



TATER HEAP

WESTERN SLOPE CONSERVATION CENTER
2021 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER & REPORT

WEBSITE VERSION

The WSCC's Annual Newsletter and Report is assembled by staff to share our accomplishments and gratitude for our members and friends. Tater Heap gets its name from a humble hill in the North Fork Valley.

meet the staff!



BEN KATZ

Public Lands Program Director



TANYA HENDERSON

Executive Director



DOROTHY PUNDERSON

2021-2022 Outreach VISTA



JAKE HARTTER

Watershed Program Director



KAREN TARNOW

2022-2023 Outreach VISTA

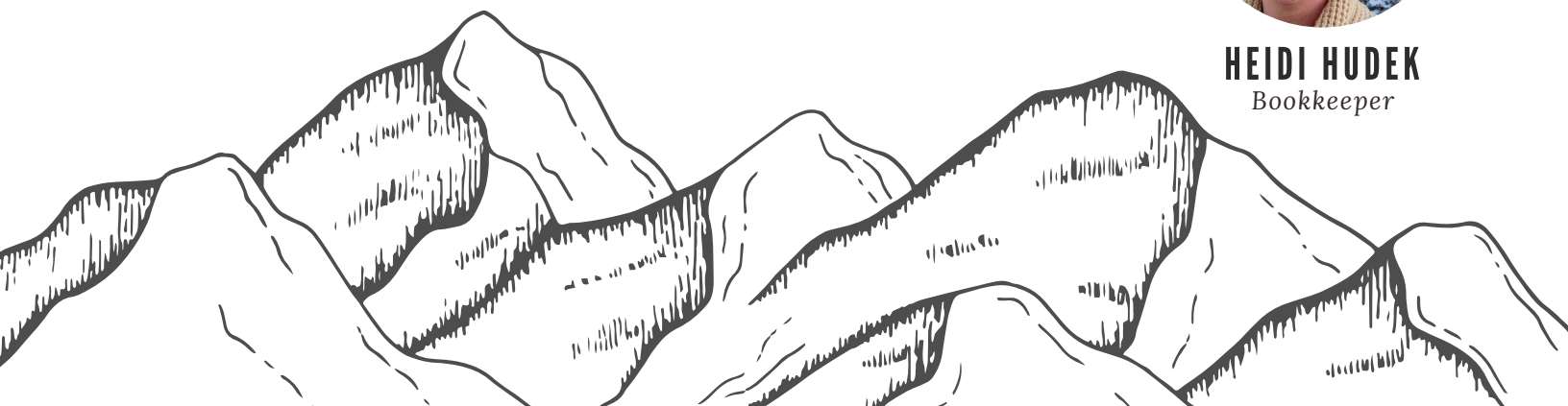


HEIDI HUDEK

Bookkeeper

CONTENTS

- Meet the Staff
- Report from our Executive Director, Tanya Henderson
- By the Numbers: 2021 Volunteer and Financial Recap
- Advocating for our Community
- Stewardship Highlights
- 2021 Board of Directors
- 2021 Highlights in Pictures



DEAR MEMBERS,

2021 was a time of transition for Western Slope Conservation Center. We have been deeply engaged in making voices heard in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest planning process. We eagerly await a plan that we hope reflects a growing recognition in our society and culture that our public forests' value is far beyond their timber, that they provide crucial ecological services like water filtration and storage, carbon sequestration and storage, and critical wildlife habitat. In Paonia, we collaborated with The Nature Connection to build a new trail on Paonia K8 property that connects to the River Park. We elevated your voices in Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission rulemakings that shifted priorities in Colorado around oil and gas to be more holistic and less capitalistic and to consider more seriously the long-term effects of this extractive industry. We helped Colorado Parks & Wildlife take out orchard fencing to usher in new access through the valley for our deer and elk. We timidly stepped back into the world of events to welcome back Mountainfilm on Tour to Paonia.

2021 was my first full year with WSCC. It was also the last full year for Karen Ortiz who dedicated nearly a decade to the WSCC board. She has been a powerful force on our board for nearly a decade, but has traded out meetings and spreadsheets for gliding gracefully over the snow bounded only by where her skis can take her. Thank you, Karen, for your passion for the wildlands and wildlife. If you see her out on the trails, know that WSCC would not be what we are today without her devotion and inspiration.

Throughout all the shifts and transitions of the past year, our commitment to conservation and community has not changed. We hope that 2022 will be a more stable time to carry on with the work we do – a time to dig deep and reconnect with all of you.



