

Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition

2021 Annual Report



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jereme Ransick

President

Jake Ellis

Vice President

Briana Blanchard

Secretary

Matthew Fonek

Treasurer

Curtis Gale-Dyer

Land Manager

Jonathan Bruns

Nicholas Hart

Adam Gregory

Colin Howell

Sam North

Billy Simek

Executive Director

Bill Strachan

Executive Director Emeritus

Zane Paff

Land Maintenance

Assistant



In Memory of Jason Willis
[Photo: Billy Simek]

Our Mission

We are dedicated to securing and protecting open, public access to rock climbing in Red River Gorge, Kentucky and promoting conservation of the environment on the lands where we climb.

Our Strategy

- First secure the highest quality climbing opportunities, whether on public or private land
- Make climbing sustainable for climbers and the environment
- Provide exemplary stewardship of the natural environment on the lands where we climb
- Educate climbers about access issues, encourage them to take "ownership" for their behavior and its impact on access



A Letter from the Director:

With the COVID-19 pandemic ongoing and historic flooding devastating the Red River Gorge region, 2021 wasted no time picking up where 2020 left off. The RRGCC was able to jump right back into the fray thanks to the hard work of its Board of Directors, land management team, volunteers, and generous donors. After a rough start off the line, we continued to plow forward, growing each aspect of the organization and making our way back to some semblance of a new normal.

This year saw the return of in-person events, albeit slightly tailored to maintain the health & safety of our local community at the forefront of event planning. We appreciate all of our sponsors and hardworking volunteers who helped bring these awesome events back to life.

Johnny & Alex trail day was distributed across the month of June with 130+ volunteers who helped cut trails & build crag infrastructure –

- New bridges at Sore Heel hollow
- Rock terracing at Chocolate Factory, Solar Collector, Left Field & the Playground
- Sustainable crag infrastructure at Neverland, prior to publication by the developers

Rocktoberfest came back with a bang, bringing in a record number of donation dollars over the course of the weekend –

- Over \$70,000 raised
- 1,400 attendees & 42 sponsors
- The final BRRP mortgage payment to secure climbing access for good!

While our mainstay events crawled out of a year-long hibernation, **RRGCC's Climb L8** took off across the region in 2021. **Climb L8** is a DEI initiative aimed at breaking down barriers in climbing for minority groups and marginalized communities by bringing more equitable access to the sport. This past year, the RRGCC hosted 14 of these events at four different gyms throughout the tri-state area. We are excited to keep this initiative rolling in 2022 and even take it outside!

Did I mention the historic floods last Spring? Our work was cut out for us, literally, with high water tearing the Miller Fork road in half. Multiple culverts, several loads of gravel, a truck load of cement blocks, hours of ditch digging, and assistance from our trusty volunteer, Jonathan Drake (and his tractor), got the road back in working order. These repairs were made possible through a \$3,700 donation from **El Cap gyms** and their members. More road work is currently underway on the road to Coal Bank hollow thanks to a **Climbing Conservation Grant** from **Access Fund** for \$3,500. Keep an eye out for a vault toilet popping up there in the future as well. Speaking of which, if you haven't tried out the new one at the Motherlode lot, be sure to stop in and leave us a review!

Last, but not least, **are you an RRGCC member yet?** 2021 marked the inaugural year for our official memberships and we look forward to better engagement with the community through our member base, along with growing public input. This also changes the way we can plan and budget by creating a steadier stream of funds through your annual & monthly memberships. COVID-19 certainly taught us we cannot solely rely on in-person fundraisers for our operational budgets so we are excited this program has been a success thus far.

2021 was an improbable banner year for the RRGCC, all things considered, but insert your favorite cliché about not stopping there, because we're going to the moon in 2022. Not really... although some lower gravity would be nice on my next choss rig...



