

2021 Annual Report





In the Yampa Valley, our landscapes are what draw many of us to our homes across Routt and Moffat Counties. Our neighbors are generations of ranchers, farmers and outdoor enthusiasts. These experiences generate a special tie to the land and, resultantly, foster a culture of stewardship and concern for our environment and natural resources. These histories also come with an intimate and personal knowledge of how the Yampa Valley is changing regionally — we see it in our rivers, our forests and our soils as the region faces increased drying, a local manifestation of the ongoing aridification of the west. Globally, 2021 produced the highest levels of greenhouse gas emissions in recorded history, according to the annual <u>State of the Climate</u> report. In order to meet the rising need for climate solutions, Yampa Valley Sustainability Council (YVSC) expanded our programming across five priority areas including Waste Diversion, Energy, Transportation, Resilient Land and Water and Community Engagement, all anchored in strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase resiliency to projected changes in the region.

These programs take people. YVSC invested in building staff capacity more in 2021 than any time in the organization's history. We grew our team from three full-time staff to eight full-time and one part-time seasonal staff members. We see great value in the new additions to our team, each of which bring unique expertise and perspectives that allow us to scale up our work and resulting impact. As 2021 marked a year of transition and growth as an organization, we began a five-year strategic planning process to ensure that YVSC programs and partnerships are built in ways that best address the sustainability challenges facing the Yampa Valley region. This process further highlighted the important role that partners and collaborators play in supporting the success of our new programming. Our increased capacity allowed us to grow our connections with standing and new partners across local government, academic institutions, industry and nonprofits. We also found new ways to engage with the community by introducing new volunteer and internship opportunities.

This year illustrated the value that is created through collaboration. We are grateful to the many partners, donors, sponsors and community members who supported our work in 2021 and look forward to strengthening the ways in which we work to advance climate solutions, together, in future years.

Sincerely,

SVSC Staff & Board of Directors

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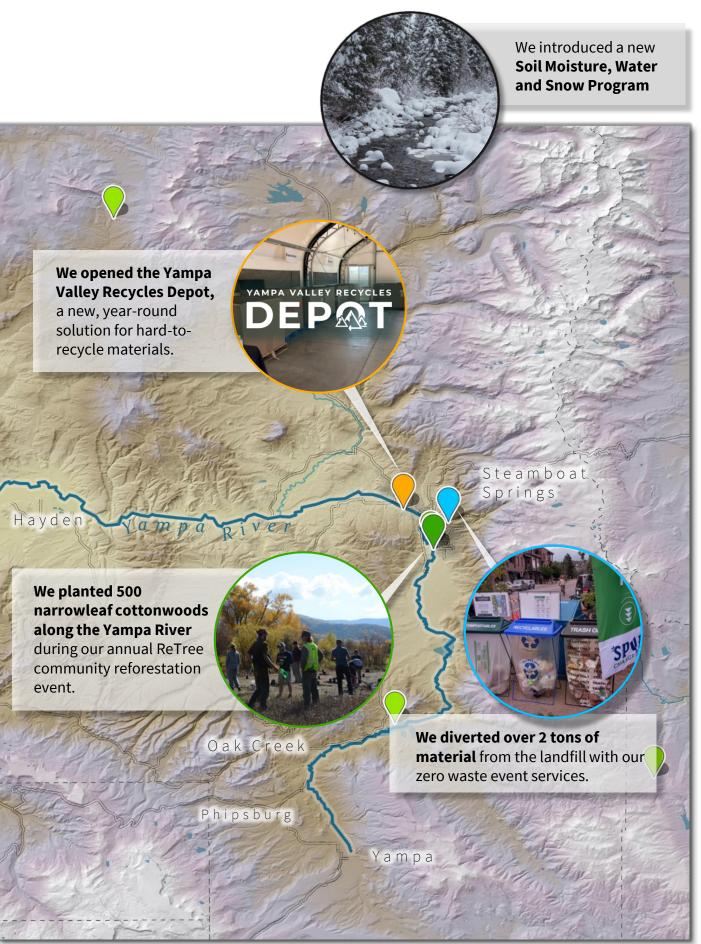
View our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan



2021 A YEAR IN REVIEW

Yampa Valley Sustainability Council grew more in 2021 than any other year. Our team of 3 grew to a staff of 9. This increase in staff capacity enabled us to scale up our impacts by increasing our organizational expertise, expanding our programs and building on new and existing partnerships.





