

# COLORADO FOURTEENERS INITIATIVE

## **2010 ANNUAL REPORT**



**Colorado Fourteeners Initiative**  
*A Partnership for Preservation*



# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



COVER: Maroon Bells at sunrise from Maroon Lake  
THIS PAGE: Uncompahgre Peak at Sunset  
Both photos by Glenn Randall, [www.GlennRandall.com](http://www.GlennRandall.com)



Last year was a pivotal one for Colorado Fourteeners Initiative as the organization moved from recovery to rebuilding. During 2010, the organization completed sustainable summit routes to three Fourteeners, posted record field education results and made important, if unglamorous, investments in management systems. CFI had a poor year financially due to accruing liabilities for several old grants, but ended the year with a clear plan for the future and a stronger capability to execute that vision.

Since there really is no mission without adequate funding, I am proudest to report that CFI's financial base broadened and deepened during 2010. Many not-for-profit organizations continued to struggle raising money, but CFI posted record individual and corporate giving last year despite a less-than-robust broader economy. To lessen the risks associated with having most support coming from fewer than five institutional donors, the organization took steps to diversify its funding base through corporate partnerships, fee-for-service revenue and larger—and more numerous—gifts from individual Fourteener enthusiasts across the country.

To help manage a larger and broader base of supporters, CFI made several important investments in development and financial systems and completed its first formal audit using generally accepted accounting principles. The more rigorous auditing process provides funders with greater confidence that CFI is employing best industry financial controls to ensure their donations are spent appropriately. CFI also migrated to a more robust and efficient donor management system and instituted more detailed project-based budgeting.

In the field CFI completed trail reconstruction projects to Mount Yale, Sunlight Peak and Windom Peak. This brings to 24 the number of summit routes reconstructed by CFI over the past 17 years. Trail maintenance capabilities were boosted by the addition of a dedicated backcountry maintenance crew working on less accessible peaks, while the Adopt-a-Peak program posted its third-best year ever in terms of volunteer days contributed. Not to be outdone, the on-mountain Peak Steward Leave No Trace hiker education program recorded record-high numbers of volunteer days and visitor contacts for the second consecutive year.

I am justifiably proud of all that Colorado Fourteeners Initiative accomplished last year. Great work was completed in the field, while important investments were made in the office. As a "partnership for preservation," CFI's accomplishments are always collective in nature. The partnership marshals the expertise of our Forest Service colleagues, the wisdom of our board of directors, the passion of our many volunteers and the financial support of individuals and organizations who gave generously so that future generations can experience the wonder of these special places we call the Fourteeners. Together we made a difference in 2010. To all who helped, I offer my sincere thanks. We could not have done it without you.

Regards,

Lloyd F. Athearn  
Executive Director

# TRAIL RECONSTRUCTION

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The summer of 2010 saw CFI complete the reconstruction of summit trails to three Fourteeners: Mount Yale and both Windom and Sunlight Peaks in Chicago Basin. These projects commenced as far back as 2007, and each took three field seasons to construct. With completion of these three routes, CFI's total reached 24 reconstructed summit routes on 22 Fourteener peaks.

CFI's cornerstone trail reconstruction projects build sustainably located, designed and constructed summit trails through incredibly fragile alpine tundra plant ecosystems. Concurrently, crews stabilize and restore unplanned, user-created hiking routes that usually are badly eroded and harmful to sensitive native vegetation. From project initiation by the Forest Service through reconstruction work by CFI and our partners, these projects can take seven years or more to complete.

The Mount Yale team worked with a 10-person crew from Rocky Mountain Youth Corps over 12 weeks last summer to complete almost a mile of trail delineation and construction on the reroute and a half mile of stabilizing and armoring existing switchbacks on the upper mountain. Preliminary restoration work was done at the lower and upper ends of the closed and severely eroded social trail, with further restoration work planned for 2011. Six stewardship projects involving more than 172 volunteer days helped advance the Mount Yale trail construction when the youth corps crew was off the mountain.

CFI's three-person Chicago Basin team oversaw an 11-person crew from Southwest Conservation Corps over 14 weeks in completing summit trails through sensitive vegetated areas on both Windom and Sunlight Peaks. Trail reconstruction began at Twin Lakes and continued as high as 13,800 feet in the Red Couloir on Sunlight. Existing user-created trail segments were closed and stabilized. Further restoration work is planned when CFI returns to perform the Mount Eolus project at an undetermined time in the future.

