

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PARK OPERATIONS ~ JUSTICE SERVICES
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ~ VETERANS SERVICES ~ RECREATION/CULTURAL SERVICES

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Mercedes Rivas
Project Manager
El Paso County Development Services Department
2880 International Circle
Colorado Springs, CO 80910

Subject: North Gate Open Space Addition No. 1 Annexation – (ANX-21-010)
Black Canyon Quarry Addition No. 1 Annexation – (ANX-21-011)
Corral Bluffs Addition No. 1 Annexation – (ANX-21-012)
Bear Creek Canyon Addition No. 1 Annexation – (ANX-21-013)
North Gate Open Space Addition No. 1 Annexation/Petition Memo (ANX-21-018)
Jimmy Camp Creek Addition No. 1 Annexation – (ANX-21-019)

Hello Mercedes,

The Park Operations Division of the Community Services Department has reviewed the aforementioned (see Subject) City of Colorado Springs Annexation applications/petitions and has the following administrative comments of behalf of El Paso County Parks. Each individual annexation will be reviewed separately below:

- **North Gate Open Space Addition No. 1 Annexation:** This annexation plat is located northeast of the intersection of Struthers Road and North Gate Road, east of Interstate 25 and the United States Air Force Academy. This 9.46-acre parcel is owned by the City of Colorado Springs and is situated immediately north and adjacent of the existing North Gate Open Space, which encompasses Smith Creek. The 2013 El Paso County Parks Master Plan shows no impacts to existing or proposed parks, trails, or open space. The proposed Smith Creek Secondary Regional Trail is located along Smith Creek, to the east of the subject property, outside of City limits. The site is not located within any Candidate Open Space Area.
- **Black Canyon Quarry Addition No. 1 Annexation:** This annexation plat is located north of West Highway 24 at the terminus of Black Canyon Road and was the site of a former aggregate quarry. The 91.12-acre site is located north of the City of Manitou Springs and immediately west of the Cedar Heights neighborhood. Although the EPC Parks Master Plan shows no impacts to existing or proposed parks, trails, or open space, the site does intersect the Foothills Candidate Open Space Area, as well as the Manitou North Candidate Open Space Area. Natural resource values in these areas include viewshed protection, wildfire urban interface, cave and cliff-dwelling wildlife habitats, and stands of pinion-juniper woodlands interlaced with scrub oak. The annexation of this property would not be in conflict with these candidate open spaces as long as any future park, trail, and open space development does not adversely affect the existing conservation values.



- **Corral Bluffs Addition No. 1 Annexation:** This annexation plat is located east of Colorado Springs, northwest of the intersection of East Highway 94 and Blaney Road. The 976.19-acre annexation is wholly owned by the City of Colorado Springs and contains the existing City of Colorado Springs Corral Bluffs Open Space. The 2013 EPC Parks Master Plan shows minor impacts to the proposed Jimmy Camp Creek Primary Regional Trail, which terminates within Corral Bluffs Open Space and provides a trail connection between the proposed Jimmy Camp Creek Open Space (City), Corral Bluffs Open Space (City), and Fountain Creek Regional Trail / Colorado Front Range Trail (EPC) to the south. This trail has been slated for long term consideration, and EPC Parks recommends its inclusion with any future trail planning efforts by the City of Colorado Springs.

The entire Corral Bluffs Addition No. 1 Annexation is encompassed by the Corral Bluffs Candidate Open Space Area. The 2013 EPC Parks Master Plan describes the area as follows:

“This distinctive landform extends along the eastern fringes of the urbanizing area of Colorado Springs. In places, the bluffs drop nearly 400 feet, marking an abrupt transition from the elevated plains on the east to the Fountain Creek drainage basin. Erosion along this front has exposed an interesting set of rock strata and created a series of gullies where more favorable moisture conditions support the establishment of isolated juniper, ponderosa pine, and other woody species...The area encompasses an approximately one-mile-wide swath of land that includes the limestone outcrops for which the area is named, as well as some of the prairie at the base and along the top of the cliffs. It also includes important wildlife habitat...Protection of this area would maintain the visual quality of this important landmark and could also provide an opportunity for a regional trail alignment along the base of the bluffs that would link Fountain Creek with the proposed Jimmy Camp Creek Park (Colorado Springs). The bluffs also have important cultural resource values, including their use by early Native Americans as a buffalo jump. Cattlemen gave the bluffs their name back in the days of open range – the steep cliffs served as a barrier where cattle could be corralled with relatively little fence construction.”

