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WARNER COLLEGE
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

March 2026



A Note from the CCC Director

Whether it's water, forests and fire, or wolves, I have seen a pattern: people talking about the topic explain why they are correct and the other side wrong. When working toward a shared path forward on a controversial topic, this approach usually doesn't work because these disagreements are rarely about information deficits. Instead, they are about values, identity, emotions, and trust. In fact, sharing information can make the other party more entrenched in their views and erode trust.

The book [From Conflict to Convergence: Coming Together to Solve Tough Problems](#) points out that in collaborative problem solving relationships are foundational and that "trust is the essential lubricant to make relationships

work.” With clear and accessible writing, authors Robert Fersh and Mariah Levinson present the principles and skills needed to navigate differences and find a shared path forward. This book is for facilitators and mediators, but I find it useful for navigating differences in many contexts.

Fresh and Levison start with five “mindsets” that support collaborative problem solving:

- Conflict can be constructive.
- Everyone gets the benefit of the doubt.
- Curiosity is the cure.
- Relationships at the core.
- Seek higher ground.

Putting these mindsets into practice involves specific behaviors:

- Deal with conflict. Don’t let it sit and fester.
- Tend to relationships.
- Start with values not information.
- Listen to learn rather than to respond. Ask questions rather than assume. Don’t interrupt.
- Share the why, not just the what.
- Accept what each person says as their sincere belief and don’t question motives.
- When you disagree, do so with curiosity, not hostility.
- Seek mutual gain.

When trying to put these behaviors into practice, there’s a catch: the presence of conflict can cause a visceral reaction that causes us to lose sight of these rational guidelines. So what do we do? Over the years, I’ve learned to employ a few steps that help me navigate these situations:

- Set intentions. Before entering difficult dialogue, I take time to reflect on how I want to engage.
- Pause. When I feel myself getting triggered, not responding immediately helps me respond more consistently with my intentions.
- Breathe. Breathing intentionally has tremendous power to settle emotional responses.

In the introduction to a recent [On Being podcast](#) with former poet laureates Joy Harjo and Tracy Smith, host Krista Tippett shares that “. . . these days I often have to remind myself to keep breathing [because] those maps and instructions

in our hearts can feel hard to access or believe in.” I recommend this podcast for how they weave together beauty, challenges, and opportunity when working across differences. This conversation contains several elements we can hold onto during these challenging times. For example, Harjo notes: “Reckonings, you know, there’s so many going on, but among Native people, we just look at it all and say: We’ve seen all this before. It’s just had different names, different stories . . . [as before] we’ll make it through.”

Be well,



News from the CCC



Confluence

May 19–21

Fort Collins, Colorado

"Confluence is no ordinary conference. Loved the quick infusion of context through short presentations and offers of thought-provoking ideas and then turning to focus most of the time on smaller groups breaking out for deeper discussion and sharing of thoughts and ideas on those compelling question topics. Great work and kudos to the organizers!"

Confluence 2024 attendee

This event brings together collaborative conservation practitioners, researchers, students, and community leaders to explore the future of collaboration. While *Confluence* focuses on the Western U.S., we do welcome participants from across the U.S. and North America. Please consider joining us for an engaging couple of days in beautiful Fort Collins.

[Register Now](#)

Indigenous Scholarship and Travel Support form closes April 1st:

If you identify as Indigenous and are interested in attending Confluence 2026, we are offering a **reduced Indigenous registration rate of \$250**, thanks to the support of [Trees, Water & People](#), [Coalitions and Collaboratives](#), and [The Nature Conservancy - Colorado](#).

To explore support that may be available, access the application form below.

[Apply](#)



We're Hiring a Communications Specialist!

The Communications Specialist is a half-time position that manages all aspects of communications for the Center for Collaborative Conservation (CCC), with support from a Communications Intern and as an integral member of the CCC team. The core focus of this position is to inform and engage CCC constituents, partners, and funders. Specific elements of this job include design, newsletters, social media, special publications, website maintenance, and event-related communications. This position will supervise a work-study communications intern and will work closely with all CCC staff to engage in all our initiatives.

