

PROTECT RESTORE EDUCATE

COLORADO FOURTEENERS INITIATIVE
ANNUAL REPORT



Colorado Fourteeners Initiative
A Partnership for Preservation

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Summit fever” is generally a bad thing. Defined as the blind focus on reaching the summit of a mountain regardless of the physical risks involved, it is usually something to be avoided at all costs.

Those hikers going for the summit well after noon in dark and threatening clouds with lightning flashes off in the distance? A classic case of summit fever. Same too, for the winter climbers pushing on to the top in fading light with insufficient gear. But not all cases of summit fever are hazardous, as we discovered last year.

As is described later in this annual report, last year several members of the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative team focused like lasers on the summit of Mount Shavano. All the pieces were coming together in a long and complicated process that would see CFI purchase private mining claims atop the peak needed to build a much-needed new summit trail. The Forest Service had tried unsuccessfully for more than a decade to assemble a land exchange that would bring into public ownership some of the remaining 10 private mining claims that ran from the saddle to near the mountain’s summit. Failure to resolve private access issues meant that route planning could not proceed and one of the worst 14er routes in the state just kept getting worse year after year.

While the risks we faced were pretty minor—lost time and money if we failed—the effort was distracting from the organization’s other work. Failure to bring the deal to fruition would have been embarrassing. Too much effort into this one project might also have kept us from meeting fundraising goals for the year that would have made it harder to field a growing crew of leaders next season. Thankfully, the hard work put in by Board Chair Hunt Walker, Directors Marty Zeller and Tim Rampe, some hired professionals and me paid off. We not only reached the summit of Shavano, but bought it, too!

The organization also reached some other important “summits” last year. We raised more money than during any prior year. In the process of reaching that goal we set a new record for donations from individual hikers across the country. We also spent more money than ever before on protecting the 14ers, including opening up our 31st sustainably designed 14er route. Finally, CFI set an all-time best for the number of volunteers engaged in our trail stewardship work.

Thank you for helping make 2016 CFI’s best year ever! We couldn’t have reached the summit without your help and support.

Regards,

Lloyd F. Athearn, Executive Director

COVER: An Inquisitive marmot checks out the Mount of the Holy Cross project.
THIS PAGE: MOUNT COLUMBIA
Crew members carefully roll a rock in late season as snow dusts nearby Mount Yale.
Both photos by Eli Allan, www.eliswindow.net.

NEW TRAIL CONSTRUCTION PROTECT

Colorado's high peaks contain the largest concentration of alpine tundra plants found in the Lower 48 states. These tundra plants are often rare in Colorado. Sometimes they are rare worldwide. Building sustainably located, durably constructed trails to keep 14er hikers off this rare and fragile ground cover is the principal goal of Colorado Fourteeners Initiative's trail construction work. Developing a network of sustainable 14er trails and keeping them well maintained will help ensure these peaks are accessible to hikers for years to come.

MOUNT EOLUS

1: Field Programs Manager Ben Hanus inspects the recently opened Mount Eolus trail in late August.

2: Eolus project crew members Timo Holmquist (L) and Eric McSwan muscle a large rock into place.

3: Llamas were used to stock, resupply and remove the Eolus basecamp, a cost-effective new tool for fixed-site projects.

MOUNT COLUMBIA

LARGE IMAGE: Cutting tread in the rain higher up on the Mount Columbia route where rock source is less plentiful.

4: Crew members work in the talus field building an elaborate rock staircase.

5: Two members of the RMYC crew take a break on a misty morning. Columbia photos by Eli Allan, www.eliswindow.net.

In August CFI opened the approach route to Mount Eolus and North Eolus. This became the 31st agency-planned route built by CFI over our 23-year history. Each new trail opening gets us closer to achieving the overriding goal that every 14er has at least one sustainable trail to accommodate current and future hiking use. Work also began last year on the Mount Columbia summit trail, one of the most involved trail construction projects CFI has ever undertaken. Focused trail reconstruction also began on Quandary Peak to dramatically upgrade the high-use route initially delineated in 2001-02.



Mount Eolus. Multiple seasons of new trail construction work in Chicago Basin ended last year when a quarter-mile bypass through a talus field was opened and 560 linear feet of trail reconstruction were performed on the approach route. With a key grant expiring in September and no margin for underperformance, CFI put three of its most experienced leaders on the project and hired a six-person CFI crew to complete the project. The team built 280 trail structures, almost a mile of retaining walls and performed 7,212 square feet of stabilization work to close the old, user-created route. A Southwest Conservation Corps youth crew assisted in clearing the trail into Chicago Basin to facilitate the pack-in effort. Llamas were used for the first time to assist in packing equipment in and out of this remote site, as well as to resupply food midseason.

