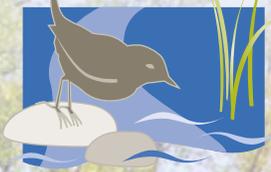


ROARING FORK



CONSERVANCY

2018 Annual Report

**EXPLORE
VALUE
PROTECT**

Message from Board President and Executive Director

Looking back, 2018 may have been the most memorable in Roaring Fork Conservancy's (RFC) 22-year history. This year brought so many changes for our organization. Some were positive and exciting, while others were stressful and challenging.

The biggest change was our move from a small corner office to The River Center. The River Center empowers us to fulfill our mission at a higher level, with education programs in the classroom and at the river, water quality testing in our laboratory, and more space to collaborate with our partners - always with a view of the river that brings us together. At the grand opening reception in August - as Governor Hickenlooper and his staff addressed the community and celebrated the Colorado Water Plan and its impacts in the Roaring Fork Valley - we were still in awe that the vision of The River Center was truly a reality.

Now, we are seeing that vision come to fruition beyond the physical building, as we embrace and grow into the endless potential of our new home.

On the other hand, a near-record low snowpack was followed by a hot, dry summer, leading to extremely low river flows and elevated river temperatures. A week after moving into The River Center, the Lake Christine wildfire started less than a quarter mile from our front door. But as Paulo Coelho said, "You drown not by falling into a river, but by staying submerged in it." So we fought our way to the surface, took a big breath, and enacted programs to raise awareness and support stressed river ecosystems. Our most successful program, the *Hot Spots for Trout* voluntary fishing closure, gave fish a break during the hottest part of the day by encouraging anglers to hang up the rod and waders from 2pm to midnight.

RFC has spent the past 22 years *bringing people together to protect our rivers*. As we move into our next 20+ years, we are inspired to continue and grow this mission. The River Center enables us to bring visionaries, researchers, policy-makers, elected officials, and community members together to discuss water issues and share ideas from the local to national level.

We hope you are excited and encouraged as you read through our 2018 accomplishments. If you have not had a chance to visit The River Center, we invite you to stop by for a tour.

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



Pat McMahon

Pat McMahon
President,
Board of Directors



Rick Lofaro

Rick Lofaro
Executive Director

How We Bring People Together To Protect Rivers

On June 29, Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC) staff officially moved into The River Center. This long awaited event was surrounded by excitement, anticipation and boxes. Lots of boxes. However, just four days later the excitement gave way to apprehension, as we evacuated The River Center when the Lake Christine wildfire ignited less than a mile away. When we were allowed to cross the evacuation barriers a few days later and return to the office, the tone, energy and focus of the summer was very different.

Subsequently, RFC received a call from Scott Fitzwilliams, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Forest Supervisor, asking if RFC would take on the coordination of long-term post-fire restoration and fundraising. Fitzwilliams explained that he and Perry Will, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Area Wildlife Manager, had identified RFC as a trusted organization with good-standing relationships among the varied jurisdictions whose scope overlapped the full burn area. RFC was honored to be chosen to fill this role and has since hosted a series of meetings, bringing together officials including USFS, CPW, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Town of Basalt, Eagle County and Garfield County. The inaugural meeting was the first opportunity for representatives of these varied groups to gather in one place to discuss their long term roles in the post-fire restoration.

As demonstrated by the Lake Christine wildfire, RFC's tagline of "bringing people together to protect our rivers," is more applicable now than ever. In addition to uniting leadership from affected communities, RFC has also broadened the scope of our Science & Policy Program and now serves as a hub and coordinating entity for a variety of watershed projects.

On the Crystal River, we continue to work towards implementation of the Crystal River Management Plan, partnering with the Town of Carbondale, American Rivers, Aspen Valley Land Trust and others to pilot restoration projects at Riverfront Park and ditch efficiencies on the Weaver Ditch.

