



**COLORADO OUTDOOR
STEWARDSHIP COALITION**

**Colorado's Public Lands:
Stewardship in Challenging Economic Times**

**Report on the Impact of
Volunteer Stewardship in 2011**

This report has been compiled and publically released in April, 2012 through the combined efforts of the Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition, a collaboration staffed and organized by Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado.

The Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition includes representatives from the following participating organizations and agencies:

- Bureau of Land Management
- Colorado Foundation for Water Education
- Colorado Fourteeners Initiative
- Colorado Mountain Club
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Colorado State Forest Service
- Colorado State Trails Program
- Colorado Youth Corps Association
- Jefferson County Open Space
- National Park Service
- Responsible Recreation Foundation
- Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers
- REI
- Rocky Mountain Field Institute
- US Forest Service
- Wildlands Restoration Volunteers
- Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado

Many thanks to all of the organizations that provided data, answered questions and posed new ones. These organizations are listed in the appendix.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are many challenges facing Colorado's outdoors that are ongoing. The combination of budget cuts to land management agencies, environmental stressors, population and development pressure and increasing use of our lands by the public creates a need for our attention and participation to ensure these places are protected.

The good news is that our communities care tremendously about these public lands, are willing to help and in 2011 contributed over **1.2 million hours** of volunteer labor. Volunteers cared for habitats, restored burn areas, built and maintained trails, preserved historic structures, educated youth and adults about the environment, acted as trail ambassadors, lived as campground hosts, staffed visitor centers and much, much more. The combined value of these volunteer stewardship efforts equates to over **\$27 million**.

While these numbers are down slightly from 2010, it is still a significant contribution of volunteer time. There are many reasons these numbers may have decreased including reporting discrepancies, less capacity to manage volunteers because of staffing challenges or fewer opportunities for volunteers to contribute. Because this is only the second year of collecting this data, it is hard to know how variable the data is from year to year even in the best of circumstances.

The Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition, a partnership of stewardship organizations and land management agencies at the federal, state and local levels has come together to prepare this report about volunteer stewardship. We are working together to enhance community partnerships that will benefit Colorado's outdoors, to highlight the importance of volunteer stewardship efforts and to find ways to build our collective capacity to engage our communities in caring for our public lands. We are also working to increase the visibility and appeal of public engagement in stewardship activities.

There are enormous benefits of outdoor stewardship volunteerism. The amount of work done is a huge asset to land managers and of great benefit to our public lands. It allows land managers to extend the reach of their budgets extensively. The intangible benefits to the volunteers themselves from their heightened connection to the land are also tremendous.

There continue to be significant challenges. Volunteer labor is not free. It requires sufficient capacity to manage and train skilled volunteers to be as effective as they can be and to ensure that they have a great experience. Volunteer management and training programs require sufficient funding and support. With that support, the investment in volunteers can be leveraged many times over.

The outdoor stewardship movement needs to be strengthened. The challenges faced in collecting consistent data demonstrate the need for more cohesion and collaboration between organizations and agencies and across sectors. By working together more effectively and creating collaborative efforts, we can mobilize a million people who love Colorado AND we can also put them to work to make their experience both productive and educational.

A CALL TO ACTION: ENERGIZING A MILLION PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT COLORADO'S OUTDOORS

As our nation celebrates the 42st anniversary of Earth Day on April 22, 2012 we present this report on the impact of volunteers' outdoor stewardship¹ preservation work on Colorado's natural resources. These past four years have been trying times, with all levels of government facing unprecedented challenges in creating and sustaining balanced budgets. Across the nation, personal households have also met some of the most challenging economic hardships since the Great Depression. Despite these challenges, thousands of people in 2011 were willing to give their time and resources to volunteer to protect the beautiful outdoors they love. Americans are beginning to realize "that pitting a healthy environment against a healthy economy is a false choice—we must and can have both. By investing in our natural wealth and heritage, we can create jobs associated with recreation and land stewardship, while passing on a vital natural legacy to our children and grandchildren."²

Colorado has seen huge growth over the past several decades, and it is increasingly important for Coloradans to contribute to the protection of our state's natural resources and public lands through volunteerism, advocacy efforts, voting for conservation measures, and financial support. However, these current investments are inadequate to maintain and sustain our natural assets for future generations. As governmental budgets shrink, new models of managing lands for the public benefit need to be developed based on prioritization of needs and assessment of the current environment. As we are faced with ever shrinking public budgets, private place-based stewardship organizations are needed to pick up more of the slack, and often find themselves straining their budgets and staff, while still unable to meet the growing gap in stewardship needs.

In early 2011, the Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition worked to establish the first aggregated baseline of annual volunteer information and data from federal, state and local public land agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs) and recreational user group working for the protection of Colorado's public lands. From this data we found that in 2010,

Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition

Identifying Needs within the Stewardship Community

A collaboration of non-profit stewardship organizations and federal, state, and local land managers has been convening for the past two years as members of the Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition. This group organized the November 2010 Stewardship Forum where participants noted several ongoing areas that stewardship efforts will need to focus on in the coming years. These areas include ensuring that there is sufficient skilled volunteer capacity that is effectively coordinated across the state, as well as launching a public awareness and education campaign for stewardship work. There was also a call for understanding what we are currently doing collectively around stewardship and the impact of that work.

