



Summer | 2025

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QUARTERLY

Breaking Barriers: 2025 Accessibility Projects

By Gabby Sherwood and Conservancy Staff

Rocky Mountain Conservancy is committed to removing barriers for people to enjoy the park's and Conservancy's facilities, programs, and services. Each year, the Conservancy supports accessibility projects to research, create, and promote accessible experiences. We are excited to share a few of the accessibility projects our donors are making possible in 2025. Each project continues our long-standing commitment to creating ways for all people to experience the wonders of our park.

Accessible Field Institute Bus

The Conservancy's Field Institute uses buses to transport participants into the park to learn about Rocky's flora, fauna, history, and geology. We've long dreamed of having a wheelchair accessible bus for our Field Institute, and this winter, the R.C. Kemper Charitable Trust and Foundation made that dream a reality. This season, we have expanded our educational access to offer courses to individuals with mobility challenges who have previously been unable to take full advantage of education programs.

The accessible bus includes two wheelchair spaces, a wheelchair lift, and 12 standard seats for a total capacity of 15 (including one seat for the driver). This Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant vehicle ensures that participants of varying abilities can travel safely and comfortably while exploring and learning about the



Rocky Mountain Conservancy's new, wheelchair accessible bus.

park's diverse ecosystems. We're excited to welcome even more people to our programs!

Rocky Mountain National Park Accessibility Guide

The path to creating a comprehensive accessibility guide to Rocky has been in the making for years. Prior to 2025, the Conservancy supported this plan by funding the cost of accessibility evaluations, planning, and equipment. Rocky Mountain National Park's accessibility guide will provide individuals of varying abilities a "know before you go" guide to Rocky. The guide will include detailed location information such as distances, surfaces, and amenities that can be found across Rocky, with a focus on information that would be helpful for people with disabilities. A variety of park experiences will be discussed in the guide, including trails, scenic overlooks,

Continued on page 14

Field Institute participants hike
on the Cub Lake Trail in Rocky
Mountain National Park.



A Message from our Executive Director



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Dear Friends,

Here at Rocky Mountain Conservancy, we celebrated our 94th birthday on July 8th. Since 1931, the Conservancy has remained committed to its mission, to promote stewardship of Rocky Mountain National Park and similar lands through education and philanthropy. Thanks to our 2,884 active members, 9,704 active donors, 21,702 license plate holders, and our past and present board members, the Conservancy has committed over 6 million dollars in support to Rocky across 80 projects in 2025. Our team has also grown to 32 full-time year-round staff members, 6 part-time year-round staff members, and an additional 129 seasonal staff members, who have made the following programs and projects possible.

In its 22nd year of operation, the Conservancy's Conservation Corps program continues to provide life-changing summers in the park for young adults. Each year, crew members spend their summer constructing and maintaining trails, removing invasive vegetation, and restoring historic buildings. Our 2025 Conservation Corps crews are wrapping up their seasons. It has been a joy to have them, and we know they will each go on to do great work.

The Field Institute has been providing unforgettable learning experiences in the Rocky Mountains for 63 years. The education department has coordinated numerous courses which have attracted participants from across the country to learn from our talented instructors about Rocky's flora and fauna, history, geology, and resources.

And we wouldn't be where we are now without our retail operations. Since our first printed publication in 1932, purchases from our Nature Stores have supported the Conservancy's mission. Across Colorado and Wyoming, we have 17 retail locations staffed by incredible clerks, our agency partners, and volunteers.

Over the last 94 years, we've walked through unprecedented and challenging times. The Big Thompson Canyon flood in 1976, the 2013 flood, the 2020 Cameron Peak Fire and the East Troublesome Fire, and the Covid-19 pandemic are just a few major events our community has persisted through. We've relied on our donors and members through these times and need their support now more than ever! I hope you are enjoying some adventures in the park this year or taking the time to reflect on your memories of the park, whether you are new to learning about our organization, or if you've been part of our journey for generations.

Warmly,



Estee Rivera Murdock

Estee Rivera Murdock
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ask the Conservancy

Have a question? Email Communications@RMConservancy.org or write: Ask the Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, PO Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517.

Shop Conservancy Nature Stores



The rear parking lot of Beaver Meadows Visitor Center in 1968.

What is the architectural inspiration and history of the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center?

The Beaver Meadows Visitor Center (BMVC), which opened in 1967, is a National Historic Landmark and an artifact of bold, modern, mid-century architecture.