On the Fryingpan River, we were able to work with the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado River Water Conservation District (River District) and Ruedi Water and Power Authority to help manage reservoir releases to increase benefits to local streams. This summer, when the Roaring Fork River was running low with precariously high temperatures (see *Hot Spots for Trout* on page 14), the River District was able to coordinate reservoir releases so that water continued to flow from the Fryingpan into the Lower Roaring Fork, reducing stream temperatures and elevating base flows to help flush any potential sediment pulses from the Lake Christine wildfire. RFC also worked to orchestrate a lease of 3,500 acre feet of River District contract water, stored in Ruedi Reservoir, to benefit winter base flows. The intent is to minimize anchor ice formation and impacts to benefit aquatic life. Releases began December 29, 2018.

Using the River Center as an anchor and a catalyst, the Science and Policy team will continue to nurture relationships, bring people together and think ahead so that when future environmental challenges occur in the Roaring Fork Valley, affected communities can continue to rely on RFC's expertise and established partnership infrastructure.

"The White River National Forest has had a long relationship with Roaring Fork Conservancy working on a range of watershed projects. As the leader in watershed science and education in the Valley, Roaring Fork Conservancy once again stepped up when needed in order to assist with the Lake Christine wildfire restoration efforts. I could think of no better organization to help facilitate the continuing efforts of numerous agencies to address the impacts of the Lake Christine wildfire while engaging and educating the public."

— Steve Hunter, PE,
Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Specialist, U.S. Forest Service





Photo: Douglas Pratte

Watershed Science & Policy

RFC's Science and Policy program addresses water issues, river health, and related land management through participation in public processes. In 2018, RFC took the opportunity to influence and advise agencies at the local, state and federal levels on a variety of important watershed issues.

BLM Property

RFC identified a water quality and riparian habitat concern on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property along Cattle Creek. After submitting a letter of concern to BLM proposing a site cleanup and protection from future degradation, the action was approved and implemented.

Fryingpan River

Worked with Colorado River Water Conservation District's coordination of reservoir releases to increase the flows into the Fryingpan River mid-summer to benefit Roaring Fork River temperatures and base flows.

City of Glenwood Springs

Reviewed plans and submitted comments to inform elected officials on potential impacts to rivers, riparian areas and stormwater management for the City of Glenwood Springs proposed redevelopment of a brownfield site within City limits near the confluence of the Roaring Fork and Colorado Rivers.

In addition, Glenwood Springs River Commission and RFC developed and proposed Riparian Setback Regulations to Glenwood Springs City Council. RFC submitted comments and attended a work session to support the regulations, explain the importance of riparian areas and provide the science behind the proposed regulations.

County Line Project

Submitted a comment letter to the U.S. Forest Service regarding the proposed County Line Project in the Fourmile Creek, Thompson Creek and Crystal River watersheds. Primary goals of the project are to improve forest health and recreation opportunity. RFC's comment letter encouraged protection of stream and riparian health and related use of best management practices throughout the project.

Ruedi Reservoir

Coordinated the lease of 3,500 acre feet of Colorado River Water Conservation District contract water stored in Ruedi Reservoir to enhance winter base flows on the Fryingpan River and benefit aquatic life. The lease was funded by the Colorado Water Conservation Board's Stream and Lake Protection Program.

Roaring Fork Watershed Plan

Re-engaged numerous public, private and non-profit entities in the update of the Roaring Fork Watershed Plan through the first Roaring Fork Watershed Summit. The goal of the revision is to track progress, streamline, provide clarity, improve accessibility and update any information that is no longer relevant.

Crystal River

RFC hosted a Restoration Workshop on the Crystal River, and from that created a working group to analyze and prioritize restoration potential, feasibility and benefit.

Lake Christine Wildfire

Assembled and led meetings with the Lake Christine Technical Advisory Group to support communication between active agencies and facilitate long term restoration planning and projects.



