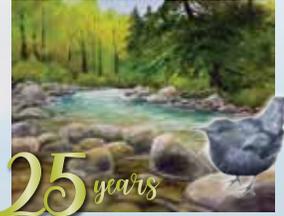


ROARING FORK



25 years

CONSERVANCY

**2021
Annual
Report**

EXPLORE | VALUE | PROTECT



Message from Board President and Executive Director

As we celebrate Roaring Fork Conservancy's (RFC) 25th year, we can't help but take a moment to pause and reflect on our community, our supporters, and our rivers.

Looking back over the past 25 years, so much has changed. We built a River Center that functions as a hub for watershed education, science, and policy. We have grown our staff and our impact, working towards meeting the new and changing needs of the rivers. Climate change, extended drought, wildfires, low snowpack, low stream flows, elevated stream temperatures, afternoon fishing closures, mudslides, algae blooms in alpine lakes and many streams and rivers – they're all impacting our landscape and our rivers. While our core values remain the same, our day-to-day priorities continue to evolve.

Water shortages and dwindling reservoir levels are changing water in the west. RFC is pursuing innovative strategies to honor existing water uses while working diligently to keep water in local rivers. As demand increases and supply dwindles, further reductions in use and innovative conservation and efficiency measures will be necessary to meet the many needs of the future. The Roaring Fork Watershed, as

a headwater, is a key player in the Colorado River Basin. While 25 years ago, the focus was on protecting streams in the vicinity of Basalt, we now know we need to embrace our role in the Colorado River Basin by participating in creative planning, forward-thinking conservation, and innovative stewardship of this unique watershed.

Through all these changes, we are grateful for our reliable and dedicated supporters. We recognize those of you who have grown with us and weathered the changes, challenges, and successes of the past 25 years. Thank you for investing in us, believing in our work, and most importantly for your passion for our rivers.

As we move into the next 25 years, we will continue bringing people together to protect local rivers through relevant education, science, and policy. This annual report highlights RFC's work over the past year while allowing us to reflect on where we began, and how we've grown.

A successful watershed group is built upon a dedicated and engaged community. Thank you for all you do to further the mission of RFC and your unwavering support.



Pat McMahon

Pat McMahon
President,
Board of Directors



Rick Lofaro

Rick Lofaro
Executive Director

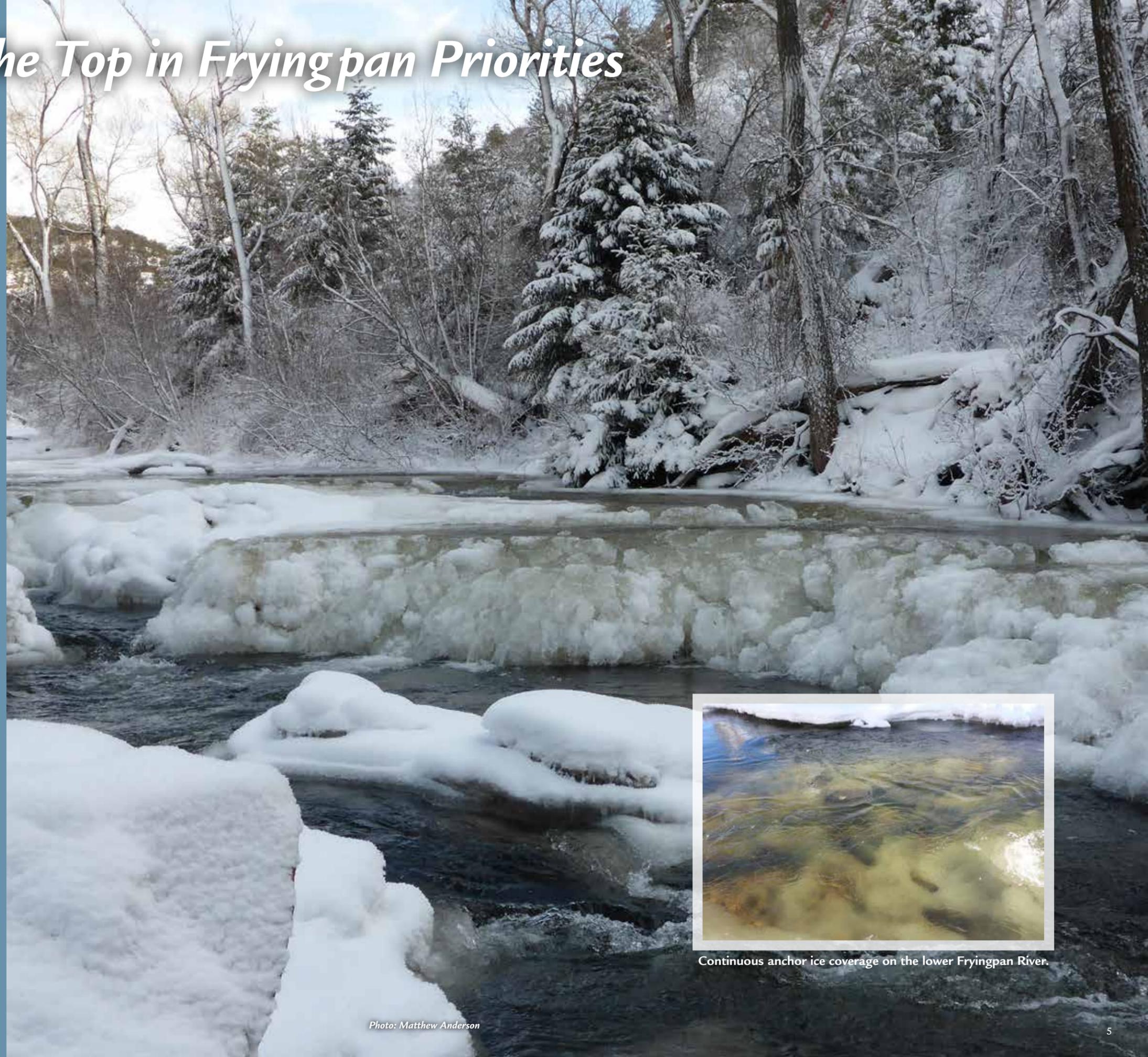
Anchor Ice Rises to the Top in Fryingpan Priorities

