

THE DONOR NEWSLETTER OF WILDLANDS RESTORATION VOLUNTEERS

Gaining Ground

Winter 2024-2025 Edition

Heal the land. Build community.

You supported volunteers to plant 10,241 native trees, plants, shrubs and willows in 2024!



INSIDE

Find out how you healed a creek in the City of Fort Collins

You're fostering wildlife habitat by promoting native plants



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ON THE COVER

What better way to celebrate Earth Day than to plant 1,500 aspen in the mud during a snowstorm? Your support enabled 78 volunteers to do just that, in a study by UC Berkeley, CSU, and the Colorado State Forest Service. After a difficult, muddy day in the snow, you might expect them not to come back, but these volunteers returned many times to assist with the aspen drought study and other projects.

This page: Volunteers carry wire to repair fencing on the Pawnee National Grasslands. Your support enabled volunteers to put in wildlife-friendly wire on fences, restore rare grassland oases, and keep cattle out of wetlands. Volunteers also removed 6,321 feet of fences.

YOUTH IN ACTION

Meet Aliana Cox: A Young Hero for All of Us

Cox's Lemonade Stand Fundraiser Shows the Power of Small Acts for Wildfire Mitigation

"The fires over the summer were bad and I wanted to see if I could fix that," says Aliana Cox.

That experience led Aliana to hold a lemonade stand fundraiser for WRV as part of her eighth-grade class in 2024.

"My family and I love to camp, and we love nature and hiking," adds Aliana. "We are very sad to see it go to waste by the fires."

At first, Aliana reached out to her local fire department but was told they didn't have needs. Then her mom, Nykcole, found WRV on the internet. Aliana conducted more research and found that WRV helps to mitigate wildfires.

As part of a project for her Language and Literature Class, Aliana created Frequently Asked Questions materials about wildfires across the world, in the United States, and right here in Colorado. She created signs and recruited friends in her neighborhood to carry those signs on the street, attracting people to the lemonade stand.



Aliana presents a check to Jess Turner, WRV Fundraising and Administrative Coordinator.



Wildfire is a concern around the world. Aliana Cox is doing something about it in her own neighborhood, raising money with a lemonade stand.

Aliana made cookies to go with the lemonade. "My parents helped too," she says.

Nykcole adds, "This is something she was born with. At four years old at a carnival, she could've been enjoying the rides. Instead, she was picking up trash. That is something that is in her soul—helping wildlife and wild lands. She's making sure we save the one earth we have."

Nykcole adds that she and her husband were simply blown away by the results. "We told Aliana don't get your hopes up, you might raise \$70."

Aliana, her family and her friends in the neighborhood raised an amazing \$500 in just two days. We salute you, Aliana!

"That is something that is in her soul—helping wildlife and wild lands. She's making sure we save the one earth we have."



A WRV tree-planting project in a burn area is the kind of effort Aliana's funds made possible.

Inspired by Aliana to hold a fundraiser for WRV? Please contact WRV Director of Development Sarah Egolf-Tarr at sarah@wrv.org or 303-543-1411, ext. 108.



BEFORE



AFTER

McClelland Creek now supports a rich diversity of native creatures, thanks to volunteers and to donors like you.

CELEBRATING RESTORATION AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

From Bare Ground to Thriving Habitat

McClelland Creek transformed for wildlife, Zach Elementary, and the Fort Collins community.

Author, ecologist and former WRV regional director John Giordanengo (at right; second from left) led a talk and tour for donors about McClelland Creek at a recent Heart and Soil Circle event in Fort Collins. Your support helped John lead volunteers in the restoration of McClelland Creek in 2012 and 2013 in partnership with the Stormwater Utility of Fort Collins. What was once a creek trickling through bare ground after the construction of Zach Elementary School is now rich habitat for both plants and wildlife.



At McClelland Creek's accessible wildlife viewing area, visitors can see the transformed habitat.

WRV'S HEART AND SOIL CIRCLE

WRV's Heart and Soil Circle recognizes donors who make a significant investment in our mission. These include gifts totaling \$1,000 or more in a year, or a legacy gift left in a will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance, or other account.

Circle donors receive special invitations throughout the year and recognition (unless anonymity is requested) in WRV's Annual Report.

Questions? Please contact WRV Director of Development Sarah Egolf-Tarr at 303-543-1411, ext. 108 or sarah@wrv.org.

WRV Seeds Growth of Native Plant Exchange

How You Inspire Gardeners and Support Wildlife with Your Gift to WRV



Participants gather at the Gardens on Spring Creek in Fort Collins to give and take native species of seed to grow at home. Organizers were blown away by the popularity of the swaps.

The room is full and the crowd is buzzing. The people are here for Colorado native seeds.

“It’s like watching kids in a candy store,” says WRV’s Annemarie Fussell about the Northern Colorado plant and seed exchange, which is free or pay-what-you-can.

