

Bucket Brigade gets a second wind in Battlement Mesa

Low-tech monitors revealed hydrogen sulfide in Silt Mesa in 2011

John Colson
Post Independent Staff

PARACHUTE — Residents of Battlement Mesa are once again putting together a Bucket Brigade of citizen air-quality guardians to keep an eye on emissions from nearby gas drilling activities.

The low-tech, air-quality monitoring device deployed by the brigade in 2011 was the first to detect the presence in this area of hydrogen sulfide, a toxic and potentially fatal gas sometimes associated with gas drilling activities.

Battlement Mesa resident Dave Devanney said the renewal of the brigade is not linked to an ongoing investigation into a suspected natural gas spill along Parachute Creek, about four miles north of the town of Parachute.

"We just want to be prepared

for any eventuality," said Devanney, a member of the Battlement Concerned Citizens, the organization that first brought the Bucket Brigade to this area in 2010.

Battlement Mesa is an unincorporated community of approximately 5,000, just across the Colorado River from the town of Parachute in Western Garfield County.

Devanney said the chief reason he wanted to revive the bucket brigade is the fact that a new drilling company, Urso, last year bought the natural gas leases once held by Antero Resources.

Antero, before selling its leases to Urso, was planning to drill up to 200 natural gas wells, from nine different well pads, in or around the Battlement Mesa community.

Urso spokesman Don Simpson has said his company has no

immediate plans to drill any new wells around Battlement Mesa.

But, he said, the company is planning on conducting "workover" operations on existing wells, which could involve clearing blockages from the well bores or other techniques to improve the flow of natural gas.

Devanney noted that one Antero well in particular, the Watson Ranch well just outside the Battlement Mesa community boundary, started emanating noxious fumes in 2010 and prompted the founding of a local bucket brigade.

"Those that remember the fumes from the fracking of the Watson Ranch well pad in July of 2010 can understand the need to be prepared," Devanney wrote in an email sent out to former and prospective bucket brigade members.

The 'buckets'

The Bucket Brigade, a program of the Global Community Monitor (GCM) organization in California, is a low-tech method of gathering air samples that can be analyzed at GCM labs.

The "bucket" is a canister with which brigade members take air samples, seal them up and ship them off to GCM for analysis.

Although the brigade has not been active recently in Garfield County, in 2011 Devanney's group gathered samples of the air on Silt Mesa, near the home of the Strudley family, and detected high concentrations of hydrogen sulfide gas.

The bucket sample collected at the Strudleys, according to GCM, showed hydrogen sulfide at 185 times the level set by the Environmental Protection Agency for long-term serious health risks.

The family, complaining of numerous symptoms of ill

health, was forced to move out of their home in 2011 and filed a lawsuit against Antero Resources. A judge dismissed their suit in May 2012, but the family said they would appeal the decision.

Initially, industry officials and the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission denied that there could possibly be hydrogen sulfide in the gas fields of Garfield County.

But the chemical compound later began turning up in a number of wells around the area, sometimes at lethal levels, which Bucket Brigade adherents took as corroboration of their findings.

The training is scheduled for 9 a.m. on April 12 at the Grand Valley Recreation Center (formerly the Battlement Mesa Activity Center), 0398 Arroyo Drive, in Battlement Mesa.

icolson@postindependent.com

Change for summer youth corps concerns county commissioners

Steamboat group to oversee GarCo projects

John Stroud
Post Independent Staff

GLENWOOD SPRINGS — An administrative change for the Youth Conservation Corps program in Garfield County could mean a more rigorous time commitment for the young workers who enlist.

Last year, Garfield County partnered with both the Grand Junction-based Western Colorado Conservation Corps and the Rocky Mountain Youth Conserva-

tion Corps out of Steamboat Springs to oversee work crews on public lands here.

Recently, it was decided that the Rocky Mountain organization would be the sole provider of those services in Garfield County this year, Steve Anthony, who helps coordinate the program for the county, advised county commissioners this week.

Priority will still be given to Garfield County youth ranging in age from 18-25 for work crews in this county, he said.

