



Public Comment RE: Proposed CMP Development Plan

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To: commissioners@huerfano.us
Cc: Carl Young <cyoung@huerfano.us>

Tue, Feb 25, 2025 at 9:12 AM

Hello Commissioners,

I'm writing in strong opposition to the proposed plan by Buckhorn Ridge Outfitters to develop Cuchara Mountain Park. I fully support the Cuchara Foundation's letter to the commissioners outlining their opposition to this plan, but I also want to add my thoughts.

I served on the Board of the Panadero Ski Corporation from February 2022 to July 2023, so I have knowledge of this process, especially with the work with the SE Group, the county paid a significant sum for their expert consultancy. Since the current commissioners were not in office at the time, **I would like to remind them of SE Group's conclusion that a for-profit operation at CMP is bound to fail, and they strongly recommended the only viable path is a non-profit or government (or collaboration) was the only way forward for sustainable operation of the park.** In moving forward with the greatly flawed plan from Buckhorn Ridge Outfitters (more below), it seems like the county has either forgotten or purposely ignored the significant amount of work the SE Group put into their recommendations for CMP. I urge the commissioners to reread the SE Group's conclusion and as experts in the field, going against their recommendations shows grotesque hubris on the part of the County.

Buckhorn Ridge Outfitter's proposal not only takes some hugely hopeful and unrealistic estimates into their revenue calculations that will lead to business failure, but it also will negatively impact the community and culture of Cuchara.

- A proposed \$70 average ski ticket price shows a complete lack of knowledge of the industry and how CMP fits into it. This is basically the same lift ticket price as Wolf Creek Ski Area, yet CMP offers limited terrain and a much smaller market. It is insulting to potential customers to charge that much to ski at CMP. That lift ticket price proposed by Buckhorn is an insult to the skiing market and will prevent visits to CMP. CMP's only niche in the ski industry is to offer affordable tickets to kids and families and Buckhorn is misplaced if they think they will get anywhere close to their visitation numbers with that pricing. Again, please see the SE Group's report on CMP for a realistic appraisal.
- Buckhorn's proposal to charge an outrageous daily fee to use the park will also limit the park's use and visitation and negatively impact the community in Cuchar. Many locals use the park daily to walk their dogs, enjoy nature, and access USFS public lands. Charging an outrageous fee just to use the park will dramatically affect the local community and culture. CMP is one of the main reasons my wife and I purchased a home in the area and spend time in Cuchara. Buckhorn's proposal will destroy all of this, and we will sell our home if we lose the resource of a publically accessible Cuchara Mountain Park. I know I'm not alone with my neighbors in this opinion. Buckhorn will not only not realize the revenue they are proposing but will completely destroy the community-vibe of the area.
- Then, the tiny home proposal. Again this will negatively affect the community and culture in the area, and their revenue projections based on occupancy rates are not based in reality. As someone who lives in the Panadero neighborhood at all times of the year, there are many times when there is simply no one up there. Other than a few holiday weeks, the weekdays are very quiet and during the fall and early spring, there is simply no draw for visitors in the area because of the weather and lack of winter or summer recreational opportunities at the time.

Buckhorn's proposal is unrealistic and bound to fail and in the process, it will destroy many of the things the local community cherishes. On top of that, there have been well over \$500k in donations to CMP and PSC and so many individuals who support PSC's vision of CMP being a place for everyone to enjoy and learn about nature and outdoor recreation. Giving the park to a for-profit entity that is willing to completely change the model of CMP that will limit, not expand, use and access to CMP is a huge middle-finger to the so many donors and supporters of CMP. On top of that, you are now basically saying that the donations to CMP, which has slowly built up park amenities were used to subsidize a for-profit operation. As a donor myself, I feel used and it will be another reason to leave Cuchara. The ethics and morals on display here are severely lacking.

I strongly urge the commissioners to reread the SE Group's recommendations and listen to the public comments in opposition to this flawed plan. Not only is this proposal based on unrealistic assumptions that will lead to a failed business, but accepting it will destroy the community in the process. Please reject this proposal outright and keep CMP a community resource that expands access to the outdoors.

Sincerely,
Will Pirkey

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