

Introduction

This Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application seeks Boise County approval for the establishment of a **private-use grass runway** within the Boise Basin area near Star Ranch, Idaho. This is one of two applications. The first is the runway CUP. If approved there will be a follow-on eight lot rural subdivision.

The project has been thoughtfully designed to preserve the region's natural beauty and open-space character while enhancing public safety and emergency response capability. One parcel will be dedicated to the **Placerville Fire Protection District** for a future fire station, medical helicopter landing zone, and fire apparatus water source, Wildfire Incident Camp, and community gathering location thereby strengthening the resilience of the surrounding communities. The proposed private-use runway will serve property owners and their guests only, consistent with FAA and Idaho Division of Aeronautics definitions distinguishing private-use facilities from public airports. Together, these elements represent a balanced approach to rural development—enhancing Idaho's backcountry flying heritage while contributing tangible benefits to Boise County's residents and emergency services network.

Project Overview

The proposed private-use grass runway use is contemplated within a future eight-lot subdivision within a rural mountainous setting characterized by open meadows, forested slopes, and expansive views typical of the Boise Basin. The future subdivision includes one parcel dedicated to a private-use grass runway, one parcel donated to the Placerville Fire Protection District for a future fire station and water source, four large parcels of approximately 30 acres each, and two smaller parcels of approximately five acres each. The grass runway will remain private-use only, serving subdivision property owners and their invited guests, and will not be open or advertised for uninvited public aircraft operations.

Not more than six home sites will be located along existing tree lines to preserve meadow views and maintain the area's natural beauty. Building design guidelines will emphasize **cabin-style and timber-accented architecture** that harmonizes with the surrounding landscape. The project will be carefully planned to minimize environmental disturbance, reduce visual impact, and strengthen local emergency response infrastructure—while maintaining the quiet, rural character that defines Boise County's mountain communities.

Compliance with Boise County Unified Land Use Ordinance Section 4.3.E

The following section demonstrates how the proposed private-use grass runway and associated subdivision meet the **Conditional Use Permit (CUP)** standards outlined in **Section 4.3.E** of the Boise County Unified Land Use Ordinance.

4.3.E.1 – Conditional Use Classification

The proposed use qualifies as a **Conditional Use** under the County's Land Use Tables, which list "Airport" as a conditional use. However, it is important to clarify that this proposal is for a **private-use runway**, not a public airport. Both the **FAA** and **Idaho Division of Aeronautics** define a private-use runway as one **restricted to use by the owner and invited guests only**, with **no public access or commercial operations**. This distinction ensures minimal public impact and aligns the project with both state and federal aviation standards.

4.3.E.2 – Consistency with the Boise County Comprehensive Plan

The project directly supports the goals of the Boise County Comprehensive Plan by **promoting safe, orderly rural development** while **preserving open space** and **maintaining the County's mountain character**. It enhances **public safety infrastructure** through the donation of land for a future public safety and fire water source, reflecting the County's goals for improved emergency response capability, responsible land stewardship, and protection of scenic and environmental resources. Further, it improves public services as stated in 4.3.E.5. below.

4.3.E.3 – Harmonious Design and Character

The **grass runway** will blend naturally into the existing meadow and open space, maintaining the area's rustic visual character. Homes will be positioned along tree lines to protect meadow views and designed with **cabin-style architecture** that complements the surrounding forested environment. These measures ensure that the project harmonizes with the existing landscape and does not alter the essential rural character of the Boise Basin.

4.3.E.4 – Compatibility with Neighboring Uses

The **rural, mountainous area** surrounding the project is accustomed to a wide range of **motorized recreational and public safety equipment**, including four-wheelers, side-by-sides, snowmobiles, snow plows, snow blowers, log trucks, logging chainsaws, and backcountry aircraft. The proposed private-use runway is consistent with these existing uses and introduces no extraordinary noise, hazard, or conflict.

Moreover, **Idaho's rich backcountry aviation heritage** and the **state's large network of wilderness airstrips** demonstrate that such uses are an accepted and celebrated part of Idaho's rural lifestyle. The **3,200-foot length** of the runway provides a generous margin of safety—far exceeding what is required for bush aircraft—further reducing operational risk.

