

## Memorandum

**To:** Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners  
**From:** Sally Ross, Planner II  
**Date:** May 26, 2023  
**RE:** Quealy Parcel Major PUD Amendment; PL20230101 – Application Revisions  
**Attachments:**

- Revised Narrative
- Revised Area Map
- Revised Trail Map
- Revised Site Plan
- Minutes from April 6, 2023
- Staff Report from initial PC hearing dated April 6, 2023

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The Planning Commission (PC) heard the Quealy Parcel Major PUD Amendment application (Application) on April 6, 2023. The PC voted to table its recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners' hearing to a later date, citing that the majority of concerns expressed by the public would be better resolved in conversations between the applicant – Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) – and the concerned members of the public. The PC recommended a new PC hearing be scheduled once the applicant had an opportunity to conduct conversations with the concerned public and, as a result of the conversation, potentially revise the original application.

The Application requests to relocate a snowmobile business headquarters from its existing location in Steamboat Lake State Park (SLSP) marina to a new location on the Quealy Parcel, on the east side of CR 129. Public concerns regarding the Application include:

- Location of the temporary operating headquarters structure and obstructive view sheds;
- Potential for increased use on the Quealy Parcel;
- Use that may not be compatible with the original intention of the Quealy Parcel, resulting in increased noise and traffic; and
- Summer youth educational programs that could impact Sandhill Crane nesting sites.

After hearing feedback at the PC hearing, it became clear to the applicant that more detail was necessary to clarify the applicant's intention for relocating the business headquarters, as well as the uses that would be permitted onsite.

The applicant acted upon the advice of the PC and directly reached out to concerned members of the public. The applicant conducted conversations with adjacent landowners, the Colorado Crane Coalition, and a previous State Land Board (SLB) employee who played an integral role in the SLB acquiring the Quealy Parcel and selecting CPW as the beneficiary of the Quealy Parcel. The applicant reached out to the Planning Staff to provide updates and to receive feedback throughout the conversations to ensure that any changes and updates made were reasonable from the County's perspective.

The applicant has revised the Application to address the concerns and to further clarify the need to amend the existing PUD. Revisions that will be presented at the June 1st PC hearing include:

- **Narrative.** The applicant intends to provide a more thorough explanation as to why the concessionaire's operating headquarters are better suited on the Quealy Parcel than at the marina.

In addition to managing the public recreation at SLSP, CPW manages the concessionaire permit and is thus responsible for the safety and well-being all recreation user groups. Winter use has increased significantly at SLSP. Uses include snowshoeing, cross country skiing, ice fishing and the concessionaire's snowmobile operation. Motorized winter recreation is not compatible in locations where recreation is primarily non-motorized. It detracts from the non-motorized experience and also poses a significant safety threat. To improve the experience and decrease risk, the applicant needs to relocate the concessionaire to its permitted recreation location (the Quealy Parcel). Existing motorized use will NOT increase as a result of this relocation; the concessionaire is currently limited by the CPW permit to the number of recreators it may host, and this will not change. Additionally, all recreation will continue to be limited to the defined trail on the Quealy Parcel.

- **Location of Temporary Operating Headquarters.** The feedback from the public included concern over the view shed that will be obstructed from CR 129 if the temporary warehouse is assembled in the originally proposed location (in front of the trees and cabins). The applicant has revised the proposed site location of the temporary structure that will be assembled to house the concessionaire's equipment and the concessionaire's trailers. These will now be located behind the trees and cabin and oriented to minimize their view from the road and adjacent properties. The new location is attached.
- **Connector Trail Location.** Because the location of the staging area has been moved up the hill, a slight modification to the location of the connector trail occurred, which minimizes potential impacts to adjacent landowners. The new location is attached.

The applicant is still requesting that the 25 mph speed limit be removed. The proposed staging area is approximately 1,700' from the National Forest and once riders reach the National Forest, there is no speed limit. Planning Commission will need to provide a recommendation on whether this should be removed or not. An option available to Planning Commission is to keep the speed limit for the general public at 25 mph, and for the concessionaire if they are going south, but allow the concessionaire to go faster if they are only going north to the National Forest. Keeping the current speed limit for the general public and the concessionaire if they are traveling south will minimize impacts to the adjacent private property and the trail crossing of CR 129.

- **Summer Youth Education Program.** The applicant has discussed area closures during the Sandhill Crane nesting periods. The plan has been conveyed to the Crane Coalition and has been approved by the CPW biologist.

While a view shed concern from adjacent landowners regarding the proposed relocation of the temporary operating headquarters has not been fully satisfied, Planning Staff believes the revisions made by the applicant show a good faith effort to address their concerns. It satisfies the interest of many members of the public and results in the overall reduction in impact to the management of the entire park in general by:

1. Separating motorized and non-motorized uses
2. Reducing the number of snowmobiles that must cross CR 129
3. Reducing the number of snowmobiles that must pass by Hahn's Peak Village
4. Reducing the amount of time that the concessionaire's snowmobiles spend on the Quealy Parcel.

**\*\*\*Issues for Discussion\*\*\***

1. The applicant has requested that the condition limiting the speed limit to 25 mph be removed. Should the allowed speed limit remain at 25 mph to reduce impacts to neighboring properties?
2. CPW proposes to mitigate visual impacts by placing the temporary structure, trailers, and parking lot behind the trees and cabin and to orient everything in the least visually impactful way. Is this adequate for mitigating any visual impacts created by the operation?

