

# FRIENDS OF THE YAMPA 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

## RESPECT THE YAMPA





## FRIENDS OF THE YAMPA 2025 ANNUAL REPORT CONTENTS

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## ABOUT FRIENDS OF THE YAMPA

**Friends of the Yampa** is a group based on one common passion, a shared love for the Yampa River. Established in 1981, we have a long standing history of working to develop support for a healthy Yampa River that supports a vibrant, diverse economy and is accessible for all. We organize river cleanups; work to provide access to the river; hold discussions about the Yampa's important and rare attributes; fund and help build river habitats and river features for a variety of uses; and participate in a local, regional and national policy efforts and campaigns. Our annual Yampa River Festival is a mainstay and a

big part of our spring efforts and then in the fall we hold our annual fundraiser, the Big Snow Bash. Every May/June we partner with American Rivers and OARS to host an annual Yampa River Awareness Project float trip down Yampa Canyon. We engage with stakeholders and work to bridge the gap between recreation and agriculture. Our Youth River Camps help inspire youth to love and respect the Yampa. Today, the Yampa River and its tributaries remain a model of a healthy river system, not only here in Northwest Colorado but in the entire Colorado River Basin and the Western U.S.

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**Our mission** is to protect and enhance the environmental and recreational integrity of the Yampa River and its tributaries through education, stewardship, advocacy and partnerships.

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## SUPPORT US

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



In 2025, our small but dedicated team accomplished an incredible amount across a large and complex stretch of the Yampa River. Doing so with limited staff requires creativity, persistence and strong partnerships, and I am deeply proud of the team's commitment to this work. With the support of our community, partners and funders, we expanded engagement through new interpretive materials, including Spanish-language displays at the Yampa River Center, facilitated grants for seven projects through the Yampa River Fund, completed a river health assessment of the Upper Yampa, completed three beaver coexistence projects, continued to lead our first reach-scale river restoration effort, and got more than 85 local youths out on the river.

The year also brought challenges, particularly funding delays and the realities of a changing climate. Despite these hurdles, we deployed more than 140,000 biocontrol insects to combat leafy spurge and partnered with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to implement aquatic invasive species prevention stations. These efforts highlight the importance of prevention and proactive investment in river resilience, especially as we face tougher drought years ahead. Looking to 2026, we are hopeful and energized, knowing there is much more work to be done, from habitat improvements and river resiliency projects to expanded workshops and learning opportunities at the River Center. Together, we remain committed to building a strong, resilient Yampa River and community.

**Lindsey Marlow, Executive Director**

## FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



As we reflect on the past year, I want to begin with a simple message: thank you. Your support—whether through time, donations, advocacy or partnership—continues to make the work of Friends of the Yampa possible.

This year was one of steady progress and meaningful connection. Together, we strengthened our organization, deepened our relationships with the community, and continued our commitment to protecting and enhancing the environmental and recreational integrity of the Yampa River for current and future generations. None of this happens without a dedicated group of people who believe in the value of this work and show up in tangible ways.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities before us and steadfast in our resolve to grow, adapt and flourish in an increasingly challenging climate. The Board is committed to strong governance, financial responsibility and long-term sustainability so that not only are we responsive to today's challenges but prepared for tomorrow's opportunities.

Friends of the Yampa exists because of a shared belief: that the Yampa River is worth caring for, investing in and protecting. On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your trust, partnership and continued commitment to the Friends of the Yampa.

**Karen Wogsland, Board President**

# STRATEGIC PLAN, 2024 – 2029

In 2024, we completed and approved our Strategic Plan for the next 5 years. This guiding document expands our enduring priorities, create opportunities, and positions us for success. It defines measurable goals for our five pillars of education, stewardship, partnerships, advocacy and organizational health.



**Education:** Cultivate a community bond for preserving and improving the wild and healthy state of the Yampa River.



**Stewardship:** Sustain and improve environmental and recreational resources of the Yampa River through monitoring and action.



**Partnerships:** Amplify impact through collaboration.



**Advocacy:** Advocate for land and water management policies that elevate the health and recreational integrity of the Yampa River.



