

# 2019 annual report

109° 06' 32"  
W 106° 33' 52"  
Independence  
Pass



INDEPENDENCE PASS  
FOUNDATION

past

present

future



2019 inmate work crew

IPF is proud to have worked for over two decades with the Buena Vista Correctional Complex's inmate work crew. IPF could not accomplish half the work it does without them. IPF believes in turn that these capable men, by working on challenging service projects in an inspiring landscape, gain a sense of satisfaction, contribution, and hope for the life that awaits them. This is a win-win program that deserves our support and celebration.



## what a year it's been

for the Independence Pass Foundation and the landscape we steward! From once-in-a-lifetime avalanches in March to altogether-missing monsoons in August, Mother Nature reminded us she has things to throw our way we can't, and won't, anticipate.

Fortunately, thanks to the vision of Bob Lewis and the extraordinary thirty-year foundation laid by Mark Fuller, Judy Olesen, Ramona Markalunas, Sloan Shoemaker, and other key players too numerous to name, including past and present board members and hundreds of longtime, loyal donors and volunteers, IPF was able to respond quickly and effectively. We organized and equipped volunteers to help the US Forest Service open campsites and trails that lay beneath centuries-old downed trees, and began assessing the longer-term implications for the health of Independence Pass's forests.

In many ways this year, my fifth year as director of IPF, has been the most gratifying: in the work we've been able to accomplish, much of it unanticipated; in the unsolicited offers of help we've received from local schools, other non-profits, and concerned citizens; and in bearing witness to deeply humbling natural events that changed our landscape in a matter of seconds.

While IPF was able to play a small part in helping get the Pass's amenities open for the public's enjoyment, Mother Nature may well have more landscape-

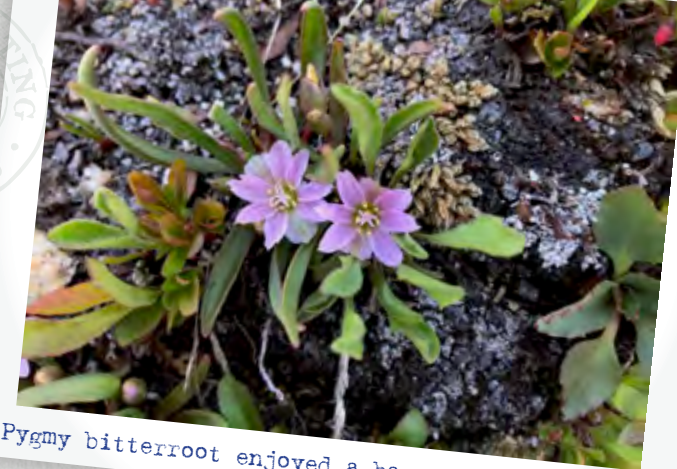
changing events in store for us. The spruce beetle outbreak that has devastated millions of acres of spruce forests to the south may well be on its way here, as the beetle thrives on downed, defenseless trees like those now dotting our landscape as a result of this year's avalanche cycle.

Although many (most?) things are out of our control, the good news is that for thirty years IPF has planted thousands of native trees of different species throughout the Independence Pass corridor, creating diversity of both species and age that will help make the Pass more resilient in the face of a spruce beetle outbreak. And working with experts, we will continue to consider other programs to foster resilience and promote restoration in the face of climate change and whatever else Mother Nature may throw our way.

I took this job five years ago because I believed the Pass was a "geography of hope" worth caring for. Today I've found my hope equally in the partners and volunteers I've been privileged to work alongside. Vaclav Havel said "the deepest and most important form of hope, the only one that can keep us above water and urge us to good works, and the only true source of the breathtaking dimension of the human spirit and its efforts, is something we get, as it were, from 'elsewhere.'"