Stewardship Forum participants issued a collective challenge *to engage a million Coloradans in taking care of our state's outdoors resources, helping to preserve, protect and sustain our natural resources for generations to come.*

¹ For the purposes of this report, stewardship is defined as the active and direct involvement of people caring for our public lands including (but not limited to) trail work, historic and cultural preservation, environmental education, visitor and interpretive services, monitoring, invasive weed control, re-vegetation, and habitat improvements.

² America's Great Outdoors, *America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations*, February 2011, Accessed April 6th, 2012, <http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/files/2011/02/AGO-Executive-Summary-Text-Only-2-7-11.pdf>

volunteers contributed over **1.3 million hours** of stewardship work in the outdoors. The 2011 report aggregated data based on 2010 activity, while acknowledging the inherent challenges in data collection and the overall complexities of measuring volunteer stewardship impact. Our report this year builds on the 2011 report, and addresses the increasing challenge of “*doing more with less*” as we continue to experience the lasting effects of the recession. Everyone involved in this study understands and appreciates the heightened need to establish sustainable practices and methods of managing public demand and public access issues that challenge long term natural resource protection. There are no easy solutions, particularly as public land management agencies and NGOs continue to experience diminishing resources that force decisions resulting in workforce reduction, fewer dollars for materials acquisition, and the need to engage more volunteers without internal resources to do so. Narrowing this capacity gap is critical for all of us and there are no easy or “free” ways of doing that.

NOW MORE THAN EVER: AN URGENCY TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

It is no surprise that Coloradans and visitors to our state, which boasts of over 300 days of sunshine a year, love our outdoors and go to great lengths to enjoy it. In 2007, over 28 million people travelled in Colorado in order to recreate in our parks and national forests, on our trails and in our urban green spaces. Collectively, outdoor recreation activities contributed over \$9.8 billion to the state’s revenues, or 10% of the state’s total economy. Nationally, outdoor recreation contributes over \$730 billion to the economy³, and nearly 6.5 million jobs. While there has been little comprehensive research to assess the impact of total economic activity generated by recreation in Colorado, the estimates vary between \$10-\$15 billion dollars every year, supporting about 107,000 jobs across the state.⁴

In April 2010, President Obama launched the America Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative. One of the key goals of the AGO is to empower and engage all Americans in sharing the responsibility of conserving, restoring and providing better access to our lands and waters in order to leave a healthy, vibrant outdoor legacy for future generations to come, and “that lasting conservation solutions should rise from the American people.”⁵ As part of the AGO process, public meetings were held across the county to ascertain the public’s perspective on outdoor resources and how communities could effectively respond to ensuring those resources were sustainable for future generations. Suggestions focused on public engagement in outdoor conservation work and strengthening the existing systems already in place. Attendees recognized the need to provide more quality jobs, career pathways and service opportunities to interest young people in conservation and the great outdoors, and the need to make the federal government a more effective conservation partner in part by strengthening the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The AGO report underscored the need to raise the public’s awareness of the value and benefit of America’s great outdoors and to conserve and restore our National Parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and other federal lands and waters, as a means of encouraging stewardship of public lands.⁶

³ Hooper, Troy. “Outdoor Recreation Economy Outpacing U.S. Financial Growth.” *The Colorado Independent*, 05 Oct. 2011, <https://coloradoindependent.com/101584/udall-outdoor-recreation-economy-outpacing-u-s-financial-growth> (accessed Apr. 5, 2012).

⁴ Colorado Parks and Wildlife. *Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*, 2008. <http://parks.state.co.us/SiteCollectionImages/parks/Programs/LWCF/SCORP/Section%204%20Economic%20Activity%20Attributed%20to%20Outdoor%20Recreation%20in%20Colorado.pdf> (accessed Apr. 5, 2012).

⁵ America’s Great Outdoors, *Promise to Future Generations*.

⁶ America’s Great Outdoors, *Promise to Future Generations*.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES:

FIRE!

VOLUNTEERS WANT TO HELP!

The risk of fire increases dramatically when we have dry periods especially with mild winters. Many other factors increase the risk of fire, including the abundant stands of dead timber that have been devastated by the mountain pine beetle and other diseases spreading through our forests. The increase of development between wildlands and urban areas further heightens the risk to people and property. Many communities face backlash from residents if they try to thin forests and decrease the amount of available fuel. Decades of mountain community development has meant that forests have become thicker than would naturally occur. Two notable examples of devastating fires include the Hayman fire in 2002 which burned 138,000 acres, destroyed 133 homes and cost \$40 million in firefighting costs and the Fourmile fire in western Boulder County in 2010 which burned 169 homes and 6181 acres and caused an estimated \$217 million in damages.

Volunteers have spent many hours re-seeding, re-foresting, controlling erosion and more in these areas to restore the burn areas. Trained sawyers in youth conservation corps are also a primary resource to assist forest personnel in safe tree removal.



Volunteers rake and reseed mountain sides at Fourmile Fire Restoration project, March 2011

The US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service manage about 35% of all land in Colorado. Clearly, the underlying theme of the AGO report, which challenges our nation to identify effective ways to steward our public lands with less government investment, resonates for us here in Colorado as we look to strengthen public engagement in outdoor stewardship.

