



Photo Credit: Mary White

Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance (IPWA)

2025 Annual Report

Hello IPWA Volunteers, Supporters, and Friends,

In 2025, the Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance (IPWA) remained steadfast in its mission to preserve and protect the Indian Peaks and James Peak Wilderness Areas. Thanks to the dedication of our 144 volunteers, we conducted 598 patrols (winter and summer), covered over 4,600 miles, and engaged with over 55,000 members of the public - 23% more than last year - educating visitors to help ensure that these cherished landscapes continue to thrive for future generations.

This year, we welcomed our largest group of new volunteers to our team (33). Additionally, we continued our annual Photo Contest, and this report proudly features some of the incredible winning images. In addition to our Trailhead Host days, we also provided weekend volunteers at two popular Brainard Lake Recreation Area trailhead huts (Long Lake TH and Mitchell Lake TH).

IPWA is not alone in working to protect Wilderness in Colorado, and with several “sister” organizations, we helped plan and implement a Wilderness Alliance Gathering, held in Keystone in October. Eleven of the 15 Wilderness groups in Colorado attended informational sessions and networking events in conjunction with Forest Service staff.

Financially, we remain in a strong position thanks to the generosity of our donors. This support has enabled us to fund 10 new trail counters for the US Forest Service, as well as continue to allocate funds for impactful “brick and mortar” projects. The Endowment Fund we initiated in 2024 has grown to approximately \$350,000 thanks to a legacy gift from a long-time donor, and we continue to plan for IPWA’s financial stability in future years.

Our success would not be possible without our dedicated volunteers—including our hardworking Board of Directors, the U.S. Forest Service Boulder Ranger District, and our supporters. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to protecting these special wilderness areas. We look forward to another year of stewardship, education, and advocacy.