Tanya Henderson
Tanya@theconservationcenter.org
Executive Director

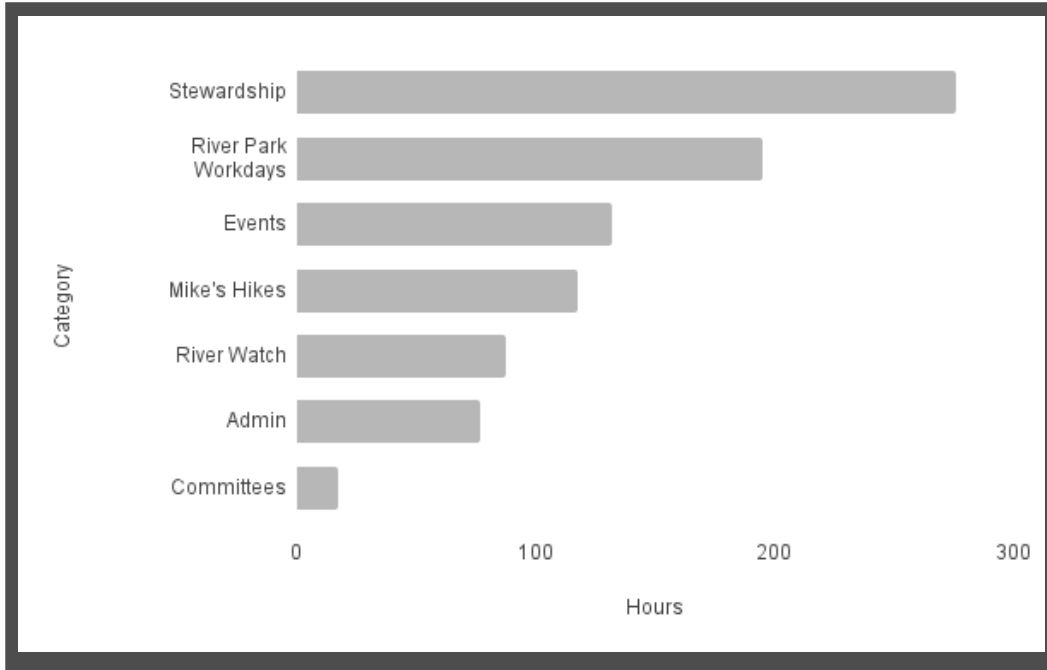
Based in the North Fork Valley, the Western Slope Conservation Center builds an informed and engaged community to protect and enhance the lands, air, water and wildlife of the Western Slope.



BY THE NUMBERS 2021

We are so grateful for the community support we received last year.

Local businesses, partners, grantors, volunteers, and YOU - our members- make WSCC's work possible.



900+ VOLUNTEER HOURS

2021 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
BLM Uncompahgre Field Office
Colorado Canyons Association
Colorado Farm and Food Alliance
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Conservation Colorado
CSU Organic Ag. Research Station
Delta Conservation District
Delta County
Delta County Libraries
ERO Resources
Fruitland Irrigation Company
League of Oil and Gas Impacted Citizens
National Forest Foundation

North Fork Farmer's Ditch
North Fork Trail Advocacy Group
North Fork Water Conservancy District
Paonia K-8 School
Rocky Mountain Wild
Stewart Mesa Ditch
The Learning Council
The Nature Connection
The Wilderness Society
Town of Paonia
Trout Unlimited
USFS Paonia Ranger District
Valley Organic Growers Association
Western Colorado Cons. Corps
Wilderness Workshop

