




Ripple Effect: Nurturing Colorado's Watersheds For A Sustainable Future



Peaks to People
Water Fund

2023 IMPACT REPORT



The significant and strategic progress we are making in safeguarding our critical water resources in Northern Colorado would not be possible without you. Together, we can make a lasting impact on the health and well-being of Colorado's natural landscapes.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey.

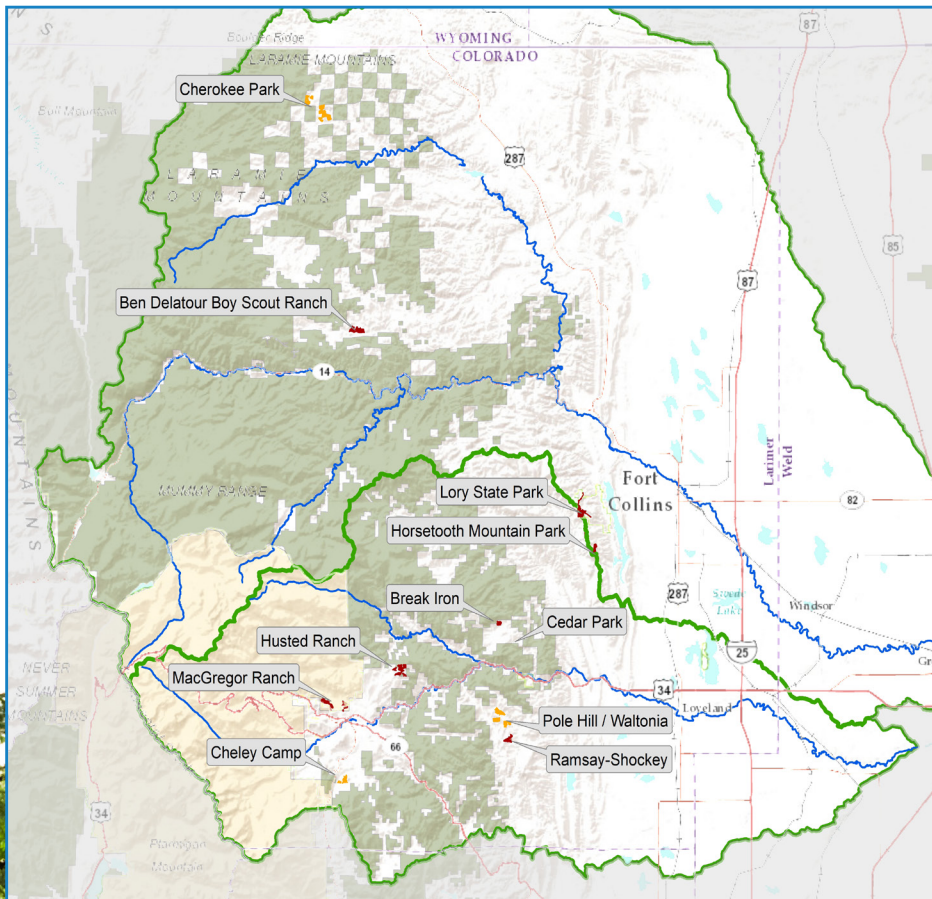
Our Solution

Access to clean water is the cornerstone of our thriving communities and businesses. It's the essence of life in Colorado. However, our clean water sources are facing increasing threats, especially from severe wildfires. Healthy forests are more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Our mission is to safeguard our mountain watersheds—the unsung heroes that provide us with vital resources like clean water, diverse wildlife habitats, and abundant recreational opportunities. By harnessing the collective efforts of government agencies, private partners, and nonprofit organizations, we are reducing wildfire risk, restoring ecological resilience, safeguarding communities and supporting local economies.

Overview

Throughout 2023 Peaks to People continued to play a vital role enhancing forest health and protecting water supplies in Northern Colorado. From providing sophisticated tools that helped direct funding to the most impactful projects in our area, to securing and leveraging significant funding for highly strategic projects, to acting as a convener to enhance collaboration at the watershed level, Peaks to People has grown our impact in meaningful ways.

Peaks to People Water Fund Current and Completed Projects*



- Active Projects
- Completed Projects
- Cache la Poudre and Big Thompson Rivers
- Cache la Poudre and Big Thompson Watershed Boundaries
- National Forest and Grasslands
- Rocky Mountain National Park

*Current and completed projects as of 12/5/2023 in partnership with Larimer Conservation District, Larimer County Natural Resources, and the Big Thompson Watershed Coalition.



2023 Impact

\$1,503,307 New and Leveraged Funds Invested

4 Projects Funded by Peaks to People

460 Acres of Forest Restoration/Fuels Reduction Work Funded

5,900 Metric Tons of Sediment Avoided into Water Supplies in the Event of a Wildfire

124 Acres of Active Crown Fire Avoided

60 Acres of Critical Wildlife Habitat Protected from Severe Wildfire

338 Homes Within 1km of Treatment Areas



Big Thompson River at Moraine Park

Funding Highlights

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Gates Family Foundation and an anonymous family foundation for their ongoing financial support, enabling our organization to pursue its vital mission. Their willingness to champion our cause inspires us to work even harder for a brighter future.

