



United States Department of the Interior

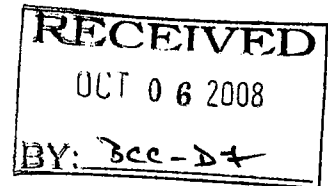


FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
EASTERN IDAHO FIELD OFFICE - ES
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Telephone (208) 237-6975 Fax Number (208) 237-8213

October 6, 2008

Sue Bagley
Teton County Planning and Building Department
89 North Main, Ste 4
Driggs, Idaho 83422

COPY



Re: USFWS comments on Mahogany Ridge proposed development

Dear Ms. Bagley,

The Teton River Valley is an important ecosystem for many sensitive species, which include but are not limited to: Yellowstone cutthroat trout, Trumpeter swan, Sharp-tailed grouse, Sandhill crane, long billed curlew, and other species. The Mahogany Ridge development is planned in an area that is very important Sandhill crane habitat as well as deer, elk, moose, and migratory birds. The preservation of meaningful open space will be critical to the preservation of these important trust species.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service is interested in promoting responsible development in Teton County. Per a previous request from the Mahogany Ridge developer, we have reviewed and commented (April 9 letter) on the conservation program for the Mahogany Ridge planned development, we also provided comments to Teton County on the Mahogany Ridge PUD proposed plats (June 18 letter). We have met with the developer, Travis Thompson and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to discuss our letter and provide other comments and suggestion that will promote sustainable development for the Mahogany Ridge Development.

After our review of the developer's conservation program document, we identified the following items that we feel need to be address by the developer for responsible and sustainable development:

- The Teton Regional Land Trust is mentioned many times throughout the Conservation Program document. A crane management area is only protected in perpetuity if this land is placed into a conservation easement. A transfer of land ownership would leave no protection on the crane management area. No mechanism is in place that will protect the open space areas for wildlife.

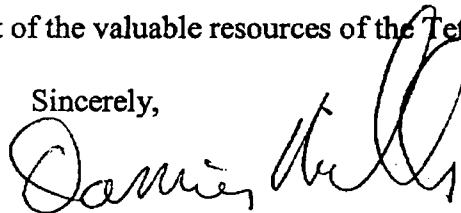
- We recommend that any crane mitigation actions be implemented in Phase I by the developer, rather than allowing homeowner associations to take upon themselves the promises made by the developer.
- We recommend that the crane management area be extended and connected to the Mahogany Creek corridor and that all of this property be protected in perpetuity by conservation easement.
- We recommend that any inactive phases be maintained in grain food plots for the benefit of wildlife. Maintenance of a food plot also will help with dust issues and wind erosion.
- We recommend that grain be planted in the crane buffer areas.
- People and dog management will be critical for the cranes to effectively utilize this habitat. Fences should be constructed around the crane management area and the Mahogany Creek corridor that will inhibit dogs from harassing wildlife. The fences should be permeable to wildlife.

The Fish and Wildlife Service's Eastern Idaho Field Office supports Teton County's efforts to promote responsible development as described in draft ordinances by the Planning and Zoning Commission to protect fish and wildlife, habitat, and migratory corridors. We encourage all developers to adhere to Teton County ordinance in regards to open space, wildlife habitat, assessment, and conservation. During our meeting with Travis and IDFG, we encouraged Travis to incorporate as much of the draft ordinance into the Mahogany Ridge development plan as possible. We also discussed the bulleted items above with Travis, who indicated that these items were acceptable. We ask that Teton County ensure that these suggestions are implemented in order to promote meaningful lasting conservation for fish and wildlife into the future (i.e. completed conservation easements).

In summary, we feel that the preservation of meaningful open space is critical to the survival of our wildlife resources. Protection of open spaces in perpetuity should be considered a high priority that should occur in the first developmental phase. We appreciate and support Teton County's efforts to promote responsible development through the draft wildlife ordinance; such as mitigation for wildlife, meaningful open space, and functional wildlife corridors. Please contact myself or Cary Myler of my staff at 208-237-6975 with any questions or concerns regarding these comments.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment of the valuable resources of the Teton Valley.

Sincerely,



Damien Miller
Eastern Idaho Field Supervisor
US Fish and Wildlife Service