Furthermore, the Corral Bluffs Alliance, a citizens group dedicated to the long-term protection of the Corral Bluffs formation, states the following on their website:

“Corral Bluffs and Jimmy Camp are important because the rocks tell the story of dinosaurs, the extinction of 75% of species on Earth and its subsequent recovery leading to the origin of our modern world . The Denver Museum of Nature & Science has been conducting research concerning the ancient environment surrounding the K-Pg (K-T) boundary in Corral Bluffs and Jimmy Camp since 1991. The University of Colorado, Colorado College, University of New Hampshire, and The Smithsonian Institution have also conducted research here.”

And continue by stating, *“Corral Bluffs Open Space has been designated a Colorado Natural Area by Colorado Parks and Wildlife”* and *“This is an historical area with evidence of habitation from 4500 years ago to the days of the trappers, the cowboys and ranchers.”*

The annexation of these properties would not be in conflict with the Corral Bluffs Candidate Open Space as long as its eventual park, trail, open space, and research-based development does not adversely affect the existing significant wildlife, historic, and geologic conservation values.

- **Bear Creek Canyon Addition No. 1 Annexation:** This annexation plat is located west of Colorado Springs and south of Manitou Springs surrounding the northern intersection of Upper Gold Camp Road and High Drive. The 1446-acre annexation is wholly owned by the City of Colorado Springs and contains Manitou Springs Section 16, the southern portions of Red Rock Canyon Open Space, and numerous popular backcountry hiking trails including the Paul Intemann Trail, Palmer Trail, Sesame Canyon Trail, Bear Creek Trail (FS 666), and Red Rock Loop Trail. It also contains the Section 16 trailhead parking area and connections to El Paso County Park’s Bear Creek Regional Park and Bear Creek Nature Center. Furthermore, the Bear Creek Trail eventually connects to Cap’t Jack’s Trail (FS 667), which takes visitors to Jones Park Open Space, an El Paso County Parks-owned alpine open space area surrounded by National Forest Service

lands. Even given the close proximity to EPC Parks facilities, the annexation has no impacts on EPC-owned and managed parks, trails, or open space.

The Bear Creek Canyon Addition No. 1 Annexation does intersect the Manitou South Candidate Open Space Area. Natural resource values in these areas include viewshed and scenic protection, as identified in the Colorado Mountain Backdrop Study, as well as wildfire urban interface, critical wildlife habitats, and the aforementioned trail connections. The annexation of this property would not be in conflict with these candidate open spaces as long as continued park, trail, and open space management and development does not adversely affect the existing conservation values.

- **Jimmy Camp Creek Addition No. 1 Annexation:** This annexation plat is located east of Colorado Springs, northeast of the intersection of US Highway 24 and Colorado Highway 94. The 410-acre annexation is wholly owned by the City of Colorado Springs and will create a critical connection between the existing City of Colorado Springs-owned Jimmy Camp Creek Park and the aforementioned Corral Bluffs Open Space. The 2013 El Paso County Parks Master Plan shows no impacts to any EPC-owned parks, trails, or open spaces, either existing or proposed.

The annexation does fall within the bounds of the previously described Corral Bluffs Candidate Open Space Area (see Corral Bluffs Addition No. 1 Annexation, above). The annexation of these properties would not be in conflict with the Corral Bluffs Candidate Open Space as long as its eventual park, trail, and open space development does not adversely affect wildlife, historic, and geologic conservation values.

These comments are being provided administratively and do not require endorsement by the El Paso County Park Advisory Board.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Ross A. Williams
Park Planner
Park Operations Division
Community Services Department
rosswilliams@elpasoco.com