

**1. PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The generous funding from Circle of Dreams has been critical to the Great Old Broads for Wilderness Northern San Juan Broadband (NSJBB) chapter’s stewardship projects and leadership development.

2024 funding provided an opportunity for a Broadband leader to attend the Wilderness Advocacy Training Sessions (WALTS) in April and a leader and an active member to attend the first ever Wilderness & Beyond Conference presented by our national office in Estes Park, CO in October. One of those attendees participated in two panels and an additional presentation including: “Beyond Our Comfort Zone,” “Federal Forest Planning & Policy,” and “The Big Threat to Bighorn Sheep in the US & Canada” We thanked Circle of Dreams publicly during the bighorn presentation for their support! Attendees’ awareness was particularly expanded by two thought-provoking panels related to Indigenous perspectives on the Wilderness Act, public lands stewardship and Land Back. They thoroughly enjoyed networking, learning and experiential activities!

In the realm of stewardship, Circle of Dreams (COD) funds contributed significantly to RiverWatch sampling, raptor monitoring at Ridgway State Park for Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW,) grazing monitoring on public lands, participation in the Mountain Studies Institute (MSI) Bighorn Sheep Monitoring Project, engagement with the GMUG National Forest for solitude monitoring, and collaboration with Colorado Natural Heritage Program for surveying of rare and sensitive species. The jeep transport funded by COD is an incredible boost to Broads’ ability to access the alpine environment for monitoring!! Thank you!!!

RiverWatch sampling was conducted monthly. The protocol was described in detail in the 2023 report.

Five Broads rotated monitoring raptors twice per month throughout the year. The quality spotting scopes, tripods, binoculars and adapters for phone photography purchased over the last three years with COD funds have increased our ability to see and photograph eagle nests (as well as bighorn!!)

NSJBB is engaging in formal livestock grazing monitoring for the first time and utilized jeep transport to access allotments. Seven Broads were trained and ten Broads conducted seven surveys recording observations of non-compliance on BLM and USFS lands.

NSJBB is the lead organization monitoring bighorn sheep in the north San Juans for the MSI monitoring program. During the 2024 season, 20 Broads participated in 18 day hikes and 7 multi-day backpacks, and utilized three San Juan Scenic Jeep Tours (SJSJT) jeep transports paid through COD funds. (SJSJT offers us such a generous discount in support of our efforts!)

In 2024, six Broads conducted 11 USFS Wilderness solitude surveys across 5 trails - East, Middle & West Fork of the Cimarron River, Fall Creek and Blue Lakes - encompassing both the Uncompahgre Wilderness and the Sneffels Wilderness. Solitude is one of the elements of Wilderness character that the USFS is required to monitor and maintain in Wilderness areas. If desired, NSJBB can share the protocol with you. Broads’ surveys have informed the now final Blue Lakes Management Plan and its goal to alleviate recreation pressure on that heavily used trail.

NSJBB collaborated with CNHP to update 25-year-old records of rare/sensitive species in Ouray County. Thirteen Broads participated in over 20 surveys. Due to our members’ local knowledge of public lands and private properties, CNHP was directed to landscapes with particular and significant habitats and species, and with owner permission was able to survey on private lands.

NSJBB tabled at Riverfest and Love Your Valley festivals in Ridgway and at the final CNHP presentation sharing the bighorn sheep informational cards funded by COD. Volunteers also distribute these cards to libraries, businesses, visitor centers and hikers on the trail. These opportunities educate the public, highlight our projects and result in more stewards and advocates for public lands.

**2. SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES.**

Discovery of an active golden eagle nest in Bear Creek previously unknown to CPW.

Broads’ reporting of non-compliance with terms & conditions of a livestock grazing permit resulted in BLM issuing a notice of non-compliance to the permittee.

Broads set up a transect in upper S. Fork Bear Creek to monitor forage utilization by domestic sheep specifically to monitor compliance with the revised updated GMUG Forest plan that restricts utilization to 30% in riparian habitats.

Nine additional USFS Ouray District trailheads have bighorn monitoring signs, and for the first time, there are 15 signs at BLM trailheads!!

Broads volunteers were able to accompany CNHP scientists to ecologically significant sites based on our local knowledge as well as hike visit distant landscapes without CNHP staff. One backpacking volunteer, found a sensitive botanical species that would not otherwise have been recorded to to its remote location. All in all, CNHP documented 23 rare plant species, a half dozen newly-identified insect species, and 15 Potential Conservation Areas. They observed significant changes in species indicating impacts of climate alterations. Broads hosted two public events for six CNHP staff to share findings. s, a rare botanical species was located in a remote area where CNHP staff could not travel due to limited time

Challenges included: 1.) Rainy weather that limited multi-day backpacks for bighorn, grazing and solitude monitoring as well as CNHP surveys, 2.) Short and long-term recommendations by the BLM SW Resource Advisory Council, mentioned in last year’s report, were not implemented on domestic sheep grazing allotments, 3.) Arduous searches for minuscule rare botanical species, 4.) Removal of bighorn signs at trailheads.

**3. LESSONS LEARNED.**

Even when we don’t see bighorn sheep or don’t find a rare species, our presence on the landscape to monitor grazing operations and shepherd camps and to educate recreation users is invaluable to protecting ecological values and ensuring Leave No Trace practices.

Binoculars are heavy to carry with the simple stretchy harness, so we plan to purchase a couple more full carrying harnesses for 2025.

Whenever possible, time our botanical surveys for when species are in bloom!

Installation of bighorn signage but ensure the sign cannot be readily removed by trailhead users. To date BLM and USFS have preferred to install the signs with agency personnel, so we have made them aware of this need.

**4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.**

As noted in the financial statement, the organization’s income did not meet budget expectations during the grant cycle resulting in staff reductions. During this challenging time of transition, the Board of Directors is fully engaged, and transition committees of members, leaders, staff and board members have been convened to assume some of the staff duties while the national office is short-staffed. Robyn Cascade, who has been involved in the COD-funded projects over the last three years, now serves on the Board of Directors and coordinates the Transition Advocacy Committee. Broads is on target to balance our budget in 2025. The continued generous support of Circle of Dreams will help NSJBB forge onward with their stewardship projects, provide for leadership development, and support staff hours dedicated to NSJBB. All our stewardship projects educate our members, community, elected officials and agency staff. Our observations and surveys contribute to data that informs land management practices and highlights impacts of climate change, recreation, extractive industries and human development, thereby benefiting Nature’s Commons.