



January 23, 2020

Nina Ruiz
El Paso County Development Services Department
DSDcomments@elpasoco.com

RE: Rolling Hills Ranch Planned Unit Development and Preliminary Plan
PUDSP199
Part of the Section 20 & part of the N ½ of the N ½, 29 T12S, R64W, 6th P.M.
Water Division 2, Water District 10
Upper Black Squirrel Creek Designated Basin

Dear Ms. Ruiz:

We have reviewed your November 4, 2019 submittal concerning the above referenced proposal for the development of 521 acres into 725 single family lots, landscaping, open space and trails.

Water Supply Demand

According to the Water Supply Information Summary, the estimated water demand is 239 acre-feet/year for household use and 1.8 acre-feet/ year for irrigation for a total estimated water demand is 242 acre-feet/year.

Source of Water Supply

Meridian Service Metropolitan District (“District”) is the proposed water supplier. The District has provided a letter dated August 30, 2019 committing to serve the 725 lots within the proposed Rolling Hills Ranch Filing 1 subdivision at the estimated demand of 242 acre-feet per year. The subdivision lies within the allowed place of use of the District’s water supplies.

The District’s sources of water are a combination of bedrock aquifer allocations from the Denver Basin as well as alluvial sources. The State Engineer’s Office does not have evidence regarding the length of time for which the bedrock aquifer sources will be a physically and economically viable source of water. According to 37-90-107(7)(a), C.R.S., “Permits issued pursuant to this subsection (7) shall allow withdrawals on the basis of an aquifer life of 100 years.” Based on this **allocation** approach, the annual amounts of water determined are equal to one percent of the total amount, as determined by rule 5.3.2.1 of the Designated Basin Rules, 2 CCR 410-1. Therefore, the water may be withdrawn in those annual amounts for a maximum of 100 years.

In the *El Paso County Land Development Code*, effective November, 1986, Chapter 5, Section 49.5, (D), (2) states:

“- Finding of Sufficient Quantity - The water supply shall be of sufficient quantity to meet the average annual demand of the proposed subdivision for a period of three hundred (300) years.”

The State Engineer’s Office does not have evidence regarding the length of time for which the bedrock aquifer sources will “meet the average annual demand of the proposed subdivision.” However, treating El Paso County’s requirement as an **allocation** approach based on three hundred



years, the annual amounts of water available from the bedrock aquifers that may be withdrawn from a maximum period of 300 years are equal to one-third of one percent of the total amount.

Information available in our files indicates the District's water rights total approximately 2,088 acre-feet/year for a period of 300 years (1,888 acre-feet/year from bedrock aquifers and 200 acre-feet/year from the alluvial aquifer), and it has approximately 1,429 acre-feet/year committed to supplying subdivisions and 30.2 acre-feet/year committed to replacement obligations, for a total commitment of 1,459 acre-feet/year.

The uncommitted annual water supply of 629 acre-feet/year is more than the estimated annual demand of 242 acre-feet/year for Rolling Hills Ranch PUD. This office wrote a letter dated January 21, 2020 regarding Rolling Hills Ranch, Filing No. 1, the 91 acre-feet per year committed for Rolling Hills Ranch Filing No. 1 is a part of the 242 acre-feet per year of commitment for Rolling Hills Ranch PUD.

State Engineer's Office Opinion

Based upon the above and pursuant to Section 30-28-136(1)(h)(II), C.R.S., it is our opinion that the proposed water supply is adequate and can be provided without causing injury to decreed water rights.

Our opinion that the water supply is adequate is based on our determination that the amount of water required annually to serve the subdivision is currently physically available, based on current estimated aquifer conditions.

Our opinion that the water supply can be provided without causing injury is based on our determination that the amount of water that is legally available on an annual basis, according to the statutory allocation approach, for the proposed uses on the subdivided land is greater than the annual amount of water required to supply existing water commitments and the demands of the proposed subdivision.

Our opinion is qualified by the following:

The Ground Water Commission has retained jurisdiction over the final amount of water available pursuant to the above-referenced decree, pending actual geophysical data from the aquifer.

The amounts of water in the Denver Basin aquifer, and identified in this letter, are calculated based on estimated current aquifer conditions. For planning purposes the county should be aware that the economic life of a water supply based on wells in a given Denver Basin aquifer may be less than the 100 (or 300) years used for allocation due to anticipated water level declines. We recommend that the county determine whether it is appropriate to require development of renewable water resources for this subdivision to provide for a long-term water supply.

If you, or the applicant, have any questions, please contact Ailis Thyne at 303-866-3581 ext. 8216.

Sincerely,



Keith Vander Horst
Chief of Water Supply, Designated Basins