Mount Columbia. CFI's three-person leadership team worked with an eight-member Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew to begin the first of four planned seasons building the new summit trail. The user-trampled Columbia route is regarded as one of the worst in the state. Work began by shoveling about 32,000 cubic feet (about 480,000 pounds!) of snow off the trail in early June to facilitate packing in the basecamp. Actual trail construction began in a large talus field, but quickly moved to steep slopes with insufficient rock source. Each buildable rock had to be moved an average of 22 feet. The crew constructed more than a half-mile of new trail, built 278 rock steps and almost 9,400 square feet of wall structures. Check out the "gigapan" photo—multiple high-resolution photos stitched together—of last year's Columbia work: www.gigapan.com/gigapans/193110.



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Quandary Peak. After seeing great progress utilizing a two-person “mini crew” over three seasons on Mount of the Holy Cross, CFI set up a similar model on Quandary Peak last summer. The fit, acclimatized duo were able to focus attention on the highest reaches of the peak near its 14,265-foot summit. Assisted by more than 300 volunteer days of work from 18 volunteer projects, the crew constructed 124 new steps and built more than 2,200 square feet of retaining walls. Included was a large group of individuals recruited from 14ers.com, as well as veterans groups from Team Red, White and Blue and VFW Post 1.

QUANDARY PEAK

LARGE IMAGE: 14ers.com members work with Adopt crew leader Kristine Velez (L) on a section of the Quandary Peak trail. Photo by Cameron Miller Photography.

1 & 2: BEFORE & AFTER A before and after sequence showing the improved trail near the summit of Quandary Peak.

ADOPT-A-PEAK

3: Intern Abby Mortimer stands next to a section of the Grays/Torresys trail “derocked” by Colorado School of Mines volunteers.

4 & 5: BEFORE & AFTER Volunteers build rock retaining walls and install check steps in a steep area on the Pyramid Peak trail experiencing serious erosion.



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TRAIL MAINTENANCE PROTECT

Once a 14er summit route is built, CFI’s work is not over. These natural surface trails are subject to the footsteps of hundreds of thousands of hikers annually. Erosional impacts on trails from spring snowmelt and summer thunderstorms can also be severe. CFI uses hired trail professionals and volunteers from across the country to maintain this growing network of previously constructed 14er summit trails.

In 2016 CFI engaged another all-time-record number of volunteers to maintain the 30 existing summit trails. Sixty-two trail projects engaged 794 individual volunteers who put in a combined 1,566 volunteer days protecting summit routes on 20 14ers. More than 60 percent of these volunteers were youths or young adults. Together they maintained 8.19 miles of summit trails and generated an in-kind value of \$235,227.

One emerging area of CFI's trail maintenance work is "de-rocking" heavily used trails near Denver. Many of the easiest 14er routes have morphed from "climbs" done by mountaineers in heavy boots to "trails" hiked by novices in lightweight footwear. CFI staff noticed the progressive widening of these trails as people migrated to the relative stability of the vegetated slopes rather than risk turning an ankle or stubbing a toe in the rocky trail. The result was progressively wider trails and more trampled tundra. CFI staff began removing loose and sharp rocks from the middle of the trail, and depositing them at the edges. The result is a smoother, more user-friendly trail that has barrier walls protecting the adjacent tundra.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE PROTECT



LARGE IMAGE: Controller Jerry Mack (L) and Treasurer Brad McQueen work on a retaining wall during a CFI Board/Staff work project on Quandary Peak.
1: Volunteers Young Chase, Aaron Wilken and Grant Volle move a large rock on the Huron Peak trail maintenance project.
2: Two veterans haul rocks on a Quandary Peak trail stewardship project.



SUSTAINABLE TRAILS PROTECT

CFI's Sustainable Trails Program continues to study how the 14er trail network is holding up to the impacts of growing recreational use. Monitoring on-the-ground trail conditions, the number of hikers on the peaks and the interplay between the two will help CFI focus on completing the most needed trail projects and retaining the value of past investments of time and money.

Sustainable Trails work in 2016 focused on estimating hiking use levels on the 14ers. Summer CLIMB Intern Emily Barnes, a Yale undergraduate, developed a modeling program that integrated CFI's daily trail counts at 10 locations (tracking use on 11 14ers) with crowdsourced peak checklists posted on the 14ers.com website. The modeling program allowed CFI to project seasonal hiking use on the 14ers in 2015 at 260,000 hiker use days. CFI's hiking use report gained significant media attention across the state, helping estimate the amount of use on individual peaks, as well as the \$70.5 million economic impact generated by 14er hikers.



LARGE IMAGE: Development and Communications Coordinator Brian Sargent and summer CLIMB Intern Emily Barnes deploy the trail counter on the Grizzly Gulch route to Handies Peak.

