

RIVER CURRENTS



Watershed Education Changes Our Relationship With Water

Tim O'Keefe, Roaring Fork Conservancy

At a community festival several years ago I watched a middle-aged man stare in awe. It was a warm afternoon in July and he was sitting under a blue tent gazing at what looked like an ant farm. He just shook his head and kept saying, "I had no idea. I had no idea." He was watching colored water move through a groundwater model, a Plexiglas box roughly the size of a computer flat screen and filled with sand and gravel. It resembles an ant farm, but full of water. We

use this model dozens of times each year to show the unusual ways water moves underground. The model simulates ground absorbing water and people pumping water out. The colored water allows one to see water moving underground. I had just finished



Middle School students learning about the Colorado River Compact during an overnight raft trip.

Roaring Fork Conservancy

a demonstration using the model and this man couldn't get enough. "You mean the water actually moves up towards the river?" he asked, his face still in shock. "Yes," I answered, "water underground almost

always moves towards rivers." "I had no idea," he responds. He was hooked. The experience made my day and changed his perspective on water underground forever.

"The way you presented our water system was an awesome change of pace. I'm glad that you are so involved in bringing water shareholders together."

- Cleo, student, Colorado Rocky Mountain School

On another occasion with a group of preschoolers, we sneak towards the bank of the river and I reach in and pick up a stone from beneath the surface of the water. It's a bright, sunny day in January and snow covers the river bank. Kids stand, bundled in their snow

noses. "Look right there," I point. "Look for something to move." A stonefly about the size of a small paper clip springs into motion and kids' faces turn from curiosity to amazement. A collective, "Whoa!" choruses among the children. They point and smile. They had no idea the frosty river held such a squirmish delight.

Educators live for these types of

clothes, eyes glued to my hand. I lift the rock

out of the water and bring it towards their

experiences when our teaching helps something inside heart or head to click and the student leaves the experience with new revelation and new understanding. We call these "ah-ha" moments, and they are priceless. If you think back to your best teachers, they did this frequently,

helping you to really enjoy learning. They made it fun. That's the goal of the watershed education program: to get students and adults of all ages, excited about rivers.

Not too long ago people drank water

out of rivers. Now, with water coming from the tap and a bottle at the grocery store, people are disconnected from the water they use and the local river. Ask a friend or

neighbor where their water comes from and most won't know the source. Ask people why rivers matter and most couldn't tell you. That's where our watershed education

Watershed Education continued on page 2

Tools of the Trade

Teaching about a dynamic subject like water allows us to use dynamic tools. Here are some of our favorites:

Enviroscape Watershed Model



Materials: molded plastic, metal toys, Kool-Aid, cocoa powder, coffee grounds, water

Purpose: demonstrate how human actions affect water quality in a watershed **Common quote:** "We made a mess of this town!"

Groundwater Model



Materials: lexan, sand, gravel, plastic tubing, water **Purpose:** demonstrate how water moves underground and is affected by pumping

Tools of the Trade continued on page 2

Watershed Education from page 1

programs come into play.

Our philosophy is simple: Take people to the resource (river, wetlands, diversion tunnel) and let them experience it first-hand. If we can't get them to the resource, we take the resource to them. Over the past 16 years we've reached tens of thousands of students and adults with simple but effective programs that reveal the intricate connectedness of water to EVERYTHING we do in life. In a sense, we are working to help repair a relationship that broke somewhere along the way. "Hello, friend. I'd like you to meet the Roaring Fork River. It's what keeps this valley alive."

To make that reintroduction we

use lots of fun tools and go to awesome places. Most schools in the valley have rivers within walking distance of their halls with great opportunities to study river ecology and chemistry. Kick nets for collecting Maroon Creek. Watershed Education programs are

bugs, flow meters, very hands-on. Heather Rousseau and waders enhance the experience as students get to know the river. When the weather turns cold, we load up aquatic insects in a cooler and bring the river to the

Middle School students measuring stream flow of

"We have students who do not spend

and Roaring Fork Conservancy's field

environment. I love seeing them realize

what lives under there can provide much

- Hilary Gamsey, teacher,

Crystal River Elementary

that picking up a rock and observing

much time exploring the outdoors

trip helps them access this foreign

entertainment."

