

ANNUAL REPORT | 2021



People working together, for people & the planet.

Released May 2022

Fostering on-the-ground conservation efforts that protect and restore natural resources and local communities by supporting collaborative conservation organizations who produce collective impacts through stakeholder driven efforts.

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Photo provided by AIM Affiliate Karuna Greenberg,
Salmon River Restoration Council.



A Farewell & Thank You

A message from Chief Executive Officer Emeritus, Carol Ekarius

The time has come to handover the reins of Coalitions & Collaboratives, Inc. My team and I have accomplished great things over the past 20 plus years and we're just getting started. COCO came to fruition in 2014, but only after Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) went from small nonprofit organization to national leader in community watershed protection and post-fire recovery.

20 years ago, the natural resource community began to realize the role wildfire plays in overall watershed health. The 1996 Buffalo Creek Fire burned 11,700 acres in the watershed, and the subsequent flooding resulted in serious impacts on lives, properties, and water supplies. The largest fire in Colorado history at the time, the Buffalo Creek Fire was a wake-up call for organizations dealing with forest health and fire issues that worse could come. Stakeholders came together and a watershed protection nonprofit was born for the Upper South Platte Watershed. CUSP has been working tirelessly ever since to uphold our mission and protect this vital resource.

After the Hayman Fire in 2002, CUSP took the lead in watershed restoration; making mistakes, learning on the fly, utilizing the small amount of resources available, and moving into the realm of post-fire watershed health expertise. This path led to the development of COCO, an organization that is bringing lessons learned, resources and funding to grassroot organizations across the county.

I've spent decades consulting, publishing, and advocating for small grassroots organizations. I am grateful for the experiences and hard work brought by everyone to support us and our organizations throughout the years. I'm confident that COCO will continue to accomplish great things on a national scale under the new CEO, Jonathan Bruno.

Jonathan Bruno has been working alongside me since 2000. His experience and passion have propelled COCO into a nationally recognized leader in collaboration. I am confident in Jonathan's leadership and I now feel comfortable with retirement. As Chief Executive Emeritus, I'm looking forward to spending more time on my passions and with my husband, Ken, on our farm in Cripple Creek.



With Gratitude,

Carol Ekarius

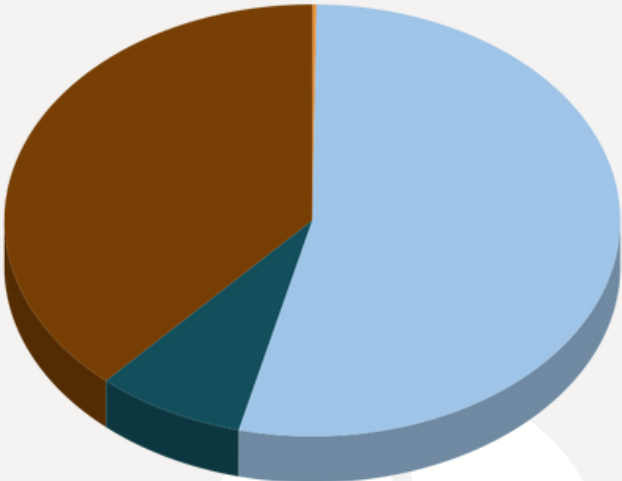
Emeritus Chief Executive Officer, COCO, Inc.



Year in Review

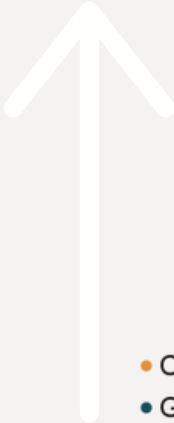
Financials & Outcomes

- Local Grants Agreements & Contributions
- Federal Grants Agreements & Contributions
- Foundation Grants Agreements & Contributions
- Program Service Fees

