

Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory
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RMBL explores year-round campus in Mt. Crested Butte

The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (RMBL) is exploring the feasibility of a year-round campus in Mt. Crested Butte. According to Executive Director Dr. Ian Billick, "Understanding the world has never been more important. We are building one of the nation's leading scientific institutions right here in the Gunnison Valley. Expanding RMBL's footprint at the Snodgrass Trailhead in Mt. Crested Butte will enable year-round programs, which are currently impossible due to Gothic's inaccessibility in winter. This expansion will further RMBL's mission to accelerate discoveries into the ecosystem processes that replenish the world's air, water and food supplies."

Billick explained, "The location was chosen for a variety of reasons, including its proximity to public transportation. The campus will support public use of the Gothic Valley, and will maintain and enhance public access to the Snodgrass Trailhead, which is important to the community, the resort and RMBL."

RMBL has a long-established history in Gothic, the site of one of the largest annual migrations of field biologists in the world. RMBL seeks to establish additional facilities outside of Gothic to meet the increased demand from researchers. Billick added, "RMBL's unique resources attract scientists from around the world. In the last four years alone, use of these facilities has grown 50%. Some of the world's top scientists and students are being turned away due to lack of space."

The Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR) has agreed to provide approximately six acres for the campus expansion at the Snodgrass Trailhead in return for RMBL creating at least 17 workforce housing units on the site. The transaction is contingent upon successful completion of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process with the Town of Mt. Crested Butte and fundraising. The proposed campus will include laboratory space, community workforce housing, a visitor's center, offices and space for educational programming.

RMBL Board Chair Kurt Giesselman noted: "RMBL's Board of Trustees has endorsed this visionary project. If successful, it will increase the local inventory of affordable housing while significantly increasing the nation's capacity to support field research. We are extremely grateful to CBMR for the opportunity to explore the viability of this project."

"CBMR is honored to help RMBL create year-round facilities to enhance its contribution to field science and education. They provide an incredible asset to our community and the scientific community with the work they do. If there is a way for us to help facilitate that and flourish for generations to come, then we are proud to be a part of it", said Erica Mueller, Vice President of CBMR. "This well thought out project also gives RMBL, CBMR and the town the opportunity to accomplish many goals and address current issues facing the community including seasonal housing, making it a win-win for all."

The project's next step is to initiate the PUD process with the Town of Mt. Crested Butte, which will include public hearings. RMBL will be fundraising for the campus.

For more information, contact Dr. Ian Billick, 970 349 6669, director@rmbll.org or Erica Mueller, CBMR, 970-349-2205 ericamueller@cbmr.com.

About RMBL:

Home to one of the largest annual migrations of field biologists, RMBL provides logistical support for scientists and students, including access to living quarters, research laboratories, and protected research sites. RMBL focuses on the importance of preserving and providing access to historical data about the local ecosystems. As scientists address ever more sophisticated questions about a dynamic world, RMBL is a vital resource for discovering nature's fundamental ecological and evolutionary processes.

Western Colorado College professor, Dr. John Johnson, first visited the abandoned mining town of Gothic, Colorado on July 14, 1919. Recognizing the rich diversity of the local ecosystems, he began bringing students to study amid Gothic's ruins. Since 1928, when RMBL was officially founded, thousands of students and scientists have followed in Dr. Johnson's footsteps, making the ecosystems around Gothic some of the most intensively studied in the world and making RMBL an internationally renowned center for scientific research and education.