
Yampatika Environmental Learning Center

Conditional Use Permit

ACTIVITY #: **PP2014-033**

HEARING DATES: Planning Commission (PC): 9/18/14 at 6:00pm

PETITIONER: Yampatika

PETITION: Conditional Use Permit for Environmental Learning Center

LOCATION: Tract in SW4 Section 33-6-84 & SE4 Section 32-6-84
Total 132 acres
Near intersection of US 40 and CO 131

ZONE DISTRICT: AF

AREA: 132 acres

STAFF CONTACT: Watkins Fulk-Gray

ATTACHMENTS:

- Memo describing project and background
- Applicant's narrative
- Expired Conditional Use Permit

ISSUE:

Yampatika, a nonprofit dedicated to environmental education, is applying to renew its Conditional Use Permit for its Environmental Learning Center at Legacy Ranch and replace it with a life-of-use permit. The elapsed permit number is PP2009-012. The Planning Department has not received any complaints regarding the property since this permit was issued, and Yampatika is not requesting any amendments to the old permit except that which would make it life of use.

SITE DESCRIPTION:

Yampatika is located on the former Legacy Ranch and is accessed from US 40. The ranch complex consists of six structures: a 1917 ranch house, 1930s bunkhouse, machine shed, pole shed, coal shed, and barn on 132 acres. The site is zoned Agriculture and Forestry. A conservation easement held by Yampa Valley Land Trust has been placed upon the property.

BACKGROUND:

The former ranch on which Yampatika is situated was acquired by the City of Steamboat Springs in 1999 with the help of several other organizations. Steamboat Springs has conducted an assessment of the historic ranch structures and has rehabilitated them, a process that continues with semi-annual property review that checks and records the condition of the historic structures.

The Environmental Learning Center functions as a home for many programmed activities, including service learning days, organic gardening series, ranch open houses, teacher training workshops, Historic Places bicycle tours, youth camps, self-guided walking tours, school field trips, school breaks, 4H programs, and snowshoe tours. More details about the Environmental Learning Center's diverse programming are included in the applicant's narrative. Since the Environmental Learning Center opened, Yampatika has won three awards for environmental stewardship.

The 5-year Conditional Use Permit granted to Yampatika expired in July of this year, shortly after Yampatika applied to the County for a renewal of the permit.

The staff report for the 2009 permit found concerns from Steamboat Springs Fire Prevention Service about traffic back-up on US 40 and the report also included a recommendation from the Routt County Department of Environmental Health to monitor water quality. No other concerns were identified, and these two concerns were addressed in the conditions of approval.

PLANNING COMMISSION OPTIONS:

1. Approve the Conditional Use Permit request without conditions if it is determined that the petition will not adversely affect the public health, safety, and welfare and the proposed use is compatible with the immediately adjacent and nearby neighborhood

properties and uses and the proposal is in compliance with the Routt County Zoning Regulations and complies with the guidelines of the Routt County Master Plan.

2. Deny the Conditional Use Permit request if it is determined that the petition will adversely affect the public health, safety, and welfare and/or the proposed use is not compatible with the immediately adjacent and nearby neighborhood properties and uses and/or the proposed use is not in compliance with the Routt County Zoning Regulations and/or the Routt County Master Plan,
3. Table the Conditional Use Permit request if additional information is required to fully evaluate the petition.
4. Approve the Conditional Use Permit request with conditions and/or performance standards if it is determined that certain conditions and/or performance standards are necessary to ensure public, health, safety, and welfare and/or make the use compatible with immediately adjacent and neighborhood properties and uses and/or bring the proposal into compliance with the Routt County Zoning Regulations and Routt County Master Plan.

CONDITIONS that may be appropriate may include the following:

Conditions of Approval:

1. The Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is valid for Life of Use provided it is acted upon within one year of approval. The CUP shall be deemed to have automatically lapsed if the seasonal summer use is discontinued for one year.

Yampatika's
Environmental Learning Center at Legacy Ranch



Current Uses 2014



Prepared by Sonja Macys, Executive Director, Yampatika

(970) 871-9151 office telephone

(970) 819-4260 cell phone

(970) 871-2284 fax

sonja@yampatika.org

Background

The Legacy Ranch was acquired by the City of Steamboat Springs in 1999 as part of the larger project to conserve the Yampa Valley Land and Cattle property on Emerald Mountain. Located on 132 acres of hay meadows and pastures, the ranch complex consists of six structures— a 1917 ranch house, a 1930's bunkhouse, machine shed, pole shed, coal shed and barn. The property is situated at the intersection of Highway 40 and 131 just outside the city limits.

