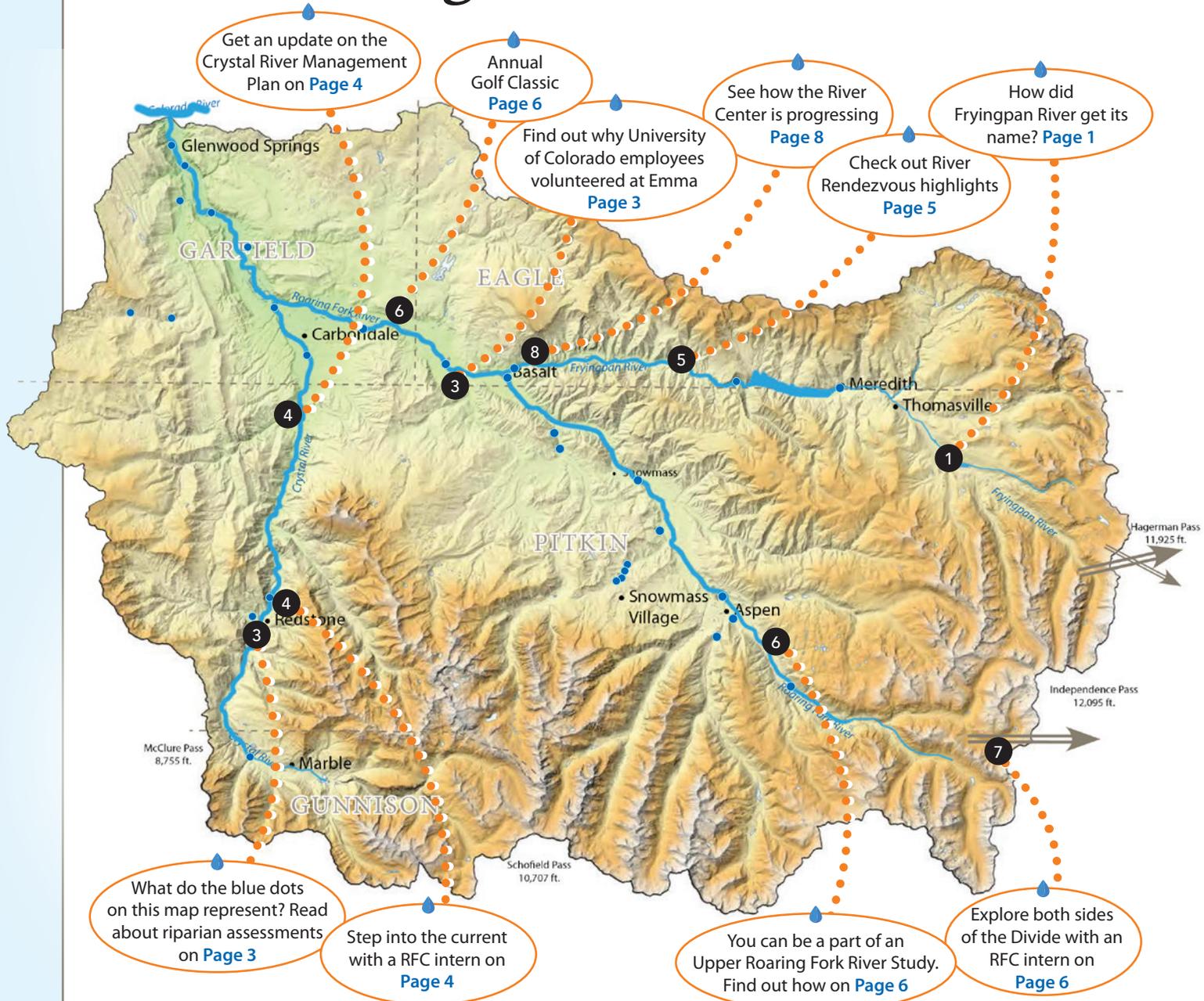
flow and winter base flows that minimize anchor ice, along with recreational and economic benefits of wadable flows during peak angling months are considered as contract water is delivered.

So next time you spot that trophy fish - whether he's on the end of your line, or smugly swimming away - remember the gold in that river may not be the kind you store in the bank, but may, in some ways, be even more valuable.