*Think your commute is bad? Each CFI crew member working on the Mount Yale and Chicago Basin projects hiked between 117,000 and 120,000 vertical feet over the summer commuting between basecamp and the project worksite. That is more than four times the height of Mount Everest from sea level to summit. Hiking to and from the worksite consumed half of every eight-hour day for most crew members, since project worksites were located as high as 13,800 feet.*

*Walls, stairs and other features on the new Mount Yale summit trail prevent soil erosion, protect tundra plants and keep hikers on the trail*



*Hardened switchbacks on the upper slopes of Mount Yale*

*The upper junction showing the closed social trail and the top of the new trail reroute*





*Cutting the new trail above Twin Lakes to Windom and Sunlight Peaks*

Reconstructed Fourteener summit trails play a vital role in protecting unique and fragile native alpine tundra ecosystems from the impacts of an estimated half-million hiker days per year. Yet few people understand how complex and labor intensive they are to perform.

- Most Fourteeners are located in wilderness, which means reconstruction work is performed using primitive hand tools—sledgehammers, shovels, rock bars and other trail-specific tools. Motorized and mechanized transportation and equipment are prohibited on wilderness projects.
- To maintain the natural character of Fourteener trails, walls, staircases and other erosion-control structures generally are built out of native materials (i.e. rocks, logs and plants) that are found nearby and transported by hand to the worksite.
- Late-melting snowpack and early onset of winter limit work to a short period between mid-June and early October, while summer thunderstorms often shorten work days.
- Food, equipment and tools to outfit a self-sufficient backcountry basecamp crew typically weigh more than 5,000 pounds and consume almost 10 percent of the entire field season to pack-in/setup, teardown/pack out.
- CFI's commitment to environmental sustainability means that all human waste generated by a 12+ person field crew is packed out for proper disposal—up to 70 gallons per crew—while food waste is removed and composted.

These factors help explain why Fourteener trail reconstruction projects can take three years and cost up to \$500,000 to complete.



*Tundra plants keep a watchful eye on the Chicago Basin crew as it works*

*Late in the season the crew works at the base of Sunlight Peak's Red Couloir*



Photos by Eli Allan

# TRAIL MAINTENANCE

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Good weather played a significant role in CFI posting one of its most successful years ever maintaining Fourteener summit trails in 2010. In an average year CFI has to completely cancel four projects due to weather, but last year not one complete day was lost to weather.

Eighteen volunteer groups worked on 35 projects maintaining summit trails on 18 Fourteeners. These projects led to 892 volunteer days of direct trail stewardship work—CFI’s third-best year ever and a 7 percent increase compared to 2009’s performance. Most of the trail maintenance projects were directed by CFI’s two-person Adopt-a-Peak crew, though several projects also were held on the Mount Yale project.

CFI added a three-person roving backcountry maintenance crew that worked independently maintaining summit trails on Capitol Peak, Mount of the Holy Cross, Uncompahgre Peak and Mount Evans. These projects were not well suited to volunteers due to their altitude, complexity and remoteness. The backcountry crew also worked on a discrete, fee-for-service project for Denver Mountain Parks early in the field season building an ADA-accessible trail of native materials on Mount Evans from Summit Lake to the Chicago Lakes overlook.

*To properly manage previously constructed summit trails—investments that can take several years and cost upwards of \$500,000 to complete—CFI is working with volunteers from the consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH) to develop a maintenance modeling program. CFI, BAH and Forest Service staff have developed protocols for the collection of GPS-based trail conditions data to track changes over time, which will be tested during a 2011 pilot project. Once completed, the modeling tool will help forecast future trail maintenance needs, costs and staffing to ensure prior trail investments are maintained over time.*

Adopt-a-Peak volunteer trail maintenance projects last year focused principally on the Fourteeners closest to the Denver metropolitan area. However, with increasing reconstruction and restoration work in the San Juans, CFI spent time recruiting potential partner organizations in Durango to be closer to these future maintenance projects.