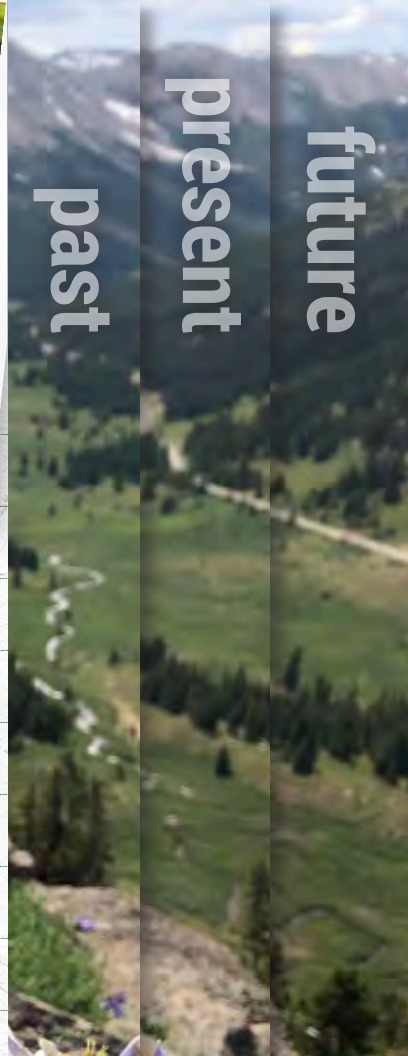
My "elsewhere" is the place we call Independence Pass, along with the people who put so much time and heart into taking care of it. Thank you for feeding that hope with your support, and for trusting us to be good stewards for the next thirty years and beyond.

KARIN TEAGUE | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Pygmy bitterroot enjoyed a banner year in 2019

INDEPENDENCE PASS FOUNDATION



**we are**

**1** staff person

**1** summer intern

**14** board members

and a **small army**  
**of volunteers**

passionate about  
restoring and protecting  
the ecological, historical,  
and aesthetic integrity of

Independence Pass.



IPF board members and volunteers preparing for the day's project

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- Karin Teague  
*Executive Director*

**PARTNERS**

- Aspen Center for Environmental Studies | Aspen Community School | Aspen Global Change Institute | Aspen Middle School
- Buena Vista inmate work crew | City of Aspen | Colorado Department of Transportation | Colorado Mountain College | Colorado State University
- Jaywalker Lodge | Pitkin County | Pitkin County Weed Advisory Board | Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers | Two Rivers Community School | US Forest Service

**we've**  
**come**  
**a long**  
**way**

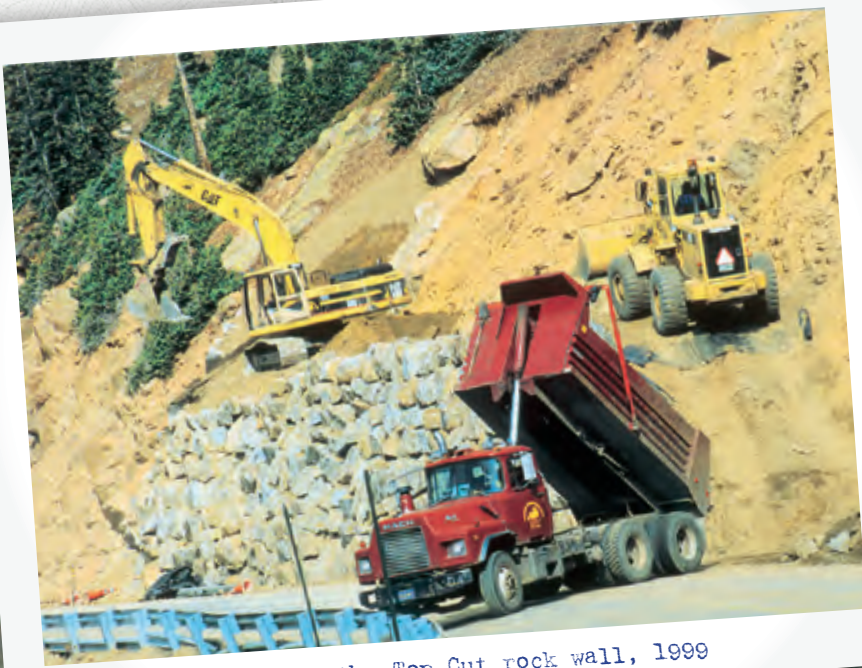


The Top Cut circa 1882 (Aspen Historical Society)

past

present

future



Building the Top Cut rock wall, 1999

during our first  
twenty years



IPF's primary focus was on stabilizing and revegetating the slopes above and below Highway 82 at the Weller Curve and along the 1.5 mile stretch of road west of the summit known as the "Top Cut," as well as preventing degradation of the Roaring Fork River below.

