

“The creek's  
going to do  
what the  
creek's going  
to do.”

“We're loving  
our natural  
resources to  
death.”

“I believe that people will protect what they know and if they don't know it, they won't protect it.”

“How can we  
help the creek to  
be more adaptive  
in the future?”

“The creek is a bit of an unruly teenager in some ways. It wants support and some structure, but not too much.”

“We've  
exceeded the  
limits of what  
the creek can  
tolerate.”

“For me, one of the most spiritual places is creekside.”

“I wasn’t homeless  
because the home is  
where the heart is. I  
was houseless  
because I’m always  
where my heart is.”



“I understand, the creek’s no punk. She can take somebody’s life in a heartbeat’s notice, and so I respect her.”

“I say waterways are  
like arteries for  
Mother Earth.  
Because it is life,  
pure and simple.”

“Where there’s  
water, you’re going  
to have people —  
from ancient times  
right up to today.”

ER

“You just have  
to let the creek  
be a part of your  
adventure.”

“Every time I see the creek, I see it differently. And I think it teaches me that Mother Nature never presents the same face.”

“We don't  
have a river.  
We have a  
creek.”

“We have the  
opportunity to  
enrich the waterway,  
to create wetlands  
and natural habitat.  
We just haven't.”

JM

“Beavers are going to do what they're going to do. We've tried to relocate beavers before. They tend to find their way back somehow.”



“Monument Creek,  
unfortunately, has a  
foul odor to it.”

JH

“When people  
love a place,  
they take care  
of that place.”

“Nobody is camping by the creek because they have a better option. And no one is trashing the creek because they don’t care.”

“What's in the best interest of the creek itself? I don't know if anybody's asking that question.”

“Who are we not listening to? To me, that is the most important question.”

“I love the  
lilac trees that  
are planted  
near the  
creek.”

“Monument  
Creek is a  
teacher.”

MLJ

“We're water beings. And the water sees us as a part of itself. No separation at all.”



“I think wonder  
and curiosity  
and awe are the  
things that can  
connect us.”

“My gosh,  
look at  
where we  
live!”

“We use about  
65-85 million  
gallons of water a  
day in the city of  
Colorado Springs.”

“Nothing is permanent, but that doesn't mean you can't appreciate things while they're still here.”

“Our historic fabric basically constitutes our collective memory, the physical manifestations of our memories.”

“The creek is a migratory flyway. 200+ bird species fly through this beautiful creek to get to their winter and summer feeding grounds. It also is a nesting ground. Some of those birds stop here, and stay here all summer long and raise their young. I've heard great horned owls calling in Monument Valley Park. It's just that magical sound.”

“Watersheds are defined by topography. The Fountain Creek watershed goes from Palmer Lake to Pueblo. So it encompasses Palmer Lake and Monument at the top of the watershed. It includes Pikes Peak and Divide. Yet those little drops of water don't just stop at a certain line or municipality. Water doesn't know those boundaries.”

“We're really developing watershed warriors. People that care. People that take action and then inspire others to take action.”

AS



“Difficult times are here. So we need to do what's right. We need to make these waterways as resilient as they can be, to mimic the natural state that they were in before us humans came in and developed the heck out of this watershed, turning the natural ecosystem from plains and forests to hard surfaces that can no longer absorb that water.”

AS

“Monument Creek is interesting because it's a very young creek. It's only 27 miles old. It starts way up in the mountains and comes down and it goes through really wild, rangy areas. There's only one diversion on Monument Creek and that's also unique for a creek of its size. Then it also is a receiving waters for our wastewater treatment plant.”

“If we paint it with one big brush and say, “it's all bad, it's blown out, it's decrepit, it's broken,” then people just don't know what to do with it. So I like to look at what we have going for us and then what's in our control to fix.”

AB

“We are all connected in this watershed. The geopolitical boundaries, the lines, the imaginary lines on the map. That doesn't mean a lot to the watershed and to the rain and to the snow and things like that. But we have to care for that water and those water resources because it goes downstream to everybody else.”

