ROARING FORK CONSERVANCY

> Bringing People Together to Protect Our Rivers

RIVER CURRENTS

Explore, Value, Protect

By Rick Lofaro, Executive Director



The summer of 2014 marked a milestone in my life. Twenty years ago, in the spring of 1994, I left the Roaring Fork Valley after spending nearly a year working as a naturalist to pursue a dream of becoming a fishing guide in Montana. I was hired on with Outlaw River Runners to guide the Swan and Flathead Rivers in

the northwestern corner of the state. Rod in hand, I was eager to head north and carry out my own rendition of Norman MacLean's *A River Runs Through It*. I had some previous experience wade guiding on the Eagle River in the late '80's, but learning to row a raft and guide from a boat was a whole new skill set. Having never ventured as far north as the Flathead Valley, I was immediately taken by the "Big Sky," crystal clear lakes, beautiful forests, and magnificent rivers. What could possibly be more exhilarating than moving to uncharted territory to pursue my dream of becoming a float crew for the first time. We had always talked about reuniting in the Flathead Valley someday with our families, but it's always somewhat shocking to realize "someday" we daydreamed about years before was happening now. With my wife Lindsay and daughters Ruthie and Francesca initiated with other spouses and children into the Outlaw crew, we soaked up the "Big Sky," swam in the crystal clear lakes, romped through the beautiful forests, and of course, floated and fished the magnificent rivers. But this trip wasn't just about our reunion and our legacy, it was about reminding ourselves to explore, and, by example, showing our children the power of exploration. Through exploration, we often find ourselves falling in love with a place, a mountain, or a river. Sometimes we fall in love many times over- each time we visit a place, whether contact is daily or twenty years removed, the river is like an old friend where the relationship hasn't missed a beat. Because of that relationship, we continue to explore and the love grows. The more we love something, the more we value it. And when we place the highest value on it, we protect it. Explore. Value. Protect. These three words are not only the foundation of RFC's mission, but also at the foundation of why I care so deeply for our rivers.

To come full circle, soon after I returned to the Roaring Fork Valley, our education staff became certified trainers for the National Fishing in Schools Program to bring angling to local schools. We will be piloting the program with three mid-valley schools the first year, then hopefully expanding

fishing guide? This question was clearly answered on an early-season scouting run, when my first cast into the Swan River yielded a bull trout as long as my arm. The fish was released unharmed but I remained firmly "hooked," landing somewhere just north of heaven. With every trip down the river my knowledge and passion for the river grew. What I didn't know then was that while I was guiding guests down the river, I was also guiding myself towards a future career where I worked not on the rivers, but for them.

Fast forward twenty years to the summer of 2014, when I returned to the Flathead Valley to reunite with the Outlaw



throughout the Roaring Fork Valley next year. In this program, students learn to cast a fly rod in the gymnasium or out on the fields during PE class. Bringing this program to the Roaring Fork Valley is a natural fit for a place where fly fishing is not only a recreational sport but also a vibrant

tourism industry. We see this program as the opportunity for students to begin their exploration of the river. Who knows, some of them might even fall in love.

RFC Data Provides New Protections in the Thompson Divide

By Chad Rudow, Water Quality Coordinator

Recent Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC) efforts have helped lead to new protections for streams in the Thompson Divide area. Through partnerships with Colorado Trout Unlimited (CTU) and Thompson Divide Coalition, data generated by RFC was the foundation for two significant water quality projects.

Thompson Creek Outstanding Waters Designation, <u>RFC and CTU</u> partnered on a proposal to designate three reaches of Thompson Creek as "Outstanding Waters". To qualify for this state designation, a stream must exhibit high standards for 12 water quality parameters and have exceptional recreational or ecological significance. CTU staff crafted the Outstanding Waters proposal and conducted stakeholder outreach while RFC staff provided the water quality data and served as scientific/technical advisor throughout the process.

