

# OUR BACKYARD

The Newsletter of Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers

Summer 2010



The popular wilderness trail to American Lake winds through stands of aspen and colorful wildflowers

## GETTING OUT THERE: A SERIOUS HUMAN NEED

**W**e are lucky. Those of us in the Roaring Fork Valley can drive, pedal, walk or even take a bus less than 20 miles and begin a journey into primitive areas that early 20th-century conservationists called “a serious human need rather than a luxury ...”

And whether you venture into designated Wilderness Areas for exercise, the scenery, or that basic “human need,” one thing is for certain: established trails on public lands get you there.

This summer, **RFOV** volunteers will have a chance to help repair trails in two Wilderness Areas:

- American Lake Trail in Aspen on August 7
- Raspberry Creek Trail in Marble on September 11

**“Our mission is to help create a sense of connection to and ownership of public lands, and each individual has a responsibility to help take care of those lands.”**

—David Hamilton  
Executive Director, RFOV

These two trails are examples of **RFOV**'s diversity of projects that connect residents with their natural surroundings. Whether you lean toward improving the health of our rivers (Tamarisk Removal on Oct. 2), maintaining well-loved mountain biking trails (Scout-Forest Hollow in May 2010), repairing renowned hiking destinations (Hanging Lake Trail on Sept. 18 & 19), or reclaiming old mining sites (Smuggler Mountain on Aug. 28), as an **RFOV** participant you can learn about the range of unique ecosystems in our region.

“Our mission is to help create a sense of connection to and ownership of public lands, and each individual has a responsibility to help take care of those lands,” says David Hamilton, executive director of **RFOV**.

more on page 6 >

**WE DO TRAILS-**  
*together!*

## INSIDE:

Rediscovering the best things in life 2

2011 Town to Town Tour: save the date! 3

Smuggler provides a glimpse of Aspen's history 4

Glenn Wysocki: the work is the reward 5

There's still time! Great weekend projects coming up 8

Hike with us to American Lake 8



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### OUR MISSION

To promote stewardship of our public lands by creating volunteer opportunities for trail work and conservation projects

## REDISCOVERING THE BEST IN LIFE

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this summer newsletter

piece as the newest member of the Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers team. When I learned in February that **RFOV** was looking for a development coordinator, I was delighted and surprised—delighted because its mission of recruiting volunteers to do trail and conservation work has always been near and dear to my heart; surprised because most non-profits seemed to be in hunker-

down, rather than expansion, mode. Upon further reflection, though, it should come as no surprise that **RFOV** continues to thrive in these challenging times. **RFOV** has always run a tight ship, relying largely on volunteers not only to do the heavy lifting of trail and restoration projects, but to do **RFOV's** marketing and outreach, to work with land management agencies to identify the neediest projects, to train volunteer crew leaders, indeed to help with almost every aspect of **RFOV's** operations. By involving locals in this way, **RFOV** has developed a loyal and ever-expanding cadre of volunteers who allow us to operate on a small budget—the smallest of any conservation-oriented non-profit in the Valley.

Moreover, in these tough economic times, as any Forest Service ranger can tell you, people are rediscovering that the best things in life indeed are free—a good trail through a beautiful landscape being one of them. And this is where **RFOV** comes in. At the same time that people are hitting the trails in record numbers, cash-strapped land



### A note from KARIN TEAGUE

**Take a moment to reflect on your favorite trails and places . . . how they affect your quality of life here, and the fact that they are ours to use, free of charge. Then consider committing a day of service to these places.**

management agencies are finding they can't keep up with the constant maintenance and restoration work required on popular trails like American Lake or Smuggler Mountain—both of which **RFOV** is working on this summer—to keep them safe and enjoyable for the public with minimum impact to the surrounding landscape.

The alternative is what we see happening this summer at the lush and lovely Hanging Lake: closure. As difficult as it must have been to de-

cide to close one of Colorado's most popular trails, the Forest Service determined nothing less than a season of rebuilding and restoration (in which **RFOV** will play a part in September) was required to keep unwary hikers from getting hurt, and to prevent this extraordinary landscape from literally being loved to death.

Hanging Lake serves as a stark reminder that with ownership comes responsibility—that our magnificent public lands will remain ours to enjoy *only* if we commit to taking care of them. So take a moment to reflect on your favorite trails and places—perhaps a meandering bike ride through a stately aspen grove, or a soft, quiet climb through an old-growth forest—and consider what they mean to you, how they affect your quality of life here, *and* the fact that they are ours to use, free of charge, throughout the year. Then consider committing a day of service to these places by coming out on an **RFOV** project this summer!

