



HIGH COUNTRY  
CONSERVATION CENTER

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT





## From Our Director

HC3's vision is to create a healthy planet through local action.

Our community has a shared value to protect our natural environment – it's the reason most of us chose to live here and why visitors are drawn to this beautiful place. HC3 leads Summit County toward environmental sustainability by providing hands-on community support and advocating for local policy creation.

HC3 helps residents and visitors recycle right, and we connected with thousands of community members in 2023 – at recycling centers, events and even at residents' curbside bins. Breckenridge and Frisco's recent pay-as-you-throw ordinances ensure that all residents and businesses have access to recycling.

HC3's climate action initiatives empower residents to reduce their carbon footprints, from energy efficiency and rooftop solar to driving electric vehicles. In 2023, we increased rebates to residents who made energy efficiency upgrades, resulting in more comfortable homes and dollars saved. And Breckenridge adopted a policy to discourage outdoor energy use (like heated driveways) through requiring onsite renewable power.

Finally, we are growing water conservation programs to encourage responsible irrigation and beautiful low-water landscapes. In addition, we are working with local jurisdictions on policies that encourage water savings.

I'm excited to share our recent successes and hope you will support our work building a more sustainable Summit County.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Schenk  
Executive Director, HC3



## 2023 Board of Directors

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Director of Business Applications

### **Nina Waters**

Summit County Commissioner

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### **Jean Mikulas**

Vail Resorts, Retail/Rental  
Operations Regional Director

### **Mike Nathan**

Arapahoe Basin Ski Area,  
Sustainability Manager

# Climate Action



*"The solar panels cover all our electricity use, and the rebates helped make it affordable."*

—ANDRE HAMPTON

## Leading Our Community in Action

From dwindling water supplies, increased risk of wildfires, and longer shoulder seasons, climate change is a global problem with local impacts. Our community goal is to reduce emissions 80% by 2050 – and to inspire you to get in on the action.

### Solarize Summit

Solarize Summit empowers residents to take action on climate change by making it easy and more affordable to generate clean, renewable electricity at home. Over 40 systems were installed in 2023, bringing our 5-year total to 259 households.



**44 PARTICIPANTS**



**396 KILOWATTS  
SOLAR INSTALLED**



**5 YEAR TOTAL:  
259 HOUSEHOLDS**



## Beneficial Electrification 101

Beneficial electrification is a popular buzzword these days, but what does it mean? It's the practice of replacing appliances and vehicles powered by fossil fuels for those powered by electricity. Why? Because burning fossil fuels releases harmful greenhouse gas emissions, whereas electricity can be renewably generated.

In Summit County, using natural gas and gasoline in our homes, businesses, and cars is responsible for 60% of our community's carbon pollution. Yet the electricity supplied by Xcel Energy is already 40% renewable and on track to be 80% renewable by 2030. So, the more we can use electricity for heating our homes, cooking, and driving, the more we'll reduce emissions. And that's great news for our climate.



*"The heat pump works really well, really efficiently, and it's a great transition from propane."*

— CARLY LANDWEHR

## HC3's Leadership

In 2023, we hosted heat pump workshops for residents and building professionals, educating the community on how these heating systems work and the incentives available. We put 100 Summit County residents behind the wheels of electric cars at our annual Electric Vehicle Ride & Drive event. And we've expanded our Energy Smart Colorado rebates to encourage beneficial electrification. From cold climate heat pumps and heat pump water heaters to electric vehicle charging and even electrical panel upgrades, we're helping community members kick gas for good.

**COST TO DRIVE 100 MILES IN COLORADO:**



**GAS-POWERED CAR: \$12**



**EV: \$4**



# Energy Conservation



*"Once we became homeowners, it was really important to try to reduce our impact. Saving energy is one way we can do that."*

— RYAN & LIBBY VAN GUNDY

## Maximizing Comfort and Efficiency

**162** HOME ENERGY  
ASSESSMENTS

**\$470** AVERAGE ANNUAL  
HOUSEHOLD SAVINGS

**89** HOME ENERGY UPGRADES

### Spotlight: The Van Gundy Family

When Frisco residents Ryan and Libby Van Gundy moved to their home at the base of Mount Royal, they quickly discovered that warm indoor air was leaking out through the roof. HC3's Energy Smart Colorado program helped them pay for needed improvements, and the impact was significant. Not only are their energy bills lower, but the home is a lot more comfortable, too.

