

FIRST DRAFT

Keeping Hanging Lake Trail usable has been difficult task

In the early 1980s, a crew working for the White River National Forest spent the better part of two summers rebuilding portions of the 1.5-mile-long trail to Hanging Lake, on Deadhorse Creek above Glenwood Canyon.

Forest Supervisor Tom Evans had decided that no horses, mules or helicopters were to be used on the project. So, the members of the crew, which

included women, each hiked the trail several times a day carrying 90-pound packs of concrete on World War II-era pack boards, recalled Jerry Craghead, who was the trail crew foreman at the time.

Sarah Rebitzke Moss, one of the crew members, recalled the packs were bottom heavy.

"We would occasionally topple over and lay there like turtles on our backs," she said in an email to Craghead.

Timbers, hardware, rosebushes to discourage hikers from taking shortcuts at switchbacks, and other construction materials also had to be carried up the trail by the crew members.

Bill Johnson, the recreation staff officer for the Eagle Ranger District at the time, oversaw the project. He recalled that the crew members had to carry a heavy rock drill up the trail, as well.

"We couldn't do any blasting there, so we had to use that old rock drill," he said.

As the project neared completion, the crews set guardrail-posts in holes drilled in the rock at the steep upper end of the trail, poured concrete around the posts, and left for the day.

When they returned the next day, they discovered that, as Craghead put it, "some SOB had torn all the posts out." The vandal or vandals had also destroyed a large section of rock retaining wall the crew had just built.

"It must have taken hours" to do all that damage, Craghead said.

After that, new rules were adopted. The crew was allowed to contract with outfitter Wes Schlage of Burns to use horses and mules to carry concrete and other materials up the steep trail to repair the vandalism and complete the project.

That project, worked on in 1980 and 1981, won a U.S. Department of Agriculture Certificate of Merit in 1983 for work "that exceeded expectations of quality and quantity."

It was also "probably the first major reconstruction of the Hanging Lake Trail since the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) was in there" in the 1930s, Craghead said.

But it wasn't the last time the Forest Service made significant improvements to the trail in the 1970s and later. Nor was it the last time that vandals caused damage.

Major trail reconstruction projects were undertaken in 2010 and 2015.

In 2010, a helicopter was used to carry tools and materials to the lake, where the boardwalk around the lake was replaced, as well as the pipe handrail that was installed in the 1980s.

In 2015, several benches



JUDY SILBERNAGEL/Special to the Sentinel

Hanging Lake as it appeared in 2019.



COURTESY OF JERRY CRAGHEAD

Sarah Rebitzke Moss, a member of the Forest Service crew that rebuilt the Hanging Lake Trail in the 1980s, worked the heavy rock drill to create holes for a metal guardrail near the top of the trail.

along the trail were replaced, and a rock retaining wall was constructed.

Both the 2010 and 2015 projects utilized numerous volunteers.

Today, as the result of a forest fire in 2020 and the mudslides that occurred this past summer, the Forest Service is again planning work on the trail. Heavily worn sections are also repaired.

"We are working to have a primitive trail open in summer 2022," said David Boyd, spokesman for the White River National Forest. "We're not sure exactly what that will look like, but it will probably include stream crossings and some parts of the trail traversing over the debris flow."

He also said the Forest Service is "hoping to have a sustainable, permanent trail to last 50 to 100 years ready in the next couple of years." But that project is still in the initial planning stages.

Natural disasters aren't the only things that have threatened Hanging Lake over the years.

In the early 1990s, a Colorado man filed for all of the water and mineral rights in Hanging Lake and Deadhorse Creek with the stated intention of bottling water and selling it to tourists at the Hanging Lake trail head.

His application was denied by the state water court, and the Colorado Water Conservation Board filed for rights to protect the water.

In 1995, a Colorado Department of Transportation retaining wall made of recycled tires at the Hanging Lake rest area burst into flame and closed the trail and rest area for several days. The



JUDY SILBERNAGEL/Special to the Sentinel

A hiker enjoys the beauty of the falls above Hanging Lake in 2019.

experiment into the use of recycled tires for retaining walls

was deemed a failure by CDOT.

Vandals struck on several occasions, leaving graffiti on rocks and causing other damage that forced temporary closure of the trail.

In May of 2020, even though the trail was closed because of the pandemic, several people illegally engaged in base jumping from the cliffs above Hanging Lake. One was injured and had to be rescued and taken to a local hospital.

It wasn't all bad news. In addition to the several trail projects, in 2011, Hanging Lake was designated a natural landmark of national significance because of its outstanding geological features. Still, threats continued, with the most serious human threat being the crowds who want to visit the lake.

In 1972, the White River National Forest recorded 16,000 visitors. By 2018, that number had ballooned more than tenfold, to 186,000 visitors.

That's why, in 2019, the Forest Service implemented a reservation and fee permit system, limiting the total number of people on the trail to no more than 615 per day during peak visitation months.

Additionally, in cooperation with the city of Glenwood Springs, a bus shuttle system was established to alleviate traffic problems at the parking area. Trail users who obtained reservations could also ride bicycles to the trail head.

