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WARNER COLLEGE
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

January 2026



A Note from the CCC Director

In Colorado, snowpack sits at 60% of average. This presents a problem from Denver to Los Angeles because Colorado's snowpack generates 75% of the flow in the Colorado River. Meanwhile, [a flood of recent news](#) describes how the parties that share the Colorado River's water have missed deadline after deadline for a new agreement. From its headwaters to its mouth, management of the Colorado River provides a kaleidoscopic view on collaboration.

At the scale of a county, the community along the Yampa River, a Colorado River headwater, demonstrates how to collaborate to keep a river healthy. For example, one of their initiatives, the [Yampa River Fund](#), invests in projects that enhance water security for communities, agriculture, the economy, and the

natural environment while supporting a healthy, flowing river. On the Yampa, a number of things work in favor of collaboration, including, as described in [Making Collaboration Work](#), a “A Sense of Place or Community.”

At the scale of a state, that sense of community is more diffuse, yet as the Colorado Water Plan has rolled out over the past fifteen years, cities, agricultural organizations, and environmental and recreational interests have broadly coalesced around the plan. I credit the [2005 Water for the 21st Century Act](#) for establishing an inclusive multi-layered decision-making structure that made this coalescing possible.

At the scale of the entire Colorado River Basin, the situation is vastly more complex. Seven states are involved, home to 40 million people and 4 million acres of agricultural lands. The Colorado River Basin is also home to 30 federally recognized Tribes who were not even included in the century-old agreement that first apportioned the Colorado River among the states. Twenty-six native fish found nowhere else in the world also depend on the river. Among these interests, the fundamental challenge is deciding who gets how much of the river’s water. Less often discussed is how we work together to make these decisions.

Writing about the Colorado River, Brian Richter calls the problem a “[massive failure of water governance](#).” In the final chapter of [Dancing with Deadpool](#), the authors suggest a structure for a basin-wide entity “to improve the process of collaborative problem-solving.” Yet even these authors give only passing attention to a critical element in collaborative efforts: leadership. Often, just one or two individuals can make a major difference in moving a collaborative effort forward. In Barbara Gray’s [Collaborating](#), she quotes Robert Reich about difficult decisions in complex contexts: “We need leaders who are not afraid to recognize frankly the political choices . . . who are willing to choreograph openly the bargaining about them.” So far, it’s not clear to me who those leaders are in the Colorado River dialogue.

I’ll continue to pay close attention to how Colorado River challenges get resolved—through a federal government mandate, through litigation, or through collaboration, a process that nearly everyone agrees will result in less pain and better, more enduring outcomes.

Be well.

John

Preview the New Year with the CCC!



The Western Collaborative Conservation Network: Confluence is coming!

Session, poster and art applications are now due February 1st.

We wanted to let you know that [registration for Confluence 2026](#) is now open!

Hosted by the Western Collaborative Conservation Network (WCCN), [Confluence 2026](#) will be held in Fort Collins, CO from May 19-21, 2026 – and our overarching theme is:

The Future of Collaboration: The Power of Working Across Divides.

This year we are focused on collaborative **skill-building** related to this theme, as well as indigenous engagement, thanks to the leadership of one of our co-conveners - [Trees, Water & People](#) and the Indigenous Engagement Subcommittee. In addition, we are designing the event to support **community building**, and our second co-convenor, [Crowd Conservation](#), is again leading a Mentorship Match program at Confluence. Our amazing Planning Committee is working hard to create an event that will inspire, teach, and connect everyone

who attends!

We are looking for your help in making Confluence 2026 as impactful as possible. Applications are open for [skill-building and community-building sessions](#), as well as applications for both [posters and art](#). The WCCN community (all of you) have so much to share, and we are so excited to see your ideas! Applications for sessions, posters and art have **just been extended until midnight on February 1st**!

Right now, early bird pricing is \$420 for a single registration, and this will be available until February 28, 2026.

For anyone who needs **assistance to attend**, we have a [short discount request](#) form. If approved, this will get you a discount of \$175 off of the current registration price. We also have a limited pool of funding for scholarships which are open to anyone, and can provide **up to \$1,450** to cover registration and travel. You can [apply for that scholarship here](#) – applications will close at **midnight on February 15, 2026**.

