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From Hendrix to Hallelujah, final names for Droste selected

Writer:

Andrew Travers

Byline:

Aspen Daily News Staff Writer

Jimi Hendrix, Paul McCartney and local school kids may have a hand in naming Pitkin County's prized new open space area between Aspen and Snowmass Village.

The naming committee for the prominent 850-acre scenic area, purchased from the Droste family last December and now open to the public, collected suggestions over the last month from the public to name the entire "mountain park" area and also the trail running across its ridge.

On Wednesday, the committee culled those suggestions down to 10 finalists. Over the next month, students in Aspen area schools will vote on them and pick their favorites. There also will be an online survey for the public to choose their picks.

The county hopes to have a name selected by early November, when public meetings will begin on the management plan and possible trail expansions for the area.

"I think we need something with a little soul," said Martha Cochran, director of the Aspen Valley Land Trust, a local nonprofit dedicated to preserving open lands.

"I don't want it to sound like another ski run," added Aspen Mayor Mick Ireland.

"I don't want it to sound like a subdivision," quipped county open space board member Hawk Greenway.

So, what did they come up with?

Finalists for the whole area are: "Elk Mountain Park;" "Let It Be Park;" "Shining Mountains Park;" "Skyline Park," and "Wild Thing Park."

For the ridge trail, the finalists are: "Hallelujah Ridge;" "Longview Ridge;" "Open Sky Ridge;" "Touch the Sky Ridge" and "Wild Thing Ridge."

Committee members racked their brains for two hours in the basement of City Hall on Wednesday, sparring over elements they want to include, like nods to the wildlife in the area, its geological history, natural character, and the feeling one has while on top of the ridge.

Pitkin County Commissioner Jack Hatfield spoke against "Let It Be" or "Wild Thing," after the Beatles and Hendrix songs, saying the ridge shouldn't be tainted by pop culture references.

The committee also dumped the many public suggestions referencing recent fossil discoveries on the property, for fear of overshadowing Snowmass Village's marketing for its historic paleontology dig at

Ziegler Reservoir.

They scrapped suggested names like “Radar Ridge,” because the radar there will likely be removed at some point, and “Whiskey Ridge,” for fear of promoting alcohol abuse.

Among the more playful names that didn’t make the cut were Ireland’s suggestions like, “OMG Ridge,” “WTF Ridge,” “Look Down on Rich People’s Houses Ridge” or “Class Warfare Park.”

A Denver-based real estate agent submitted “Elected Officials Get it Right Park.”

Charlie Eckart, of the city’s open space board, sent in a suggestion to name it “Will Power,” after county open space director Dale Will and as a nod to the steep ascent to the ridge. Will was against that option. He favored naming it “Wapiti” ridge or park, using the Ute Indian name for “elk,” but the idea didn’t garner any support from the committee, which also included city parks and recreation manager Jeff Woods.

The parcel completes a 2,500-plus-acre corridor of public land between Aspen and Snowmass Village. The county bought it from the Droste family, with contributions from Aspen, Snowmass, the state of Colorado and Aspen Valley Land Trust, for \$17 million. The family and Pitkin County battled for more than a decade leading up to the sale, as the Drostes sought to build a luxury subdivision on their land and the county attempted to block them.

The area has informally been referred to as “Droste” since then, but local officials don’t want that name to stick.

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