



THE EAGLE RIVER FUND

The Eagle River Fund is a permanent funding source for projects and activities that support the long-term health of the Eagle River.



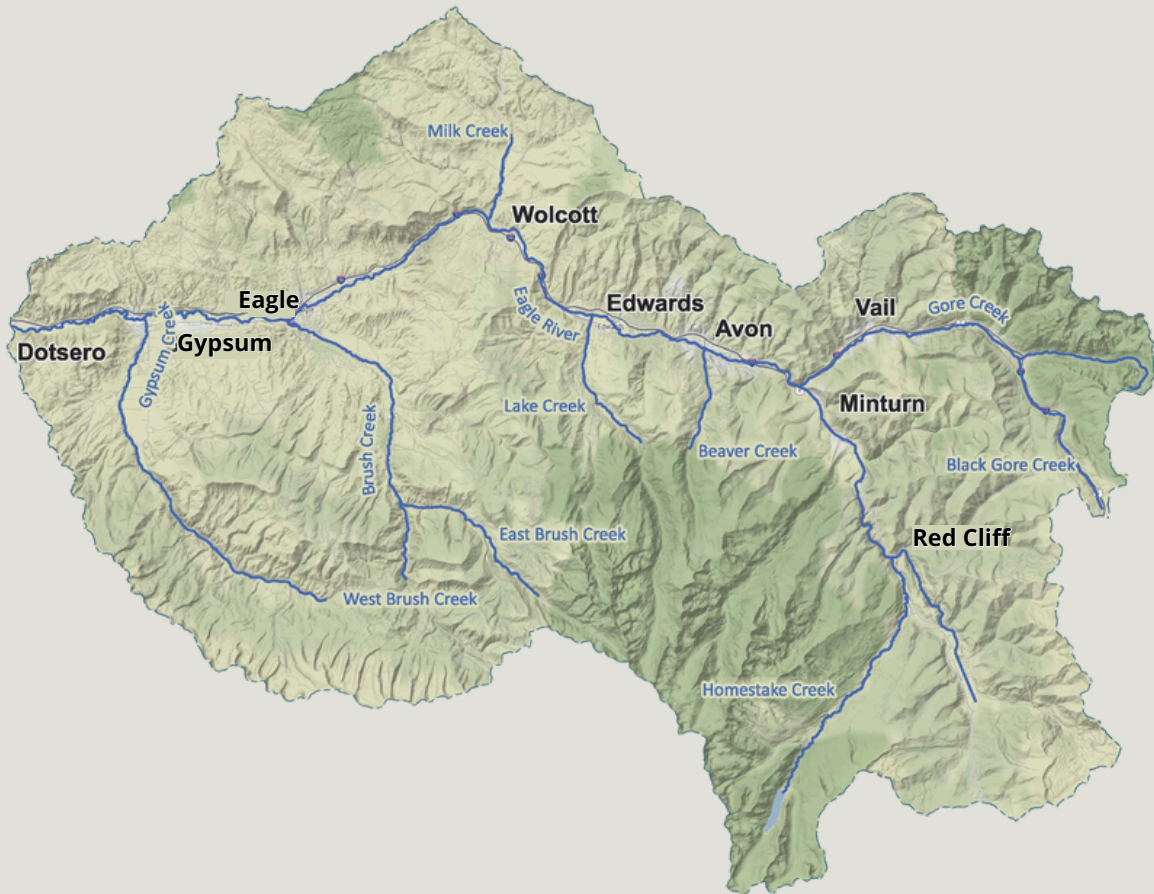
eagleriverfund@eagleriverco.org



www.eagleriverfund.org



The Eagle River Watershed



THE
EAGLE  RIVER
FUND



eagleriverfund@eagleriverco.org



www.eagleriverfund.org



Aerial view of gravel banks along the Eagle River during low flow. Edwards, Colorado. Photo credit Eagle Valley Wild.

