

ROCC PLC COMMITTEE February REPORT

TOPIC: OVERUSE AND ABUSE OF BLUE LAKES

BACKGROUND:

1. Huge increase of hiking and overcrowded camping at Blue Lakes resulting in trash, human waste & TP left at the Blue Lakes area, including the trails.
2. Lack of land stewardship and knowledge of proper etiquette in alpine area
3. Committee members have communicated with and gathered support from:
 - A. Forest Service - Dana Gardunio and Julie Jackson
 - B. Ridgway Town Council
 - C. Ouray Town Council
 - D. BOCC
 - E. ROCC Land Use Committee
 - F. Lynn Padgett - BOCC
 - G. Jake Neice - BOCC
 - H. David Taft
 - I. Joe Ryan - San Juan Hut System
 - J. Markus van Meter - Advertiser for Ouray Town Council
 - K. Abraham Proffitt - Western State Graduate student doing research for Forest Service
 - L. Karen Risch - Publisher for OTG Hiking Guide
 - M. Steve Boyle - OTG

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

"SAVE THE BLUES" CAMPAIGN

1. Coordinate with Forest Service:
 - a. Hiker info booths with volunteers at the trailhead: give out "Leave no Trace" pamphlets and do a Forest Service survey .
 - b. On April 6 we finalize our role with the Forest Service when we'll advocate:
 1. Encourage designated -not dispersed camping - a permit system
 2. Limit camping and hiking to 2 open areas about 1/2 mile north of the trailhead
 3. Fence the current camping area just a short distance north of the trail head and put up "No Camping" signs where appropriate
 4. If camping is allowed, it be limited to the timbered area that you encounter before reaching the lake
 5. No camping by the lake
 6. WAG bags or Biffy Bags and trash barrels
 7. More rangers to monitor campers
 8. More signs to educate people on the Dos and Don'ts
2. Partner with Ridgway and Ouray Town Councils to educate the public on land stewardship:
 - a. encourage businesses/motels to hand out flyers at cash register;
 - b. placards on tables in restaurants
 - c. Websites prominently give info on pack out your trash and human waste disposal
 - d. WAG bags or Biffy Bags
3. BOCC
 - a. Advertise land stewardship concepts
 - b. Declare public health emergency at Blue Lakes because of the potential pollution of the drinking water at Log Hill
 - c. Expand camping areas, preferably at lower elevations

4. County Roads - monitor and prohibit people from illegally parking and camping by the side of the road
5. Better enforcement of our county rules
6. Contribute monetarily to the solution
7. Refer to ROCC's March 2 letter to Dana Gardunio for more details