

# Year-End Report 2015

INDEPENDENCE PASS FOUNDATION





cover: Karin Teague | Weller Curve | September 2015

above: Mark Fuller | North Star Nature Preserve | June 2015



Dear Friends of the Pass,

What a year this has been for the Independence Pass Foundation! Trees planted (of course!), interpretive signs installed, progress made on Winter Gate plans, and also big changes for the organization itself.

Both Mark Fuller and Judy Olesen retired from IPF this year. As Executive Director, Mark led all of our many projects, fostered invaluable partnerships with the Forest Service, CDOT, local governments, schools, companies and correctional facilities, and left the Pass a far more beautiful and healthy corridor than he found it when he joined Bob Lewis, Judy Olesen and the fledgling board two decades ago.

Judy Olesen oversaw all of our fundraising and capital campaign efforts and was a huge part of establishing IPF as the productive organization you know it to be. Hard to imagine where we would be without Judy and Mark. We thank them both from the bottom of our hearts for all that they brought to the Independence Pass Foundation.

While it was not at all easy to say goodbye to our stalwart and talented staff of 20+ years, we are extremely fortunate to welcome Karin Teague as our new Executive Director. It feels as if we have grown up a little, having experienced our first-ever staff changes, and we couldn't be more thrilled.

As if winning the lottery with Karin weren't enough, we added three wonderful new board members to our group. Jim Stark, Lindsey Utter and Emily Jack-Scott bring vitality, new ideas, a wealth of experience, and wonderful new energy to our board.

We thank you so much for your support of this dynamic organization and welcome you to this exciting new era for the Independence Pass Foundation.

David Hyman  
Board President





Mark Fuller | Top Cut | July 2015

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Independence Pass Foundation is to promote and protect the ecological, historical and aesthetic integrity of the Independence Pass corridor and to encourage enjoyment, safety and appreciation of the Pass.

## 26 Years of Accomplishments

**“Top Cut”** (the 1+ mile road cut below the summit) stabilized with rock retaining walls, rock bolts, and wire mesh and geotextile to control rockfall

**Tundra slopes above and below the Top Cut revegetated** with planting terraces, hydroseeding, compost blankets and hand plantings

**10 miles of trail** improved and/or old road reclaimed

**12 interpretive signs** installed at the summit and the Alpine Garden, Braille and Discovery Trail areas

**61 tons of snow fence** material removed from the summit

**2,000 middle school children** participated in Pass service projects

**30,000 trees, shrubs and wildflowers** planted throughout the corridor

**54,000 volunteer hours** contributed to weeding, planting, debris removal, trash pickup and restoration work





## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

David Hyman  
*President*

Kristen Henry  
*Vice President*

Paul D'Amato  
*Treasurer*

Debbi Falender  
*Secretary*

Arthur (Boots) Ferguson, Jr.

Bill Gruenberg

Heidi Hoffmann

Gail Holstein

Emily Jack-Scott

James Peterson

Jim Stark

Lindsey Utter

Bob Wade

King Woodward

## **STAFF**

Karin Teague  
*Executive Director*



# 1 Summit signs installation.

In a ceremony attended by District Rangers and other personnel from both the White River and Pike-San Isabel National Forests, IPF unveiled four new interpretive signs at the summit. These include a “peak finder” display that identifies the names and elevations of the surrounding mountains, a description of the early days of travel over the Pass, the ecology and native flora and fauna of the Pass, and information about water diversions and other projects that can be found in the Independence Pass corridor. The signs allow those stopping at the summit to deepen their experience, understanding and appreciation of the Pass as they travel over it.