- Aireona Bonnie-Raschke, Associate Director of Practice

WCCN Homepage



The Fellows Program

CCC is thrilled to welcome Cohort 16 into our Fellows Program!

Each year, the CCC engages in a competitive process to select a new [cohort of Fellows](#). A total of six projects make up Cohort 16, which includes a combination of graduate students, faculty members, and conservation practitioners from across the globe.

Together, we will create productive platforms for people to have a voice in stewarding their local places and finding common ground among many different values. Bringing together Fellows from different countries and contexts creates an ideal learning environment that leverages the unique experiences, perspectives, and knowledge each Fellow brings to bear. Working in their learning cohort, Cohort 16 Fellows will advance **culturally relevant conservation** by ensuring local participation in decision-making. Together, we will reflect on these projects, unpacking what they can teach us both about the conditions that foster success and as well as those that can lead to failure.

Cohort 16 consists of 20 Fellows pursuing 6 conservation projects, working with communities in 7 countries. Underlying themes that tie these projects together include incorporating different knowledge systems into land stewardship, managing human-wildlife conflict, and elevating the role of women as stewards of the landscape.

- **Nature-based Solutions for Mangrove Conservation in Colombia-**
This project will study how diverse forms of care can strengthen community-led conservation with Afro-descendant women who are caring for mangroves, piangüa (clams), their communities, and their social and environmental wellbeing. By exploring relationships between social benefits and nature-based solutions, this team will unpack strategies that will lead to sustainable conservation.
- **Networks of Place in the Bolivian Amazon** - Indigenous territories are facing a variety of pressures, leading many people to move to and through various places to look for better lives. This project will fill information gaps about Indigenous realities in the Mamoré river and Tacana territories, allowing for needed updates to Territorial management and conservation planning in ways that uplift Indigenous agency and rights.
- **Canopy and Ember (North America)** - This project will advance Indigenous women's leadership in forestry and wildland fire in agencies and organizations throughout North America. The project team will work with a variety of stakeholders to plan strategically

and implement mentorship, networking, and leadership development, benefitting Indigenous women in academia, agencies, non-profits, and Tribal communities.

- **Protecting Primates in Ghana** - This project, led by a young conservationist working at a local NGO, will contribute to the long-term survival of several newly-discovered and highly endangered primates. The NGO has already worked with local stakeholders to establish a crocodile sanctuary in the area and will build on these relationships and successes to co-create a primate conservation plan.
- **Protecting Crops, Protecting Cranes (Rwanda)** - This project will co-create solutions to conflicts between farming communities and endangered Grey Crowned Cranes. The Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance and the Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association will bring together their different areas of expertise, which includes deep local experience with crane/farmer conflicts. Experimental designs will be tested with Grey Crowned Cranes housed at the Denver Zoo, along with wild cranes in Rwanda.
- **Building Tolerance on the Frontlines of Human-Carnivore Conflict in Tanzania** - The CSU Center for Human Carnivore Coexistence and Lion Landscapes, a local NGO, will work with local pastoralist communities who are facing myriad challenges, including drought, lion predation, and lack of needed resources. The project team will seek solutions that mitigate conflict with lions by looking beyond conservation priorities and holistically addressing pressing community needs.

- Allison Brody, Associate Director of Learning

Fellows Homepage



Colorado Forest Collaboratives Network

Thank you for engaging with the Colorado Forest Collaboratives Network in 2025! In case you missed it, check out our [2025 Year In Review newsletter](#) for **highlights from the year**, including links to our Branching Out recordings, blog posts, and more.

- Katie McNovak, CFCN Coordinator

[CFCN Homepage](#)



New Program Alert for 2026: the Collaborative Conservation Institute

Natural resource challenges are more complex and urgent than ever. And working with landowners and communities to face these challenges is more important than ever. Working with communities requires approaches and skills that most of us are not taught in school. This is why, in partnership with the [Colorado State Forest Service](#), [CSU Extension](#), and the [Colorado Forest Restoration Institute](#), **we are launching the Collaborative Conservation Institute in spring 2026**. The Institute will offer practitioners training in community engagement, communication, facilitation, conflict management, collaborative leadership, and more.

