



Parks & Open Space

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BOCC PUBLIC HEARING

Time/Date of Meeting: 11:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Location: Virtual Meeting

Tg

TO:	Board of County Commissioners
FROM:	Sandy Duff, Senior Land Officer
AGENDA ITEM:	Camp Tahosa Conservation Easement Acquisition
DATE OF MEMO:	March 1, 2022
ACTION REQUESTED:	Approval

For much longer than Parks & Open Space’s history of stewarding open space, the land in this community has been important to the diverse Indigenous communities that continue to thrive here today. We are partnering with Indigenous people to make meaningful changes to how we do our work that include Indigenous people, incorporate their perspectives, and honor their land stewardship legacy.

Summary

Boulder County proposes to acquire a conservation easement (CE) over the approximate 318-acre Camp Tahosa property for \$3,000,000. The property has an address of 173 County Road 96 and is located near the intersection of Peak to Peak Highway and County Road 96, north of Ward. The property is on both sides of the road, with the majority of the improvements, and Tumblesom Lake on the southern side of the road. The purpose of the easement is to preserve and protect in perpetuity the significant natural environment and open space and wildlife habitat attributes of the property and to limit the uses of the property and structures which may be permitted on the property. This CE acquisition will remove eight development rights from the property. Staff supports this acquisition.

Background Information

The Camp Tahosa property is owned by the Boy Scouts of America (Scouts). The following history is from a past Special Use Permit application the owners made to the county regarding the property.

The first owners of the property were Frances M. Edmondson and Silas T. Tumblesom, and Tumblesom named the lake after himself and sold the land a few years later. In 1912 he repurchased his original 160 acres as well as an additional parcel for a total of 320 acres and opened a fishing resort. In 1917, Tom Hussie purchased the property from Martha Tumblesom and continued to run the fishing resort until August 1929 when they sold it to Mel Gelwicks. Mr. Gelwicks built the first stone buildings on the property. In May 1931, Boulder County granted a license to run a public dance hall and the popular fishing resort at Tumblesom Lake became a full-fledged mountain resort that included a dance hall, dining room and rental cabins, and was known as the Stoney Point Lodge. The great depression was a tough time to be running a recreational resort and Mr. Gelwicks sold the lodge back to Lulu Hussie in 1933. In May 1938, the Denver Area Council purchased the property and the lodge became “Denver’s Rocky Mountain Scout Camp”. During the first decade of operation as a scout camp, the camp population,

doubled from 800 to 1600 scouts. Rustic campsites, campfire rings and an amphitheater were built, and programs were started including nature, aquatics, pioneering, rifle range, archery range, handicraft, horseback riding, hiking and backpacking. In 1942 the name of the camp was changed to Tahosa. Over the years, enrollment went from the height of 4,000 campers to lesser amounts, with many campers going to another camp in Elbert County. Today, the camp continues to operate and will continue to operate even after the CE is placed over the property.

Deal Terms

There are nine development rights associated with the 318-acre property. County Road 96 bisects the property into two large parcels. The purchase of the CE will remove eight of the nine total development rights on the property. The one remaining development right, which is in use at the ranger residence on the property, is on the southern parcel. The majority of the camping structures including a dining hall, stone cabins, group cabins and a chapel are also located on the southern property and mostly near Tumblesom Lake.

The northern 120 acres has a large maintenance barn and picnic shelter, and this area is called the Lower Meadow where the Scouts hold a variety of challenge events. This property will not have any development rights associated with it.

Specific details of the CE will include identifying conservation values, existing uses, and limitations on square footage of all accessory buildings. Current scouting and camping activities will continue to be allowed.

Acquisition Summary

Acres	Water Rights	# Building Rights County Will Acquire	Price per Bldg. Right [or Acre	Water Right Value	Total Purchase Price
318	50% interest in all water rights	8	\$375,000/ \$9,434	N/A	\$3,000,000

- The landowner will retain one building right.

Mineral Rights

The county will not acquire the Scouts’ mineral interests, but the conservation easement will contain language prohibiting development of the property’s mineral rights. A Phase I environmental assessment will also be completed.

Oil & Gas Leases

The property is not subject to an oil and gas lease.

