

2015 Annual Report



ROARING FORK



CONSERVANCY

*Bringing People Together
to Protect Our Rivers*



Thank you for believing in us!



As we celebrate our 20th anniversary in November of 2016, we remain dedicated to bringing people together to protect our rivers. Living in western Colorado with ready access to cold mountain streams filled with last winter's snowmelt, abundant trout and spectacular rapids is a special privilege that we do not take for granted. It is easy to embrace the aesthetic beauty and recreational enjoyment of the bountiful rivers and streams of the Roaring Fork Watershed, which may make fulfilling our mission appear easy.

In reality, even the most beautiful watershed has challenges to overcome and significant reasons to invest in its protection. From the headwaters of the Roaring Fork River to its confluence with the Colorado River, from the waters of Ruedi Reservoir feeding the Fryingpan River, to the banks of the Crystal River, we keep diligent watch on our rivers. We continually assess and work to improve the health of local rivers and streams, and we empower the community and next generation to do the same. Roaring Fork Conservancy's (RFC) education staff engages students of all ages in the watershed, learning about its treasures and experiencing its wonders. After teaching over 6,900 individuals in 2015, RFC educators will meet our 100,000th student in 2016! While these important milestones remind us of how far we have come, each day we embrace our responsibility to the next river, streambank, community member or student.



As RFC's leadership continues to forge ahead, we are thrilled to welcome Pat McMahon as the new President of our Board of Directors. Pat and his wife, Barb, are long-time supporters of RFC's endeavors and are passionate about local rivers. With Pat leading the way, we look forward to accomplishing great things in 2016 and beyond.

Please enjoy this year-end review of our 2015 programmatic and financial success. Thank you for all you do to make our work possible. Here's to 20 more years exploring and protecting the rivers of the Roaring Fork Watershed!

Thank you for your continued support!

Pat McMahon

Pat McMahon
President, Board of Directors

Rick Lofaro

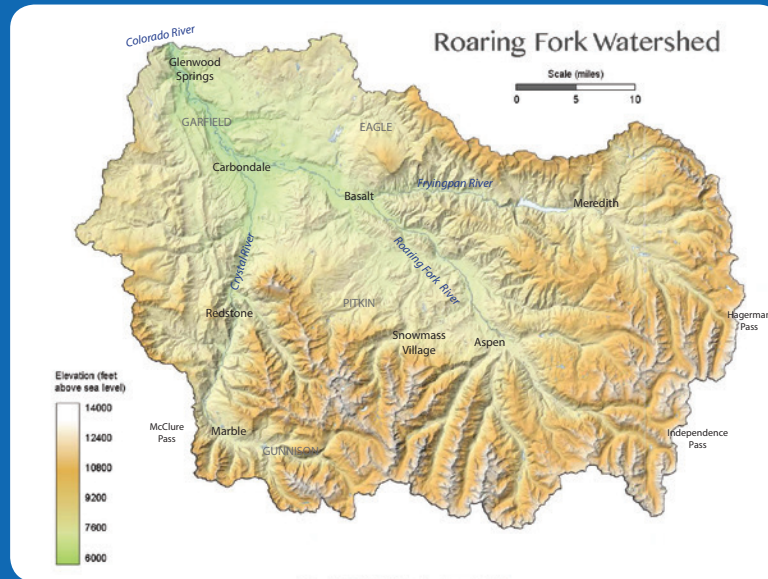
Rick Lofaro
Executive Director

Who We Are

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 our rivers, 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 valley through school and community-based Watershed Education programs and Watershed Action projects including regional watershed planning, water resource policy initiatives, and stream management and restoration.

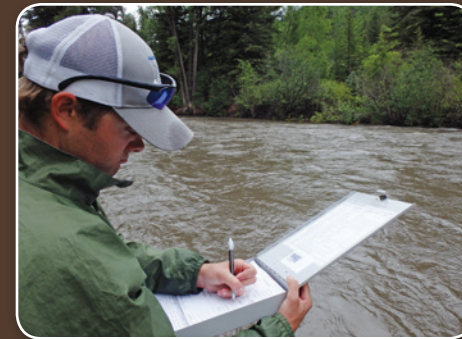
Roaring Fork Conservancy is an independent, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.



