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CRAZY MOUNTAIN RANCH

RESORT UPS ANTE IN WATER BATTLE



PARK COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL/ECOFLIGHT

The Crazy Mountain Ranch's golf course is seen in this aerial from an EcoFlight offered in 2025 by Park County Environmental Council.

Ranch wants 'exclusive authority' to use ditch to irrigate

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A private dude ranch that unlawfully watered its 18-hole golf course in 2024 is now petitioning the District Court in Park County to have "exclusive authority" to operate a ditch used to water the course.

"No other water users have rights conveyed in the Upper Criswell Ditch, so granting CMR exclusive authority to operate the headgate will not affect any other water users," the Crazy Mountain Ranch's water attorney, Peter Scott, wrote in the request filed on April 20.

Scott is also asking the court to lift a stay issued last July amid a disagreement with the state and for the judge to provide

instructions to limit the water commissioner authority this irrigation season.

Water commissioners are court-appointed to lawfully distribute water when there have been disputes among water users.

Hearing set for June 3

A hearing has been set for June 3 at 1 p.m. in Livingston despite veteran water commissioner Russ Sarrazin's attorney arguing the ranch's request was premature.

"It is no secret to this Court that tensions have been high between local water users and the CMR and there is little trust between the parties," wrote Bozeman attorney Breeann Johnson, who is

representing Sarrazin, in her reply to the complaint.

"Some of this distrust is justifiable given CMR's history of illegal water use from Rock Creek and elsewhere," Johnson said, adding that full transparency would help rebuild trust between the parties making it even more important the ranch be treated like any other Rock Creek water user.

Johnson also called Crazy Mountain Ranch's request for exclusive authority an "extraordinary remedy" and an overreach.

Irrigator Scott Knutson, of Knutson Angus in Clyde Park, told the Gazette, "Everyone would like control over water,

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Conservationists give dire warning about data centers

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Representatives from four environmental nonprofits gave a presentation in Missoula on Tuesday night to sound the alarm bells about the harms that may come from data centers in Montana if they're allowed to consume vast quantities of electricity.

"We are driving a car off a cliff," said Anne Hedges, the executive director of the Montana Environmental Information Center. "And we have nobody here to protect us at the moment. I just want to talk the scale of what we're talking about, because, like I said, we have never seen anything like this."

She gave a presentation to a crowd of over 100 at the University Center Theater on the University of Montana campus, talking about how much power data centers will require in the next decade in the

U.S. if their growth continues unabated.

NorthWestern Energy has signed letters of intent with three separate data center companies that want to build in Montana. Combined, the three companies are planning to consume between 850 and 1,400 megawatts by the year 2030.

The upper end of that megawatt range is roughly enough power to supply a million homes, and it's twice the total residential load that NorthWestern currently supplies to all customers.

"It is mind-numbing to think that we would have to provide that much power to these companies," Hedges said.

A typical refinery uses about 50 megawatts, she said.

Two of those data center companies are planning on building near Butte, and

Please see **DATA CENTERS**, Page A2



LARRY MAYER, BILLINGS GAZETTE

A proposed data center project will be located near the Broadview power substation if completed.