Boulder County Comprehensive Plan Designations

The Boulder County Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) provides information about the area’s agricultural, cultural, environmental, and other open space resources (including passive recreation, community buffers, and scenic viewsheds). Maps in the Comp Plan indicate the

following designations of these resources near the property: Tumblesom Lake B3 High Biodiversity Area, Indian Peaks Environmental Conservation Area, Overland Habitat Connectors, Riparian Habitat Connectors, Wildlife Migration Corridors, Critical Wildlife Habitats, Significant Natural Communities, Riparian Areas, and Wetlands.

POSAC Recommendation

On Thursday, February 24, 2022, POSAC unanimously approved the recommendation of the acquisition (6-0). POSAC asked that a first right of refusal be incorporated into the CE, which will be included and is a standard clause for county-held CEs. POSAC is also interested in having a cultural and archeological survey done for the property. This would require the landowner's consent, the county would need to pay for it if the county were to pursue this now, and this request could only be fulfilled after closing due to fact that significant time is needed to hire a contractor to complete such a survey. Staff would arrange for this survey to happen soon if directed by the Board to do so. However, decisions about doing this commonly happen during land use processes, so Parks & Open Space staff recommend instead deferring the idea and deciding to request it later, if desired, during any application to Community Planning & Permitting the landowner may make for approval to modify the site's historic structures.

One member of the public asked about the possibility of a recreation easement on the property to bring mountain bike trail riders off of Beaver Reservoir Road and onto the property. Since the property would not be owned by the county, the county cannot effectuate this request. The inquirer was informed to direct the request to the landowner. Once the CE is procured, the county would have the ability to weigh in on the request and could consent to a trail after additional information about the proposal would be known. Parks & Open Space staff would evaluate such a request carefully to ensure the property's conservation values would still be protected before recommending whether to grant consent or deny the request.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval. Two letters of support were submitted and are attached to this memo, as was one email of support. Staff has been in contact with the Scouts for over 17 years. The Scouts will continue to own the land and continue the scouting activities as they have done over many years. Placing the land under a conservation easement enhances the conservation programs of both the Scouts and Boulder County Parks & Open Space.

BOCC Action Requested

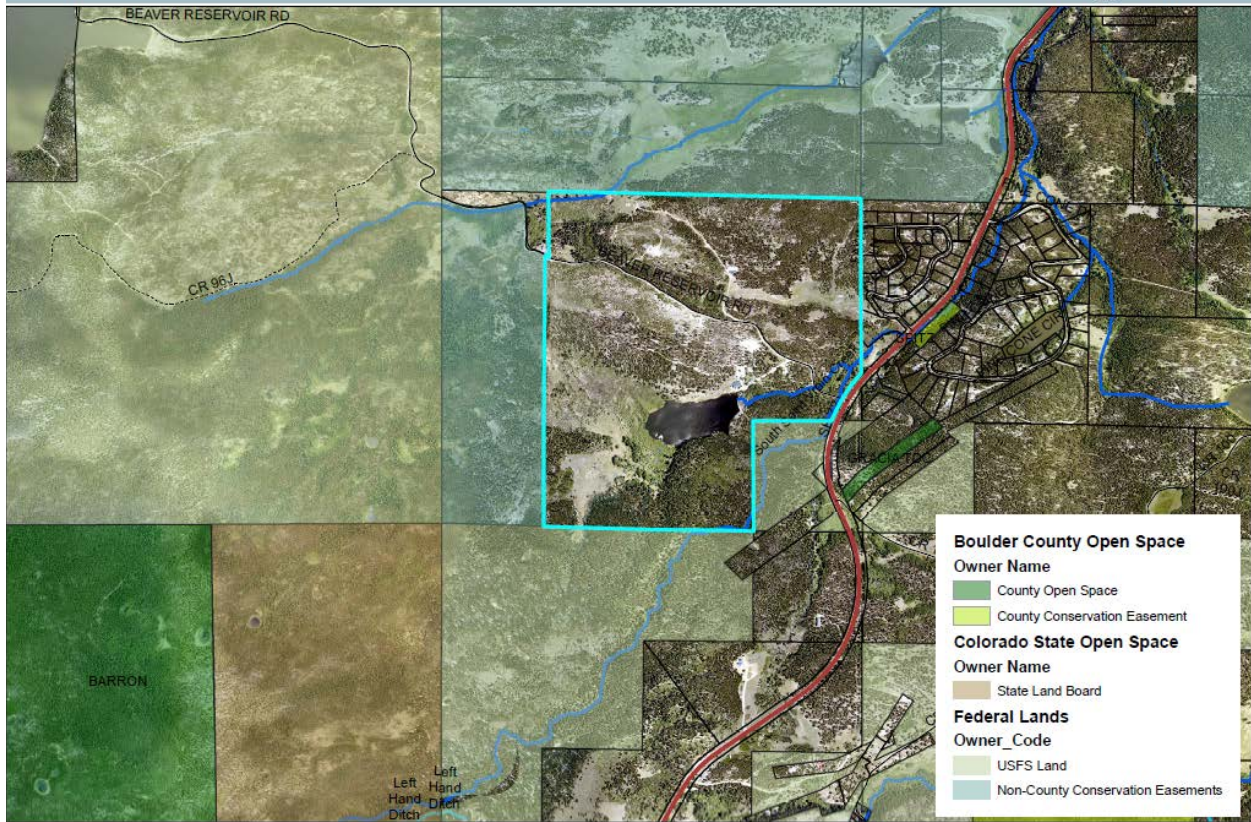
Approval of the request as described by staff.

