

Message from Board President and Executive Director

Looking back on 2017, perhaps our biggest milestone was captured in a single shovel full of soil. The monumental groundbreaking of the River Center in Basalt was an exciting time for Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC), the Roaring Fork Watershed, the western slope, and the state of Colorado. Symbolizing more than an innovative building in the heart of the Roaring Fork Watershed next to the river, it is a coming of age for us as we move to a professional and public facility dedicated to watershed education, science, and policy.

Though the wait was long, the pouring of the River Center foundation came at the most appropriate time. During 2017, RFC staff presented at watershed and education conferences around the state, sharing our expertise and experience in everything from stream management plans to citizen science, from water quality research to snow science programming. Staff participated on tours of water infrastructure projects throughout Colorado, and hosted water resource professionals, educators, and students from around the state in our own watershed. Our efforts are as diverse as water stakeholders in Colorado. Some highlights from 2017:

- Our first children's book Dee Dee the Fryingpan River Dipper was published! It teaches elementary students how to identify healthy mountain streams by the presence of the American Dipper;
- Several education programs and materials were translated into Spanish to reach English Language Learners at local schools;
- Our targeted water quality studies are putting science into the hands of landowners and decision makers increasing their environmental stewardship and knowledge; and
- Local governments are increasingly asking for RFC's input on local water issues.

We spent the last 21 years bringing people together to protect our rivers and we are thrilled that as we move into our next 20+ years, the River Center will provide us a home in which to bring together visionaries, researchers, policy-makers, elected officials, and academic researchers to discuss regional, state, and national water issues and share ideas with the broader community. As the demand for our science, policy, and education projects increases, the timing is perfect for growing in our capacity!

We are excited about our 2017 accomplishments and invite you to read through the successes of the year. Thank you for your continued support that makes our work possible!

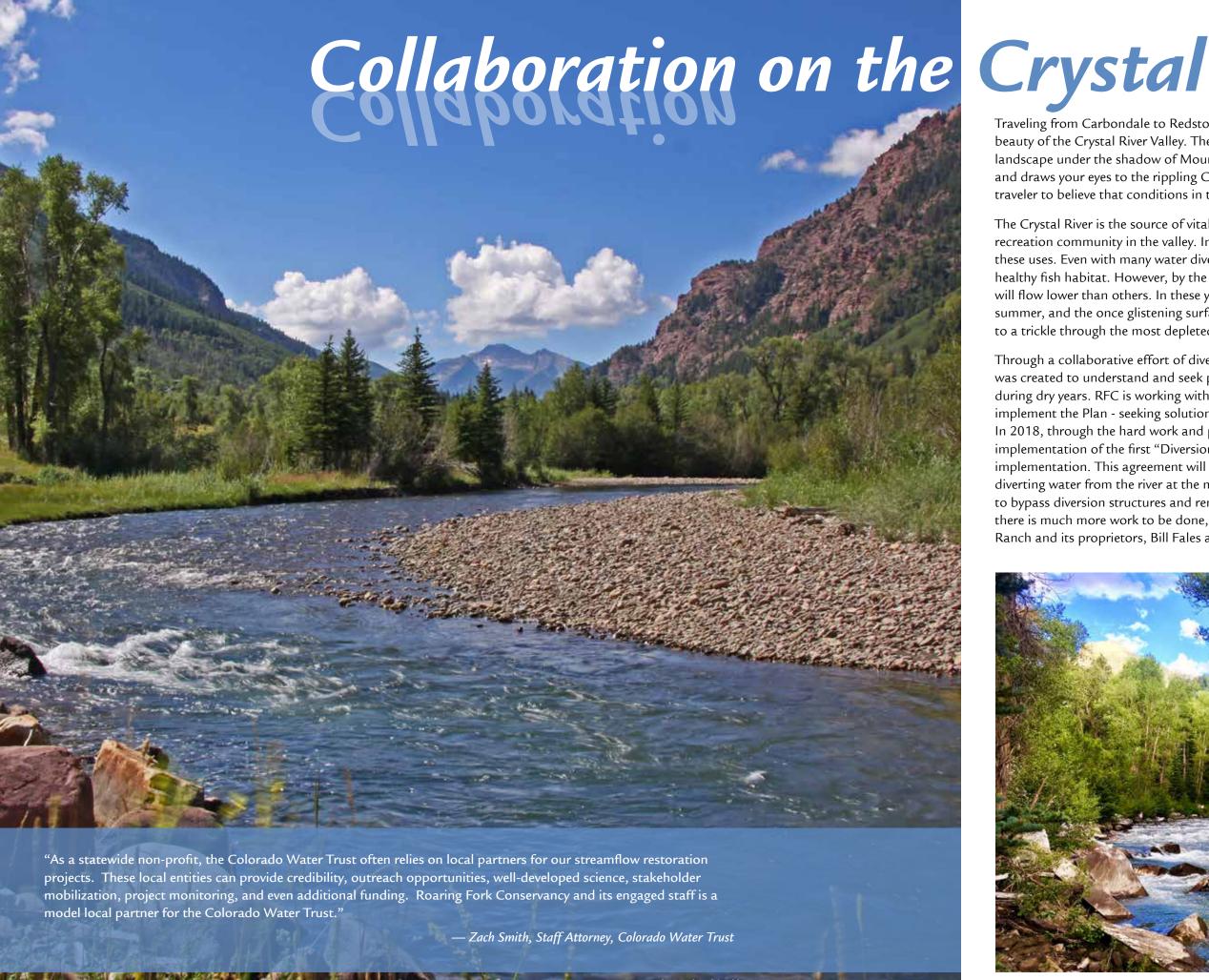
We look forward to moving into our next chapter with each of you!





