

Community Controversy and Environmental Art: The Over the River Project Debate

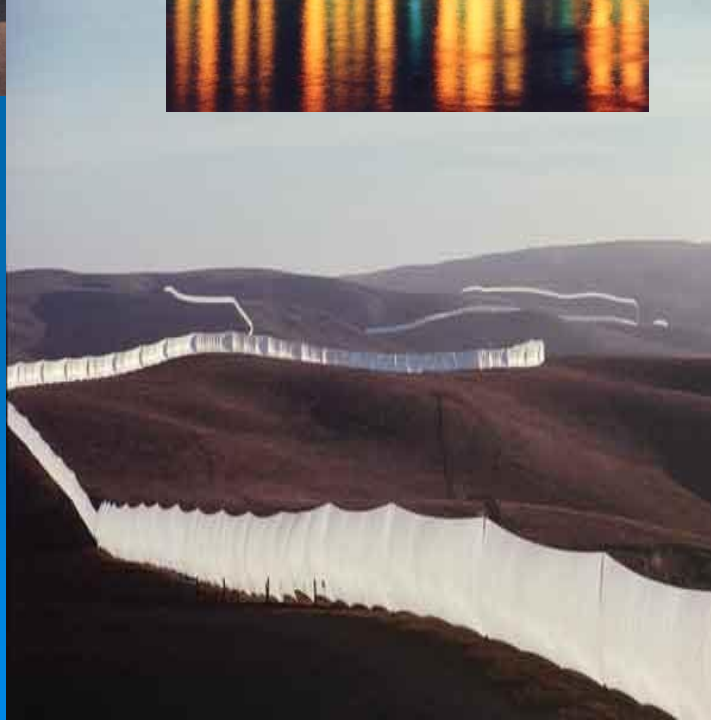
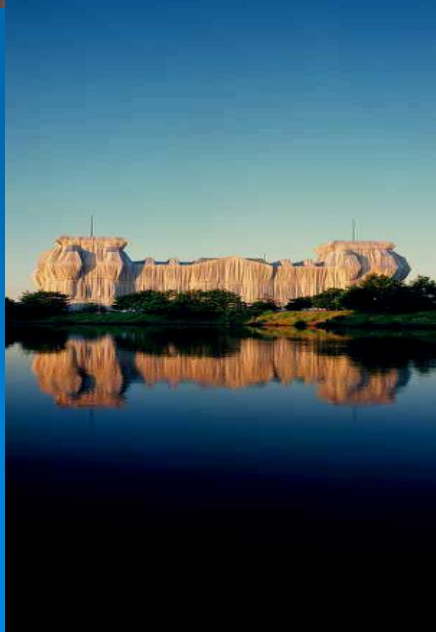
Tourism, Culture, and the Creative
Industries Conference

UWI-STA, Trinidad

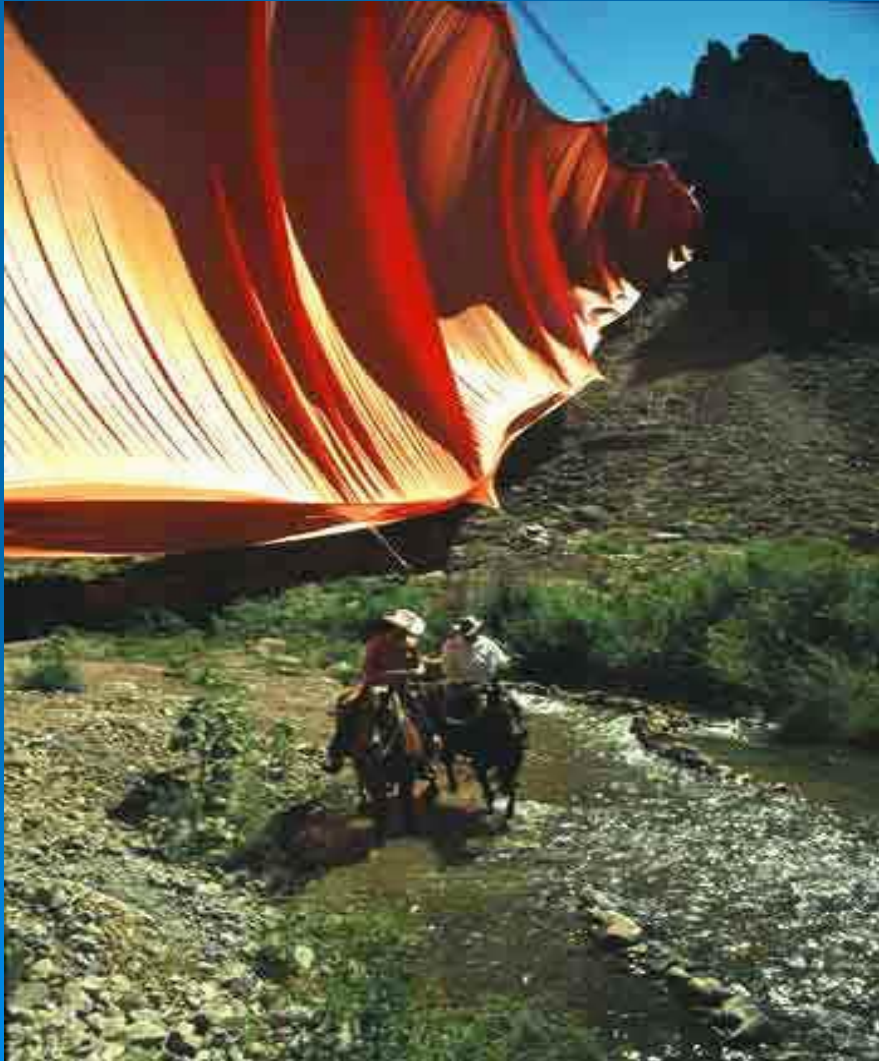
Diane Gaede & James Gould
University of Northern Colorado - USA