The River Center: A Great Field Trip Destination

The River Center officially opened on August 10, 2018, and that very same week dozens of youngsters entered its doors for the first time to participate in RFC's Water Education programs. We didn't stay inside for long! The beautiful summer weather and the nearby Roaring Fork River beckoned us outside to explore, discover and learn together. In the first five months, The River Center welcomed over 700 youths from schools, clubs and camps to our stunning new facility. Nestled between the Lake Christine State Wildlife Area, the Roaring Fork River, Old Pond Park, and downtown Basalt, the setting facilitates authentic learning. It's the perfect place for a fun-filled, educational field trip!

There are endless opportunities for hosting groups of all ages and levels of curiosity here. The indoor classroom space provides flexibility and options when the weather prevents outdoor exploration; it can also be used as an area to discuss scientific protocols before taking our water quality or macroinvertebrate equipment outdoors for some riverside lab work. On a tour around the pond and to the river we can

provide positive outdoor experiences that connect people to their environment as we explore healthy riparian habitat, watch the river flow and see signs of wildlife all around. We use the surrounding topography and the basin-like shape of The River Center's roof to help define and teach about watersheds. And, by pointing to nearby hillside that was burned in the Lake Christine wildfire, we can begin a discussion on RFC's holistic approach to protecting rivers—whatever happens on land has the potential to impact rivers.

The energy and enthusiasm continues to grow around the education programs at The River Center. We are reaching new audiences, developing new partnerships and revamping our curriculum throughout this first year in our new home. We strive to enhance our water education while continuing to provide relevant, engaging programs. Our best inspiration comes unsolicited, directly from the mouths of our students. One student on a field trip to The River Center this fall was overheard shouting to his classmates that this was "way better than science class!"

