



HIGH COUNTRY  
CONSERVATION CENTER

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT





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## From Our Director

HC3's mission is to create practical solutions for resource conservation.

HC3 is working to solve global issues that can often feel overwhelming. From climate change impacts like hotter temperatures and drought to our society's overconsumption resulting in substantial waste generation, the scale of solutions needed may seem out of reach. That's what makes HC3's experience in creating meaningful and tangible action so important. Here are a few examples of how HC3 provided hands-on, practical solutions for residents and businesses in 2024.

- HC3's Water Smart program helped residents and HOAs save water through irrigation efficiency and incentives to reduce turf lawns by transitioning to beautiful, native landscapes. We also partnered with community nonprofits to host "Water in the West" workshops that engaged and inspired residents in water conservation.
- HC3 hired a native Spanish-speaker to provide hands-on support for local residents and business owners. Several Latino-owned businesses began recycling and composting with HC3's support. We also increased our Spanish recycling marketing to remind residents how to recycle correctly.
- In partnership with the Town of Breckenridge, we created the Electrify Breck program to help locals install cold climate heat pumps.
- HC3 purchased office space in fall 2024 with a 2025 move-in date. Our new location on Frisco Main Street will enable us to better serve residents and visitors, providing a central, convenient place for community members to connect with HC3 staff and programs.

Thank you for your interest and support of our work to provide practical sustainability solutions for the Summit County community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J Schenk".

Jennifer Schenk  
Executive Director

# Climate Action



## 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. Nearly 50 systems were installed in 2024, bringing our 6-year total to 307 households.



**377** KILOWATTS  
SOLAR INSTALLED



**\$139,239** REBATES  
PROVIDED



6-YEAR PROGRAM TOTAL:  
**2.3 MEGAWATTS**

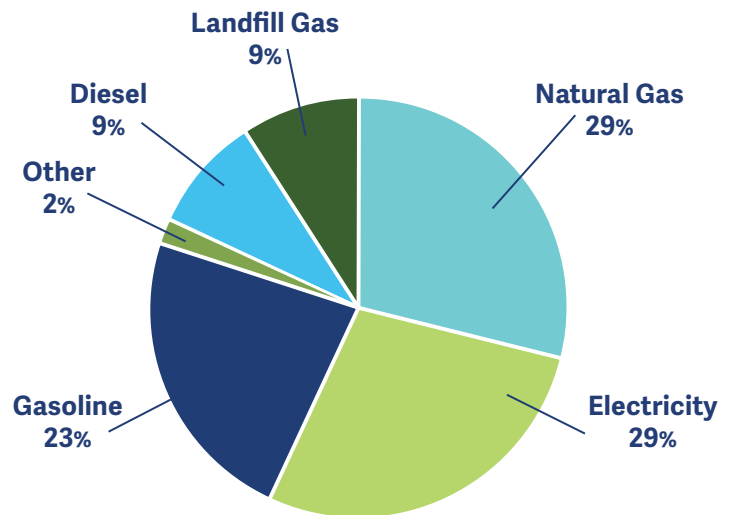


## GHG Emissions Inventory

You might know that our community has greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals, but do you know how we track progress against those goals? With a GHG emissions inventory! Our community's inventory follows a standard methodology to calculate local emissions from energy use, transportation, and waste. We update the inventory every three years to help prioritize and plan new policies and programs.

Because we need to wait for a full year's worth of data, we finalized the 2023 inventory in 2024. The biggest takeaway? Energy use in residential and commercial buildings is still the largest contributor to local GHG emissions. But there's good news. Since 2017, electricity emissions have decreased 23% as Xcel Energy adds more renewable energy to its grid.

## Where do Summit County's GHG emissions come from?



### 2023 Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Source

Looking at the GHG emissions inventory, it's clear that meeting local climate goals requires us to reduce emissions from energy use and transportation. What does this look like in our homes? In 2024, HC3 partnered with the Town of Breckenridge to launch the Electrify Breck program. Electrify Breck offers generous cold climate heat pump incentives for owners of deed-restricted homes – participants pay only 25% of the installation cost, which means they get a brand new heating (and cooling!) system at a steep discount. HC3 is also expanding its electric vehicle (EV) outreach and education. Last summer, we hosted our first Spanish-language EV Ride & Drive at Dillon Valley Elementary School.