Fiona Garvin
Chair, IPWA Board of Directors

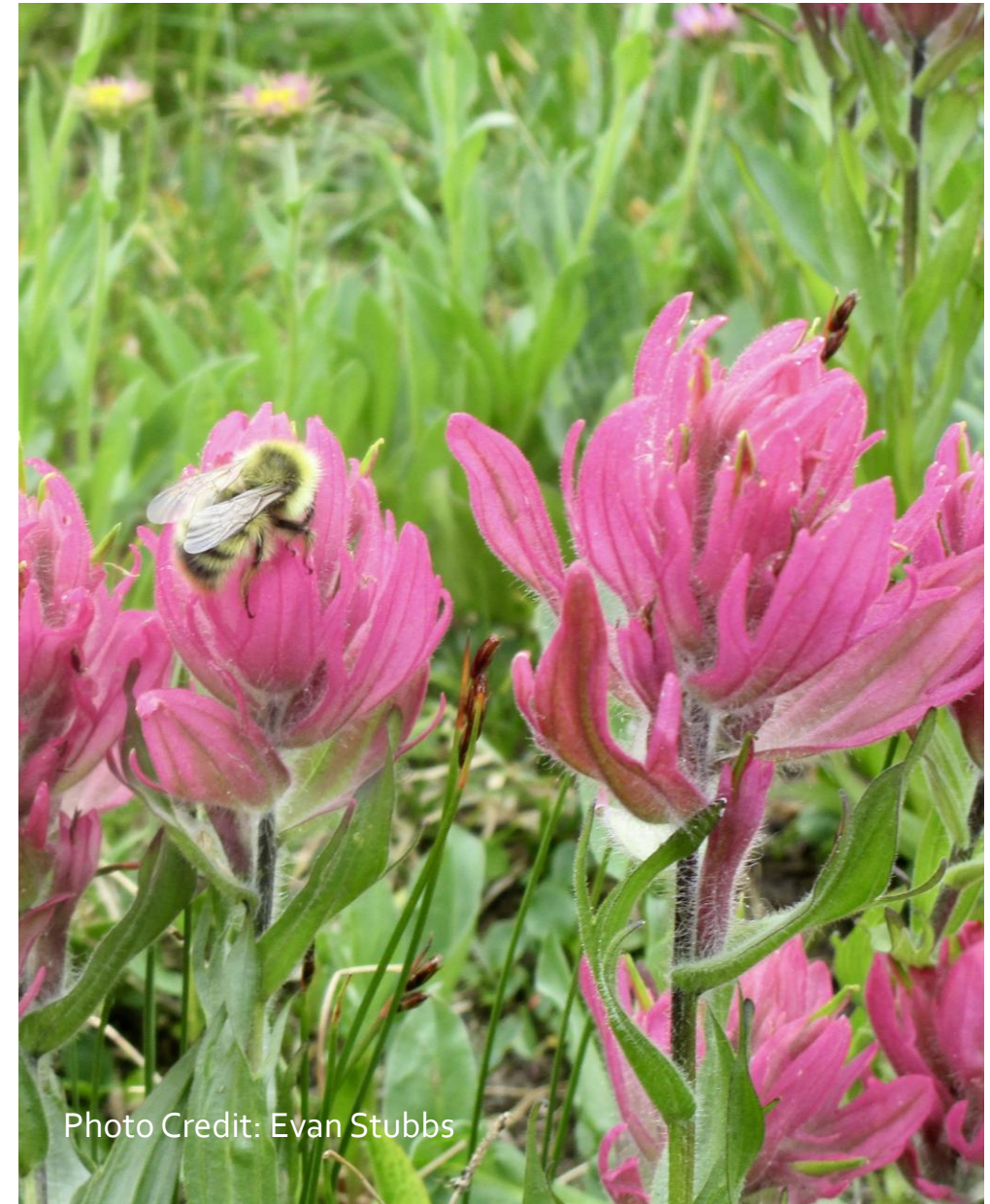
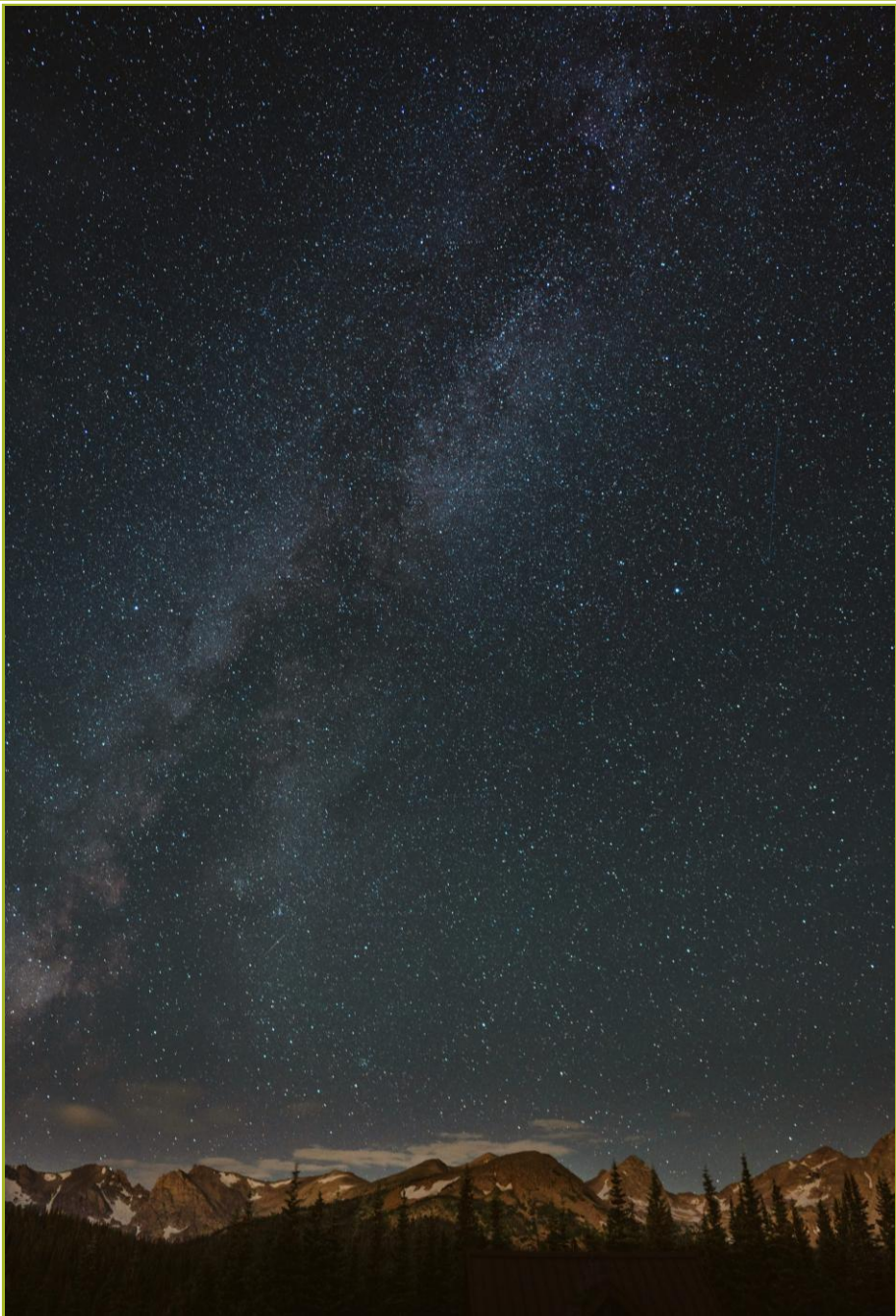