As WRV’s Plants and Pollinators Project Manager, Annemarie runs WRV’s seed collections and coordinates the events twice a year—the Northern Colorado native plant exchange in the spring and the native seed swap in the fall. The events are the result of a collaboration of local government and nonprofit agencies – and your financial support!

“We’re like an ecosystem,” describes Annemarie. “We each have separate missions, but we combine efforts.” The City of Fort Collins hosts the seed exchange at The Gardens on Spring Creek. Nonprofits Wild Ones, People and Pollinators Action Network and Colorado Native Plant Society offer native seed collection guides and growing resources. Meanwhile, OneCanopy in Loveland shares nursery space to grow seeds over the winter, WRV collects and cleans native seeds with partners at Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Northern Water and the League of Women Voters help to recruit volunteers in the community.

Native plants are a vital asset to the environment. “Native plants use less water. They need less fertilizer and don’t require insecticides. Their flowers bloom even if it’s 100 degrees outside. And they create wildlife habitat in town, which we just don’t have enough of in our natural areas,” says Annemarie.



Volunteers Tony and Kristy Martinez teach exchange attendees to make seed balls/seed bombs. Encasing seeds in clay balls helps them avoid predation until germination.



At left, Alix Emsle represents Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. At right, Annemarie Fussell of WRV serves as event coordinator. Collaboration multiplied the power of each organization's reach.

The native plant and seed exchanges have seen impressive growth, from 60 people attending a seed event in 2020 to 750 attending the plant event in 2024. This spring, 3,300 native plants were given away, plus another 1,000 brought in by event attendees, who are mostly gardeners who enjoy sharing their bounty from home gardens.

The popularity of the native plant and seed events is fueled by increased demand.

And the City of Fort Collins offers rebates to folks who switch from lawns to qualified, xeriscape landscaping that features native plants.

Native seed and plant swaps are a win for cities, pollinators, cost-conscious residents looking to save on water bills—and the planet – thanks to your support!



Once native plants are germinated at OneCanopy, a nonprofit nursery, they are available to share at the native plant swap. Organizers and attendees also share knowledge about their growth and propagation requirements and natural benefits. Those include water savings, native pollinator survival, and reduced pesticide and herbicide costs.

Meet Dave Elmore, the Leader to Take WRV's Impact Further

With over 25 years of nonprofit leadership, including roles at Paradox Sports and Outward Bound, Dave Elmore joins WRV to advance our mission, made possible by supporters like you.



Dave Elmore, right, plants native species at a Youth & Families event along Coal Creek in Lafayette with Rosalva Varela, WRV 2022 Crew Leader of the Year award winner, left.

Q: What about WRV brings you joy?

A: Recently, I went on a WRV seed-collecting project and was able to chat with different folks and hear their stories. People are passionate about collecting seeds, and I love that this project will restore landscapes in my community of Longmont. That same day, I went to a project in Loveland removing invasive Russian olives. It was loud because of the chainsaws! It was great to meet the sawyers [people who use saws], a goal-focused community! Although these are very different projects, both are amazing and conducive to building relationships.

WRV's work keeps me balanced. My whole career, I've tried to do good by seeking out mission-driven organizations. The outdoors and the natural world are where I was able to develop my values, love of nature, meaningful work, and nature-based friendships. It's who I am!

Q: What does WRV mean to the community?

A: I think WRV is very important to the community, providing meaningful relationships, and a sense of belonging. Parallel to that is the restoration we do. People want to do good work, to offset big challenges in the world, like climate change. WRV has a powerful impact on people's lives.



Dave participates in "Tool Fest," a volunteer event to clean up, repair, and put our restoration tools away for the winter.

Q: What do people who give to WRV mean to you?

A: I have a deep appreciation for people who give to WRV. [They] allow us to deliver on our mission...building diverse communities that care for the land. Without donors, we would not be able to achieve what we do each year. Philanthropic support is also a representation of people's values. Engaging in philanthropic support says, "Hey, I care about this!"

Dave most recently served as Executive Director of Paradox Sports, a Boulder nonprofit that connects people with disabilities with climbing opportunities across the United States. His prior positions include Associate Head of School for the Watershed School in Boulder and Director of Program and Safety for Outward Bound California. Learn more at wrv.org.



From top left: Father and daughter plant native rabbitbrush at a WRV bilingual Spanish-English restoration course at the Greenlee Wildlife Preserve in Lafayette.

A young volunteer carries trowels to help weed and plant native pollinator species at Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.

WRV volunteer/donor Kristin Lopez demonstrates a weed she pulled from Boulder County land near Hygiene as part of more than a decade's eradication effort.

After volunteers spend a day building a bridge on the National Forest near Pagosa Springs, WRV Program Director Nate Boschmann cuts up a refreshing snack for the team.

Everything we do at WRV is because of community support. Thank you for making these efforts possible!

Gaining Ground

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