Waste Diversion

45% waste recovery by 2036

In 2021, YVSC prioritized building partnerships with local governments to increase waste diversion. Together, we introduced new programs and outreach efforts that bridge gaps and continue to scale the implementation of the Routt County Waste Diversion Strategic Plan.

A new, year-round solution for hard to recycle materials

Hard-to-recycle materials are often banned from landfill disposal because they contain materials that are either toxic or otherwise hazardous. In early 2021, YVSC set a goal to provide year-round access to hard-to-recycle material diversion. This meant finding a physical location to expand on our biannual hard-to-recycle community drop-off events. In December of 2021, we opened the doors to the Yampa Valley Recycles (YRV) Depot, a pilot facility providing year-round access to recycling for hard-to-recycle materials. The YVR Depot pilot was launched in partnership with Routt County and the City of Steamboat Springs, and in its first month of operation collected over 1.4 tons of electronics, 223 light bulbs and 412 pounds of batteries for recycling.

Now providing zero waste services at events

As in-person events returned to the Yampa Valley, we saw these gatherings as an opportunity to reduce event impacts by diverting waste materials and, simultaneously, educating the public on proper material sorting and local recycling options. With support from the City of Steamboat Springs, YVSC performed a recycling study to strategize ways to reduce contamination of the respective waste, recycle

Electronics

and organics bins at supervised and unsupervised stations. Our study found that having a supervisor at the zero waste stations significantly decreased the amount of waste contamination throughout the bins. During the summer of 2021, YVSC provided Zero Waste Services at 29 events including the Steamboat Springs Farmers Markets, Steamboat Free Summer Concerts, among other community events, which cumulatively diverted over two tons of materials. Additionally, the use of our Water Monster dispensers helped avoid the equivalent of 11,300 single-use plastic water bottles at events throughout the year.



Intern Highlight: Zero waste at summer events

Sidney Barbier joined YVSC as a summer intern to help us implement zero waste event services at the Mainstreet Steamboat Farmers Market. For her project she helped gather data for our recycling study and worked to increase our diversion rates by updating bin signage, communicating with event vendors and creating a training video for zero waste station supervisors.

Waste diversion education

In 2021, YVSC scaled up waste diversion education and community outreach. We worked with local schools on waste diversion education by assisting Steamboat Springs Middle School gifted and talented staff with waste diversion project ideas and providing recycling information to Sleeping Giant School. We also hosted a Lunch and Learn discussion series for several businesses including Big Agnes, Northwest Colorado Health and Rotary Club of Steamboat Springs. Additionally, we trained over 60 zero waste volunteers, including six Steamboat Springs High School students and four interns.

Stantec storage unit paper recycling

YVSC assisted the local branch of Stantec in cleaning out two, several decades old storage units. Through this project they recycled over 6.25 tons of office paper which compiled to avoid over 39.13 metric tons of ${\rm CO}_2$ equivalent. Which is the equivalent of removing eight passenger vehicles from the road for a year! YVSC

coordinated with a hauler that could deliver the source separated paper to the Eagle County MRF to ensure recycling. They also upcycled many materials such as filing cabinets and paper clips.

Supporting recycling grants for Colorado

YVSC staff serve on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) Pollution Prevention Advisory Board Assistance Committee (PPABAC), which implements the Recycling Resources Economic Opportunity (RREO) grant program. In 2021, the PPABAC awarded two million in RREO grant funding to recycling projects throughout Colorado.

