

Lead King Loop Working Group

Status Report

March 2021

History

The Lead King Loop Working Group (WG) was formed in the fall of 2018 at the suggestion of the Gunnison County Commissioners and the Marble Board of Trustees. The Working Group is currently composed of representatives of the following:

- Gunnison County Commissioners
- Gunnison County Sheriff Department
- Town of Marble Board of Trustees
- US Forest Service, White River National Forest
- Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife
- Western Colorado University
- Crystal Valley Environmental Protection Association
- Citizens from Town of Crystal, Town of Marble and Crystal River Valley

The WG was originally formed to provide a forum for all stakeholders including the various local, state and federal agencies, as well as local citizens, to meet and discuss the impacts and possible solutions associated with increased recreational usage of the Lead King Loop. The original WG has expanded in 2019 to include representative from CVEPA and WCU.

It is important to note that the WG is not a policy making group but rather serves as an informal advisory group to the various policy makers.

Convening Report

In 2019 Western Colorado University Masters of Environmental Studies Student Corinne Truesdell commenced the first formal study of the increased usage, impacts and possible solutions of “The Loop”. In March 2021 Ms. Truesdell published her Convening Report which is available on the townofmarble.com website. Discussions are underway with WCU to commission another MEM student to continue the work Ms. Truesdell has started including data and survey collection as well facilitation of additional public meetings.

Meeting Notes

Meeting notes from all WG meetings are likewise available on the townofmarble.com website.

Road Closure Discussions

The Gunnison County Commissioners have received several requests from members of the public to close portions of County Road 3 east of Beaver Lake to OHV traffic to ease the impacts created by increased OHV usage. The commissioners have discussed these requests but have not vetted a serious proposal to close this stretch of County Road 3. Requests have been received by the Marble Board of Trustees to support such a closure with a letter to the Commissioners. Both the Commissioners and the Trustees have agreed to work in collaboration with each other to address the LKL issues. The portion of County Road 3 at issue begins at the Marble town boundary at Beaver Lake and proceeds to the top of Daniels Hill to the junction of FS Road 315 & FS Road 314 and is under the sole jurisdiction of Gunnison County.

The Marble Board of Trustees have had discussions about restricting OHV traffic through the Town to help mitigate the impacts to the citizens of Marble created by the increased usage of OHV but a formal proposal has not been vetted by the Board. The Trustees have had limited discussion of putting the issue of road closure(s) forward as a future ballot issue.

Any road closures or OHV restrictions imposed by Gunnison County or the Town of Marble will push the parking issue to another jurisdiction, but will not eliminate the issue.

Multiple USFS representatives have advised the WG that the U.S. Forest Service cannot arbitrarily close or restrict access to the Lead King Loop by OHVs as per the White River National Forest travel management plan. The expectation of the public and the position of the WRNF is that the LKL is open to all forms of public access per current WRNF Travel management Plan designation.

CVEPA has not put forward an official position statement on the issue of road closures but has suggested Gunnison County consider rescinding its exception allowing OHV usage on this particular section of CR 3 as an experimental test case.

For information, comments or questions regarding closure of CR 3 to OHV traffic members of the public, who have not already submitted comments, should contact the Gunnison County Commissioners at: bocc@gunnisoncounty.org

Enforcement

The WG has had much discussion around enforcement of various traffic laws and local parking ordinances as a means of mitigating some of the impacts created by increased OHV usage of the Loop.

A Collection Agreement has been negotiated between Gunnison County and the WRNF to provide a Forest Protection Officer to patrol the Lead King Loop 1-2 days per week during the summer months of 2021. The cost involved to Gunnison County is \$10,000. The Town of Marble has pledged \$3,000 as a cost share. A memorandum of understanding will be prepared

between the WRNF, Gunnison County and the Town of Marble explaining the cost share agreement.

The Gunnison County Sheriff has indicated that his office will be providing additional patrol to the Marble area in the summer of 2021. A second deputy has been added for patrol in the Somerset and Marble areas.

The Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife has indicated they plan to enforce their requirement that people parked at and utilizing Beaver Lake have in their possession a valid hunting or fishing license issued by the State of Colorado. It has also been discussed that the Gunnison County Sheriff Department does have some enforcement authority at Beaver Lake as well.