school. Aquatic macroinvertebrates (big water bugs) allow us to teach a variety of topics from adaptations to ecology to water

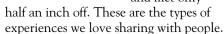
quality indexing. We also really like maps. Watershed maps, river maps, and water diversion project maps all help us tell

the story of where our water comes from and where it goes. Sometimes we'll even make a human map where students standing in lines represent the converging rivers in a watershed and pass "water" in the form of kidney beans from the headwaters to the confluence. We can model changes in seasons, flows,

and water diverted, even create droughts or floods. Afterwards a discussion about water rights sparks more questions and gets students thinking about where we use water and how we move it to where we need it.

The transmountain diversion projects that take water from the west side of the Continental Divide to the cities of Denver and Colorado Springs make for lively discussion. On our annual tour of the Twin Lakes tunnel, which moves 38% of the water above Aspen east, the insight is even more relevant. Participants on this tour see the dams, canals, and tunnels that move about 57,000 acre-feet (some 18 billion gallons) of water through a four-mile tunnel

each year. When people walk into the 10' diameter tunnel and literally see the light at the end of the tunnel four miles away, jaws drop. Then, they learn that the tunnel was dug from each side in the 1930s without the aid of modern survey equipment and met only



Our goal is a lofty one: to change people's relationship with water by creating a culture that values water, rivers

and watersheds in our region. For the festival-goer his experience with us changed his relationship with water. Our approach is making a difference one person at a time. With the continuation of

our watershed education programming and the construction of the future River Center, we hope to create a culture in western Colorado where water is valued for both people and the environment. We hope you'll join us on a future water adventure and have an "ah-ha" moment yourself. www.roaringfork.org/education

Tools of the Trade from page 1

and pollution Common quote: "What is this thing, an ant farm?"



Material: laminated paper maps, molded plastic **Purpose:** demonstrate where water goes, how watersheds work, how one town relates to another via rivers Common quote: "You're

gonna spray water on that map?!"

Stream Trailer



Material: steel, aluminum, plastic pipe, rubber tires, plastic toys, water, pump Purpose: model how erosion, sedimentation, and flow work with real rivers Common quote: "Let's do it [make a river] again!!"

Kick Nets & Waders



Materials: wood, rubber, nylon, plastic Purpose: collecting aquatic insects for study, observation, and indexing

Common quote: "Tan waders are always in fashion!"

WATERSHED EXPLORATIONS

Events Calendar

MAY

- **Thompson Creek Family Exploration**
- Heron, Eagle, Osprey Watching
- 14 High Altitude Heron Watching
- 21 Ruedi Reservoir Tour & West Slope Water
- 31 Birding Maroon Creek Wetlands





AUGUST

- Fly-Fishing Crystal River at Powerhouse
- Aspen's Invisible Ditch Tour
- 11 Science Festival & Street Fair for Kids
- 14 Coal Basin Tour: Mining to Restoration
- 16 Twin Lakes Tunnel & Diversion Tour
- 20 Proper Functioning Riparian Training

SEPTEMBER

- 11 Carbondale Bicycle Ditch Tour
- 18 Sky Mountain Park Trail Hike
- 21 Family Fall Exploration at Filoha
- 24 Aspen Tap: Drinking Water Tour
- 26 Filoha Fall Evening Walk

Photos (top to bottom): Sarah Johnson, Chris Council, Heather Tattersall, Sarah Johnson



JUNE

- **River Stewards Float**
- 4 Northstar Roaring Fork River Float
- 6 Park East Easement Volunteer Event
- River Float 2013
- Northstar Roaring Fork River Float
- 20 Northstar Roaring Fork River Float
- 25 Family Filoha Fireflies, Bats, and Bugs

JULY

- 2 Filoha Firefly & Rare Orchid Walk
- 8 Filoha Firefly & Rare Orchid Walk
- 10 14th Annual River Rendezvous
- 16 Family Filoha Fireflies, Bats, and Bugs
- Filoha Firefly & Rare Orchid Walk
- 23 Ruedi Dam and Hydropower Tour 31 Mining Water: Aspen's History & Water



