

Lead King Loop Working Group
Meeting Notes
10:30 a.m., January 30, 2020

Present: Ron Leach, Ryan Vinciguerra, Terry Langley (notes), Town of Marble; Maddie Rehn, Western Colorado University (WCU); Corinne Truesdale, graduate student researcher, WCU ; Marlene Crosby, Gunnison County; Susie Meredith Orr, Dale Will, Crystal Valley Environmental Protection Association; Shelley Grail (Recreation Manager), Kevin Warner (District Supervisor), Aspen-Sopris District - White River National Forest Service; by phone: Manette Anderson, Crystal summer resident; Dr. Melanie Armstrong, WCU.

Agenda revisions: Change of order. Moved to the beginning: Corinne Truesdale & Shelley Grail presentations.

Corinne Truesdale presented a history of the Lead King Loop/Marble/Crystal area. Highlights follow: Marble began the process of looking at current use of the LKL. This involves many entities. LKL began as a confluence of Ute trade trails. This informed trade, transportation and economic development. The Crystal River Valley was the summering grounds for Utes. Land use changed and changes with economic changes. Terrain and natural hazards prevented road development and still impacts the development/improvement of the road. Environment, people, economy (transportation,

The geographic scope focuses on the LKL but is influenced by outside influences. Influences include aesthetic value, relative location value – Aspen Carbondale, Glenwood Springs, Crested Butte. WRNF location keeps major development to a minimum. Land use value – tourist & recreation appeal; especially in summer, rising tourist industry – booming populations, more leisure time, increased disposable income, shorter travel time, increased market for wilderness recreation.

Environment – geology - shallow sea, organic sea life material calcified, compressed into limestone. Super-heated by magma formation of marble. Topography: steep rugged terrain, heavy snowfall: avalanches, blocking roads. Mudfloods, particularly in 1941 & 45.

People – the Utes used area for nomadic travel and summering grounds. 1765 – trade with Spanish; 1830's – trade with mountain men, gold panners & prospectors: discovery of marble, mining efforts silver, lead, coal and galena. 1879 – Ute removal & curse legend. Commercial uses pursued. From mining camps to enterprise: cattle/sheep/ Marble Crystal & Clarence. 1855 Schofield failed, moved to Crystal. 1880-93 Crystal Siler Boon & Bust. 1892 – Crystal Mill built to provide compressed air power to sheep mountain tunnel. Marble population peak: 2000 est. Crystal – 600. Rivalries: Marble & Crystal/ Marble Maurice & Stonington; Clarence & Marble for post office in 1890. Merged as Marble as 1899.

Economy – transportation. Weather & landscape hindered railroad construction to transport natural resources. Yule Marble made endeavor seem worth it. Mining companies often went bankrupt trying to build roads & rail lines. Elk Mountain, Crystal River, CR & San Jan and Denver Rio Grande railroad companies. Other transport: wagons, mule trains, steam tractor, aerial tram.

Boosterism to encourage investment. Publicity: newspapers Crystal Silver Lance, Marble Times, Gunnison Press Review. Colorado Marble interest but no investment, no good road, etc. Ups and downs in terms of prosperity. 1973 – tourism, new govt. After 1970 with I-70, paving Hwy 133. Real Estate, Jeep Tours, OHV rentals, Marble Ski Area (resident opposition & creation of CVEPA).

Tourism –

1910 - scenery, hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing

1938 – vacation destination

1958 – Jeep round trip between CB & Marble vis Schofield Pass

1957 – airstrip, Beaver Lake Lodge

1962 – Outward Bound School.

Today

Environment – avalanches/mudslides

Climate changes

People – Marble culture

Economy – Tourism loss of space, disturbance of pristine land, publicity

Transportation – personal & 4-wheel drive vehicles

Contemporary problems

- Lack of water & sewage

- Mudslide/avalanche/flood hazards

- Absentee land ownership

- Lack of year-round economy

- Rising land prices

- Dust

- Noise

- Wildlife disruption

- Reduced quality of life

Shelley Grail – spoke about the limitations placed by the travel management plan. She distributed the Summer Motor Vehicle Use Map and explained that the LKL road system is managed by the FS for all wheeled vehicles – Highway legal, dirt bike, ATVs, etc. No restrictions as to what can go on the road. Does not allow restriction of use by vehicle. Dave asked for any other places where designations have changed and what things could happen. They are not aware of any other places that are an open road and restricted use. Engineering safety assessment is done to determine if it is suitable for mixed use such as cars and OHV. Numbers of users was not discussed. Next round of forest planning might take this into account. Ron asked what the FS would like to see as an output by the LKL working group. She wants to make sure that it is clear that they can not make immediate changes/restrictions. Kevin feels that they are participating as a group member helping to determine what should & can be done. Staffing & enforcement personnel availability are limited by funding. Pitkin County open space is funding some personnel for where FS and open space interface. Dave reported comments by Scott Snelson who said they cannot make changes based on anecdotal complaints – data is needed. Shelley said that Conundrum Hot Springs and Maroon Belles management plans took years and years of data

