

# PEAKS TO PEOPLE WATER FUND WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER

## Note from the Director



Happy New Year!

I hope you had a safe and enjoyable holiday season after a long and difficult year. For many of us there is a sense of relief that 2021 is finally here. Last month, distribution of vaccines to control this tragic and unprecedented pandemic began and 100% containment of Colorado's two largest wildfires in history, the Cameron Peak Fire and East Troublesome Fire, was achieved. We are grateful for these incredible triumphs. Our hearts go out to all of our community members who lost their homes to these terrible fires. With more than 400,000 acres and 1,000 structures lost to the flames, the social and environmental impacts from these wildfires will be felt for years to come. Early estimates indicate that restoration of the Poudre River watershed alone will cost upwards of \$50 million. Peaks to People will do whatever we can to support recovery efforts. While the immediate needs of our family, friends and neighbors are our top priority, we must continue to restore the health of the forests that remain. It is with this concern in mind that we are now launching our most important initiative to date, our Big Thompson Initiative. Through leveraged funds and new funds, we plan to invest \$90 million over the next 10 years to restore forests in the Big Thompson watershed to their natural state and reduce the risk of severe wildfires. We are grateful to already have multiple organizations partnering with us on this much needed initiative including The Nature Conservancy, Colorado State Forest Service, the Center for Collaborative Conservation, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, Big Thompson Conservation District, Colorado Forest Restoration Institute and Brendle Group. Read on to learn more about this crucial conservation effort and please get involved.

In this update we are happy to introduce you to another impressive Peaks to People Board member, Ms. Sandra Hicks. Sandra brings a wide range of experience and business expertise to our team. We will also share updates on our current and upcoming forest health projects, provide post fire recovery resources for property owners and highlight the fuel reduction work going on in Rocky Mountain National Park.

We look forward to sharing many positive updates with you this year. Please pass this along to your friends, family, and colleagues. Stay connected by following us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

As always, feel free to reach out anytime and most importantly stay healthy and happy.

Best wishes,

*Heather Schinkel, Executive Director*





## Our Big Thompson Initiative

Peaks to People is committed to protecting Northern Colorado's water supplies from the devastating effects of severe wildfires. Wildfires can significantly affect the ability of watersheds to meet municipal, industrial and agricultural water uses. The Big Thompson watershed's critical water infrastructure supplies between 40 and 55% of the annual water needs of Fort Collins, Loveland, and Greeley, and it provides water to 30 other towns and cities along the Colorado Front Range. Analysis by the Peaks to People Water Fund team has determined that treating just 37,000 acres within the 575,000-acre Big Thompson watershed could reduce 90% of severe fire risk and conserve the forests most important for water supply.

Acres treated	37,000
Avoided erosion	236,000 metric tons
Severe wildfire avoided (active crown fire reduced)	30,000 acres
Parks and open space protected from wildfire	2,000 acres
Crucial wildlife habitat protected from wildfire	23,000 acres
Trails protected from wildfire	340 miles
Number of homes influenced (within 1 km of treatments)	14,000

It is more imperative than ever that we act now to protect the Big Thompson watershed and the communities that depend on it from the devastating effects of future wildfires. As critical as this initiative is to our water security, it will also provide many beneficial outcomes to our region. The health of our forests will improve, wildlife habitat and open spaces will be saved, and home loss and infrastructure damage will be dramatically reduced by hundreds of millions of dollars.

With budget strains on agencies that manage Colorado's forests, we cannot rely on the government alone to tackle this issue. It will take Peaks to People working together with our partner agencies to increase the scale and scope of forest restoration in order to reach our goal. The cost of this important initiative is \$90 million. To put that into perspective, the price tag for a new water treatment plant planned by Denver Water is \$600 million. While some funding for this important work is already in place, to accomplish these goals more funding must be raised. By joining us in this critical initiative you can make a significant contribution to improve water security and have a meaningful impact on near-term wildfire outcomes.

We are offering several levels of participation through our **Partner Program**, select your level of giving and contact us today. To learn more visit <http://peakstopeople.org/big-thompson-initiative/> and please, spread the word about this important initiative. This is unquestionably our best opportunity to protect our water, and with it our recreation, commerce, and prosperity. Thank you for your support!

### Thanks to Our Big Thompson Initiative Partners





## Board Member Profile



We are very pleased to introduce you to another outstanding member of our Board of Directors, Sandra Hicks. Sandra is a seasoned Environmental Engineer and EHS Manager with over 30 years of experience at Fortune 500 companies, including Intel, Trane, Kodak and Anheuser-Busch. She has extensive knowledge of global

environmental, health and safety regulations and requirements, EHS Management Systems and ISO 14001. A 30+ year resident of Fort Collins, CO, Sandy is originally from Wisconsin. She is married to Charlie, a plant pathologist, and has two boys, one graduated from Colorado Mesa and is working in Eagle, CO, the other graduated from Colorado State and is in graduate school at University of Wyoming.

