

THE [*telluride*]

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THE TELLURIDE WATCH

TOWN OF TELLURIDE

Valley Floor Management Plan Workshop Thursday

BY KAREN JAMES

TELLURIDE – Maybe you want dogs to have free run of the Valley Floor. Or maybe you don't. What about horses – should they be allowed? How about building new trails or river restoration?

Anyone who has something to say about future management of the Valley Floor is invited to weigh in on its destiny at a

workshop this Thursday evening at Rebekah Hall. At that time Ecological Resource Consultants, the firm contracted to complete a comprehensive environmental report on the 572-acre parcel and adjacent wetlands, will be on hand to walk the public through its information gathering and reporting process, answer questions and hear input during the first of four workshops designed to

bring the community into the discussion.

“We’re going to be talking about just about everything,” said Open Space Commission Chair Roberta Peterson. “Including what ERC is going to be doing in this environmental report and what they hope to accomplish.”

Once finalized, the report will heavily influence the creation of a plan that provides

for intelligent, long-term management of the hard-won open space and ensures its conservation values are preserved in perpetuity.

“The public involvement is an extremely important part of this project, maybe more so than with others,” ERC President Troy Thompson, pointing to the community’s emotional and financial investment in preserving the Valley Floor, told *The Watch* in June.

“What we intend to do is discuss the process,” said ERC Vice President and senior ecologist Dave Blauch. Blauch, who is also the technical manager of the project, elaborated that the company began its fieldwork to

assess the wetland habitats and vegetation communities on the Valley Floor just last week.

ERC expects its fieldwork will be completed by September.

From 4-5:30 p.m. on Thursday, the public is invited to a meet and greet with ERC’s Thompson and Blauch. Bill Mangle, a natural resources planner for the ERO Resources Corporation, will accompany the two.

ERO Corp. is a Colorado-based natural resource and environmental consultancy that will provide technical support and expertise to the project. The

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two companies have previously worked together on large-scale environmental and planning projects.

Mangle will handle the planning and management portions of the project.

The trio will present its project goals, elaborate on the environmental report and discuss its work schedule for the project between 6 and 8 p.m.

"We'll open it up to Q&A and whatever the public might

want to discuss," Blauch said, characterizing the workshop as "a very open and informal meeting and discussion forum."

The Town of Telluride contracted the Evergreen, Colo.-based firm to document and evaluate the natural resources, ecosystems and physical characteristics of the Valley Floor exactly four days after the state Supreme Court upheld the town's condemnation of the land located just outside its boundaries in a 6 to 1 ruling in early June.

The report will include a comprehensive evaluation and

analysis of the property's ecologic and environmental resources, as well as evaluate its historic and cultural resources; provide recommendations relative to short- and long-term management, monitoring and maintenance as well as opportunities for future restoration and remediation projects; educational programming; animal control; surface water hydrology (including irrigation practices) and other related topics.

ERC expects its final environmental report will be completed around March 2009.