**Organizational Health:** Position the organization for sustainable growth.

To view our Strategic Plan in full and learn more about our goals and initiatives for the next five years, please visit our website [friendsoftheyampa.com/about/what-we-do/](https://friendsoftheyampa.com/about/what-we-do/)

# 2025 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## YAMPA RIVER SCORECARD PROJECT >>

With the completion of the Elk River segment assessment in 2025, the Yampa River Scorecard Project (YRSP) has now successfully evaluated four major river segments since its inception: Middle Yampa (2022), Steamboat (2023), Upper Yampa (2024), and the Elk River (2025). To support this growing body of data, the project now maintains 17 HOBO temperature data loggers and has collected 29 macroinvertebrate samples, providing a continuous record of the basins' thermal and biological health. This multi-year effort remains dedicated to providing the community with a science-based understanding of our local waterways.



The 2025 focus on the Elk River segment encompassed 32 river miles, stretching from the South Fork confluence to the Yampa River. The team evaluated 18 distinct indicators of river health, with 75% of the segment's length assessed directly via walking or floating. This comprehensive fieldwork included electrofishing at two sites, seven benthic macroinvertebrate collections following Colorado River Watch standards, and seven bird surveys conducted in partnership with Audubon Rockies.

Water quality was monitored at two primary sites during both high- and low-flow conditions, ensuring a robust snapshot of the river's seasonal dynamics. A full technical report, updated website, and public brochure for the Elk River are slated for release in May 2026.



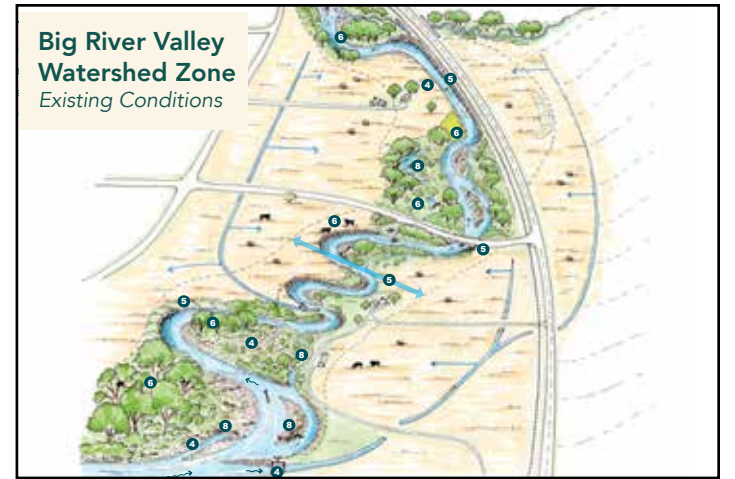
Success in 2025 was driven by a deep network of contributors, including 18 private landowners who generously granted river access. The project combined the expertise of FOTY staff, a RiverCorps member, and three student interns from Colorado Mountain College with the technical support of three consulting firms and multiple nonprofit partners. Key funding and in-kind support were provided by the North Routt Community Fund, the Walton Family Foundation, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Audubon of the Rockies, Colorado Mountain College Alpine Campus, Bucking Rainbow Outfitters, and private donors. This collaborative model continues to be the backbone of the YRSP, transforming raw data into actionable insights for the entire Yampa River Basin.



## YAMPA RIVER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM >>

This year, the Yampa River Stewardship Program (YSTEW) transitioned from foundational planning to active community visioning. A primary focus in 2025 was gathering local expertise through three stakeholder meetings in Yampa, Steamboat Springs and Hayden. These sessions engaged over 70 participants—including agricultural producers, water managers, recreation groups and agency representatives—to identify top concerns and define desired future conditions for the Upper Valley, Town, and Big River segments.

The program utilized graphic renderings to illustrate both existing conditions and the community's shared vision for the river's future. Communication was a top priority, highlighted by the distribution of 245 educational brochures to every landowner and manager along the river from the headwaters through the Middle Yampa. These materials detailed the YSTEW cycle and outlined collaborative next steps for regional river health.



The team is also nearing completion of the YSTEW Handbook, a practical resource offering solutions for 13 common challenges faced by riverfront managers, ranging from bank erosion to beaver management. By combining these tangible tools with robust stakeholder input, YSTEW continues to build a unified, science-based roadmap for the sustainable management of the Yampa River.



## <<YAMPA RIVER AMBASSADORS

In its third season, the Yampa River Ambassador program engaged 3,055 river users over 197 outreach hours, focusing on key locations like Fetcher and Rich Weiss parks. Despite a challenging season marked by low-flow and high-temperature river closures, three dedicated ambassadors provided essential on-river education from June to August.