Shortly after World War II ended, a national sense of optimism trended across the United States. With the rise of automobile use and a booming economy, Americans were eager to go on road trips and explore their national parks. However, most parks at this time lacked visitor centers and capacity for the growing crowds. To improve park infrastructure, the NPS launched an initiative called Mission 66 in 1956. A new type of centralized facility, called a visitor center, was coined. 100 park visitor centers were built; five of those, including the BMVC, became internationally known for their architecture. Mission 66 ushered in a new era of bold, modern architecture, and increased visitation of national parks.

Adamant on using natural materials when designing the BMVC, E. Thomas Casey, a structural engineer, followed the principles of Organic Architecture developed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Pieces of sandstone with lichen were quarried from Lyons, CO, and Casey used Cor-ten steel to allow the structure to weather in place. "This is the way [that] architecture ought to be. You know, that what you see is what you get," Casey told the National Park Service (NPS). Casey aimed at showing habituation between the natural world and humans by using nature motifs and mirroring effects, breaking the concept of the box, and allowing natural light to flood the indoor space.

Next time you are at the BMVC, consider how the natural light illuminates the main room at different times of day, how the steel beams rise alongside the ponderosa pine, and how the designs on the exterior mirror the triangular shape of mountain peaks. Casey's hope was that this space would be for the community and remind each of us that we exist with nature, not outside of it.

Gabby Sherwood, Communications Associate



RMNP MAP TURQUOISE TOTE BAG

Show your love of Rocky wherever you go with this conversation starter tote bag! This tote bag is a striking turquoise color with a white map design on both sides and thick straps, making it a durable and reusable grocery bag.

Price: \$22.99 **Member Price: \$19.54**



EARTH BEAR WATER BOTTLE

Enjoy your favorite beverage in this cream-colored 32oz water bottle from MiiR with a unique abstract bear design. Crafted from durable stainless steel, it features double-wall vacuum insulation to keep beverages hot or cold for hours.

Price: \$54.99 **Member Price: \$46.74**



HAT- RMNP EMBROIDERED RAM

This blue and tan hat features an embroidered mountain scene within a bighorn sheep ram with a "Rocky Mountain National Park" leather patch on the side.

Price: \$28.99 **Member Price: \$24.64**



THE ART OF THE NATIONAL PARKS UNDATED PLANNER

Revel in the beauty of America's national parks all year long with this beautiful 12-month undated planner. Each month features unique artwork of a different national park as well as space to plan your monthly priorities

and record your weekly activities, intentions, habits, and reflections. Price: \$24.99 **Member Price: \$21.24**



ANIMAL ICONS BLUE T-SHIRT

This short-sleeve button up combines comfort, style, and a love of Rocky to create a unique addition to your outdoor wardrobe or a perfect gift for a fellow Rocky enthusiast. Popping against the navy-blue background is a repeating design of elk, bear, bighorn

rams, and mountains in white and orange ink. Celebrate Rocky Mountain National Park in a stylish and unique way. Price: \$62.00 **Member Price: \$52.70**

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www.RMConservancy.org/shop
970-586-0121

Field Institute instructor, Leanne Benton (third left), identifies mountain irises during the 2025 early wildflower course in Rocky.



By
Gabby Sherwood,
Communications
Associate

"We wanted to focus on creating the best possible experience for both participants and instructors."

— Danielle Wolf,
Education Manager

2025 Summer Education Fellow Maverick Bartholomew (left) and Education Coordinator Katie Colson (right).



A Trip Down Memory Lane: The Field Institute Over the Years

For the past 63 years, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Field Institute program has offered field-based, hands-on courses taught by talented instructors focused on exposing individuals to the wonders of Rocky Mountain National Park.

When the education team began revising the Field Institute program after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, they looked to past participants and instructors for feedback. "We wanted to focus on creating the best possible experience for both participants and instructors," said Danielle Wolf, Education Manager. "Since our staff was new, hearing directly from past participants was the best way to get a sense of what people had liked and where we could improve."

One of the first changes was a new participant registration process, which used to be completed over the phone. When Wolf joined the Conservancy in 2022, she researched online registration platforms that would make signing up simpler and improve communication with participants. Now, the Eventbrite platform makes registration quick and easy for both staff and participants.

Prior to the pandemic, participants drove their personal vehicles into the park and to various locations throughout their course. Today, the

Conservancy picks up participants and instructors in an accessible location with ample parking, and the group travels together throughout the entire course.

"Both participants and instructors have told us that this is a very positive change," said Wolf. "Participants get time to chat informally with each other and the instructor between field locations, and no one has to worry about carpooling or finding parking."

