



## PEAKS TO PEOPLE WATER FUND SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER



### Note from the Director

Hello and Happy Summer!

I hope this finds you well. After a long and difficult 2020 it is so nice to finally feel like things are getting back to normal. The beautiful weather here in Northern Colorado has really helped to lift our spirits even more. Hopefully you have been able to get outside with your loved ones and enjoy it.

We have a lot of important news to share with you! We are very pleased to announce two more amazing organizations have joined our growing list of Big Thompson Initiative partners. Much thanks goes out to the Gates Family Foundation and Northern Water for stepping up to support this critical initiative. We would also like to thank our partners at the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute for helping with our annual Watershed Investment Tool (WIT) update. Read on to learn more about how we have used the WIT to conduct pre- and post-wildfire analyses to update our Big Thompson Initiative goals, benefits and outcomes. Finally, we would like to send out our heartfelt thanks and best wishes to a special outgoing board member, Alex Castino. Alex has been with us since 2018 and will be greatly missed.

In this update we are happy to introduce you to our newest board member, Dr. Blake Naughton. We also have updates for you on numerous forest health projects we are currently funding. We will provide an updated wildfire resource for landowners from our partners at the Colorado State Forest Service and more.

Be sure to check out our new blog series [Partnering Up to Protect the Big Thompson Watershed](#) where we will be highlighting the valuable collaborations we have with each of our Big Thompson Initiative Partners. We look forward to continuing our important work with initiative partners and other collaboratives here in Northern Colorado. Together we can restore the health of our forests, protect our water supplies, and prevent the detrimental impacts of severe wildfires!

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 be well.

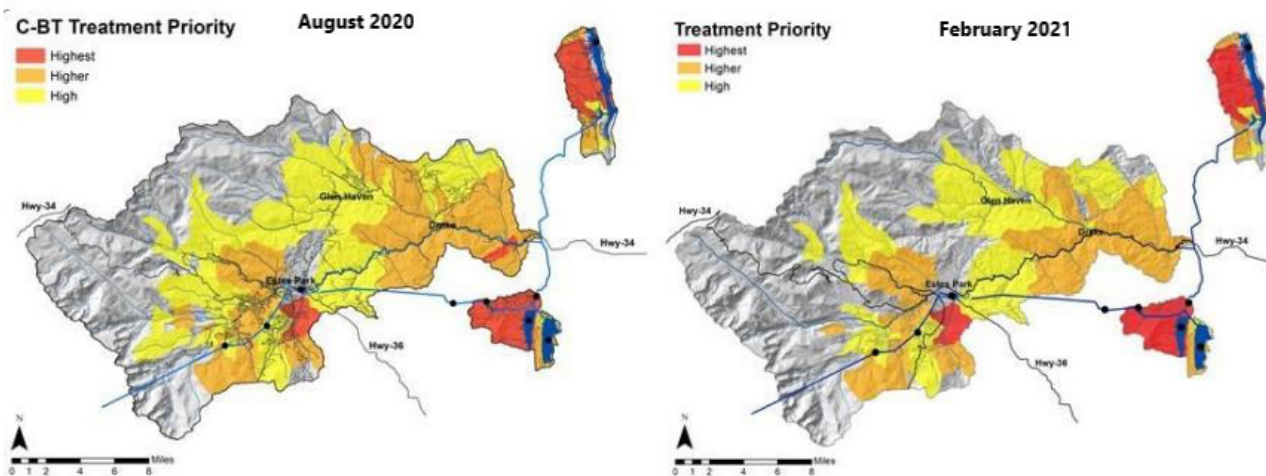
With Gratitude,

*Heather Schinkel, Executive Director*





## Watershed Investment Tool and Big Thompson Initiative Update



Earlier this year we worked with our partners at the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute to conduct an annual update to our Watershed Investment Tool (WIT). The purpose of this update is to refresh the data products in the WIT to reflect to changed conditions on the landscape. These modifications include:

- Updating spatial records of accomplished fuel treatments across all agencies,
- Updating spatial records of planned fuel treatments across all agencies,
- Updating fuels to reflect past fuel treatments and the 2020 wildfires,
- Remodeling fire behavior for current conditions in the WIT, and
- Adjusting burn probability for the 2020 wildfires.

