

Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Crazy French Ranch Fee Title Acquisition

Las Animas

19,200 acres

South of Trinidad adjacent to Interstate 25
to the east spanning to the New Mexico
border to the south

Action Required

Recommend support for the fee title acquisition of the Crazy French Ranch (up to \$16,750,000 CF for 19,200 acres).

Questions and Responses

1. Please briefly explain the relationship between the property transaction proposal and Senate Bill 20-003, concerning improvements to state parks, and, in connection therewith, making an appropriation.

The property transaction under consideration by the committee is for the fee title acquisition of the Fishers Peak property by CPW with habitat stamp cash funds and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) parks quadrant funds. Those funds are available to be spent on the acquisition now. In contrast, Senate Bill 20-003 appropriates \$4 million of General Fund for the build-out of initial infrastructure at the Fishers Peak property, in addition to \$6 million for other state parks projects around the state. In short, Senate Bill 20-003 is separate from the proposal to acquire the Fishers Peak property and does not appropriate any General Fund for the property acquisition.

2. CPW is committing \$16.75 million to the purchase of the property, while the division's partners purchased the property in 2019 for \$25.45 million. Are the partners absorbing the difference?

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL), which currently hold title to the property, were also awarded a \$7.52 million grant from GOCO's open space quadrant of lottery proceeds on June 14, 2018. Adding that grant to CPW's contribution, it is anticipated that the TPL and TNC will receive \$24.27 million from CPW and GOCO and will donate the approximately \$1 million difference along with their transaction costs.

Capital Development Committee

January 14, 2020—Property Transaction Proposal

Department of Natural Resources *Division of Parks and Wildlife*

Action Required	Pursuant to C.R.S. 33-1-105(3)(a) and C.R.S. 33-10-107(2) recommend to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission support for the Division of Parks and Wildlife’s proposal to acquire a fee title interest.
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General Information	
Name	Crazy French Ranch RFP - Fee Title Acquisition
Number of acres	19,200
Location	Crazy French Ranch is located south of Trinidad and directly adjacent to I-25 to the east until one reaches the New Mexico border and it comprises all the land between I-25 and Lake Dorothey and James M. John SWAs.
County	Las Animas

Costs / Source of Funding			
Purchase Price	Up to \$16,750,000.00 from CPW	Funding Source	GOCO & Cash Funds from Habitat Stamp Revenues which are earmarked for the benefit of wildlife habitat or access to wildlife habitat, pursuant to C.R.S. 33-4-102.7 Habitat Stamp – \$7,000,000, GOCO – up to \$9,750,000.
Habitat Stamp	Spending authority has already been approved for this project in the Long Bill.		
	Fiscal Year	FY 2018-2019	
	Line Item	Land and Water Acquisitions	
	Appropriation	\$5,500,000	
	Remaining Unexpended Balance	\$2,782,750	
Habitat Stamp	Spending authority has already been approved for this project in the Long Bill.		
	Fiscal Year	FY 2019-2020	
	Line Item	Land and Water Acquisitions	
	Appropriation	\$11,000,000	
	Remaining Unexpended Balance	\$11,000,000	
GOCO	GOCO Funds are not appropriated in the Long Bill		
	Fiscal Year	2019-2020 GOCO Parks Purpose	
	Line Item	GOCO Resolution # 2019-25	
	Appropriation	\$9,750,000	
	Remaining Unexpended Balance	\$9,750,000	
Annual Monitoring and Operation Costs	Operating costs are estimated at \$237,000 in FY 2021-22 and \$216,000 in FY 2022-23 for 3.0	Funding for operation costs of the park portion of the property will come from the Parks Operations Line Item under	

	FTEs supporting public access to Fishers Peak. Additional costs include \$46,000 annually for temporary staffing, \$40,000 annually for utilities, supplies, and fleet vehicles. The annual estimated Impact Assistance Grant payment for this property is \$1,362.12.	the Division Operations Group in the Long Bill. Funding for operations of the wildlife portion of the property will come from the Wildlife Operations Line Item under the Division Operations Group in the Long Bill.
Development Costs	Master planning efforts are underway.	Funding for development costs will be determined at a later date through the capital construction legislative process.
* The Division may alter the source of funds for individual acquisitions based on circumstances that arise in the time-period prior to closing.		

