

Letter to the Editor of the Daily Record

September 2, 2008

To the Editor:

The hogbacks are an area of significance and they deserve to be protected and preserved. They offer a scenic and beneficial natural resource to our community as an open space teeming with rocks, plants, fossils, and wildlife; a literal outdoor classroom for botany, geology, geography, and biology.

The passage of the upcoming Hogbacks Ballot Question will ensure that future residents of Cañon City will still have that resource available to them. It is the intent of City Council that the current moratorium restricting all uses in the area is just temporary. After the ballot question is approved, the work to convert the area into an asset for the entire community may begin.

For several decades, the hogbacks have been damaged by the extensive and uncontrolled use of motorized vehicles. New trails were continually being created by these activities without regard to the ecological harm done. The resulting erosion, dust, and noise have become a public nuisance. The potential risk of liability for uncontrolled and non-sanctioned activities on City owned property was a very real issue and had to be addressed.

In recent years, City Council has been approached on numerous occasions by citizens expressing their concerns about continued motorized use in the hogbacks. Many have presented City Council with petitions signed by several hundred citizens who desire to prohibit motorized uses in the area.

In response, City Council made it a priority to discuss this issue in the public forum with the intent of proposing a ballot question for the citizens to consider this November. To facilitate the discussion, several open meetings of large and small committees were held during the past five months to debate, listen, and contemplate what should be done with the hogbacks area. All of the citizens of Cañon City were invited and encouraged to participate in this process and many of them did.

The overwhelming consensus was that the hogbacks area should be restricted to non-motorized use. This decision was partly based on the fact that the area is just too narrow of a space to adequately and safely partition between pedestrian and motorized uses. It was also made evident that a large portion of the land within the hogbacks area is still owned by private citizens, not the City. These private parcels are not contiguous and interrupt the parcels owned by the City. These private land owners have expressed their desires to not allow motorized use on their property.

Finding other acceptable areas for motorized uses was discussed extensively in committee meetings with members of the Bureau of Land Management and other public agencies throughout the process. The search for these possible areas in surrounding public lands is on-going and I feel certain that an area will be found where those citizens who enjoy motorized sports can do so.

I will admit that this hogbacks issue is very important to me. I have gone on record with my desire for the hogbacks to eventually become a pedestrian link between the Arkansas River and Red Cañon Park. The approval of this ballot question can be the first step in that future goal.

The issues that confronted the establishment of the River Trail along the Arkansas years ago were very similar to this situation. The River Trail has now become a wonderful asset to our community for walking, jogging, bicycling, bird and wildlife watching, and other similar activities. With the passage of this ballot question, the hogbacks will become a new open space to be enjoyed by all of our citizens for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Daryl G. Robinson
City Council Member
Cañon City