

Proposed park south of river in Silt would feature two active gas wells

Town, land trust seek GOCO's help to buy parcel

[JOHN COLSON](#)

POST INDEPENDENT STAFF

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, CO COLORADO,

SILT, Colorado – Town officials here, working with a regional land conservation group, are hoping to make a park out of 210 acres of pasture land south of the Colorado River.

One unusual thing about the proposed park, said town administrator Betsy Suerth recently, is that it ultimately is to become home to two active gas wells, as well as to the recreational and other amenities the town plans to put there.

The land lies just off County Road 346, which parallels Interstate 70, currently is outside Silt's municipal boundaries, and belongs to the Dixon Water Foundation.

In a letter to Garfield County, Suerth outlined an acquisition plan that involves both the town and the Aspen Valley Land Trust, a Carbondale-based nonprofit that works to preserve agricultural and other open spaces from development.

“The 50 acres of the property nearest to County Road 346,” the letter explains, “is intended for development of a public park, nature trail system and other recreational amenities. In addition, the town intends to provide public access to the river, with an access road across the 160 acres of open space.”

The town is applying for a Great Outdoors Colorado grant to buy the park site, while AVLTL is applying for a separate grant to buy the 160 acres that is to remain in open space and agricultural use.

The purchase price of the land, according to Suerth, is \$1.89 million.

The projected amount of the grant applications, however, is to be approximately \$1.93 million to cover the property's price tag as well as other costs related to the transaction.

The grant applications will be roughly \$460,000 for the town, and \$1.47 million for AVLTL.

Each of the two grants calls for a local match – 30 percent for the smaller grant, and 25 percent for the larger.

The Garfield County commissioners this week pledged to contribute \$100,000 toward Silt's matching funds.

“We're very excited about this,” said Martha Cochran of AVLTL, explaining that “this is a very rich piece of property.”

Among other things, she said, the property contains several active eagle's nests, a heron rookery, riparian habitat, and a corridor for herds of elk and deer that water at the river.

Suerth said that the Antero Resources company is still in the pre-development stages of preparing to drill for natural gas from two planned well pads on the property, and that it is unknown when drilling is to commence.

But, she said, the company has offered personnel to serve on the planning team for the park.

“We have a very good relationship with Antero,” Suerth said. “We’re actually pretty excited to try to be a model of collaboration on park development in concert with gas well development.”

jcolson@postindependent.com

<http://www.postindependent.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091214/VALLEYNEWS/912139996&parentprofile=search&template=printart>