## **PLANNING COMMISSION / BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OPTIONS:**

**FINDINGS OF FACT** that may be appropriate if the Amended PUD is approved:

1. The proposal with the following conditions meets the applicable guidelines of the Routt County Master Plan and the Upper Elk River Valley Community Plan and is in compliance with the applicable provisions of Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and of the Routt County Zoning Regulations.
2. The Final PUD is substantially similar to the Conceptual PUD.
3. Relocating the concessionaire to the Quealy parcel will result in an overall reduction in impacts to the management of Steamboat Lake State park by:
  - a) Separating motorized and non-motorized uses
  - b) Reducing the number of snowmobiles that must cross CR 129
  - c) Reducing the number of snowmobiles that must pass by Hahn's Peak Village
  - d) Reducing the amount of time that the concessionaire's snowmobiles spend on the Quealy Parcel.

**CONDITIONS** that may be appropriate may include the following. Bold language represents new language proposed to be added. Language with a strike through it is proposed to be removed.

**Final PUD:**

1. **This approval shall become effective upon the recording of a resolution amending the Final PUD Plan. Such resolution shall be recorded within 6 months of approval. An extension of an additional 6 months may be approved by the Planning Director.**~~This approval shall become effective upon the recording of the Final PUD plan~~
2. The following conditions and notes shall be included in the resolution:
  - a. ~~This approval shall become effective upon the recording of the Final PUD Plan. Such Plan shall be recorded within 12 months of approval. An extension of an additional 6 months may be approved by the Planning Administrator.~~
  - b. ~~All access easement, apparent and of record, shall be shown and noted on the PUD Plan.~~

**Snowmobile Tours:**

- c. **Allow for our snowmobile rental/tour concessionaire to stage their winter operation near the Quealy Cabin.**
  - 1) **The concessionaire can operate out of snowmobile trailers and a temporary building. The current temporary building is 30'x40'. The concessionaire may have a snowmobile fleet of up to 30 snowmobiles. The majority of the snowmobiles will be stored inside overnight.**
  - 2) **Efforts will be made by the concessionaire to best position their operation in a manner to minimize visual impacts based on CPW recommendations.**
  - 3) **A winter connection trail can be established to connect the concessionaire's operation to the current winter use trail (Quealy Trail). That connector trail will be signed as open for concessionaire and agency use only. The Quealy Trail is open to the general public in the winter.**
  - 4) **The concessionaire already has approval to guide snowmobile tours on State Park lands west of CR 129 and will be able to access that area via the Quealy Trail.**
  - 5) **The concessionaire will be required to have all trailers and snowmobiles removed prior to April 15<sup>th</sup>. The temporary building may remain onsite until removal is recommended by CPW.**
  - 6) **The concessionaire will be required to make minimal impact to the grounds and will be responsible for:**
    - a) **Providing and caring for a toilet or porta-potty and trash receptacles for their guests.**
    - b) **Snow removal**
    - c) **Site cleanup**
    - d) **Any damage to the grounds or cabin caused by the concessionaire**
  - 7) **The entrance will be gated and signed.**

- d. Under no circumstances, except for emergencies, shall any snow machines operate on the winter multi-use trail on the 168-acre parcel (Quealy Parcel) between April 15<sup>th</sup> and June 20<sup>th</sup>, subject to change with ~~DOW~~ **CPW** recommendations.
- e. Steamboat Lake State Park shall be responsible for routine patrolling of the ~~new~~ trails and shall respond to trespass and misuse complaints.
- f. Speed limit on the trail shall be no more than 25 mph, and signs shall be posted.
- g. Public shall stay on the trail at all times. Signs shall be posted informing public to stay on the trail.
- h. Caution or stop signs shall be posted at the intersection of FS 410 and this trail.
- i. The Quealy trail will be open to both motorized and non-motorized users. The trail shall be open to the public from Thanksgiving to April 15<sup>th</sup>. Snow conditions permitting, the trail may be open earlier in the year with notice to the Planning Director. Hours of operation shall be restricted to State Park day-use hours, except for emergencies and groomer operation.
- j. The summer non-motorized trail shall be open seasonally when conditions allow, to be determined by Steamboat Lake State Park. Hours of operation shall be restricted to State Park day-use except for emergencies.

**Cabins:**

- k. **Remodeling the current cabin to allow for an outdoor education classroom & potential for winter concessionaire's use. Remodel will reflect the desires of the Quealy's to maintain the history of the property.**
- l. **Provide outdoor education programs/classes to the public year round.**
- m. Cabin users shall be educated regarding the Sandhill Crane nesting area, and advised of the restricted use of the area between April 15<sup>th</sup> and June 20<sup>th</sup>.
- n. Prior to issuance of building permits, the Planning Commission shall review (and approve, if applicable criteria are met) the site plan for the cabins, including their capacity size, parking, trails and other associated improvements on the Quealy Parcel.
- o. The design and materials used to construct the cabins shall be consistent with those generally used in the area.
- p. All exterior lighting shall be downcast and opaquely shielded.
- q. **Any major improvements will be approved by the State Land Board Office prior to their start.**
- r. **All future development will honor the original intent of the Quealy Property purchase.**

**Miscellaneous:**

- s. Any additional **uses or cabins** ~~and~~ changes in use shall require an amendment to this PUD.