Anchor ice is a fascinating river phenomenon. Anchor ice forms below the surface of the water and attaches to the bottom of the river, which may seem counterintuitive since ice floats. The combination of supercooled (below 0°C) water and the turbulence of a flowing river allow this unique and beautiful natural occurrence. Anchor ice can be seen in many local streams during the colder months of the year. While often stunning to observe, anchor ice in the Fryingpan River has drawn the attention of RFC staff and local anglers due to concerns that the ice can occupy interstitial spaces - the areas between rocks - that serve as essential macroinvertebrate habitat, and potentially cause a detrimental scouring to the streambed when it releases.

In the fall of 2020, RFC staff, with special help from intern Shay Austin, worked with Dr. Ed Kempema, a Senior Research Scientist at the University of Wyoming, to create a novel, objective approach to document and track anchor ice over time to better understand the factors affecting its formation in local rivers. This study was piloted on the Lower Fryingpan River last winter, an area with previously recognized anchor ice impacts, but absent data to correlate presence, timing, and location. Results from 2021, combined with future studies and observations will ultimately provide valuable information to allow RFC to advocate for management practices of Ruedi Reservoir and the lower Fryingpan beneficial to local stream ecology.

From December 2020 through March 2021, staff spent 32 days in and along the banks of the Fryingpan monitoring anchor ice at six different sites. During this time, anchor ice presence was observed 13 out of 32 survey days. A notable decrease in anchor ice began in the second half of January 2021 and continued through the end of the study period. This decrease in anchor ice aligned with increases in water temperature, air temperature, and stream flow rate. The results from this initial period of anchor ice monitoring provide a strong basis for future studies, and RFC will continue to modify and improve the protocols and methodologies to strengthen the integrity of the data moving forward. RFC intends to continue the study in subsequent years to provide more data necessary to illuminate trends and draw clear conclusions about the influence of water temperature, air temperature, and stream flow rate on anchor ice formation in the lower Fryingpan River.

For more information, or to read this year's report, visit www.roaringfork.org/your-watershed/fryingpan-river/.



Continuous anchor ice coverage on the lower Fryingpan River.

Watershed Science & Policy

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

Crystal River

- Participated in Wild and Scenic stakeholder group.
- Lead the Crystal Restoration Working Group. Prioritized riparian restoration work in the Crystal Valley and will begin associated projects and studies in 2022.
- Continued to work with the Town of Carbondale to implement the Riverfront Park Restoration and Efficiency Project, a key element of the Crystal River Management Plan. Construction is projected to begin summer 2022.
- Secured implementation funding from the Town of Carbondale, Colorado Fishing is Fun, Colorado River Water Conservation District, and Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART grants.