ONGOING CHALLENGES WITH FUNDING

Coloradans have long recognized that our quality of life is directly tied to our outdoor natural resources and have overwhelmingly supported the preservation and protection of Colorado lands. With the creation of the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund (GOCO) in 1992, Coloradans took a major step toward preserving our state's outdoor heritage. Coloradans voted in 1992 to create the following distribution model: 40% towards the Conservation Trust Fund used by local governments, 10% to Colorado State Parks, and 50% towards Great Outdoors Colorado. Since 1994 under this amendment, GOCO has awarded nearly \$757 million for more than 3,400 projects throughout the state, including such efforts as acquiring new park lands, preserving open space, building trails and urban parks, restoring wetlands for water fowl, and supporting community recreation through soccer and baseball field construction. GOCO has protected more than 800,000 acres of open space in perpetuity.⁷ These funds are capped, and any spillover goes to the Public School Capital Construction Assistance Fund. GOCO money is the bedrock of Colorado's conservation and park and recreation projects.

There have been efforts many times to either divert lottery funds to other causes, reduce funding to conservation programs or most recently, to start another lottery. In 2012, the most recent effort has been to attempt to create a new lottery for state veterans' services. While funding for veterans is critical, this method of increasing funding for services could have a severe impact on parks, recreation, open space, and wildlife projects. Just because there is a new lottery does not mean that more people will go out and buy tickets – instead, both lotteries would be competing for people's money.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is administered through the Department of Transportation, and provides funds to the states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses. Congress

⁷ Great Outdoors Colorado, "Accomplishments." Great Outdoors Colorado. n.d. <http://www.goco.org/accomplishments/> (accessed Apr. 5, 2012).

has more than once attempted to cut this budget for recreational programs in order to fund a variety of other competing needs. Many Colorado agencies rely on these funds to develop new trails and maintain and restore existing ones. Again, in 2012 budget debates, it was a close vote as to whether RTP funds would be cut or not.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is administered through the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and provides matching grants to states and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities.⁸ It is the principal source of federal dollars for expanding America's parks, and has done more to protect open space and develop outdoor recreation opportunities than any other federal program in American history. These funds have protected more than 7.6 million hectares, and supported more than 41,000 parks, ball fields, and other recreation projects.⁹ It was launched in 1964 in the Eisenhower administration, and is funded through royalties paid by offshore oil and gas producers in federal waters. While the fund is authorized to receive \$900 million annually, Congress has allowed it to reach that level only once in its long history. In 2008, it received \$156 million.

Some cities, counties, and recreation and conservation districts also have publicly funded local and regional open space programs that work to preserve urban and rural open space and natural areas by providing planning, management and maintenance of neighborhood parks and open space. Some of these tax allocations for open space programs will sunset in the next several years. While these locally generated dollars and GOCO funds for acquisition and preservation are critical, it is also vital that we allocate funds for proper stewardship of these lands once acquired.

Identifying Gaps and Capacity

Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado in partnership with Douglas County Open Space and members of the Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition recently applied to Great Outdoors Colorado for a 2012 Conservation Excellence grant, as well as to other sources. These grants, if awarded, will help fund a study to analyze Colorado's current ability to advance stewardship of public and protected lands. The study will identify current conditions, and future trends and projections facing both Colorado public land managers and our communities in their collective desire to maintain the state's outdoor resources and residents' quality of life.

The analysis will address/assess the following:

- The extent of existing gaps between what land managers are required or need to do to effectively manage habitats, trails and related infrastructure, cultural resources and educational programming *versus* what their budgets and current capacity allow them to do including an assessment of maintenance backlogs.
- The capacity of community resources, including organizations, people and funders, to fill financial gaps as well as the engagement of the public as active participants in the care of these lands.
- The perceptions and attitudes of the public, outdoor stewardship organizations, volunteers and land managers regarding: the role that public lands play in the quality of life and the economies of Colorado; the role, responsibility and willingness of the public to actively participate in land management strategies; and effective strategies and messaging to enhance our capacity to manage these resources.

⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior - National Park Service, "Land & Water Conservation Fund." 15 Mar. 2012. <http://www.nps.gov/lwcf/> (accessed Apr. 5, 2012).

⁹ DiPeso, Jim. "Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition." 9 Mar. 2011. <http://www.lwcfcoalition.org/in-the-news/435-washingto...> (accessed Apr. 9, 2012).

Case Study #1:
**“Providing technical expertise and a
whole lotta people power”**
**Rocky Mountain Field Institute
(RMFI)**

RMFI has been a technical resource for land management agencies since 1982, providing innovative on-the-ground solutions to tough management issues while also supplying the volunteer people power to get the work done. One of its largest on-going projects is the Garden of the Gods Restoration Program. With 100 times the visitor density of Rocky Mountain National Park, the Garden of the Gods is characterized by countless social trails, enormous erosion gullies, and severe vegetation loss. Since 2002, RMFI has engaged Colorado Springs residents in the hands-on restoration of the park by restoring acres of damaged landscape and reconstructing miles of trail. Over 9,000 community volunteers have contributed the equivalent of **4.7 YEARS** worth of volunteer hours (41,000 hours) moving and hauling rocks, and planting seed. RMFI makes an effort of engaging a broad spectrum of the community, including youth and adults, and people from businesses, military, public and private schools, churches, and civic groups. In a community with wide-ranging views regarding politics, religion, and social issues, its program has brought people together to focus on what they have in common—a sense of place and love of the landscape.

