

RIVER CURRENTS

River Centered: The Evolution of A Watershed Organization

By Rick Lofaro, Executive Director and Heather Lewin, Watershed Action Director

“Any river is really the summation of the whole valley. To think of it as nothing but water is to ignore the greater part.”

- HAL BORLAND

Do you remember where you were in 1996? Some might say that, for better or worse, Colorado and the Roaring Fork Valley was a different place back then. In case you hadn't found your way here yet, let me set the stage. The Av's had just won the Stanley Cup during their first season in Denver. Men were still racing World Cup on Aspen Mountain, and the X Games were still 5 years away. Aspen Highlands had just banned the historic ski patrol deck jump, Aspen Skiing Company's lift ticket prices "boldly passed the \$50 mark" and City Market in El Jebel was relatively new. Meanwhile, the Roaring Fork Club was taking shape, and consequently, so was Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC). In the beginning, RFC's mission was to protect and enhance riparian areas located throughout the Club's property and develop a plan for the 3 miles of river that flow through Basalt. Soon after the creation of the organization, however, founding board members acknowledged that truly protecting the Roaring Fork River also meant protecting all the water that flows into it. RFC's mission was subsequently expanded to include the entire Roaring Fork Watershed. And so, a watershed organization was born.

Tim O'Keefe, RFC's first education director, provides an introduction and overview before a float through North Star Nature Preserve in 2006. RFC educators still provide this program and it continues to be one of the most popular spring program offerings.



Education and Action: Finding Our Purpose

After RFC established itself as the first group focused solely on river and water issues in the Roaring Fork Watershed, we were ready to spread our wings. Realizing that a critical component of water protection and conservation is fostering the connection between the people of the valley and the rivers, we implemented an education program. By teaching water specific lessons in local schools and taking on 24 local water quality monitoring sites through Colorado River Watch, we found effective ways to begin to reach the community and share the river's story. When we could not take students to the river, we brought the river to the classroom with aquatic macroinvertebrates, water quality samples, and hands-on water-focused lessons. Within a few years, we developed a reputation as a highly effective watershed education organization. As the curriculum expanded to cover a broad range of water related and watershed issues, we realized that education, while essential, was only part of the puzzle.

“If you have a river, then you should share it with everyone.”

- CHEN GUANGBIAO

Sometimes amazing things happen when teaching. Often, the teacher learns as much as or more than the students. While teaching about the watershed, we learned that we needed to

(Continued on page 2)



not only share a message of conservation and protection, but we also needed a more in-depth understanding of the unique challenges that the Roaring Fork River and its tributaries face. Sharon Clarke, the first Watershed Action Director, often reminded us that “the breathtaking beauty of the Roaring Fork Watershed may deflect our attention from critical ecological challenges.” Images of clear running mountain streams with anglers and rafters suggest a healthy and vibrant resource but its sustainability is not guaranteed. We realized that our job was to protect and enhance the invaluable resources here in the Roaring Fork Watershed.

Sharon’s vision and persistence deserve much of the credit as RFC’s focus expanded from education and water quality to include both watershed science and water policy development on a local, regional, and statewide level. We have carried and built upon her legacy in the years since she left. So, what does that mean? It means that RFC leads, participates, and partners in watershed and stream management planning to strategically improve watershed health. We participate in the Colorado Basin Roundtable, and write letters to local, state, and federal entities using science-based facts to support healthy waterways. It means we embarked on studies like the Roaring Fork Watershed and Crystal River Management Plans to engage stakeholders and accomplish on the ground work built on scientific

research. It means we try to take the lead on water issues and bring diverse stakeholders together on projects that benefit the community and the river.

“Boundaries don’t protect rivers, people do.”

- BRAD ARROWSMITH

**Collaboration and Community:
Finding our Home**

Growing from a small organization with one employee narrowly focused on a 3 mile stretch of river, RFC’s current full-time staff of seven now engage in all aspects of watershed protection: education, science, policy, and community. In the summer of 2018, RFC will take its organizational foundation, created through two decades of progress, into a new location, The River Center. There, we will continue to realize new opportunities to enhance and elevate our work on the watershed and our community’s ties to it. With an update to the RFWP and implementation of the CRMP in progress, and more in-school and community programs rolling out every day, we couldn’t be more excited to continue to grow, learn and engage in our new home.



Above left: RFC’s water quality staff and volunteers currently monitor 22 stream sites on a regular basis and submit the data to Colorado River Watch. RFC monitors more sites for River Watch than any other single entity in Colorado. **Above right:** Sharon Clarke, RFC’s first watershed action director, stands on the banks of the Crystal River with representatives from American Rivers, after they named it one of America’s most endangered rivers in 2012. **Right:** A popular part of our education programs for youth and adults alike is identifying and looking at live aquatic macroinvertebrates under a microscope!





