

# Healthy Waterfront Celebration - Riverbend Park, Palisade, CO

June 11, 2008 – 5:30pm – 9:30pm

## Presentations

### Dr. Russell Walker, Mesa State College

Riparian systems play an especially important role in arid environments. For example, a widely-heard quote is that although riparian areas occupy only 5% of land in the arid west, these areas are used by 90% of wildlife. Russ provided an overview of riparian functions and values and touched on some of the ways we assess riparian health. He identified local challenges to riparian systems and shared some of his own observations.

### Brian Mahoney, Riverfront Foundation

Brian provided a detailed history of how the riverfront cleanup and trail system were initiated in Grand Junction, and a vision for expanding the trail system.

### Tim Sarmo, Palisade Town Manager

Made a brief appearance to note success in obtaining "outstanding waters" designation for drinking water supply from State + air frustrations with delays in getting permitted for whitewater park.

### Rob Bleiberg, Mesa Land Trust

Rob described how the Mesa Land Trust has used incentive-based tools for riparian conservation

### Michael Warren, Mesa County Planning

Michael discussed the range of options available to planners and public officials for protecting riverfronts:

**Healthy Waterfronts Opportunities Continuum**

Tools <sup>1,2</sup>	More Regulatory ←							Less Regulatory →							Comprehensiveness <sup>3</sup>		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
Zoning (floodplain, stormwater, wildlife, overlay, setbacks, etc.)	■																High
Subdivision Design Standards		■															Overlay
Buffers - Variable Width			■														Zoning
Master Plan - Policy				■													Fee Purchase
Watershed Plan - Policy					■												Watershed Plan - Policy
Best Management Practices (BMPs) [water quality, etc.]						■											Master Plan - Policy
Transfer of Development Rights							■										Inventory & Mapping
Inventory & Mapping								■									Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs)
Public Education									■								BMPs
Economic Development - Govt. Incentives Tax Credits										■							Buffers - Variable Width
Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)											■						Subdivision Design Standards
Fee Purchase												■					Public Education
													■				Transfer of Development Rights
														■			Economic Development
															■		Low

- 1 Each tool can be created with a "degree" of regulation and comprehensiveness
- 2 Tools can be used in combination
- 3 Comprehensive - Can be in scope (breadth) or in degree (intensity) of protection



June 11, 2008

Political Will - Each community is unique with respect to their "will" or desire to protect waterfronts/watersheds/riverfronts  
 Institutional Ability - Each community has a financial "ability" to implement and carry-out waterfront/watershed/riverfront protection

## Discussion Notes

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Following the presentations, audience members shared their vision for the valley's waterfronts and ideas about the tools to use to achieve the vision.

### Vision

- Continuous greenbelt – rivers + tributaries
- Healthy ecosystems (not tamarisk)
- Public access – including free public access not requiring a parks permit
- Setbacks greater than 150 feet
- Responsible development (standards)
- Cultural facilities and assets along the river
  - Want condo's, like Boise?
  - Concerts
  - Parks
  - Educational facilities to increase appreciation for the rivers, and therefore their desire to protect them
- Are the riverfronts for people or wildlife?
  - Green lawns aren't the best wildlife habitat
  - Have and need a mix of wild and manicured areas
  - Should look at a particular location and decide what's most appropriate there
- Good connections to urban trails and neighborhoods
- Respect the dynamic character of the river/ give it room to move
- Think and coordinate upstream and downstream

### Tools

- Audubon Nature Center
- Collaboration/ Coalitions/ Communication – willingness to work with unusual partners
- Marketing effort, like Durango's
- \$\$ and Volunteers – GOCO grant money is diminishing
- Political leadership must embrace the vision
- Well-formulated Master Plan
  - Palisade and Fruita included riverfront trails in theirs, which are done
  - GJ plan in process
  - Need county plan as well
  - Intergovernmental agreements
- Protective ordinance in the code – ties the political process to the Master Plan
- Education/ Celebration
- Grand Green Plan city is planning
- Tamarisk Coalition River Festival interest meeting Tues 5:30pm Coffee Muggers call 970-256-7400 for more info
- Quarterly meetings of riverfront revitalization/ trails partners – inform attendees of the next one

## **Speaker Biographies**

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### **Dr. Russell Walker**

Russ loves living on the Western Slope of Colorado but also enjoyed northern Ohio (where he grew up), Iowa, and northern Florida. After graduating from Oberlin College, he was a lab rat for about 10 years, emerging with a Ph.D. in chemistry but no desire to be a practicing chemist. By chance, he took a job managing Superfund cleanups for the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation and found environmental work much more to his liking. He moved to Grand Junction in 1990 with his wife to work for the Department of Energy contractor, but jumped at the chance in 1993 to become a professor of Environmental Science at Mesa State College, a position he holds today. His primary interests are aquatic systems, risk assessment, and air quality.

### **Brian Mahoney**

Brian has lived in Grand Junction since 1970. As a Past President and member of the Grand Jct. Lions club, he chaired a committee to investigate the possibility of a park at the Confluence. That grew into a \$100,000 Lions Club donation, which was matched by the City Council, and again by the Energy impact Block Grant committee. With these funds at hand, members of the community formed the Riverfront Commission in 1987. Brian became a Founding member of the Commission, with Bill Ela and Jim Robb as chairman. Brian engineered the purchase of Watson Island (1991) and then Dunn Auto Salvage (1993) to commence the Riverfront efforts at the confluence. He became Chairman of the Commission in 1992 and remained as such for 8 years. After that he became Chairman of the Riverfront Foundation and remained such until 2008. He remains a member of the Foundation. In total, he has been connected to the Riverfront effort for 21 years.

### **Rob Bleiberg**

Hired by Mesa Land Trust in 1996, Rob has led the organization through a significant growth period. He has established strategic partnerships with Mesa County, the Nature Conservancy, American Farmland Trust and other private and public entities. Rob's experience includes Land & Water Protection Intern with the Nature Conservancy of Colorado; 4 years as Regional Coordinator for the Student Conservation Association (SCA) in Boulder, CO and Yellowstone N.P.; Environmental Journalism Intern with High Country News in Paonia, CO. Rob has an M.S. in Natural Resource Policy from University of Michigan and a B.A. in American Studies from Wesleyan University.

### **Michael Warren**

Michael is Mesa County's Long Range Senior Planner.