



CRYSTAL CLEAR

Summer, 2022

Published by the Crystal Valley Environmental Protection Association, Environmental Watchdog for the Crystal Valley since 1972.

CORE Act Advances in the Senate

Early May brought good news for our community's longstanding efforts to protect the Thompson Divide when the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act received a mark-up in a key Senate Committee—the farthest it has ever advanced in Congress! For the first time, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which oversees all public lands legislation, took up the CORE Act in an official “markup,” a critical step toward advancing the bill. The CORE Act has already passed the House of Representatives multiple times in this Congress, meaning that Senate passage is the next step for the bill to become law.

“This vote is a new high water mark and I hope the final hurdle before it passes the Senate and becomes law,” said Hickenlooper at the committee markup. “Communities in these areas came together to write this bill from the ground up – literally! This is a model for collaboration.”

The CORE Act would protect approximately 400,000 acres of treasured public lands across the state, including lands in the Thompson Divide (over 200,000 acres alone,) the San Juan Mountains, and the Continental Divide, with various locally crafted and supported protections. The bill would also establish our nation's first National Historic Landscape at Camp Hale (near Leadville) to honor the legacy of the 10th Mountain Division and the lands where they trained. As stated in a press release following the mark-up, “a broad and varied coalition of citizens, local elected officials, ranchers, veterans, outfitters, hunters, recreationalists, conservation organizations, and business owners have been working to secure protections for the lands

included in the CORE Act for over a decade.”

Local rancher Bill Fales says “As a rancher who relies on the Thompson Divide for our summer grazing, I am hoping for the passage of the CORE Act. It will bring needed protection to this area which is so important to myself and fellow ranchers and also for the entire community, who utilizes these amazing lands for hunting and year-round recreation. The pandemic makes protection even more vital as our USFS lands are seeing unprecedented levels of use by the public. Senator Bennet and Congressmen Neguse have been fantastic in advancing this bill. Hopefully, with Senator Hickenlooper's support we can finally give this area the protection it so richly deserves.”

According to Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Commissioner, “Gunnison County has worked for years on the Curecanti and Thompson Divide elements of the CORE Act. We have fought long and hard for the CORE Act because our constituents believe in these sensible public lands protections that are vital to our economy, our values and the enduring opportunity these lands will provide for future generations.”

Along with Congressman Neguse, Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper have been champions of the bill. The Committee's party-line tie vote that followed markup allows the Senate to proceed with consideration of the bill for a final vote either alone or as part of a larger package of public lands bills. We hope to be able to share more good news about the Thompson Divide and the CORE Act in future issues of the *Crystal Clear*!

Conservation Plans for Marble Wetlands

On the morning of May 26th, members of the Trust for Land Restoration (TLR), Trout Unlimited and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) met with CVEPA to tour the Marble Wetlands Property and discuss options for its conservation. CVEPA is inspired and honored to be working with such an upbeat and talented group of doers who are clearly committed to environmental health and conservation. An afternoon site visit included members of Aspen Valley Land Trust, Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers and the Town of Marble. Everyone was excited that such a stellar property is being preserved for posterity. A meeting with neighboring Colorado Parks and Wildlife will take place soon. The property remains closed to unauthorized motor vehicles and the public is asked to avoid the immediate smelter site until mitigation can be completed.

Pat Willits, TLR's executive director, reported that they are working with the CDPHE and Trout Unlimited to develop a plan to clean up the smelter slag pile to standards approved by the State of Colorado's Voluntary Clean-Up Program. It is expected this will include sweep up and burial of the loose slag, capping the hardened

slag pile with inert road base, constructing a catchment basin at the toe of the hardened slag pile, and constructing a ranch-style three-rail pole fence around the site. Signage will be installed that will interpret past activities at the smelter and discourage walking on the covered site.

TLR will be the applicant to the State for the Voluntary Clean-up Program. Trout Unlimited will be the clean-up general contractor, and will hire and manage sub-contractors as needed.

Cost is yet to be determined but, subject to review and approval by the Marble Town Council, it is anticipated CDPHE will enter into an intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Town of Marble designating the Town as the fiscal agent to receive CDPHE funds. The Town would then reimburse Trout Unlimited for all costs associated with the clean-up.

The goal is to complete the MOU and contracting this summer so that cleanup can be completed this fall. TLR anticipates donating the cleaned-up property to a public or non-profit entity in 2023. CVEPA fully supports the plan and anticipates enjoying many peaceful walks in the area this summer.



