

# PEAKS TO PEOPLE WATER FUND SPRING 2023 NEWS



## Note from the Director

It's hard to believe I have only been with Peaks to People for a little over six months. During this time I have had a chance to dive into our work and gain an understanding of how our efforts complement and magnify the vital work of the many agencies that protect and support forest health and water resources here in Northern Colorado. We are very lucky to be part of such an experienced and active network.

As I have spent time getting to know the various partners conducting forest resilience and riparian restoration work in the Big Thompson watershed, it became clear that Peaks to People could help support enhanced communication and collaboration among agencies with the goal of increasing our collective impact. This led to the formation of the Big Thompson Watershed Health Partnership (BTWHP) last fall. Peaks to People is coordinating regular meetings to convene partnership members, which currently includes 13 local organizations. We are helping the group define goals so we can effectively and efficiently increase the pace and scale of forest health work occurring in the area.

As one example, Peaks to People recently collaborated with two organizations from the partnership, Larimer Conservation District and Big Thompson Watershed Coalition, to apply for a Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) grant through the Colorado State Forest Service. The focus of our application was to support a large-scale forest health project in the Pole Hill and Waltonia communities. We were recently notified that we received funding for this strategic four year project which will have a significant impact on the watershed. Read on to find out more about this exciting initiative!

As spring approaches, we will continue to seek out ways we can leverage our resources to have a strategic impact on the vital watershed that so many of us depend on. Our board will be meeting this April for an all day retreat to strategize on best practices and continuous improvement for our organization. If I have learned anything since taking on this new role it is the realization of just how important and urgent the work is that we are all doing. When we work together we are infinitely more effective. Thank you for your continued support of Peaks to People and our amazing partners.

*Sincerely,*  
**Julie Dubin, Director**



## Big Thompson Watershed Health Partnership

Widespread decline in forest health due to the effects of climate change and wildfire suppression have decreased the ecological resilience of the Big Thompson watershed and exponentially increased the risk of catastrophic wildfire. This has put the communities within the forested areas as well as those dependent upon its natural resources at very high risk.

The newly formed Big Thompson Watershed Health Partnership (BTWHP) spearheaded by Peaks to People Water Fund combines the resources and expertise from numerous organizations including the Big Thompson Watershed Coalition, Colorado State Forest Service, Estes Valley Land Trust, Estes Valley Watershed Coalition, Larimer Conservation District, Larimer County Natural Resources, Larimer County Office of Emergency Management, Loveland Fire Rescue Authority, Loveland Water and Power, Northern Water, The Ember Alliance, The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service.

While our organizations have worked side by side for many years, the formal creation of this partnership strengthens and enhances our ability to protect the crucial natural resources provided by the watershed.

**BTWHP partners will be offering community workshops and project site tours this spring and summer.**

**For more information please contact us at [btwatershedhealthpartnership@gmail.com](mailto:btwatershedhealthpartnership@gmail.com)**



### **The overarching goals of the Big Thompson Watershed Health Partnership include:**

- ⇒ **STRATEGIC PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION:** Collaboratively plan strategic, long-term, landscape scale forest and riparian restoration work in Big Thompson watershed.
- ⇒ **MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT:** Define consistent monitoring metrics and protocols for use among partners to provide accountability, track results and allow for adaptive management.
- ⇒ **FUNDRAISING:** Seek federal, state, regional, local and private funding to support forest and riparian restoration projects in the Big Thompson watershed.
- ⇒ **OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT:** Promote outreach and engagement with landowners, Homeowner Associations and the general public to increase social license for forest and riparian restoration projects, including use of prescribed fire.
- ⇒ **TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING:** Increase capacity of partners to accomplish internal and partnership goals.
- ⇒ **RESOURCE SHARING:** Share resources, training opportunities, expertise and connections in order to leverage partner assets.



## Funding Update

We are excited to announce we have been awarded a \$1,000,000 grant to restore forest health and reduce the risk of severe wildfire in the Big Thompson Watershed. Managed by Colorado State Forest Service, the [Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation](#) (FRWRM) grant program provides funding for fuels and forest health projects or capacity building projects on non-federal land in Colorado. The program was funded to reduce risk of wildfire, promote forest health, and encourage the use of woody material for traditional forest products and biomass energy.

The success of this grant application could not have been possible without our well-established and ongoing collaboration with [Big Thompson Initiative](#) partners and members of the Big Thompson Watershed Health Partnership, [Larimer Conservation District](#) and [Big Thompson Watershed Coalition](#).

