

# COLORADO FOURTEENERS INITIATIVE

## *2011 Annual Report*

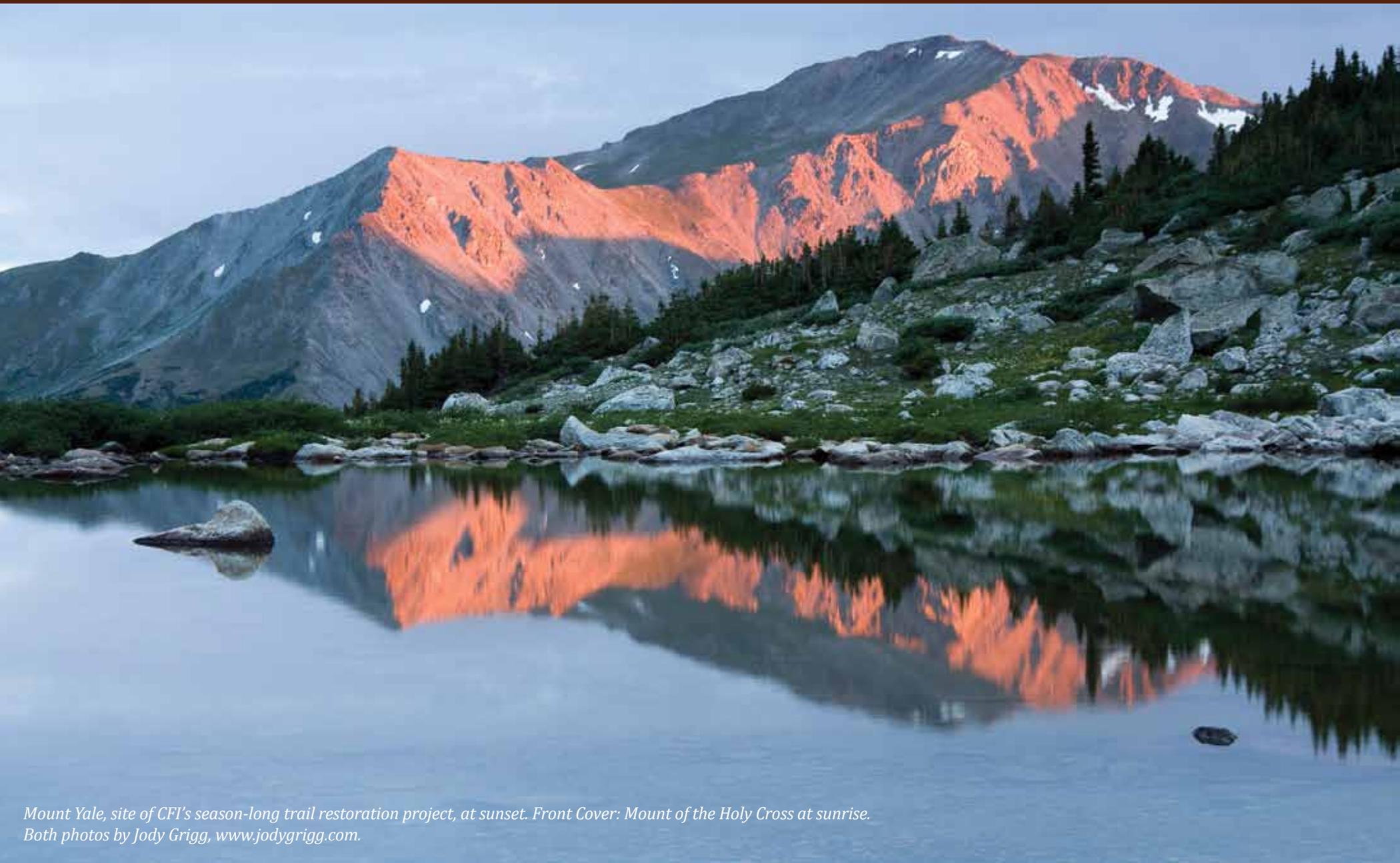


Colorado Fourteeners Initiative  
*A Partnership for Preservation*





# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*Mount Yale, site of CFI's season-long trail restoration project, at sunset. Front Cover: Mount of the Holy Cross at sunrise.  
Both photos by Jody Grigg, [www.jodygrigg.com](http://www.jodygrigg.com).*

Dear Friends,

Gardeners say it takes three years for a newly planted garden to take hold. In the first year the plants sleep, making no apparent change from when they were planted. In the second year the garden creeps, making small gains in size and display. But in the third year the garden leaps, bursting forth in a showy display that could hardly have been foreseen by the slow progress early on.