2018 RIVER CONSERVATORS:

WOODY CREEK DISTILLERS Mary & Pat Scanlan and Mark Kleckner & Tracey Snow

By Sarah Woods

Roaring Fork Conservancy will honor Mary and Pat Scanlan and Mark Kleckner, founders of Woody Creek Distillers, and Tracey Snow, as our 2018 Robert Billingsley River Conservators at the 19th Annual River Rendezvous on July 11, 2018.

After years of pursuing their own careers, these three longtime friends came together to follow their dream - create a line of spirits whose quality is a lasting legacy for the community, their families and friends. Woody Creek Distillers is proud to use produce grown on their family farm in Woody Creek and neighboring farms.

From seed to bottle, it's all done in the Roaring Fork Watershed.

Pat and Mark feel where they make the spirits is as important as how they make their spirits. They know that growing and sourcing their produce locally not only makes for the best ingredients, it's also good for the environment. The team is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the natural resources of Woody Creek. Their distillery is a low-emissions facility using the most efficient distillation technology available. The waste from their raw products goes back to the Scanlan family farm in Woody Creek as compost, or to local ranches as livestock feed.

When they founded Woody Creek Distillers they knew they wanted to make nothing but the finest craft spirits, each with a unique taste and character that was true to the origins of that spirit. It is a standard they hold themselves to every day. They grow and harvest some of their own

ingredients, like potatoes for their premium vodka. They also only source their grains from trusted Colorado farms, like the rye in their 100% rye mash whiskey.

They distill every spirit they make in their own custom Carl stills. They never use neutral grain spirits, or blend with base spirits from other distillers. Rest assured that every bottle produced by Woody Creek Distillers is truly handcrafted to the highest standards.

Early on, Pat saw the opportunity to use the unique farm land within the Roaring Fork Valley and especially Woody Creek, in a sustainable fashion to grow world-class potatoes to create their award winning vodka. Agricultural property that sat idle since the 1940's was rejuvenated, including the use of legacy irrigation sources like the Salvation Ditch in Woody Creek. Woody Creek Distillers also revived farming on land leased from Pitkin County Open Space and Trails, bringing back agricultural vibrancy to idle valley properties.

The state-of-the-art distillery in Basalt is rife with thoughtful design and engineering. From the beetle-kill pine elements in the tasting room and barrel storage facilities, to fully sustainable production processes, Woody Creek Distillers exemplifies conservational and environmentally sound operations. All heating and cooling is done within closed loop systems, using hot water produced during the distilling process for heating, while using incoming water for cooling prior to production with zero discharge. Finally, 100% of the stillage, the leftover grains and solids from distillation, are used for cattle feed and nutritional enhancement of farm land.

The Woody Creek team are true conservationists and environmentalists and have supported Roaring Fork Conservancy for many years. Congratulations, Woody Creek Team!



Thank You

to ALL the volunteers and sponsors who made our 20th Annual Fryingpan River Cleanup a success!



Photos by Dale Armstrong & Christina Medved



2017 Annual Report:

How Do We Bring People Together to Protect Our Rivers?

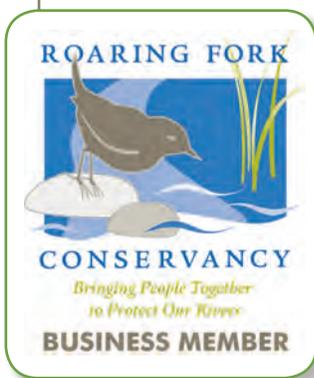
Looking back on 2017, perhaps our biggest milestone was captured in a single shovel full of soil: the monumental groundbreaking of the River Center in Basalt. Though the wait was long, the pouring of the River Center foundation came at the perfect time.



We invite you to read through our 2017 accomplishments in our 2017 Annual Report. Thank you for your continued support that makes our work possible!

View the report at

<http://www.roaringfork.org/about-us/>



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Watershed Explorations

2018 SUMMER & FALL EVENTS CALENDAR

MAY

- 17 Ruedi Reservoir Tour:
Storing West Slope Water
- 31 Birding Maroon Creek Wetlands

JUNE

- 2 14th Annual River Float
- 6 North Star Preserve
Roaring Fork River Float
- 7 North Star Preserve
Roaring Fork River Float
- 14 Fishing in Schools
Teacher Workshop
- 14 North Star Preserve
Roaring Fork River Float
- 19 North Star Preserve
Roaring Fork River Float
- 20 Lazy Glen Open Space Opening
- 21 Flowers & Filtration:
Rio Grande Wetland Walk
- 26 Deer Hill Early Summer Wildflower Walk
- 27 Family Night at Filoha Meadows:
Fireflies, Bats, and Bugs
- 28 Family Night at Filoha Meadows:
Fireflies, Bats, and Bugs

