

Our Mission

"Supporting the environment of the Cottonwood Canyons through stewardship and education"

The Cottonwood Canyons Foundation was created in 1999 to address needs relating to maintaining and healing the ecological environment in our beloved Wasatch mountains. As outdoor recreators and valley residents, we all depend on the canyons for the physical, mental, and economic benefits they provide, along with the clean water they supply to our homes. Our stewardship efforts include our Trails program, a seasonal five-person trail crew, and our two-person Invasive Weeds Program, which is the only on-the-ground mitigation effort of invasive weeds in the Cottonwoods. Serving the other half of our mission, our K-12 education programs focus on underserved communities, taking 4th and 5th graders into the canyons often for their first time. We reach the public community through our Ski With a Ranger program, and the Wasatch Wildflower Festival. Just last year, we helped educate 2,192 students from the valley about our watershed, while being supported by 141 long-term education volunteers.

Our Challenges

The challenges we face today are vastly different than the challenges 100 years ago, when the effects of mining and logging had denuded our forest and muddied our water. As the success of our predecessors' restoration can attest, we now have one of the most visited National Forests in the nation. With such a disparity in land to resources, there is a large backlog of priority maintenance needs on the trails, as well as an increasing importance to the invasive weeds work.

- **5 million annual visits to the central Wasatch**
- **Visitation expected to increase by 30% in the next 20 years**
- **USFS staffing, excluding fire, is approximately 60% of what it was 20 years ago**
- **Salt Lake Ranger District (SLRD) has one trail crew (10-15 individuals) to oversee 216,000 acres**

Our Watershed

These priority needs remain particularly important for Salt Lake Valley residents because as a categorized Urban Forest, the Wasatch National Forest impacts not only the personal recreation experience, but also the community's economic and physical well-being. Most crucial to the Salt Lake Valley is the canyons' status as a protected watershed. It is our stewardship efforts that are one of the frontline efforts at keeping our water pure.

- **Cottonwood Canyons supply 60% of the Salt Lake valley's drinking water**
- **Forest to faucet takes only 24 hours**
- **Streamside plants that keep water temperatures low are threatened by invasive species**
- **Loss of native vegetation impacts food and shelter for wildlife**
- **Soil erosion deposits into our water from unmaintained trails**

Our Success

CCF is the Salt Lake Ranger District's most crucial partner in maintaining the trails and mitigating the spread of invasive weeds, and we are proud of the work we have been able to accomplish with our limited staff. Some of our 2019 accomplishments include:

-TRAILS PROGRAM-

- 64.25 miles of trail maintained or improved
- Partnership with 15 organizations
- 109 erosion control devices installed
- 635 volunteers - 4,099 volunteer hours
- 4 large scale community event days
- Adopt-A-Trail program launched

-INVASIVE WEEDS PROGRAM-

- 562 acres scouted
- 136.50 acres mapped
- 77 acres treated
- 250 volunteers - 969 volunteer hours
- Monthly weed pulls with 4 organizations

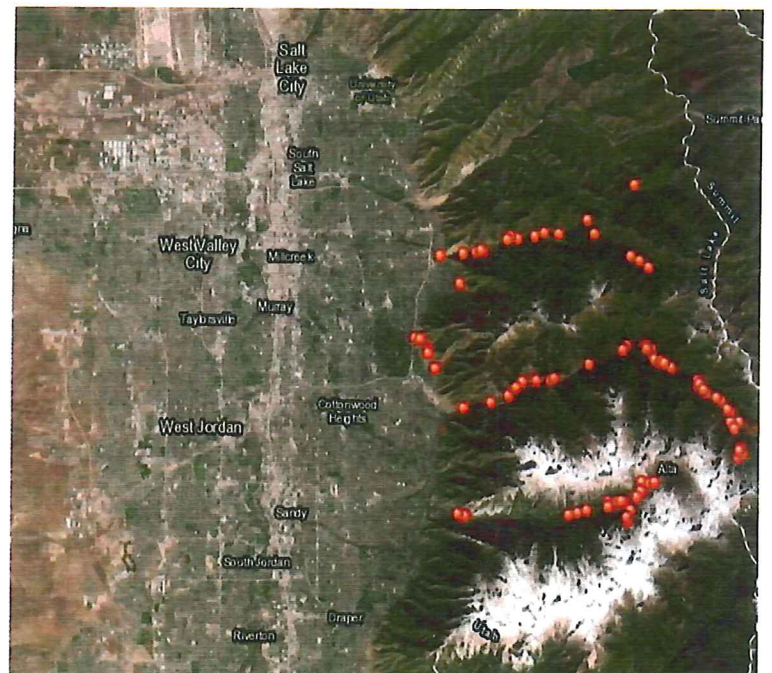


Before/After – Rehabilitation of the Mill B North trail

In 2019 alone, the total value added to the forest from community participation in both our stewardship programs was \$132,973.47. Including volunteers from all our programs, CCF has the highest level of support of all partnered organizations to the Salt Lake Ranger District, with 69% of all volunteers in the district.

Mapping the canyons with GIS Online

While weed pulls are effective in abating invasive populations in small areas, until we understand the geographic reach of this problem, we as a community will be divided in our knowledge and effort. To remedy this lack of information, and in partnership with the Salt Lake City Public Utilities Watershed Division, a new focus developed in 2019. Together, we used GIS online to collect habitat data, which is then used to populate tricanyon maps and document our work. This allows us to better plan our mitigation efforts and give partners and land managers the opportunity to use these maps for their own mitigation projects.



Each red point shows invasive populations we mapped in 2019

Our Future

While our capacity of work is great, it continues to be outpaced by need in both of our stewardship programs. With the encouragement of the SLRD, and the ability to use funding much more efficiently in the canyons, our goal remains employing a second crew for each of our stewardship programs.

Expanded staff means expanded benefits to our canyons

-Trails Program-

- Double work output with minimal administration requirements
- In conjunction with the SLRD crew, we could come close to meeting all maintenance needs in our local trail network
- Expansion of Adopt-A-Trail program

-Invasive Weeds Program-

- More data collection for mapping capabilities
- Further development of habitat restoration, including areas near new trail projects and disturbed sites
- Address new, high priority invaders like the Clematis orientalis that have recently impacted the canyons
- More fully address the myrtle spurge population that has seized hundreds of acres along the Wasatch Front



Building a retaining wall at Cardiff Fork



Volunteers with staff after a weed pull

With a clear pathway to increased work output and expanded public engagement, the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation is positioned as the most qualified, reliable, and efficient organization in the Salt Lake Valley to make a measurable impact of stewardship in the Cottonwood Canyons. Our track record has shown a wide support between land managers, aligned partners, and the community, and this we credit to our quality of work, the quality of our volunteers, and the mutual commitment to our mission. Much as we lean on our volunteers to help carry our mission forward, we now look to the organizations and businesses who benefit from a clean and sustainable canyon to help to expand our capacity.