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Pat McMahon President. **Board** of Directors Rick Lofaro **Executive Director**



Traveling from Carbondale to Redstone on Highway 133, it's easy to marvel at the beauty of the Crystal River Valley. The busy town setting gives way to a broad agricultural landscape under the shadow of Mount Sopris. Continuing upstream, the valley narrows and draws your eyes to the rippling Crystal River. Most days, it is hard for a passing traveler to believe that conditions in the Crystal River Valley are not ideal.

The Crystal River is the source of vitality for agriculture, wildlife, and a growing scenic and recreation community in the valley. In an average year, the Crystal can accommodate all of these uses. Even with many water diversions, the Crystal can provide adequate water for a healthy fish habitat. However, by the very definition of "average," some years the Crystal will flow lower than others. In these years, the robust spring runoff gives way to a dry summer, and the once glistening surface of the river becomes rockier, as flows are reduced to a trickle through the most depleted sections of the river.

Through a collaborative effort of diverse stakeholders, the Crystal River Management Plan was created to understand and seek potential solutions to water shortages, particularly during dry years. RFC is working with local stakeholders and nonprofit groups to implement the Plan - seeking solutions that benefit all parties involved, including the river. In 2018, through the hard work and partnership of the Colorado Water Trust, we may see implementation of the first "Diversion Rescheduling Agreement," a key component of Plan implementation. This agreement will monetarily compensate water rights holders for not diverting water from the river at the most ecologically critical times — allowing those flows to bypass diversion structures and remain in the river, without drying up agriculture. While there is much more work to be done, signing the first agreement with Cold Mountain Ranch and its proprietors, Bill Fales and Marj Perry, is a valuable first step.



Watershed Action Policy Highlights

RFC's Watershed Action program addresses water issues, river health, and related land management through participation in public processes. In 2017, RFC took the opportunity to comment, influence and advise agencies at the local, state and federal levels on a variety of important watershed issues.



Colorado's Water Plan

RFC staff attends monthly Colorado Basin Roundtable meetings, working to implement the local recommendations of Colorado's Water Plan as part of our role in Stream Management Planning and community engagement.

State Water Legislation

RFC staff stay up to date on pending state legislation, submitting comments and working with elected officials when appropriate.

Fryingpan River and Ruedi Reservoir Operations

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

Garfield County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Garfield County updated its Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2017 and solicited public comment in the process. RFC submitted comments emphasizing the protection of riparian and wetlands as key components of flood mitigation and encouraged support of existing county riparian codes.

Glenwood Springs River Commission

Based in part on written and verbal comments submitted by RFC, Glenwood Springs City Council voted to retain the Glenwood River Commission, a citizen advisory board that works to "investigate, study, and report to the City Council on matters concerning the use, enjoyment, preservation and conservation of rivers and streams in the City." RFC staff also serve as technical advisor to the Glenwood River Commission, helping with development of city code revisions for riparian setbacks.