The Top Cut's greener slopes today



present

future



The Weller Curve, 1991



The Weller Curve today



Kids (now adults) planting the Weller Curve

## re-planting the road cuts

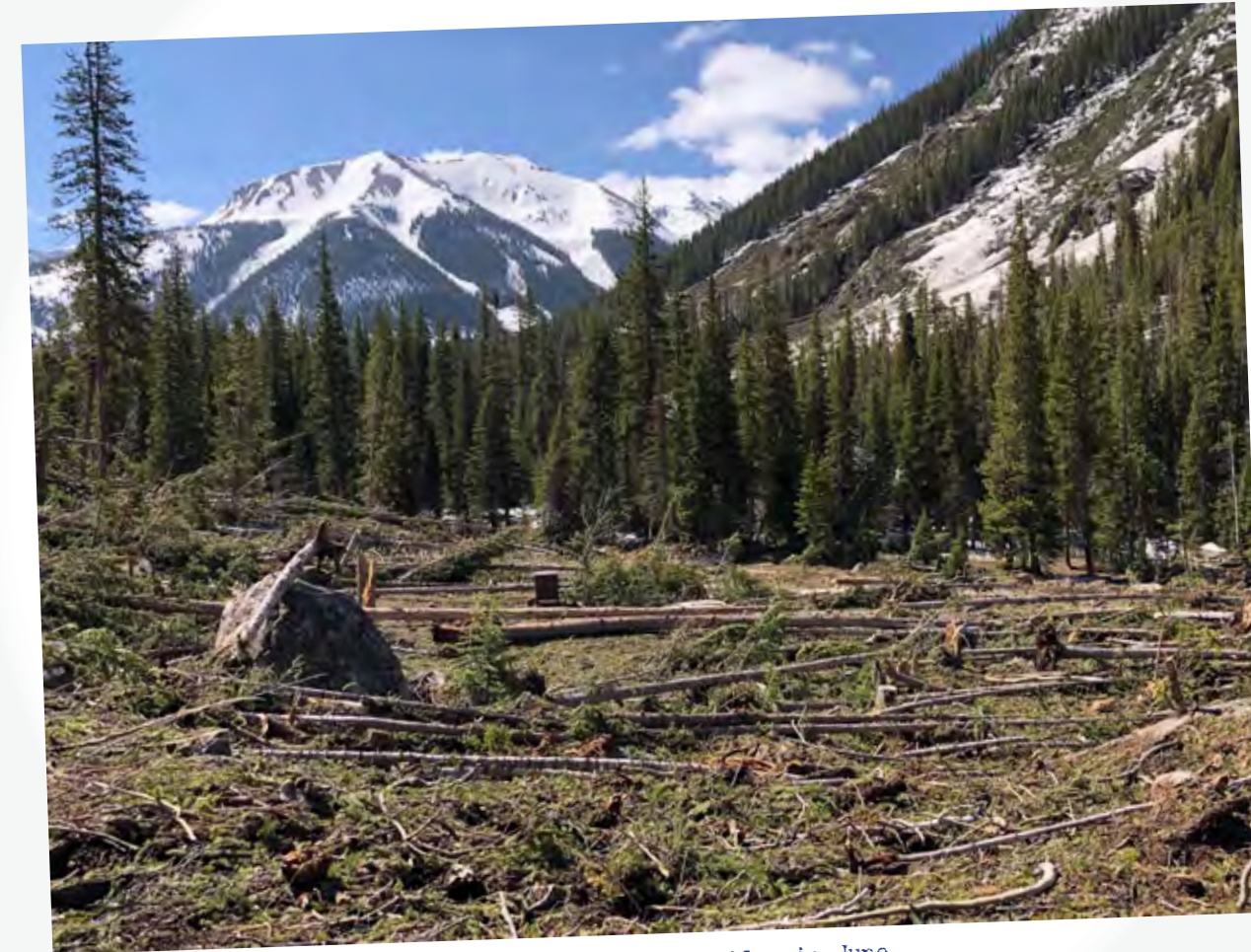


The tree planting program started thirty years ago by IPF along the Weller Curve to hold soil in place and re-green the road cuts has made a discernible difference throughout the corridor.

## our work today

In response to increased enjoyment of the Pass by a growing populace, shrinking US Forest Service budgets, and changes occurring on the landscape as a result of climate change, more recreational use, and natural events, IPF's mission has expanded.

March of 2019 saw avalanches bigger in size and number than any in recorded history. On Independence Pass, avalanches crossed Highway 82 on the east and west sides, and the Lincoln Creek corridor saw upwards of a dozen large avalanches.



The Lincoln Creek corridor in June

present

future



Clearing dispersed campsite 7 in Lincoln Creek

## clearing the debris

With the help of groups like Gay For Good, the Jaywalker Lodge, and numerous citizen volunteers, IPF was able to help the Forest Service open trails, dispersed campsites, and campgrounds impacted by avalanches in time for the summer season. We are incredibly fortunate to have the Forest Service, CDOT, and Glenn & Kim Schryver, the year-round caretakers at Grizzly Reservoir who single handedly cleared Lincoln Creek Road, working hard to keep Independence Pass safe and open to the public.