JULY

- 2 Filoha Meadows:
Firefly & Rare Orchid Walk
- 5 Family Night at Filoha Meadows:
Fireflies, Bats, and Bugs
- 9 Filoha Meadows:
Firefly & Rare Orchid Walk
- 17 Family Night at Filoha Meadows:
Fireflies, Bats, and Bugs
- 18 Filoha Meadows:
Firefly & Rare Orchid Walk
- 24 Filoha Meadows:
Firefly & Rare Orchid Walk
- 25 Water in the Age of Silver:
Touring Aspen's "Holden Works"
- 27 Twin Lakes Tunnel & Diversion Tour

AUGUST

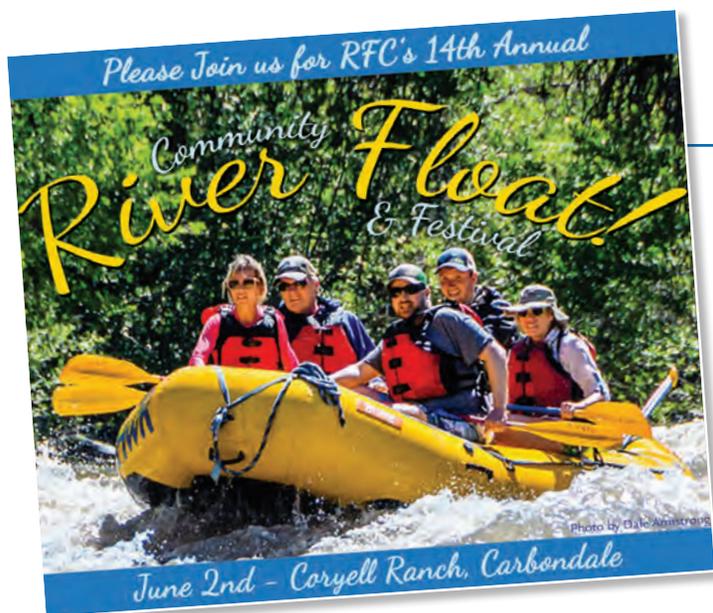
- 8 Family Exploration at Filoha Meadows
- 11 River Center Grand Opening
- 17 Family Exploration at Filoha Meadows

SEPTEMBER

- 7-8 Crooked Creek Wetland Planting
- 8 Family Exploration at Filoha Meadows
- 11 Aspen Tap: Drinking Water Tour
- 19 Filoha Evening Walk: Elk & Bighorn Sheep
- 25 Carbondale Bicycle Ditch Tour

Registration opens 3 weeks prior to program date.

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



COME FLOAT WITH US!

RFC's Community River Float & Festival
Saturday, June 2, 2018

TICKETS:

Float & Festival: \$50 (\$40 for RFC Members)
Suitable for ages 12+

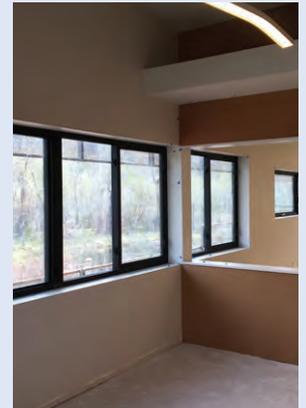
Festival Only: \$30 (\$25 for RFC Members)
All Ages Welcome

REGISTER BY MAY 30 at

<http://www.roaringfork.org/events>



Roaring Fork Conservancy spent the last 22 years bringing people together to protect our rivers. 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 expertise increases, the timing is perfect for growing in our capacity!



Save the Date

FRIDAY, AUGUST 10
RIBBON CUTTING & GRAND OPENING

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11
COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE



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Fireflies at Filoha Meadows

Kristen Doyle, Watershed Educator

Last June, I found myself guiding a group across a timeworn bridge, past a seemingly old barn, into a meadow along the Crystal River. I exhausted my botanical knowledge leading a search for rare orchids, and my explanation that the “old barn” was actually a fabricated set from a little-known Disney movie seemed to squash some of the scene’s romanticism. As dusk settled in, I wondered if the show we were all anticipating was about to happen, or if I would need to awkwardly explain that it was too cold, too rainy, or too early in the season for our performers to reveal themselves. Then I saw it – a soft light emanating from just a few feet away. As the group fell silent, another light pulsed in response from across the field. And then another. Before long, Filoha Meadows was alight with the soft green glow of fireflies.

