



INDEPENDENCE PASS FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT
2016



Dear Friends,

Another wonderful year for the Independence Pass Foundation!

At the Winter Gate, the rock wall and berm are in place, and we are set to plant and irrigate in the spring. This project is highly visible, like many of our past projects – rock work at the Big Cut and Top Cut, compost blankets that have taken hold below the road, interpretive signs at the summit and near Upper Lost Man, trees and plants along the entire corridor, and restrooms at the summit.

This year, and into the future, much of our work will be less obvious — not invisible, but not as noticeable on first glance. As in years past, we removed tons of metal debris and other waste from wilderness areas near the summit, and we also removed thousands of noxious weeds and plants from the Pass corridor. Perhaps you saw board members and volunteers in bright orange safety vests pulling oxeye daisies and mullein along the roadside between the Winter Gate and the summit? If you didn't see us this year, watch for us next summer, because controlling noxious weeds will be an ongoing priority for us.

Other less visible work this year included discussions with CDOT and Pitkin County to arrive at a solution to 35-foot trucks traveling over the Pass, clearing our own storage site of twenty years of accumulated “stuff” that is no longer needed for our work on the Pass, installation of a snow sensor and a camera at the summit where we can see the surrounding area in real time, year around, and improving climbing access in discrete but important places.

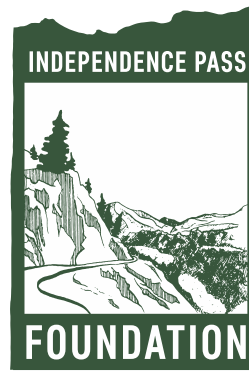
Whether you see it or not, our work will remain true to our mission: emphasizing protection of the ecological, historical, and aesthetic integrity of the Pass corridor. You can rest assured that we will continue to be the eyes and ears of Independence Pass, and we will use our best efforts to encourage and educate others to appreciate and take great care of this amazing place.

On behalf of the IPF Board of Directors, we appreciate your support, and we promise to use your contributions wisely and prudently.

Sincerely,



Debbi Falender
President





Mission Statement

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

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27 Years of Collaboration

“Collaboration” is a hot word in the non-profit world these days. But for 27 years it has been the starting place for all of IPF’s projects on the Pass. The people and organizations we’ve partnered with, and the work we never would have accomplished without them, include:

Buena Vista Correctional Facility Work Crew

Every September IPF works with the inmate work crew on the most demanding jobs on the Pass. These include trail and bridge construction and maintenance, campground cleanup and restoration, removal by hand of heavy metal and other human debris from difficult-to-reach wilderness areas, steep slope revegetation, and fence construction and repair. Our decades-long partnership with the hard working inmate work crew is one of IPF’s proudest accomplishments, and an unsung bright light in Colorado’s penal system.

Aspen Schools & Youth Groups

Every Fall kids from elementary through high school plant hundreds of trees throughout the Independence Pass corridor, and this year they removed hundreds of pounds of metal debris from the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness. IPF strongly believes that involving our kids in fun and meaningful service projects on the Pass will forever connect them with, and instill a sense of pride and ownership in, their alpine backyard.

Roaring Fork Valley Non-Profits

Throughout its 27-year history IPF has partnered with dozens of local non-profits, including most recently the Aspen Global Change Institute, Wilderness Workshop, Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers, and YouthZone. These organizations have worked on trail projects, restoration work, and citizen science initiatives to protect the ecological integrity and promote understanding of the Independence Pass region.

CDOT

Year in, year out, CDOT’s intrepid plow team gets the road open in late May, clears the road for IPF’s Ride for the Pass, performs road cut stabilization & restoration work, works with IPF on Winter Gate and other environmental and aesthetic improvement projects, and in myriad ways promotes safety on the corridor.