1 & 2: Executive Director Lloyd Athearn installs a tree-mounted trail counter along the La Plata Peak trail in the spring. This was one of 10 new monitoring locations.

3: CFI's initial hiking use report estimated that 260,000 people climbed the 14ers in 2015 and generated \$70.5 million in economic activity throughout Colorado.



To improve the accuracy of CFI's monitoring effort, a \$10,000 grant from an anonymous foundation allowed for the purchase of 10 additional trail counters and paid for staff time required to attend to them. CFI staff were able to deploy a total of 20 counters to the field last year that tracked use on 23 14er routes. The Forest Service turned down CFI's request to place counters in wilderness locations, so there will be little opportunity to increase monitoring sites in the future beyond the 20 non-wilderness locations used in 2016.

Funding from the Colorado State Trails Program announced early in the year will allow CFI to embark on a second round of trail inventories beginning in 2017. Work will focus on performing baseline inventories on the roughly 15 routes not assessed in 2011-13. Secondary inventories will also be performed on the routes initially assessed in 2011 to see how conditions have changed over the intervening six years—positively due to CFI's trail stewardship work and negatively due to the impacts of hikers and natural forces.



The user-created route on Mount Shavano is among the worst in the state—and deteriorating quickly. Planning to build a more sustainable summit trail, unfortunately, could not begin until access was obtained to cross private lands near the summit. After several years of effort CFI was able to reach deals last year that caused the project to come together—but not without some interesting revelations and tense moments along the way.

During the research phase, CFI learned from Wayne Hancock, a 14er enthusiast, CFI supporter and cadastral surveyor for the Bureau of Land Management, that the historic mining maps on the mountain might be wrong. They placed the northern-most tier of mining claims well short of the summit. Wayne believed he had found remnants of mineral survey markers showing that the private land extended north past the mountain’s summit. CFI staff investigated and found a different survey post that aligned with Wayne’s new maps. The upshot of these revelations was that CFI had to purchase the mountain’s summit in order to build the new trail. Unfortunately, the owner of the summit parcel was proving elusive to find.

Credit for bringing the project to fruition goes to CFI Director Marty Zeller, a land conservation consultant and CFI’s 2015 Volunteer of the Year. Zeller persistently called and texted to anyone named McDaniel in the state of Arkansas trying to make contact with the owner listed in the tax files. Eventually the son of the by-now-deceased landowner texted back. He was not interested in selling. The land meant too much to his father. After further thought and many assurances over months of negotiations, he agreed to sell.

The \$50,000 needed to complete the transaction was quickly raised from the estate of Mike O’Brien, the Meta Alice Keith Bratten Foundation and 58 14er enthusiasts located across the country. The first two parcels closed in December; the summit parcel in January 2017. News of the purchase spread far and wide. A private group had purchased one of Colorado’s 14ers.

CFI will be only a temporary custodian of the almost 31 acres on top of Mount Shavano. Once the new, sustainably designed trail is constructed CFI will donate the land to the Forest Service for long-term management. However, CFI’s investment has spurred the Forest Service into action to purchase several of the remaining private parcels on the saddle that are needed to close, stabilize and restore the existing user-created route. While trail stewardship work will continue to be CFI’s primary focus, the Shavano experience shows this is another way the organization can help preserve and protect the 14ers.

LARGE IMAGE:

- 1:** Closing the purchase of Mount Shavano’s summit parcel. Pictured (L to R): CFI Board Chair Hunt Walker, Executive Director Lloyd Athearn, landowner Joseph McDaniel, Jr., and CFI Director Marty Zeller.
- 2:** A front-page story in the Denver Post reporting on CFI’s Mount Shavano purchase.
- 3:** A 1902 mineral survey marker found by CFI staff last fall that affirmed Shavano’s summit was located on private land.
- 4:** A Google Earth rendition of the mountain showing the more accurate location of the mining claims CFI bought.



MOUNT SHAVANO
LANDS ACQUISITION
PROTECT

RESTORE

Low nutrient soils, short growing seasons, desiccating winds and precipitation extremes are some of the challenges faced by alpine tundra plants on Colorado's 14ers. As a result, plants in the alpine grow very slowly and need lots of assistance to revegetate denuded slopes.

CFI actively assists the restoration of closed social trails and decommissioned campsites to help speed up the natural revegetation process that otherwise would take significantly longer to occur. Check dams are installed to slow runoff and build up eroded sediments. Soil is added to the old trails to help restore natural land contours. Plugs of grasses and other hearty plants are transplanted into restoration areas to assist the regrowth process. And, rocks are placed on trail braids to narrow the trail corridor.