THE PROBLEM: OUR RIVERS ARE AT RISK

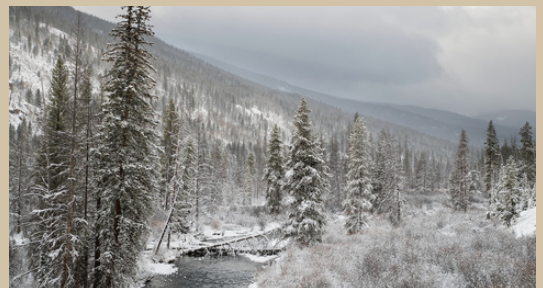
The Eagle River Watershed, like much of the western United States, faces escalating threats driven by development, population growth, prolonged drought, and climate change.

With historically low stream-flows and rising water temperatures, the **ecosystems of the Eagle River are increasingly threatened**. As a free-flowing, largely intact river system, the Eagle River supports diverse wildlife and plays a central role in the region's **economic, environmental, and cultural sustainability**.

The identity of the vibrant communities, ski resorts, and landscapes of the Eagle River Valley depends upon **healthy, flowing rivers**.

However, continued development, trans-mountain water diversions, wildfire threat, and pollution intensify the pressures on this fragile system.

DID YOU KNOW?



Colorado's outdoor recreation industry accounts for:

- **\$13.9 billion+** (GDP) annually
- **130,000+** direct jobs

Local water-dependent recreation includes:

- 2 world-class ski resorts
- numerous prestigious golf courses
- big-game hunting opportunities
- unmatched fly-fishing
- whitewater rafting and kayaking



The most pressing threats within the Eagle River Valley include **limited water quantity, water quality issues,** and the **degradation of natural habitats.** Key challenges are low stream-flows, rising water temperatures, and stormwater runoff. If not mitigated, these issues can result in **habitat loss, reduced biodiversity, and impaired ecosystem health.**

These factors are converging to create a critical situation that demands **immediate and sustained action.** Protecting the Eagle River is essential, not only for preserving wildlife, but also for underpinning the **quality of life** for residents and visitors. Additionally, local waterways **sustain the local economy,** which is reliant on **recreation industries,** such as skiing, golfing, fishing, hunting, kayaking, hiking, and rafting.



The ecosystems of local waterways affect every facet of life in the Eagle River Valley. **Water is integral to the community's public health, economic vitality, and its iconic landscapes.** Resorts, ranchers, and outfitters rely on water for their livelihoods, and locals and visitors alike find inspiration, joy, and connection in recreation outdoors.

Protecting the Eagle River is essential, not only for preserving wildlife, but also for **underpinning the quality of life** for residents and visitors.

As an upstream watershed in the Colorado River system, which serves **40 million+ downstream users,** the actions taken here directly impact the water availability and quality throughout the West.

Existing efforts to protect the Eagle River are substantial, but **limited in scope and expediency, due to insecure funding sources and restrictive grant match requirements.**

Despite the **commitment of an invested and diverse community** of local governments, municipalities, agencies, and organizations to take action to protect local rivers, **a structure to effectively leverage funding has yet to exist.**

Volunteers participate in a restoration project by planting willows near Brush Creek in Eagle. This project aims to reconnect a historic floodplain, reduce erosion, improve aquatic wildlife habitat, and mitigate water quality issues. Additional work, including the installation of in-stream structures, is occurring on an annual basis.



THE SOLUTION: THE EAGLE RIVER FUND

The Eagle River Fund launched in 2023, inspired by a water fund model developed by The Nature Conservancy and implemented both globally and as nearby as the Yampa River Watershed. By bringing together businesses, governments, residents, and agencies, water funds allow communities to generate support, increase local capacity, and **create a steady funding stream for a healthy water future.**

Community leaders Tom and Margie Gart, longtime Colorado residents and conservationists, recognized issues facing the Eagle River, such as lower flows, degraded habitats, and more.

They understood that **existing organizations are working hard to address these challenges, but lack sufficient funding to efficiently scale their efforts.**

Rather than creating an organization, the Garts approached **the Eagle River Coalition** to collaborate in developing a sustainable funding mechanism to support the work being done to protect local river ecosystems – a water fund.