Photo Credit: Evan Stubbs



Our Mission

The Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance's mission is to
"Preserve and Protect the
Indian Peaks and James Peak
Wilderness Areas."

Photo Credit: Nina Larsen Reed

“The idea of wilderness needs no defense. It only needs defenders.” — Edward Abbey

Your support for the Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance helped us actively protect the Indian Peaks and James Peaks Wilderness areas which provide an array of important benefits to our communities such as:

- Clean water and clean air
- Protected plant and wildlife habitat
- Economic value
- Opportunities for solitude and outdoor adventure
- Scientific knowledge of natural processes
- Fire education and wildfire prevention



Photo Credit: Bill Bowman

Our History – celebrating 41 years!

In October of 1978, the Indian Peaks Wilderness was designated by Congress as part of the Wilderness Preservation System. With its new designation, it started to receive more and more visitation and impacts.

In 1980, a citizens' working group was organized by 3 pioneering women - Dr. Anne Forrest Ketchin, Jan Robertson, and Anne Vickery. In collaboration with the USFS, this group produced a set of 27 points for preserving and protecting the Indian Peaks, and in 1985 IPWA was officially incorporated as a Colorado Non-Profit organization.



Photo Credit: Mary White



Photo Credit: Dan Weprin

Our Wilderness Areas



Photo Credit: Ainsley Medina

Indian Peaks Wilderness

The Indian Peaks Wilderness is among the top five most visited wilderness areas in the country with ~ 150,000+ visitors per season.

~30-minute drive from Boulder,
~ 60-minutes from Denver.

Situated within the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests.

Peaks were named by Ellsworth Bethel in the early 1900s after native American tribes that visited/populated the area or were based in the West.

