

# Coalition for the Upper South Platte 2011 Annual Report



[www.uppersouthplatte.org](http://www.uppersouthplatte.org)

719.748.0033

# Projects & Programs



## **Our Mission**

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

**2011** was a great year for CUSP. Our staff maxed out at 21 individuals during the summer, and has hovered around 14 full-time equivalent employees throughout the year. Over 4,200 volunteers contributed almost 30,000 hours to help us accomplish work across our myriad programs. The following report provides highlights of our 2011 accomplishments and finances, and the last page provides web links to many of our partners and other pertinent information.

## Forest Health



CUSP chipper crew and subdivision residents going through morning safety briefing before starting work.

on their own property and haul the slash to the site for low-cost disposal. We also operate the “Neighborhood Fuels Reduction Program,” aka the chipper program. The chipper, which comes to communities where multiple landowners have been working on mitigation, provides a cost-effective slash disposal method for property owners that have too much slash to haul themselves. Where appropriate, the crew burns slash piles, which is the least expensive approach to slash disposal.

We also contract with area forestry contractors for larger scale projects, and our in-house field crew of certified sawyers do mitigation projects where hand crews are the way to go.

Our watershed is dominated by forests. Most areas are ponderosa pine forests, but there are also areas of mixed conifer, aspen, and lodgepole. All these forest types share certain features at this time: They are in poor health, and vulnerable to disease, insect outbreaks, and catastrophic fire. CUSP works actively on a wide variety of forest-related programs designed to improve our forests’ health and protect our communities. We operate the Divide Slash Site from late April through early November, which enables citizens to work



CUSP’s field crew is certified wildland fire fighters. As trained fire fighters they can therefore utilize prescribed fire for disposal of slash and restoration.

## Collaborative Processes

CUSP actively participates in the **Front Range Round Table**, a multi-stakeholder initiative that is addressing wildfire and forest health issues across the ten counties of Colorado's Front Range (Boulder, Clear Creek, Douglas, El Paso, Gilpin, Grand, Jefferson, Larimer, Park, Teller.) In 2011 our GIS staff helped prepare maps for the Round Table's Implementation and Mapping Committee, which will help focus on-the-ground treatments for years to come. We also worked with the Round Table's Outreach Committee, and the the **Watershed-Wildfire** committee, a collaborative effort with water providers to raise awareness of the impacts on watersheds from wildfire. As part of that process, we worked to help complete a watershed wildfire assessment for the South Platte Headwaters, which is a complement to an earlier assessment completed for the lower portion of our watershed.

The Woodland Park Healthy Forest Initiative (WPHFI) was a project we began in late 2008 that was designed to ramp up collaboration and increase forest treatments in and around the Woodland Park area with the goal of significantly increasing forest treatments. In 2011, we treated 272 acres on private lands in the WPHFI area (as well as additional acres in other portions of the watershed), and the U.S. Forest Service completed 2,000 acres on public lands in the WPHFI area.

## 2011 Forest Treatment Stats

- 762 acres of mitigation
- 500 acres treated through the CUSP chipper program.
- 1600 slash piles stacked for winter burning
- 217 cords of firewood provided to those in need through a partnership with *Help the Needy*
- 2,135 loads of slash delivered to the Teller County Slash Site at Divide (up almost a third from 2010) for 133 acres treated by property owners.
- \$371,857 paid out to area private contractors for forestry projects.



Masticator thinning overly thick forest stands.

# Rivers

Here in the West, rivers truly are the lifeblood of our communities and CUSP is dedicated to protecting the rivers within our watershed. Each year we work with partners on projects designed to restore aquatic habitat, improve water quality, and provide great recreational experiences for residents and visitors. Our 2011 focus was on two major projects:

## [Trail Creek and West Creek](#)



Google Earth photos of Trail Creek drainage. Photo on left taken in 2003, the year after the fire. The same drainage, on right, after a flood event in 2006, showing large areas of sediment deposition.