Ask the app!

We know that recycling rules can be confusing. To help community members stay informed on what and where you can recycle, we continue to host the Yampa Valley Recycles app as the go-to source for recycling questions. In 2021, the app had over 5,910 material views with over 1,824 first-time users.

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Check out the <u>Yampa</u> <u>Valley Recycles app</u> for the most up to date information on where to recycle your goods.

<u>Intern Highlight: Organic composting pilot program</u> <u>for restaurants</u>

In 2021, YVSC launched a pilot program for restaurant composting in the City of Steamboat Springs. With the generous support of the Sierra Club, we were able to hire an intern, Lillian Svoboda, to lead the early development of the program and identify candidates to trial the pilot program to be introduced in early 2022. Cruisers Sub Shop was confirmed to serve as our first pilot restaurant, in addition to The Drunken Onion, both located in the Wildhorse Marketplace.



Energy

Promoting energy savings and beneficial electrification

Emissions from stationary, commercial and residential buildings were the largest producers of greenhouse gas emissions in the 2018 Routt County Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Forecasted Emissions Report, making it a key priority to meet the region's decarbonization goals. For this reason, in 2021, YVSC introduced Energy as a standalone priority area. YVSC engaged with nonprofit, government and industry partners in scoping our work to advocate for well-planned, clean energy infrastructure and beneficial electrification.

Save on energy, save on costs with energy assessments

In partnership with Energy Smart Colorado, Yampa Valley Electric Association and the City of Steamboat Springs, we facilitate commercial and residential energy assessments. These assessments include tests that help identify effective ways to save on energy and improve building efficiency and comfort. We assist residents in taking advantage of rebates and incentives to make these improvements as affordable and cost effective as possible. In 2021, we supported the completion of 12 energy assessments.

Advocating for natural and built sustainability in new developments

The Brown Ranch is a 536-acre parcel of land, set for development on the west end of Steamboat Springs, that was purchased and donated to the Yampa Valley Housing Authority. YVSC is a member of the consulting team that is working closely with the Yampa Valley Housing Authority to advance the design process. Our staff have worked closely with the Infrastructure and Natural and Built Sustainability Focus teams to help conceptualize, coordinate and advance sustainable design in the parcel's new developments and related infrastructure. The Brown Ranch sets a precedent for building new developments in the Valley, by placing community values - affordability, sustainability, and preserving cultural heritage, natural resources, and open space - at its core.



Intern Highlight: Retrofitting Main Street Steamboat

Last summer, Peter Wharton's intern project focused on helping the City of Steamboat apply for a grant that supported commercial energy assessments and retrofits for Main Street Steamboat. Peter contacted over 20 businesses and set the stage for future business-related energy programs.



Transportation

Supporting the road to low carbon transportation

The transportation sector was the second largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in the 2018 Routt County Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Forecasted Emissions Report. That's why, in 2021, YVSC designated Transportation as a standalone priority area. We developed this priority to actively support the transition to low carbon transportation by serving as a local expert and educator on the beneficial electrification of our transportation network and why it's important. Throughout the year, YVSC worked closely with nonprofit, government and industry partners on regional planning for electric vehicles (EVs) and necessary electric vehicle service infrastructure (EVSI) required to support the transition.

EV Ride and Drive events

We know that a lot of questions come up when choosing an electric vehicle. That's why YVSC partnered with the City of Steamboat Springs on the EV Ride and Drive event series to help community members find an EV that best fits their lifestyle. At these events, community members have the opportunity to get behind the wheel of an EV and get their questions answered about all things EVs including vehicle makes, charging and ranges. 100 residents participated in the October Ride and Drive event in 2021.

