

Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed  
Daniel Bowker, Forest and Fire Project Manager

#### CPRW partnership with American Forest Foundation for landowner outreach

The Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed is a local non-profit focused on improving and maintaining the health and resilience of the Poudre River watershed through community collaboration. CPRW was formed in the aftermath of the Hewlett Gulch and High Park Fires in 2012, and the subsequent flooding, erosion, and debris flows in the fall of 2013. Our coalition helped to identify funding for, coordinate, and collaborate on post-fire and post-flood recovery work, stabilizing streambanks, restoring streamside vegetation, and increasing the ability of the streams to withstand the next major disturbance event. In the past few years, we have also focused on the health and wildfire resiliency of the forests in the watershed, and have thinned and performed prescribed burns on several hundred acres in order to increase the ability of those areas to withstand wildfire. By thinning overly-dense forested acres, we can modify the structure of the forest so that when fire moves through, it performs the work that it did for thousands of years before European settlement and a century of fire suppression, reducing small diameter fuels, and creating and maintaining openings within the canopy. This kind of frequent, low-intensity fire is in stark contrast to the irregular, but high-intensity and devastating wildfire we saw in many areas of the High Park Fire, in which the dense ladder fuels allowed the fire to move into the canopy, killing large swaths of mature trees that are adapted to and would survive low-intensity surface fires.

To prioritize areas in the watershed where the forest needs restoration, CPRW works closely with the US Forest Service, and we work to identify private landowners who own property near areas where the USFS will be working on its lands. By doing forest restoration work at the landscape scale and treating private lands that are in proximity to federal lands where work is being done, we are able to achieve more benefit with limited funding, and maximize watershed resilience to wildfire. To this end, CPRW recently received a grant from the American Forest Foundation to reach out to private landowners who live within 3 miles of planned USFS forest restoration treatments, to start a conversation with those landowners about forest management. A mailer was sent to more than 300 targeted landowners in April, focusing on the upper Poudre watershed around Glacier View Meadows, Red Feather Lakes, Crystal Lakes, and Rustic, and the responses are coming in. Digital marketing was paired with the mailing campaign, in order to reinforce the message. During this campaign, CPRW is offering a site visit from a forester at no cost to the landowner, as well as information on tours and outreach events dealing with forest restoration and prescribed fire. These site visits will allow forest landowners to voice their questions and concerns to a forester, who will make management suggestions and point the landowners to resources available to help them reach their goals for their land. CPRW will also be producing a landowner guide to forest restoration, to be distributed to those landowners who request it. This guide will cover the ecology of our fire-adapted Front Range forests, how our forests and fire behavior in them has changed over the past century or so, and management techniques to restore our forests so they are more resilient to wildfire and other disturbances like insects and disease. The guide will also contain a comprehensive list of local agencies and resources who can help landowners with management planning and project implementation.

CPRW is planning another round of this mailing and digital marketing campaign later this summer. The second round may follow up with landowners in the first target area, or may expand further north into the Cherokee Park vicinity, depending on the response we get to the first round. Site visits with landowners will be happening this summer and fall, and we hope to begin management planning with some of these landowners this year, followed by implementation of forest restoration treatments. If you received one of these mailers, please fill it out and send it in to take advantage of these resources CPRW is offering!