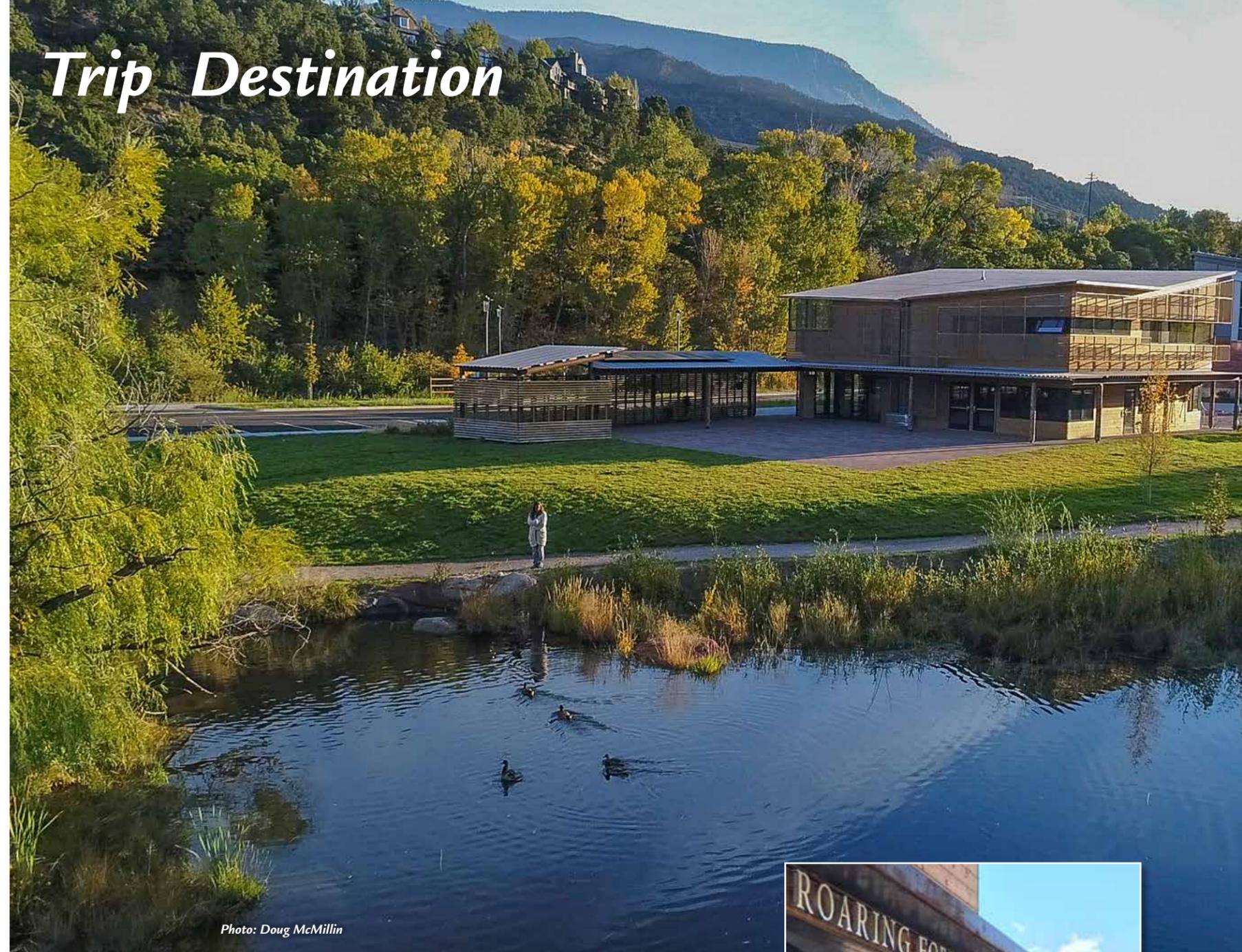
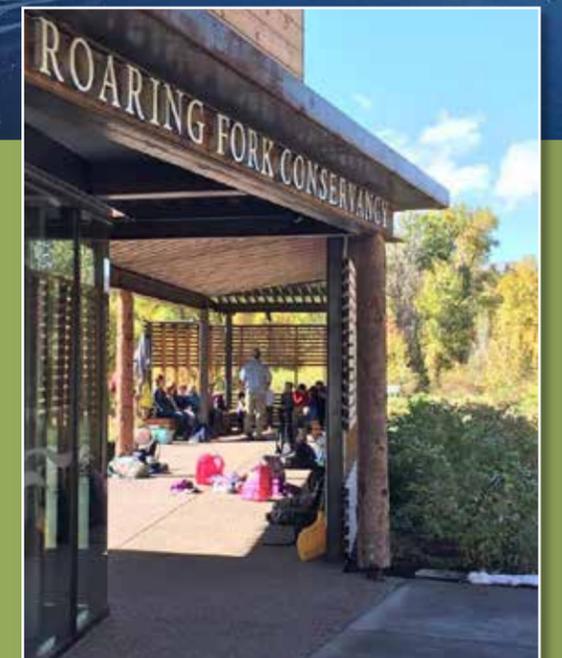


Photo: Doug McMillin

"I wanted to thank you for being such an amazingly fantastic resource for SO many students for these several years! I have cultivated a fine appreciation of the efforts of RFC towards the understanding of water issues locally and globally. I am honored to have had the opportunity to work and learn from and with you. Keep up the great work!"

— Chris Wheatley,
Teacher, Aspen High School



EDUCATION IMPACTS

Roaring Fork Conservancy educators taught **276** education programs making over **6,250** contacts in 2018!

