

Hello Commissioners and County Planning Department,

I am a resident of Josephine County and I am concerned about the public participation process regarding notifying neighbors and park visitors of the development plans for Whitehorse Park, as well as the plans that have been approved for development being beyond the carrying capacity of the 17.5 acres Whitehorse Park consists of.

The public participation process was not adequate in notifying neighbors or park visitors, as there are still folks who live right down the street from the park that are/were not until recently, aware that this development is happening. When the public was alerted and began to speak at public meetings (back in February 2020), their concerns seemed to fall on deaf ears and were told, on more than one occasion “this project is over 10 years old, and will happen no matter what you say or how many signatures you show in protest to the project”. As residents of the County, and active visitors of Whitehorse Park and many other JoCo Parks, we feel these plans are outdated (10+ years old!) due to the current state of environmental affairs and that our many concerns and considerations that have been supported scientifically and by several individuals who make tree and environmental study their profession, are dangerous to carry out. We are sad that as our County Officials you have ignored our cries to find a common ground and find a development plan that will enhance the wondrous beauty of Whitehorse, our oldest County Park. The procedure of county hearings and decision by Planning Director before the Goal 3 exception approval for full hook-ups lessened the opportunity of citizens to have any meaningful participation in the planning process.

The development plans as they stand will change Whitehorse Park into a high density RV parking lot that will no longer retain one of the main features of the park as the upper woodland of 350 trees and all the life and habitat that these trees provide. In addition, this destruction of natural spaces and replacement with pavement will increase temperatures of the immediate and surrounding areas immensely, causing increased wild-fire concern, and drought concern, considering we are in the lowest rain-fall year ever in Josephine County, and older trees retain moisture far beyond the abilities of young/baby/newly planted trees. The trees that are left standing will suffer from the loss of the 350 trees marked to be removed. This functioning biologically diverse, ecological environment will soon turn into a “built” environment with pollutants instead of sustainable organisms becoming much hotter, dryer, and significantly damaged by soil compaction, root damage, drainage changes, increased tree stress due to changing micro climate, and so many more factors!

Trees are the legacy of our generation that Today, We, YOU, can Choose to protect and preserve and pass along to future generations.

I ask that you please reconsider these outdated plans that do not fit the land of which Whitehorse Park makes up, nor do they satisfy the people of your County.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and for doing the right thing.