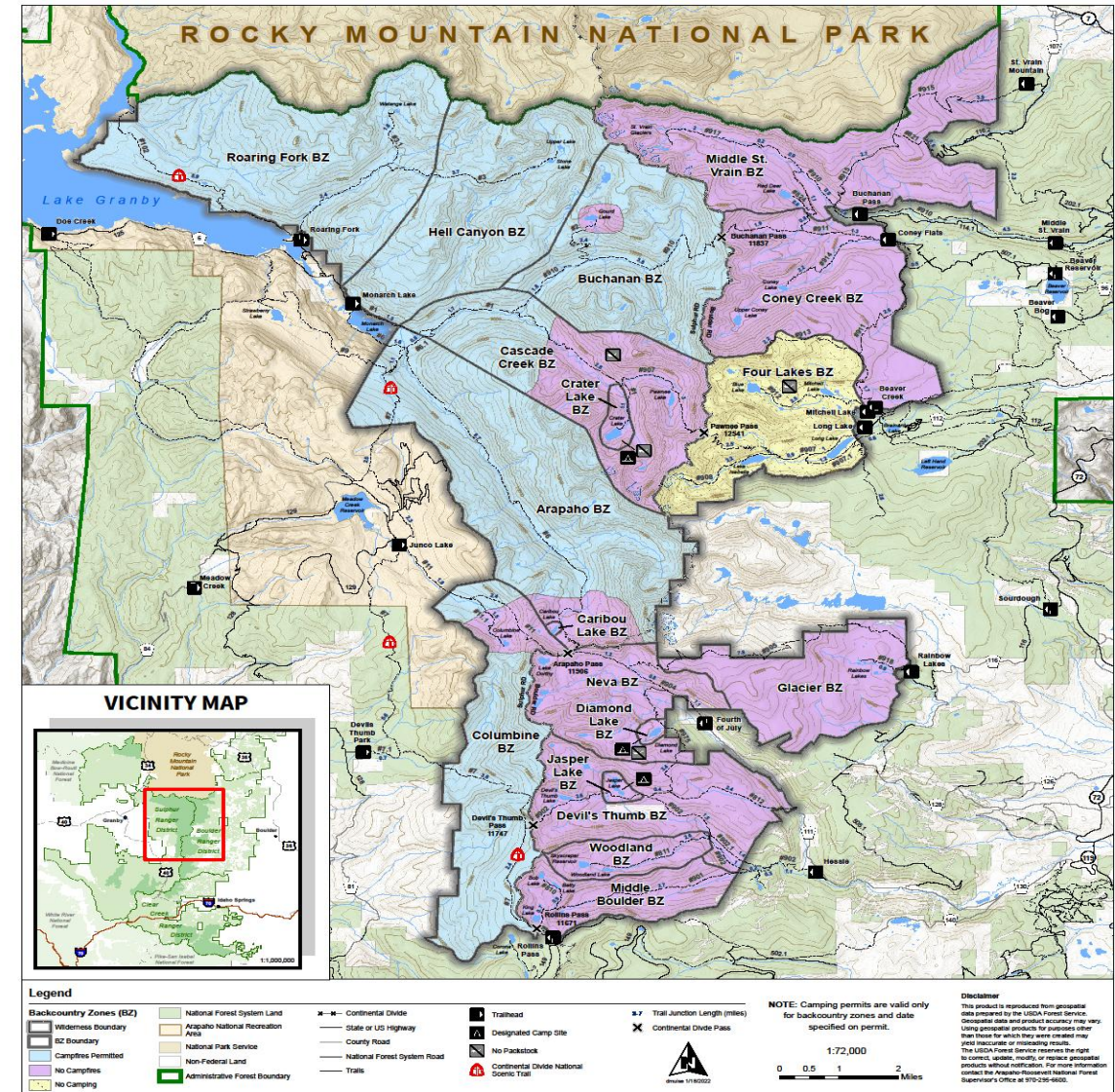
Indian Peaks Wilderness

The IPW was designated as wilderness in 1978 by an act of Congress and encompasses approx. 75,000 acres.

- Originally proposed to be part of Rocky Mtn National Park by Enos Mills, the IPW is located just south of the Park.
- The IPW stretches 18 miles north/south and 15 miles east-west at the widest point.
- Elevations range from 8,300' to 13,500'.
- 7 peaks over 13,000'.
- 28 maintained trails covering ~ 130 miles.
- Camping permits required (one of two Wildernesses in Colorado which requires permits).

INDIAN PEAKS WILDERNESS AREA

Camping Permit Required June 1 through September 15



James Peak Wilderness

James Peak Wilderness receives heavy usage summer and winter, with ATVs and snowmobiles using the old Rollins Pass road to access the Wilderness as well as thousands of backpackers, anglers, and hunters each year.

- ~ 60-minute drive from Boulder,
- ~ 60 minutes from Denver.

Situated within the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, JPW encompasses three main lake basins, plus access to James Peak and western slope trails.



Photo Credit: Dan Weprin



James Peak Wilderness

The JPW was designated as wilderness in 2002 by an act of Congress and was signed into existence by George W. Bush.