RMFI 2011 Statistics:

- 1,300 individual volunteers
- 2,994 volunteer day attendances
- 20,196 volunteer hours
- \$431,387 volunteer labor donated
- 12 acres restored
- 1 mile technical trail reconstruction
- 1,900 transplants
- 460 rock steps constructed

Despite these important strides in creating a sustainable future for our public lands, more work is needed to be done if we are to accommodate a growing population and increasing recreational pressures on our public lands, shrinking budgets to maintain and preserve them, as well as new challenges to the few sources of funding upon which many agencies rely. In the past decade, Colorado has grown 16.9% to over five million residents, and is the fourth largest state in terms of percentage of population growth rate, according to the 2010 Census. In addition, by 2030, the State Demography Office estimates that we will gain another 2.2 million residents, which represents a growth rate of over 50 percent since 2005.¹⁰ In these next few decades, as our small towns become cities to accommodate this influx of population, residential development and demand will further diminish open space, and increase our water and energy consumption.

The fall out of the recent recession continues to affect our state. At the end of FY 2011, state revenues were 7 percent below pre-recession levels, and recovery continues to be slow. Colorado is likely to face a \$500-600 million deficit in FY 2013, which threatens the development and continuation of recreation and stewardship programs, often among programs to be cut.¹¹ The Department of Natural Resources has recently undertaken a major restructuring of Colorado State Parks and the Division of Wildlife, consolidating the two agencies into Colorado Parks and Wildlife to reduce costs and eliminate redundancies. The state general fund allocation to State Parks has been completely eliminated, effectively cutting the budget for this agency in half. Four state parks have closed since 2010 and public services have been reduced. Local and county government open space programs and stewardship organizations are equally threatened in these uncertain economic times as priorities shift and competition increases for private sector investment. More than one nonprofit stewardship organization has had to close due to financial challenges.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, “Colorado.” *State & County Quick Facts*. n.d. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/08000.html> (accessed Apr. 5, 2012).

¹¹ Sunshine Review, “Colorado State Budget.” n.d. http://sunshinereview.org/index.php/Colorado_state_budget (accessed Apr. 5, 2012).

VOLUNTEERS: VALUABLE, BUT NOT FREE

Even in these troubling economic times, Coloradans want to get involved and give back to their communities, their state and the outdoors. Every year increasing numbers of volunteers get involved in causes ranging from veteran's services, tutoring children, and stewardship work. In 2010, Colorado ranked 13th in the nation in terms of volunteer service, because almost 1.3 million Coloradans volunteered over 164 million hours in human service, health, education and environmental service. Their volunteer efforts contribute \$3.3 billion to our state economy.¹² *The Independent Sector*, the national coalition of nonprofit organizations that establishes IRS approved volunteer labor costs, valued volunteer labor in Colorado in 2011 at \$22.03 per hour.

In Colorado, outdoor volunteering is an increasingly popular activity and is often a vehicle for expanding opportunities for children to learn about the environment, for families to improve their physical health, and recreationists to give back to places they fondly and regularly use. Outdoor volunteering, among other direct experiences with nature, also provides opportunities to strengthen the public's awareness and concern for environmental issues and increased conservation activism.

Many people assume that because a "volunteer" is someone who is giving their time and/or resources for free, there are no costs associated. However, reality is that there are costs involved in engaging volunteers, particularly at the scale required by many natural resource management agencies. Volunteer management at a larger scale requires professional paid staff who must invest time, energy, resources and intention in the building and retention of a reliable and trained volunteer workforce and the organization of quality volunteer projects. Volunteers need to be trained in order to be most effective. Trained, skilled volunteer leaders can lead and train other volunteers, but the training takes time and skilled instruction. Outreach efforts to recruit volunteers become paramount in an age with many competing needs for people's spare time and energy. Nonprofit organizations that specialize in volunteer management also do a great deal of educational and public awareness work and are required to raise their funds annually, both of which also require sufficient capacity.

¹² Volunteering In America, "Volunteering in Colorado." n.d. <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/CO> (accessed Apr. 5, 2012).

Case Study #2:

Friends of the Dillon Ranger District

Friends of the Dillon Ranger District (FDRD) has been coordinating volunteer outdoor stewardship projects and outreach programs on National Forest lands in Summit County since 2005. Since that time, our organization has grown from a handful of concerned citizens with an idea into a group that plans and implements over 70 volunteer projects and multiple outreach events and activities each year.

With millions of people traveling to Summit County every year for the recreational amenities provided by public lands, it is critical that anyone who values the opportunities provided by our local landscape have opportunities to give back to these lands and promote sustainable use of our trails, forests, and watersheds. Our group is a good example of how local, place-based volunteer organizations can have a significant impact on public lands surrounding rural communities around Colorado.

- 800 feet of turnpike constructed
- 16 miles of trail maintained/improved
- 161 drainage and erosion structures (drainage dips and check dams) built
- 3,721 visitors contacted by Ranger Patrollers



Case Study #3:
The Western Colorado
Conservation Corps

The Western Colorado Conservation Corps (WCCC) provides youth and young adults in Mesa, Delta, Montrose and Gunnison counties the opportunity to work and learn on public lands projects while earning a wage and the ability to achieve an AmeriCorps education award and professional training. The WCCC is one of ten Youth Corps accredited through the Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA). WCCC Corps members work 40 hours a week in temporary positions that help land managers with long-term stewardship efforts. The WCCC introduces young people to values and ethics important to the future of public lands.