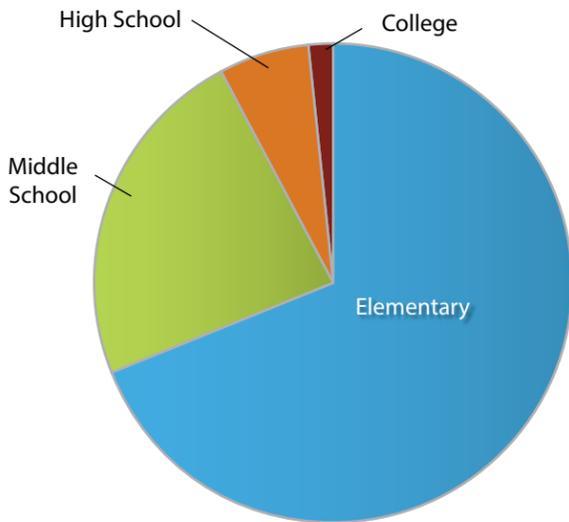


COMMUNITY EDUCATION

- 24** Watershed Exploration opportunities were offered in 2018, including river floats, hikes through riparian habitats, water diversion project tours, snowshoe hikes, and excursions to view fireflies in rare thermal wetlands.
- 421** Participants in 2018 Watershed Explorations.



SCHOOL PROGRAMS



Roaring Fork Conservancy educators taught **213** river and watershed related school programs reaching **4,249 STUDENTS**

- 2,930** Elementary School students
- 989** Middle School students
- 261** High School students
- 69** College students

NEW IN 2018

- 303** students were read RFC's first children's book *Dee Dee the Fryingpan River Dipper* and participated in a corresponding art and science program.
- 362** local middle school students learned about watersheds and then floated on our local rivers, for the first time, through RFC's Youth River Stewardship Project.



TEACHER & COMMUNITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 28** Teachers and volunteers trained in the National Fishing in Schools Program.
- 25** Participants in our 1-day Women's Fly Fishing Clinic and 1-day Adult Beginner Fly Fishing Clinic.
- 55** 1st year raft guides received River Ecology Interpretation training.



Community Outreach and Engagement



Fryingpan River Cleanup

The 20th Annual Fryingpan River Cleanup drew over 160 residents and visitors to pick up trash along 14 miles of road adjacent to the Fryingpan River, the Roaring Fork River through Basalt, and Lake Christine. These committed, hard-working volunteers showed up in frigid temperatures after a fresh snowfall, helping ensure healthy Gold Medal waters in Basalt.

Annual River Float

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 point out a few of our conservation easements along the way. This year we had over 150 people participate in the float, BBQ lunch and festivities.

Western Colorado Outdoor & Sportsman Expo, Fly Fishers International Fly Fishing Show

Over 100 people learned first-hand about RFC's science, policy and education programs when they stopped by our booth at the first Western Colorado Outdoor and Sportsman Expo in Eagle and Fly Fishers International Fly Fishing Show in Montrose. These new venues gave us an opportunity to share ways outdoor recreationists can protect rivers, and recruit new RFC members and Watershed Exploration participants.

River Center Grand Opening

Over 300 people from across Colorado attended The River Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Grand Opening Festivities in August. Friends, family, donors, local elected officials, Governor Hickenlooper, Former Governor Ritter and Chairman of Colorado's Interbasin Compact Committee John Stulp were among those who celebrated with us.

Crooked Creek Volunteer Wetland Restoration Project

RFC partnered with Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers, Wilderness Workshop, and the United States Forest Service on the 2018 Crooked Creek Volunteer Wetland Project. This was the third and final phase of a wetland restoration project in the headwaters of the Fryingpan River Valley near Crooked Creek Reservoir. Approximately 45 staff and volunteers planted hundreds of wetland plants, spread native seed, and hauled rock over a work weekend.

Russian Olive Removal

For the second consecutive year, RFC worked with students and staff from Colorado Rocky Mountain School to identify and remove Russian Olive trees (an invasive species) from the campus, riparian areas and agricultural fields. The removal of these trees will help improve riparian habitat and diversity.

Rain Barrel Workshop

With collaboration and sponsorship from the City of Aspen, RFC taught 13 Pitkin County residents about rainwater harvesting, rain barrel installation and maintenance, rain barrel regulations in accordance with Colorado Water Law, and went home with an installation-ready rain barrel.

Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper Certification

RFC partnered with the City of Aspen to develop and teach Colorado's first Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) training. QWEL is an Environmental Protection Agency WaterSense professional certification program teaching participants about water efficient and sustainable landscapes, especially in the arid west.