The program's digital reach also flourished, with the Yampa River Updates Facebook group growing to over 4,700 followers. This vital partnership with the City of Steamboat Springs continues to be a primary tool for promoting river etiquette and providing real-time condition updates to locals and visitors alike.

## 2025 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

### YAMPA RIVER LEAFY SPURGE PROJECT >>

In 2025, the Yampa River Leafy Spurge Project (YRLSP) continued its long-term management of this invasive species across Routt and Moffat counties. **A team of 14 volunteers and staff traveled to Idaho to collect 60,300 biocontrol insects, contributing to a total seasonal release of 129,725 beetles along the river corridor.**

This massive effort—**distributing 47,175 insects in Routt County and 82,550 in Moffat County**—was made possible through diverse partnerships and sustained funding through 2030. By combining large-scale biocontrol releases with dedicated monitoring, YRLSP continues to leverage regional collaboration to protect the Yampa’s ecological integrity from the headwaters to Dinosaur National Monument.



Photo: Pete Williams, Yampa River Leafy Spurge Project

### << BEAVER COEXISTENCE PROGRAM



Photo: Ryan Messinger, Western Resilience Center

In 2025, Friends of the Yampa launched its Beaver Coexistence Program in partnership with Western Resilience Center, a proactive initiative designed to help landowners manage beaver activity while preserving the immense ecological benefits these “ecosystem engineers” provide. **To ensure a science-based approach, staff completed 50 hours of intensive training**

**through the BeaverCorps program, covering everything from beaver ecology and permitting to the technical design of coexistence infrastructure.**

The program’s first year of fieldwork included site visits to five properties, offering expert consultation

on sustainable beaver management. A highlight of the season was the successful installation of a pond leveler on a private property in Routt County. This specialized device mitigates local flooding concerns while allowing the beavers to remain in place, maintaining critical wetland habitat.

Beyond on-the-ground projects, the program focused on regional and state-level advocacy. **Staff met five times with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to provide input on the Colorado Beaver Conservation and Management Strategy, which is slated for release in February 2026.** Locally, we engaged the community by serving as a panelist for the Bud Werner Memorial Library’s “Beavers in the Yampa Valley” event. Through these efforts, we are fostering a new paradigm where humans and beavers can thrive together in a healthy river system.



### << YAMPA RIVER FEST

The year 2025 marked our 45th annual Yampa River Festival, our largest and most vibrant celebration to date. To accommodate our growing community, we **expanded the Freshwater Family Zone and saw record-breaking participation, including our biggest raft race ever with 50 teams taking to the water. The festival’s success was fueled by the dedication of over 95 volunteers** and supported by local partners like Storm Peak Brewing Co., who provided 20 kegs for the festivities. With river flows holding steady between 2,300–2,800 cfs, the weekend offered perfect conditions for both competition and education.

The event kicked off with a packed State of the Yampa Address, highlighting the Yampa River Awareness Project. The evening featured a powerful screening of “A Guide to Fighting For Wild Rivers” and an insightful panel discussion with state leaders and experts, including Colorado Speaker of the House Julie McCluskie and Division of Natural Resources Director Dan Gibbs. By blending high-energy recreation with deep-dive advocacy, the 2025 festival continued its legacy of fostering environmental stewardship and inspiring collective action to protect the wild Yampa River ecosystem.

## 2025 FUNDRAISER HIGHLIGHT

### BIG SNOW BASH >>

In 2025, our Big Snow Bash concert and auction fundraiser once again brought the community together at Old Town Pub, coming remarkably close to reaching our \$45,000 goal. The evening featured an energetic performance by Colorado natives and fellow river lovers, A Brother’s Fountain. The celebration was bolstered by our partners at Storm Peak Brewing Co., who generously donated two kegs with all proceeds benefiting Friends of the Yampa.

Proving that the event lives up to its name, the first snow of the season fell the night of the bash, officially welcoming winter to the valley. It was a festive conclusion to our 2025 efforts, uniting volunteers, donors, and staff in celebration of our shared passion for the river and the snow that sustains it.





## YAMPA RIVER CENTER: >>

**Our crowning achievement** of 2025 was the grand opening of the Yampa River Center, a long-held dream brought to life as the valley's first free public space dedicated entirely to river education, stewardship and outreach. Located in downtown Steamboat Springs and opened in June, the **center serves as a year-round hub where residents, visitors and students connect with our region's most vital natural resource. Through drop-in visits, seasonal workshops** and the integration of bilingual resources, the center has quickly become a trusted destination for anyone looking to deepen their understanding of river health, recreation safety and conservation policy.

