

ROCC PLC Sept 2021 Report

Background

1. Last January the “Save the Blues” campaign was initiated with outreach to the BOCC, Ridgway and Ouray Town Councils, Forest Service, Great Old Broads, Ouray Trail Group, Plaindealer, Ouray and Ridgway Visitor Centers.
2. Local businesses and local people were contacted and original ROCC posters created by Roze Evans distributed.
3. Info tables set up at local events such as the Music in the Park, Riverwatch & Le Faire.
4. Outreach to on line publication to NOT advertise Blue Lakes of the overuse and abuse of the area.
5. Forest Service hired Erica Tucker, San Juan Mt Assoc. to manage the sign in for trail head ambassadors to educate hikers and campers. ROCC initiated this first.

Final report is:

- 35 volunteer shifts at the trailhead
- 36 volunteers
- 638 backpackers contacted
- 3111 day hikers contacted

Issues

Stop the overuse and abuse of Blue Lakes

Educate the public about healthy land stewardship, especially disposing human waste. Do the math: 3111 X each hiker's cat holes EQUALS 3111 pollutions to the area – not counting theirs dogs.

Stop online and social media advertising of Blue Lakes

Possible Action Plans

1. Give the Blue Lakes area and trail a two-year period to restore and regenerate by stipulating no camping or hiking, and only allow designated parking that is enforced.
2. Forest Service would like to establish trailhead tent again summer 2022 with the help of ROCC
3. Join Lynn Padgett’s newly formed ORCA (Ouray Recreation and Conservation Alliance) committee that includes all local environmental activist organizations (Ouray County, City of Ouray, Town of Ridgway, Gunnison County, Hinsdale County, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Ridgway State Park, the Ouray Ranger District of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests, the Bureau of Land Management, the Uncompahgre Field Office, and the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership, and the National Forest Foundation) Al Lowande attended 1st meeting and we’re looking for someone to volunteer to be permanent member. Contact Diane Thompson if interested – dianet7@yahoo.com.

Recommended Action

Now that the Save the Blues campaign has closed for the season, the Uncompahgre National Forest managers are planning for the next steps. They are seeking public input on the Blue Lakes, and your opinions and ideas are important! Please see the attached flier and add your comments by October 15

(you can either email them to Julie Jackson or submit them on line at Story Map Journal).By winter the Forest Service will move into formal scoping and NEPA analysis, and Julie will let us know when we can submit additional formal comments. Hopefully by next summer the USFS will have the NEPA completed and ready for implementation, with improved changes to dispersed camping and trail use regulation. Wait until the Forest Service develops and informs us of their plan for the Blue Lakes summer 2022 regulations, then decide how involved ROCC Public Lands Committee will get.