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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Kawuneeche Valley Restoration Collaborative Receives Grant from The National Park Foundation to Support Restoration at Project Site in Rocky Mountain National Park**

Estes Park, Colorado — June 9, 2026 — The Kawuneeche Valley Restoration Collaborative (KVRC) is honored to announce the receipt of a grant from The National Park Foundation to support its efforts to restore the Kawuneeche Valley's ecosystem. The grant aims to support restoration by funding enclosure fencing that will promote willow repopulation.

"We are incredibly grateful for The National Park Foundation's support," said Estee Rivera Murdock, Executive Director, Rocky Mountain Conservancy and KVRC member. "KVRC will use this grant to build enclosure fencing at Onahu Creek to protect willows from overbrowsing, giving them time to grow and repopulate. This is a key element of the collaborative's approach to restoring the Kawuneeche Valley's wetland ecosystem."

Home to the headwaters of the Colorado River, the Kawuneeche Valley extends from the mountain passes of Rocky Mountain National Park to where the river meets Shadow Mountain Reservoir below the Town of Grand Lake, Colorado. The valley's wetlands once stretched eight miles long and half a mile wide, lined with dense willow stands that supported rich biodiversity.

Decades of changing land uses, heavy browsing by elk and moose, and altered hydrology have degraded this ecosystem. Willow stands have thinned or vanished. The river has cut unnatural channels into the valley floor, and areas that should hold water now stay dry. Together, these changes have weakened the valley's ability to provide ecological functions.

Restoring the Kawuneeche Valley benefits communities on both sides of the Continental Divide and supports the park's wildlife, including beaver, amphibians, trout, river otter, and more than 30 bird species. When healthy, its wetlands support water quality, promote resilience against drought, floods, and wildfire, and create opportunities for recreation.

The grant from the National Park Foundation was made possible through the support of The Coca-Cola Foundation.

About KVRC

KVRC is a group of organizations that are working toward a resilient Kawuneeche Valley to benefit ecological, recreational, and economic interests. KVRC includes representatives from Colorado State University, Grand County, the National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, Northern Water, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, the Town of Grand Lake, and the United States Forest Service.