### What compelled you to join Peaks to People’s board?

As a 30-year community member and environmental engineer who has worked for multiple Front Range Fortune 500 companies, I know the importance of clean, plentiful water. The mission of Peaks to People, particularly the statement about “enhancing nature’s ability to provide clean and abundant water, carbon storage and wildlife habitat” as well as the direct focus on projects that reduce wildfire risks, spoke to me. I feel my professional knowledge as well as my business acumen, can help the organization achieve their mission.

**According to the authors of A Preliminary Green-Gray Analysis for the Cache la Poudre and Big Thompson Watersheds of Colorado’s Front Range, “investments in green infrastructure solutions provide economically superior ways**

**to achieve environmental quality outcomes than conventional investments in technology-based or “gray” infrastructure.” In your experience, how will Northern Colorado businesses benefit from investing in green infrastructure solutions like our Big Thomson Initiative?**

In my experience, many businesses such as breweries and other manufacturing depend on clean, abundant water. They rely on providers such as municipalities or water districts to ensure the quality and quantity they need for business continuity or growth. I think businesses would be interested to learn how it may be cheaper and more effective to spend “upstream” to improve forest health through management and projects, (rather than paying for expensive, technology-based treatment). Most businesses wouldn’t be aware of this option. As a board member, I hope to help support education about the effectiveness of green solutions and encourage businesses to help fund projects to ensure clean and abundant water for their future business needs.

**In the wake of Northern Colorado’s 2020 wildfires, do you think water dependent businesses feel the same sense of urgency to protect our forested watersheds as individual community members do?**

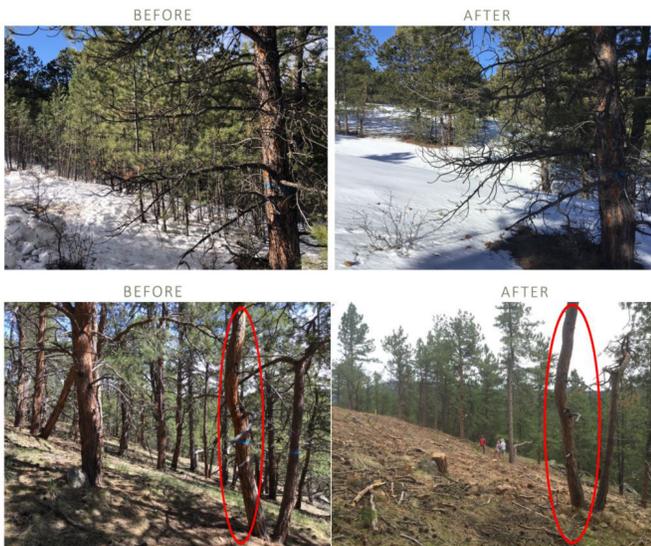
I think education and outreach to businesses to improve understanding about the mission of Peaks to People and how our work can benefit them in the future (for potentially less cost), is key. Business looks for the best, least costly option to ensure business continuity, and, if they understood the impact watershed protection can have, I believe they would support it. The recent fires brought air quality issues to the forefront and I think we can use that to emphasize that water, as well as air is adversely affected, and that pro-active measures could have made a significant difference.

## Project Updates

**Pole Hill** - Good progress has been made on the Pole Hill forest health project in the Big Thompson watershed. Restoration activities have been completed on approximately 135 acres and several more units are close to being finished. We are happy to report that our partners at the Big Thompson Conservation District (BTCD) have received overwhelming community support for the work that has been completed thus far. They have met with multiple new landowners who would like to participate in a future project. Targeted Performance Measures, additional photos and more



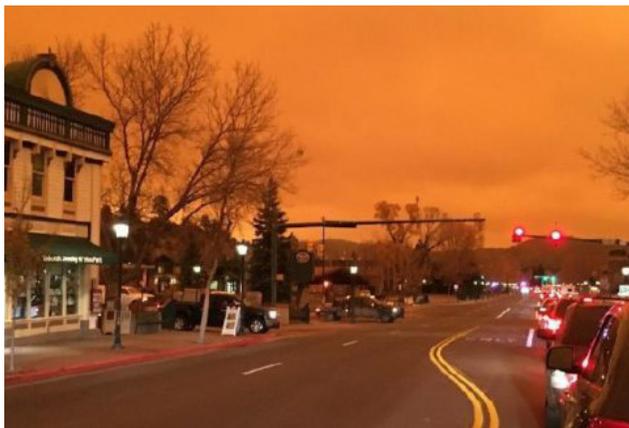
information about this project can be found in our [Watershed Health Outcomes Tracker Pole Hill Phase II Project Fact Sheet](#).



