

TELLURIDE DAILY PLANET

NEWS

Commissioners support Bridal Peak name

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Agree to write letter of support to U.S. Board of Geographic Names

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The San Miguel County Board of Commissioners gave its unanimous support Wednesday to a plan to officially name a peak just outside of Telluride.

Delta resident and avid hiker Jeff Burch is spearheading a campaign to restore what he says is the historical name of a non-descript and seldom-climbed 13,510-foot peak located on the ridge between Lewis Lake and Blue Lake: Bridal Peak. In a 1955 United States Geological Survey map that details the geology and mineral deposits of the area south of Telluride, the mountain is named Bridal Peak, but the peak is unnamed on current maps.

Burch has submitted an application to the USGS, proposing restoring the name Bridal Peak. At Wednesday's regular meeting, commissioners agreed to draft a letter of support for Burch's mission.

"I think it's great," said commissioner Joan May. "I have no reservations at all."

Burch is a former U.S. Forest Service employee, an avid hiker, photographer and history buff. Along with Don Paulson, Burch authored "Peaks of the Uncompahgre," a book of images of peaks and the stories behind their names. While researching another soon-to-be-published book, "The Peaks of Telluride," Burch realized Bridal Peak did not officially have a name. Longtime local Billy "Senior" Mahoney was the one who first pointed out the discrepancy to him, Burch said. Mahoney attended Wednesday's commissioner's meeting.

"I would just like to see it on a USGS map," Mahoney told commissioners. "Blue Lake is where the town's water comes from and Bridal Veil Falls is a very important landmark."

Burch has been distributing fliers around Telluride that explain his proposal in an effort to drum up support from the local community. He also plans on presenting his project to the Telluride Town Council on Sept. 17 and the Mountain Village Town Council on Sept. 19.

Although nearby features are named Bridal Veil Falls, Bridal Veil Basin and Bridal Veil Creek, a search of the USGS database does not turn up any peaks in the region with the word "Bridal."

According to its website, whether a name is used locally and whether there is local conflict surrounding the name are some of the criteria the U.S. Board on Geographic Names considers when naming geographical features. Burch hopes strong local support will make the board more likely to accept the proposal.

Naming geographic features after people is trickier, with more rules and the board doesn't always accept them. But Burch is hopeful Bridal Peak will get the go-ahead because it's not controversial and ties to the history of the area.

"I think Bridal is such an important name in Telluride," Burch said.

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