EV Ambassadors: your local EV experts

Who better to advocate for Electric Vehicles than local EV owners themselves? In 2021, YVSC launched the EV Ambassador Program to support the City of Steamboat Springs EV Readiness Plan. This program helps connect potential buyers with local EV drivers to share their honest experience and expertise as an EV

owner in the Colorado Rockies. We are building a team of enthusiastic ambassadors who play a direct role in the advancement of beneficial electrification in our region's transportation network by providing their vehicles for display and answering questions at inperson and online expositions.

Annual CARbon Free Challenge

Each year, YVSC hosts the CARbon-Free Challenge, a month-long challenge that encourages community members to ditch their cars and opt for alternative, low carbon transportation methods. Participants record the distance that they walk, bike, e-bike, among other forms of transportation in an effort to encourage behavior change by emphasizing the environmental impacts of gas-driven transportation. In 2021, our 175 community participants logged over 11,800 miles, which is equivalent to avoiding 4.6 tons of carbon emissions and saving 474 gallons of gas, in what was a record for the Challenge thus far!





At just 15 years old, participant Wren Capra logged over 300 miles.



Wes Hunter logged over 700 miles in daily commutes from Stagecoach.

Image: CARbon-Free Challenge participant, Chelsea Johnson, commutes on her bike to drop off her compost material for bonus miles!



Resilient Land & Water

Investing in land-based climate solutions

Restoring natural ecosystems and managing water responsibly are some of the most important ways for Routt and Moffat County residents to reduce carbon emissions and build resilience to the impacts of climate change. Investing in the health of our natural systems and water supplies can help boost their resilience to and relieve stresses from current and projected changes in temperatures and precipitation. In 2021, YVSC launched a new Resilient Land and Water Priority Area, with programs that continue to advance natural climate solutions (NCS) and a new Soil Moisture, Water and Snow program. Through this new priority area, YVSC will play a key role in the implementation of land and water resilience strategies through community outreach and by serving as a leader, advisor and partner on local projects.

Keep the Yampa Cool

The Yampa River Forest Restoration Program (YRFRP) was collaboratively launched in 2019 by YVSC, Colorado State Forest Service and the City of Steamboat Springs. In 2021, YVSC completed the initial three-year program funded by the Colorado Water Conservation Board. During these three years, YVSC worked with partners and volunteers to plant over 1,300 narrowleaf cottonwood trees along the river in Steamboat Springs. These trees are estimated to sequester around 2,600 tons of carbon dioxide over the next 50 years. Over time, the new trees will help shade 3,300 linear feet of river and reduce water temperatures, which is the biggest water quality issue that the Yampa faces. The trees provide co-benefits, including improved wildlife habitat and bank stabilization. In 2021, YVSC completed a long-term plan and a mapping analysis to outline how to meet the goal of a 10% increase in riparian forest cover along the Upper Yampa, a key recommendation of the Yampa River Health Assessment and Streamflow Management Plan. YVSC also led efforts to obtain new funding to continue this project for the next three years, securing a grant from the new Community Funding Partnership of the Colorado River District for \$150,000.

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Check out our interactive story map to learn more about how the Yampa is warming and how trees can help.

ReTree: A community celebration of trees

In October of 2021, we celebrated the 12th anniversary of ReTree, an annual community reforestation event. Each year this event brings together community members of all ages to teach about the many benefits of planting trees and to share in the experience of stewardship. 215 volunteers joined us in planting 500 narrowleaf cottonwood saplings along the Yampa River in Steamboat Springs, across from Rotary Park. We also partnered with the US Forest Service to use our tree planting efforts to integrate youth into our reforestation projects. Over the course of the year, we engaged with 86 youth volunteers to plant and care for our trees. This included multiple workdays with the service-learning crews of the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps.



