



To: Honorable Mayor Clark and Ridgway Town Council
From: Preston Neill, Town Manager
Date: October 7, 2024
RE: **Town Manager's Report**

INTRODUCTION

This monthly report serves as an update to the Town Council and community members on key projects, activities, and community issues.

2024 MOSQUITO MANAGEMENT REPORT

From Rodney Paulson, Ridgway Public Works Maintenance Operator I:

Introduction:

In the late 1980's the Town of Ridgway ("Town") abandoned earlier mosquito control efforts (broadcast spraying) and commenced efforts to control mosquito populations through application of a larvicide. Concerns regarding the health issues related to aerial spraying drove the decision. These efforts continue to occur within and outside of the Town boundaries. For a number of years, the Town has provided larval mosquito control within and outside the municipal boundaries. Town personnel routinely patrol areas where water is allowed to stand or stagnate and treat such waters with Vector Bac G, a biological larvicide. The Town begins looking for larvae typically in late April or early May and typically begins finding larvae by the first or second week in May. The goal is to control all the larvae so that there is no need for aerial spraying. Work continues until the last irrigation of the hay fields and when it starts to freeze hard at night. This year, larvae were first noted in early May. Larvae slowed down with cool weather during mid-May and then ramped up toward the end of May with the runoff getting started. June through mid-July was an extremely busy time with high runoff. It included the highest Ridgway Reservoir level in 8 years and some heavy rain events.

Materials:

A biological larvicide, Valent BioScience Corporation's Vector Bac G is used to control the larvae. The active ingredient is *Bacillus thuringiensis*, subspecies *israelensis* (B.t.i.), strain AM 65-52, fermentation solids and solubles. The label for the granules indicates that the potency is 200 international toxicity units per milligram but notes the potency is not federally standardized. EPA registration is No. 73049-10, EPA Est. No. 33762-1A-001. Recommended application rates vary from 2.5 – 20 pounds per acre depending on the stage of the larvae, more mature larvae require the higher doses. Staff also uses B.t.i. briquettes (donuts) which are designed to last for about 30 days in remote areas where the standing water is likely to be there for an extended period of time. The application rate of the briquettes is up to 100 square feet of water surface area.



Methodology:

Town staff routinely checks for areas with standing or slow-moving water. Over the years, the Town has identified areas that are highly likely to have larvae and typically focuses on those areas. However, each year Town staff also check other areas which have not been irrigated or do not routinely have standing water and/or had livestock just to make sure nothing has changed. At each wet location, the staff person will wade out into the water and with a fine mesh scoop, will check for the presence of larvae. When larvae are present, Vector Bac G granules are typically placed in the water. At some locations (e.g., large, over-irrigated fields), rather than placing granules over a wide area, slow dissolving plugs or donuts of Vector Bac are placed in the feeder ditch.

Areas and Times Monitored:

As noted above, the staff focuses their attention on irrigated locations, those with livestock present, and other areas that are likely to have standing water. This year staff identified larvae around April 23rd and began treating. The attached map shows the areas that are patrolled weekly and the day each week each location is typically worked. The areas shaded in orange are the areas which most times will have abundant larval populations. Through the summer months, June through August, each of the orange areas, including the state park is treated weekly.

Costs:

The cost of the Vector Bac G granules is about \$3.30 a pound and a pound covers about 2,000 square feet of water surface. The 2024 efforts consumed about 4,000 pounds of granules. The State Park paid for their own 1,600 pounds which were applied by Town staff. This totaled about \$13,200 in larvicide purchased by the Town. We estimate that in a typical week we covered about 70 vehicle miles on mosquito patrols. Over 22 weeks, that equates to about \$1,031.80 at \$0.67 per mile. Mosquito labor in those 22 weeks totaled about 660 hours (average 30 hours per week), which should also be factored into the total costs incurred by the Town.

Results:

The program continues to be very successful. Unlike a number of other Western Slope communities which resorted to aerial spraying in 2012, Town staff has been able to control the mosquitoes at the larval stage and has not seen any significant influx of adults. Even the State Park indicated that the evenings were generally fine. One worker at the State Park did get West Nile virus, but it is not clear where she received the mosquito bite that caused the problem.

