Taking another step in its efforts to upgrade U.S. Highway 385, The High Plains Highway Coalition recently unveiled the official High Plains Highway sign, which will soon dot the highway as it winds through Colorado.

These signs will be placed underneath the 385 designations, identifying the High Plains Highway in Kit Carson, Cheyenne Wells, Burlington, Wray, Holyoke, Julesburg and sites in between.

At the unveiling of the signs on Friday, April 10 in Wray, Phillips County commissioner and past chairman of the coalition Bud Biesemeier made the opening remarks.

He stated that one of the group's primary goals has been to move the highway toward a Super 2 Highway. One major improvement that is needed for highway safety and travelability is adding shoulders.

He then read a newspaper article from Nov. 11, 1958 that talks about a new U.S. route being proposed from Big Bend Park in southern Texas to Puma Junction in South Dakota. That highway became U.S. Highway 385.

"More recently," said Biesemeier, "the High Plains Highway Coalition worked with the consultant Wilson & Company to complete a Corridor Development and Management Plan for U.S. 385. That was finished in July, 2007."

Identified projects from that plan have been placed in the Colorado Dept. of Transportation 2035 Plan for Eastern Colorado. Improvements to 385 are prioritized third, after improvements to I-70 and I-76.

In May of 2004, the Colorado state legislature passed a joint resolution designating the High Plains Highway from town of Kit Carson east to Cheyenne Wells and north all the way along U.S. 385 to the Nebraska border, north of Julesburg.

Biesemeier also introduced the designer of the new Highway sign, his grandson Michael Dee, a graphic artist from Arvada and formerly of Wray. Dee volunteered his efforts for the design.

"We believe the sign captures the essence of eastern Colorado and our strong dependence on agriculture as our way of life," said Biesemeier.

He then emphasized the importance and signifigance of the highway to Colorado. "It serves as the economic backbone of eastern Colorado, connecting five county seats from Cheyenne Wells, north," he said. "We intend to continue in our efforts until we see the improvements we seek come to life."

Before the sign's unveiling, the High Plains Highway Coalition also held a short meeting during which it elected new officers for the next two years. Dean Wingfield, Yuma County commissioner, was elected chairman; Rayetta Palmer, Cheyenne Wells councilwoman, vice-chairman; Randy Schafer, Phillips County administrator, secretary; and Susan Roll Walters, Phillips County commissioner, treasurer.