Summary of Proposal:

Through this project, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) will acquire fee title to the 19,200-acre Crazy French Ranch. Crazy French Ranch / Fishers Peak was submitted as a Colorado Wildlife Habitat Program 2018 RFP application by The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and TNC acquired the property in February 2019 for \$25.45 million. Following that acquisition, the project partners, including CPW, TPL, TNC, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and the City of Trinidad, decided that fee title acquisition of the property by CPW would best serve the goals of protection of the property and development of meaningful outdoor recreation opportunities. As a result, in September 2019, Governor Polis announced that the partners would work to establish the property as Colorado's next state park.

This project presents the opportunity to protect a mountain and watershed critical to Trinidad's civic and cultural identity. The property includes Fishers Peak, which at 9,633 feet, is the highest peak east of its longitude in the United States. The project also gives CPW the opportunity to establish a significant level of new public access across public land in Colorado to James M. John State Wildlife Area, Lake Dorothea SWA, and Sugarite Canyon State Park in New Mexico.

CPW will contribute a total of \$16.75 million for the purchase of the property, comprised of \$9.75 million in GOCO state parks quadrant distributions and \$7.0 million in Habitat Stamp funds. Funding used to purchase the property may be reduced further if additional grant funding is secured. Separately, GOCO granted \$7.52 million in open space quadrant funding on June 14, 2018 for the acquisition of the property by TPL and TNC.

The project partners have negotiated a deed transferring title to CPW that includes certain restrictions and requirements. The deed requires CPW to use and manage the property as a state park that provides for conservation of wildlife and outdoor recreation opportunities, and that the management of the property be conducted pursuant to a master plan. CPW is restricted from subdividing the property, using the property for industrial or commercial purposes not identified in the master plan or that materially impair the conservation purposes of the property, and constructing infrastructure not designated in the master plan or that materially impair the conservation purposes of the property. The deed grants TPL and TNC monitoring and

enforcement authority to ensure compliance with the stated restrictions. These restrictions only apply as long as the property is held by CPW.

According to a review of the first map referenced below, the Property lies outside the scope of regions of known or potential geothermal resources. Also, according to a review of the second map referenced below, the Property lies inside the Central Solar Power and outside the Wind Resource Generation Development areas.

