

Memorandum

Date: December 12, 2025
To: Douglas County Board of County Commissioners
Through: Douglas J. DeBord, County Manager
From: Terence T. Quinn, AICP, Director of Community Development
CC: Brett Thomas, AICP, Chief Planner
Curtis J. Weitkunat, AICP, Long Range Planning Manager
Steven E. Koster, AICP, Assistant Director of Planning Services
Subject: **Highlands Ranch Planned Development, 81st Amendment**
Project File: **ZR2025-004**

Planning Commission Hearing:	December 1, 2025 @ 6:00 p.m.
Board of County Commissioners Hearing:	December 16, 2025 @ 2:30 p.m.

At the Planning Commission hearing on December 1, 2025, an attorney representing the Highlands Ranch Law Enforcement Training Foundation (HRLETF) requested a disclosure be included for future Backcountry applications. In response to public testimony, the Highlands Ranch Community Association (HRCA) agreed to consider such a disclosure. HRCA and the HRLETF Board have agreed on language for the disclosure.

Should the Board find that the approval criteria for the major amendment are met, the following additional condition should be considered for inclusion in its motion:

3. A notice reciting the potential impacts from the Highlands Ranch Law Enforcement Training Foundation shall be placed on each site improvement plan and plat which includes any portion of Planning Areas K and L.

The Highlands Ranch Law Enforcement Training Foundation (together with successors and assigns, "Facility") is adjacent to Planning Areas K and L. Owners, occupants, and visitors of Planning Areas K and L are subject to inherent health and safety risks, including but not limited to: (i) daily and potential night-time noise and vibration from firearms, explosives, helicopters, and vehicles; (ii) environmental exposure to lead and other contaminants; (iii) incidental safety risks related to firearms and tactical training activities conducted under organized conditions at the Facility; and (iv) potential interaction with dogs used in law enforcement training, which may carry a risk of bites or other injuries. A notice reciting the above-stated potential impacts from such the Facility shall be placed on each site improvement plan and plat which includes any portion of Planning Areas K and L.

The applicant, HRCA, has agreed to the proposed condition.

In addition, correspondence has been received since the staff report to the Board of County Commissioners was finalized on December 2, 2025. That public correspondence is attached to this memorandum.

ATTACHMENTS

Public Correspondence Since Staff Report Finalized

From: [Comcast](#)
To: BOCC@douglas.co.us
Subject: Zoning Change for Highlands Ranch Backcountry
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 1:55:13 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Please support the zoning change to allow for the basecamp building to be built on the Highlands Ranch Backcountry property.

This amenity is wonderful and my family has benefited over the years from all of their programs.

Chad

From: [Kelsey Hall](#)
To: bocc@douglas.co.us
Subject: APPROVE BACKCOUNTRY REZONING
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 1:05:19 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

REQUEST TO APPROVE BACKCOUNTRY REZONING
~~NOT~~ YES In My Backyard

HRCA Backcountry is the best representation of what Colorado stands for with its dream of bettering the next generation and reestablishing the local conservation land for generations to come. The Backcountry throughout the years has created the conservation area, reestablished the elk migration, removed deadfall and innocuous weeds (removing key fire starters), bettered the vegetation for feeding the bear, elk, deer and turkey populations, as well as established a nature-based learning environment for youngsters.

Without everything the Backcountry has established and maintained, the local Highlands Ranch and Douglas County would be lacking pivotal key attractions to the region. It's absurd to think that people would be protesting this action item without the true understanding of everything that the Backcountry has created and the opportunities that this will continue to bring the next generation, all because they believe their view of the mountains will be taken away.

Without the Backcountry and all its hard work, there would be no summer or winter nature camps, daily preschool activities onsite, horseback riding and training, the only outdoor 3D archery range in Colorado and summer movie series that is beloved by all. As well as, there would be continued poaching of animals, and human interactions via off-roading and biking through trails during pivotal migration periods of the wild animal reducing the population.

The Backcountry is requesting two buildings in the current human populated area of which the herds do not access to create all weather buildings for the people currently onsite using the property. The nature preschool and year-round camps deserve permanent facilities in which they are currently using mobile trailers.

****Note** that when getting criticism from the Cherokee Ranch neighborhood, they showed their view which seems to be missing the structures currently on property and the proposed buildings would be located with. All rezoning is being requested to the north of the neighborhood and would have no impact to the western mountain view. Funny enough, the buildings would only obstruct the elks view of the mountain as all property to the east in conservation land for miles.

*****Also**, ask them how much the elk population has increased over the years via the hard work and management by the Backcountry to reestablish the herd.