Thanks to Kendall Bakich from CPW and Mike Shook for sharing information about the Fryingpan River. Check out [www.flyfishguides.com](http://www.flyfishguides.com) for more information.



# NEWS FROM AROUND THE Roaring Fork Watershed



## RFC'S FIRST CHILDREN'S BOOK

Do you have a copy of  
*Dee Dee the Fryingpan River Dipper?*

Written and illustrated by RFC staff  
and Basalt Elementary 4th graders.

**MAKES A GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT!**

Books are available at [www.roaringfork.org](http://www.roaringfork.org), by phone, or pick-up at our office in Basalt.  
Questions? Please call Christina Medved, Education Director, at (970) 927-1290.



## “It’s a River, Not a Screaming Utensil!”

By Heather Lewin, Watershed Action Director and Liza Mitchell, Education & Outreach Coordinator



On June 16, a bus full of volunteers rolled in to the Roaring Fork Valley wearing matching black t-shirts. The back of the shirts depicted a boat full of cartoon forks adventuring down through whitewater rapids with the caption “Roaring Fork: It’s a River, Not a Screaming Utensil!”

Around here, we all know the Roaring Fork is a river. But if you are a student at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS) eating your meals at the Roaring Fork Dining Hall, you may need a reminder! After seeking out RFC to propose a service project, this adventurous crew drove in over Independence Pass on a bus barely shorter than the 30’ maximum. They wanted to focus on a project that would benefit the watershed that is the namesake of their university dining hall. We were more than happy to oblige.

In partnership with Pitkin County Open Space and Trails’ Paul Holsinger, RFC staff joined the 30 person crew from UCCS to pull barbed wire fence and weeds at Emma and Lazy Glen Open Spaces. This industrious crew of all ages worked through the heat of the day at two sites with remarkable enthusiasm and focus. Both areas are noted elk and deer migration corridors, and we were able to remove a significant amount of fencing to allow safe passage every spring and fall for local wildlife. These efforts fulfilled work goals outlined in each property’s management plan.

The Roaring Fork Dining Hall manager and trip organizer, Rebecca Bogardus, wrote a grant to the UCCS “Green Action Fund” to fund their trip over the continental divide to not only visit, but to also participate in a project to benefit their namesake watershed. For the vast majority of the group, this was their first trip to the Roaring Fork. We are beyond grateful that the UCCS group contacted us and for the work that they put in. Trips like this allow us to bridge the gap between East and West Slopes, Colorado Springs, and the Roaring Fork River while connecting the story of Colorado’s shared water resources.



## Checking the Pulse of the Riparian Zone

By Matthew Anderson, Watershed Action Intern & Michael Schuster, Program Associate

The riparian zone is the smallest, most important ecosystem in Colorado. Over 80% of Colorado’s wildlife use the 1%-2% of land in Colorado considered riparian.<sup>1</sup> These riparian zones prevent bank erosion, filter sediment and pollutants from rivers, and provide habitat for some of Colorado’s native flora and fauna; thus, maintaining and monitoring the health and quality of these zones is of high importance. To keep a close eye on our local riparian areas, RFC staff performed riparian assessments at points along the major rivers and tributaries of the Roaring Fork Watershed throughout the summer.

RFC assessed over 30 River Watch sites across the Roaring Fork Watershed, many in conjunction with regular River Watch water quality monitoring. These qualitative riparian assessments documented surrounding land use, dominant vegetation, river substrate, erosion, aquatic vegetation, and other physical habitat features of the river.

The assessments showed that local riparian areas are incredibly diverse in terms of size, surrounding land use, and dominant river bank and instream vegetation present. Some sites exhibited natural characteristics and good diversity, whereas others had significant alterations and encroachment from human activities.

These assessments are part of RFC’s ongoing efforts to monitor riparian health and identify areas of concern. In addition to being used by RFC, these riparian assessments will be submitted to Colorado River Watch’s statewide database for use by state and federal agencies.