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. Events in 2018 included:

- Engaging diners with fly casting demonstrations and tips at Aspen Skiing Company's Farm to Table Dinners at Elk Camp in Snowmass
- Hosting the RFC display and Water Wheel of Trivia at the Fly Fishing Film Tour in Aspen
- Supporting RFC's Annual River Float

Hot Spots for Trout:

The year 2018 may be remembered as one of the most intense drought years in over a decade, characterized by minimal snowpack and precipitation, hot temperatures, low stream flows and the Lake Christine wildfire. These conditions affect water quality of streams, including significant and reverberating impacts from increased water temperatures. As flows decrease, water temperatures rise, a trend which becomes more dramatic as flows drop lower and lower.

Warm temperatures can cause significant stress on aquatic organisms such as fish and insects. Rising stream temperatures decrease the amount of oxygen water can hold, but increase the oxygen required by aquatic species to maintain bodily functions.

In response to these concerns, RFC revamped a citizen science project originally introduced in 2012— *Hot Spots for Trout* — to monitor local stream temperatures. Between June and September, 63 volunteers collected 280 temperature measurements on streams and rivers throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed! Data was submitted via cell phone app or online at CitSci.org, a citizen science platform created by Colorado State University. This information allowed RFC to gather watershed-wide data and identify areas of concern. RFC water quality staff then installed temperature loggers at four of these areas along the lower Roaring Fork and Crystal Rivers. These loggers collected and stored stream temperature measurements every half hour, 24 hours a day, throughout the summer. Staff downloaded data weekly to monitor temperature levels and shared this data with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW).

Measurements submitted by *Hot Spots for Trout* volunteers, combined with RFC's rigorous temperature logger data, helped develop a detailed picture of temperature levels and fluctuations throughout the watershed – air temperatures of 90°+ from Glenwood Springs to Aspen and river flows at 1/3 to 1/6 of average combined to elevate water temperatures to a concerning level. RFC worked closely with the Roaring Fork Fishing Guide Alliance and CPW hosting weekly conference calls discussing responses to these conditions. As a result, a new voluntary fishing closure from 2 PM to midnight was initiated, giving the trout a break during the hottest part of the day. Support and participation from the commercial fishing industry and the angling public at large was integral to the program's success.

This project highlights how data can drive action and collaboration, leading to meaningful protection for local streams and the lives that depend on them.

Connecting Data to Action



“Roaring Fork Conservancy is an excellent partner in raising awareness around the health of our local rivers and fisheries. In a challenging low water year like the summer of 2018, RFC helped get the word out that anglers had the ability to lessen the impacts of a hot, dry summer on our renowned fisheries. They gave the community an excellent tool (*Hot Spots for Trout*) to stay mindful on what conditions were in the rivers and cultivated support for the conscientious practices identified in CPW's Voluntary Fishing Closures that gave our local trout a break during a stressful time.”

— Kendall Bakich,
Aquatic Biologist, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Water Quality Projects



Cattle Creek

This was the fourth consecutive year RFC conducted targeted biological and chemical water quality monitoring on Cattle Creek. This data has new importance, documenting baseline conditions prior to possible Lake Christine wildfire impacts, which burned in Cattle Creek headwaters.

In 2018, RFC continued to address the health of Cattle Creek with funding from Garfield and Eagle Counties. Water quality and stream flows were measured throughout the year at three sites, documenting the lowest flow conditions since the study began. Macroinvertebrate samples were collected above and below a newly installed diversion

structure on Lower Cattle Creek to help understand its impacts on macroinvertebrate populations.

In effort to continue to engage the community and improve creek health, RFC and Garfield County hosted a stakeholder meeting to present study updates and provide riparian and septic system best management practices. RFC also partnered with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Garfield County, and Rocky Mountain Youth Corps to conduct a trash cleanup and fence pull on BLM property along Middle Cattle Creek. In total, 2,260 pounds of trash, debris, and fencing were removed from the property!