“Will Monument Creek look like the Grand Canyon someday? Or will it just be weathered and flat? Will the climate change and shift — this was an inland sea at one point. Could this be an inland sea again?”

AB

“Floods are repaving events — ecologically they’re intended for that. But for humans and sometimes wildlife and other things, repaving events are traumatic and hard and expensive. And there's a long lag time to recover. Of course, the creek is on geological time; so no big deal. But for the rest of us, time is different.”

AB

“I really like to go to the upper part of the watershed, the Limbaugh Canyon Raspberry Mountain area towards the upper headwaters of Monument Creek. I like to go up there, look at the wildflowers. It's got really nice stands of aspen to look at in the spring, summer, and into the fall. It's an opportunity to get away from some of the noise and development that see in other parts of the watershed. You feel like you're back stepping back in time a little bit because it hasn't been as affected by development or human impacts.”

“The creek is a natural system and it's there to provide natural resources and to support nature. It's there for the wildlife. 70% or so of the wildlife in Colorado use riparian areas and wetlands at some part of their life cycle.”

BM



“It's surprising how fragile the creek can be when erosion starts. The soils are very sandy, gravelly. So whenever there's some sort of damage that occurs in the channel, they can really fall apart quickly, especially when we're putting more storm water down the drainage ways — that ramps up the energy and causes problems within the channel. But even though they're very fragile, I found that they can also be somewhat resilient. When we go in and do things to restore channels, they do respond quickly.”

“We're losing habitat whenever we have to put rock and concrete into a channel. But if that's what it takes to stabilize it against the development and the increased stormwater, that's necessary to hold together what we can.”

BM

“My job has changed a lot in the last 23 years. Instead of being out there trying to preserve habitat, I'm now in there trying to stabilize, restore, and bring things back closer to what hopefully was there originally.”

BM

“It’s really beautiful where it gets kind of marshy. It's a little bit healthier and reminds me of a more natural mountain environment. You can see some cattails, grass. And if you look closely, you can see water bugs floating on the surface and sometimes there's a frog or two.”

CA

“As I've grown in my role of caring for people and working with others at Catholic Charities, I've grown in my understanding of what people may be going through who live at the creek side. It's been a big privilege.”

CA

“There's a lot of tension between the neighborhood and the people living near the creek. I feel myself engaged in that a little bit, wanting to hear both sides of where the tension is coming from and mediate if possible. Or just be present in those kinds of conversations, which is really hard.”

CA

“When you see people's whole lives strewn along the creek, it is a sign of disorder. I mean, living on the creek is not a fun thing. Because people are really pushed to the margins. So those sights should be a wake up call. It's a sign for us to say, hey, what are we doing that's not working?”

CA

“20 years ago I came to Colorado Springs as a truck driver. Then due to my company being bought out, they fired all the worker drivers. Well, not having no family, no one to turn to, I automatically became homeless. Monument Creek was one of the first places — actually, MVP Park, right there by the soup kitchen — was one of the first places I started staying.”



“We lived in a little shelter called the Ravine. You come in through it underneath a leaf canopy. You went down in, stopped, dropped your shoes, dropped your coat, whatever, and then came down into an area where I had a 6 man tent completely covered over with leaves, vines, branches. I mean you couldn't even tell it was really there. We had it so interwoven with nature, you couldn't tell. When they came to kick us out, it took them five hours and a cat to tear it apart.”

“If I knew who was staying in that area and left it full of trash, I would go and pick it up and then I'd go ream some new rear. I'd tell them, "Hey, this is why people look down their noses at us because of that crap right there, and just don't do it. It is not that hard to take whatever trash pile you just made, put it in a fricking bag and walk it to a dumpster. It's not that hard." Some of them can't do it, though. They're mentally challenged or sick because of an addiction or whatever the case may be. I understand that. They just should have more facilities or better ways of dealing with it.”

“Some Vietnam vets, I've learned, will never go inside. They just can't. They were out in the jungles or whatever for too long. That four walls and a roof just freaks them out. And I can always find them happy, content, comfortable, up and down Monument Creek.”