Image: YVSC Intern, Thomas Cooper, and a ReTree volunteer plant trees during our annual event



Yampa Valley Climate Crew

Key conservation partners have identified labor and funding shortages as a major obstacle in moving forward with local land resiliency projects, at the timescale that we need. In 2021, YVSC introduced the Yampa Valley Climate Crew (YVCC), a new volunteer program that connects motivated community members with restoration projects. The Climate Crew coordinates volunteer projects that are often hosted in collaboration with local environmental partners including the U.S. Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. During its first year, YVCC engaged 84 volunteers on eight projects that focused on reforestation, stewardship and habitat restoration. Our work with Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and other youth agencies energizes the next generation to be a part of the solution by educating them about climate action through land restoration and stewardship projects.

Fostering a Firewise community

Wildfires are increasing in size, severity and frequency across the western United States. YVSC serves on the Routt County Wildfire Mitigation Council to help raise awareness and develop collaborative projects to create a resilient, fire-adapted community. Our Resilient Land and Water Director sits on the board as a co-chair for education and outreach. YVSC also

helps plan and facilitate the annual Routt Wildfire Mitigation Conference. In 2021, the conference was held in a virtual format with 14 speakers reaching a broad audience of 300 local and statewide participants.

Wetland restoration: A critical climate solution

Wetlands and riparian areas provide a range of important benefits including improved water quality, water supplies and essential wildlife habitat. They also are some of the most productive landscapes to sequester carbon, an important function that can help naturally reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions. In 2021, YVSC initiated several efforts to help restore wetlands at scale. The Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund awarded a grant to YVSC to lead a conceptual design process for a major wetland restoration area at the confluence of the Yampa River and Walton Creek. This area has been a focus for potential restoration for many years and the conceptual design will help build support among stakeholders for an ambitious plan that could be one of the most significant wetland restoration efforts to date in the Yampa Valley, YVSC also initiated a new partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to help restore wet meadows in California Park, an important wildlife area and the headwaters of Elkhead Creek.

New Soil Moisture, Water & Snow Program

In Colorado, our water supplies are stressed. As we face a changing water supply with increasing demand, the impacts of climate change only further exacerbate this already limited resource. That's why, in 2021, YVSC introduced our new Soil Moisture, Water and Snow program. The goal of this program is to link education with action to support the community in scaling up water conservation across key sectors and increase adaptive capacity and resilience to a warmer and drier Yampa Valley. The program also seeks to increase access to and application of relevant data and research through collaborative partnerships with research institutions and organizations to provide data for land and water decision-makers and foster conservation actions across all stakeholder and user groups.

Water conservation and water equity

A critical step in adapting to and addressing our water challenges is to use less water and use what we have more efficiently. To help the community act on water conservation, we partnered with the City of Steamboat Springs, Mount Werner Water and Sanitation District and Craig-Scheckman Family Foundation in 2021 on water conservation and equity education and outreach for the 2020 Water Conservation Plan. This program aims to increase water conservation actions and successes across stakeholder and user groups to help prepare for an adaptable and water-conscious community. Our outreach plan includes in-person workshops and trainings, along with online and print education resources that teach water users about valuable water conservation principles and practices.

New data will lead to new insights on water availability in the Upper Yampa River Basin

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, both Routt and Moffat Counties experienced continuous "exceptional drought", during all of 2021 except for October, November and December. This is the most extreme category of drought, and these conditions were caused by low water levels, below-average snowpack, dry soils and record-breaking temperatures leading to lessened runoff and less predictable water availability. In recognition of the impact of these conditions on our local water resources and with the desire to understand these processes, the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes has partnered with YVSC and Colorado Mountain College to install a network of soil moisture and climate monitoring stations in the Upper Yampa River Basin with support and funding from the Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District.

The project will establish new long-term soil moisture measurements to provide data and scientific insight on the reduction of runoff by dry soils, provide a continuous record of changing landscape conditions with a changing climate and support runoff model and forecast improvements. This network is a key project under our new Soil Moisture, Water and Snow program. In 2021, YVSC helped build stakeholder relationships and played a key role in a mapping exercise to design the network in a way that best captures basin-wide variability. The first station is set for installation in the fall of 2022.