13
Mike's Hikes

15
Stewardship Days

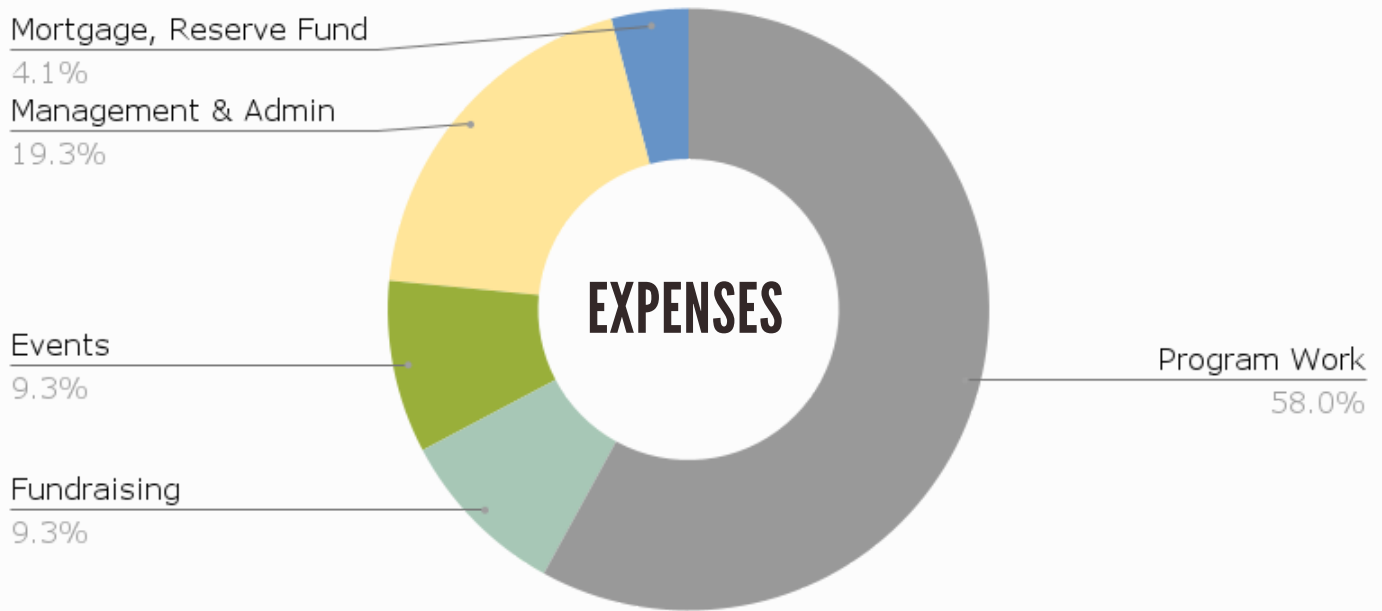
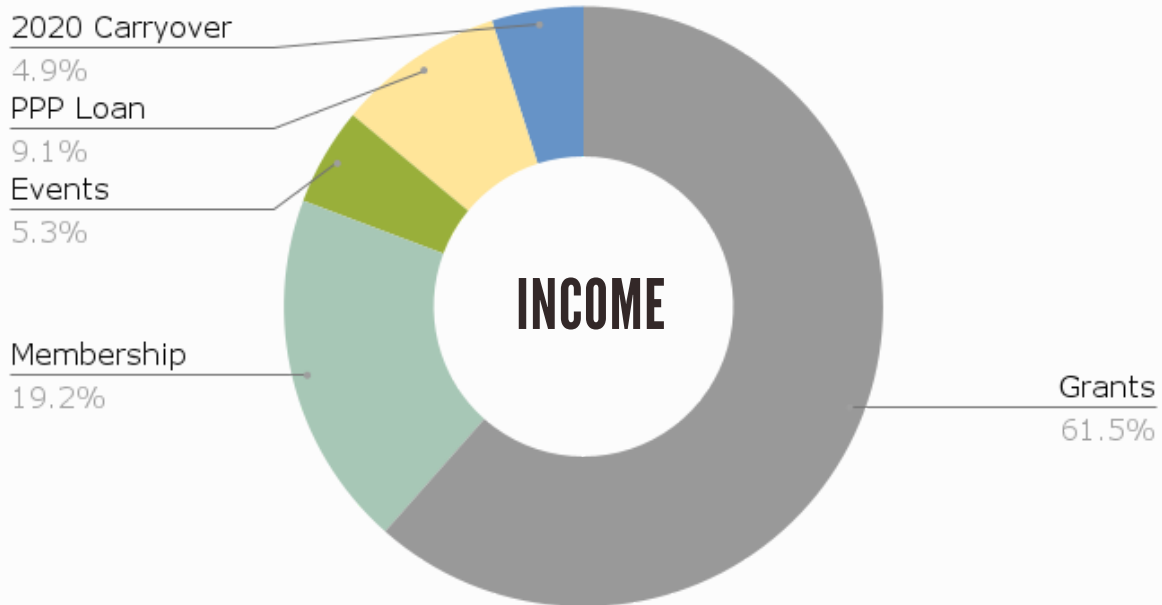
100+
Volunteers

2660+
Social Media Followers

1450+
Newsletter Subscribers

THANK YOU!