Billy Simek
Executive Director



2022 Strategic Focus

Functional Initiatives

Access & Acquisitions

1. Commitment to new climbing access in at least 1 of 3 open opportunities
2. Improved outreach & communication with private landowners
3. Educate public on bolting & route development issues and implement an improved policy for RRGCC land.

Conservation and Stewardship

1. Coal Bank road and parking overhaul and repair of Drive By parking lot.
2. Additional vault toilet installation (Coal Bank / Drive-By)
3. Chica Bonita crag rehabilitation

Education, DEI, and Outreach

1. Continue to grow and fundraise for Climb L8 and other DEI initiatives
2. Continue Gym-to-Crag program
3. Continue to develop and support equitable access and diversity in climbing and on the Board



Operational Initiatives

Governance

1. Elevate & improve use of committees to improve Coalition effectiveness
2. Define responsibilities of a paid land manager
3. Policy & procedure additions & updates

Operations

1. Continued improvement & documentation of bookkeeping and accounting process
2. Gain a better understanding of our rights as a “surface owner” vs. those with mineral rights.

Fundraising and Membership

1. Maintain or increase membership count & revenue
2. Apply for grants for specific committee & organization needs

Events and Sponsorships

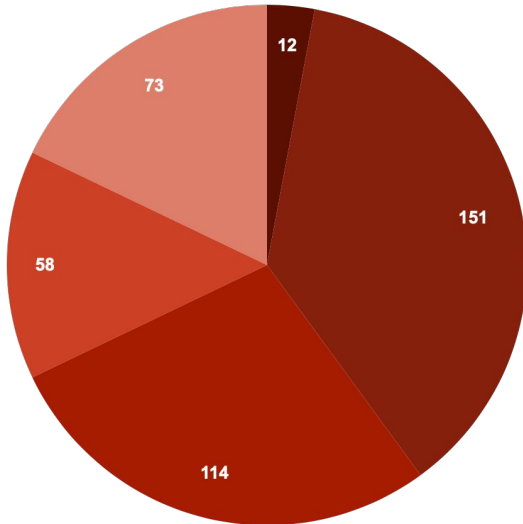
1. Expand relationships with new sponsors
2. Successful event calendar.

Marketing & Communications

1. Develop annual marketing & communications plan
2. Promote & advertise RRGCC activities & events
3. Investigate RRGCC merchandise sales & fulfillment

Membership Program

Member Base (408 total)



● Annual Tier 1 ● Annual Tier 2 ● Annual Tier 3 ● Monthly Tier 2 ● Monthly Tier 3



Membership Tiers & Incentives

Tier 1 (\$35/year)

- Member sticker
- Limited member discounts

Tier 2 (\$65/year or \$5/month)

- Member t-shirt & sticker
- Applicable member discounts

Tier 3 (\$125/year or \$10/month)

- Special edition 2022 member patch
- Member t-shirt & sticker
- Additional member discounts

Membership Sponsors

- Aclipse Campervans
- Red River Gorgeous
- Lago Linda Hideaway
- Hoosier Heights Gyms
- Daniel Boone Coffee Shop
- Gnarly Nutrition
- BedRock RRG
- Muir Valley
- Rockquest

To find more details and sign up to become a member, follow the link below --
RRGCC Membership Page: <https://rrgcc.org/membership>