CFI has been working on a similar three-year growth progression since I took the reins in the summer of 2009. Most of the first year was spent stabilizing the organization after a tumultuous couple of years. In 2010 there were incremental gains in both field programs and business operations, yet nothing too dramatic. But in 2011 the organization took a significant leap forward in all facets of its work—programmatic bests in the field combined with record fundraising in multiple categories. It was the year in which all the hard work put in over the prior two years paid off handsomely to the betterment of the Fourteeners we love.

CFI conducted the privately funded pilot phase of the Sustainable Trails Program, an important, forward-looking effort advised by volunteers at Booz Allen Hamilton, that is inventorying constructed Fourteener trails to model and manage future maintenance work. A growing cadre of Peak Steward volunteers put in record numbers of volunteer days and made record numbers of hiker education contacts on the mountains last summer. Volunteer participation on Adopt-a-Peak trail maintenance and vegetation restoration projects posted one of the best years ever, almost reaching the 1,000-days mark. Project volunteers helped CFI maintain 20 peaks, complete the season-long restoration project on Mount Yale, and begin the reconstruction of the Mount of the Holy Cross summit trail, in the process providing in-kind support valued at almost \$220,000.

In the business side of the organization, CFI posted a 62 percent increase in operating revenues and surpassed the \$850,000 mark for only the second time in the organization's 18-year history. Gifts from individuals posted the third consecutive year of record individual giving and exceeded \$200,000 for the first time ever. A \$50,000 pledge from the Appelson family set up CFI's first endowment fund, which will provide stability to CFI's Adopt-a-Peak program. CFI also achieved record corporate giving for the second year in a row. A major contributor to corporate giving was a new \$36,000 truck won through the active participation of CFI's Facebook fans voting in Toyota's *100 Cars for Good* program.

Amid all the successes, 2011 was also a year of continued transitions at CFI. Brian Wallace, a former seasonal crew leader and the education and outreach coordinator since 2009, left in October when a private grant funding his position was not renewed. A month later Greg Seabloom, CFI's long-time field programs manager and the glue that kept CFI together during its difficult transitional period, announced that he would be leaving CFI in February. The contributions of both will be missed. Thankfully CFI is a robust organization with bench depth in our staff, board, volunteers, partners and supporters.

Though the gardener's adage does not mention what happens in the fourth year, I am convinced it will be even better. Thanks for your important role in helping make all of CFI's successes in 2011 possible.

Regards,  
Lloyd F. Athearn, Executive Director

*The Maroon Bells at midsummer.  
Photo by Glenn Randall, [www.glenrandall.com](http://www.glenrandall.com).*



Mt. Elbert  
1994La Plata Peak  
1995Mt. Belford  
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# TRAIL RECONSTRUCTION

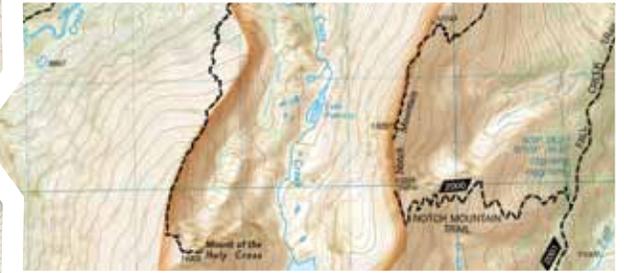
*Sustainable • Durable • Volunteer • Leadership • Recognition*



*First light on the upper slopes of Mount of the Holy Cross.*

Since its inception, CFI's has worked to ensure that every Fourteener has a sustainably designed and constructed summit trail channeling hikers through rare and fragile alpine tundra ecosystems. CFI's cornerstone trail reconstruction program has completed 24 sustainable summit trails on 22 Fourteeners over the past 18 years, an average of more than one new route per year.

