CT users take to the Trail for myriad reasons. Completer Susan McKnight echoed the feelings of many long-distance travelers when she wrote about her thru-hike experience on the Colorado Trail Thru-Hike 2019 Facebook page:

“For me the CT was a cleansing experience. I wasn’t like a lot of the super-fit trail hounds. Though I had trained hard in preparation, every day was a struggle mentally, physically, emotionally. I started the Trail broken spirited. I had experienced an unexpected, devastating loss of a loved one six months prior. Every wonderful, precious day on the CT was really and truly a matter of putting one foot in front of the other to move forward in my life. I was in survival mode. “Unlike so many of the long strikers, it took me 62 days (including my zero days) to finish. I roller-coasted not only on the terrain, but with my emotions. The task of completing such a lofty goal seemed daring near unattainable some days. But when I ran out of trail at Junction Creek, I walked away triumphant. I was actually relieved when it was over. “For me the transition from the CT to my life back home was easy. I came away with renewed confidence that I would be able to continue putting one foot in front of the other. It took me the entire two months of arduous physical and emotional strain to come to the realization that we never stop grieving because we never stop loving.”

The CTF Confronts Challenging Season

THE WINTER OF 2018-2019 WAS ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOKS — at least in its impact on The Colorado Trail. The above-average snowpack and historic avalanche cycle led to the latest melt-off in memory by two to three weeks, which affected travelers, trail crews and Adopters alike.

Several massive avalanches buried significant stretches of the Trail with downed trees, rocks and other debris. Access roads were also affected, impeding access to the CT.

“I’ve never seen anything like it in my 14 years with The Colorado Trail Foundation,” said CTF Executive Director Bill Manning.

It wasn’t until Aug. 6 that the CTF declared the entire CT “passable” for hikers and cyclists, saying that enough snow had melted “to no longer be overly arduous or hazardous and without snow-related navigation challenges.” A week later, it made the same declaration for horses and llamas.

Field Operations Manager Brent Adams, who oversees trail crews and the Adopt-a-Trail program, talked about challenges. “Many Adopters had to adjust their section visit dates while waiting for the snowpack to melt and roads to be cleared,” he noted.

Adopters are usually among the first on the Trail each season, tasked with removing downed trees obstructing the Trail, cleaning out water diversions to improve runoff, checking that proper signage is still in place, and performing other basic maintenance.

Trail crews were affected as well. “We had to delay our first crew of the season and relocate another because of lingering snow and saturated soil conditions,” Adams said. “In addition, a late-June crew experienced snow and cold temperatures on both days of the crew – on the second and third days of summer!” Fortunately, he said, all of the crews worked out well in the end.

“Although most sections of the Trail avoided significant impact from the snow and avalanches, several sections were not so lucky,” Adams said. “While most have been cleared with help from Forest Service staff, trail crew volunteers, and Adopters and their helpers, some of the larger and more remote debris fields in wilderness areas have yet to be completely cleared, although all have been improved for Trail user passage.”

“Depending on Forest Service and Adopter resources, some debris may still remain at the end of this season and the CTF will evaluate then how we will complete the clearing of the Trail,” he added.

Back at the CTF office in Golden, Manning and Office Manager Amy Nelson were kept busy keeping Trail users apprised of conditions. Relying on eyewitness reports from the Forest Service, trail crews, CT Adopters, early trail users, and others, they compiled detailed reports that they posted on the CTF website, the CTF and Colorado Thru-Hike 2019 Facebook pages, and other social media outlets. They also fielded dozens of calls.

“People reported spots where the Trail was buried by broken trees, rocks and hard-packed snow as deep as 60 feet,” Manning said. The most impacted segments were 7, 13, 21, 24 and Collegiate West 02, including a couple of areas west of Buena Vista, a broad swath near Copper Mountain resort, and along Elk Creek near Silverton.

In an article in The Chaffee County Times in late April described the scene near Cottonwood Pass above Buena Vista:

Segment 13 of the CT crosses County Road 306 around the Avalanche Trailhead parking lot, where in March three naturally-triggered slides came down (the northwest face — Continued on page 3
Executive Director’s Update

THE EFFORT TO BUILD THE COLORADO TRAIL BEGAN 45 YEARS AGO THIS YEAR AND 1974 SEEMS LONG DISTANT. (See the great new history section on ColoradoTrail.org, Click on The Trail > Trail History.) At such junctures, it’s good to reflect on the state of the Trail. Having connected the CT end to end in 1987 and turned our efforts to maintaining and improving this gem, the CTF and our wonderful volunteers have succeeded mightily. The Colorado Trail remains in good condition and we’ve been able to improve it immensely. Key maintenance efforts to divert runoff from snowmelt and rain have prevented trail erosion that otherwise would have been devastating. Building reroutes to remove the Trail from road sections has greatly improved the experience for travelers in areas like Swan River near Breckenridge, Copper Mountain and Cataract Ridge above Silverton. The addition of the 80-mile Collegiate West route in 2012 also comes to mind as a meaningful enhancement along with the ongoing effort to replace its motor miles with nonmotorized single-track.

