

RIVER VALLEY RANCH: Environmental Custodianship

Preserving and enhancing the natural setting has been a priority for River Valley Ranch from the project's inception. In transforming the 100-year-old Thompson Ranch into a year-round resort community, Hines envisioned a community whose design and structure would enrich the natural surroundings while respecting the land's ranching heritage. To accomplish this vision the following programs were instituted:

River Valley Ranch Green Builder Program

River Valley Ranch initiated the Green Builder Program which sets forth building guidelines that protect the natural setting of the Crystal River Valley, ensure that homes reflect the western ranch style character, and uphold the value of the developed community. This program requires all residential construction to adhere to a standard of "environmental friendly" design in part by requiring the use of natural materials and plantings native to the area. Each homebuilder is required to submit a completed Green Builder scoring sheet with its Design Review package. This scoring sheet assigns a numerical evaluation to all construction and landscape materials. Each home is required to score a minimum of 100 points and in this way assures that quality and respect of the natural surroundings is preserved.

Historic Preservation

In developing River Valley Ranch, Hines has tried to emulate a rancher's sense of living -- close to land and wide open spaces. In doing so, the developer has kept standing several of the original buildings from the 100-year-old ranch, including a 4,000-square-foot barn and small cabin, which have been renovated for the use of the community. Along with its preservation of turn-of-the-century architecture, River Valley Ranch has promoted its own architectural design to complement rather than diminish the ranch's heritage. From the design of both the River Valley Ranch Golf Clubhouse and the Ranch House Swim and Tennis Club to its neighborhood developments, River Valley Ranch resonates with western ranching tradition.

River Valley Ranch Golf Course and Club

1996 Golf World Architect of the Year, Jay Morrish, designed the 18-hole championship golf course to enhance and respect the natural habitats that already existed on the land. Morrish was careful to incorporate the natural elements including the riparian corridors, wetlands, indigenous grasses, rolling topography, and wildlife habitats into River Valley Ranch's innovative golf course design. By including former pasturelands of the old ranch as well, Morrish has created world-class challenging play around breathtaking views of Mt. Sopris and the scenic Crystal River Valley, all without disturbing the delicate balance of the natural habitat.

Several environmental custodianship programs, with the intent to protect the Crystal River, its river banks, the wetlands and the habitat of indigenous wildlife, were also launched to complement the golf course design. These components include water quality management, low-impact pest and weed control and a fertilization program.

The water quality management program was instituted to safeguard the Crystal River and its riverbanks. By incorporating the uses of dry wells, large detention areas, activated charcoal green fields, basins, traps, and permanent stream buffers, this program ensures that the Crystal River is free of contaminants and that the river's high water quality remains unharmed.

A fertilization program, using turf grass varieties that are tolerant to heat, cold, disease and drought, help maintain the course with the use of less water, fertilizer and pesticide application in the harsh Colorado climate.

River Valley Ranch Golf Club has been acknowledged nationally for its adherence to environmental ethics to preserve and enhance the natural setting. In 1997, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Foundation bestowed its annual Environmental Steward Award for the Western Region upon the River Valley Ranch Golf Club. The club garnered this honor prior to its Grand Opening in 1998.

Open Space

Of the 520 acres encompassing the ranch, 48 percent has been dedicated to open space. By acknowledging the topography, water flow, scenic vistas and distinctive western architecture of the land, the developers set aside this open space as part of their desire to create a community that respects the natural surroundings rather than ignoring them. Linked by a five-mile network of walking, biking and hiking trails, River Valley Ranch's open space covers nearly 31 acres of community parks and recreation areas including a European-sized soccer field and a baseball field.

American Bald Eagle Protection Sanctuary

The American Bald Eagle, which is considered a threatened species, is indigenous to the valley. During the winter, the eagles nest in the trees along four holes of River Valley Ranch Golf Course and thus, River Valley Ranch has designated this area as a wildlife sanctuary. All activity from December 15th to March 15th halts so as not to disturb the birds during their breeding and nesting season.