

OURAY COUNTY

Volunteers trudge through muck for tires

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A group of volunteers, led by Matthew Jurjonas of the Uncompahgre Watershed Project, removed 48 tires from state-owned land along Cow Creek on Friday, Nov. 18. The volunteers removed 19 tires from the Uncompahgre River on Nov. 15. Both properties are managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPW).

As volunteers went to check the final stretch of river, a large male llama, trespassing on state land, decided to defend his territory. The volunteers began to retreat, slowly and timidly. Jurjonas stood his ground, standing like a bare-knuckled boxer. No one was injured, llama or volunteers. According to Jurjonas, "Hissing back, standing your ground, throwing rocks, gesturing like you are going to throw a rock and flexing muscles all work to fend off even the most intimidating llamas." A few more tires were removed from the river after the fearful encounter.

The tires the volunteers gathered came from a flash flood

in July which dislodged over 1,000 tires from a property owned by Lawrence "Butch" Gunn. The tires washed into Burro Creek from an unnamed drainage on the Gunn property, then into Cow Creek and eventually into the Uncompahgre River. According to Gunn, he uses tires for erosion control on his property. Maynes Tire of Montrose, owned by Keith Maynes, has been delivering tires to Gunn since 1989.

The DPW manages another parcel of land owned by the state on Burro Creek. Dave Hale, DPW officer, believes there are another two or three hundred tires on that property.

According to DPW, the Attorney General of Colorado directed the agency not to allow access to state property by the parties responsible for the tires; i.e., Gunn and Maynes.

At a Ouray County commissioners meeting in October, Mark Maynes, son of Keith Maynes, agreed to remove and dispose of the tires from state land if they were collected from the river and stacked in a place with easy access. After an argument during a phone conversation with Hale, Maynes rescinded the offer, according to Hale.

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) is conducting an investigation of Gunn's involvement in the illegal alteration of U.S. waterways and violations of the Clean Water Act. The Colorado Department of Public Health and the




Volunteer efforts removed 48 tires from Cow Creek on Friday.

Plaindealer photo by Jessi Marlatt

Environment (CDPHE) has issued compliance advisories to Maynes and Gunn for the removal of the tires that washed downstream from the Gunn property. The Ouray County Commissioners issued an ordinance to remove rubbish from the Gunn property.

County Commissioners have invited representatives from ACE and CDPHE to attend the BOCC meeting on Dec. 6 at 2:30 p.m. When all of the bureaucratic agencies are in the same room the left hand will be able to know what the right hand is doing.



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