Early years: Browns Canyon

Decades of work culminate in national monument designation

by Ryan Summerlin Mail Staff Writer

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Lamb to appear in District Court

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Colorado Environmental Conservation Coalition outing stuns Kunkel

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Bulkheading may not be gone anywhere because they are already in place. However, going into too many areas of the state where it’s not clear what the future holds or what we’re going to do with the land is not going to be the way it should be — which is what we’re trying to avoid,” said Kunkel.

In 2005, Kunkel went on his first outing in the area with the Colorado Environmental Conservation Coalition on a wilderness mapping trip. “When I saw this area, I was amazed that this wilderness study area was not being managed at all as wilderness. There was trespassing and abuse,” he said.

“I was stunned to note that the FBLM Fire Service unit and forest line on FS 184 Trou- turp Trail had been established 100 feet in either direction in 2005.”

Kunkel was elected there,” said Kunkel.

By Ryan Summerlin

Editor’s note: This is the first of a two-part series about Browns Canyon.

National monument designation for Brown’s Canyon is the culmination of decades of work, and it might not have happened at all if not for the persistence — perhaps stubbornness — of a few advocates.

Just days after President Barack Obama signed off on Browns Canyon National Monument of interior, the Friends of Browns Can- yon advocated out in a Salida coffee shop to convince one last person.

“This is a story that has great human and political drama,” said Michael Kunkel, who first lived and cofounded of Friends of Browns Can- yon.

In the early years, they were strug- gling to muster any money they could for the cause.

Even before the Friends group cam- along, advocates struggled for decades to get more protection for Browns Canyon, seeing bills come and go, only to have hopes dashed by political real- istic.

The Friends’ ultimate goal was to create a wilderness area in the north- ern Arkansas Range with the Browns Canyon Wilderness Study Area at its heart.

“We were all volunteers,” said Kun- kel. “We weren’t paid. We had no salary, no business interest in Browns Canyon, no hidden agenda.” And for the first 10 years of their efforts, they operated on the small juice. And in 1990, following a recommendation after an intensive study of Browns Canyon continued through the 1990s.


The shape of protected lands in Browns Canyon has changed greatly over the years. Rep. Diana DeGette, from the 1st Congressional District, has consis- tently pushed wilderness legislation since 1999 that includes Browns Canyon, but the fluctuating boundary lines proved problematic as they swelled to nearly 35,000 acres in 2003. Former Rep. Joel Hefley’s 2005 wilderness bill brought that area down to 10,000 acres in 2005, which is much closer to the national monument boundary seen today.

In 1999, Democrat Rep. Diana Dela- cute the north end of DeGette’s wilderness crossed a well-established motorized-use trail, which would later become the southern boundary of the Fourmile Travel Management Area.

Although the Browns Canyon adva- cates were supportive of DeGette, they knew something she put up for Con- gress to designate would be hard to advance. DeGette’s bills targeted land all over the state for wilderness while her own district, in the Denver metro area, had none. It had to come from somewhere local or it wasn’t going to fly, said Fred Bild, a longtime ranch cowmen owner, wilder- ness advocate. See COLORADO, back page

Colorado Symphony Brass Ensemble performs in Salida

Craig Anderson will perform with the Colorado Symphony Brass Ensemble on Saturday.

On Saturday, March 21, the Colorado Symphony Brass Ensemble will perform a free concert at the Chaffee County Fairgrounds’ Fairplex. The concert is free and open to the public.

The Colorado Symphony Brass Ensemble will perform music by composers such as Leopoldo Stadtmueller, Hans Lang, Steve Turrell and John Lauber. The program features works from the world of brass instrument music, including music by Ravel, Mozart, and Schumann.

The concert begins at 7 p.m. and is free of charge. Visitors to the concert should note that the Fairplex is open to the public on a pay-per-use basis. Parking is $5 and admission is free.

For more information, call the Colorado Symphony at 719-539-6641 or visit www.coloradosymphony.org.
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fication before a bitter primary fight in which Hefley backed Lamborn opponent Jeff Crank. That cost him the support of many congressmen between Hefley and Lamborn, Hefley would call Lamborn’s campaign “always.”

The Denver Post reported in 2012 that Hefley called Lamborn a “consultant,” when hearing that Lamborn said he’d promised not to run.

Upon election, one of Lamborn’s first statements was that he would not support a Browns Canyon Wilderness designation. Hefley countered by pointing out that he objected to the lack of process on the Browns Canyon Bill and the restriction of access to hunters.

In 2007 all three Chaffee commissioners supported Browns Canyon. Lamborn held separate public hearings in Salida with the proponents and opponents of the Browns-Canyon Wilderness. Between meetings he met with county commissioners and other local officials.

Opponents even asked Lamborn to pass legislation to rescind the Browns-Canyon Wilderness Act, notably壹民 and outcries against Browns-Canyon are still today.

“Turret Trail,” he told the USGS, “is a trail that was cut through both the area,” he said.

Kunkel said. “Denali was a county commissioner, the Democrats had been out in the USGS, and (John) Salazar was still out in the USGS.”

Democratic Sen. John Salzar

in a meeting in Brown Vista Aug. 13, 2008 — at the same time as a Leamosa Hot Springs road rally.

“Today brought all those people from outside the area,” said Tom DeGee.

“We’d always take every meeting seriously, but today they actually truckloaded them in,” Robert Bond said.

This issue started to cause a real problem for the Friends group.

With a huge number of opportunities for new drawings showing up out of the blue, the Mountain Mail then reported there was no consensus on Browns on the USGS.

At the USGS, Salazar became secretary of the interior, and Hefley moved to the Burns-Wilderness Act commission. That, along with the USGS’s advocacy of wilderness in the area, made the Browns-Canyon Wilderness Plan.

Kunkel called it “the difficultivia” of the Browns-Canyon Act. “The national- level had less time. We agreed that the Browns-Canyon Act was dead, in the end, as well,” Hefley said. Hefley’s first statements was that they would be working with a more through with it, that he didn’t want to do that, but we finally worked out a plan that worked.”

The bill was drafted, introduced to Congress in November, and scheduled for a hearing in the Subcommittee on Forests, Resources, and Public Lands under the House Committee on Natural Resources.

Dick Suhr and Michael Kunkel testified before the subcommittee in June, 2008, calling Browns Canyon an island under the ever-increasing pressure of development.

Regardless of party affiliation, Hefley downed on what had been when Hefley chaired the House Ethics Committee in 2006.

So, too, was it when under the influence of the area that had been closed by a Wilderness Act.

The inquiry resulted only in a formal reprimand, but it also stirred up resentment against Hefley.

In September 2010, Chaffee County commissioners held a public meeting on Browns-Canyon Wilderness Act. Diana DeGette and Lamborn.

The commissioners support- ed DeGette’s latest wilderness bill, and unlike previous Browns-Canyon wilderness bills, this one included a wilderness designation with a Friends on its side.

The next day Lamborn and DeGette visited Browns-Canyon via the Turret Trail. “This was a first, and with the US Senate and House controlled by Democrats, with all of DeGette’s land selections in the Friends’ area, there was a good chance of passing the Friends of Browns Canyon bill.”

In 2011, Salazar took their growing business supporter in California, the Friends, and fund- raising. Stocks, bonds and more will be invest- ed into the program. Dick is a UCLA graduate who spent his work-life building wealth for a wide variety of clients. Dick will make the complex questions of retirement simplicity.

In the diagram, Udall’s line shows his first statements was that they would be working with a more thorough and responsible process. Dick is theposter for the diagram, Udall’s line shows...