- The premise of a water fund is
- that water users and stakeholders
- provide funding to support
- conservation and restoration
- activities that will protect their
- water supply, water quality, and
- recreational opportunities.

Tom and Margie envisioned the Eagle River Fund as a permanent source of funding to bolster projects, ensuring that vital river conservation work can continue for generations to come.



Some of Tom and Margie's favorite memories are made with their family near the Eagle River. Tom is pictured above, at right, with their son Alex.

Tom says, "One of the reasons we're excited to be involved with this fund is that there are four generations of our family that have been connected to the river."



After convening several working groups with **20+ community stakeholder groups**, a feasibility study indicated support for the fund concept.

The analysis **confirmed the community's interest and capacity** toward the implementation of projects that will ensure the Eagle River's resilience. The study identified entities capable of facilitating these projects, including local governments, water providers, nonprofits, federal and state agencies, and landowners in collaboration with eligible partners.

The Eagle River Fund is envisioned as a \$5 million fund, awarding ~\$200,000 annually to support watershed health projects in the Eagle River Valley.

The Eagle River Watershed is fortunate to have **established plans, quantifying the health, challenges and needs** of the Eagle River and its tributaries. Existing plans and documentation include the 2015 Eagle River Inventory and Assessment, 2022 Basin Implementation Plan and the 2024 Eagle River Community Water Plan, which together **provide information on emergent issues and priority actions to be implemented.**


The plans will serve as the “to do” lists for which the Eagle River Fund can provide funding capacity to help accelerate implementation, leverage support and expedite the actions needed to address the water issues.


These actions provide benefit by reducing water demand, preventing high water temperatures, protecting fish populations through habitat restoration, and increasing community resilience by buffering local waterways against drought, wildfire, and development impacts.

EARLY SUCCESS

1. RIVERWALK WATER WISE DEMONSTRATION GARDEN



 **5,600 square feet** of nonfunctional turfgrass replaced with low-water-use turf alternatives and native plants

 **collaborative effort** that brought together seven entities, **including the Eagle River Fund**

 **reduces anticipated irrigation use by at least 75%**

 as a community **demonstration** garden, this project transforms a nonfunctional turf space into a place that **inspires water-wise actions**



LOOKING AHEAD

By addressing water quality, quantity, and habitat restoration, the Eagle River Fund will have the following impacts:

- **Human Impact:** With a reach extending to the 40 million people who depend on the Colorado River Basin every day, the Eagle River Fund will also provide direct benefits to the communities of Vail, Red Cliff, Minturn, Avon, Edwards, Wolcott, Eagle, Gypsum, and Dotsero. The Eagle River itself stretches 77 miles, and its primary tributaries include Gore Creek, Brush Creek, and Gypsum Creek.
- **Organizational Impact:** We expect to award \$200,000 in projects annually, supporting the work being advanced by the 20+ organizations, municipalities, and agencies that are committed to protecting water quality, habitat health, wildlife, public lands, responsible recreation, appropriate land management, and more.
- **Environmental Impact:** The Eagle River contributes 3% of the Colorado River's typical annual flow. An estimated 85% of Colorado's native wildlife relies on riparian habitats during their life cycles. Water systems are crucial for birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, and countless natural ecosystems.

The quantity and quality of water in local rivers serve as the foundation for the **quality of life in the Eagle River Valley**, making **conservation and protection efforts imperative** for future generations to enjoy the lifestyle **we experience today**.

EARLY SUCCESS

2. EAGLE RIVER COMMUNITY WATER PLAN COMPLETION

This initiative focuses on preserving stream health, biodiversity, and recreation through collaborative projects like tree canopy restoration along the river to manage water temperatures and protect aquatic life. The Water Plan was completed in 2024, thanks to fast-tracked funding via the Eagle River Fund. This project showcases the Fund's role in addressing ecological and recreational needs and provides a foundation of consensus from which collaboration can emerge.