In 2019, as in all recent years, users have shared with us the fun they’ve had on the Trail and the memories they’ve made. Even as user numbers have risen, Trail travelers continue to hold the CT in high regard, describing it as one of the best trails anywhere. They love the spectacular views, the immersion in Mother Nature, the challenge it presents, and the necessary self-reliance that is fundamental to a quality backcountry experience.

As we look at the future, we often stop and wonder whether we can sustain this good feeling in coming decades.

From my vantage point, approaching 15 years as Executive Director of The Colorado Trail Foundation, the outlook is very favorable. I see our CTF and volunteer effort to maintain and improve the Trail as sustainable.

One need only look at the outpouring of support that enabled us to build the half-million-dollar George Miller Field Operations Center in Pagosa Springs, which was dedicated in 2018.

Our strategies and relationships are sound. People who have built personal relationships with the Trail want to “give back” through efforts such as Trail Crews and the Adopt-A-Trail program. Donors are still contributing in ways and amounts that almost every year push the organization beyond the break-even point and enables us to protect our strategic reserve. Furthermore, the U.S. Forest Service wants us to continue doing the work.

Of course, this does not mean that continuing to fulfill our mission is without its challenges. Many of those challenges stem from population growth as well as online information sharing that has gone viral, leading to rising usage. Word about the Trail is spreading rapidly. But, to me, as long as we all keep up the effort to preserve this gem, the Trail, the volunteerism and the donating that keep it nice is likely to continue.

Happy Trails,

Bill Manning
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mark Your Calendar

The Colorado Trail Foundation is hosting two upcoming events for Friends of the CT that you’ll want to add to your calendar:

Sat. Oct. 12  DURANGO GATHERING, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Carver Brewing Co., 1022 Main Ave., Durango.

Thur. Dec. 5  HOLIDAY RECEPTION, 4:00-7:00 p.m., American Mountaineering Center, Golden.
The Colorado Trail Foundation lost a great friend on July 30, when former CTF President Marilyn Eisele died. She was 76.

Marilyn, a longtime Trail volunteer, served as President in 2005 and 2006 after several years on the CTF Board of Directors. She worked on multiple trail crews, on CTF-sponsored treks, and with Adopt-A-Trail efforts.

“She approached her responsibility (as President) with great dedication,” said CTF Executive Director Bill Manning after hearing of Marilyn’s death. “She accomplished such key things as refining and signing a new Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Forest Service... and she often drove from Castle Rock to the office in Golden and spent her day making sure all CT things kept going.”

She was serving as president when the organization hired Manning, considered the CTF’s first full-time employee, pushing the group into a new era.

Current CTF Board Chairman Steve Staley said, “We at The Colorado Trail Foundation all stand on the shoulders of Marilyn in carrying out our mission. She will be so missed both for her leadership and her spirit. I, personally, learned so much from her.”

Suzanne Reed, another super-volunteer for the Trail, remembered her longtime friend: “My heart and head are filled with the images and memories of the adventures I shared with her – from our first meeting at a CT crew outside of Frisco to our worldwide travels to Mongolia, Bhutan and, of course, our many more Colorado Trail crews. She epitomized the spirit of giving back and having fun while doing it that continues to attract CT volunteers.”

That spirit was evident beyond the Trail as well, her family said. In recent years, she also hiked in Corsica, Palau, Bali, Australia and New Zealand.

Marilyn worked as a medical technologist for nearly 20 years, then went back to school for a degree in electrical engineering technology and an MBA. She then worked for several years in quality assurance in the medical device industry, both as an employee and consultant.

Marilyn is survived by her husband, Rick, and sons, Ralph and James, and their families.

Services were held April 19 in Castle Rock on what would have been her 77th birthday. In lieu of flowers, Marilyn’s family requested that donations be made to The Colorado Trail Foundation.

“Remembering Marilyn will always bring a smile to our faces,” Manning said.