To apply, go to [this link](#) or visit the [Careers at CSU](#) and search for "Communications Specialist (Part time)."



Upcoming Branching Out Session

Forest Improvement Special Districts

Thursday, March 26th, 2026 | 12:30 – 2:00pm

Passed in 2007, the Forest Improvement District Act (Title 32, Section 18, available [HERE](#) beginning on page 515) allows a governing municipality or county to create a Forest Improvement Special District (FID) to fund forest improvement projects in wildland-urban interface areas. To date, no communities have set up an FID.

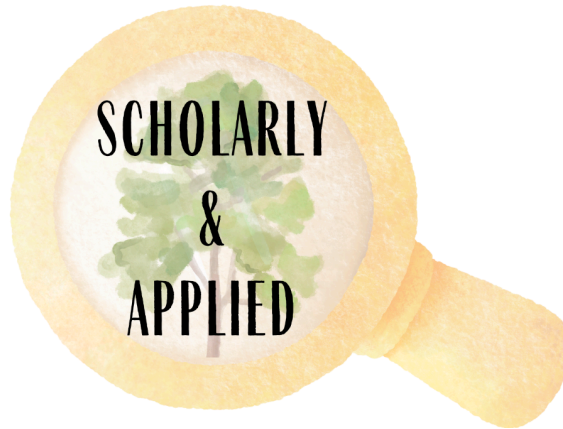
In 2025, the Colorado Fire Commission stood up a Forest Improvement District Subcommittee to learn more about FIDs, understand why they haven't been utilized, and develop administrative and legislative recommendations to make FIDs a more readily available option.

In this Branching Out session, Kevin Whelan (Special District Association of Colorado, Chair of Colorado Fire Commission FID Subcommittee) will share an overview of the Forest Improvement District Act, updates from the FID Subcommittee, and then seek input from collaboratives on barriers to setting up FIDs and possible recommendations.

Recommended pre-read: [Brief: What is an FID?](#)

[Register Here](#)

Scholarly and Applied Impact



Here we review research to guide our practice. Please [reach out with suggestions](#) for what we should cover! **CCC Fellows and staff are indicated by bold font.**

Modern conservation relies on a lot of data for decision-making, and this data can come from a variety of sources – camera traps, GPS collars, transects, and interviews to name just a few. Erin Tattersall and her co-authors point out that there is a growing tension between Western science, which “increasingly champions open data” to be more accessible, and Indigenous Peoples, who “stress the importance of Indigenous data sovereignty (IDS) to assert Indigenous rights over Indigenous data” ([Affirming Indigenous data sovereignty in collaborative wildlife conservation in the era of open data](#)). How do we prevent the misuse or extraction of knowledge without consent? The authors present nine recommendations that emphasize “the need to focus on relationship building, support Indigenous data governance agendas and to discuss upfront expectations for data stewardship.”

The idea that “supporting Indigenous data governance includes moving beyond considering Indigenous perspectives on the value of data to adopting an Indigenous lens that reconsiders the complex relationships between people, land and data” is in line with CSU’s [Indigenous Land & Data Stewardship Lab](#), directed by **Dominique David-Chavez (CCC Fellows Cohort 7)**. The goal of this lab is to “understand how Indigenous protocols and practices, which have guided human relationships with the land, water, air, plant and animal lifeforms for millennia, can guide present-day natural resource stewardship.”

Do these considerations and recommendations align with how you think about

the life cycle of data? In what ways can we more intentionally reflect on our practice and implement these ideas?

- Allison Brody, PhD

Our Associate Director of Learning

Notes From the Field



Here we take short explorations of the CCC's projects, on-the-ground engagement, research, and what we are learning along the way!

The focus this month is:

Reflecting on Confluence and Creating the Future We Want

—

A commentator that I very much enjoy recently spoke about their fight with helplessness in the recent months. This is something that I can commiserate with, particularly since the beginning of 2026. They mentioned two things that, oddly, fit right into the purpose and impact of Confluence.