Fryingpan River

- Coordinated with Colorado Water Conservation Board and Colorado River District to lease 3,500 acre-feet of water to mitigate anchor ice from January-March.
- Initiated Anchor Ice Monitoring protocol and reporting (see associated article on page 4).

Colorado River Basin

RFC continues to be an active participant in the Colorado Basin Roundtable, providing input on Demand Management discussions and the Basin Implementation Plan update.

City of Glenwood Springs

Continued to serve as a technical advisor for the Glenwood Springs River Commission on stream health, outreach, and policy projects.

Grizzly Creek Wildfire and Debris Flow Impacts

After substantial impacts from the Grizzly Creek Wildfire, Glenwood Canyon was hit by large monsoonal storms in the summer of 2021, which lead to significant debris flows and additional impacts on local stream health and water quality. RFC is partnering with numerous organizations responding to these major events.

- Continuing work with the Glenwood Canyon Restoration Alliance on community building, outreach, and restoration efforts in Glenwood Canyon.
- Serving on the Middle Colorado Watershed Council's Technical Advisory Team, advising implementation of post Grizzly Creek Fire and debris flows water quality monitoring.
- Provided resources and data to Mesa State University students studying water quality after the Grizzly Creek Fire.
- Initiated a joint meeting between local organizations and the Upper Colorado River Watershed Group in Grand County to discuss challenges and responses to the respective impacts of wildfire on both communities.

Responding to Changing Conditions

As RFC celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary, the past few years have seen significant impacts on local water resources including streams and rivers. Drought, reduced snowpack, hot temperatures and wildfire have all made their mark in the watershed in recent years, with climate change as a driving force. Many of these factors resulted in significant alterations to both water quantity and quality.

RFC continually strives to stay abreast of changes, implementing monitoring and data collection when necessary. With RFC's 25-year history and related water expertise, some of these impacts are predictable and monitoring can be planned and implemented proactively. This includes RFC's Hot Spots for Trout stream temperature monitoring in the summer and anchor ice monitoring in the winter, both of which are influenced by drought conditions.

On other occasions, RFC becomes aware of new concerns as they arise, often with public citizens or partnering organizations helping to raise awareness of changing conditions. In the fall of 2021, after a year of above-average temperatures and drought conditions, local concerned citizens notified RFC of significant algal blooms in alpine lakes within the watershed. RFC water quality staff responded, implementing a round of algal research and sampling to better understand the conditions and potential effects on lakes which are often at the headwaters of local streams and rivers.

A key component of RFC's ability to adapt and respond to changing conditions is collaboration. RFC's Hot Spots for Trout program relies on local citizen scientists who assist with collection of temperature data during hot summer months. The recent algae sampling and study was conducted in partnership with The University of Colorado's Institute of Alpine and Arctic Research, utilizing their expertise to help understand and study these new conditions.

Looking ahead, it seems likely that new concerns and impacts to water resources will arise, especially in light of a changing climate. But just as likely, is RFC's resolve to identify, study, and respond to these changes as they come.



RFC worked with Dr. Diane McKnight, a limnologist at the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research at The University of Colorado, regarding the large algal blooms observed in high elevation lakes. In September 2021, RFC staff hiked 8 miles to collect algal samples from three alpine lakes and their outlets near the headwaters of the Roaring Fork River. Samples were sent to Dr. McKnight and her team for analysis with results pending.



Water Quality Accomplishments



Colorado River Watch

- Partnered with volunteer Stream Teams to conduct regular water quality monitoring at 22 Roaring Fork Watershed sites, including 106 sample events, and 11 volunteers working a combined 121 hours.
- Assisted with the annual River Watch State Training in Cedaredge CO, helping to teach water quality monitoring and in-stream measurement protocols to 45 participants including a diverse mix of students, teachers, and watershed groups.
- Supported a River Watch grant request to the Pitkin County Healthy Rivers Fund. The grant was awarded and will fund water quality monitoring supplies for RFC and other local schools and groups participating in the River Watch Program. RFC will provide local coordination, housing, and distribution of the supplies as needed.

Cattle Creek

- RFC conducted a seventh year of 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 a second consecutive year of drought and corresponding low flow conditions and their potential impacts on water quality.