GORP Energizes Public Lands Protection

On May 20, Colorado Senator Michael Bennet released a draft of the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act. The GORP Act reflects years of community discussions and collaboration through the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) and would safeguard wildlife and the special public lands of Gunnison County.

GPLI was developed after the Gunnison County Commissioners assembled local ranchers, sportsmen, conservation groups, mountain bikers, motorized users, and water interests to work with community members and public land stakeholders across the region to develop a legislative proposal for Senator Bennet – a request he was getting from constituents. According to the group, over the last decade, they have "...met extensively to develop a consensus-based proposal for public lands protection and to vet their proposal with the public and stakeholders on the ground. [The] proposal was built on the commonly-held belief among group members that public land recreation, conservation, hunting, fishing, and ranching form the fabric of the Gunnison Basin's culture, economy, and way of life." The GORP Act utilizes a variety of public land management tools, including special designations focused on recreation, wildlife, scientific research, and conservation.

Over the years, the CVEPA Board engaged with GPLI when discussions involved the Crystal Valley. Most recently, Board Members joined the April 2022 Town of Marble meeting where GPLI representatives presented an approximately 10,000 acre proposed addition to the Ragged Wilderness, which would include Treasure Mountain. The Marble Town Trustees unanimously voted to support the proposed addition and at its meeting just a week later, the CVEPA Board did the same. In a May 25, 2022 column for the *Sopris Sun* - "CVEPA Views: Marble's Treasure" - President John Armstrong said, "The importance of the environmental health of Treasure Mountain to our community cannot be overstated by CVEPA...we support the GPLI proposal and [are] grateful to Senator Bennet for making the GORP Act a priority."

CVEPA encourages its members to visit www.GORPact.org or Senator Bennet's website <https://www.bennet.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=gunnison-public-lands-proposal> to learn more about the proposed legislation, explore the maps which show the various designations, and read the FAQs. The Senator is currently accepting feedback on the draft legislation during a 60-day comment period (a form is available on his website to submit comments), which is open through July 19.

Letter From the President



In several recent conversations the topic turned to the Ute Curse placed on the Crystal Valley. (I always like to reflect on Redstone author/laureate Larry Meredith's historical novel "This Cursed Valley.") I am not a conspiracy theorist nor do I consider myself very superstitious. That said, I have always believed in the Ute curse left by the ancestral, seasonal inhabitants of this valley. What does this mean to the believer or the skeptic? To me it parlays into not taking more than we need and receiving the bounty with an

"Once thought to be the most benign, our impact as recreationalists has become profound."

appreciation and respect of the creation. As Graham Nash advised us, "you must have a code that you can live by." CVEPA's mission to "protect and preserve the environment...and the encouragement of human conduct which will sustain these resources" challenges us to find balance in how we interact with our environment.

My credence for the curse is as much from observation as anything metaphysical. We see the basic elements of earth, water, fire and air and their effect on this "Rock Creek Valley." The early quarrying and ski area development both suffered the wrath of natural disasters. Modern decades bring rock and mudslides, rogue storms and drought, and now the specter of forest fires threatens the air we

breathe. Once thought to be the most benign, our impact as recreationalists has become profound. Our need for and often irresponsible use of water is approaching a critical threshold.

For several years, CVEPA has worked to influence the Army Corps of Engineers' decision governing the Marble Quarry's damage to Yule Creek. Ultimately the Corps meted no enforcement action and allowed the quarry to design their own penance which CVEPA and others have found grossly disproportionate to the offense. Dangerously and most troubling to us, the Corps has left the Quarry to monitor their own water quality.

The problems caused by Off Road Vehicles in Lead King Basin were well documented during the last 6 months of the Lead King Loop Stakeholders Group meetings. CVEPA remains committed to working with the group. CVEPA does not believe that the USFS creation of a parking lot to accommodate the very cause of specific issues compromising our valley is a solution to the problem. Colorado State Law protects roadway integrity by disallowing ATV/OHV traffic. Gunnison County, although well intentioned, has negated this protection for years through an exemption of the ordinance. CVEPA continues to work with the systems that we believe are failing to defend our valley.

In this 50th year of CVEPA's work we reflect on the successes of the past and how they have shaped our valley. We meet the challenges of the future with optimism and the energy of a revitalized board.

—John Armstrong

Opportunities to Lend a Hand

CVEPA has been working with other groups in the area to identify volunteer opportunities for those who are able to put in some "sweat equity" to caring for the Crystal Valley and some are coming up this summer! Be on the lookout for additional opportunities – we'll share on our website, via our email list, and in future issues of the *Clear!* A special thank you to Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers (RFOV), who are coordinating logistics for these projects, providing supplies, and handling registration.