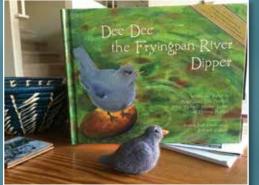
Pitkin County Open Space and Trails (PCOST) Management Plans

RFC continues to work with PCOST to enable best management practices on their riparian properties. Regularly sought for input, RFC contributes to, and comments on new and updated management plans, and regularly consults with PCOST staff on site management issues and concerns.

U.S. Forest Service (USFS) EIS and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Reviews

RFC is regularly contacted as a stakeholder in USFS EIS and NEPA reviews. After careful consideration, meeting attendance, and follow up with USFS staff, RFC comments on projects that may impact water resources.





that the children were all playing "Dipper" on the playground and dipping on rocks and pretending to dive into the river for food."

> — Caroline Mulroy, Garfield County Children's Librarian

illustrations sweet. The children were rapt as was I during the associated activities as well."

> — Ginny Beesley, Pitkin County Children's Librarian

Roaring Fork Conservancy's (RFC) logo features a little gray bird, the American Dipper, also known as the water ouzel. American Dippers are found near Western streams characterized by good water quality and healthy riparian habitat. Their diet consists of aquatic macroinvertebrates, which only survive in unpolluted, cold, highly oxygenated streams and rivers, such as mayflies, stoneflies and caddisflies. Thus, the American Dipper is considered a biological indicator of healthy rivers and streams.

Charting new territory, RFC published its first children's book, Dee Dee the Fryingpan River Dipper, to share the story of the American Dipper to new audiences, and promote understanding of healthy river ecosystems. Illustrations were created by 4th grade students who participated in a series of RFC education programs focused on river health, habitat, nature-based drawing, and riverside observation of dippers.

The story of *Dee Dee* fosters ecological literacy, as it explores the adaptations, habitat needs, diet, and environmental threats to American Dippers. Dee Dee also elevates youth creativity with its published student artwork, and guided observation and drawing activities for the reader.

RFC educators visited over 20 local schools and libraries to provide book readings, interactive educational programs, and a complimentary copy of the book to each institution. RFC educators guided students through a series of activities designed to identify the unique adaptations and habitat needs of dippers. The curriculum objective was to inspire and empower youth to develop a keen awareness of their natural environment, discover a local example of ecological interconnectedness, and artistically document their observations. To date, the feedback from children and adults alike has been overwhelmingly positive, and this little gray bird is on its way to becoming a local celebrity!



To enhance understanding of their unique adaptations, a student dresses up as an American Dipper during one of our education programs.

Photo: Mark Fuller

















EDUCATION IMPACTS

Roaring Fork Conservancy educators taught 286 river and watershed programs, making over 6,600 contacts in 2017!

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

RFC educators taught **166** river and watershed school programs reaching **4,09** students!

85

College students

224

High School students

1.079

Middle School students

2,703

Elementary School students

ADULT AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

- 27 Watershed Exploration opportunities were offered in 2017, including river floats, hikes through riparian habitats, water diversion project tours, snowshoe hikes, and excursions to view fireflies in rare thermal wetlands.
- **410** Participants in 2017 Watershed Explorations
- 85 1st year raft guides trained in River Ecology Interpretation

• FLY FISHING PROGRAMS

National Fishing in the Schools Program

- OVER 800 Local students learned to fly cast in their schools (over the last 4 years)
- **34** Youth participated in fly fishing camps and clinics taught by RFC educators and volunteers from Roaring Fork Valley Fly Fishing Club
- Volunteers trained in the National Fishing in the Schools Program
- 24 Participants in our
 Women's and Adult
 Beginner Fly Fishing Clinics











Fryingpan Cleanup

The 19th Annual Fryingpan Cleanup drew over 250 residents and visitors to pick up trash along 14 miles of road adjacent to the Fryingpan River, the Roaring Fork River through Basalt, and Lake Christine. Trash along the road can easily become trash polluting the river. These committed, hard-working volunteers helped ensure clean water and happy fish in the Gold Medal waters near Basalt in 2017.

Annual River Float

The best way to learn about the river, is to get on it! Since 2004, RFC has hosted an annual river float to teach participants about the local wildlife, water issues, riparian habitat, and point out a few of our conservation easements along the way. This year we had over 170 people participate in the float, BBQ lunch and festivities.

