



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Steamboat Springs Service Center
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April 15, 2023

Bob Keenan
Department of Planning & Community Development
City of Steamboat Springs
124 10th Street
RE: PL20240095: Butcherknife Canyon

Mr. Keenan,

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has reviewed the request regarding the development of Butcherknife Canyon for residential units. The agency would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the development. CPW has a statutory responsibility to sustain healthy populations of wildlife and habitat for current and future generations of Coloradans.

The Routt County Planning Department is requesting an evaluation of the site for potential wildlife related issues regarding the development of the canyon. While the footprint of the structures consumes a fraction of the land in question, the proposed use could have a larger impact than the structures themselves. The undeveloped land in the area is already used heavily by foot and dog traffic on trails, however it has maintained its character of being a wildlife-friendly corridor.

This area is used by wildlife, especially in the habitat surrounding butcherknife creek. Seasonal habitats for wildlife species including black bear, moose, elk, mule deer, mountain lion, pika, snowshoe hare, southern red-backed vole, white-tailed jackrabbit, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, several species of bat, songbird, and raptor, and several species of snake occur on the project footprint. Additionally, the corridor is the only significant uninhabited area connecting the Strawberry Park Valley to the habitat south of Steamboat. The construction and operation of the residences will likely change the behavior of individuals using the area, and may diminish the opportunity for people in Steamboat to have interactions with wildlife.

CPW has assessed the potential wildlife impacts based on a desktop, and on-site evaluation. Using CPW's Species Activity Maps (SAM) and local knowledge of the area, the following comments summarize the anticipated wildlife impacts resulting from this project, and also provide recommended best management practices (BMPs) to be incorporated into the project



design in order to avoid, minimize, and mitigate possible impacts to wildlife species and their habitats.

High Priority Habitats

The proposed project is located within Category 5 Crucial Habitat. This includes [High Priority Habitats](#): the project is in Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Winter range, and is also immediately adjacent to Elk production areas.

CPW recommends the following considerations to help minimize the impacts of the development:

For Columbian Sharp-Tailed Grouse Winter range, CPW advises no permitted or authorized human activities from November 15 to March 15.

For the Adjacent Elk Production area: No permitted or authorized human activities from May 15 to June 30. Surface density limitation of one pad per square mile and less than one linear mile of routes per square mile (640 acres). If pad or route density cannot be achieved or maintained, implement offsite mitigation to offset functional habitat loss.

Human- Wildlife Conflicts

Please utilize best management practices for the avoidance of human-wildlife conflict. Visible stewardship efforts will promote a future where wildlife will be able to live in conjunction with human development.

CPW recommends proper education and precautions to reduce unnecessary conflicts between people, pets, and wildlife. Due to the potential for human-wildlife conflicts associated with this project, please consider the following recommendations:

- Ban workers, contractors, and users from bringing dogs on site during the construction period. CPW has had problems with pets harassing wildlife in the past. This project is in known moose, elk, and mule deer, mountain lion, and black bear habitat, among other species.

- Utilize completely enclosed IGBC-certified dumpsters for the duration of construction. All garbage must be kept in bear-proof containers, and disposed of on a regular basis to eliminate attractants for wildlife.
- Do any and all construction on the property after July 1, and before September 1st to reduce the potential conflicts with newborn, and mating, wildlife.
- Prohibit the use of artificial light at night.
- Keep sound levels to a minimum, and attempt to reduce noise towards the creek.
- Landscaping fabrics or erosion control materials should be natural, native materials and pose a low risk of entrapment or damage by wildlife.
- Conduct surveys and treat invasive weed species both prior to construction and after construction has been completed. Utilizing locally-sourced, or certified weed-free fill will help mitigate this.
- Avoid amenities such as dumpsters, trails, benches, picnic tables, or other amenities that draw people toward the creek, which is a high use area for wildlife.
- Develop a native landscaping plan incorporating native shrubs and forbs while avoiding fruit-bearing trees or any toxic or dangerous species.
- The permanent capture and prevention of runoff of the identified sediment, sand, grit, and salts, - Vehicular pollutants (Oils, antifreeze, carbon deposits, etc.), - fertilizers, nutrients, pesticides, and herbicides.

Wildlife can be negatively affected by artificial light, noise, and construction equipment, resulting in young abandonment and stress-related nutrient deficiencies. Impacts can be minimized by working and utilizing the area when wildlife are less dependent and when forage is at its peak later in the year. Preventing invasive species establishment is a cost-effective way of preventing the mitigation and removal of such species. Such species are known to out-compete and overwhelm local species, as well as being extremely time-and-cost intensive to remove.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to comment on this project. If there are any questions or need for additional information don't hesitate to contact District Wildlife Manager, David Rehak Suma at (970) 819-5718.

Sincerely,

David J. Rehak Suma, District Wildlife Manager.

X _____

Cc. Kris Middledorf, Area Wildlife Manager
Molly West, Land Use Specialist
Jeanette Sawa, Administrative Assistant Area 10