

Telluride wins right to seize land : Local News : The Rocky Mountain News#

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The town of Telluride won a lengthy eminent-domain struggle Monday when the Colorado Supreme Court ruled it could seize nearly 600 acres of private property in a pristine area known as the Valley Floor.

Locals intend to preserve it as untouched wetlands. The town wasted no time starting to party. "The word spread fast," said Town Manager Frank Bell. "It's not hard to get people to celebrate anything around here."

By Monday afternoon, several hundred people had converged on a local park to drink beer and lemonade and rejoice in winning what's known locally as "The War for the Floor."

There was no joy expressed Monday by the attorney for the San Diego developer, who bought the land 25 years ago and has spent the better part of two decades arguing that the condemnation isn't designed for the common good but for the benefit of wealthy Telluride residents.

"We're not prepared to comment," said Denver attorney Thomas Ragonetti, who represents San Diego developer Neal Blue and his San Miguel Valley Corp.

The saga began in 1983 when Blue's company bought 672 acres on the outskirts of the ski town. It began to promote plans for a development that would include homes, as well as a golf course and a hotel.

Local residents raised more than \$1 million to fight back, and wealthy outsiders, including a Hollywood producer and the actress Daryl Hannah, contributed to the effort.

A separate court case determined that the town would have to pay the developer \$50 million for the land plus all legal fees.

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