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.

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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
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

THANK YOU!

13
Mike’s Hikes

15
Stewardship Days

100+
Volunteers

2660+
Social Media Followers

1450+
Newsletter Subscribers
2021 FINANCIAL RECAP

INCOME

- Grants: 61.5%
- Membership: 19.2%
- Events: 5.3%
- PPP Loan: 9.1%
- 2020 Carryover: 4.9%

EXPENSES

- Program Work: 58.0%
- Events: 9.3%
- Management & Admin: 19.3%
- Mortgage, Reserve Fund: 4.1%
- Fundraising: 9.3%

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.
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.

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.
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!

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](http://www.westernslopeconservation.org/volunteer) to find our 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.
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 Housewart 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.

MIKE BURKLEY
Treasurer

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.

JAY SIMON
Board Member

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

KATE GRAHAM
Board Member

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

MEGAN RANDALL
Board Member

Surrounded by granite walls deep in the Gunnison Gorge.

KAREN ORTIZ
Board Member

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

DARBY KANE PRENDERGAST
Board Member

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

ZACH KRAPFL
Board Member

Surrounded by granite walls deep in the Gunnison Gorge.

ALEX JOHNSON
Secretary

Thank you Karen for your service to WSCC over the past decade!
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
SHOW YOUR SUPPORT: VOLUNTEER, DONATE, ATTEND AN EVENT. WESTERNSSLOPECONSERVATION.ORG

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

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: ________________

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: ____________________________