# SAVE THIS DATE!

After a one-year break, the 3rd annual Town to Town Tour is back this winter, scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 22, 2011, this time finishing up in charming “Old Town”



Aspen to Basalt on the Rio Grande Trail  
Saturday, January 22, 2011  
10 a.m. start • 3:30 p.m. closing party

Basalt. The Tour is a non-competitive cross-country ski and snowshoe event created to bring our community out on one of the Roaring Fork Valley’s great public trails, the Rio Grande, while raising awareness of **RFOV** and its mission. In 2008 and 2009, more than 360 people, ages 1-80, skied or snowshoed the 18 miles from Aspen to Basalt in this popular community event.

The Tour took a hiatus in 2010 after the downturn in the economy made it difficult to secure enough financial sponsors to guarantee a quality event for the winter.

Now, with a ramped-up committee of seasoned volunteers and newcomers, **RFOV** is planning for another successful event in 2011. A big part of that success will depend on strong fundraising and sponsorships.

“Our goal is to raise \$45,000 in sponsorships, to cover all of **RFOV**’s hard costs (tents, food & beverages, and permits), staff time, and to raise a modest amount for **RFOV**’s summer trails and conservation programs,” says Development Coordinator Karin Teague. “While this is a big undertaking for us, we see the Tour as a totally unique and much-loved winter event that brings the greater Roaring Fork Valley community together, while giving

us an opportunity to educate the public about who we are and the important work **RFOV** does.”

One of the new sponsorship opportunities **RFOV** has created is the Adopt-A-Mile program.

For \$500, businesses or organizations can “adopt” one mile of the Rio Grande Trail, where they can promote their business by engaging skiers and snowshoers as they pass on the trail with drinks, music, swag, contests—whatever they can dream up.

“Adding the Adopt-A-Mile will bring a fun element to the route, and give sponsors an opportunity to gain more exposure,” says Kathleen Wanatowicz, Tour publicity coordinator. “We developed this program based on feedback from Tour participants—it can be a long event for new participants—so interactive stops along the way will help them along, as well as give sponsors a chance to directly engage with the participants.”

**RFOV** expects close to 400 participants again this winter. The Tour will begin at Rio Grande Park in Aspen, with an optional mid-course start and refreshment station at Woody Creek. New this year, the finish will be in downtown Basalt, with fantastic food and drink provided by local restaurants. The improvements to the Town to Town Tour will make this great community event even more popular, so mark your winter calendar for Jan. 22, 2011! To become a sponsor, to volunteer, or for more information, call 927-8241 or email [rfov@sopris.net](mailto:rfov@sopris.net).

► Kathleen Wanatowicz

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## Are you a member of RFOV?

Your membership is important in two ways: Your contribution enables us to help maintain and enhance our trail system, and your contribution is a powerful demonstration of our community’s support for **RFOV**. Both show a commitment to the preservation of recreational opportunities on our public lands.

If you use our valley’s trails we believe you have a responsibility to help maintain them. You can do that by volunteering and/or contributing to **RFOV**. Please use the enclosed envelope or contribute online at [www.rfov.org](http://www.rfov.org) today! And if you’re already a member, thank you!

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# A GLIMPSE INTO ASPEN'S HISTORY

In the fall, the streaked grays and browns of old mine tailing heaps blend in with the rusts, reds and golds of the surrounding vegetation at the base of Smuggler Mountain in Aspen. Yet Aspen's history—as home to the Utes, as one of the nation's top silver producers, and as a recreational oasis—can be appreciated from a number of locations on the 170-acre Smuggler Mountain Open Space.

Hike up to the Smuggler Overlook platform (a 2003 **RFOV** project) for 270-degree views of Independence Pass, Mount Sopris and Sunlight Mountain, and, of course, a bird's eye perspective on the town originally called Ute City.

Prior to the 1870s, the Roaring Fork River Valley had been used by and was home to Ute Indians for more than 800 years. Knowledge of how the Utes lived during those centuries is limited, but Ute Indian summer camps, including “teepee circles,” in the area have been documented, according to the Aspen Historical Society. Before the first mining prospectors arrived in 1879, the Utes traveled up-valley, hunting along the Maroon and Conundrum valleys into Aspen.

From the platform, non-motorized users can access the Hunter Creek cutoff trail to reach the Hunter Creek trails and the Iowa Shaft Trail (both areas in which **RFOV** has done trail work). The Iowa Shaft at the trail cutoff is one of three mineshafts on Smuggler, which hearken to Aspen's

mining years.

The town's mining boom lasted roughly from 1879 to 1893, and during that period Aspen produced one-sixth of the nation's silver. Smuggler's first claims were filed by Edward Fuller and his younger partner Con Allbright, who came to the valley in June 1879 via the town of Gothic and the Maroon Creek Valley.