Parking

Off Highway Vehicles come into the Marble area on trailers or in the back of pickup trucks and require a place to park. There are a finite number of parking spaces in the Town of Marble (about 20) that are available to park a truck/trailer combination. The Town of Marble does not have funds to operate a paid or unpaid parking program in the town so parking is available to OHV users on a first come first serve basis. Parking pressure is also felt at the base of Daniels Hill and along CR3 adjacent to Beaver Lake. Units are also being parked in the wide spots on the road to Crystal that serve as pull-outs and some of those will be signed this summer. They need to be available for safety. The WG has discussed identifying “no parking” areas as well as “parking allowed” areas in the Town and along County Road 3 east of Marble. This may provide some order and some very limited mitigation to the overall big picture issue of increased OHV usage on the LKL.

Education

Several ideas regarding education for the users of the Loop, residents of Marble and the public in general have been discussed. Printed material made available at various public places in the Marble area could help explain the impacts to the environment, traffic etiquette, and other community norms associated with OHV usage on the Loop. Volunteers could be recruited to disseminate such material at the parking area in Marble. The Marble Chamber of Commerce has depicted the Town of Marble as a quiet destination. www.mcrchamber.org.

Solutions to the problems created by the increased OHV usage on the LKL will be found somewhere in the mix of enforcement, public education, parking and intergovernmental collaboration. Public input is vital to the process. The Lead King Loop Working Group will continue its work to facilitate discussion and explore solutions.

Recommendations received

Many recommendations, ideas, possible solutions and advice have been received over the past year including but not limited to:

- Rescind the Gunnison County ordinance allowing OHV use on County Road 3 east of Beaver Lake to the top of Daniels Hill.
- Rescind the Town of Marble ordinance allowing OHV use in the municipal boundaries of the town.
- Implement a paid permit program to operate an OHV in the Town of Marble.
- Restrict truck/trailer parking to the 15 available spaces south of the Marble Fire Station.
- USFS to restrict access to the LKL with a reservation system.
- USFS to restrict access to OHV for a two year period.
- Allow access to LKL to non-motorized uses only two days per week.
- Install signage at the parking area south of the Marble Fire Station
- Install bathrooms on the LKL.
- Recruit volunteer/paid parking attendants to control parking in Marble during summer months.
- Implement a paid parking plan in the Town of Marble.
- Enter into a Forest Protection Officer agreement with the USFS and Gunnison County for patrol of the Loop 1-2 days per week, similar to the Pitkin County agreement.
- As suggested by a Gunnison County Deputy Sheriff, the Town of Marble should form a position of Town Marshall who works closely with Gunnison County to help mitigate the issues. Enforcement of regulations could create a financial opportunity for the community.
- A liaison from the town to outlying community members and stakeholders. This is a fairly large group and obtaining support from them would benefit the town.
- USFS construct a parking lot at the base of Daniels Hill.
- Ban parking on County Road 3 adjacent to Beaver Lake.
- Developing an OHV management plan for Daniels Hill and LKL.

- Town of Marble to hire a police officer to control traffic in town during the summer months.
- Gunnison County Sherriff Department to increase law enforcement presence in the Marble/Gunnison county area.
- First line (Education) - The Town of Marble will organize staff and volunteers to be present at the truck and trailer load out daily. We are going to collaborate with our Chamber to help contribute informational boards and handouts on responsible OHV use as well as other tidbits of knowledge about the area and current events. We also plan to identify the OHV route to Crystal Mill more clearly
- (Enforcement) Presence - Gunnison Sheriff's Department needs to be here. Year after year we have been promised more presence with little to no improvement. In order for any type of change or restrictions to take place we need their help. We have an office they could be based out of with a phone and internet. We would look to them for typical traffic enforcement and to help keep the lake pathway around beaver lake clear.
- FSPO (enforcement and education) - Weekend driven presence starting at the load out and then making their way around and on the loop. It helps so much just for the forest service to be seen.
- Town of Marble to make office space available to Gunnison County Sheriff deputies in the Town Office Building.
- Implement a 2-year emergency moratorium on any/all vehicular traffic through Marble to Beaver Lake and on to Lead King Loop beginning May 1, 2021.
- Implement an emergency and temporary 2 year moratorium on ALL vehicular traffic on the Loop Road, the Jeep Tours, a shuttle service, residents living on the road and emergency vehicles exempted. Post the moratorium:
 - Implement a permitting plan for the loop road, allowing Upper Crystal Valley, Gunnison residents and businesses to apply for annual vehicular permits, and allowing interested visitors to apply for daily/weekly permits.
 - An outright ban on ATVs.
 - Impose a toll road over this road.
 - More permitted tours over the road per year.