2011 Statistics:

- 197 youth and young adults were employed and trained by the WCCC.
- Over 50,750 hours of field work were performed by WCCC Corps members.
- 7,000 hours of environmental, lifeskills, career and academic training were completed.
- WCCC youth achieved 116 professional certifications.
- \$96,000 in AmeriCorps education awards were earned by WCCC Corps members for higher education.
- 6 Corpsmembers earned their GED's.
- 8 Bureau of Land Management Interns
- 5 Energy Internships with High Noon Solar through a SESP Grant

COLLECTIVE IMPACT STUDY: 2011 OUTDOOR VOLUNTEERING IN COLORADO

The collection of aggregate data about volunteer conservation stewardship across public agencies in Colorado was collected for the first time in 2011, reflecting 2010 activity. In 2010, volunteers contributed **over 1.3 million hours**, valued at nearly \$28 million. For 2011 data, the data collected was expanded to request more detailed information such as the number of unique volunteers, volunteer instances as well as volunteer hours, and how those volunteers spent their time in the field. There are many challenges with these questions because of the lack of standardization in data collection processes, as well as diminishing capacity to actually collect the data from the volunteers.

Data Collection Process

Similar to data collection completed for 2010, a brief survey was developed to assess volunteer activity on public lands, surveying land managers, stewardship groups, volunteer groups, recreational user groups, youth corps, and AmeriCorps programs that actively use volunteers for outdoor stewardship work. Survey questions were distributed electronically with follow-up phone research to:

- Federal, state and local county and municipal land management agencies that utilize volunteers directly and/or who rely on volunteer groups as part of their management functions;
- Non-governmental organizations including non-profit volunteer organizations whose missions are to engage the public in acts of stewardship and who work primarily in partnership with public land management agencies;
- Public and private agencies that use paid volunteers such as AmeriCorps and youth conservation corps, whose members are paid small stipends as part of their national or community service efforts.

The aggregate data from the public land agencies demonstrates the total number of volunteer hours contributed in 2011. Follow-up questions included: how did these volunteers come to that land agency to perform stewardship work? In general, we learned that volunteers come to work on public lands through three primary routes:

- 1) The volunteer has a direct relationship with the land agency, such as living nearby or recreating frequently on land that the agency manages;
- 2) The volunteer comes through a work project organized by a non-profit stewardship organization or user group; or,
- 3) The volunteer participates through a stipend community service program such as a youth corps or AmeriCorps program.

Measures

The data that was collected directly from participating agencies for this report, based on 2011 volunteer activity included:

- Number of unique volunteers,
- Number of volunteer hours,
- The number of hours worked in different kinds of stewardship volunteer work, such as trail building, environmental education, historic preservation, and habitat management.

There are no standards across agencies or organizations for how and what volunteer data is collected, so available data varies widely between agencies, even ones within the same governmental department. Volunteer hours and number of unique volunteers are the most accurate of all data reported since these two measurements are the most widely reported and collected across agencies and organizations. There are some agencies that use volunteers, but do not collect data about them and their work. Other agencies did not respond to requests for information. Some agencies may have been inadvertently missed in our survey, while still others had personnel changes that meant consistent data was not collected from year to year.

In the past year since the last report, several nonprofit organizations have dissolved due to funding challenges; other volunteer programs had incurred programmatic and funding cutbacks. Federal and state agencies have been challenged as they continue to undergo internal restructuring and staff changes. The data collection process that was conducted for this report demonstrates the very issue of organizational capacity: most agencies and organizations struggle in their ability to effectively record data as they prioritize internal resources to get work done on the ground. Despite data collection and reporting challenges, we were able to gather sufficient data to extrapolate and apply some uniform findings even though, in some cases, we are unable to report exact numbers.

Primary Respondents

Federal Agencies

USDA Forest Service
Bureau of Land Management
The National Park Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service

State Agencies

Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Colorado State Forest Service

18 Municipal and County Government Agencies (note: some of these agencies represent multiple smaller agencies)

98 Non-Governmental and Nonprofit Stewardship Organizations
(Note: some of the smaller groups belong to coalitions)

National and Community Service Stipend Volunteer Programs

AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps
Colorado Youth Corps Association

Data Highlights

Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours and total number of unique volunteers were the only recorded fields that were consistent within each collected dataset. Table 1 illustrates hours of volunteer labor organized through agencies. Approximately 52% of total of 1,233,790 recorded volunteer hours were working on federal lands; about 22% on municipal and county open space and park lands; and the remaining 26% on state lands.

Table 1: Total Recorded Volunteer Hours during the 2011 Volunteer Season

AGENCY	Total Volunteer Hours for 2011	Percentage of total	Total Volunteer Hours for 2010
Federal Land Agencies	638,813	52%	721,075
State Land Agencies	320,872	26%	271,304
Local and County Municipal Agencies	274,105	22%	310,290
TOTAL	1,233,790	100%	1,302,669

The total labor value rate of volunteer work throughout all agencies in 2011 equates to **\$27,180,393.70** based on the volunteer labor rate of \$22.03 – which is the rate for Colorado volunteers that is used by *Independent Sector*.¹³

Table 2: Source of Volunteers

Volunteer Source	Volunteer Hours for 2011	Percentage of total	Volunteer Hours for 2010
Direct Agency Volunteers	272,308	22%	256,662
Nonprofit Stewardship Organized	475,470	39%	360,332
Stipend Volunteers	486,012	39%	685,675
TOTAL	1,233,790	100%	1,302,669

The three different primary sources of volunteers, those organized by non-profit stewardship groups, direct agency volunteers or stipend volunteers are all important to the public land agencies that they work with and do a wide variety of stewardship work. As evidenced by Table 2 above, the stipend volunteers and those organized by a non-profit represent the largest group of volunteers contributing to public lands work with 486,012 hours or 475,470 hours respectively, both giving 39 percent of the total. The volunteers managed directly by the land agencies contributed 272,308 hours, or 22 percent of the total. Land agencies vary as to whether they have volunteer coordinators within their offices and some

¹³ The Independent Sector, "State Values for Volunteer Time." *Independent Sector's Value of Volunteer Time*. 2012. http://independentsector.org/volunteer_time (accessed Apr. 5, 2012).