We continue to have a few County residents who have significant breeding areas on their properties and who request that we not enter their properties for mosquito treatment. We try to work with those landowners by encouraging them to treat their own properties, especially if they are in problematic areas. We have been more successful with some landowners than others. On the other hand, we have had several ranches who previously did not want to be included in



annual mosquito treatment operations reach out to request that we monitor and treat their properties, as needed.

Conclusions:

The Town’s program to control mosquitoes in the greater Ridgway area continues to be very effective. It requires quite a bit time and money, consuming much of the time of a full-time staff person from June through August. It’s worth noting that at the time of writing this report, most mosquito control activities have ended for the year. Thank you!

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF LAND USE

As budgeted for in the FY2024 Budget, Community Planning Strategies (CPS), Town staff and the Planning Commission worked to assess the relationship between Ridgway’s current land use mix and the market demand (or future market demand) for land by land use category. CPS and Town staff worked with Economies of Place to develop a summary report related to the economic implications of Ridgway’s land use mix. That report has been finalized and is now available on the Town’s website [HERE](#).

UPDATE ON BEAVER CREEK DIVERSION

Through technical assistance afforded by the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Wright Water Engineers, Inc. (“WWE”) was retained to provide a report summarizing WWE’s conceptual level plan, cost estimates, and associated assumptions for the design and construction of repairs to the Town’s intake structure and transmission system that were damaged by a debris flow that occurred on August 12, 2024. The report was completed on September 20, 2024. It is intended to provide a basis for the Town’s effort to secure initial funding from the Colorado Division of



Homeland Security & Emergency Management and the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection program for design and repairs to the damaged intake structure and transmission system. The report outlines and presents 1) WWE’s approach to developing a conceptual plan to repair and minimize the risk from future debris flows to the Town’s water transmission system; 2) estimated costs to secure an interim supply of raw water for summer 2025; and 3) an overall summary of estimated conceptual level costs for the design, permitting, and construction of the conceptual plan.



Also issued on September 20, 2024 was Governor Polis' written Executive Order declaring a disaster emergency due to the flooding and debris flow in Ouray County. The Order commits \$4.9M to repairs across our County.

Town staff's focus over the last few weeks has been on preparing an application to the Colorado Water Conservation Board ("CWCB") requesting an \$8M emergency draw-down loan (bearing no interest for a 3-year period) to bridge potential State and federal grant opportunities. The application was successfully submitted on October 1, 2024. The thought is that the CWCB loan repayment (for principal amounts not otherwise immediately repaid from grants received during the 3-year period) for any unpaid balances would be extended for a longer period (like 30 years), at a to-be-determined interest rate. The challenge for us will be appropriately documenting the loan (which will involve a multiple-fiscal-year obligation) this calendar year because State/local grants in calendar year 2025 or later could impact the TABOR enterprise status for the Water Fund (and the Town's ability to borrow without prior voter-approval). We are in the process of closing on a CWRPDA Drinking Water Revolving Fund loan (for the Ductile Iron Pipe Replacement Project) and we're trying to work quickly to understand what we need to consider when incurring the CWCB emergency loan this calendar year given that the level of future grant assistance, as well as exact project costs, are still uncertain.

LEAD SERVICE LINE INVENTORY AND REPLACEMENT PLAN

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) is requiring all community and non-transient, non-community water systems to develop an inventory to identify the materials of service lines connected to the public water distribution system. An initial inventory is due by October 16, 2024. In addition, all community and non-transient, non-community water systems with one or more lead, galvanized requiring replacement, or lead status unknown service lines in their distribution system must submit a lead service line replacement plan to CDPHE by October 16, 2024.

The Town took advantage of technical assistance offered by CDPHE for hands-on support for service line inventory and lead service line replacement planning activities. Assistance was provided by the department's dedicated technical support contractors, WSP in partnership with Sunrise Engineering. The Town successfully submitted the inventory and replacement plan on September 24, 2024.

CML EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE WORKSHOP

Thursday, October 24, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

CML's popular Effective Governance workshops help you gain the knowledge you need to be the best leader you can for your community! Topics include:

- Staff-council relations
- Ethics, liability, and conflicts of interest
- Media relations and social media



- Civility
- Grass roots advocacy
- Much more!

Participants also receive a link to a recording of the 2024 CML Annual Conference session on Finance and Budgeting for Municipalities 101.

Email Preston if you'd like to register for this workshop.

