

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/28/2022 6:00:00 AM

First name: Robert

Last name: Taylor

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Proposed project: El Jebel Administrative Site, Upper Parcel Conveyance Project

Responsible official: Scott G. Fitzwilliams, Forest Supervisor

National forest and/or ranger district: White River NF; West Zone/Sopris Ranger District

Lead objector: Robert Taylor

It has been presented that Eagle County and Pitkin County are pursuing purchasing the Forest Service Property for development purposes rather than utilizing as open space. Particularly Pitkin County for developing for employee housing for employees that would work in Pitkin County but would then live in Eagle County.

Therefore, I object to the finding of no significant impact based on the context of the project and intensity of effects using the ten factors identified in 40 CFR 1508.27.

(1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

- Per the Forest Service Draft Decision Notice, "Housing density and traffic would likely increase with any future potential development; however, Eagle County will upgrade roads and road intersections concurrent with new traffic generating development". Eagle County has a known history of approving developments without addressing upgrading roads and infrastructure first, and therefore would have to question the validity of this statement. Development of the Forest Service property would have significant adverse consequences to the local communities' roads and infrastructure.

(2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

- Valley Road has known safety issues with speeding traffic, lack of pedestrian shoulders, incomplete pathways and obstructed lines of sight. Development on the Forest Service Property would cause significant adverse safety issues on Valley Road.

(3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

- Adjacent Park lands and prime farmlands could be significantly affected with the sale of the Forest Service Property. The lower bench land, the lower field west of the Harris Reed ditch, was once an active hay field (prime farmland).

(4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

- Sale of the Forest Service property, unless utilized as open space, would have a significant adverse effect to adjacent residents along with the community itself. Overdevelopment in the El Jebel area has had a significant

impact on the quality of life and loss of open space for local residents.

(5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

- Per the Forest Service Draft Decision Notice, "effects of the conveyance of the Upper Parcel would not be uncertain or significant and do not involve unique or unknown risks". Both Eagle County and Pitkin County currently have no master plan or design concept plan for purchasing the Forest Service property. Conveyance of the Upper Parcel and its risks would be completely unique and unknown at this time.

(6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

- The sale of currently open space to an entity that is viewing the property for development would defiantly set a precedent for future actions in a community, that due to over development, is quickly losing open space and quality of life.

(7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.

- Sale of the Forest Service Property most likely have a significant impact on both the environment and the local community.

(8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

- Although not listed as an 'Historic Place', the Forest Service infrastructure and its adjacent fields has been a significant part of this local community for many years. To see it possibly replaced by development would be a great loss to this community.

(9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

- There is an active Osprey nest located in the lower west field. Although no longer endangered, Ospreys are protected by federal law. Colorado state regulations also list protections for ospreys, prohibiting surface occupancy within a quarter-mile radius of active nests, according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Per the Audubon Society, this nest is located in a 'noncommon nesting area'. Active nests require federal permits for taking.

- This lower west parcel is also a known wildlife corridor as noted by Jennifer Mueller's response, although she neglected to add that field is also used as a winter migration area for elk.

(10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

- Although the sale of the Forest Service land would not be in violation of 'laws', it is unfathomable that the USDA Forest Service, known for protecting the forest and the environment would consider not protecting the environment by the sale of this property.

Thank You

Robert Taylor