Last summer, CFI began a two-season trail reconstruction project on Mount of the Holy Cross near Minturn. The heavily traveled, but poorly delineated Halfmoon Trail up the mountain's north ridge is notoriously difficult to follow on the descent. Hikers frequently get off route and descend into the Cross Creek drainage. Some realize their mistake and quickly regain the ridge. Others get lost and require search and rescue missions. All of this off-trail travel causes serious impacts to the fragile alpine tundra ecosystems, which will be minimized once the new trail is completed.



CFI's two-person Holy Cross team, a 10-person Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew, and three multi-day volunteer projects put in a combined 542 person days working on the project. Due to the record winter snowpack, the camp was not packed in until late July. The crew and volunteers completed almost a mile of trail reconstruction and associated terrain restoration work by the end of the summer. Work on the route will continue in 2012, with additional work clearing downed trees from the nearby Notch Mountain Trail, closing and restoring campsites along East Cross Creek, and designating campsites in more sustainable locations.

CFI wilderness basecamps are so isolated they have their own solar power systems and communicate via satellite phones.



Up to 10 percent of the field season is spent horse-packing 2-3 tons of basecamp equipment, trail tools, and supplies in and out of the wilderness.

Each basecamp crew generates 50-70 gallons of human waste that are packed out for disposal to minimize resource impacts.



*Members of the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew strain to move a boulder.*



*Upper right: Heavy reconstruction work to define a clear path through the talus field.*



*A marmot keeps a watchful eye on the crew. All photos by Eli Allan, [www.eliswindow.net](http://www.eliswindow.net).*

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# TRAIL MAINTENANCE

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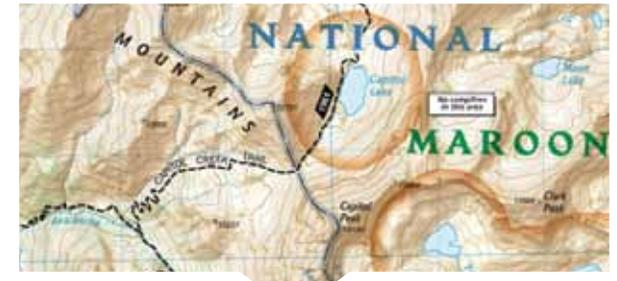


*Roving Backcountry Crew member Danica Ivanovich places a rock step on the Mount Sneffels summit trail.  
Photo by Eli Allan, [www.eliswindow.net](http://www.eliswindow.net).*

Despite the massive snowpack, which cancelled a few early season trail maintenance projects, CFI had a very productive field season maintaining the existing Fourteener trail network.

CFI's two-person Adopt-a-Peak crew and three-person Roving Backcountry Crew conducted 42 projects with 505 volunteers to maintain 17.5 miles of trails last year. The 989 volunteer days contributed through all volunteer projects were an 11 percent increase over 2010. Unfortunately, an early October storm, when multiple projects were under way, prevented breaking the elusive 1,000 person-day barrier.

Roughly half of all Adopt-a-Peak volunteer days were performed by youths. These service projects get kids outdoors, provide fun, hands-on backcountry experiences, and educate them about alpine ecology and the importance of public lands stewardship.



*Adopt-a-Peak volunteers place another check step in the trail above Capitol Lake. Photo by John Krotchko.*



Over the past five years, CFI has averaged more than 900 days per year of volunteer trail maintenance.



Adopt-a-Peak volunteers provided more than \$172,000 in donated value during 2011.



*Ben Hanus collects GPS data for the Sustainable Trails Program on Mount Bierstadt.*

To ensure CFI is managing its inventory of constructed trails in a strategic way, CFI conducted a pilot version of the Sustainable Trails Program last summer. Funded by private donors, the project collected detailed GPS-based inventories of 12 summit trails. This information is being analyzed and will be used to quantify and prioritize future maintenance projects, staffing needs, and costs. Funding from the Forest Service will continue the project for at least a year.

The newly established Kimberly Appelson Memorial Endowment will help fund CFI's Outdoor Leadership Intern position in future years. The internship, which was renamed in Kimberly's memory, provides critical on-the-ground project leadership experiences to aspiring natural resource protection professionals. Over time the goal is to grow the endowment so that it can fund multiple interns working to protect the Fourteeners.