Approx. 17,000 acres, with the majority on the East side of the Continental Divide.

It is situated within 4 distinct Colorado counties – Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, and Grand.

Named after Edwin James, a botanist who was part of Stephen Long's expedition to Colorado in 1820.

Approx. 20 miles of trails.

Elevation from 9,000' to over 13,000'.

Upper montane, sub-alpine, alpine ecosystems.

The Winter Park Ski train from Denver goes underneath the JPW at the Moffat Tunnel!

Our USFS Boulder Ranger District Partner



IPWA "assists the Boulder Ranger District by providing a volunteer presence in the Indian Peaks and James Peak Wilderness Areas that promotes responsible visitor use and supports the preservation of the Wilderness and the areas natural resources."

IPWA and USFS:

- Work together under a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which defines roles, responsibilities, and working relationships.
- Conduct joint volunteer training annually
- Plan and execute joint projects annually
- Volunteers complete annual service agreements and RAW (Risk Awareness Worksheet)

Alliances

We also partner with and form alliances with a diverse range of organizations to achieve our mission.



Current Alliances & Partners

- USFS Boulder Ranger District
- Outdoor Recreation Hospitality
- Bear Vault
- Boulder Bookstore
- Bryan Mountain Ski Patrol
- Colorado Mountain Club (CMC)
- Eldora Ski Area
- National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance (NWSA)
- Poudre Wilderness Volunteers
- Eagle Summit Wilderness Volunteers
- University of Colorado
- and more!



Photo Credit: David Stringfield

Our Volunteers

Volunteer Impact

Our 144 volunteers performed 598 patrols in 2025, covering over 4,600 miles (winter and summer). While these figures vary year-to-year, we are proud to go above our target of 3,000-4,000 miles per year. We encountered 55,388 members of the public – a number which continues to rise each year.