Learn more: eagleriverco.org/water-plan/





EXAMPLES OF COMPELLING INITIATIVES FOR GRANTMAKING:

Stormwater Infrastructure Installation & Improvements



- Allows for filtration to soils, increasing soil moisture, filtering pollutants, slowing water deployment into river
- **Location:** Town of Avon
- Example: rain gardens
- **Project Estimate:** \$5,000 each

Project Focus Key



WATER
QUALITY



WATER
QUANTITY



NATURAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

Invasive Tamarisk Mitigation



- Prevents the enormous consumption of water by tamarisk species
- Allows native vegetation to rebound, where previously was out-competed
- Decreases wildfire risk
- Enables river access by wildlife like birds, deer, beavers and elk
- **Location:** Eagle/CO River Confluence
- **Project Estimate:** \$25K+ annually

Riparian Restoration & Floodplain Reconnection



- Natural infrastructure installed to increase filtration and improve riparian ecosystem health
- Grading of banks to decrease erosion, reconnect floodplain
- **Locations:** Brush Creek Valley Ranch & Open Space and Lower Eagle River
- **Project Estimate:** Phases range widely; multi-million dollar projects anticipated





The Eagle River Fund provides **permanent funding for projects and activities** that support the long-term health of the Eagle River. **Some of the tangible outcomes include the following:**

Increased Stream-flows & Moderated Water Temperatures

- Conservation and restoration projects will benefit river systems with improved stream-flows and cooler water temperatures during the hot summer months when flows are typically low.

Restored Habitats

- Restoration efforts will protect critical habitats, helping preserve biodiversity in the Eagle River Watershed. These efforts will also increase resilience to wildfire, drought, and the impacts of climate change.

Heightened Awareness & Stewardship

- The Eagle River Fund will help elevate water issues to the forefront of public consciousness, fostering stewardship of local riparian landscapes.

Permanent Funding for Long-Term Solutions

- The Eagle River Fund will establish a legacy for future generations, ensuring that solutions can be pursued effectively for many years to come.



Leverage for Matching Grants

- The Eagle River Fund will provide matching funds required to secure grants, allowing local water projects access to larger funding pools.

Collaborative Resource Utilization

- The Eagle River Fund will promote collaboration among stakeholders, allowing more projects to be executed simultaneously and at increased scale while avoiding duplication.



Gore Creek and sunset light on the Gore Range in Vail, Colorado. Photo credit Eagle Valley Wild.

SUSTAIN YOUR RIVER WITH YOUR INVESTMENT

Investing in the Eagle River Fund helps ensure the health and sustainability of the Eagle River Valley. By protecting vital water resources locally, we are safeguarding everything we love about living here - from hiking and fishing to skiing and simply enjoying a family picnic by the river. We understand that water quality, vibrant landscapes, thriving communities, and economic stability are interconnected.

Healthy waterways buffer our community against wildfires, secure our water supply, and sustain our unique way of life. Your investment supports actions that protect these priorities, creating a legacy that actively addresses this region's water challenges into the future.

When you give, you're joining a community of dedicated individuals who care about the river's future and ensuring

that the Eagle River continues to flow with life, recreation, and economic vitality. Whether you enjoy fly-fishing, skiing with your kids, playing golf, seeing wildlife, taking your dog hiking, or spending time outdoors with your family, you rely on healthy water. Without it, many of these activities can't exist. Together, we will build a sustainable, resilient future for the Eagle River and the people and wildlife that depend on it.

Your investment indicates that you are taking care of an integral part of the community and the lifestyle that you want, both now and in the future. By supporting the Eagle River Fund, you are joining a local movement to protect your river for generations to come.

Will you join us?



THE EAGLE RIVER FUND

How To Learn More

Visit www.eagleriverfund.org

Email eagleriverfund@eagleriverco.org or
call 970-827-5406 with questions, to set
up a meeting, or to visit a project site.

How To Become a Supporter:

You can give online at eagleriverfund.org, talk to us
about non-cash gifts, or donate by check. If sending a
check, please be sure to include "Eagle River Fund" in
the memo line of your check and mail to:

Western CO Community Foundation
PO Box 4334
Grand Junction, CO 81502



eagleriverfund@eagleriverco.org



www.eagleriverfund.org