The impact of this space was immediate, hosting a vibrant array of programming that ranged from technical river safety seminars to youth education days with the Boys & Girls Club. We even celebrated rafting culture through community events like the inaugural Dutch Oven Showdown cooking competition. This milestone was made possible by the generous support of the Yampa Valley Community Foundation's Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant, the Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District, Alpine Bank and several dedicated individual donors. We are elated to finally provide a community home that fosters a deeper connection to the Yampa River for generations to come.

## LOCAL YOUTH CAMPS >>

In 2025, our youth summer camps saw incredible growth through our partnership with Colorado Mountain College and a collaboration with Yampatika, **servicing a total of 90 youth. Over four weeks, campers navigated 76 miles of the Yampa River in rafts, inflatable kayaks, and paddleboards, gaining hands-on experience in river safety and stewardship.** Our curriculum emphasized the ecological health of Western rivers, drawing participants from across Routt and Moffat counties, as well as out-of-state.

To ensure the river remains accessible to all, Friends of the Yampa awarded \$2,000 in scholarships to eight campers this year. By removing financial barriers and providing deep-dive education on our local waterways, we continue to cultivate a diverse next generation of river stewards.



## << DINOSAUR NATIONAL MONUMENT YOUTH RIVER CAMP:



**The DINO camp** provides high school students a tuition-free, five-day immersion in Dinosaur National Monument's Lodore Canyon. Currently financially supported by the Iron Horse Family Foundation and in partnership with Colorado Mountain College, and the National Park Service, this program combines river science and leadership training with hands-on experience in stewardship and expedition planning. By exploring the Green River firsthand, students develop the skills and connection necessary to become the next generation of environmental leaders.

**In 2025, 12 campers and a team of eight staff navigated 45 miles of river amid 90-degree heat and red flag warnings.** The group became a resilient team, scouting rapids and setting records for dragonfly larvae collection. Despite smoke from nearby fires, students engaged in vital lessons on fire ecology and water conservation, building meaningful relationships that foster deep hope for the future of our wild river ecosystems.

## 2025 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

### YAMPA RIVER FUND:

The Yampa River Fund had a successful 2025 including a growing endowment fund—now over \$6.5M and distributing approximately \$280,000 in grant funds to seven projects. There have been six years of successful grant awards, and we are looking forward to another strong year in 2026. **Each year, the Yampa River Fund has distributed over \$200,000 to projects that contribute to a healthier future for the Yampa River as a vital component of Northwest Colorado’s lifestyle and economy.** Projects include supplemental streamflow in the river during low flow conditions, river restoration projects and infrastructure improvement projects to provide water security for local economies, the environment and recreational opportunities. More information on the Yampa River Fund can be found at [yampariverfund.org](http://yampariverfund.org).



### THE SEVEN FUNDED PROJECTS IN 2025 INCLUDE:

#### **2025 Yampa River Environmental**

##### **Release Program – Colorado Water Trust**

Strategically streamflow releases from Stagecoach Reservoir and Elkhead Reservoir during low flow conditions.

##### **Morgan Bottom Connectivity Project: Phase II – Friends of the Yampa**

Additional design work for a project to improve floodplain connectivity and riparian habitat in the Middle Yampa.

##### **Yampa River Forest Restoration Project – Yampa Valley Sustainability Council**

Tree planting project to improve shading for the Yampa River and to create riparian buffers at 10 sites.

##### **Nonlethal Beaver Management in the Yampa Valley – Friends of the Yampa**

Funding for the new Yampa Valley Beaver Working Group that works with interested landowners to employ nonlethal beaver management efforts.

##### **Wet Meadow Restoration on Conserved Lands to Improve Watershed Health – Colorado Cattleman’s Agricultural Land Trust**

Projects on local properties with conservation easements to slow erosion, reduce nutrient contributions, raise water tables, and increase resilience to drought, flood, and wildfire.

##### **Stillwater Reservoir Drain, Collar, and Channel Replacement Project – Bear River Reservoir Co.**

Funding for the final efforts rehabilitate Stillwater dam to make operations safe and remove storage restrictions that have limited the storage capacity of this reservoir since 2019.

