

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



**RMEF**



**ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION**



Ensure the future of elk, other wildlife,  
their habitat and our hunting heritage.

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**PROTECTING WHERE ELK LIVE**

Foraging, wintering, and migrating elk depend on high quality habitat, we work to protect it

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**UNLOCKING ACCESS, FOR HUNTERS, FOR ALL**

Opening access to recreation is a key component to project design and funding priorities

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**BEING A STEWARD OF OUR LANDS**

Restoring and enhancing habitat for elk and other wildlife provides more resources for the animals to thrive and survive

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Promoting science-based policy and ensuring funding for conservation is critical to our mission and progress

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**IT TAKES A TEAM, SUPPORTING OUR WORK**

The lifeblood of the organization are supporters and volunteers who make this work possible

## ENHANCING ELK COUNTRY

**FALLEN PINE CONES, TALL BRUSH AND DEAD TREE** limbs from the canopy above crackled and popped from advancing fire on the forest floor as a warm Arizona day grew hotter. Crew members nearby did nothing to douse the flames. In fact, they are the ones who ignited them on purpose.

In many ways, the 2019 prescribed burn operation on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest is a microcosm of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's mission. RMEF funding helped leverage additional partner dollars to make the 7,382-acre controlled burn possible. Overly dry, overly dense forest conditions removed unnaturally high fuel loads that impede wildlife movement and can also result in catastrophic wildfire. All that translates into poor habitat for elk and other wildlife.

Reintroducing fire on a landscape after decades of fire suppression increases soil moisture, stimulates soil nutrients, removes encroaching trees and shrubs in meadows, triggers growth of diverse vegetation and improves stream flow. And all that leads to better overall forest health and enhanced habitat for elk, deer and numerous species of bird and animal life.

RMEF partners with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, state wildlife agencies, private landowners and scores of conservation, business, civic and other groups to carry out a multitude of habitat enhancement projects nationwide that ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat and our hunting heritage. It is who we are. It is what we do. And it is what we have successfully done for 35 years since our founding in 1984.

**Our founders, four elk hunters from northwest Montana, had a vision and we work every day to bring that vision to pass.**

One key facet of our mission is to enhance elk country. For RMEF, 2019 was a record-setter! We enhanced a single-year record 404,164 acres of wildlife habitat across 23 different states. Why? We had a tame fire season followed up by a mild fall that allowed massive amounts of work to clean up fuel loads on many landscapes.

This year, we also permanently protected more than 25,000 acres of habitat across a dozen states. One particular project protected 442 acres along Montana's scenic Rocky Mountain Front that also improved access to 27,000 acres of public land behind it (see pages 6-7). Additionally, we maintained record membership growth, opened or

improved access to nearly 60,000 acres across nine states, provided more than \$1 million for elk-related scientific research and unveiled an updated, modernized logo.

Development, a lack of forest management and many other issues continue to impact elk country.

The following pages highlight how the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is answering the challenge. Thanks to the support of our volunteers, members, sponsors and other supporters, we will press forward to do even more for wild elk and all of us whose lives are shaped by them.



*Kyle Weaver*  
**Kyle Weaver**  
President & Chief  
Executive Officer



PHOTO: USFS



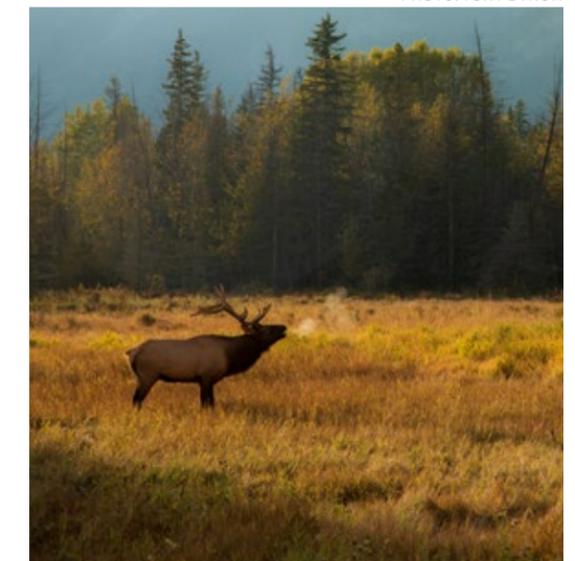
### The Falls Creek Acquisition

WEST OF AUGUSTA, MONTANA, THE ROCKIES  
soar vertically out of the plains to stand guard on the massive Bob Marshall Wilderness beyond. It's a dreamland for backcountry elk hunting, but one that's limited by the number of trailheads where you can find an open path to public land.

A new gate opened in 2019 where the Dearborn River tumbles out of a mighty chasm along the Rocky Mountain Front and is joined by Falls Creek to the south. RMEF partnered with a generous landowner as well as the U.S. Forest Service; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Lewis and Clark County Open Lands Program; Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust and others to acquire 442 acres of key wildlife habitat that have since given birth to a new trailhead, a new public river put-in on the Dearborn, and secured public access on Falls Creek, opening 27,000 acres of outstanding public elk country. "There are a lot of places in that country that take your breath away," explained Brian Golie of Montana Fish and Wildlife, "but I remember reining up and seeing those falls for the first time and thinking that had to be one of the finest."

The Falls Creek acquisition is a powerful story of a conservation-minded landowner and the partnerships that work to preserve high quality habitat, with the additional layer of access for all to enjoy it. The acquisition is not, however, unique to RMEF's work, but rather typical in the sense that day-in and day-out, the organization strives to protect lands, enhance habitat, and open access to landscapes just like Falls Creek. This project was empowered by the contributions of members, and in no small part, happened because RMEF supporters stepped-up to provide the financial support needed to get the job done. As RMEF supporter Mandy Miles explains, "Falls Creek is a living legacy of our past and to our future. To preserve and protect such a special place was both a dream and a goal for life."