*"Our heat pump coupled with our solar is truly a dream setup!"*

– THE SARGES FAMILY



# Energy Conservation



## Maximizing Comfort and Efficiency

**132** HOME ENERGY  
ASSESSMENTS

**\$496** AVERAGE ANNUAL  
HOUSEHOLD SAVINGS

**104** HOME ENERGY RETROFITS

### Spotlight: Holly & Justin

When Holly Blando and Justin Saunders moved into their new home three years ago, they loved the neighborhood and the views, but not the \$700 energy bills. An energy audit revealed that leaks in the house were letting 76% of their warm indoor air escape every single hour. Fortunately for Holly and Justin, there's a straightforward fix for leaky homes like theirs: Sealing all the gaps and cracks in the home and adding insulation. After completing their project, Holly and Justin don't have to bundle up inside to stay warm. And they have another reason to love their home – their energy bills are no longer \$700.

**\$6,702** PROJECT COST

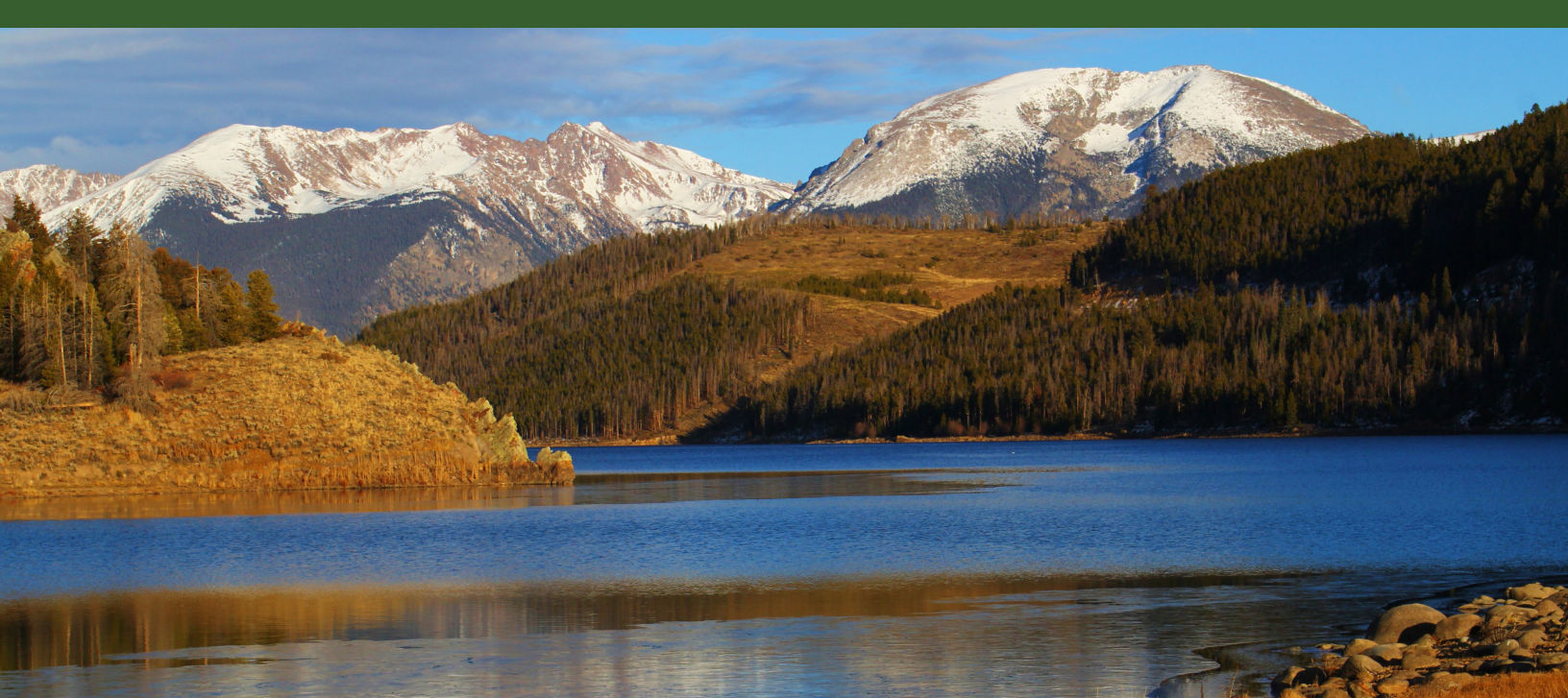
**\$4,000** HC3 REBATE

**\$2,702** NET COST

**\$525** ANNUAL ENERGY  
BILL SAVINGS



# Water Conservation



## Water Scarcity in the West

The majority of Summit County's water supply comes from snowpack and snowmelt. Climate change is the biggest threat to our snowpack and, consequently, the long-term sustainability of our water supply. Rising temperatures and scarcer water supplies cause a ripple effect of negative environmental and community issues- like shorter ski seasons, lower river flows, and a greater need for outdoor irrigation.