Until 2006, the top position on the CTF Board of Directors was President. Marilyn Eisele, who died on July 30, was the last to hold that title. Under her tenure, the CTF hired its first full-time, paid Executive Director, who took on the role of running the Foundation’s day-to-day operations.
Unusual Season Puts Trail Crews to the Test

It was another busy season for CTF trail crews, which in addition to their typical maintenance and trail-building tasks, were tested by unusual weather conditions and heavier-than-normal damage caused by deep snowpack and multiple avalanches. Here's a roundup of reports from this year's basecamp and backpack crews:

CREW 0119 — JUNCTION CREEK (SEGMENT 28), June 3-7. Leaders Jodie Petersen and Dave Peters and eight backpack crew members were forced by deep snowpack to postpone their effort by 5 full weeks and seek additional participants available for the rescheduled work party. They upgraded one mile of tread, including building 70 water diversion structures, cutting back brush, and building an armored stream crossing.

CREW 0219 — RALEIGH PEAK (SEGMENT 2), May 11-12. Field Operations Manager Brent Adams and his wife, Anne Englert, led a crew of 17 in building 225 feet of new tread, with three rock grade-control structures (4 foot, 6 foot, and 8 foot long). Abandoned trail of similar length was also reclaimed. In addition, they built 12 drains east of Raleigh Peak Road and seven more between the west end of the realignment and the Chair Rocks social trail.

CREW 0319 — LOST CREEK WILDERNESS (SEGMENT 4), June 1-5. Leader Greg Speights and his backpack crew of 14 appreciated Rich Johnson and his horses who packed the tools in. The team improved the crossing at Craig Creek by installing several large stepping stones for hikers and clearing a log jam to make way for horses. They also built a rock gutter, three rockered water bars, eight rockered check dams, and 21 drains, cleared the corridor by pruning and removing downed trees and limbs, and removed loose rock rubble from trail tread.

CREW 0419 — BUFFALO CREEK (SEGMENT 3), June 1-8. Cindy Johnson led a crew of 16 in building 1,000 feet of new tread on a reroute, which included taking out one culvert and installing three new ones where the Trail intersects Forest Service Road 550. Work involved several major rock constructions.

CREW 0519 — TRAMWAY CREEK (SEGMENT 3), June 8. Adams and Englert led this one-day crew of 25 in completing final items on the realignment project started by CTF Crew 0419, including rock armoring the realignment crossing of existing trail, building rock wing walls and installing tread retaining rocks at the Forest Road 550 crossing, and closing approximately 600 feet of abandoned trail.

CREW 0619 — TENMILE RANGE (SEGMENT 7), June 22-23. Adams and Englert and 18 crew members removed a bridge that had a broken log stringer and replaced it with a new 17-foot bridge with new log stringers and decking salvaged from the old bridge. The crew also cut and removed smaller trees and loads of debris from an avalanche chute at the site.

CREW 0719 — (WOMEN-ONLY), UPPER SOUTH MOUNT ELBERT TRAILHEAD (SEGMENT 11), June 27-30. Cindy Johnson led an all-woman crew of 24 in constructing 100 feet of new tread, which involved removing willows and building up the trail in a boggy area. They also repaired drainage in two areas where water was crossing the trail. Five crew members spent a day doing tree and debris removal in an avalanche area in Collegiate West Segment 02.

CREW 0819 — HANCOCK (SEGMENT CW04), June 29-July 6. Leaders Laura Brieser-Smith and Scott Smith and crew of 23 were scheduled to work on new trail in Collegiate West Segment 04, but snow blocking the Trail precluded that effort. Instead, they were diverted to repair avalanche damage near Copper Mountain resort. That included cutting and removing debris from 1,480 feet of trail, building three rock stream crossings, repairing a damaged 14-foot bridge and replacing a broken 12-foot bridge. Extensive repair work was also accomplished on additional parts of the trail.

CREW 0919 — COCHETOPA CREEK (SEGMENT 20), July 13-19. Leader Loren Woods led a backpack crew of 11 and horseman Rich Johnson assisted by packing in the group’s tools and toilet equipment. The team succeeded in clearing two miles of trail, including cutting back a mile of heavy willows encroaching on the Trail, removing eight trees, and reworking four areas to improve drainage and footing. In addition, they rerouted approximately 150 feet of tread to avoid water drainage problems.

CREW 1019 — RAZOR CREEK (SEGMENT 17), July 20-27. Leader Dave Fitzwater and his crew of 9 worked a stretch that had seen heavy abuse including by cows. They improved 1,125 feet of tread, armored 2 stream banks, added 1 rock crossing, upgraded 30 feet of turnpike, put in 50 water diversions and trimmed overgrowth along 1.7 miles of the Trail.

