

December 20, 2020

**TO:** **Kittitas County Community Development Services**  
411 N. Ruby Street, Ste 2  
Ellensburg, WA 98926  
Office: (509) 962-7539

**Re:** Hidden Point LLC (CU-20-00005) Conditional Use Permit Application

**From:** Jodeanne Scheer and Stephen Scheer  
Owner of 20 acre parcel at 900 Emerick Road, Cle Elum, WA  
14956 NW Mill Road  
Portland, OR 97231

Dear Commissioners:

My name is Jodeanne Scheer, and I am writing to express my family's strong opposition to the Conditional Use Permit application for Hidden Point Guest Ranch off Emerick Road in Cle Elum, WA.

My husband, Stephen Scheer, and I own a cabin at 900 Emerick Road that has been in our family for 16 years. We spend a lot of time at both of our residences, which includes our cabin in Cle Elum and our houseboat in the rural outreaches of Portland, OR. We value living in low density rural areas that are rich in wildlife and natural areas, and which preserve natural and scenic habitat for native species, as well as for the enjoyment of humans.

My husband and I are signees of Patricia Galloway's letter of concern, from 12-14-20, and concur with all of her very well researched and pertinent objections to the approval of this Hidden Point Ranch Conditional Use Application. I especially want to reiterate that the requested development of a large commercial short term rental recreational property within a low density, rural agricultural zone:

- is improper,
- does not meet County Land Use criteria for a rural working zone,
- is completely out of character with the quiet, rural nature of our neighborhood
- would be detrimental to wildlife habitat and
- exponentially increases fire and safety dangers within our area.

This CUP should be denied outright and further development of the property should be curtailed until proper permitting and County approval is obtained.

I would like to add to the record our own personal concerns, as well as some personal observations of the activities already happening at the Hidden Point properties.

#### Zoning Considerations

We concur with Patricia Galloway that this development is most consistent with a rural recreational resort, which is not a permitted use within the AG-20 zone. Hidden Point Guest Ranch, as proposed, is clearly not a working ranch, it is simply a short-term rental property, without any on-site infrastructure for keeping guests and surrounding properties safe, protected and supervised. This project is not consistent with the surrounding rural neighborhood, has detrimental effects on roads, neighbors and wildlife, and does not meet required criteria for a conditional use permit. It should be denied.

## Fire Danger

Fire danger in our area is extreme for most of the summer and fall months of each year, especially when drought conditions exist. As the Taylor Bridge fire in 2012 so clearly elucidated, one spark from a careless welder at a project miles away nearly obliterated our whole Emerick Road/Lookout Mountain community. Luckily, the majority of our residences and outbuildings were spared, thanks to the hard work of our firefighters and a fateful reversal of the direction of strong winds. The previously existing destroyed house on parcel 797634 in the Hidden Point proposal was actually one of the two local structures that did burn to the ground. The Hidden Point parcels are all on a steep hill (>35% slope) with slopes that face towards the canyon, are in the face of the often-prevailing winds and are at elevated danger of fires for these reasons. A careless cigarette, a discarded match or a vehicular spark in dry grasses could ignite and spread rapidly in our area, creating an inferno much like in 2012. The prospect of having up to 48 unsuspecting and fire-ignorant guests visiting our neighborhood on a daily basis exponentially increases the risk of fire danger to all of our homes as well as to the vast community and lands beyond Emerick Road. Fire Department access to these parcels is dependent on weather, snow loads, and the presence of ice and seasonal soaking of the soils, making the gravel road access to the site difficult to impossible for a portion of each year.

No where in this application for a recreational hotel are there plans outlined for emergency fire and safety systems, or any mention of how guests will be educated on our extreme fire danger, or protected in the event of fire or other disaster.

Our family, along with some of our neighbors, have already seen recent evidence of fires left untended at Hidden Point, and on neighboring properties (please see concerns noted by Gretchen Chambers, JoAnne Schmieder, and Patricia Galloway) during times when guests have been seen camping at the Hidden Point pumphouse. It is hard to contemplate a way to mitigate the fire danger from so many visitors at a short term rental hotel system, especially with no one on site or nearby to monitor activities by guests, and where even guests in the presence of the current owners have displayed dangerous and careless behaviors.

