



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

HEALTHY RIVERS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES



Michael Hagadorn



A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear friends,

We can achieve big things when we start with the problems we can solve locally.

That belief guided Forever Our Rivers throughout 2025 as we worked alongside partners, communities and people like you to protect the rivers and streams that sustain life across the Four Corners region.

This annual report is an opportunity to reflect on what we accomplished together. Inside, you'll find stories of restoration, education and partnership—work made possible by people who understand that healthy rivers support wildlife, strengthen communities and sustain the landscapes and ways of life that make the Southwest unique.

Over the past year, we continued investing in science-based conservation and community-centered action. Together with local partners, restoration efforts across the region improved wildlife habitat, strengthened watersheds and expanded opportunities for people to connect with the outdoors.

From icy headwaters in Colorado to ephemeral desert streams in New Mexico, Utah and Arizona, we supported projects that restore natural processes, reduce the impacts of wildfire, flooding and erosion and build more resilient watersheds.

We helped kids and adults spend more time in nature, learning about healthy ecosystems and discovering that the value of these waterways extends far beyond the fresh water flowing through them. We also continued making progress on Little Salt, an educational film that explores the people and communities whose lives depend on the Colorado River as the 1922 Colorado River Compact, the agreement that governs water across the basin, is renegotiated in 2026.

As you read this report, I hope you see both the urgency of the challenges facing our rivers and the promise of what we can accomplish together. Thank you for believing in this work and for helping shape a more resilient future for the rivers, communities and landscapes we all depend on.

Sincerely,



Chip Norton,
Board Chair



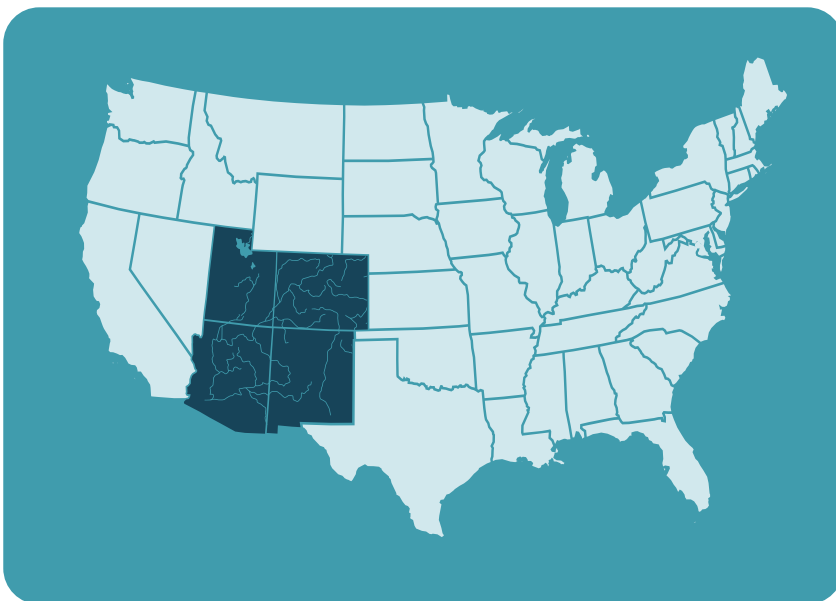
Ann Johnston,
Executive Director

ABOUT FOREVER OUR RIVERS

MISSION

Our mission is to improve the health and vitality of rivers to ensure a future where water and its connected communities thrive.

Forever Our Rivers works to ensure reliable supplies of clean water, protect wildlife habitat around and within rivers, lakes and streams, and support farmers and ranchers who grow local food and support our way of life in the Southwest. We are supported by a dedicated coalition of individuals, values-aligned businesses and foundations.



VISION

We envision a future where rivers and communities provide benefits to each other so that people, plants and animals thrive.

The health of our communities is directly tied to the state of our rivers and streams that flow through them. We work toward a future where thriving communities and healthy rivers go hand in hand. Together, we will navigate the currents of change, channeling our resources, energy and passion into projects that safeguard our rivers and nurture our communities.

Collaborating with a diverse network of partners, we accomplish our mission by acquiring private and public funding, collecting and sharing data, and awarding funds through a competitive grants program.

