

Crystal
Valley
Environmental
Protection
Association

Crystal Clear

Spring, 2025

Photo by Jacob Schmidt

Published by CVEPA, the Environmental Watchdog for Colorado's Crystal Valley since 1972.

President's Letter

John Armstrong

It has been a long, slow evolution in the United States to achieve the environmental standards and protections that the American people have come to benefit from. We stand stunned at the short period of time that these achievements have unraveled. Clean air and water...are they not inalienable rights of man? Greed, an unquenchable thirst for power and wealth, now threatens to jettison the hard earned protections of the last 75 years. Our system of checks and balances which has worked for 250 years has been bought through crafty manipulation of justices and courts. "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed." (Luke 12:15)

CVEPA is not a partisan organization nor do we claim party affiliations. In a time when politicians remain silent, cower in fear and kowtow in order to secure personal gain and security, it is more important than ever to speak up. The current administration is not the party of our grandparents or even our parents. They have made it clear that environmental protections are in the way of the power grab and have actively proceeded to dismantle the institutions that were entrusted with that mission. A sovereign democracy under siege by a dictatorial superpower is now being used as a pawn in an international chess game for natural resources. Extraction and development of our domestic resources is front and center and while that may not be inherently bad this cannot be in the public's best interest without scrutiny and transparency. Will our national lands be auctioned off to the highest bidder?

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Letter, continued



CVEPA's mission focuses on the Crystal River watershed. How do the actions of this new administration affect us locally? In just over one month we have seen land management agencies gutted. Our White River National Forest has just lost its forest supervisor. This forest is the most popular forest in the nation, by user visits. Scott Fitzwilliams, supervisor for 15 years, availed himself of the administration's deferred retirement program. The Forest is viewed as "the largest economic engine of any forest in the country." (*Colorado Sun*.)

This comes at a time when burgeoning visitation and recreational pressure are at an all time high. Are our land management agencies flawless? Not by a long shot, but dissolution is far different than improvement. We must be vigilant in monitoring water quality, quantity and allocation, methane pollution and harvesting, wildlife challenges from recreation, mineral extraction...the list is endless. Mankind undeniably continues to need

natural resources. Finding balance in this quest is our challenge.

When focusing on eviscerating federal agencies, remember that what is far worse than too much government is the private sector running unbridled.

This land is your land! Speak up and stand tall for the country you love. Get involved and stay involved. Call your elected officials, write your senators and congressmen. The environment and the democratic process that protects it have never been more threatened by an administration than now!



Photo by Jacob Schmidt

Preserving Dark Skies in the Crystal River Valley

Kelsy Been

What's the best part of the Crystal River Valley at night? If the dark sky on a clear, stary night isn't the first thing that comes to mind, it's probably near the top. The ability to see the Milky Way, spot Venus, or map out constellations is a gift that many people don't have. According to DarkSky Colorado, a statewide nonprofit dedicated to restoring the nighttime environment, 80% of Americans can't see the type of night sky we enjoy here.

Besides being beautiful, did you know that the night sky plays a critical role in environmental conservation, and protecting it benefits both people and wildlife? Light pollution — the human-made alteration of natural night lighting — has wide-reaching impacts. It blocks our view of the universe, disrupts natural behavior in wildlife, and negatively affects human health. Species that evolved over billions of years in the presence of only natural light sources, like starlight and moonlight, struggle to adapt to artificial light. Migratory birds, nocturnal animals, and even plants rely on natural light patterns to guide feeding, reproduction, and seasonal cycles. Fortunately, light pollution is one of the few environmental problems that is technically easy to reverse. Simple changes, like shielding light fixtures, reducing light intensity, and using warmer-colored bulbs, can significantly reduce its impact.

We are lucky that Colorado is a leader in dark sky conservation, with more DarkSky-certified communities and open spaces than almost any other state.

Nearby Dark Sky Parks like Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Mesa Verde, and Curecanti National Recreation Area — and the soon-to-be designated Rifle Gap State Park — offer protected views of the night sky. Several places in Western Colorado — including Paonia, Gunnison, Norwood, Nucla, Naturita and more — have either received or are working toward official Dark Sky designations. And many other communities across the state have implemented lighting codes in support of these best practices without seeking out the official designation.

