



CPW's response to DRMS's Martin Marietta mine (I-70 & US40) [Specification Aggregates Quarry - File No. M-1974-004, Martin Marietta Materials, Inc.]

1 message

Marette - DNR, Brandon <brandon.marette@state.co.us>

Wed, Jun 15, 2022 at 4:57 PM

To: Eric Scott - DNR <eric.scott@state.co.us>

Cc: Tim Woodward - DNR <tim.woodward@state.co.us>, Joe Halseth - DNR <joseph.halseth@state.co.us>, Mark Lamb - DNR <mark.lamb@state.co.us>, Lance Carpenter - DNR <lance.carpenter@state.co.us>

Good afternoon Eric,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments for the proposed DRMS application that would allow for a 48-acre expansion and 16-acre buffer of the Spec Aggregate Quarry. The property is in the northern portion of Jefferson County Open Space's (JCOS) Matthews/Winters Park, which is currently closed to the public. The Matthews/Winters JCOS property is adjacent to the existing Martin Marietta mine to the north, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart (Cabrini Shrine) on the west, by I-70 on the south, and US Highway 40 on the east. The proposed land exchange would transfer 60 acres of the Matthews/Winters property to Martin Marietta for mining. After mining is complete, Martin Marietta would return the mined and reclaimed property to JCOS.

The mission of CPW is to perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state parks system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources. CPW has a statutory responsibility to manage all wildlife species in Colorado, and to promote a variety of recreational opportunities throughout Colorado. One way we achieve this goal is by responding to referral comment requests, as is the case for this project.

CPW's main concern is the permanent loss of 64 acres of four (4) mapped High Priority Habitats: Elk and Mule Deer Severe Winter Range and Winter Concentration Areas. Our secondary concern is the subsequent distribution response of the large resident and wintering elk herd and smaller mule deer herds into less desirable habitats.

- This proposed disturbance area is currently utilized year-round by 150-200 elk, and is mapped as elk "overall range" and "severe winter range" which shows the importance of these lands for elk, especially in winter. Elk utilization and numbers have increased dramatically over the last 10 years as documented by local District Wildlife Managers and managers of the Cabrini Shrine. Yearly census work and collar data confirm elk movements and numbers.
- A priority for CPW in this area is to manage elk population levels, reduce chronic wasting disease prevalence, and prevent game damage complaints. Converting JCOS property to mined lands will result in habitat loss and may impact CPW's ability to manage elk in this area. CPW relies on hunter harvest to manage big game populations. Herds in this area have grown in size due to lack of harvest because of the minimal access for hunters and habitat loss. CPW, in partnership with Cabrini Shrine and JCOS, started a novice hunter program and this effort has reduced game damage by dispersing elk using a limited number of novice adult hunters. Harvest on the land proposed for exchange has been an important piece of the hunter program's success. CPW is interested in working with the mine to continue hunting on the proposed land exchange property to manage elk populations until active mining commences. Maintaining harvest on this property could help prevent the elk from overusing the critical winter range that remains and keep the herd(s) to the west of Golden.
- There are already a lot of human-elk conflicts associated with this herd, and eliminating this habitat could shift elk herds to other adjacent areas where greater conflict may occur. Currently, elk are pioneering to the east as far as the Rolling Hills Golf Course (McIntyre Street and W. 32nd Avenue). Such movement and continued change in distribution into urban areas east of Highway 6 is expected to increase the number of resident (non-migratory) elk. Resident elk in urban settings results in increased elk-human conflicts, which are exceedingly difficult to manage in populated areas where hunting is not feasible.
- Even though mule deer can cause fewer conflicts with humans and are more adaptable within the urban fringes, CPW's district wildlife managers and biologists similarly need to manage foothills mule deer herds to reduce chronic waste disease prevalence.

CPW also recommends that the revegetation mix for the eventual reclamation include native seed, composed of both grass and forb species found in the area. That way, reclaimed habitats that are once again available and accessible to these elk herds will lessen their impact on eastern golf courses and residents' lawns.

Proposals such as this one may be relatively small in size but they contribute to cumulative habitat loss for all wildlife species. Habitat loss and fragmentation from developments can be offset with habitat protection adjacent to or offsite of development. CPW and JCOS are currently collaborating on several long-term conservation strategies that will protect wildlife habitats from development along the Front Range. The addition of other conserved lands in this area can increase important wildlife habitats and provide habitat connectivity to offset the loss of habitat from this development. CPW appreciates the ability to consult with DRMS on wildlife management issues as we collaboratively discuss the responsible development of this quarry with protecting year-round and wintering elk habitats.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me, or local District Wildlife Manager Tim Woodward at tim.woodward@state.co.us.

Regards,

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Northeast Region Energy Liaison and Land Use Coordinator



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