FOREST RESTORATION & WILDFIRE RISK MITIGATION GRANT

Peaks to People received a significant \$1,000,000 grant in March from the [Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation \(FRWRM\)](#) program, managed by the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). This grant supports forest health initiatives led by Larimer Conservation District (LCD) and the Big Thompson Watershed Coalition (BTWC), benefiting communities like Pole Hill and Waltonia in the Big Thompson Watershed. Out of 69 applicants from 23 counties, Peaks to People was one of only 4 organizations in Larimer County to receive this grant.

The success of this grant application could not have been possible without the help of our Big Thompson Initiative partners, LCD and BTWC. Together these partners have planned distinct and complementary projects to restore more than 450 acres on private land and create 1-3 mi of roadway fuel breaks. Paired with previous treatments, the footprint of these projects will span more than 3,000 acres across the landscape.

This collaborative project expands and leverages a 2022 Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP) grant awarded to Larimer County for forestry and wildfire mitigation work in the Big Thompson. Critical funding provided by a variety of stakeholders enables our organizations to protect local communities and support economies in the watershed.

NORTHERN COLORADO FIRESHED FUND

In May, Peaks to People was selected to receive funding from the new [Northern Colorado Fireshed Fund](#). This grant will further our work in convening the Big Thompson Watershed Health Partnership (BTWHP) and contribute to creating resilient landscapes in Northern Colorado. The fund, established in collaboration with the National Forest Foundation and the Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest, supports six local organizations in its inaugural round.

This grant will enhance our ability to support partners across multiple jurisdictions and promote collective efforts to improve forest and stream health to create more resilient landscapes and mitigate the potential impacts of wildfires on communities and ecosystems. The opportunity to collaborate with numerous dedicated stakeholders in this endeavor is a privilege we deeply appreciate.





Project Highlights

POLE HILL

Larimer Conservation District (LCD) has been enhancing forest health and reducing wildfire risk in the Pole Hill Community since 2017 and Peaks to People has been providing funds for this work since 2019. This latest phase of work encompasses approximately 400 project acres of privately owned parcels. The location of these treatments upstream of Pinewood, Flatiron, Carter Lake, and the soon to be Chimney Hollow Reservoirs could mitigate fire spread into the watersheds directly draining to these critical components of the Colorado-Big Thompson system. Downstream values include Barnes Ditch and the Loveland Greeley Canal which are valued by the City of Greeley.

In addition to Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding from NRCS, LCD and BTWC also received a COSWAP grant from Colorado Department of Natural Resources for the Pole Hill and Waltonia communities, which provided significant additional funding to the area. Big Thompson Initiative partners, including Northern Water and the Colorado State Forest Service have also provided crucial funding for LCD's work here.

WALTONIA

Located approximately halfway between Estes Park and Loveland, Colorado, this Big Thompson Watershed Coalition (BTWC) project includes 50 acres of forest treatment across small- to mid-acreage parcels within the community in addition to 1 - 3 mile of roadway defensible space work along Waltonia road. This community is located in a narrow draw between heavily forested, steep canyon walls and is at high risk for severe wildfire. Treatments here are intended to reduce wildfire risk and improve ingress/egress routes for emergency responders. With directly adjacent treatments currently ongoing in Pole Hill, treatments in this project area will accomplish cross-boundary wildfire risk reduction and enhance landscape-scale resiliency.

The project includes several community outreach events, workshops and community meetings hosted by BTWC to promote education and awareness around wildfire risk to raise the capacity for landowners to pursue their own mitigation activities. Community mitigation efforts will also be supported with several Air Curtain Burner "burn days". Similar to Pole Hill, this project has received a diverse array of funding from numerous partners including, Peaks to People Water Fund (CSFS-FRWRM), Northern Water, CO-DNR (COSWAP), and the U.S. Forest Service.



*Pole Hill Project Site June 2023
Photo: Peaks to People Water Fund*



*Waltonia Roadway Work November 2023
Photo: Big Thompson Watershed Coalition*

Project Highlights (cont)

CHEROKEE PARK

We also provided support in 2023 for Larimer Conservation District's (LCD) project in Cherokee Park, reinforcing our commitment to watershed protection through strategic investments in forest restoration. The 344-acre project, located in northern Larimer County, benefits the Poudre River Ranch Homeowners Association and the Diamond Creek Road Association in Livermore, CO. The Trail Creek watershed, draining into the Cache la Poudre River, has significant water diversions for Fort Collins and Greeley.

The project, supported by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and Larimer County Emergency Services, collaborates with the US Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife on adjacent sections. Forest restoration treatments aim to enhance resilience by returning the forest to a state of moderate fire intensity, reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires.