*A section of braided and eroding trail on Mount  
Bross prior to restoration*



*Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado crew  
stabilizing and restoring this eroded area  
with vegetation plug transplants*



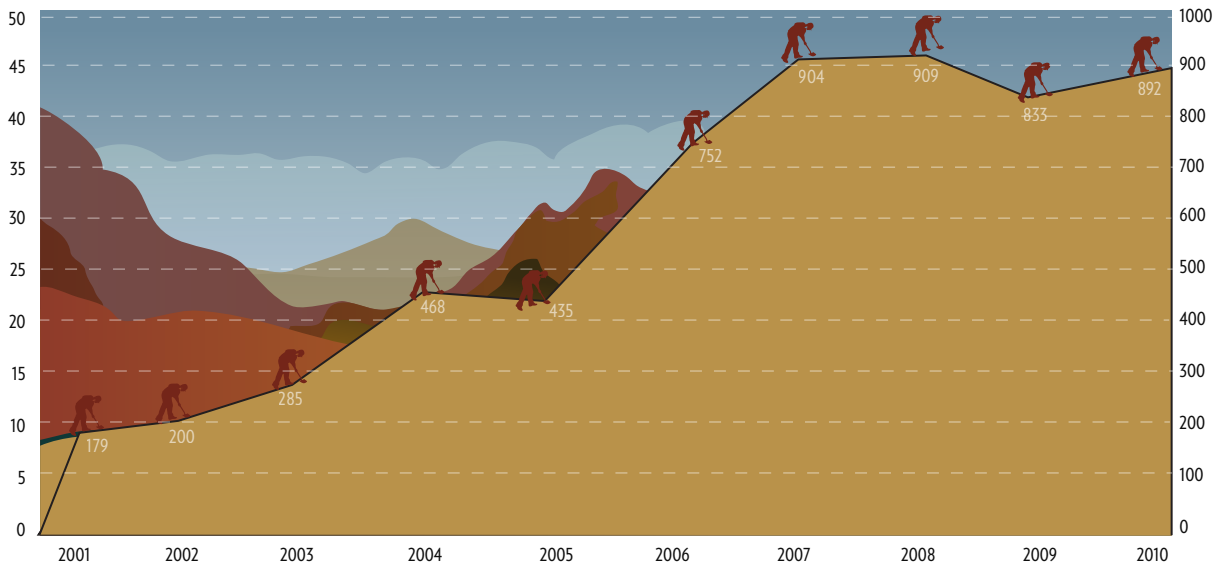
*Booz Allen  
consultant Jason  
Coccia jots down  
potential trail  
data collection  
criteria*





*Special Sports Venture volunteers at work on Quandary Peak*

## Number of Volunteer Days





*Colorado College students install waterbars and fill soil to restore natural contours and minimize trail erosion at Uncompahgre Peak*



# EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

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*Education and Outreach Coordinator Brian Wallace educating hikers at the Kite Lake trailhead*

CFI amassed a year of significant accomplishment in 2010 educating hikers about the unique alpine ecosystems found on the Fourteeners. The on-mountain Peak Stewards program set records for both volunteer days and hiker contacts for the second year running. Meanwhile, important investments were made in Fourteener hiker education through installation of trailhead kiosks and shooting footage for future web-based educational videos.

A private grant turned CFI's seasonal education and outreach coordinator into a year-round position, allowing a significant increase in the number of trained Peak Stewards volunteering through the program. Nine trainings over the winter and spring led to an active cadre of 45 Peak Steward volunteers who put in 225 days over the season—a 65 percent increase over 2009—contacting 7,596 hikers on 49 Fourteeners. All were record accomplishments for the program. Beyond providing hikers with Leave No Trace information, Peak Stewards also assist CFI by tracking visitor use levels and noting areas in need of maintenance.

Four sets of trailhead kiosk panels were produced providing information about agency regulations, maps, trail profiles and statistics for constructed summit routes and Leave No Trace practices designed to minimize impacts on the Fourteeners. Kiosk panels were installed at trailheads for Grays and Torreys Peaks (Stevens Gulch), Mount Evans (Chicago Lakes) and Mount Massive (North Halfmoon Creek). Vandalism of the kiosk frame at the Mount

Elbert trailhead (South Elbert) delayed installation of panels there until 2011, when trailhead kiosk panels also will be installed at Wetterhorn and Uncompahgre Peaks and Mounts Bierstadt and Sneffels.

