

# THE ASPEN TIMES

## Pitkin County close to preserving habitat for elk

Cozy Point South to be open space

**By Naomi Havlen**  
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A highly visible swath of land along Highway 82 is a step away from being protected as open space.

The large parcel is on the right side of the highway just past Brush Creek Road when driving upvalley. The 129 acres known as Cozy Point South are part of the critical winter range for the Burnt Mountain elk herd, according to Dale Will, director of Pitkin County Open Space and Trails.

The property is owned by the Aspen Country Day School LLC and will be sold as open space to the county for \$2.75 million. Pitkin County commissioners approved the first reading of the purchase at their meeting Wednesday.

"This is a huge piece of property for us to preserve," Commissioner Patti Clapper said. Elk are frequently seen on this parcel of land, Will said, demonstrating that it's a valuable portion of habitat for elk in the Brush Creek Valley.

A number of development proposals have threatened the property in the past, he said, but now the land can be preserved as a landmark in the Roaring Fork Valley.

"This is a piece of land that gives everyone a sense of place when traveling up and down the valley," he said.

Michael Goldberg, manager for Aspen Country Day School LLC, said the land was purchased several years ago with the intention of expanding the school's campus and the potential to build a high school. When those efforts didn't come to fruition, the owners decided the next best thing would be to sell the land to someone who would preserve it as open space. Open space was a priority for the partners, he said, rather than elk habitat.

"We wanted to preserve the open space, and whatever else comes along with that is just a bonus," Goldberg said Wednesday.

Goldberg signed the contract to sell the property on Feb. 16. Open Space and Trails plans to seek grant assistance from Great Outdoors Colorado to help offset the cost of the purchase, and as part of that plan they will grant a conservation easement on the land to a third party, like the Aspen Valley Land Trust.

Commissioner Jack Hatfield thanked the open space board for putting together the deal, and Goldberg for being willing to sell the property to be protected from development.

Pitkin County is close to protecting open space along Highway 82 near Brush Creek Road. Aspen Times photo/Mark Fox.



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"It's important as habitat and as the entrance to upvalley - Aspen and Snowmass," he said. "It's a heck of a wonderful piece of land to preserve."

The purchase will be up for a public hearing at the county commissioners' March 9 meeting.

Also at Wednesday's meeting, commissioners approved first reading of the purchase of 10 acres up Avalanche Creek in the Crystal River Valley for open space. The land is critical winter range habitat for bighorn sheep in the area, Will said.

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[BACK](#) 