Last year was a quiet one for CFI's vegetation restoration work. The decomposed granite of the old Mount Eolus social trail did not lend itself well to transplantation, so work focused principally on slope stabilization. Most of the 3469 square feet of restoration work occurring in 2016 was performed on Mount Bierstadt. This focuses on closing trail braids and restoring willow plant communities on the opening half-mile to Scott Gomer Creek. Other routes seeing restoration and trail narrowing work last year included Grays and Torreys Peaks, Quandary Peak, Missouri Mountain and Mount Evans.



MOUNT ELBERT

LARGE IMAGE: Closeup of a big transplantation plug of grasses ready to be moved to the restoration site.

1: Volunteers from the JCC Ranch Camp dig holes where plugs will be transplanted to speed recovery of a denuded area near timberline.

2: A smiling volunteer plants a plug of grasses, which have a high success rate at transplantation in the alpine.

MISSOURI GULCH TRAIL

3 & 4: BEFORE & AFTER Crews and volunteers added rocks to the braided section of the Missouri Gulch trail to help contain hikers and prevent further trampling of alpine tundra.

5 & 6: BEFORE & AFTER Logs were brought in to close an unplanned campsite immediately adjacent to the creek in Missouri Gulch that threatened water quality.



EDUCATE

Colorado Fourteeners Initiative can build the best summit trail network in the world, but if hikers do not follow Leave No Trace practices while on the 14ers they will continue to have an out-sized impact on these fragile alpine ecosystems. Educating hikers to stay on trails and adopt minimum-impact practices is vital to 14er protection efforts.

Over the years CFI has developed a multi-faceted educational approach that seeks to educate 14er hikers in their homes, at trailheads and while they are on the trails. Last year CFI made strides in all of these areas.

CFI's YouTube channel reaches hikers before they ever leave home. Last year CFI produced a six-video series with Dr. Chris Ray, a wildlife biologist at the University of Colorado's Institute for Arctic and Alpine Research, about the American pika. A similar video series about marmots was shot featuring Dr. Greg Florant, a Biology Professor at Colorado State University and national marmot expert. This series will launch in 2017. CFI's YouTube channel experienced 7,739 unique views during 2016, a 14 percent increase over 2015 viewership numbers.



Reaching people at trailheads with educational messages before they begin their 14er hikes is another key goal. CFI developed a new kiosk for the Kilpacker trailhead that serves to educate climbers about the new sustainable route on El Diente Peak that was opened the prior year, as well as important LNT practices.

Directly talking with hikers while they are climbing 14ers is the most personalized and interactive way CFI shares information about the high peaks. CFI's trail crews and volunteer Peak Stewards made 12,360 direct hiker contacts in 2016. This was a 36 percent decline compared to 2015. Hiker contacts surged in 2014-15 when work was occurring on Mount Bierstadt, but naturally declined when work stopped on that high-traffic route. Terry Mattison stepped up to coordinate the Peak Steward program last year, leading the group of volunteers to make 8 percent more hiker contacts despite putting in fewer days in the field. Trail crew members continue to make the majority of hiker contacts due to the fact that they are out on the peaks all season and have "teachable moments" as hikers pass active worksites.



LARGE IMAGE: A pika peers over the lip of a rock next to the Mount Columbia worksite. Photo by Eli Allan, www.eliswindow.net.
1: The new kiosk installed at the Kilpacker trailhead contains information about CFI's new route to El Diente Peak.
2: Peak Steward Scott Goldberg shares Leave No Trace information with two hikers headed to Mount Eolus.
3: Colorado State University Biology Professor Greg Florant talks about marmots near one of his research sites on Loveland Pass.
4: CFI's video crew captures footage of a pika at the University of Colorado's Niwot Ridge Research Station



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Big things are on the horizon for CFI. Our work only seems to get more complicated as new trails are constructed on the last few 14ers. Some require resolving private land access issues. Others push the technical abilities of our crews. Here is an overview of some projects and initiatives you will be hearing more about in the future.

“Find Your Fourteener” Campaign. The National Forest Foundation’s new strategic plan broadens the organization’s mission beyond forest health to include high-use recreation destinations, fragile ecosystems and trails. That sounds like CFI’s 14er stewardship work! Informed by the “14er Report Card” and bolstered by an existing web of long-term working relationships with partner organizations, NFF committed to a five-year, \$5+ million “Find Your Fourteener” campaign as the foundation’s first recreation-focused initiative. Several strategy meetings over the fall with partners helped prep for a campaign kickoff in 2017.

Private Lands Issues. Buoyed by the success of CFI’s private lands work on Mount Shavano, CFI’s Board is investigating other 14ers where private lands currently thwart legal public access and the construction of needed summit routes. Two of the peaks where CFI is most interested in interceding are Mounts Lindsey and Sherman. Almost all of the approach to Lindsey is on Forest Service land, but the agency will not let planning proceed until summit access is obtained. Conversely, on Sherman virtually the entire route is on privately owned mine sites.