## Safety and Roads

Emerick Road, past the end of the county road, is gravel, private, sparsely traveled by residents and their guests only, and maintained in the past up to Unionville Ranch at the expense of Unionville Ranch. It is not a feasible or safe business operating plan to create a commercial resort business at Hidden Point, where roads on the property are steeply sloped, and whose only access is via an Emerick Road spur beyond the Unionville turnoff. This gravel spur road is not maintained, is deeply potholed, and travels around a steep embankment and adjacent to a gorge, which makes it especially treacherous in ice and snow. With no onsite managers, how will "guests" be able to access or leave the property in case of sudden snowstorm and/or emergency? Common snow loads in the winter range from 1-5 feet, can last hours to months, and require on-site snow plows to create reliable ingress and egress. Where and how will guests get help when needed? Cell phone service is spotty, the gravel road is often impassable, and emergency services are therefore difficult to engage and may be unable to access the area. As longtime residents of the Lookout Mountain area, we all have developed strategies to live with these winter realities. Some park on Emerick Road on neighbor's properties close to the end of the county road, and sled their belongings to upland houses and cabins. Some use snowmobiles or specially outfitted ATV's. This does not seem a reasonable burden for "resort guests," and, there is not space for 24-26 vehicles to park at the end of the county road anyway. Finally, Patricia Galloway has extensively covered the costs and realities of the private Emerick Road upkeep, in her letter, with increased potholes seen recently from commercial construction traffic related to Hidden Point activities. These issues highlight why this commercial development is unreasonable and completely out of context with our rural neighborhood.

### Trespassing and Littering, Open Space:

Trespassing and littering behaviors by the owners and/or guests at Hidden Point have been observed by us and our neighbors even before any rental lodging has been available on the property. In our 16 years of living in our neighborhood, we have never seen litter left on roads or neighboring properties, until the last year. We are known to walk the Emerick Road loops frequently, with the permission of private landowners, and the only trash encountered previously has been fire related remnants left after the 2012 Taylor Bridge fire. This has changed since Hidden Point has had guests hiking (and trespassing) the private lands surrounding the Hidden Point property. We have picked up several caches of strewn beer/soda cans (as have our neighbors.) There has even been a fire ring created, with remains of a fire, at a gorge viewpoint belonging to the Ames' (parcel 187634) in an area with absolutely no access to water for fire suppression. While we cannot document with certainty that these incidents were related to Hidden Point guests, there are few people other than landowners who wander here, and there were groups of people camping at the Hidden Point pumphouse on both occasions when we personally picked up litter. Paying visitors at rental units with little interest or knowledge of our neighborhood might think that our private lands are deserted, and that no one cares about casual littering. Actually, we DO really care, and are highly offended that supervised guests would trespass without permission and then litter on our lands. Such actions can only be expected to exponentially multiply with up to 50 unsupervised strangers per day in our midst.

The nature of our quiet rural neighborhood is that we have large tracts of fenceless land, with one or no residences/cabins per parcel. This allows for lots of open space, and for the free passage of wildlife, as well as horses and neighbors with permission to wander. It distresses me to think that with the onslaught of 50 strangers per day into this fragile community and ecosystem, that fences would start going up to deter trespassing and theft. This would negatively affect the Swauk Prairie Deer Winter Range habitat, and the yearly migrations of large mammals through our neighborhoods.

### Wildlife Impacts:

This application notes the only animals on the Hidden Point site are deer and turkeys. However, multiple letters from neighbors have listed the multitude of animals and birds that frequent this area. We live at 900 Emerick Road, and routinely document deer, elk, bear, bobcat, coyote, weasel, marmot, skunk, and cougar sightings and tracks, and have even seen wolf tracks once or twice near Swauk Canyon. We had an elk die on our property ~4 years ago, after being hit by a car on Emerick Road. The increase in car traffic related to a commercial hotel business will only put our wildlife at increased risk from vehicular collisions. Rodents are especially plentiful and include mice, voles, pine squirrels, and pack rats. Bird species are too numerous to list, but include great horned owls, turkeys, grouse, numerous species of woodpeckers (more plentiful since the fire), raptors, warblers, chickadees, meadowlarks, tanagers, and more. Snakes, including rattlesnakes, bull snakes, garter snakes, racers, and rubber boas are found throughout our natural area. Our properties along Emerick Road are especially important as wildlife habitat, as we border lands with a conservation overlay that protects for posterity much of Swauk Canyon's optimum wildlife habitat and winter deer range from development.