This also means that wilderness first aid-trained Conservancy staff are present for the entirety of the course and offer valuable insights specific to Rocky, allowing instructors to focus on teaching their course instead of worrying about logistics.

When reinvigorating the Field Institute programs, which include both field courses and scenic ecology bus tours, the Field Institute's fleet of vehicles included two Ford E350 tour buses (from 2011 and 2013) and a 2012 2WD Chevy Express 15-passenger van. After creating a vehicle replacement plan in 2022, the Conservancy began updating its fleet in 2023. The primary tour bus was replaced first, followed by a wheelchair accessible tour bus and an all-wheel drive van.

If you're interested in joining a field institute course or tour, visit RMConservancy.org/events.

2025 Summer Education Fellows

By Gabby Sherwood,
Communications Associate



Maverick Bartholomew observes blue mist penstemon during the 2025 Early Wildflower Field Institute course.

During the busiest time of the year, the Conservancy education team is glad to be joined by two Education Fellows for the 2025 summer season – Maverick Bartholomew and Anna Weinstein.

Bartholomew is from San Jose, California and graduated from the University of Denver with a Bachelor of Science in Ecology and Psychology in 2024. Prior to his fellowship, he had visited Rocky a few times with his family and has enjoyed recreating in other various national parks such as Arches, Canyonlands, and Glacier.

During his job hunt for nonprofit positions, Bartholomew was immediately drawn to the Conservancy's education fellowship. The opportunity to obtain a wide variety of experiences and create personal projects was appealing to Bartholomew, who was interested in learning how a nonprofit operates and supports a national park. "I get to tailor my fellowship experience to exactly what I want to get out of it," said Bartholomew.

In perfect timing for a busy summer, one of Bartholomew's main responsibilities has been the day-to-day facilitation of the Field Institute courses. He coordinates with instructors to ensure they have

the support they need and drives participants and instructors around the park, while making sure everyone is safe. Bartholomew has written grant applications and developed and hosted an educational program about birding for the Conservation Corps. He also presents various ecological topics while tabling at the Estes Park Visitor Center. "It's really fun to push myself to further my own knowledge and then be able to share it with other people," said Bartholomew.

Bartholomew's interest in nonprofit work sparked during his time with the Montana Conservation Corps in 2024. As a crew member on a water restoration team, Bartholomew built structures to reduce and prevent erosion in the eastern plains of Montana. "I think that really pulled me to stay in nonprofit and environmental education work," said Bartholomew. "I liked the community that these kinds of jobs attract." Bartholomew hopes to remain in the nonprofit sector after his fellowship, "potentially working for a conservation corps doing program coordination and making sure different projects run smoothly," said Bartholomew.

Bartholomew's fellowship is made possible by the Olson Family.

Born and raised in the Denver area, Anna Weinstein is no stranger to the diverse landscapes Colorado has to offer. She grew up backpacking around Colorado including the Lost Creek Wilderness area and National Forests. She graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) with a Bachelor of Computer Science and Engineering and a Master's degree in Engineering. While she was at MIT, Weinstein participated in two National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) courses, sailing and environmental education, which proved to be formative experiences.

During the last two years working as a machine learning engineer in California, Weinstein spent all her free time reconnecting with the outdoor

spaces she grew up in; she earned her Wilderness First Responder certificate, backpacked, climbed, and participated in volunteer events such as trail building and invasive plant removal.

As long as she can remember, Weinstein knew she wanted to be a teacher. After her time in California, Weinstein was ready to pursue what she was truly passionate about, outdoor education. She discovered the Conservancy's fellowship posted on the NOLS alumni job board and immediately felt excited about the opportunity to be introduced to the National Park Service and explore an environmental education career. "Of the environmental education opportunities I was considering, this fellowship had the most opportunities for career exploration and advancement," said Weinstein.



2025 Summer Education Fellow Anna Weinstein talks to visitors about elk ecology.

In her fellowship, Weinstein presents pop-up education programs at the Estes Park Visitor Center, works busy shifts at the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, and co-leads guided hikes and Bettie programs in Rocky. Weinstein has also had time to reflect on what is next for her career. "I've spent a long time trying to become the engineer I thought I should be," said Weinstein. "This fellowship is about building confidence in the person I am and returning to things I value most. Younger me would be so proud of what I'm doing now."

Weinstein's fellowship is made possible by the Conservancy's Next Generation Fund.

Artist-in-Residence
Program Assistant
Marilyn Irwin leads
a private tour at the
William Allen White
Cabin in Moraine Park.