LARGE IMAGE: Planned work on the Navajo Basin route to Mount Wilson includes moving the existing trail from sensitive riparian areas along the headwaters of the Dolores River into the talus field to the right.
1: Trail work on Mount Princeton’s summit route is planned to begin during the 2019 field season.
 Photo by Cameron Miller. www.cameronmillerphotography.com.
2: A group of climbers ascends the lower slopes of Mount Wilson’s north ridge route. A more sustainable approach route is planned for this lower prow.
3: Fourteener-related groups, including CFI, Rocky Mountain Field Institute, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, Colorado Mountain Club and two youth corps, discuss with National Forest Foundation and Forest Service staff how to enhance collaborative stewardship work on the 14ers.



LOOKING AHEAD

Mount Princeton.

The Forest Service continues planning and analysis work to move the existing, unplanned trail away from sensitive vegetation near the peak’s saddle. The planned new trail will take a more direct route to the summit and allow for the closure of many braided descent routes found today. Trail delineation and construction work is anticipated to begin in 2019.

Mount Wilson.

Planning work is also under way for a new approach trail to Mount Wilson’s north ridge through the Navajo Basin. Work will focus on moving the trail away from sensitive riparian habitat around Navajo Lake and adjacent to the headwaters of the Dolores River. Work is also planned up the lower prow of the north ridge to avoid impacts to sensitive tundra plants. Work is slated to begin on or after 2019.

Mountain Base Facilities.

CFI’s summer operations have been based for many years near Twin Lakes at an old cabin managed by the Forest Service. The site also houses CFI’s yurt and an enclosed garage for tool storage. Access has been provided through annual agreements. Discussions are ongoing with the Forest Service regarding obtaining a long-term lease that would provide greater certainty for the organization’s growing field work. CFI has also been in discussions with the Bureau of Land Management regarding setting up a small base facility near Lake City to provide similar off-project lodging and logistical support for operations in the San Juans.

4: CFI plans to return to the Wilson Massif in a few seasons. The view (L to R) of Wilson Peak, Gladstone Peak and Mount Wilson from the summit of El Diente Peak.
 Photo by Glenn Randall. www.glennrandall.com.



4

2016 Core Staff



Lloyd Athearn,
Executive Director



Emily Barnes, CLIMB Intern



Ben Hanus,
Field Programs Manager



Jerry Mack, Controller



Brian Sargeant, Development
& Communications
Coordinator

2016 Board of Directors

CFI Board of Directors and staff at the August work project on Quandary Peak. Kneeling (L to R): Brad McQueen - Treasurer, Lloyd Athearn, Lynn Guissinger, Margaret McQuiston. Standing (L to R): Ben Krasnow, Hunt Walker - Chair, John Mill, Richard Heppe, Spencer Phillips, Marty Zeller, Jim Wason, Mandy Hughes, Tom Barney - Vice-Chair, Jerry Mack. Not Pictured: Lisa Mattis - Secretary, Wendy Boutin, Charles Cavness, Craig Mackey, Nate Palmer, Tim Rampe, Jim Schoettler.

ORGANIZATION

2016 Seasonal Staff

Members of CFI's seasonal staff photographed in late May at Twin Lakes.
Kneeling (L to R): Preston Hovenkamp, Spencer Phillips, Aneesa Winn, Dana Young, Kristine Velez, Steena Cultrara.
Standing (L to R): Timo Holmquist, Eli Allan, Nick Schwartz, Roslyn Peters, Eric McSwan, Macy Wiley, Meg Reeves, Rob Duddy, Abby Mortimer, Taylor Beeson, Margaret McQuiston, Charlie Simon, Miriam Venman-Clay, Evan Levy, Kevin Langevin, Tom Cronin. *Not pictured:* Niki Peters.



2016 Seasonal Project Managers

Mount Eolus Crew

Tom Cronin, Project Manager
Miriam Venman-Clay, Project Manager
Steena Cultrara, Assistant Project Manager
Timo Holmquist, Member
Kevin Langevin, Member
Evan Levy, Member
Eric McSwan, Member
Roslyn Peters, Member
Macy Wiley, Member

Mount Columbia Crew

Eli Allan, Project Manager
Meg Reeves, Project Manager
Preston Hovenkamp,
Assistant Project Manager

Adopt-a-Peak Crew

Rob Duddy, Leader
Kristine Velez, Leader
Taylor Beeson, Member
Nick Schwartz, Member
Charlie Simon, Member
Aneesa Winn, Member
Abby Mortimer, Appelson Outdoor
Leadership Intern
Niki Peters, Appelson Outdoor Leadership Intern