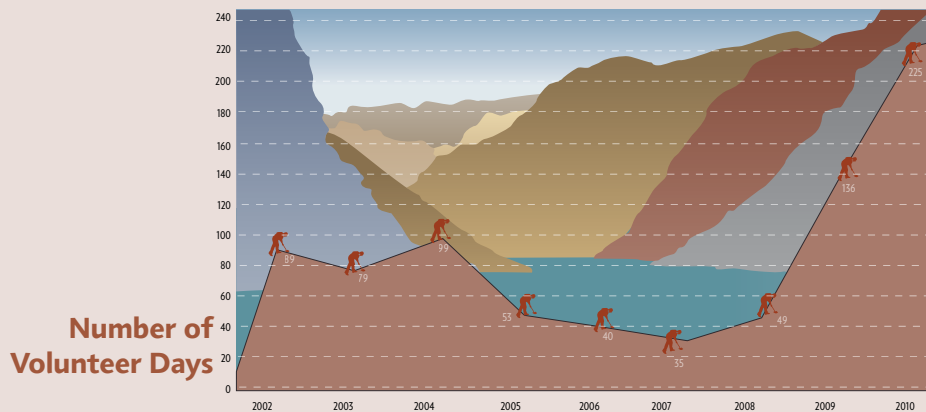
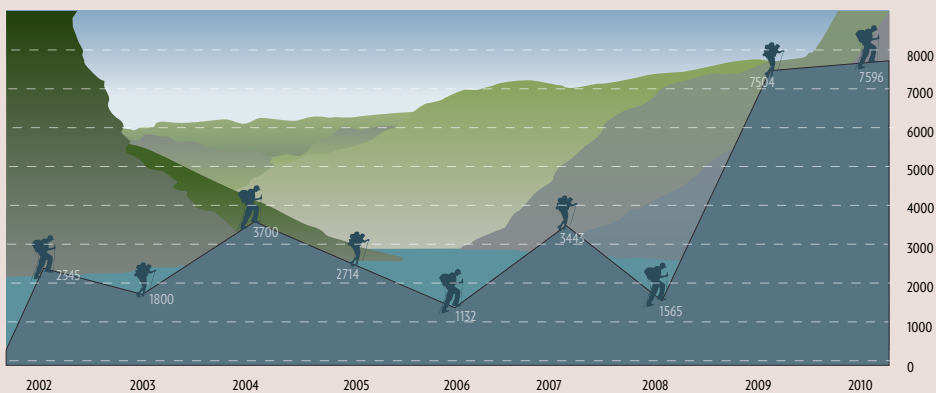
*CFI's Fourteener-specific Leave No Trace hiker education program benefits from a long-standing partnership with the five Denver-area REI stores. CFI staff and Peak Stewards last year gave talks at 19 "How to Climb a Fourteener" clinics put on monthly during the spring and summer, in the process educating 1,188 new Fourteener hikers about minimum impact techniques developed for these unique and fragile places.*

To leverage the broad reach of CFI's website, three days of video filming occurred last summer that will be edited into web-based videos educating hikers across the country about topics ranging from alpine ecology to what is involved in building and maintaining Fourteener trails. Look for segments to begin appearing this summer on a completely redesigned 14ers.org website.



## Number of Persons Contacted

*Shooting footage on Mount Bross for future web videos*



# LOOKING FORWARD

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*Sunrise from Snowmass Mountain photo by Glenn Randall, [www.GlennRandall.com](http://www.GlennRandall.com)*

CFI and the Forest Service are hard at work planning projects that will unfold over the coming years to protect additional Fourteeners. Here is a quick sampling of where CFI will be working on sustainable summit trail reconstruction projects in 2011 and future field seasons.

## **Mount Yale**

With funding from the Forest Service and Patagonia, CFI will spend a full season stabilizing and restoring the mile-long badly eroded social trail that was closed last year. In some places the devastation is 15-20 feet wide.

## **Mount of the Holy Cross**

Grants from Colorado State Trails and the National Forest Foundation will fund two seasons of work commencing this August delineating and reconstructing the primary ascent route, which has been the cause of many rescues and trampling of vegetation by lost hikers. Work in 2012 will focus on closing and restoring campsites along Cross Creek.

## **Maroon Bells**

A major commitment from Colorado State Trails will allow route reconstruction work to begin in 2012 on North Maroon Peak for what is anticipated to be a two year project. A full year of trail reconstruction work is anticipated on Maroon Peak, which should begin in 2014.



## **San Luis Peak**

The Forest Service received a significant grant from Colorado State Trails to begin work on San Luis Peak's two summit routes commencing in 2012.