Citizen Volunteers

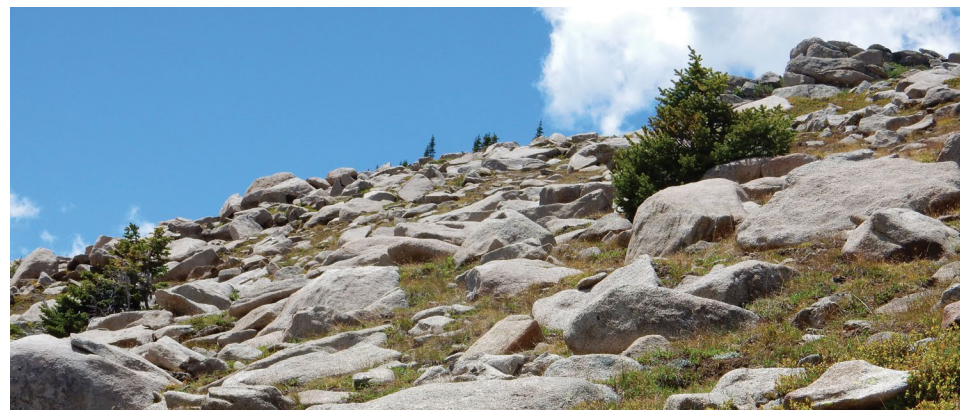
Individuals from throughout the Roaring Fork Valley and beyond volunteer their time to pull noxious weeds, pick up trash, plant trees, staff IPF events like the Ride and the Ski for the Pass, and generally help take care of this place we all love.

US Forest Service

The agency that manages the landscape on both sides of Highway 82 is IPF’s key partner in identifying priorities and coordinating all projects and events on the Pass. IPF is indebted to the guardians of our natural heritage from the Leadville and Aspen-Sopris Ranger Districts, and is hugely grateful for the support they’ve shown IPF through the years.

Our Donors

Needless to say, IPF wouldn’t exist without the support of our donors, including local governments, philanthropic organizations, businesses, local and national environmental and family foundations, and the hundreds of individuals from all over the country who love the Pass and wish to see it protected for generations to come. Please see page 15 for a complete list of our generous supporters.



2016 Projects

1 Winter Gate

The winter closure area five miles east of Aspen, a popular jumping-off point for skiing, snowshoeing, and dog walking when the Pass is closed to cars, got a big facelift this summer. In partnership with its contractor Natural Aspen and landscape architects Bluegreen, IPF scraped the existing weed-infested berm to the north of the parking area and replaced it with a stacked rock wall using boulders from the surrounding slopes. The wall and berm, which will be planted next spring with native trees, grasses, and shrubs, blocks the view into CDOT's dump and staging area, delineates the parking area, and creates an attractive gateway to Independence Pass. This winter IPF will fundraise to complete the project, which will include a kiosk for travel information, replacement of the existing, dilapidated closure gate with a sturdier, more attractive one, and repaving of the parking area. If you are interested in supporting the Winter Gate project, please contact Karin Teague.

*“May your trails
be crooked,
winding,
lonesome,
dangerous,
leading to the
most amazing view.”*

ED ABBEY



BEFORE



AFTER

2 Science at the Summit

This summer saw three studies launched near the summit of Independence Pass. The Aspen Global Change Institute, in partnership with IPF, installed the last of seven soil moisture monitoring stations throughout the Roaring Fork Valley, its highest elevation station at over 12,100 feet. In addition to measuring soil moisture, a key component of the health and timing of native vegetation growth, the station will also measure air temperature and snow depth. The station is further equipped with a camera that will take photographs 365 days a year, giving us a chance to see what the summit looks like in the dead of winter and allowing us to watch the emergence and growth of alpine plants through time-lapse photography. At the same site, CMC Professor Delia Malone and students created a cover composition plot where the flora are identified, counted, and recorded every year on the same date, in order to monitor change in floral composition over time. In addition, a citizen science study was launched at the Lost Man Trail which will track the timing of species' blooms throughout the summer. All of this work will add to our understanding of the biotic diversity and the impacts of climate change on the flora of Independence Pass. Bob Lewis would have been proud!



