

Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition, Inc.  
40625 County Road 69A  
Hayden, CO 81639

April 4, 2023

Via Email to sross@co.routt.co.us  
Routt County Planning Department  
136 6th Street, Suite 200  
Steamboat Springs, CO 80487  
Attention: Sally Ross

Subject: PL20220101 – A major amendment to the Steamboat Lake State Park PUD

Dear Ms. Ross,

It was just brought to the attention of the Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition, Inc. (CCCC) by North Routt residents that there is a proposal for a major amendment to the Steamboat Park P.U.D. to allow for the use of the Quealy parcel as the base for the snowmobile operation at the state park and for year-round use of the Quealy cabin for educational programs.

While working for CPW as a volunteer raptor monitor I have personally observed Sandhill Cranes and Bald Eagles on the Quealy parcel. Since it was not part of my purview and, because I did not want to disturb them, I have not walked onto the property to determine whether or not cranes have been nesting there.

Cranes have historically returned to northwest Colorado in March and April. Nesting in north Routt normally occurs during April and May and cranes do not leave the area until late September. A wetland meadow such as the Quealy parcel is prime nesting and chick rearing habitat for cranes.

Because cranes are a Tier 1 species of concern in the state of Colorado, the CCCC believes that further research is warranted to determine their use of the Quealy parcel and to reduce impacts during nesting and chick rearing seasons when they are most vulnerable.

The state park amendments to the snowmobile concessionaire proposal state that all possessions must be removed prior to May 31. If cranes are nesting in the area, this is too late and could definitely impact their breeding success.

The CCCC is also concerned that remodeling of the Quealy cabin and its subsequent use as a site for year-round educational programs would negatively impact nesting cranes

and other wildlife on the parcel. Remodeling of the cabin would most likely take place during the spring or summer when cranes are most active in the area.

In working with local Forest Service staff the CCCC has recommended a ¼ mile (1320') buffer zone between human activity and nesting cranes. The proposed graded 30' x 80' parking area and remodeled cabin would be within 350' of a mapped wetland, the prime nesting site for cranes. The use of the cabin during the spring and summer will introduce vehicle and human traffic in an area that has historically been open space and wildlife habitat. It is our belief that other areas of the park such as the amphitheater and Visitor Center would be better suited for educational programs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Hughes  
Co-Founder and CCCC Director