2021 FINANCIAL RECAP



THANK YOU TO OUR 2021 GRANTORS AND PROJECT FUNDERS:

Wolcott Family Foundation
 Western Conservation Foundation
 Conservation Lands Foundation
 National Forest Foundation
 Aspen Environmental Fund
 Fund for Wild Nature
 West Elk Community Fund

Gates Family Foundation
 High Country Conservation Advocates
 The Wilderness Society
 Telluray Foundation
 National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance
 Western Colorado Community Foundation

Resource Legacy Fund
 Colorado Water Conservation Board
 North Delta Ditch Company
 Fruitland Irrigation Company
 Welfelt Fabrication
 Ira Houseweart Metalworks
 Finnigan Millworks

...and to our many local business sponsors of our 2021 events.

ADVOCATING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

PARTNERSHIPS FOR RIVER HEALTH

Long-term planning for our watershed

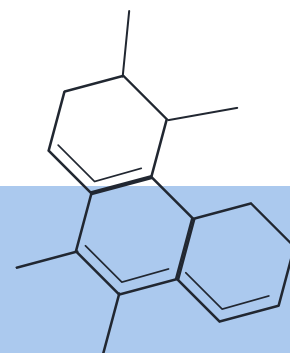
Healthy rivers and sustainable river planning have been key values for our organization for many decades. This year we partnered with North Fork Farmer's Ditch, Stewart Mesa Ditch, and Trout Unlimited to begin two major irrigation diversion improvement projects. The projects are being funded through WSCC and North Fork Water Conservancy District's Integrated Water Management Plan: Phase 2, and the Colorado Water Conservation Board. The projects will improve designs for each respective diversion to benefit water management, recreation safety, and fish passage.




COMMUNITY SCIENCE AT WORK

Bromide sampling and Somerset Domestic Water

During the summer of 2018, staff and volunteers of the WSCC met with the managers of the water treatment plant for Somerset Domestic Water District (SDWD) in Somerset, CO after learning that unusually high concentrations of bromide in the North Fork of the Gunnison river water supply were creating major problems in meeting state standards for Disinfection Byproducts. Bromide is a fairly rare, naturally occurring compound in the Earth's crust. It typically occurs in evaporite deposits. Several subsequent sampling results taken by WSCC proved to be unsubstantial, showing bromide levels well below lab detection limits in most cases. However, SDWD continued to have intermittent problems associated with bromide, and in 2021 WSCC partnered with community stakeholders to help develop a Source Water Protection Plan. The plan places a high priority on determining the source of bromide within the watershed. In 2022 WSCC will begin an Upper North Fork Watershed Bromide Study to determine where, and how, bromide is entering the North Fork of the Gunnison River watershed and impacting the SDWD water system.





Keep
The
NORTH
FORK
Fruitful

TAKING CARE OF OUR PUBLIC LANDS AND WILDLIFE

We tracked administrative planning actions like the US Forest's Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest plan revision process and activated our community along the way. We successfully advocated for bills in the Colorado state legislature and state budget that will protect our wildlife and state parks. We organized our community around critical oil and gas rulemaking changes at the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission. And we continued to push the Bureau of Land Management through our litigation on the Uncompahgre Field Office Resource Management Plan to be accountable to the decade of community input and not an 11th hour decision made in April 2020. As our work continues, make sure to stay tuned for ways to get engaged!



KEEP THE NORTH FORK FRUITFUL

Our organization is known for advocating for the highest protections for our public lands. In 2020, we partnered with Colorado Farm and Food Alliance, Valley Organic Growers Association, Conservation Colorado, and Wilderness Workshop to flip the script and come up with a proactive vision of the future of the North Fork Valley's public lands. Throughout 2021, we have continued this campaign. After a successful virtual "fly-in" with elected leaders, federal agencies, and environmental organizations in Washington DC, our organizations hosted a series of one-on-one and small group meetings to determine possible solutions to the threats to our way of life.

Get involved in our work!

Join the Public Lands or Watershed Committee, become a Mike's Hikes volunteer leader, sign petitions, and more!

Visit www.westernslopeconservation.org/volunteer to find out how you can participate as a volunteer with WSCC today.

STEWARDSHIP HIGHLIGHTS



PUBLIC LANDS EVENTS

Engaging our community

2021 was an exciting time to be outside. WSCC was honored to continue our Mike's Hike program with several volunteer-led hikes. We hosted quarterly Pints & Public Lands events in Paonia and virtually to educate our member base about ongoing projects and activities. We organize these activities so that we can all enjoy deeper relationships with our public lands.