By
Gabby Sherwood,
Communications
Associate

William Allen White Cabin Inspires Artists and Staff Alike

"Having the time to work and compose in the William Allen White Cabin gave me new insights into composition and the music I was working on. The grand view from the front porch of the cabin was immensely inspiring."

— Pierre Jalbert,
2025 Artist-in-Residence,
composer and professor of
music at Rice University

The Artist-in-Residence program at Rocky Mountain National Park draws artists to the park for various reasons. Pierre Jalbert, 2025 Artist-in-Residence, composer and professor of music at Rice University, has always felt that his music is influenced by the natural world. "Being able to explore and learn about the park was extremely rewarding," said Jalbert. "Also, having the time to work and compose in the William Allen White Cabin gave me new insights into composition and the music I was working on. The grand view from the front porch of the cabin was immensely inspiring."

During Jalbert's residency, he utilized a birdsong identification app to listen and recognize the birdsong of native species in Rocky such as the ruby-

crowned kinglet and the mountain chickadee. "These will make an appearance in the piano piece I'm writing as a result of my residency at the park," said Jalbert.

The Artist-in-Residence program at Rocky is a long-standing program dating back to 1984 when the park welcomed its first artists to stay in the historic William Allen White Cabin in Moraine Park. Marilyn Irwin, the Conservancy's Artist-in-Residence program assistant, helped facilitate and run the program for 22 years in Rocky during her time as a park ranger. During her first season at Rocky in 1990, Irwin quickly fell in love with the park and returned for 29 summers while teaching during the school year. After retiring from teaching in 2001, Irwin moved to Estes Park to

Marilyn Irwin shares her passion and knowledge of the William Allen White Cabin and family.

Scan this QR for more
info about the Artist-
in-Residence program





Stuart Paterson

Marilyn Irwin (2009) led countless programs in Rocky as a seasonal park ranger.

have longer seasons at Rocky while doing the work she is most passionate about.

Over the years, Irwin has become more and more enamored with the life of William Allen White and his family, the cabin itself, and the Artist-in-Residence program. She has procured

and donated antique fixtures and furnishings, participated in the recreation of one of White's quilts, hosted ranger-led programs, and volunteered countless hours to both the Artist-in-Residence program and the preservation of the cabin.

Irwin has seen the Artist-in-Residence program evolve over the years; she performed various duties such as helping select artists for the program and knows exactly how to support the residents. "I take care of the cabin and show it to each artist and give them a tour of the park if they haven't been here before," said Irwin. "I attend all of their programs and make sure they have everything they need."

Irwin hopes that each artist will be touched by Rocky in a unique way. "I do hope they come away with a real appreciation for the park and see how special this place is," said Irwin. "It's different than any other national park. I hope they also have time to relax and enjoy being away from distractions like cellular connection and television."

Rocky Mountain Conservancy supports the Artist-in-Residence program through donations to its Next Generation Fund so artists from around the world can continue to be inspired by the park's natural, cultural, and historical resources and share their craft with visitors through free public programs. Conservancy funding helps remove financial barriers to the Artist-in-Residence program, which allows a wide variety of artists to apply.

In 2025, this popular program attracted over 380 applicants, from which seven artists were selected. The Conservancy and park staff are thrilled to host Pierre Jalbert, Hunter Goan, Jillian Roper, Ben Banet, Kite Davenport, Deborah Jojola, and Jennifer Ball as the artists-in-residence. Each artist hosts two public programs during their two-week residency; the first program took place in late May, and the remaining programs will run until early October.

Marilyn Irwin interprets the park's resources with visitors during a ranger-led program in the winter of 2009.



Stuart Paterson

2000 up-potted willow stems are stored and monitored at Rocky's greenhouse till they are ready to be planted in the park.



By
Gabby Sherwood,
Communications
Associate

Many Hands Make Light Work: Volunteers Up-pot Thousands of Willow Stems in Rocky's Greenhouse

"It's a good teaching moment. It exposes people to a lot of the projects within the park that many times are unseen."

— Michelle Gibbons,
RMNP Greenhouse Manager

Restoring wetlands has been over a decade in the making in Rocky Mountain National Park. As part of the park's Elk and Vegetation Management Plan, fenced ungulate exclosures were installed in various park areas to restore important plant communities such as willow. Many of these fenced areas, such as Moraine Park, used to be healthy willow-beaver wetland ecosystems. However, due to multiple stressors, such as heavy browsing by animals like elk and moose and human-caused ecosystem degradation, these once lush wetlands have transitioned into elk-grassland ecosystems.

