

CVEPA PRESIDENT'S LETTER SUMMER 2026



Late May was a busy week for CVEPA. We met with the skeleton USFS Aspen Sopris District, the Town of Marble (TOM) and the Gunnison County Commissioners to request review of the implementation of the Lead King Stakeholders Group recommendations on the Off Road Vehicle

use from Marble to the Lead King Basin. A review was assured after 3 years and we are now entering the fourth year. Gunnison Commissioners said at their annual visit / meeting in Marble that they want to reconvene the stakeholders. CVEPA demands the promised Sheriff's deputy enforcement of key OHV truck/trailer parking along County Road 3 and Town Park..

That same week, CVEPA met with AVL and TOM hosted by the Trust for Land Restoration (TLR) of Ridgway. TLR became the saviour of our beloved Marble Wetlands when they accepted the donated property when no one else would. TLR had their annual retreat at the Beaver Lake Lodge in Marble and conducted both a meeting at the firehouse and then a site visit with said entities at Marble Wetlands. TLR's visit was a delightful exercise in co-operation and management of the Preserve. CVEPA also met with CPW on Wetlands access . TLR is on track to transfer ownership to TOM and CVEPA remains the local entity coordinating interests at the Preserve.

Would it be a surprise that water is the hot issue locally, regionally and nationally this year ? One of the greatest causes for joy is the \$99 Million purchase of the Shoshone (Colorado River in Glenwood Canyon) Non-consumptive Water rights by the Colorado River District. The deal will secure reliable flows in the Colorado River to support agriculture, recreation and wildlife for millions of people. Concurrently, the local intergovernmental agreement (IGA) for protections of the Crystal River, although spineless in it's lack of commitment, is a signal that entities associated with the watershed are working together. Read Dale Will's article in this issue for more information. CVEPA seeks more durable and comprehensive protections for the Crystal River.

Closest to home is the announcement from the West Divide Water Conservancy District (WDWCD) to supply augmentation to residents in the Crystal Valley. Members

know that CVEPA battled with the WDWCD for years. It is the entity that for 50 years held conditional water rights for 2 dams over 250 feet tall that would have inundated the town of Redstone and the Placita section of the Crystal Valley. Our water would have been diverted out of our watershed for agricultural and oil shale development in the Colorado River Valley. About a decade ago the District relinquished these rights. The Rifle based WDWCD is a taxing district that has taxed residents for half a century for something most did not want any part of. It is an interesting development that they are now actively seeking sources of augmentation for valley residents.

This age old system of augmentation is odd. Stored water can be released at a given time to fulfill the user's legal obligation to increase the river volume but the one time pulse of this "paper water" would likely be indiscernible just a few miles downstream.

After years of negotiations, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, administrators for Beaver Lake in Marble, have agreed to supply a portion of those waters for augmentation through an agreement with WDWCD. Two other water impoundments, one at Rapid Creek on Darien Ranch and one at Treasure Mountain Ranch in Crystal (prospective developers of a ski resort in that area) may be built as part of this proposal, although both agreements are pending. This is great relief to residents who have very junior, or inferior, water rights with the spectre of having their water shut off. Seemingly of little consequence, the evaporation rate of the reservoirs is stunning, as evidenced in the application in water court.

CVEPA has always promoted robust water conservation efforts as the primary means of mitigation. It is not easy to change habits of centuries but as we stumble headlong into Dead Pool at Lake Powell the consequence of long term, widespread drought can no longer be ignored. To deny credence to conservation is arrogance.

McClure Pass has seen more development than in the last 50 years. The Pitkin County Open Space and Trails is converting the old pass road into a new hike and bike path including a tunnel under SH 133. The McClure Pass communications tower awaits approval from the USFS.

CVEPA encourages you to search and read Aspen Journalism, The Sopris Sun and the Crystal Valley Echo to stay informed on issues critical to our environment and quality of life. Staying informed is the key to positive engagement.

CVEPA would like to applaud the Town of Marble and especially Kelsey Been as they move toward Dark Skies International certification. Look for events promoting Dark Skies as locals work for this certification which protects our ability to access our celestial wonderland.

Join CVEPA at our Annual meeting and fest at the Thompson Barn at River Valley Ranch in Carbondale at 4:00 on August 23rd !