

BRIEFS

Council selects executive search firm

Gunnison City Council has chosen Strategic Government Resources (SGR) to find the next city manager. The vote was taken during its regular meeting this week.

Council conducted interviews with representatives from both SGR and Prothman Company Tuesday afternoon before the evening session. The two companies were the finalists among 11 companies who submitted bids. Prothman Company has performed several executive searches for Gunnison County.

SGR's total estimated cost for services is \$25,000 and stated its approximate search time to be 15 weeks.

The search follows the resignation of former City Manager Ken Coleman Jan. 7. The city's charter requires the city manager position be permanently filled by July 6 — 180 days following the vacancy.

County gives DMV deadline extension

Gunnison County officials reported this week that the Colorado Department of Revenue, Motor Vehicle Division is in the final stages of securing a new home for its driver's license operation in the valley — and that the deadline for relocation has been extended until the end of March.

The office is presently located in the Blackstock Government Center — but the lease for space in the building expired in 2007, and last summer county commissioners decided to formally terminate the agreement to make room for planned renovations in the County Clerk and Recorder's Office.

Forest Service considers coal reinstatement

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced their intent to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to consider two coal lease modifications on lands adjacent to the West Elk Mine near Somerset, Colorado.

In 2014 the West Elk previous lease modifications were vacated by a federal judge. To remedy the deficiencies identified by the court, a supplemental Draft EIS and Final EIS will be prepared. The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Supplemental EIS in the Federal Register provides official notice of the Forest Service's decision to resume analysis. The NOI will be published in the Federal Register on Feb. 23, 2016.

Comments received during previous comment periods will remain as part of the public record. Comments will continue to be accepted while the Supplemental EIS is being prepared. The Supplemental Draft EIS is estimated to be released this spring with an additional formal comment period following its release.

Road damage threatens Alpine Tunnel access

Palisades wall crumbles under apparent slide

Chris Rourke
Times Staff Writer

Damage to the road leading to the Alpine Tunnel east of Pitkin has put the future accessibility of that historic district in limbo despite two decades and the equivalent of \$1 million of volunteer restoration work.

U.S. Forest Service Archaeologist Justin Lawrence said an apparent rock slide or avalanche has damaged the "Palisades" — a 33-foot high retaining wall built out of hand-cut stones to create a 452-foot long stretch of narrow gauge railroad bed upon which The Denver, South Park and Pacific Railroad trains once ran. Today the old grade is home to the road which climbs to an altitude of 11,523 ft. where the Alpine Tunnel is located.

"In the spring we will go up and assess the road," said Lawrence. "Any of the stones that can be re-used will be salvaged and stored until a plan has been developed. It is possible that motorized access to the Alpine Tunnel complex may have been affected."

The Alpine Tunnel was built between 1879 and 1881 and was an integral part of the narrow gauge line that connected St. Elmo to Pitkin. The tunnel only functioned for 28 years, being plagued with accidents, avalanches, cave-ins and fire. Still, to this day it is considered an engineering marvel.

For the last 20 years a group of committed volunteers has spent summers under the leadership of retired Forest Service Outdoor Recreation Planner Ray Rossman. Under the program called "Passport in Time," the volunteers have restored buildings and other structures, laid 60 feet of rails

and ties and assisted the estimated 3,500-5,000 visitors who venture to the site each season. Overseeing the volunteer work is one of the highlights of Rossman's career, he said.

"It's very disappointing to me what happened," said Rossman. "But you have to keep in mind that it's been there since 1881-1882, and things don't last forever."

Still, Rossman said he hopes to see the road restored — and the key to such repairs would be funding.

"It's too early to know what can be done," Rossman said. "I know what my wishes are. There may be options, but opening up the road again will be a long process."

Rossman said the Alpine Tunnel is significant because it was designated as an historic district and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. He said the site is also a popular tourist attraction, and suggested other motorized trails could be used to gain access to the site, though not with full-sized vehicles.

"Maybe it's not as bad as we anticipated," Rossman said hopefully. "Right now it's just a big question mark."

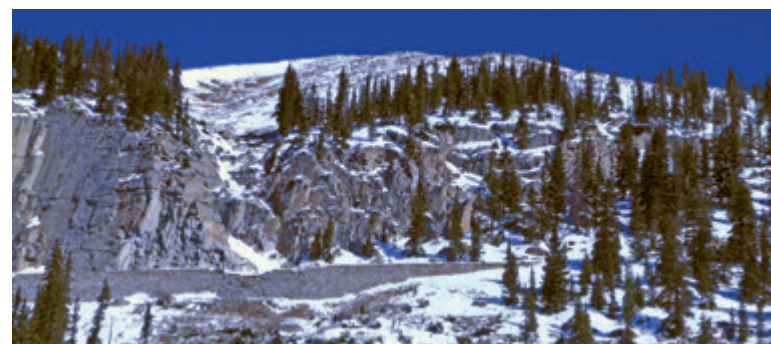
Conn and Renee Peterson have spent time each summer over the better part of two decades volunteering at the tunnel site. They planned to return again this summer.

