

R Park wins approval, looks to open this fall

Rendezvous Park also draws fire, particularly when it comes to parking, wildlife and dogs.

By Michael Polhamus

Rendezvous Park got the nod from county commissioners Tuesday, allowing the 40-acre park across the Snake River from Emily's Pond to move forward with plans to open this fall.

The park will feature ponds, trails and open spaces, and was created through the joint efforts of the Jackson Hole Land Trust and the LOR foundation. In all it will cost around \$5 million to build and maintain, and may in coming years house a caretaker on-site to manage the property.

The park's approval did not arrive without contention — particularly with regard to moose habitat and a planned 33 parking spaces.

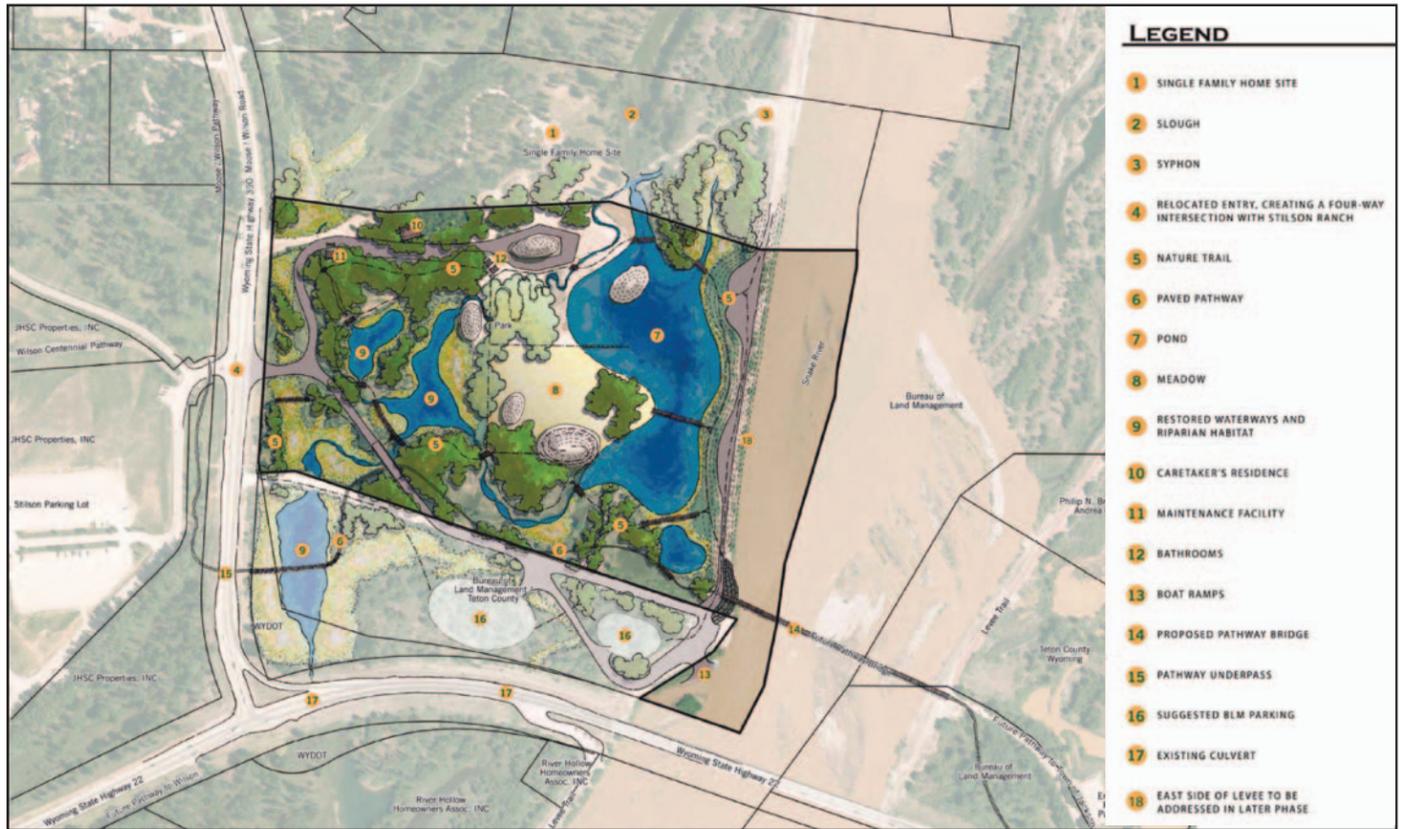
"Do we really need," asked Kim Springer, speaking to county commissioners Tuesday, "another place to cross-country ski in the winter?"

"How about creating this natural park for the wildlife," she asked, "instead of people? Are we trying to satisfy an insatiable appetite for recreation in this county, at the expense of wildlife?"

Others expressed similar concerns.

"We don't need wildlife biologists to tell us that if there's increased cars and increased dogs and increased people, this is going to be bad for wildlife," Phil Round, of Wilson, said at Tuesday's meeting.

Allowing dogs in the park would present a special problem for wildlife if they're allowed to frolic upon it un-



Seen here is a drawing of Rendezvous Park's many water features, pathways and green spaces. Located northeast of the intersection between Highways 22 and 390, the park reclaims what for years has been a gravel pit on the Snake River's western bank.

leashed, Round said.

"We all know it's a joke — almost no one uses a leash ... and there are very few people who can keep their dogs under voice control," he said.

A 33-parking-space requirement would also harm wildlife, County Commissioner Barbara Allen said.

These concerns are all legitimate, Rendezvous Lands Conservancy Board of Directors President Hal Hutchinson said. Rendezvous Lands Conservancy privately owns and

manages the park.

The high number of parking spaces had been mandated by the Teton County/Jackson Parks and Recreation Department, to keep the park in compliance with land use regulations, Hutchinson said.

He'd rather not build all 33 "out of the gate," Hutchinson said.

"We don't want to have a natural park covered in parking," he said.

"We don't want to make parking so easy that someone who would other-

wise ride a bike or take the bus would say, 'let's just drive there, they have plenty of parking spaces,'" Hutchinson said. Furthermore, he said, "we are very open to restricting dogs."

At his suggestion, commissioners changed the park's conditions from requiring 33 spaces to allowing no more than 33 spaces.

Hutchinson also volunteered to prohibit all dogs within the park's confines except for those on a leash.

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