

WOOLLY BUGGER RANCH

Fairplay, Park County, Colorado

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112± Acres

\$1,879,000

Named after the classic fishing fly the Woolly Bugger, this ranch offers a rare opportunity to own a stretch of undeveloped river frontage. With 112 deeded acres, you will find ample room to enjoy the solitude and scenery that the South Park region is well known for. The ranch is situated in the northwest corner of the valley, offering easy access to and from front-range cities. South Park has a well-earned reputation as a premier destination for outdoor enthusiasts of all interests. The valley and surrounding mountains are home to vast tracts of public land, as well as several rivers, creeks, and lakes all offering recreational opportunities for the new owner. The Woolly Bugger is an ideal opportunity for those seeking to minimize travel and maximize adventure.



HISTORY

Colorado's South Park region is the largest of the three major mountain "parks" or valleys. The three valleys each serve as the headwaters of their respective river systems which drain the surrounding mountain ranges. The North Platte River originates in the Rabbit Ears Range and winds its way through North Park. In Middle Park, the Colorado River begins its long journey to the Pacific along the west slope of the Continental Divide in Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park. The South Platte River originates in the slopes of the Mosquito and Park ranges and cuts its way through the valley, past the front range, and out to eastern Colorado until its confluence with the North Platte and the two rivers become one, known simply as the Platte.

With a landmass of approximately 1,000 square miles, the South Park Valley is an enormous ecosystem with diverse flora and fauna, much of it native. It is that ecological diversity that attracted its earliest human inhabitants, the Ute, who likely spent their summers hunting, fishing, and gathering its natural bounty. Attracted by vast herds of Bison, Pronghorn, Elk, and Mule Deer that grazed the valley's abundant grasslands, the Ute would continue to inhabit the region until the westward expansion of the United States in the middle 19th century. At times the Ute would find themselves in conflict with the Southern Arapahoe band who had also come to depend on the region's vast Bison herd. Spanish explorers visited South Park in the early 18th century, referring to it as "Valle Salado" or, "Salty Valley", likely referencing the numerous mineral springs that dot the valley floor. Exploration would intensify as the United States expanded westward and its growing population sought adventure and fortune in the untamed territories of the West. In 1844 John C. Fremont led the first official exploration of the area during his second of five expeditions to the West. Fremont was in search of a southern route to the Oregon trail and though he found no viable path to the Pacific, Congress would authorize the publication of 10,000 copies of his final report. In his report, Fremont gave detailed descriptions of a wild and untamed landscape teeming with an abundance of flora, fauna, and natural resources that would fuel the imaginations of pioneers and explorers to follow.



The defining event that would come to define the region as we know it today was the Pikes Peak gold rush of 1859. The earliest gold discovery in South Park is believed to be in 1803 when a fur trapper named James Pursley panned gold from Tarryall Creek. Pursley's find was rather minor but as word slowly spread eastward subsequent prospectors would locate more significant deposits and by 1859 the region would see an influx of adventurous individuals seeking their fortunes. Prospectors by the thousands arrived and in short order, every inch of available ground was claimed. The South Platte and its tributaries were found to have rich gold deposits in their placers and much of the early mining efforts in the region centered around those placer deposits. As time went on the best placer deposits had all been claimed so efforts shifted to lode sources and hard rock mining in the surrounding Mosquito and Park range mountains.

The Town of Fairplay would be founded in 1859 by miners fed up with the conmen, hucksters, pickpockets, and other unsavory characters who had populated the town of Tarryall. In its early years, Fairplay would serve as a summer mining camp for the prospectors who would depart for Denver when winter approached. Mining would evolve from small independent operations into larger, more organized concerns during the late 1800's and early 1900's. Shovels and pans would yield massive, steam-powered dredges capable of sluicing gravels at an industrial scale and hydraulic mining capable of melting mountains. Tailings piles from the industrial dredges that mined the valley floor are still visible around Fairplay to this day. Though once thought inexhaustible the rich gold deposits would be "played out" by the middle of the 20th century. The last of the massive dredges, the South Platte Dredge #1 would cease operation in 1951.

