

Good Morning,

I have been aware of Monica and Mark Phelan's plans to build a "Shire"-like ag business at Old Ranch and Holmes Roads for at least twenty years when it was still in its infancy. At the time, I was working for the Colorado State Forest Service and I was asked to provide technical assistance for windbreak design to protect and shield the animals and facilities there. I remember even now how bold and innovative it appeared at the time. One usually associates these types of businesses that incorporate community, ag, plants and education occurring in western states like Oregon or Washington State. Much has changed since then.

At one time El Paso County was a much more productive ag county including dairies, ranches, dryland farming and grassland production. Given the stupendous growth that has occurred in the past 20 years, El Paso county has slowly lost its connection to its past. A great portion of the ag community has disappeared to homes and urban sprawl. I cite the Banning Lewis Ranch development as one such egregious example.

Given the expected growth of the City of Colorado Springs, the influx of many thousands of citizens fleeing high-taxing Western states and the erosion of the nation's agricultural roots, I wholeheartedly support the variance for The Shire. I can't imagine a business more suited to this site; on the edge of Black Forest (once home to sugar beet farming and forest products!), near the expansion of the city (a great location to learn and instill plant education), and acting as an serene oasis (in a growing sea of houses). I endorse The Shire and the planned efforts that it will promulgate; education, people, animals and community. I hope you share their vision as well.

Dennis Will  
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