Fryingpan River

- For the eighth consecutive year, RFC monitored levels of the algae *Didymosphenia geminata* (didymo) in the Fryingpan River. Surveys of didymo stream bed coverage and basic water quality monitoring were conducted at 7 locations in spring, summer, and fall.
- RFC maintains temperature loggers at 3 sites within the Fryingpan River. These loggers measure stream temperature every hour and have operated year-round since 2013.

Temperature Monitoring

In 2018, RFC installed temperature loggers on the lower Roaring Fork River and Crystal River in response to drought and low-flow conditions leading to stream temperature concerns. Loggers have been maintained since that time and data was shared with Colorado Parks and Wildlife in a joint effort to monitor potential impacts on aquatic life during the 2021 drought year.



The Evolution of an Educational Legacy

RFC's resilience, ingenuity, and growth has been a pervasive presence in my life since I moved to the valley 23 years ago. As a young teacher I was excited to meet RFC's first education director, Tim O'Keefe, and include his watershed lessons into my sprouting curriculum. We walked my fourth-grade class to natural spaces around Basalt and introduced the students to Basalt's rivers and riparian areas through games and exploration, picking up trash as we went, and often leaving student made signs encouraging people to not litter and respect the river. The students were so engaged in this curriculum that they pushed us to create an afterschool program that continued for three years. Most of them participated through middle school, challenging both Tim and I to continuously create new lessons and activities. I have run across some of these students who are now adults working and living in our communities. They often share memories with me of getting their feet wet while playing and learning about our rivers.

While some of the areas we explored remain, others have changed as the town and population grew. In the early 2000's, the area that we always avoided was Old Town Pond. Even the hardest of students were not interested in exploring the dirty pond often referred to as "Lake Malaria" and adjacent asphalt parking lots with exposed septic tanks and sewer lines that were leaking into the Roaring Fork River.

Now, as RFC's current director of education, I smile as I lead students around The River Center and riparian areas. The pond and land are now a functional diverse ecosystem that we use as an outdoor classroom. Sharing the redevelopment of this brownfield site (former industrial site mitigated for

redevelopment) empowers students with a story that embodies rejuvenation and hope. Today, the revitalized space around The River Center and Roaring Fork River has become a haven that we use to teach this and future generations of students.

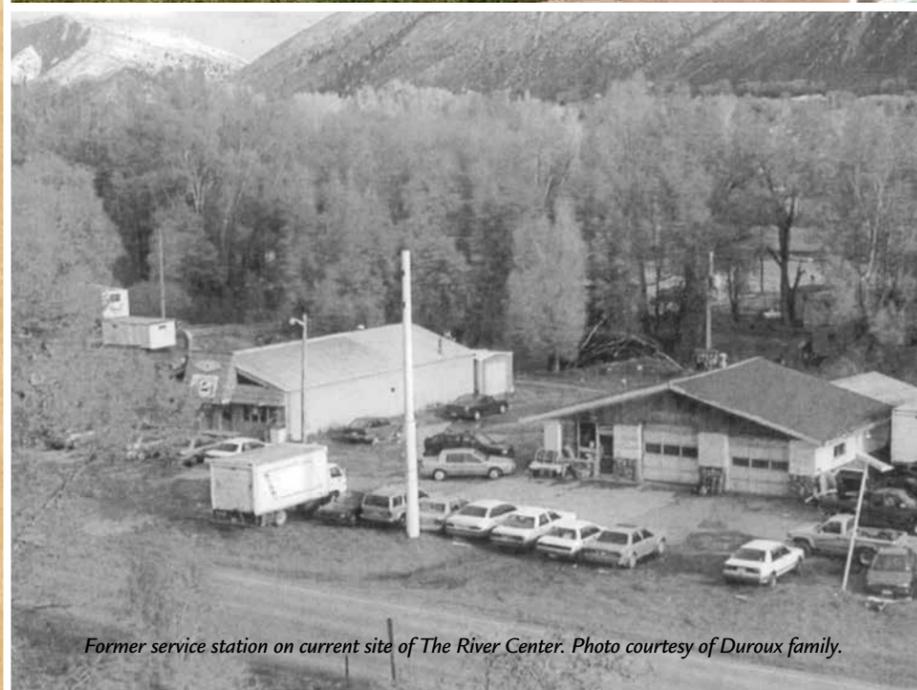
Over the last two decades I have watched RFC's education programs evolve from a community grass root effort to protect the rivers in Basalt, into a leader in watershed protection and education throughout the Roaring Fork Valley and state. The education programs that have reached over 133,000 thousand students are now spread across multiple generations and have been developed to build students' knowledge through multiple programs that they experience during their K-12 education.