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Staff

Ann Johnston, Executive Director
Danielle Beamer, Grant Program Lead



To support river conservation, scan the QR, or visit
ForeverOurRivers.org/donate



Our programs work with communities to bring conservation efforts to life.

Healthy Rivers, Vibrant Lives

Healthy rivers support thriving communities. Through education, outreach and community partnerships, this program connects people with the knowledge and resources needed to support local conservation efforts.



A Resilient Colorado River

Healthy rivers begin upstream. This program restores the natural processes that keep rivers and streams healthy across the Colorado River Basin. Through nature-based restoration, we're improving wildlife habitat, reducing wildfire risk and building more resilient watersheds.



Fiscal Sponsor: Little Salt Film

Little Salt brings the story of the Colorado River Basin to life. The film explores the challenges and connections that unite farmers, ranchers, Tribal communities, recreationists, conservationists, and growing cities, all of whom depend on this remarkable river system.



SUCCESS STORIES



Restoring Waterways with Nature-Based Restoration

Three years after the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire, the largest wildfire in New Mexico's history, recovery continues across Mora County. While the fire left lasting scars on the landscape, it also brought together conservationists and community members with a shared commitment to restore the watersheds they call home.

With support from Forever Our Rivers, Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance turned that commitment into action through nature-based restoration. By working with the landscape rather than against it, restoration crews installed nearly 60 rock and log structures designed to mimic natural river debris. These structures slow stormwater runoff, reduce erosion, capture sediment and create the conditions for native vegetation to return and thrive.

Over the past year, the five-person restoration crew completed two projects on private properties, restoring approximately one mile of stream. As

grasses, shrubs and trees take root, they help stabilize streambanks, improve wildlife habitat and strengthen the watershed's ability to withstand future challenges like floods, drought and wildfire.

The impact extends well beyond the project sites. Demonstration projects have sparked conversations with neighboring landowners and inspired growing interest in future restoration efforts throughout Mora County. At the same time, Hermit's Peak continues building relationships with local partners, laying the foundation for long-term, community-led watershed stewardship.

Recovery is rarely dramatic. More often, it's found in quieter moments: a stream slowing after a storm, native plants returning to the banks or neighbors working together to care for the places they love. By investing in local partners like Hermit's Peak, we help ensure projects like this have the resources they need to make a difference for our rivers and streams.

PROJECT IMPACT

Approximately **1 mile** of stream restored
Nearly **60 rock and log structures** installed
2 landowners directly served

15 community members engaged through outreach

Growing interest from neighboring landowners inspired by demonstration projects

THE STATS



3,394 ACRES

of riparian habitat restored
and protected



\$300k +

conservation impact this
year



977 YOUTH

experienced educational
river trips



The Tree that Changed the Escalante River

In southern Utah, the Escalante River brings life to one of the most rugged landscapes in the American Southwest. Cottonwoods and willows line its banks, providing habitat for wildlife and creating a ribbon of green through the desert.

In the 1950s, Russian olive trees were planted throughout the area for what seemed like practical purposes at the time: to limit erosion and provide windbreaks for settlers and farmers. But the hardy trees spread beyond where they were originally planted and began taking root throughout the watershed.

For decades, invasive Russian olive trees threatened the balance of the river. They choked out native vegetation, leading to severe channel narrowing, erosion and degradation of terrestrial and aquatic habitats, all of which disrupted the natural processes that keep rivers healthy.

With support from Forever Our Rivers, Grand Staircase Escalante Partners was able to continue one of the largest and most successful riparian restoration efforts

in the Southwest, bringing together a wide range of landowners and stakeholders, including federal and state agencies, nonprofit organizations, local businesses and private landowners, around a shared purpose—to restore the natural balance humans had disrupted.

