

## The Heart of the Matter

By *Christina Medved, Director of Community Outreach*

We don't talk about it enough. We're too busy. We're texting not talking. We don't have time to slow down and breathe. And share. And remember.

Do you remember when you first fell in love with water? Maybe your grandpa took you fishing? Or did you go rafting with your buddies? Or to the beach with your siblings? I bet you remember who was with you, and the feeling, and the sounds, and the smells.



I do. I remember the cold splash of waves, the exhilaration of a live fish on the line, and the smell of the shore. I remember those summer days that made my heart pound and ignited a spark that left me wanting more time there,

no matter how long we stayed. I wanted more time on Lake Erie with my dad and my brother, hopping on huge breakwall boulders to get to the best fishing spot, just minutes from downtown Cleveland. I couldn't wait for my brother to try out one of the many lures he spent hours fidgeting with and sorting in the garage. I wanted more time at the family lake we used to get up at 5am to drive to, arriving just in time to see the fog starting to lift off the surface. I caught a lot of bluegill in that lake. I remember watching my dad and brother bait my hook with the slimy, squiggly worms I refused to touch. I had the worst sunburns of my life at that lake and the blackflies left huge welts on my arms and legs. I remember the holiday pig roasts with family and friends where my mom would ensure everyone had enough to eat. I loved every minute of it.

What I didn't realize until later is how those experiences were not only shaping who I was but simultaneously inspiring me to protect those places. It's what led me to major in environmental science and biology in college. My first internship was as an environmental educator in a national park where textbook content came to life - I was immersed in the outdoors and discovered a passion for sharing my love for wild places. Soon, I realized my path was leading me further from the city and closer to the water. I was drawn not just to the experience but the opportunity to create and share that experience with others.

Fast forward to 2014, when I arrived here in the Roaring Fork Valley.

Somehow the shores of Lake Erie, the family lake, and the banks of the Roaring Fork share equal spaces in my head and my heart. Most of us come from somewhere else and our connection to the local rivers is unique to our background. Some of us remember a life-changing moment that brought us here. In others, that connection might have grown over time. But we all keep coming back. Why? Why do you love rivers like you do? Why do you choose to spend your weekends on or near water, plan entire vacations around them, or invest in all the gear to enjoy them? I propose it's because we recall, deep in our hearts, how those first experiences felt. Perhaps we are trying to rekindle those memories for ourselves when we take our children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews on the same excursions we had as a child. Shepherding them as they create a connection to a place they are growing to love.



It may feel natural for you to want the places you love to be around for years to come - to allow others to enjoy it like you did. To allow that encounter to live on in their hearts forever. That's stewardship.

Now, that brings us to today. Whether you have lived here for 5, 15, or 50 years, you have seen some change in the valley. All indications point to a historic water year and not the kind of history we were hoping to rewrite. We are facing historically low snowpack, record breaking warm temperatures, and unprecedented drought. Recently discovered aquatic nuisance species - New Zealand mudsnails in the Roaring Fork River and zebra mussels in the Colorado River - are the proverbial cherry on a bad news sundae. The place we all love now needs a stronger, united effort to protect its future.

Maybe in the midst of all the bad news, we need a few more stories told in the shade of a cottonwood tree alongside the river. Some time together to connect with each other. I've shared my inspiration and I want to know yours. Because each connection - whether experienced firsthand or heard through storytelling - deepens our relationship and motivates a greater level of care and stewardship. And a reminder that, together, we are the ones that can protect these special places not just in our memories, but into the future.

# UPCOMING SUMMER EVENTS

**MAY 20**

**Birding Maroon  
Creek Wetlands**

7:30 AM

**JUNE 18**

**North Star Roaring Fork  
River Float**

10:00 AM

**JULY 2 & 15**

**Family Filoha Meadows  
Evening Exploration**

7:30 PM

**JULY 20**

**Herron Park – Insects of  
the Roaring Fork River**

10:00 AM

**JULY 14**

**Orchids & Plants of Filoha**

7:00 AM

**JULY 20**

**Water in the Age of  
Silver: Touring Aspen's  
“Holden Works”**

5:00 PM

**JUNE 22-24**

**Inclusive Youth  
Fly Fishing**

Clinic for children  
with disabilities and  
their neurotypical peers.