Together these partners have planned distinct and complementary projects to restore more than 450 acres on private land and several miles of roadway fuel breaks.



Paired with previous treatments, this project will achieve a landscape-scale footprint of over 3,000 acres. [Read more HERE.](#)



Peaks to People recently participated in a research study being conducted by Utah State University on the Role of River and Watershed Organizations in the Intermountain West. The team from USU interviewed 236 organizations since 2020. It is an interesting snapshot of where organizations work,

what organizations do, the types of knowledge organizations use and the factors enabling and constraining organization success

A website that describes the findings from this research can be found [HERE.](#)



## Board Member Profile

We are happy to introduce you to another terrific new board member, Lydia Lazar. Lydia is currently serving as the Interim Executive Director for AcresUSA, a 50+ year old multimedia publishing company focused on production-scale organic and regenerative farming.

She was an associate dean at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, and previously, the dean of international law and policy at Chicago-Kent College of Law. Ms. Lazar holds an AB degree in government/international relations from Dartmouth College, a master's degree in geography from Columbia University with a focus on urban hydrology, and a JD from Chicago-Kent College of Law. Ms. Lazar is active/admitted to practice law in the State of Illinois. In addition, she recently completed Northwestern University's mediation training program. Her full employment history is posted at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/LydiaLazar/> and details on prior publications and public lectures can be seen at <https://lydialazar.com/outreach>.

Lydia's broad range of experience and education are a valuable addition to our team and we are so grateful to have her working with us. We asked Lydia to share some of her thoughts with us.

### **What brought you Northern Colorado?**

*The weather! We looked around for somewhere where the sun was shining more often than not...*

### **How have your early career experiences in waste, water and energy resource management issues influenced your thoughts about the watershed health work going on in Northern Colorado?**

*It is very inspiring to learn about the many coordinated efforts that are underway in NOCO. I*



*think if I have learned anything at all in my career it is that environmental problems in our society are never going to be solved by siloed approaches - we need an "all of society" approach that leverages civil society, the business sector, academia and government to create and sustain progress both across the landscape and across the generations. Creating the environmental conditions for future humans to prosper in this local ecosystem means fundamentally re-thinking the ways that we are inhabiting the space. Science tells us that we can create the conditions to continue/deepen drought, or we can, alternatively, create conditions that are more conducive to rain. It is up to us to drive our decision-making processes toward the restoration of a healthy local hydrological cycle.*

### **Why have you decided to focus on regenerative agriculture and to support efforts to nurture a more ecologically sustainable society?**

*From my very first professional experiences - first as an intern for Frances Moore Lappe and then as a research analyst with Dr. Barry Commoner - I have understood that the conventional agricultural approach as advocated by large corporations and, unfortunately, many in academia and government, was destined to lead to environmental problems as it "externalized" or ignored the pollution costs*

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*associated with continuous industrial-style monoculture production. Working with Dr. Commoner, I researched the chemical pollution of underground aquifers by conventional potato farmers, while also studying the socio-economic forces those producers faced - forces that seemed to be leading inexorably to the abandonment of all farming on Long Island. Over time, I have learned more about the economic and social pressures on our farmers and ranchers, and I have become convinced that we must pivot toward regional and local approaches to food security and move away from the "feed the world" mindset that drives our producers to seek high yields at whatever cost in soil health. I think that the Covid pandemic really highlighted the fragility of our current food production and distribution system. Now, in this last chapter of my professional career, I am humbled and excited in equal measure to be able to contribute to*

*a historic shift in thinking about food security and food sovereignty in our country.*

**With all the great local organizations working in this space, what was it about Peaks to People that resonated with you?** *I see Peaks to People as a force multiplier. I really appreciate the way that the organization can leverage resources (both financial and organizational) and help orchestrate efforts across NOCO to reduce the likelihood of future fires.*

**Read any good books lately?**

*I am currently reading Water Always Wins by Erica Gies. I love the way that she shows how our obsession with controlling water has led to so many of our current problems with water, and I am learning so much from her research into Green Infrastructure and Slow Water - topics I have been obsessed with from my earliest graduate work on water management in the Valley of Mexico*