Sincerely,

Kelsey B. Hall, CPL

Director of Operations
P.O. Box 6194
Denver, CO 80206
M: 469-688-2411
khall@portcolorado.com
www.portcolorado.com

From: [Ryan Hall](#)
To: bocc@douglas.co.us
Subject: Vote to Approve Backcountry Rezoning
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 1:45:52 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Good afternoon,

As a Highlands Ranch resident and active community member, I can not emphasize enough how much the Backcountry means to the community and HRCA. They have done nothing but amplified everything that it means to be a Coloradan.

HRCA has increased the Elk population by managing the herd, restricting habitation by establishing the conservation area (as well as continued to adopt more land into it), limit seasonal activities and access for the herds to thrive and increase in population. As well as removed all poaching which used to occur on a regular basis prior to their creation.

Backcountry also focuses on the good of the people and next generation by allowing for youth camps, horseback riding, weekend nature activities, and summer night movies. We need more accessibility for events like this to allow for children to remain outdoors away from electronics and exploring / appreciating the great outdoors.

Without the continued betterment of the Backcountry, we will continue to live in a “not in my backyard” world where the concepts remain ideas that are never fulfilled and children are restricted to indoor activities with lack of socialization or conceptual understanding of the great State that we live in.

Best regards,

Ryan Hall, RPL

Staff Division Order Analyst

Overland Oil & Gas, LLC

44 Cook Street, Suite 650
Denver, CO 80206



From: [Seth Houy](#)
To: BOCC@douglas.co.us
Subject: Support for HRCA Zoning Amendment – Backcountry Wilderness Base Camp
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 12:45:50 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Commissioners,

My name is Seth Houy, and I'm both a Highlands Ranch resident and a parent of a five-year-old who participates in programs in the Backcountry Wilderness Area. I'm writing to express my support for HRCA's zoning amendment request that would allow the construction of two additional facilities at the Base Camp and Horse Corrals.

These programs have become an important part of our community—not just recreationally, but developmentally. The Backcountry Wilderness Area provides a safe, structured environment where kids can disconnect from screens, explore nature, build confidence, and learn hands-on skills they simply don't encounter elsewhere. As a parent, I've seen firsthand how meaningful these experiences are for my daughter and her peers.

The proposed facilities would create weather-resilient spaces that allow these programs to continue safely year-round, expand educational opportunities, and improve the quality of experiences offered to local families. Importantly, the plans stay within areas already used by people and impact less than 1% of the Backcountry's footprint, preserving the natural habitat while enhancing public benefit. This feels like a thoughtful, balanced approach that protects the wilderness area while still supporting growing community needs.

Highlands Ranch families deeply value the Backcountry and the unique programs HRCA provides. Strengthening this resource only enhances the long-term livability and appeal of our area—something I see every day in my work in residential real estate.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you'll support this amendment and the positive impact it will have on local children and families.

Sincerely,
Seth Houy
303-875-9841

From: [Whitney Pappas](#)
To: BOCC@douglas.co.us
Cc: [Liz Wattiker](#) ♥
Subject: I support the backcountry
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 1:04:30 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Hi,

I'm writing to express my support for more kids getting outdoors and the enhancement of the backcountry camp area.

-Whitney Pappas

From: [Susan Kamberos](#)
To: BOCC@douglas.co.us
Subject: HRCA Backcountry
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 7:09:10 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Dear Board Members,

I am in huge support of offering more opportunities to our kids in Highlands Ranch by enhancing the Outdoor Education program. Now more than ever our kids need to learn what amazing opportunities live outside of their houses, their phones and screens.

Please support the enhancements of the Backcountry Camp area.

Thank you,

Susan Kamberos

Administrative Assistant, School Leadership Department

Ian Wells, Executive Director of Schools (WHR Region)

John Gutierrez, Executive Directors of Schools (EHR Region)

(303) 387-9640

[School Leadership Google Site](#)



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From: [Kiel Downing](#)
To: BOCC@douglas.co.us
Subject: HRCA Backcountry Rezoning, Douglas County Board of County Commissioners
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 3:41:00 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Kiel Downing
10823 Cedar Brook lane
Highlands Ranch, CO 80126
kieltdown@gmail.com

Douglas County Board of County Commissioners
Attn: Planning / Land Use Division

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed rezoning of the Backcountry Wilderness Area.