The Artists: Christo and Jean-Claude

Have been creating “environmental art” for over 40 years



1970 - 1972: Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colo.
142,000 square feet of orange nylon fabric was
tied to the mountains along Highway 325



“The Gates” NYC 2-12 to 2-28, 2005

1979 - 2005



Art, Nature, and Community

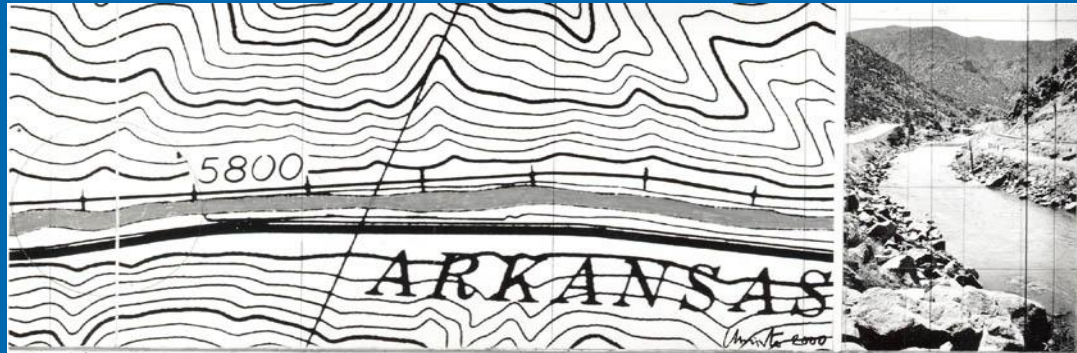
- Christo goes through a public process that always involves meeting with gov't officials, art supporters, and the public
 - Christo says, “YOU, all, are part of this artistic installation” – you are part of the art project
- No cost to the locality – Funded through artist's sketches & conceptual art sold to collectors
- Environmental impacts are always mitigated, the art materials recycled

Concepts of Civic Tourism:

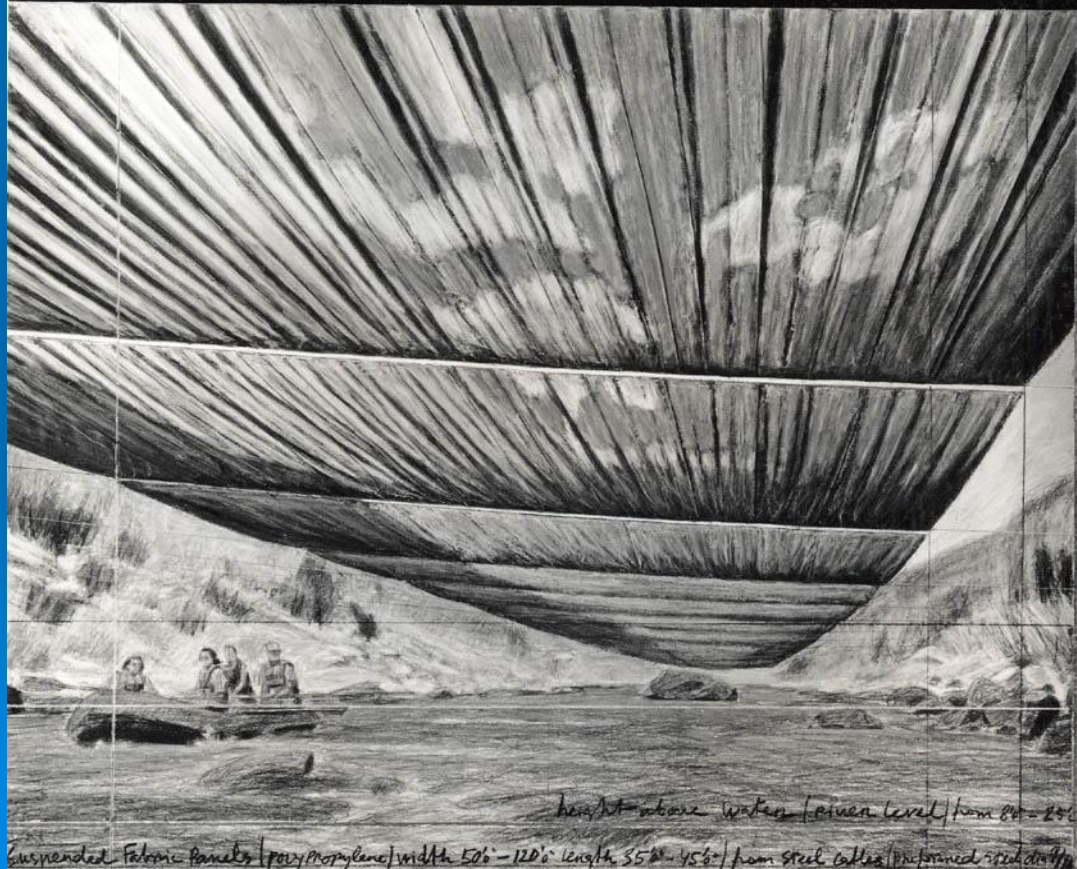
- *Rethink the economics:* - What do we want to sustain, and for whom?
- *Connect to the Public* – A society to match our scenery & pride in sense of place
- *Invest in the Story* – Revealing the genius of a place