PHOTO: TONY BYNUM



RMEF'S APPROACH TO CONSERVING AND STEWARDING elk country has a lot to do with people and partnerships, whether they be donors, landowners, volunteers, policymakers or public agencies, and oftentimes it takes a mix. In addition to the people, we also bring credible science, financial resources, creativity and persistence which has allowed us to exceed 7.9 million acres of conserved habitat and 12,000 projects in our 35 years of existence. In 2019, the approach was no different. Funds raised through our banquets and allocated to habitat projects with partners across the country accomplished more than 400,000 acres of improved habitat. An all-time high. A very special relationship between one of RMEF's lands program managers, a conservation officer and a landowner near Augusta,

Montana, resulted in the completion of a monumental public access project that will benefit generations into the future. In our quest to improve the science around elk management, habitat and wildlife disease, we reached the milestone of committing more than \$1 million to research. And finally, the Torstenson Family Endowment combined with banquet proceeds continued to fund mentored hunts, shooting sports and other national programs focused on hunting and the relevance of hunting in our culture. RMEF is blessed to have tremendous people that support our mission and we look forward to accepting the challenges of conserving elk country for future generations.

**"Falls Creek is a living legacy of our past and to our future. To preserve and protect such a special place was both a dream and a goal for life."**

- Mandy Miles, Idaho



**Minnie Maud Ridge:  
Maximum Elk Country**

1,595 acres protected

**“THERE’S ONE VISTA ON MINNIE** Maud Ridge called the Sentinel. It’s a rocky spine with cliffs on three sides that runs about 300 feet above the ground with views over a thousand feet down these long canyons,” says Randy Olson of the land he owns in northeast Utah. “I was sitting there last September just as the sun was coming up and turned it all to gold. I already had a tingle running down my spine, and then a bull lit up with this long bugle.”



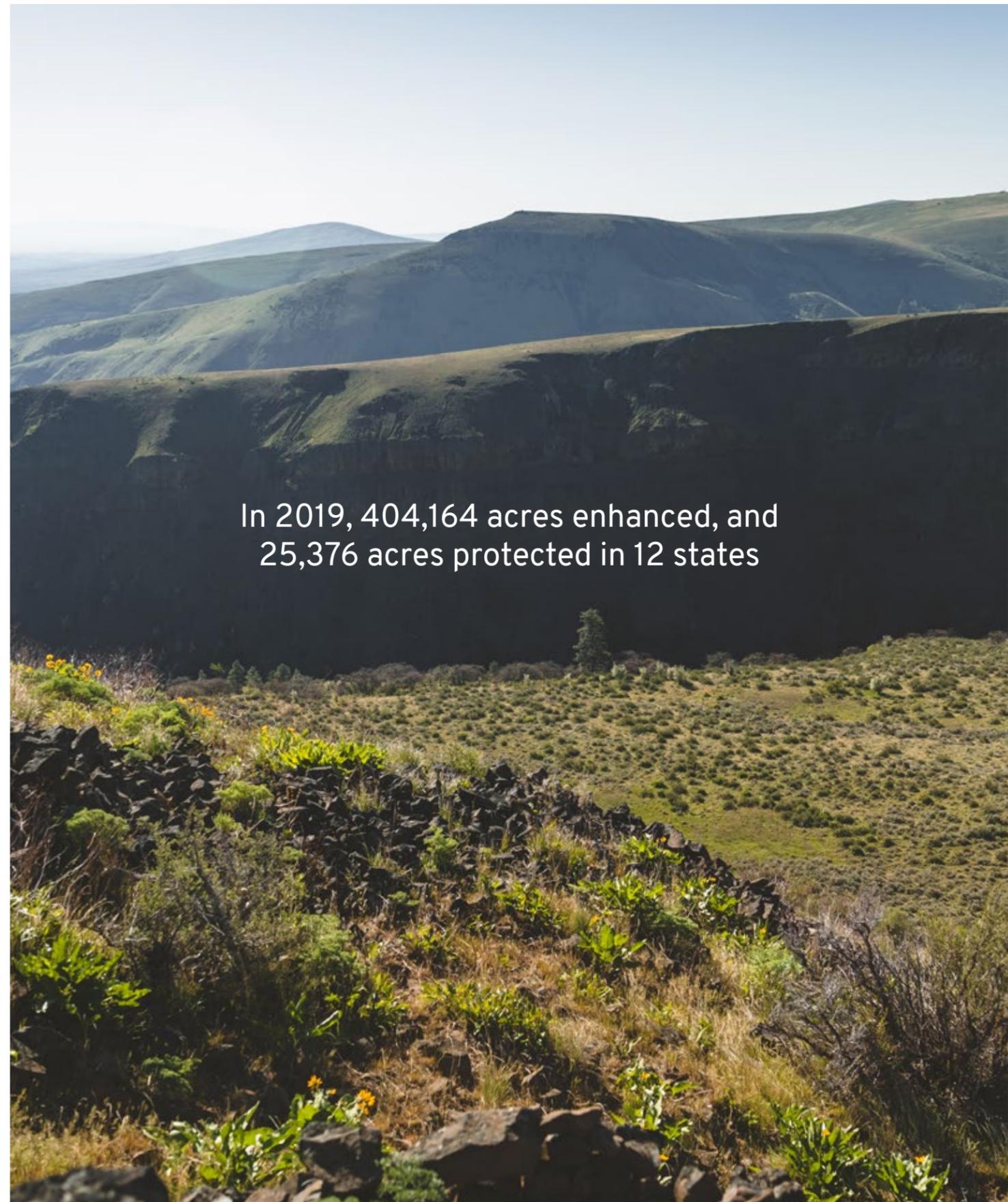
In 2019, Randall J. Olson, MD and chair of the University of Utah Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, received the Governor’s Medal for Science and Technology for pioneering innovations in cataract and intraocular lens surgery that earned him worldwide acclaim—and for spurring philanthropic support to create the John A. Moran Eye Center, a premier hub for ophthalmic care and research that now attracts almost 150,000 patients from around the globe. He’s also a passionate elk hunter and has been a proud RMEF supporter since he became member 17,787 early in 1987.

