



P.O. Box 468
320 6th Avenue
Ouray, CO 81427
(970) 325-7211

August 4, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd

I write to you to express my unwavering support for your efforts to convey Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir, which is currently an asset of the National Forest Service, to the City of Ouray. This historic infrastructure is critical to the people of the City of Ouray as water storage for the city's water augmentation plan, and as a popular destination for both locals and visitors for recreation.

As the mountain west area of the United States continues to experience long term drought, water storage is the most important tool we have to allow the City to trade water. When the forest Service drained the reservoir, they took a critical safety measure away from our water management toolbox. Conveyance of Crystal Reservoir area will allow the city to quickly repair the dam and refill the reservoir. This will return access to an important storage tool for our water plan, restore the reservoir as a recreation destination, and make it available again as a water source for wildfire suppression efforts when needed in the public lands and wilderness areas that surrounding the City of Ouray.

On behalf of the people of the City of Ouray, gratitude and thanks to you, your staff, and all who help make this conveyance possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ethan A. Funk", written over a horizontal line.

Ethan A. Funk, Mayor
City of Ouray, Colorado



On Tue, Aug 12, 2025 at 7:43 AM Justin Perry <jperry@ourayco.gov> wrote:

“I fully support the conveyance of Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam to the City of Ouray and any efforts to refill this critical resource. While I’m an avid fisherman and value the reservoir for recreation, my priority is the safety and protection of our county. The vital role of Crystal Reservoir in wildfire response became all too clear during the recent Snowshed Fire in the Ironton-Red Mountain area. Thankfully, the fire didn’t grow larger, but had it spread even slightly, we would have faced serious challenges in securing water from alternate sources for aerial support and water drops. Crystal Reservoir is a crucial water source for fast, effective fire suppression in the Ouray and Red Mountain Pass areas. To ensure we’re prepared for future emergencies, it’s imperative that we refill this reservoir and make it a key asset in our wildfire response strategy.”

Justin Perry

Ouray County Sheriff



Office: 970-325-7272 | Cell: 970-318-6299

461 6th Ave. PO Box 585 - Ouray, CO 81427

jperry@ourayco.gov | ouraycountyco.gov

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Washington, D.C. 20515

Subject: Letter of Support for the Conveyance of Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir to the City of Ouray, Colorado

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

On behalf of the City of Ouray, we, the Ouray City Council, respectfully submit this letter in strong support of federal legislation authorizing the conveyance of the Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir to the City of Ouray. This transfer represents a strategic, multi-benefit opportunity that aligns with state water priorities, strengthens regional resilience, and generates significant environmental and economic value.

With extensive experience in infrastructure management, the City of Ouray is uniquely positioned to manage the Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir as a local, community-driven asset. The proposed conveyance will yield wide-ranging benefits to the City, surrounding communities, and the State of Colorado as a whole.

The Colorado Water Plan emphasizes multipurpose water storage, watershed health, and proactive local water management. Ownership of Crystal Reservoir will enable the City of Ouray to enhance water security for its residents, improve drought resilience, and implement conservation strategies consistent with the Plan's objectives.

With increasing threats of wildfire in the San Juan Mountains, the reservoir serves a critical role in regional wildfire mitigation. Local control will allow the City to integrate the reservoir into comprehensive wildfire response and forest health strategies, improving emergency preparedness and watershed resilience. The reservoir's operational stability benefits agricultural, municipal, and recreational water users downstream. City management of the dam will ensure cooperative, transparent governance and stewardship that reflects the needs of neighboring water stakeholders and maintains regional hydrologic balance.

Conveyance of the reservoir is essential to the City's Water Augmentation Plan, which ensures reliable water supply and compliance with state and federal water law. Ownership will allow for direct, adaptive management of storage assets needed to fulfill augmentation obligations.

Crystal Reservoir has long been a scenic and recreational attraction, drawing thousands of visitors annually for fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing, and photography. The City's stewardship will protect and responsibly enhance this asset, supporting the regional tourism economy and sustaining local businesses and jobs. The reservoir and its surrounding habitat are home to a variety of native wildlife species. Local ownership will ensure continued protection of critical habitats and ecosystems while enabling the City to partner with conservation organizations to expand stewardship efforts.

This conveyance directly supports the goals outlined in the City's Master Plan, including sustainable infrastructure investment, environmental protection, and responsible recreation development. It embodies Ouray's vision of long-term resilience and self-sufficiency.

We urge Congress to approve this vital conveyance. The City of Ouray stands ready to assume ownership, management, and full responsibility for the dam and reservoir in a way that serves both the public good and the strategic interests of the region and the State of Colorado.

Thank you for your attention and support.

Sincerely,

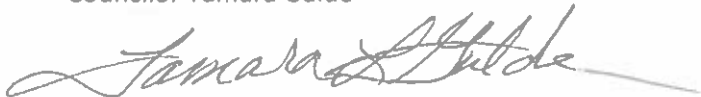


Mayor Ethan Funk

Mayor Pro Tem Josh Smith



Councilor Tamara Gulde



Councilor Michael Underwood





JAKE NIECE
MICHELLE NAUER
LYNN PADGETT

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

541 4th Street • P.O. Box C • Ouray, Colorado 81427 • 970-325-7320 • FAX: 970-325-0452

August 5, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

With deep gratitude and appreciation, we are writing to thank Senator Bennet for the work and support your office has provided the City of Ouray in developing the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act.

We hope that Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd will also join you with their strong support and help shepherd this proposed Act expeditiously through Congress so it can shine as a pragmatic example of bipartisan solution-oriented legislation that solves an urgent problem in our community and county.

The Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act as drafted is a targeted conveyance of approximately 45-acres of Federal Land to be quitclaimed to the City of Ouray. The conveyance is essential to provide water for the City's augmentation plan. Crystal Reservoir, also known as Crystal Lake, is an important recreation and economic engine for our region, serving multiple beneficial purposes. The conveyance will keep these lands free and open to the public for recreation. For example, Crystal Reservoir was the only lake in Ouray County that was open

to the public, fee-free, and accessible for wheelchairs and strollers. It was stocked by Colorado Parks and Wildlife with cutthroat and other trout species.

As drafted, the proposed Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act contains important safeguards to ensure these 45-acres remain pristine and open to the public for multiple uses, including fishing, hiking, hunting, and skiing.

Conveyance to the City of Ouray to repair Full Moon Dam and refill Crystal Reservoir would also provide water that could be used for fire suppression if a human-caused or wildfire starts in the Ironton valley or surrounding peaks. The Snowshed Fire started on steep terrain above Highway 550, about 1.6 miles southeast of Crystal Reservoir on Sunday, June 22nd, 2025. Due to the hazardous mountain conditions and need for first responders to use the narrow highway, U.S. Highway 550 had to close to all regular vehicle traffic. It is normally a 45-minute 24-mile drive south to Silverton from Ouray on U.S. Highway 550, which comprises part of the San Juan Skyway Scenic Byway. The detour to get from Silverton to Ouray, which is common for residents to travel to medical services in Montrose County, became an over 4 hour and 200-mile excursion each way for more than 24-hours while U.S. 550 remained closed. While it may have been too windy to use a helicopter for bucket drops the first 12 hours of the Snowshed Fire, having Crystal Reservoir filled and available for bucket drops as soon as the conditions allowed could have reduced the containment time and increased safety for firefighters and the public.

The language and lands included in the proposed Act were created collaboratively with your team, the City of Ouray, GMUG and Region 2 representatives of the U.S. Forest Service, and the Colorado Division of Water Resources, Division 4, and the Colorado Dam Safety Engineer.

We support the carefully crafted conditions and requirements contained in the proposed Act which, as introduced, will:

- Grant a perpetual easement to the USFS for each trail and road that originates at, terminates at, or traverses the parcel;

- Allow the City of Ouray, beginning on the date of conveyance, to assume responsibility for the costs of all repairs, operations (consistent with water rights), and maintenance of Full Moon Dam and related infrastructure, including Full Moon Ditch;
- Require the City of Ouray to maintain the parcel in perpetuity as open space for full public access for recreation and fishing without ANY recreational access fees (in other words, remain free and open to the public in perpetuity);
- Prohibit any development, commercial operations or construction other than as needed for Full Moon Dam, Full Moon Ditch, or Crystal Reservoir and related infrastructure;
- Prohibit expanding the footprint of Crystal Reservoir;
- Protect any upstream wetlands from impairment or harm from operation of the Crystal Reservoir.

The City of Ouray has provided the assurance that it is ready and able to assume the necessary design, repairs, and operation of Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam and has a team of geotechnical, engineering, and legal experts ready to work with the appropriate federal and state authorities, including the State's Dam Safety team.

The proposed Conveyance Act will honor the incredible work performed in the early 2000s by the Red Mountain Task Force, Trust for Land Restoration, Ouray County Board of County Commissioners, Ouray County Historical Society, Trust for Public Land, Fort Lewis College, USFS, Ouray Trail Group, Ouray Nordic Council, and many others to purchase private lands in Ironton Park and put them into the USFS system so that the heritage values and integrity of the Red Mountain Historic Mining District could be preserved. The 800 acres purchased and preserved by the Red Mountain Task Force that was given to the U.S. Forest Service includes the 45-acre conveyance parcel. The USFS Press Release is attached to this letter. It illustrates what an incredible asset Crystal Reservoir was. In 2003, when the land was acquired by the USFS, Ouray District Ranger, Jim Free said, "This land is one of the crown jewels in the Red Mountain Area. It has world class mountain views, outstanding ecological, recreational, and historical values. Now we have a great opportunity to manage it in the public interest."

The proposed Conveyance Act will allow the City of Ouray to repair, refill, and operate Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam to restore it as the water supply, public recreation, and wildlife habitat asset it previously was. The City of Ouray will take on the roll and responsibility of managing it in perpetuity.

The incredible scenic beauty of Crystal Reservoir and Iron-ton Park draws around a million visitors a year, many of whom enjoy fishing, hunting, hiking, photography, and cross-country skiing here. Crystal Reservoir was Ouray County's only free and ADA-accessible body of water for fishing and was stocked by Colorado Parks and Wildlife with cutthroat trout. Ouray County Clerk's Office reports that before it was drained, Crystal Lake/Reservoir was the most popular wedding location listed on marriage licenses in Ouray County.

A conveyance now from the USFS to the City of Ouray of Crystal Reservoir and 11-foot tall Full Moon Dam will allow these assets to be repaired and maintained so they will continue to provide the same benefits for recreation, water, wildlife, scenic beauty, and our economy as they have for the last 90 years.

We urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to co-sponsor the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act. If it becomes law in 2025, the City of Ouray will immediately begin work on this shovel-ready project and implement the steps needed to repair and refill the reservoir by 2026.

Sincerely,

Signed by:



C08C28AF777F41D...

Jake Niece
Commissioner

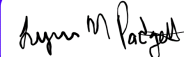
Signed by:



06DA7F557BDB426...

Michelle Nauer
Commissioner

Signed by:



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Lynn Padgett
Commissioner

Signed by:



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Justin Perry
Sheriff



Press Release

**Ouray Ranger District
Uncompahgre National Forest
December 18, 2003
Contact: Laurie Kelso**

Ironton Park Goes Public

Today the Forest Service announced Ironton Park is now a part of the public land system. After several years of effort the Forest Service and Ironton Park Company, Inc. closed a land transaction monumental to the Red Mountain Project. The Forest Service purchased 60+ patented mining claims which include the spectacular Crystal Lake area. The land is located south of Ouray along the Highway 550 Scenic Byway, better known to most as the Million Dollar Highway. Approximately 806.24 acres were purchased from Ironton Park Company, Inc. for \$2,520,000.00.