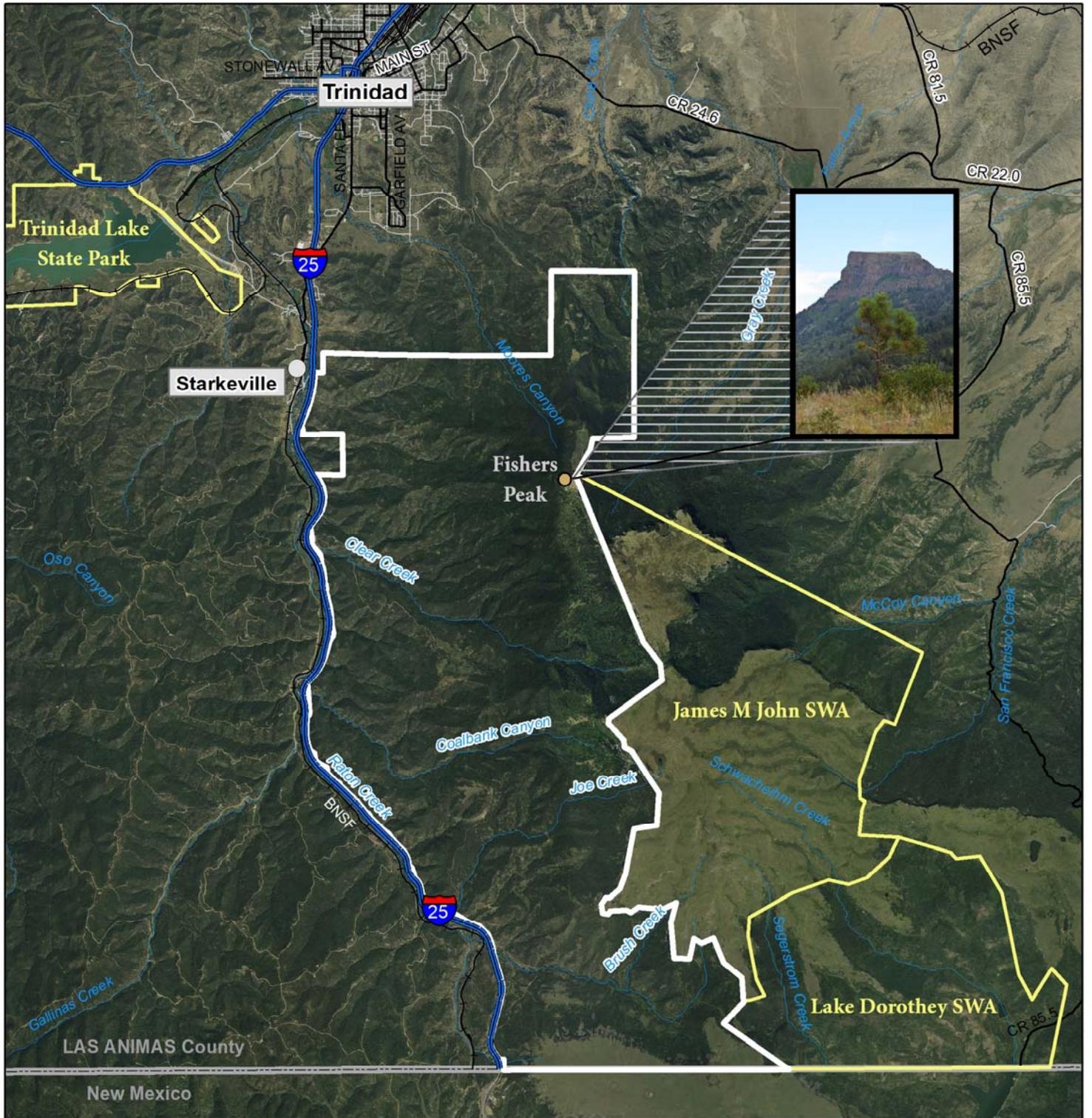
Geothermal: November, 2003 US Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Geothermal Technologies Program.

Wind and Solar: A map entitled “SB07-91 Renewable Resource Generation Development Areas” from “Renewable Energy Development Structure,” a report of the Colorado Governor’s Energy Office dated December 2009.

Mineral Interest Ownership: A portion of the oil and gas rights are severed from the surface estate. There are no active leases on the property. The Minerals Remoteness Letter determined that the probability of surface mining on the Crazy French Ranch is so remote as to be negligible.

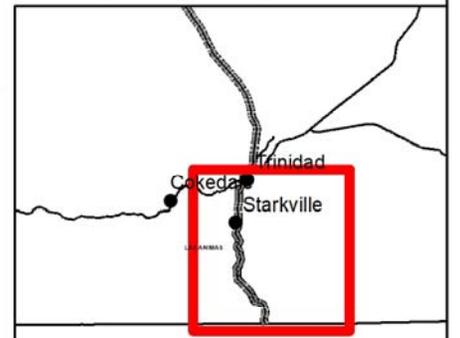
Attachments:

- Map
- Concurrence letters



Crazy French Ranch RFP Project # 18-055, 19,200 Acres Las Animas County

- Crazy French Ranch
- CPW Parcels





COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Trinidad Lake State Park
32610 Hwy. 12
Trinidad, CO 81082
P 719.846.6951 | F 719.846.0676

December 12, 2019

Senator Larry Crowder
District 35
200 E Colfax, RM 346
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Senator Crowder,

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) respectfully requests your concurrence on a land acquisition in Las Animas County, south of Trinidad, Colorado. The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land currently own what has been historically referred to as "Crazy French Ranch" and what is currently referred to as Fishers Peak Ranch. The owners now wish to sell this property to CPW for the purposes of habitat conservation and for allowing meaningful outdoor recreation on this unique, iconic landscape.