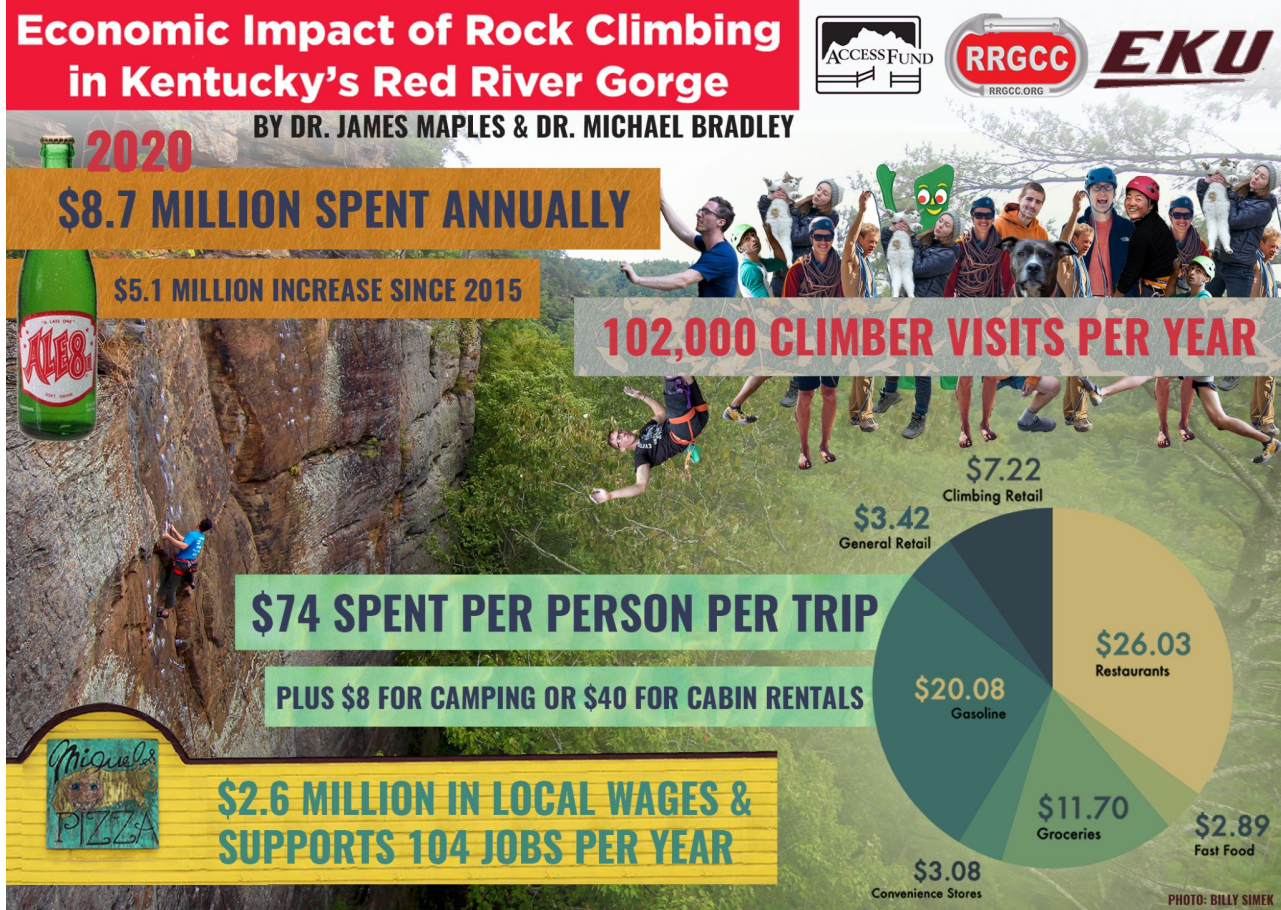
Economic Impact Study

2020 Economic Impact Study Update

With the help of a grant from the Access Fund & Eastern Kentucky University, an updated economic impact study was conducted by Dr. James Maples & Dr. Michael Bradley which found climbers spend an estimated **\$8.7 million** in the regional economy annually with over **102,000** climber visits per year.