“Two years ago a patient of mine told me, ‘The Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] has been gifted just under 6,000 acres and they’re looking to sell. It’s way up high in the mountains and it’s just an unbelievably wild place. It looks like it’s hardly seen the hand of man,’” Olson says. The description proved true.

Aspens tower like columns in a Roman coliseum. A mosaic of oakbrush, grasslands and sage fans out around them. The wildlife biologist who conducted the baseline survey of the property required for every conservation easement described it as the most beautiful aspen stand he’d ever seen.

“It’s pretty amazing. There are aspens in there that you can barely put your arms around,” Olson says. “I went up there quite a few times that summer, then I hunted in there that fall and took a nice bull. By then, my mind was made up.”

Olson bought the land in 2018. Not far to the north, the country has been chopped into 10- and 20-acre ranchettes, adding scores of roads, houses and fences while subtracting most of the native wildlife and plants. Vowing never to see that happen here, he donated a conservation easement last year to RMEF forever protect just under 1,600 acres of phenomenal habitat for elk, moose, mule deer, black bear, pronghorn, sage



In 2019, 404,164 acres enhanced, and 25,376 acres protected in 12 states

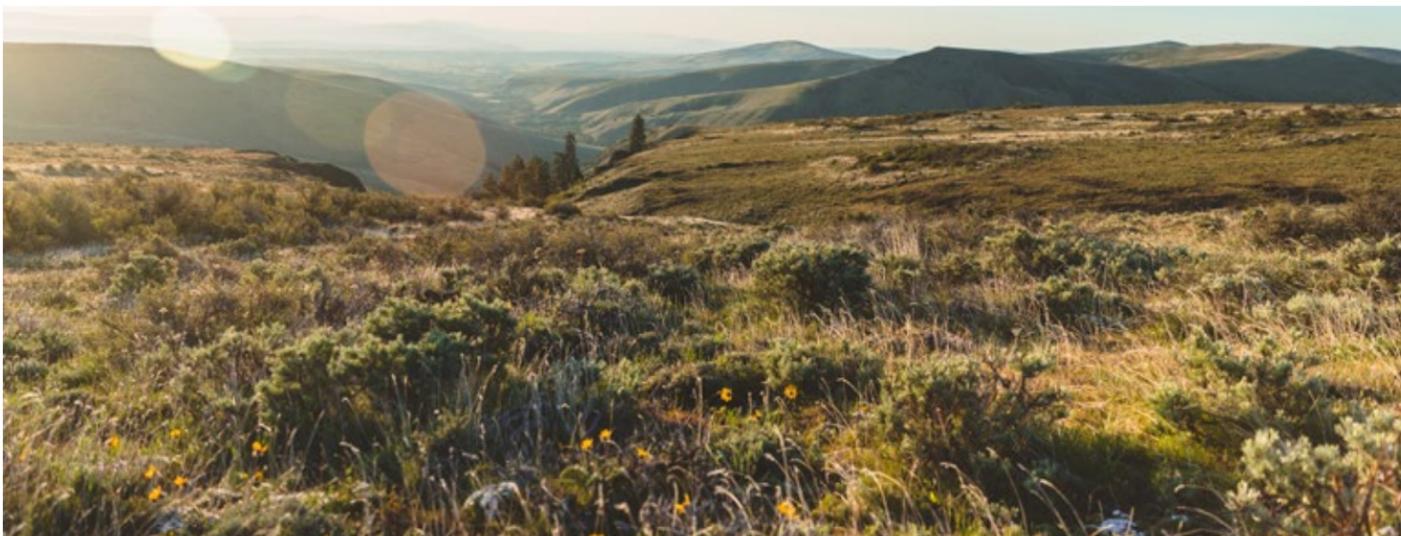
**Oak Creek Wildlife Area**  
Yakima County, Washington

4,486 Acres with Public Access  
Permanently Protected July 12, 2019

Since 1984, 7.9 Million Acres Enhanced or Protected

“RMEF not only works hard to protect and enhance elk habitat, but strives to **OPEN AND IMPROVE PUBLIC ACCESS**. That’s one of many reasons we strongly support its mission. We want our kids and grandkids to be able to enjoy the outdoor lifestyle like we did during our younger years.”

– Jerry & Shannon Whitehead, Idaho



## Conservation for the Calves of Cowiche

4,400 acres protected and opened to public access

**ELK ARE RARELY MORE VULNERABLE THAN IN THEIR** first wobbly weeks of life, except perhaps when they face a long, harsh winter that entombs their world in white. In both cases, healthy, intact habitat can tip the balance. Take the east slope of the Cascades, home to Washington’s largest elk herd. When snow drapes the peaks, some 2,000 elk descend out of the high country east of Mount Adams and Mount Rainier onto the foothills above Yakima, where they find open ridges of grass trimmed by sage, oaks, ponderosas and fins of lava from ancient volcanos.