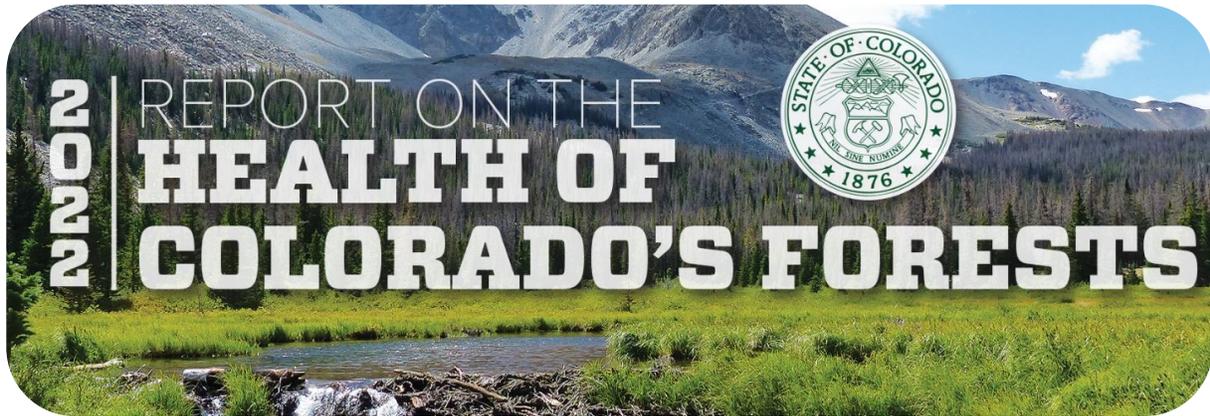
## Policy Updates

Senators Michael Bennet, John Hickenlooper, and Congressman Joe Neguse recently announced that Colorado will receive \$37 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act to mitigate wildfire risks in forests across the state, including in Larimer, Gilpin, Clear Creek and Boulder counties. "As the western wildfire crisis continues to impact our communities, we must ensure we are lessening the threats of these fires in any way possible" Representative Joe Neguse.



## Wildfire Community Preparedness Day is Saturday May 6, 2023

Wildfire Community Preparedness Day is a national campaign that encourages people and organizations everywhere to come together on a single day to take action to raise awareness and reduce wildfire risks. Learn more [HERE](#)



Each year, forest health reports provide information to the Colorado General Assembly and the general public about the health and condition of forests across Colorado, as well as the progress the Colorado State Forest Service is making in addressing critical forest health issues in our state.

Read the full report [HERE](#).

*“Together, we are doing the groundwork necessary to build our capacity and impact to equal the scale of the problem. It took many decades for Colorado’s forests to get to an unhealthy state – and it will take a sustained effort to bring about the change we know is necessary. Working together, we can leave things better than we found them, securing a better quality of life for all Coloradans.”*

– Matthew M. McCombs, State Forester and Colorado State Forest Service Director



We’ve just earned our 2023 Gold Seal with @CandidDotOrg! Check out our [#NonprofitProfile](#) to see the great work we do for our community. We want to make sure you have the progress updates you need to confidently support our work with trust and confidence.

Every year, millions of nonprofits spend trillions of dollars around the world. Candid finds out where that money comes from, where it goes, and why it matters. Through research, collaboration, and training, Candid connects people who want to change the world to the resources they need to do it.

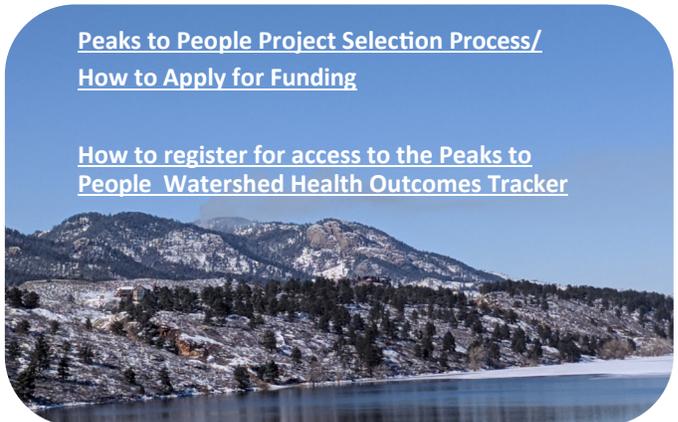
## Now Accepting Proposals!

We encourage anyone interested in receiving funding from Peaks to People for a current or future project to submit a proposal for review.

**Click on the links to the right to get started**

[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](#)





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