“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 flashing 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 to 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 spines, 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
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 Fourteener Initiative’s trail construction work. Developing a network of sustainable 14er trails and keeping them well maintained will help ensure these areas are accessible to hikers for years to come.

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 sixteen-person CFI crew to complete the project. The team built 260 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.

In August CFI opened the approach trails to the Mogollon Dike and North Eolus. This became the first newly planned route built by CFI over 25 years of history. Each new trail expands our ability to leverage the incredible trail that every year 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. Planned trail reconstruction also began on Quandary Peak to dramatically upgrade the high-use route initially delineated in 2000.

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 sixteen-person CFI crew to complete the project. The team built 260 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.
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 veteran groups from Team Red, White and Blue and VFW Post 1.

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 veteran groups from Team Red, White and Blue and VFW Post 1.

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 veteran groups from Team Red, White and Blue and VFW Post 1.

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 veteran groups from Team Red, White and Blue and VFW Post 1.

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 veteran groups from Team Red, White and Blue and VFW Post 1.

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 veteran groups from Team Red, White and Blue and VFW Post 1.

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 veteran groups from Team Red, White and Blue and VFW Post 1.

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 veteran groups from Team Red, White and Blue and VFW Post 1.

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 veteran groups from Team Red, White and Blue and VFW Post 1.
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 “climb” done by mountaineers in heavy boots to “trail” 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.
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 all 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.

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 install the trail counters. CFI staff were able to deploy a total of 20 counters to the field last year (as seen on our peak counters). 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 monitoring sites deployed in 2016.

Funding from the Colorado State Trails Program announced early in the year will allow CFI to deploy a second round of trail inventories beginning in 2017. Work will focus on inventorying 13 new routes that are the roughly 15 routes not assessed in 2011-13. Data is expected to show how the condition on these 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 increase of hikers and natural forces.

To improve the accuracy of CFI’s monitoring efforts, a $10,000 grant from an anonymous foundation allowed for the purchase of 10 additional trail counters and paid for staff time required to install them. CFI staff were able to deploy a total of 20 counters to the field last year. 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 monitoring sites deployed in 2016.

Funding from the Colorado State Trails Program announced early in the year will allow CFI to deploy a second round of trail inventories beginning in 2017. Work will focus on inventorying 13 new routes that are the roughly 15 routes not assessed in 2011-13. Data is expected to show how the condition on these routes initially assessed in 2011 has changed over the intervening six years—positively due to CFI’s trail stewardship work and negatively due to the increase 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 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 its new trail. Unfortunately, the owner of the summit parcel proving elusive to find.

Credit for bringing the project to fruition goes to CFI Director Marty Zeller, a land conservation consultant and CFI 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 estates 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 that this is another way the organization can help preserve and protect the 14ers.
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 ELOUS**

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 high success rates 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.
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 on the trails is the most personalized and interactive way CFI shares information about the high peaks. CFI’s trail crew and volunteer Peak Stewards made 1,350 direct hiker contacts in 2016. This was a significant decline compared to the 2,211 contacts made in 2015 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 Steward members continue to make the majority of their contacts due to the fact that they are out on the peaks all season and have “teachable moments” as hikers pass active worksites.

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 on the trails is the most personalized and interactive way CFI shares information about the high peaks. CFI’s trail crew and volunteer Peak Stewards made 1,350 direct hiker contacts in 2016. This was a significant decline compared to the 2,211 contacts made in 2015 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 Steward members continue to make the majority of their contacts due to the fact that they are out on the peaks all season and have “teachable moments” as hikers pass active worksites.

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 on the trails is the most personalized and interactive way CFI shares information about the high peaks. CFI’s trail crew and volunteer Peak Stewards made 1,350 direct hiker contacts in 2016. This was a significant decline compared to the 2,211 contacts made in 2015 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 Steward members continue to make the majority of their 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 capture footage of a pika at the University of Colorado’s Niwot Ridge Research Station.
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. This sounds like CFI’s mission as well! Information on the “near Report Card” and bolstering an existing web of friends and working together across partner organizations, NFF committed to a five-year $9+ million “Find Your Fourteener®” campaign as the Foundation’s first recreation-focused initiative. Several strategy meetings over the fall with partners helped prepped 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 Mount 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, almost the entire route is on privately owned mine sites.

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 also be a more direct route to the summit and allow for the closure of some degraded 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. CFI Board and investigative other trails 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 Mount 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, almost the entire route is on privately owned mine sites.

