

## Commissioners sign off on development rights transfer

By Tom Ross (Contact)

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — Routt County commissioners placed their signatures Tuesday on a development map that could change the way deals are done in the valley on either side of Steamboat Springs.

When the commissioners signed a new plat map for Alpine Mountain Ranch, they gave their final blessing to a transfer of development rights from one rural parcel to another.

It was something that had not previously happened in Routt County, but county officials think the process could grow to shape the course of future development in the area.

"We might have some growing pains," Commissioner Doug Monger said. "But we'll use it to improve as we move into a full transfer of development rights program."

In a development transfer, one property owner sends his development rights to a second property owner in exchange for compensation.

The transfer of development rights this week, from Flying Diamond Ranch straddling Colorado Highway 131 in the south valley, to Alpine Mountain Ranch closer to Steamboat Ski Area, will conserve more than 900 acres at Flying Diamond by placing them under a conservation easement. At the same time, the transfer will add 20 salable lots valued at more than \$1 million each at Alpine Mountain, whose developers, Bill Butler and Andy Daly, are compensating Flying Diamond owner John Adams. Adams is giving up pre-existing approvals to develop lots on his own land.

The conserved lands on Flying Diamond include elk habitat on Thorpe Mountain and irrigated hay meadows on the north side of the state highway.

"It gives a whole different perspective to working on different parcels of land," Assistant Planning Director Ellen Hoj said. A benefit of the process, she said, is that hundreds of scenic acres have been protected from development in perpetuity without the investment of tax dollars.

The county commissioners approved the transfer of development rights in concept in late January. And the additional 20 lots were part of their original approval of Alpine Mountain Ranch, with the caveat that they could not be sold until the developers won approval for a plan to purchase development rights elsewhere.

On Tuesday, commissioners signed the plat map converting 20 conditional lots at Alpine Mountain to sellable status. That brought the total number of lots just outside the city's southern limits at that location to 63.

Realtor Joan Ryan represented Adams in the deal, along with Brent Romick, of Romick and Associates. Ryan said they are already working on a new proposal involving a transfer of development rights.

"This is not the only one," Ryan said. "We're working with (Adams) and one or two other large ranch owners on another project."

Hoj concurrently is drafting voluntary transfer of development rights regulations that would formalize and broaden the county process.