Site 7 open for business

## restoring aesthetic integrity

Four years of restoration and revegetation efforts by IPF have resulted in an attractive, understated winter closure gate area befitting our scenic byway.



The winter gate area, fall 2019





Aspen Community School 6th graders carrying rebar down the mountain

# engaging students in service projects

We were delighted to welcome the Two Rivers Community School to our growing roster of Roaring Fork Valley schools that perform service projects on the Pass. This year Two Rivers and the Aspen Community School carried out the remaining piles of rebar that eluded last year's mule team. We are grateful for the strength, stamina, and stellar attitudes the kids showed on this challenging project!



Two Rivers Community School 6th & 7th graders loading rebar for recycling



# protecting the Pass's ecology

IPF once again partnered with RFOV, the climbing community, and employees of the Aspen Skiing Company to restore the steep, braided, and fast-eroding access trail to the popular Bulldog climbing area. By better defining the trail and using locally-sourced stone and wood to build steps, there will be less erosion, fewer social trails, and therefore less damage to the surrounding landscape.



Big rocks make great steps

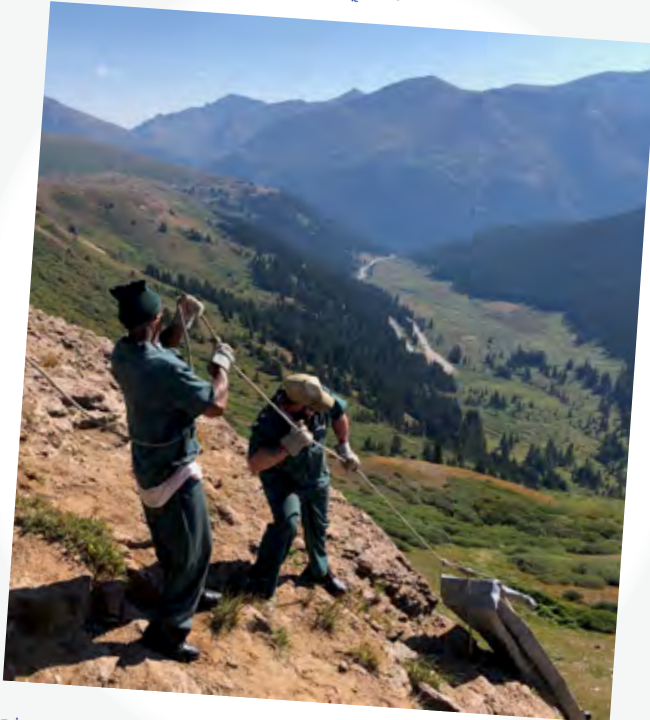
# making the wilderness wild again

Step 1:



Round up panels and haul them to staging site

Step 2:



Hoist panels via rope up and over rock cliff to summit

If you've ever hiked south of the summit on Independence Pass, you may have wondered, "what ARE those huge, shiny, metal things scattered all over the valley below?" Those 12-foot-long aluminum panels were components of the two-mile-long snow fence that was partially erected and then abandoned in the 1960s along the Continental Divide. In its decades-long effort to rid the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness of the snow fence's dangerous and unsightly metal debris, IPF worked this fall with the Buena Vista inmate work crew to remove the last remaining 35 panels from the steep terrain of west Mountain Boy Basin. Wonder no more about those strange, shiny relics: they are gone!

“

Your generation must come to terms with the environment. You must face realities instead of taking refuge in ignorance and evasion of truth. Yours is a grave and sobering responsibility, but it is also a shining opportunity. You go out into a world where mankind is challenged, as it has never been challenged before, to prove its maturity and its mastery — not of nature, but of itself.... Therein lies our hope and our destiny.”