"This land is one of the crown jewels in the Red Mountain area," said Forest Service District Ranger Jim Free. "It has world class mountain views, outstanding ecological, recreational, and historical values. Now we have a great opportunity to manage it in the public interest."

This accomplishment was a result of cooperative efforts between the landowner, the Forest Service, and The Red Mountain Task Force. The Task Force was created more than five years ago with the objective of preserving the land in the Red Mountain Pass Area, specifically protecting the values and integrity of the Red Mountain Historic Mining District. Task Force efforts have focused on gaining public and congressional support in obtaining Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) for the project. LWCF funds are used by the Forest Service to purchase historical patented mining claims. The purchased land becomes a part of the Uncompahgre National Forest System. This guarantees future access to thousands of Acres and protects this portion of the Scenic Byway from development.

Adding this area to the public land system benefits the public in many ways. Financially it benefits the agency and the public by reducing property boundary management costs.

Privately owned mining claims are scattered throughout the Red Mountain Area creating miles of boundary lines for the Forest Service to manage. The cost to survey, inspect and maintain boundary lines can be more expensive than the value of the land.

Ironton Park has been a favorite winter playground for years. Activities from cross country skiing to snow-shoeing and sled dog racing are very popular. It's a favorite for hiking too. The scenic quality of the area is difficult to match. Artists and photographers are known to visit Ironton Park in the fall of each year in hopes of capturing the spectacular sights. Fall colors are highlighted by the Red Mountains in the background providing a truly spectacular view.

Another significant reason for bringing this area into public ownership is the paleoecological resource value of the property. The property contains an Iron Fen an unusual type of wetland. The Fen is an unusual ecosystem type for North America, and especially Colorado. This valuable resource may not be replaced once it is disturbed. Now scientists will have an opportunity to learn more about the vegetative history of the area.

The purchase of this land took two years of negotiation and planning to complete. Prior to acquiring any property, the Forest Service had a number of tasks to complete to ensure the purchase is in the public interest.

A major task in this process is to communicate extensively with the public and potentially interested parties. The Red Mountain Task Force was a tremendous partner in helping us reach the public and obtaining their comments on the project. "Public response has always been in support of the project," said Ranger Free. A good example of their support and interest was displayed during the first Red Mountain Heritage Day sponsored by the Red Mountain Task Force and the Forest Service last September. The event drew over 400 people who were given a colorful map of the area and an opportunity to visit more than twenty Red Mountain sites. Most sites on the tour have quite a history so a task force volunteer was available at each location to share some interesting stories.

Other significant steps in the acquisition process include conducting a thorough hazmat analysis of the property, and getting an appraisal of the property. Both tasks take a lot of time and money. Forest Service specialists completed the Hazmat Analysis during the summer of 2003 with the assistance of the Army Corps of Engineers. The appraisal was initiated during the winter of 2002/2003, and field work was completed in August of 2003.

The Red Mountain Project is a major initiative to acquire more than 11,000 acres of privately owned patented mining claims in the mountains between Ouray, Silverton, and Telluride. This latest purchase brings the total amount of land entered into public ownership to just over 4,400 acres. Ironton Park is the fourth property purchased by the Forest Service this year.

Most of the lands acquired have been through an ongoing partnership between the Red Mountain Task Force which includes the Ouray and San Juan County Historical Societies, and The Trust for Public Land. Congressional support has been essential to the acquisitions as the land was purchased with funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Congress appropriated the funds at the request of Colorado Congressmen.

"This purchase is not the end of the project by any means," claims Ranger Free. Both the Forest Service and the Red Mountain Task Force remain committed to the project and look forward to continued work with the Trust for Public Land. "We're still actively seeking contact with private property owners who may have an interest in donating or selling land in the Red Mountain Area." Ranger Free suggests interested parties contact Ouray District Lands Specialist Laurie Kelso at 970-240-5405.



John I. Clark
Mayor
Town of Ridgway
PO Box 10
Ridgway, CO 81432

Jul. 21, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Letter of Support for the Conveyance of Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir to the City of Ouray, Colorado

Dear Senator Bennet,

On behalf of the Town of Ridgway I respectfully submit this letter in strong support of federal legislation authorizing the conveyance of the Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir to the City of Ouray. This transfer represents a strategic, multi-pronged opportunity that aligns with state water priorities, strengthens regional resilience, and generates significant environmental and economic value. The proposed conveyance will yield wide-ranging benefits to the City, surrounding communities, and the State of Colorado as a whole.

As you no doubt are aware, the Colorado Water Plan emphasizes diverse water storage options, watershed health, and proactive local water management. Ownership of Crystal Reservoir will enable the City to enhance water security for its residents, improve drought resilience, and implement conservation strategies consistent with the Plan's objectives.

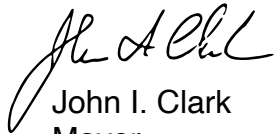
With increasing threats of wildfire in the San Juan Mountains, the reservoir serves a critical role in regional wildfire mitigation. Local control will allow the City to integrate the reservoir into comprehensive wildfire response and forest health strategies, improving emergency preparedness and watershed resilience.

Crystal Reservoir is also a significant economic development asset, as it has long been a scenic and recreational attraction, drawing thousands of visitors annually for fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing, and photography. The City's stewardship will protect and responsibly enhance this asset, supporting the regional tourism economy and sustaining local businesses and jobs.

We urge Congress to approve this vital conveyance. We fully support the City of Ouray in its effort to assume ownership, management, and full responsibility for the dam and reservoir in a way that serves both the public good and the strategic interests of the region and the State of Colorado.

Thank you for your attention and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John I. Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

John I. Clark
Mayor
Town of Ridgway
PO Box 10
jclark@town.ridgway.co.us



SAN JUAN COUNTY COLORADO

1557 GREENE STREET
P.O. BOX 466
SILVERTON, COLORADO 81433
PHONE 970-387-5766 admin@sanjuancolorado.us

August 13, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd:

San Juan County would like to express our sincere appreciation for Senator Bennet's leadership and support in developing the ***Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act***. Senator Bennet's office has been instrumental in shaping this legislation that meets critical needs in our region.

We respectfully request that Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to join you as co-sponsors and champions of this important bipartisan initiative. The Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act offers a pragmatic, solution-focused response to a pressing local infrastructure and water security challenge—one that can serve as a national model of cooperation between federal, state, and local partners.

The Act proposes the conveyance of approximately 45 acres of federal land—currently under U.S. Forest Service (USFS) management—to the City of Ouray for the restoration and operation of Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam, which is essentially a shovel-ready project. These lands will remain free, open to the public, and protected in perpetuity, continuing to support outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, and emergency water supply.

Key benefits of the conveyance include:

- **Support for the City of Ouray's water augmentation plan**, critical for the City's long-term water security, municipal needs, and in the event of a call by senior water rights – keeping the municipal hot springs open.
- **Preservation of public access**—ensuring free, fee-less recreation including accessible fishing, hiking, skiing, photography, and hunting.
- **Wildfire readiness**—providing a nearby water source for suppression efforts in remote terrain.
- **Protection of upstream wetlands** and maintenance of the parcel as open space.
- **Historical alignment** with efforts led by the Red Mountain Task Force and partners to protect Iron-ton Park and the Red Mountain Historic Mining District.

The draft bill includes thoughtful, enforceable safeguards:

- **Perpetual public access and no recreational fees.**
- **Prohibition on development**—allowing only necessary repairs and maintenance of water infrastructure.
- **Permanent easements** for all existing roads and trails, preserving recreation connectivity to U.S. Forest Service lands and trails.
- **Long-term stewardship requirements** by the City, including **dam safety compliance**.

Crystal Reservoir—also known as Crystal Lake—has been a cornerstone of Ouray County's recreation economy and ecological health for nearly a century. Before it was drained, it was Ouray County's only free, ADA-accessible fishing and recreation lake, and the most popular wedding location listed on local marriage licenses. Restoring it will restore these unique community benefits.

Any one of the benefits listed above would provide justification for supporting the legislation when combined they provide an amazing opportunity that would benefit the City of Ouray, the region and our guests that visit this amazing area.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Austin Lashley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Austin Lashley, Chairman

San Juan County Commissioner



1360 Greene Street
Silverton, CO 81433
970.387.5522

August 26, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Support for the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet,

With deep gratitude and appreciation, We are writing to thank you for the work and support your office has provided the City of Ouray in developing the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act.

We hope that Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd will also join you with their strong support and help shepherd this proposed Act expeditiously through Congress so it can shine as a pragmatic example of bipartisan solution-oriented legislation that solves an urgent problem in our community and county.

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As drafted, the proposed Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act contains important safeguards to ensure these 45-acres remain pristine and open to the public for multiple uses, including fishing, hiking, hunting, and skiing.

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We support the carefully crafted conditions and requirements contained in the proposed Act which, as introduced, will:

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- Prohibit any development, commercial operations or construction other than as needed for Full Moon Dam, Full Moon Ditch, or Crystal Reservoir and related infrastructure;
- Prohibit expanding the footprint of Crystal Reservoir;
- Protect any upstream wetlands from impairment or harm from operation of the Crystal Reservoir.

The City of Ouray has provided the assurance that it is ready and able to assume the necessary design, repairs, and operation of Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam and has a team of geotechnical, engineering, and legal experts ready to work with the appropriate federal and state authorities, including the State's Dam Safety team.

The proposed Conveyance Act will honor the incredible work performed in the early 2000s by the Red Mountain Task Force, Trust for Land Restoration, Ouray County Board of County Commissioners, Ouray County Historical Society, Trust for Public Land, Fort Lewis College, USFS, Ouray Trail Group, Ouray Nordic Council, and many others to purchase private lands in Ironton Park and put them into the USFS system so that the heritage values and integrity of the Red Mountain Historic Mining District could be preserved. The 800 acres purchased and preserved by the Red Mountain Task Force that was given to the U.S. Forest Service includes the 45-acre conveyance parcel. The USFS Press Release is attached to this letter. It illustrates what an incredible asset Crystal Reservoir was. In 2003, when the land was acquired by the USFS, Ouray District Ranger, Jim Free said, "This land is one of the crown jewels in the Red Mountain Area. It has world class mountain views, outstanding ecological, recreational, and historical values. Now we have a great opportunity to manage it in the public interest."

The proposed Conveyance Act will allow the City of Ouray to repair, refill, and operate Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam to restore it as the water supply, public recreation, and wildlife habitat asset it previously was. The City of Ouray will take on the roll and responsibility of managing it in perpetuity.

The incredible scenic beauty of Crystal Reservoir and Ironton Park draws around a million visitors a year, many of whom enjoy fishing, hunting, hiking, photography, and cross-country skiing here. Crystal Reservoir was Ouray County's only free and accessible body of water for fishing and was stocked by Colorado Parks and Wildlife with cutthroat trout. Ouray County Clerk's Office reports that before it was drained, Crystal Lake/Reservoir was the most popular wedding location listed on marriage licenses in Ouray County.

A conveyance now from the USFS to the City of Ouray of Crystal Reservoir and 11-foot tall Full Moon Dam will allow these assets to be repaired and maintained so they will continue to provide the same benefits for recreation, water, wildlife, scenic beauty, and our economy as they have for the last 90 years.

We urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to co-sponsor the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act. If it becomes law in 2025, the City of Ouray will immediately begin the steps needed to repair and refill the reservoir by 2026.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dayna Kranker", with a horizontal line underneath.