There is enough solitude that cow elk linger to give birth in places like Cowiche Creek. It’s part of a beltline of critical habitat perched above the vineyards, orchards and sprawl of Yakima Valley. This band of wild country extends north past Ellensburg and south to Ahtanum, a swath where RMEF has so far protected more than 125,000 acres. That total grew in 2019 when the RMEF and its partners protected a 4,486-acre chunk along the south fork of Cowiche Creek.

“It’s one of the least roaded places I’ve ever worked on,” says RMEF lands program manager Bill Richardson. “No wonder it’s such a magnet for cows to calve on.”

Owned by Alan and Joan Van Wyk, this land was assembled by Alan’s grandfather around 1900 as a base for his sheep grazing operation. The Van Wyk Family wanted to ensure it would always remain intact. They began talking with RMEF in the early 2000s, and recently decided to

move forward with a sale to make it public land. Forterra, a Washington-based nonprofit land conservation organization, stepped up with bridge funding, and will hold a stewardship easement on the property.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife used a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service habitat grant and a Pacific Power mitigation agreement to complete the purchase, and will manage the property as an addition to the Cowiche Unit of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. It borders a 2,893-acre parcel RMEF helped purchase from neighboring landowners in 2014, and will be open to hunting, fishing, hiking and bird watching.

The property protects key habitat for elk, mule deer, neotropical birds, raptors, bats, more than 70 butterfly species and possibly sage grouse. The sagebrush steppe here is robust enough to merit a potential reintroduction of sage grouse. The acquisition also conserved more than seven miles of Cowiche Creek, spawning and rearing habitat for bull trout and coho and chinook salmon.

“This property is an important link to surrounding state, federal and private conservation lands,” says Mike Livingston, WDFW’s south central regional director. “With the help of our partners RMEF and Forterra, we’re able to permanently protect the area where up to 2,000 elk migrate between their summer and winter ranges, and where elk calves are born each year.”

**Since 1984, 1.3 Million Public Access Acres Unlocked**

## Carving a New Route for Colorado’s Stagecoach

1,000 acres secured and enhanced for public access

**HUNTING IS WOVEN INTO THE AUTUMN FABRIC OF** Colorado’s Upper Yampa Valley. Swing sets and barn rafters become de facto meatpoles while blaze orange and camo become the default town attire. Stores, cafes and bars double as antler exhibits to greet the influx of hunters that come for the elk and mule deer herds roaming hundreds of thousands of acres of public land that wreath the valley.

Those willing to invest some boot leather find a dreamland of pocket meadows tucked in the aspens and lodgepoles that rock and roll up to the Flat Tops and Gore ranges beyond.

But access isn’t always simple.

Take Stagecoach. A short-lived ski resort brought a tide of condos to this quiet bend in the Yampa River 20 miles upstream of Steamboat Springs before going bust in 1974. Then a dam corralled the Yampa into an 800-acre reservoir 15 years later, spawning Stagecoach State Park, which now attracts as many as 200,000 visitors annually. To the north, it borders the Adams State Wildlife Area, created as part of the dam mitigation to protect hundreds of elk and deer that winter above its shorelines. Beyond that, though, historic ranches have given way to a march of trophy homes and No Trespassing signs.

Hunters have been able to park above Stagecoach’s neighborhoods to access 1,000 acres of public land on Woodchuck

Hill cared for by the Bureau of Land Management. It’s a gorgeous ridge of aspen and a backdoor into the 40,000-acre Sarvis Creek Wilderness.

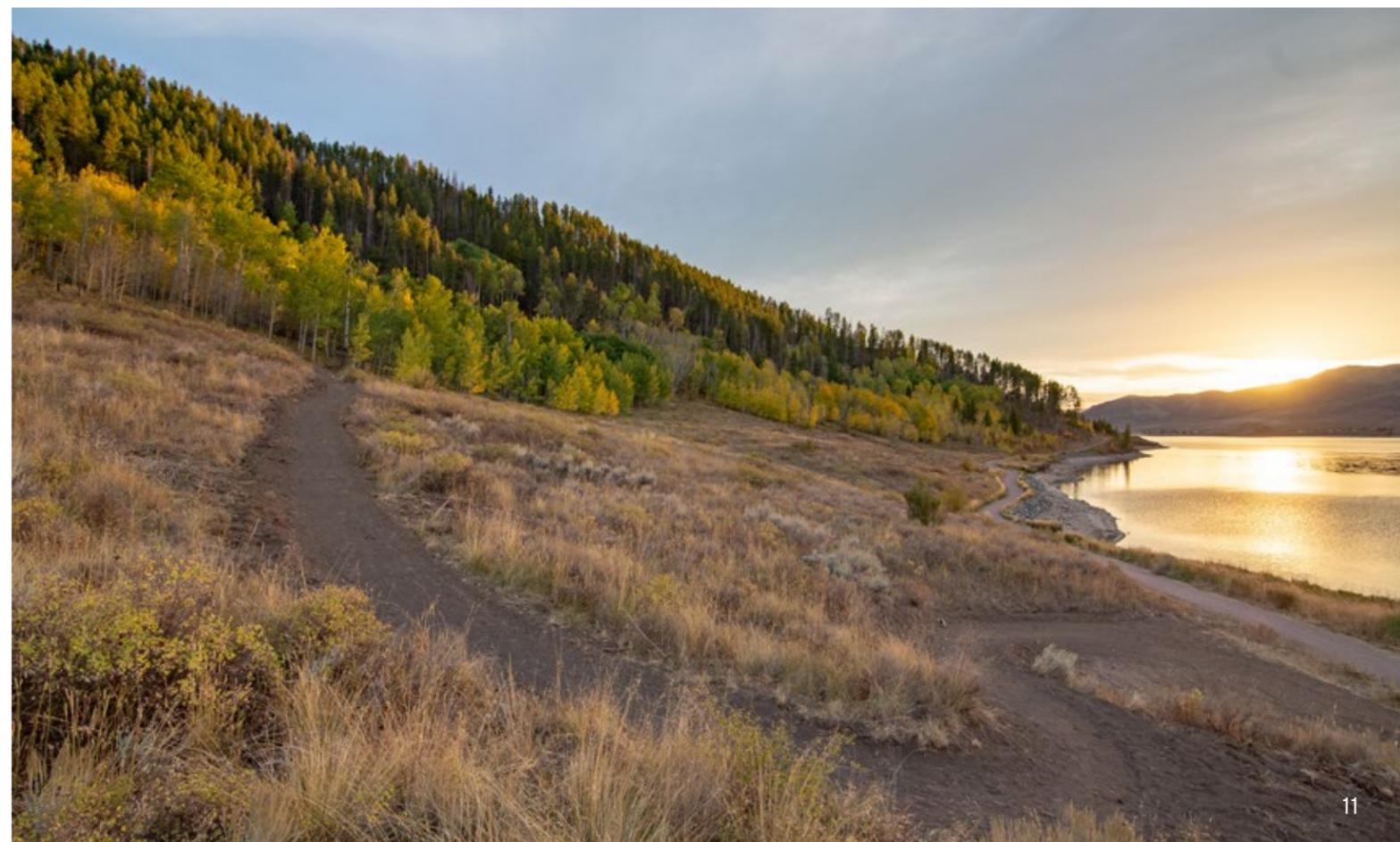
But some homeowners got nervous about having hunters so close. The neighborhood association hired surveyors who found a few feet of private ground wedged between public road and public land. A fence went up and Woodchuck Hill was suddenly cut off.