Trail Creek and West Creek (tributaries to Horse Creek, and subsequently to the mainstem of the South Platte at Deckers) are two river segments that were particularly hammered by flooding and erosion events following the Hayman fire. With help from the National Forest Foundation, Vail Resorts, the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, Douglas County, the City of Aurora, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, and other donors, CUSP and its primary partner, the Pike National Forest, are working to address the aftermath of the 2002 Hayman fire. We hired Dave Rosgen, principal of Wildland Hydrology, and one of the leading experts in the United States on managing and restoring river systems, to help develop and implement a plan in 2010 to begin planning for a restoration project. Rosgen and the team started in November of 2011 and will continue through 2012. According to Rosgen's report (see the report on our website under the publications/reports menu item) the potential post-restoration reduction in flow-related sediment yield is 16,974 tons/yr that currently continue downstream. In the meantime, CUSP and our volunteers have done miles of stabilization work in the watershed. We have also developed new partnerships through this process with the Rocky Mountain Field Institute, a Colorado Springs based nonprofit, and Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, a Denver based nonprofit.

These photos correspond to the same drainage seen in the previous Google Earth photos. Top: prior to any work. Middle: new “D” channel constructed to control flow of water coming down the drainage, and the D channel on a winter’s afternoon with flows moving through the new channels and freezing. Bottom: one of four sediment ponds constructed within the draw to trap erosion during flood flow events.



### [Happy Meadows/Sportsmen's](#)

Happy Meadows is a stream segment on the mainstem of the South Platte in Park County that is managed by the Pike National Forest for recreation, and the Sportsmen's Paradise is a private fishing community on the river, that is totally surrounded by USFS lands. Our project, which began in 2011 (and will be completed into 2012) removed an existing dam that was blocking fish passage, increasing sediment deposition, and threatening a county road during ice flows, and redeveloped the diversion so the water rights holders will still be able to get their water efficiently

delivered to their stream diversion, while reducing the negative impacts of the dam. We also created over one-half acre of new wetlands, and started the in-channel river restoration that will ultimately total four miles of the river. The total budget for the project is \$700,000.

### 2011 River Stats

- 1.5 miles of in-stream river restoration
- Approximately 9 miles of bank stabilization, willow planting, and river-edge clean up
- 4 in-channel sedimentation ponds constructed within Trail Creek basin to reduce sediment making its way into the river
- 1,000 feet of new “D” channels in an intermittent stream channel feeding Trail Creek to allow for the efficient feeding of water into the river
- 100,000+ willows harvested, processed planted.



#### Restoration at Happy Meadows/Sportsmen's

Top left: volunteers seeding area disturbed by equipment; Top right: equipment creating “J-Hook” vein in river.  
Bottom left: Contractor supervising the removal of the dam; Bottom right: volunteer harvesting willow for transplanting.

# Other Programmatic Work

## Antero

On January 15th over 416 intrepid ice fishermen (and fisher-women and -kids) braved the winter weather for a chance to catch the whopper at the Antero Ice Fishing Contest. Charles Hickman, pictured here, walked away with the \$500 top prize. Proceeds raised at the event go back to recreational improvements and environmental projects at Antero. We raised \$7,000 in 2011. CUSP has also participated in the Antero Management Committee with Denver Water, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Park County Sheriff's Office, and representatives of the recreation community.



## Energy



During 2011 CUSP served as the Community Energy Coordinator for Teller County under a grant from the Governor's Energy Office. We pulled together an energy advisory committee, which was tasked with developing a sustainability plan for Teller County, and hosted a Sustainability Fair in Woodland Park. CUSP staff also manned a booth at the Woodland Park Farmer's Market, during which we collected unusual recyclables, including corks (we filled two five gallon buckets!), batteries (we kept 130 pounds of used batteries out of the waste stream) and several dozen small electronics, such as cell phones and ipods. We

also co-sponsored this year's holiday home tour in Woodland Park, featuring the energy efficient aspects of six designer homes in the area. The energy program staff participated in the Governor's Bottom Up campaign, and the Pikes Peak Regional Council of Governments regional sustainability planning process.



## Mines and Mineral Extraction

During 2011 staff completed monitoring abandoned mines in the Fairplay/Alma area, the Geneva Creek area, and around Lake George. As the lab data is returned, we will use it to develop a strategy for addressing abandoned mines in the watershed. The full report for our abandoned mines program will be posted on our website in the spring of 2012. The U.S. Forest Service, EPA, and Denver Water have been key partners in our mine analysis program.