My support is grounded in the following reasons:

1. The Backcountry Base Camp has already been used for outdoor education, equestrian and recreational programming since 2016. The proposed zoning formally acknowledges and clarifies these long-established uses and does not introduce new uses or pre-approve any construction. Rezoning of the area in questions would allow for continued and expanded opportunities to provide outdoor education and recreational opportunities. These programs will continue to be minimally impactful to the Backcountry and the surrounding community.
2. The rezoning applies only to 65 acres which is less than 1% of the 8,200-acre Backcountry area and focuses exclusively on areas already shaped by human activity (Base Camp and Horse Corrals), thereby preserving the vast majority of the property as protected wildlife habitat. This ensures that sensitive interior habitats, home to elk, birds, and other wildlife, remain undisturbed.
- 3 The Backcountry serves as a vital green space for families, youth, and adults by offering opportunities for environmental education, recreation, and connection with nature close to home. By concentrating human activity where infrastructure exists rather than in undisturbed natural zones, this rezoning balances human use with ecological stewardship which is a model approach for sustainable growth in our rapidly developing region.

I urge the Board to support the rezoning of the Backcountry Wilderness Area as proposed. This change represents thoughtful, balanced land-use planning that respects both the natural environment and our community's need for accessible green space, recreation, and environmental education.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

Kiel Downing

From: [Taylor Norris](#)
To: bocc@douglas.co.us
Subject: HRCA Backcountry Area Douglas County Zoning Project
Date: Sunday, December 7, 2025 1:09:42 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Hello Commissioners,

I am writing to share my support and feedback regarding the potential zoning project in the HRCA Backcountry area. My son attends Wild Roots Preschool, and our family deeply values the unique opportunity it provides for children to learn and grow immersed in nature every day.

This proposed project would offer families meaningful peace of mind, knowing that our little ones—and future students—will have a safe, weather-resilient space to learn during extremely cold or harsh conditions, while still remaining connected to their Wild Roots community. These improvements would enhance safety, create year-round learning environments, and expand access to high-quality, nature-based education. With the affected area representing less than 1% of the Backcountry, the proposal supports the places where children and visitors engage with nature, all while maintaining a conservation-first approach.

For Wild Roots specifically, we are thrilled about the prospect of dedicated indoor preschool classrooms that will serve current and future students, enriching their experience without compromising the program's outdoor focus.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to thoughtfully guiding the future of our community.

Sincerely,

Taylor Norris



Taylor Norris • Graphic
Designer
She/Her
p: 308.233.2621
e: taylor.marie.norris@gmail.com
w: <https://www.taylor-made-design.co/>

From: [Lee Kamberos](#)
To: BOCC@douglas.co.us
Subject: HRCA Backcountry
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 7:58:45 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Dear Board Members,

I am in huge support of offering more opportunities to our kids in Highlands Ranch by enhancing the Outdoor Education program. Now more than ever our kids need to learn what amazing opportunities live outside of their houses, their phones and screens.

Please support the enhancements of the Backcountry Camp area.

Thank you,
Lee Kamberos

From: [Chris Johnson](#)
To: bocc@douglas.co.us
Subject: Backcountry Zoning
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 2:17:06 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Dear County Commissioners,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Highlands Ranch Community Association's (HRCA) zoning efforts aimed at conservation, specifically as it relates to their efforts to protect habitat while fostering improved facilities for their program participants, with a focus on safety. The Backcountry Wilderness Area is like no other, anywhere in the country. It serves as a model for inter-urban conservation in the areas of habitat improvement, outreach and recreational opportunities.

I believe these efforts are vital for preserving the Backcountry Wilderness Area and ensuring the long-term environmental health of our community. Supporting HRCA in this initiative will help protect open space and maintain the quality of life in Highlands Ranch.

I urge you to approve the proposed zoning measures that support these important conservation goals and HRCA's ongoing mission of outdoors related engagement.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,
Chris Johnson
Highlands Ranch, CO

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Chris Johnson
President
Rome Sausage Company
303-296-7663
www.romesausage.com

From: [Woody Anderson](#)
To: BOCC@douglas.co.us
Subject: Backcountry Wilderness Base Camp
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 1:11:21 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

County Commissioners,

I'm writing to share my strong support for the Highland Ranch Backcountry Wilderness Area's request to rezone their property off Santa Fe.

We were residents of Highlands Ranch for 17 years and have been in Roxborough for the last three. While in Highlands Ranch, the Backcountry Wilderness Area played a vital role in the life of our family. We participated in many of their programs as we sought experiences for our children that would connect them to the beautiful natural world that was in our backyard. Those decisions were instrumental in growing their respect for and desire to protect and enjoy all that the Backcountry Wilderness area and beyond has to offer.

