

**From:** [Kathy Kratzer](#)  
**To:** [Jamey Ayling](#)  
**Subject:** CU-23-00003 Fowler Creek Guest Ranch Proposal – Citizens Against Approval  
**Date:** Friday, July 26, 2024 12:51:56 PM

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7/26/2024

Delivered via email: Jamey.Ayling@co.Kittitas.WA.US

Jamey Ayling  
Kittitas County Community Development Services  
411 N Ruby St., Suite 2  
Ellensburg WA 98926

Subject: Fowler Creek Guest Ranch Proposal – Citizens Against Approval

“The mission of Kittitas County Community Development Services is to assist the citizens of Kittitas County in planning for the use and development of land and buildings while protecting public health and safety, sustaining a vibrant economy, promoting the conservation of natural resources, and protecting the environment.” Text taken from <https://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/cds/default.aspx> and underlined for emphasis.

Further to this, the Kittitas County 2021 Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement (Ch. 1.3) elaborates on this mission statement by reminding us “Kittitas County is a region with a distinct sense of place based on the quality and diversity of our natural and built environment, valued recreational opportunities, respected rural working lands, unique regional character, and commitment to a high quality of life.” And that, “The cornerstone of the County's approach to planning is conducting activities in a manner that encourages citizen involvement, enhances public trust, and promotes mutual understanding.”

The land associated with the subject Conditional Use Permit application has been designated a Rural-5 Zone (R-5), as you know. Kittitas County Code describes the purpose of this zone is to “provide areas where residential development may occur on a low-density basis. A primary goal and intent in siting R-5 zones will be to minimize adverse effects on adjacent natural resource lands. (Ord. 2005-05, 2005)” This designation is consistent with Washington State’s defined RA-5 Semirural Residential zone, which shall be developed in a manner that “maintains low, semirural residential densities within the Urban Growth Area on lands not suited to intense urban uses and not already characterized by urban development.”

Now, as two of Kittitas County’s residents who make our home on Parcel #375934 and who have been engaged in the progression of the Fowler Creek Trails, LLC’s (FCT) Fowler Creek Guest Ranch project, and Kittitas County’s related administrative process, we whole-heartedly call on the County to stop this project from progressing any further: Deny this application.

The stated County’s cornerstone approach “encourages citizen involvement, enhances public

trust, and promotes mutual understanding” has not been realized thus far in this process. We only learned of this project via word of mouth from our neighbors. Why? Was it because FCT and their agent, Pat Deneen, wanted to minimize community awareness, so that the project could move forward quickly and unencumbered by an informed and engaged group of effected citizens? This lack of communication and the bypassing of an established public disclosure and engagement process does not align with the County’s cornerstone approach. It does not involve citizens. It does not promote mutual understanding. And, it certainly does not build trust. All of which are needed and should be welcomed when a private entity is seeking to transform 34 acres of rural land into a “guest ranch” suitable for 200 guests and which apparently necessitates the inclusion of a general store with rentals, a ranch house, a bed-and-breakfast, and a 30-space RV park. Quite a spread, even after FCT abandoned 10 additional short-term cabins imagined in their original proposal.

Reducing the scale by merely 10 short-term rental cabins will not "significantly reduce the size and complexity of the overall project scope" as stated in FCT letter of June 24, 2024. This statement is merely smoke and mirrors. This proposal would have a noticeable and potential detrimental effect on our quality of life, the conservation of our natural resources, including water, wildlife, and forested lands, and may negatively impact public health and safety.

Quality of Life: FCT’s hosting of year-round events with guest counts numbering 200+ will increase nearby dust, noise, and light pollution levels. Even though FCT may claim that the forest will shield the neighbors and mitigate the additional environmental pollution, we can attest to the fact that the forest is incapable of providing this level of protection. At any given time, we can hear and view traffic on Zrebiec from the front step and backyard of our home. How has the Kittitas County Community Development Department investigated and verified that the quality of life will be equal or better for those citizens most directly impacted by this project?

Conservation of Natural Resources: What about the 34 acres of natural resources that will be directly impacted by this project? What about the deforesting that will have to happen? Where will trees of like species, age, and count be replanted to mitigate the taking of these trees? What of the wildlife that calls this forest home? What of the Golf Course elk herd that migrates through and inhabits this property? How will their habitat be replaced? What of the air quality that is improved by this existing natural vegetation? How will FCT offset the increase in carbon pollution from their facility? How has the Kittitas County Community Development Department addressed these concerns?

Public Health and Safety: The increased traffic due to this project’s construction and long-term operations pose both public health and safety concerns. What has the Kittitas County Community Development Department done to evaluate the impact of the proposal on the fire evacuation routes, the increased hazards associated with off-road vehicles, the increased demands on the Fowler Creek Road, the Westside Road intersection, and Forest Service Road 4517? More traffic equals more safety hazards, more accidents, more wear and tear on surrounding infrastructure, and more pollution of all types. What has the Kittitas County Community Development Department done to call on FCT to improve the involved public facilities rather than asking the taxpayers to foot this bill for them?

Furthermore, what about water availability? This is not only a public health and safety issue, but also a quality of life and natural resource issue. What water study has been done to determine the amount of water the proposed project will need during construction and over its planned lifetime (both Phases 1 and 2)? Is the water available now and is it expected to be in the future to meet the increased demand? If domestic water is not available in Phase 1, what will make it available in Phase 2? Will the surrounding neighbors suffer from this increased demand creating a health and safety issue for people and wildlife who already call this area home? The current application states that well tag number ABL 232 is currently

producing the maximum allowed usage of 5,000 gallons per day (gpd) at the ranch house. The average person consumes 80-100 gpd. How many people currently reside in the ranch house? How many stock tanks are being filled for horses? Is the well metered to demonstrate it is producing 5,000 gpd each and every day?

Last, there is a perceived conflict of interest created by Pat Deneen serving in two competing positions. First, as an agent of FCT working to bring this for-profit project to fruition. And, second as a servant on the Kittitas County's Planning Commission driving a process and authoring policies used in the evaluation of viability and suitability of projects like this. This apparent conflict of interest calls into question all aspects of this project, and Kittitas County's handling of it heretofore, sows doubt and distrust, and opens the door to future lawsuits. This alone should disqualify the project from moving forward.

In summary, we moved away from the hustle and bustle of King County living to fully enjoy the serenity of Goat Peak Ranch and the surrounding area. It is zoned RA-5/R-5. To us, and as codified, that meant that we were moving to a "...low, semirural residential densities within the Urban Growth Area on lands not suited to intense urban uses and not already characterized by urban development" and where the County would work to "minimize adverse effects on adjacent natural resource lands." This project would change all that. As such we join our many neighbors in asking you to listen to our many calls for reconsideration, including those communicated above, and implore you to deny this permit application.

Emphatically,

Kittitas County Citizens and Neighbors,  
Ed and Kathy Kratzer