

USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region

Att: Reviewing Officer

1617 Cole Boulevard, Building 17

Lakewood, Colorado 80401

Additionally: Mr. Scott Fitzwilliams, Forest Supervisor

White River National Forest, Eagle/Holy Cross Ranger District

RE: Berliamont Estates Access Route FEIS and Draft ROD

This letter concerns the continuing effort of developers to get a permit to construct a two lane paved road into a 640 acre inholding, referred to as Berliamont Estates, North of Edwards, Colorado. I had written a letter (May 22, 2019) to Mr. Scott Fitzwilliams, the Forest Supervisor for the White River National Forest opposing issue of such a permit. This permit completely ignores the Colorado Parks and Wildlife closure (Nov. 22 to May 21) of access to one lane dirt roads to preserve a large area of native land for the purpose of Deer and Elk migration and calving. The USFS own Mission Statement, Motto, Vision and Guiding Principles are also in opposition to this permit. The best option is to declare NO ACTION.

I am writing to object to option 2 of the Berliamont permit. I recommend the Forest Service commit to the option of no action, on the paving of the road into the Berliamont inholding North of Edwards, Colorado. The Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and their Wildlife Biologists, have recommended and the USFS has agreed to close the roads into this area, from Nov 22 to May 21, annually. These roads, 774, 778, 780, and 783 are closed for this period to both motorized and mechanized travel. They are closed to preserve and protect the Deer and Elk migration and calving areas surrounding and at the upper end of the in holding. This area is one of the last large tracts of land not considered Wilderness. Mr. Bill Andree, and Mr. Bill Heicher, retired (Both with 30+ years of service) CPW Wildlife officers, have stated that the Elk herd, one of the biggest in Colorado, has declined since 2002, to about 50 % of it's numbers at that time. Further decline of this herd will wipe out the Elk. The Officers have stated, they will not adapt, they will just die.

If the newly proposed road, option 2, (2.4 miles) is to be open year round, it is in direct conflict with the CPW directive. This 2.4 mile section of road belongs to all citizens. A paved road, with snow plowing, will create 6-10' berms to keep the road open. These berms will be on the down hill side of the road, as no place to store snow on the up hill side. Observe plowing on Vail Pass, in steep areas, all snow must go to the right side or downhill side of the road because of narrow or non existant median. There will be significant retaining walls to restrain erosion, which will further inhibit migration. Should the road be paved, with resident travel, Water trucks (there is no domestic water supply in this plan), must be used, with daily trucking of water for inholding residents. There is approximately 2,000 vertical foot gain to the top of the project, with 6-8 Or 9% grade in places. This is steeper than the Vail Pass "narrows" at 7% grade. The road will be unusable without continual plowing, sanding and chemicals, which there is no plan to mitigate the effect on ground water and the aquifer. Additionally, with our high draught level, the possibility of a wild

fire in the area would dictate smart management of this area to include a second road to preserve human life as an alternative egress route in the event of a major wildfire incident. No such secondary road is in the plan.

An inholding of this nature, being purchased knowing that it was an inholding, should not be allowed to negate a wildlife closure through public lands. Part of the joy of living in Eagle County is non motorized access to the observation of native wildlife. Allowing this developed road, is in direct conflict with the stated goals of the USFS. The following are directly quoted from the USFS Mission statement web site.

USFS stated mission: Sustain the Health, diversity and productivity to meet the needs of present and future generations. The proposed 19 home sites do nothing to meet the needs of present or future generations, and adversely affect a number of species of wildlife and a large tract of native environment.

Motto: Caring for the Land and Serving the People-- key bullet points

1. Listening to people and responding to their diverse needs in making decisions. -Over 90% negative responses by Eagle County citizens in answer to this proposal. Repeated negative comments in the local papers. Petitions with over 1,000 signatures against this proposal.
2. Helping States and communities to wisely use the forests to promote rural economic development and a quality rural environment. -Does the use by 19 individuals in the inholding override the enjoyment of the natural habitat for elk migration and breeding, hunting, hiking and mountain biking in it's natural state, by the residents and tourists, of Eagle County. This county is a major tourist economy, and is very reliant on tourist activity. USFS native lands in their wild state are a significant attraction to our local economy.

Vision: Eight Points of the Forest Services Vision of their mission

#8. The American People can count on the Forest Service to perform. - The Forest Service must deny the paving project in light of the over whelming opposition by local citizenry. The Forest Service has absolutely failed to perform in light of citizen response. Use of a law in Alaska, to justify building a two lane paved road where none exists, does not mean the Forest Service is performing. An example of Fulford, road closed in the winter, is more like the use should be. Building a 2 lane paved road is more on the order of Cordillera subdivision.

Guiding Principles: To realize our mission and vision, we follow these 13 guiding principles.

#2. We use the best scientific knowledge in making decisions and select the most appropriate technologies in the management of resources. - Wildlife Biologists from CPW have continued to recommend winter closure for Elk migration/breeding, for preservation of a declining herd.

#4. We strive for quality and excellence in everything we do and are sensitive to the effects of our decisions on people and resources. -Again, 90+ % negative, on paving the road, by locals, supported by the Wildlife Biologists recommendations from CPW.

#7. We promote grassroots participation in our decisions and activities.- Local input in excess of 90% negative has been repeatedly ignored by USFS.

#11. We are responsible and accountable for what we do. - Noted participation by many local citizens,

not just the developer, has not been accomplished. We have not seen sufficient justification to permit the road over the objections of many of the local residents. No mitigation of the damage to the elk breeding and migration grounds has been presented. No alternatives that can be successful to sustain the deer and elk populations have been presented. No mitigation of the road problems, the traffic problems, who is paying for the maintenance after the road is in, and the secondary road because of the possibility of wildfire. Additionally no addressing the generational impact to the wildlife and the local citizen population is presented. This must be done, in cooperation with Colorado Parks and Wildlife scientists before any consideration of the proposal.

If the Forest Service truly follows these parts of their published Mission Statement, Motto, Vision, and Guiding Principles, the Berlaimont application for road improvement and year round vehicle access must be denied. Perhaps the Forest Service can assist with a land trade to a much more suitable parcel, thereby preserving this large native area. The best action the USFS can take is the option of NO ACTION. The purposed use by these developers is completely unreasonable and any other conclusion is unsupportable.

Respectfully submitted,

Walt Olsen, [REDACTED]

November 5, 2020