Ultimately, in June 2014, the Colorado State Water

Quality Control Commission approved the "Outstanding Waters" designation for three branches of Thompson Creek and their related tributaries. This designation ensures the watershed's exceptional water quality is preserved in perpetuity. This essentially means that any entity seeking development or discharge permits in the designated



Chad Rudow measures stream flow on Middle Thompson Creek

watershed must demonstrate that the proposed activity will not degrade the creeks' baseline water quality.

"This is a huge conservation win that ensures there will be no degradation of these pristine waters," said Aaron Kindle, Colorado Field Coordinator for Trout Unlimited. "The designation will safeguard the streams, wetlands and tributaries of a significant watershed, and the populations of native cutthroat trout found there."

Thompson Divide Supplemental Water Quality Study Commissioned by longtime partner Thompson Divide Coalition, RFC and hydrogeologist, Dr. Robert Moran



North Thompson Creek Watershed

conducted the second phase of a study to define water quality conditions prior to potential natural gas development in the Thompson Divide area. This supplemental study reaffirms the findings of the first study, and states that the Fourmile and Thompson Creek watersheds are "healthy, uncontaminated and support significant populations of benthic aquatic organisms." With an emphasis on scientific validity and legal defensibility, these two studies combine to provide a solid baseline, or "yardstick", for comparison against future changes in water quality.

These watersheds are the lifeblood of our communities." said Zane Kessler, Executive Director of Thompson Divide Coalition. "This report strengthens the case that these pristine water resources are at risk and deserve to be protected."



The recently released Thompson Divide Supplemental Water Quality Study 2013 can be found on the RFC website at www.roaringfork.org/publications.

Didymo on the Fryingpan River

By Taylor L. Applewhite, Undergraduate Student, Colorado Mountain College

I never thought when I got hired for a summer internship, that I'd be sampling rock snot. I've always heard about the Fryingpan River and what great fly fishing it had to

offer but I had never heard of rock snot and I was about to spend a summer studying and sampling just that. The native to North America, toilet-paper like freshwater diatom known as Didymosphenia geminata or "didymo" for short, may pose a threat to the health of the fishery and its happy fisherman. This algae typically grows in thick mats covering rock surfaces in cold, fresh water streams. Local fishermen have told me that didymo was first observed on the Fryingpan River in the mid 1970's. Since then it has become more prolific, posing a threat to the health of aquatic ecosystems. Although the full impact on the Fryingpan River is



the Fryingpan.

currently unknown, Roaring Fork Conservancy partnered with the Natural Resource Management (NRM) program at Colorado Mountain College (CMC) in Leadville to study the didymo, and this is where I got involved. I was hired as a seasonal intern for the Natural Resource Management program. In the spring, summer, and fall, NRM student interns set out to observe and quantify the current presence of didymo. Twenty sampling sites from the Ruedi Dam to the confluence with the Roaring Fork were used in the study. We collected data at different flow rates, measured temperature, pH, and specific conductance and will write up a summary report identifying potential management plans for mitigation. We used a homemade tool known as the "didy-scope" to determine how much didymo coverage was on rocks in the main channel. It was impossible to see rocks in the turbulent flow with the naked eye. The didy-scope is a five gallon bucket with a clear, grid patterned bottom. Some described that I looked like an ostrich with its head buried in the sand while looking through it. In addition to collecting visual data at each site, we scraped the surface of rocks and weighed the scraped material, burned it in a furnace, and weighed once more to measure how much organic material, or didymo, was covering each rock. We brought the samples back to the lab at CMC, put them on slides, and started the search for the bowtie looking microscopic diatom. There was a higher concentration on each slide from the Fryingpan River sites opposed to the upstream sites. We did not actively search for didymo on Ruedi

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Reservoir but to my knowledge, none has been found there. Upon investigation of rocks covered in "rock snot", small macroinvertebrates were observed buried within the