collection. Corinne asked about restricting vehicles that can not travel safely. Shelley said that, if the engineering & road crews said they cannot maintain the road, changes might be made. Warning signs are to caution, not restrict. Marlene asked how that interfaces with road maintenance, in particular sites that are degrading. Shelley said that the LKL is on an every-other year maintenance schedule – never more than a level 3 (1 paved, 3 most of the roads in forest system- dirt or native surface, some gravel). Kevin asked if Gunnison County or other organizations have come in and done maintenance. The county spends between \$8-12,000 between Marble/Crystal and has an agreement between FS & the county. Volunteer groups have also helped with clearing and maintenance. Rugged 4-wheel drive experience is what people are looking for. This group is trying to set aside that mentality through town of Crystal. Ryan asked if the LKL designation was changed from road to trail, would that allow changes to be made easier such as no longer being open to full size 4 wheel vehicles. Trails - OHV trails, single track would require a change in travel management plan and would require an extensive effort including years and years of meeting with stake holders from all walks of life. Marlene: travel mgmt. is somewhat cast in concrete and we have to work within that. What is FS willingness in helping to mitigate problems, including developing parking on FS land. Gold Pan gallery chained off so no longer turn around. More hikers, safety. Kevin – proponent-based moves forward more quickly if groups are able to help fund project. Current priorities with FS funding are timber & wildfire mitigation. Fiscal year planning will begin within next month or so.

Clarifying the next steps

2020 scope of work –

*Western's involvement

Center for Public Lands –

*Shelley: How to get group/community members/recreational users aligned

*Ron – an example is the management plan for the Penney Hot Springs. Town of Marble is frustrated with the traffic & impacts that come through the town associated with LKL. A number of forces, including enterprise aspect, ATV users, hikers, jeep tour enterprise, residents. Trailer parking is full in the summer. Look to local, county, federal govt to do something. What kind of data needs to be collected? User survey, car counts. Corinne reported on her research. Impacts of the volume of people who come to town. Research questions, field work, CPW – wildlife questions.

*Manette – a mission statement might inform the research direction.

*Better understand the destination and activities that people are coming for. Where are they coming from? Where to target education. Identify the desired outcome, future conditions. Who, when to ask. Survey the community and visitors in Marble & unincorporated areas. Neighborhood get together to listen to small groups. Corinne asked for some clarification as to asking the future of LKL vs future of Marble. Ryan spoke to keeping them separate and, for this group, concentrating on the LKL. Dale asked about surveying regarding OHV and not allowing non-licensed vehicles on county roads. San Juans have worked on this and someone should check with them. Other questions to ask: What was the individuals experience? Would they come back? How many locals use the loop – if not, why not? What is vision for future? What is the greatest on a local? Willingness to pay for a permit? Is your use impacted by some other uses? Emergency incidents data. How many days was enforcement in place? Sales tax data. Get information from other areas dealing with similar problems.

Local help with surveying. Help with contacting other areas. Prioritize/mission statement.

Discussion of the LKL working group purpose and outcomes followed. Several spoke to favoring Draft 2 (The purpose of the LKL Working Group is to balance the interests related to the community of Marble, Crystal and neighboring U.S. Forest Service lands in providing advice and recommendations to the management direction of the LKL. The group will accomplish this through mutual education, transparency in process; fostering communications between constituents and governmental agencies; and identifying, evaluating and recommendation options that meet the needs of the many stakeholders involved. Outcomes: The LKL WG will assess the situation and conditions for controversy, description of the stakeholders, central issues, data and information central to the issues, and recommendations for measurable actions that meet the appropriate balance for all interest with both near- and long-term strategies). It was suggested that long-term strategies come first.

Ron: Begin data collection and outcome surveys this year. Meet face to face in Aug. Teleconference every other month. He suggested that Corrine make her presentation to Marble Town Council and CVEPA.

Marlene feels that the boundaries of the geographic area needs to put emphasis on LKL. Ron says plan for data collection needs to be in place by Memorial Day. Shelley suggest a person from each entity take turns in informally joining Corinne in the data collection process. Corinne will develop a schedule for focus groups, grant applications, NEPA hiring. CVEPA is willing to share nonprofit status for the purpose of grant applications. Aspen Ski Company environmental grants was suggested as a possibility.

The meeting ended at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Langley