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## **Residents Say 'YES' to Hogbacks Proposal**

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Cañon City voters resoundingly said "yes" to the Hogbacks issue on Tuesday, allowing the city to move forward with a master plan designed to create open space in the area just east of Skyline Drive.

Referendum 2A sailed through with a 57 to 43 percent vote (3,960-3026) by city residents. The ballot issue was the result of months of work by the ad hoc Hogbacks Committee, which was organized in January by City Council.

Mayor Frank Jaquez was delighted by the results and showered issue supporters with praise for its approval.

"You guys won it," Jaquez told several members of the Skyline Hogbacks Preservation Campaign, a group of citizens that banded together in an effort to protect the area's unique qualities. "The city could not have done it without all the work you did. You were the ones out there pounding the streets, giving the presentations."

Monica McGowan, campaign chair, said she was elated with the voters' decision.

"I am so proud of the teamwork of the community, pulling together like this," McGowan said. "People had confidence in what we were trying to accomplish. It could not have been done without so many people with expertise coming together."

City Council closed the 563-acre Hogbacks area to all uses as of Aug. 1, pending Tuesday's vote. The moratorium remains in effect until lifted by council, and anyone ignoring the closure still faces fines up to \$500 and up to six months in county jail on charges of third-degree criminal trespassing, which by state statute is a Class 1 petty offense.

Jaquez said he believes the council will consider lifting the moratorium soon, and said he expects the Hogbacks to be reopened around the first of the year.

Jaquez commended City Councilman Keith Hovland for his work as Hogbacks Committee Chairman.

"My hat is off to Keith and to all of you," Jaquez said. "We were there to support you, but you did all the work."

Issue 2A was hard fought throughout the community, because it restricts motorized uses in the Hogbacks area, which now will be opened to walking, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, bird watching and more. Motorcycle enthusiasts were concerned their sport was being taken away.

The city countered that there simply was not enough space in the Hogbacks to accommodate all historical uses. The city controls only 339 acres of the 563 combined acres, and that land is broken up into three major parcels by privately-owned acreage.

The committee's primary reasons for recommending discontinuing motorized use were liability issues and a poor revenue stream for the project. Funding for future open space improvements will come from grants and other revenue sources.

Understanding motorcycle enthusiasts' disappointment with the decision, council has said it will continue to seek opportunities for motorized sports, while acknowledging it is unlikely any appropriate area exists within the city limits for such activity.

If Issue 2A had failed, the Hogbacks would have remained closed to all uses indefinitely.

McGowan said the open space label will allow the Hogbacks to be utilized by schoolchildren, colleges, community members, tourism, the Chamber of Commerce and many others.

"Now, it will be what it should have been historically," McGowan said. "I am so proud of our council. They took every part of the governmental structure, and they did everything exactly the right way."