

formation about potential oil and gas leasing impacts and stipulations concerning coal-bed natural gas and conventional oil and gas development in the Pike National Forest.

The Forest Service is asking residents for:

- Substantive comments about the proposed action.
- Possible additional alternatives that we did not consider.
- Site-specific geographic comments about areas on the public lands that are important to you.
- Identify areas of cultural, social, economic or environmental importance that could be impacted by oil and gas leasing that are not already identified in the

Forest Service's proposed action. For questions or comments, contact John Dow, forest planner, PSICC, 2840 Kachina Dr., Pueblo, CO 81004 or by phone at: 719-553-1476. Email inquiries should be sent to: [psicc\\_oandg@fs.fed.us](mailto:psicc_oandg@fs.fed.us).

Only individuals or entities who submit timely and specific written comments will have eligibility to file an objection under 36 CFR 218.8. For objection eligibility, each individual or representative from each entity submitting timely and specific written comments must either sign the comment or verify his/her identity upon request.

Issues raised in an objection must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regard-

ing the proposed action unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities. ■

## Two Village Center metro district board members face potential recall elections

By Lisa Hatfield

The El Paso County Clerk and Recorder's Office announced May 24 that there are two separate recall petitions for two members of The Village Center Metropolitan District, Bruce Hacker and Steven Barr. Recall organizers have 60 days from May 25 to gather 102 signatures to recall each respective board member. There are 254 eligible electors who can cast ballots in this election if enough petition signatures are gathered.

According to the district website <http://vcmetro.net/>, Village Center is located south of Highway 105 and East

Knollwood Drive and provides several essential services for the Village Center community including maintenance of the streets, snow removal, and maintenance of the storm water system and the common areas.

The Clerk and Recorder's Office has estimated the cost of this potential recall election at \$3,422, which will be charged to the district and not other county taxpayers.

For more information about this potential recall, contact Ryan Parsell of the Public Information Office at the Clerk and Recorder's Office, (719) 351-9626 (cell/text message) or (719) 520-7322 (office). ■

### NEPCO meeting, May 11

## Saving water takes landscape planning

By Lisa Hatfield

At the May 11 meeting of the Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations (NEPCO), Steve Moorhead of Water Returns described methods of achieving water conservation through sustainable landscaping. He emphasized replacing Kentucky bluegrass and other non-native, thirsty turf with native Colorado grasses and other xeric plant materials that provide color and texture to homeowners' yards and common areas in housing developments.

"It is better to invest in water efficient investments in your landscape than to keep paying for more water," said Moorhead.

Some highlights of Moorhead's presentation and responses to questions:

- The main mission of xeriscaping is to save water by reducing the need for irrigation.
- Typically, 50 percent of a household's total water use is consumed by irrigation of non-native grass lawns.
- Modifying the type of plants in the yard can reduce outside water use needs by about 30 percent.
- Good xeric design provides color and texture to the yard, improves the value of the property, and is a good return on investment due to reduced water use.
- Native grasses are the cheapest plant material to replace bluegrass, but another option is dense plantings of a variety of xeric plants.
- Assessment of soils, grade, drainage, and solar orientation is part of planning for plant selection for high, medium, and low watering zones for a sustainable waterwise landscape.
- Group plants and shrubs by water needs into distinct watering zones so it's efficient to water plants as a group without over- or under-watering any of them.
- It is vital to improve soils before new plantings; 80 percent of vegetation problems relate to the soil.
- The firewise qualities of plants need to be considered when choosing new plant material. Junipers are particularly flammable and should be removed.
- Residents should clarify their goals with their designer or architect. Water, flood, and firewise principles all need to be integrated in xeriscape plans.
- Plant new materials sparsely to allow for their mature size.
- Water Returns does not advocate replacing turf with large areas of rock, and sometimes the percentage of rock allowed is limited by homeowners association (HOA) covenants or town ordinances.
- Mulches retain moisture in the soil. Wood mulch adds organic matter to the soil, and rubber shredded mulch doesn't blow away as much as wood mulch.
- Underground irrigation systems are more expensive

to install, work best on level areas of turf, and water does not evaporate or blow away, encouraging plants to develop deeper root systems.

- Demonstration xeric gardens of various stages of maturity can be seen at the USAA building on Research Parkway east of Voyager Parkway (just planted), at the Donala Xeriscape garden between People's Bank and the Loaf & Jug shopping center at 13784 Gleneagle Drive (a few years old), and at the Mesa Water Treatment Facility on Mesa Road just north of Fillmore Street (20 years old).
- Bluegrass sod serves a purpose, but "don't let it be the default." It's up to individual HOAs to make rules on landscaping.

Current Colorado law does not allow graywater from sinks and showers to be reused for any kind of outside irrigation because of water rights and public health issues. However, Gov. John Hickenlooper signed HB13-1044 on May 15 allowing in-house graywater to be reused in toilets, but there are public health, water rights, and cost issues for graywater use in an entirely separate plumbing system.

Senate Bill 13-183, signed by Gov. Hickenlooper on May 10, prevents HOAs from requiring planting of non-native turf and punishing homeowners whose lawns die during times of drought and water restrictions.

### Business meeting

At the business meeting, new Vice President Kelly McQuire reported on several land use issues north of Northgate Road that are under review. The NEPCO board will monitor Board of County Commissioners' upcoming agendas and report to members of NEPCO.

The new NEPCO Transportation Committee needs a charter. County engineer André Brackin will be the main county contact, and Commissioner Darryl Glenn will be an additional contact. Non-county issues will be directed to the Monument Transportation Department.

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NEPCO's mission is to promote communication and interaction among about 50 HOAs and residential areas in northern El Paso County in order to exchange ideas on topics of common interest and to develop collective responses to the county on issues affecting the quality of life of NEPCO member associations.

The next NEPCO meeting will be held at 10 a.m. July 13 at the Monument Town Hall and Police Building, 645 Beacon Lite Road at Highway 105. HOA attorney Lenard Rioth will address homeowners on HOA legal issues and recent state legislation concerning HOAs.

For more information on NEPCO, visit [www.nepco.org](http://www.nepco.org) or call Bob Swedenburg at 481-2723. Lisa Hatfield can be contacted at [lisahatfield@ocn.me](mailto:lisahatfield@ocn.me).



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