River Stewards

RFC's River Stewards, a volunteer group of young professionals, spearhead community engagement events to inspire young river enthusiasts to explore, value and protect the Roaring Fork Watershed. Events in 2017 included:

- Carbondale Boat Ramp work day with RFC and Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers
- Elk Camp Farm to Table Dinners: informational table and flycasting lessons
- Women's Fly Fishing Clinic
- Runoff Party/Crawfish Boil at the Roaring Fork Beer Company
- Fly Fishing Film Tour in Aspen: RFC display and Water Wheel of Trivia
- · RFC's annual River Float

Prockter Open Space Volunteer Wetland Project

On July 8, over 30 staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to plant thousands of plants in a constructed wetland at one of the City of Aspen's key stormwater outflows. RFC partnered with Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers, and the City of Aspen on this project, which will serve to filter and clean stormwater prior to flowing into the Roaring Fork River.

Elk Camp Farm to Table Dinners

In July and August, RFC staff loaded the Elk Camp gondola at Snowmass and spent evenings at Aspen Skiing Company's Farm to Table Tuesdays. These beautiful summer events featured locally sourced meals and beverages, live music, family activities, and more. RFC was one of two nonprofits selected to receive a percentage of the proceeds from food sales and the privilege to speak about our work throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed. Several hundred children and adults participated in fly casting demonstrations, learned fun facts about the watershed, and got their picture taken with Captain Cutthroat (RFC's adult-size version of the native cutthroat trout, as can be seen in the photo at the top of this page).

Rain Barrel Workshops

RFC taught one of the first rain barrel workshops on the western slope of Colorado in 2017. The first workshop was offered in Carbondale in collaboration with Community Office for Resource Efficiency (CORE) with over 30 participants from Aspen to New Castle. The second workshop was provided in collaboration with the City of Aspen with over 12 participants from Pitkin County. In both workshops, participants learned about harvesting local water, rain barrel installation and maintenance, rain barrel regulations in accordance with Colorado Water Law, and went home with a rain barrel that was ready for installation.

University of Colorado at Colorado Springs Workday

In partnership with Pitkin County Open Space and Trails, RFC staff welcomed 30 dining hall staff from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs to the Roaring Fork Watershed. This adventurous crew wanted to visit and conduct a service project in the watershed that is the namesake of their dining hall facility: the Roaring Fork Dining Hall. The group pulled barbed wire fence and weeds at Emma and Lazy Glen Open Spaces. Both areas are noted elk and deer migration corridors, and we were able to remove a significant amount of fencing to allow safe passage every spring and fall for local wildlife. These efforts fulfilled work goals outlined in each property's management plans.

"Aspen Country Day School 5th Graders have engaged in true inquiry-based science by sampling water from Castle Creek. They have been empowered by participating in authentic citizen science, thanks to the training provided by Roaring Fork Conservancy. Students have enjoyed the hands-on experience that comes from the guidance of the staff at RFC. Educators from RFC have provided the students with engaging and challenging tasks related to their local environment, and they now feel they are part of a greater good as they collect data that will become part of the larger network." — Brett Nelson, 5th Grade Teacher Aspen Country Day School Photo: Shayna Miller

The Confluence:

River Science and Education

For 20 years, Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC) and River Watch of Colorado have partnered to maintain a robust data network in the Roaring Fork Watershed. River Watch works with community-based volunteers to monitor water quality and, in turn, utilizes the data they generate to educate citizens and inform decision makers on the condition of Colorado's waters. RFC, along with a dedicated network of stream team volunteers, currently monitors 22 sites - more than any other single entity in this statewide program.

