

## Hogback Usage Concerns Residents

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The Daily Record  
July 3, 2007

Several residents filled Cañon City council chambers Monday to support comments made by fellow neighbors urging councilors to address hogback area usage.

Citizens who reside near the hogback hills located at the foothills of Skyline Drive on the west end of town told councilors "uncontrolled use of off-road vehicles" has led to unwanted noise and is threatening the area's eco-system balance.

The hogback hills are a well-known playground for all-terrain vehicles, motorbikes and other types of vehicles used to climb the hills' steep inclines. Those who spoke to council said such use has been on the rise as of late. "In the last six months there has been an explosion of use in the hogbacks," said area resident Monica McGowan. "The stories range from noise and frazzled nerves, vibrations that actually rattle windows of homes...erosion problems...that affect the plants and wildlife in the area."

McGowan also expressed concern that the area's "vegetation is being destroyed, thereby increasing a run-off issue that affects our storm water drainage."

Cañon City resident Roger Bernard said human-caused erosion will lead to long-term problems for area wildlife and plants.

"The eco-system is suffering an imbalance due to overuse." He said. "This will lead to devastating effects that cannot be over-stated."

McGowan provided councilors a petition signed by 104 residents requesting council to take action on the issue.

One of those residents, David Garcia, said safety issues are also of concern. The retired Colorado Stat trooper said that "mostly underage kids are involved in a lot of careless and reckless driving" and shared a story of a 15 years old family friend who was injured while riding a motorbike on the hills.

"That was pretty close to home," said Garcia. "It took him close to a year to recover from his injuries."

Councilors said they were impressed by the showing during the standing-room-only meeting and expressed empathy with the residents.

"I used to live up on Fifth Street years ago and they used to drive me crazy," said Councilmember Jerry Gill.

"It's a very valuable area of open space that is being trashed," said Councilman Jon Stone.

Councilors said they have always considered the issue a priority and hope to focus more attention on the issues.

"This did not become the same priority because we had a number of issues to attend to," said Councilman Keith Hovland. "We should put it higher on our task list."

In other action from Monday's meeting:

The council agreed to leave the seat being vacated by Catherine Mortensen unfilled until the expiration of the term, January 17, 2008.

Mortensen announced last month she would not seek re-election and will leave her post effective July 17.

Her at-large position will be contested in November.

Mayor William Jackson congratulated City Administrator Steve Rabe on his election as president of the Colorado Municipal League.

CML is an organization for municipal governments across the state. Rabe and other city officials attended the annual conference held last week.

"It's a very prestigious position," said Jackson.