



**ROYAL GORGE
BRIDGE & PARK**
CAÑON CITY, CO

P.O. Box 549
Cañon City, CO
81215

November 27, 2007

Board of Fremont County Commissioners:

This letter is to strongly support the 2007 Community Application by Fremont County for a Preserve America Designation for Fremont County, Colorado. The Royal Gorge Bridge and Park promotes heritage tourism, and has shared its rich history with millions of guests since it's opening in 1929.

The Royal Gorge Bridge is the world's highest suspension bridge towering over a 1,000 feet above the Arkansas River, and is one of the Colorado's premier attractions after almost 80 years. It is still considered an engineering feat or marvel by today's standards.

The Incline Railway was built in 1931, and is the world's steepest, traveling 1,550 feet from the top of the Royal Gorge to the Arkansas River below at a 45-degree angle. Both of these structures were engineered by George W. Cole, and are on the National Historic Registry. The world's longest single-span Aerial Tram at the park will be 40 years old in 2008.

The Royal Gorge Bridge & Park is a strong advocate in heritage tourism promotion for the area. For example, in 2006, the Royal Gorge Bridge & Park joined other organizations to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of Zebulon Pike's explorations of the Arkansas River area. The Royal Gorge Bridge & Park was one of the local sponsors for a historic river walk for over 500 local grade school children, and was active in other year long festivities. Our park held a commemoration ceremony with dignitaries from the State, the County, and the City to recognize the significance of these explorations. The park renamed the deep crevice in the 1000 foot wall that houses the Incline Railway, "Pike's Gulch," to signify his travels in the area.

Visitors to the park may view the Historical Expo at the Plaza Theater featuring photos and information from the building of the bridge to the aerial tram. There are also depictions of the Railroad Wars when the Santa Fe and the Denver Rio Grande Railroads

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declared war on each other in the late 1800's, to build tracks through the Royal Gorge. More recently, a Mountain Man Trading Post was added to the park to depict the first Western settlers way of life.

Since 1906, when 5,000 acres were deeded to the City of Canon City by the U.S. Congress, to be used as a municipal park, to the building of the bridge in 1929, the Royal Gorge area has always drawn visitors because of it's awesome scenery—that has never changed. Today, our visitors are more and more interested in heritage tourism, and seeking to enrich their lives by learning, and experiencing the area for themselves. We strongly support the efforts of the City of Canon City, the City of Florence, and Fremont County in making this a Preserve America Community.

Please feel free to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mike Bandera". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" and last name "Bandera" clearly distinguishable.

Mike Bandera

Vice-President and General Manager