This action would transfer fee title interest on approximately 19,200 acres of oak, pinion/juniper scrublands and subalpine forestland along with existing amenities to CPW, thereby creating our next state park. This land provides an intact landscape of variable habitat types that support a multitude of wildlife species, to include some species of concern, such as the endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. The Ranch adjoins James M. John and Lake Dorothy State Wildlife Areas, as well as New Mexico's Sugarite Canyon State Park. All told, this acquisition will help connect and protect approximately 35,500 total acres of invaluable habitat. The property has existing access off Interstate 25 and boasts the potential for the first-ever public access to Fishers Peak from Colorado, an extensive network of non-motorized trails, picnicking, wildlife watching and hunting opportunities. Public access will provide a unique experience for residents and tourists alike, while helping to boost and diversify the local economy.

Colorado Parks & Wildlife respectfully requests your support for the acquisition of this property. This project is scheduled for review by the Capital Development Committee in early 2020. In preparation of that meeting, CPW requests your concurrence prior to December 20th. If you support this transaction, please sign on the approval line below and return to douglas.vilsack@state.co.us. Please feel free to call me at (719) 846-6951 if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your time in considering this matter.

Sincerely,

Crystal Dreiling
Park Manager

I support this proposal.

Senator Larry Crowder

Date: 12/18, 2019





COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Trinidad Lake State Park
32610 Hwy. 12
Trinidad, CO 81082
P 719.846.6951 | F 719.846.0676

November 25, 2019

Las Animas County Commissioners
200 East First Street
Trinidad, CO 81082

Dear Commissioners,

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) respectfully requests your concurrence on a land acquisition in Las Animas County, south of Trinidad, Colorado. The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land currently own what has been historically referred to as "Crazy French Ranch" and what is currently referred to as Fishers Peak Ranch. The owners now wish to sell this property to CPW for the purposes of habitat conservation and for allowing meaningful outdoor recreation on this unique, iconic landscape.

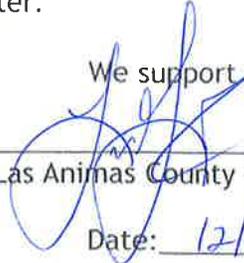
This action would transfer fee title interest on approximately 19,200 acres of oak, pinion/juniper scrublands and subalpine forestland along with existing amenities to CPW, thereby creating our next state park. This land provides an intact landscape of variable habitat types that support a multitude of wildlife species, to include some species of concern, such as the endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. The Ranch adjoins James M. John and Lake Dorothy State Wildlife Areas, as well as New Mexico's Sugarite Canyon State Park. All told, this acquisition will help connect and protect approximately 35,500 total acres of invaluable habitat. The property has existing access off Interstate 25 and boasts the potential for the first-ever public access to Fishers Peak from Colorado, an extensive network of non-motorized trails, picnicking, wildlife watching and hunting opportunities. Public access will provide a unique experience for residents and tourists alike, while helping to boost and diversify the local economy.

Colorado Parks & Wildlife respectfully requests your support for the acquisition of this property. This project is scheduled for review by the Capital Development Committee in early 2020. In preparation of that meeting, CPW requests your concurrence prior to December 20th. If you support this transaction, please sign on the approval line below and return to my address or scan a signed copy and email back to my address (crystal.dreiling@state.co.us). Please feel free to call me at (719) 846-6951 if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your time in considering this matter.

Sincerely,

Crystal Dreiling
Park Manager

We support this proposal.



Las Animas County Board of Commissioners, Chair

Date: 12/10/19, 2019





Corazón de Trinidad Creative District
135 North Animas Street
Trinidad, Colorado 81082

December 30, 2019

In re: CPW acquisition of Fishers Peak/Crazy French Ranch

Honorable Senator Rhonda Fields
Chair, Capital Development Committee
Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Senator Fields and Capital Development Committee Members,

As Executive Director of the Corazón de Trinidad Creative District, I am writing to strongly support the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) fee title acquisition of Fisher's Peak Ranch.