In 1893—at the same time that Aspen's population had peaked to between 10,000

and 16,000—the Sherman Silver Act was repealed and silver lost its value. Following what is known as the Silver Panic, Aspen began a downward slide. Ironically, a 2,350-pound silver nugget that was located within Smuggler in 1893 was not removed until 1894, a year after the crash of the silver market.



## RFOV's conservation & trail work helps preserve Smuggler Mountain for the future

Since the Silver Rush days, the land ownership of Smuggler has had a turbulent history. In the late 1960s, much of Smuggler and Hunter Creek was owned by McCullough Oil Company and other private parties. The Hunter Creek lands were largely acquired by the U.S. Forest Service, Pitkin County, the City of Aspen, and the Aspen Valley Land Trust.

“The acquisition of the properties, which make up Smuggler, accomplished the goal of acquiring private parcels in order to protect wildlife habitat, view sheds, and to allow for continued outdoor recreational opportunities,” states the Smuggler Mountain Management Plan.

more on page 7 >

# VOLUNTEER PROFILE

'Amazing result' of trail work is the reward for hard-working Glenn Wysocki

Since joining a work crew on the Colorow Trail project in 2003, Glenn Wysocki of New Castle has become one of our most dedicated participants, volunteering on many other trail and conservation crews and serving as an ambassador on numerous **RFOV** projects (often doubling on kid duty with son Sage while Glenn's wife, Eileen, leads a crew).



Glenn often works as an **RFOV** ambassador, helping check in volunteers at the start of the project day, assessing how the volunteers are holding up during the trail work, taking photos of crews and their work, ensuring volunteers are having a good experience, and helping prepare the free dinner at the end of the day.

"I like the project days because you get a general idea of what is going to be done on a trail, then you see the progress throughout the day and then an amazing result because of everyone's combined efforts," Glenn says. "It's fun to hike the trail again after the project and see the great work that has been done to keep it in good shape, even with heavy use."

Glenn is also a master at behind-the-scenes work, such as setting up and breaking down tents, supplies and equipment on project days and at other **RFOV** events, and soliciting donations from local businesses

for project day give-aways. He has been instrumental in organizing the Hogback Hustle 5K in New Castle, an annual race that benefits **RFOV**.

Most recently, Glenn volunteered on National Trails Day, June 5, on the new Elk Creek Trail in New Castle, where he was an ambassador. In May, he also helped launch a new informational program for **RFOV** that

**“RFOV is a great group of people. It's fun to get to know everyone and see them again on other projects. I would encourage people to do more projects and tell them about other ways to get involved in the organization.”**

aims to inform hikers and cyclists about volunteer opportunities with the organization. Glenn spent one of his weekend days greeting recreationists on Carbondale's heavily used Red Hill.

"**RFOV** is a great group of people," he says. "It's fun to get to know everyone and see them again on other projects. I would encourage people to do more projects and tell them about other ways to get involved in the organization."

And, perhaps, his most important role is helping to finish off the free beer on project days.

Of all of the projects he's worked on, Wysocki's favorite trail remains the one that first introduced him to **RFOV**. "The Colorow Trail is close to home, it's a loop, and it's a good length. I like the views from the overlook. It's close to town, but it feels like it's a long way away."

► *Cindy Hirschfeld*

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## GETTING OUT THERE . . . from page 1

“Our main goal—through volunteerism, by building trails, wetlands, and more—also affects a larger number of people who live or visit here because of the natural beauty.”

American Lake and Raspberry Creek are not the first projects in Wilderness for RFOV. Over the past 15 years, our volunteers have worked on the Snowmass Lake, Capitol Creek, Maroon Lake, Difficult, Pyramid Peak, Granite Lakes, Crater Lake and Eagle Lake trails, as well as an archeological project in the Flat Tops Wilderness.

Martha Moran, a recreation specialist with the White River National Forest, says maintenance of these trails in Wilderness is critical to the Forest Service. “Having a Forest-Service-established trail in any wilderness ensures the effects of protecting the wilderness resource by not having unmanaged spider-web trails and minimizes human activities encroaching wilderness,” she says.

The 2.3-million-acre White River National Forest is the top recreation forest in the nation, according to the USFS, and is known as the birthplace of Wilderness. Today, it contains seven Wilderness Areas: the Raggeds, Hunter Fryingpan, Collegiate Peaks, Flat Tops, Ptarmigan Peak, Eagle’s Nest, and Maroon Bells-Snowmass.

