

# *Zephyr misleading with information*

**By Royal Gorge Preservation Project**  
Special to the Daily Record

The Royal Gorge Preservation Project applauds Zephyr Minerals' launching of a Q&A platform for the purpose of responding to questions concerning their purpose and scope. We do not applaud the dissemination of information that is misleading, inaccurate and or outright false. Their ad in the Aug. 11 issue of the Shopper and the quarter-page ad in the Aug. 14th issue of the Daily Record contained such information.

We share Zephyr's concern about wildfires and agree that all available precautions be taken in their prevention. Currently, there are four major wildfires burning in Colorado, all exceeding 200 acres. They are the Pine Gulch, Grizzly Creek, Williams Fork and Cameron Peak fires, totaling 180,902 acres, none of which are even remotely near containment.

Zephyr referenced the recent YMCA fire, the evidence of which until recently has been visible on the mountainside immediately west of Cañon City due to

fire retardant dropped by aircraft. Zephyr commented that the fire started in a remote area and that the public land had no firefighting resources close by. Their article proceeded to detail their concern and projected active involvement with prevention and preparation in the event of a fire, including the County requirement that a Fire Protection Plan be in file with the fire district.

Examination of Zephyr's Fire Protection Plan filed on Oct. 28, 2019, is not specific or current for the areas in which they are currently drilling. The plan states that County Road 20X (off County Road 28/Copper Gulch Rd) and County Road 3A provide access to the area of exploration. In fact, County Road 20X (gated) provides no road access to the area of exploration within approximately five miles ('as the crow flies') and County 3A's closest proximity to the exploration area is over four miles, by air, with no road access. The bridge on County Road 3 (Temple Canyon Road) is closer but still close to three miles without road access.

Based on Zephyr's reporting, the fire plan estimating a 15-minute response time and the assessment that "existing public roadways accessing the subject property (are) adequate for fire vehicle access" are clearly incorrect and (probably) applicable to a separate and distinct area of exploration.

Zephyr's Fire Protection Plan states that a cistern with "Approximately 2000 gallons of water is at the drill site during exploration." Aerial photographs do not show the existence of such a cistern. Fire suppression capability beyond that of a simple hand-held extinguisher is improbable. The high winds common to this area, low rainfall and dense rugged terrain make fire danger a frightful possibility.

Zephyr stated that "Tourist helicopters fly over public land in Fremont County regularly without incident of starting wildfires." True, but like other aircraft, they stay in the air. Zephyr's contract helicopter lands at the drill site(s) numerous times each day. A clear case of 'apples' and 'oranges'.

Finally, Zephyr states that had they been exploring at

the time of the YMCA fire, both helicopter and water sources would have been available to fight the fire, "...immediately and without hesitation."

Here are some questions for your Q&A platform: Does Zephyr have the authority to divert a helicopter that has been contracted for a specific purpose (exploration) to another purpose that would endanger its existence? Is the contracted lightweight helicopter equipped with the tools needed for fire suppression? How would the "water resource" be utilized by the helicopter? Is the ownership of the contracted helicopter certified by federal and/or state of Colorado authorities to be utilized to assist state/federal authorities with wildfire suppression? We refer you to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) website wherein they state "For safety reasons, the BLM does not permit untrained citizens to volunteer in wildland firefighting efforts."

Please continue to inform the public regarding your goals and aspirations, but do your research first and do so with openness and honesty.