First, (stay with me here) did you know that in 2016 Steven Maier and Martin Seligman published an update on their famous “learned helplessness” study from 1967? If you ever took animal behavior or psychology, you probably know the original; it’s the one with the dogs being shocked, and those who were harnessed in place appeared to learn to give up on trying to escape. At the time, they determined that when we learn that our actions don’t make a difference, we learn helplessness. Makes sense. However, their 2016 publication lays out a different reality – one which is supported by decades of study since the 60s. We are passive by default, and we can unlearn helplessness through control or action.

So, what does this have to do with Confluence? One of my two goals for the event is skill-building for everyone who attends. And I firmly believe that when we feel equipped to do our work and have opportunities to grow our skillsets, we experience an increase in our ability to take action. Maier and Seligman's 2016 work reminds us that this is one antidote for helplessness.

In addition, this same commentator pointed me in the direction of another really interesting paper – Science's "Experimental evidence for tipping points in social convention" by D. Centola, J. Becker, D. Brackbill, and A. Baronchelli (2018). And if I were to boil it down to a single sentence, they show that small groups of people can change the conventions of society, and that there is a tipping point at which enough people support change that it begins to rapidly take hold. As the commentator said – "You can't know and will never know, if you are the person who caused your movement to hit that tipping point."

The second goal of Confluence 2026 is community building. Taken in light of this paper, which I fundamentally see as an exploration of how we can move towards the futures that we want, Confluence is also a space where we can pool our vision for a time in which nature is in relationship with and cared for by communities in a more holistic way than capitalism allows. When we come together, we are powerful, and the more we come together, the more likely it is that we can find a tipping point for the positive changes that we want to see in the world.

Honestly, I think the same things could be said of much of our collaborative conservation work. We are moving towards the future we want together, and our actions towards that future empower us.

So, with all that in mind, I hope you will join us this May in Fort Collins! Let's lift each other up and move towards the future we want together.

[You can learn more about Confluence and register here.](#)

- Aireona Raschke, PhD
Our Associate Director of Practice



Other News and Opportunities

Birds, BBQ, and Brews, April 25, 2025, 8am- 1pm | Join the Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust for their Spring Birding Tour at La Joya Farm in Socorro County, NM, where over 250 birds have been spotted during their annual migration over the conserved area. Following the tour, guests will enjoy a delicious BBQ-style lunch featuring locally sourced food and brews (including non-alcoholic) while learning more about RGALT's conservation efforts to protect land and water in the middle Rio Grande valley. [Learn more and get tickets here!](#)

Global EJ Conference Tickets Available | The Center for Environmental Justice at Colorado State University is hosting a global conference to continue the dialogue and inspire action. *Where Do We Grow from Here? Environmental Justice and the Politics of Hope* is a global conference happening April 13-14, 2026. We welcome academics, practitioners, community advocates, and leaders from around the world to learn about environmental justice. The conference will be held in hybrid format with in-person presentations happening at Colorado State University. [Get tickets today](#)

Jobs

Check out the CCC's [Job Board](#) for a list of jobs focused on natural resources and collaborative conservation!

Here are just a few postings shared through our board:

Trail Crew Leader, Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers | Carbondale, CO,

closing 4/15/2026. The Trail Crew Leader is responsible for supervising and leading a crew of 4 individuals as well as volunteer groups on both frontcountry and backcountry trail and restoration projects. Pay is \$25-\$28 an hour. [Learn more](#)

The River Network hiring for Executive Director Position | The USA is facing a crisis of water security, affordability, quality, and access. River Network strengthens organizations and leaders to improve and protect their waterways, create climate-resilient communities, and ensure equitable access to safe, affordable drinking water. They are seeking a driven executive director to work remotely--[Learn more here](#).

If you have job openings that are aligned with our work on collaborative conservation and you want us to share them, submit them to our [job board](#).

If you think a colleague would find value in reading CCC news, please forward this email to them and invite them to subscribe to our email list using the form at the bottom of the [CCC home page](#).

If you feel moved to support our work supporting conservation, please consider [donating to the CCC](#).

Questions? Ideas? Opportunities? Please email the CCC Director [John Sanderson](#).

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The CCC Team



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