“You've had people for thousands of years in the area, leaving behind some evidence. Typically, flint knapping debris like chipped stone tool materials. And then after the Civil War, you have railroad towns in that stretch of Monument Creek. There was forestry, timbering, mining, what am I forgetting? Of course, ranching. And then the Academy comes along in 1954 and in a sense re-sculpts that land, trying to bring it back to a more natural appearance, and removing many of the more recent structures like ranch houses and stuff.”

“Monument Creek means things to people that many area residents would never even fathom. I mean, people in Colorado Springs know there are American Indians in the community; there are American Indians still interested in what goes on here. But even as a person who's worked with a lot of tribes over my career, I was reminded that archeological sites in the area of the creek mean a lot of different things to different people, including American Indians. It might have spiritual importance but that is not mine to analyze or even try to understand — just to respect.”

“The Air Force Academy's special because in the 1950s, the famous architectural firm, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and a committee of dignitaries including people like Walt Disney laid out the Academy as a different kind of military academy that would be inspirational as a natural setting against the Rocky Mountains. About eight miles of Monument Creek flows through the Academy's land. It makes me proud to be part of its stewardship, to be doing a small part to help keep this patch of federal land preserved.”

“I started to research different segments of the trail. Who was here? Was it a pioneer? Was it a little town? And then I started to learn about the pioneers and little communities and entrepreneurial endeavors. I can't make a time machine to go back then and the pioneers are long gone, but to me, the Monument Creek is a witness to this simple pioneer history that occurred along the trail in the 1860s to about 1900s.”

“Just north of Woodmen Road access to the New Santa Fe Trail, there is a site where Harlow and Leafy Teachout had a two story home. It was a hotel and it was a stagecoach stop. And it was there from 1868 through the 1870s. The remnants of the rock structure of the barn and the home foundation are still there.”



“Over in the trees to the northwest, there are the remains of a big rock dam, part of which fell over. In the 1880s, five entrepreneurial citizens of the little community of Edgerton built that dam to create two lakes so that when they froze over in November, they could cut blocks of ice and use them for cooling things.”

“I learned about a family that lived in a section where Monument Creek goes by, the Kinner family — three girls and a mom and a dad. And they lived there in the 30s and 40s. The youngest of the children, Janet, told me, ‘We had this big basin and our mom and dad were big on us three girls being clean. So you took a bucket and you went down to the Monument Creek and brought back water, which would not be heated, and that's how we scrubbed up to be ready for our Sunday best.’”

“Near the north entry of the Air Force Academy was a small community called Husted. Both the Denver Rio Grande and Western Railroad and the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad would be built through this area. Both railroads had to have bridge structures to go over the creek. Monument Creek wandered and meandered through the community almost in a stealth-like manner. It was a witness to this short lived but important community.”

“I found that running the trail along the creek put my brain in a much better state. I found comfort in hearing the babbling Monument Creek and seeing it weaving through the trees. I found there were times it called out in the heavy water of a spring runoff. And other times it hardly made any noise at all, as it was the summer months and running low. It was a comforting companion, you might say.”

“My playground was Monument Valley Park. We always wanted to go down to the creek, but it was very difficult because the levees were built to get stormwater out of Colorado Springs, and it was hard to climb down into where the actual water was. Today the city has put in a ramp, so that makes it easier for people, at Uintah anyway, to get down to the water level. But in those days it was very difficult to get down to the water.”

“Over the last couple of decades, we've watched cities all along the Front Range who have figured out a way to make their waterway a real amenity in the community — from Fort Collins, Denver with the Platte River, and even Pueblo with the Arkansas River. Colorado Springs is the only one who hasn't. Now, Monument Creek is a little different because in the other cities, those are major rivers.”

“We've put together a team who has created a vision for an eight-mile stretch of Monument Creek. It goes past the confluence of Fountain Creek and around the curve down to where Shooks Run comes in. We have a vision with five economic zones along the way where we think development can actually create a funding source for long-term sustainability of the creek itself.”

