



Watershed Watch

A publication of the *Coalition for the Upper South Platte*

A Healthy Watershed ~ Now and in the Future

Newsletter Fall 2017

The Year in Review

2017 was a year of significant anniversaries for **CUSP**, our watershed community, and the neighbors with whom we have worked over the years. It marked the 15th anniversary of the Hayman Fire and the 5th anniversary of the Waldo Canyon Fire.

The Hayman Fire of 2002 still remains the largest land mass wildfire in Colorado history. At over 138,000 acres it was a radical departure from what we previously knew as a catastrophic wildfire. Before Hayman, the largest Colorado wildfire was the 1996 Buffalo Creek Fire that burned almost 12,000 acres.

The Hayman fire transformed **CUSP**. We rapidly evolved from an education and outreach organization to becoming post-fire recovery experts, recognized on a national stage as the go-to pros for boots-on-the-ground project development and implementation. It was the acquisition of this expertise that prompted USFS Forest Supervisor Jerri Marr to reach out to **CUSP** for aid and assistance when the Waldo Canyon Fire claimed over 18,000 acres in western El Paso county.

To this day, **CUSP** works closely and diligently with many dedicated partners to keep our watershed resilient, healthy, strong and safe.



Hayman Fire 2002



Waldo Canyon Fire 2012

PROJECTS IN AND AROUND THE WATERSHED



While the weather remained favorable, **CUSP** was able to significantly reduce the number of burn piles on several large-scale mitigation properties. However, an abnormally dry late winter put a halt to some of this activity.

We were able to remove timber from a number of properties through volunteer projects like the National Day of Service Project in mid-January when volunteers helped split and stack firewood for Help the Needy in Woodland Park.

This Fall, if weather permits, we will be able to incinerate slash collected at our Divide site, using the Air Curtain Burner that was installed last year.

As part of the **National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy**, **CUSP** has been partnering with the **Town of Palmer Lake** and the **Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department** to increase fuels mitigation awareness in the Palmer Lake Community by offering free home assessments. As part of these efforts, **CUSP** and the Palmer Lake community actively participated in **Wildfire Community Preparedness Day** on Saturday, May 6th.

CUSP leveraged a grant from **State Farm** to arrange for slash drop off and chipping services for home owners in and around Palmer Lake. The grant also covered a tour of Palmer Reservoir to highlight the extensive mitigation projects **CUSP** has implemented there.



CUSP's mushroom study of "Fungal Degradation of the Woody Byproducts of Forest Management Activities" began the Fall of 2014 and has been proceeding successfully ever since.

This year, with the help of volunteers, we took about 500 pounds of spawn and inoculated 10,000 sqft of wood chips on a private property in the northern edge of the watershed.

The Colorado Mycological Society, the Denver Botanic Gardens and the Sam Mitchel Herbarium at the Denver Botanic Gardens have all taken an active interest in this on-going study.



SPECIAL EVENTS



Newmont's own inaugural P4P winner Frank

In early May of 2017, **CUSP** launched a new fundraising event, Pack for the Platte, or P4P. Modeled on the wildfire Pack Test that firefighters take annually to maintain their certification, (the arduous Pack test requires participants to complete a 3mile course in 45 minutes carrying 45 pounds), this event is geared towards raising awareness about **CUSP's** wildfire suppression program as well as raising funds to support it. It also brings together local firefighters and the public for a day of friendly competition and physical challenge.

This inaugural event was sponsored by Newmont Cripple Creek & Victor Mine, Vectra Bank and Denver Water. Noah's Ark Whitewater Rafting, Gearonimo Sports, Canyon Enterprises, Polar Bottle and The Supply Cache supported the event by donating great prizes.

Our first winner was Frank Archuleta from Newmont CC&V. We are looking forward to expanding the event in 2018 and modifying it to accommodate a wider range of participants.

The first weekend of June, longtime **CUSP** friend and volunteer John Schwabe hosted an exceptional fundraiser for **CUSP**. John donated his organically grown vegetable plants, herbs and some flowering plants for a sale that took place at the **CUSP** office on June 3rd, just in time for the local outdoor gardening season.

These beautiful and lush plants were a huge hit with the public. Growing vegetables at high altitude can be a challenge and John's growing and care and feeding tips proved invaluable to both seasoned and novice gardeners. The few plants that were left were donated to the Harvest Center for their plant sale the following week..



John Schwabe, gardener extraordinaire and Wendie Warner



CUSP is entering our third decade of service to the Upper South Platte watershed community.

Yes, we turn 20 in 2018!

Please consider a "birthday donation".

Donate online at: www.coloradogives/CUSP/overview

Or send a check to "CUSP"

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CUSP protects the
water quality and ecological health
of the Upper South
Platte Watershed,
through the cooperative efforts of
watershed stakeholders, with emphasis
placed on community values and
economic sustainability.



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