

INDEPENDENCE PASS
FOUNDATION

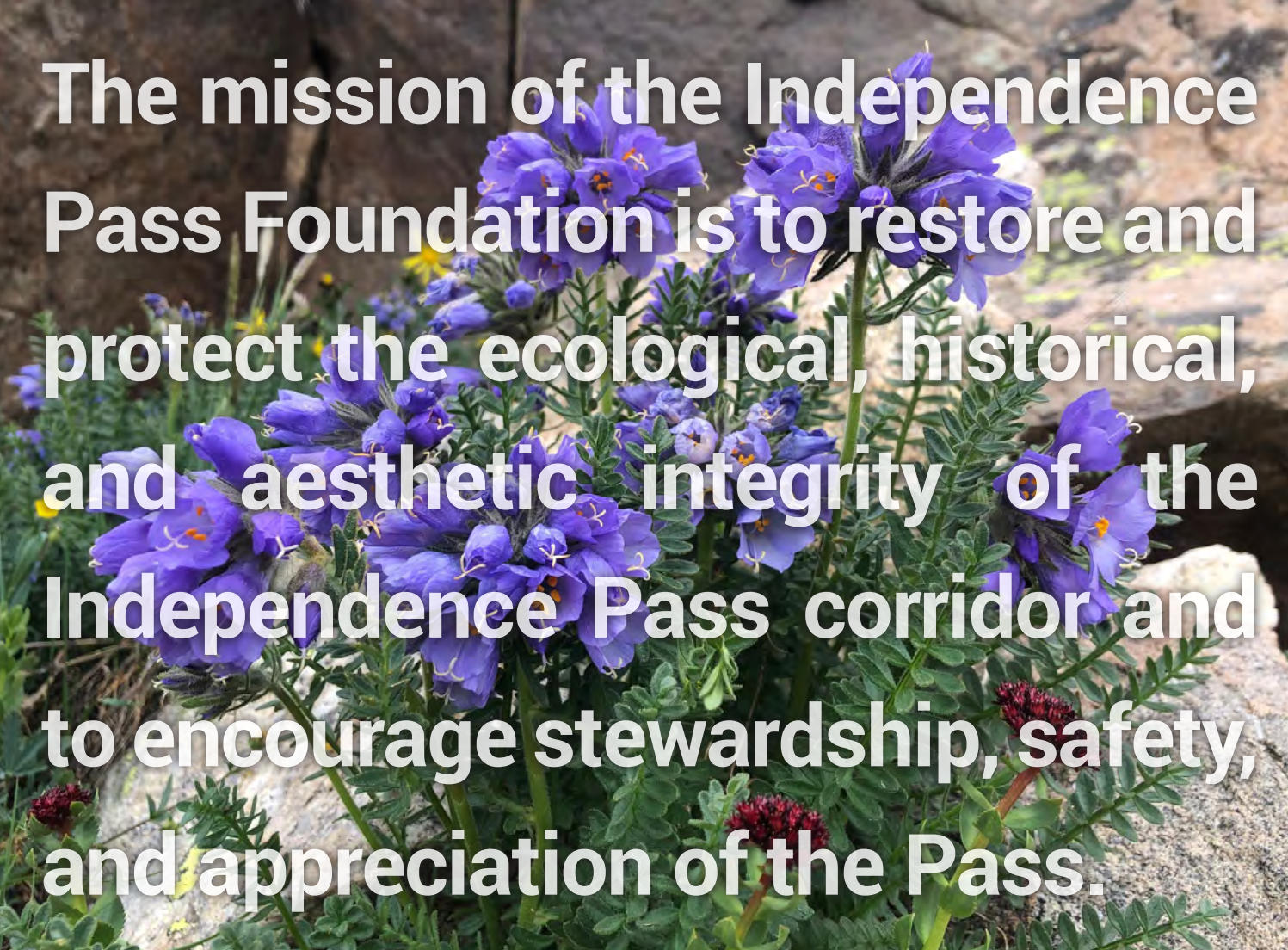
INDEPENDENCE PASS

ELEVATION 12,095 FEET

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

2020 annual report

taking stock



The mission of the Independence Pass Foundation is to restore and 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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Karin Teague, *Executive Director*
Isabel Haga, *Summer Intern*

For the Independence Pass Foundation, 2020 has been a year of taking stock.