*Slope stabilization and revegetation work will occur this summer on Mount Yale's closed social trail*



# ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

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## 2010 Staff

Lloyd Athearn, Executive Director  
Jerry Mack, Controller  
Greg Seabloom, Field Programs Manager  
Brian Wallace, Education and  
Outreach Coordinator

## 2010 Board

Michael McCabe, Chair  
Chuck Bartholomew, Vice Chair  
Nate Palmer, Treasurer  
Kathleen Brennan, Secretary  
Warren Buettner  
Steve Dayney  
Alice Jennison  
Trygve Kjellsen  
Norbert Klebl  
Tim Leddy  
Matt McConnell  
Bill Middlebrook  
Jim Schoettler  
Mark Soane  
Anne Vickery

## 2010 Board Partners

Jon Morrissey,  
USFS Liaison, Leadville District Ranger  
Loretta McElhiney,  
USFS Region 2 Peak Manager

## Chicago Basin Crew

Shaun Loveless, Leader  
Ben Hanus, Assistant Leader  
Jarlath Caldwell, Crewmember

## Mount Yale Crew

Kyrstan Hubbel, Co-Leader  
Jeff Goldberg, Co-Leader

## Adopt-a-Peak Crew

Frances Boulding, Leader  
Evan Conner, Outdoor Leadership Intern

## Roving Backcountry Crew

Ben Turati, Leader  
Kate Henderson, Crewmember  
Dan Williams, Crewmember





*Wendell Hann leading a packstring into Chicago Basin in 2009*


### **2010 Volunteer of the Year**

Wendell Hann, a retired Forest Service fire and landscape ecologist, was selected as the 2010 Colorado Fourteeners Initiative Volunteer of the Year for his generous assistance to CFI in recent years. Wendell is an accomplished horsepacker who has donated his packing services for many years to transport tons of trail tools, food, equipment and supplies for CFI's backcountry basecamps. Over each of the past two years Wendell has used his packstring to pack in an estimated six tons of equipment over the steep, narrow and very exposed Purgatory and Needle Creek trails 15 miles into Chicago Basin. This process has taken eight days per season—four in and four out—which has saved CFI more than \$40,000 in transportation costs.

*CFI's 2010 seasonal staff at pre-season training near Twin Lakes. Back row (L to R) Frances Boulding, Ben Hanus, Ben Turati, Dan Williams and Jeff Goldberg. Front row (L to R) Kate Henderson, Kyrstan Hubbel, Evan Conner and Shaun Loveless. Not pictured: Jarlath Caldwell*

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

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2010 was a year of financial tension between growing and diversifying CFI's base of support and accounting for past, unmet project liabilities that surfaced over the course of the year. Addressing past grant liabilities totaling \$77,480—some of which dated as far back as 2003—played a primary role in the reduction in net assets of more than \$71,500 at year's end. Despite this one-time hit, the view ahead is quite encouraging.

## Operating Revenues

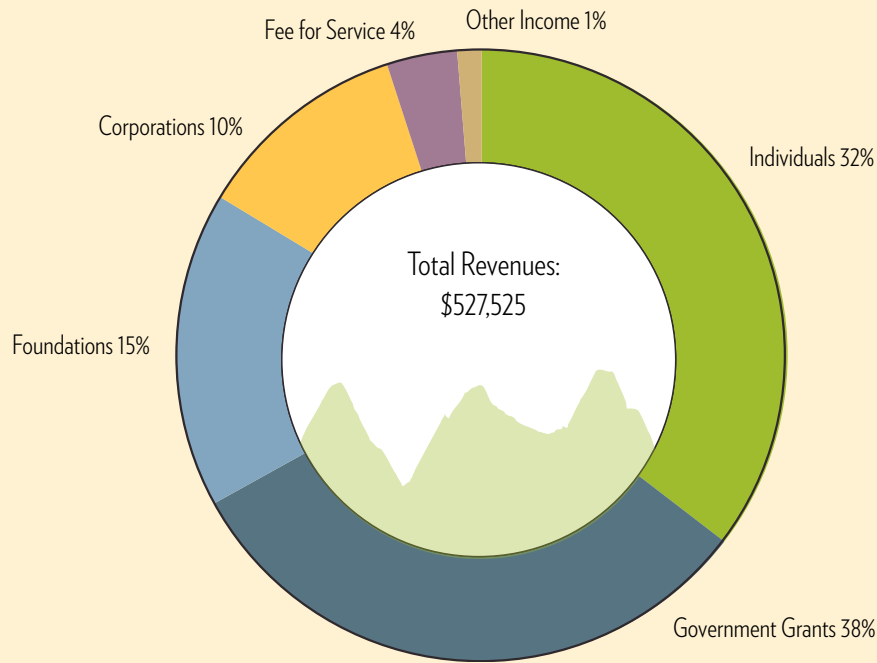
Operating revenues in 2010 rose to \$527,525, an increase of 3 percent relative to 2009. Government grants remained CFI's largest revenue source, but fell from 55 to 38 percent of total revenues when compared to 2009. Gifts from individuals residing in 39 states and the District of Columbia totaled \$170,275—the highest level in CFI's 17-year history. The average individual gift increased 46 percent when compared to 2009. Foundation gifts increased last year as a share of total revenues by 5 percent, while corporate gifts increased by 3 percent. CFI's work for Denver Mountain Parks provided almost \$18,000 in fee-for-service revenue. CFI migrated donor records from an unsupported, proprietary software residing on one computer to a leading hosted donor management system, which provides greater tools for managing grants and donor relationships, as well as opportunities for online gift processing through CFI's website.