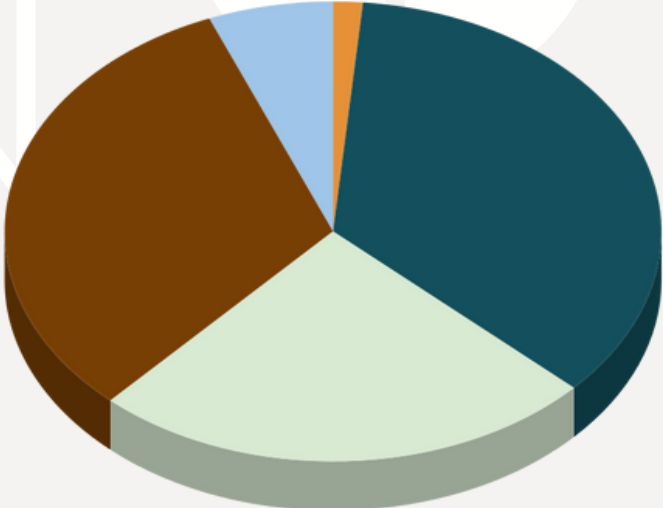


Income

\$2,327,848.20



- Communications & Technology
- Grants & Direct Assist
- Personnel Cost
- Program Operations
- Contracts & Contractors



Expenses

\$2,351,834.39



\$740K AWARDED TO

16 NEW NONPROFITS



ATF
AFTER THE FLAMES

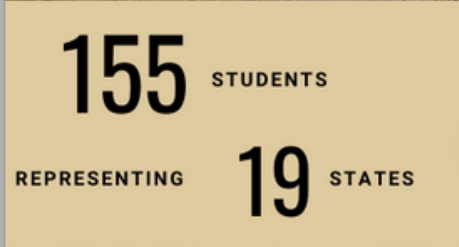


AIM
ACTION, IMPLEMENTATION
AND MITIGATION



2 WEBINARS

FOREST HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL
PLAN FOR POST-FIRE FLOODING



155 STUDENTS

REPRESENTING **19** STATES



CMAT
COMMUNITY MITIGATION
ASSISTANCE TEAM



CW-MBP
COMMUNITY WILDIRE
MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES
TRAINING



3 ASSIGNMENTS

4 CMAT LEAD TRAINEES

4 NEW TEAM MEMBERS



20+ PARTNER
ORGANIZATIONS

MONARCH PASS FOREST & WATERSHED
HEALTH PROJECT

FLAGSHIP PROJECT UTILIZING NEW REDUCTION TECHNIQUES



CUSP
COALITION FOR THE UPPER
SOUTH PLATTE



ARWC
ARKANSAS RIVER WATERSHED
COLLABORATIVE



400

ACRES
FOREST MITIGATION



PROVIDING HOMES TO FAMILIES
DISPLACED BY WILDFIRE AND NATURAL DISASTERS
OVER 100 RVS AND COUNTING



PWP
PURGATOIRE WATERSHED
PARTNERSHIP



FISCAL SPONSOR OF
RV4
CAMP FIRE FAMILY



17 STEWARARDSHIP EVENTS

3 AT-RISK YOUTH EVENTS

6 YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Programs & Training

The Action Mitigation and Implementation (AIM) Grant Program increases local capacity and supports wildfire risk reduction activities in high-risk communities by providing direct support to place-based wildfire mitigation organizations through pass-through grant funding, on-site engagements, mentoring, and training on proven best mitigation practices.

By the end of 2021, AIM granted funding to a total of 49 organizations to support personnel, home ignition zone assessments, defensible space projects, prescribed burning, planning, and a wide variety of other capacity building projects. In 2021, the AIM team signed-on to support 16 additional projects with new and returning affiliates. Click on any of the organizations below to learn more about their mission and programs offered.

Organizations Awarded Grant Funding in 2021

- [Audubon Canyon Ranch, CA](#)
- [Dovetail Partners, MN](#)
- [Mattole Restoration Council, CA](#)
- [Mendocino County Fire Safe Council, CA](#)
- [Platte Canyon Fire Department, CO](#)
- [South Willamette Solutions, OR](#)
- [Whatcom Conservation District, WA](#)
- [Woodland Hills Fire Department, UT](#)
- [Fourmile Fire Protection District](#)
- [Seigler Springs Community Redevelopment Association, CA](#)
- [Mountain Valley's Resource Conservation & Dev. Council, NC](#)
- [Okanogan Conservation District, WA](#)
- [Ruffed Grouse Society & American Woodcock Society, PA](#)
- [Tri-County FireSafe Working Group, MT](#)
- [United Way of Missoula County, MT](#)
- [Yuba Watershed & Protection Fire Safe Council, CA](#)

Awardee Outcomes

Graphic reflects cumulative efforts made by AIM awardees and the AIM team since the establishment of the COCO and USFS cooperative agreement in 2018.