<sup>1</sup>Colorado Natural Heritage Program. (2015) Colorado Wetland Information Center. Retrieved from [www.cnhp.colostate.edu/cwic/index.asp](http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/cwic/index.asp)

# Moving the Crystal River Management Plan from Paper to Project

By Heather Lewin, Watershed Action Director

Colorado's Water Plan seeks to cover 80% of prioritized rivers with Stream Management Plans by 2030. By completing the Crystal River Management Plan (CRMP) in 2016, RFC is ahead of the game. However, publication of the plan is not the end, but rather a starting point. With a plan in place, implementation becomes the next important step. A plan is elevated by its ability to facilitate real, on the ground change. With a plan in place, moving from potential projects to on the ground work has proven exciting, enlightening and sometimes challenging. Here's a preview of projects in progress:



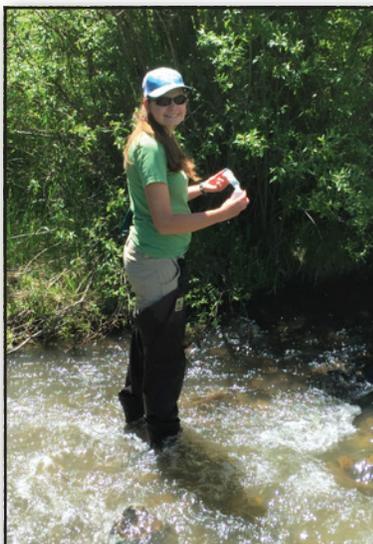
- ❖ RFC continues to work with the Colorado Water Trust and a local rancher to secure a nondiversion agreement that will place much needed water in a flow-depleted area of the lower Crystal River. The challenges we have encountered in this process have helped us understand new aspects of water management and will shape the way we approach future agreements.
- ❖ In partnership with American Rivers, we are working with the Town of Carbondale to install ditch efficiencies at the Weaver Ditch headgate, with telemetry systems allowing the ditch to deliver water more effectively.
- ❖ In partnership with Aspen Valley Land Trust (AVLT), we are working to implement a riparian and habitat restoration project on Town of Carbondale property at River Valley Ranch.
  - ❖ Because the Weaver headgate is located within the stream reach identified for restorative work, these projects will be combined to take place simultaneously, so that instream work is coordinated to minimize ecological impacts. We are currently pursuing funding for this project.
- ❖ We are working with Colorado Rocky Mountain School and AVLT to remove Russian Olive from their campus and adjacent Conservation Easement. Russian Olive is an invasive species that can take over and replace native plant life in riparian areas.

Interest in the planning and implementation process has led us to host several tours with groups including universities and state-wide organizations. We continue to work with partners and stakeholders to implement key CRMP recommendations to benefit the Crystal River.

## Stepping Into the Current

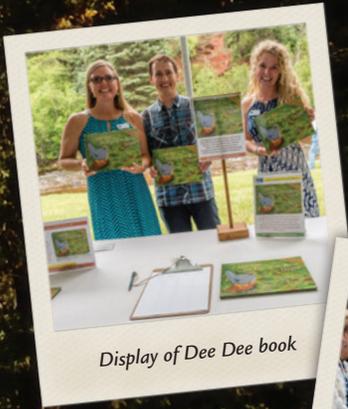
April Phinney, Watershed Action Intern

This past summer I had the opportunity to work with RFC as a Watershed Action Intern. Having grown up right next to the Crystal River, I have always been curious about the Valley's natural resources. It was this summer, however, through my internship that I realized the difference between simply caring about our local rivers and actually caring for them.



As part of my internship program, I helped assess how much *Didymo*, a potentially overpopulated algae, was present in the Fryingpan River. This project required that we survey how much *Didymo* covered rocks at various points in the river. While attempting to cross the river to reach one of the sample locations, I skidded across algae-coated sandstone and only steadied myself by taking two steps into a turbulent but shallower current. The experience suddenly made me notice that the water's depth determined its velocity, that velocity then altered the size of rock on the riverbed, and that rock size impacted the percentage of algae able to cling to the rocks. These subtle, yet significant, relationships provided me a glimpse into the river's complexity.

Through this and various other activities such as collecting water quality samples, monitoring conservation easements, and sharing river conservation information at a local farmer's market, I gained a practical understanding as well as an emotional appreciation of our local rivers. This firsthand knowledge offers an important foundation, enabling me to effectively consider and care for the watershed and related ecosystems in the place I love.