BLM managers offered to purchase access rights, they identified a section of the state park that climbs from the dam to Woodchuck. A switchbacked connector branching off an existing shoreline trail would restore access, an idea the Upper Yampa Water Conservation District, which owns the reservoir, supported.

Fueled by a \$50,000 state trail grant and a \$40,000 grant from RMEF, managers broke ground last year. The trail opened last fall.

“People latched onto it immediately,” says Andrew Dean, senior park ranger who helped lead the effort. “Hikers and mountain bikers love the fantastic views of the Sarvis Creek Wilderness, the Flat Tops and everything in between. And hunters are delighted. I spoke to a gentleman who has hunted that BLM parcel with his family for 30 years. He was totally thrilled to have access once again.”

**In 2019, 60,000 Acres Unlocked in 9 States**





**RMEF'S HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM SEEKS TO** improve elk country by supporting a diversity of projects intended to help meet ongoing habitat challenges. Lack of forest management, fire suppression, invasive species and disease are some of the most pressing issues threatening elk country. By working with volunteers, agencies, private landowners and other partners, RMEF helps ensure elk will remain abundant. Agency partner collaborations in 2019 allowed RMEF and partners to implement several large-scale projects, accomplishing much-needed prescribed fire, invasive weed control and timber management across elk country. At the core of our stewardship work are steadfast volunteers who not only generated the funding for these habitat enhancement projects, but also implemented critical follow-up work, such as hand-planting native plants and by installing wildlife-friendly fencing. Together, we are the force that digs in to ensure resilient landscapes for elk and other wildlife.



Forest/Rangeland Thinning



Prescribed Burning



Noxious Weed Control



Aspen Restoration



Wildlife Water Sources

dry places by capturing and storing precious rain and snow when it falls there. It's tearing down abandoned barbed-wire and woven-wire fences that have grown decrepit and deadly, and where appropriate, building wildlife-friendly fences.

In 2019, RMEF enhanced more than 400,000 acres of habitat, more than any other year since founded in 1984. An unusually tame wildfire season across much of the West freed up both staff and funding to improve habitat instead of fighting flames.

Habitat stewardship, like all of the work we do, depends on partnerships. Most of these projects were carried out by the skilled professionals who work for the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and state and county land and wildlife departments. RMEF is focused on sustaining and growing these relationships so when opportunity knocks, we can get into elk country to achieve as much as possible during these tight windows.

**Since its founding in 1984, RMEF has enhanced more than 6.6 million acres**

South Dakota: Spotted napweed, yellow toadflax and oxeye daisy can dramatically reduce the amount of native forage available for elk and other wildlife. Weed-eating weevils are a long-term solution to help manage these non-native noxious invaders.



**WHETHER IT'S SEEDING FROM A HELICOPTER FROM 100 FEET IN THE AIR,** or boots on the ground planting sage brush, restoring and enhancing habitat is a critical component to our mission. Most are not the sexy projects that grab headlines, they're just the daily good news of working in the dirt to make healthier forage, water and cover for elk and other wildlife.

It's cutting out firs and pines that have sprung up in aspen stands without the small, regular forest fires that kept those groves intact. And cutting down junipers where, because of that same fire suppression, they're encroaching on grasslands and sagebrush benches that have carried elk, mule deer and pronghorns through hundreds of hard winters. It's replanting native grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees in the wake of the massive wildfires that come when the clock inevitably runs out on fire suppression. And using prescribed burns to restore the natural role of fire on those landscapes.