##### **Duquette Diversion Hydraulic Modeling – Community Agriculture Alliance**

This funding will enable the next step of the planning phase for this diversion replacement project. Once the Hydraulic Model is complete, the engineering firm will be able to evaluate the preferred design and assess how a final design can meet the required floodplain permitting requirements.

### << YAMPA RIPPLE EFFECT PROGRAM:

**The Yampa Ripple Effect** is going strong, with 20 enthusiastic partners raising nearly \$30,000 in 2025. Whether through a “round-up” feature at the register or a small contribution added to every bill, these collective efforts create a powerful impact. Local businesses report that customers are incredibly supportive of the program, often seeking ways to contribute even more to the cause.

**Every dollar raised through these partnerships directly supports the Yampa River Fund and Friends of the Yampa, ensuring we can continue to finance projects that protect the river’s health and the community it sustains.** It is a true testament to our valley’s spirit that these small, individual contributions add up to a significant “ripple” effect for the future of the Yampa.



### THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!



**In 2025**, over 255 incredible volunteers helped bring our mission to life—supporting everything from fundraising events to scientific monitoring. Collectively, they contributed 1,783 hours of service across our core five programs with volunteer opportunities:

- Yampa River Leafy Spurge Project
- Stream Team (River Watch)
- Yampa River Festival
- Yampa River Cleanups
- Yampa River Ambassadors

Their time, energy, and passion helped protect the Yampa River and ensure our events and programs ran smoothly. We couldn’t do it without them!





## YAMPA RIVER AWARENESS PROJECT

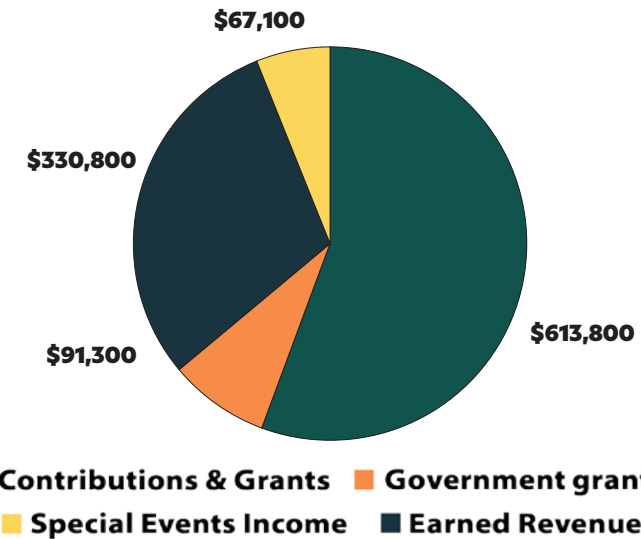
A flagship collaboration between Friends of the Yampa, American Rivers, and OARS, the **Yampa River Awareness Project (YRAP)** continues to champion the river's ecological and cultural legacy.

In 2025, the program hosted a diverse cohort of 24 leaders—spanning policy, science, art and local community—on a five-day expedition through Yampa Canyon. Surrounded by world-class geology, participants engaged with Indigenous perspectives and conservation experts to bridge the gap between education and advocacy. By fostering deep personal connections to the water, YRAP turns immersive experiences into a powerful catalyst for collective river protection by those who are decision-makers.