ON THE GROUND

Partnerships for public lands

Our organization hosted a series of events throughout 2021 designed to get people outside and care for the landscapes they love. We partnered with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Colorado Parks and Wildlife and landowners to remove dilapidated elk fencing on private land to improve big game access to wildlife corridors along the North Fork of the Gunnison River. We also partnered with Colorado Canyons Association and the Bureau of Land Management to continue work in the campaign to designate the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area a Dark Sky Park. In May, we celebrated Colorado Public Lands Day with the US Forest Service and community members by removing an illegal structure on top of McClure Pass. We hosted two trail work days with the Nature Connection Wilderness Trail Crew and US Forest Service staff to maintain trails on Kebler Pass. As we launch into 2022, we continue to look for unique partnerships and exciting opportunities to get you involved in taking care of our natural world.



2021 Zeedyk workshop at Gould Reservoir

PAONIA RIVER PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Finalizing our 2013 Master Plan

There have been so many amazing happenings in and around the Paonia River Park this year! We are excited to announce that we have nearly completed our Paonia River Park Master Plan, which began in 2013. Among the many updates is a new Minnesota Creek Bridge crafted by Ira Houseweart Metalworks. The bridge is an incredible work of art and is fully ADA compliant, allowing visitors of all abilities to access the River Park trails. Next to the bridge you may have noticed a new outdoor classroom structure. Last fall we held a transition ceremony with the help of the North Fork School of Integrated Studies to relocate the stone Labyrinth from the classroom space to another area further down the trail. The students helped move stones and welcome the new learning space to the River Park.

Additionally, this year WSCC provided funding and oversight on a new trail project in partnership with The Nature Connection and Western Colorado Conservation Corps to extend the River Park trail across Grand Ave and include a 0.5 mile Paonia School Loop. The trail connects Delta Schools and Town of Paonia properties with the River Park. We are excited to be expanding our trail network from the River Park to connect key locations in the community.



DON'T MISS OUT!

Get involved with the River Park and more by checking out our events schedule on our website or at the QR code below.

A few of our upcoming events:

**March 20th: Annual Meeting
March 24th: Winter Speaker Series
May 5th & 6th: Conservation Days
June 4th & 5th : RiverFest 2022**



THANK YOU 2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS!

We are so grateful for all the work our board has put in this year to complete a Five Year Strategic Plan! We asked: what's your favorite place in the North Fork? Here are a few of their answers.



My friends kid me when I tell them that one place after another is my favorite place in the North Fork. But I'll go with the Oh-Be-Joyful Trail and Silver Basin area below the Ruby Mountains.

MIKE BURKLEY

Treasurer



Besides my home, hiking up Anthracite is one of them!

JAY SIMON

Board Member



KATE GRAHAM

Board Member



MEGAN RANDALL

Board Member



Surrounded by granite walls deep in the Gunnison Gorge.

KAREN ORTIZ

Thank you Karen for your service to WSCC over the past decade!



**DARBY KANE
PRENDERGAST**

Board Member



ZACH KRAPFL

Board Member



I have so many favorite places. Exclamation Point blows my mind every time I stick my head out over the edge.

ALEX JOHNSON

Secretary





YOU ARE THE WSCC.

We could not do our work without the support of you, our members, partners, and friends. To learn more about WSCC and get involved, visit westernslopeconservation.org.

SAVE THE DATE for our Annual Meeting!

March 20th, 2022, 7pm, online



204 Poplar Avenue
PO Box 1612
Paonia, CO 81428
Tel (970) 527-5307
westernslopeconservation.org

WESTERN SLOPE
CONSERVATION
CENTER



Nonprofit Org
US Postage Paid
Paonia, CO
Permit No. 33

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT: VOLUNTEER, DONATE, ATTEND AN EVENT.
WESTERNSLOPECONSERVATION.ORG



Special thanks to High Country Printing & Graphics in Paonia, CO.

Join online at
westernslopeconservation.org
Questions? Call (970) 527-5307

Become a member:
Name(s): _____
Business Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____
Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____
Email: _____

Annual Membership/Donation Level:

- \$100 Sustaining Membership
- \$100 Business Membership
- \$55 Household Membership
- \$35 Basic Membership
- Custom Membership

Please make check payable to Western Slope Conservation Center

Cash Check Check #: _____
 Credit Card _____
Exp. Date: _____ Security Code: _____
Signature: _____