Intern Highlight: Collaborative research internship

2021 was our second year hosting a summer research intern in partnership with the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes (CW3E) and Colorado Mountain College (CMC). In 2021, the Aspen Global Change Institute (AGCI) joined this partnered internship and hosted an intern based in the Roaring Fork Valley. Our Yampa Valley intern, Rachel Santi, led an independent research project that explored the variability of soil moisture across an elevation gradient and between different vegetation types. This work has helped inform the development of our new soil moisture monitoring network.

Yampa Basin Rendezvous

In September 2021, we co-hosted the fourth annual Yampa Basin Rendezvous, A Dialogue on Drought, Water Availability and Conservation, alongside the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes, Friends of the Yampa, Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District, Colorado Mountain College and Steamboat Ski and Resort Corporation. This year's speaker lineup included 17 weather and water experts including Marty Ralph (Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes), Josh German (Bureau of Reclamation) and Megan Holcomb (Colorado Water Conservation Board, State of Colorado) along with others who led over 300 attendees through an exploration of the impacts of drought in the Yampa River basin, the science behind projected changes in water availability and its effects on resource management and water conservation.

Community Engagement

Uniting the community around climate solutions

YVSC is a trusted community resource for understanding how climate change is influencing our region. We take it as our goal to empower individuals, governments, businesses and organizations to connect their knowledge with actions that can help adapt and mitigate harmful impacts of climate change. In 2021, we focused on increasing our presence in the community through partnership, collaboration and new outreach efforts to expand our reach.

Fostering the next generation of climate leaders with the new YVSC Internship Program

In 2021, YVSC formalized the YVSC Internship Program after recognizing that there was a need to support local students and young professionals in gaining professional development for sustainability and climate career pathways. Using a project-based approach, participants are assigned a staff mentor who helps them expand on or develop a meaningful environmental project within our community. Throughout our first summer and fall terms, we hosted six interns ranging from local high school students, to undergraduates and recent college graduates. Additionally, we hosted six interns earlier in the year before the program was formally introduced.

Increasing community youth engagement with climate action

YVSC sees great value in engaging with local youth, so they feel educated, empowered and emboldened when it comes to climate challenges. During the summer of 2021, YVSC intern Gretchen Jacobs, helped launch and formalize this engagement by developing the Rising Leaders in Sustainability initiative, a program that connects young people with opportunities to get involved with local climate action. This includes our monthly, youth-focused Next Generation Newsletter, an annual Careers and Leadership in Sustainability Event, as well as other youth focused events throughout the year. In November, intern Thomas Cooper, hosted a documentary screening and panel discussion of a Protect Our Winters (POW) documentary, Purple Mountains. We had over 50 attendees watch and join in discussion around the film.

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Sign up for our <u>Next</u>
<u>Generation Newsletter</u> for sustainability tips, ways to get involved and educational resources!





Monthly Community Meetings

In 2021, we continued to convene our monthly YVSC Community Meetings. These meetings bring together community partners and members to discuss local sustainability topics and projects. Quarterly, our meetings focus on partner updates where YVSC and community partners provide updates on their sustainability and climate-related programs, events and engagement opportunities. Other meeting topics vary by month to highlight and discuss relevant, community-centric sustainability topics and projects. In 2021, we hosted our meetings virtually, which helped make it successful in reaching a variety of attendees, totaling to over 450 attendees throughout the year.

Sustainability Speaker Series

In 2021, YVSC, Colorado Mountain College and Bud Werner Memorial Library partnered up to present the Sustainability Speaker Series. This ongoing series seeks to connect our community with renowned experts to share their timely insights, research and actions that inform and inspire how we build our sustainable Yampa Valley futures. Our first event featured Elizabeth Parks, Ph.D., and her book *The Ethics of Listening: Creating Space for Sustainable Dialogue*.