3 Noxious Weed Eradication

IPF stepped up its efforts to keep invasive weeds at bay by increasing its staff and volunteer hours, hand pulling species like oxeye daisies and scentless chamomile, and partnering with Pitkin County and the Forest Service to chemically treat particularly worrisome weeds, including yellow toadflax, a species that has taken over hundreds of acres of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness near Marble. Noxious weeds are plants that have been transported either accidentally or purposefully as ornamentals from places as far away as Europe, Asia or Africa. They have an advantage in their new environment because the insects, diseases, and animals that would normally control them are not found here. As the toadflax seen at 12,000 feet on the Pass demonstrates, these invasive weeds are able to adapt to a wide variety of climatic and environmental conditions, and as a result, they can displace native plants at an alarming rate. When the native plants that wildlife use for food, shelter, or nesting are gone, wildlife leave the area. The Independence Pass corridor is prime territory for invasive species to take hold, because they can hitchhike on vehicles and prefer to establish themselves in disturbed sites such as roadsides. By controlling invasive weeds, IPF has dedicated itself to protecting the beautiful native wildflowers, plants, and wildlife that call Independence Pass home.



4 Lost Man Bridge and Trail

Relying on the strength and stamina of the Buena Vista inmate work crew, IPF replaced a failed bridge on the upper Lost Man Trail, a bridge that in the early summer is critical to crossing the headwaters of the Roaring Fork River and proceeding to Independence Lake and the pass to Lost Man Lake. IPF also partnered with Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers and Wilderness Workshop on a weekend-long trail restoration project attended by over twenty volunteers. Participants built steps and water bars on the steep north side of the pass where the trail had become deeply rutted, forcing hikers off trail and resulting in braiding and scarring of the alpine tundra. After the main trail was fixed, braided trails were closed off and revegetated. Volunteers also trimmed overgrown willows at the midway point of the Lost Man loop. With its abundant snowpack and streams, the Lost Man Trail supports a rich array of alpine flowers and is the most popular trail on the Pass.





5 500 Trees Planted

Continuing its decades-long relationship with the Aspen School District, IPF and almost 100 children from the Aspen Middle School and Aspen Country Day School, as well as volunteers from Plant Trees 4 Life and the Buena Vista work crew, planted over 500 Engelmann Spruce, Lodgepole Pine, Douglas Fir, and Colorado Blue Spruce trees throughout the Independence Pass corridor. In addition to offsetting carbon emissions, providing habitat and food for native fauna, and beautifying the corridor, the trees this year were planted with the goals of stabilizing slopes de-vegetated by road building and human activity and discouraging illegal camping and parking in roadside areas.

*“Attention
is the rarest
and purest
form of
generosity.”*

SIMONE WEIL



6 Summit Improvements

Anyone who has spent time at the top of Independence Pass knows that wind and cold are constant companions there. The summit's harsh conditions eventually take their toll on fences, signs and other man-made structures. This year IPF removed numerous sections of dilapidated fencing along the summit trail and replaced it with attractive split rail. While no natural material will withstand the conditions at the summit long term, IPF believes the fence is sufficiently important to merit ongoing replacement, because it is designed to keep visitors on the trail and off the fragile tundra, which despite the cold and wind is home to dozens of species of colorful alpine wildflowers. In addition, IPF installed its first summit "donor tube," which allows visitors to make a donation to IPF to help pay for the toilets and other summit improvements that IPF undertakes with its partners for the benefit of the public.



7 Outrageous Overhangs Project

For the second year in a row, IPF partnered with RFOV, the Ute Mountaineer, Jaywalker Lodge and local climbing guides and enthusiasts to restore the badly eroding and hazardous steep entrance to the Outrageous Overhangs climbing area. Over two days these hearty volunteers worked under difficult physical conditions to reroute the entryway and close off unsafe routes, allowing the steep hillside to recover and revegetate.



8 Mountain Boy Restoration

By 2025, IPF's goal is to remove all of the rebar, metal cable, wire, and other debris from the mammoth Continental Divide snow fence experiment, which was abandoned in the 1960's. This is an audacious goal because there remains several TONS of material in the Mountain Boy area, all of which is designated wilderness, meaning the debris can only be carried out by hand or mule. No helicopters, ATVs, or mechanized vehicles of any kind are allowed. It is audacious also because there are no trails in most of this wild but wonderful place that is deserving of restoration. The removal effort began in earnest this year with the help of students from the Aspen Community School and YouthZone. Both groups did the hard work of pulling rebar out of the ground and hauling it off the 12,500-foot summit by hand. In addition, the Buena Vista work crew removed an old weather station that had finally succumbed to the elements and was strewn across the tundra, visible to the naked eye from the summit of the Pass. The work crew accomplished this daunting task by breaking down the fiberglass walls and roof into sections which they stacked, turned into makeshift "sleds," and pulled down the mountain, with no tools or equipment. Here's to human strength and ingenuity!