Pitkin County recently adopted a new lighting ordinance. Read it by going here: - <https://www.pitkincounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/34130/chapter-07> then clicking on "7-20-140: Lighting"

We acknowledged upfront that we are lucky that the Crystal River is generally a Dark Sky oasis, but there are still some easy light pollution improvements that could be made. Plus, we want to make sure policies are in place to protect our dark skies for generations to come. CVEPA is currently exploring how to advocate for Dark Sky policies and best practices in the Crystal River Valley and will have updates in the months to come. Until then, continue enjoying the beauty and broad benefits of a truly stary night. Learn more about lighting best practices, the impacts of light pollution, and more from [Dark Sky International](#) or [Dark Sky Colorado](#).



CVEPA was honored to be asked by Wilderness Workshop to participate in a recent full page ad in the Aspen Daily News to indicate our mutual support for the stewards of our public land. Along with 30 other organizations and businesses in the Roaring Fork Valley, we stand with our public land managers who care for our wildlife, water and public lands across Colorado.

We're calling on Congress to take a stand to support these public servants and our amazing public lands and encourage you to write your representatives to ask for the same.

As the ad said, USFS and BLM staff are "the heart and soul of our Colorado way of life." We stand with them.

<https://www.bennet.senate.gov/contact/>

<https://www.hickenlooper.senate.gov/email-john/#contact-form-emailJohn>

<https://hurd.house.gov/contact>

Unite, Baby, Unite!

Suzy Meredith-Orr

Whether you viewed November's election results with delight, disinterest or dismay, most of us find ourselves suffering from political fatigue right now. We're shutting off the tv, avoiding the web and trying to ignore the news. As tempting as it might be to hide under the covers, so many important issues need our attention, and we can't shut out the world just yet. Take the environment, for instance. Like everything else in politics, all the signs are pointing to division and disagreement over whether to protect our natural resources, clean air, water, wildlife, and public lands, and if so, how to do it.

If you're like me and my friends at the Crystal Valley Environmental Protection Association, you're gearing up for four bumpy years. The next US president's pick to head the EPA has promised to eliminate environmental regulations that have proven inconvenient for the fossil fuel industry. Trump has also promised to halt the Inflation Reduction Act which will mean a lot less funding for clean air. And Project 2025 has a local component directed at abandoning the lease withdrawal recently obtained for the Thompson Divide, along with a bunch of other important environmental safeguards.

Prior to January 20, environmentalists were reading the signs and burning the midnight oil, encouraging President Biden to designate more national monuments (including the Dolores Canyon), and developing endangered species protections at the state level. In Utah, the Southwestern Utah Wilderness Alliance took significant action by suing the state for its attempt to seize 18 million acres of public land. There's tension in the air, uncertainty and stress. And we could all do with a little hope.

Like the rest of the country, not everyone in the greater Roaring Fork Valley agrees on everything or ever could. Our life experiences, circumstances and core beliefs bring us to issues from different places. But I can't help but wonder if we're ignoring an opportunity to unite that's right in front of us. That there's something we stare in the face every single day. Something that really needs us to unite around it to survive.

It's this beautiful place where we live.

Proximity may not equal love, but that people want to be here is evident every time we head out to work. We travel between different towns, different counties and even different mountain ranges just to reach our jobs. We endure housing challenges, high taxes, transportation nightmares and limited family or "me" time for the sake of being here.

Why do we put up with it? For some, it's that family is here. For others, treasured memories of childhood vacations have brought us back to settle and raise families. Some might be answering the call of the slopes or streams or other recreational opportunities. Some value our clean air or proximity to wildlife. There are probably some who put up with

it just for the money. But I believe that most deal with the struggles because we love this place.

Indications of how the environment might be treated during the next four years remind us that the things we value come at a cost. Protecting this place requires us to engage. Luckily, political action is nothing new for residents of the Roaring Fork, Frying Pan and Crystal valleys. There are many local examples of remarkable results from grassroots beginnings.

Take CVEPA's start as a handful of folks who stopped a ski area from turning Marble into a town the size of Grand Junction. We're now celebrating our 52nd year.

Or there's the advocacy group that grew out of concerns over wildlife-vehicle conflict. Check out Roaring Fork Safe Passages to learn more.

