

Project Details 2007

Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP)

Watershed Restoration

Summary of Work: The Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) has been in a transition period, with Executive Director, Jonathan Bruno, moving to a new job outside the nonprofit sector, and previous Executive Director, Carol Ekarius, returning to the helm. Due in part to the transition, a portion of the grant work as agreed to has been completed, and some work is still progressing. CUSP has already used its CHRF grant to match sources of funding to complete the Environmental Education and Green Forest treatment portions of the grant in 2007.

During that period CUSP's Environmental Education Coordinator, Theresa Springer, conducted programs with 887 students who received 4357 contact hours. The programs are designed to engage students' imaginations and thirst for learning. For example, the program with the Woodland Park School District's Environmental Education class was an intensive education program that consisted of eight classroom events and two field seminars with natural resource professionals from the United States Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife. The students learned about what interventions must be used to correct ecosystem problems, such as sediment loading in rivers and invasive species on land (focused on the Happy Meadows river restoration site). They also learned how to translate the data that they collect in the field into 3-dimensional scaled-relief models and complete a model of a specific natural area within the USFS Pike National Forest or other public land site. The project wrap-up was a presentation, by students, for dignitaries such as Congressional staffers, the Mayor, school board members, and the resource professionals who helped guide the project.

CUSP's Green Forest Health Program is an on-going project that grew out of the ashes of the Hayman Fire. In the months after the fire was controlled, CUSP dedicated efforts to helping restore healthy forest conditions in the Upper South Platte Watershed as a method of reducing the likelihood of future catastrophic fires within the watershed. Grant funds helped support the 2007 Neighborhood Fuels Reduction project, which brings communities together to create defensible spaces around valuable resources (ranging from homes to riparian areas), and to reduce fuel density in Red Zone areas of the watershed. In 2007 the CUSP crew worked on 236 sites around the watershed, treating 619 acres, and engaged landowners and volunteers to put in over 12,000 hours toward cleanup efforts.

The funding for the USFS Rampart Range Motorized Recreation Area (RRMRA) project and the South Platte River Restoration at Happy Meadows Campground were both held up by the time it took the USFS to move the projects forward. However, CUSP believes that the funding from the grant for these projects will be utilized over the next few months. The RRMRA funds depended on work being completed by the USFS, and that work is just being completed, so the plan is to do a portion (seeding, tree planting, and fencing out decommissioned trails with volunteers) to be completed in October and November of this year if weather cooperates. If winter weather sets in early, this work may need to be completed in April of 2009.

The Happy Meadows work has taken an exciting turn, and we are planning to use grant funds to take advantage of this opportunity: One of the contributors to high sediment loads in the Happy Meadows area is a diversion dam that was built in the 1960s. This structure is failing in its purpose of efficiently delivering diversion water to the Sportsmen's Paradise water rights, and at the same time

blocks fish passage and creates sediment problems. Sportsmen's is working with CUSP to do planning for river restoration through their portion of the South Platte (immediately downstream from Happy Meadows) and at the same time has agreed to work with CUSP on the correction of the diversion system to meet multiple objectives, including the efficient use of Colorado's precious water. Grant funds will be used to hire a consultant, Jeff Crane, to oversee this portion of the project. Jeff has worked on similar projects around the State of Colorado, and he is one of the most knowledgeable consultants for this type of project. He will design a new and improved diversion structure, and supervise the reconstruction of the diversion.