

El Diente Peak claims another life

Dolores County Sheriff's office dealt with two search and rescue operations on Monday, July 26. One resulted in two injured people and a fatality, and the second with stranded bikers.

The first call was made by a member of a hiking group of seven that was attempting to transverse between Mt. Wilson and El Diente Peak. The caller, using his cell phone, was able to assist the rescue efforts. Three people were injured as the result of a rock slide, and one Peter Topp, 59, or Colorado Springs, CO, died on the mountain before the rescue medical team could get to him. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

The other two Kathy Donnelly, 31, of Bloomfield, CO and Charlie Zimmerman of Montrose, CO, were airlifted out by helicopters with injuries. Donnelly has injuries to her leg, head, and hip. Zimmerman had injuries to his head, back, and ribs. Both were taken to St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Junction.

Air Care in Durango was placed on standby while a helicopter from the Olathe Spray Service in Montrose and a helicopter from the Air National Guard assisted in getting a technical climb team from San Miguel Search and Rescue to the victims. Bad weather hampered the rescue operation throughout the afternoon.

At approximately 2:30 p.m. searchers were able to reach the injured climbers and render medical attention. Unfortunately, Topp had passed away before the medical climb team reached him.

A strong weather cell located over the area stopped recovery operations until later in the evening when the helicopters were able to make several hurried flights to the peak, safely recovering the climbers and rescue personnel.

Dolores County Sheriff Jerry Martin said the rescue operations went extremely well, except for the bad weather conditions encountered during the mission.

Several of the climbers had CORSAR (Colorado Search and Rescue) cards. By purchasing a CORSAR card, sheriff offices coordinating search and rescues are able to access the fund to help offset search expenses. Climbing rescues can be extremely expensive, draining sheriff's budgets.

San Miguel and Dolores County Sheriff's Offices coordinated the efforts to rescue the climbers.

The second call, which came at the same time involved the rescue of three stranded bikers on Scotch Creek, above Rico. The bikers were from Cincinnati, OH. They were exploring the area and had stopped some mountain bikers and asked if the road was passable by bike, and were told it was fine.

The Ohio biker just so happened to have 1100cc road bikes, not mountain bikes. They got their motorcycles stranded and had to walk out.

Sheriff Martin said he turned the rescue efforts over to the Rico chapter of Dolores County Search and Rescue. The group later helped the Ohio bikers retrieve their motorcycles from the trail.



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The Black Hawk helicopter pictured above helped transport the injured climber and the search teams from El Diente last Monday.

On the left, Shawn Donnelly, husband of one of the injured climbers is talking to Dolores County Sheriff Jerry Martin (center) and San Miguel County Sheriff Bill Masters (far right).

The staging area, and where the pictures were taken was at the Telluride Airport.

Part of the cost of the search will be paid for by climbers having Colorado Search and Rescue Cards. Contact Sheriff Martin for more information on these cards.

photo courtesy of Sheriff Jerry Martin

Planners pass well application to County

The Dolores County Planning Commission voted to pass an application to drill a gas well east of the Cahone Post Office on to the County Commission and recommend approval at a meeting July 27.

About an hour's worth of comments were taken and two people held the position that the Bill Barrett well is too close to Cahone. Jeanne Babin worried mostly about contamination of an aquifer that is across County Road R from the proposed well on Imo Jean Daves property. Babin lives across Highway 491, and said that the creek runs across her property. She brought two letters, one of which is printed on page 2 of this issue. Another, this one from Clinton Ratcliff, said that their property has a water well and expressed opposition to the Bill Barrett well in its proposed location.

Dirk Hood said he lives less than 1,000 feet from the proposed well site. He said he worries about noise and activity. He said he doubted that Dove Creek residents would want a gas well within 1,000 of the center of town. Later in the meeting he asked if Bill Barrett lives within 1,000 feet of one of his wells.

Babin said she wants the water in Alkali Creek to be tested before the well is developed. As the meeting began, Babin said she was representing several people including the two who wrote letters as well as Paul Stevens, and Jan Foster. She had several pictures and explained that Foster, who used to be Jan Erickson, had moved to Alamosa and her water well there had been destroyed because of chemicals being added to a nearby well.

Planning Chairman Steve Garchar asked Julie Ayres about the creek. "Most of these pictures are of your place," Garchar said.

Ayres said that until irrigation came in, the creek was seasonal, drying up during summer months. Now it drains irrigation water.

Tanya Jenkins worried about odors when wells are tested and gas is burned. She wondered about how much traffic would increase and Garchar said the proposal does have that information. The application, Garchar said, is available to anyone who wants to read

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Voters may get chance at a 1% sales tax

Dolores County will probably ask voters for a 1% sales tax this November. That was the feeling at a special meeting held July 22.

Extension Agent Dan Fernandez had been working on a grant application to pay for part of the costs of a community/senior center to the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and he said he had included a sales tax in the application. He said it would be a lot easier to convince DOLA officials to cough up the money if County citizens are willing to contribute. Fernandez called the County Sales Tax, "front and center" to the grant application.

In the application he is about ready to submit, the County will contribute \$500,000 from its reserve funds. DOLA will be asked for \$900,000, and an additional \$497,600 in a loan will be requested.

The ultimate decision on whether or not to ask voters for a sales tax was postponed, and details were left undecided. The Commission discussed whether or not to sunset the sales tax after any loans are paid back and whether or not to use sales tax money to rebuild County reserve funds.

Commissioner Ernie Williams said he thinks it would be wise financial planning to use a successful sales tax to rebuild the County's carry over. "It would just be keeping the carryover where it should be," he said. Commissioner Doug Stowe suggested that if a County sales tax is approved by voters, it should not sunset when loan money is paid back. He pointed out that operation of a community/senior center costs money, an esti-

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