

President's Letter January 2026



Greetings Members of CVEPA and friends of the Crystal Valley and Happy New Year.

As we look around our valley and our planet we find a multitude of environmental concerns. Greater than all the worries is still my gratitude for the good fortune of living in the valley of my dreams. That said, it is all the more important that we stay engaged in protecting this river valley that continues to give us so much. Sharing with membership through the *Crystal Clear Newsletter* is our best instrument to remain in touch. I apologize for the hiatus since our last Summer 2025 Crystal Clear Newsletter. I knew when CVEPA vice president Suzy Meredith-Orr retired from the board last summer that there would be a tremendous void. In the 6 years of Suzy's tireless volunteer service she almost single handedly developed and maintained our brilliant, colorful and comprehensive quarterly outreach mailing. CVEPA aspires to continue with a periodical to keep you informed. **We miss you, Suzy !**

The year 2025 seemed rather quiet in the valley but hardly uneventful. We appreciate that you want and need to stay informed on the issues. The

Dorais Way closure at the Redstone North Bridge was resolved and the access to Flloha Nature Preserve reopened last summer. CVEPA thanks Pitkin County for persevering in overcoming the selfish closure to this historic access perpetrated by the Rock Creek Association.

Treasure Mountain Ranch (TMR) first unveiled their ambitious plan for a ski-based development at Crystal City at a CVEPA annual meeting. Progress has been slow, but this fall TMR received permission for construction of a 5,000 square foot maintenance building in Crystal. Along with lot line adjustments TMR relinquished use of several historic Crystal City structures (including the Crystal Club) in return for rights to build an equal amount of new cabins nearby. CVEPA urged Gunnison County to require TMR to submit a comprehensive application for their development rather than their separate initial piecemeal request. Gunnison County granted the TMR request without review of the ultimate plan. The TMR concept hinges on a federal land exchange located near 11,000', adjacent to their private property. This high USFS terrain is part of a wilderness expansion proposal in The Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection Act which CVEPA has strongly supported. TMR states that the overall conservation of much of their property through a complex land exchange is in the best public interest. Stay tuned as this proposal evolves.

The Crystal River along the Marble Airstrip has been successfully restored and CVEPA thanks local watchdogs who reported the unpermitted manipulation of the river course. Distant Gunnison County would never have known about the disturbance without your and CVEPA's eyes on the Environment. If you see something that doesn't look right, it's probably because it isn't right? **Report it!!**

The United States Forest Service completed a parking lot at the foot of the Daniel Hill (the old Gold Pan Pottery location). The lot was product of the Lead King Loop Stakeholders Group recommendations and is designated for hikers, bikers and equestrians. The lot distinctly prohibits use by All terrain and off highway vehicles (ATV/ OHV). When the requisite

regulation signage was not installed CVEPA contacted the USFS. The flagging district office cited inability to find and procure signposts and the manpower to install signage. CVEPA found the posts, drove to Grand Junction and delivered them to the office. This presidential administration is hell-bent on eliminating any protections and oversight to your public lands, and perhaps the land itself! White River NF supervisor Scott Fitzwilliam took early retirement rather than face the emasculation of his organization. Shortly there after, District Ranger Warner moved to Pitkin County. Interim Ranger Jennifer Schuller is now at the helm of the Aspen / Sopris Ranger District. At this time the stunning new Carbondale office remains closed to the public. The USFS needs any volunteer hours you can offer.

There is a 190' tall communications tower proposed for a location 2 miles up the Ragged Mountain Road. This is the road that departs from the top of McClure Pass and travels toward Chair Mountain. Gunnison County has already supported the Project. At 190' tall the tower is a mere 10' below wearing the requisite flashing red lights. The tower will require a grid-based power line, likely up the Ragged Man Road. The GMUG Forest has the ultimate say on the alignment above the pass summit and would insist on underground utilities due to visibility, periodic maintenance, line clear-cutting and the risk of power line associated forest fire. CVEPA and environmental groups are closely observing this proposal.

Wilderness Workshop hosted several CSU experts on high country river hydrology early this fall. They gathered information on the importance of historical flash flooding in the Crystal Valley. When the call for volunteers went out CVEPA waded the icy river to dig cottonwood and spruce root tubers in the River cobble to establish date lines from tree root rings. This data supports the living story of the river in relation to wild and scenic values. Enhanced protection of the Crystal River through numerous combinations of governmental cooperation or wild and scenic designation are being evaluated. A new facilitator is being hired to continue moving forward to protect the river and it's special values.