Dayna Kranker

Mayor of the Town of Silverton



R. Glenn Boyd
Ouray County Emergency Manager
Office: 970-325-7273 ext. 1 | Cell: 970-318-9603
Email: gboyd@ourayco.gov | Fax: 970-325-0225
421 6th Ave; PO Box C, Ouray Co 81427

August 20, 2025

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Re: Support for the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

On behalf of Ouray County Emergency Management, I wish to express strong support for the **Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act**, an urgently needed and carefully crafted piece of legislation that will restore Crystal Reservoir (also known as Crystal Lake) and Full Moon Dam to serve the public interest for generations to come.

Importance of the Conveyance

The Act proposes the conveyance of approximately 45 acres of U.S. Forest Service land to the City of Ouray. This targeted conveyance will:

- Secure water for the City's augmentation plan and long-term municipal supply.
- Preserve perpetual public access to fishing, hunting, skiing, hiking, and other recreation without fees.
- Protect upstream wetlands and prohibit commercial development, while maintaining the parcel in perpetuity as open space.

Crystal Reservoir has long been a cornerstone of Ouray County's recreation economy, ecological health, and cultural life. Before it was drained, it was our only **fee-free, ADA-accessible lake** and the most popular wedding site on local marriage licenses. Restoring it will bring back these unique community benefits.



R. Glenn Boyd
Ouray County Emergency Manager
Office: 970-325-7273 ext. 1 | Cell: 970-318-9603
Email: gboyd@ourayco.gov | Fax: 970-325-0225
421 6th Ave; PO Box C, Ouray Co 81427

Wildland Firefighting Resource

One of the most critical benefits of restoring Crystal Reservoir is its role in **wildfire preparedness and suppression**. The Iron-ton Valley and surrounding peaks are highly vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire due to topography, beetle-kill forests, and limited fuel reduction options. There are no comparable ponds or reservoirs for drafting between Ridgway Reservoir and Electra Lake—more than 30 miles apart.

Crystal Reservoir is uniquely suited to support suppression efforts:

- **Tanker trucks** can draft directly from the reservoir via adjacent paved access, which can bear the heavy axle loads required.
- **Helicopter bucket drops** can be safely and efficiently conducted due to the reservoir's depth, length, and lack of obstructions or powerlines.
- The location offers an operational advantage for rapid deployment, reducing cycle times and improving suppression effectiveness.

The 2025 **Snowshed Fire** underscored this urgent need: highway closures isolated communities, and aerial resources could not immediately engage due to distance and conditions. A restored Crystal Reservoir would provide a proximate, safe, and effective water source that can save property, infrastructure, and lives.

Call to Action

The Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act represents a bipartisan, solution-focused approach that balances water security, recreation, wildfire readiness, and conservation. We urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to join Senator Bennet in co-sponsoring and advancing this legislation expeditiously.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to protecting Colorado's water resources, public safety, and heritage landscapes.

Respectfully,

R. Glenn Boyd
Ouray County Emergency Management



COLORADO RIVER DISTRICT

PROTECTING WESTERN COLORADO WATER SINCE 1937

August 4, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support Letter: Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet:

The Colorado River Water Conservation District (“River District”) is pleased to submit a letter of support for the *Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act* (“Act”), which will authorize the conveyance of the Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir (“Crystal Reservoir”) from the US Forest Service (“USFS”) to the City of Ouray (“City”).

The River District is a local government entity established in 1937 to serve as a leader in the protection, conservation, use, and development of water resources of the Colorado River basin for the welfare of the River District. In this effort, the River District is dedicated to ensuring our communities have the resources to protect and secure sustainable water resources.

While any water acquisition of this manner needs to be thoughtful and include thorough due diligence, the River District supports the City’s analysis of potential water resources for their community, and the proposed action to acquire Crystal Reservoir as an additional water source with community benefits. The Act proposes the conveyance of approximately 45 acres of federal land, currently under USFS management, to the City for the restoration and operation of the Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam. According to the City, these lands will remain free, open to the public, and protected in perpetuity continuing to support outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, and emergency water supply. The Reservoir will allow the City to strategically manage their storage assets needed for their Water Augmentation Plan, while also providing recreational benefits and regional resilience to support wildfire preparedness.

We support the City’s analysis and thorough exploration of securing a sustainable water resource that includes additional ancillary benefits. The proposed Act fits the City’s current water and economic needs for their community. We ask that you look favorably upon this proposed act and urge Congress to do the same.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrew Mueller
General Manager

August 19, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: City of Ouray ownership of Crystal Reservoir on Red Mountain Pass

Comments by Eric Jacobson, Owner Hydrowest, Inc., Operator of Ouray Hydroelectric Power Plant

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

1. In my professional career, I have been intimately involved with rural dams, reservoirs, waterways, powerlines, and powerhouses. Oftentimes these projects are on USFS land and carry a FERC permit. I have also served on regional wildfire preparedness committees.
2. As part of the Federal permits, these projects are required to have an Emergency Action Plan. Wildfire preparedness is almost always an element of an EAP.
3. Since these properties are generally remote from municipal services, self-protection from wildfire is generally required.
4. Lacking municipal water mains, self-supply of water is also a consideration.
5. A plan for water tankers to fill nearby is beneficial.
6. For pumping, a 2' depth is pretty much needed. High capacity pumps will cavitate/draw air in shallow water.

7. A 4000 gallon tank truck will carry about 17 tons of water, When combined with the weight of the truck, the loads can approach 30 tons. These weights do not support off road excursions.
8. For helicopter bucket fills, a 4' depth is desirable, along with the potential for dynamic loading (some element of forward travel) rather than filling from a hover.
9. Helicopters take much more power to climb loaded than to travel level or downwards. Climbing (and travel distances) also dramatically increase cycle times (this reduces effectiveness).
10. Southern Ouray County has had significant beetle kill in the conifer forests which dominate the landscape. Fuels reduction is not an alternative due to topography and USFS land ownership. Mines, lodges, transmission lines and highways cross the area. Catastrophic large-scale wildfires can be expected.
11. There are no other ponds for drafting either by truck or helicopter between Ridgway Reservoir and Electra Lake. These ponds are 30 miles north and south of Red Mountain Pass and are situated at lower elevations.
12. Crystal Reservoir is within a few feet of a paved road capable of carrying the heavy axle loading tanker trucks for wildfire suppression and property preservation.
13. Crystal Reservoir is long enough and deep enough for dynamic helicopter bucket loading. It has no intervening geography or powerlines to increase operational hazards. The low dam makes northward exits, against the prevailing wind, an operational benefit.
14. The preservation of Crystal Reservoir for an emergency water supply for firefighting is an absolute necessity. There is no other reasonable alternative anywhere nearby. Preservation of the pond is a matter of public health, safety, and welfare.
15. An EAP for pumping at Crystal should include a hard floor pump inlet site on the pond bottom, and an improved weight capable drive in area for truck drafting.
16. A helicopter bucket filling course, to maintain the longest possible loading run with adequate depth, and free of obstructions, should also be part of the plan.
17. Crystal Reservoir has clear water. Red Mountain Creek is of inadequate depth and has highly acidic water (which would have a deleterious effect on \$750k fire apparatus). Iron-ton Park is also the logical place for fire crew camps as it is on a hard surfaced road, is not surrounded by forest, and has several escape routes from the area.
- 18. I have limited my comments to firefighting, other commentators certainly cover the plentitude of other reasons for preserving and improving Crystal Reservoir.**

Best Regards:

Eric R. Jacobson

Owner, Hydrowest, Inc.

Operator of Ouray Hydroelectric Power Plant

400 Oak Street

Ouray CO 81427



P.O. BOX 392, RIDGWAY, CO 81432 • 970-325-3010
UNCOMPAHGREWATERSHED.ORG

July 30, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Introduction and Co-Sponsorship of the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

On behalf of the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership (UWP), I would like to share information that may be useful in decision-making about the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act, a federal action that could help preserve critical wetlands in the headwaters of the Colorado River.

UWP is dedicated to preserving and restoring the natural, scenic and economic values of the Upper Uncompahgre River Watershed, where Crystal Reservoir is located high in the San Juan Mountains. In fact, the area around Crystal Reservoir has been identified by our scientists and community members as critical riparian areas for our watershed health needed to support the local economy.

We understand that the Act proposes the conveyance of approximately 45 acres of federal land—currently under U.S. Forest Service (USFS) management—to the City of Ouray for the restoration and operation of Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam. The reservoir is located over historic fens, uniquely valuable wetlands made of peat that act as important filters for the highly mineralized waters, removing metals that impair water quality.



P.O. BOX 392, RIDGWAY, CO 81432 • 970-325-3010
UNCOMPAHGREWATERSHED.ORG

To retain the water-quality improving characteristics of the fens, the reservoir needs to be carefully managed. City and Ouray County leaders have expressed their mutual interest in monitoring and preserving the fens after the conveyance, which is aligned with UWP's objectives.

Your support of the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act is of utmost importance to the City of Ouray, and our watershed nonprofit would appreciate your efforts to pass the Act that allows our local government to realize their water resiliency goals. Thank you again for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Tanya Ishikawa".

Tanya Ishikawa, Executive Director
Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership

Cc:

Ouray County Commissioner Jake Niece
Ouray County Commissioner Lynn Padgett
Ouray County Commissioner Michelle Nauer
Ouray County Interim Manager Kara Rhoades
Ouray Mayor Ethan Funk
Ouray City Council member Tamara Gulde
Ouray City Administrator Michelle Metteer



www.restorationtrust.org

133 n. Lena Street #3
PO Box 743
Ridgway, Colorado 81432
970-626-3236

August 11, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Introduction and Co-Sponsorship of the Crystal Lake Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Trust for Land Restoration, I am writing to express our appreciation of Senator Bennet's proposed legislation providing for transfer of ownership of the Crystal Lake Reservoir in Ouray County from the federal government to the City of Ouray and urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to support and co-sponsor this important proposal.

The Trust for Land Restoration is a non-profit land trust and environmental consulting group based in Ridgway that assists communities, local governments, citizen groups and other conservation organizations overcome environmental liability issues to protect and preserve scenic, historic and environmentally significant landscapes in Colorado. We were founding

members and partners in the Red Mountain Project that initially identified and helped the US Forest Service acquire the property that includes Crystal Lake twenty years ago, and we continue to be involved in a number of conservation projects in the Red Mountain Mining District.

Saving Crystal Lake and its associated water rights and augmentation value alone is of utmost importance, regardless of who claims ownership to them. That those water rights and augmentation ability can be preserved for the benefit of the citizens of the City of Ouray makes them all the more critical. That, plus the Lake's contribution to ecosystem function, wildlife habitat, scenic recreational values and emergency wildfire suppression makes returning the Lake to functioning status most urgent and perhaps the top priority in this portion of the San Juan Mountains. Doing so under the name and management of the City of Ouray makes the most sense, particularly now, given the budgeting and staffing crises and unpredictable future of the United States Forest Service.

This is not to minimize legitimate concerns that the US Forest Service has had with regard to the stability of the Crystal Lake dam. Perhaps the dam should be better analyzed and, if deemed necessary, engineered to be safer. The City of Ouray has demonstrated its ability to harness outside expertise to solve complicated problems and get projects done. It's in everyone's interest in Ouray County and indeed the State of Colorado that the safety of the dam be assured. I am confident that the City of Ouray with its partners, including the County of Ouray, the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Colorado River Conservancy District will apply their best resources to assure that happens.