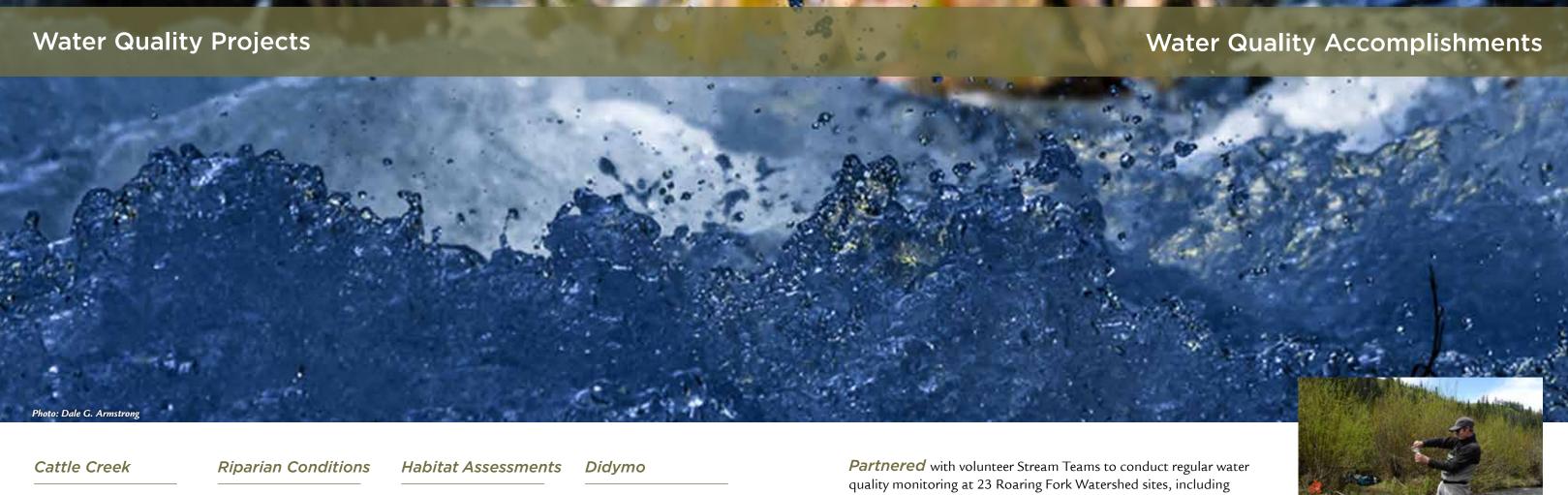
The River Watch program also provides applied science opportunities for local students as they collect and analyze water quality data through school programs. Currently, the seven schools in the Roaring Fork Valley enrolled in the River Watch program generate a significant quantity of local water quality data. RFC acts as a liaison, providing support to schools participating in the River Watch program.

In 2017, Basalt and Glenwood Springs High Schools, two long-time River Watch participants, shifted their programs to new teachers. Additionally, Aspen Country Day School, opted to re-enroll in the River Watch program after a brief hiatus. To ensure a seamless transition, RFC offered support for the incoming teachers by training on proper protocols, inventorying equipment, providing resources, and offering general assistance as needed. In addition to working with teachers, RFC staff also helped educate students on River Watch protocols and the value of collecting accurate, meaningful data.

These relationships continue to strengthen the 3-way partnership established between Roaring Fork Conservancy, River Watch of Colorado and local schools, enhancing both the network of stream monitoring, and the informed river community throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed.

"RFC's assistance to me, as a first year River Watch teacher, was invaluable. RFC helped me train students in water quality testing, opened students' eyes to the wonders of aquatic ecosystems, and gave them insight into possible ecological careers."

> — Brett Wamsley, 1st year River Watch Teacher Glenwood Springs High School



RFC continued assessing the health of Cattle Creek. Funding from Garfield and Eagle Counties allowed RFC to conduct 12 sampling events to measure water quality and stream flows. Macroinvertebrate data was submitted to the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission in connection with Cattle Creek's 303(d) impairment listing. Moving forward, RFC will continue monitoring activities while exploring initiatives to improve stream health and address sources of water quality and stream flow impairment with various stakeholders.

Glenwood Springs River Commission (GSRC) and RFC partnered to conduct an assessment of riparian conditions along the Roaring Fork and Colorado Rivers within Glenwood Springs city limits. The assessment documented existing riparian conditions, including the presence and density of vegetation, evidence of erosion, occurrence of development within the riparian zone, and other human alteration. This project is the first step in RFC's work with the GSRC to develop recommended riparian setback codes for the City of Glenwood Springs.

RFC conducted Riparian and Physical Habitat assessments at over 30 River Watch sites within the Roaring Fork Watershed. These qualitative assessments documented surrounding land use, existing vegetation, channel substrate, erosion extent, and other physical habitat features.