Oil and gas development and hydraulic fracturing (or fracking) are starting to take prominent positioning in national media. We have been addressing potential development in the watershed by performing a baseline monitoring program in South Park. The first year's monitoring covered ten surface water points and 30 domestic wells. We expect to collect additional samples in 2012. This program was funded by the Park County Land and Water Trust Fund. This report will also be available on our website in late spring, 2012.

## Roads



Gravel roads are major contributors of erosion to streams and rivers in the watershed. CUSP has been working with a variety of partners in 2011 to plan for a project that will reduce sediment from roads in Douglas County along the South Platte between Deckers and Sedalia. The two roads in question run adjacent to Pine Creek and Sugar Creek, and run steeply down hill to the river. Copies of the road reports are available on the CUSP website.



### [Trails](#)

Gill Trail runs between Jefferson County Highway 126 and the base of Cheeseman Reservoir. This rugged, 3.5 mile trail, is a heavily used by hikers and fisherman accessing the South Platte at Cheeseman Canyon. CUSP with financial support from Denver Water, and manpower and resources from our partners, including the USFS and Trout Unlimited, have worked on the trail for the last five years. In 2011, volunteers spent 8 days improving trail condition and our staff mapped the whole trail to develop a long-term plan for future improvements. CUSP and our volunteers have also worked on other trails in the watershed, including trails at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument and the Pike National Forest.

### [Tree Planting](#)

In 2011 we planted almost 8,000 trees, primarily in the Hayman and Schoonover burns, helping to restore the forest of the future! Due to the severity of the fires, and the nature of ponderosa reproduction, foresters estimate that it could take hundreds of years, or perhaps a thousand years for the forest to come back on its own, so the trees we plant are critical to restoration. One big tree planting event this year was the Kids 4 Trees days, that we worked on with the Pike National Forest and the international Kids 4 Trees nonprofit. Over 1,300 students from Colorado Springs schools came out for the day, with each kid planting at least a couple of trees, as well as participating in a number of environmental education stations manned by USFS staff and CUSP staff!



## Invasives and Weeds



Invasive weeds cause significant environmental disruption, and have been something CUSP has worked on since we developed our first strategic plan in 2000. Our weed program was unfunded in 2011, but we treated approximately 40 acres of toadflax, Canada and musk thistle, and our volunteers helped hand weed along about 7,000 feet of river banks in Happy Meadows, Eleven Mile canyon, and Trail Creek. We also began a program of Best Management Practices for contractors working on our projects to minimize the spread of weeds on equipment and through patch disturbance.

# Education and Outreach



Since our inception, an emphasis on education has been a central tenant of all our endeavors. We work to *create a water literate society* every day, through every project and program. In 2011 we successfully extended our educational programs to include an internship-based approach to engaging students from area high schools and colleges. Our team works directly with classroom teachers to bring kids out to the field, and we

collaborate with other nonprofits to extend the public's understanding of issues that relate to the values we share — clean water, clean air, abundant wildlife, healthy forests and fisheries, while promoting economic sustainability for our communities.

With support from Xcel Energy Foundation, we began developing a “Service-Learning” program that is standards-based. This program is enabling us to work with more teachers and students, while maintaining our staffing at current levels.

Through a grant from the Colorado 319 Nonpoint Source Program, CUSP developed an online database of articles and reports. This is a great resource that will serve the Upper SouthPlatte for years to come, and we'll continue to build this resource for the watershed. Visit the database at: [search.uppertsouthplatte.org](http://search.uppertsouthplatte.org).

### 2011 Education Stats

- 10 interns worked with CUSP staff on projects and programs.
  - ◆ One high school student from Fairplay worked on the mine assessment.
  - ◆ One Denver University grad student studied the economic value of restoration work performed by burn victims on their own land following the Hayman fire.
  - ◆ One University of Colorado grad student, Adam Greenwade, studied biomass availability in Front Range forests. Adam graduated from the Master's of Public Administration program as Valedictorian.
  - ◆ Five graduate students from the University of Colorado School of Architecture and Planning worked on a case-study evaluation of an area ranch in affiliation with CUSP and the landowner.
  - ◆ One University of Colorado at Boulder undergrad, helping to develop an online database of information (see Library, above).
  - ◆ One student from the GIS program at Pikes Peak Community college interned to assist CUSP with mapping associated with our various programs and projects.
- 1123 technical support hours, representing staff time provided by CUSP's partners (government and other nonprofits) who have worked with students at CUSP events.
- 2057 teachers and students received over 6,000 contact hours, learning about forest health, mine history and ecological foot prints, wetlands, rivers, and wildlife

# Finances & Management

CUSP is a 501(c)3 charitable nonprofit. CUSP's Board of Directors approved revisions to our policies in 2011. Pursuant to our policies, CUSP has an audit by an outside CPA firm each year. Our policies, audit, tax forms, and other documents relating to accountability and transparency are published each year on our website, or available in hard copy upon request.