A path towards regional climate education for K-12 students

Lyra Colorado approached YVSC to help convene a northern Colorado branch of the emergent Climatarium initiative. This program is a regional branch of a statewide education network meant to support locally-informed K-12 climate education, experiential learning opportunities and career pathways. Through this initiative we are forging regional connections between education and industry partners to empower youth to consider how climate action can play a role in emerging career pathways throughout Routt and Moffat Counties.

Volunteer opportunities

Volunteerism provides opportunities for community members to directly engage with and push forward local sustainability and climate related projects. In 2021, we engaged over 320 community volunteers through stewardship via our annual ReTree planting event and other projects hosted by our emergent Yampa Valley Climate Crew. Additionally, volunteers supervised bins to support YVSC's zero waste event services throughout the summer and fall. We want to thank the many volunteers who donated their time and energy to support our work here in the Yampa Valley community.



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Interns

Sidney Barbier Gretchen Jacobs Lillian Svoboda

Thomas Cooper Darby Martinez Luke Wasem

Madeline Craig-Scheckman Abby Merage Peter Wharton

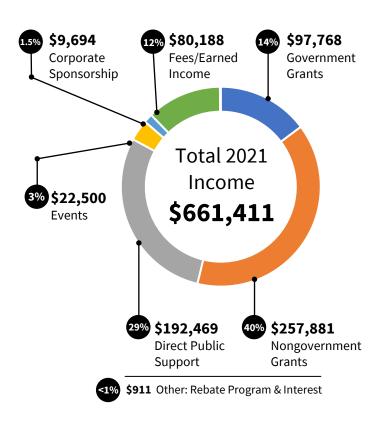
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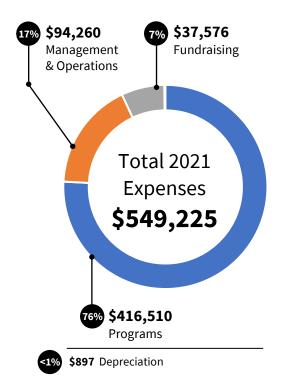
New growth to staff

Financials



Income

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68 \$103,786
881 \$154,628
469 \$65,804
00 \$17,000
4 \$38,550
88 \$16,502
\$1,792
\$26,400
998 \$424,462



Expenses

	2021	2020
Programs	\$416,510	\$214,276
Management & Operations	\$94,260	\$49,958
Fundraising	\$37,576	\$17,725
Depreciation	\$879	\$1,231
Total Expenses	\$549,225	\$283,190





Program Partners

Thank you for your thoughtful collaboration



Alpine Bank Aspen Global Change Institute Big Agnes Bud Werner Memorial Library Center for Western Weather & Water Extremes City of Steamboat Springs Clean Energy Economy for the Region (CLEER) Colorado Mountain College Colorado Parks & Wildlife Colorado State Forest Service CSU Extension, Routt County Community Agriculture Alliance Energy Outreach Colorado **Energy Smart Colorado** Fridays for Future Friends of the Yampa Glas Deffryn Ranch **Integrated Community** Main Street Steamboat Mount Werner Water & Sanitation District Northern Colorado Clean Cities Northwest Colorado Council of Governments Northwest Colorado Health Partners in Routt County Reaching Everyone Preventing Suicide Rocky Mountain Youth Corps **Routt County** Sierra Club Solar United Neighbors South Routt Recreation Association Stantec

Steamboat Creates

Steamboat Free Summer Concerts Steamboat Springs School District Steamboat Springs Ski & Resort Corporation Steamboat Springs Board of Realtors Steamboat Springs Chamber Steamboat Springs Economic Development Council Tour De Steamboat **Trout Unlimited** Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District **US Forest Service** Walking Mountains Yampa River Fund Yampa Valley Electric Association Yampatika Yampa/White/Green Basin Roundtable

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Three Moon Fund

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