Roaring Fork Conservancy Highlights

- 1996 Founded
- 2000 Formed the National Council to help raise support for Watershed Action and Watershed Education programs
- 2003 Cofounded Roaring Fork Watershed Collaborative, an ad-hoc committee of 50+ government agencies, non-profits, and citizens that proactively addresses water issues in the watershed
- 2007 Became lead consultant for Roaring Fork Watershed Plan process
- 2008 Authored a comprehensive 500-page State of the Watershed Report
- 2012 Published Roaring Fork Watershed Plan
- 2015 Over 95,000 students reached in RFC education programs since 1996





Watershed Action

The Watershed Action program addresses current issues and future threats to watershed health and integrity. Proactive science and watershed planning help inform decision-makers and direct on-the-ground improvement and restoration projects. Most current endeavors, including scientific studies, restoration projects, policy work, and educational campaigns, are rooted in the Roaring Fork Watershed Plan. Watershed Action staff focus on water quantity and quality, hydrology, riparian and river ecology, and geomorphology.



Watershed Education

Inspiring people to take action requires knowledge. Each year the Watershed Education programs reach thousands of students and adults with hands-on, exploratory experiences. School programs cover topics such as water chemistry, river ecology, watershed mapping, aquatic insect identification, snow science, and the economics of water.

Adult community outreach programs include river guide trainings, watershed explorations, educational dialogues and forums, tours of local water facilities, and river float trips. Teacher professional development workshops provide engaging opportunities to earn continuing education credits required by Colorado's Department of Education. Every program is designed to engage participants with people and places in the watershed that they otherwise might not encounter or have access.

Water Quality in Action: 2015 Cattle Creek Stream Health Evaluation

In 2015, with funding provided by Garfield County, RFC embarked on an extensive study to better understand water quality impairment(s) on Cattle Creek. Data from former studies revealed high water quality near the headwaters and impaired water quality on the lower portion of Cattle Creek. With this information, RFC worked with landowners to gain access to private land, enabling us to sample multiple sites along Cattle Creek, in effort to understand what is happening in between these two sites: if there was a gradual degradation, a point where “good” turned to “bad,” or just a small impaired reach.

RFC assessed chemical and biological water quality data, based on standards set by the State of Colorado, at seven sites along Cattle Creek to provide insight into the source of any water quality impairment(s). This data, coupled with a land use analysis, will recommend best management practices in effort to improve stream health, and will also be used to inform stakeholders including landowners, water rights holders, county officials, and state regulators.

Throughout the study, RFC conducted stakeholder outreach, including hosting a meeting with public citizens, Cattle Creek residents, business representatives, and elected officials. A shared interest in the long term health of Cattle Creek was a common denominator amongst attendees and has led to ongoing support of the study and great anticipation of results, expected in 2016.

Water Quality Accomplishments:



Stream Team volunteers process water quality samples by Christina Medved

- Conducted 28 sampling events examining water quality, discharge (stream flow), and macroinvertebrates (aquatic insects) on Cattle Creek.
- Assisted with statewide training of new Colorado River Watch participants.
- Partnered with volunteer Stream Teams and local River Watch schools to conduct regular water quality monitoring at 29 sites, including 144 samples, and more than 15 volunteers working a combined 180 hours.
- Awarded a \$6,500 grant from the Aspen Skiing Company Environment Foundation to purchase 16 new pH meters for RFC, all volunteer Stream Teams, and local schools participating in the River Watch program.
- Partnered with the Colorado State Water Quality Control Division to conduct macroinvertebrate sampling in the Roaring Fork Watershed.
- Published *2015 Didymo Survey, Lower Fryingpan River* in partnership with Colorado Mountain College's Natural Resource Management Program.

The Clean Water Act is the primary federal law governing water quality in the United States. Under the 303(d) section of the Act, each state is required to monitor rivers and streams and then submit lists of waterways too polluted or degraded to meet water quality standards. The law then requires states to prioritize ranking for waters on this 303(d) list and develop standards for these waters, in effort to help improve the water quality. Cattle Creek, a tributary to the Roaring Fork River between Carbondale and Glenwood Springs, is listed on the State of Colorado's 303(d) list for aquatic life, and as a result became a focus of water quality concern for RFC and a variety of stakeholders.



