



# COLORADO

## Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Area 2  
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March 5, 2017

Nicole Wobus  
Boulder County Land Use Department  
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Boulder, CO 80306  
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nwobus@bouldercounty.org

Re. Twin Lakes Parcel

Dear Nicole:

Thank you for contacting us regarding the land use designation change and potential proposed development of the "Twin Lakes Parcel" at 6655 and 6500 Twin Lakes Road and 0 Kalua Road in Gunbarrel. With any land use issue likely to have a significant impact on wildlife we prefer to be involved as early as possible in the process so that we may potentially offer guidance and suggestions for avoidance and mitigation. As this parcel has a lot of public interest in regards to wildlife we agreed to put initial comments in a letter.

The parcels in question total 20 acres. Boulder County Housing Authority and Boulder Valley School District are seeking to have the land use designation of these properties changed to allow for mixed density affordable housing. Twin Lakes Action Group (TLAG), a citizen's organization, is seeking to have the land use designation of these parcels changed to open space. We recognize that land use and land use designations often are products of a community's needs and values. When a property has a high value for wildlife, we often encourage preservation of that property or ask that measures be taken to mitigate the impacts of any proposed development to wildlife. That being said we also understand that, especially along the Front Range, housing is a real need and development can be a real necessity to a community. We appreciate how Boulder County and the City of Boulder have prioritized wildlife habitat and natural areas throughout the county to the benefit of wildlife. Both city of Boulder and Boulder County have dedicated significant resources to not only protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat but also to monitoring species and informing their management.

### Habitat Value of Property

Blue Mountain Environmental and Fellsburg, Holt, and Ullevig (FHU) conducted wildlife surveys on the parcels. Blue Mountain identified fox, coyote, raccoon, and skunk on the property in addition to a moose and a mountain lion that traveled through the property. Additional mammals they expected to find were deer, eastern cottontail, fox squirrel and vole. Members of TLAG also reported observing wood duck, tiger salamander, meadow vole, garter snake, and long eared owl on the properties. They also note great-horned owls, red-tailed hawks, and kestrels likely use the site.



FHU compiled a similar list of observed species but did not observe tiger salamander, long-eared owl, or wood duck. Additionally, FHU identified the dominant vegetation on the site as smooth brome, alfalfa, and field pennycress. FHU identified two wetland area on the site.

Both reports identify wildlife movement corridors along the site and acknowledge a historical great horned owl nest site on the adjacent Twin Lakes Open Space.

The site itself is surrounded on three sides (south, east, and west) by residential developments and borders the Twin Lakes Open Space to the north. There is additional connectivity with the Coen/Johnson Trust property managed by Boulder County Parks and Open Space to the south.

#### *Wetlands*

Wetlands are valuable wildlife habitat and many different species depend on them. Of the two wetlands on the site one is dominated by cattails and the other is associated with the ditch along the north side of the property. Development and filling of wetlands should be avoided.

#### *Wildlife Species Observed on Site*

Of the species of wildlife observed on site, none is listed as threatened or endangered. The common garter snake is a state species of special concern. The moose and mountain lion observed on site were likely moving through the area, as the site does not have quality moose or mountain lion habitat. While long-distance movements of these animals is to be expected, their location in a densely populated area was not desirable. Other species described in the reports are not only very common in Boulder County and Colorado but also very adaptable to human development and presence. These species have been very successful at surviving in and around people and will likely continue to use the area regardless of development. Any future resident should be educated about how to peacefully coexist with local wildlife.

#### *Wildlife Movement Corridor*

The property in question is used by wildlife to travel between Twin Lakes and other rich habitat to the south. Development of this property will likely impact the wildlife that uses it. The wildlife that travel across this property will likely continue to do so, especially if a wildlife corridor is established as described in the technical memo prepared by FHU. Wildlife also currently uses the Boulder Whiterock ditch as a movement corridor and will continue to do so if these parcels are developed. Although the property is a movement corridor for individual animals it is not identified as a migration corridor for any species.

#### *Great-horned Owls*

Great horned owls are common in Boulder County and nest on the open space adjacent to this site. Great horned owls are federally protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act which prohibits their harassment, take, or nest destruction. Because of great horned owls adaptability and high tolerance for human activity, we do not have a recommended spatial buffer zone for an active nest in contrast to other raptor species as described in "Spatial and Temporal Buffers for Raptors in Colorado: A Review of Relevant Literature and Applicable Laws." Great horned owls typically nest between January and July and if the developers of this site wished to use an abundance of caution in regards to the nest, they may willingly choose to avoid construction activities while the nest is active. Alternatively, they could hire

a qualified biologist to monitor the nest during construction. It is our expectation that great horned owls will continue to nest and use the open space and the area if construction moves forward. Impact to great horned owls will likely be limited to a reduction in hunting acreage although we do not have enough information to say how much owls currently use the site to hunt.

Overall, this site has similar value to wildlife as many undeveloped properties in eastern Boulder County. While wildlife will be impacted by any proposed development that impact is not likely to be any greater than the impact from the general development of the area. With Boulder County's robust system of open space and land use planning the species utilizing this site should continue to thrive and live in the area regardless of whether development occurs or this parcel is instead converted to open space.

If you have any questions please contact your local District Wildlife Manager Kristin Cannon at 303-291-7117.

Sincerely,

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

Larry Rogstad  
Area Wildlife Manager