- t. All other applicable conditions of the Steamboat Lake PUD **as reflected on the Final PUD Plan recorded at reception number 635207 shall continue to apply.**~~(1995) and as amended (1997 and 2003) shall continue to apply, and shall be reflected on the Final PUD Plan.~~
- u. **There shall be no parking on County Road 129.**~~Parking for access will not be allowed on CR 129. General parking for motorized use shall be adjacent to Steamboat Lake Marina.~~
- v. ~~After one year, snowmobile traffic study shall be conducted by Steamboat Lake State Park.~~
- w. ~~After the 2004-2005 season the trail through the BLM property will be reviewed. Until that time, the proposed alignment shall be considered an approximate location. The permanent trail alignment shall be approved administratively.~~
- x. ~~Intensity of use, levels of capacity, compliance and environmental impacts shall be monitored. An annual monitoring report shall be submitted to Planning Staff and related agencies.~~
- y. ~~This amendment to the PUD Plan is contingent upon the purchase of the Quealy property by the State Land Board.~~
- z. **The concessionaire is encouraged to recycle to reduce the amount of waste entering the landfill.**

## Revised Narrative

Steamboat Lake State Park would like to amend the Quealy Trail and cabins section of our current PUD.

The purpose for the following request is to better manage current use, not to increase use. This is a management decision with the goal of providing a more enjoyable and safer experience to all of our visitors and the local community by relocating an existing snowmobile concessionaire to an area furthest away from our non-motorized users and Hahn's Peak Village, thereby limiting the amount of snowmobile traffic going by residential areas.

The snowmobile concessionaire is currently operating out of the Steamboat Lake Marina parking lot. This has led to competition for parking space for all of our winter visitors. The Marina parking lot is a popular staging area for our non-motorized visitors to directly access our non-motorized area. It is also the most popular location for ice fishermen to access the lake. In an agreement with the local community, the snowmobile club and Routt County, to aid in limiting snowmobiler parking congestion along CR 129, in Hahn's Peak Village, at local businesses, in the Columbine Quarry and at the new snowmobile parking area on USFS 550, Steamboat Lake State Park placed multiple signs along CR 129 directing snowmobilers to park and camp in our Marina parking lot. This has led to further congestion and competition for parking space at our facility.

The goal of Steamboat Lake State Park is to maintain the intent of the original land acquisition and honor the wishes of the Quealy's by maintaining the history and integrity of the property while providing opportunities for the public. These wishes included allowing snowmobile access across the property during a designated time period, construction of two cabins, providing an interpretive center and protecting the property for wildlife and their habitats. We have designated a small area of impact which is in the area surrounding the Quealy cabin.

This proposal is the result of several meetings with concerned citizens/groups, the Routt County Planning Dept. and CPW biologists.

We are requesting that the following be included in the PUD:

- 1) Allow for our snowmobile rental/tour concessionaire to stage their winter operation near the Quealy Cabin.
  - a. The concessionaire can operate out of snowmobile trailers and a temporary building. The current temporary building is 30'x40'. The concessionaire may have a snowmobile fleet of up to 30 snowmobiles. The majority of the snowmobiles will be stored inside overnight.
  - b. Efforts will be made by the concessionaire to best position their operation in a manner to minimize visual impacts based on CPW recommendations.
  - c. The concessionaire would be required to cease operations prior to April 15<sup>th</sup> to mirror the current motorized trail use closure.
  - d. A winter connection trail can be established to connect the concessionaire's operation to the current winter use trail (Quealy Trail). That connector trail will be signed as open for concessionaire and agency use only. The Quealy Trail is open to the general public in the winter.

- e. The concessionaire already has approval to guide snowmobile tours on State Park lands west of CR 129 and will be able to access that area via the Quealy Trail.
  - f. The concessionaire will be required to have all trailers and snowmobiles removed prior to April 15<sup>th</sup>. The temporary building may remain onsite until removal is recommended by CPW.
  - g. The concessionaire will be required to make minimal impact to the grounds.
  - h. The concessionaire would be responsible for:
    - i. Providing and caring for a toilet or porta-potty and trash receptacles for their guests.
    - ii. Snow removal
    - iii. Site cleanup
  - i. The entrance will be gated and signed.
  - j. Any damage to the grounds or cabin caused by the concessionaire shall be remedied by the concessionaire.
- 2) Widening of the road entrance from CR 129.
  - 3) Improvements to the cabin road and parking area.
  - 4) Expansion of the parking area to accommodate temporary steel building and parking.
  - 5) Installing a CXT type toilet.
  - 6) Remodeling the current cabin to allow for an outdoor education classroom & potential for winter concessionaire's use. Remodel will reflect the desires of the Quealy's to maintain the history of the property.
  - 7) Provide outdoor education programs/classes to the public year round.
  - 8) Any major improvements will be approved by the State Land Board Office prior to their start.
  - 9) All future development will honor the original intent of the Quealy Property purchase.

