

PEAKS TO PEOPLE WATER FUND SEPTEMBER 2022 NEWS



Note from the Director

I am excited to have the opportunity to introduce myself to you as Peaks to People Water Fund's new Executive Director. It is an honor to carry on the meaningful and impactful work that is Heather's legacy from the last seven years. Under her leadership, Peaks to People Water Fund has grown from an idea to a thriving, well-established nonprofit organization with an important role in shaping the future of our region.

As a seasoned nonprofit professional for more than 20 years, I bring with me a passion for exploring collaborative and creative approaches to solving complex problems. From my early days as a naturalist and environmental educator through my years of working with diverse partners engaged in experiential education, ecotourism and conservation initiatives around the world, I have consistently been inspired by the collective power of committed groups of individuals to accomplish amazing things.

On a recent field trip in the Poudre Canyon with our local Watershed Wildfire Protection Group to observe Cameron Peak Fire recovery work, I met many experienced representatives from varied sectors who all care deeply about our local environment. It is clear that everyone involved is bringing their exceptional expertise and strengths to collectively address the impacts of recent burns and reduce the potential impacts of future fires. I am eager to join in and apply my skills and experience here in a region and community I love.

I look forward to deepening and expanding Peaks to People's existing connections and nurturing new relationships with partners, investors and community members who share our concern about the future of our watershed and our optimism that through strategic investing and strong partnerships, together we can make a real and significant difference in Northern Colorado.

*Sincerely,
Julie Dubin, Director*



Pole Hill Project Site Visit

Our team had the pleasure of visiting the Pole Hill Community with our partners from Larimer Conservation District (LCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) last month. We have been quite fortunate to have funded several phases of work in this area over the past few years. The improved forest health conditions and reduction in wildfire risk in this area would not be possible without the dedication and commitment from the team at Larimer Conservation District and the continued support for the work from the private landowners in the Pole Hill Community.

[Big Thompson Initiative](#) partners have provided substantial funding for the Pole Hill restoration work since 2019, including Northern Water and the Colorado State Forest Service. In addition to EQIP funding from NRCS, LCD has also received the DNR-COSWAP grant for the Pole Hill community, which will bring over \$700k of additional funding to the project area. Our partners at Colorado Forest Restoration Institute have completed pre and post implementation monitoring for the project site to verify outcomes.

Pole Hill Monitoring Report

Peaks to People Water Fund invests in strategically placed forest restoration and fuel reduction treatments to mitigate wildfire risk to water supplies and other values in Northern Colorado. We partner with Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) to develop and apply monitoring tools that measure outcomes of these investments. The aim of this monitoring program is to ensure investments are developed to be strategic and impactful, to measure progress towards achieving project and program goals, and to support continued learning and improvement with Peaks to People partners and stakeholders.

CFRI worked with Matt Marshall from Larimer Conservation District to determine an appropriate sampling strategy for the site. CFRI's recently published Pole Hill Monitoring report summarizes treatment results such as changes to forest structure, surface fuels, and modeled fire behavior following treatment. In addition, the report compares modeled fire behavior informed by field monitoring data to the fire behavior



Pole Hill Monitoring Report

predictions from the Watershed Investment Tool (WIT) and may be used for treatment planning and communication with landowners in future projects. Peaks to People is extremely grateful for our partnership with CFRI and the incredible work they do. We wish to extend our sincere thanks to the authors of this report, Tori Hunter, Allison Rhea, and Kat Morici.

Read the full report [HERE](#).



Project Updates

We are pleased to announce that with our financial support, our partners at Larimer Conservation District (LCD) will continue forest health treatments in the Pole Hill Community as well as on the historic MacGregor Ranch in Estes Park, CO. LCD has identified six forest restoration projects on private lands within the Big Thompson watershed. These project areas include an additional 145 acres within the Pole Hill community and up to 160 acres on the MacGregor Ranch. Both project areas are slated for mechanical forest restoration over the next year.

Pole Hill Phase IV- Work in three of the four project areas in this community will be starting this fall. These projects will be implemented by three different logging contractors, two of whom are new to the Pole Hill community. This is exciting in that LCD has mainly used one contractor for all the completed acres in the Pole Hill Community to date. Peaks to People is contributing \$15,000 for this phase of work at Pole Hill.

MacGregor Ranch Phase III- With tree marking complete, this project is fully set up and ready for contractors to see and bid on. Once this year's hunting season operations have been completed on the ranch, the project will move forward with a contractor tour and a request for



bid proposals. Since the terrain is easily accessible and public exposure is significant due to its close proximity to Rocky Mountain National Park, interest within LCD's main contractor base is expected to be high. For this phase of work at Mac Gregor Ranch, Peaks to People is contributing \$20,000.

Both projects fit within the larger landscape restoration effort of the Northern Colorado Fireshed and tie into previous work completed by LCD, USFS, and Larimer County. The 2022/2023 phases of work to be completed in these areas will result in over 750 acres of forest restoration work being completed across the two ownerships.



Resources for Landowners

Disaster Preparedness for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Preparation can help keep you and your loved ones safe – especially if any of your family members live with disabilities. The elderly, persons living with disabilities and those with mobility issues may have a difficult time securing property and reaching safety without proper preparation. For your benefit, the team at Bankrate has compiled a detailed disaster preparedness guide which rounds up resources, disaster safety tips and assistive technology.

Access the guide [HERE](#).



Big Thompson Initiative News

We are very happy to have two more wonderful organizations join our Big Thompson Initiative Partner Program! The Big Thompson Watershed Coalition (BTWC) and The Ember Alliance (TEA) have joined our growing list of initiative supporters. Both organizations have been working on projects in the Big Thompson watershed aimed at reducing wildfire risk and protecting water supplies for the downstream communities and businesses who depend on them. Having these teams officially become Big Thompson Initiative partners was a logical next step as our priorities clearly align. Peaks to People is pleased to be working with BTWC and TEA. We are better when we work together.