How can this be applied to Christo's next project?

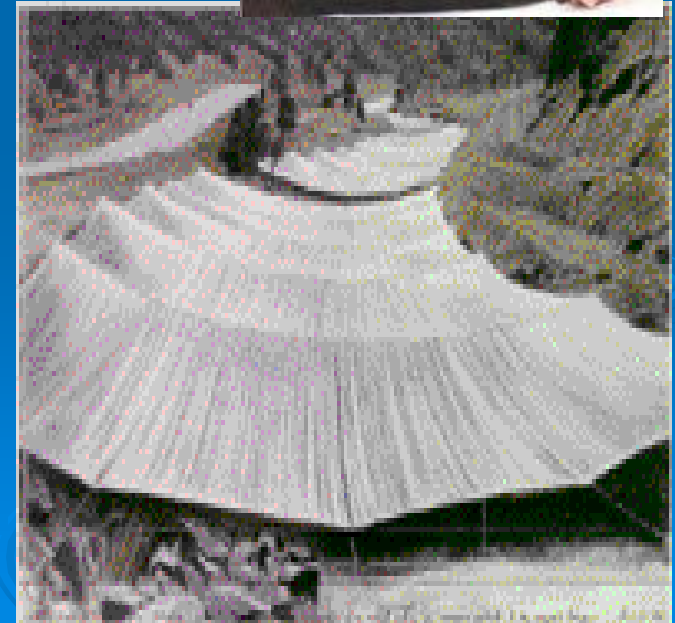
1992 – 2014: Over the River, Colorado



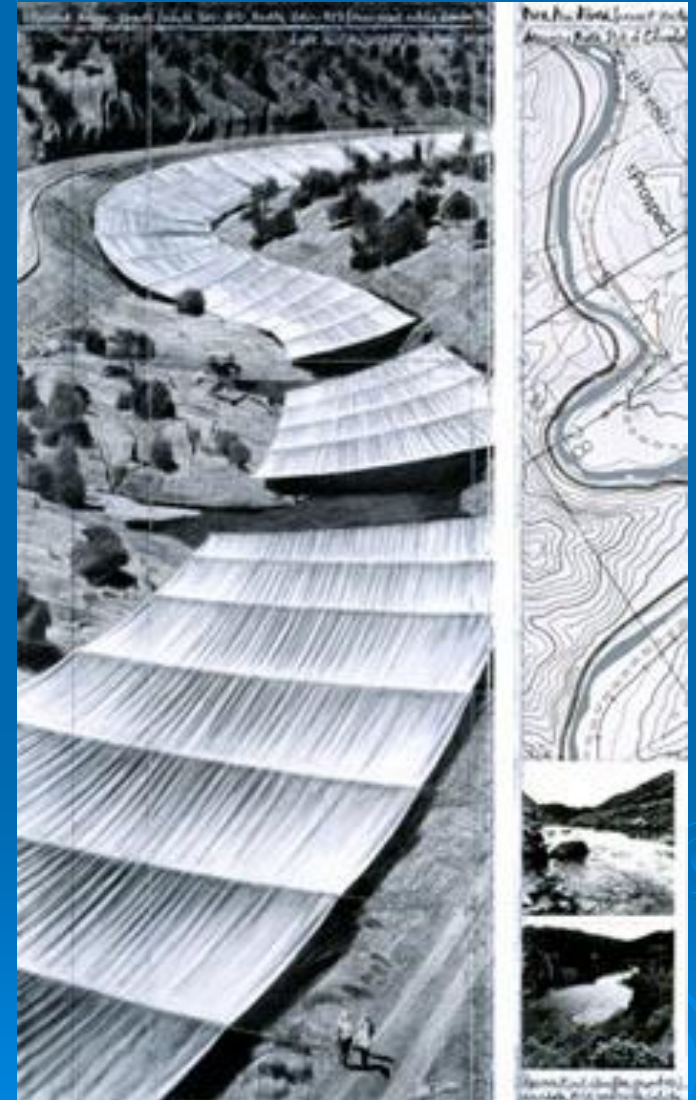
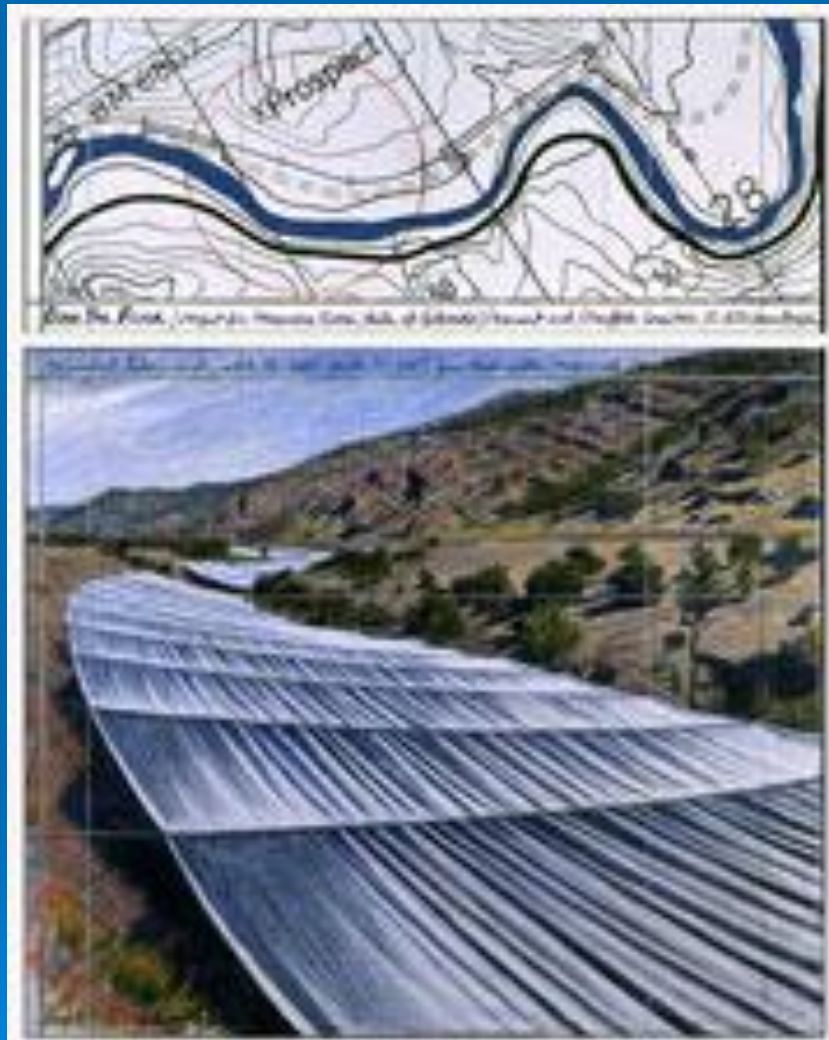
Over the River (project for Arkansas River, Colorado) Fremont and Chaffee Co. US#50, Union Pacific

