



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Southeast Region
4255 Sinton Road
Colorado Springs, CO 80907
P 719.227.5200

February 3, 2023

El Paso County
ATTN: Kari Parsons

2880 International Circle,
Colorado Springs, CO 80132

Re: Autumn Hills Sketch Plan

Dear Kari Parsons,

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has reviewed the preliminary plan for Autumn Hills Sketch Plan located on the southwest corner of Meridian Road and Stapleton Road in El Paso County. This area included within the Development boundaries will sustain numerous wildlife species including deer, coyote, fox, raptors, songbirds, and numerous small mammals, as well as a fairly resident pronghorn heard. CPW makes the following recommendations for work on this project.

Due to the high prevalence of pronghorn on the proposed site, CPW recommends for general construction protocols low speeds for construction vehicles to avoid wildlife collisions. CPW believes there will be minimal impact to the pronghorn herd. They are accustomed to housing developments and vehicles, and will move to other locations if they are bothered. However, Where new roads are required, CPW recommends that these single-purpose roads are gated to reduce traffic disruptions to wildlife. If any temporary (e.g., construction) or permanent fencing is proposed, CPW recommends that it is the wildlife-friendly fencing that allows young to cross, and does not include high-tensile hogwire.

Fences can cause many problems for wildlife, including death, entanglements, and barriers to movements. CPW recommends the developers consult our publication Hanophy, Wendy "Fencing with Wildlife in mind." CPW.state.co.us. 2009 when considering the design of fences within the development. The publication is available on our website and we would be happy to provide a link to the PDF specifically. The use of privacy fencing, chain link fencing, and other exclusionary fencing should be at least 6 feet high and should be restricted to the immediate area surrounding the buildings or within the designated building envelope and should not be used as a method to designate boundaries of larger lot sizes (> 1 acre). Fencing outside the immediate building envelope or area surrounding the buildings on larger lots within the known range of elk, deer and pronghorn should be a maximum top height of 42"



with at least 12” spacing between the top two wires or rails and a bottom wire or rail at least 16” above the ground to allow passage of juvenile animals and pronghorn antelope.

It is also recommended that the top and bottom wires be a twisted barbless type or smooth wire or rail construction. Construction of ornamental wrought iron fencing with closely spaced vertical bars (<12”) and sharp projections extending beyond the top horizontal bar should be strongly discouraged in areas where deer, elk, and black bear are known to occur. This type of fencing typically ensnares deer and elk by the hips when trying to squeeze through and impales animals attempting to go over the top. It should be noted that it is very distressing to find wildlife in or impaled on fences.

CPW recommends that the plan includes the development and implementation of a noxious weed control plan for the site, prior to any disturbance of the site. All disturbed soils should be monitored for noxious weeds and noxious weeds should be actively controlled until native plant revegetation and reclamation is achieved. Care should be taken to avoid the spread of noxious weeds, and all construction equipment should be cleaned prior to leaving the site.

CPW recommends that all landscaping in the sub-developed area should be comprised of native species. Using ornamental or non-native trees, shrubs, forbs or grasses can attract wildlife to the developed area, and create possible wildlife/human conflicts. The use of native plant species for landscaping purposes can also provide an aesthetically pleasing landscape that requires little maintenance, and are frequently more drought-tolerant than non-native species.

Pets should not be allowed to roam free and fences should be installed to decrease or eliminate this problem. It is strongly encouraged that dog kennels have a top enclosure, regardless of the height of the kennel. Dogs and cats chase or prey on various wildlife species. One benefit to keeping animals under control is that they are less likely to bother other people, be in roadways or become prey for coyotes, foxes, eagles, hawks or owls.

There is suitable habitat on the site for nesting raptors and migratory birds. CPW recommends the use of preconstruction survey to identify raptor nests within the project area and implement appropriate restrictions. CPW recommends adherence to the recommended buffer distances and timing stipulations identified in the attached document “Recommended Buffer Zones and Seasonal Restrictions for Colorado Raptors”. Removal or relocation of any active raptor or migratory bird nest will require consultation with CPW and US Fish and Wildlife Service prior to disturbance. Both active and potential nest sites, winter night roosts should be considered when evaluating disturbance during construction.

Care should be taken to avoid the destruction of active dens and nests while constructing structures, ponds, and trails. Possible dens or nests should be monitored for species activity. CPW would be concerned if trees and snags were removed for the development. The main concern with removal of trees is that these trees may be currently occupied or historic nest sites. Please take care to avoid removal of trees with occupied nests. For raptors, an active nest is any nest that is frequented or occupied by a raptor during the breeding season or which has been active in any of the five previous breeding



seasons. Many raptors use alternate nests in various years; therefore, a nest may be active even if it is not occupied in a given year. Removal or relocation of any active raptor or migratory bird nest will require consultation with CPW and US Fish and Wildlife Service prior to disturbance. Both active and potential nest sites, winter night roosts should be considered when evaluating disturbance during construction.

The best way to avoid impacts on the nesting efforts of migratory birds is to focus construction activities outside of the breeding season. For the majority of species that breeding season would be within the time frame April 1 to August 31. If construction must occur during the breeding season, CPW recommends surveys for active nests be conducted prior to ground disturbance.

After construction of dwellings, trash should be kept indoors until the morning of trash pickup. The CPW recommends using bear resistant trash containers. Bears, skunks, raccoons, and neighborhood dogs are attracted to garbage and do become habituated.

Feeding of all wildlife by future residents of this development should be prohibited, with the exception of songbirds. The use of bird feeders, suet feeders, and hummingbird feeders are discouraged. However, if feeders are used, they should be placed so they are inaccessible to bears, raccoons or skunks and other wildlife species that might cause damage or threaten human safety. It is illegal to feed big game including deer, elk, antelope, moose, bear and lion.

Pets should be fed inside or if pets are fed outside, feeding should occur only for a specified period of time and food bowls returned afterwards to a secure site for storage. Pet food left outside attracts various wildlife species which in turn attracts predators.

When landscaping lots, it is strongly recommended that native vegetation be used that wildlife is less likely to be attracted to. Planting of trees and shrubs that are attractive to native ungulates should incorporate the use of materials that will prevent access and damage (fencing, tree guards, trunk guards, etc.).

CPW appreciates being given the opportunity to comment. Please Feel free to contact District Wildlife Manager Aaron Berscheid at 719-439-9601 or aaron.berscheid@state.co.us should you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Tim Kroening
Area Wildlife Manager



Cc: SE regional files
Area 14 files
Aaron Berscheid, DWM