CMC students sample for "rock snot" on

thick matting which seems to provide a sanctuary from the hungry trout. When encountering fisherman during our sampling, they informed me that the didymo constantly gets caught on their flies; providing a source of aggravation that isn't welcome on their fishing trip. It is apparent that there is no easy fix to the didymo presence on the Fryingpan River. In the meantime, there are active steps we can take to prevent the spread of didymo to other rivers and streams in Colorado and the rest of the country. First, we must educate the public just as we have with other nuisance and invasive aquatic species such as zebra mussels. We also have the responsibility to make sure all

of our equipment is washed and dried fully when recreating in different waterways. One seemingly insignificant drop of water is enough to spread didymo into new territory. Didymo does not pose any risk to human health as it does not threaten the quality of drinking water for those downstream, but it can clog up drinking water intake systems creating a new set of problems. Not only was my experience on the Fryingpan River tons of fun, it was beyond educational. I found myself much more interested in microbiology than I thought possible which has prompted me to continue studying didymo for my capstone project to graduate from CMC this May. As it turns out, algae can be interesting!



Taylor Applewhite using a "didy-scope" on the Fryingpan

ACTION WATERSHED

Crystal River Stream Management Plan

By Seth Mason, Hydrologist, Lotic Hydrological, LLC

Stakeholders in the Crystal River watershed remain interested in understanding the complex relationships between the physical structure of the watershed, patterns of land and water use, and measures of ecological health/ function. This interest stems from concerns raised by local conservation organization, the listing of the Crystal River on American Rivers 'Most Endangered Rivers' list. Recent work conducted on the lower Crystal River during drought conditions, associated temperature increases could be detrimental to the fish population. In response and in partnership with Public Counsel of the Rockies, RFC recently initiated work on a Crystal River Stream Management Plan--an effort to better understand the effectiveness and feasibility of various management strategies that honor local agricultural production, preserve existing water uses, and enhance the ecological integrity of the river. This work is both important and timely, as evidenced by recent calls during development of Governor Hickenlooper's Colorado Water Plan for implementation of stream management planning throughout the Colorado River basin Development of a Crystal River Stream Management Plan is ongoing and consists of three primary elements:

1. Focused field-evaluations conducted by experts in water quality, fisheries health, riparian ecology, and geomorphology. Data and analysis produced from these evaluations will allow researchers characterize watershed conditions, identify opportunities for improving ecological function, and contemplate limitations on the success of those measures.

2. A series of computer models, collectively known as an Ecological Decision Support System (EcoDSS), which will operate at the nexus between hydrology, ecology, hydraulics, and water rights allocations. These models will simulate various management strategies and provide valuable information about how changes in management of land and/ or water resources relate to fisheries and riparian health.

3. Stakeholder engagement to steer ecological assessments and guide decision-making process. The Crystal River Stream Management Plan is designed to be a community driven process. Periodic stakeholder meetings will help to identify and evaluate opportunities for

action within existing legal, political and administrative constraints. This stakeholder process will ultimately drive the development of a prioritized list of actions for improving conditions in the Crystal River.

Since work began in June of 2014, several activities transpired. Field crews mapped the Crystal River bottom using high-resolution bathymetric surveying. Using survey-quality GPS mounted to a raft, repeat runs down the river yielded over 23,000 individual elevation measurements, which are now being used to construct a digital representation of the riverbed and its floodplain. This "data layer" will be incorporated into EcoDSS to simulate the way that water flows through the Crystal River. Another component of the EcoDSS requires carefully reconstructing and simulating water rights administration within the watershed. RFC's consultants are currently building upon existing water rights models for the Crystal River in an effort to accurately simulate how surface and groundwater move across the landscape under a variety of weather and climate conditions.