Restoration Project: Coal Basin Ranch — Sunday, July 24, 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

Recreation is growing in this Redstone hideaway, and we want to ensure that trails, plants, and streams get along! You can participate in landscape restoration that will enhance this publicly accessible property. Register at: www.rfov.org/calendar/coal-basin-ranch

Marble Extravaganza! — Saturday, August 20 – Sunday, August 21

Come for the scenery, stay for the barbecue! Join for a day or enjoy a weekend campout in Marble full of stewardship projects, learning opportunities, and plenty of time to hang out. RFOV will provide breakfast and dinner on the first day of this project and breakfast and dinner on the second day. Camping will be provided at a site in-town. Register at: www.rfov.org/calendar/marble-2022

CVEPA 50th Anniversary Celebration — Sunday, August 21

Volunteers are needed to direct parking, set up tables and chairs, and clean up afterwards. Email cvepa@outlook.com for more details and to volunteer! CVEPA needs long range hand-held radios for the event. If you have some to lend, please contact us!

Sign the Crystal Wild & Scenic Petition

The Crystal River is one of the last free-flowing rivers in the state. Want to protect the Crystal River from dams and diversions? Ensure our water quality? Preserve stream flows that will ensure that healthy ecosystems and recreational opportunities remain in the Crystal? Or perhaps you would like to add your voice to the Wild & Scenic coalition? Visit CrystalWild.org to learn more about the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and sign the petition in support of W&S status for the Crystal. The Act helps preserve certain rivers and streams with outstanding natural, heritage, or recreational features in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.



CVEPA Board Changes

New Board Member: Paying it Forward

Jay Engstrom



Being raised in the Crystal River Valley is truly one of the best experiences one could have. In your adolescent years you absorb every ounce of information you hear and take everything to heart. Every little experience in the environment around you shapes who and what you become, and what you believe. Sure, you are aware of the rest of the world and the madness that clouds it, but there is something special to be in a safe place where you feel like you belong. To be raised in the woods, you develop a special bond with nature that will always pull you back.

I grew up in Redstone with my siblings, swimming in the Crystal and biking along any trail we could find. We would spend winters shoveling snow and chopping wood, while summers were full of gardening and chasing the locals away from eating the chickens. We would watch the elk, bear, and coyotes run through our yard every morning. It was the simplest time in my life, and it impacted me more than any other.

Which is why I am so excited to be part of CVEPA. I now live in Carbondale, with my parents still residing in my childhood home. The Crystal Valley for the most part has not changed much – sure, people come and go, and of course there have been changes that are somewhat inevitable. But thanks to the community and those who fight for what they believe, every time I drive up 133 I get a glimpse of my past and of the simplicity that it was and still is. I want to be part of protecting that, for myself, my neighbors, and for all the wild things that make it what it is.

And cheers to all the parents in the valley, you are truly giving your children one of the greatest gifts, without them even comprehending it.

A Inspiring Example

Suzy Meredith-Orr



I first met Dorothea Farris when she was a Pitkin County Commissioner. I had applied to be on the Redstone Historic Preservation Commission, and she was one of the interviewers. Afterwards, she asked if I was any relation to Lone Meredith. Lone was my great aunt and one of my most favorite relatives. I was thrilled to learn she and Dorothea had been friends since teaching in Carbondale decades ago.

Just as Lone was a role model for me, so has Dorothea become one. Since that day in 1999, I've learned much more about her work as a tireless public servant, having served not only as a commissioner, but also as an Aspen School Board member, Colorado Wildlife Commissioner and member of the Thompson Divide coalition and West Elk Scenic Byway.

Her tenure on the CVEPA board lasted many years, and she served as President for five. Her life-long passion for the environment was strongly expressed through many CVEPA projects, but was particularly evident in her efforts to obtain Wild & Scenic status for the Crystal River, and towards the abandonment of the disturbing push to dam parts of our beloved valley.

Dorothea invited me to join the CVEPA board three years ago. I'll never forget that first meeting in what seemed pretty much like a "smoke filled room." Though there weren't any actual cigars, there was, except for me, only one woman present. But that woman filled the room with her strength and intelligence and drive. She had clearly done the work. All our board members take their jobs seriously, work together with respect and constructively express their passion for the valley, But Dorothea will always represent for me the special women who show a of strength of purpose that can change the world, much like the other

women who have served on this board over the last 50 years.

Dorothea has spoken many times about the importance of committing to do the work to protect the Crystal Valley. She has set that example nobly. We thank her for all she's done to protect this special place.