Since the Ranch's acquisition, the City has placed a conservation easement on the property, which is held by the Yampa Valley Land Trust (YVLT). In addition, the City has conducted an historic structure assessment, stabilized and rehabilitated the ranch buildings and surveyed the area's archaeological resources. Local and state organizations donated their resources, time, and expertise to make the acquisition and building renovations possible.

At the property's dedication in 2000, it was noted "This project is a model in Colorado for how public and private interests can accomplish important conservation and outdoor recreation projects. The Yampa project demonstrates how conservation, agriculture and recreation can coexist.¹" In the 2003 article "Harvesting Historical Riches," found on the Colorado Historical Society's website, it is noted that "Yampatika, a nonprofit group that interprets the Yampa Valley's cultural heritage will also provide educational services in the historic ranch buildings."

Use of the Property

Yampatika has partnered with the City to create an Environmental Learning Center at Legacy Ranch, using the site as a destination for educational programming on topics related to the property's conservation, agricultural and historic values and its position at a demonstration site for sustainability efforts. Year-round programming has served residents and visitors and helped the City fulfill its educational goals at the Ranch. Programs have created needed opportunity for healthy and productive youth activities in Steamboat Springs.

Organizations that have collaborated on educational programs on-site include:

Soroco Elementary, Hayden Valley Elementary, Soda Creek Elementary, Strawberry Park Elementary, Christian Heritage School, Lowell Whiteman Primary School, the Steamboat Home school group, BookTrails, The University of Wisconsin, Lowell Whiteman High School, Snowboard Outreach Society, the Eagle Scouts, the Boys and Girls Club, 4H, Colorado Mountain College's Sustainability Studies and Culinary Management Programs, the Yampa Valley Design Guild, Routt County United Way, Steamboat Springs Alternative High School, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, the Colorado Open Space Alliance, The Yampa Valley Sustainability Council, The Yampa Valley Land Trust, The City of Steamboat Springs Planning Department, The City of Steamboat Springs Parks and Recreation Department, The Kiwanis Club, Smartwool, Tread of Pioneers Museum, Deep Roots, The Community Agriculture

¹ http://www.steamboatpilot.com/news/2000/sep/11/owens_to_dedicate/?local_news

Alliance, Routt County Extension, The Nature Conservancy, The Yampa Valley Birding Club, The Bureau of Land Management., The USDA Forest Service, Historic Routt County, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Colorado Biology Teachers Association.

Public benefit and public use of the site is documented in the following table.

Year	Youth Served	Adults Served	Total Served	People served through free programs	People served through fee-based programs	Youth on scholarship (included in “people served through free programs”)	Volunteer Hours	Value of Volunteer Time ²³
2009 ⁴	363	124	487	365	122 (25%)	16	120	\$3,564
2010	476	126	602	513	89 (15%)	22	2,241	\$48,114
2011	534	95	649	523	126 (19%)	25	1,594	\$36,264
2012	656	303	959	871	88 (9%)	26	2,390	\$54,373
2013	956	313	1,269	1,194	75 (6%)	25	2,151	\$53,990

Educational programs that have been offered over the past five years are described here:

Service Learning Days

Organizations like the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, SOS Outreach, The Steamboat Springs Alternative High School, The Steamboat Springs Honor Society, Smartwool, The Kiwanis Club and many more have completed service work on site with many projects like cleaning the grounds; composting yard waste; and completing the kids’ scale gardens.

“From the Ground Up” & DIY Organics

Organic gardening series offered in partnership with many local organizations help adults understand how to grow fresh, organic produce in our short growing season.

Open Houses Co-Hosted by the Tread of Pioneers Museum

Open Houses co-hosted by the Tread of Pioneers Museum, provide adults the opportunity to view the Ranch through the lens of history, covering topics such as our area’s agricultural history; homesteading; and the historic structures of the Legacy Ranch.

² The value of volunteer time is calculated by multiplying the number of volunteer hours by the Independent Sector’s value of volunteer time in the state of Colorado. https://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time

³ This value does not include donated products for building and property maintenance (i.e. fencing, paint) or donated services (i.e. snow removal).