JM

“One of our main goals is to return Monument Creek back to its natural functions, instead of being driven through town through the levee system which shoots water out of town. You remove some of the levees and you turn it back into its meandering natural path and then you have wetlands.”

JM



“Water's going to move where it needs to move. It basically goes to the point of least resistance at all times.”

JB

“This summer, we've had record amounts of rainfall since they started tracking back in 1890. We have broken a two-month period and a one-month period and probably will be breaking a three-month period. We typically get 16 and a half inches of precipitation a year. And we've already had 17 or 18 inches and it's the middle of July. So call it what you want. There's this big talk about El Niño and going from Niña to Niño — that's possibly having an effect on it. Or global warming. I don't know, but something's changing.”

“I remember Monument Creek from very early in childhood, primarily being at Monument Valley Park. We used to have symphonies in the park and summer camps too. We would go to the park and run around. We would go down there and skip rocks and look for whatever, snakes and whatnot. Yeah, a lot of fond memories. I really enjoyed the Springs Spree back in the day. You remember that? And then later in life, I took some classes and did some research on Monument Creek as well as the other creeks. I’ve got a lot of down home feelings for it.”

“People don't realize that once you put hard surfaces out there, that water still has to go somewhere and it can't soak into the permeable surface anymore. So it runs off and it goes into our storm water system, and then to our creeks.”

JB

“We build places that reflect our values because it's expensive and time-consuming to construct a place. So we build them to reflect what we believe. And then, as everybody interfaces with those environments on a daily basis, they internalize those values and it becomes part of how they see the world and how they think the world should be and their understanding of the world. And then they go and shape other places with those values. So place and people are integrally connected and are always shaping each other.”

“The creek runs mostly along a seam of shale. It's a Pierre Shale, which is easily erodible. And it's gray, so the water has a gray quality. It's never been crystal blue like you think of some majestic mountain, western river. It's always been gray and sediment-laden.”

JH

“All of that engineering work, it's a story of the mentality of conquering nature. It's designed for controlling water, floods, but it's not designed for letting natural eco services function, and it's not designed for human interaction and it's not designed for beauty.”

JH

“In the industrial era of the late 1800s, early 20th century, before we had a Clean Water Act and other environmental laws, creeks were where you dumped your pollution, your industrial waste and your sewage, and you just sort of pushed them aside and that was the creek’s function.”

JH



“You take it for granted when you turn on the tap or take a shower. People don't even think about where their water comes from. They just expect it to be there. And it's such a vast and enormous, huge infrastructure that costs so much money to make happen. If people realize that and realize their personal effects upon the world, they might change their behavior.”

“If you really allow nature to take its course, systems tend to restore themselves. Sometimes there's a new equilibrium. So if you could just work with the natural system to let the river do its thing, it would heal itself. Maybe there'll be no more humans, but the world will be fine.”

JH

“I have been going to Monument Creek since I was a tiny, tiny child. I have had picnics there. I have had birthday parties there. I have fed the ducks with my grandparents there. It's a really special site. I even scattered the ashes of my dog at the root of one of those willows. I also have a crying rock where I go for comfort and solace.”

KM

“There’s a particular site on the creek under the bridge right at the water that has been home to many people that I love — that I have loved. We had a person whose name was Scott. He was an avid outdoorsman. He just loved to be outside, and he was experiencing houselessness, and he died in that space. He died in that creek, and I just can't ever walk, or run, or move by there without remembering that people live there and die there.”

“In the work we do, we use the word *yet* a lot. That person is not housed *yet*. And it seems to me that the creek is saying, ‘yet, yet, yet’ over and over again to remind us of the impermanence of everything.”

KM

“These folks are doing their best, and the thing that is categorically true of all of them — yeah, there's some substance use, and there's some behavioral health stuff. All of them have survived things that you and I can't imagine. And we don't know what we would do if we had to survive those things. So we would build these folks monuments if we knew what they have lived through.”

