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To: [Jamey Ayling](#); [cgs@co.kittitas.wa.us](mailto:cds@co.kittitas.wa.us)
Subject: Urgent Fire Safety Concerns - Fowler Creek Guest Ranch (CU-23-00003) Proposal
Date: Thursday, October 19, 2023 10:41:26 AM

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Mr. Ayling,

I trust this letter finds you in good health. My name is James Lassiter, I am a licensed professional fire protection engineer and proud member of the National Fire Protection Association, with 25 years of experience in assessing and mitigating fire risks associated with various public developments and new construction projects. I am also a part-time resident of the Granite Creek community.

I have recently reviewed the proposal for the Fowler Creek Guest Ranch project and feel compelled to bring to your attention critical concerns related to the fire life safety of the citizens of upper Kittitas County, particularly the residents of the Granite Creek community. My primary concern is the heightened likelihood of wildfires spreading rapidly due to the lack of firefighting water in the area and increased fire hazards introduced to the area by the proposed development. This poses a serious threat to the safety of future occupants of the Fowler Creek Guest Ranch development and the surrounding existing neighborhoods. As a fire protection engineer my commitment is to prioritize the safety of communities through evidence-based risk assessment and mitigation strategies. I write to express urgent concerns regarding the proposed development currently under consideration.

Upon thorough evaluation of the project plans, it has become evident that the proposed development not only increases the fire risk in the area but, critically, fails to address or enhance resident egress capacity or emergency first responder ingress via the existing roads that will be shared by current residents of the area and future development occupants. This combination poses a serious threat to the safety of residents and emergency response efforts.

Increased Fire Risk: The proposed development introduces elements that significantly elevate the potential for fire occurrences, including high concentrations of recreational vehicles and campsites with open fire pits. Factors such as immediate proximity to fire-prone areas, lack of adequate firebreaks, and the abundant use of fire-prone building materials, coupled with the propensity of short-term occupants of the proposed development who typically won't prioritize preventive maintenance of their recreational equipment, contribute to an elevated fire risk in the vicinity. The mentality of temporary residents, who are not invested in the local community, allows them to make riskier decisions when it comes to fire safety. Germain examples of these risky behaviors that are already witnessed in the area include the use of fireworks during burn ban periods, not completely extinguishing campfires, and public intoxication around fire ignition sources. The Fowler Creek Guest Ranch development would highly concentrate and increase these universally recognized fire risks and hazards to an unacceptable level. It is crucial to address these concerns promptly to mitigate potential hazards and ensure the safety of the community.

Specifically, recreational vehicles and their dense introduction to the area represent an extraordinary fire hazard. While only a small fraction of the overall U.S. population sojourns in this type of housing, historical data shows that recreational vehicle fires have resulted in significantly higher fatality rates and property damage rates per incident compared to other types of dwellings. Contrary to popular belief, the most common cause of recreational vehicle fires originates in the engine area, running gear, and wheel areas of vehicles, and not in the cooking or space heating elements of the vehicle. Thus, it is important to note that just driving numerous recreational vehicles into the area considerably increases the fire hazard risk before examining problematic space heating

systems and cooking systems elements.

Insufficient Resident Egress Capacity: Equally concerning is the apparent lack of improvement or increase in egress capacity along existing roads. In the event of an emergency, a limited ability to evacuate residents and an increased likelihood of blocked roadways with recreational vehicles pose a serious risk to public safety. Adequate egress capacity is fundamental to a community's resilience in the face of potential threats, especially those related to fire incidents.

Diminished First Responder Ingress: Also of particular concern is the potential reduction in effective ingress capacity for firefighting and first responder personnel. This reduction caused by increased traffic on rural roads compromises the effectiveness and timeliness of emergency response efforts, further exacerbating the risk to both property and lives.

I respectfully urge a comprehensive reassessment of the proposed development, with a specific focus on addressing the identified fire risk factors and enhancing egress capacity along existing roads.

I appreciate your immediate attention to this matter and your commitment to prioritizing the safety and well-being of the citizens in our community.

Sincerely,

James Lassiter
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