



“Rags Over the Arkansas River”

ROAR
www.roarcolorado.org

To preserve and protect the headwaters of the Arkansas River, the Bighorn Sheep Canyon, its inhabitants and the communities that depend upon them.

ROAR News Release

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ROAR To Point Out Deaths Caused by Christo’s Projects

Rags Over the Arkansas River (ROAR), the group opposing artist Christo’s plans to hang aluminum-coated material over a 45 mile stretch of the Arkansas River in Bighorn Sheep Canyon, will tell Fremont County Commissioners Feb. 1 about deaths at the artist’s previous projects.

The Canon City meeting begins at 9 a.m. at the Fremont County Administration Building. Commissioners will hear public comments about the proposed Over The River (OTR) project. ROAR will focus on expected impacts to public safety, emergency services, public access and law enforcement, as well as the county’s potential liability if the project is approved.

ROAR has long argued that the proposed project could kill wildlife, birds and fish, including bighorn sheep, bald eagles and brown trout. ROAR says that over the long term, construction, traffic delays and environmental impacts will wound the area’s bedrock industry, tourism, and more than offset any potential revenue that comes to the area from the proposed project, which will be on display to the public for just two weeks.

At the hearing, ROAR will cite the response of Christo and his late wife to 1991 deaths at the artist’s Umbrella Project at Tejon Pass near Los Angeles and in Japan.

The commissioners will be shown a copy of a *New York Times* story of November 12, 1991. Reporter William Grimes wrote, “The umbrella project that artist Christo once called ‘a symphony in two parts’ has become a tragedy in two acts. On Oct. 16, a sudden wind uprooted a 485-pound umbrella in the Tejon Pass north of Los Angeles and struck Lori Keevil-Mathews, 33 years old, of Camarillo, California, crushing her to death against a boulder.”

When the project was being dismantled, a Japanese worker died when “the arm of the crane he was operating touched a 65,000-volt power line,” wrote Grimes.

When asked about the tragedies, Christo told the *Times* reporter, “For me, the real world involves everything: risk, danger, beauty, energy – all we meet with in the real world. This project demonstrated that everything is possible.”

Christo’s late wife, Jeanne Claude, told the *Times*, “Christo’s art is like a marriage: it’s for better and for worse.”

(more)

ROAR cites similarities between the Umbrella Project and the proposed Over The River venture, for which industrial construction, project display and habitat reclamation are slated to last three years. OTR planners have said that the structures can withstand winds of 42 miles per hour. But winds in Bighorn Sheep Canyon along Highway 50 regularly gust to 70 to 90 miles per hour. Winds of only 40 miles per hour blew over the umbrella that crushed the woman at Tejon Pass.

ROAR is concerned that deaths of workers, residents, drivers and tourists using the river are possible, particularly since OTR will be using cranes more than 50-feet high in the roadway, clogging traffic and imperiling drivers during the long construction period. Also, some of the project is near high-voltage power lines.

ROAR will urge the Fremont County Commissioners to deny permission for the OTR Corporation to proceed with the exceptionally high risk project that will endanger local citizens as well as visitors.

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