For more information and to register visit: www.roaringfork.org/events

River Watch Educates and Motivates Citizen Scientists

An interview with volunteer Dick Helmke

Chad Rudow, our Water Quality Coordinator, recently sat down with Stream Team volunteer Dick Helmke in Glenwood Springs. Dick conducts water quality monitoring on Cattle

RFC: Tell us a little about yourself. **Helmke:** I'm a fourth generation Coloradan, my ancestors began over in the Escalante Canyon country. My father broke that mold, he became a geologist, and I ended up in computers, and worked most of my career for IBM. That was back in the pioneering days of mainframes which now don't get a lot of press but do a lot of work; it was a great time. When I found out I could do my job remotely, we moved to the valley in 1999 and I worked for another five years or so.

Since retirement, I've mostly been doing volunteer work. I am the treasurer and a docent for the Glenwood Railroad Museum. I also help my wife with historic preservation projects and with trying to get a performing arts center in Glenwood Springs.

RFC: Didn't you help fix up the historic Cardiff Schoolhouse on Roaring Fork Conservancy's Park East conservation easement?

Helmke: Yeah, my wife got the ball rolling and she and I did all the grunt work on it ... it was a lot of work ... but it's really nice and is being used a lot these days for gatherings and performances.

RFC: Tell us about your interest/ connection with rivers.



Dick Helmke (on right sampling Cattle Creek) has been a stream team volunteers for the past six vears. Chad Rudow

Helmke: Early on my interest in rivers was from the historic and geographical points of view. The way we explored this country, for example Lewis and Clark, or the way rivers enabled settlement, ranching, farming, and transportation. I've also been fascinated with the recent transition of rivers from transportation to recreation, for example railroad corridors to bike trails. There are some awesome analogies to be made between rivers and arteries.

So, I initially saw rivers for their usefulness, and now through all this [work with Roaring Fork Conservancy] I've really learned to appreciate rivers for themselves, the beauty they bring us, and their environmental aspects.

RFC: How long have you been volunteering for Roaring Fork Conservancy?

Helmke: Six years, and I have had numerous partners over the years: a ranch manager, teacher, master

pipe fitter, environmental engineer, and mathematician.

RFC: Why did you become a volunteer for Roaring Fork Conservancy? Helmke: You know, I didn't really have a strong influence other than a good friend asked me and it

seemed like fun since I am an analytic guy and love graphs, trends, statistics and all that. But now it has turned into a whole lot more than that and I really hope that by doing this it is helping to protect a small portion of the watershed. [Dick is our only volunteer who creates his own charts and graphs, plotting the results after each sample

RFC: What have you learned as a Water Quality Volunteer?

Helmke: I've learned there are always threats [to rivers] but they are always changing. Climate change is a newlyperceived threat. Looking at mineral extraction there is a change: We're not mining [in the area] anymore and impacting streams that way, but oil and gas extraction bring new threats.

RFC: How has Roaring Fork Conservancy changed your relationship with rivers?