*Cherokee Park Project Site December 2023
Photo: Larimer Conservation District*



To learn more about these projects and others supported by Peaks to People visit the new [Projects](#) page on our website. Projects are selected utilizing our Watershed Investment Tool, a risk-based assessment and planning tool designed to estimate the benefits of forest fuels reduction. By analyzing pre-treatment forest fuel conditions we determine optimal treatment methods and locations to maximize return on investment.



*Forest Health Council Tour May 2023
Photo: Peaks to People Water Fund*

Community Outreach and Education

In May the Big Thompson Watershed Health Partnership (BTWHP) organized a field tour for members of the [Colorado Forest Health Council](#), a Governor-appointed group of influential leaders focused on advising the Governor on matters concerning forest health across the state.

Peaks to People team members played a crucial role in coordinating the tour, working closely with BTWHP partners to plan the field stops, ensure a well-structured itinerary, and facilitate the overall flow of the tour. We also collaborated with representatives from the Colorado Department of Natural Resources to align the tour stops and discussions with the Council's concerns and goals.

The tour covered a range of important topics, shedding light on post-fire recovery and funding, debris cleanup, and protection of water resources following the 2020 Cameron Peak Fire. We visited an active project site in Estes Park, where partners provided a technical explanation of pre-fire restoration efforts, highlighting the ongoing need for workforce development in this area. This stop also emphasized the significance of leveraging funding from multiple partners to amplify our collective impact in the watershed. The tour concluded with an overview of the complexities surrounding prescribed fire and fuels management.



BTWHP PODS Workshop July 2023
Photo: Peaks to People Water Fund

Collaboration - Navigating Big Problems with Collective Insight

Working collaboratively with our partners across the region is the cornerstone of our efforts. The scope of the problems facing our mountain watersheds is far too great for any one entity to remedy. This prompted Peaks to People to convene the [Big Thompson Watershed Health Partnership \(BTWHP\)](#) in late 2022. Comprised of 16 local, state and federal organizations, both public and private, our partnership aims to increase the pace and scale of forest and riparian health projects throughout the watershed by collaborating on projects and grant opportunities, leveraging funding and sharing valuable expertise and resources. Only by working together will we be able to increase the pace and scale of much needed forest and river health work within the watershed.



OVERARCHING GOALS OF THE BIG THOMPSON WATERSHED HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

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 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.



Board Retreat April 2023
Photo: Peaks to People Water Fund

Organizational Development

In April, Peaks to People's leadership team convened for a day-long retreat with a singular focus: crafting a visionary strategic plan.

The board worked together to develop new aspirational goals and strategies that will guide us through the upcoming three years. The experience of coming together in this manner left us inspired, rejuvenated, and eagerly anticipating the expansion of our role in supporting watershed protection efforts across Northern Colorado.

OVERARCHING GOALS OF PEAKS TO PEOPLE'S 3-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Mature into a Leading Partnership Driven Water Fund

Our partnerships will facilitate planning, education, outreach, collaborative fundraising, project implementation, monitoring and workforce/capacity building.

Steadily Increase Acres Treated

We will meaningfully and significantly increase annual acres treated, setting clear annual growth targets that we regularly reach or exceed.

Communicate our Value Proposition

We will have a robust communication strategy that highlights actual impacts, defines our water fund, establishes our leadership position and inspires giving.

Build a Strong and Healthy Organization

In order to continue to be well-prepared for future opportunities, we will build a strong, healthy and sustainable organization. This will include diverse and reliable funding, comprehensive internal standard operating procedures, a strong and effective board, a thriving staff, reliable budgeting tools, and the systems, processes, procedures and resources that afford us the capacity to respond to opportunities.

We are invigorated by the shared commitment to our cause and the strategic path that lies ahead. As we embark on this transformative journey, we invite our community to join us in our pursuit of a sustainable and thriving future. Your continued support fuels our passion and amplifies our mission. Together, we are charting a course toward a brighter tomorrow.

Special Thanks to Our Partners

The Nature Conservancy of Colorado

Gates Family Foundation

Colorado Forest Restoration Institute

Larimer Conservation District

Big Thompson Watershed Coalition

Estes Valley Watershed Coalition

Larimer County Natural Resources

Larimer County Office of Emergency Management

Larimer County Conservation Corps

Northern Water

Colorado State Forest Service

U.S. Forest Service

Natural Resource Conservation Service

The Ember Alliance

City of Loveland

City of Greeley

City of Fort Collins

Loveland Fire and Rescue Authority

Estes Valley Land Trust

Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed

Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative

National Forest Foundation

Center for Collaborative Conservation

Brendle Group



Cache La Poudre River, Fort Collins



Peaks to People Water Fund

PROTECTING WATERSHEDS | SUSTAINING HABITATS | ENRICHING COMMUNITIES

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