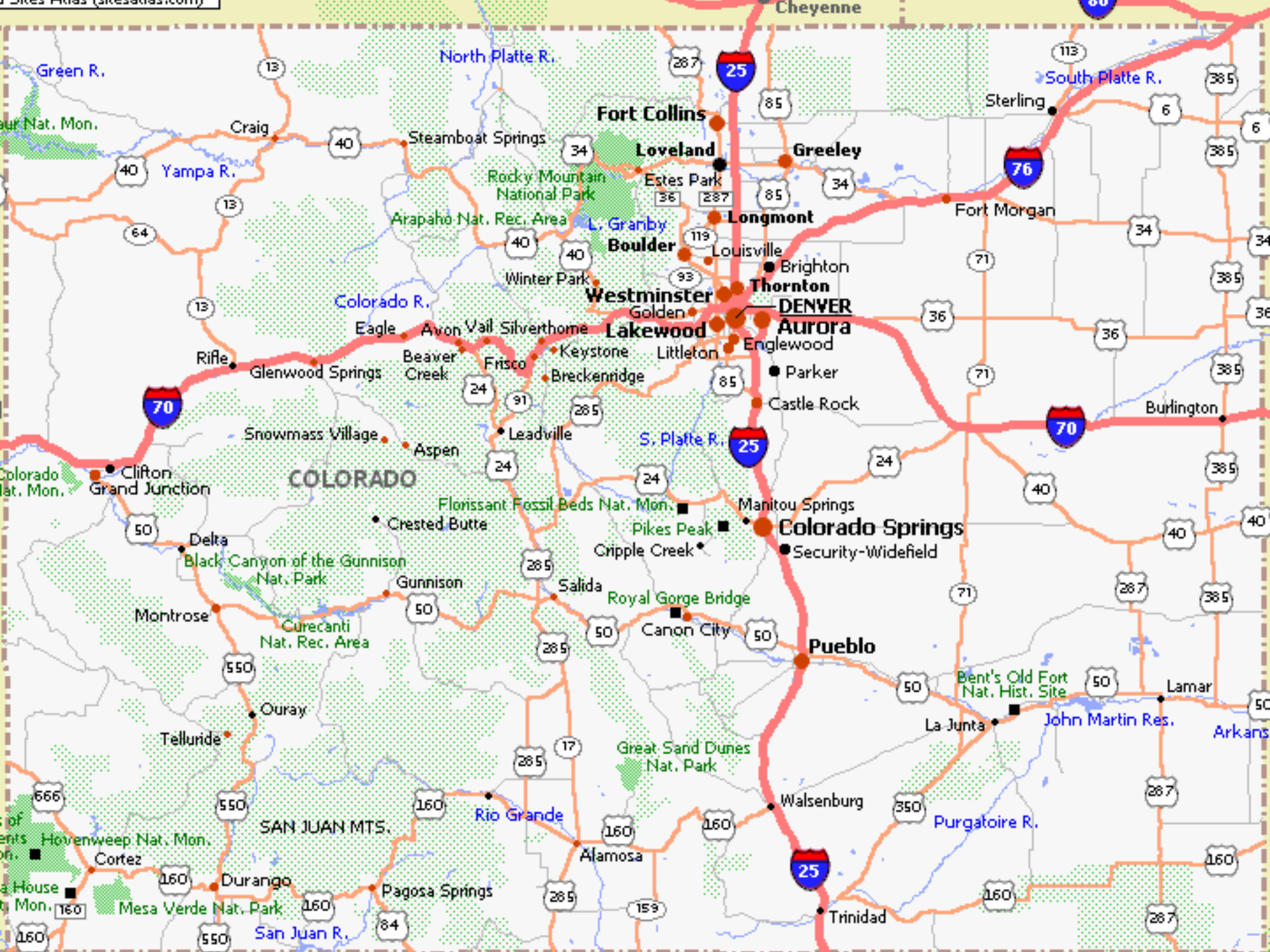


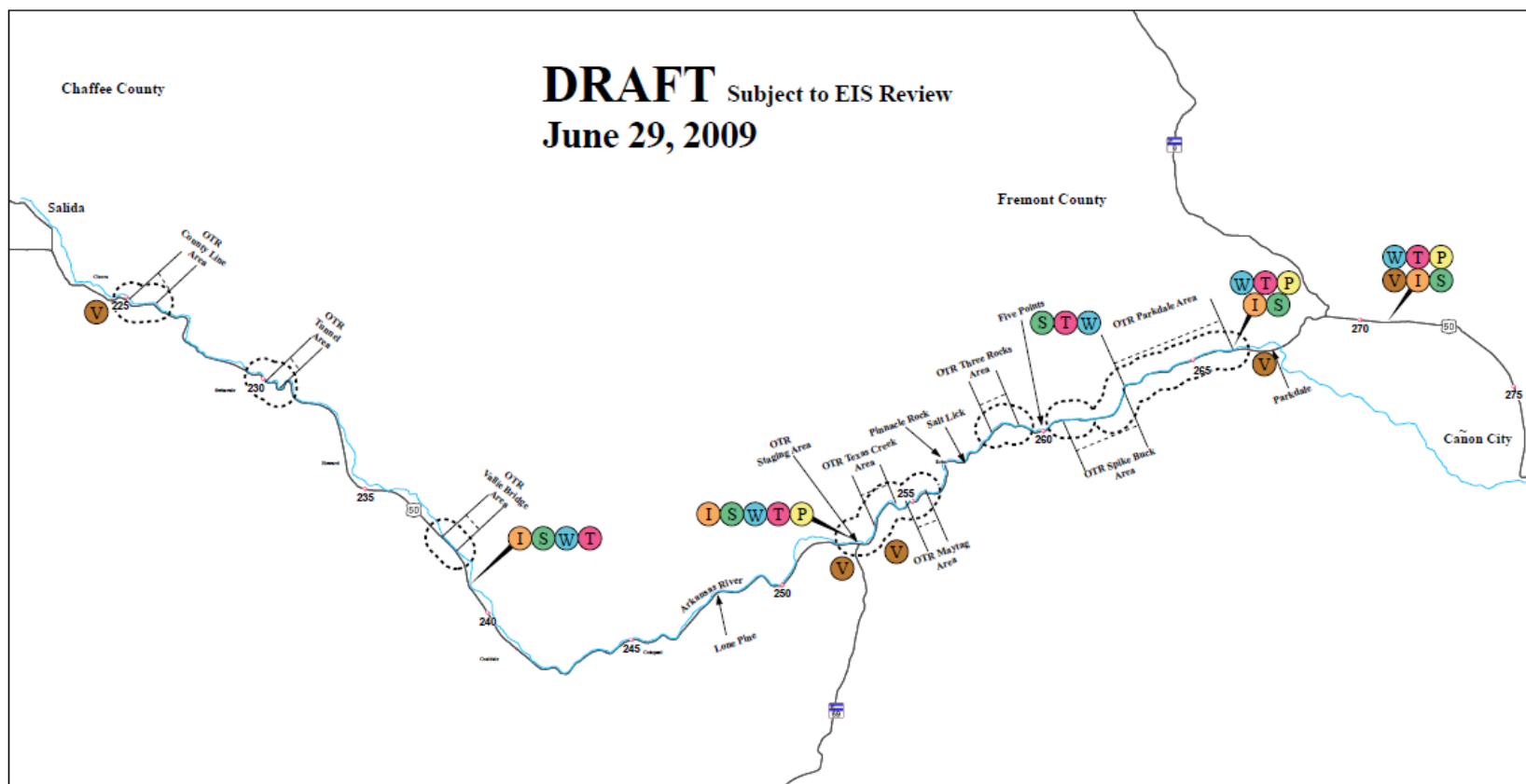
height above water (river level) from 8' - 25'
Suspended Fabric Panels (polypropylene) width 50' - 120' length 55' - 95' from steel cables (high-tensile steel cables)



