



Watershed Watch

A publication of the *Coalition for the Upper South Platte*
A Healthy Watershed - Now and in the Future

Newsletter

Volume 16, Number 1, Winter 2015

FIREFIIGHTERS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

We thankfully had few severe wildfires threatening our communities and natural resources this year in Colorado. Unlike our quiet wildfire year, 2015 brought devastating wildfires to other western states. Over 9.4 million acres burned this year in the U.S., compared to a 10 year average of about 6.5 million acres burned per year.

With fewer fires to tackle at home, more Colorado firefighters were available to fight out-of-state blazes. For the first time, CUSP's red-carded firefighters joined other wildland firefighters called out to assist with large fires.

With the understanding that healthy forests contribute to high quality water, and wildfires impact both forest health and waterways, CUSP has grown both our wildfire mitigation and wildfire response capabilities over the years. CUSP's firefighters completed higher-level training last year, and are now qualified for deployment outside of our watershed service area.



Three of our firefighters were called out this year, and went above and beyond to protect communities and ecosystems in California and Washington State.

Jeff Tienken, Deputy Operations Director, and Beth Nielsen, Monitoring Coordinator, headed out to northern California to work on several fire complexes. As an experienced sawyer, Jeff was enlisted to fell hazard trees on the front lines to make way for equipment and clear miles of contingency fire line. Beth went out with other local firefighters from the Divide Fire Protection District and Colorado State Forest Service. Beth's work included pumping water to hand crews creating fire lines (including hauling up to 600 feet of hose and equipment up steep hillslopes), mopping up hot spots, and taking down hazard trees.

Jonathan Bruno, Chief Operating Officer, went up to northern Washington to assist as a technical specialist working with local fire departments to create rapid home ignition assessments in front of fires. The successful pilot program Jonathan was working on took advantage of the smoke in the air to help homeowners better prepare their homes for wildfire.

In addition to this difficult work protecting communities and ecosystems from devastation, the invaluable work the CUSP fire crew and many other local firefighters were part of will bring benefits back to our watershed. Our staff and other participating firefighters have gained valuable experience and earned increased levels of certification. This expertise will improve local response when the next wildfire ignites near our communities. Thank you to our brave men and women serving on the fire line!



Nothing liberates our greatness like the desire to help, the desire to serve - Marianne Williamson

WHAT YOU MADE POSSIBLE IN 2015

Whether you contributed your time to volunteer, participated in one of our programs, or generously donated to CUSP over the past year, your investment had a significant impact in the Upper South Platte Watershed. By working together, we made a difference in the places we live and play, and in the lives of the people we care about. Your support made the following possible so far in 2015:



- Nearly 2,000 volunteers contributed more than 15,000 hours worth \$425,000 of in-kind labor to protect watersheds
- Completion of forest health work on 370 acres, with an expected 750 acres completed by year-end to reduce wildfire risk and improve wildlife habitat
- Continued flood mitigation and wildfire rehabilitation in areas impacted by the 2012 Waldo Canyon Fire and 2002 Hayman Fire
- Operation of the Fairplay and Divide slash sites and Neighborhood Fuels Reduction Program to assist landowners in their wildfire mitigation efforts
- Extensive water quality monitoring along the South Platte River and its tributaries, including areas impacted by historic mining
- Noxious weed mitigation from 11 Mile State Park to Birch Hill
- Almost 2.5 miles of trail maintenance and enhancement at popular recreation areas including Cheesman Canyon, Guanella Pass, Staunton Springs, Rampart Range, and Trail Creek
- Installation of amenities for the new geology trail and completion of critical maintenance on 11 miles of trails at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument
- Increased firefighting activities, including burning hundreds of slash piles to reduce fuels in local forests and deployment of 3 fire crew members to combat the impacts of large fires in northwestern states
- Initiation of an air quality monitoring program in South Park
- Update of the Park County Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- Facilitation of community engagement and participation in the Bureau of Land Management's land use planning for the Front Range and eastern Colorado
- Engagement of over 465 youth from across Colorado and across the nation in experiential environmental education and service-learning projects

INCREASE YOUR IMPACT ON COLORADO GIVES DAY

Help us reach our year-end goal of \$20,000 this Colorado Gives Day by investing in the watershed you rely on and love!

Give where you live (and play) this December 8th to improve long-term watershed health. Your gift will support upcoming projects to improve water quality, enhance habitat and forest health, and bolster community resilience to the next wildfire or flood.

When you donate this Colorado Gives Day, your gift will go even further with the \$1 Million Incentive Fund contributed by Community First Foundation and FirstBank. Your online Colorado Gives Day donation to CUSP will be increased proportionally with the \$1 Million Incentive Fund.

Don't miss this opportunity to increase your donation - schedule your Colorado Gives Day donation today or set a reminder to give on December 8th!

Visit www.coloradogives.org/CUSP/ and click the 'CO Gives Day' option on the donation page to maximize your gift.



KEEP CUSP ROLLING

Our fleet of vehicles works hard transporting our crew, equipment, and materials across a watershed larger than the state of Delaware. With over 1 million miles logged combined, our trucks are worn out. This wear and tear shows. Many of our vehicles cost more to maintain annually than they are worth. Costly maintenance cuts into funds that could otherwise be used for critical programs like water quality protection, flood and wildfire mitigation, forest health, river restoration, habitat improvement, environmental education, and volunteer coordination. We urgently need to replace vehicles, and we need your help to do it!



Help us reach our goal of \$26,000 to keep us rolling and unlock matching funds. Your donation will be matched dollar for dollar with our Department of Natural Resources grant once we reach our \$26,000 goal. Help us upgrade our fleet by donating at <https://cusp.ws/donate/> or www.coloradogives.org/CUSP. Thank you for your investment, these vehicles are critical to the work we do to protect watershed health!

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One by one, your investment makes our work possible!

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Go Green!

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<http://eepurl.com/BtMy5>



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

Inside this edition

- 1 Firefighters Go Above and Beyond**
- 2 Increase Your Impact**
- 3 Thank You Donors**