It's using herbicides and beetles and calloused hands to beat back invasions of exotic noxious weeds with the nutritional value of Styrofoam to elk and other wildlife. It's building and maintaining guzzlers to keep water – and wildlife – in

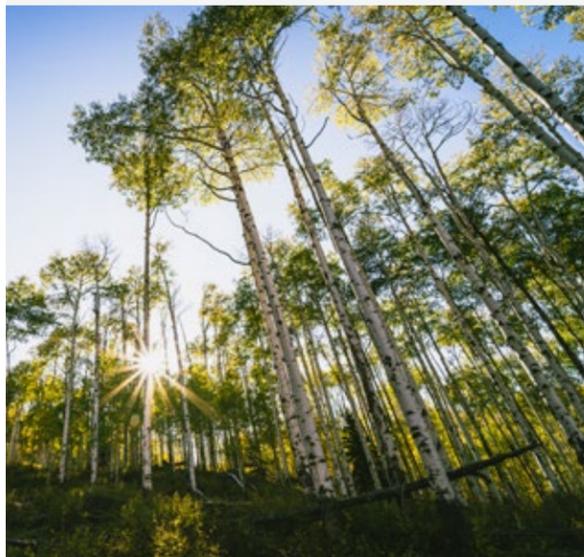


## FINANCIALS

RMEF CELEBRATED ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL year in 2019 by putting more than \$44 million to work through program expenditures, including permanent land protection, habitat stewardship, hunting heritage, elk restoration and membership services. This figure was highlighted by \$19.5 million in permanent land protection projects which featured several critical access projects. Of the \$12.3 million spent on habitat stewardship and hunting heritage, a significant portion can be attributed to RMEF's mission allocation program, which ensures that a portion of the money raised by volunteers goes back to work in their own states. In addition to program accomplishments, 2019 saw the beginning of several technology upgrades at RMEF aimed to better service members and facilitate more robust and efficient fundraising events. Overall, RMEF continued its strong track record of financial stewardship with a programmatic efficiency of 83 percent.

Of course, this mission accomplishment would not be possible without the support of our members and donors. Donations, memberships and fundraising events accounted for nearly \$43.7 million of RMEF's \$65.5 million in total support and revenue. Another significant revenue source in 2019 was return of \$9.4 million on investments, the majority of which are either donor or board restricted endowments. These endowments, including the RMEF Torstenson Family Endowment, play a crucial role in providing long-term stable support of RMEF programs.

The overall financial strength and efficiency of operations at the RMEF enable us to continue delivering strong and impactful mission accomplishment. For a more detailed review of our finances we invite you to review our audited 2019 financial statements at [www.rmef.org/resources/rmef-financials](http://www.rmef.org/resources/rmef-financials).



**82.49%** Program Services  
**10.41%** Fundraising  
**7.10%** Administration

### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

(in thousands)	2019	% of Total
<b>Support and Revenue</b>		
Donations (a)	\$ 17,151	26.17%
Special Events, net of event expense	14,759	22.52%
Membership dues	11,790	17.99%
Return on investments	9,365	14.29%
Program service revenue (b)	9,254	14.12%
Advertising/sponsorships, retail and other revenue	3,218	4.91%
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>65,537</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Program services	44,048	82.49%
Fundraising	5,560	10.41%
Administration	3,793	7.10%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>53,401</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 12,136</b>	

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

(in thousands)	2019
<b>Assets</b>	
Current assets	\$ 28,896
Investments (board designated)	12,648
Investments (donor endowments and other restricted)	47,234
Property and equipment, net of depreciation	11,293
Land held for program accomplishment (c)	3,204
Other assets	976
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 104,251</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Current liabilities	\$ 6,183
Planned gift liabilities, net of current portion	1,287
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>7,470</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	
With donor restrictions	48,345
Without donor restrictions	48,436
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>96,781</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 104,251</b>

- (a) Includes cash contributions and donated conservation easements  
 (b) Composed of grants, contract revenue and conveyances of permanently protected land  
 (c) Balance consists of land holdings awaiting conveyance to public entity for permanent habitat protection and public access

NOTE: The figures that appear in the financial summary, as shown above, are derived from the 2019 audited financial statements, which expressed unqualified audit opinions.

The complete audited financial statements for RMEF can be seen at [www.rmef.org/resources/rmef-financials](http://www.rmef.org/resources/rmef-financials).

## Leadership, Approach and Honesty

IN MY FIRST YEAR AS CHAIR OF RMEF'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, and my fifth year on the board, it's been astounding to witness this organization achieve so much. RMEF averages roughly 200,000 acres of elk country enhanced or protected each year since founded in 1984. In 2019, the organization more than doubled the average, working across dozens of states, hand-in-hand with the many volunteers and partnerships who make our mission possible.

Like many of our members, I came to support RMEF because of my passion for hunting and the outdoors, and as I better understood the organization and its work, several things jumped out to me that sets us apart from other conservation groups. First, its supporters and volunteers are the leaders. RMEF members go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure the organization is equipped financially and with the manpower to get things done. Second, it's work. Whether it be protecting land or improving access, RMEF's approach is always science-based and strategic. Lastly, honesty. From the board to the staff, being true to our history, our traditions and transparent to our membership, honesty underlies everything we do.

We believe in taking care of the things that we value and pass along to others, which is why at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation we seek partnerships with those who hold our values. Those partnerships are non-partisan and translate into land protected, habitat improved, communities enriched and our passion for hunting and the outdoors sustained.

We look forward to rolling our sleeves up and accomplishing much more in the future for elk and elk country, and thank those who make this organization what it is.