*The difference a large Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado project makes. Above: The heavily eroded lower section of the Grays and Torreys causeway in fall 2010. Below: After 60 VOC volunteers did their stuff in September 2011.*

# TRAIL RESTORATION

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*Log and rock check dams on the lowest portion of the restored trail.*

Once a newly rerouted summit trail is completed, CFI steps in to close and restore the old, user-created route to give nature's recovery process a boost. This is necessary because erosion has stripped the native soil from these areas and alpine tundra plants regenerate very slowly. Without this help closed social trails could take several decades to restore themselves to natural conditions.

The multi-step restoration process involves carrying topsoil from nearby deposition areas and animal piles to help restore the slope's natural contours. Rocks, logs and wattles that will decompose over time are placed across the restoration area to stabilize the slope and slow water runoff. Plugs of grasses and plants that are well suited to transplantation are dug up and planted in strategic locations. At the end of summer, native seeds are collected from near the project site and scattered across the bare soil to help the restoration process.

Last summer CFI's Mount Yale crew spent the season restoring the 1.1-mile-long closed summit trail, as well as completing a few remaining structures on the new trail that was opened in 2010. Over the course of the summer, two CFI project leaders directed the work of a 10-person Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew and nine volunteer groups. Together these efforts invested 764 person days in the project.



*Before: The severely eroded lower portion of the Mount Yale trail in 2009, which was up to 20 feet wide and more than a foot deep in places. After: Rock and wood check dams and wattles help control erosion while hundreds of plug transplants begin the revegetation process.*

Some of the tangible accomplishments include:

- 14,920 vegetation plugs transplanted
- 220 nine-foot-long wattles installed to slow runoff and control erosion
- 50 wood and rock check dams constructed in deeply trenched areas

Keep in mind that each wattle weighs 15 pounds and all 220 wattles used on the project had to be hiked up the mountain between 1,500 and 3,000 vertical feet to the location where they were installed.



Alpine tundra plants are 10 to 1,000-times slower to regrow than plants found at lower elevations.

An inch of soil in the alpine typically takes 1,000 years to be created.

Over the course of a single summer, uncontrolled erosion can strip away soil that took 12,000 years to create.



*Outdoor Leadership Intern Chris Houde shows volunteers how to transplant vegetation plugs on Quandary Peak.*

While the Mount Yale project is the largest restoration project CFI has conducted in recent years, restoration is always a part of CFI's work. For example, Adopt-a-Peak volunteers on Quandary Peak last year performed secondary restoration work to assist in revegetating the old, user-created trail that was closed in 2002. This summer campsite restoration will be a major part of the Holy Cross project.

*Before: Bare soil with the start of deep erosion troughs appear in 2005 on this steep portion of the old trail.  
After: Following restoration, with wattles and strategically placed rocks designed to slow water to limit erosion and pool water for newly transplanted vegetation plugs.*

# HIKER EDUCATION

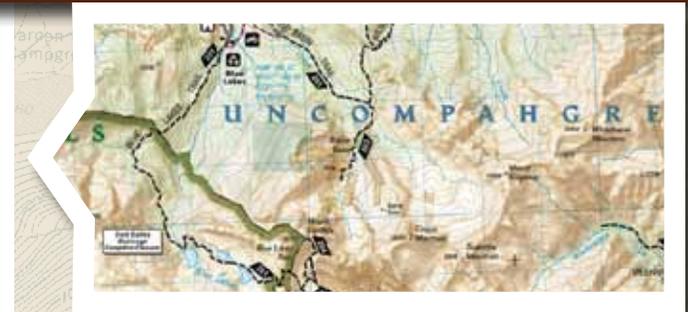
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*The newly installed educational kiosk at the Nellie Creek trailhead for Uncompahgre Peak.*

Educating hikers about the fragility of Colorado's beautiful alpine tundra ecosystems is a crucial component of CFI's work. Given the national draw of the Fourteeners, CFI utilizes a number of strategies to help reach hikers before they leave home, when they are at trailheads, and while they are on the mountains. It is a big challenge given that people are widely dispersed across 54 peaks over an estimated 110-day hiking season.

To reach hikers before they leave home, CFI completed the first batch of six educational videos that were posted to CFI's YouTube page and linked to CFI's completely redesigned website. Former CFI ecologist John Giordanengo generously donated his time and expertise to explain how alpine tundra ecosystems operate, what is unique about the plants that grow there, and why doing things like picking flowers can be harmful to the long-term viability of these spectacular ecosystems. Additional video footage was shot last summer that will be used in future videos covering topics including building and maintaining sustainably located and designed hiking trails. CFI also used staff and volunteers to educate more than 1,300 people through talks at Denver-area REI stores and in other community outreach events.