Over many decades, Trinidad has had a history of reinventing itself by necessity. From the Santa Fe Trail days, to mining and rail economies, to natural gas exploration, there have been numerous iterations of the community. It is experiencing yet another rebirth, based largely on outdoor recreation and the creative sector of the economy. Over the past five years, Trinidad was certified as a Colorado Creative District, was designated as a Colorado Main Street community, and was selected by Governor Hickenlooper in 2015 as the demonstration project for the Space to Create Colorado initiative. Space to Create Trinidad is a \$19 million project that will add 41 affordable live/work units in our downtown core. In addition, new hiking trails and dirt biking on our many gravel rural roads have opened new opportunities in our area.

The Creative District's mission and long-term planning includes not only support for increased business activity and economic development in the community, but also a continued and positive sense of place and appreciation for its beautiful and vital natural surroundings. At the confluence of the Sangre de Cristo range of the Rocky Mountains and the Eastern Plains short-grass prairies, and nearby lakes and rivers, Trinidad is in a perfect position to develop tourism and growth dependent on outdoor activities, conservation, agriculture, the ecology of the

region, and protection of our water shed and native flora and fauna. Fishers Peak has long been a symbol of the region and the idea of investors and speculators moving toward housing and sub-division development of the property, changing the entire area, is offensive to the sensibility of those who live, work, and visit here. With ownership in the hands of CPW, the nature-based values of residents and visitors alike will be maintained and marketed in such a way as to celebrate and support the open space and natural draw of Colorado. Maintaining conservation values on this land will preserve its character and qualities far into the future. Trinidad is extremely grateful to the partners who have worked diligently and cautiously to bring this major project to fruition.

Trinidad offers one of the largest inventories of turn-of-the-century Victorian buildings west of the Mississippi, brick streets, a vigorous creative workforce, short-grass prairies, mountains, pristine lakes and rivers, and magnificent Dakota Wall formations. Fisher's Peak makes up the core of the surrounding natural landscape and the peak is an important symbol of Trinidad, easily recognized on the I-25 corridor between Denver and Santa Fe.

The historic character and ecological health of the area are a vital part of our efforts to share and promote this remarkable region in numerous ways. Acquisition by CPW will help to continue Trinidad's efforts to grow in a carefully considered way and will protect one of our most visible and vital assets. This project preserves our history, natural resources, and has the potential to greatly influence the economic viability of the region and our community.

The Corazón de Trinidad Creative District fully supports fee title acquisition by CPW.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Marilyn Leuszler", is displayed within a light gray rectangular box.

Marilyn Leuszler
Executive Director, Corazón de Trinidad Creative District
Trinidad, Colorado

135 N. Animas Street
P O Box 880
Trinidad, CO 81082



(719) 846-9843
fax (719) 846-4140
www.trinidad.co.gov

December 30, 2019

Honorable Senator Rhonda Fields
Chair, Capital Development Committee
Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Senator Fields and Capital Development Committee Members,

The City of Trinidad strongly supports Colorado Parks and Wildlife's fee title acquisition of Colorado's 42nd State Park, the 19,200-acre Fisher's Peak Ranch.

Fisher's Peak is located immediately south of Trinidad. It is an iconic mesa on Trinidad's skyline and is a landmark for the City of Trinidad. Its 9,633-foot elevation makes it the highest peak in the United States east of Interstate 25.

The City of Trinidad proudly worked with The Trust for Public Lands, The Nature Conservancy, Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Great Outdoors Colorado to purchase this pristine property, which serves as an important ecological connection between Colorado's mountains and eastern grasslands. The property which has never been open for public use provides habitat for numerous mammals, plants and reptiles and is on a critical wildlife migration corridor. Acquisition of this property will offer the public numerous recreational activities such as hunting, camping, hiking, biking, and picnicking and will benefit the economy of Trinidad, Las Animas County and the State Parks system.