4.3.E.5 – Adequacy of Public Facilities and Services

The property is **adequately served by existing County roads** and will have **the same access to fire, police, and medical services** as other Star Ranch and Placerville area residents. Additionally, the project enhances those very services by **donating a parcel to the Placerville Fire Protection District**, which will include a **fire station site, helicopter landing zone, camp site area for federal firefighters and year-round water supply** for firefighting. This contribution greatly improves public safety capacity rather than imposing any additional burden on County resources.

4.3.E.6 – Public Cost and Economic Impact

The project will **not create excessive public cost** or require additional infrastructure investment. In fact, it **benefits the County and community** through the land donation valued at approximately **\$250,000**, which provides essential facilities for emergency response operations. The fire department has contemplated incorporating a community center with the fire station. Plus, the runway parcel and subdivision infrastructure are privately funded, privately maintained, and create no ongoing financial liability for Boise County.

4.3.E.7 – Impact on Noise, Traffic, and Environmental Conditions

The **private-use grass runway** will generate **minimal and infrequent seasonal aircraft activity**—comparable to or less than other common motorized equipment in the area, such as side-by-sides, chainsaws, or snowmobiles.

The runway is restricted to subdivision owners and their invited guests, and not for use by the general public. This is both mandated by the FAA and private insurance companies. HOA covenants will **prohibit flight training, and restrict hours of operation**, ensuring continued peace and safety for neighboring residents. The grass surface naturally minimizes dust and glare, and no additional smoke, fumes, or odors will be produced.

4.3.E.8 – Vehicular Access and Traffic Safety

A service road will provide access from the runway **to Harris Creek Road**, an existing County-maintained roadway. No new public road connections or traffic realignments are required. Traffic volumes associated with residential and occasional aircraft use will remain low,

and no hazardous interference with traffic is anticipated. Improvements to Harris Creek Road by the developers of Harris Creek Heights will further mitigate additional traffic

4.3.E.9 – Preservation of Natural, Scenic, and Historic Features

No significant natural, scenic, or historic features will be disturbed by the proposed development. Building sites are positioned thoughtfully within the treeline to preserve the open meadow and maintain natural viewsheds. The grass runway will blend with the existing grass meadow, preserving the visual character of the meadow. Further, the property owners to the South are considering establishing a conservation easement to preserve their grass meadow view.

Conclusion and Community Benefit Statement

This Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application represents a thoughtful and balanced approach to rural land development—one that preserves the character of Boise County while enhancing its safety, resilience, and community value.

The proposed **private-use grass runway** is not a commercial or public airport; it is a **limited-access, low-impact facility** consistent with Idaho's deep tradition of backcountry aviation. Designed to blend seamlessly into the natural landscape, the runway maintains open space and scenic beauty while serving a small community of property owners who value responsible land stewardship and emergency preparedness.

Far from burdening County resources, this project gives back. Through the **donation of land to the Placerville Fire Protection District**, the project directly strengthens the Boise Basin's emergency response infrastructure—providing a dedicated site for a fire station, helicopter landing zone, and year-round water source for firefighting operations. These contributions will improve safety not only for subdivision residents but for the entire basin including Placerville, Star Ranch, and Centerville areas.

The proposed development is fully consistent with the **Boise County Comprehensive Plan and Unified Land Use Ordinance Section 4.3.E**. It supports the County's long-standing goals of preserving rural character, promoting public safety, protecting natural beauty, and encouraging responsible, low-density land use.

As Fire Chief of the Placerville Fire Protection District, an FAA-licensed pilot, and a retired Navy SEAL Commander, Andrew Bourret's (Applicants Representative) vision for this project extends beyond residential development. It is about **using aviation as a tool for public safety**—allowing local responders to detect and contain wildfires by air, assist with medical emergencies, and coordinate regional response more effectively.

In summary, this CUP request seeks not just permission to build, but an opportunity to strengthen our community's connection to the land, its safety, and its future. The project harmonizes with the Boise Basin's past and prepares it for a safer, more resilient tomorrow.