Dear Friends,

The purpose of this letter is to express my appreciation to all of the Friends of The Colorado Trail for their support in 2002. Whether you supported it as a volunteer or as a donor or both your contributions are appreciated. You are a true "Friend of the Colorado Trail". The CT would not exist without the thousand of volunteers and donors from all over the world for the past 16 years. To attest to this accomplishment Backpacker Magazine lists the CT as number 5 in the top 10 long distance trails in the US. Volunteers and supporters of volunteers made it happen.

The summer of 2002 in Colorado will long be remembered for the drought and forest fires. Fortunately, the fires directly damaged none of The Colorado Trail, but the threat of fires greatly limited the summer maintenance program. Five of our planned 18 maintenance crews had to be cancelled. Three more were modified as a result of the fire threat. May hikers were saddened when they were denied access because of the fire danger. But to look on the bright side the hikers who did get on the Trail were not hampered by lingering snowfields, bogs and rain. And none of the crews that were fielded were unable to complete their work because of rain.

So while the azure blue Colorado skies were dimmed by smoke and the multi-colored wildflower fields faded by drought, the laughter of volunteers working along the trail and the steady financial support from CT Friends were a reminder this year that The Colorado Trail is a treasure that continues to stand the test of time, and Mother Nature.

See you on the Trail in 2003,

Merle McDonald, President
The Colorado Trail Foundation
Miracle on The Colorado Trail

It was Friday afternoon and we had just finished a hard day’s work, shifting boulders all day. Half of the crew had worked down in the ‘flats’, reshoring up the banks and landing of a wooden bridge. The rest of us had cleaned tons of rock out of the trail that had had a lot of horse use from a nearby horse corral. To make matters worse, it had rained a great deal that week and we had had a constant light rain all day. As we laid our tools down, a lone backpacker approached us. Always eager to talk to through hikers, we exchanged the who’s and where’s and then asked him how his trip had been. He related this story to us. In the San Juans he had been caught by an early snowstorm after crossing the Las Animas River and had become completely lost. Each opening in groups of trees looked like a trail passage, only to be closed in after a hundred yards or so. He wandered deeper into the forest and then when the wind converted the snowstorm into a blizzard, he knew that he was hopelessly lost. His tracks were covered up and he had no idea in which direction he was traveling. Exhausted he sank down in the shelter of a couple of tree giants. Having deep faith in God, he prayed on his knees, passionately for guidance. Not long after he had wrapped himself in his tarp, tucked his head in for warmth that he thought that he heard a rustling and a stamping of hooves. Looking out he saw a pair of mountain goats approaching. The males began to charge Stan, and then stop suddenly and walk away, looking over his shoulder. He repeated this several times and suddenly Stan knew that the goat wanted him to follow. He packed his pack and followed them slowly, as they were breaking trail. Hours passed as he followed them on a steep uphill climb, skirting cliffs and deep ravines. It was dusk when they finally reached the crest, a steep, slippery and treacherous climb. In the dark they lead him down the other side until, in the black darkness, he bumped into a building. It was a small old timers shack, with a door and windows to keep out the persistent snow laden wind. He could hear the goats moving around outside, while Stan tumbled into his sleeping bag in his wet clothes. It was late morning when Stan woke up and found the sun had just broken through the clouds. He opened the door and looked for the goats, but they had long gone, leaving a hard packed spot where they had bedded down for the night. Looking east, Stan saw a small lake and to the left, a sign poking through the snow. He hurried out, breaking tracks in the snow and read the sign: Kite Lake. He knew now where he was and that there was a road to follow to get off the mountain. The goats had shown him the way! To Stan, he with the firm handshake, ready smile, handlebar mustache, beautiful fiancée in Oklahoma, deep faith in God, and classrooms of very lucky middle-school science students now learning from him—and most of all, he with a depth of spirit and faith who was given two unlikely guardian angels for a miracle of survival along The Colorado Trail, our gratitude for this story. What miracles happen on The Colorado Trail!

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December 2002
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With a continuing commitment
To protect Colorado's backcountry.