The team that supports the BWA has done as best they can with the very limited resources available to them. The potential is so much greater and hearing of their plans to build structures that support their mission deserves our backing. Their mission is desperately needed in a world filled with screens, phones, video games and indoor entertainment. Every time a child interacts with nature, we have taken one small step to ensuring the magnificent beauty of Colorado is better understood and valued for future generations.

Please vote to support the Backcountry Wilderness Area!

Thank you,
Sherwood (Woody) Anderson
10541 Raven Run
Roxborough, CO 80125

From: [Chris](#)
To: bocc@douglas.co.us
Subject: Backcountry Wilderness Area Zoning
Date: Sunday, December 7, 2025 10:26:09 AM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Hello. I would like to express my support for the proposed zoning updates to allow future development of weather-safe shelter for the outdoor education program and an indoor equestrian facility.

I am a senior citizen who is relatively new to Highlands Ranch. This year I started taking riding lessons at the horse corrals. The instructor, Nichole Adams, is a highly qualified expert and excellent teacher. I am learning so much about horses, including their care. However, I will not be continuing my lessons during the winter months. It's too cold for me. In addition to thinking about my own comfort, I am concerned about the instructors and horses who are outside in the freezing cold and blazing heat.

Additionally, I believe more families and children would enjoy the resources of the Backcountry Wilderness Area if an indoor classroom or shelter facility were provided. I was very surprised to learn that children in the Wild Roots Preschool are outdoors year round. I'm sure HRCA has ensured that the children are safe, but it seems extreme.

I understand some residents and neighbors are concerned about the impact on the environment or aesthetics. The equestrian facility in particular is located close to the road; on the road side of the law enforcement facility. I haven't studied wildlife patterns, of course, but it doesn't seem like a spot that would be attractive to elk and other animals. As for aesthetic concerns, the existing set up of portable sheds and make-shift fencing is hardly attractive. There are many examples of beautiful horse stables and indoor rings.

I hope this zoning proposal is accepted and eventually leads to the construction of new facilities for people and horses.

Thank you,

Chris Siegel

From: [Jeff Wellen](#)
To: BOCC@douglas.co.us
Subject: Backcountry Wilderness Area - Support for Zoning for New Buildings
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 7:42:22 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Douglas County Commissioners,

I wanted to write in support of the proposed construction of the new buildings in the Backcountry Wilderness Area. My wife, twin 10 year old daughters, and I all love the Backcountry and the opportunities and programs the BWA offers to get us outside. My daughters have learned to ride horses, had outdoor survival camps, attended summer camps, birthday parties, and so many other fun outdoor activities. Having additional amenities for camps and horse riding will benefit so many people, but especially the kids.

Please approve the construction of these buildings.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jeff Wellen, P.E.
Highlands Ranch Resident since 2010

From: [Ryan Hall](#)
To: bocc@douglas.co.us
Subject: Backcountry Rezoning Approval
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 1:47:29 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Hello,

As a Highlands Ranch resident and active community member, I can not emphasize enough how much the Backcountry means to the community and HRCA. They have done nothing but amplified everything that it means to be a Coloradan.

HRCA has increased the Elk population by managing the herd, restricting habitation by establishing the conservation area (as well as continued to adopt more land into it), limit seasonal activities and access for the herds to thrive and increase in population. As well as removed all poaching which used to occur on a regular basis prior to their creation.

Backcountry also focuses on the good of the people and next generation by allowing for youth camps, horseback riding, weekend nature activities, and summer night movies. We need more accessibility for events like this to allow for children to remain outdoors away from electronics and exploring / appreciating the great outdoors.

Without the continued betterment of the Backcountry, we will continue to live in a “not in my backyard” world where the concepts remain ideas that are never fulfilled and children are restricted to indoor activities with lack of socialization or conceptual understanding of the great State that we live in.

-Ryan

From: [Kristi Giebel](#)
To: BOCC@douglas.co.us
Subject: Backcountry Basecamp
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 1:12:46 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of getting more kids outside and enhancing the backcountry. Both of my children have attended camp throughout the years and have absolutely loved it. I truly believe that the future of conservation is dependent on educating our youth to love and protect the outdoor outdoors. Having these enhancements in the backcountry will teach more kids to do exactly that!

Thank you,
Kristi

From: [Jennifer Morton](#)
To: bocc@douglas.co.us
Subject: Backcountry Base Camp
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 7:45:55 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Hello Commissioners,

I'm writing to express my strong support for the proposed zoning change that would allow the Backcountry Base Camp to add a new building for its outdoor education and youth programs.

I've lived in Highlands Ranch for 24 years and my family has both worked at and attended the Backcountry programs. They've been an incredible resource for kids and for our community.