Close to home, the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness is familiar to both locals and visitors. Designated in 1980, this wilderness exemplifies Rocky Mountain splendor: vast regions lie above treeline; six peaks tower above 14,000 feet; trails lead

over nine passes above 12,000 feet; and long glacial valleys point the way to alpine lakes.

American Lake is located in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness. Rising steeply from the trailhead (just before the historic ghost town of Ashcroft), the trail switches back through the aspen for about 1.5 miles before reaching a spruce forest.

After the trail passes through forest and meadows that are ablaze with wild flowers from mid-July to mid-August, it enters a scree field near a waterfall before reaching the lake.

Raspberry Creek, in the Raggeds Wilderness south of Marble, is a lightly used trail offering views and solitude. The nine-mile loop over Anthracite Pass is considered arduous but picturesque. Even for experienced hikers, the loop can present an interesting orienteering challenge.

“Raspberry Creek ... is more of a wilder hike with lots of solitude opportunities and a good possibility of

viewing wildlife,” Moran explains.

Whether it’s the recreational opportunities, scenic vistas, or the humbling height of granite peaks, many of us love this region for its natural landscape. Join RFOV this season for some trail and conservation work on public lands that inspire awe and fulfill a “serious human need.”



“... a Forest-Service-established trail . . . minimizes human activities encroaching wilderness.”

—Martha Moran  
White River National Forest

► Trina Ortega

## SMUGGLER: A GLIMPSE INTO ASPEN'S HISTORY . . . from page 1

In 2006, the county and city began a process to restore the area; part of the plan is to close unsafe mine areas and restore the natural landscape. **RFOV** will help fulfill some of those goals this summer by continuing the trail and restoration work that began in 2009.

Early this July, volunteers constructed new trail, and on Saturday, Aug. 28, volunteers will continue the restoration efforts by turning sections of double-track roads into single-track. For this family-friendly **RFOV** project, volunteers will also seed and plant trees and shrubs to restore areas impacted by old mining activities.

To sign up to volunteer, visit [www.rfov.org](http://www.rfov.org), email [rfov@sopris.net](mailto:rfov@sopris.net), or call 927-8141.

► Trina Ortega



Restoration at Smuggler kicked off in 2009 and continues this year.

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# THERE'S STILL TIME!

COME ON OUT FOR A GREAT WEEKEND PROJECT

## Smuggler Restoration & Trail

**Aspen • Sat., August 28**

We'll continue the restoration and trail work begun last year, turning sections of double-track roads into single-track through revegetation. We'll also be seeding and planting trees and shrubs to restore areas impacted by the old mining activities on this site.

## Raspberry Creek Loop Trail

**Marble**

**Sat., September 11**

This 9-mile trail is a moderate to difficult hike that is surprisingly popular considering its remote location. Hikers and equestrians are rewarded with stunning views as they climb 3,100' through the Raggeds Wilderness to Anthracite Pass and back down into Marble. Volunteers will build dip/waterbar structures, checkdams, and short reroutes



on the east leg. The second priority is the overgrown and eroding Raspberry Creek side.

## Hanging Lake Trail

**Glenwood Canyon**

**Sat. & Sun., September 18 & 19**

One of the most heavily visited trails in the entire state of Colorado, with about 80,000 visitors per year due to its close proximity to I-70, short distance (1.2 miles) and spectacular travertine lake scenery. Nearly all of the trail work involves using native rock to rebuild rock walls and install rock steps and drainage structures.

## Colorado River Tamarisk Removal & Restoration, Phase II

**Glenwood Springs**

**Saturday, October 2**

Help continue our efforts to eradicate the invasive tamarisk and Russian-olive along the Colorado River between West Glenwood and the hot springs. We'll finish the middle section of the north bank and hopefully the south bank. We'll also do some restoration planting with native vegetation in Two Rivers Park to replace some of the ground cover and vegetation we removed in 2009.



## Come Hiking With Us! American Lake and Beyond . . .

Join **RFOV** staffer and wildflower aficionado Karin Teague on Friday, July 30, on a hike to one of Colorado's loveliest places, American Lake. We will add a twist to this classic hike by continuing beyond the lake up a lightly-traveled trail through shoulder-high bluebells and monkshood into a glorious high alpine bowl. Along the way we will identify and discuss the local flora, as well as take note of the work to be done by **RFOV** on its

Aug. 7 American Lake trails and restoration project day.

While we will climb 2,300 feet in just four miles, this hike can be done by anyone who is reasonably fit, acclimatized, and well hydrated and fueled. For more details on this free, six-hour outing, call **RFOV** at 927-8241 or e-mail [rfov@sopris.net](mailto:rfov@sopris.net). Space will be limited to 10 participants, so sign up early, and come see why we do the work we do!