We then report on how these updates change the spatial distribution of wildfire risk to water supplies and priorities for treatment across the full Peaks to People planning area and the Big Thompson Initiative landscape. Read the full report [HERE](#).

In 2020, the two largest fires in Colorado history flanked the Big Thompson watershed to the west and north encompassing more than 400,000 acres. Amazingly Big Thompson Initiative priority areas were left relatively unchanged. Our team's pre- and post-wildfire analyses indicate there are 9,000 fewer acres in need of immediate treatment. We have determined that by investing \$67 million in new and leveraged funds over the next 10 years we will be able to mitigate 84% of the feasible wildfire risk to the Big Thompson watershed by treating a targeted 28,000 acres of forest.

In addition to protecting our vital water resources, the Big Thompson Initiative will provide durable outcomes and benefits, including: 179,000 metric tons of avoided erosion, 22,000 acres

of active crown fire avoided, as well as protecting 2,000 acres of parks and open space, 17,000 acres of critical wildlife habitat, 233 miles of trails and 13,000 homes from wildfire.

We are excited to announce that the [Gates Family Foundation](#) has joined on as a Peaks to People Water Fund [Big Thompson Initiative partner](#)! Gates has been funding land conservation since 1978. They prioritize projects with demonstrated impact, strong funding leverage, scale, connectivity, and a high degree of collaboration, landowner commitment, and community support. THANK YOU Gates for supporting Peaks to People and our Big Thompson Initiative.



[Northern Water](#) has also joined us as a partner in our Big Thompson Initiative! We have been working collaboratively with the team at Northern Water for many years. They first joined our Working Group in 2014 and have since been valuable members of our Stakeholder Committee as well as a strategic partner in several forestry projects in the Big Thompson. THANK YOU Northern Water for your continued support!!! Working together we can all thrive.



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!





## Board Member Profile



We are very pleased to introduce you to our newest member of our Board of Directors, Dr. Blake Naughton. Dr. Naughton is the Vice President of Engagement and Extension at Colorado State University. Blake is recognized for his expertise in education and administrative leadership, partnership development and performance management in higher education. Throughout his professional career, he has focused on demonstrating that higher education can

transform lives by showing in measurable, relevant, and actionable ways how universities can best serve citizens and communities. At CSU engagement and extension, Dr. Naughton oversees several units including: the Colorado Water Center, CSU Extension, and CSU Extended Campus which all provide science-based community outreach programming that extends the services of the University across Colorado and beyond and seeks to help fulfill Colorado State University's land-grant mission. He also serves as professor of human development focusing on how individuals, organizations, and communities benefit from lifelong educational programs and services.

## Wildfire Recovery Efforts Are a Race Against the Clock



Burn Scar on Cache la Poudre River Dec 2020  
Image Credit: Peaks to People Water Fund

Autumn wildfires, such as the Cameron Peak and East Troublesome fires of 2020, feed off of drier and more abundant fuel loads than would normally be seen in spring and early summer. Increased fuel loads can lead to larger, more severe wildfires. Fortunately late season wildfires also provide natural resource experts, elected officials, municipalities and water providers with a healthy window of time to plan and initiate restoration projects upstream to reduce the impacts downstream once spring rains begin four to six months later. Read all about the opportunities and challenges presented by the 2020 wildfires in our blog, [Wildfire Recovery Efforts Are a Race Against the Clock](#).

## Project Updates

**Forestry Demo Site for Decision Making in Drake, CO** – We are excited to be providing \$10,000 in funding for this important forest management demonstration project which will work to reduce the risk of wildfire to 8 private properties in the Cedar Park/Storm Mountain communities, and may reduce risk to neighboring homes as well. The Cedar Park/Storm Mountain community is a densely populated and forested mountain community which drains into the Big Thompson River. By reducing fuel loads on private properties, the potential for high-severity fire effects on and around these properties is decreased which can have beneficial effects at a neighborhood and drainage level.