**Case #4:
The Coalition for the Upper South Platte
(CUSP)**

CUSP has worked since 1998 to protect the 2,600-square-mile watershed that reaches from the Continental Divide to Strontia Springs Reservoir, southwest of Denver. The watershed has over 1.6 million acres of public lands; it provides the majority of drinking water for Colorado's residents; it is renowned for its "gold-medal" fishing streams; and it is home to numerous threatened and endangered species. The Upper South Platte Watershed varies in elevation from about 6,000 to over 14,000 feet and contains five major municipal and several smaller reservoirs.

2012 marks the 10th anniversary of the Hayman Fire, the largest fire in Colorado's history that burned 138,000 acres and 133 homes in 20 days. Most of the fire (72%) stayed on the Pike National Forest south and west of Denver and northwest of Colorado Springs. While the land is slowly healing, the fire's devastation continues to negatively impact surrounding water, plant, and wildlife resources. Due to the fire, the soils remain loose and unable to efficiently soak up water. Run-offs loaded with sediments deposited into the South Platte River have affected major water reservoirs that provide over 75% of Colorado's water for municipal, industrial, and agricultural uses. 2012 volunteer work in this area will involve building erosion control structures, planting willows and ponderosa pine, removing invasive weeds; building log fence to protect restoration sites; planting and mulching native vegetation.

Additional work includes trail restoration, numerous stream restoration sites, and potential development of disabled access fishing areas.

CUSP 2011:

Over 3400 volunteers completed 18,100 hours of work at 450 sites, including:

- 762 acres of fuels mitigation
- 500 acres treated and chipped
- 1600 slash piles stacked for winter burning
- 217 cords of firewood provided to the needy
- 2135 loads of slash delivered to our slash site
- 1.5 miles of in-stream river restoration
- 9 miles of bank stabilization, willow planting and river edge cleanup
- 100,000 plus willows, harvested, processed and planted
- 3180 hours working with students and raising awareness of forest health and ecology.

are more able to manage volunteers directly than others. Some agencies do not manage volunteers at all while others have sophisticated programs.

As mentioned above, the data that was gathered about the specific type of work that volunteers did was not reported by every agency, but extrapolation provides a good baseline to determine what the largest areas of volunteer work was.

Table 3: Type of Work Completed

Type of Work	Total Number of Hours	Percentage of Total
Trail Work	138,342	12%
Environmental Ed.	85,866	7%
Trail Patrol	66,421	6%
Historic Preservation	46,385	4%
Habitat Restoration	44,456	4%
Camphost	44,156	4%
Maintenance	28,361	2%
Visitor Information	25,638	2%
Administration	5,835	>1%
Monitoring/Research	4,178	>1%
Other (trail planning, animal care, wildfire protection, etc)	48,241	4%
TOTAL	537,879	47%

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Thousands of people throughout Colorado donated 1,233,790 of hours in 2011 to outdoor volunteer projects, valued at \$27,180,393. However, despite these impressive figures, overall outdoor volunteer hours decreased between 2010 and 2011 by nearly 5%. It is likely that this decrease is the result of a couple of issues:

Data Reporting. Some agency staff in positions responsible for data collection, in addition to the way that data was collected, changed in the past year. Reporting inconsistencies likely accounts for a great deal of discrepancy from year to year, and with few systems in place to collect data, it is often up to the individual as to how it is collected from year to year. For example, the USDA Forest Service reported about 84,000 hours fewer

this year, which dramatically reduced the number of hours reported in this report. In this case, they had switched over to a new type of reporting system for volunteers.

Smaller Operating Budgets and Infrastructure Challenges. Many organizations have had to significantly cut expenses and are simply without the internal resources to effectively collect and manage data. Funds are most frequently associated with direct project costs leaving operational and administrative needs unfunded. Continued threats to federal programs such as the Recreational Trails Program and Land and Water Conservation Funds that directly impact state programs such as the State Trails Program, will undoubtedly challenge even project-based funding for volunteer projects.

CONCLUSION

Much like how public schools require funding to operate successfully, public lands also require adequate funding to be well cared for and to be kept safe, open, and enjoyable for people to enjoy. Unfortunately, it seems that budget cuts hit these two sectors the hardest – even though they will both contribute significantly to the economic and social success of our children and our country. Our public lands need help and part of the solution is to make an investment in public engagement for their care. The combination of factors related to budget cuts, population and development pressure and increasing use of these lands demands a response. It is essential that our policy makers, funders and community leaders recognize that Coloradans care deeply about our outdoors and will go to great lengths to help protect and enhance them.

The benefits of outdoor stewardship volunteerism are many. The amount of work done, as shown in the case studies outlined here, is a huge asset and benefits our public lands by allowing land managers to extend the reach of their budgets extensively. In 2011, volunteers contributed over **1.2 million hours** to the stewardship of our public lands. These volunteers spent crucial hours caring for habitats, restoring burn areas, building and maintaining trails, preserving historic structures, educating youth and adults about the environment, acting as trail ambassadors, living as campground hosts, staffing visitor centers and much, much more. The combined value of these volunteer stewardship efforts equates to over **\$27 million**.