— RACHEL CARSON



Tomorrow's stewards: Aspen Middle School students





Determining an avalanche victim's age with ACES naturalists

## inspiring stewardship in the next generation

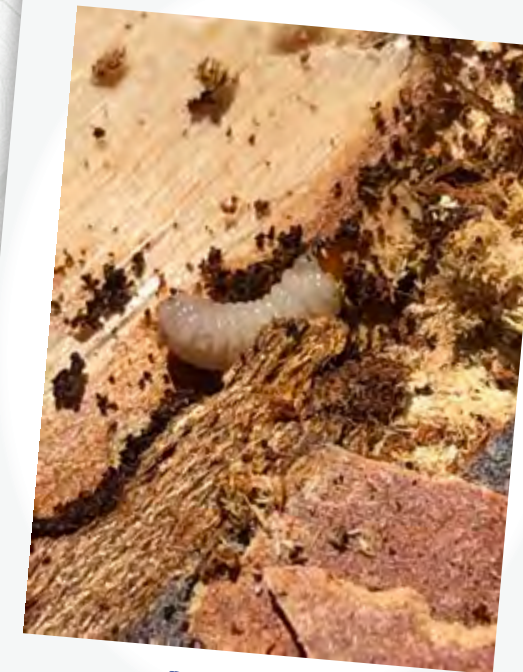
Engaging and inspiring our kids through hands-on service projects is one of IPF's highest priorities for promoting the long-term stewardship of Independence Pass and all of our public lands. To accomplish this, IPF continues to add to the number of schools and youth groups we work with on tree planting and other service projects, and to refine those projects by partnering with groups like ACES to include a richer educational content.



Planting saplings where trees used to be at Lincoln Gulch

## understanding our changing climate

IPF continues to work with experts in forest health and alpine ecology to better understand the changes our landscape is experiencing and will likely experience in the coming years as a result of climate change, including the possibilities of intensive beetle outbreaks, fire, and accompanying changes to local flora and fauna.



Beetle larva



Searching for signs of spruce beetle



# monitoring and addressing erosion on the Top Cut

This fall IPF and its consultants accompanied CDOT on an assessment of the Top Cut, in which areas of weakness and potential failures, including rock slides and tundra loss, were identified.

While CDOT will address rockfall mitigation, this winter IPF will assess revegetation options above Highway 82 akin to our previous, successful efforts below the highway. IPF will apply for state grants to fund those efforts.



Metal nets installed in the mid-2000s to retard rockfall are starting to lose ground

# contributing to scientific research

IPF will continue to **(a)** study the native flora of the Pass, including their species composition and timing of bloom, **(b)** monitor and eradicate noxious weeds that threaten native habitat, **(c)** partner with groups like the Pika Project, the Aspen Global Change Institute, and the

Watershed Biodiversity Initiative to establish critical baseline data for ongoing and future scientific studies, and **(d)** involve local citizens in those studies whenever possible. IPF believes the Pass's diverse ecology and unparalleled access make it an important resource for adding to the body of knowledge on alpine ecology in a changing climate.



Native wildflowers like Alpine smelowskia carpet the Pass's windswept summit with color



Partners IPF, CMC, and AGCI conducting their annual, July 15 cover composition study

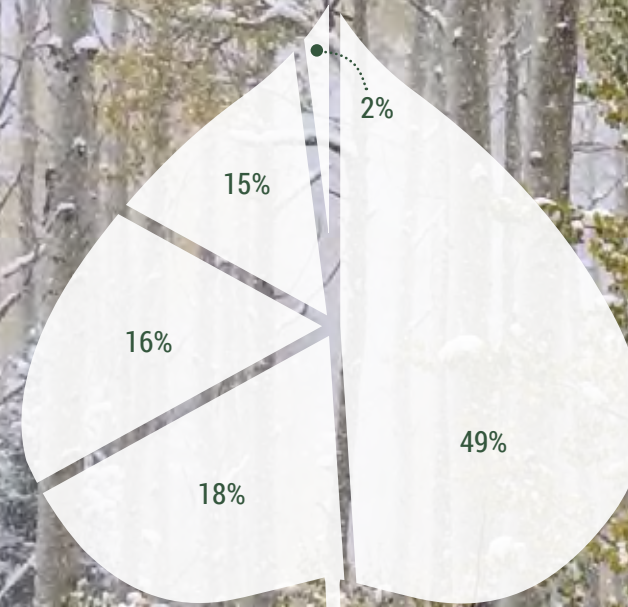


A snowmobiler riding snow-free slopes in the non-motorized Lost Man drainage

## promoting thoughtful use

IPF will continue to act as a watchdog for Independence Pass and all the living things that call the Pass home. Recreational users of all kinds can enjoy the Pass together and minimize impacts by learning and following USFS travel regulations, use restrictions, permit requirements, and leave no trace principles.