(Maps following)

Vicinity Map

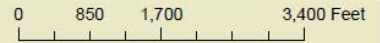
CampTahosa 318 Acres CE

Aerial Map

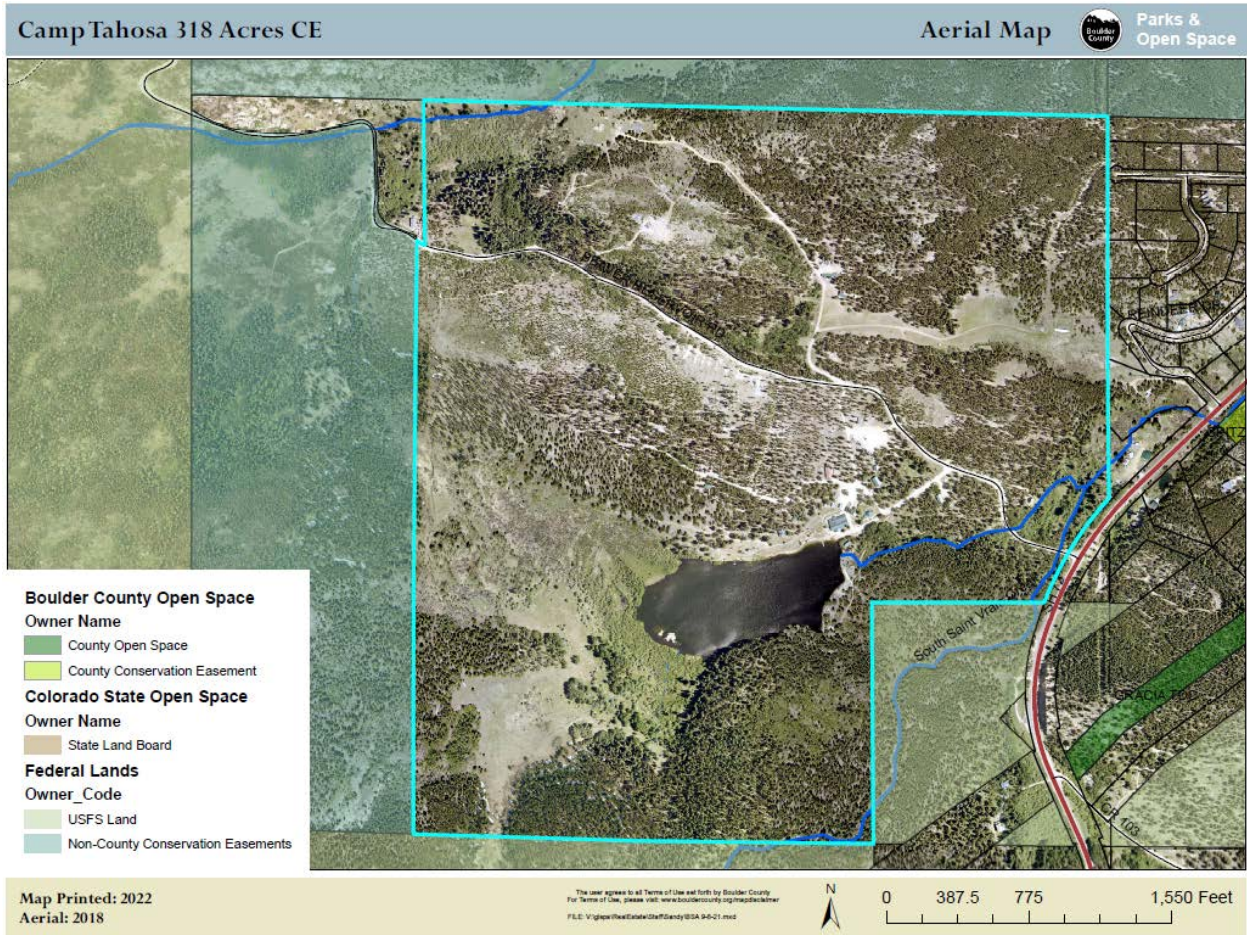


Map Printed: 2022
Aerial: 2018

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Close-Up Map



Name * Bev Baker


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Address 

* 1590 Garfield Ave, Unit B
Louisville, CO 80027
United States

Comments for POSAC Members *

I am writing in support of Boulder County acquiring a conservation easement on the Camp Tahosa property. I have participated in Boulder County Nature Association's Indian Peaks Bird Counts on this property since 1995. The property provides a diverse variety of habitats for birds and other wildlife, including Tumblesome Lake, aspen groves, willows, meadows, and conifer forests. Protection from further development will benefit many mountain wildlife species that use this property plus the surrounding National Forest and other undeveloped lands. In recent years I have observed degradation of willows at the west end of the lake, apparently from moose, resulting in reduced cover near the ground that the willows used to provide. I have also observed some small noxious weed populations. I expect that these and other natural resource conditions are included in the County's baseline documentation reports for the property. Thank you.

Name *	Linda Andes-Georges
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Comments to POSAC on 2/24/2022 re proposed purchase of Tahosa property (Boy Scouts/America camp)

Like my avian survey colleague Bev Baker, who is submitting a written comment, I support this purchase. I have had a long acquaintance with two areas in the Peak-to-Peak region: Niwot Ridge since 1995 and since the early 2000s the upper south St Vrain, which include Tahosa. These were my sectors for the Indian Peaks Birdcount, a unique long-term survey of avian use of the County's montane, sub-alpine and alpine habitats over 40 years. I have been able to continue the upper S St Vrain, with Bev, to this day.