KM

“When I think of those trees, when I think of the creek, when I think of the earth, when I think of the bees, when I think of the flowers, when I think of really any natural element, I think that it is all screaming for us to protect it.”

KM

“The trouble with this world and the beautiful thing about this world is that anyone can decide that they're going to care about just one thing. That could be stray animals. That could be the watershed. That could be people experiencing homelessness. But until we can grasp comprehensively how interconnected, and interchangeable, and irreconcilably linked everything that we care about is — I don't think that we can move forward.”



“You can almost see reflections or ripples of what's going on in Colorado Springs in the creek. It's a place where larger issues play out. In a way, the creek is a mirror to what's going on in the city.”

LDW

“In the 1990s, the last Conejos residents were forced out. They did not want to sell but they took the offer and they moved away and then the city bulldozed all of the residences, all of the businesses. Today, that is the site of America the Beautiful Park. There is no acknowledgement anywhere in that park that it's on top a former neighborhood. There is one existing building and that is the Conejos Community Church. That is the only building that was spared.”

“We've tried to control the creek in so many ways without really connecting with it. Monument Creek didn't have enough water and so they started buying up water rights all to the west of us and then pumping water uphill, over the mesa and down into Colorado Springs to irrigate for trees and gardens, et cetera. But they never actually embraced the creek itself. We built the railroad right next to it, we built a highway right next to it, we built a power plant right next to it. The creek had to serve a practical purpose or it was merely ignored.”

“It's important to me that these spaces were built for the people of Colorado Springs. So much of our community was built for tourists but Monument Valley Park was built for local people. It was built for working class people who worked six days a week and on their day off, they could be out in nature. It very much goes along with Palmer, who was a Hicksite Quaker — his vision was that everyone needed access to nature for their mental, physical, and spiritual health. As humans in the 19th and 20th century, cities were crushing to your soul, to your wellbeing, so that access to nature had a healthful benefit to you in all ways. When I go to that park, I can't help but think about all the working class folks who really built Colorado Springs enjoying that place.”

“During the economic crisis, Colorado Springs lost about half of its Parks department. Our budget was slashed, lots of people were laid off. As a result, the parks weren't cared for during that time, they couldn't be cared for. I've seen that slowly reemerging in terms of the care of the park itself. Of course, there's a growing houseless or homeless population that camps along the creek. There's a lot of garbage in the creek. There's more garbage than I ever remember seeing.”

“I think of the people that lived in the Roswell neighborhood. They played in the creek. Kids got out of the house first thing in the morning and they went and fished in the creek and they swam in the creek. I never see people in the creek today.”

LDW

“There's no option, no way we can disentangle ourselves from the vitality, the existence, and the presence of water. We are so fully interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent upon the waters of this Great Mother -- Gaia that we actually lose sight of it. That's what happens when it's ubiquitous and we lose our sensitivity to being related.”

“I long for recognition of this existence, watershed to watershed. It's all connected AND it's very personal. The reality is: we're in the watershed, we're of the watershed, it is our larger body.”

MLJ



“I trust the forces of life that are restoring balance. And I am answering the call to cooperate, to collaborate, not to work against. My visionary activity is inspired by the vision, the innate capacity, and seemingly prime imperative, if you will, of a planet to ensure that life here can thrive.”

MLJ

“Erin, you were born here. You're a walking representation of Monument Creek, the source of your gestational waters. The watershed is a part of your aliveness. It is a part of your ability to get up and walk. The levity within that defies gravity.”

MLJ

“When our skin is on the earth, in the waters, in the atmosphere, we become one with the potential of the earth. And we're flooded with life-enhancing antioxidants.”

MLJ

“Monument Creek is important as a symbol. It’s not a huge source of water for us, but it's very symbolic because it's the water we can see. It's the water we can interact with and that's critically important.”

NH

“We're spending millions and millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars correcting things that had we, from the very beginning, been thoughtful about how we developed the land, we wouldn't have had to do.”

