

# **West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway Corridor Management Plan**



Prepared for:  
**West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway  
Steering Committee**

**EDAW**

2000

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# **C**hapter I - Location and Description

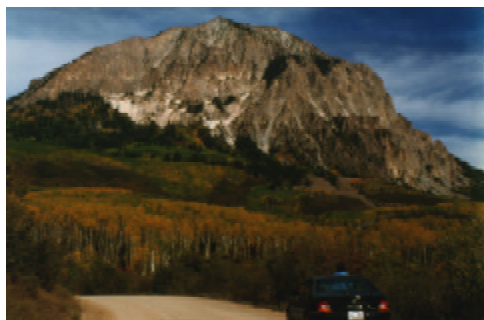
## **A. Location**



The 205-mile West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway is located in west central Colorado. It is one of Colorado's premier byways, crossing through five counties, nine rural communities and a broad cross-section of the diverse landscapes, dramatic scenery, and the rich history and culture that make up Colorado's Rocky Mountain region. As shown on Map 1, the West Elk Byway begins in Garfield County in the rapidly growing community of Carbondale in the Roaring Fork Valley between Glenwood Springs and Aspen. From here, one travels south up the Crystal River Valley into Pitkin County on Colorado State Highway 133, through the historic community of Redstone to McClure Pass (elevation 8,755 feet). At McClure Pass the Byway crosses into Gunnison County, descending south into the Muddy Creek drainage and then west into the upper North Fork Gunnison River drainage (North Fork Valley). On the way it passes through the small mining town of Somerset. It then enters Delta County and continues through the fruit growing communities of Paonia and Hotchkiss.

At Hotchkiss the Byway turns south on Colorado State Highway 92 and climbs gradually upward to the Town of Crawford. Just beyond Crawford State Park a spur road leads to the north rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. Beyond this spur road the Byway passes into Montrose County, continues south and skirts the Black Canyon of the Gunnison in Curecanti National Recreation Area (NRA). Here, it crosses back into Gunnison County, continues to U.S. Highway 50, then proceeds east along the Gunnison River to the Town of Gunnison. At Gunnison the Byway turns north on State Highway 135, passes through the small resort town of Almont, and on to the historic mining town of Crested Butte. At Crested Butte the Byway follows Gunnison County Road 12 west, up and over Kebler Pass (elevation 9,980 feet) on an improved gravel road, to rejoin State Highway 133 in the upper North Fork Valley east of Paonia, near Paonia Reservoir.

## **B. Byway Corridor**



Two types of delineations for the Byway corridor are shown on Map 1. The blue lines delineate the overall Byway corridor area. This area includes both those lands visible from the Byway and those lands containing notable features that are not in view of the Byway but within close proximity. These latter areas are places that travelers are likely to visit while traveling the Byway and would therefore influence their overall impression of the Byway. Only four such areas have been delineated. They include the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Thompson Creek Natural Environment Area south of Carbondale, the historic community of Marble and its surrounding lands, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, and the lands surrounding the Crested Butte ski area. While not directly visible from the Byway, these are well known destinations that are directly accessed via the Byway.

All other lands included in the Byway corridor area are visible from the Byway. Some of these are only visible at great distances, such as the extensive areas of the Grand Mesa, Grand View Mesa and Fruitland Mesa. Because of their distance, extent and character, they primarily serve as background context for the lands closer to the Byway, which are the primary focus of attention. On the other hand, there are some lands that when viewed at considerable distances from the Byway become focal points because of their prominence and strong visual character. These include a variety of peaks and mountaintops, particularly peaks in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area, the West Elk Wilderness Area and the Raggeds Wilderness Area.

The orange line on Map 1 encloses the lands contained within the Primary Byway Influence Area. These are the lands that form the primary focus of attention as one travels the Byway, and from which the dominating impressions and retained memories are most strongly derived. These are also the lands within which landscape modifications and management activities would be most visible to the traveling public. The Primary Byway Influence Area is often a much narrower zone than the overall Byway Corridor, typically averaging one to two miles in width. In some areas the Primary Byway Influence Area is notably wider, usually due to the presence of visually prominent, middleground landscape features such as Mt. Sopris, Chair Mountain and portions of the Raggeds and West Elk Wilderness Areas. In other areas, the Primary Byway Influence Area widens due to the open nature of the terrain through which it passes or

the elevated panoramic views, which are afforded at key locations. Conversely, in some locations the Primary Byway Influence Area is notably constricted due to various conditions of topography and vegetation that enclose the Byway, giving it a sense of intimacy with the surroundings and in some cases a sense of remoteness.

