



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

711 Independent Ave
Grand Junction Colorado
970-255-6100

Kelli McLean
Fruita Community Planning and Development
325 E Aspen St
Fruita, CO 81521

September 26, 2022

RE: 2022-30 Raptor Crossing PUD

Ms. McLean:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife has reviewed the proposed planning documents and application for the Raptor Crossing Preliminary PUD located on Raptor Road, next to James M Robb-Colorado River State Park-Fruita Section and two gravel pits. This proposal intends to create a 39 unit motor coach development, similar to an RV park with one permanent structure at each site. As with all developments, CPW is always concerned with the loss of habitat and habitat fragmentation but also with wildlife impacts caused by increased visitation in and around wildlife habitats. Increased vehicle traffic, and other human disturbances including dogs and other pets can have adverse impacts on wildlife and increase human-wildlife conflicts.

A prairie dog colony is present and active immediately south of this proposed development on Raptor Road, and that parcel has been proposed to be developed into a 50 unit apartment complex. A site inspection was conducted on September 26, 2022 to determine whether white-tailed prairie dogs were present on at this proposed motor coach development. No prairie dogs or burrows were seen, however CPW is concerned about the displacement of those prairie dogs when development occurs in addition to naturally dispersing individuals coming into contact with pets and people at the motor coach development.

The presence of prairie dogs provides a food source for raptors and mammalian carnivores all of which are common in the area. In the winter, bald eagles have nearby roost sites along the Colorado River in and around the Fruita Section of James M Robb-Colorado River State Park and Horsethief Canyon State Wildlife Area and likely prey on this prairie dog town. In the summer, there is potential for black bear usage of the area as they are known to utilize the Colorado River corridor and washes.

The I-70 corridor near Fruita experiences roadkill from deer crossings. These high speed collisions are a danger to both deer and humans. A campground in the proposed site may attract deer from the Colorado River depending on any tree, shrub or water developments but



may also increase highway collisions due to animal displacement. Human-deer conflicts are not uncommon in campgrounds, especially during summer fawning seasons when does can be very protective. To minimize attraction to mule deer, CPW recommends avoiding non-native and decorative landscaping as well as fencing of individual trees to prevent use and damage by deer. This parcel is also adjacent to I70 where deer-vehicle collisions seem likely depending on the landscaping or other attractants.

Fencing considerations should be employed to reduce prairie dog interactions with both humans and domestic pets. The proposed development CC&Rs suggest that pets, including dogs will be allowed. Prairie dogs can carry several diseases of concern to pets and humans, specifically bubonic plague. CPW generally suggests fencing that allows free movement of wildlife, but in this case a more restrictive fencing that reduces prairie dog interactions within the campground should be employed by burying small diameter fencing (chicken wire) or the use of smooth galvanized steel panels to prevent climbing.

To minimize bear-human conflicts, as well as conflicts with skunks and raccoons that will likely be attracted to a campground, CPW recommends bear proof trash receptacles, secure food storage containers, no bird feeders, cleaning utensils and requirements for the cleaning of barbecue grills, and signage reminding visitors that bears frequent the area and how to minimize conflicts.

Feeding of all wildlife should be prohibited. Deer, skunks, raccoons, black bears, foxes, prairie dogs and other animals can all come into conflict with humans when fed. Canine Distemper and rabies are diseases of concern when raccoons, skunks and foxes come into contact with humans and pets. Feeding of big game is also prohibited by law.

Pets should not be allowed to roam free. Cats and dogs can both come into conflict with wildlife. Owners, contractors, employees and guests should have facilities available such as runs or kennels to reduce temptation of off leash dog walking.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact District Wildlife Manager Mark Richman at 970-250-4501 or mark.richman@state.co.us.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Richman', written in a cursive style.

Mark Richman

District Wildlife Manager, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Grand Junction

CC: Kirk Oldham, Area Wildlife Manager, Grand Junction
Dan Neubaum, Terrestrial Biologist, Grand Junction
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