Programs & Training

Community Wildfire Mitigation Best Practices Training for Wildfire Mitigation Professionals

Formerly known as Mitigation Best Practices, two four-month long CW-MBP training courses were held virtually with over 150 people in attendance. Professionals joined from across the United States, as well as Canada.

As stated by a 2021 student, "Lots of ideas on how different people are managing different resources, populations, demographics, topography and solutions. Having the knowledge from this course will help me better develop community involvement projects that meet the community's need ... [The course was] well organized and presented, with broad perspectives, a welcoming and supportive environment, and a good mix of peer review and instructor insights."



Photo provided by CW-MBP training staff of a virtual live training course.

The course is growing exponentially. You will be seeing a series of courses taking place over various periods of time, in-person and virtually in 2022.

After the Flames Webinar Series

COCO hosted the Colorado Forest Health Advisory Council Listening Session with six panelists and 140 attendees. Access to funding, research needed, and effective forestry management were all topics of discussion. You may access the full report and session recording [here](#) or on the ATF website.

A webinar to plan for post-fire flooding before the fire was held with hydrologist, Gerald Blackler, PhD, PE, DWRE, Associate Principal, Engenuity Engineering Solutions.



CMAT Assignments

The Community Mitigation Assistance Team (CMAT) is a national interagency resource helping communities build sustainable local capacity for community wildfire mitigation during high-risk times before, during and after a wildfire.

[Greater Santa Fe, New Mexico | January](#)

The request included assistance in developing strategies to sustain community engagement following the increased interest resulting from the Medio Fire; a review of current programs and activities; and assistance in identifying opportunities to increase mitigation actions on private and tribal lands within the Fireshed. The CMAT was also requested to provide an actionable plan that identified capacity needs for implementing the CMAT's recommendations. Click [here](#) for the full report.



Photos courtesy of CMAT reports.

[Lake County, California | May](#)

Lake County and the Mendocino National Forest requested a CMAT to enhance Lake County's collaborative efforts and evaluate their wildfire mitigation strategy, including relevant plans, programs, and activities. They also requested that CMAT develop priorities, clarify roles and responsibilities of involved parties, and provide them with an actionable plan to implement. Click [here](#) to view the summarized report.



Photos courtesy of CMAT reports.

[Grand County, Colorado | November](#)

In 2020, Grand County residents witnessed another megafire, the East Troublesome Fire. Two other large wildfires, the Williams Fork and the Cameron Peak, also impacted Grand County and the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests during the late summer and fall of 2020. Mitigation leaders and governmental agencies recognized that post-fire recovery efforts could easily detract residents and wildfire mitigation personnel from the mitigation momentum seen over the past ten years. CMAT was asked to review existing mitigation programs, plans and activities, and provide analysis and recommendations intended to increase collaboration, establish and/or clarify roles and responsibilities and develop a Mitigation Action Plan. Click [here](#) to view the full report.



Promoting Collaborative Conservation

A Summary of Affiliate Organizations Operating Under Coalitions & Collaboratives, Inc.

Coalitions & Collaboratives, Inc. was formed in 2014, but its story started when a large cohort of stakeholders came to the table to find some common ground from the post-fire devastation of the Buffalo Creek Fire. It was agreed upon to form a nonprofit watershed group, Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP), to protect the values in the watershed.

As CUSP grew and became a nationally recognized leader in the field, groups outside the watershed would call on CUSP for assistance and input. It was these regular calls for help that led the CUSP board and management team to launch COCO, broadening the vision of people working together, for people and the planet, nationally.