Measuring stream flow in Cattle Creek by Chad Rudow



Fryingpan River by Paul Hilts

Lower Fryingpan and Ruedi Reservoir Economic Impact Study

As an integral component of the Comprehensive Lower Fryingpan River Assessment, RFC partnered with Colorado State University to better understand the role angling in the Lower Fryingpan River and Ruedi Reservoir play in the local economy. Fishing in Colorado provides unique recreational opportunities and generates economic activity through the purchase of gear and clothing, guide services and other recreation-related expenditures such as travel, food and lodging. With data collected from RFC's survey team during the summer of 2014, CSU Economists analyzed the direct and spin-off economic activity created from recreational fishing on the Lower Fryingpan River and Ruedi Reservoir.

The study reports:

- The economic impact of fishing on the Lower Fryingpan River is \$3.8 million annually.
- The combined impact of recreational fishing on both the Lower Fryingpan River and Ruedi Reservoir is nearly \$4 million.
- Total angling expenditures for the year on the Lower Fryingpan River were \$3.3 million, with almost half of the expenditures coming in June, July and August.
- Recreational fishing on the Lower Fryingpan River contributes 38.3 jobs to the region.
- On average, 44% of expenditures associated with fishing on the Fryingpan occur in downtown Basalt, corresponding to \$1,692,454 in economic impact, 17 jobs and \$1,041,370 in value added in downtown Basalt.

This study provides a measurable quantification for the one of a kind fishing experience realized on the Gold Medal, high quality waters of the Fryingpan River. RFC will use information generated from this study to inform decision making and management of the Fryingpan River and Ruedi Reservoir going forward.

Funding for this study was provided by Eagle County, Pitkin County Healthy Rivers and Streams, the Town of Basalt and private donations. To read the *2015 Lower Fryingpan River and Ruedi Reservoir Economic Impact Study*, please visit www.roaringfork.org/news.



Fly Fishing the Pan by Jim Ryan

Crystal River Management Plan

With both the Colorado State Water Plan and the Colorado Basin Implementation Plan calling for increased Stream Management Planning across the state, RFC is ahead of the game with the anticipated release of the Crystal River Management Plan in the spring of 2016.

The Crystal River Management Plan includes an extensive and inclusive assessment of fluvial geomorphic processes, riparian health, fisheries health and habitat, water quality, water diversion infrastructure and associated channel structures, to be used in identifying and producing an action plan for implementing high-priority/high-impact projects and feasible water resource management alternatives throughout the Crystal River watershed. This work will clarify important drivers of stream channel change and identify the primary natural and anthropogenic sources of detrimental impacts in the watershed. The results of this assessment will guide recommendations for specific restoration/reclamation actions on the Crystal River from the Town of Marble to the confluence with the Roaring Fork River. This work includes development of an Ecological Decision Support System for understanding and predicting ecological impacts produced by geomorphic modification of the streambed or implementation of alternative management strategies for consumptive and non-consumptive water uses on the lower Crystal River.

The culmination of the work effort developed a collaborative process for evaluating the feasibility of different water and land management alternatives for enhancing and preserving important ecological attributes on the Crystal River and outlining the core components and recommendations of an implementation plan. The scientific credibility and comprehensive assessment needed to build trust with the stakeholders and provide the necessary information for them to assess how the findings measure up to community values and the desire to pursue future action.

The engagement process consisted of a series of three stakeholder meetings in the fall of 2015. The purpose of the first meeting was to present and discuss findings from the Crystal River assessment and modeling analysis and identify stakeholders' questions and concerns. The second meeting explored issues and concerns regarding potential future action scenarios with the assistance of technical and legal experts. The last meeting in the series provided the rationale for and identification of a range for flow targets and an estimate of the percentage conservation needed to obtain them. This was complemented with a proposal by the Colorado Water Trust to pay willing water users upstream of the fish hatchery to reduce diversions in drier years.

Stakeholder engagement and working with the Colorado Water Trust will continue into 2016, with hopes that in the next drought year the Crystal River will continue to flow.