Display of Dee Dee book



Dancing the night away – music by Bo Hale



Rick Lofaro, Executive Director



Bidding on the silent auction items



Great setting on the banks of the Fryngpan River



Friends enjoying the event

18TH ANNUAL

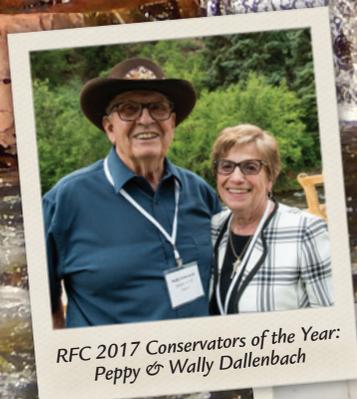
# River Rendezvous

ON THE BANKS OF THE FRYINGPAN

JULY 12, 2017



Sarah Woods, Director of Philanthropy, with husband, Robert, and Carolyn and Dick Shell, River Center supporters



RFC 2017 Conservators of the Year: Peppy & Wally Dallenbach



What a spectacular spot for River Rendezvous on the banks of the Fryngpan for all to enjoy.



Toasting groundbreaking of the River Center



Master of Ceremonies: Pat McMahon, RFC Board President



Great Silent Auction items... something for everyone!



Liquor & Wine Tent silent auction

# Managing for the Environment in the Upper Roaring Fork River

By April Long, City of Aspen Clean River Program Manager



Photo by Tim O'Keefe

In years like this, where snowpack was plentiful and river flows have stayed above average, it's hard to imagine this river is anything but perfect. However, even in an average year, there are approximately 50 summer days that the Roaring Fork River in Aspen doesn't meet the in-stream flow – an amount set by the state, and held as a water right, as the minimum amount of flow needed to maintain a healthy river. In a dry year, that shortage jumps to 120 days.

Because of this, the City of Aspen and Pitkin County have been developing an Upper Roaring Fork River Management Plan that will help decision makers select projects and make water management decisions that can alleviate this flow shortage and improve the health of the river.

While there may be a shortage of water in the Roaring Fork River, there is no shortage of intelligent people with a passion for protecting it. This summer, a team of consultants, technical experts, and stakeholders (including Roaring Fork Conservancy) engaged in candid, robust conversations to identify key issues, constraints, and priorities for river health in the Upper Roaring Fork. The consulting team used this feedback, previous reports, and best available data to produce amazingly detailed digital tools that will allow decision makers to determine how certain tweaks to management of the river system can alter flows and affect ecological response.

Now it's your turn to weigh in! The City and County are hosting a public open house and focus group meetings in early November. The project team will explain the current conditions in the river, the possible impacts from project options that could improve the health of the river, and the trade-offs inherent in each of the options. Your feedback will be used to help point decision makers in the right direction. Visit the project website to learn more: [www.aspencommunityvoice.com/upper-roaring-fork-river-management-plan](http://www.aspencommunityvoice.com/upper-roaring-fork-river-management-plan)



The minimum in-stream flow right for the Upper Roaring Fork is 32 cubic feet per second. This water right is junior to several senior diverters which is why the river frequently and legally dips below this standard.



The 3rd Annual Roaring Fork Golf Classic was held at Aspen Glen on August 13, 2017. Perfect venue, great sponsors, terrific prizes, delicious food and drinks – enjoyed by all! Many thank yous to our sponsors, listed at right.

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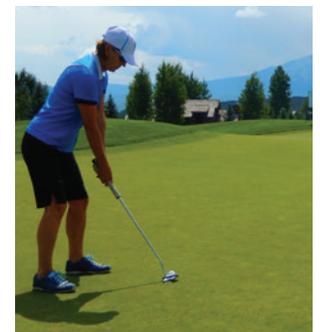
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## Summer Reflections on My Home Watershed

By *Caleigh Smith, Administrative Intern*

Roaring Fork Conservancy recently partnered with Twin Lakes Reservoir and Canal Company for a tour of the Independence Pass Transmountain Diversion System where we observed Lost Man Reservoir, the Twin Lakes Diversion Tunnel, Grizzly Reservoir, and the headwaters of the Roaring Fork River.

As a life-long Roaring Fork Valley local and a recent Colorado Springs transplant for college, I have an investment in water on both sides of the Continental Divide. Something that most people don't know is that this system can divert up to 40% of the headwaters of the Roaring Fork River to the Front Range where it is used commercially, privately, and agriculturally.

