

COMMUNITY

THE WATCH

Draft Watershed Plan to Be Unveiled Thursday

Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership Seeks Public Input on Draft
BY WATCH STAFF

OURAY - The Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership has

been hosting community forums for the last three years to identify issues and solutions to problems within the Uncompahgre River basin. Now, all that work has come to fruition in the form of a draft watershed plan. Sarah Sauter, author of the Uncompahgre Watershed Plan, will make the second of two public presentations on Thursday, January 12, in the San Juan room of the Ouray Community Center. Doors open at 6 p.m. Refreshments will be provided.

The series of community educational forums looked at issues impacting the river from its source, at Lake Como at 12,215 feet, to its confluence with the Gunnison River in Delta at 4,915 feet, a distance of 75 miles and encompassing a watershed of

714,000 acres.

The forums looked at mining, agriculture, stormwater, wildlife and riparian zones, and recreation in Ouray, Montrose and Delta counties. The plan was made possible by grants from the Colorado Water Quality Control Division and the Healthy Rivers Fund. (The UWP AmeriCorps/VISTA Program was supported by TriCounty Water Conservancy District, GMUG National Forest, the Telluride Foundation, Western Mining Action Network, and the Trust for Land Restoration.)

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The purpose of these presentations is not only for the public to hear about the problems identified and the possible solutions targeted by the plan, but also to gather citizen input prior to the writing of a final draft. It is the intention of UWP to use the plan

both as a tool to restore health to the watershed where needed, and as a guide to keep the watershed healthy in future decision-making.

The draft plan identifies as problem areas: low seasonal flows on the Uncompahgre, accelerated snowmelt, heavy metals and selenium (the river below Montrose is on the impaired waters list because of selenium levels), and recreation hazards and conflicts.

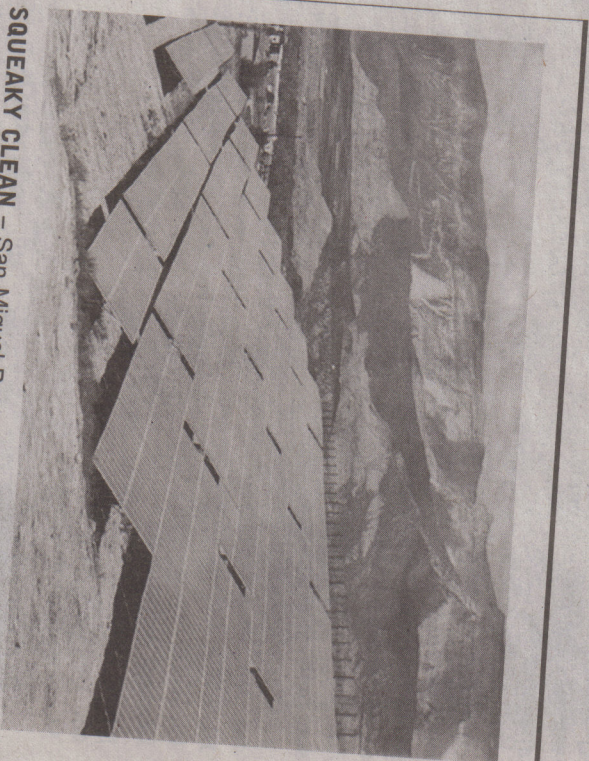
The plan's goals include: improving water quality (reducing heavy metals, selenium, salt, nutrients and sediment levels); improving riverine ecosystem function (flood management, riparian buffers and new wetlands); improving seasonal flows; improving recreational opportunities; and creating a stable stakeholder group, with

the funding of a watershed coordinator.

Presentation and public

comment will be from 6:30-8 p.m. The Community Center is located next to Town Hall at 320 Sixth Ave. The plan can be seen at uncompahgrewatershed.org. There is a table of contents to assist in finding areas of interest.

For more information, contact Matthew Jurjonas, Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership Outreach Coordinator, UWPVista@gmail.com; 773/726-0105.



SQUEAKY CLEAN - San Miguel Power Assn. will buy power from this solar garden being built by Clean Energy Collective in Montrose County. (Courtesy photo)