COLORADO
Parks and Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources

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May 29, 2015

Neal Starkbaum
Assistant Director, Gunnison County Community Development Department
Offices of Planning, Building and Environment Health
221 N. Wisconsin St., Ste. D
Gunnison, CO 81230

RE: Little Cimarron Creek Ranch Subdivision Land Use Change Comment

Dear Mr. Starkbaum,

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has reviewed Gunnison County's Minor Impact Land Use Change Application for Little Cimarron Creek Ranch. The applicant, Lakeside on the Colorado, LTD., proposes Little Cimarron Creek Ranch as a one phase project to divide a 66.27 acre parcel into 4 single-family lots, with limited agricultural use. The lots will range in size from 16 to 17 acres.

The property is located on the westerly edge of Gunnison County, adjacent to Montrose County. The property is bounded on the east side by Gunnison County Road 864, and on the other three sides by private ranches. The access road to Cimarron State Wildlife Area transects the property on the south side. The Little Cimarron River runs through the property from South to North. The habitat is primarily riparian with willow, cottonwood, juniper, pine and alder species. The southwest portion of the property on the west bank of the Little Cimarron River is primarily sagebrush upland. The proposed project sites sits at approximately 7600 ft. elevation.

Gunnison Sage-grouse Habitat Utilization:

The sagebrush hillside and the sagebrush-riparian interface on the southwest side of the property are considered important Gunnison Sage-grouse habitats. Cimarron State Wildlife area, managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, is located within a half mile south-west of this parcel. This 6,454 acre State Wildlife Area was acquired in 1980 from the United States Government as mitigation for habitat lost because of reservoir construction according to the Colorado River Storage Act of 1956. Over half of Cimarron State Wildlife Area consists of Gunnison sage-grouse habitat and the largest lek in the Cerro Summit/Cimarron Gunnison sage-grouse

SCANNED

Bob D. Broscheid, Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife • Parks and Wildlife Commission: Robert W. Bray, Chair • Carlos Castillo, Vice Chair
Jeanne Horne, Secretary • John Howard, Jr. • Bill Kane • Dale Pizel • James Pribyl • James Vigil • Dean Wingfield • Michelle Zimmerman • Alex Zipp

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population is on this State Wildlife Area. This lek is located within 1.6 miles of the property in question, however not within line of site.

In November of 2014 the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the Gunnison Sage-grouse under the U.S. Endangered Species Act as a threatened species. The listing proposal includes maps identifying "critical habitat" essential to the conservation of the species. ~~The proposed project falls within an area mapped by the USFWS as critical habitat for Gunnison~~ sage-grouse because it contains physical and biological habitat features essential to the conservation of the species. The USFWS will need to be consulted for proper procedures dealing with Gunnison Sage-Grouse and to ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

Black Bear Habitat Utilization:

The location of the proposed project lies within CPW mapped summer and fall black bear habitat. The area surrounding the proposed project does experience black bear conflicts throughout the summer and fall months. Due to the bear activity that exists in the area of the proposed project, the applicant should be prepared for bear activity. CPW strongly recommends that the applicant or HOA require bear proof trash containers at residences and facilities and keep trash and food, including pet food, sources properly stored. CPW also encourages limited use of bird feeders and other bear attractants. Upon request CPW can provide literature to help reduce bear conflicts.

Mule Deer, Elk and Moose Habitat Utilization:

The proposed project also lies within elk calving, spring, summer, fall and winter use areas, as well as mule deer spring, summer, fall and winter use area. Moose populations have recently established throughout the year in the Little Cimarron drainage as well. CPW advises landscaping be planned with plant species and plant protection that would reduce deer, elk and moose foraging and damage on landscaping. CPW strongly recommends keeping livestock feed properly stored and applied to reduce deer, elk moose foraging on livestock feed.

CPW recommends wildlife friendly fences be constructed throughout the proposed project area. The proposed project is in the migration corridor for the Cimarron deer and elk herds, and is mapped as Gunnison Sage-grouse occupied habitat within the Cerro Summit/Cimarron population. Many wildlife species are frequently in the area and would benefit from wildlife friendly fences to allow safe migration. Upon request CPW can provide a book for fencing with wildlife in mind.

Impact Avoidance and Minimization Recommendations:

Given the high quality wildlife habitat of the proposed project site and surrounding area, and based on a site specific evaluation of the proposed activities at the site, CPW recommends the following to avoid and minimize potential project impacts to wildlife.

- Use of bear proof trash containers and waste storage to minimize black bear conflict
- ~~Proper timing use and removal of bird feeders to reduce black bear conflict~~
- Planned landscaping considerations to reduce mule deer, elk and moose foraging and damage to landscaping
- Proper storage and application of livestock feed to reduce mule deer, elk and moose foraging on livestock feed
- Construction of wildlife friendly fencing

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the impacts the proposed Little Cimarron Creek Ranch may have on wildlife. If you have further questions please contact myself, or District Wildlife Manager Matt Ortega at 970.252.6011.

Sincerely,

Renzo DelPiccolo
Area Wildlife Manager
970.252.6010

cc: Matt Ortega-DWM, Patt Dorsey-SW Regional Manager, Jon Holst-Energy Resource Specialist, Brian Magee-Land Use