



Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation District Board *Working Proposal from the National Forest Foundation*

As the congressionally-chartered nonprofit partner of the U.S. Forest Service, the National Forest Foundation is uniquely aligned to act as a designated fund manager for recreation projects benefitting National Forests and surrounding public lands in Gunnison County.

By directly engaging local communities and leveraging private and public funding, the National Forest Foundation (NFF) improves forest health and Americans' outdoor recreation experiences. We believe that communities should play a leading role in determining the future of the 193-million-acre National Forest System, so we focus our efforts on connecting these communities with the necessary tools and funding to become active and devoted stewards of this incredible public estate. We focus our efforts on on-the-ground projects, seeking efficiency and leveraging support whenever possible.

ADVANTAGES OF PARTNERING WITH THE NATIONAL FOREST FOUNDATION

The NFF is an established, proficient and reliable leader in putting designated funds to work on public land recreation projects throughout the U.S. The NFF's commitment, experience, knowledge and professionalism combine to ensure enduring conservation outcomes and several important advantages:

- The confidence of working with the Congressionally-chartered foundation explicitly charged with administering funds to support and benefit the 193-million-acre National Forest System (National Forest Foundation Act Amendment Act of 1990, 16 U.S. Code § 583j, et seq.).
- The skill and expertise, gained through more than 20 years of experience, in funding and managing recreation projects on National Forests and Grasslands, and other public and private lands that impact or adjoin National Forests and Grasslands.
- The credibility of working with a recognized leader in managing collaborative, community-based restoration on the National Forest System.
- The highest level of accountability and transparency in partnering with a trusted conservation organization subject to an annual OMB Single Audit under 2 CFR part 200, subpart F.
- Effective, consistent and expert financial management by an accounting team well-versed in trust accounting with oversight by a Board-appointed Audit and Finance Committee.
- An extensive network of partners and a multitude of leveraging opportunities, allowing for maximized conservation investments.

GUNNISON COUNTY COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP FUND CONCEPT

In Gunnison County, the NFF, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, envisions a community stewardship fund to support on-the-ground recreation and forest health improvements to National Forests and adjacent public lands. This fund, which could be anchored by a cooperative partnership with the Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation District, would pool local contributions for greater impact. The NFF would be responsible for 1) collecting and responsibly managing funds from public and private contributors, 2) coordinating directly with the U.S. Forest Service and local partners to identify and select high priority recreation or forest health projects on National Forests in Gunnison County (and potentially adjacent public lands if projects benefit National Forests), coordinating with the U.S. Forest Service on project design and implementation, and allocating funds to local non-profit stewardship organizations and contractors to implement selected projects.

To help successfully launch the community stewardship fund, the NFF will match the Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation District's FY19 contribution with at least \$15,000 in additional funding.

Matching funds would be reassessed on an annual basis based on the NFF's federal appropriation and other contributions.

SNAPSHOT OF SIMILAR SUCCESSFUL NFF PROGRAMS IN COLORADO AND ARIZONA

White River National Forest Ski Conservation Fund, Colorado

The White River National Forest Ski Conservation Fund has provided a way for ski resorts in Summit and Eagle County to meet local conservation challenges since 2007. Through the Ski Conservation Fund, the NFF pools donations from patrons of Copper Mountain, Arapahoe Basin, and all of Vail Resorts' Colorado mountains – Breckenridge, Keystone, Beaver Creek, and Vail. The National Forest Foundation provides a 50-cent match on every dollar donated by guests and invests the pooled funds in the stewardship of the White River National Forest through grants to local nonprofits and contractors.

Over 10 years, the Ski Conservation Fund has directly invested over \$4.5M in 132 projects on the White River National Forest. Grantees further leverage the funds with volunteer time and matching funds. With these additional resources, the total value of the Fund to date is \$13.8M. These investments support critical maintenance and improvements on the White River National Forest and help many local nonprofit organizations build capacity while boosting local economies. Over 10 years, the projects have resulted in tangible results, including 1,557 miles of trail maintained, 206 campsites maintained, over 1,700 road and trail crossings and culverts improved, over 3,000 acres of habitat restored and over 22,000 volunteers engaged in projects.

The National Forest Foundation manages similar partnerships with ski areas and resorts across the country. A full list of partnerships is [available online](#).

Northern Arizona Forest Fund, Arizona

The NFF and Salt River Project developed the Northern Arizona Forest Fund (NAFF) to address declining forest health in the Salt and Verde River watersheds, which are the sources of irrigation, commercial, and municipal water supplies for millions of Arizonans. By leveraging contributions from Arizona cities, businesses and residents, the NAFF provides a mechanism that allows local and downstream beneficiaries to invest in the lands and watersheds upon which they depend.

The NFF manages the multi-million dollar NAFF program, collecting contributions, coordinating directly with the Forest Service, and allocating funds to local non-profit stewardship organizations, contractors, and the Forest Service to implement high priority projects on the Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Kaibab, Prescott, and Tonto National Forests. To provide participating contributors with clear expectations on how funds will be spent and the benefits provided, the NFF coordinates with an advisory council of contributors to create a list of priority projects that will improve the health of National Forests in the Salt and Verde River watersheds. Each year, contributors receive official reports detailing accomplishments associated with these priority projects. *More information about the NAFF is [available online](#).*

CONCLUSION

The National Forest Foundation is uniquely positioned to manage a community stewardship fund for Gunnison County. The NFF already has experience in this arena and its focus on leveraging funds, when appropriate, adds value and generates additional improvements to National Forests and surrounding public lands.