Watershed Action Policy Highlights

RFC's Watershed Action program addresses water issues, river health, and related land management through participation in public process. In 2015, RFC had the opportunity to comment, influence and advise agencies at the local, state and federal level on a variety of important watershed issues.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Previously Issued Oil and Gas Leases on the White River National Forest (WRNF)

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released a draft EIS encompassing oil and gas leases in the WRNF including areas of the Roaring Fork Watershed and Thompson Divide. RFC staff submitted recommendations to the BLM through an official letter and public meeting comments urging cancellation of all leases in the Roaring Fork Watershed to protect pristine, irreplaceable water resources. The BLM will publish the final EIS in July 2016.

Fryingpan River and Ruedi Reservoir Operations

RFC strives to bridge the gap in communication between the Bureau of Reclamation, who is charged with the management of Ruedi Reservoir, and local stakeholders from law enforcement and safety personnel to homeowners and anglers. Because Ruedi Reservoir is managed for multipurpose considerations, including hydropower, recreational, aesthetic and environmental needs, ongoing and upfront communication is critical to ensuring the safety and productivity of all uses.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) 2015 Strategic Plan

CPW adopted its 2015 Strategic Plan, designed to set overarching goals and strategies to guide CPW's work into the future. During the plan's development, RFC participated in several meetings and submitted comments on-the-record encouraging CPW to prioritize goals promoting healthy rivers and aquatic life.

Grizzly Reservoir Operations

RFC served as a coordinating entity between reservoir operators and Roaring Fork Valley stakeholders, including the City of Aspen, Pitkin County and interested citizens, after the August 2015 Grizzly Reservoir draining. RFC's work facilitated interagency cooperation, ensured timely chemical and biological monitoring, mediated public relations, and helped develop a memorandum of understanding regarding communication of future releases.

Pitkin County Open Space and Trails (PCOST) Management Plans

RFC continues to work with PCOST to enable best management practices of their riparian properties. Regularly sought for input, RFC contributes and comments on new and updated management plans and consults with staff on issues and concerns. In 2015, RFC participated in the updated North Star Preserve and new Wheatley Open Space Management Plans.

Colorado's Water Plan (CWP)

Throughout the development of Colorado's Water Plan, the first ever commissioned by the State, RFC participated in the local and statewide process by regularly attending Colorado Basin Roundtable meetings and submitting comment letters on each draft of CWP to the Colorado Water Conservation Board. RFC focused on opposition to new or increased transmountain diversions, adoption of water conservation policies, and protection of aquatic life.

Recreational In-Channel Diversion (RICD) on the Roaring Fork River in Basalt

RFC voiced its support of the Basalt-based RICD to both the town and Pitkin County in the holder of the water right. This potential amenity, located along the Roaring Fork within walking distance of Basalt, will provide an additional opportunity and venue for river recreation, which ultimately strengthens the community's connection to and appreciation for the river. Moreover, the RICD helps to insure seasonal flows in the Roaring Fork River, which contribute to healthy river ecology, add diversity to our recreational resources, and create an opportunity for citizens of Basalt, Pitkin County, and the entire Roaring Fork community to engage in creating a vision for the future of the river.



Educating the Roaring Fork Valley



First Catch by Christina Medved

School Programs

Each year RFC educators teach a multi-unit Watershed Education program for 4th grade students at Basalt Elementary, Glenwood Springs Elementary, and Crystal River Elementary Schools, and 6th grade students at Carbondale Middle School and Two Rivers Community School in Glenwood Springs. Our diverse and interdisciplinary programming ranges from preparing Aspen Middle School 7th graders for their annual river trip to teaching snow science on local mountains, using a Stream Trailer to demonstrate riverbank erosion, to teaching students how to read and use watershed maps. In 2015, RFC educators taught 254 programs to over 5,450 elementary, middle, high school, and college students from Aspen to Glenwood Springs.



Geomorphology Observations by Liza Mitchell

Teacher Training

In June of 2015, 15 local teachers, along with a teacher from Colorado Springs and another from North Dakota, attended a National Fishing in Schools Program teacher training led by RFC educators. This curriculum, and an accompanying kit, educates students about fish, insects, aquatic environments, resource conservation and stewardship through fly fishing and casting, as the instructional tool. Over 400 students across the Roaring Fork Valley started learning how to fly fish through this program. RFC staff also trained teachers new to the statewide River Watch program, in water quality testing procedures. In total, 120 teachers received professional development through RFC programs in 2015.