Last fall when I discovered that the Boy Scout property was for sale, I became very apprehensive. I have found that often when a good property owner sells, the future upkeep of the place becomes murky. So I was worried that in other hands, the environmental values would plummet.

Over the years, we have grown to cherish the Tahosa part of our sector for its high environmental values, supported by the careful management of the place by several successive Boy Scout leaders. We have noted that rather than deteriorating due to heavy year-round use, the forest, meadows and pond have retained their wildlife and their vegetation—more about the willows in a moment.

We have seen that area wildlife sort of "generates" here, and spreads out into the wider area: For example, otters have bred on Tumblesome and then migrated to nearby streams. We have seen bobcats and black bears. General use by ungulates is high. Bird diversity is good in all seasons: Our ongoing species list now includes 93 species, which is remarkable at this altitude. Some habitats have morphed in typical succession from severely fire-damaged to new aspen, to spruce/fir, with corresponding changes in wildlife use. Tahosa managers have worked very hard at making the pine/spruce woods more fire-resilient. The meadow is lush. On the whole, this is a healthy place.

As for the willows, while currently the increasing numbers of moose are making a negative impact on willow cover, we are hoping that reintroduction of wolves will somehow reduce this. Certainly, hunting has not seemed to do so. If the County can pressure CPW to encourage this addition to natural processes, we would be delighted.

Again, I think a conservation easement is the best way forward for all parties in this effort to preserve good habitat in Boulder County and I urge you to recommend the proposal to the Commissioners.