“Maybe there is something about this love of wide open spaces that is a desire to be bigger, grander, more connected. There’s something about the urge to lift up our gaze from the micro-dramas of our own life, and be more attuned to the larger rhythms of the cosmos, and the cosmic Artist.”

OMID SAFI

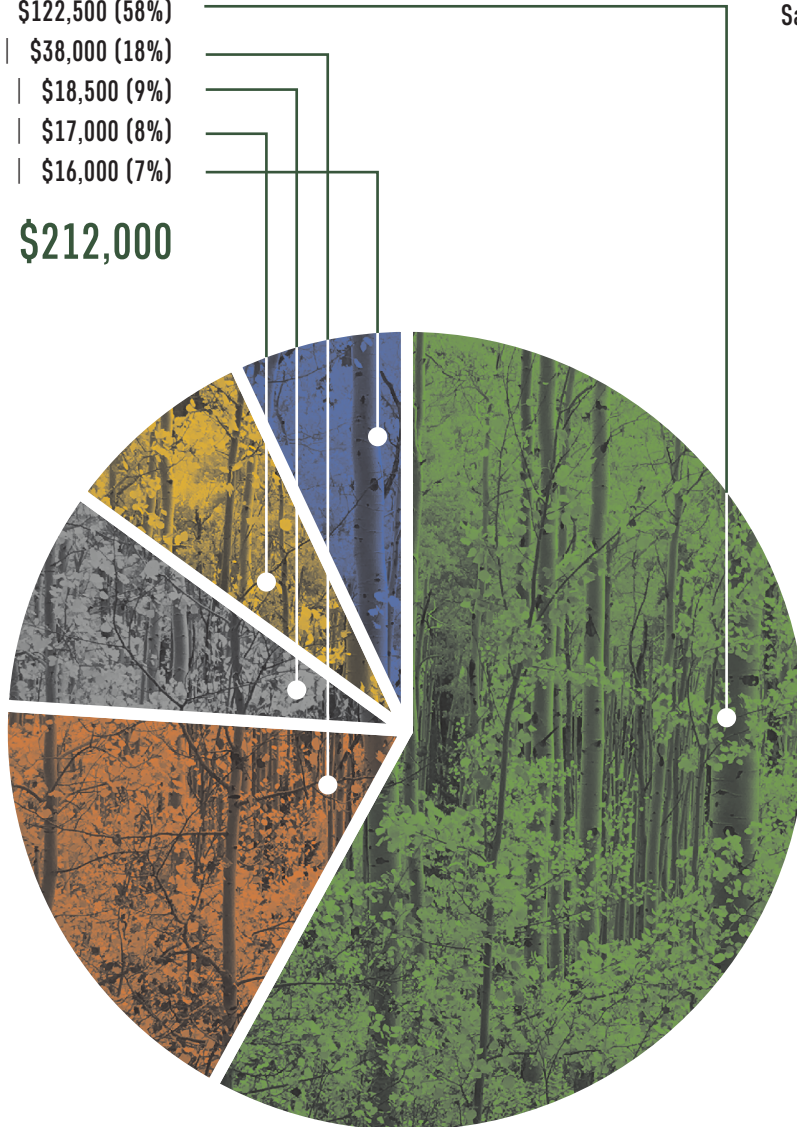


Annual Income & Expenses

September 1, 2015 - August 31, 2016

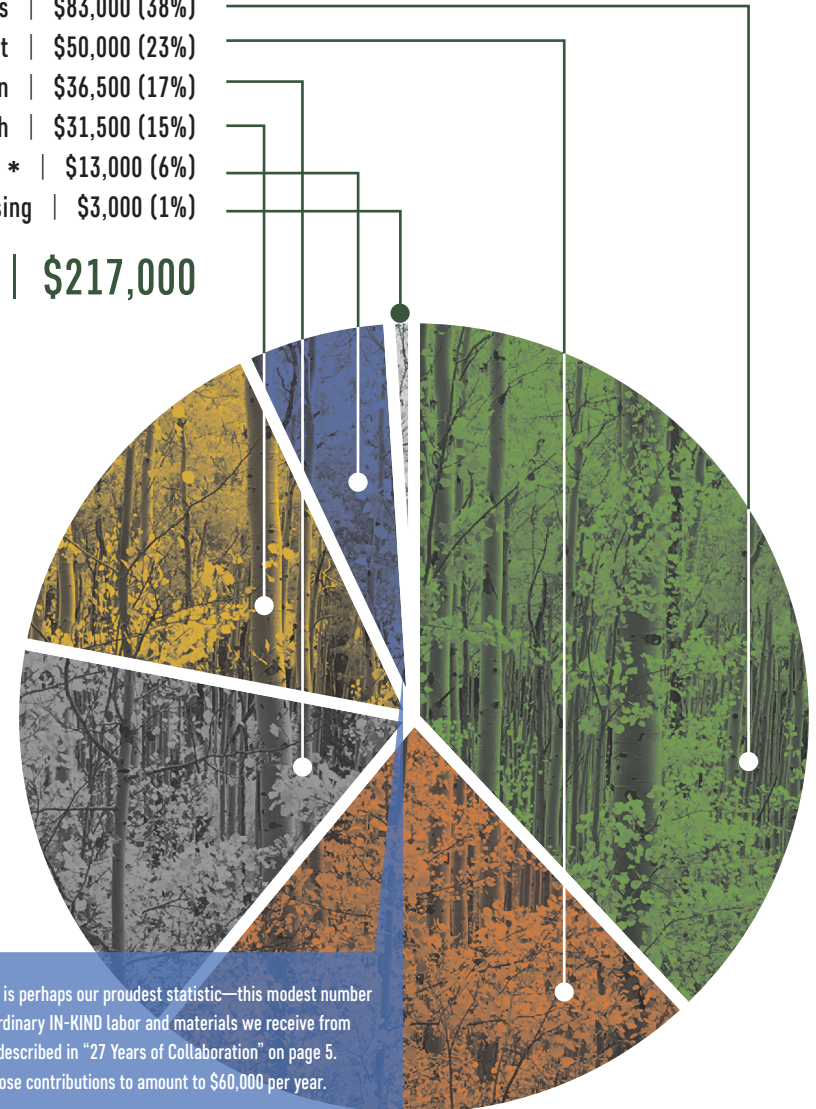
Income

Individuals		\$122,500 (58%)
Governments		\$38,000 (18%)
Foundations		\$18,500 (9%)
Businesses		\$17,000 (8%)
Event participants		\$16,000 (7%)
Total		\$212,000



Expenses

Salaries + consultants		\$83,000 (38%)
Capitol project		\$50,000 (23%)
Administration		\$36,500 (17%)
Education/outreach		\$31,500 (15%)
Projects *		\$13,000 (6%)
Fundraising		\$3,000 (1%)
Total		\$217,000



* **Projects** | This is perhaps our proudest statistic—this modest number reflects the extraordinary IN-KIND labor and materials we receive from our partners, as described in "27 Years of Collaboration" on page 5. We estimate those contributions to amount to \$60,000 per year.

Donors

\$10,000+

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\$5,000+

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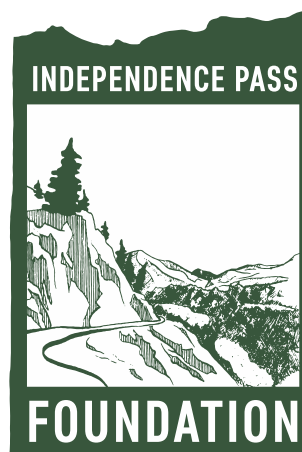
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to IPF that we acknowledge
all our generous donors,
and do so correctly.

Please let us know if we have
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or missed anything.

Special thanks to Martha Moran

a great partner and friend for 14 years —
congratulations on your retirement!





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