We are requesting that the following be removed from the Quealy Trail and cabins section in the "all conditions" page:

12) Speed limit on the trail shall be no more than 25 mph, and signs shall be posted.  
*Reasoning: Due to the evolution of mountain snowmobiles this is no longer feasible. They require snow circulation provided by the track to keep from overheating. This cannot be achieved on the hard pack trail that they are required to stay on. To prevent engine damage, these snowmobiles need to be able to go faster than 25mph on this trail. Lower speeds force snowmobilers to dip off the designated trail to find powder to cool their engines. There is no snowmobile speed limit on the BLM ground that the trail goes through or USFS grounds that the trail connects to. The portion of the trail on State Land is less than .5 mile in length and in an open flat area.*

16) A one-year snowmobile traffic study shall be conducted by Steamboat Lake State Park. **Completed**

17) After the 2004 - 2005 season the trail through the BLM property will be reviewed. Until that time, the proposed alignment shall be considered an approximate location. The permanent trail alignment shall be approved administratively. **Completed**



20) This amendment to the PUD Plan is contingent upon the purchase of the Quealy property by the State Land Board. *Completed*





USFS Trail

Public Groomed Trail

Winter only concessionaire connector trail  
Concessionaire Location

Shop Complex

CR 129

Entrance to be improved

Steamboat Lake Visitor Center  
Visitors Center





Search



Hunt Map  
Layers

Tools



HOLDINGS, LLC  
AUSERMAN, D

BLM

Deep Creek

DAVIS, TERAN

14

214

214

14

Deep Creek

Route County Rd 14

TIMBER

45°

1 mph  
SE

11 of 20

500'

40.81682, -106.96404

mapbox





USFS Trail

Public Groomed Trail

Winter only concessionaire connector trail

Concessionaire Location

CR 129

Entrance to be improved



## ROUTT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

### MINUTES

**April 6, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Routt County Planning Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present: Chairman Steve Warnke and Commissioners Bill Norris, Andrew Benjamin, Jim DeFrancia, Ren Martyn, Paul Weese, Linda Miller, and Pete Wood. Commissioners Greg Jaeger, Brian Kelly were absent. Planning Director Kristy Winsor and staff planners Alan Goldich and Sally Ross also attended. Sarah Katherman prepared the minutes from a recording.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

#### **MINUTES – March 2, 2023**

Commissioner DeFrancia moved to approve the above cited minutes, as written. Commissioner Norris seconded the motion. **The motion carried unanimously.**

**ACTIVITY: PL20220101**

**PETITION: A Minor Amendment to the Steamboat Lake State Park PUD to allow for the use of the Quealy parcel as the base for the snowmobile operation at the state park**

**APPLICANT: Steamboat Lake State Park c/o Colorado Parks and Wildlife – Ryan Crabb**

**LOCATION: The proposed site is located on State of Colorado land, Board of Land Commissioners property. The parcel sits northeast of Steamboat Lake State Park on the east side of CR 129**

Mr. Ryan Crabb, Senior Ranger of the Steamboat Lake State Park, a division of Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) stated that the State Park has a Planned Unit Development (PUD) that includes the Quealy Parcel. He said that the petition is to amend the PUD to allow for the relocation of the snowmobile tour concessionaire's operation. He explained that the concessionaire currently operates out of the Steamboat Lake State Park Marina parking lot. The relocation of the operation would move the snowmobile tours away from the non-motorized uses and free up much needed space in the parking lot. Mr. Crabb said that the snowmobile operation would not be expanded; it would just be relocated to the Quealy parcel where the snowmobiles would have direct access to the trail into USFS lands. He added that the concessionaire only operates during the winter and prefers not to operate into April, when tourism drops off and snow conditions are variable. The temporary building and trailers used by the concessionaire would be removed when conditions allow, but no later than Memorial Day weekend. Mr. Crabb indicated the Quealy parcel on a map, and pointed out the route currently used by the snowmobile tours around the lake, across CR 129 and onto the Quealy trail. He indicated the direct route that would be used from the Quealy parcel. He stated that the new route would keep snowmobile traffic away from Hahn's Peak Village, the Park and the non-motorized trails.

Mr. Crabb presented a photo of the Quealy parcel and stated that the entrance would need to be widened and that a bigger gate would be installed. He said that the area would be open only to the clients and employees of the concessionaire. No parking for the public would be allowed on the Quealy parcel. Mr. Crabb indicated the location on a site plan of the proposed staging area near the old Quealy cabin, and stated that the area was chosen to minimize disturbance to wildlife. He said that the other element of the proposal is to make some improvements to the Quealy cabin and then use the site for small environmental educational programs. He stated that he would like to apply for a grant to upgrade the cabin and perhaps install a vault toilet at some point in the future. Mr. Crabb stated that wildlife biologists with CPW had been informed of the proposal and had no concerns.

Ms. Ross reviewed the proposal to relocate the snowmobile tour operation to the Quealy parcel and stated that staff is recommending approval. She reviewed the history of the existing PUD on the parcel, which would allow for the construction of rental cabins. She stated that the Quealy parcel is owned by the State Land Board and is leased to Colorado Parks and Wildlife. She added that a zone change for the parcel from Agriculture/Forestry (A/F) to Outdoor Recreation (OR) was approved in 2004 to allow recreational uses on the property. Ms. Ross noted that the State is voluntarily entering into the County planning process for this use. Because the State is not obligated to obtain permission for the proposed use, the County cannot enforce or disallow any use on the property. Ms. Ross stated, however, that the concessionaire's US Forest Service permit limits operations to the following:

- Confining trail grooming to designated routes, not to begin until a minimum of 18" of snow has accumulated and ceasing by May 1<sup>st</sup> each year.
- Grooming of designated routes should occur during daylight hours as much as possible, and must cease by 7:30pm.
- Client: Guide ratio is 8 (clients):1 (guide).