Passing the Torch

Tait Andersen



I first met Peter Westcott when I was in kindergarten at the Waldorf School. Both of his kids went to Waldorf, although they were a few years older than me. It was a tight-knit community, one where when I see folks from that era, we still stop and catch up. So it was with Peter this spring, when I attended a CVEPA meeting and found him on the board. I explained my interest in becoming more active in the environmental community and he offered me his board seat. A few weeks later we met at Bonfire Coffee.

I wanted to understand Peter's motivation for being involved with CVEPA, and see if he could lend perspective to a young environmentalist like me. Peter joined CVEPA thirty years ago, and as we both remarked, the environmental space has changed since then. Community volunteerism has largely shifted to paid staff, while CVEPA is one of the few that is still volunteer-based. It gives CVEPA moral clarity – we are doing this solely because we want to help protect this place. There's no courting donors or salary to get in the way of that.

There are challenging, divisive issues facing the Crystal Valley right now, such as the proposed methane-capture in Coal Basin and the proposed Upper Crystal Valley Trail. I asked Peter how he comes to a decision on these matters.

"Trust your heart."

It's simple advice that cuts through the complexity and strikes at the root of the matter. Advice that requires as a prerequisite that you already love the place, that your heart has a deep connection to it. Advice that I was honored to receive, and follow.

I concluded by telling Peter that I would take over his seat on the board with the condition that we can continue a dialogue, so that I might learn more, and so the Crystal Valley can continue to benefit from his stewardship.

Thank you Peter for all that you have done, and continue to do for the Crystal Valley.

Celebrate 50 years of protecting the Crystal Valley



**With the Crystal Valley Environmental
Protection Association**

1972-2022

Sunday, August 21, 4pm

Sunfire Ranch

Local Beer

Local Food

Live Music

***Environmental
Speaker***

For more info and directions to the ranch, visit cvepa.org

CVEPA's 50th Year

CVEPA began in 1972 when a small group of Crystal Valley residents banded together to address the threat of a major ski area proposed for the upper Crystal. Kitchen table meetings of the original three, Lloyd Blue, Marge Orlosky and Esther Fogle Neal, drew interest from others passionate about the environment, and the Crystal Valley Environmental Protection Association was born. After successfully defeating its first foe, the Marble Ski Area, the organization has gone on to passionately fight numerous threats to the valley. CVEPA is excited to celebrate 50 years of grassroots advocacy during 2022, and is grateful to be able to continue the legacy of its founders. We're honoring the good old days with stories from some of those dedicated folks, both members and friends, who ensured CVEPA would continue to exist far into the future. Look for more in our next issue, published in September, and please plan to join us this summer for a valley-wide 50th anniversary celebration!

Grassroots Activism: Then and Now

Mike Mechau

The setting in which CVEPA now finds itself is very different from way things were when it was founded in 1972 and succeeding decades. CVEPA was very largely on its own when it fought its biggest battles: the Marble ski resort development scheme, the West Divide Project authorized by Congress providing for a 301 foot high dam at Placita on the Crystal River, and limiting the massive damage to Coal Basin, Coal Creek, and the Crystal River caused by Mid-Continent's mining operations.

Now, there are various locally active well-funded private organizations as well as government agencies set up to address environmental issues, including the Roaring Fork Conservancy, Pitkin County's Healthy Rivers, the Wilderness Workshop and others having concerns much the same as CVEPA's. So that raises the question whether CVEPA's continued existence has made sense.

The answer to that question is yes when one considers the need that abounds and the role CVEPA has played recently and continues to play: 1) bringing to light rerouting of Yule Creek by the marble quarry company and pressing the Corp of Engineers for corrective action; 2) seeking sensible control of the egregious OHV traffic over the Lead King Loop; 3) providing input on public use of the Marble wetlands it stepped in to save from development; 4) discreetly supporting current efforts to build a consensus for Wild, Scenic, and Recreational designation for the Crystal River.

The need for protecting and scrupulously caring for this magnificent valley has certainly not faded. Issues of growing and urgent concern, such as methane emissions in Coal Basin, diminished stream flows coupled with wasteful irrigation practices, and many other matters, call for CVEPA's carrying out its mission in collaboration where possible with like-minded organizations. (Regarding methane emissions, I would urge that CVEPA seriously resist any proposal to "re-industrialize" Coal Basin that would cause its renewed degradation.)

CVEPA's work over its 50 years of ups and downs can best be celebrated by going forward with the spirit that seems to me is evident in the work that has been going forward under John Armstrong's leadership. And the recent additions of younger members to CVEPA's board are very likely to strengthen that spirit.