We appreciate Senator Bennet's efforts and thank Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd in advance to co-sponsor the *Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act* and help move it through Congress. The need is critical, and the time is now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrick Willits". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Patrick" and last name "Willits" clearly legible.

Patrick Willits
Executive Director



Ouray County Historical Society

PO BOX 151 * Ouray, CO 81427-0151 * 970-325-4576

Email: info@ouraycountyhistoricalsociety.org

July 21, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Letter of Support for the Conveyance of Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir to the City of Ouray, Colorado

Dear Senator Bennet,

The entire board of the Ouray County Historical Society believes strongly that the federal legislation authorizing the conveyance of the Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir to the City of Ouray be enacted forthwith.

There are multiple reasons why this legislation should move forward, not the least of which is the historical relevance of this body of water to the San Juan Region of the Rockies, specifically, Ouray County.

The attached black and white photograph taken by the renowned western photographer William Henry Jackson in 1901 shows this pristine body of water nestled high in the Red Mountain District of the Rockies. In 1930, the Full Moon Dam was constructed to increase the size of this body of water.

Thereafter, the reservoir served as a source of water security, drought resilience, and water conservation for the city of Ouray. Moreover, the lake has become the source of multiple tourist endeavors into the high country from the days when then Colorado governor Ralph Carr feasted on trout he caught in the lake to today's countless numbers of tourists who stop on their journey across the Million Dollar Highway to take their unprecedented reflective photographs of the lake against the fall colors of the Rockies.

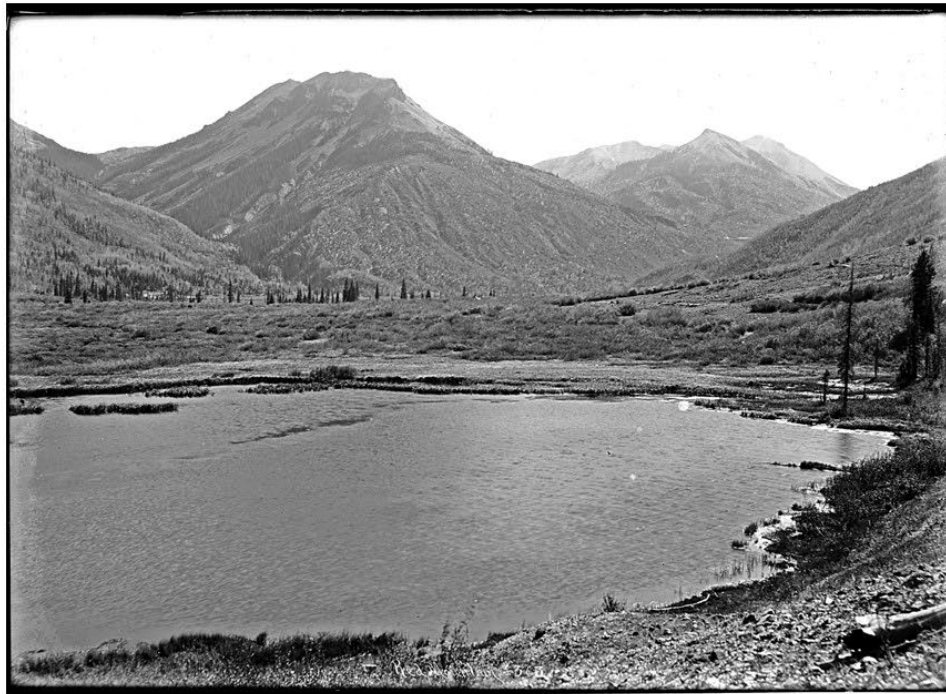
All these high-country thrills and endeavors ceased after the recent draining of the reservoir by the US Forest Service.

The Colorado water plan emphasizes multi-purpose water storage, watershed health, and proactive local water management. What better way to fulfill this plan in Ouray County than to transfer the management of this reservoir to the City of Ouray.

Senator Bennett, please do everything in your power to see that this legislation moves forward to its rightful completion.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Chismire M.D.
President
Ouray County Historical Society



Crystal Lake in 1901 by William Henry Jackson



Crystal Lake before drainage by the US Forest Service by Don Paulson

San Juan County Historical Society

P.O. Box 154

Silverton, Colorado 81433

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

August 11, 2025

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Introduction and Co-Sponsorship of the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

On behalf of the San Juan County Historical Society I want to express our sincere appreciation for Senator Bennet's leadership and support in developing the ***Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act***. Senator Bennet's office has been instrumental in shaping this legislation that meets critical needs in our region. We worked with the Red Mountain Task Force for many years and were able to raise 14.9 million dollars to preserve the beautiful landscape of Red Mountain Pass, and were able to purchase Crystal Lake at that time.

We now respectfully urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to join you as co-sponsors and champions of this important bipartisan initiative. The Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act offers a pragmatic, solution-focused response to a pressing local infrastructure and water security challenge—one that can serve as a national model of cooperation between federal, state, and local partners.

About the Legislation

The Act proposes the conveyance of approximately 45 acres of federal land—currently under U.S. Forest Service (USFS) management—to the City of Ouray for the restoration and operation

Preserving the History of San Juan County, Colorado



of Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam, which is essentially a shovel-ready project. These lands will remain free, open to the public, and protected in perpetuity, continuing to support outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, and emergency water supply.

Key benefits of the conveyance include:

Support for the City of Ouray's water augmentation plan, critical for the City's long-term water security, municipal needs, and in the event of a call by senior water rights – keeping the municipal hot springs open.

Preservation of public access—ensuring free, fee-less recreation including accessible fishing, hiking, skiing, photography, and hunting.

Wildfire readiness—providing a nearby water source for suppression efforts in remote terrain.

Protection of upstream wetlands and maintenance of the parcel as open space.

Historical alignment with efforts led by the Red Mountain Task Force and partners to protect Ironton Park and the Red Mountain Historic Mining District.

The draft bill includes thoughtful, enforceable safeguards:

Perpetual public access and no recreational fees.

Prohibition on development—allowing only necessary repairs and maintenance of water infrastructure.

Permanent easements for all existing roads and trails, preserving recreation connectivity to U.S. Forest Service lands and trails.

Long-term stewardship requirements by the City, including **dam safety compliance**.

Crystal Reservoir—also known as Crystal Lake—has been a cornerstone of Ouray County's recreation economy and ecological health for nearly a century. Before it was drained, it was Ouray County's only free, ADA-accessible fishing and recreation lake, and the most popular wedding location listed on local marriage licenses. Restoring it will restore these unique community benefits.

Call to Action

We urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to co-sponsor the *Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act* and work with Senator Bennet and the rest of our Colorado Delegation to advance it swiftly through Congress. If enacted in 2025, the City of Ouray is prepared to immediately move forward on this nearly shovel-ready project with final engineering, permitting, and construction so that Crystal Reservoir can be repaired and operational by 2026.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to secure a resilient water future for Ouray, protect public access, and honor the legacy of collaborative conservation in Ironton Park.

Thank you again for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,



Beverly Rich
Chairman



Logo of the Red Mountain Project features Crystal Reservoir

Information about the Red Mountain Project and Red Mountain Task Force can be found at:

<https://ocs.fortlewis.edu/redmountainproject/default.asp>

CONVEYANCE SUPPORT STATEMENTS RECEIVED FROM BOB RISCH AND KAREN RISCH:

Bob Risch served as mayor of the City of Ouray for six years (2007-2013), was a longtime Chairman of the Red Mountain Project Task Force, and has served in leadership roles of the Ouray Trail Group. He put a tremendous amount of effort into forming and securing funding for the Red Mountain Task Force in the late 1990s and early 2000s. He worked with private landowners to facilitate the sale of private mining claims, ensuring protection from development and the retention of public access. As you know, the Red Mountain Task Force successfully acquired Iron-ton Park and Crystal Reservoir (including Full Moon dam and related infrastructure) and transferred these assets to the U.S. Forest Service. Bob was instrumental in conceiving and achieving a full perimeter trail around the City of Ouray.

Here is Bob's quote:

"I could not do better than quote District Ranger Jim Free in a Press Release from Dec.18, 2003, when we closed on the purchase: "This land is one of the crown jewels in the Red Mountain area. It has world-class mountain views, outstanding ecological, recreational, and historical values. Now, we have a great opportunity to manage it in the public interest." Given its placement upstream and economic impact on the economy, it will be most efficiently managed by the City of Ouray."

--Bob Risch

The 2003 USFS Press Release from December 18, 2003 referenced by Bob Risch is attached.

Karen Risch is Historian of the Ouray County Search and Rescue Team, and a Past President of Ouray Trail Group and Ouray Nordic Council.

"Crystal Lake, with its Full Moon Dam, is a national treasure and anchors a fragile alpine ecosystem unique to Colorado. The Mears Trail connects Crystal Lake at the north end of Ironton Park and its rare iron fens to the Larson Brothers Mine across from the Ouray County Nordic trails. Four historic hiking trails are accessible from Full Moon Dam. These scenic trails are beloved and well used: Hayden Mountain, Mears, Full Moon, and Beaver/Belfast."

"The Red Mountain Project secured congressional funding to purchase and preserve 800 acres of mining claims in the Ironton Park area in the early 2000s, thereby protecting them from development. **Be assured that conveying Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam to the City of Ouray accomplishes the goals of the Red Mountain Project and that the Ouray Trail Group and Ouray County Nordic Council will continue to preserve and maintain these cherished trails. Be assured that the citizens of the City of Ouray will restore Crystal Reservoir and continue to treat this treasure with respect and care.**"

--Karen Risch

A map created for the Red Mountain Project Heritage Days shows the trails mentioned by Karen Risch. It is attached.

THE RED MOUNTAIN PROJECT BACKGROUND:

The Red Mountain Project began in 1998 as a regional effort to protect 10,500 acres of scenic and historic landscapes, preserve numerous historic mining and railroad sites, and provide enhanced recreation and interpretive opportunities along the San Juan Skyway.

A Task Force was established representing the Ouray and San Juan County Boards of Commissioners and county historical societies, the Uncompahgre and San Juan National Forest, The Trust for Public Land, and the Fort Lewis College Office of Community Services.

The links below provide more detailed information regarding the successes of the project.

- [Project Fact Sheet](#) (ATTACHED)
- [Map of Acquired Land \(JPG, 500K\)](#) (ATTACHED)
- [Project Partners](#)



Press Release

**Ouray Ranger District
Uncompahgre National Forest
December 18, 2003
Contact: Laurie Kelso**

Ironton Park Goes Public

Today the Forest Service announced Ironton Park is now a part of the public land system. After several years of effort the Forest Service and Ironton Park Company, Inc. closed a land transaction monumental to the Red Mountain Project. The Forest Service purchased 60+ patented mining claims which include the spectacular Crystal Lake area. The land is located south of Ouray along the Highway 550 Scenic Byway, better known to most as the Million Dollar Highway. Approximately 806.24 acres were purchased from Ironton Park Company, Inc. for \$2,520,000.00.

"This land is one of the crown jewels in the Red Mountain area," said Forest Service District Ranger Jim Free. "It has world class mountain views, outstanding ecological, recreational, and historical values. Now we have a great opportunity to manage it in the public interest."

This accomplishment was a result of cooperative efforts between the landowner, the Forest Service, and The Red Mountain Task Force. The Task Force was created more than five years ago with the objective of preserving the land in the Red Mountain Pass Area, specifically protecting the values and integrity of the Red Mountain Historic Mining District. Task Force efforts have focused on gaining public and congressional support in obtaining Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) for the project. LWCF funds are used by the Forest Service to purchase historical patented mining claims. The purchased land becomes a part of the Uncompahgre National Forest System. This guarantees future access to thousands of Acres and protects this portion of the Scenic Byway from development.

