

Letter From The President



I have been thinking lately about how complex all the current environmental issues are and how potentially divisive they can be. Certainly, it was so much simpler years ago and things were so much more black and white. Simpler and less divisive issues in 1972? There was an air of satisfaction and anticipation with proponents of the Marble Ski Area. The development would bring huge economic growth in the Marble Valley. The Ute Curse, or just bad luck, had bankrupted Marble and the Quarry with mudslides, fires and avalanches,

the market and war. There was little but subsistence living in the upper valley.

The U.S. Forest Service and Gunnison County had already shown support for the ski area and for many it was a foregone conclusion that the development was going to succeed. The wave of ski area growth in Colorado seemed unstoppable and many residents accepted this with resignation.

I reflect on our organization's foundation, especially this year, as CVEPA celebrates its 50th anniversary. The small group of people who founded CVEPA were called everything in the book, eccentric environmentalists, greenies and spoilsports, NIMBYs that were so selfish they didn't want to share the valley with anyone. Divisive issues indeed! Simple answers were illusive and the victories were hard-earned. I am so impressed with the courage of the founding women and men of CVEPA.

Today, we all share an entire suite of new challenges, some with new twists. Every environmentally conscious person wants to stem climate change and mitigate the methane gas fuming from abandoned coal mines. No one wants to disturb 30 years and millions of dollars of high country reclamation. The American people have inherited the unfinished business of Redstone's Mid Continent Coal and Coke and the escaping methane is said to be voluminous. "Mr. Peabody's coal train done hauled it away" and now the Crystal Valley Methane Groups, elected officials, CVEPA, and innovative minds in the private sector are challenged with how to best ameliorate the damage. Delta Brick and Climate Company has applied to the USFS and BLM for a permit to enter Coal Basin to garner more information on the volume and location of the methane gas leaks. Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper have secured \$1.2 million in federal funding through the Omnibus Appropriations Bill for methane capture in Pitkin and Gunnison Counties!

People need low impact ways to recreate, commune with nature and safely get off the highways. Every step off the road threatens to fragment wildlife and bird habitat and

"recreating" in a mall threatens the physical and mental health of our society. Local environmentalists struggle to achieve balance with recreational amenities in the Upper Crystal Valley. Both the Coal Basin and Upper Crystal Trail issues find environmentalists with differing ideas on how to protect the character of the present while preparing for the future.

While bicyclists, hikers and stand up paddle boarders seek opportunities, others are driving high impact motor vehicles such as ATVs, OHVs and side-by-sides that produce much greater consequences for high country environments. The collateral effects on the Town of Marble and the Lead King Basin are profound. The Lead King Loop Stakeholders Group is a committee funded by the USFS, Gunnison County and the town of Marble and brokered by the Center for Public Lands at Western Colorado University. The group is in its fourth month of meetings. CVEPA is the environmental representative on the committee and has invested a lot of man and woman hours

working towards solutions to the recreational impacts in the Upper Crystal Valley. You are also encouraged to share your thoughts in this process (see link on page 5). The fruits of this working group will be presented at a public listening session in April.

CVEPA's position has always been focused on the disproportionate impacts of said motor vehicles on the health of the environment and the populace. One person on one machine causes more disruption than scores of "lighter" trail and road users.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released the decision on the retro-active permitting of Colorado Stone Quarries (Marble Quarry) Yule Creek operation last week. We have awaited this decision since 2019 when CVEPA reported to the Corps that the Quarry relocated Yule Creek without a permit. We have been told to expect little in the way of required compensatory mitigation from the Corps and the Quarry. We must petition the Army Corps through the Freedom of Information Act to even learn what the decision is. The lack of freedom of information is indeed troubling.

The Wilderness Workshop is shepherding the effort for Wild and Scenic Designation of the Crystal River. The Workshop has been vigilant at maintaining transparency and inclusivity as it works to form a productive stakeholders group moving forward. We know that the process of designation is lengthy and we appreciate the work local groups are doing to move this forward.

CVEPA is so proud of our newest board member, Tait Anderson. Tait and Grant Stevens give CVEPA a boost of the energy and expertise from the next generation of environmentalists. We encourage members to become involved with CVEPA as guardians of this very unique valley.

—John Armstrong

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