CREW 1119 — ILLINOIS CREEK I (SEGMENT CW02), July 31-Aug. 4. Leader Douglas Batterly and his backpack crew of 14 worked on a major reroute to move the Trail off of the motorized Timberline Trail. They built 500 feet of tread, a 7-by-3-foot dry stack wall, and a small rock ravine crossing.
CREW 1219 — MOLAS PASS (SEGMENT 24), Aug. 3-10. Glenn Kepler led 17 crew members in extensive maintenance work on the east side of Molas Pass. Work included replacing a rotten log in a two-log bridge over Molas Creek, building two water crossings and four approach-turnpikes at upper Molas Creek, constructing a 10-foot turnpike and water bars at 20 locations to mitigate water runoff. They also rebuilt a 60-foot turnpike.

CREW 1319 — ILLINOIS CREEK II (SEGMENT CW02), Aug. 4-8. Leader Daniel Zier and their backpack crew of 10 labored more on this multiyear reroute project. Across steep hillside, they built an additional 200 feet of new trail, 35 feet of retaining wall to support the path, 4 check-steps and over 100 feet of additional tread adjacent to these rock features. They reported having zero precipitation and, tongue-in-cheek, way more than zero fun.

CREW 1419 — CAMP HALE (SEGMENT 8), Aug. 17-24. Bill Carpenter led a crew of 23 volunteers that, alongside six from the U.S. Forest Service, worked toward the completion of a new bridge just beneath Cataract Creek Falls. They moved 30 tons of rock for the bridge abutments and prepared and transported the 33-foot log stringers. Volunteers built new approach trail on each side of this new crossing location. The bridge has since been completed and is sure to serve CT travelers for decades as it provides superb viewing close to the beautiful waterfall.

CREW 1519 — SOUTH CLEAR CREEK (SEGMENT CW02), Aug. 26-31. Paul Smith led a backpack crew of 7 that worked in the area of Lake Ann and had ideal weather to do Trail maintenance. Around tree line to preserve the tundra, they installed check dam risers (big steps) in a deeply rutted area to stem worsening Trail erosion. The group restored stretches of social trail and braided sections. They fixed a splitting log and the bank of a timber log bridge and removed one very large hazard tree with everyone’s favorite saw, the Katanaboy.

In addition to the regular crews, Adams and Englert led an Adopter Training on May 18 and a crew and team leader training on May 19 on the first mile of Segment 4 beginning at the Rolling Creek Trailhead. Participants built five log check steps and eight drains to improve runoff, and removed a number of trees obstructing the Trail.
THE THIRD TIME PROVED THE CHARM for ultra-runner Andre-Paul Michaud, who at the end of July completed The Colorado Trail in the fastest-known time for a self-supported thru-hike, finishing the 486-mile trail in 8 days, 23 hours and 16 minutes. That’s in excess of 50 miles a day, including a final 70-plus-mile push from Molas Pass to the Junction Creek Trailhead outside Durango, the western terminus of the Trail.

It was Michaud’s third attempt at the record, according to a story in the Durango Herald. In 2017 he was waylaid by the Peak 2 Fire near Breckenridge and in 2018 he pulled off the trail near Copper Mountain after 120 miles due to foot problems.

This year, however, all went according to plan, Michaud, 47, told the Herald. “I could not believe how well my body was working, honestly,” he said. “I know world-class athletes and coaches who speak about how when you practice and train so much for something, that when you get to the event you’re actually okay, and that’s kind of what happened.”

His training, he said, included spending weekends hiking and running for 100 miles with his backpack, ultra-light tent and sleeping bag.

Michaud left Waterton Canyon, the eastern terminus of the Trail, at 5 a.m. on July 21 and arrived at Junction Creek at 4:16 a.m. on July 30. The previous record for a self-supported hike was 9 days, 14 hours and 28 minutes set by Brandon Stapanowich in 2016. A self-supported hiker can accept no outside help on the Trail, including, in Michaud’s case, the offer of ice cream from a Colorado Trail trekking group he encountered in the Sawatch Range.

The runner, an anesthesiologist by profession, first became interested in the record while living in Durango from 2010 to 2015. His attempts came while he was living in Grand Junction. In August, he moved to Alaska, making his record-breaking run a memorable farewell to Colorado.