1998

CUSP works to protect the 1.6 million-acre watershed stretching from the Continental Divide to Strontia Springs Reservoir, southwest of Denver. The watershed is a recreational mecca with over one million acres of public lands; providing municipal water for about three quarters of Colorado's residents.

CUSP works with partners to provide essential services such as project planning, implementation, and monitoring within the watershed. CUSP's crews work tirelessly, on-the-ground and in the boardroom, to ensure communication, cooperation and completion of vital programs.



2012

The Purgatoire Watershed Partnership works closely and collaboratively with stakeholders across the watershed on a host of projects and educational opportunities for the benefit of our landowners, communities, and the watershed as a whole.

Alongside engagement and stewardship events, our work includes; planning and implementing on-the-ground conservation, restoration, recreation, and improvement projects; and river health assessment and progress tracking data collection.



2017

ARWC grew out of the process of wildfire and its effects on water and communities. As fires in the Arkansas River Basin became more intense and frequent, the need for organized community and agency partnerships to address impacts and preserve the health of our watersheds became clear and urgent. ARWC is a response to these growing needs.

ARWC's service area spans 23,000 square miles of the Arkansas River Basin, reaching from Leadville to the Colorado-Kansas border. Our work includes forest health and wildfire fuels mitigation, post-fire and flood recovery, stream management planning, stream restoration, collaborative development and stakeholder engagement.



Affiliate Highlights

COCO, CUSP, ARWC and PWP collaboratively work together to accomplish missions and goals across watersheds. These are just a few highlights from 2021.

CUSP | Access to the North Fork River

CUSP's crews continued hardening river access points to reduce erosion and sedimentation into the river. Unfortunately, it is human nature to take the easiest and shortest path. Along the river, this results in vegetation damage and degradation of the banks. By creating obvious paths with rock stairs, most users will use this easier path with fewer impacts on the habitat.



ARWC | Monarch Pass Forest & Watershed Project

Over 466 acres of forest mitigation took place along Monarch Pass with the use of new cut-to-length technology. This was a collaborative effort amongst ARWC, federal, state and local governments to manage the excess amount of fuels accumulated from spruce beetle killed trees. Wood was sourced out to various local wood product retailers and will now be useful building materials, rather than fuels in a high-intensity wildfire.



PWP | Youth Outdoor Education

PWP partnered with various natural resource organizations, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Trout Unlimited, and City of Trinidad (to name a few), to provide six outdoor programs to over 120 attendees. Programs focused on wildlife, biology, ecology, ranching, and outdoor recreation.



Staff & Board

COCO, CUSP, ARWC and PWP share field staff to accomplish the goals of each organization.

COCO

Jonathan Bruno | Chief Executive Officer
Jane Mannon | Outreach & Development Director
Maria Brandt | Outreach & Development Coordinator
Mitch Dahlke | Wildfire Mitigation Specialist
Katie Doorman | Mitigation Fellow
Theresa Springer | Recovery Coordinator

CUSP

John Geerdes | CEO, Executive Director
Chris Fuller | Deputy Director
Jeff Ravage | North Fork Watershed Coordinator
Wendie Warner | Special Projects & Safety Director
Kat Herrera | GIS Coordinator
Adrian Knight | Staff Forester

ARWC

Jonathan Paklaian | Executive Director
Carrie Adair | Chief Operations Officer & GIS Specialist
Andy Lerch | Lead Forester
Marget Strozyk | Fuels Mitigation Specialist

PWP

Julie Knudson | Executive Director & Watershed Coordinator

COCO Board of Directors

Mike Smith | Chair
Jen Kovecses | Vice Chair
Lisa McVicker | Secretary
Gerald Barber | Treasurer
Eric Howell | Director
Jim Idema | Director
Mary Dawson | Director
Mark Shea | Director



Welcome New Wildfire Mitigation Specialist

Mitch Dahlke

Originally hailing from Minnesota, Mitch values contribution and work ethic learned on the Midwest farms of his youth, and holds a deep fascination with tribal and agricultural prescribed fire practices. He holds a Master's of Conservation Leadership from CSU, Fort Collins and has come to us from Summit County in November 2021. Welcome to the team, Mitch!