To read the entire study, follow the link below –

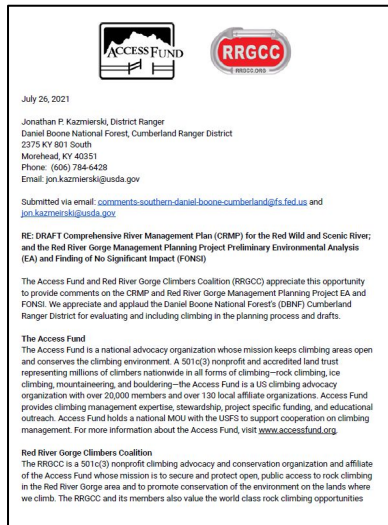
www.scienceimpactpub.com/journals/index.php/jei/article/view/173



Interested in learning more about the economic impact of tourism in the Red River Gorge and the history of climbing in the area? Check out Dr. Maples' new book – **“Rock Climbing in Kentucky's Red River Gorge: An Oral History of Community, Resources, and Tourism”**

Access & Acquisitions

USFS Management Plan



The RRGCC worked with the Access Fund to review and comment on the USFS Red River Gorge Management Planning and Comprehensive River Management Plan.

Advocated for...

- Trails & Access
- Support for Education
- Partner with Climbers
- Managing Cliffside Access
- Clifty Wilderness Fixed Anchors
- Roads & Parking
- New Climbing Routes and Areas

Recent Developments

- *Foxtown Boulders Lease Extension (2022)*
- *Coordinated comments with Access Fund on USFS Management Plan (2021)*

Current Opportunities:

- *Lease (1) / Purchase (1) / Donation (1)*

Bolting & Route Development

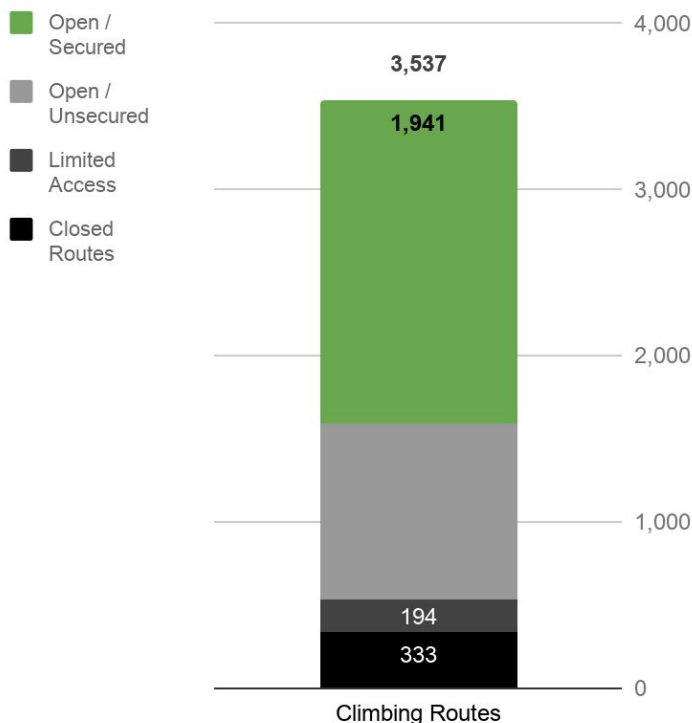
The RRGCC is creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for use between RRGCC and route developers to establish improved route development framework.

Added consolidated information for where new routes can and cannot be added.

Visit: <https://rrgcc.org/bolting/>

Climbing in the Red

Routes By Access



Conservation & Stewardship

1.6
Miles of
Road

1,161
Acres

247
Hours
of Work

18
Miles of
Trails

Update from the Land Manager:

After historic flooding wreaked havoc across Kentucky, our land management team got to work on repairing roads, trails, & bridges across RRGCC properties. A generous fundraising effort by El Cap's gyms in Colorado combined with our dedicated volunteers got our infrastructure quickly back in shape.

JATD returned in a month-long format across June where we completed a number of important erosion control and trail work projects. We look forward to seeing everyone back this year for a normal, one-day event!

There is always more work to keep our beautiful properties sustainable for climbing, lookout for volunteer opportunities and some of our new projects coming up in 2022!