(The Colorado Trail Foundation does not maintain records of FKTs, but sometimes glances at them on self-regulated FKT websites.)
While the lifeblood of The Colorado Trail Foundation remains the hundreds of small donors who contribute annually to help cover our operating expenses, we have been fortunate over the years to be the beneficiaries of the generosity of several large donors as well.

The Roundup Riders of the Rockies, a group of horse riders that has supported the CTF with grant money starting in the 1970s, contributed again this year, donating $20,000.

This year marks the second in which we’ve received a grant from The Summit Foundation, which supports nonprofit efforts in Summit and adjacent counties. This year, the foundation increased its grant to $5,000.

A family in Breckenridge, which chooses to remain anonymous, began donating years ago through their family foundation. This year they contributed $10,000.

Finally, another anonymous donor, who is a longtime volunteer, hiker and supporter, directed the required minimum distribution from his retirement account, all $18,060.49 of it this year, to go to the CTF. He has been doing so for the past few years. Directing all or part of an RMD to a nonprofit is becoming an increasingly popular option for retirees for its potential tax advantages.

The Foundation can’t say enough about those whose passion for the Trail is matched by their donations, large or small. You are what make this organization great.

In May, the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service recognized The Colorado Trail Foundation with an award for Enduring Service. The CTF was one of four organizations honored as part of the Forest Service’s 2018 Volunteers & Service Annual Awards Program.

In its nomination statement, the Forest Service noted that the CTF “is a well-organized, engaged partner that serves as a model innovative partner organization with the USFS,” beginning with its founding in 1987. “The resources that the CTF offers, along with their reputation, enhance the stewardship capacity and trail maintenance on this popular hiking trail in Colorado, and for that the Forest Service would like to recognize and commend the CTF for its enduring service.”

“In 2018 alone,” the award noted, “CTF volunteers contributed 16,680 hours stewarding The Colorado Trail, an astounding $411,829 worth of labor.”

The CTF, it said, has gone “above and beyond expectations in a positive way. The CTF has shown exceptional dedication and commitment over the past 25-plus years, but especially in the past decade. … Their boots-on-the-ground support, along with consistent reporting and organized trail adoption program, is a model and example for others.”

Also receiving recognition were the Southwest Conservation Corps, Colorado Mountain Club and Central Colorado Mountain Riders. The awards are given “for projects and activities … that exemplify outstanding stewardship and partner contributions to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service mission.”

“Recognition like this from the U.S. Forest Service means a lot,” said CTF Executive Director, Bill Manning, “it fuels our Trail maintenance efforts like a good volunteer crew camp meal.”
Hundreds of Colorado Trail supporters help the Foundation in myriad ways each year. Here are a few of the ways you can step up and lend us a hand.

**DONATE ONLINE:** You can donate online on the ColoradoTrail.org website. Simply click the Donate or Contribute buttons on the home page to give via a credit card or PayPal. Or you could . . .

**MAKE IT A RECURRING GIFT:** You can do this by checking the box on the donation page to “Make This a Recurring Donation.” Some donors find that giving via a regular monthly withdrawal is more convenient.

**COLORADO GIVES DAY:** A program of the Community First Foundation, Colorado Gives Day, held in December each year, is aimed at increasing contributions to more than 2,600 nonprofit organizations in the state. Watch for CTF e-mails or check on Facebook for the date of this year’s event. For more information, go to ColoradoGives.org.

**AMAZONSMILE:** Through its AmazonSmile philanthropic program, Amazon contributes a half percent of eligible purchases to the buyer’s designated charity. It’s easy to set up and only needs to be done once; go to Smile.Amazon.com when buying through Amazon and select The Colorado Trail Foundation as your designated charity.

**CT SHOP:** Purchase any of the Trail-related items – maps, guidebooks, clothing, tools and commemoratives – from the CTF’s online shop and the profits from the sale go to the Foundation. Click the “Shop” button at the top of any page on ColoradoTrail.org

**LEGACY GIVING:** Help ensure that the Trail will be here for future generations by including The Colorado Trail Foundation in your will or living trust. Your financial advisor, attorney or accountant can help you set up a charitable gift to the Foundation in the form of cash, stocks, bonds, or from proceeds of insurance policies or the sale of property. You can also designate the CTF as a beneficiary of an insurance policy, IRA or pension plan.

**IRA REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTIONS:** Donate all or a portion of your RMD directly to the CTF (a qualifying charity) and receive an exclusion from taxable income without having to itemize deductions. Consult your tax professional about making a “qualified charitable distribution.” The CTF can provide the transfer account info to you or your investment advisor.

**THANK YOU!**