

Malachite RV Park

This proposal is for a 10-space RV-campground on a property near Malachite/Gardner off of County Road 570, zoned Agricultural. In the Agricultural zone, a campground requires a conditional use permit (see: 1.05.36). There will be ten RV sites equipped with electric and water hookups, and an additional ten sites with no hookups to be used for tent and van camping. There will be a separate structure for bathrooms, showers and a common kitchen area for guests. The project will create one seasonal job, employing an on-site manager who will occupy a 1,200 square-foot dwelling to be constructed as part of this project, with the potential for an attached gallery space to display CS Woods products.

The campground will be situated on roughly 3.4 acres in the northeast portion of a 38.27-acre parcel. The campground will be located on an open field at the edge of the cottonwood forest that forms part of the riparian area along the Huerfano River.

The campground will be marketed to visitors who are coming to the area to visit the wolf sanctuary and/or hike over Mosca Pass. Currently, the wolf sanctuary is unable to accommodate campers, which discourages many people from visiting the site. Providing a campground for those who want to experience the wolves will help to support that project and generally bring more tourism to the Gardner area. The second activity that will be promoted is for groups who want to hike the Mosca Pass. The operator will arrange for a shuttle to drop off and/or pick up visitors on either side of the pass, which can include visits to the Sand Dunes or hot springs, and then bring visitors back to Huerfano County to camp.

Property History:

The main residence on the adjacent property, owned by the applicant, was built between 1886-1892 by the Sharp family. The family raised cattle and ran a trading post where he traded tobacco and clothing in the valley on what was known as the Buzzard Roost Ranch.

The property has been owned by the Mace family since 1976, when Stuart Mace came from Aspen and settled on the site to start the non-profit Malachite Farm School intended to keep alive and teach organic farming techniques. The school lasted for about 15 years. While in operation, there were often 60 to 70 people on site, working, learning and visiting the site. The applicant's residence adjacent to this parcel was the former school building, built as an extension onto the original Sharp residence. The family established Malachite Inc., which was later re-established in the late '90s as a wood mill that has grown into a successful business that supplies high-end milled wood to furniture makers and carpenters. The mill employs between 8 to 10 people and is a significant economic activity in the area, making CS Woods a significant consistent source of employment in this part of the County since 1976.

Wheat was once grown on the site before the topsoil blew away during the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. The topsoil has never recovered and still to this day, the soil will not support such crops. There are the remnants of a former grist mill on the site.

Comprehensive Plan Compliance

This project supports goals outlined in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan that specifically encourage the development of RV camping as an economic development activity.

The following excerpts from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan relate to this project.

- GOAL PSA.2: ENCOURAGE TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COUNTY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE CITIZENS AND VISITORS.

- Economic Development – Introduction:

The County will ensure that businesses are appropriately located to prevent land use conflicts and are well-designed with a focus on sustainability. Ultimately, the County seeks to find a balance between economic vitality and its rural character to preserve the natural environment and high quality of life.

The appropriate location of businesses should be determined primarily by business developers themselves, subject to the rights of neighbors, and only secondarily by county regulations. Forcing businesses to locate in pre-determined business or industrial parks should be a last resort.

- GOAL ED.1: ENCOURAGE THE RETENTION AND EXPANSION OF EXISTING BUSINESSES AND THE ATTRACTION OF NEW BUSINESSES THAT WILL BENEFIT THE COUNTY.
 - Policy ED.1.3.: Encourage tourism-oriented businesses and organizations and branding (including “Spanish Peaks Country”) in the County.
 - Policy ED.1.10: Encourage development of well maintained RV parks throughout the County.
- GOAL ED.4: ENCOURAGE RECURRING RECREATIONAL AND ARTISTIC EVENTS WHICH ENHANCE LIFE IN HUERFANO COUNTY AND CREATE BUSINESS GROWTH IN OTHER ECONOMIC SECTORS
 - Policy ED.4.2: Develop and promote outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities throughout Huerfano County including but not limited to hiking and historic trails, historic sites, birding, virtual tours, reopening Grandote Golf Course, non-motorized outdoor sports, endurance rides, and clays courses

Potential Impacts and Mitigation

Within ¼ mile of the proposed campground along County Road 570, there are seven properties that border on the road, three of which contain dwellings. The closest neighbors to this project, Manuel and Sara Garcia, have a home that is about 330 ft from the perimeter of the project. Between the Garcia residence and the proposed camp sites and buildings, there is a thick grove of cottonwoods and a significant elevation change. In the winter, when there are no leaves on the trees, the Garcia residence is not visible from the proposed campsites (see photo to the right from proposed campsite in the direction of the Garcia residence). Additionally, there



is a vertical elevation difference of about 30 ft between the Garcia residence and the proposed campground, with the campground on the high plain above the river valley. This elevation difference along with the cottonwood forest will help to reduce the amount of sound traveling from the campsite to the Garcia property.