1992 – 2014: Over the River, Colorado

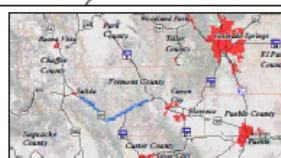
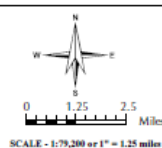






LEGEND

- Cities
- Counties
- US Highway 50 Mile Posts
- Highways
- 0.5 Mile Buffer of OTR
- Parks and Staging Areas
- Information Center
- Parking Area
- Water
- Trash
- Portables
- Portable VMS Signs



Base map provided by J.F. Sato & Associates

OVER THE RIVER
Copyright

Figure 3
Enhanced Visitor Services
Exhibition Period

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Economic Benefits

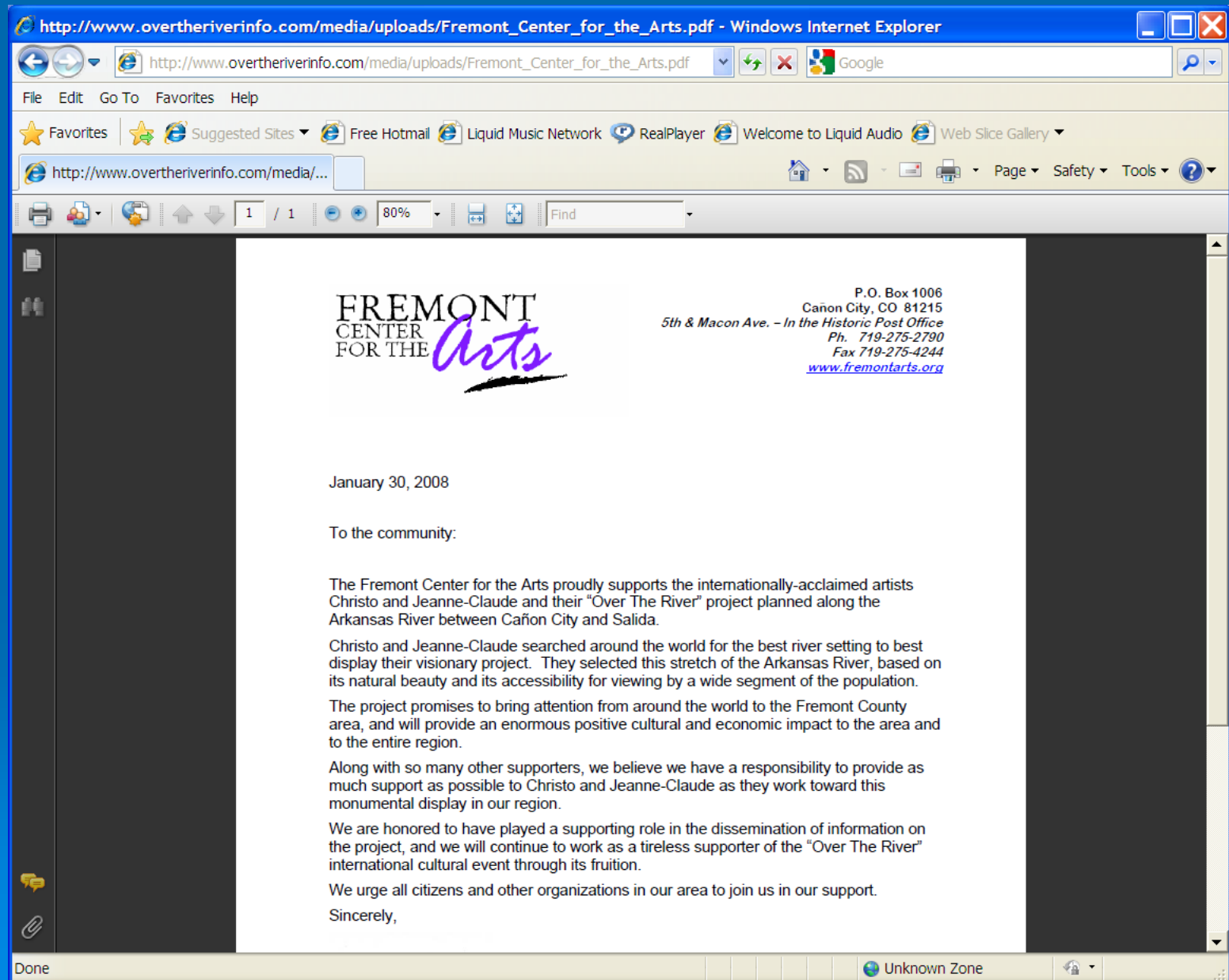
- The Draft EIS projects substantial economic benefits as a result of *Over The River*. If Alternative 1a is selected, the project is expected to create over 600 temporary jobs (mostly local hires) and generate \$121 million in economic activity over the life of the project, including:
 - About \$25.8 million within Fremont, Chaffee, Pueblo and El Paso counties during installation and demobilization activities, including about \$8.9 million in personal income, and an additional \$38.7 million of economic output in other areas of the state, including \$2.7 million of personal income. (Ref 4.14.2.1)
 - Total economic output due to visitor spending is estimated to be about \$50.0 million, including \$22.2 million in Fremont and Chaffee counties and \$27.8 million in Pueblo and El Paso counties. (Ref 4.14.2.2)
- Approximately 75% of total spending on materials and supplies would occur within Colorado, including about \$1.5 million worth of materials purchased within Chaffee and Fremont counties and \$1.6 in El Paso and Pueblo counties. (Ref 4.14)
- Alternative 1a is expected to generate about \$1.87 million in additional tax revenues statewide, including around \$583,000 for local municipalities within Fremont and Chaffee counties. (Ref 4.14)
- The Draft EIS shows that selecting a shorter alternative would significantly reduce the economic benefits. Alternative 1a will produce a total economic output of \$121 million over the life of the project, but the shortest proposal, Alternative 4, produces only \$25 million total. Net tax revenue generated under Alternative 4 would also be about 85% lower than Alternative 1a. (Ref 4.14.7.2)

