

Pier Proposed at Crystal Lake

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT

OURAY – A popular lake-fishing area south of Ouray may soon become more accessible to disabled anglers, if proposed plans for an ADA-compliant fishing pier there come to fruition.

The Bureau of Reclamation has announced that this summer, it plans to drain Crystal Lake, a manmade lake in Ironton Park along Highway 550 on Red Mountain Pass, in order to rebuild the outlet works of the dam that stops the lake at its north end. In addition to dam repair, the project also calls for the perimeter of the lake to be shored up with riprap (big chunks of rock) which will make it trickier for anglers – especially those who are disabled – to reach its shores and wet a line.

U.S. Forest Service fisheries biologist Matt Dare, who works out of the Gunnison National Forest District headquarters in Delta, has come up with a plan to not only preserve but enhance accessibility to the Crystal Lake fishing area going into the future. He suggested the scheduled lake drainage provides the perfect opportunity to build a fishing pier there, designed to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.



CRYSTAL LAKE – The popular fishing area south of Ouray on the way to Red Mountain Pass may get a fishing pier accessible to disabled anglers, if stakeholders secure a Fishing Is Fun grant from the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife. (Courtesy photo)

Now, he is seeking support from community stakeholders for the proposal, and hopes to win a Fishing Is Fun grant from the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife to fund the construction of the pier.

“It’s a gem in plain sight,” Dare said of Crystal Lake at a Ouray City Council meeting on Tuesday. The lake is richly stocked with cutthroat

trout, which will be removed from the lake as it is drained and relocated until the conclusion of the Bureau of Reclamation project. The proposed pier would jut out approximately 16 feet into the lake, enhancing fishing opportunities once the lake is restocked.

see **PIER** on page 32

PIER from page 7

The Fishing Is Fun program uses federal money allocated to each state based on the number of licensed anglers each year. In Colorado, it provides up to \$900,000 in matching grants annually to local and county governments, park and recreation departments, water districts, angling organizations and others for projects to improve angling opportunities. Money is given out to projects through a competitive process.

The Forest Service is partnering with the Uncompahgre Watershed Project to apply for the grant, which is due in April of this year and will largely be drafted by Dare. Construction, if awarded, will take place in the summer of 2013.

The total cost estimate for the project is \$25,000. Fishing Is Fun would refund 75 percent of that cost; the county and other stakeholders would need to make an in-kind contribution of about \$7,250 toward the project.

At its meeting Tuesday, Feb. 21, the Ouray City Council gave its blessing to the fishing pier proposal, and committed to writing a letter of support. Dare will bring the proposal before the Ouray County Board of Commissioners on March 20.