

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Kelly McNicholas Kury, 970-319-0219; Zane Kessler, 970-989-4156; Ron Leach, 970-963-1938; Hattie Johnson, 970-456-8533; Bill Argeros, 970-923-6100; John Spillane, 303-915-8533

Efforts to protect the Crystal River continue with selection of facilitator groups

Wellstone Collaborative Strategies and P2 Solutions will lead robust community engagement process

PITKIN COUNTY, COLO. (January 23, 2023) - The Wild and Scenic Feasibility Collaborative announced the selection of Wellstone Collaborative Strategies and P2 Solutions to facilitate and lead a community engagement and stakeholder process that will consider the feasibility of a federal Wild and Scenic River designation for the Crystal River in Gunnison and Pitkin Counties.

The selection committee of the Collaborative included representatives from the Town of Marble, Gunnison County, Pitkin County, the Colorado River District, and American Whitewater, as well as landowners in unincorporated Gunnison County and the Pitkin County Crystal River Caucus.

Denver-based Wellstone Collaborative Strategies and Loveland-based P2 Solutions were selected for their experience and competence in facilitation and community engagement. Both Jacob Bornstein, founder and principal of Wellstone Collaborative Strategies, and Wendy Lowe, owner of P2 Solutions, have demonstrated exceptional facilitation skills and experience shepherding broad community conversations to successful outcomes. Jacob and Wendy have strong backgrounds in natural resource issues and direct knowledge of the Crystal River.

Ron Leach, administrator for the Town of Marble, summed up broad community excitement for the process with this statement: "The Wild & Scenic stakeholder process is off to a great start!"

Bill Argeros lives along the Crystal River and is a member of the Crystal River Caucus. "I'm excited to move forward with the selected facilitation groups in order to engage in a stakeholder process that will result in a Wild and Scenic designation for the Crystal River that is tailor-made for our community. Such a designation will prevent in perpetuity any dams or diversions of our precious water while maintaining the integrity of individual property rights. It will ensure the Crystal River will remain free-flowing and ecologically balanced."

American Whitewater, a national nonprofit that advocates for the preservation and protection of whitewater rivers, will support Wellstone in the administration of its outreach efforts. "American Whitewater is incredibly proud of the work of the Crystal River Wild and Scenic Collaborative in identifying the need for a robust and inclusive stakeholder process to discuss the merits and mechanisms for lasting protections for one of Colorado's few remaining free flowing rivers. Wellstone is highly qualified to include diverse perspectives and identify a path forward. This process will provide paddlers, landowners, conservationists, ranchers, community members, and anyone else with interest in the Crystal River a valuable chance to share their perspectives

and insight,” said Hattie Johnson, Southern Rockies stewardship director for American Whitewater.

John Spillane lives in the upper Crystal watershed in Gunnison County and was involved in the selection process. “I’m looking forward to working with Wendy Lowe and Jacob Bornstein to explore the best ways to protect the Crystal River. Wendy and Jacob appear well suited to handling the diverse interests affecting the Crystal River and I’m confident the process will allow all of the interested stakeholders to express their views and find common ground.”

Zane Kessler of the Colorado River District, which is involved in the Collaborative, pointed out the selection of Wellstone and P2 Solutions was unanimous. “Consistent with the River District’s work to represent and protect the interests of all water users on the Western Slope, we believe Jacob and Wendy can bring Crystal River water users – both consumptive and non-consumptive – to the table for a meaningful conversation around the future of the Crystal River,” said Kessler.

“Jacob and Wendy’s clear record of experience on facilitating contentious community issues among broad stakeholders really stood out,” said Kelly McNicholas Kury, a Pitkin County Commissioner. “They have worked on other Colorado water issues and have direct knowledge of the Crystal River which I think will help us identify and work through the most important community concerns about how to protect the river.”

The Collaborative envisions creating a structure to enable broad-reaching discussion and investigation of the feasibility of a Wild and Scenic designation or other protective measures. With a goal of identifying long-lasting river protection, the Collaborative envisions the creation of a stakeholder group that would engage in fact finding, identification of overlapping interests and concerns, and a robust discussion of shared goals and strategies. The initial phase of the stakeholder process will bring together a robust and representative cross section of interested individuals to provide informed input; examine, explore, and investigate river protection; access and rely on experts in river and riparian health; engage experts to provide factual information relevant to protective designations; agree upon rules of engagement; be a process grounded in the highest integrity and inclusiveness; and result in identification of shared principles for protection of the Crystal River.

Costs for the facilitation services and expenditures of the stakeholder process are to be shared through both monetary and in-kind contributions from the Town of Marble, Gunnison County, Pitkin County, the Colorado River District, and American Whitewater. The stakeholder process will kick off in the first quarter of 2023.

Enclosed:
RFP
Wellstone and P2 proposal