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**PRESS RELEASE**

**WHILD Fund makes first-year grants**

**Steamboat Springs, CO** – The Yampa Valley Community Foundation announced the inaugural year granting results from the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Local District Fund (WHILD). Two grants totaling \$1,204 will be awarded to two local land managers.

Decisions on how to spend WHILD revenue are made by a board comprised of four land managers and two community members at large. Wildlife Improvement project grant applications are requested and received annually in September.

The board decided to grant \$402 to the US Forest Service to for gates and signage to increase education for seasonal closures Flash of Gold and BTR trails located on Buffalo Pass. Buffalo Pass area is an important elk production area. BTR and Flash of Gold trails both intersect elk production areas and have been determined through Environmental Assessment that there trails should be closed from May 15 – June 15<sup>th</sup>. Over the past two years, the United States Forest Service has found good compliance with the closure, but there is a need to improve the entrances with gates and signs so compliance continues to improve. In order to fully fund this project, an additional \$654 is required.

Two local nonprofits, Keep Routt Wild and Routt County Riders will fundraise the last required amount of \$654 to complete the gate project. Each nonprofit will be responsible to raise half or \$327. To support the project, you can donate directly through each organization's webpage from January 15<sup>th</sup>- January 31<sup>st</sup>. Any additional funds raised to will be directed to support the WHILD Fund. Visit <https://www.keeprouttwild.com/donate> to donate through Keep Routt Wild and visit: <https://www.coloradogives.org/index.php?section=organizations&action=newDonation&fwID=36964> donate through Routt County Riders.

The City of Steamboat Springs will receive an \$800 grant will provide Springs for the purchase of four new temperature probes on the Yampa River to assist with collecting data for an ongoing temperature monitoring effort on the river. The Yampa River has been identified by the EPA as not meeting temperature requirements. The City and its partners need additional temperature information to understand both what is happening with the river along different stretches of the river, as well as to understand how various mitigation efforts (such as an enhanced ReTree effort) are benefiting river temperature. These temperature probes will help enable broader data collection that will provide clarity to future management to protect of wildlife using the river.

TMEF grants will be distributed by the end of this year. The USFS and the City of Steamboat Springs will determine whether to use a contracted entity or internal crews to perform the requested trail maintenance projects.

The purpose of the Fund is to provide a permanent endowment to support wildlife habitat improvement projects, including capital projects, planning, research, studies, management, enforcement, education and other wildlife habitat improvement projects, for the public benefit within Routt County. As of November 27th, 2019, the fund had a balance of \$45,000.

The WHILD board meets every October to review grant applications and make recommendations for the Yampa Valley Community Foundation Board of Trustees to approve in November. The amount distributed is based on the endowment spending policy set by the Yampa Valley Community Foundation.

For more information or to donate, visit [www.yvcf.org/whild](http://www.yvcf.org/whild)

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