



Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance
(307) 733-9417 • www.jhalliance.org

February 9, 2010

Mayor Mark Barron and Town of Jackson Town Council
RE: PAWS dog park proposal for Karns Meadow
Cc: Tyler Sinclair, Planning Director

Dear Mayor Barron and Town Councilors,

We are writing in regard to PAWS of Jackson Hole's proposed dog park on the Town of Jackson parcel in Karns Meadow. We strongly support PAWS's efforts in this community and recognize the need for a public dog park in town. We are committed to working with PAWS and the Town of Jackson to identify an appropriate location for a dog park; due to its value to wildlife, we must voice our strong concern that Karns Meadow is not it.

Ungulates traveling between nearby buttes, as well as waterfowl, foxes and other smaller creatures rely on the meadow year round. As one of the last vestiges of open space within Town boundaries, Karns Meadow is a clear example of Town's commitment to providing for wildlife habitat and connectivity as well as for a healthy riparian ecosystem, including the carefully planned park already scheduled for construction there. The proposed START Bus barn and the storm water wetland project, which will both inevitably encroach onto the dwindling wildlife habitat, pose enough of a threat to wildlife that additional pressure in the form of a dog park is not a responsible use of the site.

Our specific concerns are many, and include the fencing that will be put in place to keep dogs in, which will inevitably obstruct wildlife movement, and the impacts of the dog park on water quality and riparian or wetland vegetation in the meadow, not least of all the uncertain impacts of dog urine. Increased human traffic in the area due to this and other proposed developments, combined with the aforementioned factors, stand to effectively impede the ability of wildlife to cross the meadow in the future.

In addition, a dog park would be the most effective at limiting wildlife conflicts if it were open in the winter months. The winter is when our local wildlife is at its most susceptible to disturbances that sometimes mean the difference between survival and death. The Alliance completely agrees with the condition suggested by Game and Fish in their Jan. 13, 2010, letter stating that the Karns Meadow site necessitates winter closure in order to minimize impacts on local wintering wildlife. This condition implies that, irrespective of funding, the site will not be open in the winter in the future, making it limited in its ability to serve our community's needs.

There are numerous other options available for a dog park, which would have a negligible impact on wildlife, which could be open in the winter in the future - thereby further decreasing the impacts on wildlife in the surrounding public lands - and which could be considered further. These include but are not limited to: the new park planned for East Jackson, the back portion of the Center for the Arts lawn, the Parks and Recreation Center property, the new Post Office grounds, the Rodeo Grounds, a portion of Miller Park, a portion of Powderhorn Park, a portion of Mike Yokel Park, another vacant lot in town or the base of Snow King. There are likely pros and

cons regarding each of these sites, but we believe that there are too many cons to the Karns Meadow site to make it a viable option.

As PAWS has established, the benefits of a dog park cannot be understated. Not only will it give dog owners a place to exercise and socialize their dogs, but it also has the potential to decrease the impacts of dog use on the surrounding public lands. With more dogs in the dog park, potential wildlife conflicts elsewhere could be minimized. We also appreciate PAWS's commitments to enforcing park boundaries, although the enforcement requirements would likely be less onerous in a place without the wildlife concerns of the Karns Meadow site.

The Conservation Alliance is committed to working with PAWS and the Town of Jackson to identify a better location for a dog park, an amenity from which this community would surely benefit. We cannot support the proposal for a park in Karns Meadow because of the unacceptable impacts on wildlife that would come from a dog park situated in this fragile riparian environment.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Cindy Harger
Interim Executive Director



Kristy Bruner
Community Planning Director

Cc: Amy Romaine, Executive Director, PAWS of Jackson Hole
Larry Hamilton, Board President, PAWS of Jackson Hole



Cindy Harger, 2008



Franz Camenzind, 2008