



**IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

MAGIC VALLEY REGION  
324 South 417 East, Suite 1  
Jerome, Idaho 83338

C.L. "Butch" Otter / Governor  
Virgil Moore / Director

November 23, 2016

Tom Bergin  
Blaine County Planning and Zoning  
219 First Avenue South, Suite 208  
Hailey, Idaho 83333

**Re: Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley, Croy Creek, Blaine County**

Dear Tom:

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) staff has toured the site and reviewed the Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley conditional use permit (CUP) application submitted by Benchmark Associates, P.A. for the development of a new animal shelter on 20 acres located at 101 Croy Creek Road. The new shelter will consist of series of connected buildings and is intended to supplement the existing nearby shelter.

The purpose of these comments is to assist the decision-making authority by providing technical information addressing potential effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat and how any adverse effects might be mitigated. It is not the purpose of IDFG to support or oppose this proposal. Resident species of fish and wildlife are property of all Idaho citizens, and IDFG and the Idaho Fish and Game Commission are expressly charged with statutory responsibility to preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage all fish and wildlife in Idaho (Idaho Code 36-103 (a)). In fulfillment of our statutory charge and direction as provided by the Idaho Legislature, we offer the following comments and suggestions.

Croy Creek Canyon provides important seasonal and year-round habitat for a variety of native wildlife. Native plant communities within the canyon provide winter habitat for elk, fawning habitat for mule deer, and potential seasonal habitat for a variety of other native wildlife including Brewer's sparrows, greater sage-grouse, and pygmy rabbits. Human activity and infrastructure near or within areas used by wildlife can disrupt migrations, reduce the quality and quantity of winter habitat, and increase stress during crucial life history stages.

Depending on winter weather severity, as many as 50 elk (Map 1) winter in Croy Creek Canyon, typically at higher elevations. The proposed development is in a mule deer migration corridor (Map 2). The corridor is used by mule deer moving from high elevation summer/fall habitat to low elevation winter habitat and back. The current development does not represent a substantive risk for migrating mule deer; however, future development in this portion of the canyon could affect the corridor.

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To minimize the effects of development on wildlife resources in the area, we recommend the following plat notes:

- Big game and other wildlife depredations on native plant restorations, landscaping plants, and gardens are anticipated if development occurs at this site. All responsibility for controlling wildlife depredation will belong with the property owner. Any actions taken to alleviate depredation will be those prescribed by IDFG.
- Unsecured garbage has the potential to attract black bears and other animals. We encourage the property owners to use bear-proof garbage containers and dumpsters.
- Refuse (household garbage, landscaping trimmings, etc.) burning should be strictly prohibited.
- Pets running at large dramatically increase the negative effects of developments on wildlife. All pets should be kept in-doors, kenneled, or leashed at all times.
- We recommend all outside pet kennels are completely enclosed, including a roof, to prevent mountain lion and other predator depredation.
- All pet food should be stored and fed in a manner that does not attract “nuisance” wildlife (e.g., skunks, raccoons, magpies, red fox, etc.). All responsibility for controlling nuisance wildlife will belong with the property owner. Any actions taken to alleviate nuisance wildlife problems will be those prescribed by IDFG.
- Fences should be built according to wildlife-friendly specifications to facilitate continued wildlife passage through the area. No perimeter fences would be our preferred option. The following link provides good information on wildlife-friendly fence designs: <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/landowners/>.
- All hay and other livestock feed should be stored and fed in a manner that does not attract big game or other wildlife species. Attracting big game from native habitats exacerbates existing winter habitat problems in the Blaine County. Any hay or livestock feed left on the premises during winter months should be made unavailable to big game.
- We recommend the feeding of game species or predatory wildlife be prohibited. Artificial feeding of wildlife tends to attract and concentrate animals away from native habitat, can facilitate the spread of disease, and has the potential to create conflict between neighboring homeowners due to the likelihood wildlife will use adjacent properties where they may be considered a nuisance.
- All actions needed for urban interface fire prevention (vegetation removal, fuel breaks, etc.) should be completed within the building envelopes. No vegetation clearing or other actions should occur on naturally vegetated portions of the property. Should this type of work require a larger space than that allotted for building envelopes, we recommend enlarging the building envelopes enough to accommodate these actions.

