



PEAKS TO PEOPLE WATER FUND SPRING 2019 NEWSLETTER



Note from the Director

Hello and Happy Spring! It's a wonderful time of year. I hope you are getting outside and enjoying the beautiful weather.

Our Board of Director's had a fantastic retreat last month in which they talked about goal setting and fundraising. They are committed to raising \$1 million for projects by 2020. We will be reaching out to our partners and stakeholders to get feedback on long term goal setting as well as finding projects that align with our Watershed Investment Tool. Together we can be more strategic and have a more meaningful impact in our two watersheds.

Earlier this month I had the pleasure of presenting with fellow Healthy Watershed Consortium grantees on Lessons Learned in Source Water Protection at the AWWA's Sustainable Water Management Conference. Professionals from a wide array of disciplines attended the event which focused on presenting solutions for balancing the benefits of conservation with the costs, managing water resources, water conservation, and more.

In this newsletter we'll provide some highlights from the final monitoring report for our demonstration sites. Many thanks to all our partners for their work on these projects and to CFRI and TNC for the thorough report! We hope you like our new segment "Resources for Landowners" where we will showcase programs that offer financial and/or technical assistance to landowners looking to implement best management practices on their land.

We have a lot of exciting projects in the works which I look forward to sharing with you this summer. In the meantime, enjoy this update and please like and follow us on [Facebook](#) to stay up to date, feel free to [Tweet](#) us anytime and link up with us on [LinkedIn](#).

Heather Schinkel, Director





Board Member Profile



We are happy to introduce you to Peaks to People Water Fund board member, Alex Castino. Alex is a licensed Colorado attorney who has worked in land conservation for more than 5 years. Previously she acquired over 2,000 acres in fee and conservation easement for

Larimer County and implemented the first perpetual water sharing agreement in Colorado. Currently Alex manages Great Outdoors Colorado's land protection grant programs where she works to protect Colorado's premier lands and landscapes for future generations. When she's not working to protect the outdoors, she enjoys them by mountain biking, sailing, hiking, camping, gardening, climbing and snowboarding. We had the pleasure of meeting up with Alex recently to talk about her vision for Peaks to People and the role we can play in protecting our forested watersheds.

How do you see Peaks to People adding value to the conservation efforts currently underway in Northern Colorado?

Peaks to People brings tools, resources, and expertise that enable conservation efforts to be targeted, so Northern Colorado can stretch its dollars and efforts further for the most on-the-ground impacts.

Can Peaks to People's solutions help land managers protect Northern Colorado's premier lands and landscapes for future generations?

Peaks to People's work protects our water supplies, riparian and aquatic habitats, as well as the quality and sustainability of our outdoor recreation resources. Managing our protected and private lands in a way that contributes to a healthy, high-functioning ecosystem is a critical component to maintaining the quality of life that residents and visitors to Northern Colorado have come to know and love.

How will our efforts support tourism and outdoor recreation in Northern Colorado?

Living in an environment where fire is part of the natural cycle is part of our reality in Northern Colorado, but Peaks to People and its partners are working to return the forest to a healthy condition that minimizes the intensity of fires when they do strike and allows all of the people and small businesses, plants and animals, waterways and water infrastructure, to bounce back quickly and thrive in this beautiful place we all call home.

Thanks to Alex for sharing her knowledge and love of Colorado's wild places with us and for supporting the mission of Peaks to People Water Fund!



2018 Ecological Monitoring Report for Peaks to People Water Fund Demonstration Sites

We have completed work at several demonstration sites to assist with initial data gathering, testing and process development. Each site is located in either the Big Thompson watershed (Larimer County Ramsay-Shockey Open Space and adjacent State Land Board land) or Cache la Poudre watershed (Ben Delatour Scout Ranch) and is unique in design and function.

Included here are a few highlights from the final monitoring report by Colorado Forest Restoration Institute: Kat Morici, Brett Wolk, Jeffery B. Cannon, Ben Gannon and The Nature Conservancy: Rob Addington The [FULL](#) report, [Executive Summary](#) and



individual monitoring summaries can be found on both the [Outcomes](#) and [Resources](#) pages of our website. Thank you to CFRI, TNC and all the partners involved!