In a century of mining, it is estimated the rich deposits of the South Park valley floor yielded 45 million ounces of gold. As gold production wound down, the South Park region would come to see another "boom" of sorts. The period of population growth and prosperity after World War II would fuel an increase in recreation. Denizens of Denver and other front-range cities would set out on the newly constructed highways to find solitude and recreation in the Rocky Mountains. South Park would soon become a recreational destination for those looking for a short escape. Prospectors would give way to outdoorsmen and women seeking adventure and enjoyment.



WILDLIFE AND RECREATION

The main recreational attraction on the Woolly Bugger is the 3,100 feet of the Middle Fork of the South Platte River that flows through the property. The cold, clear waters of the Middle Fork play host to a healthy and thriving population of Rainbow, Brown, Brook, and Cutthroat trout. With exclusive access to both banks through the ranch, anglers of all abilities can wet their line in solitude knowing theirs is the first fly the fish will see. The willow-lined banks of the Middle Fork are also a prime habitat for a host of other birds and mammals. Raptors sightings are frequent. Osprey, Eagles, Hawks, and Falcons all pay a visit from time to time. Shiras moose frequently utilize the riparian zone along the river. Mule Deer, Elk, and Pronghorn Antelope can be found on the ranch or nearby National Forest Lands. Small game mammals and furbearers such as squirrels, rabbits, mink, marten, badgers, beavers, and muskrats all inhabit the ecosystem. Woolly Bugger is located within Game Management Unit 49. Big game hunting tags are limited in most cases requiring 1-3 points to successfully draw.

Recreational gold panning is sure to yield some color for the effort. Though the river was mined extensively during the gold rush the early miners were inefficient at capturing fine gold and left plenty behind. The town of Fairplay's beach park (3mi downstream) is a popular destination for recreational prospectors who report finding flake gold in and among the dredge tailings. Nearby are several access points to the millions of acres of National Forest and BLM land in the Pike and San Isabell national forests. Three large reservoirs: Antero, Spinney Mountain, and Eleven Mile are all located a short distance from the ranch and provide opportunities for boating, fishing, camping, hunting, and watersports. The South Platte River and its various tributaries are known for world-class trout fishing and boast thousands of acres of state wildlife areas and BLM land open to public enjoyment. The town of Breckenridge and its world-class skiing, mountain biking, shopping, and dining are located just 20 miles north on Highway 9.



IMPROVEMENTS

The entire perimeter of the ranch is fenced with 4-strand barbed wire on steel T posts with a secure access gate located off Sacramento Creek Rd. There are currently no structures on the ranch, however, the building envelope does have exceptional views of the surrounding mountains and is waiting for the next owner's home.

LOCATION

Wooly Bugger Ranch sits just 2 miles outside the town of Fairplay, near the intersection of highways 285 and 9. The distance to the ranch from both Denver and Colorado Springs is nearly identical at about 85 miles. The drive from either city is incredibly scenic taking only 1.5-2 hours. The roads in and out of Fairplay are open year-round and are well-maintained in winter. Fairplay is the county seat and most populous town in Park County with a population of around 750 residents in 2023. Though small enough to retain an authentic local flavor, Fairplay has a grocery store, gas stations, hardware store, a few bars and restaurants, and one of the county's two stoplights. You won't find any familiar national chains in Fairplay; everything is locally owned and operated. Though close enough to the front-range cities for quick weekend escapes, South Park's remote, rugged nature feels a world away.



WATER RIGHTS AND RESOURCES

All water and mineral rights owned by the seller for the subject property will be conveyed with the sale.

CONSERVATION

Wooly Bugger Ranch was placed under conservation easement with the Mountain Area Land Trust in 2017. The easement allows for the construction of a single-family home and associated structures within a 5-acre building envelope. Copies of the conservation easement are available to qualified buyers upon request.



SUMMARY

Wooly Bugger is a blank canvas on which a new owner can create their dream home among the solitude and splendor of the Colorado Rockies without the headaches and hassles of the I-70 corridor. With available river frontage property becoming ever more scarce, this ranch presents an opportunity to pursue your passions right in your own back yard and with aw inspiring views of the Rocky Mountains.




Woolly Bugger Ranch
 Park County, Colorado, 112 AC +/-



-  Woolly Bugger Ranch
-  Forest Service
-  State Land
-  Fish and Wildlife
-  National Park
-  Other
-  BLM
-  Local Government

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