Fryingpan River

For the fifth consecutive year, RFC surveyed the levels of the algae *Didymosphenia geminata* (a.k.a. didymo and rock snot) levels in the Fryingpan River. Surveys of Didymo stream bed coverage and basic water quality monitoring were conducted at 7 locations in the spring, summer and fall.

RFC maintained temperature loggers at 3 sites along the Fryingpan River. These loggers have operated year-round since 2013, providing 5 years of continuous water temperature data.

Water Quality Accomplishments

Partnered with volunteer Stream Teams to conduct regular water quality monitoring at 22 Roaring Fork Watershed sites, which included 106 sampling events and 15 volunteers working a combined 148 hours.

Upgraded to a new multi-parameter sampling instrument, with funding from Aspen Skiing Company's Environment Foundation, to enhance RFC's continuing efforts to monitor the health of streams and rivers throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed.

Assisted with the annual statewide training of over 60 new Colorado River Watch participants in water quality monitoring protocols and measuring in-stream properties.

Moved into the new Water Quality Lab in The River Center. This significant upgrade to RFC's water quality program is utilized as a staging area for field work, classroom for water quality lessons, and laboratory for processing and analyzing samples by staff and Stream Team volunteers.



Water temperature logger



Gifts and Contributions

Roaring Fork Conservancy acknowledges our generous donors and program sponsors. Your contributions enable us to continue our watershed education programs, science and policy work. Thank you for ensuring our work will continue for many years.

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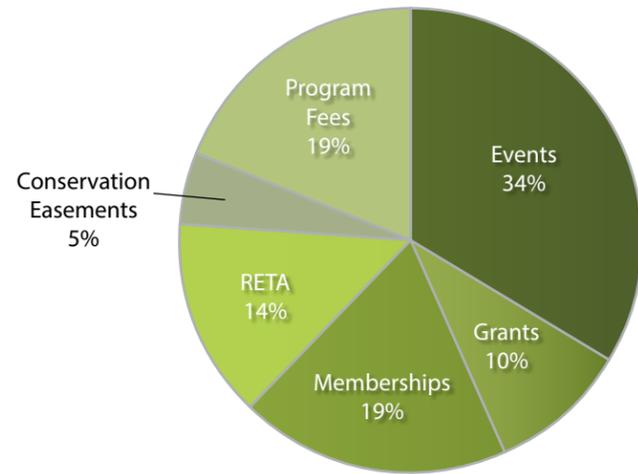
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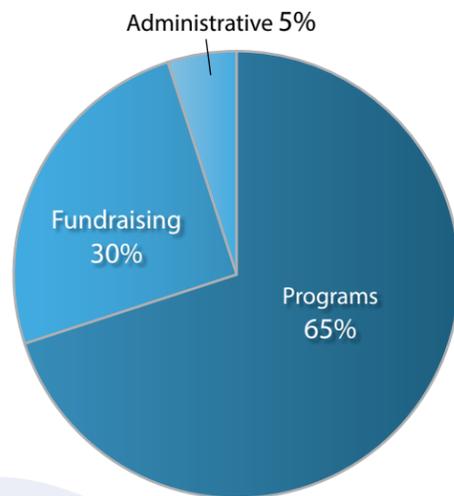
2018 OPERATING REVENUES



Category	Amount
Events	\$369,796
Grants	109,300
Memberships	212,760
RETA	155,018
Conservation Easements	52,414
Program Fees	204,170
Total	\$1,103,458

2018 OPERATING EXPENSES

Category	Amount
Programs	\$668,037
Fundraising	308,325
Administrative	51,387
Total	\$1,027,749



Roaring Fork Conservancy is an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization registered in the state of Colorado. Roaring Fork Conservancy donor records are not sold, exchanged, or provided to any outside organization in any way.