NH

“We've used our waterways as dumping grounds and toilets. And so serving in these really important legislative bodies has raised my awareness of how we think about and care about and manage the land and the waterways that we live on.”

NH

“I don't think I realized that I had a relationship to the creek until I became a city council person and a board director for Colorado Springs Utilities. As a legislator, I became more aware of development and how we develop our cities.”

NH

“We are the only major city of our size that does not have a really major waterway. Monument Creek is certainly not a river. And so it's kind of fascinating that this small creek has captured so much attention and so much abuse.”

NH



“People don't realize that every drop of water that we drink and every drop that we import and every drop that comes off the roof as rain or snow melt is owned by us or somebody else downstream.”

“We have to put that water somewhere and so everything ends up in Fountain Creek. And then in the Arkansas River which eventually goes to the Gulf of Mexico. But before it goes to the Gulf, it goes through 180 wastewater treatment plants. So there's 180 other communities that drink it and tens of hundreds of farmers who irrigate with it. We're one of the first spoilers of the Arkansas River.”

“We have almost as many dogs as we have guns in El Paso County. And many people don't pick up their dog poop.”

RS

“We are one of the fastest growing places in the country. So how we grow is going to be critical. When I moved here in 1970, it was 130,000 people. Now the city is 500,000. Metropolitan area is at three quarters of a million. We're predicted to be a million in the metropolitan area and the city itself at 725,000 by 2050. If you had to build a city that was based on the Pikes Peak Watershed and you didn't have any other water to import, you would have a city of about 30,000 people.”

“If you think about what the other Front Range cities have done well, we are way behind in terms of creating wetlands, but more so in creating a whole network of trails and greenways along our waterways.”

RS

“When you think of it, there's just as much water in the world today as there was a thousand years ago. We may have had a few ice asteroids hit the world, but most of the water that is here was here 10,000 years ago. You really don't waste water. What you do is you make it unusable. We have to learn how to clean our water so that it is usable again. I believe that humans have creativity and the ability to figure these things out.”

“The park is a perfect analogy of the community itself and how it changes to fit the changing needs and tastes. The park was never intended to be a museum. It's a living, growing thing.”

TS

“People have been camping on Monument Creek since the town was founded. Even the earliest papers relate how the Marshall would have to go roust people who were creating too much disturbance in the bottoms — that's what they called it, the bottoms.”

TS



“It is an area of passive recreation for walking, for strolling, for contemplating, but it also is a place for active recreation where you have basketball courts and pickleball courts and volleyball courts, and you've got hiking trails which allow for bicycles to transit. Motorized vehicles are prohibited, which I think really reinforces the nature of its park-like setting. Now, in the 1930s the city decided to open up the park one day a year to allow invalids to experience the park. This happened when the lilac shrubs had come to their maturity and would drench the area in wonderful aromas.”

“We have about 56 creeks in Colorado Springs. And most of those are intermittent, meaning that they only flow during a precipitation event. Also, Pikes Peak is a fourteener in our watershed and our lowest elevation is at 4,600 feet. That's a huge elevation change in a distance of just 70 miles. We're the second-most studied watershed in the country because of these factors that make us so unique.”

“When I started my career, we would get blue-green algae every once in a while. Bloom here, bloom there — not too much of a problem. And then as the years went by, blooms became longer, became more frequent, and now in the last five to seven years, it's been a chronic problem. Every year we've had blue-green algae blooms which are a problem because they can create toxins and these toxins are harmful for animals and they're harmful for people. And if we detect the toxins, we turn that water out. We don't take that water, we don't use it. So that's water we can't use.”

“Part of what makes the creek unique is that some of the better habitat, some of the healthier parts of the watershed, are within a military reservation. Typically, a lot of military reservations installations are affecting the local community rather than being affected by it in terms of the natural resources. For instance, we're really trying to promote beaver on the Air Force Academy. Also native stream fish and all the big megafauna that occurs within the watershed — the deer, the elk, the bear, the mountain lion, all of that. Our 18,500 acres are sort of like a wildlife preserve.”

