

Lead King Loop Conference Call  
July 16, 2020

Present: Ron Leach, Marlene Crosby, Manette Anderson, Terry Langley, Susie Meredith-Orr, Mary Flynn, Chris Cox, Dale Will, Melanie Armstrong, Corinne Truesdale, Ryan Vinciguerra.

COVID check in – Corinne said this has thrown her for a bit due to being quarantined and uncertainty about the future. It has given her time to reevaluate and research. Has anything shifted for others in terms of being able to commit and work on the project? Chris said it has thrown a wrench in everyone's lives and businesses. He reports a huge increase in numbers coming to Crystal and on the Loop (hikers & vehicles). Marlene asked if Chris had talked to Bill Fisher from Schofield and whether numbers on that side have increased and Chris said yes, he reported the same. Melanie said that Western plans to be open for in person classes in the Fall and that things they will have an graduate intensive program as well. Ron said that the local governments have been overwhelmed and many projects have fallen off for the past 3-4 months. Dale said that Pitkin County Open Space is also seeing an increase in users and real estate is also seeing growth and this will increase the pressure on our valleys. Marlene said there have been significant budget cuts for capital projects. Mary said that the district forest service has been very busy. First time users have grown and are unprepared and uninformed. Chris said first time hikers are coming with no water or food. She reported that the LKL is officially open. The signs say that travel is not encouraged. Manette says that she is concerned with vehicular and individual safety as the loop is being overrun. Susie said CVEPA members might not be able to meet in person this year.

Forest Service – Mary Flynn works in the Carbondale office and has been with the FS for 14 seasons, 12 with fire and has now with recreation. She is on Special Permits – outfitters & guides. She is doing a 120-day detail filling in for Rob Stewart. Katie Nelson will be filling in for Shelley Grail. Corinne gave an overview of the formation and work done by the Lead King Loop Working Group as well as the data-gathering she has been doing.

Survey & Summer Work – Corinne began doing surveys on June 8. She tries to go up every other day and has collected more than 200 surveys of Loop users. She locates at the fork and finds people are unprepared and often take the wrong fork or overestimate their ability to drive the road. She also has 120 responses to an on-line survey with OHV clubs and users. She has conducted focus groups with local residents. She wants to gather data on emergency incidents, data from businesses. Chris said that there is a jeep rental business in GS and he sees their jeeps daily. He suggests contacting them for their numbers. Susie volunteered to help with in-person surveys. Mary asked for input into the signage. She asked what information visitor information was dispensing. Chris said people need to know it takes a 4x4 with clearance and that street SUVs are not suitable. Marlene said that the county has ordered large 36 x 36 signs: 4 wheel drive, high clearance vehicles only. They are leaving a stretch of road rough to discourage cars. Corinne said she has to explain the reason for no parking areas. Manette said they have had large signs up by the beaver pond and at the top of Schofield pass for decades and she feels that drivers feel challenged rather than warned. Corinne said novices often follow experienced drivers.

Ideas – Corrine said the data needs to be analyzed. Anecdotal information indicates that signage and visitor information is a key element.

Future time line: Corinne's involvement will probably be curtailed after August due to graduation and the possibility of a job. She asked for individual's input through the end of summer and into the Fall. Ron said he would like another in person meeting with the group and continued involvement with Western Colorado University. He wants monthly conference call meetings to continue. Chris said he wants to remain involved but is frustrated with the slow pace and would like to see something implemented to help curtail the usage. He would like to see the time line and goals defined. Melanie says she hopes to provide a bridge for Western's involvement and transitioning from Corinne to other students. Nathan Fey is with CORE and is watching this in terms of other gateway communities. Marlene said her notes on this go back to the 80's and 90's. With the road under the auspices of both Gunnison County and the Forest Service, she wants to hear from the Forest Service about what can be done and how to use the data being gathered to make some decisions. Corinne asked if there was a need for more information/data to be included in the surveys or to be gathered from other agencies. Mary asked what other recommendations (besides improved signage, leaving the road rough) the group would make. Manette wants to challenge the idea that the road cannot be closed. She suggests a moratorium on vehicular traffic from the top of Daniel's Hill to the beaver pond to give Crystal a respite from the impact and disrespect they experience every day. Hikers and bicycles would still be allowed. Marlene asked if the FS has the authority for something like this. Mary does not know but she is willing to ask. Melanie said that, in her experience, when a community group can come together with a proposal that is well founded and supported by data, the FS is much more empowered to act. Mary said there are FS solutions (such as reservations) short of closing that have been implemented other places. Susie would like to look at finding funding. Dale said that CVEPA would have a larger role once decisions have been made – they would help with spreading the word. Corinne said that the working group allowed different organizations to come together and work to identify and untangle the knots. She thinks she can have analysis of the data done by the end of the summer. She would like future meetings to identify action items. Her suggested time line is to set the next meeting, have action items identified for the next meeting, bring questions. A date of Aug 27, 11 a.m. was selected, in person at either the church or the campground. Ron will come with some information on the proposed Marble parking plan as well as information about a proposed parking lot at the Gold Pan and the one surveyed on FS land. Marlene will send the information to Mary. Corinne will bring results from the surveys and focus groups. Chris will bring cabin rental data. She will email the group's mission statement to everyone. Manette asked about traffic counters and Marlene said they were ready to be picked up. Manette will get them picked up and installed. Chris asked that signage be on the agenda next month. He reports that the signage they have put up on their property have worked. He suggests information at the bottom of Daniel's Hill saying that there is no parking at the side of the road.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Langley