While the exclosures allow visitors to see the stark difference between

Volunteers meticulously pack the soil into willow stem containers.

willow height inside and outside the fencing, a dedicated team of park staff, volunteers, and vegetation crews are working behind the scenes in Rocky's greenhouse and plant nursery to restore this natural resource.

In May 2025, numerous volunteers worked alongside park staff in the greenhouse to up-pot 2000 willow stems with the hope they'll be ready to plant in the park in a few months.

Up-potting willow is tedious, repetitive work that requires a significant amount of time, resources, and patience. Each willow stem is planted in a tall, cone-shaped container with soil so that the roots can sprout. Allowing strong root growth before

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for upcoming
2025 volunteer events





A group of willow up-potting volunteers work together in Rocky's greenhouse.

being planted in the ground gives the willow an increased chance of maturing in its native environment.

To protect the roots from freezing, the greenhouse staff waits till early summer to move the willow propagations into large trays filled with water. "The roots will soak up the water from underneath and draw up as much water as they need," said RMNP Greenhouse Volunteer John Atkinson. In the fall, the willow will be transported into the park to be planted inside exclosures in wetland habitats.

"Volunteer-based willow planting projects to reestablish populations have been taking place in the park for over a decade," said RMNP Greenhouse Manager Michelle Gibbons. "It not only contributes to the park's wetland restoration efforts but is also an educational opportunity for volunteers. It's a good teaching moment," said Gibbons. "It exposes people to a lot of the projects within the park that many times are unseen. We had people here today working that didn't even know our greenhouse existed."

Willow is a keystone species native to Rocky that has many ecological benefits for wetlands, such as providing food and building materials for beavers. Willow and beaver populations have dropped dramatically alongside wetland habitats in the park. The Kawuneechee Valley alone, which was once dominated by tall willow, has experienced a 77% loss of tall willow acreage since 1999 (NPS). "We are trying to promote a habitat that will be inviting to beavers so they will build dams, which will create higher water table levels in our wetlands," said Gibbons.

Current restoration efforts are already producing encouraging results. 80% of the up-potted willows leave the nursery alive when they go to be planted in the park. While the success rate in the field is undetermined, "observational assessments indicate up-potted willows have a higher survival rate after planting than live staking (driving a willow stake into the ground)," said Gibbons.

Restored willow-beaver wetlands will be more resilient by "retaining more

moisture that is critical to withstand droughts, support biodiversity, reduce flammability, and repel invasive exotic plants" (NPS). This doesn't just benefit the park's plants and animals, but also nearby communities and visitor experience.

While willow planting is just one step in a multifaceted restoration process, its impact will be long-lasting thanks to collaborative individuals who are determined to preserve Rocky's diverse landscapes and natural resources for future generations to enjoy.

Rocky Mountain National Park Greenhouse Volunteer John Atkinson unloads up-potted willow stems.





Around the Conservancy

High School Leadership Corps Update:

Rocky Mountain Conservancy's High School Leadership Corps (HSLC) hosted two sessions for 22 high school students in 2025. Each crew of nine members and two youth mentors spent 10 days in Rocky Mountain National Park and the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests working on various service projects such as trail maintenance, including bridge repairs; vegetation management; and fire fuels management, including constructing and burning piles with Rocky's fire division. The 2025 HSLC staff consisted of Sasha Godsil, the program lead, and Owen Bass, the field coordinator.

Although most of the participants are from Colorado, "many of them don't get the opportunity to access the park as some people may think," said Godsil. The program provides opportunities for students of varied outdoor experience to work and learn in the park and be exposed to different career paths in conservation. "The amount of growth I see just in 10 days of being in the wilderness with these participants is more than I saw in an entire year in a classroom," said Godsil, a former teacher.

"I want them to look back on this experience fondly," said Godsil. "I want them to know that the park is not just for people who can afford lavish vacations, piles of gear, or plan their trip months in advance. The park is here for them just as it is for everybody else."

The Conservancy's High School Leadership Corps is made possible with support from sales of Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park specialty license plate, Athletic Brewing's Two for the Trails grant program, WoodNext Foundation, the National Forest Foundation, and in collaboration with Poudre Wilderness Volunteers.



The 2025 High School Leadership Corps removes a dead-and-down tree on the Emmaline Lake Trail in the Poudre Valley.

Conservation Corps Updates:

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy Conservation Corps is about to wrap up another incredible season with 51 participants across 10 crews working in Rocky Mountain National Park, Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, and other nearby public lands.

Participants from about 20 different states arrived in May with a wide range of outdoor skills and experiences, which Field Stewardship Manager, Dani Woods, said is what makes the Conservation Corps so special. "I love growth and development, it's my favorite thing in the world," said Woods. "Watching them go from these shy, intimidated individuals to truly confident people who have found a whole new part of themselves by working in the woods and have become a better version of themselves is what I always look forward to."

