

ROOS KNOWS

Plenty of events planned for this week in Durango area 3B

WOLVERINES WIN

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THE Durango HERALD

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LA PLATA MOUNTAINS

Residents' ire grows over drilling

Metallic Minerals questioned about water use and access

BY JESSICA BOWMAN
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Tensions flared during Metallic Minerals' first open house in Durango, where company officials introduced an exploratory drilling project in the La Plata Mountains and fielded pointed questions from residents.

The Vancouver-based company acquired claims covering about 19 square miles in the La Plata Mountains in 2019 and has since conducted exploratory work to evaluate mineral resources, including copper and other metals. About 90% of the project area sits on public land managed by the U.S. Forest Service, with the remainder on private patented mining claims.

Company officials said the meeting was intended to introduce the La Plata Project, share information and hear community concerns. But as the evening progressed, frustration rose among attendees who said answers about long-term impacts – particularly the possibility of a future mine – were insufficient.

The company has drilled eight exploratory holes to date and is considering up to a dozen drill sites for 2026.

"They've been in Durango for almost six years now, and last night was the first time that they had engaged in the Durango community," said Dan King, administrator for Save the La Plata, a coalition focused on preserving the La Plata Mountain range. "All of that is troubling to the coalition, and that's why our numbers continue to grow."

The coalition has grown to about 400 members, many of whom attended Thursday's meeting, where much of the discussion centered on water, recreation access and what exploration could mean for a potential future mine.

Company officials repeatedly stressed the project remains in its early stages and said they could not answer many long-term questions.

"We're explorers," one representative said. "We're in the business of evaluating whether a project can become a mine. Not all projects do."

Metallic Minerals described the project as a long-term effort, with any potential mine being years away. But that timeline has

See MOUNTAINS, 8A

Middle East vets reflect on past wars as Iran conflict enters 6th week



Photos courtesy of Trevor Peterson

ABOVE and BELOW: Pagosa Springs resident Trevor Peterson signed up for the U.S. Army as soon as he could, having spoken to a recruiter at age 17. He joined with the intent of serving in Afghanistan after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. But at boot camp, he was told he would be deploying to Iraq instead. Peterson said there are similarities between the U.S. Iraq War and the new conflict the U.S. is engaged with in Iran. He is worried a power vacuum in Iran will lead to new insurgencies forming.

Risks with regime change?

BY CHRISTIAN BURNEY
HERALD STAFF WRITER

As the U.S. war with Iran approaches its sixth week, Durango area veterans of past Middle East conflicts are reflecting on their experiences and applying them to the current conflict.

Pagosa Springs resident Trevor Peterson, an Iraq War veteran, said he fears toppling Iran's regime will lead to a power vacuum and insurgencies similar to what followed after Saddam Hussein's removal from power in Iraq 23 years ago.

He was part of the U.S. initial



invasion of Iraq and deployed in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and the 2nd Battalion,

187th Infantry Regiment.

"They took Saddam out, and that's the thing. Everyone celebrated for a little bit – and then they kept fighting each other," he said.

With Hussein out of the picture, he said, a power struggle quickly unfolded between different factions, including Sunnis, Shiites and later the Islamic State (ISIS) group.

"Saddam kept those groups separated with fear and power," he said. "He also kept that land in check. They (Iran and Iraq) fought a war in the '80s, and without Saddam, it

just fell apart."

Peterson said the U.S. appears to be pursuing the same strategy in Iran as it did with Iraq, but key differences make him pessimistic about the outcome.

The first difference is topographical, he said. Iran is mountainous – "like one big fortress" – while Iraq is a largely flat desert that tanks and troops can easily traverse.

The next difference is social media, he said. People around the globe are more connected compared to then. For context,

See VETS, 8A

Durangoan helps wounded Ukrainian soldiers heal through art

Nonprofit founder says citizens of Ukraine fear the world has forgotten their problems

BY CHRISTIAN BURNEY
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Durango resident Suzanne Horwich, who founded Artists Giving Back four years ago, returned last week from her latest trip to Ukraine where she worked with Ukrainian soldiers wounded in the war with Russia.

Horwich is used to working with refugees fleeing war and conflict from around the world. During this trip, she was working specifically with



Horwich

wounded soldiers.

She spent two weeks visiting hospitals and resilience centers in towns like Uzhhorod in west Ukraine, giving hospitalized soldiers

the opportunity to practice art therapy. In Ukraine, she said, it's common for children to be

See ART, 8A



A Ukrainian soldier who lost part of his right arm fighting against Russian forces traces a plate with a pencil in Suzanne Horwich's healing through art program. Horwich, of Durango, has visited Ukraine several times in the past four years. She started her program to help refugees of conflicts.

Courtesy of Suzanne Horwich

A&E Wednesday | 3B
City, Region, State | 3A
Food & Nutrition | 1B

Obituaries | 2A
Opinion | 4A
Sports | 6A



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More weather | 8B

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