To educate hikers at the trailhead, CFI installed three-panel kiosks last summer at four Fourteener trailheads: Mount Elbert (South Elbert), Mount Sneffels (Yankee Boy Basin), Uncompahgre Peak (Nellie Creek) and Wetterhorn Peak (Matterhorn Creek). The kiosks provide peak-specific information about agency regulations, maps, trail profiles, and statistics for constructed routes. They also contain Leave No Trace information regarding practices that can limit recreation-caused impacts. Additional kiosks will be created once new reconstructed summit trails are completed.

Peak Steward volunteers provided more than \$50,000 in donated value last year.



Peak Stewards put in more than three times the number of field days in 2011 than the historic average.



*A Peak Steward contacting hikers near the Maroon Bells.*

To reinforce sustainable climbing behaviors once hikers are on the mountains, CFI recruits and trains volunteer Peak Stewards to talk to hikers about the unique alpine ecosystems and share pertinent Leave No Trace tips. Peak Stewards also help monitor visitor use trends and resource impacts for the Forest Service. A group of 55 active Peak Stewards posted another record year last summer by putting in 291 volunteer days and making 9,864 direct hiker contacts. This was a 29 percent increase in volunteer days and a 30 percent increase in visitor contacts compared to 2010. Almost half of active Peak Stewards put in four or more days on the mountains.



*Above: Shooting footage of an Adopt-a-Peak project on Quandary Peak for a future educational video. Below: Former CFI staff ecologist John Giordanengo explains Colorado's alpine environment in one of the first videos.*

# LOOKING FORWARD

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*The lush beauty of El Diente Peak's Kilpacker Basin.*

The outstanding year posted in 2011 is merely a prelude to what Colorado Fourteeners Initiative will be doing in 2012 and beyond. A multi-year grant from the Gates Family Foundation is helping accelerate CFI's capital trail reconstruction projects. This and other funding is helping CFI increase by 50 percent the number of fixed site crews in the field, with the goal of reconstructing five Fourteener trails by the end of the 2013 season.

## **Maroon Bells**

Support from the Colorado State Trails Program, National Forest Foundation, Aspen Skiing Environment Foundation, City of Aspen, and Pitkin County is allowing CFI to start the first of an anticipated two years reconstructing the access routes to the Maroon Bells. Focusing first on North Maroon Peak, the work will solve natural resource problems located on the lower slopes of both peaks, but will not go high on either mountain due to the inherent safety risks to crews. A recent Forest Service decision will allow for larger CFI crews, and means that both projects likely can be finished in two years, rather than three.



*Climbers ascending the heavily eroded, user-created trail to Mount Eolus.*

New Forest Service summit trails undergo a four-year planning and environmental review process before the first rocks are moved.



An estate gift may help CFI resolve private land issues on Shavano and Tabeguache that thwart trail reconstruction work.



*Castle and Conundrum Peaks at sunrise, where planning is under way for future trail reconstruction projects. Photo by Jody Grigg, [www.jodygrigg.com](http://www.jodygrigg.com).*

### **San Luis Peak**

Support from the Forest Service will fund CFI's work on the most remote Fourteener over the next two seasons. Though hiking use is low, growing impacts are being seen, with the potential for impacts to skyrocket if work is not completed immediately. Work will move the user-created summit trail away from Stewart Creek and wet, lush wildflower meadows to higher, drier, and more durable terrain. Next season's work will focus on the Cochetopa side.

### **El Diente Peak**

Assuming the Forest Service completes the environmental approval process, CFI plans to reconstruct the approach trail through the lush Kilpacker Basin in 2013. As with San Luis Peak, the fundamental problem to be solved stems from a trail that is located too close to Kilpacker Creek and ascends slopes too steeply, resulting in riparian area damage and braided, eroded trails.

### **Mount Eolus**

CFI plans to complete the third and last Fourteener in Chicago Basin in 2014 by constructing a sustainable summit route, as well as stabilizing and restoring the heavily eroded existing summit trail.



