



East Vail’s wildlife herd taking a midday lie about in an East Vail residential neighborhood. I70 wildlife fencing blocks the migratory paths of wildlife herd animals.

VHA Report: What’s Next: Open Space and wildlife – Part Four

December, 11 2024

Health officials applying undisputed environmental and community health standards, say it is not a medically sound practice for humans or wildlife to sedentarily shelter long-term in close proximity with each other. Wildlife can become habituated to human contact. Wildlife encounters with people unaware of wildlife behaviors is a public safety issue for authorities. In central Vail, a female moose with calves, endangered unwitting tourists seeking to take “selfie photos” with themselves, the moose mother and calves. Wild animals, particularly moose are prone, if provoked, to make a violent self-defensive attack. Vail was never intended to be a wildlife petting zoo.



Wildlife control official using tranquilizer dart to sedate a young moose in the Lionshead Parking Structure. Wildlife that become habituated to human contact and poses a threat are, in most instances, relocated and released into uninhabited areas.

The purpose of open spaces are to function as fire breaks and grazing lands for migrating herds, which allow animals to freely circulate as they seasonally pass through the town and surrounding region. Vail was designed by highly placed wildlife and conservationists visionaries. They set out principles for a community wide network

of open space in the interest of wildfire prevention and wildlife preservations. These principles were based upon international scientific and best practices standards.

The TOV has, over the years, demonstrated inconsistent successes in defending against incursions onto publicly controlled open spaces , whether owned privately or publicly. The TOV management of open spaces is subject to political maneuvering and obstreperous litigation, which has caused millions in unnecessary expenses and engendered conflict injurious to the stability of the community’s public interest.

As a property owner the TOV was given and accepted the responsibility to assist in enforcing property owner covenant protections adopted before the Town of Vail was formed. Their purpose of the covenants, in part, is to enforce conformity with the purposes of open space protections There are reasons to believe, according to some who voice concern, that the Town has not adequately fulfilled its responsibilities. Public trust needs to be restored.

For these reasons, it may now be appropriate to devise a separate governing entity, publicly elected with taxing authority, to administrate Vail’s Gore Valley open space and its indigenous wildlife populations. The purpose of the entity would be to oversees and assists in administrating public and private open spaces on behalf of the indigenous populations within the Gore Valley.

The Booth Heights experience stimulated a resurgence in the community’s collective memory about its long-held wildlife conservation principles. Violating these steadfast preservation beliefs triggered the community’s impulse to protect the wildlife habitat against the incursion of the proposed Booth Heights housing development in East Vail. In the process, a new generation of local environmental activists has emerged. Procrastination about taking further principled steps to resolve open space and wildlife preservation issues, is not a cure.

A reader wrote, “I’m writing to say that I hope the VHA continues to serve its very important role as a watchdog and advocate. The VHA’s efforts have been invaluable at keeping folks “honest” and letting local government and officials know that someone is watching. The bigger Vail gets, the more the VHA is needed.”

VHA, is funded by voluntary dues pledged annually from condominium associations and individual property owners. Members are primarily the part-time resident property owners from Vail’s founding generations. As Vail grows, traditional assumptions of political activism have also become more complicated and costly.

VHA is a member and reader-supported non-profit. Memberships and contributions fuel the VHA reports, *Letters to Vail* and help VHA respond to important issues, expand our reach and ensure transparency and coverage. VHA is thankful for support and participation from the Vail community. We are pledged to remain at the forefront of advocating on behalf of the mutual interests of full and part-time residents and property owners.

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