Over the last two decades, I have had the joy of teaching the children of my former students. Hannah Simmons was my student in 2006. Upon seeing her this fall chaperoning her daughter's fourth grade class during their visit to The River Center, I was excited to hear that she and her daughter, Gianna, thoroughly enjoyed the program. She shared that the activities were just as engaging as she remembered during her experiences in middle school.

As I look forward to the next decade of watershed education, I am galvanized to continue RFC's legacy of captivating and inspiring students to become stewards of the watershed by building knowledge that motivates protection and best development practices for rivers and riparian land.

Megan Dean

Director of Education



“Over the last two decades, I have had the joy of teaching the children of my former students.”

- Megan Dean

Megan Dean with two generations of former students, Hannah and Gianna Simmons.

Former service station on current site of The River Center. Photo courtesy of Duroux family.

EDUCATION IMPACTS

17 Watershed Explorations reached **205** residents and tourists



98 First-year raft guides representing **7** outfitters participated in River Ecology Interpretation training



Roaring Fork Conservancy taught **213** education programs making over **4,300** contacts in 2021!

336 children attended **23** RFC led Summer Camps and After School Programs



52% of school programs took place at The River Center

RFC educators taught **132** river and watershed related school programs reaching **2,816** students



RFC created teacher friendly online video clips and activities to deepen students understanding of watersheds before their in-person program.

Ten-minute virtual activities allowed students to build a basic understanding of content so that when they experienced programs in person, they were already familiar and excited about the objectives.

These teacher friendly virtual activities required little to no guidance; a true plug and play experience.

RFC educators sent these activities to teachers before their scheduled programs, which allowed students to go deeper when they were in the field, connecting what they experienced in-person to what they learned through online programming.

Online videos and activities were utilized over 900 times by local students in 2021.



RFC hosted Water Education Colorado's annual educators conference which was attended by **20** educators from around the state.



**NEW
IN
2021**

Community Outreach and Engagement



The Brooksher Watershed Institute

The Brooksher Watershed Institute is a series of presentations from local, state, regional and national water leaders addressing our most precious resource, water. In its third year, RFC offered six virtual and one in-person presentation and each program provided opportunities for participants to engage in dialogue with these water leaders. The topics covered were how warming water is impacting coldwater sportfish, microplastics in the atmosphere and aquatic environments, Grizzly Creek wildfire impacts such as debris flows and flash floods, monitoring snowpack, and the ever-changing environment of the Colorado River Basin. The live presentations had 245 attendees from around the world and recorded presentations were viewed over 400 times. The Brooksher Watershed Institute recorded presentations, slides, or related reports are available at www.roaringfork.org/education-and-outreach/brooksher-watershed-institute/.



23rd Annual Fryingpan & Beyond River Cleanup

For a second year in a row, the Fryingpan & Beyond River Cleanup looked different than in previous years. Instead of a one-day event, the Cleanup took place over a week allowing individuals and families to space out while collecting roadside debris. Over 250 residents and visitors picked up trash along 14 miles of road adjacent to the Fryingpan River, the Roaring Fork River from Aspen to Glenwood Springs, the Crystal River, and even along the Colorado River.

Hot Spots for Trout

For the second year in a row, the lack of precipitation led to below average stream flows, resulting in increased water temperature. Higher water temperature holds less dissolved oxygen, which can stress fish and other aquatic life. To monitor these conditions, RFC staff and eighteen volunteers collected over 300 water temperature data points from around the Roaring Fork Watershed. Data collected by volunteers enhanced RFC's ability to monitor the watershed, engage with the public, and identify future water quality and habitat concerns. Rocky Mountain PBS wrote a story and produced a video on the Hot Spots for Trout program. *Hot Spots for Trout Against Drought* can be viewed at www.rmpbs.org/blogs/rocky-mountain-pbs/hot-spots-for-trout-against-drought/.

City of Glenwood Springs

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

- Participated in the Glenwood Springs annual RiverFEST event. 118 volunteers cleaned up 13 cubic yards of trash along streams and rivers throughout GWS and attended an outreach celebration afterward.
- Attended a riparian planting project in partnership with the Glenwood Springs River Commission and Middle Colorado Watershed Council. Volunteers planted 150 native plants along the Colorado River at Two Rivers Park.