The allure of Hanging Lake has drawn countless visitors for more than 120 years, many of whom

weren't prepared for the rigors of the steep trail.

"Part of the charm was that you had to work a little for the reward" of reaching the lake, Craghead said. "I'll never forget the Canadian woman who was literally crawling up the last section of the trail, in tears because it was so steep. But she refused to quit."

"That trail had women in high heels, people in flip-flops," Bill Johnson recalled. "Only about half the people who started made it all the way to the top."

The charm of Hanging Lake also makes people want to help, from the numerous volunteers who worked on the 2010 and 2015 projects, to the trail work conducted in the 1980s.

"That project generated a lot of excitement within the Forest Service," Craghead said. "There was enough interest in it that staff from the forest supervisor's office and other ranger districts came to help work on it at different times."

Other crew members included Shawn Day, Glen Ewing, Deb Goldberg, Sue Lange Scheing, Terri Sysol, Vanda Whitaker and Andy Wood.

Craghead and Johnson, both now retired, said they supported the permit system in 2019.

"It was a gutsy move, but it was necessary," said Craghead.

Sources: *Author interviews with Jerry Craghead and Bill Johnson; emails from David Boyd, White River National Forest; newspaper articles at www.newspapers.com and www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org.*

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Infrastructure law includes millions for animal crossings

By MATTHEW BROWN
Deseret News

SALT LAKE CITY — Motorists and truckers aren't the only ones to benefit from the recently signed \$1.2 trillion infrastructure law, which includes the largest investment in road and bridges in a generation.

Wildlife will experience a lifesaving benefit if states tap into some \$350 million earmarked for the construction of animal crossings over and under highways that run through wildlife migrating routes in the West and elsewhere.

It's the largest single sum ever invested to resolve the deadly problem of vehicle-wildlife collisions that stretches back nearly a century when government first began funding the construction of high-use roads and highways, says Matt Skroch, project director of U.S. public lands and rivers conservation for the Pew Charitable Trusts.

"The law has the potential to yield a huge return on investment by making roads safer, and populations of wildlife healthier, across the American West," he wrote in a recent article for Pew Charitable Trusts.

Wildlife have been roaming the landscape for millennia before the automobile. Their migration corridors can stretch up to 200 miles as they head to the lower elevation valleys for winter foraging and return to the cooler mountain areas in the summer.

Skroch explained that the seasonal migrations among deer are passed down from generation to generation, so when roads started crisscrossing their routes in the West, collisions were inevitable. A report to Congress by the Federal Highway Administration showed more than 1 million wildlife-vehicle collisions occur annually, injuring or killing thousands of people and animals.

That study, the most recent available, was in 2008. And the carnage persists, particularly in the Western United States where traffic volumes have increased.

The Pew article co-authored by Skroch noted a stretch of U.S. Highway 550 near the Billy Creek Wildlife Area in western Colorado is infamous for its roadkill and occasional major accidents, as is a portion of U.S. Highway 26/287 between Riverton and Dubois in Wyoming.

But during the past decade, advances in GPS technology, such as collars affixed to deer, have also made it possible to map animal migration routes with pinpoint accuracy, which has also led to solutions beyond road signs, such as fencing or highway crossings dedicated to wildlife, that are enormously effective.

"Some of these structures have reduced collisions by more than 80%," Skroch wrote.

An example of that success is an overpass dedicated to wildlife erected at Parleys Summit along I-80 in Utah in 2018.

Video from the state's Department of Wildlife Resources shows dozens of animals, from rodents and deer to moose and bears, using the overpass at all hours.

In the two years before the \$5 million wildlife overpass was built, more than 100 wildlife-vehicle crashes were reported, according to the Utah Department of Transportation, and it's estimated the number of unreported collisions was four times that many.

The technological advances and data-backed successes in several states like Utah, helped public safety and wildlife stakeholders in both government and non-profit arenas successfully lobby Congress to include funding for wildlife crossings in the Biden administration's bill, Skroch explained.

"What the wildlife crossing provision in this new federal infrastructure and transportation bill is all about is providing the guidance and resources to really mainstream that win-win solution" that will save the lives of people and wildlife, he said.

Utah school district to pull two books from library shelves

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALT LAKE CITY — A Utah school district is removing two books from libraries after a complaint from a parent.

The Washington County School District in Southern Utah will pull the award-winning books "Out of Darkness" and "The Hate U Give," said communications director Steven Dunham.

The first book will come off secondary school shelves, and the second will be removed from elementary and intermediate schools.

"Out of Darkness" follows a romantic relationship between two teenag-

ers, a Mexican American girl and an African-American boy, in Texas in the 1930s.

"The Hate U Give" follows a 16-year-old's life after the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend at the hands of a police officer amid the Black Lives Matter movement.

The decision comes after committees reviewed the books and found profanity and sexually explicit content, Dunham said.

He said the school recognizes parents' rights, but hopes parents also recognize there are valuable lessons to be taken from the literature.

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