Twin Lakes Tour by Christina Medved

Watershed Explorations

RFC offers field-based educational programs for adults and families through its Watershed Explorations series. These hands-on programs are designed to bring participants to unique places in the watershed and educate participants about particular water issues via local and regional experts. Twenty-nine Watershed Explorations were offered in 2015, including river floats, hikes through riparian habitats, tours of water diversion projects, snowshoe hikes, and excursions to view fireflies in rare thermal wetlands. Most Watershed Explorations are offered for free due to the support of Pitkin County Open Space and Trails, City of Aspen Parks and Open Space, and the City of Aspen Water Department. Over 1,400 adults participated in our Watershed Explorations in 2015.



Spotting herons at North Star Preserve



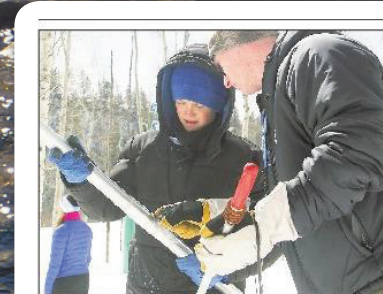
Stream Trailer



Streamside classroom



Using art to teach about riparian birds by Megan Dean



Derrick Wyle of NRCS, right, walks 12 year old Zechariah Matthews through the snow surveying process.

Learning about the frozen gold in the hills

Roaring Fork Conservancy organizes expedition to demonstrate snow measurement at telemetry sites

Will Grandbois
wgrandbois@postindependent.com

A fresh mantle of snow clothed the peaks above McClure Pass on Saturday morning as around a dozen people set out on snowshoes to learn about one of the area's most precious resources: water.

"We're trying to create a greater understanding of this frozen gold which becomes liquid gold," explained Sarah Johnson, education and outreach coordinator for the Roaring Fork Conservancy.

As part of its mission to "inspire people to explore, value and protect the

Roaring Fork watershed," the conservancy organized the expedition to one of seven snow telemetry sites that monitor snowpack in the valley.

An eclectic group met at the Redstone Inn for the event, including a CMC sustainability student and a water attorney.

Jennifer Matthews of New Castle brought her 12-year-old son, Zechariah.

"We're always looking for the opportunity to expose the kids to what impacts our community," she said.

Derrick Wyle, soil conservationist

FROZEN, A3

Community Outreach and Engagement



Fryingpan Cleanup by Christina Medved

Fryingpan Cleanup

The 17th Annual Fryingpan Cleanup drew over 150 residents and visitors, from as far away as Washington state, to pick up trash along 14 miles of road adjacent to the Fryingpan River. Trash along the road can easily become trash in the river. These committed, hard-working volunteers help ensure clean water and happy fish in the Gold Medal waters of the Fryingpan River.

North Star Preserve Bank Restoration Project

RFC partnered with Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers, Pitkin County Open Space & Trails, and numerous others to conduct a large-scale volunteer bio-stabilization project on the banks of the Roaring Fork River. Over 55 people worked together in

the North Star Preserve to lay down mats of biodegradable erosion control fabric, plant hundreds of native willows, install bank stabilization wattles, and reseed disturbed areas. The new plants and erosion control measures will stabilize these banks, prevent future erosion, and maintain a healthy riparian ecosystem.

Crooked Creek Restoration Project

The United States Forest Service (USFS) has worked in the upper reaches of the Fryingpan River watershed to restore Little Lime Creek and the associated wetlands to a more natural condition. In June, the USFS collaborated with RFC, Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers, and Wilderness Workshop to conduct a large-scale volunteer project to plant native vegetation in the restored wetlands. Over 30 staff and volunteers camped along the creek and spent two days revegetating the area. They worked tirelessly, transplanting locally sourced sedges and willows, and planting nursery stock grown from locally collected seeds. Because of the efforts of these individuals, and multi agency collaborations, this section of Little Lime Creek is being transformed into a natural stream channel surrounded by a budding wetland.



