

March 3, 2010

TO: Planning and Zoning Commission--Cache County Council  
RE: Request for Conditional Use Permit for Rainey Ranch ski resort  
FROM: Cache County landowners adjacent to the proposed development

Dear Commissioners,

This letter represents the alarm and concern, and even disbelief, of the undersigned group of neighboring Cache County landowners. We have learned just in the last few days about the proposed development of this ski resort on an inholding of land surrounded by the State wildlife refuge and the Forest Service wilderness area, and overlooking our properties.

As county residents, we rely entirely upon you commissioners to be our line of defense—to represent and protect us from detrimental impacts to our water, properties, rights, and families. In terms of direct impacts of this proposal to us county landowners, we include on the following page a list of urgent concerns we have, including blaring water quality and rights issues, destruction of wildlife and hunting values of this open space, infrastructure and safety problems, and public-land access.

We also understand that the county must consider the tax-revenue and economic benefits of development in such a proposal. As immediate neighbors, we are deeply familiar with the setting and climate at this location. We are dumbfounded about how a ski resort at this low foothill elevation, built and maintained at what must be a huge cost, could possibly be a viable and long-term business enterprise. We worry that it is likely to fail, leaving instead a long-term burden on county citizens for infrastructure, maintenance, and scarred land.

Cherry Creek Canyon, as it is today, fits the dictates of the FR-40 zoning perfectly, as “compatible with the protection of the natural and scenic resources of the forests for the benefit of present and future generations”. It is one of the last wild and open pieces of our rapidly growing mountain front. One of the last great places in Cache Valley for hunting pheasants, for wintering elk and deer, and for horseback riding into the mountains.

In contrast, the construction of a low-elevation, nighttime-lit, snow-making, air-polluting resort jammed between wilderness and wildlife refuge—which also drains its waste into the unconfined aquifer that feeds municipal and private water sources immediately below-- is in no way compatible with the guidelines for FR-40 zoning.

As county residents, we dependent upon your oversight and vision, and we urge you to reject this ill-conceived request for a conditional use permit.

**List of specific issues for neighboring Cache County landowners**

- 1) The proposed septic drain field is in the extremely coarse-grained and permeable unconfined gravel aquifer that fills the valley bottom. This leads immediately downslope to both surface water and groundwater sources for residents of the county, not to mention water sources for Richmond city and the Richmond irrigation company. Presumably 5000 gallons of waste from ~1000 users per day and a restaurant will be dumped into this geologic unit, and it will inevitably result in contamination of these critical water sources. Section 113 of the Utah Safe Drinking Water Act requires a drinking-water protection zone for cities within a 250-day groundwater time of travel from the water source. This septic drain field almost certainly violates that, and scientific study of this is essential.

- 2) It is difficult to believe that three 1" residential hookups for seasonal cabins can somehow provide all the water needed for not only the lodge and 1000 visitors per day, but also for the significant snowmaking necessary at this location. Where are the calculations regarding this water supply? If additional water is indeed required, will it infringe upon senior water rights in the neighborhood? During drought times, who would lose their water?
- 3) This development would severely degrade the wildlife corridor between the National Forest and the State wildlife refuge. This will terminate one of the last winter sanctuaries for wildlife in Cache Valley, replacing it with traffic, generators, nighttime lighting, and snowmaking machines.
- 4) This development should require a wide, paved road all the way to the resort, which is necessary for emergency vehicle access, passing, and to prevent the already notable erosion and runoff problems of a gravel road. More importantly, the many hundreds of daily vehicle-trip impacts to this quiet residential area obviously present a safety hazard for our school children catching buses and other pedestrians who use the road daily. Who will pay for such a road and its maintenance? It better not be county residents!
- 5) We are deeply concerned about the loss of access to the public lands and trail of Cherry Creek Canyon. This is currently used regularly by hikers and horseback riders as a gateway to the wilderness.
- 6) The FR-40 zoning of this property, as described within the County Code, is NOT compatible with this proposed usage, especially in the case of this particular location. Instead the RR zoning designation and its related requirements have been created for exactly this purpose, and it is in that zone that new ski resort development should take place in the county.

Thanks for your attention and service.

Sincerely,



Joel Pederson  
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