



July 20, 2020

Town Council
Town of Vail

Re: Proposed Booth Heights Memorandum of Understanding

Dear Council Members:

The Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance (ESWA) is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization that supports the Forest Service's efforts to protect and preserve the Eagles Nest Wilderness, Holy Cross Wilderness and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas in Summit and Eagle Counties. See our website at <https://eaglesummitwilderness.org>. Many of our members are residents of Vail, and all are lovers of Wilderness. I personally live at 4229A Nugget Lane in East Vail.

ESWA's primary interest in the proposed Booth Heights land swap is the protection of the Bighorn Sheep herd that uses the Booth Heights property for winter range. Wildlife in the Vail Valley is under increasing pressure from human development and the increased number of hikers in our local Wilderness Areas. It is vital that we protect the critical wildlife habitat that remains. This is particularly true of the winter habitat provided by the Booth Heights property as it is essential for the survival of the Bighorn Sheep that spend the remainder of the year in the Eagles Nest Wilderness.

We commend the Town for its willingness to consider a trade of the Booth Heights parcel for Lot 3 of the Middle Creek parcel. Such a trade protects critical habitat for the Bighorn Sheep while allowing Triumph to develop its planned 144 housing units in a more responsible location. We fully support such a land trade. However, we are concerned that the Memorandum of Understanding as currently drafted is being used as a vehicle to advance affordable housing proposals by the Vail Local Housing Authority that have nothing to do with the land swap.

The protection of Bighorn Sheep and the development of affordable housing are both important issues, but they are unrelated and should not be artificially tied together. Doing so threatens to delay and possibly undermine a relatively simple land swap needed to protect the

Bighorn Sheep's winter range. We adopt and support the detailed arguments and proposed revisions to the MOU in this regard set forth in the Vail Homeowners Association's July 13, 2020 Call to Action.

Affordable housing is an important issue, and the Vail Local Housing Authority's proposals deserve careful consideration on their own merits. However, they should not, and need not, be tied to the protection of our Bighorn Sheep.

Sincerely yours,

Michael F. Browning
ESWA 2020 Chair