

MSI Awarded \$25,000 for Animas River Trails Planning and Implementation

February 15, 2007 – The Mountain Studies Institute (MSI) was recently awarded \$25,000 from the Laura Jane Musser Fund for trails planning and implementation related to the Animas River Corridor Project in Silverton. The proposal, titled “Art, Ecology, and the Humanities – Heritage Development in the Animas River Corridor, San Juan County, Colorado”, was submitted in the fall of 2006. The funds will be used specifically to initiate implementation of trails-related components of the Animas River Corridor Revitalization Project in 2007 and 2008.

Beginning in March 2007, MSI will work with Silverton and San Juan County residents to involve them in all aspects of project activities. Project partners, including San Juan County and the Town of Silverton, Animas River Stakeholders Group, and the San Juan County Historical Society, will work alongside residents to identify and prioritize which trail segments and artistic/interpretive exhibits can begin to be constructed. This project will continue the momentum generated during the 2006 community visioning and planning process as well as build upon the past hard work of many dedicated citizens.

The Animas River Corridor Revitalization Project is a community vision, action plan, and funding strategy to guide clean-up, revitalization, and reuse of a two-mile section of the Animas River Corridor and the Eureka Townsite. The project artistically and ecologically incorporates the mining, mountain and rail heritage, recognizes the unique San Juan community spirit and respects the natural beauty of the Animas River.

The Laura Jane Musser Fund, based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, encourages collaborative and participatory efforts among citizens in rural communities that help strengthen their towns and regions in a number of civic areas including economic development, business preservation, arts and humanities, public space improvements, and education. Funding for the Animas River Project is through the Rural Initiative Program, which places priority on projects that bring together a broad range and diversity of community members and institutions, include community members in all phases of the process, and work toward an outcome of positive change within the community. In addition, applicant communities must have a population of 10,000 or fewer and be able to demonstrate the rural characteristics and need of their location.

Other upcoming MSI activities include air quality monitoring and outreach for the San Juan Mountains, funded by the U.S. EPA and local National Forests. Sampling of high-elevation precipitation and lake food-webs for mercury pollution will commence this spring. An outreach booklet and community forums will present existing and new air quality information to environmental managers, community leaders, and interested public in the fall. MSI also is collaborating with the University of Colorado’s Western Water Assessment to bring technical workshops on tree-ring based stream flow reconstructions to water managers in the San Juan mountain region. This summer will be another busy season with a variety of researchers and students basing their activities out of MSI’s Silverton Field Station.

Information on future meetings, events, and volunteer opportunities related to the Corridor Project, including the 2007 Animas River Festival, scheduled for Saturday June 30th, will be announced in the Silverton Standard and on MSI’s website. For more information on the project or MSI, please contact the Mountain Studies Institute in Silverton at 970.387.5161 or visit www.mountainstudies.org.

Mountain Studies Institute is an independent, non-advocacy, not-for-profit 501(c)3 mountain research and education institution and high-altitude field station in Silverton and Durango, Colorado. MSI's mission is to enhance understanding and sustainable use of the San Juan Mountains through research and education.