Fireflies, also known as lightning bugs, are neither flies nor true bugs, but beetles (Coleoptera). Hatching from eggs, firefly larvae are voracious predators of slugs, snails, and soft-bodied insects. These larva live underground and are capable of producing a light of their own. In the late spring of their second year the larvae pupate, a process akin to a caterpillar creating its chrysalis, before emerging as the adults we are accustomed to seeing. The dazzling display of light is actually a mating call, signaling to others they are “single and ready to mingle.” These flashing patterns differ between species, and are also used by scientists to identify who is who. However, not all “come hither” flashing patterns end happily ever after – the females of some species mimic the flash patterns of others, and then viciously attack and consume their would-be lovers. After mating, female fireflies gently lay their eggs in soft, damp soil, and the life cycle begins anew.

The presence of these copulating coleopterans at Filoha Meadows and other thermal wetlands is a mystery. Fireflies typically live at lower elevations, and while populations have been found at hot springs throughout Colorado, these populations are isolated with miles of arid mountains between them. One theory is that as homesteaders developed the west, fireflies in the east took advantage of irrigation ditches and canals, expanding their range. Dr. Larry Buschman, an entomology Professor at Kansas State University with over 20 years of firefly experience, finds that explanation lacking. Fireflies only persist near permanent, year-round water sources, with many populations found in remote areas reached only by wilderness backpacking. Buschman suggests in his *Field Guide to Western North American Fireflies* that thousands of years ago, when the climate of the American West was wetter, these burly beetles made their way across the continental divide and dispersed into damp forests and wetlands in the West. As the climate became drier, available habitat shrank leaving pockets of fireflies lingering on in our remaining springs and marshes, isolated from each other and subsequently developing their own local adaptations.



Clockwise from top left: Adult *Photuris* firefly and the light organs of the male, female, and larva. Photos by Dr. Larry Buschman.

Because of this, Buschman believes the population present at Filoha Meadows (currently identified as *Photuris* spp.) may actually be its own sub-species. This uniqueness and isolation also makes the relic population at Filoha meadows vulnerable and vital to protect, as there are no nearby populations possible of reestablishing themselves. While these fireflies may create more questions than answers, one thing is certain: the fireflies at Filoha meadows continue to sparkle for spectators, helping RFC inspire people to explore, value, and protect not just the Roaring Fork watershed, but all creatures big, small, and bright that call it home.



Viewing fireflies during a Filoha Meadows program.

Interested in seeing these fireflies yourself?

Attend one of our July Filoha Meadows programs, FREE thanks to Pitkin County Open Space & Trails. Details, including dates and registration, can be found at www.roaringfork.org/events.

Staff & Board Flows



Matthew Anderson,
Watershed Action Intern

Matthew is an Environmental Science and Resource Management major at the University of Washington in Seattle. This is his second summer assisting the RFC Watershed Action team with water

quality and conservation easement monitoring. Matthew was born and raised in Basalt.



Johnny Cronin,
Director of Donor Relations

Johnny's experience building relationships with donors and fundraising for conservation programs, including The Nature Conservancy and Houston Wilderness, follows a successful

career as an entrepreneur. Johnny's background dovetails well with RFC's 22-year mission of inspiring people to explore, value and protect the Roaring Fork Watershed. Graduating from Texas Tech with a degree in Public Administration, Johnny appreciates the busy intersection that is conservation, "friendraising" and governing these sometimes complicated issues. Johnny, his wife Vicki, and his entire family are respectfully dedicated supporters of the amazing outdoor opportunities Colorado provides.



George W. Kelly III,
RFC Board Member

Born and raised in Canton, Ohio, George W. Kelly III moved to Colorado upon graduating from St. Bonaventure University with a degree in Marketing in 1998. After starting his career with East West Partners in

Vail which eventually took him to Lake Tahoe, George and his wife Stacey were drawn back to Colorado and the Roaring Fork Valley, an area that has become home. After a career in leadership roles with East West Partners and Aspen Skiing Company George decided it was time to start his own business. In 2011 George founded Organic Return, an Award Winning Digital Marketing Agency with local and national clientele. Organic Return is a member of 1% For The Planet and focuses on working with hospitality, real estate and business-to-business companies throughout the United State. George lives in Basalt with his wife Stacey Kelly and two kids; four-year-old George IV and six-year-old Audrey.



April Long,
Watershed Plan Coordinator

April is a water resources engineer with 16 years of experience assisting local governments with stormwater management programs. For the last decade, April has served as the Stormwater

Manager and Clean River Program Manager for the City of Aspen. She started this program and has grown it into a nationally recognized program for its progressive and creative approach in regulation and award-winning design, construction, and performance of water quality improvement facilities. While she continues her role with the City of Aspen, April is also the principal of her own private contracting business, Colorado Watermark, LLC, where she specializes in strategic planning for water resources and watershed master planning and implementation. April is working with RFC staff to re-engage stakeholders in the update of the 2012 Roaring Fork Watershed Plan. Originally from Alabama, April has a degree in Biosystems Engineering from Auburn University. She spends her free time near the water, too - hiking, camping, skiing and rafting with her family and friends.

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