*Fred Lekse, Jr.*  
**Fred Lekse, Jr.**

Chair, RMEF Board of Directors



## RMEF Board of Directors

- CHAIR**  
 Fred Lekse, Jr. *Collbran, CO*
- VICE CHAIR**  
 Mark Baker *Helena, MT*
- Philip Barrett *Darby, MT*  
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 Dr. Martin Vavra, Ph.D. *La Grande, OR*  
 Michael Wright *Canton, GA*

- OFFICERS**  
 R. Kyle Weaver *President & CEO*  
 Grant Parker *Secretary / General Counsel*  
 Shane Cronk *Treasurer / VP Finance & Accounting*

## RMEF Founders

- Dan Bull  
 Charlie Decker  
 Bill Munson  
 Bob Munson

## Your Legacy, Their Future

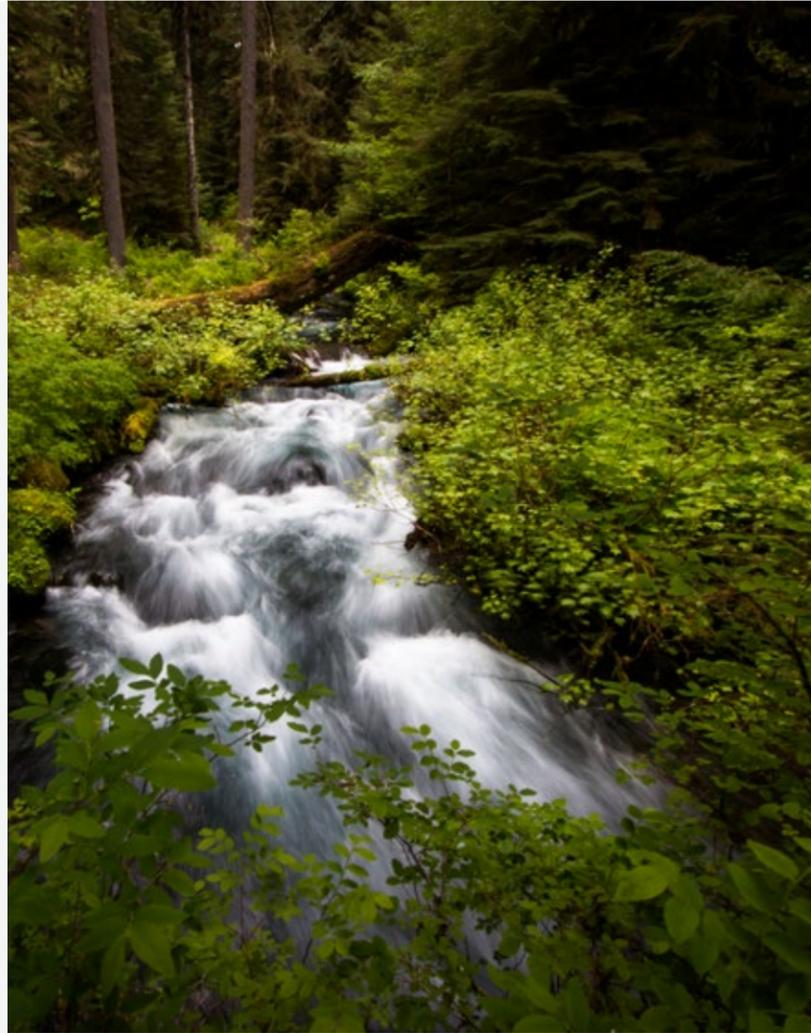
WE OFFER OUR HEARTFELT appreciation for those who support the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation by remembering the organization in their estate plans. In 2019, planned gifts to RMEF allowed for powerful and permanent lands and creatures to flourish.

Gifts for our future ensure the health and viability of our conservation mission, so that generations to come can experience the splendor of our wild places. Planned gifts to RMEF cements your legacy for their future.

## Issues & Advocacy

RMEF'S ISSUES & ADVOCACY PROGRAM advocates for hunting, land management and conservation programs with Congress, federal and state agencies, state legislatures and the judicial system to advance priorities. RMEF's staff, board of directors, federal affairs representative, members and volunteers significantly contribute to these efforts, working in a nonpartisan manner with reasoned, scientific, factual arguments focused on mission. The Issues & Advocacy program involves drafting federal and state legislation, testifying at congressional and state legislative hearings, submitting technical comments on regulations and participating in legal proceedings to promote and protect members' interests in hunting, wildlife, access to public lands, habitat conservation and fundraising. Legislation and regulations are tracked in all 50 states and members are informed about key developments at [rmeff.org](http://rmeff.org), through email, social media and *Bugle* magazine. They are also asked to engage decision-makers on pressing issues. Thousands of members have answered RMEF's "Calls to Action" to ensure their voices are heard.

Significant progress was made on many federal and state issues in 2019, yet four primary topics emerged as top priorities: the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), big game migration corridors, chronic wasting disease (CWD) and predator management.



## LWCF

CONGRESS CREATED THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF) IN 1964 TO conserve natural areas and provide outdoor recreational opportunities for Americans through annual appropriations from offshore oil and gas royalties. Offshore royalty payments collect around \$900 million annually, but Congress typically directs less than half that amount to LWCF.

LWCF has provided significant funding to complete 80 RMEF conservation projects, permanently protecting more than 150,000 acres of America's most crucial elk habitat.

RMEF worked diligently for several years on legislation to direct Congress to provide permanent, full funding to LWCF and played a critical role in a March 2020 meeting with President Trump and key lawmakers where an agreement was reached to do just that.

Montana Senator Steve Daines showed the president photos and maps of RMEF's Falls Creek, Montana project that leveraged \$250,000 from LWCF, which when added to significant funding provided by private donors and other conservation organizations, allowed the project to be completed a year ahead of schedule. The president announced, "We need to be doing more of this" and called on Congress to "send me a bill that fully and permanently funds the LWCF and restores our national parks."