Hundreds of people robustly advocated for years for the protection of the Thompson Divide. In April they celebrated a major victory--withdrawal of the Divide from oil and gas leases for 20 years.

Currently, dozens have committed to be part of the process to determine the best way to protect the Crystal River from dams and diversions. CVEPA believes the best option is to make the Crystal River Wild & Scenic.

The ways we chose to help may be different, but taking some kind of action is the goal. Even if you don't consider yourself a "Greenie" you can still make a difference.

Not sure about climate change? Then how about advocating for keeping the public land where you and your kids hike or snowshoe public by donating to CVEPA, Colorado Wild Public Lands or Wilderness Workshop.

Do the words "Drill, Baby, drill" make you want to celebrate? Perhaps consider throwing your hat in the ring for clean water, and working to protect the quality and quantity of what we drink or where we recreate. Roaring Fork Conservancy might be just the organization for you.

Care about mining history? Support efforts to preserve historic sites. Check out Aspen Valley Land Trust, or the Redstone Historical Society.

If you want a better handle on the issues facing the area, the nonprofit news organization Aspen Journalism provides excellent in-depth coverage of environmental issues in our watershed. You've probably seen their work in area newspapers.

The point is to write a letter, join a protest, or just support an organization committed to protecting our environment. The connections between folks who work together for a common purpose are uniting. And the best part is, as we share impacts in the greater Roaring Fork watershed, so we will share the benefits.

"...the things we value come at a cost. Protecting this place requires us to engage."

The Month of July, 1971

Bill Jochems

This was the most fascinating month which began with great expectations and ended with great concerns that I had made a mistake. I moved to Redstone I bought the most northerly of Osgood's worker cottages, a half mile north of the Inn, on the east side of Redstone Boulevard. My family and I were trying to get everything emptied from the rental van before the 4th, when a VW Bug crunched on the gravel drive, stopped and a tiny lady emerged. Paula Mechau got right to the point. Real estate developers were trying to get Redstone residents to vote for a Water and Sanitation District. If the district was approved the hillside behind my new house would be covered with condominiums. This seemed unbelievable, but if you had been there beside me and listened to Paula's formal and forceful speech, you would have serious concerns too.

A couple of days later, I took a break from moving and explored the yard. There on the north side of the house, just outside the bathroom, was a pool of water. It had not rained, and I soon figured out the pool was actually sewage from my house. I crossed the street to talk to my new acquaintance Léonard Short and told him there was something wrong with my septic system. "None of the original Osgood houses have a septic system. You have a cesspool and you are overloading it." Leonard said. "Don't let the County know." So a very discreet and temporary expansion of the cesspool was made, and the water and sewer district was approved and served us thereafter.

The next surprise occurred within a few days. "We've opened up the Inn so Colonel Norman Smith can tell us his plans for Redstone." The Col told the 20 or 30 of us assembled, how he had bought the strip of land above Redstone on the east, and planned a string of condos. He was also dealing with the Castle ownership and hoped to extend condos from above Redstone to above the Castle. Redstone was such a beautiful place, that he was sure his condos would sell and Redstone, as well as our lives, would be improved. I found it difficult to contemplate what would surely be at least a tripling of the population of Redstone.

At the same time I was moving into Redstone, I was trying to establish myself as a lawyer in Glenwood Springs. I met J. E. DeVilbiss, a Glenwood lawyer who later became District 6 Judge. He told me that developers from Colorado Springs were buying property around Marble for a ski area and surrounding real estate development. I had moved to the Crystal Valley because I liked it the way it was, The news I was hearing seemed to signify change for the worse, substantial change for the worse.

"Hey, did you hear about the big dam they're going to build at Placita?" No, I had not heard; but then I learned that a proposed reservoir would back up water halfway to Marble. Yet another shock, and still in my first month of moving to Red-

stone. I had been around enough to know that many more projects were planned than were ever built; but still, if any one of these proposals-- condos in Redstone, ski area at Marble, or dam at Placita--were actually built, I wasn't sure Redstone was the place for me.