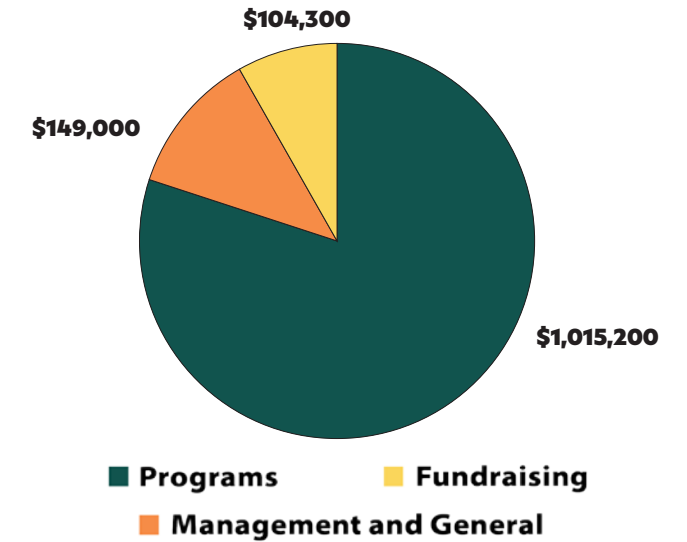


## 2025 FINANCIALS

### 2025 SOURCES OF REVENUE

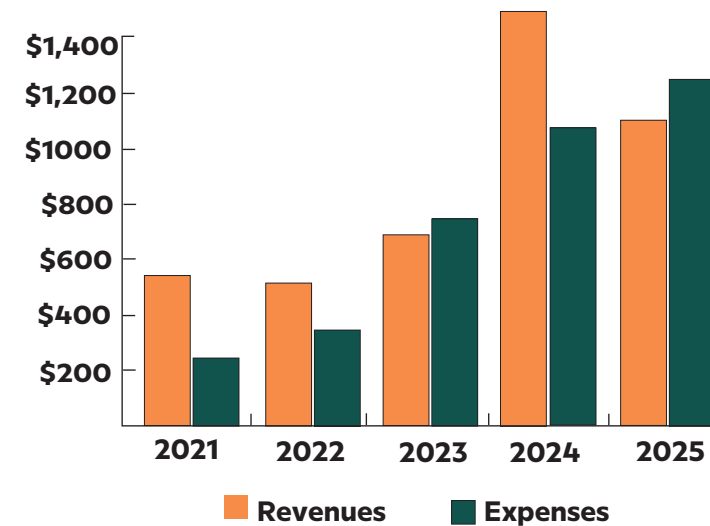


### 2025 EXPENSES BY FUNCTION



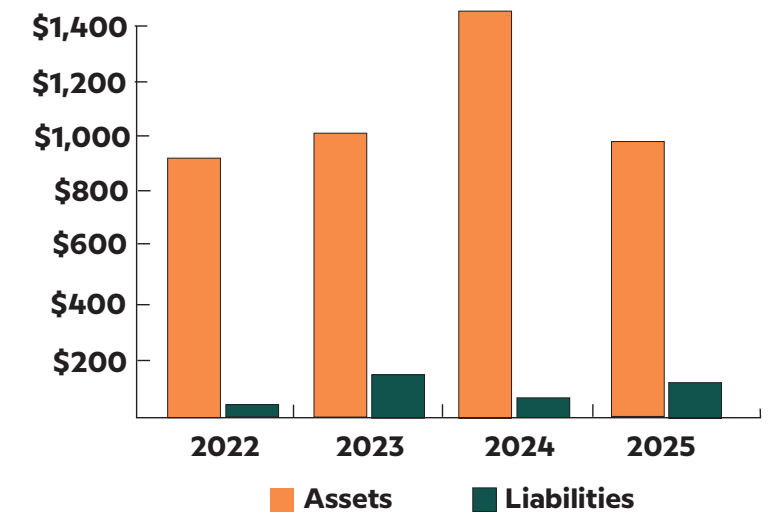
### 2021-2025 ACTIVITY

(in thousands)



### ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

(in thousands)



# 2025 FRIENDS OF THE YAMPA STAFF & BOARD

## BOARD MEMBERS

**Karen Wogsland**, *President*

**Melanie Kilpatrick**, *Vice President and Secretary*

**Gary Kennedy**, *Treasurer*

**John St. John**

**Jennifer Wellman**

**Jackie Brown**

**Nicole Seltzer**

**Travis Crooke**

**Charlie Smith**

**In Memorium — Peter Van De Carr**

## STAFF

**Lindsey Marlow**, *Executive Director*

**Rebecca Campion**, *Development Program Manager*

**Katie Berning**, *Outreach Program Manager*

**Jenny Frithsen**, *Environmental Program Manager*

**Emily Burke**, *Conservation Program Manager*

**Jeremy Bailey**, *Program and Office Assistant*

**Kent Vertrees**, *Recreation and Education Coordinator*

**Arianna Birdseye**, *Outdoor Programs Logistic Technician*

**Mike Robertson**, *Yampa River Fund Manager*

**Avery Cannon**, *RiverCorps Intern*

## HOW TO SUPPORT FRIENDS OF THE YAMPA

### DONATE

[FriendsOfTheYampa.com/donate](https://FriendsOfTheYampa.com/donate)

### MEMBERSHIP

[FriendsOfTheYampa.com/membership](https://FriendsOfTheYampa.com/membership)

### SPONSORSHIP

Email [outreach@friendsoftheyampa.com](mailto:outreach@friendsoftheyampa.com)

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Friends of the Yampa



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