For anyone who wants to know CVEPA's history and who hasn't read Darrell Munsell's *Protecting a Valley and Saving a River*, get a copy and read it. It's informative and very readable and contains the cartoons of Jack Roberts.



Coke Ovens Tour

The Redstone Historical Society will sponsor a tour of Redstone's iconic Coke Ovens in honor of CVEPA's 50th Anniversary. The tour will be led by former Redstone resident, Ron Sorter, at 11am on Sunday, August 21. Coffee and donuts will be served. CVEPA thanks the RHS for their support!

CVEPA's 50th Year

Jack Roberts: Artist and Environmentalist

Gary Miller

"Did I ever tell you...?"

That is how Jack Roberts, my father, would start a fictionalized version of the future. It was like a warning: he would stand close to me, directly in my face, with lots of hand motions. Each time he would repeat these predictions, it was like it was being told to me for the first time. So, I had to act as though I had never heard him say these predictions: some of them were funny, but some of them were serious.

When it came to the Crystal River Valley, Jack would get very serious. He was passionate about the Crystal River's natural and wild flow. Jack did not want the Crystal River to have a dam built at Placita, and the water diverted over to West Divide Creek. So, about once a year, he would say to me:

"Did I ever tell you? Did I ever tell you that if they start to build a dam at Placita, I will buy some dynamite and blow up the first bulldozer? I can paint western historical paintings from prison just as well as I can from my studio. Do you understand me?"

"Yes Jack," I stated.

So who is this artist who loved our Crystal River Valley? Jack Roberts was a well educated artist who loved western history. One of his other passions was the Crystal River Valley.

Many of Jack's paintings depicted the Ute Indians' travels through the valley. Those paintings required in-depth research and accuracy. Many times the research took longer to

do than the painting. He wanted those paintings to hold up to the test of time: history.

But, it wasn't all cowboys and Indians. Jack was also commissioned by Ken Johnson to tell the history of Redstone, Colorado, through his paintings. Those particular paintings currently hang at the Redstone castle. Jack's other major commissions involved a series on Teddy Roosevelt, the Indian calendar, the Glenwood Hot Springs, the Colorado Press Association, and many others.

Aside from historical paintings, Jack had two other favorite projects that were close to his heart. He used his artistic talents to help spell doom and increase public interest for not only the plans for the Placita Dam (West Divide) project, but also the Marble Ski Area proposed development. Many of these cartoons can be viewed at cvepa.org/jackroberts

Jack Roberts passed away in 2000, a week shy of 80 years old. A wonderful book about Jack was written by Darrell Munsell, and is available at all the local libraries and some bookstores. The title is "Colorado Artist JACK ROBERTS: Painting the West." Darrell Munsell also wrote a book about CVEPA, called "Protecting a Valley and Saving River." It is loaded with Jack Roberts' editorial cartoons. Get ready for some fun.

THE CARPET BAGGERS OF MARBLE by Jack Roberts



Editor's Note: Ken Johnson commissioned the paintings depicting the history of Colorado newspapers. Called the Frontier Press collection, it is on display at Colorado Mesa University. W.R. Hall commissioned the works of Teddy Roosevelt and the Indian Calendar. The Roosevelt paintings are on permanent display in the Museum of the West in Grand Junction. The Indian Calendar is also owned by the museum, and may be viewed with advance notice. The Hot Springs historical paintings were commissioned by its Board of Directors. They hang at the lodge and at the athletic club. US Bank, at the corner of Eight and Grand in Glenwood Springs, has paintings on public view. The Redstone Historical Society recently received a donation of the painting "Lucas Kovats" from Bob and Judy Shettel. It is on display at the Redstone Inn. Darrell Munsell's book "Colorado Artist Jack Roberts: Painting the West" is available at the Redstone Gallery as are reproductions of Mr. Robert's works.

Nature Walks

Alex Menard, passionate wilderness advocate and longtime Marble-ite, will lead a series of walks focusing on the natural world this summer.

Weed ID and Work Day Sunday, July 10, 1pm-4pm

Learn to identify and control common local weeds. Meet at the Marble Hub.

Beaver Walk with Roaring Fork Conservancy Saturday, August 13, 10am-12pm

See the Marble Wetlands and signs of beaver activity. Especially suited for kids but everyone is welcome. Meet at the Mill Site Parking Lot.

Living History Day Saturday, September 10, 12pm-5pm

Historic scenes and characters will be recreated at sites in Marble, followed by BBQ at the Marble Hub.

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/become-a-member>



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