

NEWS IN BRIEF

WATER

MOUNTAIN SNOWS THAT FEED COLORADO RIVER LOOK GOOD SO FAR

Snowpack in the mountains that feeds the Colorado River is slightly above the long-term average this winter — welcome news in the drought-stricken Southwest. But water and weather experts said Tuesday it's too early to predict how deep the snow will get or how much of it will make its way into the river and on to Lake Powell in Utah and Arizona, one of two major reservoirs on the Colorado. "We are cautiously optimistic, but nature has a way of doing what it wants," said Chris Watt, a spokesman for the federal Bureau of Reclamation, which manages the water in Lake Powell. The Colorado River serves about 40 million people and 6,300 square miles of farmland in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. Mexico is also entitled to a share of the water.

STATE

COLORADO SEES RISE IN TRAFFIC FATALITIES IN 2015

Colorado officials are increasing safety efforts after 2015 had the most traffic fatalities since 2008. *The Denver Post* reports that 545 people died in Colorado traffic accidents in 2015, 11.7 percent more than in 2014. According to the Colorado Department of Transportation, it was the first year since 2008 there have been more than 500 traffic deaths. CDOT data shows that among the rise in fatalities is a sharp increase in motorcycle fatalities. There were 104 motorcycle deaths in 2015, compared to 94 in 2014. CDOT spokesman Sam Cole says the department does not have an explanation for the rise. Cole says lower fuel prices and high job growth may have contributed, as there are more people on the road for work.

BOULDER

CU VALUES GOP DEBATE EXPOSURE AT \$4 MILLION, SPENT \$764,000

The University of Colorado believes hosting the Republican presidential debate in October was well worth the price tag, valuing the events publicity to be more than \$4.1 million. *The Daily Camera* reports that the university spent more than \$764,000 to host 14 Republican presidential candidates on Oct. 28 at the Coors Event Center. The university-commissioned analysis of the debate's publicity value was calculated based on advertising rates, the number of times CU was mentioned and the duration of exposure. In addition, the study found that visitors during the debate spend more than \$424,400 in the area. Campus spokesman Ryan Huff says the debate also helped engage the campus and community through lectures, watch parties, rallies and a visit by Democratic presidential candidate Martin O'Malley.

IN THE NEWS

HISTORY

Winter mining tour explores high-country history**Ski/snowshoe tour is Jan. 30, south of Ouray**By **STEPHEN ELLIOTT**
Staff Reporter

When many of the mines of Ouray County and the San Juan Mountains were still in operation, hardy miners often spent months enduring not only the harsh conditions of their chosen profession but also the bitter cold and deep snow of southwestern Colorado's high country.

Many structures from Ouray County's mining history are still standing, and a tour by cross-country ski or snowshoe next week will give the curious a peek into what it was like for the miners of yesterday to spend winters at altitude.

Don Paulson, curator of the Ouray County Historical Museum and a local mining and railroad historian, will lead the tour, which is scheduled for 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 30. Attendees should register for the event at uncompahgrewatershed.org, and a \$25 donation (\$15 for children 14 and under) is requested to support the two sponsoring organizations: the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership and the Ouray County Historical Society.

"It was a pretty rough life up there over 10,000 feet," Paulson said. "If you're walking up there on snowshoes and realizing people had to wander around in the snow all the time, you get a better sense of that."

This is the fifth year Paulson has led the winter mining tour, and he also leads similar historical mining tours on foot in the summer. Paulson has written a book, "Mines, Miners and Much More," about the mining history around Telluride, Silverton and Ouray. It's available in most local bookstores.

People of all ages are welcome on the tour, as long as parents accompany children, but no dogs are allowed. Attendees should bring snowshoes, cross country or tour-

ing gear, appropriate clothing, a lunch, water and sunscreen. The Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership will provide warm drinks and cookies. The group is limited to 20 participants. For more information, contact Judi Chamberlin at 970-325-3010 or UWPcoordinator@gmail.com.

"This mine tour is a great way for people to explore areas of our watershed where they probably have never visited, especially in wintertime. The Uncompahgre River fills with water flowing down from several San Juan mountain slopes that are impacted by the legacy of mining," Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership communications director Tanya Ishikawa said in an email. (Ishikawa is also a freelance contributor to *The Watch*.)

"Hearing stories about mines in our local area while on a trip by cross country skis or snowshoes is a great way to understand how mines affect our water resources, as well as have a relatively easy backcountry adventure back into the 1800s," she added.

Paulson said he first began visiting the Ouray area in the 1970s, when some of the mines in the area were still in operation. The mines were originally producing silver, according to Paulson, but eventually switched to base metals like lead, zinc and copper.

Though mining is often seen as a relic of centuries past, owners have tried to reactivate several local mines in the last few years, according to Paulson, including the Revenue Mine and the Camp Bird Mine, both near Ouray.

"They're currently both closed, but the problem is the price of metals," Paulson said. "When metal prices go up, mining becomes more profitable. They're both dormant even though they have been active in the last three or four years."



Top: Participants stop at a historic mining structure in the Red Mountain Mining District during the 2013 winter mining tour. This year's event is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 30. [Courtesy photo] Bottom: Snowshoers and cross-country skiers curious about history will join historian and Ouray County Historical Museum Curator Don Paulson for a winter mining tour south of Ouray on Jan. 30. [Courtesy photo]

Attendees will meet at the Ouray Visitors Center at 9 a.m. before carpooling to County Road 31 south of Ouray. From there, the group will snowshoe or ski about two miles to several mine sites before returning to the trailhead.

Paulson is a railroad enthusiast, and he said that passion is what

brought him to his research into local mining history.

"Railroads have always been my hobby. When I first started visiting Ouray in the 1970s, I became aware how railroads were especially built for mining, so then I got interested in mining," he said.

MONTROSE COUNTY

Sheriff's Posse raising funds**Group has 50-year history in county**By **LAUREL BLACK**
Editor

If you find yourself lost or injured in the backcountry in Montrose County, the volunteers with the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse will likely be the first faces you see.

The group has been performing rescues, fighting fires outside of incorporated fire districts and providing event security for the past 50 years, member and board secretary Paul Gottlieb said.

And they've done it with the help of the community they serve — from volunteers who give their time freely, money obtained through grants and residents who

donate to the group's 501(c)(3).

The Posse's once-yearly fundraiser is currently underway, and the group is hoping to raise at least \$25,000 in 2016 to cover the costs of equipment and training, Gottlieb said. Last year, funds went toward the purchase of new radios for the team and a four day National Search and Rescue training course for 14 of its members (all are trained in first aid and kept up to date on GPS and tracking skills).

"We do hear back from the people (we help), and the majority of them are very pleased with what we've done for them. I think the county residents are pleased with

what we do, too. We actually save the taxpayers a lot of money," Gottlieb said.

In fact, the Posse's current building was built with the help of donations from the grateful family of a deceased man who was pulled from the Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

Without the Posse, according to Gottlieb, paid personnel with the Sheriff's Office would need to be deployed for search and rescue missions, which would place a greater financial burden on the county's taxpayers.

There are about 21 members of the Posse on the east side of the

county and 15 in the area around Naturita and Nucla, Gottlieb said.

"Our people come from all walks of life. We have farmers, we have bookkeepers, we have educators, we have retired people," Gottlieb said.

He added: "It's a commitment: You don't just come one day and do something. You need to be trained for it."

Donations to the Sheriff's Posse are tax-deductible and can be mailed to the organization at PO Box 717, Montrose, Colorado, 81402.