Crew work dates will be from June 10 through Sept. 13, with crew members receiving a \$310 stipend per week and AmeriCorps education award of \$1,468 for completing 450 hours of service,

Anthony said.

The big change from last year, he said, is that crews will be expected to be in the field 24 hours a day, seven days a week, working, camping and spending off-time together. There would be occasional breaks for resupply and laundry, he said.

County Commissioner Tom Jankovsky expressed some reservations with that arrangement.

"That is a more rigorous time commitment," he said. "I don't want this to be a boot camp. I want it to be a work experience for students."

Last year, the county contributed \$40,000 for each crew of eight to 10 workers for projects on U.S. Forest and BLM

lands in Garfield County. The commissioners will consider a new contract with the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps group in May.

Among area projects tentatively listed for the year will be trail work in the East Elk, Mitchell, Grizzly and No Name creek areas near Glenwood Springs and New Castle, as well as the Sweetwater Lake area in the Flat Tops.

Fence work throughout the White River National Forest is also listed, as are three projects straddling the Garfield/Mesa County line in the Cayton and Wallace creek areas.

jstroud@postindependent.com

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Today's business workshop canceled

Inclement weather has canceled a workshop for business owners, "How to bring your products and services to the global marketplace," scheduled for today at the Colorado Mountain College Glenwood Center, 1402 Blake Ave.

The workshop was to be presented by the office of U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet and various local business and law-related agencies.

Bennet's office, which announced the cancellation, reported that the event will be rescheduled.

Roaring Fork Watershed Collaborative's Quarterly Meeting

The quarterly meeting of the Roaring Fork Watershed Collaborative will meet from 1-4 p.m. Thursday, April 11, at the Third Street Center's Calaway Room. The agenda will include the Watershed Plan Inventory of Activity, Aldis Strautin of NOAA presenting a long-range climate forecast for the Roaring Fork Valley, and an update on municipal water conservation efforts. Full agenda can be found at www.roaringfork.org/events. All are welcome to attend. The Roaring Fork Watershed Col-

laborative group comprises water and river professionals who work on and care about local watershed issues. For information call Barb at 927-8111.

Good Seed Community Garden

The Orchard, 110 Snowmass Drive in Carbondale, has released plans for the second phase of the Good Seed Community Garden, located on the north side of The Orchard property.

There will be more than 45 new garden plots this year, available in two sizes. The annual cost is \$25 for a small plot (5-feet-by-10-feet) and \$40 for the large plot (5-feet-by-20-feet).

The garden will open Saturday, April 13, for the 2013 growing season. The Good Seed Community Garden is unique in that as part of signing the gardening agreement, gardeners are asked to contribute 10 percent of their produce to those in need through either LIFT-UP or Feed My Sheep.

An informational meeting to learn more about the Good Seed Community Garden will be hosted at The Orchard at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 11. Spanish translation will be available. For more information please contact Garden@TheOrchardLife.com.



Eighth-grader Luis Medina practices his fire rescue drills as Greg Bak of Colorado River Fire Rescue stands ready to assist during a recent training exercise at Riverside Middle School. ACCESS Roaring Fork offers the Jr. Fire Rescue Academy as part of its "SecondShift" afterschool program.

Students learn fire safety and rescue

Staff Report

Garfield County middle-schoolers are receiving a lesson in fire safety and rescue from the Colorado River Fire Rescue this spring.

A group of students at Rifle and Riverside middle schools are attending the Jr. Fire Rescue Academy as part of ACCESS Roaring Fork's "SecondShift" afterschool program.

The academy provides the opportunity for Fire Rescue personnel to work directly with area youth in weekly classes that teach the participants fire safety, firefighting techniques and basic CPR. At one recent class monitored by Fire Rescue personnel, students learned

firsthand from the professionals how to extinguish a live fire. The 10-week session will culminate in a field trip to the fire station in each of the two communities.

Formed in September 2012 and dedicated to protecting life, home and property through leadership, education and partnerships, Colorado River Fire Rescue is the product of combining the Rifle and Burning Mountains fire protection districts.

The "SecondShift" afterschool program provides a wide-ranging academic and enrichment curriculum to students in five middle schools in Garfield County. For more information about ACCESS programs, visit www.accessrf.org.