First and foremost, we are taking stock of all we have: the flower-filled tundra, old growth forests, crystal-clear waters, and majestic mountains of Independence Pass; the trails and amenities that allow us to enjoy it; the rich communities of plants and wildlife that live there; and the innumerable people who have taken care of it through the years.

It has also been a year of taking stock of what is changing and what we stand to lose. When the coronavirus emerged earlier this year, the Independence Pass Foundation predicted a quiet summer for visitors, projects, and volunteers. We were wrong on all counts. 2020 saw record numbers of visitors to the Pass: people escaping crowded cities and discovering, or rediscovering, the benefits of wide-open spaces, clean air, health-giving exercise, and the opportunity to connect meaningfully, and safely, with loved ones.

More people meant more impacts. More trash, more trail and infrastructure damage, more human waste fouling the landscape. 2020 showed us our inevitable future—one with a soaring, outdoor-hungry population—and raised the question of how the needs of that population can be met while protecting the singular landscape of Independence Pass and the living things that call it home.

2020 also gave us a glimpse into the very real risks of catastrophic fire, devastating beetle outbreaks, and prolonged drought, as well as blow downs, freak snow storms, and other extreme weather events.

While there is much we cannot control, there IS much we can do, even in a year hampered by the coronavirus. With our dedicated partners and volunteers, the Independence Pass Foundation took on the mammoth challenge of revegetating and stabilizing the steep slopes above Highway 82. We planted hundreds of native saplings in areas stripped of trees by last year's historic avalanches. We completed four significant trail projects, and hauled the last of the rebar off the north slopes of the summit. Finally, as we will forever do, we pulled invasive weeds, repaired fences, and picked up trash throughout the corridor.*

We also continued to take stock, through rigorous study, of our native plants, the pollinators they depend on, our pika population, and the biogeography of the Pass generally. The Independence Pass Foundation believes it is important to know what we have, how climate change and recreational impacts are affecting those things, and how best to respond.

