



**COLORADO**

**Parks and Wildlife**

Department of Natural Resources

Southeast Regional Office  
4255 Sinton Rd  
Colorado Springs, CO 80907  
P 719.227.5200

November 1, 2024

Ashlyn Mathy  
El Paso County Dev. Services Department  
2880 International Circle  
Colorado Springs, CO 80910-6107

Re: Esteban Rodriguez Rezone RR-2.5

Dear Ms. Mathy,

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) is in receipt of the above referenced permit application and is familiar with the site. This area included within the Development boundaries will sustain numerous wildlife species including deer, pronghorn, coyote, fox, raptors, songbirds, and numerous small mammals.

The impacts on wildlife from a larger development at this location would depend on the type and scale of development and operations. If there are new wells planned or other large scale disturbance that could include new access roads, and significantly increased vehicle and human traffic resulting in increased noise and disturbance impacts to wildlife, those impacts could impact the available habitat. There would be increased habitat fragmentation from new roads and infrastructure and decreased use of the location by wildlife. In addition to direct habitat impacts, possible development could have significant noise impacts during operations that would be of concern to CPW. There is always some disturbance from any infrastructure development but there is potential to minimize those impacts to wildlife by the usual means by low density of infrastructure or seasonal limits on activity where appropriate. CPW requests the opportunity for additional review when more details are available on any expanded or future operations at the site.

### Impacts to Wildlife Resources

#### Big Game Habitat:

The proposed lease area supports a significant pronghorn population in their general overall range. For continued permeability and to maintain some habitat for pronghorn as the project moves forward, CPW requests the project be designed to retain large available blocks of intact habitat to the extent practical and that wildlife permeable fencing be used whenever possible to allow for pronghorn movement. Please see the CPW document “Fencing with Wildlife in Mind” available at the CPW website.

#### Burrowing Owls:

Burrowing owls are listed as State Threatened, and nest in active or inactive prairie dog (black-tailed or white-tailed) burrows. If development is proposed to occur in a prairie dog



Jeff Davis, Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife Commission: Dallas May, Chair · Richard Reading, Vice-Chair · Karen Bailey, Secretary · Jessica Beaulieu  
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colony that has been active within the past 10 years, CPW recommends the adherence to CPW's Burrowing Owl survey protocol if development occurs from March 15 through August 31.

#### Raptors and Migratory Birds:

There is suitable habitat for nesting raptors and migratory birds on the proposed lease site. Consultation with USFWS is recommended to ensure compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Act. To avoid impacts to the nesting efforts of migratory birds CPW recommends any proposed development or exploration of the site focus, seismic work, construction, and vegetation clearing activities outside of the breeding season (March 15th -August 31st). If construction must occur during the breeding season, surveys for active nests should be conducted prior to groundbreaking. All migratory birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and removal or disturbance of any migratory bird nest would require consultation with CPW and USFWS prior to disturbance. CPW also recommends the use of preconstruction surveys to identify raptor nests within the project area and the implementation of appropriate restrictions. CPW recommends adherence to the recommended buffer distances and timing stipulations identified in the CPW document "Recommended Buffer Zones and Seasonal Restrictions for Colorado Raptors" available on the CPW website.

#### Impact Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Recommendations:

A comprehensive planning process for any subsequent development plan to include reclamation of temporary impacts would be important to minimize habitat fragmentation and disturbance from increased traffic, noise, and infrastructure associated with development. Recommendations to avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential project impacts to wildlife of the proposed project and associated activities at the site would depend on the site specific development plans for the site which are undetermined at this time. CPW would appreciate the opportunity to work with SLB and the operator if a lease goes forward. CPW does recommend any proposed development plans consider the following:

- If nesting burrowing owls are present, no human encroachment or surface disturbance should occur within a 660-foot buffer of nesting burrows from March 15 to August 31. If burrowing owls occupy the site, CPW recommends that earthmoving and other disturbance activities be delayed until after they have migrated away from the site. If seismic work could disturb or collapse dens containing nests, that work should avoid the nesting period for any nests.
- Due to the use by foraging raptors within the project area and the potential for raptor nest sites within the project boundary, CPW recommends preconstruction surveys for raptor nest sites prior to surface disturbance or vegetation removal. If a nest is located during the survey CPW recommends adherence to the recommendations in the attached Recommended Buffer Zones and Seasonal Restrictions for Colorado Raptors for best management practices to minimize impacts to nesting raptors
- CPW recommends that all areas of disturbance be re-vegetated with a native seed



mix and that a long-term noxious weed control plan is developed and implemented for the site. The Colorado Weed Management Association provides the booklet "Noxious Weeds of Colorado" that provides information on identification and management of noxious weeds in Colorado. CPW prefers that native vegetation be retained on site during the operational lifespan of the project, both as habitat for wildlife and to ensure successful reclamation of the project area. Proper reclamation, from a wildlife perspective, involves not only stabilizing the soil and establishing ground cover, but also fostering plant communities with a diversity of species and plant types- grasses, woody plants, and broadleaf forbs, which will fully serve the nutritional needs of wildlife.

Once again, we appreciate being given the opportunity to comment on the Esteban Rodriguez Rezone CC. Please Feel free to contact District Wildlife Manager Sarah Watson at 719-439-9636 or sarah.watson@state.co.us should you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Tim Kroening  
Area 14 Wildlife Manager

Cc: Sarah Watson, DWM  
SE Region File  
Area 14 File