## income



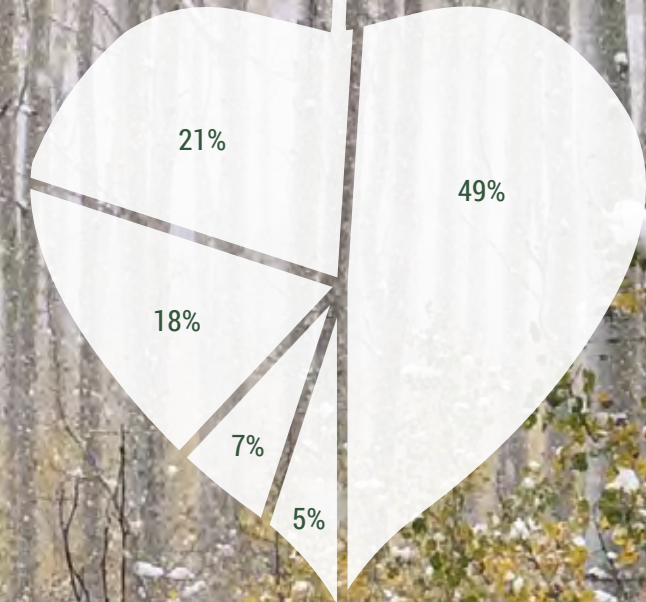
## 2018 Income

Individuals	\$118,564	49%
Events	\$42,826	18%
Governments	\$38,000	16%
Foundations	\$35,710	15%
Businesses + Sales	\$5,111	2%
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$240,211</b>	

## 2018 Expenses

Salaries	\$87,275	49%
Education + Outreach	\$36,692	21%
Administration	\$32,334	18%
Projects	\$13,264	7%
Fundraising	\$8,140	5%
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$177,705</b>	

## expenses



# thanks to our generous Independence Pass Foundation donors

October 1, 2018 - October 1, 2019

## \$10,000+

Anonymous Fund at Aspen  
Community Foundation  
City of Aspen  
Glickman Family Fund  
Pitkin County

## \$5,000+

Aspen Thrift Shop  
The Joe W. & Dorothy Dorsett Brown  
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## \$1,000+

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## \$250+

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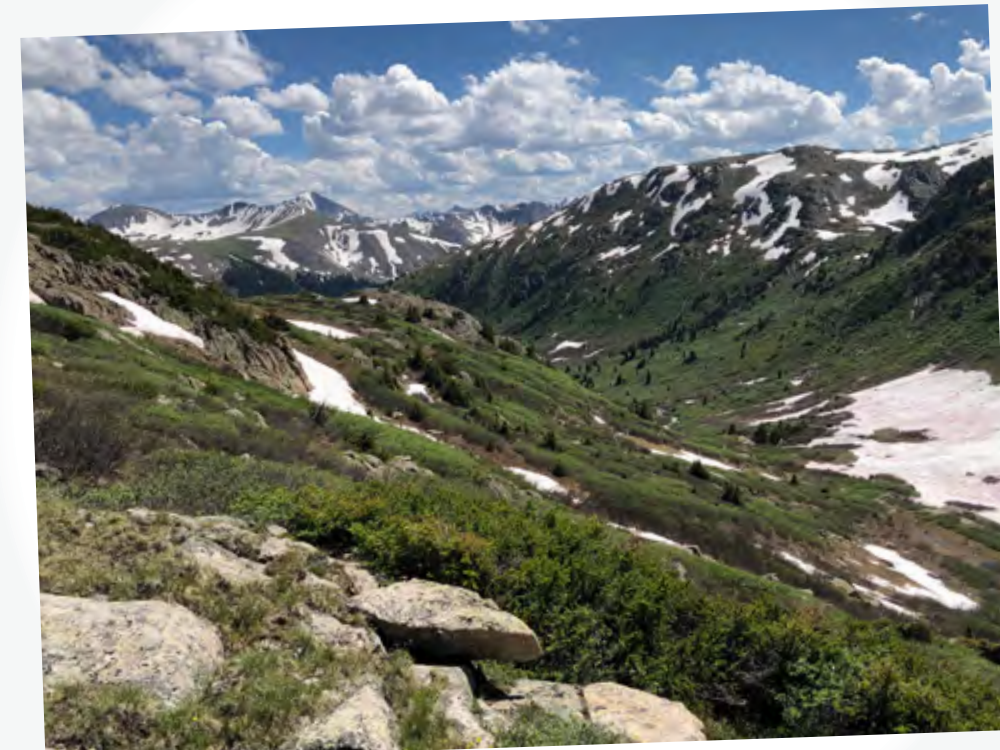
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2019's late, lingering snowpack made for an emerald-green summer on the Pass

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