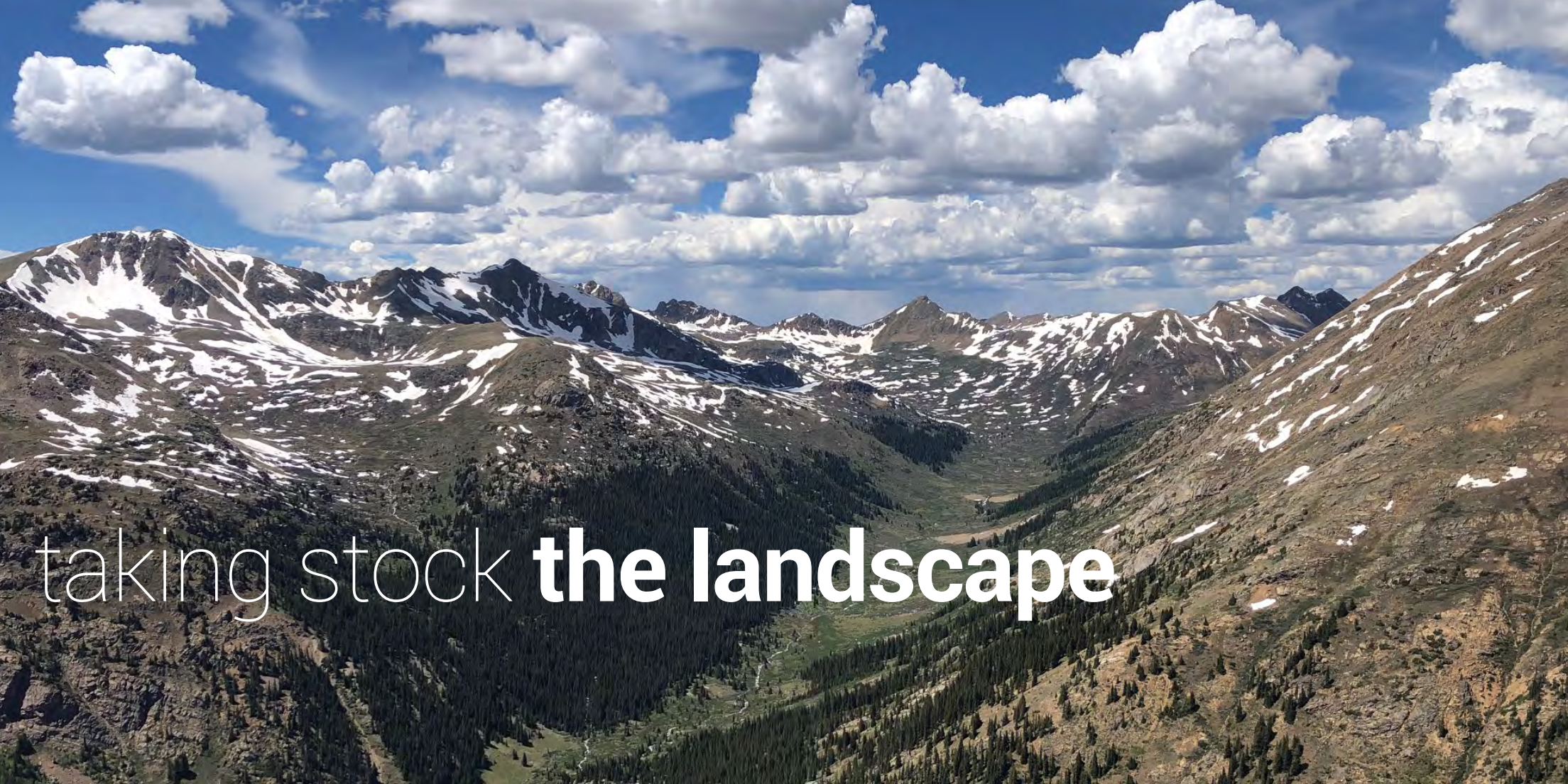
Taking stock of all we have and the challenges ahead has redoubled our determination to be worthy stewards of a place that gives us so much. We hope you will join us in that effort, and wish you the best in 2021.

THE INDEPENDENCE PASS FOUNDATION

*

- (1) trash-of-the-moment: face masks
- (2) least favorite trash: diapers
- (3) most perplexing: plastic flossers (??)





taking stock **the landscape**

Thousands of square miles of rolling tundra, jagged peaks, forests of aspen, pine, spruce and fir, hundreds of lakes and streams, and an extraordinary diversity of plants make up the Independence Pass landscape. Comprised of three wilderness areas receiving the highest degree of public lands protection, the Pass serves as a refuge for threatened species, a vital source of clean air and water, and a repository of nature's myriad wonders.

But there are threats to the landscape. They include natural and climate change events such as drought, fire, and beetle epidemics. In addition, human-caused impacts, including off-road motorized travel, development of mining inholdings, and careless campfires, threaten to degrade the landscape.