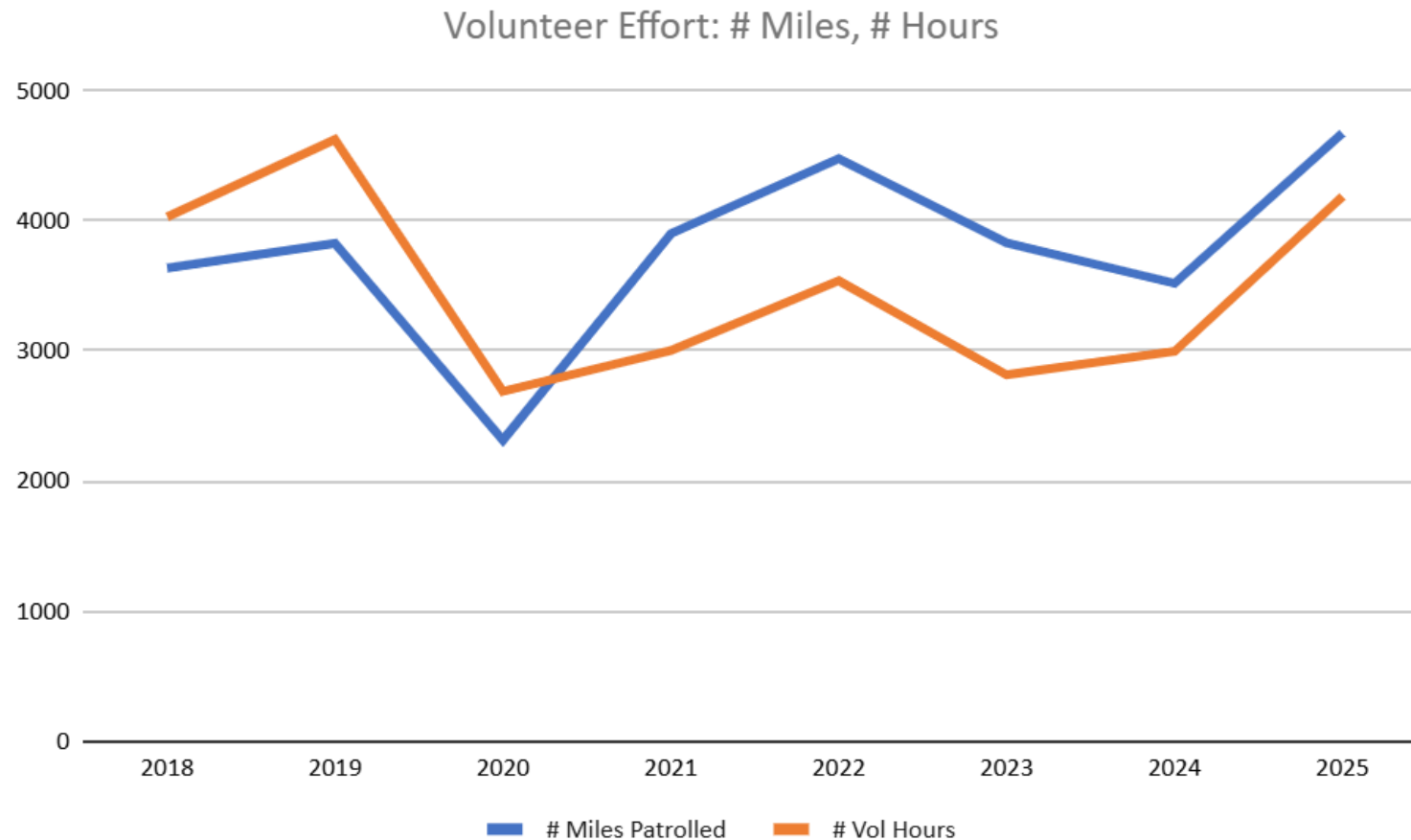




Photo Credit: Jeff Bluhm

Our Programs

Our Programs

To “Preserve and Protect the Indian Peaks and James Peak Wilderness Areas” we implement four main programs with our 100% volunteer workforce.



Patrols



Education



Advocacy



Restoration

Wilderness Patrol: Summer

In the 2025 Summer Patrol season, IPWA volunteers:

Spent 3,418 hours on 456 patrols, covering 4,143 miles

Contacted 52,457 members of the public; a 23% increase from 2024

Counted 7,384 dogs – a 17% increase from 2024, of which 579 were off-leash

Removed 152 illegal fire rings, a 52% increase from 2024



Photo Credit: Bill Bowman

EWDBowman*

Trailhead Host Programs

Our Trailhead Host program hosted one day at East Portal Trailhead (James Peak Wilderness) to hand out “wag bags” to backpackers to reinforce Leave No Trace Principles. The USFS also co-hosted a day with us at the newly restored Hessie Cabin (Indian Peaks Wilderness). We also staffed the two Brainard Lake Trailheads (Long Lake, Mitchell Lake) on every Saturday and Sunday throughout the summer and fall.

We contacted 7,923 visitors during Trailhead Host days (an 8% increase from 2024), including 269 backpackers (a 35% increase from 2024).



Wilderness Patrols: Winter

Our volunteers patrol the Brainard Lake Recreation Area and James Peak Area from the end of hunting season to the start of the summer season .

IPWA Winter Patrollers complete additional classroom and field training in:

- Wilderness First Aid and CPR
- Radio and satellite device communications

In 2024-2025, winter patrol season, IPWA Volunteers:

- Completed 142 patrols
- Logged 772 volunteer hours
- Skied or snowshoed over 535 miles
- Contacted more than 2,931 visitors
- Encountered 165 bikes and 426 dogs (88 off-leash)



Wilderness Restoration



In 2025, IPWA Volunteers worked to remove 20 trees impacting wilderness trails. We completed four trail work projects in conjunction with USFS staff on the Waldrop Trail in Brainard Lakes Recreation Area and Crater Lakes Trail in James Peak Wilderness. We anticipate increased efforts in 2026, both in tree work and trail maintenance!



Wilderness Advocacy & Outreach

In addition to Trailhead Hosting, IPWA participated in several outreach events.