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 Liza Mitchell, *Education Programs Manager*
 Chad Rudow, *Water Quality Program Manager*
 Sheryl Sabandal, *Development Manager*
 Michael Schuster, *Program Associate*

Program Associates

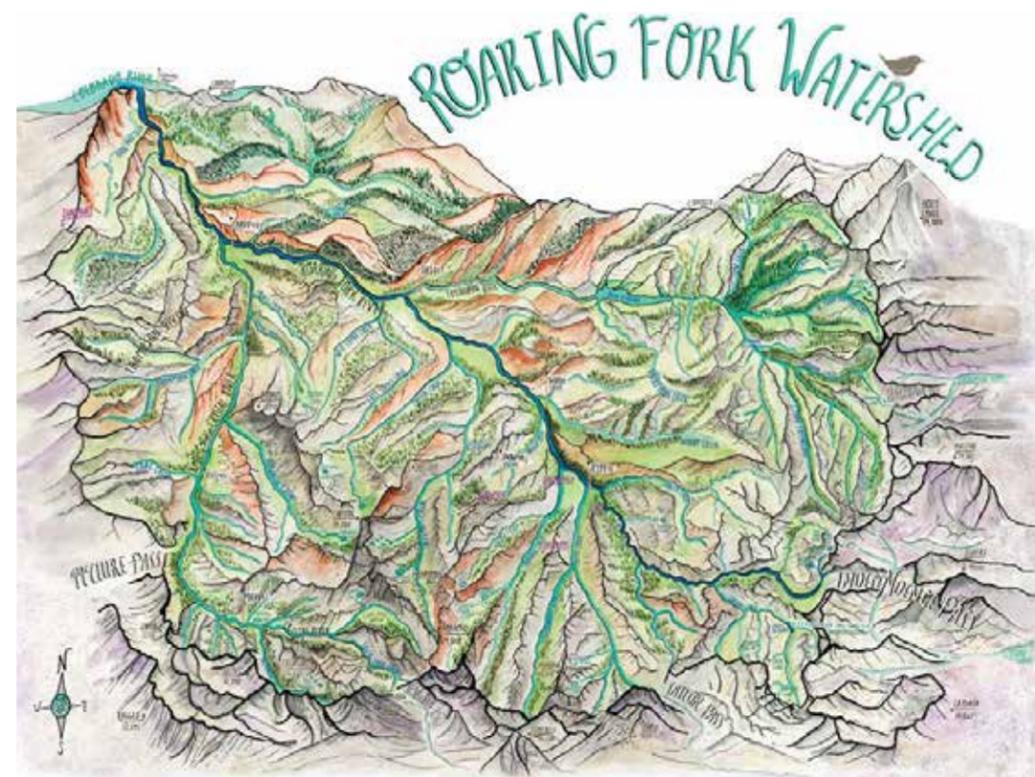
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 Karin Sheriff
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Uncredited photographs provided by Kristen Doyle, Christina Medved, Liza Mitchell, Chad Rudow and Michael Schuster.

In honor of our 2018 River Center Grand Opening, RFC partnered with local artist, storyteller and environmental advocate, Sarah Uhl, to create a story map of the Roaring Fork Watershed. More accessible than a topographic map, this piece of art is incredibly accurate, thanks in part to aerial tours of the watershed with EcoFlight. It features the "important places" of the Roaring Fork Watershed – the rivers, tributaries, lakes, reservoirs, mountain peaks, towns, and iconic landmarks that are all inexorably linked within our watershed.

The original story map is on permanent display at The River Center, but if you want to show some pride in the Roaring Fork Watershed, make a \$35 donation to RFC and receive a 12" x 16" print as a thank you gift.



ROARING FORK CONSERVANCY

The River Center · 22800 Two Rivers Road · Basalt, CO 81621

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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 to keep water in the 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 Action projects, including regional watershed planning, water resource policy, and stream management and restoration initiatives.

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*Bringing People Together
to Protect Our Rivers®*

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