While in the Roaring Fork Valley, I am also a downriver benefactor of the Roaring Fork River by living on my family's small ranch, being an intern with RFC, and working as a raft guide on both the Colorado and Roaring Fork Rivers. It was important for me to gain exposure to both sides of this water issue and to gather enough information to form my own opinion on the subject.

I would highly recommend that Valley or Front Range residents explore and investigate this diversion, or others that bring water into their community, and how it impacts them, especially before forming any predisposed notions about this issue.

And, on a final note, Rocky Ford cantaloupes, grown using Roaring Fork water on the front range, are some of the most delicious I've ever encountered!

## Staff & Board Flows



**Matthew Anderson, Watershed Action Intern**  
Matthew was born and raised in Basalt. He is currently a sophomore in the Environmental Science and Resource Management program at the University of Washington in Seattle. As a summer Watershed Action Intern, he helped conduct water quality sampling and riparian assessments throughout the Roaring Fork watershed, monitored conservation easements, and attended various water conferences and seminars.



**April Phinney, Watershed Action Intern**  
April grew up in the Crystal River Valley and is studying geology at Wheaton College in Illinois. Her work with the Roaring Fork Conservancy this summer included collecting water quality samples, monitoring Didymo levels, and helping with various other events. She is thankful for the opportunity to gain hands-on experience and a better understanding of local river environments through her summer internship.



**Michael Schuster, Program Associate**  
Mike has lived in the valley since 1995. He first worked with RFC during the 2015 field season. After three consecutive seasons, he is beginning a Master's in Environmental Management program through Western State Colorado University. Mike has assisted staff with water quality, didymo, and macroinvertebrate sampling. He has also led educational outreach programs at various community events. Mike is an avid angler, hiker, and skier.



**Caleigh Smith, Administrative Intern**  
Caleigh grew up on a small ranch in Rifle, CO, with water rights and water law at the forefront of her family's conscious. She is a senior at Colorado College majoring in Ecological and Environmental Journalism and also spent her summer as a raft guide on the Colorado River. These factors led her to intern at RFC, where she wanted to have a culminating academic experience during her senior summer. Thank you RFC!

**YOU'RE INVITED!**

## 3RD ANNUAL IRON FLY COMPETITION

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2018 • 6 - 10 PM**

**RIVERSIDE GRILL • BASALT**



Iron Fly is a fly-tying event combined with a little friendly competition. Competitors are provided with secret and funky materials that must be used to tie a fly.

**You never know how the judges rate the best flies!**

Details can be found at: [www.roaringfork.org/events](http://www.roaringfork.org/events)





Concrete Wall Pouring



Final Steel Beam Install



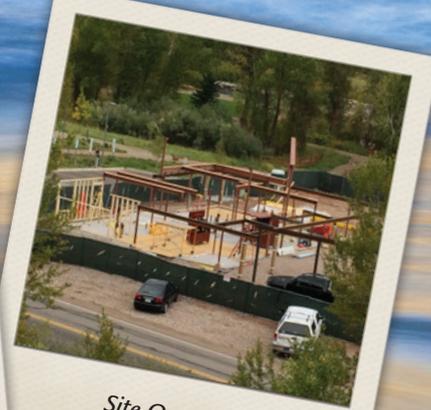
Slab Install and Radiant Heat Piping



First Wall Up



River Center (Rendering)



Site Overview



Executive Director, Rick Lofaro, and Basalt's Mayor Whitsitt at groundbreaking ceremony



River Center Lobby (Rendering)



July 7 Groundbreaking Ceremony



Situated near downtown Basalt and Old Pond Park, the River Center will provide easy access for residents and visitors to drop in and learn about the pivotal role rivers play in the community, the state and the American West. The River Center is in an ideal location to host water-related educational seminars and classes, in addition to providing much needed lab space for water quality testing and river research.

With the unique combination of accessibility, visibility and functionality, the River Center is not just a building; it is an innovative concept to demonstrate, experience and share the actions and interactions necessary to protect our exceptional rivers and watershed.

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Randy & Ken Kendrick  
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For more information please contact: Sarah Woods,  
Director of Philanthropy, (970) 927-9595, [swoods@roaringfork.org](mailto:swoods@roaringfork.org).  
For updates visit [www.roaringfork.org/RiverCenter](http://www.roaringfork.org/RiverCenter).

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