Adding this area to the public land system benefits the public in many ways. Financially it benefits the agency and the public by reducing property boundary management costs.

Privately owned mining claims are scattered throughout the Red Mountain Area creating miles of boundary lines for the Forest Service to manage. The cost to survey, inspect and maintain boundary lines can be more expensive than the value of the land.

Ironton Park has been a favorite winter playground for years. Activities from cross country skiing to snow-shoeing and sled dog racing are very popular. It's a favorite for hiking too. The scenic quality of the area is difficult to match. Artists and photographers are known to visit Ironton Park in the fall of each year in hopes of capturing the spectacular sights. Fall colors are highlighted by the Red Mountains in the background providing a truly spectacular view.

Another significant reason for bringing this area into public ownership is the paleoecological resource value of the property. The property contains an Iron Fen an unusual type of wetland. The Fen is an unusual ecosystem type for North America, and especially Colorado. This valuable resource may not be replaced once it is disturbed. Now scientists will have an opportunity to learn more about the vegetative history of the area.

The purchase of this land took two years of negotiation and planning to complete. Prior to acquiring any property, the Forest Service had a number of tasks to complete to ensure the purchase is in the public interest.

A major task in this process is to communicate extensively with the public and potentially interested parties. The Red Mountain Task Force was a tremendous partner in helping us reach the public and obtaining their comments on the project. "Public response has always been in support of the project," said Ranger Free. A good example of their support and interest was displayed during the first Red Mountain Heritage Day sponsored by the Red Mountain Task Force and the Forest Service last September. The event drew over 400 people who were given a colorful map of the area and an opportunity to visit more than twenty Red Mountain sites. Most sites on the tour have quite a history so a task force volunteer was available at each location to share some interesting stories.

Other significant steps in the acquisition process include conducting a thorough hazmat analysis of the property, and getting an appraisal of the property. Both tasks take a lot of time and money. Forest Service specialists completed the Hazmat Analysis during the summer of 2003 with the assistance of the Army Corps of Engineers. The appraisal was initiated during the winter of 2002/2003, and field work was completed in August of 2003.

The Red Mountain Project is a major initiative to acquire more than 11,000 acres of privately owned patented mining claims in the mountains between Ouray, Silverton, and Telluride. This latest purchase brings the total amount of land entered into public ownership to just over 4,400 acres. Ironton Park is the fourth property purchased by the Forest Service this year.

Most of the lands acquired have been through an ongoing partnership between the Red Mountain Task Force which includes the Ouray and San Juan County Historical Societies, and The Trust for Public Land. Congressional support has been essential to the acquisitions as the land was purchased with funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Congress appropriated the funds at the request of Colorado Congressmen.

"This purchase is not the end of the project by any means," claims Ranger Free. Both the Forest Service and the Red Mountain Task Force remain committed to the project and look forward to continued work with the Trust for Public Land. "We're still actively seeking contact with private property owners who may have an interest in donating or selling land in the Red Mountain Area." Ranger Free suggests interested parties contact Ouray District Lands Specialist Laurie Kelso at 970-240-5405.

- 1 Hayden Trail
- 2 Larson Brothers Mine
- 3 Brown Mountain Road
- 4 Gray Copper Trail
- 5 Corkscrew Pass Road
- 6 Richmond Trail
- 7 Ironton Town Site
- 8 Colorado Boy Trail & Mine
- 9 Corkscrew Turntable Trail
- 10 Mountain King Trail & Mine
- 11 Red Mtn. Mining District Road
(Red Mtn. Pass to Guston)
- 12 Barstow Trail & Mine
- 13 Red Mountain Overlook
- 14 Idarado Mine Complex
- 15 Red Mountain Town Site &
National Belle Mine
- 16 Swamp Angel Research Site
- 17 St. Paul Lodge – Brooklyn Mine
Road
- 18 Porphyry Basin / Bullion King
Mine
- 19 Silver Ledge Mine
- 20 Silver Ledge Loading Structure
- 21 Iron Fen Wetland Site

(See reverse for descriptions)

Red Mountain Heritage Day

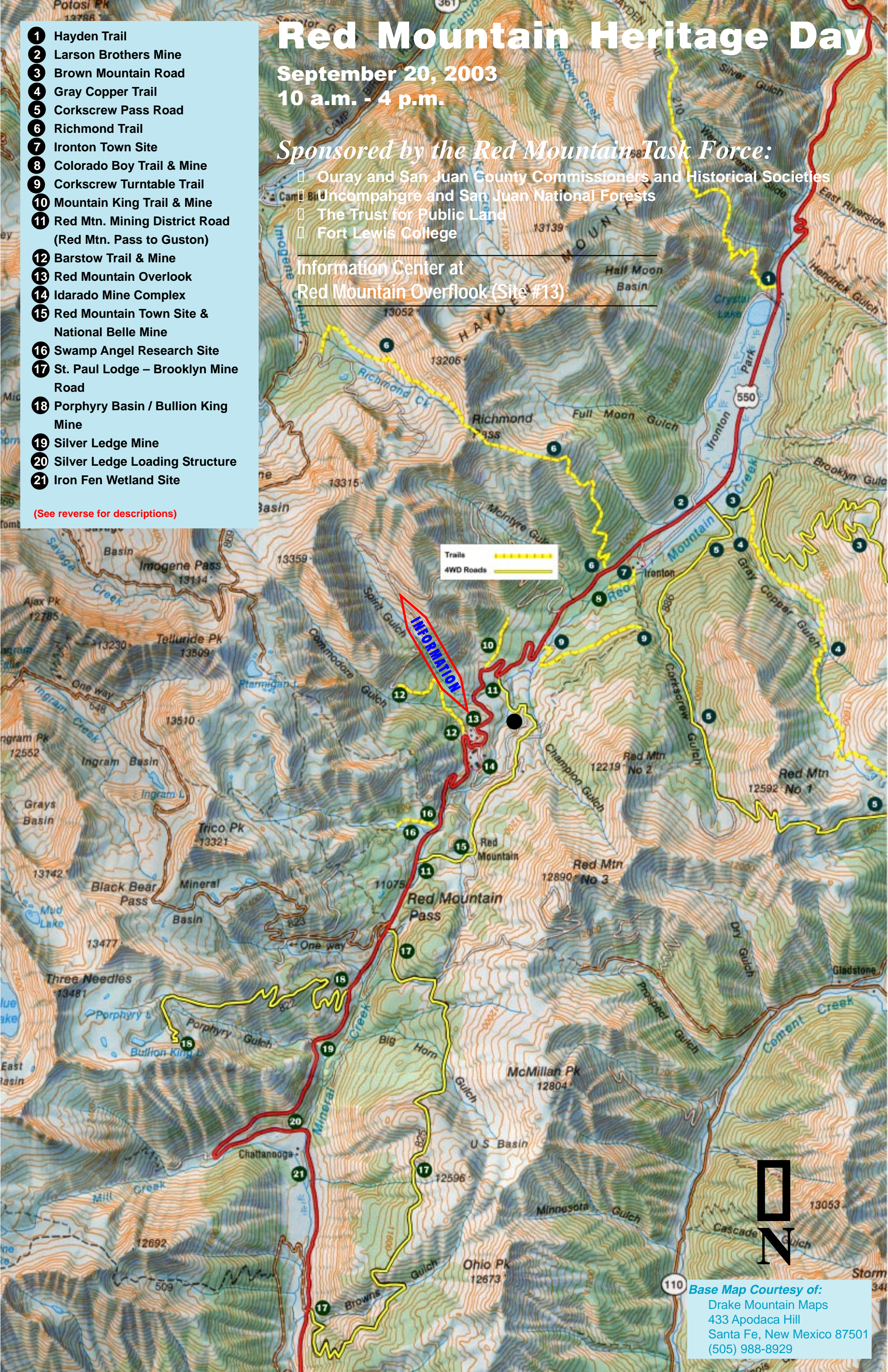
September 20, 2003

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Sponsored by the Red Mountain Task Force:

- Ouray and San Juan County Commissioners and Historical Societies
- Uncompahgre and San Juan National Forests
- The Trust for Public Land
- Fort Lewis College

Information Center at
Red Mountain Overlook (Site #13)



Base Map Courtesy of:
Drake Mountain Maps
433 Apodaca Hill
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
(505) 988-8929

TRAILS

1. Hayden Trail. Built by early day miners to avoid paying the toll at Bear Creek, this challenging 5.6-mile trail begins at the north end of Crystal Lake in Ironton Park and connects to the Camp Bird Road. Suitable for only the most fit hikers, the trail climbs 2,500 feet in the first 2 miles. It is remote with fantastic views, very steep stretches and serious weather exposure.

4. Gray Copper Trail. To access this recently rebuilt trail, turn off SH 550 at the Corkscrew/Brown Mt. turnoff. At the first junction, turn left onto the Brown Mt. Road and go to Gray Copper Cr. crossing. After a short distance, look for a signed, steep road to the right. Park and begin your two-mile moderately difficult hike that passes scenic waterfalls and the Vernon Mine behind Red Mt. #1.

6. Richmond Trail. Look for a trailhead sign on the west side of SH 550 just south of the Ironton town turnoff. This moderate to strenuous hike has an elevation gain of 2600 feet. It begins in aspen forests and tops out at 12,667' on Richmond Pass, which offers beautiful views of the entire Red Mt. District and surrounding mountains.

8. Colorado Boy Trail and Mine. This easy ½ mile trail goes to the recently stabilized Colorado Boy mine headframe. Follow the flagging on the road south of Ironton town site; then take the first trail to the left that crosses Red Mt. Cr. on a foot bridge. The trail continues down the creek a short distance before turning right, then up a short, but steep, climb that levels out just before the headframe.



7. Ironton, ca 1902; County Road 20D.. Originally known as Copper Glen, Ironton was a supply point in 1883 for the Red Mountain Mining District. By 1890, it was one of the largest towns in the district with 300 residents and many businesses. The Silverton Railroad reached Ironton in 1889. Over the years, fires damaged the town, which was in decline by 1900, largely because of the 1893 silver crash. By 1910, the population was 48. The last inhabitants, Harry and Milton Larson, began working and living in Ironton during the 1920's. Harry died in the 1940's, but Milton continued on until his death in the mid-1960's.



19. Silver Ledge Mine
The Silver Ledge was located New Year's Day 1883 on Mineral Cr. east of Porphyry Gulch, and patented Dec. 31, 1887. Its first shaft was a tunnel 200-ft. long running north from the junction of Mineral and Porphyry Creeks. Free gold had been found, but its main output was a low-grade galena. The Silver Ledge was the first mine in the US to recover zinc as a marketable product. By the 1910's, it was one of two mines still operating in the district. By the 50's the Black Mining Co. had produced 786 tons of ore from working the surface; yielding \$14,007.

9. Silverton Railroad and Corkscrew Turntable
Designer Charles W. Gibbs devised the turntable to solve wintertime operational problems at the gulch switchback. The steep, narrow gulch did not have room for a passing siding or wye. The 50-foot turntable was used to turn the locomotive and the coupled cars were gravity-fed through the table. Two interpretive hikes will be provided at 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Sign up at the Red Mt. Overlook, #13 on the map.

FOUR WHEEL DRIVE ROADS

3. Brown Mountain Road. This moderately difficult 4-wheel drive road departs SH 550 on Ouray County Road 20 immediately north of the large tailings reclamation site at the south end of Ironton Park. The road ascends Brown Mountain for several miles and offers great views of Hayden Mountain, and Red Mountain #1.