Quandary Peak Crew

Margaret McQuiston, Lead Trail Technician
Spencer Phillips, Trail Technician

Trail Planning

Dana Young, CFI-USFS Design Assistant



2016 Volunteer of the Year: Nate Palmer

While chronologically still among the organization's youngest directors, Nate Palmer was recognized as CFI's 2016 Volunteer of the Year for almost a decade of leadership on the Board of Directors and 14 years volunteering for the organization. Nate first connected with CFI in the fall of 2003 when he helped clean, fix and sharpen tools at the end of the season. He won "Volunteer of the Day" and received a CFI T-shirt. That led to a slot on CFI's Programs Committee, which helped advise the organization about its field projects and volunteer programs, and later a promotion to the full Board in April of 2009. Over his three terms on the Board Palmer has served as Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer, Finance Committee Chair and currently Nominations and Governance Committee Chair. Year in and year out Nate has been among the Board's most prolific fundraisers. Few have had such a long-term or impactful tenure with the organization programmatically or financially.

Nate moved to Colorado in 2003 when he was 24 and helped open up the Denver office for LaSalle Bank. Knowing nobody in the area, he began climbing 14ers every weekend. Though he arrived in July, by year's end Nate had summited 15 14ers that first year. Over the years since he has climbed all but seven peaks. Palmer currently manages the same Denver office of the Chicago-based bank he helped open almost 15 years ago (now known as CIBC after a few sales and name changes). "I knew nobody when I moved to Denver. The 14ers were basically my first friends in Colorado. The reason I looked to volunteer with CFI is that I wanted to give back to them. They have given me some of the best days of my life."

As he closes in on climbing all of the 14ers Nate's favorite is Capitol Peak. However, one look at his car's license plate—GRNDTTN—and you can tell it's not his favorite peak. That distinction is held by Wyoming's Grand Teton, which, at 13,770 feet, clocks in 230 feet shy of being a 14er. Wait another year, however, and that might change. He's off to climb Ama Dablam in Nepal. "I have a feeling that one might take the cake!" said Palmer.

2016 Award Recipients

Adopt-a-Peak Partner of the Year:
Sanborn Western Camps

Adopt-a-Peak Special Recognition:
Nick Gianoutsos (a.k.a. MonGoose)
(Lakewood, Colorado)



Laura Schafer
(Boulder, Colorado)

Peak Steward of the Year:
Bill Anderson (Colorado Springs, Colorado)

Outstanding Agency Partner:
Ben Lara, Salida Ranger District

Out-of-State Ambassador Award:
Adelaide Leavens (Fort Worth, Texas)



Youth Ambassador Award:
Olivia McClurg-Torczon
(Greeley, Colorado)



Corporate Partner of the Year:
Osprey Packs
(Cortez, Colorado)

Foundation Partner of the Year:
The Summit Foundation
(Breckenridge, Colorado)

Special Recognition for Outstanding Service:
Wayne Hancock (Salida, Colorado)

FINANCES

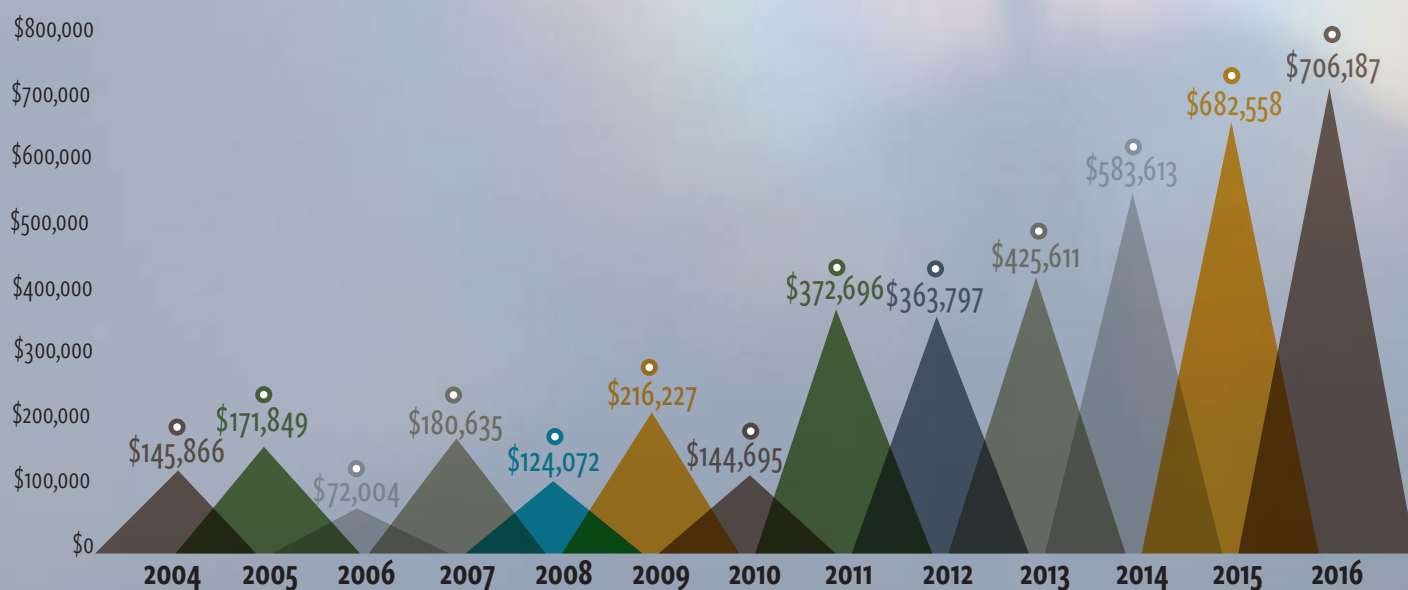
Colorado Fourteeners Initiative posted another all-time-record year in terms of financial performance, continuing an eight-year trend. Operating revenues were up 17 percent compared to 2015, while operating expenses were up 28 percent. Both were at all-time highs. It was the first year in the organization's 23-year history that either revenues or expense surpassed \$1 million. CFI ended the year with an operating surplus of \$23,629 (2.2 percent).

