

## **STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners  
**FROM:** Katherine King, Senior Resource Specialist and Brian Lorch, Director  
**FOR:** March 27, 2018 Consent Agenda  
**REQUEST:** Approval to exercise option agreement to acquire the Mountain Pride Claims (Upper Blue)

---

OSAC unanimously recommended the County acquire the Twin Sister claims at their June 5th meeting. BOSAC also recommended acquisition in June, and the Breckenridge Town Council has approved a 50% contribution.

Twin Sister, Little Sarah, Maggie, Baker, Gold Chief Claims; New York Lode; Schedule Nos. 2809561 and 2809560, Owner: Anne Hunting and Garry O'Hara; 27.6 acres

**BACKGROUND:** The County and Town have been working diligently in recent years to protect the front side of Baldy as open space. The area is highly used for winter and summer recreation, and functions as the scenic backdrop to Breckenridge. Since 2016, the County/Town has purchased the Laurium claims (105 acres and a new trailhead access to Baldy), Mountain Pride Mine (32.5 acres), and the Golden Edge claims (37 acres). Recently, the opportunity has arisen to purchase the Twin Sister claims (27.6 acres, see attached map).

County staff reached out to the land owners, as it is one of the last privately-held large groups of mining claims on Baldy (the other, owned by Carbonate Mine, has active small-scale mining activity on it). The landowners were in fact ready to consider selling the property, and liked the idea of it becoming open space. Recent comparable purchases in the area have been in the \$8500- \$12,500/acre range, and because this property does not have as good of access, OSAC recommended staff offer \$8,000/acre, to which the owners agreed. Staff will conduct a site visit later this month when the snow has melted, but does not anticipate any environmental concerns.

**OPEN SPACE VALUES:** Located high on the west side of Bald Mountain, the Twin Sister claims are two separate backcountry-zoned parcels that could each be a development site. The area is very popular for recreation and contains historic mining relics. Protection of the claims will ensure permanent public access, as well as preserve its scenic backcountry character. The property contains the following open space values:

- Recreational/Access: Accessed from either Baldy or Boreas Pass Road, the property has trails and is used for backcountry and cross-country skiing. Development of this site could result in significant changes to the character of Baldy Road, and the overall backcountry nature of the area.
- Extensions of public land: The claims are surrounded by National Forest land and Open Space lands, and are one of the last privately-owned groups of claims in the area.
- Unique lands: Acquiring this inholding into a large area of undeveloped public land will enhance and extend additional wildlife habitat, including spruce, fir and high alpine tundra.
- View corridors: Above treeline on the flanks of Baldy, the upper portion of the claims are visible from throughout the Upper Blue. Master Plan maps show they are visible from 50-100 points.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION/REQUEST:** Staff strongly concurs with OSAC's recommendation to pursue acquisition of the Twin Sister Claims at an approximate cost to the Open Space fund of

\$110,000. Staff requests BOCC approval to exercise the option agreement and close on the property in August.

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