

# **Friends of the Lower Blue River**

Minutes of the Annual Meeting

Saturday, August 8, 2009

Pass Creek Ranch

Sam Kirk, President of the Friends of the Lower Blue River, welcomed everyone to the Annual Meeting, and thanked Jim and Sandy Donlon for hosting the meeting on their ranch, overlooking the beautiful Gore Mountain Range.

Sam pointed out the information tables for the "Hidden Gems Wilderness Campaign", staffed by Kurt Kunkle, and for "Defeating Noxious Weeds," staffed by John Taylor. He suggested that attendees stop by the tables before or after lunch to get specific information.

Everyone was reminded to be sure to pay their 2009 membership dues today, in order to have your name included in the raffle of a John Fielder framed photograph, valued at \$1,000, to be given away during the business meeting. Members and guests were invited to have lunch, which was from Peak Provisions, and included a variety of sandwiches, snacks, and drinks.

Sam Kirk called the Annual Business Meeting to order at 12:05, and again thanked Jim and Sandy Donlon for their gracious hospitality in hosting our meeting. Jim then welcomed everyone, and gave a brief history of Pass Creek Ranch, and their love for the Lower Blue River Valley.

Sam then introduced and welcomed our state and local officials that were present, Senator Dan Gibbs and Lake Dillon Deputy Fire Chief, Jeff Berino. They were later included on a panel of experts discussing various issues relating to the Lower Blue River Valley.

Sam also introduced our new Executive Director, Myrth McDonald, who told us about herself and her family, her connections to Colorado in her youth, and finally returning here after college. Myrth gave a short review of the Board's new Officers, Executive Committee, and the Retreat in May. Myrth again thanked our hosts Sandy and Jim Donlon of Pass Creek Ranch, for providing such a beautiful setting for our annual meeting, mowing the field, arranging for our tent, and our hay bale podium.

Priscilla Ledbury, Secretary, then read the minutes from our 2008 Annual Meeting, and they were ratified by the members present.

Frank Isenhardt, Treasurer, gave a brief Treasurer's Report for 2008. We had a tiny surplus in 2008, with an Income of \$5,600 and Expenses of \$5,400. As of July 2009, we have had Income of \$4,300 and Expenses of \$4,000. Frank reminded everyone that our Fiscal and Membership year is January to December. In addition, he reported that the FOLBR Board of Directors has decided to change the categories of membership dues beginning in 2010. There will be five levels of membership,

beginning with River Runner (\$50 - 1 person), Lower Blue Campers (\$75-99 – 1+/ family), Backpackers (\$100-\$249), Mt. Climbers (\$250-\$999), and finally the Gore Range Summitters (\$1000+).\*\*

Sam then introduced the current Board Members, and thanked them for their service. And he asked for everyone to give special thanks to retiring Board members, Tom Kaesemeyer, Adam Poe, Pauline Child, and Tom Jones.

Sam asked for a motion to elect the remaining Board members: Sam Kirk, John Fielder, Priscilla Ledbury, Frank Isenhardt, Myra Isenhardt, Currie Craven, Jim McCotter, Lynn Amstutz, Roger Wegner, John Hillman, Signe Ferguson, John LeCoq, George Beardsley, and Pam Beardsley, to an additional term. Motion passed.

Lynn Amstutz, of the Nominating Committee, presented John Taylor for election as a new Board member. Motion passed, and John will join the board.

Myrth and Sam conducted the drawing for John Fielder's beautifully framed photograph of the McCullough Creek Drainage. John was thanked for his wonderful donation, valued at \$1,000. Bob Girvin was the lucky winner. Congratulations, Bob.

There being no New Business to discuss, Sam adjourned the business meeting at 12:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Priscilla Ledbury, Secretary

*\*\*Subsequent to the annual meeting, the Board of Directors voted to change the dues levels for 2010, and did away with naming the levels. The new membership levels will be announced and go in to effect in January, 2010.*

Immediately following our business meeting, Sam introduced our Panel of Invited Experts:

State Senator Dan Gibbs – AND – Summit County Wildfire Mitigation Specialist

Scott Hummer – Blue River Water Commissioner

Jeff Berino -- Lake Dillon Fire District Deputy Fire Chief

Jerry Peterson – Lake Dillon Fire Authority Board Member

Ross Wilmore – USFS East Zone Fire Management Officer

Joel Cochran – Summit County Emergency Manager

Senator Dan Gibbs, informed us of another hat that he now wears as Summit County Wildfire Mitigation Officer. We all know him, as the Senator who introduced the Bark Beetle to the Capitol, in a test tube that he always carried with him. He even had a log in his office to show others the danger to our Colorado forests. Senator Gibbs began working for us in 2006, and has introduced and carried several bills in both the House and Senate, many relating to the Wildland Urban Interface. He informed us of

new legislation to give a Tax Credit for up to \$2500 for Tree Removal Expenses, so encouraged everyone to save their receipts. In the future, he plans to work towards more Grant opportunities for Fire Mitigation efforts.