Each crew spends 11 weeks at their work sites restoring and maintaining trails such as the Longs Peak Trail, rehabbing burn areas from the 2020 East Troublesome Fire, clearing dead trees, maintaining and preserving historic sites in the park, planting in the park greenhouse and McGraw Ranch, rebuilding bridges, and building stone staircases, walls, and dams.

Woods was joined this season by a skilled stewardship staff of three field coordinators: Eli Bolick, Connor Neal, and AJ Lullo. "They care about our crews and care about getting more young adults into the field," said Woods.

Thank you, Rocky Mountain Conservancy Conservation Corps, for your hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm for conserving our parks and public lands!



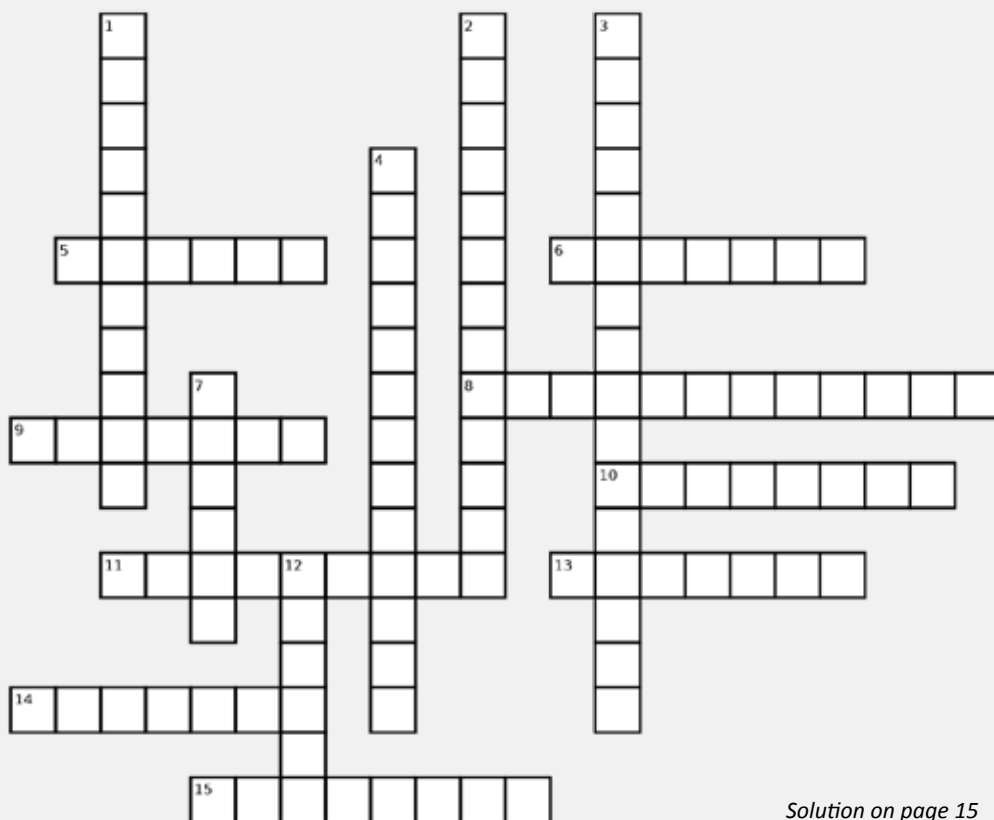
Rocky Mountain Conservancy Park Puzzler

Across

- 5.** An ancient decomposer that interacts with abiotic and biotic matter. Will often be found growing on bare rocks.
- 6.** The Arapaho name of this east side lake means “lake of many rocks”.
- 8.** A well-sought-after waterfall in the park named after the wife of Abner Sprague, one of the first settlers in the Estes Park area.
- 9.** This type of geological feature has formed numerous U-shaped valleys in the park.
- 10.** This native amphibian survives winter by freezing itself in its breeding ponds, then thaws with the arrival of spring.
- 11.** Known as the “Father of Rocky Mountain National Park,” this man campaigned for the creation of a national park and summited Longs Peak over 250 times.
- 13.** A nutrient-rich inner bark layer of trees that beavers enjoy eating because of its source of sugars and starches.
- 14.** Temporary camp structures built by the Utes in Rocky Mountain National Park. These dome-shaped structures were typically made up of willow, bark, grass, and reeds.
- 15.** This stunning lake in the park was named after a man named Locke and is the Scottish Gaelic for lake or inlet.