Our pilot training will focus on forest health and wildfire in Colorado. If you work for Colorado State Forest Service or CSU Extension, please consider joining us. If you work for a community-based collaborative in Colorado that works on forest issues, there may be an opportunity for you to participate, too. Thanks to generous funding from [Confluence Collaboration](#) and CSU's Warner College of Natural Resources, **tuition will be waived for the 2026 Institute**. To learn more, contact [Allison Brody](#).

In tandem with the Institute, we are also launching the [Common Ground Fellowship](#), a new program that we are co-creating with students from the [CSU chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology](#). During this Fellowship, CSU students (undergraduates and graduates) will learn practices in collaborative conservation, interview practitioners, and create a product that tells the story of

collaborative conservation.

If you are a CSU student and you are interested in learning principles and skills for solving conservation challenges involving people with different values, perspectives, and experiences, please consider [applying](#) for one of the twelve slots in the 2026 cohort. All students will be eligible to apply to the Common Ground Fellowship, regardless of major or academic level.

Learn More and Apply Here



Other News and Opportunities

Community Wildfire Defense Grant Awarded to Peaks to People Water Fund | In a big win for wildfire defense in Colorado, this \$9.8 million award will skyrocket preventative, research, and preparedness efforts over the next 5 years! This key initiative of the Big Thompson Watershed Health Partnership unites government agencies, fire departments, non-profits, community groups, and landowners to support fire-adapted communities and resilient forests and watersheds. [You can read more about this success here.](#)

NFF Fellowship Application Closing Soon | The National Forest Foundation is now accepting applications from graduate students (master's or PhD) for its 2026 Conservation Connect Fellowship! This paid fellowship offers hands-on conservation experience, mentorship from NFF and Forest Service professionals, leadership training, and the chance to work directly on

collaborative stewardship of our National Forests. Fellows earn \$22.90/hour for up to 300 hours during summer 2026 and/or the 2026–27 academic year.

[Apply by January 25, 2026.](#)

Funding Opportunity: Drought Resilience in the Upper Colorado River Basin | The Foundation for America's Public Lands is now accepting pre-proposals for its Drought Resilience Fund! This opportunity supports shovel-ready restoration projects that address prolonged drought and improve natural resource conditions on BLM-managed lands and waters in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Projects must be led by a non-BLM partner working closely with a BLM field office. Pre-proposals are due by **January 20**—a great chance to collaborate and put impactful drought solutions on the ground. Interested? Reach out to [Scott Miller](#), program lead, and/or program officer [Daley Burns](#).

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:

Conservation Officer for Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game | This position will enforce fish and game laws, patrol public lands, investigate wildlife violations, and promote ethical outdoor behavior. They will collaborate with biologists to gather data, and assist in wildlife population monitoring. Educating the public on wildlife laws and conservation efforts while building relationships rooted in respect and stewardship is also key. The candidate will also work with landowners and communities to address wildlife-related issues. [Learn more here.](#)

New York Agriculture Projects Coordinator for Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, NY | This full-time position that will work on agriculture conservation, water quality improvement, and climate smart practices. They are a leader with strong interpersonal skills, coordinating agricultural BMP project implementation and taking decisive action. This position will engage directly with a variety of stakeholders and provide strategic support for the program. [Learn more here.](#)

Black Rosy-Finch Survey Technician for State of Wyoming | This seasonal position conducts alpine bird and mammal surveys in Wyoming's high-elevation mountain ranges. Field work will involve extensive off-trail travel in challenging terrain, including point-count surveys, overnight camping, and long-distance backpacking. Work schedules will vary based on weather and field conditions and will require extended periods in the backcountry. [Learn more here.](#)

Watershed Coordinator for Mancos, CO Conservation District | Lead multi-benefit watershed and soil health projects. This full time role focuses on irrigation water management, drought resilience, habitat improvement, and soil conservation, while coordinating with local partners, producers, and technical experts. The position also develops project proposals, supports monitoring, and helps secure funding to advance soil health and watershed resilience in the region. [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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