8:30 AM

**SEPT 29**

**Snowmass Water  
Supply Tour**

9:00 AM

**JUNE 10 & 16**

**North Star Roaring Fork  
River Float**

3:00 PM

**JULY 16 & 21**

**Family Filoha Meadows  
Evening Exploration**

7:30 PM

**SEPT 30**

**Filoha Afternoon Walk**

3:00 PM



## Congratulations, Lani Kitching!

**RFC will honor Lani as our  
2026 Robert Billingsley River  
Conservator at A Night  
for the Rivers on July 8, 2026.**

Armed with an undergraduate degree from University of Southern California and an executive MBA from UCLA, Lani climbed to senior vice president at a Fortune 500 company before a fly rod and the Eastern Sierras stole her attention.

Now a longtime Colorado resident, Lani blends boardroom savviness with fly fishing know-how as chair of the Colorado Wildlife Council, conservation advocate, former Town of Carbondale trustee, Roaring Fork Fishing Guide Alliance member, and owner of Proudline Guided Flyfishing. Whether working with policymakers, restoring habitat, or teaching newcomers to cast a line, she's built a reputation for connecting people, communities, and wild places.

In short: Lani is part executive, part angler, part public servant, and fully committed to keeping Colorado's rivers flowing and fish stories growing. Her path is defined not only by achievement, but also by an abiding sense of stewardship — an understanding that true leadership emerges through service, curiosity, and a willingness to meet both challenges and opportunities with humility.

Lani is a dear friend of RFC and we are thrilled to honor her as the River Conservator for her dedication to Colorado's rivers.

## WESTERN COLORADO ANGLER PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Before heading to western Colorado for a fishing adventure, be advised of record setting low flows, expected high water temperatures, and the recent discovery of aquatic nuisance species (ANS).

Anglers are encouraged to contact local fly shops for current conditions, carry a thermometer and reel it in when water temperatures reach 68°F, and bring gear that will allow you to change fishing plans upon arrival (boating, wading, high mountain).

Additionally, the Roaring Fork River from Carbondale to the confluence with the Colorado River, along with the Colorado River, is infested with New Zealand mudsnails. The Colorado River from its confluence with the Eagle River to the Utah border is infested with zebra mussels.

**River users are urged to clean, drain, and dry their gear before coming to the western slope and clean, drain, dry gear after every use and before moving from river to**

**river.** Wader washing and boat cleaning stations can be found by scanning the QR code.



All are welcome to the Roaring Fork Valley, but please keep these concerns in mind when coming to visit our waters and anywhere else you enjoy fishing in Colorado. Protect our rivers and the fishery.

Get all the program details and register at [www.roaringfork.org/events](http://www.roaringfork.org/events) or scan the QR code.



JULY 8, 2026

Star River Ranch  
Basalt, Colorado

*A Night for the Rivers*

Benefiting Roaring Fork Conservancy

## Welcome Summer Interns



Eden McClellan, science and policy intern, is a senior at the University of British Columbia studying Environmental Sustainability and Political Science.



Sayre Harris, water quality intern, is a senior at Colorado Mountain College studying Ecosystem Services and Stewardship.



## ROARING FORK CONSERVANCY

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

### REMINDER:

Our rivers have zebra mussels and New Zealand mudsnails.

Only you can prevent their spread. Don't take them home with you and don't bring any other invasive species here, either!

Protect our rivers.

**CLEAN, DRAIN, and DRY**  
**all water-related gear,**  
**after every use.**

*Learn more by scanning the QR code*



## REEL IN WATER USE

FISH  WATER TOO

Colorado had the warmest winter on record and the lowest snowpack on record. Rivers throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed have flowed below normal since 2025 and the watershed has experienced drought conditions since January 2025. Now more than ever it's critical to conserve indoor and outdoor water use.

*Learn more indoor and outdoor water saving tips  
by scanning the QR code.*