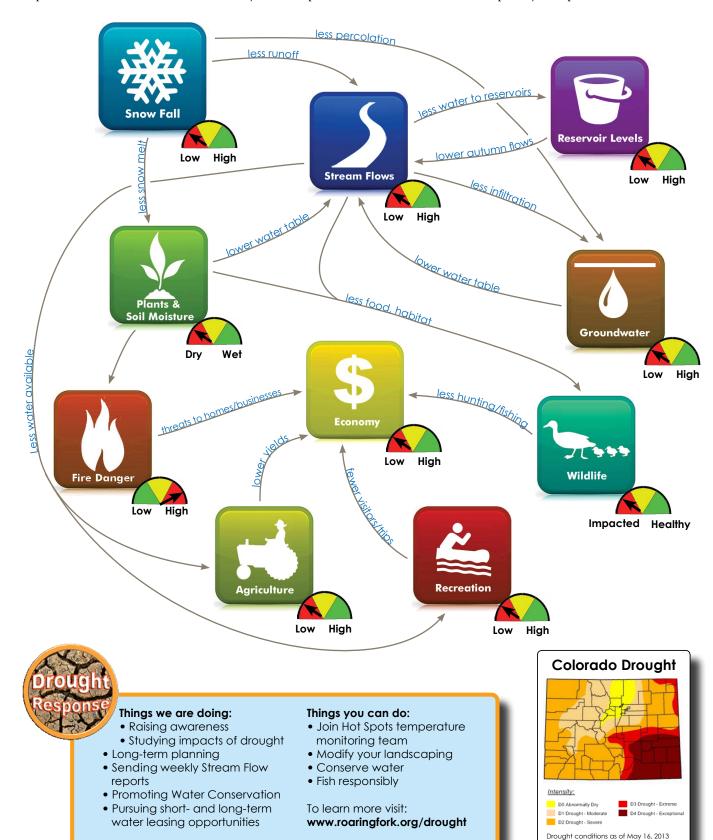
Helmke: I live near the confluence of the Roaring Fork and Colorado Rivers and now see the river more as the sum of its parts. It becomes one river but I now see the individual tributaries, the Roaring Fork, Crystal River, Cattle Creek, and all the others. I think that leads into the thought that you need to protect each one of those sources from threats both qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative examples would be things like increased building (near rivers), damaging the riparian area, diversions to the east slope, and climate change. And then qualitative things ... we're seeing plenty of that in Parachute Creek right now.

RFC: What is one thing you would like to teach people related to rivers? **Helmke:** It comes back to that threat issue. I'd like to tell people that threats to rivers change, and seem to increase with human population, for example, increased developments, extraction industries, and climate change. Basically, as there are more of us [humans] the threats just keep increasing, and we need to raise awareness that we can't keep fouling our own nests ... we need to protect those vital arteries.

www.roaringfork.org/wqm

The Vicious Cycle of Drought

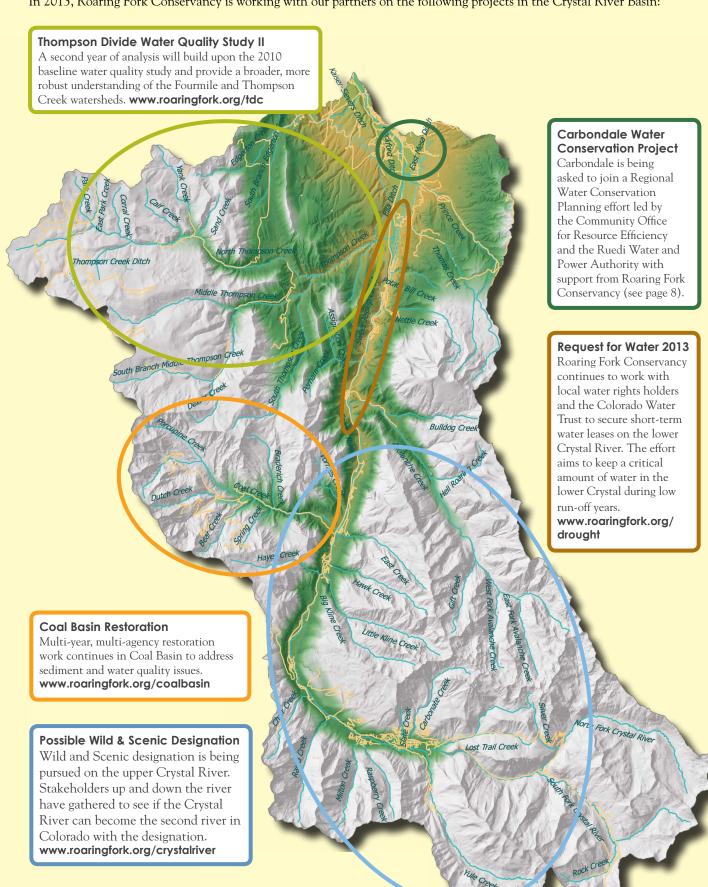
For the past decade the Roaring Fork and Colorado River watersheds have experienced several periods of drought. Conditions in spring, summer, and fall are influenced by the amount of snowfall we get in the winter. Below average snowfall impacts the environment and the economy. We've represented some of those relationships for you to ponder here.