### **C. Land Ownership and Administrative Jurisdictions**



The West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway crosses a mixture of private and public lands as illustrated in Map 1. The Byway crosses a number of public land jurisdictions. These include: two National Forests (White River and Gunnison), three BLM Resource Areas (Glenwood Springs, Uncompahgre and Gunnison), two National Park Service properties (the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area), two State Parks (Crawford and Paonia), as well as scattered tracts of State School Board Lands and Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) lands.

Most of the forested lands in view of the Byway in the Crystal River Valley (north of McClure Pass) are managed as part of the White River National Forest. South of McClure Pass, all Forest Service lands are managed as part of the Gunnison National Forest. Similarly, BLM lands north of McClure Pass are administered by the Glenwood Springs Field Office, those between McClure Pass and Mesa Creek along Highways 133 and 92 by the Uncompahgre Field Office, and the remainder of BLM lands along the Byway by the Gunnison Field Office. West of Gunnison, centered on the Gunnison River and the reservoirs of the Aspinall Unit (Blue Mesa, Morrow Point and Crystal) are two contiguous National Park Service properties: the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park to the west and Curecanti National Recreation Area to the east.

Paonia State Park is located at Paonia Reservoir in the Muddy Creek drainage between Paonia and McClure Pass. Crawford State Park is located at Crawford Reservoir just south of the Town of Crawford. An extensive area of CDOW lands is located north of Blue Mesa Reservoir. Two CDOW hatcheries are also located along the Byway: one just south of Carbondale on Highway 133 and one between Almont and Crested Butte on Highway 135. Several sections of State School Board lands are scattered between Gunnison and Crested Butte.

## **D. Landscape Character and Land Use**



The Byway begins in the scenic Roaring Fork Valley, in the Town of Carbondale. The first two miles of the Byway are located within the town's new and rapidly expanding urban area. The older, historic portions of the town are located a few blocks east of the Byway. Leaving Carbondale and traveling south up the Crystal River Valley, the urban influences give way relatively quickly to a rural ranching landscape. Most residences in this area are ranch and farmsteads, but some new homes are also located here. The area is primarily rolling irrigated pasture/hayland with stringers of cottonwood along the drainages and irrigation ditches, bounded by sage and juniper covered ridges. The valley becomes increasingly enclosed and narrower as one travels to the south. Mt. Sopris, a single conical peak rising to an elevation of 12,953 feet at the head of the valley, is a dominant focal point.

At the base of Mt. Sopris the Byway enters a canyon setting. The valley bottom is narrow and visually punctuated by the clear flowing Crystal River and associated riparian vegetation (cottonwood, willow, alder). The enclosing canyon walls are composed of steep to sheer red rock in a variety of interesting formations. Evergreen vegetation is well established on the lower slopes and is scattered on the higher slopes as conditions permit. Pockets of residential development occur at regular intervals on scattered tracts of private lands along the river. All other lands in this area are managed by the White River National Forest for a variety of public purposes. The community of Redstone and the Redstone Historic District are located in this area.

Moving higher in the Crystal River Valley, the Byway continues winding along the clear flowing Crystal River, bordered by steep mountain slopes of conifer and aspen rising 2,000-3,000 feet above the highway. A discontinuous band of cottonwoods are often associated with the river. Private residences are located on a few scattered private in-holdings in this area as well. Attention is often drawn to the high mountain slopes as one approaches the base of McClure Pass. Ascending the steep mountainside at McClure Pass affords panoramic views of highly scenic peaks to the south, east and north, and to the scenic Crystal River Valley below. Crossing through aspen-conifer woodland stands at the summit of McClure Pass, the Byway enters the Gunnison National Forest. Panoramic views then open up to the west and south as the aspen and conifer forest gives way to grass and oak. Below are private ranching lands of the Lee Creek and Muddy Creek drainage basins. Ranching on the rolling



hills and steep slopes of these isolated valleys continues to be the primary land use here as it has for many generations. Rising dramatically above these valleys to the east are the jagged peaks of the aptly named Raggeds Range in the nearby Raggeds Wilderness Area.