2021 Highlights

- Flood repairs on MFRP road, bridges, and trails throughout our properties
- New footbridges in Sore Heel
- Terraces at Chocolate Factory slabs
- Bald Rock vault toilet installation
- Erosion control projects at Left Field, Playground, Solar Collector, & Hazel Hollow
- Trail and belay base infrastructure for a sustainable opening at Neverland



Education, DEI & Outreach

Our Values

We value the world class rock climbing opportunities found in and around the Red River Gorge as a national treasure deserving of our best efforts to preserve for all climbers to enjoy, experience, and appreciate.

Gym-to-Crag

In depth discussions about what to expect for your first time climbing outside and how to be a good steward of the land.

- Three Gym to Crags in 2021
- Revised our Gym to Crag presentation
- Received an education grant from the Access Fund

Climb L8

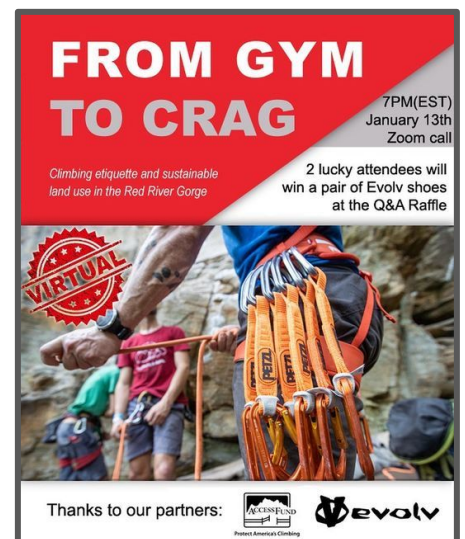
Gym initiative which exists to remove systemic and financial barriers to entry into rock climbing and facilitate a safer space in the rock climbing gym for Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQIA+, adaptive, first time climbers, and those without financial means. The goal of Climb L8 is to work to break down those barriers in climbing and bring people together by building community, empowering and amplifying underrepresented voices, and making space to learn together.

Climb L8 offers free admissions and rentals at partnering local climbing gyms for the communities described above.

- 14 events in three states serving over 300 individuals
- Partnering with Climb Time Oakley, Rock Quest, North Mass Boulder and LEF Climbing
- Over \$6,000 received by Ale 8 One, Madtree Brewing, Climbing 4 Change, and additional fundraising
- Presented the program during the Access Fund Climbing Advocacy Conference.

The Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition is committed to promoting diversity in all facets of climbing. We are dedicated to creating safer spaces in the outdoors and want everyone to feel welcome on our property.

The outdoors are for everyone.



Fundraising & Events

Rocktoberfest (In person!)

2021 was the RRGCC's 25th anniversary and everyone came ready to celebrate and support the RRGCC. This was a record year and one of the large events to date!

We would like to thank all of those that showed support and attended the event. We hope to see you next year!

- Over 1400 attendees
- 100+ volunteers
- BRRP is paid off!
- 13 Clinics with Pro Climbers & Guides

Films and presentations:

- *The Climbing Initiative: The Global Impacts of Climbing*
- *Sam Elias: Cities to Crags*
- *Reel Rock 15* bonus footage
 - *The Perfect Season* | Janja Garnbret
 - *Born Among Boulders* | Giuliano Cameroni