Recent Economic Testimony:

➤ *Addressed these themes:*

- The value of public art on the Arkansas Valley economy
- Tourism boost during August 2014 project viewing
- Future tourism boost once visitors experience the area(?)

Letters



Letters

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Fremont County Tourism Council

February 13, 2008

Fremont County Center for the Arts
505 Macon Ave.
Cañon City, Colorado 81212

Regarding: Over the River Project

Dear Center for the Arts:


As the FCTC board representative I have been instructed to convey to you and to the Christo and Jeanne-Claude our support of the Over the River Project, which is proposed for the Arkansas River sometime in the not to distant future.

We are very excited about tourism opportunities that this Project will bring to Fremont County and Cañon City specifically. Also, not to mention the economic value a project of this magnitude would bring to our area. Having been in the media and advertising business for over 35 years I can only say from my perspective that this will not only bring "stimulation to our economy" but will also create "top of mind awareness" for years to come not only regionally but nationally as well as internationally.

Personally I am somewhat familiar with the New York "Gates" project, and saw the impact that the "Gates" brought to a very public city in the news, across the nation and would sincerely welcome that sort of recognition to the Fremont County area. The impact as far as recognition for Cañon City, Fremont County, and the Royal Gorge area would be of a value that could never be equaled in a financial "return on investment"

I would like to again impress on the Fremont County Center for the Arts board as well as the prominent civic heads of the area that the Fremont County Tourism Council is 100% behind the Christo and Jeanne-Claude "Over the River Project".