*The improperly located trail to San Luis is heavily eroded and causing siltation impacts to upper Stewart Creek.*

Looking farther into the future, CFI plans to have a continued focus in the Elk Mountains and Sawatch Range, with opportunistic projects in other areas when possible. Exploratory work is under way on both Castle Peak and Snowmass Mountain, which are expected to see trail reconstruction work begin over the next five years. Also in the planning phase are Mounts Columbia and Princeton. An estate gift is helping CFI try to resolve private lands issues that are thwarting planned trail reconstruction work on Mounts Shavano and Tabeguache. If this proves successful, CFI hopes to address other peaks where private lands are an obstacle.

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# ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

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## 2011 Staff

*Lloyd Athearn,  
Executive Director*



*Greg Seabloom,  
Field Programs Manager*



*Brian Wallace, Education  
and Outreach Coordinator*



*Jerry Mack, Controller*



*Alyssa Crews, CLIMB Intern*



*CFI's 2011 seasonal staff at Twin Lakes during preseason training. (L to R) Eli Allan, Nicole Fox, Matt Brownlee, Kyrstan Hubbel, Danica Ivanovich, Sarah Gorgas, Dan Williams, Ben Hanus, Chris Houde (kneeling), Teddy Wilkinson.*

## 12 2011 Staff

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

## 2011 Board

Michael McCabe, Chair  
Nate Palmer, Vice-Chair  
Jim Schoettler, Treasurer  
Trygve Kjellsen, Secretary  
Jerry Anderson  
Chuck Bartholomew  
Kathleen Brennan

Warren Buettner  
Steve Dayney  
Mandy Hughes  
Alice Jennison  
Norbert Klebl  
Tim Leddy  
Lisa Mattis  
Matt McConnell  
Bill Middlebrook  
Mark Soane  
Anne Vickery  
Marty Zeller

## 2011 Board Partners

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

## 2011 Seasonal Staff

**Adopt-a-Peak Crew**  
Nicole Fox, Leader  
Chris Houde, Outdoor Leadership Intern  
**Mount of the Holy Cross Crew**  
Eli Allan, Co-Leader  
Sarah Gorgas, Co-Leader  
**Mount Yale Crew**  
Kyrstan Hubbel, Co-Leader  
Matt Brownlee, Co-Leader  
**Roving Backcountry Crew**  
Dan Williams, Leader  
Danica Ivanovich, Crewmember  
Teddy Wilkinson, Crewmember  
**Sustainable Trails Program**  
Ben Hanus, Leader

## Special Recognition for

### Outstanding Service Awards

Wendy Askelson  
Derek Lauber

### Peak Steward Awards

Len Shipman: Peak Steward of the Year  
Glenn and Corinne Sommerfeld: Outstanding Peak Stewards  
Mario Sailas: Most Committed to Leave No Trace

### Adopt-a-Peak Awards

John Krotchko: Length of Service Award  
Michael Beerline: Most Field Time  
Andy Clark: Best Group Camaraderie and Support  
Brandon Coleman: Brought Most Smiles  
Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado: Partner of the Year



2011 Volunteer of the Year  
Bill Middlebrook



*Bill Middlebrook atop Mount Democrat before a ski descent.*



*Bill Middlebrook skiing Mount Massive.*

Bill Middlebrook, the founder/owner of 14ers.com, was selected as the 2011 Colorado Fourteeners Initiative Volunteer of the Year for his tireless promotion of the organization over the years. Bill joined CFI's board in 2009, a critical period as the organization sought to rebuild after a loss of funding and staff. His promotional efforts to the many thousands of 14ers.com followers have increased awareness of and financial support for CFI, putting the organization on a much more sustainable path for the future.



# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

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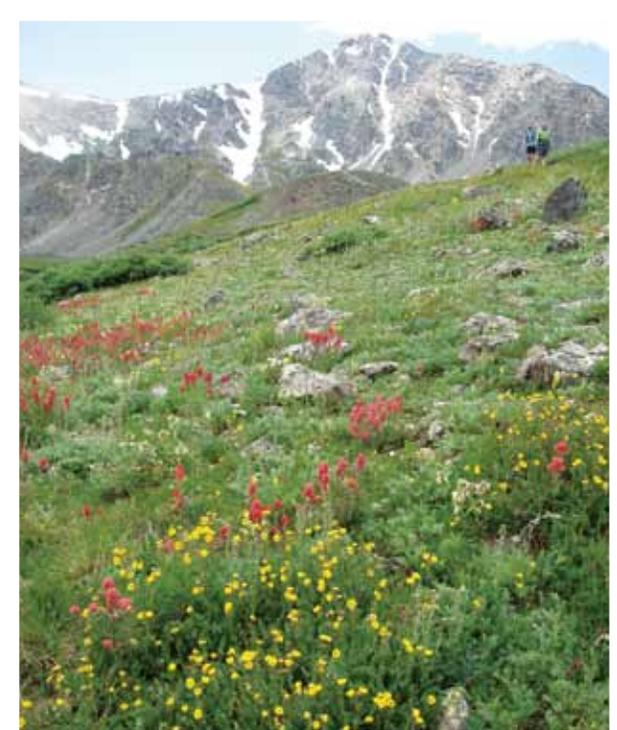


*Mount Eolus reflecting in Twin Lakes.*

2011 was a year of solid financial performance for Colorado Fourteeners Initiative. Revenues increased substantially and came from the most diversified funding base CFI has yet enjoyed, while expenses grew more slowly. Together these contributed to an increase in net assets of \$228,274 by year's end. Much of the increased revenue stemmed from obtaining grants and pledges in 2011 for work that will be performed in future years. CFI also received a pledge (paid off in January 2012) to establish the organization's first endowment fund. Together these forward-looking gifts helped lay the foundation for a bright and busy future protecting the Fourteeners.

## Operating Revenues

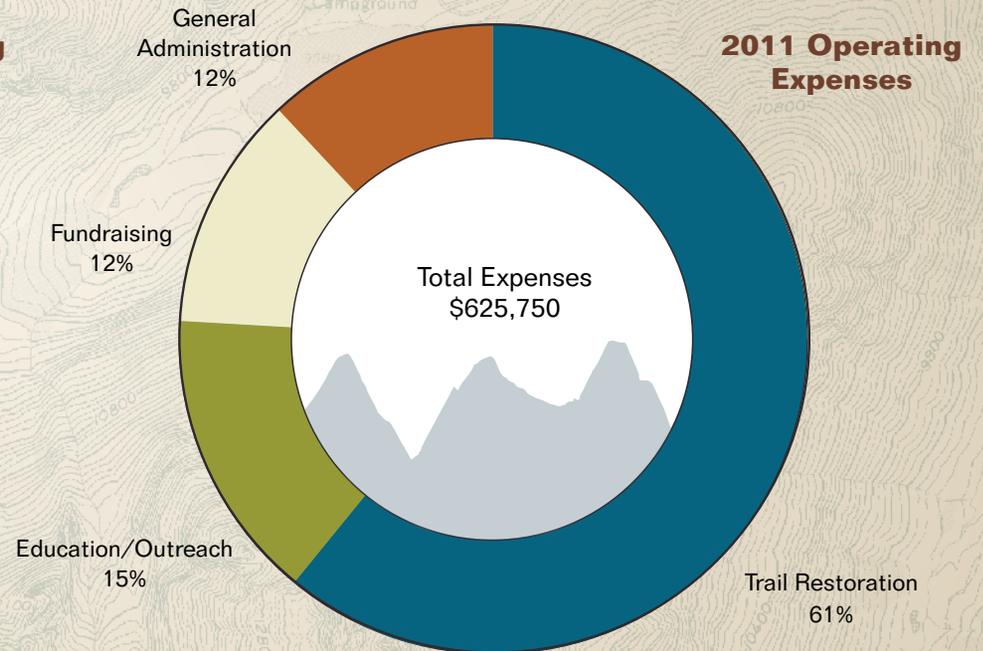
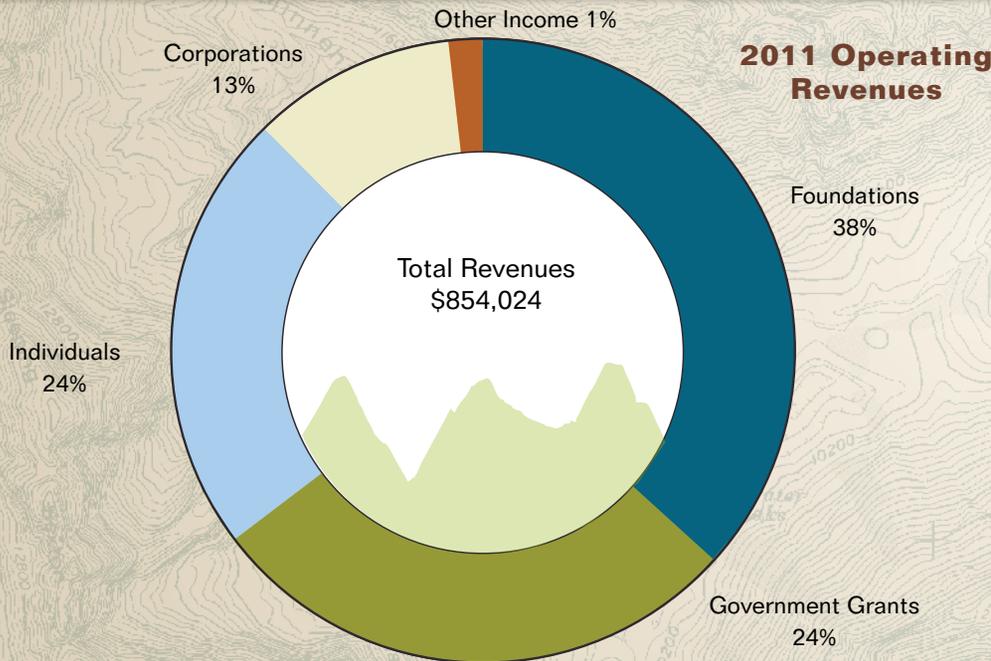
Overall revenues in 2011 were \$854,024, an increase of 62 percent compared to 2010. Sources of revenues also continued to diversify. Foundation gifts represented CFI's largest revenue source at 38 percent of total revenues, a dramatic increase from 15 percent in 2010 and 10 percent in 2009. A major contributor was a multi-year grant from the Gates Family Foundation to reconstruct five summit routes over the next three years. Advance funding of future projects



