Middle Park Colorado Broads membership meeting notes March 23, 2021

Attendees: Ingrid Anderson, Sara Bransom, Joyce Clair, Sharry Erzinger, Anne Gerleman, Mandy Hanifen, Roxanne Singler, Sally Sharp, Pat Welch, Travis Wright, Melanie Zwick

Sarah stated the purpose of the meeting is so people can know their position on the issue of the protection of the Rolling Pass road area. She then gave an overview of the Middle Park Broads. Sally gave an overview of the National Broads.

Travis presented on the threats and why it’s important to preserve the Rollins Pass area for the future. Travis acknowledged that he had assistance from many others, such as BLM, USGS and the Forest Service to put this presentation together.

Some highlights of the presentation:

Rollins Pass, the Great Gate, encompasses 3 counties. Grand, Boulder, Gilpin. It contains the highest concentration of artifacts in the US.

1904 RR build, 1928 Moffat Tunnel opened, 1936 rails removed, 1956 road opened to auto traffic, 1969 gas pipeline from County Rd 8 to Boulder county, Continental Divide Trail, Indian Peaks Wilderness, James Peak Wilderness. 1979 Grand County filed for National Historic Register status for the tunnel and trestles, 1980 both routes over Rollins Pass are officially closed.

The Corona (Rollins) road is listed on the National Record of Historic Places, the State list and the list of Most Endangered Places.

Many local organizations wrote letters to the FS in support of development. The Town of Winter Park notes restoring the road over the pass as one of its objectives.

The route over the pass has been an issue for over 100 years. The Needles Eye tunnel functioned well while the RR ran. After that, it fell into disrepair and problems with repairs and damage caused by explosive during construction and the inherent rock structure and the freeze/thaw environment. There were numerous rockslides from the 1940s to one in 1979 which closed the tunnel. The road reopened briefly in 1989 and was closed indefinitely in 1990. The Mine Safety and Health Administration deemed it very deteriorated and needing more work than stated to repair. There are continued rockslides. It has been proposed to daylight the tunnel. The RR wished it were longer. They built snowsheds, effectively extending it.

Alternatives for reopening the road have included day lighting the tunnel, cutting up early- would be in Wilderness area which starts 100 ft from the road, go around the tunnel – the slope is 75%- that would also impact archeological features.

The Boulder Wagon Road which encircles Yankee Doodle Lake was closed in 1980 because of the Wilderness Area and a 900 psi natural gas pipeline. This road has a 22% slope.

Coloado’s population has mushroomed and there is heavy use of this area including irresponsible passing which can damage cultural artifacts. It can take centuries for the fragile tundra to repair itself. Why does this seasonal road make sense when other routes exist? Grand County commissioners look at is as an economic boon for area businesses.

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There is much illegal and irresponsible behavior taking place in the area. Nature needs nurture in the Rollins Pass road area.

There were some questions and Mandy asked Travis about doing a presentation in Grand Lake which he said he would be happy to do.

Thank yous to Travis and members for attending.

Submitted by Melanie Zwick