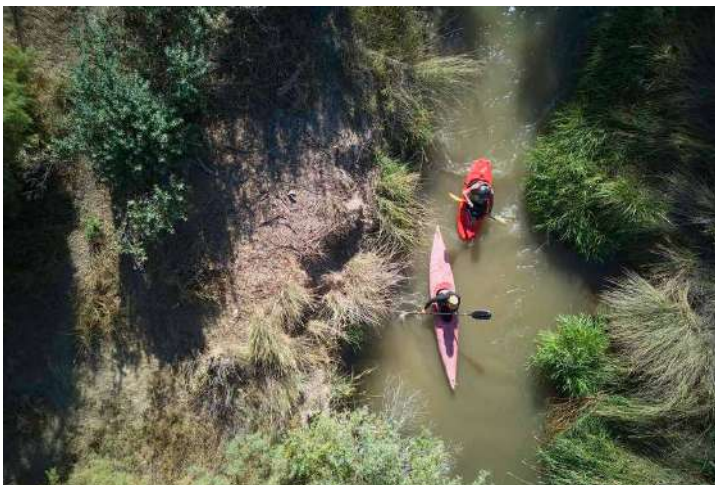
Over the past year, restoration crews treated more than 1,400 acres of Russian olive regrowth, preventing invasive trees from reclaiming restored habitat. The team also monitored 19 restoration sites, collecting valuable data that helps scientists and land managers understand how native plants and river systems are recovering over time.

Restoration doesn't end with removal, it takes monitoring teams and a community committed to ensuring these efforts continue moving forward. As cottonwoods and willows return, they provide food and shelter for wildlife, stabilize streambanks and help restore the river's natural flow. Long-term monitoring helps ensure today's restoration efforts continue to benefit the watershed for years to come.

PROJECT IMPACT

Treated **1,400+** acres of invasive Russian olive
Monitored **19 restoration sites** across the watershed

Supported long-term stewardship through partnership and science-based monitoring
Protected and restored habitat for native wildlife



Telling the Story of the Colorado Basin

Every river has a story. The Colorado River's is one of connection.

Its waters support wildlife, sustain farms and ranches, provide drinking water for millions of people and create places where communities gather, work and explore. Yet the challenges facing the Colorado River Basin are often complex, making it difficult for people to understand how deeply connected we all are to its future.

That's the story *Little Salt* sets out to tell.

Forever Our Rivers helps bring this feature-length documentary to life. What began as a journey to follow a small stream near Fruita, Colorado, evolved into a much larger exploration of the Colorado River Basin and the people whose lives are shaped by it. Along the way, the filmmakers meet farmers, ranchers,

Tribal communities, recreationists, conservationists, scientists and water managers, each offering a unique perspective on the river they depend on.

Rather than searching for simple answers, *Little Salt* invites viewers to ask thoughtful questions. Where does our water come from? Who depends on it? And what does it take to protect a river that supports both people and wildlife across the arid West?

At Forever Our Rivers, we believe conservation begins with understanding. Restoration projects improve rivers on the ground, but stories have the power to connect people to places they may never visit and challenges they may never experience firsthand. By supporting *Little Salt*, we're helping inspire meaningful conversations about the future of the Colorado River Basin and the shared responsibility of protecting one of the West's most important river systems.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about this amazing project, visit foreverourrivers.org/little-salt-film or littlesalt.org



Opening the River to the Next Generation

Not every child grows up with the opportunity to explore the rivers in their own backyard.

For many students in Western Colorado, barriers like transportation, equipment and cost make outdoor experiences difficult to access. Yet these rivers are more than places to recreate; they provide wildlife habitat, support local communities and shape the landscapes they call home.

With support from Forever Our Rivers, Colorado Canyons Association welcomed 62 students from the Montrose County School District Engagement Center, Partners of Delta, Montrose and Ouray Counties, Colorado Mesa University Upward Bound and the Hispanic Affairs Project for guided educational floats on the Gunnison River.

For many participants, it was a day of firsts. Their first time in a raft. Their first time spotting a bald eagle soar-

ing overhead. Their first opportunity to experience the Gunnison River not just as a place on a map, but as a living ecosystem worth understanding and protecting.

Along the way, students learned how healthy rivers support wildlife, agriculture, recreation and local communities. They tested water quality, explored riparian habitats and discovered how rivers shape life across the Western Slope.

The impact extended well beyond a day on the water. After participating, 94% of students reported feeling a stronger connection to nature, 90% felt a greater sense of belonging in outdoor spaces and 98% said they intended to become stewards of public lands.

By investing in programs like these, we are helping remove barriers to the outdoors while inspiring the next generation of conservationists, scientists and community leaders.

PROJECT IMPACT

62 students experienced the Gunnison River through guided educational floats

672 student contact hours

94% reported a stronger connection to nature

90% felt a greater sense of belonging in outdoor spaces

98% expressed an intent to become stewards of public lands

MILESTONES

2018

Increased native cottonwood and willow growth by 70% across the Dolores, Escalante, Verde and Gila rivers in Colorado, Utah and Arizona.