⁴ Yampatika moved into the Legacy Ranch site in June 2009 so these data reflect 6 months of operations.

Teacher Training Workshops

Teacher trainings have been offered on a variety of topics such as Project WILD/Aquatic WILD - an international conservation education program focusing on wildlife, aquatic and flying wildlife, habitats, and stewardship and Project Learning Tree - an international conservation education program focusing on trees, forests, and stewardship.

City of Steamboat Springs Historic Places Bicycle Tour

Bikers typically end the City of Steamboat Springs Historic Places Bicycle Tour at the Environmental Learning Center.

Yampatika Camps

Yampatika offers camps to youth ages 5-14 in the “outdoor classroom” of the Ranch grounds. Camps generally run from mid-June to mid-August and can accommodate 24 campers in a given day. A ratio of 6 children to 1 adult is our maximum. Camp activities generally take place in the three acre building envelope of the Ranch complex and the hours of operation are between 8am and 5pm.

Self-guided walking tour

Yampatika received a State Historical Fund grant to develop a self-guided walking tour brochure which is supported by interpretive signage in the Ranch House and on the grounds of the property. Interpretive signs may be viewed by visitors or community groups using the space for meetings.

Educator Resource Library

The bunkhouse, which serves as summer office space for seasonal Naturalists, also houses environmental education tools and resources that are made available to teachers from Routt, Moffat and Jackson Counties on a first come first serve basis. Our “discovery boxes” provide teachers with lesson plans, educational materials, and outdoor activities that they may use to teach their students about a variety of environmental topics in outdoor settings. We also have resources available to complement the discovery box topics, such as molds for animal tracking, skulls, and bird wings and feathers that teachers use to support their lesson plans.

School Field Trips

Legacy Ranch serves as the field site for Yampatika’s Environmental Literacy Program in the Steamboat Springs and South Routt School Districts. Hayden uses the Nature Conservancy’s Carpenter Ranch.

School Break Opportunities

The Legacy Ranch is a winter destination for the Boys and Girls Club of Steamboat Springs. Youth come to *Blues Break Camp* and learn about *Animal Tracks*, *Snow Art*, *Snow Science*, *Winter Adaptations* and *Winter Pioneer Life*.

Town Kids 4H Program

The ‘Town Kids’ project, offered in partnership with 4H, allows for lambs and pigs to be housed on site. Each child in the program gives 16 hours of service back to the site.

Snowshoe Tours

In the winter season, we offer occasional snowshoe tours that highlight the ecology and history of the Legacy Ranch. Due to its flat terrain, the Ranch offers an ideal location for beginning

The Community Benefit of Environmental Education

Legacy Ranch presents a wonderful opportunity for Yampatika’s environmental education programs. Its natural resources include open space and an extensive riparian gallery. Its cultural resources include an historic Ranch complex and a working agricultural operation. Its proximity to other protected areas such as the Chuck Lewis Wildlife Area, managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, plus the conservation easement on Humble Ventures’ land affords Yampatika Campers the opportunity to hike from the property to overnight camping locations.

Studies show that environmental education can have numerous positive impacts on a community. Most apparent is a decrease in risk factors for youth in our community. For example, fewer children will spend summers at home alone or feel isolated from their peers due to lack of accessible and appropriate activities. Instead, these children can participate in constructive, educational programs in which they can form positive social relationships with their peers and the community. In the long-term, studies have shown that children who spend time in a natural setting and participate in outdoor education programs have reduced levels of stress, have shown enhanced cooperation and conflict resolution skills, gains in self-esteem and self-confidence along with other positive outcomes.⁵

Yampatika involves at-risk, underserved, and special needs children in educational programs. These populations often have limited opportunities to participate in programs outside of school due to lack of financial opportunity, insufficient knowledge that opportunities are available to them or disengaged parents. Due to the high cost of living in Routt County, it is also necessary for many families to have both parents working full-time outside the home, leaving many children at home and unsupervised during summer break.