Ms. Ross added that the snowmobiles must remain on the groomed trail across the Quealy parcel until they reach USFS land. She presented photos of the site.

Ms. Ross stated that another element of the request is to increase the current 25 mph speed limit on the trail because the machines overheat at lower speeds if operated on a hard pack trail. She stated that staff has concerns with this request. She stated that in response to concerns regarding the visual impact of the staging area and temporary buildings, the applicant is proposing to construct snow berms to screen the site from the road. Ms. Ross asked Planning Commission to consider whether this mitigation is sufficient.

Mr. Goldich explained that this application meets the standards for the amendment to the PUD to be processed administratively, but that because staff knew that the proposal would be controversial, the decision was made to bump it up for review by Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners (per Section 3.2.1 of the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations).

Mr. Goldich stated that the existing PUD on the Quealy parcel, which was approved in 2004, includes the restriction that the parcel is closed for use between April 15 and June 20 to protect the Greater Sandhill Crane nesting area on the site.

In response to a question from Commissioner Norris, Mr. Crabb described the metal building on blocks that would be removed at the end of the winter. He said that the building is served only by solar lighting and temporary heating at its current site, but that there is electrical service near the Quealy parcel and that it could be extended to the site if needed.

Commissioner Wood asked if other alternative sites had been considered. Mr. Crabb said that the State Park does not have any other available areas with parking suitable for this use, and noted that part of the application is to improve the Quealy cabin use in the summer for educational programs and school groups. He said that the Parks wanted to wrap these projects together.

Commissioner Martyn asked for more details about the operation, the number of tours per day, etc. Mr. Crabb indicated on a site plan the route currently used around the State Park, across CR 129 and onto the groomed trail. He said that the concessionaire's permit allows him to operate 30 machines, but that he actually runs about 19. He said that the trips are all guided, but that he would be allowed to rent machines for unguided tours, and has done so in the past. Mr. Crabb stated that only clients of the concessionaire would be allowed to park on the Quealy parcel, but that many of them are shuttled to the site by the concessionaire. He confirmed that the Quealy trail is open to the public.

Chairman Warnke asked about the proposed increase to the speed limit on the trail. Mr. Crabb stated that the current machines overheat at low speeds unless they are cooled by snow, which does not happen on the groomed trail, even with the use of scratchers. He said that the request to eliminate the speed limit is being made by CPW.

Commissioner Benjamin asked about law enforcement actions. Mr. Crabb stated that they are rare, and that the most common infractions are lack of registration and riders going off the trail. He added that there are more problems with locals than with tourists.

In response to a question from Chairman Warnke, Mr. Crabb indicated on an aerial photo the Quealy cabin, Hahn's Peak Village, the two existing residences and the new one being built in the Lucky Camp subdivision.

Commissioner Benjamin asked about complaints. Mr. Goldich said that no official complaints had been received regarding the snowmobile operation.

Mr. Goldich stated that while the zone change from A/F to OR was approved in 2004, it was never recorded. He said that whether the PUD amendment is approved or not, the zone change will be recorded to accurately reflect the approval. The zoning will also be corrected on the GIS.

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Shirley Stocks, a longtime resident of Hahn's Peak Village and owner of Lot 1 in Lucky Camp stated that the community has long been opposed to expanding snowmobile operations and expanding usage in North Routt. She stated that a commercial snowmobile business is not compatible with a residential area and will create conflict. She reviewed the history of the Poverty Bar property that is deed restricted for use as a snowmobile trail. She described the negotiations that had occurred 20 years ago that resulted in the current trails and their use, and the agreement regarding the use of Quealy trail for snowmobile access to the USFS. She said that those

negotiations took three years and were a collaborative efforts by all concerned parties, government agencies and the community. Ms. Stocks reviewed the rules that apply to the managed trail for access to USFS land. She offered that there is no reason to move the snowmobile concessionaire's operation across CR 129 and stated that doing so would result in negative impacts on the wildlife, the residents of the area and its visitors. She cited negative impacts on wildlife habitat, view corridors, wetlands and the riparian corridor. Ms. Stocks stated that there is room for this use at the marina where facilities already exist and the site is buffered from view and from the residential areas. She cited the minutes from the Planning Commission meeting in 2004 when the PUD for the Quealy parcel was reviewed, noting the concerns regarding view sheds, preservation of the Quealy parcel and noise concerns. Ms. Stocks described the impacts that a snowmobile operation staging out of the Quealy parcel would have, and expressed concern with the lack of enforcement of the rules. She suggested that the proposed change is not in the spirit of the agreement that was reached in 2004 regarding the use of the Quealy parcel. She asked that Planning Commission recommend denial of the petition, or table it until a solution that satisfies all parties can be found.