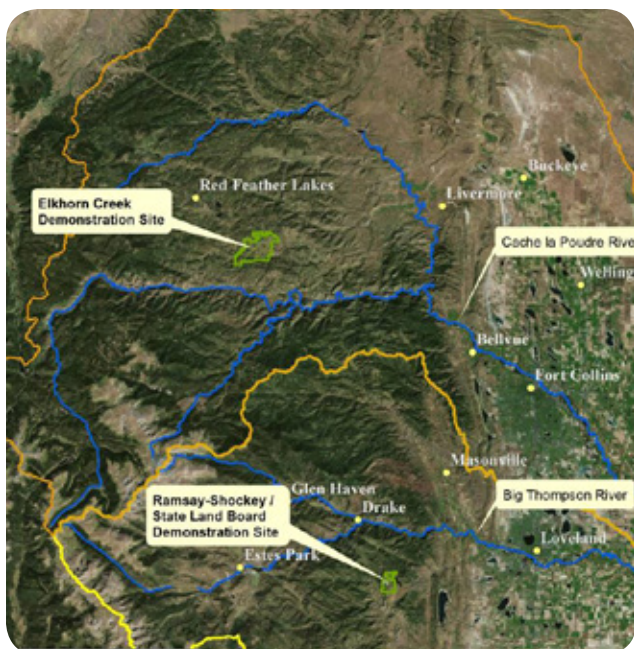
Central to the Peaks to People Water Fund is the establishment of on-the-ground projects demonstrating the benefits of forest management in moderating wildfire behavior and protecting water resources from negative impacts associated with post-fire soil erosion and sedimentation. The Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) at Colorado State University (CSU), the Colorado Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and other partners led an effectiveness monitoring program to assess how these projects achieved management goals and desired conditions.

Wildfire and forest health objectives were evaluated using a comprehensive, multiscale approach, informed by two techniques: 1. Field surveys of forest structure and fuel loading to model fire behavior and effects before and after treatment using the Forest Vegetation Simulator (FVS). 2. Remote sensing techniques to quantify forest cover and gap distribution at a project scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

FOREST AND FUELS INVENTORY

An important principle of restoring Front Range montane forests is to reduce tree density while maintaining a range of forest densities across the landscape (Addington et al., 2018); it appears all monitored treatment areas achieved this goal as indicated by the high standard deviation in residual basal area and tree density in each stand. Woody surface fuels remained low in all stands except where slash was lopped and scattered.



Cache la Poudre Demo Site Pre-Treatment July 2016 Photo Credit: CFRI



Cache la Poudre Site Post-Thinning Treatment June 2017 Photo Credit: CFRI



Cache la Poudre Demo Site Post Rx Burn Nov 2017 Photo Credit: CFRI



Cache la Poudre Demo Site Post-Treatments June 2018 Photo Credit: CFRI

FFE-FVS Fire Modeling

Broadly, it was found that thinning alone did little to change modeled fire hazard, but hazard was substantially reduced following the application of prescribed broadcast fire. Prescribed broadcast fire reduced surface fuel loading and raised average tree crown base height, which are key factors for increasing tree survival and improving forest resilience to wildfire.

Remotely Sensed Canopy Cover and Gap Size Deliniation

Overall, both Ramsay-Shockey and Scout Ranch forest restoration treatments contributed to desired conditions of decreased canopy cover and increased coverage and size of large gaps.



Big Thompson Demo Site Pre-Treatment May 2016 *Photo Credit: CFRI*



Big Thompson Demo Site Post-Treatment Sept 2017 *Photo Credit: CFRI*

COLLABORATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

To facilitate peer-to-peer learning, Peaks to People stakeholders were invited to participate in field data collection throughout the monitoring process. Forestry and fire managers informed monitoring strategies by sharing with scientists what information would be useful for management decisions. The impacts of this project expands beyond the demonstration sites, as fire and forestry professionals were trained in measurement techniques to help them gauge outcomes on other management projects and improve forest management elsewhere.

New Watershed Investment Tool Web Page!

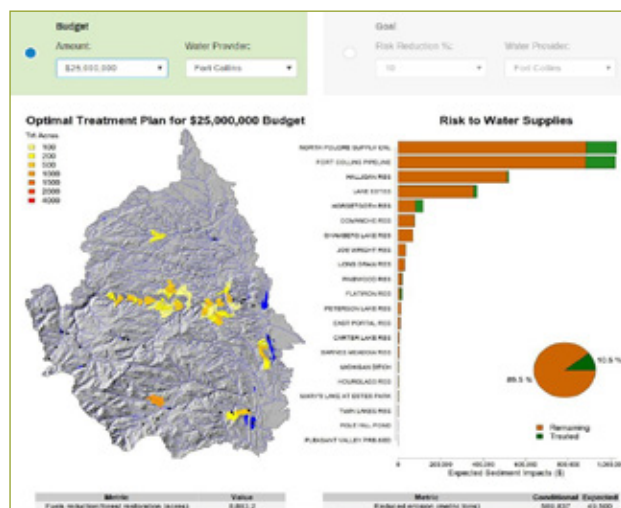
In Northern Colorado, thousands of acres of forests need restoration to reduce the size and severity of wildfires. Unfortunately, public and private land managers lack the funding to reduce forest fuels at meaningful scales. We need to prioritize and fund forest management where it can best protect our water resources.

