

Save the Dells: What we stand for

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Prescott's most iconic landmark - the Granite Dells - is threatened by Arizona Eco Development's (AED) plans to build more than 600 homes and a private resort at the historic Point of Rocks Ranch.

That's why I started Save the Dells, a group of local citizens offering an alternative to AED's proposal that would turn the heart of the Granite Dells into another gated subdivision.

More than 400 citizens attended two May open houses hosted by AED and many raised serious concerns about this alarming proposal. Because few officially represented Save the Dells, allow me to comment on this contentious development and what we propose as a solution.

Our goal is to create a Granite Dells Regional Park by permanently conserving the remaining undeveloped portions of the Granite Dells as publicly accessible open space.

Reflecting Prescott's aspirations as stated in the General Plan and Open Space Master Plan, our campaign is a step forward in Prescott's legacy of protecting crucial land for recreation, scenery, wildlife, tourism, and sustaining our western heritage.

Consuming almost 500 acres of wild Dells landscape, AED's project would effectively end this legacy. These 500 acres are just 3% of AED's entire 15,000 acre landholding, but they mean the world to many of us.

These acres include the iconic Point of Rocks, nearly one-half of the Peavine National Recreational Trail through the Dells, both sides of the Iron King Trail, Yavapai cultural sites, and indispensable woodlands that buffer flood flows into Granite Creek and provide essential wildlife habitat.

Losing this is what is at stake if a fair deal isn't achieved. But we believe a fair deal is possible.

AED wants their proposed 3,300-home development to be "annexed" into the City of Prescott. This means they want 100 million gallons per year of Prescott's water, new taxpayer-funded roads, a hook-up to Prescott's sewer, and access to City schools and emergency services.

As tremendously valuable taxpayer-funded services these shouldn't be given away freely without the public gaining something equally valuable in exchange.

Annexation also allows AED to build more than one-hundred times more homes per acre than under their current County zoning – and all of those homes would have the esteemed Prescott zip code.

Clearly, there are tangible benefits of annexation for AED, and Save the Dells is working to ensure that the people of Prescott get something tangible in return: our beloved Granite Dells.

Current codes already require that 750 acres of AED's 3,000-acre proposal are dedicated to open space. Our concern is over 500 acres located wholly in the Dells; only two-thirds of what is already mandatory.

To me, this sounds like a no-nonsense deal.

Please, join us at our Save the Dells Community Forum, to be held at the Yavapai College Performing Arts Center from 5:30-7:00pm on Monday, June 25. Learn more about how and why we propose to protect the Granite Dells as public open space for people, wildlife, and community. Doors open at 5:00pm, and the event is free and open to the public.

Joe Trudeau, of Prescott, is Chairman of Save the Dells

Working to create Prescott's own Granite Dells Regional Park

www.SaveTheDells.org