5. Corkscrew Pass Road, County Road 20A. Built originally as a trail connecting the Red Mt. Mining District and the Gladstone area, this moderately difficult and spectacular 4-wheel drive road passes between Red Mt. # 1 and #2. This route tops out at 12,217 feet and offers routes to Silverton via either the Gladstone/Cement Creek drainage or the Animas Forks ghost town and Animas River drainage.

11. Red Mt. Mining District Road. The easy 2.5-mile, 4-wheel-drive road winds throught the heart of the district. Look for County Rd. #31 on the east side of SH 550 about 500 yards north of the Red Mt. Pass summit. The road passes by the Red Mt. town site, National Belle, Genessee Vanderbilt, Yankee Girl, and Guston mines and again intersects with SH 550.

17. St. Paul Lodge. Brooklyn Mine Road. San Juan Co. Road 14 departs SH 550 on the west immediately south of the top of Red Mt. Pass. This moderate/easy 4-wheel drive road is approximately 3.5 miles long and immediately climbs for a short distance before traversing under McMillan and Ohio Peaks and passing by the Brooklyn Mine complex. This route offers spectacular views to the south of the Three Needles, Lookout Peak and Ophir Pass.

18. Porphyry Basin/Bullion King Mine Road. Access to this area is via San Juan County Road 65 which is on the east side of SH 550 and approximately .5 miles south of the top of Red Mt. Pass. This moderately difficult 4-wheel drive road ascends approximately 1,500 feet in elevation to the Porphyry Basin area which features short hiking opportunities to lakes, small ponds, and beautiful rock formations, meadows and panoramic views to the east.

20. Silver Ledge Loading Structure.

See location on map. Site hosts on site.



2. Larson Brothers Mine/House.

The 1893 silver crash closed most mines near Ironton and many people left. Over the years, buildings were lost to fire, salvaging, decay, and Idarado's tailing pond flooded most of the townsite. But a few houses remained. One was home to Harry and Milton Larson, the last inhabitants of the area, who moved in during the 1920s to prospect. Harry died in the 1940s, leaving Milton behind as the sole resident until he died in the 1960's.

RESEARCH SITES OF INTEREST

16. Swamp Angel Research Site. A short 10-minute hike over moderate terrain will lead you to the Center for Snow and Avalanche Study's proposed research plot, which will be manned by the Center's Director who will explain the planned snow system research and education. Look for the sign and flagging locating the trailhead which is .6 mile north of the top of Red Mt. Pass and immediately west of SH 550.

21. Chattanooga Iron Fen and Wetland. Iron fens are a unique wetland found only in select mountain areas that are highly mineralized. This fen is located on the west side of Mineral Creek just below the historic town site of Chattanooga – watch for flagging and a sign for the turnoff that will take you to this interpreted site. As part of an extensive wetland complex, this iron fen features a Sphagnum balticum peat moss that is found nowhere else in the U.S. and otherwise does not occur south of Hudson Bay, Canada. Additionally, a rare liverwort, Jungermannia rubra, is also found in this wetland area.



10. Mountain King Mine and Trail

In 1878, before the famous Red Mountain finds of 1882, the Mountain King Lode was located on the east slope of Bear Mountain. It was sold for \$1,000, but wasn't worked actively until 1887. In 1906, Golden Lions Mines Co. took over and constructed several buildings and employed 23 workers. By 1943, operators cleaned and retimbered the first 400 feet of the tunnel and by 1984 had shipped 1,327,582 tons of shipping ore and 1,306,305 tons of milling ore. This trailhead is located on SH 550 approximately ½ mile north of the Red Mt. Overlook. Look for the trailhead sign and parking near the highway. The trail is on an old road into the Mountain King and is an easy .9 mile roundtrip hike.



15. Red Mt. Town Site

The discovery of silver-rich ore at the Yankee Girl and other mines led to the creation of Red Mt. Town in early 1883. Snow concealed the swampy nature of the first townsite, and in 1885 it was moved north to firmer ground near the National Belle Mine. The town included many businesses with 500 residents. The town burned in 1892, was rebuilt, burned again 3 years later, and was partially rebuilt. After short economic resurgence in 1907, the population dwindled to 26 by 1910, and the post office closed in 1913. A 1939 forest fire destroyed most of what remained.



12. The Barstow Complex and Trail

up Commodore Gulch changed hands several times from 1880, when it was patented, to 1899 when it had become the Red Mountain Mining District's largest producer. Gold, silver, lead, and some zinc and copper, were mined from a 4,155-foot tunnel and 465 feet of crosscuts. The Barstow operated until 1928 and was sold at a sheriff's sale in 1936. In 1939, Idarado Mining Co. incorporated and began mining it for base metals during World War Two, working parts of the complex until the 1970's. Access the Barstow Trail immediately above the Red Mt. Overlook. It is an easy 1.8-mile rountrip hike with a 500-foot elevation gain.



14. Idarado Mine and Treasury Tunnel.

The Treasury Tunnel was established about 1896 with a track from the Silverton Railroad running to it. The site was abandoned by 1906. Between 1921 and 1924 the Million Dollar Highway was upgraded and the Treasury Tunnel was right on the roadway. With automobile access, operations expanded. By the 1930's, the San Juan Metals Co. was mining the tunnel and had built a new mill, boardinghouse, and offices. In 1939, the Idarado Mining Co. purchased mines in west Red Mt. Valley and expanded operations during World War Two and in 1946 the company built a new mill at its Treasury Tunnel operations. For years, Idarado ranked first or second in the state in copper, lead, zinc, gold, silver and cadmium production. Mining ceased in 1978.



RED MOUNTAIN PROJECT FACT SHEET

PROJECT SUMMARY

The goal of this project is to acquire from willing sellers 10,500 acres of historic landscapes and structures within and around the historic Red Mountain Mining District. Once purchased, they are being added to the adjacent Uncompahgre and San Juan National Forests and Ouray County Parks for public use and enjoyment. In the meantime historic structural assessments, stabilization projects, installation of interpretive signs and improvements to historic trails for recreational use are ongoing.

KEY PARTNERS

The Red Mountain Task Force members represent:

- Ouray and San Juan County Boards of Commissioners and Historical Societies
- Uncompahgre and San Juan National Forests
- Fort Lewis College Office of Community Services
- The Trust for Public Land

Supporting partners include:

- Cooperating private property owners
- Colorado Historical Society, Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission, Colorado Preservation Inc.

(Click on image to enlarge)



PROJECT AREA

- Approximately 36 square miles
- Located within Ouray, San Juan, and San Miguel Counties, the Uncompahgre and San Juan National Forests, and adjacent to the San Juan Skyway; one of only twenty-one All-American Scenic Byways in the U.S.

LAND ACQUISITION INITIATIVE

- Through the work of Colorado Senator Wayne Allard, former Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell and former Colorado Representative Scott McInnis, Congress has approved \$14.1 million in Land and Water Conservation Funds for Red Mountain.
- The Land & Water Conservation Fund was established in 1964 by Congress to use revenue from offshore oil drilling to fund conservation and recreation projects.
- \$354,000 in State Historic, Colorado Department of Health and Environment, and Great Outdoors Colorado funds have been used for land acquisitions.
- The Trust for Public Land has acquired and conveyed approximately 7800 acres to the Forest Service.
- Negotiations are ongoing with other willing sellers, with several hundred additional acres under consideration to purchase.
- 122 acres purchased by Ouray County for use as a park.

HISTORIC SITES

Recently completed work:

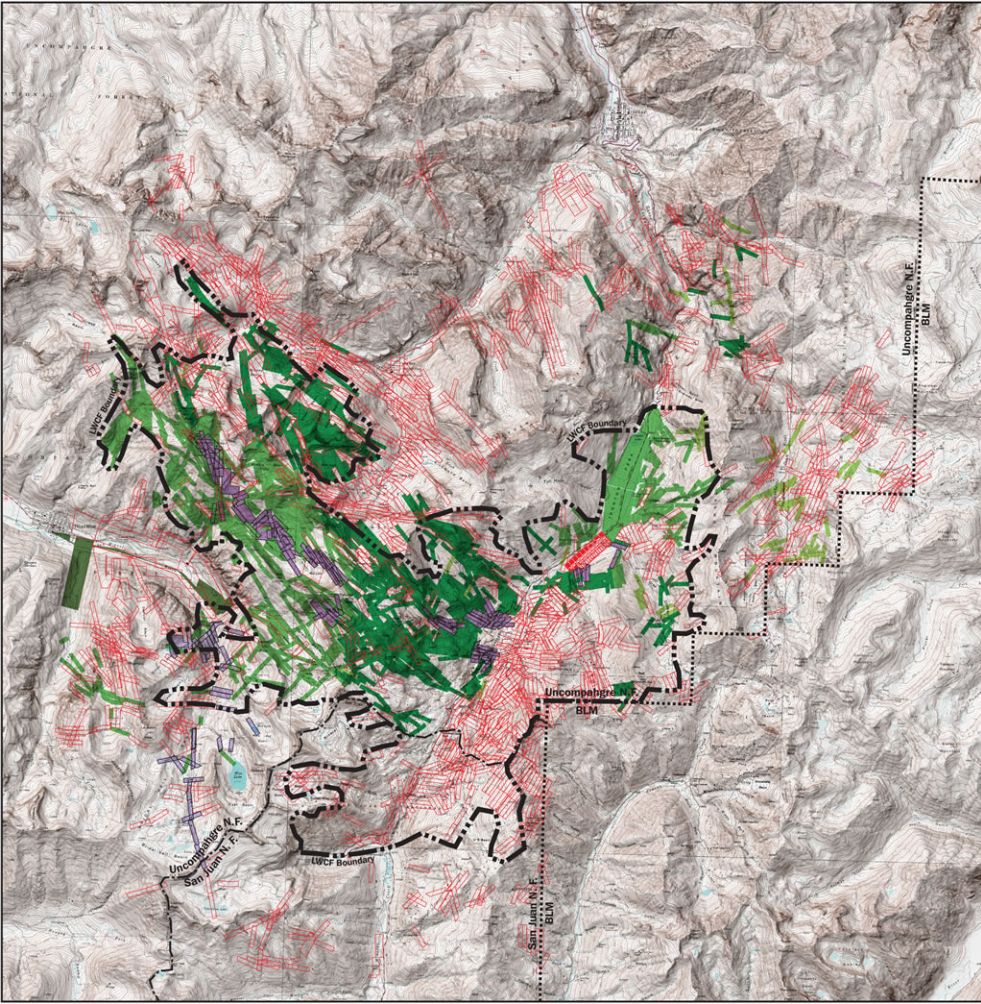
- Preparation of a comprehensive cultural resource survey of 110 sites completed, fall 2002.
- Historic preservation funding in excess of \$300,000 has been used to stabilize several structures.