Total net assets grew for a fourth consecutive year to an all-time high of \$706,187 at year end. This represents a one-year increase of 4 percent and a 470 percent increase since the current management team took over in 2009. The total net assets figure includes \$253,301 in grants obtained to fund work in future years, \$110,000 in a reserve fund to ameliorate seasonal cash-flow swings, \$40,400 in office and field equipment and retained surpluses to cushion against an unexpected revenue downturn.

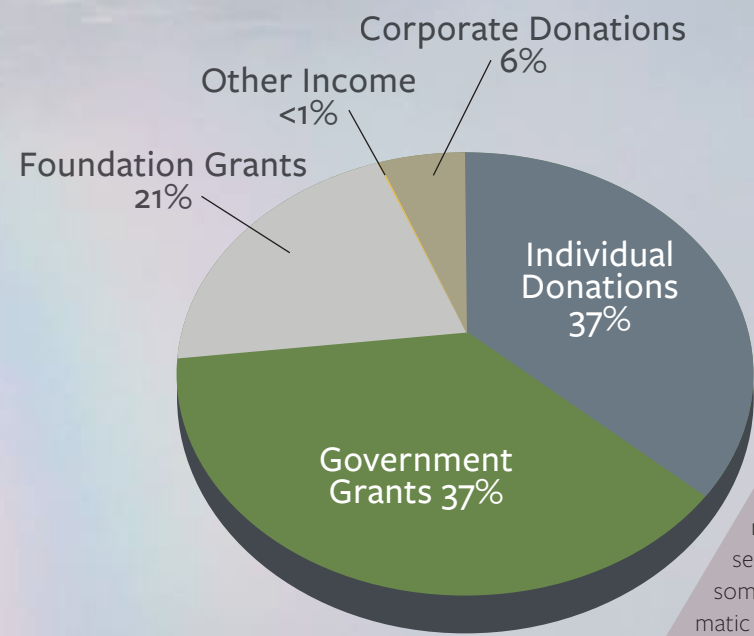
Operating Revenues

Total operating revenues were \$1,088,468, representing the organization's best year ever for fundraising. Government grants surged to \$399,056, an increase of almost \$103,000 (23 percent) compared to 2015, and represented 37 percent of total revenues for the year. Government grants edged out gifts from individuals by a mere \$1,545 as the largest source of operating revenue. Much of the increase stemmed from a Colorado State Trails Program grant funding the Mount Columbia project. Donations from individuals totaled \$397,511 for the year, an all-time high and a 17 percent year-on-year increase compared to 2015. Individual gifts, which represented 37 percent of total revenues, came from donors living in 46 states, the District of Columbia, and four foreign countries. Foundation grants more than doubled (+124 percent), increasing from \$132,386 in 2015 to \$225,633 last year, largely due to a \$82,611 grant

from the National Forest Foundation for the Mount Eolus project. Foundation grants represented 21 percent of total revenues. Corporate gifts fell by 62 percent for the year to \$62,321, and represented 6 percent of total operating revenues. This amount is more in line with corporate support in past years, but was a dramatic one-year decline due to the unique windfall that occurred in 2015 from REI's \$85,000 Every Trail Connects contest donation. Interest and other sources of miscellaneous income were again less than 1 percent of total revenues. The in-kind value of volunteer labor working on 14er trails and educating 14er hikers totaled \$235,227 for the year, again an all-time high. Accounting rules prevent this number from being included as revenue in CFI's audited financials, though it can be used to match some of CFI's larger government and foundation grants.



