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Comments: Proposed Turkey Tracks Shooting Range

My wife and I would like to comment on the proposed Turkey Tracks shooting range. First thing to discuss is the people population near Turkey Tracks. There are approximately 250 residents within ample earshot of the range. Approximately half of these are full time residents (many retired), living here for the peace and quiet that rural mountain life is supposed to afford someone. We live at the west end of Westcreek, nearly 2.4 miles, as the crow flies, west of Turkey Tracks. The east side of Westcreek is much closer, only 1.6 miles, as the crow flies, from Turkey Tracks. Some homes in the Trout Creek subdivision are literally 1 mile N-NW of Turkey Tracks.

Using a noise chart presenting examples of decibels of various sounds, I'd place the decibel level outside our door during an active round of shooting at 60+/- decibels. At 50 decibels, the chart says "Moderate rainfall" or "Refrigerator humming". At 60 decibels it states "Normal conversation" and "Dishwashers". My wife and I can both attest the shooting is louder than our dishwasher and significantly louder than a moderate rainfall or refrigerator. The chart in the report places "Quiet Urban" at around 58 decibels. Having previously lived in Albuquerque, NM we can safely say the shooting noise outside our house is louder. Plus coming in pulses makes it impossible to "get used to it". Couple this with our background noise (without significant wind) being much less than 20 decibels - "Leaves rustling" or "Recording studio". Let's just say we can hear neighbor conversations 500 ft away and loud talking at the nearby lake ¾ mile away. I'll even go on record to say our background, on a non-windy day, is less than 10 decibels. I'd like to add my 64 year old hearing is not that great. The point here being that sound travels very well out here. With minimal background noise to drown out other sounds loud noises become effectively louder. One of our favorite past times, when Turkey Tracks is inactive, is to sit on our back porch and listen to the absolute quiet. Once in a while we'll hear a distant pine cone drop to the ground.

At 2.4 miles from the range we loudly hear the shooting. The shooting often starts at 7 am and has at times gone on well after dark, as late as 10:30 pm. Sometimes it is all day, non-stop during the warmer weather weekends. The BOOM BOOM BOOM of the gunshots is definitely louder than the official Report indicates it should be at a distance. But then, the Report does not have a sound measurement beyond a few yards from the source. No measure of the noise impact on neighboring communities was indicated in the Report. As stated earlier, we'd put it at 55 to 65 decibels, coming in pulses. Our dog, who looks forward to being outdoors, refuses to go outside when shooting is occurring. The wind can be relatively loud, your report stating 44 decibels. Up at the higher elevation shooting range area the wind is stronger. Westcreek and Trout Creek are somewhat sheltered by surrounding mountains. Having mentioned these surrounding mountains, this presents a condition the Shooting Range Proposal did not consider. Sound can amplify to some extent as it bounces off of mountain sides, called the "amphitheater effect". Whether this is a big factor in our case I'm not an expert so I won't dwell on the topic more. I will attest to the fact the shooting is loud at our property and even louder down by Pine Lake and more so on east side of the lake. I know Trout Creek residents have complained about the shooting, at 1 to 1.5 miles from ground zero and in a mountain bowl I bet it is very loud there.

One final area I'd like to discuss, or better stated, dispute, is fire danger. The Report indicated the fire danger at Turkey Tracks is low due to past mitigation, "prescribed burns". This is only partly correct, fires are still occurring and prescribed burns are not without proven dangers. The Report only touched on fires caused by bullets hitting ground with dry brush or causing sparks. The Report failed to account for illegal rounds and targets, specifically tracer bullets and exploding targets. Whereas these are not "allowed", non-the-less they are being used. It's not like Turkey Tracks is manned nor can the DougCo Sheriff be around that much. I get it, people don't always play by the rules. The problem here is it only takes one illegal round, or spark and Game Over, this area will burn again (we're in the Haymen Burn area and lot's of dead trees still abound in the surrounding areas.) Never mind

the strong winds found at Turkey Tracks (as mentioned and measured for sound in the Report). Colorado has some very recent experiences with the effect of wind on wildfires. Recent news stories have been reporting the latent expense of past fires in the form of MUCH higher home insurance rates. Just the second half of this year, 2023, obtaining a new insurance policy on a part time occupied home in much of rural Teller County is near impossible. Personal experience with a \$400K home in CME on a tree-less lot (1/2 mile to a volunteer fire dept.), resulted in only two available choices, either no insurance or \$6000 annually with a wildfire exclusion. Whereas we're not aware of this yet being an issue here in Westcreek, all it will take is a publicly reported fire, even a small one, at Turkey Tracks and obtaining affordable insurance will become a big issue here.

While on the topic of people not playing by the rules, STRAY bullets from Turkey Tracks have been found here in Westcreek. None at our property yet, but the closer, denser Westcreek Lakes Subdivision can account for at least 2 proven stray bullets. One was found in a fence plank, another found through a roof (causing significant water damage before it was discovered). Both were determined to have come from the direction of Turkey Tracks. A third bullet is rumored to have been found but I have no direct knowledge of the details. For the record, a quick Google search on the range of bullets states a .22 caliber bullet can travel 1.5 miles. Other, larger, bullets can travel as far as 3.5 to 4.5 miles.

Bottom line, allowing shooting close to residential areas is a VERY BAD IDEA. The facts and a bullet travel alone indicate shooting should not be allowed within a 4.5 mile radius of any human populated area. Shooting noise distance in mountainous regions will vary, but a minimum of 4 miles should be respected. As to wildfire dangers, high elevation, windy, vegetated, hilly places should be off limits PERIOD. Closing the forest to dispersed shooting in and around this area is a great idea just in terms of safety, fire danger and noise. However, even allowing a specific "controlled" area for shooting is still a VERY BAD IDEA. Unless the shooting range was entirely enclosed, no bullets can leave, no significant noise allowed to escape, and rules enforced, the idea is simply not feasible in the proposed area of Turkey Tracks. The site is simply too close to residential populations and the area is very subject to wildfires. All the best intentions will not prevent rule breakers using the site.

We invite you and your team to visit our property and hear for yourself the noise levels. I can put you in contact with the property owners of the known stray bullets. I can personally take you to the bullet sites (although bullets are removed).