

Mark Butler Memorial Workday

On October 10, 2008 co-workers and friends of United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) employee Mark Butler gathered in his memory along Fourmile Creek in South Park. After a few quiet words, the group of twenty volunteers donned replicas of Mark's signature bandana and began the day's work using sledge hammers and rebar to plant more than 1,000 native willow cuttings in the Creek's floodplain.

In 2004, Colorado Open Lands, along with the Denver Water Board, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and the USFWS partnered to restore a stretch of Fourmile Creek in the South Park Basin. Once a meandering stream, it had been channelized and straightened, causing severe erosion and habitat loss. The creek supported very little wetland vegetation and few fish. Today, this section of the Creek boasts recovering wetland plant communities and a sizeable population of trout.

As the USFWS Mountain-Prairie Region's 'Platte River Liaison' and an accomplished professional hydrologist, protecting and improving Colorado's waters were among Mark's passions. Moved by his death in the summer of 2008, his friends and co-workers searched for a way to honor his memory. A work-day to assist with the Fourmile Creek project was an obvious choice, given the USFWS' lead role in the project and the stream's location in the headwaters of the Platte River watershed for which Mark led basin-wide endangered-species habitat recovery efforts.

By all accounts, the work-day was a great success, providing the volunteers with an opportunity to reflect on their time with Mark while making a valuable contribution to a larger restoration project. Said Amelia Orton-Palmer *"Every once in a while I would take a break from pounding the rebar, look around, imagine the future return of riparian habitat, and think of Mark being there in every molecule of the stream, rocks, soil, grasses, fish, birds, mountains, wind, sky. It was a wonderful tribute to him."*



Photo by Jana Mohrman

Picking up debris along Fourmile Creek in South Park.



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Friends of Mark Butler plant willows on Fourmile Creek in South Park.