For the fourth consecutive year, RFC surveyed the algae Didymosphenia geminata (Didymo - a.k.a. 'rock snot') levels along the Fryingpan River. Surveys of Didymo stream bed coverage and basic water quality monitoring were conducted at 7 locations in the spring, summer and fall of 2017.

Partnered with volunteer Stream Teams to conduct regular water quality monitoring at 23 Roaring Fork Watershed sites, including 112 sample events, and more than 15 volunteers working a combined 161 hours.

Received a \$4,430 grant from the Aspen Skiing Company Environment Foundation for Water Quality Program support, including equipment and training for RFC staff and Stream Team volunteers.

Assisted with the annual statewide training of 50 new Colorado River Watch participants in water quality monitoring protocols, lab work, and measuring in-stream properties.









Gifts and Contributions

Roaring Fork Conservancy would like to acknowledge our generous donors and program sponsors. Your contributions enable us to continue our watershed education programs, science and policy work. Thank you for ensuring our work will continue for many years.

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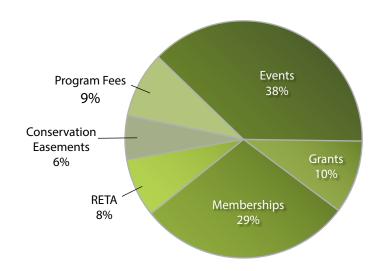
In Memory of **Bob Waterman** Jim Jensen

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2017 Financial Summary

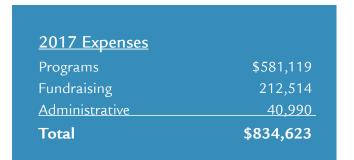
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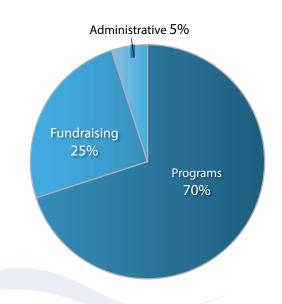
2017 OPERATING REVENUES



2017 Revenues	\$320,092
Events	
Memberships	244,629
Grants	86,130
Program Fees	76,940
Conservation Easements	53,093
RETA	65,963
Total	\$846,847

2017 OPERATING EXPENSES





Roaring Fork Conservancy is an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization registered in the state of Colorado. Roaring Fork Conservancy donor records are not sold, exchanged, or provided to any outside organization in any way.

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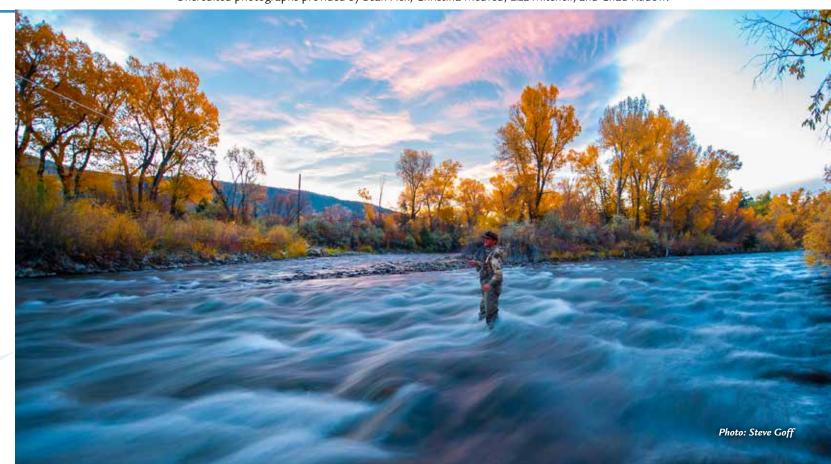
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Uncredited photographs provided by Sean Fick, Christina Medved, Liza Mitchell, and Chad Rudow.



ROARING FORK CONSERVANCY P.O. Box 3349 ~ Basalt, Colorado 81621

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 the streams, monitor water quality, and preserve riparian habitat.

As one of the largest watershed organizations in Colorado, Roaring Fork Conservancy serves residents and visitors throughout the Roaring Fork Valley through school and community-based Watershed Education programs and Watershed Action projects, including regional watershed planning, water resource policy, and stream management and restoration initiatives.



www.roaringfork.org 970.927.1290