Yampatika’s programs provide hands-on, outdoor educational experiences for both children ages 5-14, and adults. The programs provide an opportunity for children to get out of the house and become engaged in constructive, non-competitive activities with their peers. Yampatika

⁵ “Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California.” American Institutes for Research: Palo Alto, CA: 2005. “California Student Assessment Project Phase Two: The Effects of Environment-Based Education on Student Achievement.” SEER: Poway, CA, 2005. Taylor, Andrea Faber; Frances E. Kuo; and William C. Sullivan. “Views of Nature and Self-Discipline: Evidence from Inner City Children.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21, 2001. Wells, N.M., and Evans, G.W. “Nearby Nature: A Buffer of Life Stress Among Rural Children.” *Environment and Behavior*. Vol. 35:3, 311-330.

encourages participation from children of all backgrounds and abilities and is actively reaching out to at-risk, low income, and special needs children. Thanks to the generosity of local funders, each year between 20-25% of summer camp attendees are at-risk youth on scholarship.

Consistency with the Conservation Easement & Routt County Zoning

Yampatika has worked with the YVLT to assemble a proposal that is consistent with the property's existing conservation easement and creates public awareness about it and its associated conservation values. Yampatika's programs are driven by the conservation values defined in recital C of the easement to "conserve natural habitat for wildlife," and they are consistent with recital E of the conservation easement which allows for "low-impact, non-motorized recreation on the property." Winter uses are consistent as defined in section 4M of the easement "for non-motorized, low impact winter recreational uses such as snow-shoeing, cross country skiing or skate-skiing."

Yampatika has reviewed Section 4 of the Routt County planning department's Zoning Regulations, "Zone Districts and allowable uses." The property in question falls within the section 4.4 Agricultural and Forestry District (AF), defined below.

4.4 AF - Agriculture and Forestry

This Zone District is created for the purpose of providing the productive agricultural and forested lands of Routt County and preserving the visual, productive, and cultural values associated with agriculture and agricultural lifestyles in rural, unincorporated areas of Routt County. The Zone District also provides for other uses including resource extraction, most requiring permits.

Property Management Plan

According to the "Legacy Ranch Conservation Maintenance Plan⁶," published by the City of Steamboat Springs in April 2006, "Regular examination and maintenance is the most important method for preserving any historic building." Yampatika conducts a semi-annual historic property review, using checklist and photo documentation to maintain records on the status of the property. Any notable change constituting an improvement to the property or its deterioration is photo documented.

Parking Plan

As per section 5.4 of the Routt County Zoning standards, attached as Appendix I, "off-street parking and loading facilities shall be provided in accordance with Appendix C of these regulations in proportion to the need for such facilities." Appendix C defines the size of each parking space as 9 feet x 18 feet and requires a 24 foot aisle for perpendicular parking on both sides. Using those dimensions, there are 16 available parking spaces on site. The spaces, adjacent to the Bunkhouse are compliant with "Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Standards." See Appendix E for a drawing of the parking area.

⁶"LegacyRanch" and "The Legacy Ranch" have been used as names for the property.

Appendix C, section 8 of the Routt County Zoning standards does not define a specific number of parking spots for the exact use that Yampatika is proposing. However, perhaps the most comparable use would be for a day-care center or school.

Using the day-care center model, one parking space would be required per employee and one space per six children. Using the maximum number of Yampatika employees that would work at the site during the summer season (4), we would need four spaces and using the maximum number of students that could be on site at any given time (24), we would need an additional four parking spaces for a total of 8.

Using the school model, one spot would be required per three students. Again, with a maximum of 24 students on site, we would need 8 parking spots. The current parking spaces of 16 are more than sufficient to accommodate on-site parking needs.

Yampatika's use varies seasonally, operating at maximum continuous use during June, July and August. At that time, as many as 27 people (24 children and 4 adults) could be on site in a given day. The site's parking area is large enough to accommodate 16 vehicles, which has been sufficient for the past five years. The area is within the three acre building envelope noted in section 4I of the conservation easement and provides 16 parking spaces. The parking lot has been maintained in its rustic state; both for consistency with the rural nature of the property and because of the constraint of section 5G of the conservation easement which states

“No portion of the property (exclusive of the trails as described herein) shall be paved or otherwise covered with concrete, asphalt, or any other paving material,”

In case of an emergency need for parking, Colorado Parks and Wildlife has allowed for use of its parking lot which is in close proximity to the Ranch.

Yampatika's Qualifications

Yampatika is uniquely qualified to be the site steward of the Legacy Ranch. We are aware of the restrictions and limitations on the property and the need for educational programming on a variety of topics beyond our current focus. To meet the goal of integrating agriculture, recreation and preservation, we have partnered with others who have expertise in these areas.