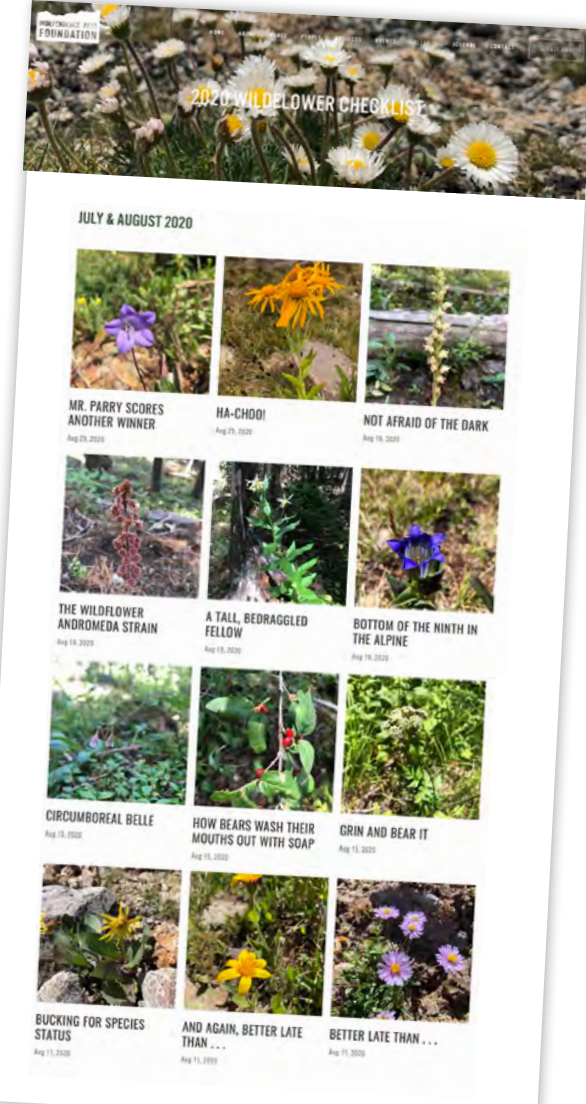
While the challenges are great, and Mother Nature is often unpredictable, the Independence Pass Foundation continues to effectively protect and restore the landscape of the Pass.

This fall, we conducted a major revegetation project near the summit in conjunction with CDOT's rockfall mitigation work. By carefully selecting the seeds of locally-found plants and using cutting-edge hydroseeding products and application techniques, we hope to see the currently barren, eroding slopes significantly greener and more stable in the next one to three years.

In addition, with the help of many students and volunteers, we planted hundreds of trees of varying species to foster a robust, resilient forest. We supported the Wilderness Land Trust in extinguishing the last remaining developable mining claims on Green Mountain in the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness.

Finally, in our ongoing effort to assess, document, and support the health of the Pass's flora, we created a real-time checklist of its wildflowers. We continued our multi-year monitoring of their timing of bloom and composition. We pulled countless oxeye daisies, yellow toadflax, and other invasive weeds that can crowd out native species. We also launched a photographic study of the Pass's wider biogeography.

Please visit our website — independencepass.org — to see all the checklists and studies referred to in this report.



taking stock **the trails**



and amenities

This year the coronavirus reminded us all how important getting outside in a natural environment is to our health and wellbeing. The Pass's trails, campsites, and day-use areas like the Grottos served as safe spaces for people to gather and reconnect in person. Here they could breathe clean air, move their bodies, and let their children run about.

For all these reasons, the record number of people who enjoyed the Pass in 2020 was heartening. But it was also concerning. More people meant more trash, more trampling and human waste on the tundra, more illegal camping and campfires, and inconsiderate driving and parking. These impacts demonstrated the need for clear signage, well-maintained trails, adequate bathroom facilities and trash receptacles, more education, and vigilant stewardship. The Independence Pass Foundation, in partnership with the US Forest Service, will continue to address all of these impacts in 2021.





taking stock **the wildlife**

This summer the Independence Pass Foundation successfully completed seven pika surveys as part of the Front Range Pika Project's White River National Forest survey. We designed and conducted the valley's first pollinator study, a component of the Roaring Fork Watershed Biodiversity Initiative. Working with avian experts Rebecca Weiss and Mark Fuller, we created a photographic Birds of Independence Pass checklist, which is free and available to all on our website.