River Stewards

RFC's River Stewards, a dedicated group of young professionals, spearhead community engagement events to inspire young river enthusiasts to explore, value, and protect the Roaring Fork watershed. These passionate individuals helped kickoff the Fryingpan and Beyond River Cleanup, ran several social media campaigns, volunteered at river restoration projects, and ushered in four new members. This fun, multi-talented, and committed cohort meets monthly.

Programs with RFC & RFOV

Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers (RFOV) invited RFC to provide some education and interpretation on two hikes this summer.

- An RFC educator joined RFOV on a hike along the Jess Weaver Trail in Glenwood Canyon. Participants learned about the history of the trail, the unique geographical and ecological features found in No Name Canyon, and the benefits of riparian habitats.
- RFC's science and policy staff was one of 6 stops along the Lake Christine Tour. Participants on this tour learned about the history, Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) analysis, restoration efforts to date, and helped remove invasive plants.
- In partnership with RFOV and Pitkin County Open Space and Trails, RFC's River Stewards and other volunteers helped restore 400 feet of streambed along the Roaring Fork River by planting 500 native plants at Lazy Glen Open Space.

Grizzly Creek Volunteer Project

Hosted by the Glenwood Canyon Restoration Alliance, RFC participated in the Grizzly Creek Volunteer Project, joining 40 participants from numerous partner agencies and the public, conducting maintenance, restoration, and improvement of the Grizzly Creek trail and rest area. Aspen Public Radio featured the work in a piece about the Grizzly Creek wildfire, impacts, and restoration.

THANK YOU, RFC NATIONAL COUNCIL

You make our work possible!



protect



explore



value



Thank you to our 2021 National Council!

Representing all parts of the United States, RFC National Council members make annual contributions of \$1,500+ that 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.

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Colorado Water Conservation Board
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Crystal River Environmental Protection Association
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Middle Colorado Watershed Council
Natural Resources Conservation Service
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Pitkin County Healthy Rivers Board
Pitkin County Library
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
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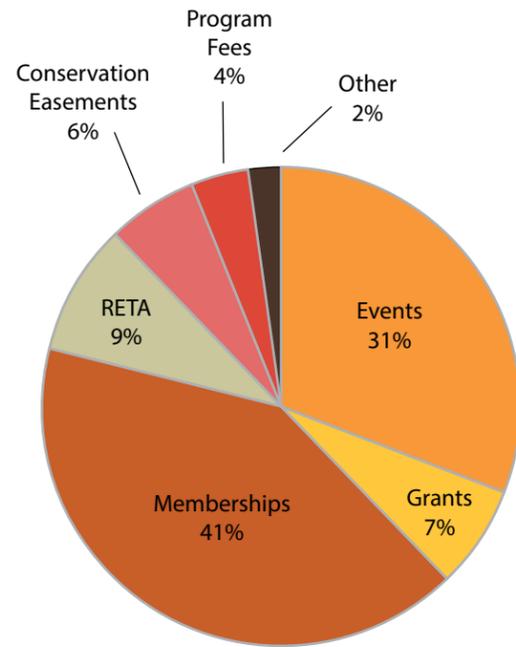
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2021 OPERATING REVENUES



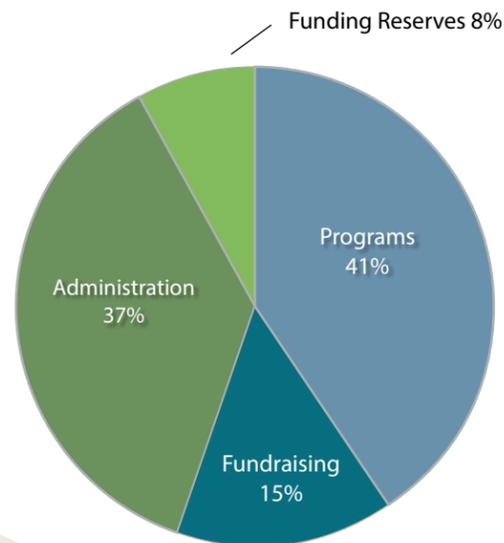
2021 Revenues

Events	\$329,289
Grants	\$76,000
Memberships	\$432,694
RETA	\$98,026
Conservation Easements	\$58,790
Program Fees	\$38,047
Other	\$22,777
Total	\$1,055,623