Children's Water Education Fund Support Roaring Fork Conservancy educational efforts in our schools. Join those making a difference by contributing at www.roaringfork.org.

Crystal River & Coal Basin Priorities for Action in 2013

In 2013, Roaring Fork Conservancy is working with our partners on the following projects in the Crystal River Basin:



Dorothea Farris Honored as 2013 River Conservator

Rick Lofaro, Roaring Fork Conservancy

This summer Roaring Fork Conservancy will honor Dorothea Farris as the 2013 Robert Billingsley River Conservator at the 14th Annual River Rendezvous. In her 44 years of public service and community involvement Dorothea has championed public lands, wildlife, and

rivers with incredible enthusiasm. Dorothea served for 12 years as a Pitkin County Commissioner and has served on a very long list of boards both locally and statewide.

In the past several years Dorothea has helped champion the Crystal River through her role with the Crystal Valley Environmental Protection Association, helping to designate the river as one of America's 10 Most Endangered Rivers in 2012. Conditional water rights including a dam, along with flow and sediment issues all contributed to the listing of the Crystal, one of the longest freeflowing rivers in Colorado. Dorothea knows the Crystal Valley is a special



place to be respected and protected.

"I came to Aspen in 1957 to work at the [Hotel] Jerome and knew this place was home," said Farris in May of last year. "This area has been our special place forever. It won't remain that way unless we all

have an active role." For Dorothea, that active role has taken the form of service on numerous boards and offices to help improve the quality of life for people and the environment. She has also encouraged hundreds of other to protect the places we all love.

Dorothea grew up in New Jersey but was always intrigued by the West. She earned a degree from the University of Colorado before moving to the Roaring Fork Valley. Dorothea and her husband Doug raised their family in the upper Roaring Fork Valley and moved to the Crystal Valley in 1988.

"It is a pleasure to honor someone who is dedicated and committed to service. Dorothea is an inspiration as we work to change the culture of our relationship with water," says Executive Director Rick Lofaro.

Currently, Dorothea works as a community liaison and consultant for the Carbondale-based Heartland Environmental Services and serves on several boards and committees including the Thompson Divide Coalition, West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway Committee, Colorado Natural Areas Program, and USFS White River National Forest Stakeholder Committee. She has traveled extensively and written several articles and some fiction. Dorothea has been honored with numerous awards for her public service, most recently receiving the Pitkin County Cares, Volunteer Service, Greg Mace award in 2012.

When asked about the importance of our rivers Dorothea states, "The reality of a healthy river is that it not only provides clean water for people downstream, and for municipalities and ranchers, but provides an opportunity for people to witness beauty at it's core." www.roaringfork.org/rendezvous

River Stewards Engage Young Adults

Kara Armano, River Stewards Steering Committee

As the new chair of the River Stewards, I hope to engage more young river enthusiasts and further Roaring Fork Conservancy's mission to bring people together to protect our rivers. With eleven Steering Committee members, including three newbies, the River Stewards are looking forward to a great year of events.

To kick off 2013, we hosted a women's-only fly fishing clinic in April and two Bloating Bloopers nights in Carbondale and Aspen. These two nights of fun also served as a method to sign up participants for the annual River Stewards Float scheduled for June 1. There are plans for a couple Water Talks laster in the summer on hot topics affecting water quality and quantity including climate change, drought, ditches, administration, in-stream flows, and more. All of these events are designed to be educational as well as an opportunity to share our passion for rivers. This year we will partner with other young professional groups in the valley to introduce them to the conservation issues affecting our rivers and to expand the River Stewards membership.

www.roaringfork.org/stewards

Award-Winning River Center Design

Since its inception, Roaring Fork Conservancy has envisioned creating a River Center where the hidden elements of rivers and water are revealed. Like nature



centers that sprang up in the 1960s and 1970s in response to people's disconnect with the environment, the River Center will help people reconnect to their watershed and

local rivers. Part education center, part action center, part community gathering spot, part research hub, the River Center will put Basalt and the Roaring Fork Watershed on the map for celebrating rivers. The goal is to change people's relationship with water by creating a culture that values water, rivers, and watersheds in our region.