Following the path of our neighbors on Snowmass and Capital Creeks, the Town of Marble (TOM) is working toward designation from the Dark Skies International Initiative. Through the enthusiasm and organization of Marbelian Kelsey Been local residents are networking to achieve this goal. Kelsey was a CVEPA board member and we thank her for her service. In support and solidarity, CVEPA paid the application fee for the certification process for TOM. A treasure like dark night skies is often fully not appreciated until it disappears.

The precious Marble Wetlands has enriched many people's experience. The Marble Charter School has begun to reap the benefits of this living outdoor Classroom. CVEPA hopes to become more involved with the school in the future. CVEPA continues to work with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to secure Public access to the wetlands through CPW property. The Valley's wildlife officer John Groves has been promoted to supervisor added to his current responsibilities. John is also charged with moving the wetlands access issue to fruition. CVEPA continues to work with Colorado Dept. Public Health and Environment with the boundless support of Mark Rudolf who facilitated the conservation of Wetlands by the Trust for Land Restoration.

The annual CVEPA August meeting at Raspberry Cafe was lively and well attended. Many people were shocked but the fact that we invited Garfield County Commissioner Perry Will as our keynote speaker. Perry's career spanned Colorado House Representative then Senator after his distinguished career as Director of Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Perry is a conservative and was enthusiastic about speaking with CVEPA. Do we not speak with someone with varying opinions? Do we not jump at the opportunity to converse with our elected officials? I wanted to hear from Perry and he was anxious to hear from us. Pitkin County. Commissioner Jacober joined in the conversation, and everyone benefitted from a congenial discussion. I believe that most of us have much more in common than we have differences. We are all in this together.

This spring the Gunnison County Commissioners perennially extended the exemption allowing Off Road Vehicles (OHV) to operate on the Marble Road #3. Use by these vehicles is prohibited on County Roads statewide, for many reasons. The timing for memorializing this exemption is especially inappropriate. The only legal OHV truck and trailer parking in the valley is the dedicated TOM parking lot below the firehouse. This lot was dedicated by mutual recommendation of The Lead King Basin Stakeholders Group after 14 months of arduous and time-consuming meetings. (Two CVEPA representatives faithfully attended these meetings.) The Stakeholders proposed that there be only one lot with 12 legal truck/trailer parking spots. This parking arrangement was recognized as the only practical, equitable and achievable means of controlling the number of OHVs in the valley. The County, the USFS and TOM stressed that enforcement is the key to the success of the program. On a busy July weekend this summer, CVEPA observed that the lot was full and every illegal parking spot in Marble Valley was full of truck/trailers. These units totaled more than twice the allotted legal parking spots. "Luckily" there was a Gunnison County Deputy at the firehouse. When asked if he was aware of the parking violations, he acknowledged it. When asked what he was going to do about it he replied that he would not enforce and that it was "a slippery slope". We have waited for years for the promised enforcement. Selective enforcement is not an option! CVEPA lobbied for a two-year evaluation of the implementation and success of the parking agreement. The County assured us of an evaluation after 3 years of operation. CVEPA has enjoyed a good working relationship with the Gunnison Commissioners and anticipates cooperation in making sure this happens.

In August a camper trailer incinerated on top of McClure Pass. Luckily the fire did not spread to the dry forest. The charred toxic pile of burned aluminum, insulation, wires and fiberglass remained on the side of the road for 3 months. Gunnison Deputies drove past this hazard almost daily apparently not questioning this toxic pile. With winter approaching CVEPA started making calls. The USFS was shut down. CDOT and deputies placed responsibility on each other. Finally, CVEPA reached out to

Gunnison Sheriff Murdie who promptly dispatched a truck from Gunnison. Sheriff Murdie is very accessible and vowed cooperation on the Marble trailer parking issue and the removal of the toxic waste.

Lack of action by public servants points to the necessity for citizen participation. This land is your land! You are the Eyes of the World. It is time for every one of us to step up in defense of Mother Nature.

Please If you haven't renewed your membership consider sending CVEPA your support at cvepa.org. We appreciate the small monetary donation, but it is your name in solidarity of environmental defense that is so important when we lobby land managers, elected officials and developers.