Ms. Leslie Lovejoy, a resident of North Routt and representative of the Friends of the Routt Backcountry, described the non-motorized use area on Hahn's Peak. She said that the Quealy Trail travels right across the non-motorized use area. She said that over the last few years that the County has been plowing up to the new parking area created on Forest Service Road (FS) 550 there have been fewer conflicts with snowmobiles riding in the non-motorized area. She said that all of these solutions have come about through extensive community involvement, but that the community has not been informed or included in discussions about the current proposal. Ms. Lovejoy suggested that inadequate notice had been provided. She requested a tabling of at least 8 weeks to allow the community to find a mutually agreeable solution. Ms. Lovejoy expressed concern with the lack of education provided by the concessionaire regarding the non-motorized area. She said that more signage and education is needed. She added that the sheriff's office will not respond to snowmobiles riding in Hahn's Peak Village. She asked Planning Commission to table the petition.

Ms. Barbara Hughes of the Colorado Crane Coalition, stated that she had submitted a letter. She said that there is a prime Sandhill Crane nesting and chick (colt) rearing area on the Quealy parcel. She said that while winter use is not a concern, the removal of the temporary building in late April or May is too late, as the cranes are already there. Ms. Hughes also expressed concern with the proposal to remodel the Quealy cabin for increased summer use because the cabin is only about 300 feet from the nesting habitat. She suggested that the educational programs could be held elsewhere in the Park without impacting the meadow on the Quealy parcel. Ms. Hughes requested that, if the petition is approved, the deadline for removal of the temporary facilities be moved to the beginning of April. She noted that the Sandhill Cranes are a Tier 1 species in Colorado.

Mr. Scott Denniston, a resident of Hahn's Peak Village, said that he and the community have been battling commercial snowmobile operations for many years. He expressed concern with trucks with snowmobile trailers blocking access and stated that allowing the concessionaire to move his operation to the Quealy parcel would lead to an increase in snowmobile usage in the Hahn's Peak area and increase the negative impacts on Hahn's Peak Village. He stated his agreement with the previous comments and added that the Quealy parcel is not an appropriate location for a commercial operation. Mr. Denniston asked Planning Commission to table the petition.



Mr. Bryce Hinchman, an attorney representing Ty Lockhart the owner of Lot 5 of Lucky Camp, expressed agreement with the previous comments. He stated that they had submitted a letter on Mr. Lockhart's behalf. He reviewed the history of the existing trails and the agreement that defines the route that snowmobiles must use and limits the speed of snowmobiles to 25 mph. He offered that the petition to amend the PUD would water down or remove altogether the rules that were agreed to in 2004. He said that the proposal represents a significant expansion and departure from the current use of the Quealy parcel. He stated that Mr. Lockhart's lot line is only about 300 ft. from snowmobile and non-motorized access point to the USFS land. He said that proposal would lead to snowmobiles traveling at reckless speeds across the trail and creating significant noise impacts. Mr. Hinchman stated that Mr. Lockhart is also concerned with refueling and maintenance of snowmobiles on site and the potential for spills of hazardous materials. Mr. Hinchman discussed the lack of delineation of the wetlands on the Quealy parcel. He asked Planning Commission to table the petition. He stated that if the petition is approved, his client is requesting that a date for removal of the metal building be set, that its location be defined, that a limit on daily trips by the concessionaire's machines be set, that only guided tours be allowed, and that the 25 mph speed limit be maintained. Mr. Hinchman stated that the petition was unclear and who the permittee is and that this should be clarified. He added that an explanation was also needed of what would happen to the operation and the PUD if the lease on the Quealy property is not renewed.

Mr. Victor Washburn, a resident of Hahn's Peak Village, expressed frustration with the lack of a complete operational plan, including how many snowmobiles the operator would be allowed to run in the future. He added that the proposal would involve the creation of a new trail across the Quealy parcel to meet the existing trail. He asked who the applicant is and who the concessionaire is, and whether the State Park is responsible for supplying parking for public snowmobilers. Mr. Washburn stated that he would like to see all the comments that were submitted regarding the petition.

Mr. Rich Galusha stated that he and his wife are in the process of building a studio on their lot in Lucky Camp. He reviewed the history of the Quealy trail and said that the current arrangement is the result of the community-wide negotiations. He said that the Quealy parcel is a pristine area that will end up all tracked up and packed down by snowmobiles riding fast like the area around Steamboat Lake. He expressed concern with the lack of enforcement regarding speed limits and where people are allowed to ride. He asked Planning Commission to deny the petition, or at a minimum table it to allow for community input. Mr. Galusha suggested that the concessionaire should operate out of the FS 550 parking lot where the use would not bother anyone.

Mr. Ty Lockhart, owner of Lot 5 at Lucky Camp, stated that he is an adjacent property owner and had not received notice of the petition. He expressed frustration at the lack of delineation of the wetlands on the Quealy parcel by the Army Corps of Engineers. He said that he thinks if the proposal is approved and the concessionaire is moved to the Quealy parcel that many more riders will ride off trail, causing more disturbance. He expressed concern with the lack of enforcement and suggested that the parking lot at FS 550 would be a better place to locate the operation. Mr. Lockhart offered that the 6 – 8 parking spaces, a building, trailers, snowmobile parking would cause much more disturbance that can be accommodated on the designated portion of the Quealy parcel. He also said that no clear plan for the operation had been presented. He said that no one

wants a big metal building and a parking lot in middle of the beautiful vista towards Hahn's Peak across the meadow.