Our board is made up of individuals who represent the various types of stakeholders in the watershed, and currently includes:

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Tom Eisenman**, *Board Chair*, Development Director, Park County

**Mary Dawson**, *Vice Chair*, Environmental Programs Specialist, City of Aurora

**Greg Aplet**, *Treasurer*, Forest Ecologist, The Wilderness Society

**Dan Drucker**, *Secretary*, Director & President, Center of Colorado Water Conservancy District

## BOARD MEMBERS

**Connor Baker**, Interested Individual

**Karen Berry**, Board Member of Jefferson Conservation District

**Marie Chisholm**, Interested Individual

**Kurt Dahl** Environmental Health Director, Teller County

**Swithin Dick**, Water Resource Engineer, Centennial Water & Sanitation District

**Garth Englund**, Special Projects Engineer, Douglas County

**Lynda James**, Upper South Platte Conservancy District

**Don Kennedy**, Environmental Scientist, Denver Water

**Don Logelin**, VP for Programs at Cheyenne Mountain Chapter of Trout Unlimited

**Sara Mayben** (non-voting member), Renewable Resource Staff Officer, Pike National Forest

**Patrick O'Connell**, Jefferson County Planning & Zoning - Development Services

**Kris Sexton**, (non-voting member), District Ranger, South Park Ranger District, Pike

**Tedd Stiles**, Interested Individual

## MANAGEMENT TEAM

**Carol Ekarius**, Executive Director

**Jonathan Bruno**, Operation's Director

**Mark Herndon**, Deputy Operation's Director

**Helen Dyer**, Development and Outreach Director

**Chris Fuller**, Office Manager

## Fund Raising

In 2011 CUSP participated in the Colorado Springs Independent's annual **Give!** campaign for the first time. This successful campaign brought in \$16,135.00 in donations which included \$4,000 in matching grants; \$1,000 each from the Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Mining Company and the Dusty and Kathy Loo Fund of the Pikes Peak Community Foundation (PPCF), and \$2,000 from the Leopold Fund at PPCF. It was a great outreach opportunity that brought us new friends and great media coverage, and for many on the Front Range a new found awareness of who CUSP is and what we do.



# Donors & Supporter

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 Gary and Judith Jaspers  
 Jefferson Conservation District  
 Jefferson County  
 David and Pat Jensen  
 Bart Johnson



*Thanks to all of  
 our donors,  
 supporters, and  
 volunteers!*

*Special thanks  
 goes to the  
 National Forest  
 Foundation for  
 ten years of  
 significant  
 support for our  
 work with the Pike  
 National Forest,  
 including support,  
 through their  
 Treasured  
 Landscapes  
 program for  
 Hayman  
 restoration!!!*

Jara Johnson	Gerald and Linda Mussleman	South Park Mercantile
Lawrence Johnson	National Forest Foundation	South Park Schools South Platte
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Kristine Kasper	Stephen Newel	Mary Spencer
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Lynn and June Koester	Lisa Patton	Teller-Park Conservation District
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Jane Leche	William and Dorothy Plume	Trout Unlimited: Cheyenne Mtn Chapter
Jerry Ledbow	Dave & Karen Praner	Trout Unlimited: Cutthroat Chapter
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Harold Leipold	Rainbow Ridge POA	UMC MO Conference
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Bruce Metzger & Jan Hanley	Brett & Patricia Sichelmer	Woodland Park United Methodist Church
Ronald and Barbara Middleton	Nicholas Simpson	Xcel Energy
Mile High Youth Corps	Gail Smith	Byron Yost
Joanne Mills	Paul and Deborah Smith	Ann Young
Kamela Mohs	Jean Smith	Frederich and Mary Young
Susan Moore	Randall B. Smith	Joseph Zaremba
Mosquito Range Heritage Initiative	Wendy Snapp	Diane Zingler
Mountain Grown Gardens	George and Nancy Soderstrom	Timothy Zingler

