



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Steamboat Springs (Area 10) Service Center
P.O. Box 775777 | 925 Weiss Drive
Steamboat Springs, Colorado 80487
P. 970.870.3333

March 27, 2025

Greg Jaeger
Routt County Planning Department
136 6th Street, Suite 200
Steamboat Springs, CO 80487

RE: Swarey Sawmill Project

Dear Mr. Jaeger,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Swarey Sawmill Project in Routt County. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has a statutory responsibility to manage all wildlife species in Colorado; this responsibility is embraced and fulfilled through CPW's mission to protect, preserve, enhance, and manage the wildlife of Colorado for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of the people of the State and its visitors. CPW encourages the Swarey Sawmill to afford the highest protection for Colorado's wildlife species and habitats. CPW has reviewed the proposal and would like to offer the following comments on potential impacts on wildlife.

The entire property is approximately 62 acres, with King Creek running through it at the southerly end. The proposed building will be adjacent to the existing residential building on the property and will extend the drive to accommodate employee parking and snow removal. This building is proposed to be about 5000 square feet (50'X100') and 23 feet tall. The existing and proposed buildings are located more than 900 feet away from the high-water mark of King Creek, which runs through the property. The property is bounded by Routt County Road No. 5 on the North. Most of the property is composed of sagebrush and hay pastures with emergent herbaceous wetlands surrounding King Creek on the South end of the property.

The area surrounding the proposed site provides habitat for various species throughout the year. The project site falls within the overall, summer, and winter ranges for elk; the overall and summer ranges for mule deer; the overall and summer ranges for moose; the overall range for pronghorn; the overall range for bears; and the overall range for mountain lions. This property is included in the winter range of the Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse. This property is also included in the Greater Sage Grouse Priority Habitat management area. Several other animals may utilize this area throughout the year, including songbirds, foxes, coyotes, and other small mammals.



Jeff Davis, Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife Commission: Dallas May, Chair · Richard Reading, Vice-Chair · Karen Bailey, Secretary · Jessica Beaulieu
Marie Haskett · Tai Jacober · Jack Murphy · Gabriel Otero · Murphy Robinson · James Jay Tutchton · Eden Vardy

CPW appreciates the prior communication with the applicant regarding state-listed species. Reviewing the project summary and purpose, as well as the need, we found that the preferred alternative is located within CPW high-priority habitats for the Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Winter Range and the Greater Sage-Grouse Priority Habitat Management Area. The proposed project area is also adjacent to a high-value CPW Conservation Easement, which provides critical habitat for sage grouse. When considering the overall scope of the proposed project, in concert with local knowledge of grouse use, both general and seasonally, of the proposed site, CPW staff do not believe that the proposed project is likely to result in any long-term negative impacts on Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Sage-Grouse use of the project area or to these local grouse populations. However, in order to minimize the potential for short-term impacts to breeding Greater Sage-Grouse, CPW staff recommend that all operations and maintenance activities be limited to between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm during the lekking, nesting, and early brood-rearing seasons (March 1st through May 15th). Based on our project review, we have determined that any additional timing limitation recommendations are not warranted in this instance, given the limited disturbance duration and the proximity to the core habitat.

CPW has also identified Sportfish Management Waters along King Creek on the South end of the property. CPW recommends the applicant avoid any ground disturbance within 500 feet of the common high water mark of King Creek. CPW recognizes that the proposed building location will be 900 feet away from the high water mark and commends the applicant for their wise planning to avoid disturbing the fishery.

CPW appreciates the opportunity to be involved in planning and would be happy to discuss any wildlife issues with Elam Swarey. If you have any questions, please contact District Wildlife Manager Elijah Columbia at 970-896-6353, elijah.columbia@state.co.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kris Middledorf". The signature is stylized with a large, flowing "K" and a cursive "Middledorf".

Kris Middledorf
Area Wildlife Manager - Area 10
Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Cc:
Elijah Columbia, District Wildlife Manager
Libbie Miller, Conservation Biologist
Molly West, Northwest Region Landuse Specialist
Jeanette Sawa, Administrative Assistant