FOREST SERVICE SIGNS FINAL DECISION ON BLUE LAKES VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests announces the decision for the Blue Lakes Visitor Use Management Plan, setting new guidelines for managing visitor use across 16,200 acres on the Ouray Ranger District.

“We are excited to reach this point,” said Dana Gardunio, Ouray District Ranger. “The plan has been years in the making, with extensive community involvement, and we have finally arrived at a decision that will protect these beloved areas while ensuring sustainable, high quality recreational experiences for the future.”

The plan will be implemented in phases as resources allow. The first phase, expected to start in 2025, involves reconstructing the Blue Lakes Trailhead parking area and installing two new vault restrooms using funding from the Great American Outdoors Act. The Forest Service will also begin developing a monitoring plan and gathering data to establish designated camping areas.

The second phase will involve working with Recreation.gov to develop a permit system for the area. From June 1 through September 30, permits will be required for access with a daily limit of 40 individuals for day-use and 24 individuals for overnight-use (four sites with up to six people per site). The permit system may be implemented as early as 2026. The Forest Service is planning an outreach campaign with partners to inform visitors about the new system before they arrive.

Other management changes include designated camping throughout the planning area, requirements to pack out human waste in the Mt. Sneffels and Wilderness zones, the prohibition of dogs in the Mt. Sneffels zone and a prohibition of overnight stock use in the Wilderness zone. While the plan sets the direction for these changes, the Forest Service will be implementing official Forest Orders and signing the areas when these actions are finalized.

“We are implementing this in phases to make sure we get it right,” said Gardunio. “We will be learning as we go and making adjustments as needed using the adaptive management strategy outlined in the plan.”



Concerns about visitor spillover into adjacent zones without permits were raised during the comment period. The adaptive management plan includes measures to address potential visitor impacts across all management zones. For example, if visitor numbers or impacts in adjacent areas become a concern, the permit system could be expanded to include those areas, such as the Blaine Basin or Mt. Sneffels zones.

“Concerns were raised that a limited-entry permit may create unwanted impacts in adjacent areas,” said Gardunio. “The beauty of using an adaptive management strategy is that it’s an iterative process that gives us flexibility to address unforeseen future challenges.”

The Forest Service will implement the plan and associated management actions utilizing a variety of tools based on legal authorities, feasibility, technical logistics and Forest Service resources.

While adoption of this plan is a crucial first step in addressing the impacts occurring in these areas, effective implementation and stewardship of this area in the future will require additional resources. The Forest Service will likely pursue authorization through the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) that would propose a fee for enhanced management needs. Once authorized, any permit fees collected would be retained by the Ouray Ranger District and reinvested into local projects such as natural resource restoration, education, outreach and resource monitoring. A separate public process would be required for any new or increased FLREA fees.

For a detailed list of management actions by zone and more information on the Blue Lakes Visitor Use Management Plan, visit the project webpage: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/gmug/?project=61979>.

For additional questions, contact the Ouray Ranger District at 970-240-5300.

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

The Ridgway Town Council has committed to picking up trash and litter along Hwy 62 from milepost 20 to 22 through January of 2026. The commitment is to pick up litter a minimum of two times each year. The time has come to pinpoint a date and time to hold another clean up event this fall!

UNCOMPAGRE WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP FIELD TRIPS

To attend any of the events listed below, email tanya@uncompagrewatershed.org.

- Love Your Gorge
Saturday, Oct. 12, 2024
Join at Ouray Ice Park and the Uncompagre River Gorge in Ouray.



UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- **Town Council Regular Meeting** – October 9, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom
- **Town Council Budget Retreat** – October 12, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom
- **FUSE Creative Main Street Committee Meeting** – October 15, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in the Decker Community Room and virtually via Zoom
- **Planning Commission Meeting** – October 29, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom
- **Sustainability Advisory Board Meeting** – November 6, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom (*DATE SUBJECT TO CHANGE*)
- **Town Council Regular Meeting** – November 13, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom

JOKE OF THE DAY

Boss: “You’re fired!”

Me: *turns in gun and badge*

Boss: “You’re an IT-tech, where did you get those?”

Bonus Joke:

Cop: “Your license says you should be wearing glasses.”

Me: “I have contacts.”

Cop: “I don’t care who you know.”