“What we're confronted with is the need to observe and listen and have a posture of receptivity to the creek and to what's happening with it and to the people who live there. I think it's really important for us to hold some reverence for what's happening there. And then to wonder what, and then to listen to the needs and the desires of people who live at the creek. I think that's utterly important for us.”

“I became really good friends with a lady named Angela. Her boyfriend died from an epileptic seizure in his sister's private swimming pool. She was pregnant with his son so we clung to each other for comfort for a while. She's the one who showed me that there's little itty-bitty white shrimp that run up and down in red roots on certain parts of this creek. I've never seen them anywhere else. They're alive! And they crawl up and down doing their own little busy thing, whatever it is that shrimp do. It was the neatest thing. And it was them shrimp and her showing them to me that made me latch onto the little creek and figure out just exactly what it was all about.”

“I-25 follows an ancient pathway, north-south, along what we now call the Front Range. Lots of tribes passed through and/or settled in here, there's no question on that matter. Today, we consult 30+federally recognized tribes, many now located at substantial distances from the Academy. Often as I talk to an American Indian person with heritage in this area, they gesture to Pikes Peak and other landmarks and say, "We had names for all these." However, some tribes have not retained those names in their oral traditions. In other cases, they're not names to casually share with a non-American Indian person. But it's interesting to consider that Monument Creek, over thousands of years, very likely had different Indigenous names — names that we don't know.”

“We have a lot of natural water because of Pikes Peak. We have reservoirs and we have ways to capture some water. But as the city grew, it wasn't enough. In the 1940s and '50s, they built a water pipe from Twin Lakes in western Colorado over to Colorado Springs. That's where the majority of our water comes from today. But the city has continued to grow and we had to come up with a second plan. We owned water rights in the Pueblo Reservoir and wanted to pump water up from there. That was a 20-year project that had a lot of politics involved. We had to convince Pueblo that if they allowed us to bring all that water up, we wouldn't just use it, make it dirty and send it right back down to them. It forced us to work as a community to send cleaner water back down to Pueblo.”



“I think that for some generations it's too late. You're always going to have people that care in each generation, but you're also going to have a lot of people that could care less. “So what if I'm blowing my grass into the street? I have a mortgage, there's a war going on, whatever. There's more important things to worry about.” So I believe that you have to start young and really ingrain in these kids' minds that this is the only world we have and if you keep messing with it, we're not going to be able to survive.”

“Monument Creek is the main water body through town. Although people might say Fountain Creek, it's Monument Creek that runs all along the city. And it was also the focus of General Palmer and one of his parks. He put aside quite a bit of land for parks, but he really wanted to clean up Monument Creek because it was the entrance to town when the railroad came from Denver, and later the highway. Monument Creek is crucial to Colorado Springs' identity.”

“I get up every morning believing that we can create the societal conditions where no one is obligated to sleep outside. My dream for our world and this community is that we are able to provide adequate housing opportunities and supportive services — and I mean, I would settle for adequate trash cans and bathrooms — so that we can protect and enjoy the creek, and visit it recreationally (and not because we've experienced such trauma that we can't bear the thought of living in a shelter with 400 other people.) So in 100 years, I hope all the creek beds will be pristine and litter free and visited for fun by formerly houseless people.”

“An enforcement-only strategy around camps doubles the amount of waste and trash and problems. Because without appropriate resources, without adequate support for folks, they are just going to move somewhere down the street. My estimate is about \$8,000 in cost to the community for one camp cleanup. That includes the ticket writing, the time that person may eventually spend in jail because they lose their ticket and fail to appear. That includes the massive amount of money that we pay to these crews to come and clean up. Meanwhile, the camp is relocated 50 - 100 yards away. Pushing people around from place to place is a colossal waste of our resources as a community, but what's more important, it's a colossal waste of dignity.”