The Independence Pass Foundation participates in these initiatives in order to provide useful data to researchers and land managers, to engage and educate our community in wildlife conservation and climate change impacts, and to share and celebrate the living beings that share the Pass with us.

INDEPENDENCE PASS FOUNDATION

ILLUSTRATED CHECKLIST



The Birds of Independence Pass



2020 Front Range Pika Project Public Lands Volunteer Manual

White River National Forest



Guide for Pollinator Observation on Independence Pass

This guide contains pictures of pollinators seen and/or thought to be present on Independence Pass. Some pictures of some bees and butterflies were taken by me, Isabel Hagø, during the summer of 2020, along with several pictures of butterflies that were gathered from the internet to provide an idea of what other pollinators look like that were not captured on camera. Following the pictures, there is a table I created compiled from "The Bumble Bees of Colorado: A Pictorial Identification and Information Guide" (Bowers, et al., 2017) of Bumble Bees found in Pitkin County which should be used to help simplify the identification process of Bumble Bees as much as possible. Finally, a list of pollinators identified at each of the five plots during 2020 can be found along with descriptions for locating each of the five plots.





taking stock **the people**

The ecological, historical, and aesthetic integrity of Independence Pass has depended for decades on people who've cared about it, beginning with its dedicated managers, the US Forest Service and CDOT. Wilderness champions had the foresight 50 years ago to protect the surrounding landscape for all time. The founders of the Independence Pass Foundation committed to leaving the Pass better than they found it 31 years ago, a commitment carried on by its board and staff today. Community members and stewards of all ages give their time, physical labor, and financial support to take care of it.

The good news: there is no sign that people's dedication to the Pass or spirit of volunteerism is waning. Indeed, in this year of the coronavirus, we saw more people participate in the most volunteer project days in the Independence Pass Foundation's history. Being part of something bigger, it seems, feels good.



“ You can make a lot of speeches, but the real thing is when you dig a hole, plant a tree, give it water and make it survive. That’s what makes the difference.”

WANGARI MAATHAI

2004 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER

annual income & expenses

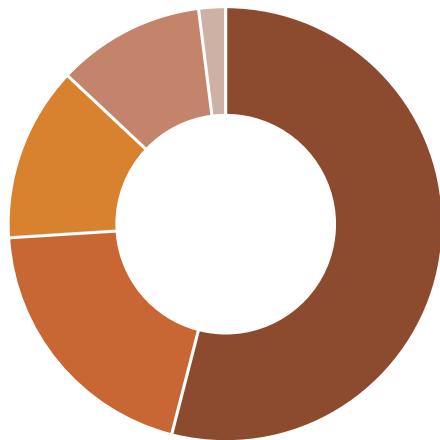
2019



income

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------|--|-----|---|
| Individuals | | \$149,500 | | 54% | ▶ |
| Event sponsors & participants | | \$40,200 | | 15% | ▶ |
| Governments | | \$40,000 | | 14% | ▶ |
| Foundations | | \$34,000 | | 12% | ▶ |
| Businesses, sales & miscellaneous | | \$13,300 | | 5% | ▶ |

total \$277,000



expenses

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|-----------|--|-----|---|
| Salaries & consultants | | \$121,800 | | 54% | ▶ |
| Education & outreach | | \$44,700 | | 20% | ▶ |
| Administration | | \$29,200 | | 13% | ▶ |
| Projects | | \$23,000 | | 11% | ▶ |
| Fundraising | | \$4,800 | | 2% | ▶ |

total \$223,500

donors

Thank you to all of our supporters who make our work possible

October 1, 2019

to

October 1, 2020

It is hugely important to the Independence Pass Foundation that we accurately acknowledge and express our appreciation to all of our donors. If we neglected to note your donation during this period, or noted it incorrectly in any manner, we apologize, and ask that you let us know so we can make it right. Thank you!

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“What does it mean, that the earth is so beautiful? And what shall I do about it?” MARY OLIVER