Even though numbers are down about 5% from 2010, this is still a very significant contribution of volunteer time and underscores the need for challenges to both be recognized and dealt with accordingly. Two of the major challenges highlighted in the report are the need for both NGOs and land managers to accomplish as much or more with smaller operating budgets and develop a standardized way to collect data. However, it is important to remember that this is only the second year of collecting this data, so it is hard to know how variable this data is from year to year, even in the best of circumstances.

Volunteer labor is not free. It requires sufficient capacity within the land management agencies and within the nonprofit groups organizing work on their lands. Volunteers need to be managed and trained to be as effective as they can be and to ensure that they have a great experience that makes them want to return again and again. Volunteer management and training programs require sufficient funding and support to allow that investment to be leveraged many times over.

The data collection process for this report demonstrates how difficult the capacity question is. Agencies and organizations are challenged to have the staff and systems in place to collect and track their data

and accomplishments. Many of the different agencies, even ones within the same department, record data differently and in many cases, what data is recorded is up to the individual on the ground. There is little-to-no standardization of data collection across agencies. It is absolutely critical to be able to measure and demonstrate the success of volunteer stewardship activities in order to increase capacity and build the case to our decision makers that an investment in stewardship is essential.

The outdoor stewardship movement needs to and can be strengthened. The challenges faced in collecting consistent data demonstrate the need for more cohesion and collaboration between organizations and agencies and across sectors. By working together more effectively we can not only mobilize a million people who love Colorado, we can also put them to work to make their experience both productive in terms of results and educational. Engaging youth in job training and community service programs and leveraging the passion and commitment of volunteers will go a long ways towards filling the gaps in funding and capacity. This should not be overlooked as a critical part of the solution.

APPENDIX: DATA BY AGENCY

FEDERAL AGENCIES	Unique Volunteers	Stipend Volunteers	Number of Hours	Total Value
BLM	4,520	635	227,110	\$ 5,003,233
National Park Service	2,677	Did not differentiate	176,743	\$ 3,893,648
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Did not differentiate	Did not differentiate	20,815	\$ 458,554
US Forest Service	5,951	531	214,146	\$ 4,717,636
Subtotal FEDERAL	13,148	1166	638,814	\$ 14,073,071
STATE AGENCIES	Unique Volunteers	Stipend Volunteers	Number of Hours	Total Value
Colorado Parks and Wildlife	9,561	157	308,923	\$ 6,805,574
Colorado State Forest Service	822	None	11,949	\$ 263,236
Subtotal STATE	10,383	157	320,872	\$ 7,068,810
LOCAL/COUNTY PROGRAMS	Unique Volunteers	Stipend Volunteers	Number of Hours	Total Value
County Programs				
Boulder County Parks & Open Space	3,417	None	33,817	\$ 744,989
Douglas County	Did not provide	Did not provide	3,749	\$ 82,590
San Miguel County	13	None	75	\$ 1,652
El Paso County Parks	2,057	22	2,757	\$ 60,737
Larimer County Department of Natural Resources	368	None	44,000	\$ 969,320
Eagle County	Did not provide	Did not provide	29,486	\$ 649,577
Jefferson County	934	None	22,208	\$ 489,242
Local Municipalities				
Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services	2,258	None	8,302	\$ 182,893
Town of Castle Rock Parks and Recreation	Did not provide	Did not provide	6,059	\$ 133,480
City of Aurora Open Space and Natural Resources	1,339	None	4,804	\$ 105,832
Fort Collins Natural Areas	1,454	None	12,151	\$ 267,687
City of Boulder Parks and Recreation	3,200	None	38,000	\$ 837,140
City and County of Broomfield	10	None	179	\$ 3,943
City of Lakewood Regional Parks	745	None	4,299	\$ 94,707
City of Lafayette	170	None	3,450	\$ 76,004
City of Boulder Open Space and Natural Parks	1,100	None	25,950	\$ 571,679
City of Denver Parks and Recreation	8,517	None	33,568	\$ 739,525
Town of Breckenridge Open Space and Trails	260	None	1,251	\$ 27,559.53
Subtotal LOCAL/COUNTY	25,842	22	274,105	\$ 6,038,533

