



STATE OF
COLORADO

Hays - DNR, Peter <peter.hays@state.co.us>

Concern over big horn sheep effected by Douglas Mtn Mine project

1 message

Margi Kaspari <mergikaspari@yahoo.com>

To: "joseph.walter@state.co.us" <joseph.walter@state.co.us>

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Tue, Nov 27, 2018 at 8:29 AM

Please see attached letter sharing my concerns about your allowing the permitting of the DMRM

Tony Kaspari
empire resident
303-324-9103

Week 1 writing campaign CPW.docx
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FRIENDS OF CLEAR CREEK

is a group of engaged citizens from the communities of Clear Creek County Colorado, who respect and protect the air, water, natural landscape, wildlife, and quality of life for all who reside in and visit our beautiful county.

www.FriendsOfClearCreek.com

November 20, 2018

Colorado Parks and Wildlife NE Region

ATTN: Mr. Joe Walter – District Wildlife Manager; joseph.walter@state.co.us
6060 Broadway, Denver CO 80216

CC: State Representative KC Becker: kbecker.house@state.co.us
State Senator Kevin Grantham: kevin.grantham.senate@state.co.us
Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF); Terry Myers: info@wilsheepfoundation.org
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Society (RMBS): rmbs@bighornsheep.org
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Evergreen Naturalists Audubon Society; Kathy Madison - Board President:
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Rocky Mountain Angling Club (RMAC): rmangling@gmail.com
Department of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety; Peter Hays: peter.hays@state.co.us

RE: Douglas Mountain Ranch Mining Project, Permit #M2018016 with the Department of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety

We write to you in opposition to the proposed Douglas Mountain Ranch Mining Project currently under permit review with the DRMS. Your office is tasked with identifying potential wildlife hazards for the project and in a letter dated June 18th 2018, Mark Lamb, the Area 1 Wildlife Manager for Colorado Parks and Wildlife, expressed concerns on the project's impact to the health of local bighorn sheep, falcons, and elk. We believe this project would have impacts on far more wildlife than those listed but first want to focus on the risks to our state animal (and your official symbol), the Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep. Our local Bighorns are prized in the community for the emotional and economic benefits they bring; the town of Georgetown celebrates the herd with an annual festival. This mine would industrialize critical habitat that currently exists directly adjacent to the project area and exacerbate herd stress your department has specifically identified in research documents. As concerned citizens we demand you recommend outright denial of the mine permit to the DRMS on those grounds.

Mr. Lamb's letter states that the Bighorn Sheep population that inhabits this area is one of Colorado's primary "Tier 1" bighorn sheep herds, and the CPW's September 2015 report "[Population Estimation, Survival, Estimation and Range Delineation for the Georgetown Bighorn Sheep Herd: Final Report](#)" describes the herd as one of the "largest and most highly valued" in the State of Colorado for both hunting and wildlife viewing. As you are surely aware, this is an ancient native herd that has been used to repopulate many places in the Western USA. Ben Kraft, a biologist with CPW, was recently quoted on

a Channel 4 newscast saying your department's objective was to "wisely manage bighorn habitat and make sure that habitat isn't lost, fragmented, or degraded because of our activities".

CPW's 2015 Bighorn Sheep Report specifically mentions Empire Junction (the site of the proposed mine and the Kraft interview) as high-consequence habitat where current road traffic produces the most sheep/vehicle mortality within the entire herd and a restriction point that hinders the herd's ability to genetically intermingle. In fact your report recommends building road wildlife bridges in the area to assist the herd's long-term health. By literally removing the last natural passages for sheep in the area and adding up to 300 trucks a day (estimate provided by the developer to the community) the proposed mine will make the current strained conditions immeasurably worse.

Elk, deer, moose, black bears, and mountain lions also roam the Douglas Mountain Plateau. The threatened greenback cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, and brown trout all swim in the waters of Clear Creek, which is fed by the West Fork of Clear Creek that runs along the edge of the plateau. Bald eagles, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, ospreys and hawks all soar above the plateau and breed and nest in close proximity on neighboring mountainsides. This plateau has a rich diversity of wildlife and is important for migration corridors, nesting areas, lambing and calving areas, winter habitat, and denning sites for many species. Removing native vegetation on the plateau would deplete food sources for all wildlife in the area, and the lush vegetation areas on the adjoining properties would be decimated by the disruption of the natural springs and ground water. Bighorn sheep, elk, deer, and moose are spotted and photographed daily on the plateau, drawn by the springs and vegetation, not just on the steep mountainsides.

The permit application from Empire Aggregate LLC gives very little detail as to how the wildlife will be protected throughout the mining project. No fencing is planned until animals are killed or injured within the area of activity. Speed limit signs would be posted for 10 mph. What is the minimum distance required for a fully loaded eighteen-wheeler to come to a complete stop when a bighorn sheep or elk leaps onto the road in an area it is accustomed to traveling through? Large berms and windrows would be built along the edge of the plateau, creating a large area of bare dirt on the out-slope toe where sediment will be washed into the creek. This will be a constant occurrence as new dirt is removed and piled. Seeding those new berm areas will take several weeks before new vegetation holds the dirt in place in the summer, and nothing will hold the dirt in place in the winter when vegetation cannot grow. This process presents a grave threat to the ecosystem in our watershed. Excess sediment has a detrimental effect on the threatened greenback cutthroat trout which has been reintroduced into Clear Creek. These same bare dirt berms pose a threat to our birds of prey, as the plateau is in a high wind area and it will be difficult to prevent dust from filling the air, which will spread well beyond the mine area and effect the neighboring mountainsides, specifically the peregrine falcon nesting areas.

After a meeting with the Douglas Mountain Ranch Mining Project developers, Mr. Joe Walters, District Wildlife Manager for CPW, now chooses to appease the developers stating the adherence to a few guidelines would alleviate any harm to our bighorn sheep population and all other wildlife. How can this stance be taken by CPW? The job of the Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife is to defend and protect wildlife and their habitat. The Douglas Mountain Plateau, the location of the proposed mine and subsequent reclamation, is the only natural, accessible, and undeveloped alluvial plateau in Clear Creek County. It is a unique geological feature, unspoiled by development, which supports many wildlife species and therefore, should be protected. We are urging CPW to take a firm stance and contact the Department of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety before December 18th, 2018, to deny the Douglas Mountain Ranch Mining Project.

Best Regards from Friends of Clear Creek,

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I am reaching out to you to help stop this detrimental strip mining operation. There is zero positive environmental benefit to this project. Please take a firm stance in opposition to this project by submitting a letter in writing to the Department of Reclamation, Mining and Safety as well as our local Clear Creek County Planning Commission. Thank you in advance for your help.

Margi Kaspari