This CUP application states that there would be no wildlife impacts from this recreational resort, but does not justify this opinion in any way. We do not agree with this assessment. Both the denuding of native vegetation that has already occurred on the site, and the huge increase in human activity that would be created with a commercial hotel business (that is completely out of character with our rural community), would diminish and degrade the wildlife habitat that exists within and around our community

Another concern of ours is how this development might attract unwanted hunters to our private properties. All of our neighbors near Emerick Rd post "No Hunting" signs. As a result, we frequently encounter very

large antlered ungulates during hunting season residing in our meadow and on surrounding properties. Large numbers of elk can be seen on seasonal migrations and forage actively on all properties near Swauk Canyon and Emerick Road. Deer in large numbers are resident year-round. Game trails are easily seen on the bluffs and properties above Swauk Canyon. Our properties support and are part of the Swauk Prairie Deer Winter Range. Large influxes of outsiders noticing this abundance of deer and elk in our wildlife sanctuary would very likely be tempted to return to our area to trespass and hunt, against community wishes and signage, creating conflicts with current property owners.

SUMMARY:

Thank you very much for considering these concerns when evaluating the Conditional Use Permit for the Hidden Point "Guest Ranch" proposal. The large influx of people and development that is outlined in this application is totally out of character with our rural woodland habitat and quiet, peaceful neighborhood. This conditional use permit application should be denied, as it does not meet the criteria for a conditional use permit within our AG-20 zone or neighborhood. Please help preserve our local low-density rural zoning and support our rich natural and scenic habitat from degradation due to an unwanted commercial development.

Sincerely,

Jodeanne Scheer (jodeannekay@gmail.com)  
Stephen Scheer (scc17@aol.com)

900 Emerick Road  
Cle Elum, WA 98922

14956 NW Mill Road  
Portland, OR 97231

**From:** [Scheer Jodeanne Bellant](#)  
**To:** [Kelly Bacon \(CD\)](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Notice of Application - CU-20-00005 Hidden Point  
**Date:** Monday, December 21, 2020 8:00:10 PM  
**Attachments:** [letter.pdf](#)

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Dear Ms Bacon:

Thank you for this information and for the links provided. I would like to submit my comments against this conditional use application. I am sending you a pdf copy. Please let me know if that is the correct way to do this. I am also happy to send in a signed paper copy by mail, if that is preferable. Thank you for forwarding my concerns to the appropriate parties.

I appreciate your time and trouble in working on this matter.

Sincerely,

Jodeanne Scheer

On Thu, Dec 17, 2020 at 9:31 AM Kelly Bacon (CD) <[kelly.bacon.cd@co.kittitas.wa.us](mailto:kelly.bacon.cd@co.kittitas.wa.us)> wrote:

Good morning,

Kittitas County CDS is requesting comment on the Conditional Use application CU-20-00005 Hidden Point.

The proposed project is for a “Guest Ranch or Guest Farm” providing overnight lodging, dining and recreational facilities in a rural setting. All application documents can be found at the links below. I have also attached the SEPA Checklist for recording. CDS is using the optional DNS process for this application. Please let me know if you have any issues accessing the materials. Please submit any comments for this application by 5pm on Monday, January 4, 2021. If CDS does not receive comments by this date, we will assume your agency has no interest in the application.

CU-20-00005 Hidden Point Internal

[CU-20-00005 Hidden Point External](#)

Thank you,

# Kelly Bacon

## Planner I

### Kittitas County Community Development Services

411 N. Ruby Street, Ste 2

Ellensburg, WA 98926

Office: (509) 962-7539

[Kelly.bacon.cd@co.kittitas.wa.us](mailto:Kelly.bacon.cd@co.kittitas.wa.us)

Please Note: In an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and the Governor's "Safe Start" reopening plan, Kittitas County Community Development Services is currently in Phase 3 and is open to the public in a limited capacity. At this time many of us are on a rotating schedule working from home and in the office; during this time I will do my best to respond to you as promptly as possible.

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