Down

- 1.** A “new” feature in Rocky Mountain National Park that was formed when the Lawn Lake Dam gave way and flooded Estes Park.
- 2.** This visitor center in Rocky is a National Historic Landmark and internationally recognized for its architecture inspired by the style of Frank Lloyd Wright.
- 3.** A predator in rocky notorious for its ferocious and relentless hunting style. It molts twice a year to blend in with its environment yet has a black tipped tail that remains year-round.
- 4.** This U.S. President signed the Rocky Mountain National Park Act in 1915, establishing Rocky Mountain as a national park and securing its boundaries.
- 7.** This keystone species is the dominant woody shrub that grows in the majority of Rocky’s riparian habitats or wet meadows. They stabilize stream banks, provide building materials and food for beavers, and can reach over 10 feet tall in the Montane ecosystem.
- 12.** This scavenger bird species will eat just about anything, including the ticks off the backs of elk and mule deer.



Solution on page 15

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To make a gift to support Rocky Mountain National Park, visit RMConservancy.org, or call 970-586-0108

Breaking Barriers

picnic areas, and visitor centers. The projected completion date is May 2026, and, when complete, the visitor access guide will be promoted on various media platforms including NPS.gov.

Expanding information about conditions in the park to include the aspects listed above allows people to make informed and autonomous decisions about their unique ability to recreate in the park. “I’m most excited to see the guide greatly improve access in the near term,” said RMNP Landscape Architect Rose Lang. “While there are many needed accessibility improvements in the park, this effort will allow people with disabilities and their families to enjoy the park immediately.”

In 2025, the National Park Foundation and Conservancy are underwriting the cost of a contract, part-time accessibility project coordinator to organize data gathered from programmatic and physical barrier evaluation and finalize the content of the accessibility guide.

When complete, the visitor access guide will be available in several formats including PDF and print form, braille, large-print, and an audio description version with a written transcript. Each version meets the accessibility requirements outlined in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which is the gold standard for accessible communications.

Accessible Picnic Tables in Rocky

With the goal of increasing universal accessibility at campsites, aging and failing picnic tables at campgrounds and picnic areas across the park will be replaced. All new picnic tables will comply with accessibility standards set by the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) and will be made of reinforced concrete with a 50-year life span.

Beginning on May 15, 2025, 120 new picnic tables were delivered, assembled, and installed at Glacier Basin Campground. And an additional



The Lavash family with a GRIT all-terrain wheelchair, available at the Estes Park Mountain Shop.

15 tables are slated to be installed in Moraine Park Campground this summer. The old tables were removed and hauled away. Danny Basch, one of the deputy facility managers at Rocky, coordinated with the contracting officer and contractor to schedule final inspection and acceptance of the newly installed tables. This project was made possible with support from the National Park Foundation.



A newly placed accessible picnic table in Rocky Mountain National Park.

GRIT All-Terrain Wheelchairs

This spring, Rocky Mountain Conservancy worked with the Estes Park Mountain Shop to purchase three GRIT all-terrain wheelchairs, so they now have a fleet of four wheelchairs available for the public to use. The GRIT chair is an all-terrain wheelchair to increase recreation access to individuals with mobility

challenges. “The chair is so easy and quick to set up and break down,” said Bruce Lavash. “It’s always worth the time to get the chair out and set it up so that our sister can experience every bit of the park that is possible.”

GRIT chairs are available to rent at no cost at the Estes Park Mountain Shop and can be used in the Estes Park area and Rocky. Call the Estes Park Mountain Shop at 970-586-6548 if you are interested in reserving a GRIT chair. This project was made possible by individual donors and in collaboration with Estes Park Mountain Shop.

“The people who rent GRIT wheelchairs are able to experience Rocky in a way that would not be possible without them,” said Zach Zehr, owner of the Estes Park Mountain Shop. “Adding these additional chairs more than doubled our fleet, and my hope is we always have a chair available to rent in the future.”

Wheelchair Sledge

Rocky Mountain Conservancy funded the park education team’s purchase of a wheelchair sledge, which allows students in wheelchairs to attend and participate in winter field trip programs led by the park’s education team. The sledge is a platform and skis with an adjustable brake to

maintain control over varied terrain, which can be pushed or pulled across the snow. It accommodates most manual wheelchairs and allows users to remain in their personal mobility devices without the need for transfers. After the education team trained and practiced with the sledge, the team used the sledge on Conservancy-funded snowshoe field trips with elementary students this winter.