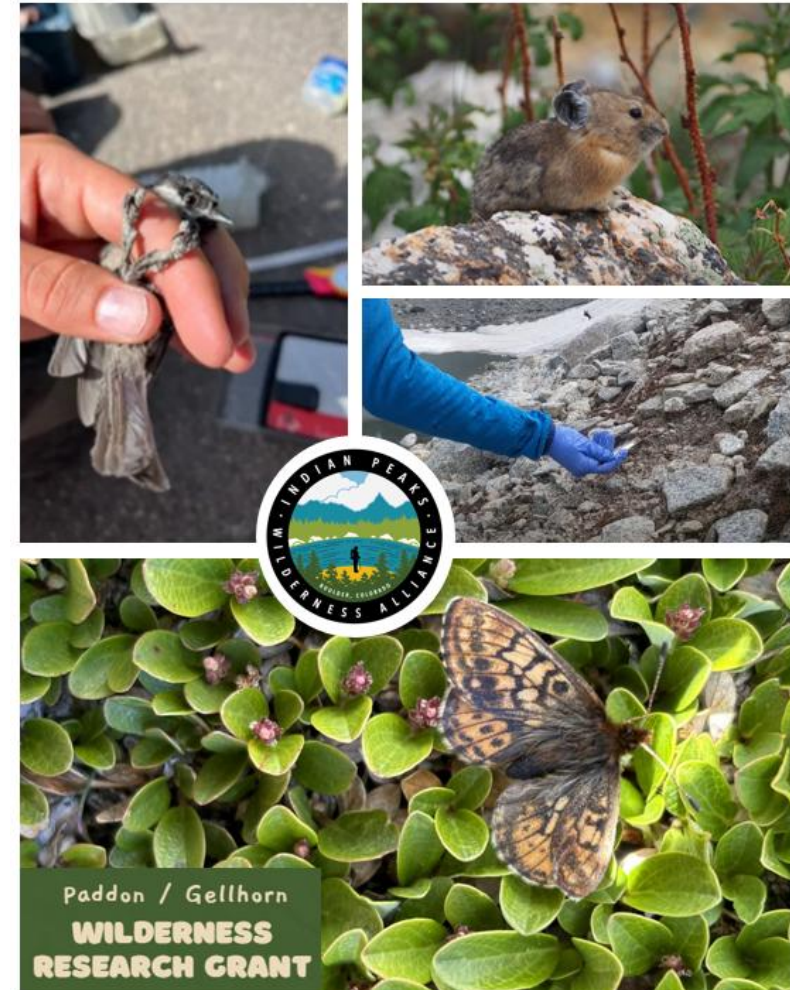
- IPWA & the USFS held joint outreach events at the Denver and Boulder REIs, discussing topics such as COTREX, obtaining permits, trail suggestions, etc.
- We also partnered with Women's Wilderness for an educational outreach event which included a patrol hike in the Indian Peaks Wilderness to Diamond Lake
- IPWA also participated in Colorado Mountain Club's Nurture the Land event at the Dairy Arts Center. It was a fun and inspiring evening with ~150 community members. Sara's presentation communicated a deep appreciation of our beloved Wildernesses, the importance of stewardship, and a feeling of empowerment to get involved. Watch our presentation [here](#)!
- We also reach over 5,000 contacts regularly through our monthly newsletter, our website, and our revamped social media channels.



Supporting Education: Wilderness Research Grants

In 2025, IPWA funded two post-graduate research grants:

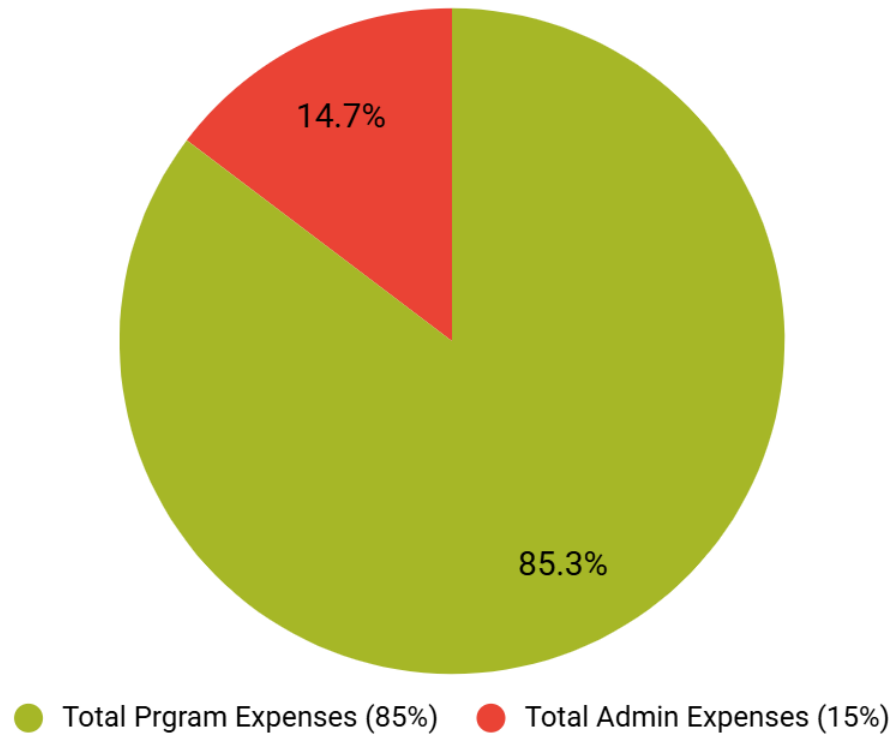
- Dani Laird (MS in Ecology & Master in Environmental Management dual candidate, Clark School of Environment and Sustainability, Western Colorado University): Satellites to species conservation: Spatial modeling for the endangered Uncompahgre Fritillary Butterfly ([see video report](#))
- Samatha Kruczek (Undergraduate, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Colorado-Boulder): Characterization and spatial analysis of scaly-leg mites in two chickadee species across an elevational gradient in the Colorado Front Range ([see video report](#))



Paddon / Gellhorn
**WILDERNESS
RESEARCH GRANT**

2025 Financials

IPWA Expenses 2025



Total Revenue:	\$63,347
Total Expenses:	\$33,054
Overage:	\$30,293
(invested to cover future expenses)	

Photo Contest

2025 was IPWA's 11th year to hold our annual Volunteer and Supporters Photo Contest. We had 56 submissions, of which the Board selected 12 to turn into a note card packet. Super Supporter donors who give \$100+ are given a set of these notecards as a "Thank You" for their financial support.



Photo Credit: Bill Bowman

Challenges/Opportunities to Our Mission

During our next planning cycle, we see a number of challenges facing our organization, the USFS, and the IPW/JPW Areas including:



Overuse
*Continued
Colorado
population growth*



**Lack of
Awareness
of Leave No Trace
Principles**



Technology
**Drones, Mtn Bikes,
Social Media**



Pollution



**Climate
Change**

In addition, the USFS has faced a freeze on Seasonal Ranger hires for 2025, and on-going uncertainty regarding federal funding levels, which will reduce their enforcement and trail maintenance presence in the Wilderness and other public lands.

2025 IPWA Board of Directors



Photo credit: Andrew Robinson

Board Officers:

- Fiona Garvin - Board Chair
- Peter Fellenz - Vice Chair
- Marilyn Schmitt - Board Treasurer
- Conrad Lattes - Board Secretary

At-Large Board Members:

- Aaron Swain - Training Coordinator
- Alexa Carollo - Volunteer Coordinator
- Peter Fellenz – Mentor Coordinator
- Andy Gup - Winter Patrol & Sawyer Coordinator
- CJ Gup - Quartermaster (Uniforms and Gear)
- Cynthia Girand – Outreach & Education Coordinator
- Kenzie Tierney - Communications & Newsletter Coordinator
- Sara Raley - Summer Patrol Coordinator
- Yonah Cohen - Web Designer & IT Support

A wide-angle photograph of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, there are large, light-colored boulders and patches of green grass. A small, clear blue lake is nestled in the middle ground, surrounded by rocky slopes. The mountains in the background are rugged, with patches of snow and green vegetation. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The text "Thank You" is centered in the middle of the image.

Thank You

Photo Credit: Barry Erdman



Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance (IPWA)

www.indianpeakswilderness.org