



City of Glenwood Springs
101 West 8th Street
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Study: Native wildlife and plants threatened by mine expansion *Extensive survey of proposed mine expansion area reveals healthy habitat*

The proposed expansion of the Mid-Continent Quarry near Glenwood Springs would have profound negative impacts on surrounding habitat and the wildlife that depends on it, including elk, deer, bighorn sheep, golden eagles and numerous species of migratory songbirds.

That's according to an analysis by the highly regarded Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) of the public lands that would be affected by the proposed mine expansion. The CNHP is a nonprofit organization sponsored by the [Warner College of Natural Resources](#) at Colorado State University that tracks and ranks Colorado's rare and imperiled species and habitats, and provides expertise on these topics to promote the conservation of Colorado's biological resources. It also offers a wide range of related services including biological monitoring, research, mapping, and conservation planning services. (<https://cnhp.colostate.edu/>)

The City of Glenwood Springs commissioned the survey as part of its information gathering process around the proposed mine expansion, which would create a 447-acre open pit quarry in wild lands a half mile from the city limits. City Manager Debra Figueroa said it was important to assess the environmental values that would be affected by the proposed expansion.

"We hope this information will help inform the Bureau of Land Management's decision-making about the proposal to expand the quarry" Figueroa said. "Not only will the quarry have enormous impacts on our local economy, it will also have irrevocable impacts on the plants and wildlife that also call this area home."

The Mid-Continent Quarry is a 15.7-acre open pit mine located a mile north of downtown Glenwood Springs, directly adjacent to Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park. If approved, the expanded quarry would be almost 30 times larger than the existing one. The proposed expansion, proposed by Rocky Mountain Resources, a Beverly Hills, Calif.-based company, is currently under review by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Specialists from the CNHP spent considerable time in 2019 cataloging the plants and animals that live in and otherwise utilize the habitat that will be destroyed by the mine expansion assessing the overall environmental health and importance of the area to wildlife.

“Currently,” the CNHP report concludes, “this site continues to provide high quality wildlife habitat and is consequently important to the survivability of numerous native wildlife species from Neotropical migrant breeding bird species to big game species such as elk and mule deer and native carnivores such as mountain lion.”

Some of the key wildlife values currently supported by the healthy habitat in the mine’s proposed expansion area include:

§ Provisioning of winter habitat for elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep. Winter is an especially vulnerable time of year for wildlife, and accessible and secure winter habitat is critical to the survivability of most native wildlife species.

§ Three golden eagles, two adults and one sub-adult, were observed flying over the proposed mine-site expansion area on 3 of 5 survey days, suggesting that a nest site was likely nearby.

§ A total of 56 breeding bird species were identified during the surveys, which is an indicator of habitat quality and the high value of this site for breeding bird species.

§ Native plant species richness is high in this area with at least 114 native plant species; native plant species richness is an indicator of system stability and resilience.

§ High connectivity between south-facing slopes that provide winter habitat, and the Flattops that provide summer habitat is important for seasonal migration of a number of species.

In addition to affecting area wildlife, the proposed quarry expansion will radically increase the amount of truck traffic through Glenwood Springs, and expand operations from the current seasonal work to 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, year round. Opposition to the quarry expansion has garnered widespread support from residents and business owners, who see the proposal as a threat to the city’s \$500 million tourism economy that employs 2,000 people. Local municipal and county governments throughout the region have been unanimous in their opposition as well.

Glenwood Springs is best known as a historic destination, receiving 1.2 million visitors per year who visit for its world-famous natural hot springs pools, outdoor recreation activities that include hiking, biking, skiing, golf, caving, as well as water-based activities accessible on the iconic Colorado River. The Glenwood Springs economy has been based on tourism since 1885, the year of its incorporation. It has been recognized as the 2011 "Most Fun Town in America" by Rand McNally and USA Today, the 2014 #6 "Best Small Towns" by Livability, and the 2015 "The Fifth Best Place to Live in America" by Outside Magazine.

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Attachments: “Final Report: Survey of Lands Affected by the Proposed Expansion of the Rocky Mountain Resources Limestone Quarry”, Colorado Natural Heritage Program