In September, Crystal River stakeholders met to review the previous assessments conducted by RFC on the Crystal River and help outline a process for effective community engagement during development of the Crystal River Stream Management Plan. Meeting attendees included local landowners/agricultural producers, the Colorado River District, Town of Carbondale, CVEPA, West Divide Water Conservation District, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife. Representatives from the Colorado Water Trust, Lotic Hydrological and the Public Counsel for the Rockies were on hand to answer technical and legislative questions. Discussions held during this meeting and buy-in

Roaring Fork Beer Co. Launches 1% for the Fork Program



Fork Beer Company (RFBC) released its long-awaited seasonal Slaughterhouse Lager. RFBC is donating 1% of the revenue from sales of the Slaughterhouse Lager to Roaring Fork Conservancy to support protection of local

rivers. The label on the can features the Roaring Fork Conservancy logo demonstrating the brewery's

River Stewards

By Kara Armano, River Stewards Steering Committee President

The River Stewards were busy in 2014, educating our peers about the program, spreading the word about what's new with Roaring Fork Conservancy, and having fun with friends...all while drinking a few beers along the way, of course! We kicked off the festivities in March by hosting Watershed Jeopardy in Carbondale and really tested participants' knowledge of the Roaring Fork Watershed. With our very own Brian Long acting as Alex Trebek, we had a packed



down Ruby Horse Thief. Many more great times are ahead house at Carbondale Beer Works and a great time was had by all. Also in March, we partnered with the Fly Fishing for this crew, including a couple of exciting announcements on a personal level. Congratulations to Natasha Film Tour in Aspen, hosting a welcome table and asking fly-fishing enthusiasts trivia questions pertaining to the Lucero on her recent engagement to Mike Conklin! Conrivers we love to fish. In early June, we co-hosted the River gratulations to Jeff Conklin on his recent engagement to Festival and, despite not being able to float the river due to Brittany Fortier. A double congrats goes to April and Brian Long who are expecting twins in early 2015! And a warm high water (yeah!!!!),



were still able to offer something for everyone - food, Roaring Fork Brewing Company's Slaughterhouse Lager, games, music and paddleboard demos – to ensure all attendees had a great time! Later in June, April and Brian Long

hosted a Water Talk in Aspen to discuss where the storm water goes around town in Aspen. July brought the second annual Cruise-a-Thong in Glenwood Springs, where the Stewards hosted a comfort station for all participants. It



Photo: Craig Silberman

to the process by the individuals in attendance suggest that the Crystal River Stream Management Plan should produce meaningful results that can help ensure that our streams and rivers continue support the needs and high quality of life enjoyed of local residents.

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NEWS AND UPDATES

Carbondale-based Roaring commitment to the rivers of the Roaring Fork Watershed.

RFBC has named multiple beer offerings with rivers in mind. Slaughterhouse Lager is named after a prominent rapid on the Roaring Fork River near Aspen loved by boaters during high water. Their Freestone Extra Pale Ale also incorporates the local rivers into its name. A freestone river is one without a dam and the local Crystal River is one of a handful that runs undammed.

The craft Slaughterhouse Lager can be purchased at RFBC's tasting room in Carbondale and at local restaurants and liquor stores.



was an awesome event with clever costumes and good energy!

For the remainder of this year, we have several fun movie nights planned and will close out with our annual River Stewards Float

welcome to Catherine Berg, the newest addition to the River Stewards crew.

Thanks for your time and we look forward to more fun events in 2015!



New Educational Endeavors: Fly Fishing in the Classroom & Teacher Professional Development

By Christina Medved, Education Director

Earlier this year the Education Department offered two teacher workshops, providing an opportunity for local teachers to obtain teacher professional development

without leaving the Roaring Fork Valley. Our first workshop was targeted towards teachers whose students are at the elementary level. Teachers were trained in general watershed



education which brought a further depth to what they see RFC educators teaching to their students throughout the school year. They were also trained and certified in Project WET[™] (Water Education for Teachers), an international, award-winning curriculum. For the last twenty-five years, Project WET[™] has developed and published materials



for a global student audience in an effort to help classroom teachers implement water resource lessons into their curriculum; thus wonderfully complimenting RFC's educational focus.