Johnny & Alex Trail Day

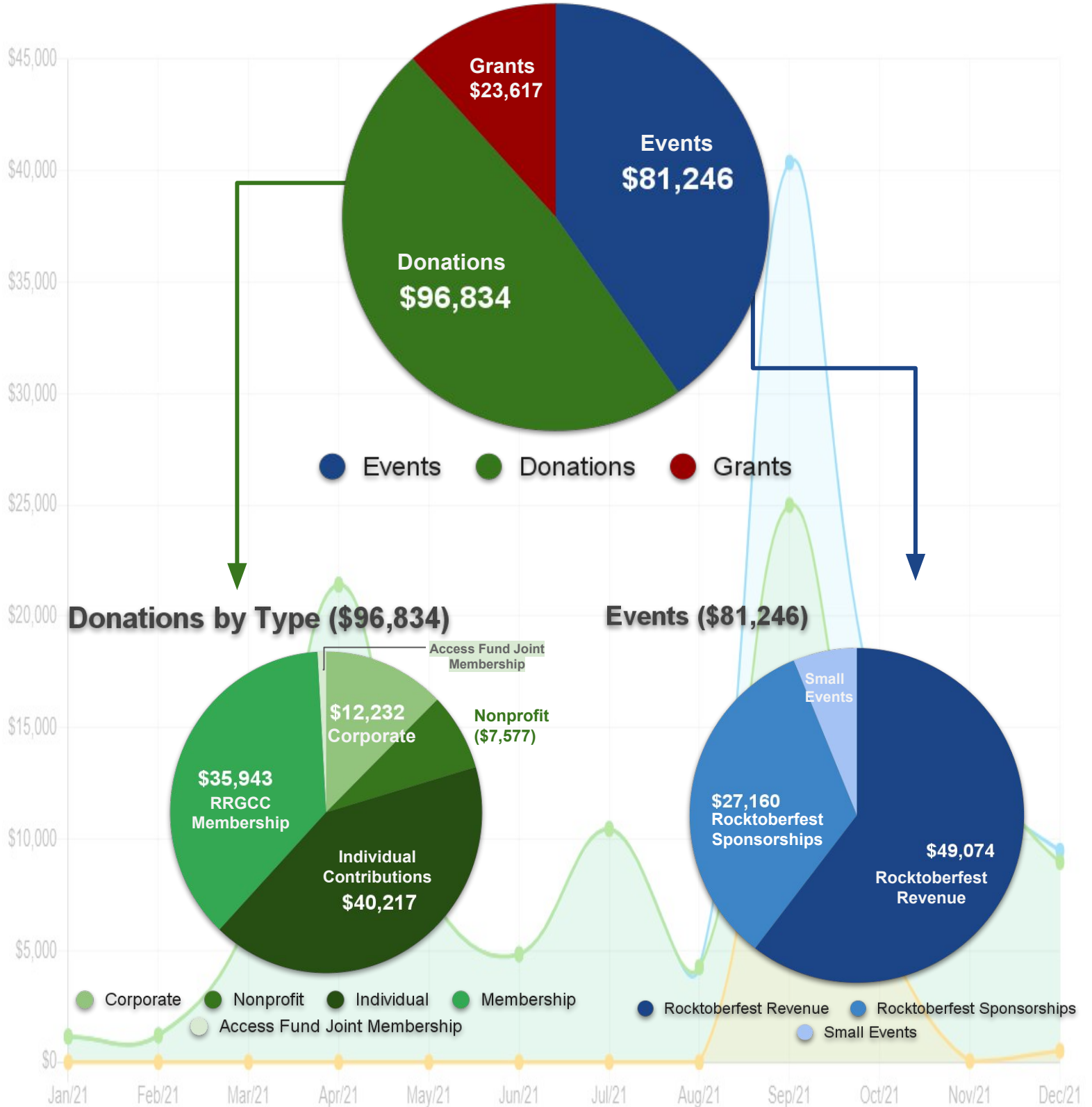
While being aware of Covid-19 precautions, we held multiple trail days which were spread across multiple weekends. This allowed us to keep our groups smaller while still accomplishing our goals.

