JUNE 2021, ISSUE 1

THE LIVE STREAM

Official Newsletter of Coal Creek Watershed Coalition

Executive Director Update

BY ASHLEY BEMBENEK

While the snow-capped peaks and vibrant green vegetation fill me with energy and optimism, this year's anemic snowpack and abbreviated runoff season give me a sense of foreboding. As our climate continues to change and persistent drought becomes an on-going part of the narrative, CCWC's work is more important than ever. Reducing nonpoint source pollution and improving watershed health will increase watershed resiliency, protect drinking water supplies, and provide a hedge against an uncertain climate future.

I hope you'll join CCWC in protecting and improving our water resources. In 2021, CCWC will continue water quality monitoring and project planning in the Coal Creek, Slate River, and Washington Gulch watersheds. Our monitoring programs provide vital data to assure that water quality is maintained and where possible improved.

2020 Wasn't a Waste

BY ALLI DEL GIZZI

Backcountry waste management isn't the most appealing of dinner conversations, but its impacts are far reaching, particularly as tourism and recreation increase throughout our watersheds.

In 2020, CCWC partnered with the Town of Crested Butte, the US Forest Service, and the National Forest Foundation to install a permanent structure with two vault toilets in the Washington Gulch Watershed, about 1.6 miles past the Long Lake Trailhead.

Based on pumping records from portable toilets at nearby sites, CCWC expects the new permanent toilets will intercept about 800 pounds of human waste each year. By capturing this waste in an appropriate facility, the project protects watershed health, water quality, and improves the recreational experience.

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW:

- 282 Water Quality Samples
- 50,000 Temperature Measurements
- 2 Backcountry Toilets
- 6 Algae Samples
- 6 Pebble Counts

↑ Algae in Washington Gulch

↑ Washington Gulch Toilet Installation

Field Notes

BY ALLI DEL GIZZI

I've been working as biologist in aquatic systems for close to eight years now and somehow I made it to 2020 without seeing a beaver. One of my first jobs was in the Pacific Northwest where I worked on a field crew collecting a wide array of watershed data. Throughout my time with this program I saw huge herds of elk, bald eagles, salamanders as big as my arm, and river otters feasting on shellfish, but I just could not manage catch a glimpse of those furry rodents!

When CCWC's 2020 field season started up in July, I was surprised when beavers almost immediately moved in near one of our field sites. Clearly they were present and active, but they didn't tend to be out when I was working. Finally, in early November on one of my last field days of the season, I caught my lucky break. Something in the river caught my eye as I was driving home along Slate River Road. I pulled over and to my sheer and utter delight, three beavers were busily harvesting from a willow stand. After turning off my car I watched for about 20 minutes as they interacted, swam, waddled on land, and collected limbs of the trees. I could barely contain my joy!

CCWC is currently pursuing opportunities with local partners to implement low-tech, process-based wetland restoration projects across the valley emphasizing the use of beaver mimicry in rivers and streams. For more see the Gunnison Country Times article "Leave it to Beavers".

Alli started with CCWC in July 2020 and is currently working on an addendum to the Upper Slate River Watershed Plan.

Beaver dams in the Upper Slate River Watershed impound water to support extensive wetlands, attenuate flood flows, and buoy flows in the late summer.

Support CCWC Today!

Your tax-deductible donations help us fulfill our mission and support various programs and projects.We can't do this without your help! Mail us a check or donate online at CoalCreek.org

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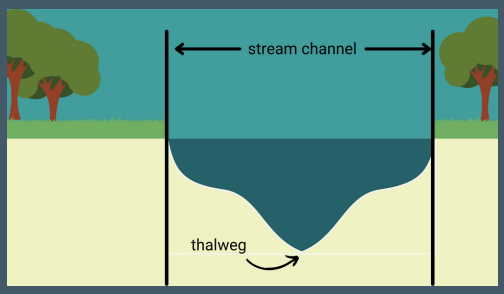
WATER WORDS

In water words we explore the etymology of words we commonly use in the world of water.

Thalweg (n.) the deepest part of a stream channel. The thalweg is nearly always the area of a stream with the fastest flow, making it an important location for measurements (flow, temperature, etc.)



Thalweg is a combination of the German words *thal* (valley) *+ weg* (way) which translates as the "valley way".

Next time you're looking at a stream, see if you can spot the thalweg, it can be right in the middle or against the bank!

Volunteers Wanted!

Feel like splashing around in Coal Creek as part of our water sampling program? We can use your help at our water quality sampling events throughout the year!

We are also looking for new board members.

If you are interested in joining our Board of Directors or other volunteer opportunities, please Email us at **director@coalcreek.org.**