# Income

Category	2011 Actual (N3)	2011 Budget
Utilities G&D	\$ 33,000	\$ 33,000
Biz Grants/Donations	\$ 272,470	\$ 10,000
Local Gov G&D	\$ 172,200	****
Individual Contributions	\$ 20,367	\$ 20,000
Federal G&D	\$ 1,147,797	\$ 800,000
State Grants/Donations	\$ 246,354	\$ 100,000
Other Grants	\$ 20,000	\$ 25,000
Program Revenue	\$ 99,132	\$ 50,000
Special Events	\$ 9,176	\$ 8,000
Interest	\$ 269	\$ 0
Misc	\$ 58	\$ 2,000
Donations-inkind	\$ 221,422	\$ 225,000
<b>Total Annual Income</b>	<b>\$ 2,242,245</b>	<b>\$ 1,273,000</b>

# Expenses

Category	2011 Actual	2011 Budget
Contractors	\$ (970,091.00)	\$ (450,000.00)
Cost-Share	\$ (6,663.00)	
Salaries & Related	\$ (613,722.00)	\$ (480,000.00)
Accounting & Bank Exp	\$ (7,316.00)	
Other Prof Fees	\$ (1,115.00)	
Supplies	\$ (32,703.00)	\$ (85,000.00)
Office-Misc	\$ (26,471.00)	
Project & Event Exp	\$ (4,515.00)	
Equip Ops/Travel	\$ (16,546.00)	\$ (5,000.00)
Occupancy	\$ (4,090.00)	\$ (17,000.00)
Interest Exp	\$ (7,495.00)	
Prof Dev	\$ (5,013.00)	
Insurance	\$ (7,087.00)	
Advertising	\$ (5,796.00)	
Miscellaneous	\$ (5,222.00)	\$ (36,000.00)
Donations-inkind	\$ (221,422.00)	\$ (200,000.00)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ (1,935,267.00)</b>	<b>\$ (1,273,000.00)</b>
<b>Carryover</b>	<b>\$ 352,879.00</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>

Expense by Functional Area	2011 Actual	2011 Budget
Percent by Area: Gen Admin	5.40%	10.00%
Percent by Area: Fund Raising	0.40%	5.00%
Percent by Area: Program	94.20%	85.00%

(NOTE: 2011 Carryover primarily represents temporarily restricted grant funds for 2012 work.)



# Resources

<b><i>CUSP Main Website:</i></b>	<b><a href="http://www.uppERSouthplatte.org">www.uppERSouthplatte.org</a></b>
<b><u>Other CUSP Websites:</u></b>	<b><a href="http://search.uppERSouthplatte.org">search.uppERSouthplatte.org</a></b>
	<b><a href="http://www.uppERSouthplatte-weeds.org">www.uppERSouthplatte-weeds.org</a></b>
	<b><a href="http://www.tellerenergy.com">www.tellerenergy.com</a></b>
	<b><a href="http://www.divideslashsite.org">www.divideslashsite.org</a></b>
	<b><a href="http://www.antero-icefishing-contest.com">www.antero-icefishing-contest.com</a></b>
	<b><a href="http://www.wphfi.org">www.wphfi.org</a></b>
<b><i>Outside Sites of Interest:</i></b>	
<b><u>Front Range Roundtable:</u></b>	<b><a href="http://www.frontrangeroundtable.org">www.frontrangeroundtable.org</a></b>
<b><u>Watershed wildfire assessments:</u></b>	<b><a href="http://www.jw-associates.org">www.jw-associates.org</a></b>
<b><u>Colorado State Forest Service:</u></b>	<b><a href="http://csfs.colostate.edu">csfs.colostate.edu</a></b>
<b><u>National Forest Foundation:</u></b>	<b><a href="http://www.nationalforests.org">www.nationalforests.org</a></b>
<b><u>Governor's Energy Office:</u></b>	<b><a href="http://www.rechargecolorado.com">www.rechargecolorado.com</a></b>
<b><u>Pike National Forest:</u></b>	<b><a href="http://fs.usda.gov/psicc">fs.usda.gov/psicc</a></b>