Crooked Creek Wetland Planting by Chad Rudow

The Great Divide Film Screening

Over 40 million people, billions of dollars of agricultural production, and an enormous amount of economic activity from California to the Mississippi River are dependent on rivers born in the mountains of Colorado. *The Great Divide* beautifully illustrates the timeless influence of water in both connecting and dividing this arid state and region. In a time of mounting demand and limited supply, the need for all citizens to better understand and participate in decisions affecting this critical resource is paramount. RFC hosted this film screening at the Crystal Palace in Carbondale and at Basalt Middle School, reaching over 200 people with its important message.

River Stewards

The River Stewards, an outreach of RFC, have a mission to inspire young river enthusiasts, ages 24-40 to explore, value and protect the Roaring Fork Watershed. In 2015, they did this in multiple ways:

- Hosted *Snow2Flow Jeopardy* at the Carbondale Beer Works



Women's Fly Fishing Clinic by Christina Medved

- Volunteered for 5Point Film Festival
- Hosted a Friday Afternoon Conversation with author Craig Childs during MountainSummit Film Festival in Aspen
- Held the MountainSummit Film Festival Pre-Screening of *Les Voyageurs Sans Trace* in Carbondale
- Led a Women's Only Fly Fishing Clinic in Carbondale
- Organized a RFC display and Water Wheel of Trivia for the Fly Fishing Film Tour in Aspen
- Organized a viewing of the Reel Paddling Film Festival
- Helped plan and co-host the River Float

RFC Visits Local Farmers Markets

Water and locally grown food: the two go hand-in-hand. That is why RFC visited farmers markets from Aspen to Glenwood Springs throughout the summer of 2015. RFC engaged with over 350 residents of and visitors to the Roaring Fork Valley via the Water Wheel of Trivia, providing educational materials and answering questions.



Farmers Market booth by Christina Medved

Think Outside the Banks: Riparian Campaign

Riparian vegetation consists of the plant communities adjacent to rivers and streams. It is vital to stream health, provides essential habitat and food for plants and animals, minimizes erosion, and mitigates nonpoint source pollution. In effort to educate the public about the importance of riparian areas, RFC was awarded funding from Pitkin County Health Rivers and Streams, to create a beautiful graphic representing the campaign. The graphic appeared as an advertisement in the Aspen Times throughout the summer of 2015. Radios spots on Aspen Public Radio also emphasized the need to maintain healthy riparian areas. Both advertisements invited homeowners to call RFC for a free riparian assessment.

Think outside the banks.
Healthy rivers require a healthy riparian habitat.

To learn more about your riparian habitat, or for a free riparian assessment, call Roaring Fork Conservancy at 970-927-1290.

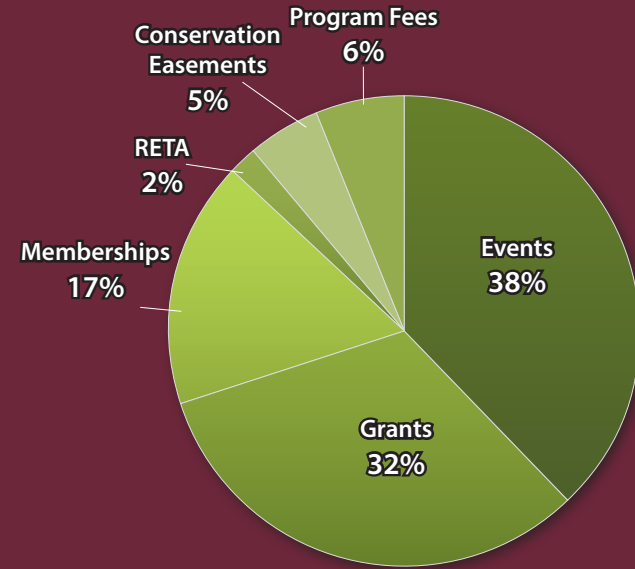
THE ASPEN TIMES
SINCE 1881 .COM

School turnover spurs questions
Tab Wed
The sudden resignation of Aspen High School's principal May 20, along with a handful of other departures, has prompted questions about the future of the school system. Both administrators have been with the district for decades and managed their retirements at least a year ago.