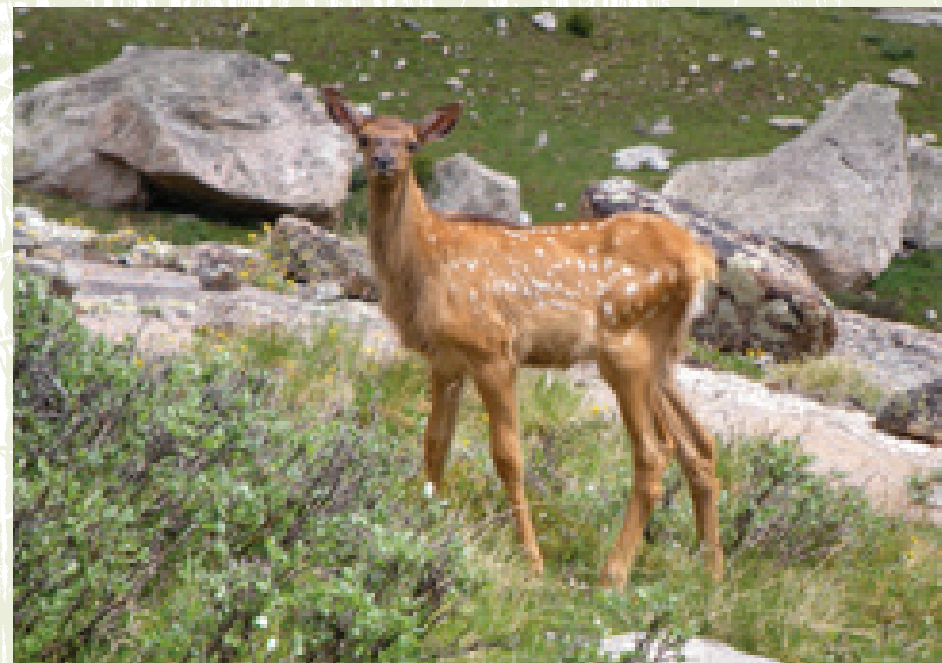
# 2

**Noxious weed eradication.** It seems all plants flourished in 2015, including plants we'd prefer didn't. For the first time anyone can remember, Toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris* & *L. genistifolia*) appeared in several locations along the corridor, as did Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Field Pennycress (*Thlaspi arvense*) and an unending stretch of Oxeye Daisies (*Leucanthemum vulgare*). With the help of the Buena Vista inmate work crew, the Jaywalker Lodge, citizen volunteers and IPF's tenacious board, over sixty extra-large bags of invasive species were pulled from the corridor. Hitting noxious weeds early & hard is key to keeping them from taking over an area and crowding out native wildflowers, which otherwise thrive on the Pass and make it one of the great wildflower drives in the country.



# 3

**Watchdog work.** In the spring IPF submitted formal comments with the Pike-San Isabel National Forest on the proposed Eureka gold mine operation at the North Fork Lake Creek trailhead area, which was slated to begin operating this summer (but which has since been postponed until next summer). IPF spent many hours in conversation with both the owner/operator and the Forest Service to ensure the operation will be carried out in a way that is as environmentally sensitive as possible, in light of its proximity to the pristine waters of Lake Creek, the Mount Massive Wilderness, the popular North Fork Lake Creek trail, and the Scenic Byway corridor enjoyed by thousands of travelers. IPF also worked with the press, the Roaring Fork Conservancy and other river steward volunteers to monitor the Roaring Fork River after the Grizzly Reservoir flush and to evaluate the effects of mine tailings from Ruby Mine on upper Lincoln Creek.





4

**Ghost Town, Upper Lost Man & Weller Curve revegetation.**

With the help of 200 middle school kids, BKR (“Big Kids Rule”) Crew, Plant Trees 4 Life, and dozens of other volunteers, IPF planted 300 Engelmann spruce, 100 lodgepole pines, 200 Douglas fir, 200 wild rose and 150 Rocky Mountain penstemon plants, and a dozen native willow species in places where human impacts or natural events (like the gully washer across from the Independence townsite in 2010) have denuded the landscape. IPF also transplanted 50 trees from its Lincoln Campground plantation, which was established in 2009 in anticipation of the increasing difficulty of obtaining native tree seedlings from nurseries for IPF restoration projects.



Cathy Miller/Imagess | Aspen Country Day School | September 2015

Cathy Miller/Imagess | Aspen Country Day School | September 2015



*“Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed ... We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in.”*

— WALLACE STEGNER

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**Winter Gate work begins.** This fall IPF obtained all necessary permits and approvals to begin work at the winter gate closure area, which will significantly improve this current eyesore’s utility and appearance. In response to public feedback about the scale of the project, IPF worked with its landscape architects to design a lower-key and lower-cost approach to the winter gate that more closely mirrors historical work done on the Pass and directly fulfills IPF’s mission to “promote and protect the ecological, historical and aesthetic integrity” of the Independence Pass corridor and to restore it to its “natural beauty.” IPF will begin by removing the existing weed-infested berm to the north of the road and replacing it with a locally-sourced rock retaining wall that will provide structure for a new berm composed of weed-free soil planted with native trees and plants. The wall and planted berm will create a natural parking barrier and will block views of the CDOT staging and dumpsite area to the north. The remaining improvements, including the installation of new gates to both Highway 82 and the CDOT site (to prevent illegal camping and dumping), a kiosk for USFS winter travel information, and repaving, will be completed upon a successful fundraising campaign. Please contact Karin Teague if you would like to contribute to the winter gate campaign.



# 6

**Summit & Classy Cliffs trails work.** IPF oversaw the Buena Vista inmate work crew in completing over a mile of trail work south of the summit, which included closing off social and braided trails and old road tracks while filling in and creating a sustainable trail that keeps people off the fragile tundra and its myriad alpine wildflowers, while allowing them to explore the summit and enjoy its 360-degree views. And in a highly successful collaboration, IPF, Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers, and the local climbing community transformed the hazardously steep and slippery trail to the popular Classy Cliffs climbing area on the lower Pass into a safer and more accessible one by building a series of rock steps and performing other backbreaking trail work.



Karin Teague | Buena Vista work crew | September 2015



Bob Wade | Classy Cliffs volunteers | June 2015





Mark Fuller | North Star Nature Preserve | June 2015

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