2016 TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES:
\$1,088,468



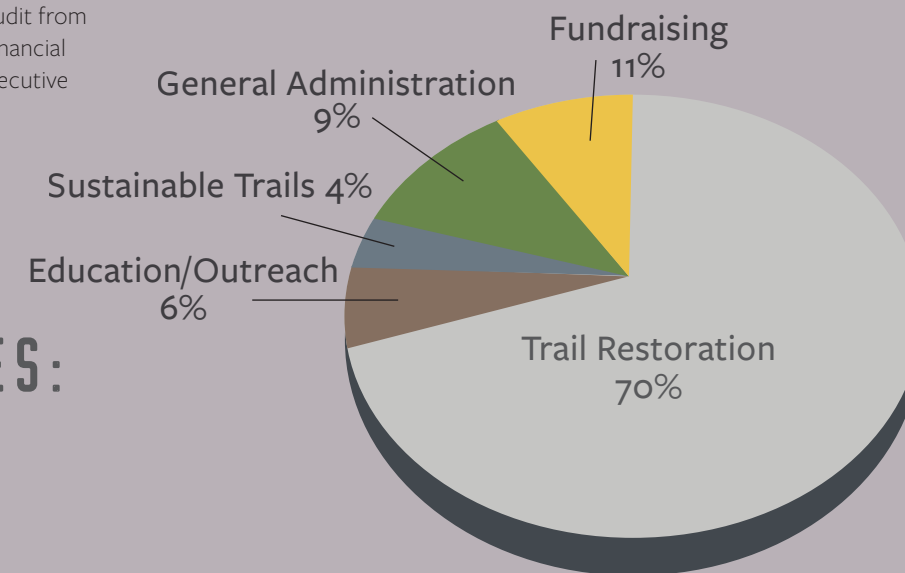
Operating Expenses

Total operating expenses in 2016 were \$1,064,839, an all-time high, reflecting CFI's biggest year ever protecting the 14ers. Fully 80 percent of expenses last year (\$850,297) were devoted to programmatic activity, a 5 percent increase compared to 2015. Program-related expenditures increased \$220,200, an increase of 35 percent. Trail restoration work (\$743,451) accounted for 87 percent of all programmatic expenses (70 percent of total expenses), by far the largest share. An additional \$218,435 was spent on trail-related work in 2016 compared to the prior year. This included expenses associated with running the Mounts Eolus and Columbia and Quandary Peak fixed-site projects, as well as the eight-member Adopt-a-Peak mobile maintenance crew. Education and outreach (\$67,469) represented 8 percent of program expenses, and included creating YouTube educational videos, working with the news media, developing trailhead educational kiosks and supporting the Peak Stewards hiker education program. Funds spent on education and outreach in 2016 were 12 percent lower than in the prior year. The Sustainable Trails program (\$39,377) accounted for 5 percent of program expenses (4 percent of all expenses). Sustainable Trails-related expenses increased by \$11,390 (41 percent) due to the acquisition of 10 new counters and the staff time associated with doubling the number of trail counters in use. Many of the new counters were placed in outlying areas of the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Ranges.

Fundraising (\$116,656) and general administration (\$97,886) accounted for 11 percent and 9 percent respectively of all 2016 operating expenses. Despite raising 17 percent more revenue for the year, fundraising expenses increased a mere \$921 (0.8 percent). Administrative expenses increased by \$11,371, a jump of 13 percent, though were supporting 35 percent more program-related spending. CFI's administrative and fundraising expense ratio (referred to as "AFR" in the nonprofit sector) was 20 percent for 2016, a 5 percent decrease from 2015. CFI's AFR tends to be higher than many nonprofits due to some uncontrollable factors. The limited duration of CFI's summer field season means that seasonal staff, the largest programmatic expense of the organization, work only one-third of the calendar year. Meanwhile, the organization's core staff, who largely perform all administration and fundraising tasks, work 12 months of the year. This seasonal imbalance translates into a higher AFR due to the lack of significant programmatic expenses for two-thirds of the year.

CFI received a clean, GAAP-based audit from JDS Professional Group for its 2016 financial statements. This marks the eighth consecutive clean audit for the organization's financial reporting.

2016 TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES:
\$1,064,839





Colorado Fourteeners Initiative
A Partnership for Preservation

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Fall photo of Mount Sneffels.
Photo by Cameron Miller Photography.