West-Side Accessible Fishing Opportunities

In partnership with the National Sports Center for the Disabled (NSCD), the Conservancy supports fly-fishing events on the west side of Rocky which are aimed at reducing accessibility barriers to this popular sport. In 2025, Rocky staff scheduled three of these events leaving the Holzwarth Historic Site from 9 am-noon. Programs took place on June 21, July 19, and one is still upcoming on August 23.

“The programs are important because they provide opportunities for visitors of all abilities to enjoy the park and participate in an outdoor recreational activity,” said Rocky’s Colorado River

District Interpreter Kristi Neilson. “Visitors have the opportunity to fly fish with trained instructors, learn about fish and their habitat, and be engaged in riparian resources.”

This program is made possible in part with a grant from the National Park Foundation. For more information and to register for the August 23 event, visit nps.gov/romo and search for ranger-led programs.

Winter Speaker Series Videos

In response to requests from members and donors for public recordings of the Winter Speakers Series held at Beaver Meadows Visitor Center at Rocky, Conservancy and park staff collaborated to produce videos of these special presentations. To make these videos available for individuals of varying abilities to enjoy, they include audio descriptions and captions. The Conservancy first supported technological improvements to the auditorium in the lower level of the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, so these recordings could happen.

The audio-described and captioned videos from the recorded

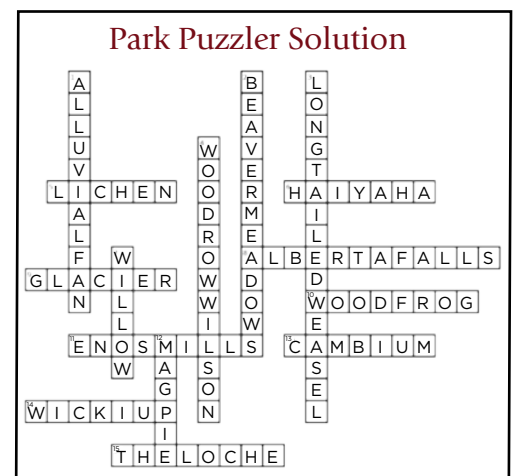
presentations align with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires all digital media and communications developed and produced by federal agencies to be accessible to individuals with disabilities ([section508.gov](https://www.section508.gov)). Once reviewed and approved, park staff will make these videos available for public viewing on Rocky’s web page. Please stay tuned for details by following the Conservancy’s Facebook, Instagram, or signing up for our e-newsletter at www.RMConservancy.org/subscribe.

American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation for Park Staff

For the past several years, Rocky Mountain Conservancy has funded American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation for park staff who use ASL for communication during mandatory meetings and trainings. The availability of ASL interpreters ensures that all employees have a sense of belonging and access to essential information. ASL interpretation is also available for the public with advance notice and coordination.

Each of these 2025 accessibility projects is made possible by the dedication of Conservancy staff, park staff, various partners, and the generosity of donors and members. Every person deserves an equal opportunity to safely explore the wonders of Rocky Mountain National Park. Our parks and public lands belong to everyone.

Accessible fly-fishing programs are free and available to visitors on the west side of the park.





Rocky Mountain Conservancy

Estee Rivera Murdock, executive director
 Gabby Sherwood, *Quarterly* editor
 PO Box 3100
 Estes Park, CO 80517
 (970) 586-0108
Communications@RMConservancy.org

Philanthropy Director Jessica Barnes, Board President Walt Borneman, and Marlene Borneman enjoy breakfast with Rocky Mountain Conservancy Goodwill Ambassador and Grammy-Award Winning Musician Judy Collins.

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Nature Notes

- **Theresa and Steven Goff** were fishing along Old Fall River Road on May 3 when they spotted a beaver along the far bank between the US-34 bridge and the Roaring River confluence. It stayed on the surface for a few seconds before diving underwater.
- While hiking in the park on an early summer afternoon, **Jodi Roman** spotted 38 calypso orchids. Roman entered the park during the early evening in hopes of finding one and was overjoyed to see so many!
- **Richard & Crystal Smith** captured this stunning shot of the Milky Way over Longs Peak while hunting for the aurora borealis in early June.
- **Nancy Ramadan's** early summer hike to Emerald Lake was one of most stunning she's ever done. Every step of the trail felt like walking through a postcard. The trail was buzzing with quiet awe, and that final majestic view of Emerald Lake cradled beneath the peaks of the Continental Divide was absolutely unforgettable.
- **Ellen Hostetler** spotted a marmot perched on top of a sign along the Forest Canyon Overlook trail in the alpine tundra.



© Jodi Roman



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