



Restoring the Ecology, Natural Beauty, & Safety of Independence Pass

Newsletter of the INDEPENDENCE PASS FOUNDATION September 2010

Photos by Mark Fuller



Left: On August 14, 10 members of the "Maroon Corps", an informal volunteer group of local young adults, planted over 200 lodgepole pine seedlings on the steep slopes below the Top Cut near timberline. Right: Travis Bruch (left), White River National Forest, and Forestry Consultant Jeff Webster (right), visited the lodgepole pine plantation south of the Ghost Town of Independence with IPF Executive Director Mark Fuller.

Compost Blankets Restore Once Barren Slopes

Revegetation throughout the Pass corridor continues to play a substantial role in the Independence Pass Foundation's restoration work. Since 2004, IPF has undertaken a series of five "compost blanket" projects on the steep and severely eroded hillsides below the one- and one-half mile stretch of the Pass known as the Top Cut. The Top Cut, where IPF has worked since 1996, lies just below the summit on the west side.

The lack of organic nutrients in the soil limited the natural revegetation of the slopes below the road. Begun on an experimental basis, the compost blankets have proven over the years to make up for this deficiency. Organic compost impregnated with native grass seed is spread over the slopes with a blower. The annual growth/dieback cycle that plants undergo replenishes organic material, helping the grassy areas to become self-sustaining.

In September 2010, IPF treated over 70,000 square feet in this location and elsewhere--50% more area than usual. The total project cost, including hydromulching and traffic control, will be about \$185,000.



Federal grants to improve highways, recommended by the Colorado Department of Transportation, have been hugely important to IPF's ability to revegetate the once barren hillsides below the Top Cut. IPF has received an additional \$52,000 federal enhancement grant to undertake another treatment next year. Previous compost blanket applications thrived this year due to unusually rainy weather.

Healthy and Sustainable Forest Management

Additional planting projects may come from the example set by the Denver Women's Club. In the 1930's, the women established a lodgepole pine plantation south of the Independence Ghost Town to replace the native trees that were cut down for buildings and firewood to support the Town of Independence. This forest is now a perfect place for demonstrating healthy and sustainable forest management practices. Discussions are underway with the Forest Service to explore collaborating on some pilot projects in this area that would include public access and education features.

16th Annual Ride Attracts Bikers of All Ages!

Every year hundreds of bike riders of all ages and abilities join the Independence Pass Foundation for an early-season jaunt from the winter gate on Highway 82 to the Independence Ghost Town. They also join fellow riders at the post-ride party at the Sky Hotel where they have a chance to take home one of dozens of prizes donated by Roaring Fork Valley businesses and restaurants. We appreciate the great turnout for the 16th Annual Ride for the Pass on May 22 as well as the support of the generous Sponsors who made the Ride possible.

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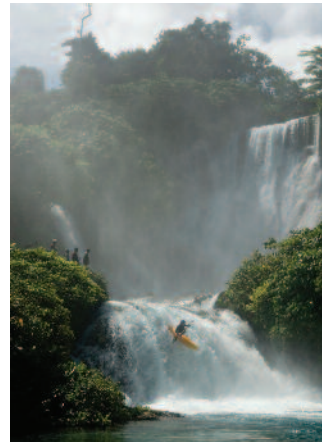
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IPF Hosts 2nd Wild & Scenic Film Festival

The Independence Pass Foundation hosted a fast-moving program of eight short documentaries at the Wheeler Opera House January 5. The subjects of IPF's 2nd annual film fest ranged from organic backyard farming to western range wars and from threatened orangutans to protection of the world's largest marine reserve. The program also featured a 10-minute video covering two decades of IPF's restoration work. In addition to enjoying award-winning films, attendees had the chance to win "giveaways" — including a pair of cross country skis and two nights at the Hotel Jerome — donated by businesses and individuals.



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