The [Big Thompson Watershed Coalition](#) (BTWC) will host tours of the 8 treated properties for WUI landowners who are interested in understanding their options and outcomes and will use this to spur future projects with landowners. Additionally, BTWC has two CSU graduate students who will work with the community over the course of 4 months to assist them in forest management and wildfire response planning as the groundwork for a full Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) development.

(Continued on next page)



(Continued)

**Project Snapshot:**  
**Cedar Park/Storm Mountain**  
**Defensible Space**  
**Demonstration Project**

The project will:

- Assist 8 landowners in the Cedar Park/Storm Mountain communities with defensible space and thinning through a cost-sharing grant
- Treatment will decrease fire risk for landowner and also act as a demonstration site for other landowners to better understand treatment options and outcomes
- BTWC will prioritize visible properties with landowners who are willing to pitch in costs & labor, but also are share their experience with others.
- Additionally, CSU research associates will work to assist the community with initial planning for communal forest mgmt. priorities.

**Defensible Space**

If you are an interested resident in the Cedar Park/Storm Mountain area, please email  
[Courtney.Gutman@bigthompson.co](mailto:Courtney.Gutman@bigthompson.co)

to learn more and get your application!

		Forest Treatments	
		D-space only	D-space + forest thinning
<b>Wood Debris Treatment</b>	Wood chipping or lop and scatter	Resident A ~1 acre (x2)	Resident C ~4 acres (x2)
	Pile burning	Resident B ~1 acre (x2)	Resident D ~4 acres (x2)

**Small parcels treatment matrix for 3/4-5 acre parcels**

**Project partners include:** Big Thompson Initiative partners, Northern Water and Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) as well as the Big Thompson Watershed Coalition, Coalitions & Collaboratives, United States Forest Service and Wildlands Restoration Volunteers. More information about this project can be found in our [Watershed Health Outcomes Tracker Forestry DemoSite for Decision Making in Drake, CO Project Fact Sheet](#).



Cheley Camp, Image Credit: Big Thompson Conservation District

**Cheley Camp** - Peaks to People is providing \$10,000 in funds for this project which consists of forest restoration treatments on 2-separate tracts of land. The main treatment consists of three treatment units comprising 80-acres. Located within the Lake Estes drainage, this project aims to restore functionality and vigor of the forest and reduce the effects of severe wildfire. The secondary treatment will consist of one 15-acre treatment unit located within the Fox Creek drainage, adjacent to the town of Glen Haven. The goals with this project reflect those of the treatment on the main property. **Project partners include:** Big Thompson Initiative partners, Big Thompson Conservation District (BTCD) and Northern Water as well funding assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Program. Targeted Performance Measures, additional photos and more information about this project can be found in our [Watershed Health Outcomes Tracker Cheley Forest Restoration Project Fact Sheet](#).



Image Credit: Big Thompson Conservation District

**Pole Hill Phase II** - This 250-acre project led by the Big Thompson Conservation District (BTCD) is located in the headwaters of Cottonwood Creek which drains to the Big Thompson. Landowners are excited to be seeing the benefits of the work being done in the area and five new community landowners have signed agreements with BTCD to have thinning work done on their land during Phase III. Phase III will add an additional 150 acres to the project area.

Peaks to People contributed \$100,000 for Phase II of the Pole Hill project and will be providing an additional \$50,000 to fund Phase III. **Project Partners include:** Big Thompson Initiative partners BTCD, Northern Water, CFRI and the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) as well as funding assistance from the NRCS EQIP. "Pole Hill is a great example of leveraging funds from multiple sources and partners to increase the amount of acreage being restored to a healthier state," Rob Addington, Forest Program Director at The Colorado Nature Conservancy. 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, Image Credit: Big Thompson Conservation District

**Husted Ranch** – We have contributed \$59,000 for work on Husted Ranch in the Big Thompson watershed. NRCS EQIP funds covered approximately 150 acres of work. By leveraging partner funds BTCD has been able to increase the project size to 250 acres. Similar to Pole Hill, this area has experienced a drastic shift from historical conditions. Mechanical thinning is being implemented to restore the functionality and vigor of the forest and reduce the effects of severe wildfire on the Dry Gulch/Lake Estes drainage.