In 2012, we moved design along by completing architecture design development and exhibit schematic design. The architectural design won a prestigious Merit Award in the Unbuilt category from the American Institute of Architects. The River Center Capital Campaign has also been revitalized with more than \$400,000 in new contributions in 2012. www.roaringfork.org/rivercenter.

Land above 9000' (depicted as white on the map to represent snow) is the main source of our water supply

Michigan Students Assist with **Water Conservation Planning**

Rose Ann Sullivan, Kootenav Resources, LLC



Four University of Michigan graduate students are working with Roaring Fork Conservancy to study regional water conservation planning in an effort to help the Roaring Fork Watershed develop a regional water conservation plan. The team includes (from left to right): Elizabeth Och, Charlotte Jameson, Kara Steeland, Emma Maack, University of Michigan

Roaring Fork Conservancy is partnering with Ruedi Water & Power Authority (RWAPA) and the Community Office for Resource Efficiency (CORE) to bring the research capabilities and creativity of a team of University of Michigan graduate students to the Roaring Fork Valley. The students will assist with structuring a regional water conservation planning initiative for the Roaring Fork Watershed.

A multi-disciplinary group of students from the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources & Environment (SNRE) will provide ideas and implementation recommendations for a multi-jurisdictional, regional water conservation plan by researching other Colorado and western state models and applying that knowledge to the Roaring Fork Watershed's specific needs and concerns. The students will also provide information on community water conservation education and outreach programs that could be tailored for implementation in the watershed – including programs highlighting the nexus between energy savings and water conservation and the ecological benefits associated with enhanced stream flows. Members of the team include Elizabeth Och, Charlotte Jameson, Kara Steeland, and Emma Maack.

"We are very pleased to be working with these four University of Michigan students and their distinguished faculty advisors on another Roaring Fork Watershed Plan initiative," said Rick Lofaro, Roaring Fork Conservancy's Executive Director. "The thorough and professional work provided by the SNRE graduate students we worked with in the past greatly enhanced implementation of the Roaring Fork Watershed Plan. I know Roaring Fork Conservancy and its partners will be in a much better position to move forward with this regional program with the assistance of this new team of students from Michigan."

This is the second group of SNRE graduate students to work with Roaring Fork Conservancy on a major water resources project. During 2010, five SNRE Master's program students worked to identify models of governance systems that promoted collaborative watershed-scale management, and recommended approaches to public outreach and education for the Roaring Fork Watershed Plan. www.roaringfork.org/watershedplan

Board & Staff Flows



Ted Borchelt joined the Board last fall. He is a real estate broker with Aspen Snowmass Sotheby's and a 25-year resident. He and his family live in Carbondale.



Valerie Yaw, principal at Bluegreen also joined the Board this winter. Val helped create our young river enthusiast group, the River Stewards, which engages 25-40 year-olds



Elise Osenaa joined the education team this winter and has already taught hundreds of students about water, rivers, and watersheds. Elise previously taught environmental education in Denver.



Elizabeth Munn, grad student at the University of Michigan, joins us as a Wyss Scholar and will assist with regional water conservation planning, education and outreach, and river flow



Bill Hoblitzell just received his Master's from NAU. He has guided whitewater rafting in the U.S. and India but calls Colorado home. He is working with us as a Wyss Scholar on the Crystal River Assessment Project.



Austin Owen returns for her third summer as our Development Intern. Austin spent the fall of 2012 in Morocco studying abroad and will enter her senior year at University of San Diego in the fall.



Kristjan Danis, Program Intern, spent his youth in California and high school in Japan before attending CU-Boulder where he just completed his junior year. Kristjan is passionate about the outdoors and its preservation.

THE RIVER CENTER CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

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8 RIVER CURRENTS ~ Summer/Fall 2013

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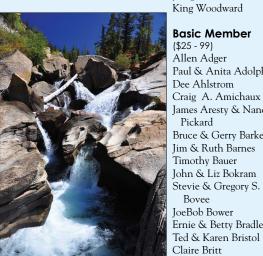
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RIVER CURRENTS

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