The second workshop trained Physical Education (PE) teachers in the National Fishing

in Schools Program (NFSP) curriculum titled "Cast a Fly," Catch a Student." NFSP is a nationwide, all-inclusive, in-school program that provides an easy and fun way to teach students the basics of fly casting during their PE class. Whether an experienced angler or picking up a rod for the

first time, NFSP makes it easy to learn and teach fishing to students in elementary, middle and high schools. Teaching children how to fish compliments the Conservancy's mission and

current education

programs in

such a way that

opportunity to

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NFSP lessons

use of a special

Curriculum Kit

which includes

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Since each kit

fly rods and reels,

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is valued at over \$3,000, RFC has been busy writing grant proposals to fund the purchase of three kits to be loaned out to area schools.

Both of these workshops provided required hours for teacher professional development which can go towards the renewal of teaching licenses through Colorado's Department of Education. RFC educators are certified teacher trainers in both Project WET[™] and NFSP, and will continue to offer them, along with other topical teacher workshops, in the near future. If you are interested in participating in a future teacher workshop, please stay tuned to our website or contact us for more information.

We would like to thank Blue Sky Adventures - Canyon Bikes in Glenwood Springs for creating this beautiful display to inform guests about the valuable waters of the Roaring Fork Watershed and of the Roaring Fork Conservancy's work. Thank you, friends!







Conservation Easement Profile: Blue Creek Ranch, Carbondale

Roaring Fork Conservancy acts as a land trust, holding 16 Conservation Easements and protecting over 280 acres of riparian habitat in the Roaring Fork Watershed. Each issue of River Currents highlights one of these easements.

Stats

Acres: 19.1 Date Acquired: October 31, 2002 Riverfront Protected: 1,410 feet of Roaring Fork River Owner: Blue Creek Ranch HOA

Public Access: Fishing Access, Boating Access, Walking Trails along the River

About the Easement

Located on the bank of the Roaring Fork River, the Blue Creek Ranch Conservation Easement offers public access to formerly private property near Catherine Store Bridge. The towering cottonwoods and ponderosas that line the walking path offer shade from the hot summer sun and vibrant fall colors. This popular property offers public hiking and fishing access along the river trail and carry-in boat access from the parking lot off County Road 100. Dogs are allowed but don't forget your leash!

Survey Says.....

By, Kristjan Danis, Watershed Action Intern

Important piece of Roaring Fork Conservancy's Comprehensive Lower Fryingpan River Assessment is an economic impact study. We are looking at how much money the Fryingpan is brought into the Roaring Fork Valley, specifically the town River Valley was of Basalt, and Pitkin County from recreation on the Lower Fryingpan and Ruedi. The data is being collected through by Roaring Fork surveys given to those who are fishing the Fryingpan or recreating at Ruedi. The survey asks questions about where data is still used people are from, how much money they are spending on their todav by local trip, and where their money is being spent. Some visitors business owners just want to take the survey and then get on with their day and the town of while others are more talkative and want to share fishing stories or the details of their trip. It has been an interesting experience meeting the different faces of the Fryingpan that to see how the come from near and far. Along with the interesting people, rivers effect local I had the opportunity to witness some epic feats of nature. I business and may even attract new businesses to downtown saw a garter snake that had just snagged a rainbow trout from Basalt. The data has not yet been compiled but the good the river, some of the thickest mayfly and insect hatches I have news is we have surveyed over 400 people to date! ever seen, and some of the biggest fish on the river caught in people's nets.

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The last economic impact study on conducted in 2002 Conservancy. This Basalt. Updating this study is crucial

Staff Flows



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Megan grew up exploring the mighty Mississippi River in eastern Iowa. She worked as a Water Patrol Officer for Iowa's Department of Natural Resources and while regulating boating and fishing laws was exciting, she was passionate about education and received her B.S. in Elementary Education with a specialization in Science from the University of Iowa. She has lived, explored, and taught in the Roaring Fork Valley for the last 15 years. While working as a classroom teacher, Megan enjoyed partnering with the Roaring Fork Conservancy to bring watershed ecology to all of her students. She also developed and taught an after-school program called 'Tracking and

Megan Dean Watershed Education

Environmental Awareness' to students in schools throughout the valley. Megan is also trained and certified in Photovoltaic Design and Installation through Solar Energy International and worked on projects both in Colorado and Costa Rica. When not teaching, Megan enjoys painting, running after her children, and diving head first into all the water and mountain sports that she can.