*The heavy winter snowpack resulted in spectacular wildflower displays across the Fourteeners, including Uncompahgre Peak (top) and Grays and Torreys Peaks (bottom).*

CFI's revenues increased 62 percent between 2010 and 2011.

More than three of every four dollars CFI spends goes to trail restoration or hiker education programs.



from the National Forest Foundation and other foundations also contributed to the dramatic increase in foundation giving. Government grants stayed relatively flat in dollar terms, but fell for the second straight year to 24 percent as a share of all revenues due to the increases in other revenue categories. Gifts from individuals residing in 38 states and the District of Columbia totaled \$201,472, the third consecutive year of record individual giving. As a percentage of all revenue, individual gifts dropped to 24 percent. Corporate giving also posted an all-time record of \$113,479, boosted in part by the new truck won in Toyota's *100 Cars for Good* program. This was the second consecutive year of record corporate giving and more than doubled 2010's previous high.

### Operating Expenses

Overall operating expenses in 2011 grew to \$625,750, a 13 percent increase when compared to 2010. The balance between programmatic expenditures and fundraising/general administrative expenses remained unchanged at 76 percent and 24 percent respectively despite the increase in overall expenditures. CFI added two seasonal positions in 2011, the Sustainable Trails project leader and a three-month marketing and development-focused intern through the CLIMB (Colorado Leaders, Interns, Mentors in Business) program. The share of programmatic expenses devoted to trail restoration work fell by 7 percent, while the share devoted to education and outreach work grew by 7 percent. Production of educational videos about the unique alpine ecosystems found on the Fourteeners, a complete overhaul

of CFI's website, and production of educational kiosks for three trailheads were responsible for much of the increased education and outreach expenses last year. A similar 2 percent shift occurred in non-programmatic expenses, with greater funds being spent on fundraising and fewer funds being spent on general administration. This reflects the shift in staff time from setting up administrative systems in 2010 to a greater staff focus on writing grants and increasing revenues in 2011.

CFI again received a clean GAAP-based audit from JDS Professional Group and has now been using accrual-based accounting for the past two years. CFI met with Colorado State Trails staff in an attempt to resolve the outstanding grant dating to 2006. However, at year's end there was no resolution of the matter.



*Access to Wilson Peak via the Rock of Ages Trail was opened in 2011. Photo by Glenn Randall, [www.glenrandall.com](http://www.glenrandall.com).*

## COLORADO FOURTEENERS INITIATIVE

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