



OPEN SPACE & TRAILS DEPARTMENT

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STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Christine Zenel, Resource Specialist
DATE: April 9, 2021
FOR: April 27, 2021 Consent Agenda
REQUEST: Approval to exercise Option Agreement to acquire the Chataqua Extension (Snake River)

The OSAC made a unanimous recommendation at its March, 2021 meeting that the County pursue acquisition of the Chataqua Extension property, located in the Deer Creek Basin south of the Town of Montezuma and adjacent to Montezuma Road (Snake River Basin, see attached map).

- Mining Claim: Schedule No. 3009166, Chataqua Ext North MS# 20666
- Total Acres: 20.5 acres
- Owner: Sofia Tieze
- Cost: \$450,000 (~\$21,951/acre)

Open Space and Trails (OST) staff approached the realtor for this property in December, 2020 after the property was listed for \$650,000. After several rounds of negotiation, the OSAC made a unanimous recommendation at their March, 2021 meeting to acquire this property at \$450k. On March 29, the property owner and County entered into a purchase option agreement. Environmental Resource Consultants (the contractor completing the Swan Restoration) is completing an environmental assessment of the site. Closing on the property is expressly contingent upon review and acceptance of any environmental concerns that are identified.

This property meets OST's Open Space Selection Criteria as follows.

- Access: This property is surrounded by existing U.S. Forest Service lands and connects to Summit County Open Space properties. This property also lies adjacent to, and is visible from, the Montezuma/Deer Creek Road corridor that is popular for outdoor recreation in all seasons.
- Agricultural/Cultural: Old mine sites tucked away on this property provide insight into historic mining activity in the Snake River Basin.
- Buffers: Acquisition of this property would preclude development immediately visible from Montezuma Road and prevent backcountry access from being pushed further out into the Deer Creek Basin.
- Extensions: This property connects to U.S. Forest Service lands and Summit County Open Space properties that meet open space criteria guidelines, and as such could enlarge and/or connect existing open space parcels.
- Recreational: There is potential to create a new parking area on the property when this is deemed appropriate by land management agencies. Currently, the only established parking areas in the Deer Creek Basin above Montezuma are on County or Forest Roads or snowplow turnarounds. In Summer and Winter, trailers containing snowmobiles and OHV's take up extensive space, leading to illegal parking on County Road 5 (Montezuma Road). Backcountry access from the Deer Creek Basin offers incredible recreation opportunities year round, including backcountry alpine and Nordic skiing, and hiking. Opportunities for four-wheel-drive

recreation, snowmobiling, and mountain biking also exist from this access point. Private development on this property would negatively impact these quality recreation experiences.

- View Corridors: Development of the likely home site on this property would be visible from Montezuma Road/Deer Creek Basin and surrounding areas as individuals access the National Forest to recreate.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION/REQUEST: Staff concurs with OSAC's recommendation to pursue acquisition of the Chataqua Extension property at a cost of \$450,000 to the Open Space Fund. Staff requests BOCC approval to exercise the Option Agreement and move forward with closing in June 2021.

Cc: Scott Vargo, Bentley Henderson, Jeff Huntley, Jim Curnutte