## Operating Expenses

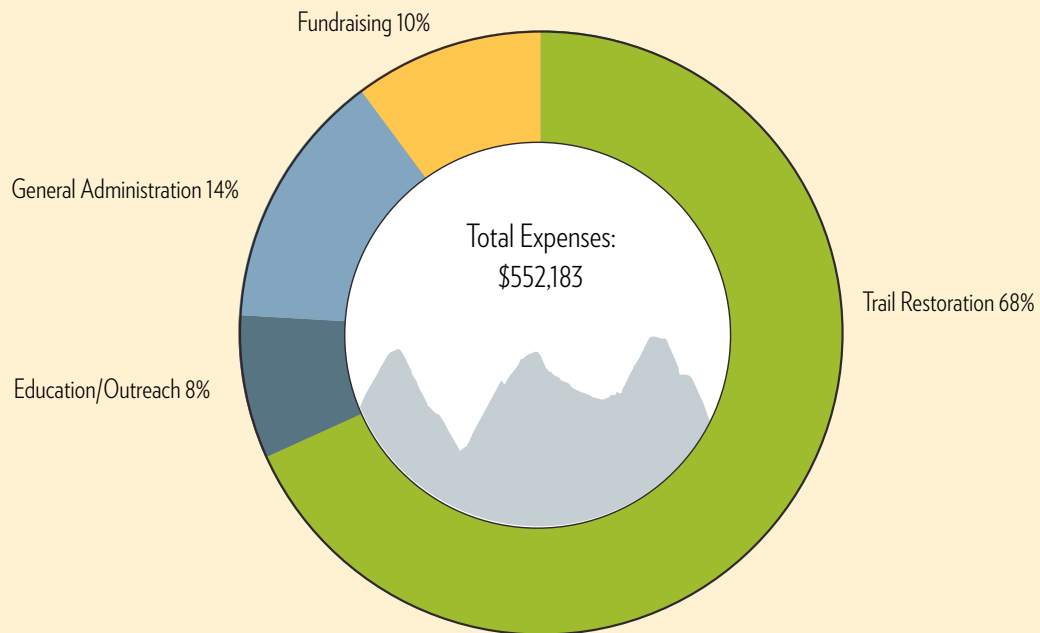
Operating expenses grew to \$552,183 in 2010, a 19 percent increase when compared to 2009. Rebuilding CFI's field programs, adding a fourth seasonal crew and investing in marketing, development and financial systems all played roles in increased expenses. Administrative and fundraising percentages increased in 2010 relative to the prior year, principally because there was no executive director on the payroll for the first half of 2009. Significant time was devoted by the executive director and the controller setting up financial, audit and donor management systems that also increased the expenses in these functional areas. Development of project-based budgeting allowed revenues and expenditures to be tracked by individual projects, which allows the organization to assess whether projects are fully funded or are being subsidized by general donations. Liabilities for completion of trailhead kiosks in 2010 and 2011 and construction of switchbacks on Mount Yale that were to have been constructed in 2008 increased expenses by almost \$28,000, much of which did not have corresponding revenues during this fiscal year.

To provide greater financial transparency and to ensure that CFI is using best industry practices, CFI engaged JDS Professional Group, one of Colorado's leading audit firms with a well-respected not-for-profit practice, to perform the organization's first GAAP-based audit using accrual-based accounting. JDS Professional Group gave CFI a clean bill of health for audits of both 2009 and 2010 fiscal years. The auditor reduced net assets by \$46,874 in the 2010 audit to reflect the worst-case scenario regarding potential repayment of a State Trails grant dating to 2006. CFI disputes the full repayment of the grant, and any difference in the repayment amount will be reflected in the 2011 financials.

### 2010 Operating Revenues



### 2010 Operating Expenses





Lupine and the Sneffels Range  
photo by Glenn Randall, [www.GlennRandall.com](http://www.GlennRandall.com)

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