In response, Senators Daines, Cory Gardner of Colorado and Joe Manchin of West Virginia crafted S. 3422, the Great American Outdoors Act, to provide full and permanent funding for LWCF and direct significant resources to address maintenance backlog issues at national parks and other federal lands. The bill earned overwhelming bipartisan support in the Senate and House of Representatives.

## Predator Management

OUT-OF-STATE ENVIRONMENTAL EXTREMISTS RAISED more than \$1 million to place an initiative on the ballot in Colorado asking voters to approve a forced introduction of gray wolves onto the landscape in the Centennial State. RMEF joined with other sportsmen and agriculture organizations to fight against the initiative by informing voters why a forced wolf introduction is a bad idea. RMEF produced a series of videos with facts about the impacts of a forced introduction on elk hunting, livestock, conservation and recreation resources and other wildlife that were widely distributed on social media. RMEF leadership held a news conference at a prominent national outdoor trade show and staff participated in a variety of public meetings and radio programs to increase public awareness about the initiative.

RMEF continues to push for removal of federal protections for grizzly bears and gray wolves. RMEF and the U.S. Sportsman's Alliance filed an intervener brief in support of the U.S. Justice Department's appeal of the 2018 Montana District Court decision blocking delisting of the Greater Yellowstone population of grizzly bears.

RMEF submitted comments in favor of the Interior Department's 2019 proposal to remove federal protections for gray wolves throughout the lower 48 states and endorsed legislation in Congress



to direct the Interior secretary to remove federal protections for gray wolves in the Great Lakes states of Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.



PHOTO: SDGF

## Migration Corridors

FORMER INTERIOR SECRETARY Ryan Zinke signed Secretarial Order 3362 in 2018 to require western states to identify, map and conserve big game migration corridors for elk, mule deer and pronghorn antelope. RMEF provided financial and technical assistance to states to map and conserve elk migration corridors since the order was executed. RMEF was instrumental in drafting language into the Senate transportation infrastructure bill to

include funding and policy direction to state transportation agencies to address wildlife crossings and habitat connectivity. The bill passed the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee unanimously on July 30, 2019, and awaits further action. RMEF is working with leadership of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to ensure the House transportation bill includes the same funding and policy direction.

## CWD

RMEF ADVOCATED FOR SEVERAL YEARS for Congress to appropriate significant funds to research institutions to find a cure for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and to state wildlife agencies for testing and response measures to contain the disease. Congress addressed chronic wasting disease last year by directing limited funds for federal research and for states to control outbreaks in deer, elk and moose populations. RMEF will work to secure greater funding for these efforts in 2020 and beyond to address this critical wildlife issue.



## IT TAKES A TEAM, SUPPORTING OUR WORK

Engaging every generation in our pastime of hunting is one of the most important pillars that supports our mission. From volunteers to supporters, industry partners and RMEF staff, we exist in this space of conservation because of a passion for the resource and a connection to it through gun, bow and the pursuit.

“I have been involved with RMEF since its inception 35 years ago, and witnessed its growth from a fledgling local conservation organization into one of national prominence. I can attest to how RMEF places a focus on science-based wildlife management and upholding the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Sharing hunting experiences with my children and grandchildren has provided me with tremendous personal enjoyment, and I truly appreciate RMEF’s mission of ensuring the future of hunting for generations to come.”

– Alden Glidden, Oregon



PHOTO: TOM & PAT LEESON



**RMEF’S HUNTING HERITAGE PROGRAM** works to enrich our **COMMUNITIES** and preserve our hunting traditions with programs that engage youth, adults, families, veterans and students around outdoor skills, hunting ethics and conservation. RMEF grants funds to safety and education courses, shooting skills instruction, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and more. In 2019, RMEF awarded nearly \$500,000 through its Torstenson Family Endowment for hunter education and mentoring, as well as 12 scholarships for outstanding college students majoring in wildlife biology.

**FROM REMOVING MILES OF OLD BARBWIRE** to cutting trees and brush so that foraging habitat improves, our dedicated volunteer army continues to make RMEF one of the best conservation organizations in the country. In 2019, volunteers performed roughly 120 projects over 15,000 hours in dozens of states. They installed water guzzlers for elk and other wildlife, built fencing around aspen groves, uprooted invasive noxious weeds, and perhaps most important, helped organize and run hundreds of banquets and membership drives that put funds to work for elk and elk country.



Four years after his last chemo treatment, eleven-year old Brycen Fuhrman’s dream came true through a Hunting Heritage partnership between RMEF and the Outdoor Dream Foundation.

“I got outdoors and saw all the amazing animals and scenery. It is a little adventure every time, and it is awesome to spend time with my family.”

– Brycen Fuhrman, Virginia

“It’s a great feeling knowing that our effort to give back is to an organization that really gets the job done. Hunting is conservation, and no organization exemplifies this like RMEF.”

– Jim & Diana Copper, Tennessee

**IT IS PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE AND INVEST IN OUR MISSION**, donating their resources to improving habitat for elk and wildlife, conserving our wild spaces and enriching our communities through outreach and advocating for our traditions. **SUPPORTERS** of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation give for today and for tomorrow, ensuring the organization is on solid footing so we can keep in the business of conservation. Thank you to our members, corporate sponsors, foundations and anyone who believes it is money well spent when given to RMEF.

**More than 500 chapters  
across 49 states**



**RMEF**

Ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their  
habitat and our hunting heritage.

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION**  
5705 Grant Creek Rd • Missoula, MT 59808

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