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Benedicts donate land for park

By **SCOTT CONDON**
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Not all news is bad news about the Hunter Creek Valley these days.

Long-time open space and trails promoter Fritz Benedict and his wife have donated 10 acres near the entrance of the valley for a public park.

"It's a killer site. It's the best one up there," said Glenn Horn, a private land use planner who is helping Benedict process the donation to Park Trust.

Park Trust is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Pitkin County Parks Association.

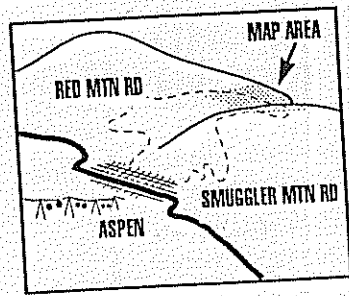
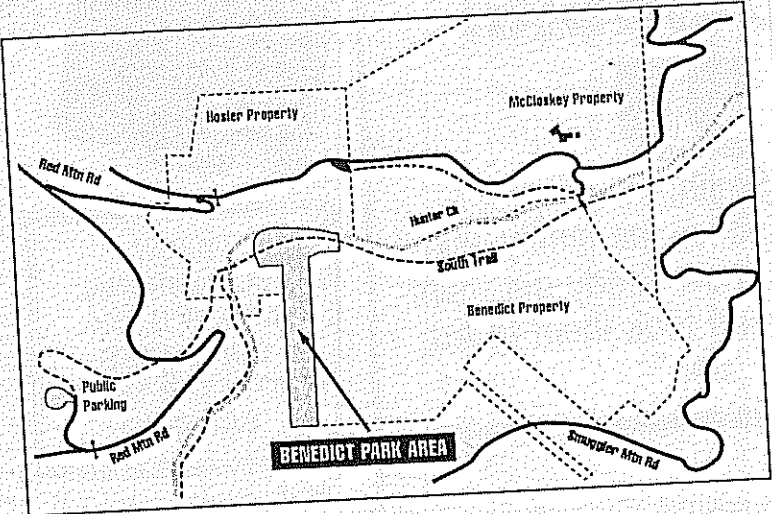
"It's a beautiful park, we're glad to have it," said Hal Clark, executive director of the Parks Association.

Benedict and his wife, Fabienne, are splitting the 10 acres off a 72-acre parcel they own on the south side of Hunter Creek and the north side of Smuggler Mountain.

The donated land is beside the Benedict Bridge, the structure that provides access to Hunter Creek Valley from Red Mountain. Access to the park, non-vehicular only, will be from the south trail into Hunter Creek Valley.

The Benedicts first proposed donating the land for a park after City of Aspen open space, called the Marolt property, was used for construction of employee housing, said Alice Davis, another land use planner assisting the Benedicts and Park Trust.

The Benedicts donated the park land in Hunter Creek to provide the community for



NEW PARK: Fritz and Fabienne Benedict donated 10 acres at the entrance to Hunter Creek Valley, see shaded area of map, for a park. Maps by Frank Martin.

other lands for the local trail and open space system and Fritz has been active with the Pitkin County Parks Association.

Davis said the Benedicts had considered donating the land for a park for more than a year, but held off because they were waiting for the access disputes to Hunter Creek Valley to be settled.

They got sick of waiting, she said.

Multiple parties have been feuding since 1987 over whether the accesses to Hunter Creek are owned by the public or by private landowners. The dispute is now in federal district court in Denver.

The Benedicts and other land-

agreement to give the public an undisputed easement along the south trail into Hunter Creek. The court battle is over the north trail.

Parks Association director Clark said the park, which is unnamed, will be passive — with a minimal amount of development.

Clark said he would like to see the park named after Fritz, but he hasn't been able to test the idea because Benedict is in France.

"We'll wait until he gets back and see if it's all right with him," Clark said.

The Benedicts have indicated only wooden picnic tables and a shelter for them will be constructed at the site.