

A Conversation with Local Nonprofit Leaders

This is our second of three annual Give 10 Focus on Giving newsletters. Themes are based on Give 10 Emerging Leaders' and Partners' most commonly shared interest areas. This issue of Focus on Giving shares insight and perspectives from local leaders on environmental issues. We asked leaders to share answers to a series of questions and the following organizations generously shared their time and expertise: City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department, Colorado Open Lands, Colorado State University's Colorado Water Institute, Community Foundation of Northern Colorado, and Wildlands Restoration Volunteers.



What are the most pressing environmental concerns impacting Larimer County?

CLIMATE CHANGE. Many environmental concerns fall under the umbrella of climate change. Warmer temperatures increase concentrations of ground level ozone, which is a growing local concern. Warmer temperatures also bring the increased risk of wildfires, which themselves cause a myriad of other environmental issues such as poor air quality, highly erodible soils, and a direct threat to our water supply.

GROWTH. The rapid population growth puts significant pressure on the environment. Community infrastructure must meet ever-increasing demands placed on it by growing numbers of people. This growth impacts everything from transportation systems, to the electrical grid, to water resources. Rapid urbanization also fuels the "buy and dry" practice through which agricultural land is stripped of water and developed. Typically, when land is used for agricultural purposes, recharge water returns to the water table, streams, and other water sources, providing important wildlife habitat. However, when this land is developed and water is diverted, complex ecosystems are impacted. Approximately 7,000 acres of agricultural lands in Larimer County are converted to development every year. This conversion adversely impacts wildlife and leads to the proliferation of invasive plant species.



What could our community do to address these challenges?

- Consider addressing "buy and dry" challenges through new tax initiatives, similar to the tax initiatives used to protect open space. Explore ways to preserve a meaningful percentage of Larimer County's current agricultural lands by using tax dollars to purchase and protect water rights while maintaining the environmental ecosystem.
- Engage private land owners to consider conservation easements.
- Leverage existing tax incentives and grant funding opportunities to place conservation easements on properties to slow pace of conversion of farm land into developed land.
- Manage regional growth planning that includes transportation, housing, water, and a clean energy commitment.

What could our community do to address these challenges? (continued)

- Maintain and expand the community ethos of environmental stewardship. Empower citizens to advocate on behalf of causes they care deeply about.
- Build awareness of these challenges, understand the data about the impact of these challenges, and present information to decision makers.
- Plan for smart growth at all levels. Shift the collective orientation from environmental disaster recovery to disaster prevention.

Interested in learning more? There many great organizations and coalitions working on environmental issues in Larimer County. In our conversations with local leaders, the following entities were identified as great sources of information or potential volunteer opportunities.

Audubon Rockies

Big Thompson Watershed Coalition

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

City of Fort Collins Natural Areas

Larimer County Open Lands

City of Fort Collins Natural Resources Advisory Board

Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed

Colorado Addicted Trailbuilders Society (CATS)

Colorado Open Lands

CSU's Center for Collaborative Conservation

CSU's Colorado Water Institute

Colorado Trout Unlimited

Colorado Youth Outdoors

Ducks Unlimited

Estes Valley Land Trust

Larimer County Environmental and Science Advisory Board

The Nature Conservancy

Overland Mountain Bike Club

Peaks to People Water Fund

The Poudre Runs Through It

Poudre Wilderness Volunteers

Save the Poudre

Sustainable Living Association

Wildlands Restoration Volunteers



Bright Ideas – Here are a couple of volunteer ideas to get you started:

- Become a Master Naturalist with the City's Natural Areas team.
- Dig in! Wildland Restoration Volunteers offers a searchable website to find a project that speaks to you.
- Monitor and research local bird populations with the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies.

FEEDBACK?

We hope you found this issue of Focus on Giving informative. As always, we'd love your feedback. Don't hesitate to reach out to Sara Maranowicz, Community Programs Director, at sara@bohemianfoundation.org to share your thoughts or recommendations for future newsletters.

Inspiring Resources (books, podcasts, websites)



- "A Sand County Almanac," Aldo Leopold
- Any of Wallace Stegner's or Edward Abbey's books
- [E&E News](#)
- Elizabeth Kolbert's articles in The New Yorker
- [Grist](#)
- "Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life" and "Naturalist," Edward O. Wilson
- [High Country News](#)
- "Last Child in the Woods," Richard Louv
- [National Academy of Sciences](#)
- [Science](#)
- "The Lorax," Dr. Seuss
- "Thinking, Fast and Slow," Daniel Kahneman