Sincerely



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Letters

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Letter sent to Bureau of Land Management:

Bill Dvorak, President
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800 824-3795 reservations
719 539-5607 cell
www.DvorakExpeditions.com website
Bill@DvorakExpeditions.com email

G'day,

I am writing to voice my support of the OTR project. I have attended all three scoping meetings held last month and spent considerable time speaking with the project engineers, DOW, State Parks, Colorado Highway Patrol, Emergency services personnel, BLM, DOT, local residents and Christo and Jeanne Claude themselves about concerns that I and others have voiced concerning the proposed project. Through this dialogue and research I have done on previous projects this group has done I have become convinced that the benefits far outweigh any downsides that may occur. This project will create a legacy for the Arkansas valley that will last for generations.

One concern I feel qualified to speak to is the issue of Emergency Medical Services. I work as a part time EMT for Chaffee County EMS and drive the canyon well over 100 times a year both doing transfers in the ambulance and conducting my river business. I am aware of no spot in the canyon that an ambulance that is running emergent with lights and siren would not be able to pass through when traffic pulls to the side in both lanes of traffic. I would also be willing to wager a significant sum that, based on what I have been informed can be done to mitigate traffic control and public safety, that anyone sick or injured in the canyon during the project would receive Advanced Life Support (ALS), treatment much faster than is currently possible.

The artists have a long and positive history of completing projects, addressing and mitigating concerns brought up along the way. The project will bring beauty, joy and economic stimulation to our area as well as the lasting legacy referred to above. I encourage you to find no significant impact that cannot be mitigated and approve this project.

Sincerely,
Bill Dvorak

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Letters

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June 10, 2008

experience
Colorado Springs
at Pikes Peak.
Convention and Visitors Bureau

To Whom It May Concern:

Experience Colorado Springs at Pikes Peak (ECS), the Colorado Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau, is a strong advocate for the proposed art project, *Over the River*, by Christo and Jeanne-Claude. This project is directly related to the mission of ECS as it will provide extensive opportunities of destination marketing and cultural tourism activities. Our support is based not only on the significant economic boost that this project will provide to our region, but also on the outstanding reputation of the artists.

Each year more than six million visitors travel to Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak region to enjoy our stunning scenery as well as our numerous museums, historic sites, and attractions. The *Over the River* project will provide tourists with once-in-a-lifetime incentive to travel to southern Colorado. This art installation gives ECS an equally rare chance to promote our area regionally, nationally and internationally. The estimated number of out-of-state visitors during the project's two week duration is approximately 380,000 and Colorado Springs stands to benefit strongly from this influx of visitors, largely due to the proximity of our airport – the closest major airport to the Arkansas River.

In recent months, I have had the great pleasure of meeting with Christo. I have listened to him share his vision for the project and am convinced that he and Jeanne-Claude will create a work of art that will be beautiful and compelling not only to our visitors but to our local residents as well. I am confident that the artists and their expert team are reviewing and accommodating every reasonable environmental and economic concern.

As we continue in our mission to provide every visitor to Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak region with an unforgettable experience, it is essential that we support any efforts to enhance our community's appeal. *Over the River* will certainly enhance our area's attractiveness and keep Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak region "top of mind" with local, national and international media through the duration of the project and for many years to come.

Please feel free to contact me at (719) 635-7506, ext. 133 if you have any questions or need additional information.

All the best,

Done

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Connect to the Public

- For the past 7 years Christo and Jeanne-Claude have visited the Arkansas Valley to discuss their project with the various communities affected
- In summer 2010 BLM public hearings took official testimony on 6 alternatives
- Testimony ran 70% for, 30% against in Canon City, and 50/50 in Salida – comments are still being taken

Environmental Impact Testimony

➤ Wildlife Impacts

- Bighorn sheep, elk and deer
- Birds and their flight patterns
- Fish

➤ Traffic Impacts of crowded roads-emergencies

➤ Recreation Impacts – rafting, hiking

➤ Materials would mostly be recycled, but anchor spikes left in rock

Invest in the Story

- Testimony at public hearings is telling the Arkansas Valley story, in a compelling way
- Various histories of the valley are being entered into a public record
 - History of the built environment
 - History of the ecology of the region
 - History of economic and tourism development



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In Progress

Christo and Jeanne-Claude

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Christo, Over The River, Project For The Arkansas River, State of Colorado
Photo: Wolfgang Volz, © Christo 2007



Christo, Over The River, Project For The Arkansas River, State of Colorado, Detail
Photo: Wolfgang Volz, © Christo 2009

Over The River Comment Period Has Begun — [Click Here to Help](#)

About the Project

Over The River is a temporary work of art by the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Christo plans to suspend 5.9 miles of silvery, luminous fabric panels high above the Arkansas River along a 40-mile stretch of the river between Salida and Cañon City in south-central Colorado.

Latest News

[Over The River Comment Period Has Begun - SUBMIT A COMMENT NOW IN SUPPORT OF OTR](#)