Over the years that Yampatika has been site steward of the Legacy Ranch, the organization has won several awards for its programming there. They include:

- The “Sustained Contributor” Award from Yampa Valley Sustainability Council, 2011
- The State Honor Award from Colorado Preservation, Inc. , 2010 presented jointly to Yampatika and the City of Steamboat Springs
- The New Pioneer of the Yampa Valley Award, 2009 presented by the Community Alliance of the Yampa Valley



CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT
Routt County
Planning Commission

Permit No.: PP2009-012

Project Name: Yampatika Environmental Learning Center

Owner: Yampatika

Address: 925 Weiss Drive Steamboat Springs, CO 80487

Type of Use: Conditional Uses Permit

Location/Legal Description: 35435 Highway 40 Steamboat Springs, CO
Southwest ¼ Section 33, Township 6, Range 84

Period of Permit: Five (5) Years

Board Approval Date: May 21, 2009

Conditions of Approval:

1. The Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is valid year round for the five (5) years provided it is acted upon within one year of approval. The CUP shall be deemed to have automatically lapsed if the uses permitted herein are discontinued for a period of one (1) year. This permit will be reviewed following the initial five (5) year period by planning staff. Following planning staff review, the permit can be administratively renewed by the Planning Director for another five years.
2. The CUP is contingent upon compliance with the applicable provisions of the Routt County Zoning Regulations including but not limited to Sections 5, 6, and 8.
3. The CUP is limited to uses and facilities presented in the approved project plan. Any additional uses or facilities must be applied for in a new or amended application.
4. Any complaints or concerns which may arise from this operation may be cause for review of the CUP, at any time, and amendment or addition of conditions, or revocation of the permit if necessary.
5. In the event that Routt County commences an action to enforce or interpret this CUP, the substantially prevailing party shall be entitled to recover its costs in such action including, without limitation, attorney fees.

6. No junk, trash, or inoperative vehicles shall be stored on the property.
7. This approval is contingent upon any required federal, state and local permits being obtained and complied with; the operation shall comply with all federal, state and local laws.
8. Fuel, flammable materials, or hazardous materials shall be kept in a safe area and shall be stored in accordance with state and local environmental requirements.
9. All exterior lighting shall be downcast and opaquely shielded.
10. Prior to the issuance of the permit, the permittee shall provide evidence of liability insurance in the amount of no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence with either unlimited aggregate or a policy endorsement requiring notice to Routt County of all claims made. **Routt County shall be named as an additional insured on the policy. Activity number must be listed on policy.**
11. Permits/Approvals that require an ongoing review will be assessed an Annual Fee. Additional fees for mitigation monitoring will be charged on an hourly basis for staff time required to review and/or implement conditions of approval.
12. The permittee shall prevent the spread of weeds to surrounding lands and comply with the Colorado Noxious Weed Act and the Routt County Noxious Weed Management Plan.
13. The CUP is limited to uses and facilities presented in the approved project plan. Any additional uses or facilities must be applied for in a new or amended application.

Specific Conditions:

14. The hours of operation are 9:00 am. to 9:00 pm. year-round, with the flexibility for evening meetings and overnight events.
15. The applicant will perform a baseline water chemical analysis and quarterly bacteriology testing. Copies of the test results will be submitted to the Routt County Environmental Health Department. A disinfectant device shall be placed on the water system.
16. A Special Events Permit shall be required for an event resulting in more than 100 participants. Special Events shall be limited to two events per year.
17. Any new signage associated with the CUP shall meet the requirements set forth by the Routt County Zoning Regulations, Section 5.9-Sign Standards and Permits.
18. A Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) access permit will be required prior to the issuance of the CUP.
19. The operator shall encourage carpooling and the use of shuttles, and on-site parking shall be limited to 16 vehicles. No parking shall be allowed on Highway US 40.
20. The operation shall comply with regulations required by the Routt County Environmental Health Department including upgrades to the septic system appropriate for the proposed increase in intensity of use.
21. No hazardous materials shall be stored on site.

Permit Issued by the Routt County Planning Commissioners:

Don Alpert
Don Alpert, Chair

7/13/09
Date

ACCEPTED:

[Signature]
Permittee

7/6/09
Date

This permit may be subject to an Annual Fee: Permits/Approvals that require an ongoing review will be assessed an Annual Fee. Additional fees for mitigation monitoring will be charged on an hourly basis for staff time required to review and/or implement conditions of approval.