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OURAY COUNTY

Alternative Power proposes panel permit simplification

BY DALTON CARVER
dalton@ouraynews.com

The building permit process for solar panel construction may change, after testimony from an Alternative Power Enterprises representative at the Board of County Commissioners meeting Tuesday, March 21.

According to Alternative Power representative Jill Markey, the county's building permit process for constructing solar panels forces the company to wait a significant amount of time before building can start.

"It just ties our hands," she said Tuesday morning. "We get a project and then we have to sit and wait for about a month before we can begin."

Markey said Alternative Power typically doesn't have to go through the building permit process with any of the surrounding counties, including San Miguel and Montrose.

In addition, Markey calculated the county actually loses money with the permit process in place, considering how many county employees have to touch the document before it's fully processed.

Mark Castrodale, county planning director, said 35 permits have been pulled for solar panels since 2011, and he confirmed the process results in the county losing \$50 to \$200 per permit pulled for solar panels.

"We're not even breaking even on these because of how many people have to touch these (permits)," he said.

As a result of the wait time and calculated net loss for the county, Alternative Power proposed to eliminate the requirement for building permits to be pulled for solar panels.

Don Batchelder, county commissioner, said he thinks Alternative Power's request is "very reasonable" considering the region's short building

season but also warned the visual impact conflicts that could result from no longer requiring building permits for solar panels.

"It's nothing that can't be resolved," he said. "My suggestion on how we deal with this is to look to land use staff."

Ben Tisdell, county commissioner, agreed with Batchelder that the situation could have a favorable outcome for both the county and Alternative Power.

"It seems (the permit process is) acting as a disincentive and slowing down the process," he said.

John Peters, county commissioner, pointed out keeping the permits would keep solar panels in line with visual impact code regulations, but eliminating the process could result in a proliferation of panels in certain areas. Peters also questioned how solar farms

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Ridgway Elementary School teacher Krista Javoronok (left) is awarded the Conservation Educator of the Year Award by Ken Lipton, Shavano Conservation District president.

Courtesy photo

RIDGWAY SCHOOLS

Javoronok receives conservation award

"Nice to be recognized"

BY DALTON CARVER
dalton@ouraynews.com

Krista Javoronok, fourth grade teacher at Ridgway Elementary School, was recently recognized as the Conservation Educator of the Year by the Shavano Conservation District. Javoronok has several years of conservation and outdoor education experience and has been implementing that work into her Ridgway classroom for seven years.

Javoronok, a Colorado State University graduate, said she felt honored to receive an award for something she loves doing.

"It wasn't something I expected to be recognized for," she said in a phone interview on Monday. "It's just my passion to take kids outside and teach them about their local surroundings and encourage them to protect and conserve their natural resources."

The fourth grade teacher also said receiving an award from an organization made up of mostly farmers and ranchers was a great learning experience.

"A lot of teachers do things on the side that aren't part of our regular jobs and we just do it because we're passionate about it and it's always nice to be recognized for that," she said. "I'm thankful (SCD) takes the time to recognize teachers for their hard work and for the things they're doing to make students' lives better."

Prior to her role at Ridgway Elementary, Javoronok worked in the Front Range informally teaching science, geography and environmental education in classrooms. Not officially a classroom teacher, Javoronok worked as program manager for the Colorado Mountain Club youth education program. In that role, she organized field trips focusing on connecting kindergarten through eighth graders to the mountains through their academic subjects.

"If a seventh grade class was studying geology, we would do some sort of educational field trip that also involves rock climbing," she said, thinking back to her pre-Ridgway days. "We also had an avalanche science class where (students) could dig snow pits, look at snow crystals and learn about rescue equipment and slope angles."

Javoronok's work with the Colorado Mountain Club helped shape her teaching style in Ridgway, understanding

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OURAY COUNTY

UWP nets donation from RIGS for work at Humboldt Mine site

BY MARY MENZ
news@ouraynews.com

Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership received a \$3,000 donation from RIGS Adventure Co., primary sponsor of the 2017 Fly Fishing Film Tour in Ridgway March 18. The money is earmarked for UWP's Humboldt Mine Reclamation project in cooperation with partner Trout Unlimited.

UWP and TU have applied for Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART grant funding for fiscal year 2017. The

water monitoring, soil sampling and leachate testing efforts will occur this year at the Humboldt Mine site.

An on-the-ground reclamation phase is scheduled for 2018 and 2019. The reclamation efforts planned for the Humboldt Mine, along with efforts in the Ouray Silver Mines and the Revenue Mine, will benefit downstream water users with incremental water quality improvements.

"These partnerships between government agencies, non-profits, ranchers and ag producers, anglers and the local business community demonstrate

the kind of collaboration we need for continued success," said Scott Williams, UWP board member. "We're thrilled that the community is listening and is an active partner in this process."

The Sneffels Creek headwaters, where Humboldt Mine is located, feed the upper Uncompahgre Watershed. Sneffels Creek drains into Canyon Creek, a tributary to the Uncompahgre River.

The area has levels of cadmium and zinc that exceed the state's 303(d) effluent limitations. Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to identify waters that do not meet water quality standards.

Scott Williams (left), board member for UWP, and Cary Denison (right), Gunnison River basin coordinator for Trout Unlimited, on Tuesday accepted a check from Tim Patterson, owner of RIGS Adventure Co. Fly Shop and Guide Service, representing proceeds from the 2017 Fly Fishing Film Tour.

Plaindealer photo by Mary Menz



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