The [Big Thompson Watershed Coalition's](#) overarching objective is to foster resilience in the watershed by providing multi-purpose and multi-stakeholder benefits to water and forest resources, as well as the wildlife and people who depend on them. Since 2013 they have helped raise over \$10 million dollars in federal, state, and local funds for river improvement projects, developed 3 large-scale river management and restoration plans, completed 10 major river enhancement projects, and worked with over 150 private landowners and organizations in the process. BTWC serves a unique function of bringing together private landowners, public land management and infrastructure agencies, agriculture, local business, and recreation and tourism industries and recognizes these individuals as key parts of the Big Thompson watershed's unique identity, economy, and health.



[The Ember Alliance](#) helps communities prepare for wildfires, from preplanning to response to the sometimes long recovery period. Their mission is to create a fire resilient society that supports people, landscapes, and the planet. TEA works with public and private groups to conduct prescribed fires to make sure that when wildfires happen, they burn calmly in healthy forests and grasslands that have been burned previously. They endeavor to create the enabling conditions for fire resiliency and socially just fire management through workforce development, particularly for under-served and underrepresented populations.

"We are all strongly aligned in seeing a "healthy forests" outcome in the landscape, and that's going to take time, money, resources, and collaboration to achieve."

Gabe Donaldson, Director of Business Operations, The Ember Alliance

We are offering several levels of participation through our [Partner Program](#). Learn more and join us!



Board Member Profile

We are excited to introduce you to our newest board member, Dr. Mark Eiswerth. Mark is an environmental and resource economist who has served in academia, consulting, and nonprofit research. He works as full-time Visiting Professor at Colorado College and, since 2009, Professor of Economics and instructor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies at the University of Northern Colorado. Previously, he enjoyed working at university locations ranging from those with comparatively little water (e.g., Nevada) to those with more (e.g., Wisconsin). His research has included topics of water quality and resources, invasive species, payments for ecosystem services, outdoor recreation, and biodiversity. Mark is a Colorado native with a passion for protecting nature and the people who depend on it.



You have been a supporter of Peaks to People for quite a few years. What aspect of the Water Fund concept do you find most compelling and how can you see it working for watersheds in Northern Colorado?

The most compelling aspect to me is right there in the name: Peaks to People, which brings nature together with the people who depend on it. I became excited about the Water Fund concept several years ago, after hearing about what was happening right here in Colorado as well as places further away like Latin America. The analogy is that at some point, if an individual has any extra money to save and is concerned (enough) about the future for themselves and those who depend on them, they are going to save some money in a bank or fund. The same can be true for those of us individuals and entities who depend on nature's future – we only have to become concerned enough about it to motivate our investment in our own and our community's future. The main challenge we always face is learning about the individual and collective benefits of doing so. That's where Peaks to People has made an important contribution, in terms of actually estimating the benefits that are expected to come from specific projects in which stakeholders may wish to invest.

How do the water quality issues in Northern Colorado compare or contrast from those in other places you've worked?

In terms of the big picture, they are much less different than I would have expected before I had the chance to work in those other places. I went from Colorado to Nevada to Wisconsin, and then back here to Colorado. Certainly, some differences do stand out in the extent to which water quantity issues are important across different areas. But what has struck me related to water quality is that in most contexts, there are surprising numbers of individuals and entities who are motivated to organize, come together, and do hard work over time to try to address big concerns. It can be challenging and frustrating at times, but it's also inspiring to be surrounded by people and organizations who are passionate about water.

In your opinion, how can payment for ecosystem services promote best management practices in forested watersheds?

Well, it's not really my opinion and the answer is not theoretical. We can actually see and hear an answer quite clearly when we talk to various Peaks to People partners (e.g., in Conservation Districts). Those folks are incredibly knowledgeable and have a passion for visiting with

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...from page 5

landowners about some of the benefits that could be realized on their lands due to best management practices such as forest thinning. Now that we have a better understanding of potential benefits, we as landowners and potential investors can make better decisions about what sorts of BMPs can best benefit the land where the action is taken. Also, we can better comprehend the benefits potentially on tap for neighboring landowners and the watershed as a whole.

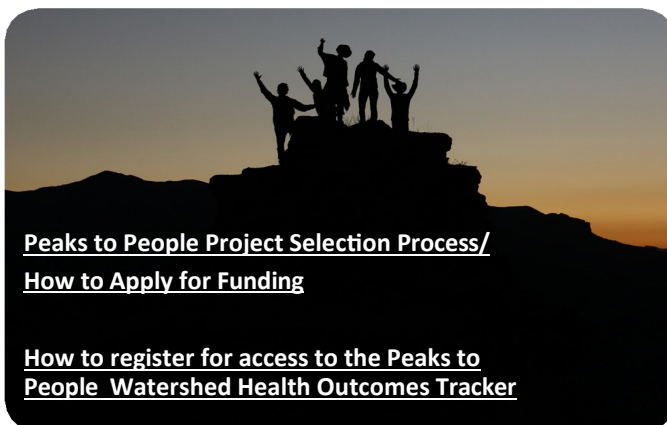
Where are your favorite places to play outside in Northern Colorado?

Some of my best memories from childhood are when my parents would take my sister and me to quiet spots along the Cache la Poudre, and when we all would drive up the Big Thompson Canyon with my grandparents to go to Estes Park or beyond. Even though the world has changed a lot over time, I am very grateful that those places still exist and that my wife and daughters have been able to enjoy and love them. It's hard to express how much that means.

Now Accepting 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.





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