Roaring Fork Conservancy connects people, watershed
Basalt-based group nears 15th anniversary
Scott Gordon
About 20 people stood in quiet attention downstream from the Roaring Fork River dam project, listening to the speaker's words. The dam project is a major engineering feat, but it also has the potential to disrupt the river's natural flow. The Roaring Fork Conservancy is currently about 80 percent of the way through the project. The dam is expected to be completed in 2016. The valley of the river is a beautiful one, and the dam will have a significant impact on the area. The conservancy is working to ensure that the dam is built in a way that minimizes its impact on the environment.

2015 Financial Summary

2015 OPERATING REVENUES



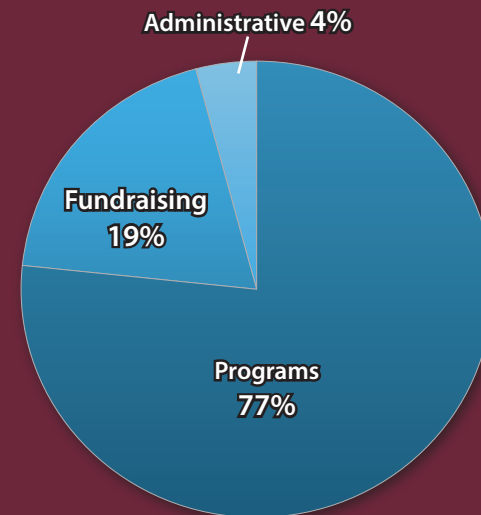
2015 Revenues

Events	\$376,858
Grants	318,900
Memberships	167,406
RETA	23,694
Conservation Easements	48,906
Program Fees	60,859
Total	\$996,623

2015 OPERATING EXPENSES

2015 Expenses

Programs	\$766,494
Fundraising	192,066
Administrative	37,654
Total	\$996,214



2015 Roaring Fork Conservancy Staff



Board of Directors

Pat McMahon, *President*
Rick Neiley, *Vice President*
Jennifer Sauer, *Secretary/Treasurer*
Ted Borchelt
Stephen Ellsperman
Jim Light
Rick Lofaro, *Executive Director*
Don Schuster
Diane Schwener, *Interim President*
Jacque Whitsitt, *Town of Basalt Rep.*
Larry Yaw
Valerie Yaw

Staff

Rick Lofaro, *Executive Director*
Megan Dean, *Watershed Educator*
Larry Gruel, *Controller*
Heather Lewin, *Watershed Action Director*
Christina Medved, *Watershed Education Director*
Liza Mitchell, *Watershed Education & Outreach Coordinator*
Chad Rudow, *Water Quality Coordinator*
Sheryl Sabandal, *Development Associate & Office Manager*
Sarah Woods, *Director of Philanthropy*

National Council Executive Committee

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Carter Brooksher, *Vice President*
Bill Gruenberg, *Treasurer*
Judy Baum, *Secretary*
Barb McMahon, *Event Co-Chair*
Sarah Woods, *Event Co-Chair*
Marianne Antoniak
Janice Beck
Joyce Gruenberg

Nancy Kempf
Ken Kendrick
Jean Moore
Jan Petersen
Robert Woods

River Stewards Steering Committee

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Jeff Conklin, *Vice President*
Natasha Lucero, *Secretary*
Catherine Berg
Dan Berg
Nick Kilbourn
Brian Long
Cal Viall
Monica Viall

Program Associates

Seth Kurt Mason, *Hydrology*
Rose Ann Sullivan, *Strategic Partnerships*

Interns

Austin Owen
Michael Schuster
Carlson Schwoerer

Special Projects

Alicia Creyts
S. Chapin Lewis, *Esq.*

These individuals were with RFC in early 2015

Sarah Johnson, *Watershed Education & Outreach Coordinator*
Ramsey Kropf, *Past President*
Holly Pagan, *Development Associate*

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Join us in protecting the Roaring Fork Watershed at
www.roaringfork.org

Cover photo: Fryingpan Dawn by Mark Fuller

Back Cover photo: Sunset on the Roaring Fork by Tamara Susa

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