INTERPRETIVE WAYSIDE EXHIBIT

The Forest Service has constructed an interpretive exhibit overlooking the heart of the Red Mountain Mining District. Interpretive panels located there include photos, diagrams and descriptions of the Red Mountain Mining District, Silverton Railroad, Yankee Girl Mine, Mining Settlements, the Treasury Tunnel, and Idarado reclamation work.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

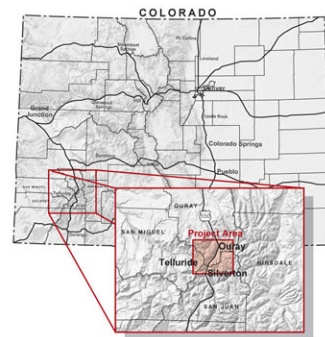
- Visit web site at redmountainproject.org
- Contact:
 - Bob Risch, PO Box 601, Ouray, CO 81427; (970) 325-4205; email bkrisch@ouraynet.com
 - Beverly Rich, PO Box 154, Silverton, CO 81433; (970) 387-5144; email bevrich@frontier.net
 - Ken Francis, Fort Lewis College Office of Community Services, 1000 Rim Drive, Durango, CO 81301; (970) 247-7310; email francis_k@fortlewis.edu
 - Doug Robotham, The Trust for Public Land, 1410 Grant Street, #D210, Denver, CO 80203; (303) 837-1414; e-mail doug.robatham@tpl.org



CONSERVED LANDS

RED MOUNTAIN PROJECT

- Phase I Claims
- Phase II Claims
- Phase III Claims
- Other Conserved Lands
- RAP Claims (unavailable)
- Water Lease Claims (unavailable)
- BLM / Forest Service Line
- Forest Service Boundaries
- LWCF Boundary
- Other Claims
- Unavailable Claims
- Priority Claims



January 20, 2005



Prepared by:



July 30, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

With deep gratitude and appreciation, we are writing to thank Senator Bennet for the work and support your office has provided the City of Ouray in developing the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act.

We hope that Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd will also join you with their strong support and help shepherd this proposed Act expeditiously through Congress so it can shine as a pragmatic example of bipartisan solution-oriented legislation that solves an urgent problem in our community and county.

The proposed Conveyance Act will honor the incredible work performed in the early 2000s by the Red Mountain Task Force, Trust for Land Restoration, Ouray County Board of County Commissioners, Ouray County Historical Society, Trust for Public Land, Fort Lewis College, USFS, Ouray Trail Group, Ouray Nordic Council, and many others to purchase private lands in Ironton Park and put them into the USFS system so that the heritage values and integrity of the Red Mountain Historic Mining District could be preserved. The 800 acres purchased and preserved by the Red Mountain Task Force that was given to the U.S. Forest Service includes the 45-acre conveyance parcel. The USFS Press Release is attached to this letter. It illustrates what an incredible asset Crystal Reservoir was. In 2003, when the land was acquired by the USFS, Ouray District Ranger, Jim Free said, "This land is one of the crown jewels in the Red Mountain Area. It has world class mountain views, outstanding ecological, recreational, and historical values. Now we have a great opportunity to manage it in the public interest."

The proposed Conveyance Act will allow the City of Ouray to repair, refill, and operate Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam to restore it as the water supply, public recreation, and wildlife habitat asset it previously was. The City of Ouray will take on the roll and responsibility of managing it in perpetuity.

The incredible scenic beauty of Crystal Reservoir and Ironton Park draws around a million visitors a year, many of whom enjoy fishing, hunting, hiking, photography, and cross-country skiing here. Crystal Reservoir was Ouray County's only free and ADA-accessible body of water for fishing and was stocked by Colorado Parks and Wildlife with cutthroat trout. Ouray County Clerk's Office reports that before it was drained, Crystal Lake/Reservoir was the most popular wedding location listed on marriage licenses in Ouray County.

A conveyance now from the USFS to the City of Ouray of Crystal Reservoir and 11-foot tall Full Moon Dam will allow these assets to be repaired and maintained so they will continue to

The language and lands included in the proposed Act were created collaboratively with your team, the City of Ouray, GMUG and Region 2 representatives of the U.S. Forest Service, and the Colorado Division of Water Resources, Division 4, and the Colorado Dam Safety Engineer.

We support the carefully crafted conditions and requirements contained in the proposed Act which, as introduced, will:

- Grant a perpetual easement to the USFS for each trail and road that originates at, terminates at, or traverses the parcel;
- Allow the City of Ouray, beginning on the date of conveyance, to assume responsibility for the costs of all repairs, operations (consistent with water rights), and maintenance of Full Moon Dam and related infrastructure, including Full Moon Ditch;
- Require the City of Ouray to maintain the parcel in perpetuity as open space for full public access for recreation and fishing without ANY recreational access fees (in other words, remain free and open to the public in perpetuity);
- Prohibit any development, commercial operations or construction other than as needed for Full Moon Dam, Full Moon Ditch, or Crystal Reservoir and related infrastructure;
- Prohibit expanding the footprint of Crystal Reservoir;
- Protect any upstream wetlands from impairment or harm from operation of the Crystal Reservoir.

The City of Ouray has provided the assurance that it is ready and able to assume the necessary design, repairs, and operation of Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam and has a team of geotechnical, engineering, and legal experts ready to work with the appropriate federal and state authorities, including the State's Dam Safety team.

The Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act as drafted is a targeted conveyance of approximately 45-acres of Federal Land to be quitclaimed to the City of Ouray. The conveyance is essential to provide water for the City's augmentation plan. Crystal Reservoir, also known as Crystal Lake, is an important recreation and economic engine for our region, serving multiple beneficial purposes. The conveyance will keep these lands free and open to the public for recreation. For example, Crystal Reservoir was the only lake in Ouray County that was open to the public, fee-free, and accessible for wheel chairs and strollers. It was stocked by Colorado Parks and Wildlife with cutthroat and other trout species.

As drafted, the proposed Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act contains important safeguards to ensure these 45-acres remain pristine and open to the public for multiple uses, including fishing, hiking, hunting, and skiing.

Conveyance to the City of Ouray to repair Full Moon Dam and refill Crystal Reservoir would also provide water that could be used for fire suppression if a human-caused or wildfire starts in the Iron-ton valley or surrounding peaks. The Snowshed Fire started on steep terrain above Highway 550, about 1.6 miles southeast of Crystal Reservoir on Sunday, June 22nd, 2025. Due to the hazardous mountain conditions and need for first responders to use the narrow highway, U.S. Highway 550 had to close to all regular vehicle traffic. It is normally a 45-minute 24-mile drive south to Silverton from Ouray on U.S. Highway 550, which comprises part of the San Juan Skyway Scenic Byway. The detour to get from Silverton to Ouray, which is common for residents to travel to medical services in Montrose County, became an over 4 hour and 200-mile excursion each way for more than 24-hours while U.S. 550 remained closed. While it may have been too windy to use a helicopter for bucket drops the first 12 hours of the Snowshed Fire, having Crystal Reservoir filled and available for bucket drops as soon as the conditions allowed could have reduced the containment time and increased safety for firefighters and the public.

provide the same benefits for recreation, water, wildlife, scenic beauty, and our economy as they have for the last 90 years.

We urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to co-sponsor the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act. If it becomes law in 2025, the City of Ouray will immediately begin work on this shovel-ready project and implement the steps needed to repair and refill the reservoir by 2026.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Michael Waters". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a long, sweeping underline.

Michael Waters

Ouray Trail Group



Ridgway Ouray Community Council

August 8, 2025

A nonprofit community-based organization whose mission is to enhance Ouray County's quality of life through education, protection of the environment and promotion of social justice.

Post Office Box 1077
Ridgway, Colorado 81432

Website: roccnet.org

Email:

ROCCnet.org@gmail.com

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Scott Williams

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Carolyn M Dresler, MD

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

On behalf of the Ridgway Ouray Community Council (ROCC), we write to express our strong support for the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act. We would like to thank Senator Bennet for his leadership in advancing this vital legislation. We respectfully urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to join as co-sponsors of this bipartisan, community-driven initiative.

ROCC is a nonprofit grassroots organization representing over 200 residents, property owners, and taxpayers in Ouray County, Colorado. Our mission is to enhance Ouray County's quality of life through education, protection of the environment and promotion of social justice. This conveyance aligns with all three pillars of our mission by strengthening water infrastructure, expanding equitable outdoor access, and protecting critical natural resources for current and future generations.

The bill proposes the conveyance of approximately 45 acres of U.S. Forest Service land to the City of Ouray for the restoration and long-term stewardship of Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam. This is a nearly shovel-ready project with far-reaching community benefit. Importantly, this land would remain fee-free, open to the public, and protected in perpetuity.

Conveying Crystal Reservoir and the Full Moon Dam parcel to the City of Ouray will provide many benefits to our local area including:

- Securing long-term water resilience through the City of Ouray's water augmentation plan, including continued operation of the Ouray Hot Springs during times of water shortage.
- Preserving free, ADA-accessible public recreation, including fishing, hiking, skiing, hunting, and photography.
- Crystal Reservoir and the surrounding land parcel provides a venue to the City of Ouray and Ouray County that is protected from the artificial lights that would be a perfect place to enjoy another outdoor recreation dimension of Ouray County - its dark starry night sky. This location would complement the many other Dark Sky certified places within Ouray County.
- Restoring Colorado native cutthroat trout habitat which is limited in Ouray County.
- Waterfowl habitat that is protected from artificial lights during the important spring and fall migrations.

- Improving wildfire readiness by providing a strategically located water source for suppression in rugged terrain.
- Safeguarding upstream wetlands and open space.
- Continuing the legacy of conservation leadership from the Red Mountain Project and local partners to protect Iron-ton Park and the Red Mountain Historic Mining District.

The bill language is thoughtfully written and contains provisions that would be enforceable such as:

- Perpetual public access with no recreation fees.
- Prohibition on development, except for essential water infrastructure maintenance.
- Permanent easements for existing trails and roads to maintain recreation connectivity to USFS and County lands.
- Ongoing stewardship responsibilities and dam safety compliance by the City of Ouray.

Crystal Reservoir, which is also known as Crystal Lake, has been a central feature of Ouray County's recreation and environmental identity for nearly a century. Before it was drained, it was Ouray County's only free, ADA-accessible fishing lake and a beloved community gathering place. Restoring the reservoir restores deeply valued experiences.

Our request:

We urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to co-sponsor the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act and work alongside Senator Bennet and the rest of the Colorado delegation to pass it into law. If enacted in 2025, the City of Ouray is prepared to move forward immediately with final engineering, permitting, and construction. The plan is to bring Crystal Reservoir back online by 2026.

This is a rare and timely opportunity to ensure a resilient water future, protect inclusive public access, and continue a proud tradition of collaborative conservation in Ouray County.

Thank you for your continued leadership and your commitment to Colorado's communities and public lands.

Sincerely,

Linda Browning

Co-President

Kristin Arnold

Co-President

August 11, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Introduction and Co-Sponsorship of the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

On behalf of Great Old Broads Northern San Juan Leadership Team, I want to express our sincere appreciation for Senator Bennet's leadership and support in developing the ***Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act***. Senator Bennet's office has been instrumental in shaping this legislation that meets critical needs in our region.

Although in general, Broads is opposed to the Federal agencies selling public lands to private entities, this is an exceptional case. Crystal Reservoir was created in 1937 and now is an important resource for the vegetation and wildlife of this area.

In 2024 Broads worked with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program to document important areas for conservation in Ouray County. Restoration of the wetland areas surrounding Crystal Reservoir was found to be paramount in its importance. The first step in restoration would be to re-fill the reservoir to its former size.

Just upstream of the lake is Iron-ton fen, one of the few iron fens (wetlands with peat soils) in the country. It supports rare mosses and wildlife, including moose. Lowering the water table by draining the lake has already resulted in visible drying of the peat soils which took thousands of years to form.

We now respectfully urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to join you as co-sponsors and champions of this important bipartisan initiative. The Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act offers a pragmatic, solution-focused response to a pressing local infrastructure and water security challenge—one that can serve as a national model of cooperation between federal, state, and local partners.