“The human history of our region goes back for tens of thousands of years. This is the ongoing and traditional homelands of the Nuuchiu or the Ute people. 48 tribes have ongoing cultural connections to this place. I believe it’s important to share the real history of the place, including the fact that this land belongs truly to Indigenous people, that we are interlopers, that this is unceded land that we invaded. We participated in genocide and forced removal of the original inhabitants of this land. But they are still here, not through any generosity on our part, but through their own perseverance and their own will to survive because we tried to exterminate Indigenous people.”

“Historically, land along the creek was the place where working class people, largely working class people of color, were forced to live because of de facto segregation. They were literally shut out of other neighborhoods in Colorado Springs. The cheapest, most affordable land, the only land that they could have access to was literally adjacent to both Monument Creek and Shooks Run. That neighborhood was accessible to them because it was a bottom land and prone to flooding. Originally, it was a Jewish neighborhood that became a Hispano neighborhood. A lot of Black military families lived there too. It was a marginalized space for people who were marginalized.”

“It's our great opportunity to find out that, as human beings, we are a part of these greater forces. To take our position — just take our position as being in connection with all life. And as a species that can and does depend on love, depend on connection. We are not a species that can survive without it. That means we have the greatest potential for care, the greatest potential for altruism. It's time we get excited about the possibility of what we can do together. Together with the Earth, with greater forces of life, cosmic and terrestrial. It begins in that relationship, that appreciation, that attentiveness, that awareness, that puts us in communication with all the other natural processes of life. It is simply my wish and hope to be a part of and a witness to the blossoming of humanity, to our becoming more fully human. The opportunity is not somewhere far away. It's here now.”

“So here we are, in 2023. A lot of snow is falling in California. Cyclone Freddy traveled 3,000 miles and had four rapid intensification periods. In various ways, whether it's snow, falling rain, sleet, freezing rain, no matter what, we're seeing the many faces of water right now. This is all water in motion. Water is on the move. When water moves like this, all of the elemental forces are in play.”



“The University Village up on North Nevada — it has the back of big box stores looking over Monument Valley and what a waste that is. Why don't we face toward the creek and build restaurants that have outdoor seating that faces the creek and the mountains? What is the mindset that just didn't even think to face the creek? We've turned our backs to the creek all the way along.”

“Then you have all this development in the county. The water that serves that development is in aquifers which is not a renewable resource. Once that water goes away, it's gone. So we're starting to think more mindfully and thoughtfully about the water that's available. I really pushed for a regional water task force, a water commission, to look at that interplay between the renewable water and the non-renewable water and the development between what the county approves versus the development that the city approves. Very different processes, different governmental bodies, and honestly, very different mindsets. Water is the most precious resource we have, and so those conversations are happening more and more.”

“Colorado Springs Utilities needed to get more water so they tried to build a couple large reservoirs in the mountains. One was supposed to be up by Buena Vista. And if you go up there, you'll still see the signs that say, "Don't let Colorado Springs dam the Arkansas." And there was another big one, the Homestake Project, that was supposed to be up by Aspen. But people opposed them vigorously. Reservoirs destroy viable ecosystems and even though they can be used for recreation, environmental advocates justifiably hate them. What Colorado Springs Utilities did well over the years was securing high-quality senior water rights. There's no other city in the state that has more primary source, high mountain water rights except for Denver.”

“Originally we had no springs in Colorado Springs. We just used “Colorado Springs” because it was supposedly a health resort and a healthy place required the name “springs.” So Colorado Springs didn't have any springs until the Tahama Springs was discovered, and it was basically just a seep — it wasn't a spring but they determined that it was capable of providing sufficient water — and so they developed it and provided it as a gift to the public. It was a WPA project after the 1935 flood damaged the area quite significantly.”

“The uniqueness of the park is that it was a gift given to the citizens of the city by the town founder. He provided several parks, but Monument Valley Park is the crown jewel. It was a gateway to the city for people arriving from the north on the railroad tracks, which was adjacent to the creek. Now the city's first Parks and Recreation was an anomaly when it was established because General Palmer had an understanding of government and how organizations behave, and he felt that Parks would not receive the proper attention if it were part of a municipal function. So he established a separate and independent Parks Commission, and they had taxation authority and they ran their own shop.”