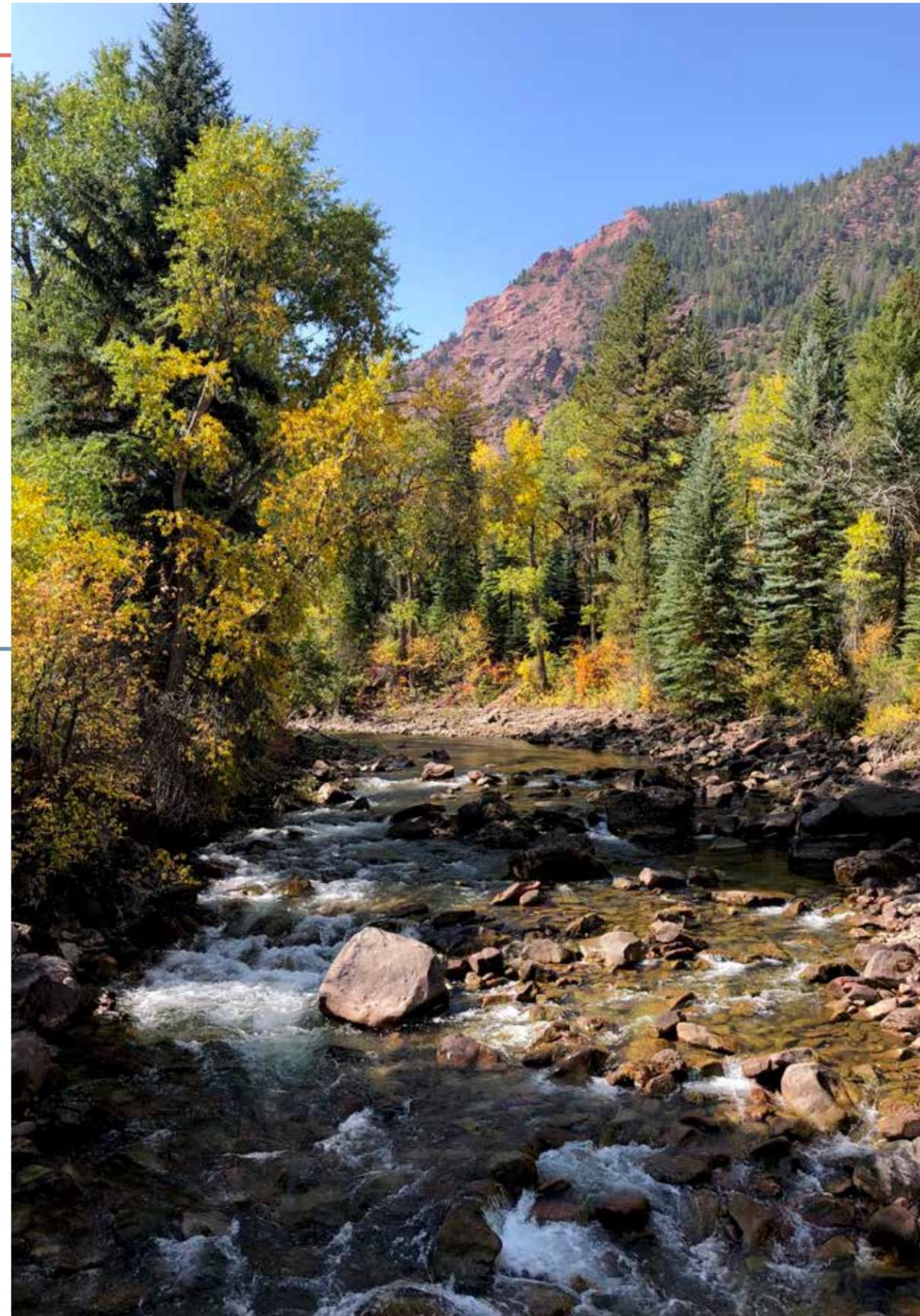
2021 OPERATING EXPENSES

2021 Expenses

Programs	\$422,622
Fundraising	\$156,076
Admin.	\$381,807
Reserve Funding	\$80,000
Total	\$1,040,505



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.



Uncredited photographs provided by Matthew Anderson, Alexis Hitzeroth, Heather Lewin, Rick Lofaro, Christina Medved and Chad Rudow.

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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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