"We'd like to be there for sure — we planned on going," said Con Peterson. "We'll have to see if they'll have anything for us to do or if they have the road open enough, since they're still assessing. It may be a while before we can decide."

Peterson joked that Rossman's recent retirement may have provoked the damaging slide.

"Maybe it said, 'If you're giving up, so am I,'" Peterson laughed.

(Chris Rourke can be contacted at 970.641.1414 or at chris.rourke@gunnisontimes.com.)



Matt Buchanan

The US Forest Service said an apparent rock slide or avalanche had damaged the road leading to the Alpine Tunnel. Damage to 933-foot retaining wall known as the "Palisades" will be assessed this spring.

Recent slide not area's first

Woodstock destroyed in 1884 by avalanche

David Primus
Special to the Times

Two railroads were headed to Gunnison in the early 1880s — the Denver and Rio Grande, which built over the Continental Divide at Marshall Pass, and the Denver, South Park and Pacific, building a tunnel under Alpine Pass north of Pitkin.

After piercing the Divide, the South Park needed to build a railroad grade from the tunnel at 11,600 feet to the Tomichi Valley. This was no small feat, requiring

building a road across a cliff face. They did this by constructing a retaining wall of stones 452 feet long and 33 feet high. They filled behind the retaining wall with rocks and dirt, forming the railroad grade. This became known as the Palisades, and up until this winter, provided vehicle access to the Alpine Tunnel site (see related article).

For more than 135 years, the old railroad bed has survived with very little maintenance, although several avalanche paths cross the road. Avalanches in this area were common and the railroad was often challenged to keep the tracks clear of snow. Also, just as today, avalanches presented a risk to life of those living and working in the high country. In 1884, disaster struck, killing

on A3



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FEATURED PROPERTY



SUMMER CABIN with seasonal access would make a great hunting cabin & family retreat. Located on the Lake City Cut-off road, this 864sf cabin sits on 40 acres bordering public lands; 12250 CR 26; **\$99,900**

BEAUTIFUL LOG HOME

with room for horses, borders small creek, "D" log interior, vaulted ceiling, pellet stove, 4 bdrm/2 bath, & large master bedroom with double closets. This bright & sunny home sits on 2.16 acres, no covenants, under cabinet lighting, & marble countertops; 95 Blackfoot Tr; **\$333,000**

IN-TOWN LOG HOME features sun porch, garden oasis with plenty of perennial flower gardens & trees, attached garage, large great room that can be converted to a 4th bdrm, 3 bath, & 2 fireplaces; 414 N. Taylor; **\$329,000**. Call Cathie for details.

PRICE REDUCED to \$795,000 on this 3783sf home with 3.92 acres of grazing pasture at 653 Pashuta. Includes 4 car garage plus carport, custom log home, private back patio area, built-in desk, bar/island seating, 2 sided fireplace, plenty of storage, large utility/mud room, & formal dining room.

GORGEOUS HOME with 1/2 mile of private fishing on Cochetopa Stream at 4066 Hwy 114 for **\$950,000**. This 3867sf home sits on 40 acres with an additional 40 acres that can be purchased adjacent to this property Borders BLM property on 2 sides. Includes nearly 5,000sf of heated RV space/workshop/garage areas. Get details at www.clarkeagency.net

BACK NINE GOLF COURSE LOT for sale, includes house plans, .40 acre, & utilities to the property; 795 Fairway Ln; **\$110,000**

NEW LISTING: 3.84 acre homesite at CR 10 & Sage Drive borders open space & is just 4 miles northeast of Gunnison. No HOA fees or covenants, multiple building sites, great views; **\$79,500**

PRIME LOCATION FOR YOUR NEW HOME: this 1/3+ acre lot is across from the golf course & just a stone's throw from the Gunnison River. Trees, partially fenced, .34 acre with views of Hartman Rocks Recreation Area; 635 Tomichi Trail; **\$130,000**

IN-TOWN BUILDING SITE at 1110 Vulcan Street: 6311sf level lot, city ditch access, close to the trail system & recreation center. Great neighborhood of newer homes; **\$59,500**



LOOKING FOR A HOME ON ACREAGE? This 3232sf home is just 20 minutes from Gunnison & 5 minutes from Blue Mesa Lake. It's on 48 acres, is perimeter fenced, & without covenants. There are numerous outbuildings & sheds on the property, as well as a garage & carport; 28288 Hwy 149; **\$349,000**



SOLID & WELL BUILT HOME with custom interior in excellent condition at 919 CR 17. You can't beat the views, either! This 2668sf home includes 2.1 acres, in-floor heat, 4 heated garage bays, 3 bdrm/2 bath, stucco exterior, extensive slate trim, spacious & comfortable; **\$548,000**

Visit other realtor listings at: www.clarkeagency.net