Since its purchase, Governor Polis named Fisher's Peak as the newest, and second largest, state park in Colorado. Given the size of the land, 55 square miles, the habitat and the landscape that deserve to be protected and managed, it is appropriate and responsible to transfer it to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife to be its steward. Colorado Parks and Wildlife has a proven track record to manage Colorado's public parks and the wildlife and the City of Trinidad strongly supports Colorado Parks and Wildlife managing Fisher's Peak State Park.

Honorable Senator Rhonda Fields
Chair, Capital Development Committee
Colorado State Capitol
December 30, 2019
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We appreciate your favorable recommendation regarding the acquisition of Fisher's Peak Ranch by Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

Respectfully,



Phillip T. Rico
Mayor

cc: Bo Pogue, CDC Staff
Mike Valentine, Acting City Manager
City Council Members
Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director
Doug Vilsack, DNR Assistant Director
Debbie Wagner, City of Trinidad Lobbyist



COLORADO BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

The voice for our wild public lands, waters and wildlife

January 3, 2020

Capital Development Committee
Colorado General Assembly
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, I am writing to express our support for Colorado Parks and Wildlife's (CPW) fee title acquisition of Fisher's Peak Ranch.

The acquisition and conservation of the 19,200-acre property would permanently protect invaluable fish and wildlife habitat within Las Animas County. This habitat includes important winter range for mule deer, elk, turkey and many non-game species. It provides a unique mix of lower elevation wintering habitat for big game species as well as summer range.

The acquisition would help connect protected habitat on both the James M. John SWA (8,200 acres) and the Lake Dorothy SWA (4,500 acres), thus contributing significantly to the long-term health of wildlife populations in this region. In addition to protecting habitat, this acquisition would help improve access to these state wildlife areas. As stated by *Colorado Sun* reporter/writer Jason Blevins (9/12/19): "The park is a 30-square-mile trove of untrammelled forest, teeming with deer, elk, bear, cougars and more, capped by the basalt-flumed butress that towers over the city of 9,000 people."¹

In addition, access to Fishers Peak, which is displayed on Las Animas County's official seal, has long been viewed as a dream among locals, Trinidad Mayor Phil Rico said in an interview with *The Gazette*. "The residents who've been here all our lives, we've always felt like it belonged to us, yet we couldn't access it," the town native said. "Now it has become reality."²

Bordered by Trinidad, Interstate 25 and thousands of SWA acres, Fisher's Peak could be open in 2021, offering public access for the first time since statehood and promising a boon to the boom-bust economy of Las Animas County, added Jason Blevins. Combined with James M. John and Lake Dorothy state wildlife areas and Sugarite State Park in New Mexico, there will be trails and wildlands spanning nearly 55 square miles.³

¹ Jason Blevins. "A massive ranch in Trinidad is officially Colorado's newest state park thanks to innovative partnerships: Fishers Peak is set to become 42nd state park with promise of outdoor recreation, conservation and economic development." *Colorado Sun*: 9/12/19.

<https://coloradosun.com/2019/09/12/fishers-peak-trinidad-colorado-state-park-new/>

² Seth Boster. "Colorado gets a new state park." *OutThereColorado*: 9/12/19. <https://www.outtherecolorado.com/colorado-gets-a-new-state-park/>

³ Jason Blevins. "A massive ranch in Trinidad is officially Colorado's newest state park thanks to innovative partnerships: Fishers Peak is set to become 42nd state park with promise of outdoor recreation, conservation and economic development." *Colorado Sun*: 9/12/19.

<https://coloradosun.com/2019/09/12/fishers-peak-trinidad-colorado-state-park-new/>

CPW's fee title acquisition of the Fisher's Peak Ranch will benefit hunters, anglers, hikers, bikers and the local/regional economy. The Colorado chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers fully supports this acquisition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David A. Lien". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

David A. Lien
Co-Chairman, Colorado
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
dlien442@gmail.com
703-303-6596