**\$3,370** TOTAL COST


**\$500** ENERGY SMART REBATE

**\$2,870** NET COST

**\$539** ANNUAL ENERGY  
BILL SAVINGS



# Water Conservation



*"Partnering with HC3 has been a wonderful experience. They assisted us in cutting our water budget by half."*

– THAYER HIRSH, PEAK ONE  
HOA PRESIDENT

## Reducing Water Use

Water Smart Irrigation Assessments and rebates help residents use less water on thirsty grass lawns. Additionally, HC3 offers workshops to keep best practices top of mind for local irrigation pros.

**5** WATER EDUCATION EVENTS

**8** LARGE IRRIGATION  
ASSESSMENTS PERFORMED

**83** LANDSCAPERS TRAINED IN  
EFFICIENT IRRIGATION

## Spotlight: Peak One Neighborhood

Peak One Neighborhood HOA was looking for a solution to high water bills. After working with HC3 to get an assessment, they took advantage of rebates to help their irrigation system run more efficiently – and reduced their summer watering bill by half.

**\$12,843** TOTAL PROJECT COST

**\$3,500** TOTAL REBATES

**\$3,891** ANNUAL SAVINGS

**2.5 YEARS** PAYBACK PERIOD



# Zero Waste



## Advancing New Zero Waste Strategies

Local recycling programs are working well. Yet, an increasing population, a growing visitor base and new development are creating more waste than ever before. In 2023, HC3 addressed a major source of local waste: construction & deconstruction (C&D) waste.

### Planning for the Future of C&D

HC3's proactive approach to diverting construction and deconstruction waste has led to the development of a comprehensive community-wide plan and pilot projects, paving the way for future policy development in C&D recycling.

**5-YEAR C&D RECYCLING  
PLAN DEVELOPED**

**46 TONS OF C&D WASTE  
SEGREGATED DURING A PILOT  
PROJECT**



## Education & Engagement

HC3 meets residents where they recycle – at businesses, schools, curbside recycling bins, and local recycling centers – to help them increase and improve waste diversion.



**1,595 RECYCLING BINS**  
tagged with personalized tips



**734 RECYCLERS**  
educated at 3 drop-off centers



**129 BUSINESSES**  
supported with personalized assistance



## Strong Future Grants

In 2023, HC3 launched and administered the Strong Future Grants program, which empowers local businesses and organizations to implement innovative waste diversion projects. Funded projects included:

- Launching the community's first residential compost pick-up service
- Increasing capacity for a local food rescue initiative
- Replacing single-use drinkware with reusable cups



# Resource Wise



## Making the Business Case for Sustainability

Local businesses are the backbone of our economy, but they also account for half of our energy use and much of our waste. Through Resource Wise certification, businesses become more sustainable, setting an example for residents and visitors and helping to preserve our mountain home.

**30 NEW BUSINESSES**

**37 BUSINESS PROJECTS**

**\$840 AVERAGE SAVINGS  
PER BUSINESS**

**3,308 LED BULBS INSTALLED**

### Business Spotlight: A-Basin Electric Vehicle Charging

How do you get skiers and riders to drive their electric cars to the mountains? Install charging stations in coveted parking spots. Arapahoe Basin's Early Risers lot now features 10 electric vehicle charging plugs, so folks can charge while they hit the slopes. The impact? Guests love it, and the chargers are almost always full.

# K-12 Education



*"Students loved the presentation, and the activity was one of their favorites from our energy unit."*

– UPPER BLUE ELEMENTARY TEACHER

## Inspiring Summit County's Future Leaders

From wind-powered sail cars and solar bugs to recycling games and compost science, HC3 teaches Summit County's K-12 students the importance of protecting our natural resources.

**164** 3<sup>RD</sup> GRADERS

**249** 4<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS

**124** 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS

**247** 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS

**280** 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS



# Sustainable Food



## Growing Local Food

Greens grown in California travel over 1,200 miles to reach Summit County. The greens – and much more – grown locally by HC3 account for far fewer emissions and much more nutrition.

### Grow to Share

Fresh produce donations and nutritional education for local families.



**30 SHARES WEEKLY**  
to families in need



**13% INCREASE**  
in families served

### Summit CSA

Community farm-share program offering fresh, locally grown food.



**77 COMMUNITY SHARES**



**6,260 POUNDS**  
of local produce

# Community Partners





# Community Partners







# Get Involved

DONATE • VOLUNTEER • TAKE ACTION • [HIGHCOUNTRYCONSERVATION.ORG](https://highcountryconservation.org)



**HIGH COUNTRY**  
CONSERVATION CENTER

## VISION

*Creating a healthy planet  
through local action*

## MISSION

*Promote practical solutions  
for resource conservation in  
our mountain community*