Scott Hummer, addressed water issues and whether the drought is over? Although there is no drought this year in Colorado, we must realize that this has not happened in the last 10 years.

This year we have snow left on the mountains, and it's early August. Both Dillon and Green Mountain Reservoirs filled to the maximum this year. And we will have more water during the next 3-5 years, due to the dead trees consuming less water. But, threats to our water supply depend on development on the Front Range. Our Economic Blood is our Water Supply. We have to look at the effect of climate change in the future, abandoned water rights, and wildfires.

Jeff Berino, talked about the timetable for the new Fire Station North of Silverthorne. They are expecting a Final Silverthorne Town Council approval this Fall. This station will be designed for fighting fires in the North end of Summit County, and will be "Water on Wheels". The Lake Dillon Fire District is working with the Heeney Fire District to map with GPS all of the water sources in the lower blue assure that fire fighters know where to access water, year-round.

LDFD has quadrupled training for forest fires, and water tankers are now available in Silverthorne, Heeney, and Summit Cove.

Dr. Gary Peterson, a Lake Dillon Fire Authority Board Member, gave us an update on the new Silverthorne fire station. Unfortunately, the construction will be delayed due to budget shortfalls and lower tax income based on new property appraisals. Construction probably will begin in 2012. Overall communication is improving between different fire districts in the county.

Ross Wilmore of the US Forest Service, introduced Jan Cutts, our new District Ranger.

He discussed the Global Event that is now occurring with the Pine Beetle epidemic from Canada to the Rocky Mountains, tracing the lodgepole pine fires from the 1870s, 80s, and 90s to today.

Our 100+ year old trees, drought conditions over the last ten years, and pine beetles have killed our trees. As the trees die and lose needles, the canopy opens, young lodgepoles blow over, and grasses aspens, and new lodgepoles will appear. The "Wildland Urban Interface – Community Wildfire Protection Plan" is a cooperative to protect the homes along the forest edge. Work has been done at Wildernest, Mesa Cortina, Willow Creek, and Maryland Creek. There will be a decision this Fall about beginning to clear the WUI at Rock Creek, Slate Creek, Seirra Bosque, and other locations in the lower blue river valley. There is a Wildland Fire Task Force including State, Federal, and Local agencies, which has developed a joint operating plan for all forest fire emergencies. Fire departments, fire districts, US Forest Service, and Summit County Emergency Management are all working together to implement the plan as needed.

Joel Cochran, talked about some of the problems with providing emergency services to the Lower Blue River Valley, due to its rural character, limited cell phone service, and livestock concerns. He handed out cards with his contact information ([www.scalert.org](http://www.scalert.org)), so that people could confirm that their phone was included on the Emergency "Reverse 911" call listing, or to add their cell phone to the list. He also had a copy at the meeting for people to look at, or you can call the dispatch number 970-668-8600. In case of an emergency, a phone message would be sent to all land-line phones, even if the number is un-listed. Other ways to get Emergency information are with National Weather Service radios, or news over Public Service Radio. Joel talked about the 3 Ps to emergency management, Planning, Preparing, and Practicing. We all need to think about what we can do if there is a fire emergency. How can we save human lives, animals, property, and the community?

If, the FOLBR Board wants to pursue the possibility of improving cellular service in the Lower Blue by adding new sites, we should send a letter to Joel, who would then put a package together for Verizon and Qwest. Several attendees expressed interest in this, as an emergency service.

Questions and Answers:

Q - Would the fire be fought differently if it starts West or East of the Blue River?

A - Ross – Fire burns with the wind (from West to East) and uphill, so if a fire starts in the rugged, roadless, area of Eaglenest Wilderness, we would manage it very aggressively on the eastern side of the fire, near homes. It will produce a lot of smoke to the East, for people and animals, but a sage fire is easier to put out if it crosses the road and river. A fire starting to the East is better, since the fire and smoke should go East.

Q – Why is the Blue River Campground still closed, since the dead trees have been removed?

A – Jan Cutts – When the contractor finished removing the trees, the concessionaire did not have staff to open the facility. It will be opened next year.

Sam thanked all of our Panelists, our hosts Jim and Sandy Donlon, and all of our members who attended the meeting.