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 Mount 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, almost the entire route is on privately owned mine sites.

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 support off-project logging and logistical support for operations in the San Juans.

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.

Nate Palmer

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 lied to July by year and day he had completed 5 of them 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). He was named a CIBC President’s Circle Honoree for 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 Year” and received a CFI T-Shirt. That led to a seat on CFI’s Programs Committee, which helped advise the organization about its field projects and volunteer programs, and later appointment to the Nominations Committee. Nate became a Director in 2007 and 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.

As he closes in on climbing all of the 14ers he’s found, he favors in particular Capitol Peak. However, one last peak can’t be left off the bucket list--GRNDTTN. He’s climb it some day. The drive is held by Wyoming’s Grand Tetons, which, at 13,770 feet, clocks in 230 feet shy of being a 14er. Wait another year, however, and one might take the cake!” said Palmer.

“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.”

In recognition of this, he was recognized as CFI’s 2016 Volunteer of the Year for almost a decade. While chronologically still among the organization’s youngest directors, Nate Palmer was recognized as CFI’s core staff member of the year for almost a decade. He 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.
Operating Revenues

Total operating revenues were $1,064,839, representing the organization’s best year ever for fundraising. Government grants surged to $372,696, an increase of almost $146,000 (29 percent) compared to 2015, and represented 21 percent of total revenues. The 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 NRE $5,000 Every Trail Counts donations. Corporate donations, which accounted for 6 percent of total revenues, came from donors living in all states, the District of Columbia, and four foreign countries. Foundation grants represented 21 percent of total revenues. Foundation grants, from the National Forest Foundation for the Mount Eolus project, grants for the conservation of the Sangre de Cristo Ranges, and a Colorado State Trails Program grant for the Mount Columbia project. Donations from individuals totaled $227,187 for the year, or one-hundred sixty-seven percent over one-year increase compared to 2015. Individual gifts, which represented 27 percent of total revenues, came from donors living in all states, the District of Columbia, and four foreign countries. Foundation grants doubled ($33,914) per year increase, and represented 6 percent of total operating revenues. The 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 NRE $5,000 Every Trail Counts donations. Corporate donations, which accounted for 6 percent of total revenues, came from donors living in all states, the District of Columbia, and four foreign countries. Foundation grants represented 21 percent of total revenues.

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 $200,000 placed in outlying areas of the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Ranges. While net assets increased by $216,227, primarily due to $235,227 in donations, working on 14er trails and educating 14er hikers totaled $235,227 for the year. This amount decreased by $92,000 due to the lack of significant programmatic expenses for two-thirds of the year. AFR was the first year in the organization’s 23-year history that either revenues or expense surpassed $1 million. CFI spent on education and outreach in 2016 were to percent lower than in the prior year. Sustainable Trails-related expenses increased by $166,000 due to the acquisition of 10 new counters and $128,000 for the Mount Eolus project. Donations from individuals ($218,435), which represented 4 percent of total operating revenues, were lower than expected due to a dramatic one-year decline in donations. AFR 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 season means that seasonal staff, the largest program-related expenditure, of the organizations work only one-third of the calendar year. Meanwhile, the organization's concern costs, which largely amount to administration and fundraising tasks, work most of the year. This seasonal imbalance translates into a higher AFR compared to the lack of significant programmatic expenses for the remainder of the year.

2016 TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES: $1,088,468

Operating Expenses

Total operating expenses in 2016 were $583,613, an all-time high, reflecting CFI’s biggest year ever protecting the 14ers. Fully 40 percent of expenses last year (144,695) were devoted to program activity, a 5 percent increase compared to 2015. Program-related expenses increased $166,000, an increase of 25 percent. Trail restoration work ($372,696) accounted for 5 percent of all programmatic expenses (30 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 Mount Eolus and Columbia and Quincy Peak Trail-Finder projects, as well as the eight member Adopt-a-14er mobile maintenance crew. Education and outreach ($82,004) represented 8 percent of program-related expenses, and included creating YouTube educational videos, working with the media, developing trailhead educational tools and supporting the Peak Stewardship Education program.

In 2016, CFI offset $144,695 in program-related expenses ($425,611) with $216,227 in grants. CFI’s AFR 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 season means that seasonal staff, the largest program-related expenditure, of the organization's work only one-third of the calendar year. Meanwhile, the organization's concern costs, which largely amount to administration and fundraising tasks, work most of the year. This seasonal imbalance translates into a higher AFR compared to the lack of significant programmatic expenses for the remainder of the year.