We anticipate that the impact of noise, light or other potential nuisances to adjacent properties will be minimal. To the north and east, the distance to the nearest neighbors is nearly or slightly more than a quarter mile, and to the west is the home where the applicant lives and the CS Woods mill. To the south and southeast are a number of homes, including the Garcia residence as the closest residence, but the separation between these and the proposed campsite by a thick ribbon of cottonwoods as well as the distance from the project, should make any impacts marginal.

To help residents in the county live according to the tradition of rugged individualism, Huerfano County has also included the Code of the West in its Comprehensive Plan, which states that “the surrounding properties will probably not remain as they are indefinitely.” ... “The view from your property may change.” The Code of the West explicitly states that adjoining agricultural uses may be expected to disturb the peace and quiet, and while a campsite is not an agricultural use, the occasional disturbance that may arise might be analogous to that of occasional disturbances caused by agricultural activities.

Each campsite will be equipped with water and electrical hookups. Electrical hookups will mitigate the need for RVs to run generators. The primitive campsites will be primitive campsites reserved for tent and van camping, and would not permit the use of generators.

The type of tourism this campground intends to support will be for visitors hiking Mosca Pass and visiting the wolf sanctuary. It is anticipated that the average length of stay will be two nights. To help mitigate impacts on the surrounding area, the campground will implement the following rules:

- Lights out after 10:00 PM – to be able to appreciate the dark skies, outdoor artificial lights must be turned off by 10:00 PM.
- Noise Curfew: No music or other noise audible across campground permitted after dark. On site attendant will monitor noise and ensure that loud parties or late-night noise does not disturb the neighborhood.
- No Generators: RVs will be prohibited from running generators on site. Electrical hookups will be provided to mitigate the need to run generators.
- No open camp fires at individual campsites. A communal fire pit will be constructed in the common area where fires may be allowed when conditions allow.
- Pets: All dogs must be on leash at all times.

Septic/Water Use

Leach fields must be at least ten (10) feet from the property line.

5 CCR 1002-43 delegates to local health departments the authority to regulate OWTS systems under 2,000 gallons per day. In Table 6-2, it outlines the average use in gallons per day for different types of

uses; campsites or Travel trailer park without individual water and sewage hookup per unit use an estimated 50 gallons per day; a Travel trailer park with individual water and sewage hookup per unit should be calculated at 100 gallons per day. Since this site will have water hookups, but the dump station will not be connected to the OWTS system, and will instead be a separate vault system that will be emptied as needed, a camp site with communal showers, toilets and kitchen for ten camp sites plus a single permanent residence, calculated at 75 gallons per day, should be expected to produce a flow of up to 575 gallons per day through the OWTS.

(A shower is calculated at 14.5 gpd, a toilet at 24.8 gpd)

Traffic: It is anticipated that guests will stay an average of two nights. If the campground is 70% full through the summer, which will generate 10-15 trips per day.

Dump Station: While campers will have access to facilities that should minimize the need to dump their septic tanks, a septic vault will also be constructed so that RVs can dump there for a fee. This will be a service offered to those who camp at the site, as well as to the community at large. Currently, there are no other options in the area for campers to dump their waste, and providing this service will help to reduce illegal dumping and encourage RV tourism in the area.

Drainage: The site is relatively flat with a slight slope toward the northeast. In the northeast corner of the property, there are some natural ponding areas where surface flows could be caught after a storm, but water does not pond here, as it infiltrates too quickly.

USGS defines the soil type on the site as Willowman gravelly sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes. This soil is comprised of cobbly, gravelly alluvium and is well drained. This project will not create any additional runoff at the property line.

Bulk Water Station:

Independently from the campground proposal, the applicant holds the water rights to dispense _____ acre-feet of water. Included on this site plan is a plan to install a bulk water station. Many people in the area depend on bulk water for residential uses, and offering an additional station will take some pressure off of the Gardner station and offer a valuable service to the community.

The water rights to this are attached to the Huerfano County Water Conservancy District Notice of Inclusion in the Tier 1 Water Augmentation Program.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to consider this application.

Amos Mace