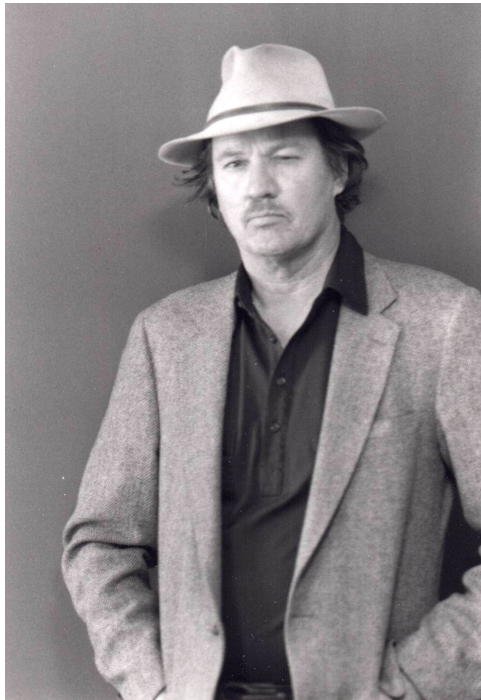
Within the year that followed, not only was there no visible progress on any of the threatened developments, but resistance, even opposition, was developing. The Pitkin County Commissioners included Dwight Shellman and Joe Edwards who were very progressive guys when it came to land use. The regulations they adopted discouraged Col. Smith and he put his property above Redstone up for sale, without attempting to build a single condo. And, a few folks in Marble were concerned enough about the ski area and its accompanying real estate development that they hired attorney J. E. DeVilbiss to develop a resistance.

J. E. wrote the Charter for the Crystal Valley Environmental Association (CVEPA) and persuaded Marble residents to support reincorporating the Town of Marble's Municipal Charter. Thus, two entities were formed to fight the Marble Ski Area. That was more than 50 years ago and both entities are alive and well today. CVEPA took the lead in opposing the Marble Ski Area. Opposition before the Gunnison County Commissioners was fruitless. They were willing to approve development that would have accommodated 22,000 people, almost doubling the population of Gunnison County. They had no hesitation. The Colorado Real Estate Commission eventually took notice of some questionable lot sales and canceled Marble Ski Area's ability to sell lots, which led to bankruptcy and shutting down.

After the Marble campaign, and a variety of other projects, CVEPA's next major efforts were directed to Mid-Continent's

coal mine west of Redstone and the proposed Placita reservoir. Black water would occasionally over-load the mines' settlement basins, one time turning the Crystal River, and even the Roaring Fork, black as far down as Glenwood Springs. When Mid-Continent declared bankruptcy in the early 90s, CVEPA kept careful watch on the reclamation efforts, and consistently lobbying for better cleanup. Then in 2015, CVEPA joined Pitkin County in Water Court to oppose the Placita Reservoir, resulting in the abandonment of that project.

Today Redstone and the upper Crystal Valley retain the great beauty and other qualities they had back in July of 1971. CVEPA had a significant role in the defeat of the two biggest challenges, Marble Ski Area and Placita Reservoir. Those two projects would have made the Crystal Valley a drastically different. CVEPA's role in many other, less dramatic projects has maintained the qualities that attracted me in July 1971. I lived happily in Redstone till July 2023, moving 18 miles downstream to Carbondale, when I could no longer see well enough to drive a car.



Bill Jochems c. 1971

New Mission Statement

After much discussion and debate, CVEPA's board of directors adopted a new mission and purpose statement in February to replace a wordier version adopted some time ago. Let us know what you think!

Mission:

The Crystal Valley Environmental Protection Association protects and defends the natural environment of Colorado's Crystal River through vigilant grassroots action.

Purpose:

Since its kitchen table beginning in 1972, CVEPA has been a strong leader on behalf of the unique environment and history of the Crystal Valley. CVEPA is the only organization exclusively dedicated to the preservation of the ecosystems in the Crystal Valley. We support public access consistent with the preservation of biodiversity, including wildlife. The board acts as a watchdog on threats to our environment and advocates for environmentally sound practices by government, industry and individuals.

The "Crystal Clear" is published quarterly by the Crystal Valley Environmental Protection Association, a 501c3 organization. CVEPA has been the environmental watchdog of the Crystal Valley since 1972. Past issues of the "Clear" are available at cvepa.org/newsletters

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As a grassroots non-profit organization, we rely on your support to help us protect the Crystal Valley. Please consider becoming a member by visiting <https://cvepa.org/cvepa-membership-options>



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