Mr. Arne Stemsrud, a resident of Hahn's Peak Village, stated his agreement with all the previous comments. He asked if allowing this operation on the Quealy parcel would open the door for a summer ATV tour operation on the same site.

Hearing no further comment, Chairman Warnke closed public comment.

Mr. Goldich stated that all notice requirements had been met. He stated that the State Park is allowed to request an amendment to its PUD based on changing conditions. He said that the proposal is not for a new use, but rather the relocation of the staging area for an existing use, and that there would be no increase in the number of snowmobiles. Mr. Goldich said that the current petition is specific to the relocation of an existing use and does not set a precedent of any kind regarding other uses. It also does not have any bearing on private snowmobile use in Hahn's Peak Village or elsewhere. Mr. Goldich said that staff does not support the proposed increase in the speed limit. He added that the Army Corps of Engineers only delineates wetlands when dredging or fill is proposed. He stated that this petition is not for a permit – it is for an amendment to the existing State Park PUD – so there is no permit holder. Regarding the details of the snowmobile concession, Mr. Goldich clarified that the State Park contracts with a concessionaire of their choice and that the County is not involved. He reviewed the process through which the State Park is voluntarily applying for an amendment to its PUD. He stated that the matter is currently scheduled to be heard by the Board of County Commissioner on April 18, but due to scheduling conflicts that the item will be tabled to April 25. He reviewed the potential additional conditions of approval (COAs) that Planning Commission could consider regarding the maximum number of snowmobiles allowed on site and a specific date by which the temporary facilities must be removed from the site.

Mr. Goldich clarified that the applicant is Steamboat Lake State Park (CPW) who leases the Quealy parcel from the Colorado State Land Board. Mr. Crabb reviewed the process through which operators can apply for concessions on State Parks. He said that each Park handles its own concessions based on the individual merits of the applications. Mr. Crabb clarified that the concessionaire used to rent machines for unguided tours, but that now he only runs guided tours.

In response to a question from Commissioner DeFrancia, Mr. Crabb stated that individuals are allowed to ride on the Quealy trail into the USFS lands, but would not be allowed to operate on the portion of the trail between the entrance and the connector trail. He stated that the relocation of the snowmobile concession would help to alleviate the congestion at the marina parking lot, which is open for public parking for a variety of activities at the Park. Mr. Crabb stated that the public would continue to access the Quealy trail on the current route. He indicated that route and the route that would be used by the concessionaire's clients on a map of the site.

Commissioner DeFrancia asked about the current use of the Quealy cabin. Mr. Crabb said that it was in disrepair and was not used at all. He said that the road through the parcel is lightly used in the summer.

Commissioner Weese asked about the cabins approved on the existing PUD. Mr. Goldich said that approval was granted for two rental cabins on the north portion of the property, but those cabins have not been built.

At Commissioner Benjamin's request, staff reviewed the noticing requirements. Ms. Ross presented a timeline of when the various notices had gone out and when the property was posted.

Chairman Warnke asked if CPW's wildlife people had reviewed the application. Mr. Crabb reviewed that they had. He stated that they had no concerns with the proposal and would remain involved as the project moves forward. Chairman Warnke suggested that representatives of the Crane Coalition, CPW and the State Park should meet to determine when the temporary facilities should be removed from the site to avoid disturbance of the crane nesting area.

### **Roundtable Discussion**

Chairman Warnke asked Planning Commission to weigh in on the 25 mph speed limit, the snow berms proposed to mitigate the visual impacts, and whether it would be appropriate to table the petition to allow the opportunity for more community involvement.

Commissioner Wood stated his support for maintaining the 25 mph speed limit. He stated that the variability in snowfall and operator skill would make the effectiveness of snow berms unknown. He said that unless there was a reason not to, he would support a tabling to allow for increased involvement by the neighbors and for more information regarding the impacts on the cranes.

Commissioner DeFrancia noted that the petition is for an amendment to a PUD, which is a zoning issue. It is not about the enforcement of regulations and rules that apply along the trail. He reviewed that the request is for relocating the snowmobile concession staging area and temporary building and trailers, widening the entrance to the Quealy parcel, installing a seasonal portable toilet, eliminating the 25 mph speed limit on the trail, erecting snow berms, creating an area for a parking lot and remodeling the existing Quealy cabin to allow for it to be used year-round. Commissioner DeFrancia stated that the existing PUD was developed through an agreement reached via multi-party dialogue that involved the community. He noted that the proposed changes are not in compliance with that agreement reached in 2004. He stated his support for tabling the petition to allow for all interested parties to reconvene to discuss the issues and negotiate a new agreement.

Commissioners Benjamin, Miller, Norris, and Martyn expressed support for tabling. Commissioner Weese stated that he would go along with the consensus to table.

Chairman Warnke noted that the State Parks are participating in the process voluntarily. Mr. Crabb stated that the State Park is not trying to push through or hide anything. He said he would be happy with a tabling to allow the Park to work with the residents and talk through the issues.

### **MOTION**

Commissioner DeFrancia moved to table the Amendment to the Steamboat Lake State Park PUD to June 1, 2023 to allow all interested parties to coordinate through the State Park to work through the issues cited above.

Commissioner Norris seconded the motion.