### Reducing Outdoor Water Use

HC3's Water Smart program helps residents and businesses use less water through more efficient irrigation and by converting thirsty grass to beautiful, low-water landscaping. HC3 also hosts community workshops to educate residents and encourage sustainable water use.



**110** EVENT ATTENDEES



**\$35,605** IRRIGATION  
AND LANDSCAPE  
REBATES PROVIDED



## Turf Replacement Pilot Program

In 2024, HC3 launched a turf replacement pilot program. This program helped residents, homeowners' associations and local governments transition away from thirsty grass lawns to low-water landscapes, reducing water consumption and increasing resiliency in the face of a scarcer water future.



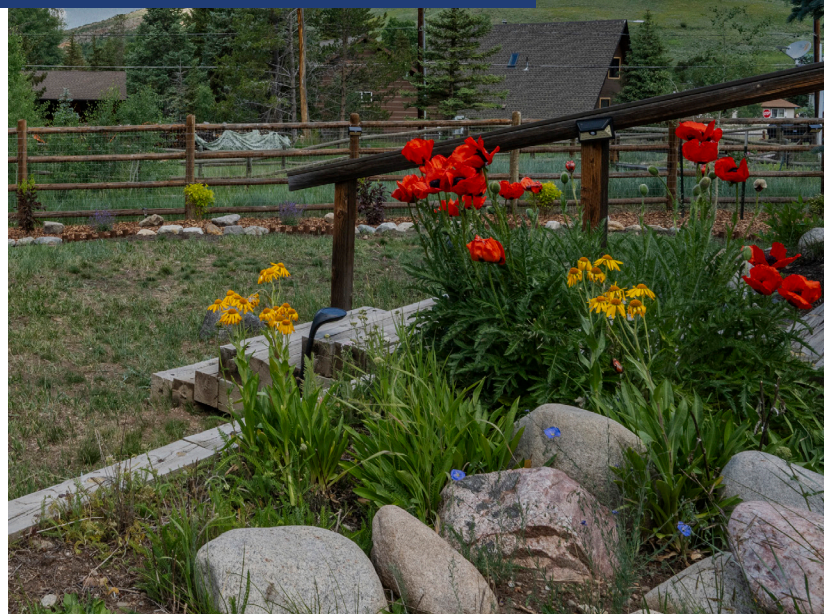
**5,700 SQ. FT. OF LAWN CONVERTED**



**34,300 GALLONS OF WATER SAVED**

*"Not only have we seen a decrease in water usage on our bill, but we absolutely love our new beautiful yard!"*

– DILLON VALLEY RESIDENT



### Project Spotlight: Dillon Valley

The homeowner converted 550 square feet of unused grass to native plants, switched to drip irrigation for new plantings, and made efficiency upgrades to their existing irrigation system. Before the project, they watered 4-7 days per week using hoses and a manual sprinkler. After the project, the resident's water bill decreased, saving approximately 3,500 gallons of water annually with additional savings expected as plants are established.



# Zero Waste



## Advancing Zero Waste Strategies

Our community offers robust recycling and composting programs to keep waste out of the landfill. Yet, an increasing population, a growing visitor base and new development are creating more waste than ever before. HC3 continues to create innovative initiatives to educate and empower the community to reduce waste.

### 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.

In 2024, HC3 partnered with Frisco and Breckenridge to continue the implementation of Pay As You Throw and Universal Recycling, making recycling more accessible for all residents and businesses. And we supported Summit County's policy adoption, which will begin in 2025. Single stream recycling has increased 10% since Pay as You Throw began.