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- Native plant communities support the most stable and diverse wildlife populations. Removal of native vegetation should be minimized and restricted to what is necessary to construct roadways, buildings, and other infrastructure. Vegetation and soil disturbance by contractors and utilities companies should be limited to roads and building envelopes only. We recommend all disturbed sites are restored using native plant materials.
- Croy Creek Canyon contains public lands that provide popular access for recreation (i.e., hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, etc.). All support and administrative staff, and other guests should be notified that these activities on public lands are lawful, and constitutionally protected in the case of hunting, and will continue into the future.

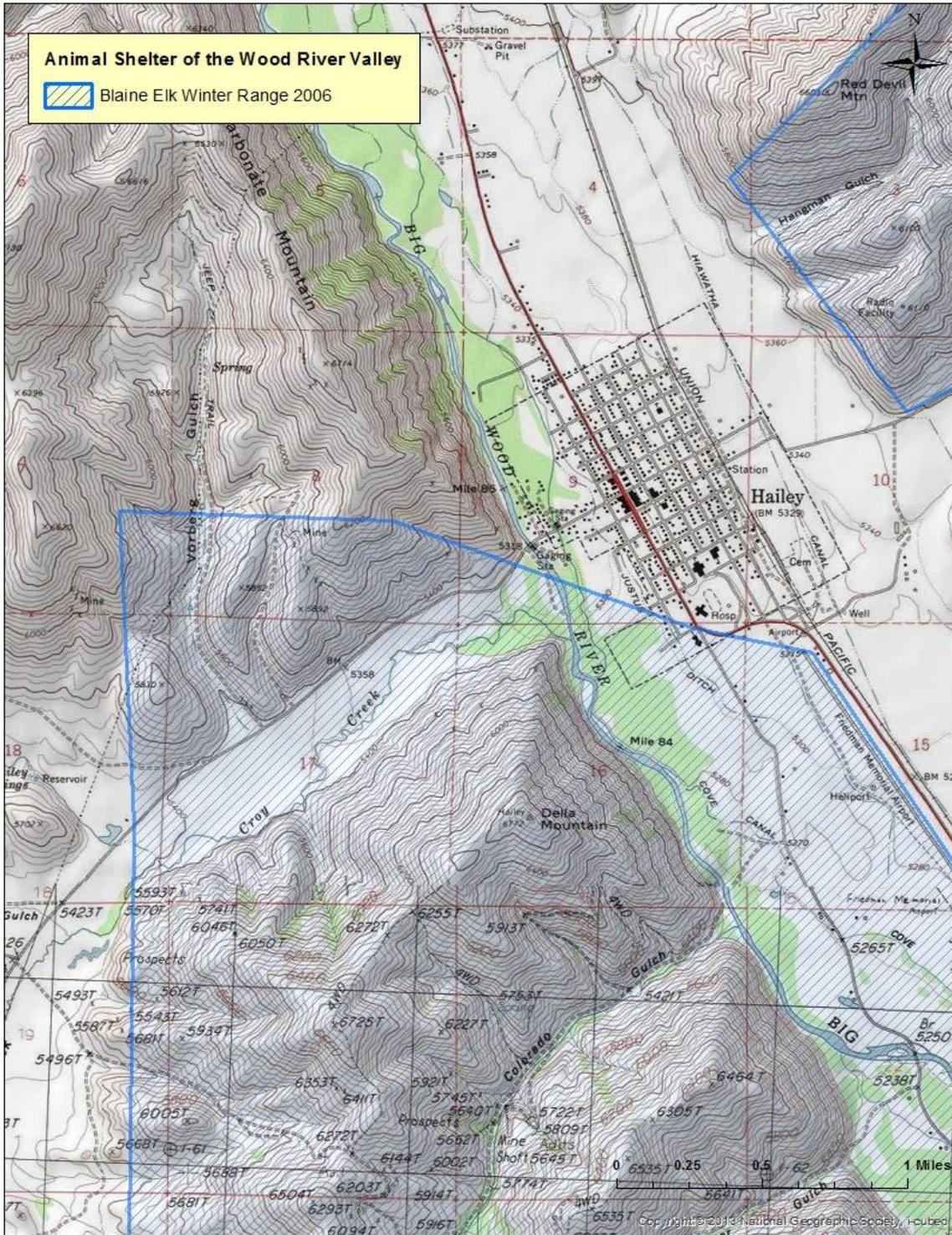
Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please contact Mike McDonald, Environmental Staff Biologist, in this office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