**Husted Ranch** In addition to the Pole Hill forest restoration project, we are also funding upcoming work on Husted Ranch in the Big Thompson watershed. Similar to Pole Hill, this area has experienced a drastic shift from historical conditions. Species compositions have shifted from Ponderosa Pine to Douglas-Fir & forest densities have greatly increased. The project area has also experienced Mountain Pine Beetle and mistletoe outbreaks which have adversely affected forest health. Mechanical thinning will be implemented on approximately 195 acres of forested lands to restore the functionality and vigor of the forest and reduce the effects of severe wildfire on the Dry Gulch/Lake Estes drainage. Our partners at the Big Thompson Conservation District will be

leading the efforts on this project. We look forward to seeing the positive impacts their work will have on fire behavior in this area Targeted Performance Measures, additional photos and more information about this project can be found in our [Watershed Health Outcomes Tracker Husted Ranch Project Fact Sheet](#).

## Fuel Treatments Save Town from Destructive Fire



In June of 2012, Rocky Mountain National Park Staff completed a new Fire Management Plan (FMP) which increased the park's ability to adequately manage fuels adjacent to at-risk communities, park infrastructure, and natural and cultural resources. The 2012 FMP update expanded the area where fuels treatments were permitted, focused primarily along the park's eastern and western boundaries. By reducing fuels in the areas of Moraine Park and Upper Beaver Meadows, through thinning operations followed by pile burning and prescribed fire, park staff created what wildland fire fighters refer to as a "catcher's mitt". [Learn more](#) about how these ongoing efforts helped save Estes Park from the destructive East Troublesome Fire.



## Flood After Fire



Did you know wildfires dramatically alter the terrain and increase the risk of floods? Excessive amounts of rainfall can happen throughout the year. And properties directly affected by fires and those located below or downstream of burn areas are most at risk for flooding.

**1** During normal conditions, vegetation helps absorb rainwater.

**2** But after an intense wildfire, burned vegetation and charred soil form a water repellent layer, blocking water absorption.

**3** During the next rainfall, water bounces off of the soil.

**4** As a result, properties located below or downstream of the burn areas are at an increased risk for flooding.

### Degree of Land Slope

Higher degrees of land slope speed up water flow and increase flood risk.

### Flash Floods

Intense rainfall can flood low-lying areas in less than six hours. Flash floods roll boulders, tear out trees and destroy buildings and bridges.

### Mudflows

Rivers of liquid and flowing mud are caused by a combination of brush loss and subsequent heavy rains. Rapid snowmelt can also trigger mudflows.



Reduce your risk. The time to buy flood insurance is now. Contact your local insurance agent for more information or visit the National Flood Insurance Program at [FloodSmart.gov/wildfire](https://www.floodsmart.gov/wildfire).

## Conservation Resources for Landowners

Last fall northern Colorado experienced wildfires of epic proportions. Hundreds of homes, many of them primary residences, and more than a thousand structures were lost to the flames of the Cameron Peak and East Troublesome fires. Larimer County has created a webpage with more than a dozen resources for homeowners impacted by wildfires.

Visit <https://www.larimer.org/wildfire-resources> for valuable information on topics such as:

- Post Fire Flood Risks,
- Forestry Contractors, and
- Vegetative Recovery After Wildfires

## Board Member Recruitment

We are seeking additional leaders to serve as Board members.

### BOARD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Serve a three-year term of office (minimum).
- Attend bi-monthly board meetings (minimum 75% attendance required) and occasional board retreats.
- Be an advocate for Peaks to People and its mission.
- Secure warm leads to support Peaks to People. Generate awareness and revenue.
- Provide expertise and guidance to the organization.

### DESIRED SKILLS AND EXPERTISE

We are recruiting for diverse leaders with expertise in the following areas:

*Fundraising, Marketing/Communications, Human Resources, Finance, Business Leaders.*

To inquire about opportunities on the Peaks to People Water Fund Board, contact Board President, Rob Addington, [Raddington@tnc.org](mailto:Raddington@tnc.org) or Executive Director, Heather Schinkel, [heather@peakstopeople.org](mailto:heather@peakstopeople.org).

## Now Accepting Project Proposals!

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 set goals and track all the work that is being done in Northern Colorado more effectively.

Peaks to People Project Selection Process/  
How to Apply for Funding

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How to register for access to the Peaks to People  
Watershed Health Outcomes Tracker

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How to add a project to the Peaks to People  
Watershed Health Outcomes Tracker

## Don't Miss a Drop of Good News

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