2022

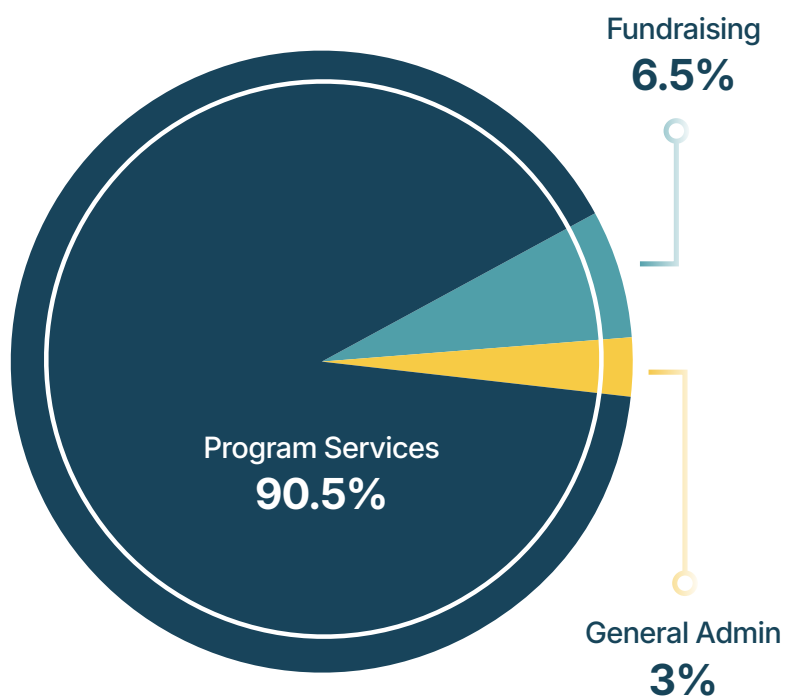
Built beaver dam analogs to reconnect Trail Creek headwaters with their floodplain, slow water and restore critical beaver habitat.

2024

Connected 943 kids with rivers through hands-on river trips and ecosystem education.



FINANCIALS



EXPENSES

Program Services	\$22,630
Admin & General	\$762
Fundraising	\$1,623
Total Expenses.....	\$25,025
Ending net assets.....	\$23,545

REVENUE

Contributions.....	\$48,570
Royalties	\$0
Investment Income	\$0
Other Income	\$0
Total Income	\$48,570

Dear Friends of the Foundation,

We are excited to share an important milestone in our organizational evolution. Forever Our Rivers Foundation (a private foundation) has officially transitioned its stewardship programs to Forever Our Rivers, a publicly supported 501(c)(3) charity with a complementary mission and an independent board of directors.

Forever Our Rivers has a strong track record of improving river health and actively invites broad and diverse public participation that results in an inclusive base of support.

For you as a donor, this transition unlocks enhanced federal tax-deductible limits for your generous gifts, ensuring an even greater return on your investment in our shared commitment to build more resilient rivers and streams.

Forever Our Rivers is also an experienced fiscal sponsor, allowing passionate leaders to spend less time on paperwork and more time helping communities. Thank you for partnering with us in this exciting new chapter.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTORS, SPONSORS AND PARTNERS.

Thank you for supporting river conservation in the Southwest. Your support is vital to ensuring our rivers and streams remain healthy, flowing and conserved for generations to come.

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We work hard to ensure the accuracy of this donor list. If your name has been misspelled, omitted, or listed incorrectly, please accept our sincere apologies and notify us at info@foreverourrivers.org or call 970-275-9712.

NONPROFIT PARTNERS

Grand Staircase Escalante
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Friends of the Verde River

Rivers Edge West

Hermit's Peak Watershed
Alliance

Little Salt Productions

American Whitewater

River Sisters Congresso

Rio Grande Return

Colorado Canyons Association

Friends of Youth and Nature

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Colorado West Land Trust

San Juan Citizens Alliance

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Casting for Recovery

Four Corners Water Center

Institute for EnviroSolutions

Purgatoire Watershed
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Roaring Fork Conservancy

River Science





Forever Our Rivers is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization serving Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. Our tax identification number is 99-1563135.



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