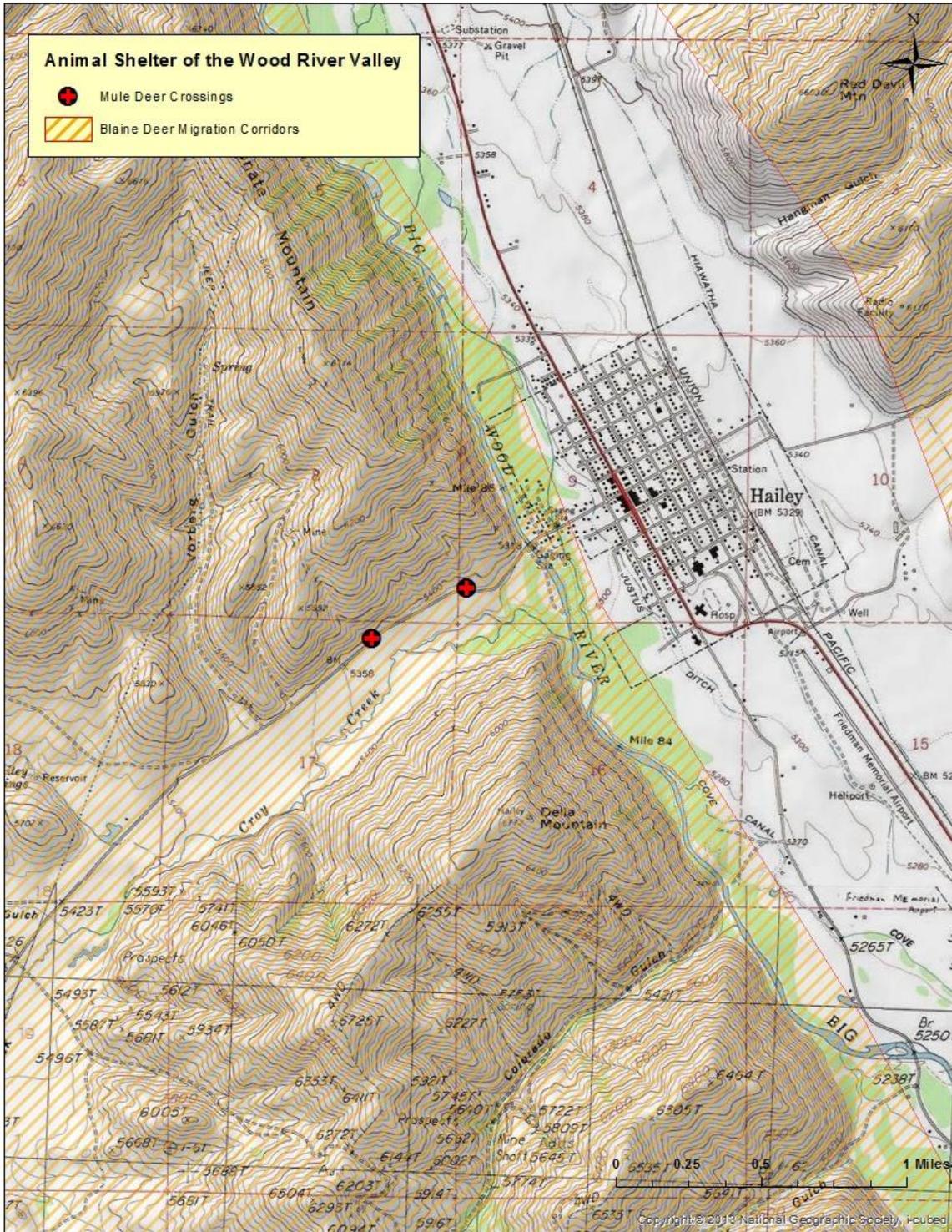


Toby Boudreau  
Magic Valley Regional Supervisor

Cc: Sam Stahlnecker (Benchmark Associates, P.A.)  
Nancy Cooley (Blaine County)  
IDFG – Boise (Vecellio)  
ECc: IDFG (R4 staff)



Map 1. Designated elk winter habitat, Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley, Croy Creek Canyon, Blaine County.



Map 2. Mule deer migration corridor and mule deer crossings, Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley, Croy Creek Canyon, Blaine County.