I encourage you to approve the zoning change and support the continued growth of these programs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Morton
Highlands Ranch Resident

Sent from [Outlook](#)

From: [Halls](#)
To: bocc@douglas.co.us
Subject: Back Country Wilderness Area Zoning Support
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 4:30:50 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

TO: Douglas County Commissioners

FROM: Steve Hall, Highland Ranch Homeowner, Fish and Wildlife Agency
Professional Conservation Educator, Volunteer

RE: Highland Ranch Community Association (HRCA); Backcountry Wilderness Area

SUBJ: Support and Feedback - Zoning Process

I strongly support your consideration of the zoning proposals for the HRCC Backcountry Wilderness Area to achieve three main objectives:

1. Improve safety and program quality by eventually allowing appropriate facilities—such as weather-safe shelter—for the outdoor education and equestrian programs that have grown significantly since 2016.
2. Expand year-round access to environmental education and outdoor recreation for families across the region.
3. Protect high-value habitat by relocating development potential away from sensitive interior areas and concentrating it at Base Camp and the Horse Corrals—two areas already shaped by human activity.

As a longtime outdoor and conservation administrator, educator and volunteer, I know that fulfilling the objectives above will improve: 1) overall family health and quality of life, 2) conservation efforts in Douglas County and its communities, and 3) safe and responsible outdoor and indoor programming for Highlands Ranch citizens and their guests.

Having worked for over 45 years for such agencies and organizations as Texas Parks and Wildlife (36 years), Colorado Division of Wildlife, and International Hunter Education Association, and having recently started

volunteering for the HRCC leading such activities as birdwatching, and elk/nature tours, and teaching activities such as archery, I know how important it is to lead safe, interactive and informational activities that are inviting, comfortable, proximal and engaging to families. With the addition of high quality places to gather and learn, especially during inclement weather, HRCA will enhance many of its Backcountry facilities and activities, especially those geared towards young people. Volunteer instructors like myself can greatly expand our conservation education programs where we can 'meet & teach', then head 'up the trail' for hands-on learning experiences. My personal specialty is safe, legal and ethical outdoor behaviors and the Backcountry zoning effort will most certainly enhance those recreational standards.

Thank you for your consideration -- an important step for Douglas County -- the model for Colorado!

Steve Hall, Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW) Education & Outreach Director and Hunter Education Coordinator, 36 years (retired), and TPW/Colorado Division of Wildlife Hunter and Aquatic Education Instructor -- 45 years

From: [Kelsey Bechtold](#)
To: bocc@douglas.co.us
Subject: Approve Backcountry Rezoning
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 1:22:46 PM

Caution: This email originated outside the organization. Be cautious with links and attachments.

Please approve the Backcountry rezoning. The facts are simple!

HRCA's philosophy remains:

1. Conservation first
2. Recreation and education only where they have minimal impact
3. Connecting people to nature to build long-term conservation support

The amendment continues this approach and reflects how the Backcountry Wilderness Area has been successfully managed since 2009.

HRCA will continue to:

1. Improve safety and program quality by eventually allowing appropriate facilities—such as weather-safe shelter—for the outdoor education and equestrian programs that have grown significantly since 2016.
2. Expand year-round access to environmental education and outdoor recreation for families across the region.
3. Protect high-value habitat by relocating development potential away from sensitive interior areas and concentrating it at Base Camp and the Horse Corrals—two areas already shaped by human activity.

HRCA's conservation management has strengthened wildlife health across the property:

1. Elk populations have doubled
2. Turkeys have tripled
3. Habitat quality continues to improve

The zoning update applies only to areas already shaped by human activity and has little or no impact on wildlife corridors or interior habitat.

HRCA safety in learning:

1. HRCA has safely operated children's programs, camps, and equestrian activities next to the LETF for more than a decade without any safety incidents. The LETF is not a public facility and is occupied by law enforcement agents. The out-of-sight yet ever-presence of law enforcement actually improves the safety of Backcountry Wilderness Area attendees. The possibility of a future Base Camp building would also allow the Backcountry Wilderness Area to operate independently during inclement weather as our current option is to shelter within the LETF classrooms. LETF has been and will be an important and great partner.

The Backcountry Wilderness Area will continue to be managed as one of the region's largest conservation areas, with:

1. Strictly protected wildlife habitat
2. Environmental education programs concentrated in low-impact zones
3. Deliberate multi-use trails in low-impact zones

Again, please approve this rezoning request for the Backcountry.

Kelsey Bechtold
607 Huntington Place,
Highlands Ranch, CO 80126