

The Establishment of a National Cemetery in Southern Colorado

**Status Report
to
Custer County Commissioners,
April 30, 2008**

**Charles Bogle
Chairman
Custer County Veterans Cemetery Committee**

The Status Today

- **Fort Logan is projected to be at capacity in 12 years.**
- **Fort Logan had the seventh largest rate of use of all veterans' cemeteries in the country in 2006. (3491 burials in 2006)**
- **May 23, 2007 U.S. House Passed H.R.1660 Passed by unanimous voice vote.**
- **May 24, 2007 Received in Senate, Read Twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.**
- **Required Senate action has not been accomplished**
- **A new line item in the VA FY2009 Budget in the amount of \$5 million is specifically allocated to be used for land acquisition for a replacement of Fort Logan.**
- **The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the final authority in the selection of a cemetery site.**

Southern Colorado Region

- **Southern Colorado Region - Twenty Four Counties including Custer County.**
- **The National Cemetery Administration's (NCA) considers "reasonable access to burial benefits to mean that a first interment option, for casketed or cremated remains is a national or state veterans cemetery, is available within 75 miles of the veteran's place of residence."**
- **Fort Logan (Denver) is the existing cemetery that is used as a determination of distance. By the VA's own rules a new cemetery must be more than 75 miles from an existing cemetery.**

H.R.1660, as amended, would:

- **Establish a National Cemetery in Southern Colorado Region.**
- **Require the Secretary to establish a national cemetery in El Paso, County, Colorado.**
- **Require the Secretary to consult with state and local officials in site selection.**
- **Require the Secretary to consult with government officials in site selection.**
- **Authorize the Secretary to accept a gift of an appropriate parcel of real property to use as cemetery.**
- **Require the Secretary to submit to Congress a report on the establishment of the cemetery.**
- **Require the Secretary to add the cemetery to the current list of priority projects, but does not allow this cemetery to take priority over any of the current priority projects.**

The Status Today, con't.

- **Eleven proposed sites have been “formally” identified in Southern Colorado.**
- **The proposed Custer County site is one of eight sites that have the potential of being provided at no cost to the government.**
- **The proposed Custer County site is the largest (930 acres) of the proposed sites.**
- **A Congressional Field Hearing will be conducted in Colorado Springs Friday, May 2nd, at 12 p.m. MST, to examine the VA cemetery site selection process.**

Potential Economic Impact to Custer County

- **The Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade has provided a rudimentary economic impact.**
- **Based on:**
 - **only 250 burials per year,**
 - **an average attendance of 20 per service**
 - **an average cost per funeral of \$6,500**
 - **30% overnight visitors**
 - **70% day trips**
 - **An annual impact of \$2,005,500**

This estimate doesn't include the impact of potentially 6-7 full Time employees and contracted construction.

Potential Economic Impact to Custer County

When Fort Logan closes, approximately 3491 burials could be expected with a similarly derived impact of \$38,007,000.

This compares to a similarly based current county income of \$42,000,000.

This could generate an approximate 90% increase in the current business base with a leveling economic year round effect.

How can we not pursue this action?

- **A cemetery of this particular nature would provide a significant and stabilizing economic impact on the community.**
- **The cemetery could have a usable life of upwards of 200 years with a continuing favorable impact.**

Requested Action

- **Formally support the continued pursuit of the candidacy of our Custer County cemetery site.**

4.12 Custer County (Site 11)

Location: Site is located along Colorado State Highway No. 69 at the base of the majestic Sangre de Cristo Mountains approximately 14 miles south of Westcliffe, the county seat of Custer County. Overlooking this site and perched high in the rugged Sangre de Cristo mountains, are two mountain monuments in honor of the men and women who perished in the Columbia and Challenger space shuttle accidents. The existing County road 105 extends along the length of the proposed site. The site can be accessed from the south off of Interstate Highway 25 from Walsenburg north on State Highway No. 69 approximately 45 miles. It is accessed from Pueblo via highways 69 and 96 approximately 82 miles. The site is approximately 2.5 miles from the Silver West airport that has 7,000 x 54 foot paved runway with fuel service.

Water: Available on-site quantity and dependability of supply must be determined. The site has an approximate elevation of 8,500 feet.

Acreage: The ranch has identified parcel of approximately 930 acres, which can be used as a national cemetery.

Topography: Gently rolling land suitable for construction of a cemetery.

Property Owned by: Privately owned by an Army veteran.

Aesthetics: This site is on the rolling terrain of the Wet Mountain Valley. Its setting is within the tranquil and scenic valley between the Wet Mountains to the east and the Sangre de Cristo mountain range to the west. There is very little likelihood of encroachment by development.

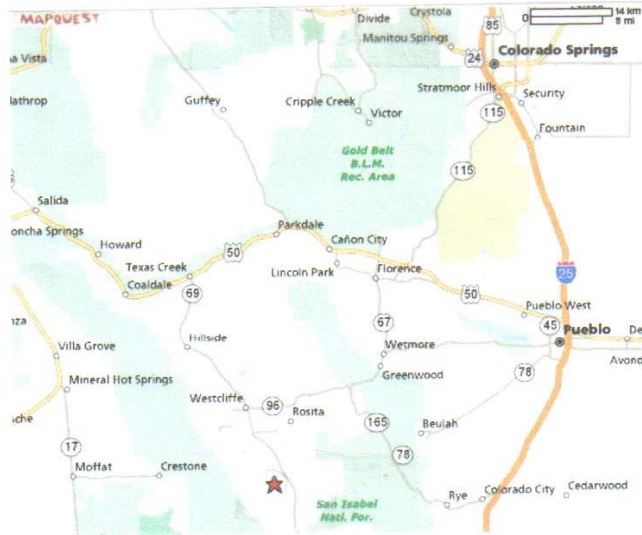
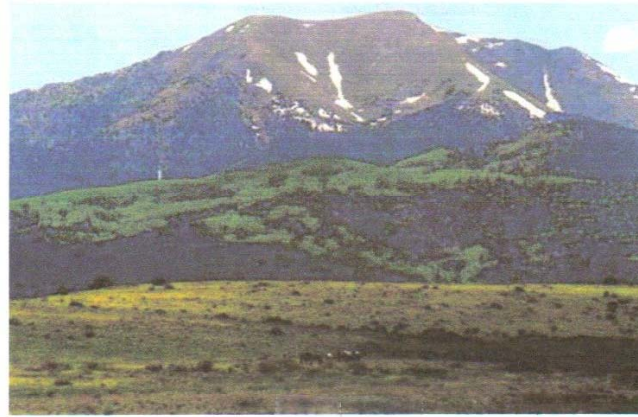
Feasibility: If the property were to be used as a veteran's cemetery the owner would be willing to donate the property at no cost.

Comments: The citizens of Westcliffe, Silver Cliff and Custer County consist of 20+ percent veterans. Patriotism is very much a part of the community's way of life. American Flags line Main Street on each holiday. One of the most active American Legion Post in the state stands ready to provide honor guard support for this cemetery, as well as other locations.

The presence of a National Veterans Cemetery would provide a significant and stabilizing economic impact on the community.

The location of the property is represented supplemental maps, page 2 and 3.

PROPOSED SITE # 11, CUSTER COUNTY



Water source	Access to site	Acreage	Topography	Ownership	Aesthetics	Feasibility	Total Score
3	4	5	5	4	5	5	31

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