About the Legislation

The Act proposes the conveyance of approximately 45 acres of federal land—currently under U.S. Forest Service (USFS) management—to the City of Ouray for the restoration and operation of Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam, which is essentially a shovel-ready project. These lands will remain free, open to the public, and protected in perpetuity, continuing to support outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, and emergency water supply.

Key benefits of the conveyance include:

- **Support for the City of Ouray’s water augmentation plan**, critical for the City’s long-term water security, municipal needs, and in the event of a call by senior water rights – keeping the municipal hot springs open.

- **Preservation of public access**—ensuring free, fee-less recreation including accessible fishing, hiking, skiing, photography, and hunting.
- **Wildfire readiness**—providing a nearby water source for suppression efforts in remote terrain.
- **Protection of upstream wetlands** and maintenance of the parcel as open space.
- **Historical alignment** with efforts led by the Red Mountain Task Force and partners to protect Iron-ton Park and the Red Mountain Historic Mining District.

The draft bill includes thoughtful, enforceable safeguards:

- **Perpetual public access and no recreational fees.**
- **Prohibition on development**—allowing only necessary repairs and maintenance of water infrastructure.
- **Permanent easements** for all existing roads and trails, preserving recreation connectivity to U.S. Forest Service lands and trails.
- **Long-term stewardship requirements** by the City, including **dam safety compliance**.

Crystal Reservoir—also known as Crystal Lake—has been a cornerstone of Ouray County's recreation economy and ecological health for nearly a century. Before it was drained, it was Ouray County's only free, ADA-accessible fishing and recreation lake, and the most popular wedding location listed on local marriage licenses. Restoring it will restore these unique community benefits.

Call to Action

We urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to co-sponsor the *Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act* and work with Senator Bennet and the rest of our Colorado Delegation to advance it swiftly through Congress. If enacted in 2025, the City of Ouray is prepared to

immediately move forward on this nearly shovel-ready project with final engineering, permitting, and construction so that Crystal Reservoir can be repaired and operational by 2026.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to secure a resilient water future for Ouray, protect public access, and honor the legacy of collaborative conservation in Ironton Park.

Thank you again for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,

Peggy Lyon, Judith Lopez and Heather Scott

Great Old Broads Northern San Juan Leadership Team

August 6, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Introduction and Co-Sponsorship of the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,
(& To Whom It May Concern),

I am writing to express my strong support for Ouray's efforts to preserve public access to Crystal Reservoir and to restore its fishery. As a business owner in Ouray County for over 25 years—and with permitted access to Crystal Reservoir through the USFS for 20 of those years—I feel compelled to voice my full endorsement of this initiative to protect such a vital local resource.

Crystal Reservoir has long been a treasured destination for both visitors and residents. It has historically provided an exceptional still-water fishery, served as a stunning photographic landmark, and acted as a key access point to nearby hiking trails—including accessible options for individuals with disabilities. The potential loss of this site would be a significant blow to Ouray County's recreational offerings, especially considering it is perhaps the only high-alpine lake in the region that is easily accessible without a specialized 4x4 vehicle. This makes it a cornerstone of outdoor access and adventure in the region.

From an ecological standpoint, the reservoir's spring-fed waters offer an ideal and resilient habitat for aquatic life, including self-sustaining populations of native cutthroat trout. Thanks to its stable, clear, and cool waters, the reservoir supports year-round fish survival without winter die-offs or sedimentation during spring runoff. These unique characteristics have consistently provided our fly-fishing outfitter and retail shop with the ability to deliver memorable and high-quality experiences to anglers from around the country.

The socioeconomic benefits of maintaining and revitalizing this angling destination are clear. Continued support will not only ensure the longevity of this one-of-a-kind resource but will also allow future generations to enjoy the recreational, ecological, and economic value it brings to the region.

I respectfully urge you to support the City of Ouray's efforts to preserve public access and restore the fishery at Crystal Reservoir. It is a world-class recreational asset that is truly irreplaceable.

Sincerely,

Tim Patterson



Tim Patterson – Owner

RIGS Fly Shop & Guide Service

1075 Sherman Street #101 - PO Box 2086

Ridgway, Colorado 81432

970-626-4460 x703

info@fishrigs.com

www.fishrigs.com

July 30, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Introduction and Co-Sponsorship of the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

On behalf of the Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce, I want to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude for Senator Bennet's leadership and support in developing the ***Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act***. Senator Bennet's office has been instrumental in shaping this legislation that meets critical needs in our region.

I now respectfully urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to join you as co-sponsors and champions of this important bipartisan initiative. The Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act offers a pragmatic, solution-oriented response to a pressing local infrastructure and water security challenge—one that can serve as a national model of cooperation between federal, state, and local partners.

About the Legislation

The Act proposes the conveyance of approximately 45 acres of federal land—currently under U.S. Forest Service (USFS) management—to the City of Ouray for the restoration and operation of Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam, which is essentially a shovel-ready project. These lands will remain free, open to the public, and protected in perpetuity, continuing to support outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, and emergency water supply.

Key benefits of the conveyance include:

- **Support for the City of Ouray's water augmentation plan**, critical for the City's long-term water security, municipal needs, and in the event of a call by senior water rights - keeping the municipal hot springs open.
- **Preservation of public access** – ensuring free, fee-less recreation including accessible fishing, hiking, skiing, photography, and hunting.
- **Wildfire readiness** – providing a nearby water source for suppression efforts in remote terrain.
- **Protection of upstream wetlands** and maintenance of the parcel as open space.
- **Historical alignment** with efforts led by the Red Mountain Task Force and partners to protect Ironton Park and the Red Mountain Historic Mining District.

The draft bill includes thoughtful, enforceable safeguards:

- **Perpetual public access and no recreational fees.**
- **Prohibition on development** – allowing only necessary repairs and maintenance of water infrastructure.
- **Permanent easements** for all existing roads and trails, preserving recreation connectivity to the U.S. Forest Service lands and trails.
- **Long-term stewardship requirements** by the City, including dam safety compliance.

Crystal Reservoir – also known as Crystal Lake – has been a cornerstone of Ouray County's recreation economy and ecological health for nearly a century. Before it was drained, it was Ouray County's only free, ADA-accessible fishing and recreation lake, and the most popular wedding location listed on local marriage licenses. Restoring it will restore these unique community benefits.

Call to Action

I urge Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to co-sponsor the ***Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act*** and work with Senator Benet and the rest of our Colorado Delegation to advance it swiftly through Congress. If enacted in 2025, the City of Ouray is prepared to immediately move forward on this nearly shovel-ready project with final engineering, permitting, and construction so that Crystal Reservoir can be repaired and operational by 2026.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to secure a resilient water future for Ouray, protect public access, and honor the legacy of collaborative conservation in Ironton Park.

Thank you for your valued leadership.

With regards,



Ashley J Perkins
Director Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce



P.O. Box 145
Ouray, CO 81427

August 13, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Letter of Support for the Conveyance of Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir to the City of Ouray, Colorado

Dear Senator Bennet,

Thank you for your leadership and support in developing the ***Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act***. We sincerely hope that Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd will join you as co-sponsors of this initiative.

I am submitting this letter of support for the Act on behalf of the Ouray Chamber of Commerce in Ouray, Colorado. The Ouray Chamber of Commerce represents businesses and nonprofit organizations in Ouray and the surrounding area.

It has come to our attention that the Full Moon Dam and Crystal Reservoir could possibly be transferred through a conveyance to the City of Ouray. That would be such a welcome outcome, as the recent draining of the reservoir has significantly impacted us all.

The dam and reservoir are important to us on many levels:

- The reservoir provides a water source to help with regional wildfire mitigation to help keep us all safe.
- The reservoir provides continued water security for the residents and businesses in Ouray, as well as additional water to support the many seasonal visitors to our City when needed.

- Crystal Reservoir has long been a coveted draw for visitors and residents alike. Over the years it has provided a quick and fee-free getaway for a busy shop owner at the end of a very long day. It has been a place for photographers to capture scenes that contribute to their livelihood and encourage others to visit Ouray. It has been a place of discovery where visitors and residents alike can soak in the beauty of the reservoir and the peaceful images of our Red Mountains mirrored in it, view the wildlife who frequent it, or find a great fishing spot. Crystal Reservoir is a treasure that we have been missing since it was drained a little over two years ago.

Simply put, all of the above helps to generate economic value that helps to support our businesses and nonprofit organizations and contribute to the vitalization of our City and the surrounding area in one way or another.

For these reasons, the Ouray Chamber of Commerce supports the conveyance of the Crystal Reservoir and Full Moon Dam to the City of Ouray. We urge you, Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to co-sponsor the Conveyance Act to restore this natural, environmental landmark to those who need and enjoy it.

Sincerely,



Beth Edwards
Executive Director
Ouray Chamber of Commerce
(970) 729-1564
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The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
United States Congress
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Support for the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Hurd,

On behalf of the Six Basins Project, we are honored to provide our strong support for the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act. We are deeply grateful to Senator Bennet and his office for their commitment to advancing this legislation, and we encourage Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd to join him in ensuring its passage.

The Six Basins Project, founded in 2017 as a collaboration among local off-road outfitters and business professionals, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to preserving the natural beauty and historic character of the San Juan Mountains. Our nonprofit's mission is grounded in stewardship, balancing recreation with conservation. We focus on projects that improve recreation infrastructure, enhance sanitation, provide signage and education, and foster responsible enjoyment of our alpine landscapes.

Crystal Reservoir, also known as Crystal Lake, exemplifies the very balance between access and conservation that guides our mission. For nearly a century, it served as both an essential water supply and a beloved public space. It was Ouray County's only fee free, ADA accessible lake, stocked with native cutthroat trout and enjoyed by anglers, hikers, families, and visitors of all abilities. Its setting in Iron Horse Park made it one of the most photographed locations in the San Juans as well as one of the most popular wedding sites listed on county marriage licenses. Restoring Crystal Reservoir will restore this unique blend of practical utility and community joy.

The proposed conveyance of approximately 45 acres to the City of Ouray is more than a technical land transfer. It is a realistic, shovel-ready solution that will strengthen the City's water augmentation plan, provide a nearby source for wildfire suppression, and preserve wildlife habitat. The need for this became especially clear during the Snowshed Fire of June 2025, when firefighting resources were stretched and the lack of a nearby water source complicated

suppression efforts. A refilled Crystal Reservoir will provide an important tool for wildfire management while continuing to serve the public as a cherished recreational space.

We also view this legislation as part of a much larger conservation story. When the Forest Service purchased the Crystal Lake area in 2003 as part of the Red Mountain Project, it was described as “one of the crown jewels in the Red Mountain area,” citing its world-class views, ecological richness, and historic value. That acquisition preserved the integrity of the Red Mountain Historic Mining District, protected rare ecosystems such as the Iron Fen wetland, and secured public access along the Million Dollar Highway. The Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act honors that legacy while giving the City of Ouray the ability to restore and manage the reservoir for the benefit of both wildlife and the community.

The Six Basins Project is proud to support this collaborative, solution-focused initiative. It reflects the values we uphold: balancing recreation with stewardship, protecting ecological integrity, and ensuring that treasured places remain accessible to all. The restoration of Crystal Reservoir will provide long-term water security, enhance wildfire readiness, strengthen the local recreation economy, and preserve one of Ouray County’s most iconic landscapes.

For these reasons, we strongly support the Crystal Reservoir Conveyance Act and respectfully urge its advancement through Congress. We look forward to the day when Crystal Reservoir is once again filled, thriving, and serving as a symbol of both community resilience and conservation success.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering our support.

Sincerely,
Six Basins Project