That's why Peaks to People and researchers at Colorado State University developed the Watershed Investment Tool. The tool analyzes forest fuel conditions, erosion potential, and connectivity to water supplies to optimize forest fuel treatments for water supply protection. This helps us direct funds towards projects with the greatest outcomes. It also helps us track progress towards stakeholder goals. By decreasing the cost and increasing the speed in which projects are implemented, Peaks to People can ensure the available funding is yielding the maximum impact. The combination of assessment and prioritization capabilities makes the Watershed Investment Tool the ideal instrument for outcome-based investing.

Learn more about this innovative tool and take it for a test drive on our brand new WIT web page! You'll be able to:

- Choose optimal treatment plans based on budget or goal of risk reduction.
- Select a budget amount or risk reduction percentage to analyze.
- Select your water provider of interest and
- See the optimal treatment plan and associated risk reduction based on your selected criteria.

Head over to <http://peakstopeople.org/watershed-investment-tool/> to try the tool today!





Tracking Watershed Health in Northern Colorado

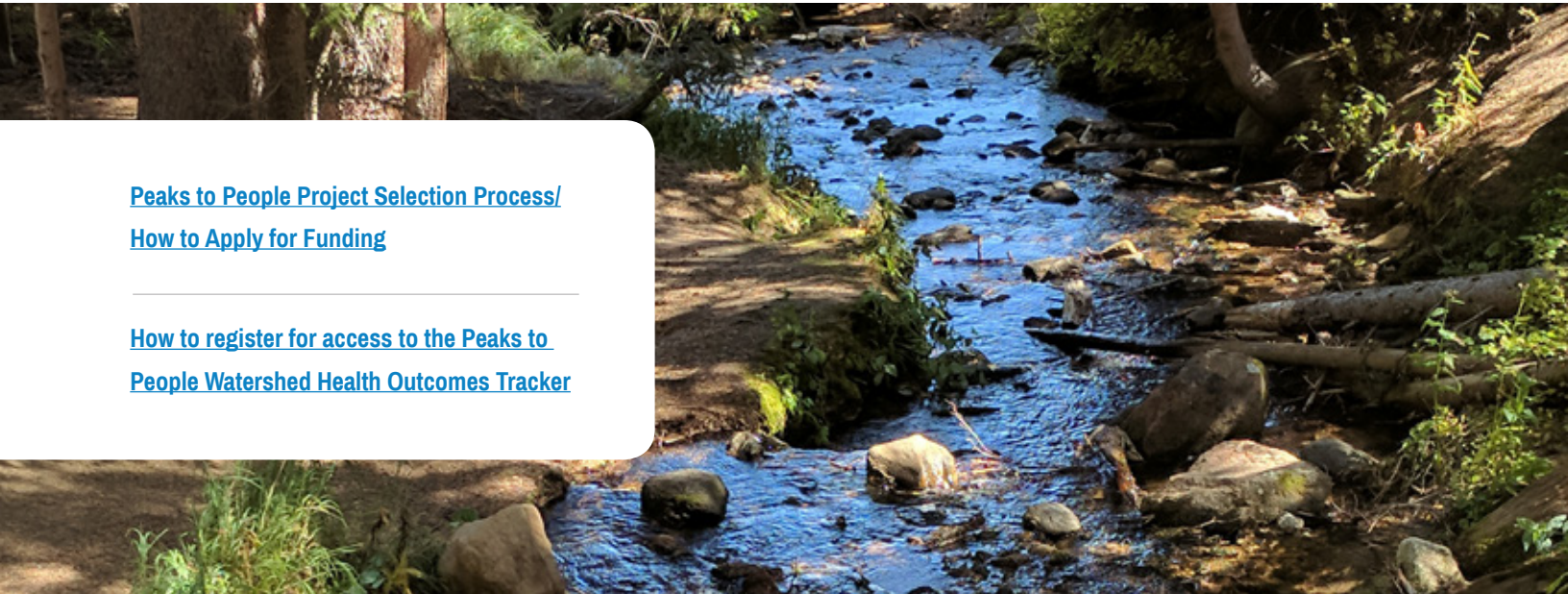
Outcome-based land management is a strategy that focuses on achieving outcomes across landscapes that include ecological, economic, and social goals. Because outcome-based land management is aimed at maintaining viable and sustainable landscapes this approach is inherently collaborative. Providing a shared resource to track projects within and across our two closest watersheds was an important step for Peaks to People. That's why Peaks to People partnered with Sitka Technology Group to develop the [Watershed Health Outcomes Tracker](#). This sophisticated, web-based program enables implementers, landowners and funders to

track proposed and active projects designed to improve forest health and protect water resources on the front range.