Announcing our new Watershed Action Director: Heather Lewin

Originally from New England, Heather grew up exploring the mountains and rivers of the Northeast. After graduating from Providence College with a B.S. in Biology, Heather moved west. She fell in love with the Roaring Fork River while working as a guide for Aspen Whitewater Rafting. After spending several summers guiding on the

rivers and several winters as a ski instructor at Snowmass Ski School, Heather decided it was time to "give back" to the outdoor environment in which she recreated and enjoyed. After spending a year obtaining a graduate certificate from the Teton Science Schools' Professional Residency in Environmental Education program, Heather completed her MS in Environmental Science and Policy from Johns Hopkins University. While in graduate school, Heather began volunteering with RFC, matching academic projects with watershed needs. That quickly grew into part-time, then full-time employment, when Heather came on as the Watershed Action Coordinator in May of 2013. Under the close mentorship of Sharon Clarke, Heather learned about the intricacies of the Roaring Fork Watershed. Heather has now transitioned into the role of Watershed Action Director. As such, she will oversee the Conservancy's on-the-ground river studies, land conservation programs, restoration projects and water policy activities, all while engaging local stakeholders and hearing community concerns as we work together to explore, value and protect the Roaring Fork Watershed.

River Watch Program Update

Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC) continues to participate in the Colorado River Watch program, generating water quality data utilized by local and state entities. With the help of volunteer stream teams, RFC currently monitors 23 water quality stations more than any other entity in this state-wide program. In addition Chad Rudow, RFC's Water Quality Coordinator, helped train new participants during River Watch's annual training workshop this fall. This is the fourth year Chad has been invited to help instruct new River Watch participants from around the state.

Sharon Clarke's 10 Year Contribution to the Roaring Fork Valley



Roaring Fork Conservancy would like to thank Sharon Clarke, our former Watershed Action Director, for her dedication

over 10 years of hard work to our organization and especially the Roaring Fork and Crystal River valleys. Sharon accepted a new position with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and will return to a much beloved Pacific Northwest she called home for many years.

During her time at Roaring Fork Conservancy, Sharon led efforts to implement Watershed Action projects which led to many victories both for the rivers and the community. Among her major successes are: co-leading the development and implementation of the Roaring Fork Watershed Plan and compilation of the State of the Watershed Report; spearheading the Crystal River assessment and restoration project; the development of a Roaring Fork Watershed Regional Water Efficiency plan and developing strong relationships and partnerships with local, state and federal government agencies, water right holders, and other non-profits such as Colorado Water Trust, to pursue creative solutions to enhance stream flows which included regional water conservation plan. Sharon has directed RFC's land conservation program, designed and implemented macroinvertebrate studies, identified stream gage needs and obtained funding for their installation, and was instrumental in coordinating the Comprehensive Lower Fryingpan River Assessment. Sharon will be greatly missed by Roaring Fork Conservancy and the many people who have had the privilege of working with her. We wish her well in her future endeavors in Oregon!

2014 RIVER RENDEZVOUS "Fine Wines & Tight Lines"



Kirk Patrick, Gordon Viberg, Liz Milton, Sue Patrick and Jim Milton, Karen Davis, Leslie Ann Gallagher Jack McKay, and Bob Davis

Martha & Bill Drake and Pamela & Bruce Earthman enjoying the evening.





Dick Kipper, the 2015 River Council Executive Committee President, and his wife Marianne.

Nan and Hugh Williamson enjoying the music provided by Bo Hale Treatment





Brandon Soucie - winner of the casting competition and Jeff Dysart one of the participants in the competition.

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ROARING FORK CONSERVANCY

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