**Project Partners include:** Big Thompson Initiative partners BTCD, Northern Water and CSFS as well as funding assistance from the NRCS EQIP. 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](#).

**Horsetooth Mountain Open Space** - We will contribute \$30,000 for a project in Horsetooth Mountain Open Space (HTMOS) approximately three miles southwest of Fort Collins, CO. Forest management goals identified in the plan are to preserve forest health and older, larger trees, protect Horsetooth Reservoir water supplies, and reduce the threat of large, high intensity wildfires. To achieve the above goals, pine beetle and mistletoe-infected trees will be isolated or removed, as will poorly formed or suppressed trees, to allow regeneration of healthy and diverse species. Thinning will protect older trees and allow for re-growth of understory vegetation that in the event of a wildfire will be critical as a course filter to overland flow before runoff reaches Horsetooth Reservoir and associated Colorado-Big Thompson infrastructure.

**Project Partners include:** Big Thompson Initiative partners Larimer County Natural Resources, Northern Water and CSFS. More information about this project can be found in our [Watershed Health Outcomes Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Project Fact Sheet](#).



## Restoring Our Forests Strategically and Collaboratively



Ben Delatour Scout Ranch on Elkhorn Creek in the Poudre River Watershed  
Aug 2019 Image Credit: Peaks to People Water Fund

Despite the two largest wildfires in Colorado's history burning more than 400,000 acres in Northern Colorado in 2020 there is still plenty of work that needs to be done to prevent the occurrence of future severe wildfires.

The [Colorado State Forest Service](#) (CSFS) reports approximately 10% of Colorado's 24 million acres of forest are in urgent need of treatment to address forest health, wildfire risk and watershed protection threats, at a cost of approximately \$4.2 billion.

"Current and emerging conditions are threatening the health and resiliency of forests in Colorado. There is a solution, but it requires an investment in our forests that cannot be sporadic. Rather, that investment must be focused and strategic, cross-boundary and collaborative", says Michael Lester, State Forester and Director of CSFS.

Read more about some of the work being done here in NOCO to prevent the occurrence of future severe wildfires in our blog: [Restoring Our Forests Strategically and Collaboratively](#)



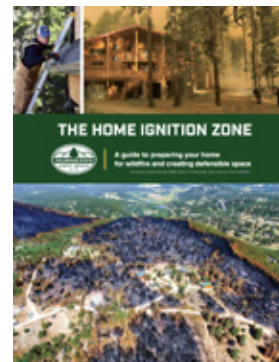
## Conservation Resources for Landowners

More than half of all Coloradans live in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), where homes and other structures meet wildland vegetation, and are at some risk of being affected by wildfire. An updated guide from the [Colorado State Forest Service](#) can help residents prepare their home and property for wildfire with practical steps and guidance.

The [Colorado Home Ignition Zone](#) brochure informs homeowners on how to address the home ignition zone, or the structure and the area around it. The guide includes an overview of wildfire mitigation

concepts, info on wildfire risk in Colorado and easy-to-follow steps and checklists to address vulnerabilities with the home and reduce fuels to create defensible space.

Wildfires play a natural role in Colorado's environment and residents can increase the likelihood their home survives a fire by minimizing the ability for it to ignite, in part by reducing nearby fuels.



## 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!

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](#)

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

[How to add a project to the Peak's to People  
Watershed Health Outcomes Tracker](#)





## Don't Miss a Drop of Good News

Like and Follow us on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/peakstopeople/>

Follow us on Twitter! We'll share the news you need to know.

<https://twitter.com/PeakstoPeople>

We're LinkedIn. Connect with us!

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/peakstopeople/>



**Peaks to People  
Water Fund**

info@peakstopeople.org

970 829.0020

[peakstopeople.org](http://peakstopeople.org)