**The motion carried 8 - 0, with the Chair voting yes.**

#### **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Winser reviewed the noticing requirements and discussed the jurisdictional issue of applications from the State. Ms. Ross noted that while Colorado Parks and Wildlife is the applicant, the Quealy parcel is owned by the State Land Board.

Ms. Winser and Mr. Goldich reviewed the upcoming agendas, including an application from Routt County regarding its shop just outside Oak Creek and a permit review of the Thunderstruck snowmobile tour operation.

Mr. Goldich reviewed the schedule for the April 26, 2023 Solar Summit to be held in Hayden. Ms. Winser said that a joint meeting of the Board of County Commissioners, Planning Commission, Design Workshop and staff would be held on April 27 to review the progress made on the update of the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations. This will be a special meeting.

Ms. Winser stated that Planning Commissioner must elect officers for the coming year. Ms. Katherman noted that three commissioners, include Brian Kelly, who is absent had voted for the existing slate of officers via email.

#### **MOTION**

Commissioner Norris nominated Steve Warnke to continue as Chair and Brian Kelly to continue as Vice-Chair. Commissioner Martyn seconded the motion. **The motion carried 8 – 0.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.**

**From:** [Alan Goldich](#)  
**To:** [Alan Goldich](#)  
**Subject:** FW: PL20220101 - Amendment to th Steamboat Lake State Park PUD  
**Date:** Friday, May 26, 2023 2:40:28 PM

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**From:** Colorado Cranes <[coloradocranes@gmail.com](mailto:coloradocranes@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 14, 2023 6:39:20 PM  
**To:** Sally Ross <[sross@co.routt.co.us](mailto:sross@co.routt.co.us)>  
**Cc:** [ryan.crabb@state.co.us](mailto:ryan.crabb@state.co.us) <[ryan.crabb@state.co.us](mailto:ryan.crabb@state.co.us)>; Julie Arington <[julie.arington@state.co.us](mailto:julie.arington@state.co.us)>  
**Subject:** PL20220101 - Amendment to th Steamboat Lake State Park PUD

[coloradocranes@gmail.com](mailto:coloradocranes@gmail.com)

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

May 13, 2023

Via Email to [sross@co.routt.co.us](mailto:sross@co.routt.co.us)  
Routt County Planning Department  
Via Email to [bcc@co.routt.co.us](mailto:bcc@co.routt.co.us)  
Routt County Board of Commissioners

Subject: PL20220101 – Amendment to the Steamboat Lake State Park PUD

Dear Planning Commissioners and Board of County Commissioners,

Members of the Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition (CCCC) met with Ryan Crabb, Senior Park Ranger, on May 11, 2023. We learned at that time that he had met with a couple of North Routt residents and that they had come to an agreement that the snowmobile concession could be moved to the Quealy parcel if the operation were moved further east on the property to reduce the visual impact. This would involve cutting into the hillside to level it, extending the road to that point, and clearing a parking area. This would also move the planned 30' x 80' parking area further from the wetlands. Ryan told us that operations would cease by April 15 and snowmobile trailers would be removed at that point. This would reduce impact to cranes who arrive for nesting in April and May. The large temporary building would not be removed until the ground was dry, probably in mid-June, when cranes would be foraging in the area but that it would involve just one day's work to remove.

The CCCC suggested a few other areas of the park as potential sites for the snowmobile operation. The areas we suggested are used for recreational summer use, have roads and vault toilets, and no visual impact from homes or county roads. We were told that the park did not have the staff to plow these park roads in the winter and therefore, could not move the snowmobile concession or parking for non-motorized use to those areas. We suggested that if funding increased in the future, they consider moving the snowmobile concession to Sage Flats where it would not impact an important county view corridor.

When we asked about summer activity on the Quealy parcel, we were told that there would be some "inner city" campers and their counselors who have previously been located at Pearl Lake. CCCC offered to provide educational programs to teach the kids about Greater Sandhill Cranes, their lifecycle, habitat requirements, etc. thinking that these were truly "inner city" kids with very little environmental awareness. After the meeting we researched Avid4Adventure and found that their 5-day "Expedition Camping" trips for thirteen 5th-6th graders and their two counselors at Steamboat

Lake are booked for the month of June and half of July into early August at a cost of \$1699 per child. The CCCC is now very concerned that daily use of the parcel, including campfires at night, will negatively impact the cranes, during chick rearing when they are most vulnerable.

The CCCC realizes that the state park does not have to go through the county planning process and has the final say in the use of park property. Opening the proposal for public review was done as a “good neighbor” gesture.

CCCC members visited the Quealy parcel on May 6 and observed 3 pairs of cranes, 2 coyotes, and 4 mallards, all within a 10-minute period and viewed from CR 129 without setting foot on the land. We would like to go on record to express our concerns about the use of the Quealy parcel for summer camping and programs because of the historic use of the parcel as open space and wildlife habitat. We are most concerned about potential negative impacts to the breeding success of Greater Sandhill Cranes, a Tier 1 species of concern in Colorado, and will be monitoring the site this summer to gather additional data.

Sincerely,

Barbara Hughes  
CCCC Co-Founder and Director

CC via email:  
Steamboat Lake State Park  
[ryan.crabb@state.co.us](mailto:ryan.crabb@state.co.us)  
[julie.arington@state.co.us](mailto:julie.arington@state.co.us)