**1,806** RECYCLING BINS  
TAGGED WITH 40%  
HOUSEHOLDS IMPROVING  
BETWEEN VISITS



**801** RECYCLERS  
EDUCATED AT 3  
DROP-OFF CENTERS



**402** NEW FOOD SCRAP  
PARTICIPANTS ENROLLED

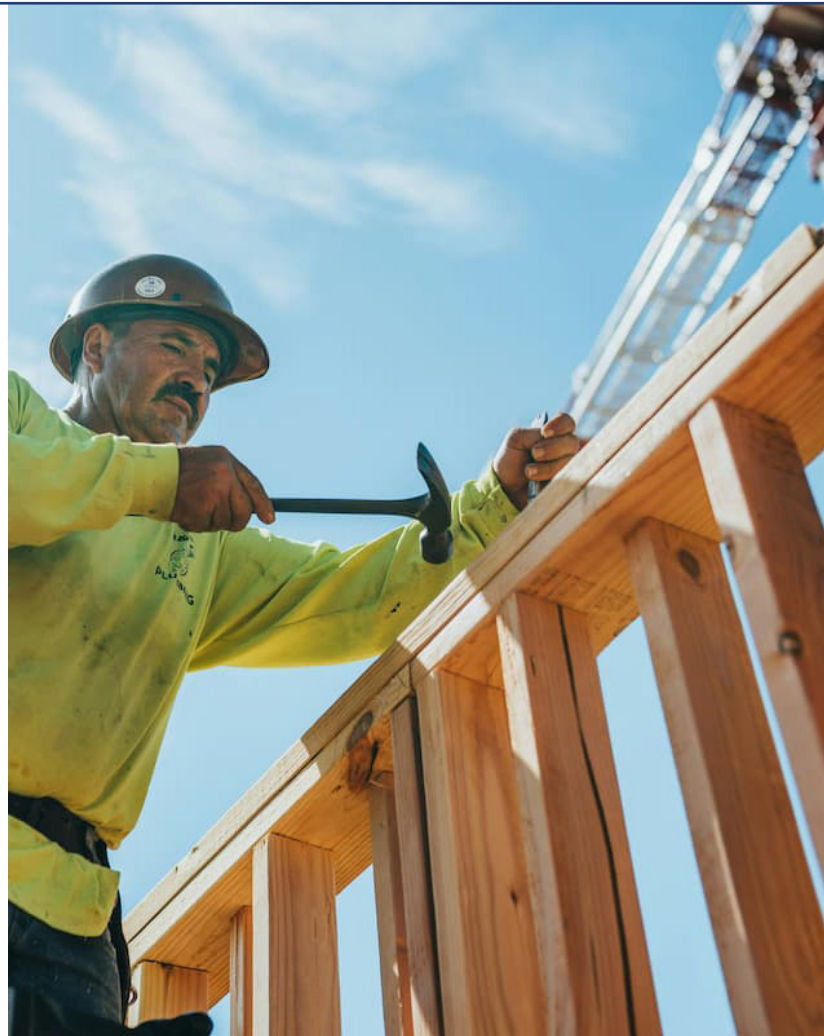


**393,793 LBS.** FOOD  
SCRAPS DIVERTED FROM  
LANDFILL



## Construction & Demolition

In 2024, HC3 continued its focus on reducing construction and demolition (C&D) waste. With construction materials comprising 30% of Summit's landfilled waste, diverting these materials is critical to extend the life of the landfill. A 2024 C&D Waste Composition Study revealed that nearly one-third of all C&D waste - including wood, cardboard, concrete/asphalt, and scrap metal - is recoverable and could be diverted from the landfill within our existing recycling systems. HC3 also conducted stakeholder engagement with building professionals and our Zero Waste Task Force to explore future policy options that would reduce construction waste going into our landfill.



## Latino Community Outreach

- Approximately 17% of Summit County's population is Latino. In 2024, HC3 prioritized inclusive outreach to boost participation in waste diversion initiatives.
- HC3 leveraged its weekly Grow to Share pick-up events to connect directly with Latino community members, successfully enrolling new participants in the food scrap program.
- HC3 partnered with local Latino-owned businesses to understand and overcome the barriers to recycling and composting. For example, HC3 helped Taqueria Mi Roca, a Latino-owned food truck in Breckenridge, begin both recycling and composting—demonstrating that hands-on support can drive meaningful change.



# 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.

**27 NEW BUSINESSES**

**23 BUSINESS PROJECTS**

**\$1,552 AVERAGE SAVINGS  
PER BUSINESS**

**404 LED BULBS INSTALLED**

## Business Education & Engagement

In addition to one-on-one sustainability consulting, HC3's Resource Wise program also supports the business community through educational workshops. In 2024, HC3's staff engaged with 45 local business representatives who attended workshops covering topics like irrigation efficiency, composting, and energy efficiency for multi-family buildings.



# 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.

**236** 3<sup>RD</sup> GRADERS

**175** 4<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS

**235** 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS

**240** 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS

**300** 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 provide organic produce to residents.

### Grow to Share

Fresh produce donations and nutritional education for local families.



**316 FAMILIES SERVED**  
THROUGH GROW TO SHARE



**79 COMMUNITY GARDEN**  
SHARES SOLD

### Summit CSA

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



**1,593 LBS. PRODUCE**  
DONATED TO FAMILIES  
IN NEED THROUGH  
GROW TO SHARE



# Community Partners





# Community Partners





# Financials

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**Coming Soon**





# 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*