- Over 130 volunteers
- 13 projects completed



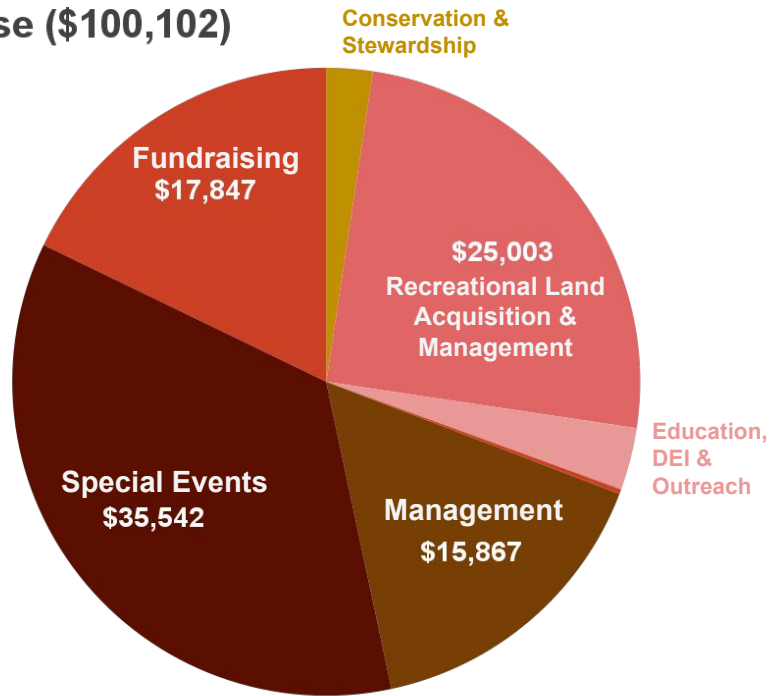
Finances: Support

Support (\$201,697)



Finances: Expenses

Expense (\$100,102)



- Conservation & Stewardship
- Recreational Land Acquisition & Management
- Education, DEI & Outreach
- Advocacy & Research
- Management & General
- Special Events
- Fundraising

2021 Capital Expenditures

Capital expenditures are not included in the RRGCC statement of activity, rather they added to our balance sheet.

- In 2021, the primary capital expenditure was our **last** mortgage payment of \$20,219 on Bald Rock Recreational Preserve
- In 2021, the organization paid approximately \$15,000 to repair the Miller Fork Road



Donors & Sponsors

\$5,000+

Anonymous
Access Fund
New Belgium Brewing
Quantrell Subaru

Our Individual Donors

- *577 Individual Donors*
- *360 New Donors*
- *217 Repeat donors*
- *179 Monthly Recurring Donors*

\$2,000+

Ale-8-One Bottling Company, Inc.
Black Diamond Equipment, Ltd.
El Cap Holdings, LLC
Petzl America, Inc.
Trango / Tenaya

\$500+

Michael Bond
Jonathan Bruns
Jixuan Cheng
Mandy Hostetler
Noah Kaufman
Joern Putschke
Randall Slusher
Bill Strachan
Anthony Yarro
University of Illinois
Rock Climbing Club
Aclipse Campervans
ARMBURY
Boulder Climbing Coalition
ClimbOn
Evolv
Hop's
Joshua Tree Skin Care
Kroger Community Rewards
Maker's Mark
Quest Outdoors
Rock on Climbing Gear
SCARPA North America
Send Climbing
Vertical Frontier Climbing Club
Wolverine Publishing

\$250+

Dan Chandler
Matt Fronek
Michael Hargis
Nicholas Hart
Eman Hawass
Colin Howell
Kevin Insko
Peter Jones
Jerry Kripal
Dennis & Beth Lappin
Joseph Meiners
David Miller
Jacob Shidler
Ryan Smith
Isaac Steinbrunner
Carl Virost
Melissa Wagner
Jordan Wesolek
Jeffery Youngpeter
Bailout Systems
Best of the Red
Crag Dog
Inkwell Media
The Conscious Climber
Warrior's Way
West Sixth Brewing
Wild Asteria

\$1,000+

Anonymous
Dave & Maryanne Foster
Chris & Savanna Elkins
Keri & Doug Libbe / Bunce
Michael Murray
Jereme Ransick
Van Wombwell
5.Life
Beattyville Tourism
Climbing for Change
Gnarly Nutrition
J&H Lanmark
La Sportiva NA
MadTree Brewing
Miguel's Pizza
RAB USA LLC
Sterling Rope Company
The Armaid Company, Inc.
Wolfe County Tourism