



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Southeast Region - Area 14
4255 Sinton Road
Colorado Springs, CO 80907
P 719.227.5200 | F 719.227.5264

April 22, 2021

El Paso County Planning and Development
Attn: Kari Parsons, Project Manager
2880 International Circle, suite 110
Colorado Springs, CO 80910

RE: Ridge at Lorson Ranch PUDSP

Dear Ms. Parsons,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Ridge at Lorson Ranch PUDSP. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has reviewed the project materials and visited the site. Due to the general nature of the project, CPW comments will address potential impacts to wildlife found on shortgrass prairie habitat.

CPW recommends that all projects be assessed to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to sensitive wildlife habitats and species. That includes species of concern as well as Federal and/or State listed species, big game wildlife (migration corridors, winter range, and parturition areas), breeding and nesting habitats for sensitive ground-nesting birds, and nests of raptors sensitive to development in order to prevent loss of habitat or fragmentation of habitat. US Fish and Wildlife Service should be consulted on any Federally-listed Endangered and Threatened Species that might be present at the location.

Wildlife species that can be found on the project site include: black tailed prairie dog, burrowing owls, mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, several bat species, many additional species of small mammals, a variety of reptiles, and a variety of grassland birds as well as scaled quail. Golden eagles are present year-round and utilize the area frequently. Golden eagles, as well as Ferruginous hawk, Red-tailed hawk, Prairie falcon, and Swainson's hawk, hunt nearby and within prairie dog colonies, and nest in the surrounding area.

The majority of the project area is shortgrass prairie which provides habitat for the species listed above. If black-tailed prairie dog towns are present within the project area, there is a high probability that burrowing owls and mountain plovers are present



within those towns as well. Consultation with USFWS is recommended to ensure compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Act. The best way to avoid impacts on the nesting efforts of migratory birds is to focus construction activities outside of the breeding season (March 15th -October 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.

Other Threatened, Endangered, and State Species of Concern: Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia*), a state threatened bird, may be found within the preferred corridor and CPW recommends a survey of prairie dog colonies prior to construction to determine absence or presence of the species. If nesting burrowing owls are present, CPW recommends no human encroachment within 660 ft of nesting burrows from March 15 to October 31. If burrowing owls merely occupy the site, it is recommended that earthmoving and other disturbance activities be delayed until late fall after they have migrated.

The proposed project area is within the range of the Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*), a state species of special concern. The Best Management Practices for mountain plover recommend surveys to identify habitat and plover nests within the project area, and plan construction activity outside of critical nesting periods, April 1st through August 15 where these species are found. Mountain plovers can nest in short-grass prairie, dryland cultivated farms, and prairie dog towns and are likely to be nesting on the project area.

The entire project area is within the overall range of the Swift Fox (*Vulpes velox*), a state species of special concern. CPW recommends pre-construction surveys to identify and avoid all maternal swift fox den sites. Swift fox live here year-round, breed during December, and raise their young into the next fall. It is recommended that swift fox surveys include daylight searches for den areas and nighttime spotlight searches during August and September. Swift fox is a species of state and federal concern that lives in and around the proposed area.

We appreciate being given the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact District Wildlife Manager Philip Gurule, should you have any questions or require additional information at 719-227-5283 or via email at philip.gurule@state.co.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cody Wigner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cody Wigner
Area Wildlife Manager

Cc: Philip Gurule, DWM
SE Region Files
Area 14 Files