We encourage anyone interested in receiving funding from Peaks to People for a current or future project to [submit a proposal](#) for review. Working together we will be able to more effectively set goals and track all the work that is being done in Northern Colorado. Learn more about this thoughtfully designed online platform in our recent blog, [Tracking Watershed Health in Northern Colorado](#).

[Peaks to People Project Selection Process/
How to Apply for Funding](#)

[How to register for access to the Peaks to
People Watershed Health Outcomes Tracker](#)



Conservation Resources for Landowners

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has numerous programs designed to assist landowners interested in receiving financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices on their land. These programs help landowners reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. One such

program is the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#) which enables the NRCS to subsidize the costs of restoration efforts on private land. EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that helps landowners promote agricultural production and environmental quality simultaneously.

In Larimer County, the [Big Thompson Conservation District](#) and the [Fort Collins Conservation District](#) have partnered

with the NRCS on the [Healthy Forest Initiative](#). As the team at [BTCD](#) explains, "This partnership helps deliver a land-management philosophy that addresses multiple aspects of our forest such as wildfire hazard reduction, water quality, erosion control, wildlife diversity, and many more. Using the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), NRCS helps cover the costs of forest restoration on private land."



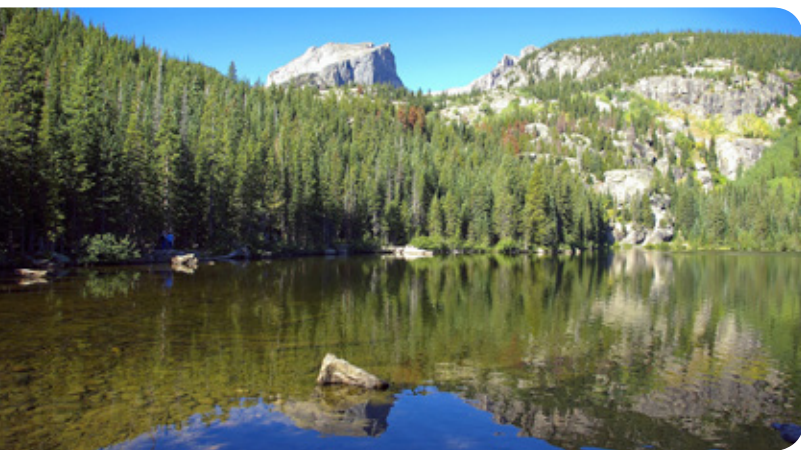
The general eligibility requirements for EQIP are:

1. You own or have control over non-industrial forest land
2. You are in compliance with Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) requirements of earning less than \$900,000 per year
3. You are willing to allow NRCS to create an EQIP plan of operations for your forest improvement project.

To learn more about EQIP and how to apply visit the Colorado NRCS website at: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/co/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=nrcseprd1361683>. To learn more about the Healthy Forest Initiative and it's use of EQIP visit the Big Thompson Conservation District at: <https://www.bigthompson.org/forestry/> or the Fort Collins Conservation District at: <http://www.fortcollinscd.org/healthy-forest-initiative.html>



Arapaho Roosevelt NF Awarded Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Grant



We are thrilled to report that the Northern Front Range Collaboration Watershed Resilience Project in the Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest has been awarded \$2,426,083 through the [Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership](#). The grant program is a result of a six year partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Together the two agencies are working to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Since the program's inception in 2014, the USDA has invested \$213 million in 69 Joint Chiefs' Landscape

Restoration Partnership Projects. This year the partnership will invest more than \$12 million to [13 projects](#) in nine states to mitigate wildfire risk, improve water quality and restore healthy forest ecosystems. During the three-year projects, landowners work with local USDA experts and partners to apply targeted forestry management practices on their land, such as thinning, hazardous fuel treatments, fire breaks and other systems, to meet unique forestry challenges in their area.

The Northern Front Range Collaboration Watershed Resilience Project will work to support habitat for at-risk wildlife, restore watershed conditions, enhance streams, and manage invasive plant species. The project's long-term goal is to strategically establish boundaries that will foster healthy fire regime across the landscape and reduce the danger of destructive wildfire. Total FY 2019 Funding for this project is \$2,426,083 with the NRCS providing \$1,676,390 and the Forest Service contributing \$888,110. Peaks to People provided a letter of support and we hope to cost share to further leverage the funding.

More Information

Ag producers and forest landowners interested in a project to mitigate wildfire risk should contact their local [USDA service center](#) to see if their land is eligible. More information is available online at <https://go.usa.gov/xEsyY>.



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**Peaks to People
Water Fund**

info@peakstopeople.org

970 829.0020

peakstopeople.org

