

COMMUNITY

Regional Watershed Restoration Discussions Begin

OURAY – The Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership and the Mountain Studies Institute presented an Abandoned Mines and Water Quality Conference at the Ouray Community Center on Wednesday, April 27.

The conference, attended by over 50 community members, regional county commissioners and state and federal agency managers, and by AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, examined varying perspectives regarding the future of mining in the county and its potential effects on water quality and on local and neighboring watersheds.

Rob Runkel, of the US Geological Survey, discussed what is happening above Ouray in the historic Red Mountain Creek mining district, and Camille Price, project manager for the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment, discussed the history and remediation of the Idarado mine.

MSI's Chris Peltz gave a presentation on possible remediation solutions, one of them Biochar, a product made from beetle-kill lodgepole pine that is used to add carbon to damaged soil systems.

Colorado Trout Unlimited's Snake River Project Manager Elizabeth Russell discussed Navigating Liability in Watershed Restoration, followed by a panel discussion moderated by Pat Willits of the Trust for Land Restoration. In that discussion, representatives from The Lake

Fork Valley Conservancy, Animas River Stakeholders Group, Willow Creek Reclamation Committee, Kerber Creek Restoration Project, and the Coal Creek Watershed Coalition gave histories of their group's formation, and reported on their organizations' progress in recent years.

The next day, discussion continued regarding what UWP members had learned from the conference, and how it will be implemented in the Watershed Plan now underway in Ouray County.

The UWP, an informal grassroots coalition of local citizens working to improve and protect the watershed, is dedicated to understanding and protecting the health of the Uncompahgre River, and neither supports nor advocates against mining. Its goal is to work with industry to promote environmentally responsible mineral extraction.

Interested parties can visit www.uncompahgrewatershed.org, for a Power Point Presentation, and to find out more about the organization, and to be kept apprised of upcoming meetings the UWP is organizing, concerning Total Daily Maximum Loads and about Non-Point Source Discharge Permits and how they work. The UWP and MSI would like to thank MO-SAIC Community Project, Alpine Bank, Colorado Trout Unlimited and Colorado Non-Point Source Pollution Program for their financial support.