
Pitkin County open spaces expand

Smuggler Mountain management plan gets initial approval

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ASPEN — Pitkin County officials spent most of their day on Wednesday dealing with open space issues of one sort or another, including a large portion of the old Lenado mining camp, a ranch near Carbondale and the roughly 250 acres on Smuggler Mountain at the northeast corner of Aspen.

In Lenado, located at the upper end of Woody Creek Road, former Woody Creek resident and community benefactor George Stranahan is in the process of turning over to the county some 338 acres of mining claims that will be “sterilized” of their development potential.

The claims represent almost the last of the property that Stranahan has owned for decades in the abandoned mining and logging camp, much of which he has sold at bargain prices to locals who have lived there. He put the claims under a conservation easement in 1978, according to county officials, but retained the right to build a cabin on one claim.

As part of the process, Stranahan and his family will retain ownership of that 10-acre parcel, on which a cabin was built at some point in the last quarter-century. The cabin is to be removed, and the land will become a family campsite, according to discussion before the county commissioners.

In the meantime, the deal will yield one transferable development right, which will be attached to Stranahan’s Flying Dog Ranch in lower Woody Creek, which was put up for sale when the Stranahans recently moved to Carbondale.

In other open space developments, the county has approved the first-ever “open space master plan” for Cold Mountain Ranch near Carbondale — more than 600 acres of hayfields owned by the Fales and Perry families; the acreage is being preserved under a conservation easement.

The ranch has been owned by the two families for more than 80 years, and has been ranched since 1881, according to county officials. It includes 240 acres used to grow hay, and generally supports roughly 220 cow/calf pairs per year.

The deal, which contains permission for the family to build three homes on the ranch, reflects “the desire [of the families] to maintain the ranch in the family ownership as an agricultural operation and to pass it down to the next generation,” according to a memo from county planning director Cindy Houben. It includes an agreement by the property owners for a trail easement on their lands parallel to Colorado Highway 133, part of the Carbondale-to-Crested Butte trail envisioned by Pitkin county Open Space and Trails.

The three homes, according to family members, are mainly intended to be used by the growing families, although one parcel has been designated for possible sale and development.

The master plan, which is the first to be written under new regulations approved last year by the county, was unanimously approved by the county commissioners on first reading, and is to be back for final approval on Jan. 28.

The commissioners also gave their initial approval to the 47-page Smuggler Mountain Open Space Master Plan, which is to govern use of the publicly owned space to the northeast of Aspen.

Among the more potentially controversial provisions of the master plan is a provision that permits dogs to be walked off leash on Smuggler Mountain Road only if they are “under voice and sight control” by their owner or walker. Dogs and “other domestic pets” are to be allowed on “all established trails” throughout the area, according to the plan.

The management plan contains pages that describe in minute detail the existing conditions on Smuggler and the outline of plans to regulate recreational users, including hikers, mountain bikers and motorists on Smuggler Mountain Road.

The commissioners' unanimous approval of the master plan will be taken up again on Jan. 28 for a second reading.

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