STIPEND VOLUNTEERS	Unique Volunteers	Stipend Volunteers	Number of Hours	Total Value
***Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA)	None	1600	448,000	\$ 9,869,440
AmeriCorps NCCC	Did not provide	Did not provide	38,012	\$ 837,404
Subtotal STIPEND VOLUNTEERS	None	1600	486,012	\$ 10,706,844
NON-GOVERNMENT STEWARDSHIP ORGANIZATIONS	Unique Volunteers	Stipend Volunteers	Number of Hours	Total Value
Back Country Horsemen of Colorado	105	None	9,600	\$ 211,488
Big City Mountaineers	57	None	7,368	\$ 162,317
Bluff Lake Nature Center	Did not provide	None	4,010	\$ 88,340
Boulder Area Trails Coalition	15	None	500	\$ 11,015
Boulder County Audubon	200	None	5,000	\$ 110,150
Boulder County Horse Association	10	10	650	\$ 14,319
Boulder County Nature Association	200	None	4,000	\$ 88,120
cityWILD	2	3	325	\$ 7,151
Coalition for the Upper South Platte	Did not provide	Did not provide	31,887	\$ 702,471
****Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO)	Did not provide	Did not provide	47,910	\$ 1,055,457
Colorado Canyons Association	774	None	774	\$ 17,051
Colorado Environmental Coalition	115	None	2,500	\$ 55,075
Colorado Mountain Club	961	None	7,261	\$ 159,959
Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association	Did not provide	None	1,950	\$ 42,959
Colorado State University Environmental Learning Center	275	None	250	\$ 5,508
Colorado Water Trust	Did not provide	Did not provide	36	\$ 793
Continental Divide Trail Alliance ¹⁴	442	None	8,095	\$ 178,333
CSU Extension Tri River Area	350	None	8,037	\$ 177,055
Denver Botanic Gardens	27	None	880	\$ 19,386
Durango Nature Studies	63	6	3,396	\$ 74,814
Forest Conservancy	100	None	5,465	\$ 120,394
Friends of Dinosaur Ridge	133	2	10,977	\$ 241,823
Friends of the Dillon Ranger District	561	17	10,626	\$ 234,091
Grand Valley Audubon Society	68	None	1,098	\$ 24,189
Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation	293	None	26,791	\$ 590,206
Guardians of Palmer Peak	47	None	1,400	\$ 30,842
Gunnison Trails, Inc.	45	None	200	\$ 4,406
High Plains Environmental Learning Center	2,148	2,156	5,661	\$ 124,712
Indian Peaks Wilderness Area	122	None	6,913	\$ 152,293
Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates,	78	None	694	\$ 15,289

¹⁴ Note: Continental Divide Trail Alliance stopped operating after the 2011 volunteer season; we have therefore used last year's hours.

Inc				
Mountain Park Environmental Center	200	None	2,000	\$ 44,060
Partners for Access to the Woods	16	None	120	\$ 2,644
Plains Conservation Center	92	None	3,839	\$ 84,573
Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers	750	None	5,190	\$ 114,336
Rocky Mountain Field Institute	1,290	10	20,234	\$ 445,755
Rocky Mountain Princeton Club	Did not provide	Did not provide	6	\$ 132
Rocky Mountain Raptor Program	257	None	35,000	\$ 771,050
San Juan Mountains Association	538	None	14,000	\$ 308,420
Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership	400	None	1,400	\$ 30,842
Sierra Club – Rocky Mountain Chapter	Did not provide	Did not provide	155	\$ 3,415
Stay The Trail / Responsible Recreation Foundation	51	10	497	\$ 10,949
Colorado State University: Student Leadership, Involvement, and Community Engagement Office – SLICE	22,758	573	63,066	\$ 1,389,344
Colorado Trail Foundation	Did not provide	Did not provide	20,550	\$ 452,717
The Trust for Public Land	17	None	1,020	\$ 22,471
Trees, Water & People	98	22	3,488	\$ 76,841
Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado	4,194	None	34,375	\$ 757,270
Western Colorado Botanical Gardens	117	None	5,491	\$ 120,956
Wild Connections	22	1	376	\$ 8,283
WildEarth Guardians	16	None	200	\$ 4,406
Wilderness Workshop	50	None	4	\$ 88
Wildlands Restoration Volunteers	1,012	83	50,206	\$ 1,106,308
Subtotal NGO	39,069	2,893	475,471	\$ 10,474,626

***CYCA Members Corps				
Boulder County Youth Corps	Mile High Youth Corps	Mile High Youth Corps- Colorado Springs	Larimer County Youth Conservation Corps	Rocky Mountain Youth Corps
Southwest Conservation Corps- Four Corners	Southwest Conservation Corps- Los Valles	Steamboat Springs Community Youth Corps	Weld County Youth Conservation Corps	Western Colorado Conservation Corps

****Colorado OHV Club List				
Arrowhead Snowmobile Club	Big Horn 4x4 Club	Big Thompson 4 Wheelers	Bookcliff Rattlers MC	Boothill Motorcycle Club
Buena Vista Snowmobile Club	Colorado Assoc. of 4WD Clubs	Colorado Blizzards	Colorado Motorcycle Trail Riders Assn	Colorado Quad Runners-CO Spgs Chapter
Colorado Quad Runners-Denver Trails	Colorado Snowmobile Association (CSA)	Creede OHV Club	Creeper Jeepers Gang 4WD Club	Front Range Trail Riders
Grand Mesa Jeep Club	Gunnison County SnoTrackers	Heart of the Rockies SnowMobile Club	High Rocky Riders Off Road Club	Holy Cross Powder Hounds
Larimer County 4WD Club	Mile Hi Snowmobile Club	Mile High Jeep Club	Motorcycle Trail Riding Association	Mt. Sopris Rec Riders
Northern Colorado Trail Riders	Northwest Colorado Snowmobile Club	Public Access Preservation Association	Rampart Range Motorized Mgmt Com	Rising Sun 4WD Club of Colorado
San Juan Sledders	San Juan Trail Riders, Inc.	Silverthread Outdoor Recreation Club	Silverton Snowmobile Club	South Fork Powder Busters
Thunder Mountain Wheelers	Timberline Trailriders	Trailridge Runners 4WD Club	Trails Preservation Alliance	Uncompahgre Valley Trail Riders
Ute Pass Iron Goats	Western Slope 4 Wheelers	Western Slope Snowmobile Assoc.	Rock Junkies 4x4 Club	Hillbillies
Big Horn Jeep Club				