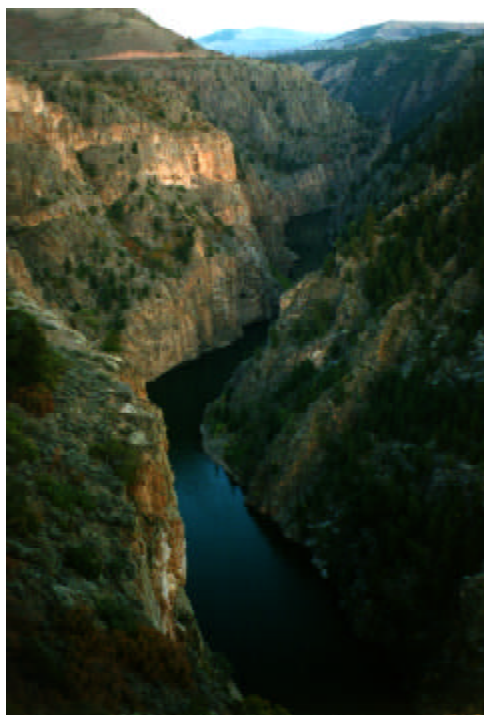
Muddy Creek has been impounded at the bottom of the drainage creating Paonia Reservoir, a nearly three-mile long reservoir bordered by steeply sloping hills of juniper and oak. Paonia State Park has been established here to capitalize on the various recreation opportunities provided by the reservoir. Beyond the State Park the Byway enters a deep, well-defined river canyon at the confluence of Muddy Creek and Anthracite Creek. At this point the Byway splits to form a loop – one portion going east up Anthracite Creek and the other going west down the North Fork Gunnison River, which is formed by the confluence of Muddy and Anthracite Creeks.

Continuing west on State Highway 133 along the North Fork Gunnison River, the Byway passes through a relatively narrow canyon bounded on both sides by high and very steep slopes which are generally covered by oak brush and scattered conifers. The hill slopes on the north side often have prominent exposed bands of caprock and are irregular in nature. Where the valley bottom permits, limited agriculture in the form of orchards and irrigated hayfields is taking place. A strongly defined and well-developed riparian woodland (cottonwood and willow) is almost continuous along the river. The river itself is visually conspicuous and clear as it moves swiftly over the rocky bottom. Within this canyon setting are the historic coal mining communities of Somerset and Bowie. Production and transport of coal from these historic underground operations remains active today.



This enclosed canyon setting opens onto a broad river valley, which appears almost idyllic. It contains a well defined riparian river corridor along with prosperous appearing orchards and hay fields on the valley bottom that extend up onto some intermediate mesas and terraces. Intermingled throughout are canals and drainages with stringers of natural vegetation. All this is backdropped by the West Elk Mountains, which rise abruptly to the south. Within this rich agricultural valley are the towns of Paonia and Hotchkiss, which are skirted by the Byway.





At Hotchkiss the Byway turns south and follows State Highway 92 up an elevated series of sloping mesas (Spurlin, Crawford and Grand View). As the name implies, Grand View Mesa in particular, provides elevated, panoramic views to the north of the North Fork Gunnison River Valley and the Grand Mesa beyond. Land use is a mix of ranching and farming (cattle and irrigated pasture) but with a sprinkling of rural residences. An area of dry, broken adobe hills separates the agriculture of the valley from the ranching and farming of this higher area.

Within this region and set on a gently sloping hillside below Young's Peak is the Town of Crawford. It is a well established, compact town with attractive character. Several significant old buildings, including the Town Hall, the community church and associated cemetery, add a sense of permanence and history. Just beyond town is Crawford Reservoir, which is managed as a state park. The reservoir is strongly influenced by campground, picnic, parking and maintenance facilities. The large reservoir is unusual in this region which makes it visually inviting. The reservoir was built by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) for irrigation purposes.

Continuing south, the Byway passes through medium to broad, gently sloping valleys of irrigated hay meadows and grazing cattle, bounded by mesas and ridges to the west and the scenic West Elk Mountains to the east and north. Here, ranching predominates; few rural residences are found other than those associated with farms and ranches. This extensive unit then transitions rapidly to steep oak brush hills and then to a mixture of oak brush, aspen and conifer as the Byway approaches the Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Curecanti National Recreation Area. The Byway follows several miles of very winding road in the steep, south-facing slopes above Morrow Point Reservoir which lies far below in the canyon bottom. Attention is most strongly drawn to the canyon, which is visible to the bottom in very few locations from the Byway. However, at the various established overlooks, opportunities to view the canyon bottom are possible. In many locations, panoramic views extend beyond the canyon to the San Juan Mountains. Beyond the narrow band of Park Service lands are private, high elevation ranching lands.

Near the intersection of State Highway 92 and US. Highway 50, the Byway leaves the canyon rim setting and begins to follow Highway 50 for 15 miles along the edge of Blue Mesa



Reservoir. Blue Mesa Reservoir is the largest water body in the state of Colorado. It is bounded alternately by open rolling sage hills and interesting, prominently elevated topography. Most notable in this regard are the ancient Dillon Pinnacles. At the eastern end of the recreation area, the Byway enters a winding canyon setting with very steep walls of 200' to 300'. Public lands continue beyond the bounds of the recreation area where a combination of BLM and CDOW lands provide a variety of dispersed recreation opportunities and wildlife management activities.

The Byway emerges from this canyon setting into open ranching country of the Gunnison River Valley. The Gunnison River and associated cottonwood riparian forest are dominant elements in this valley, which is bounded by low sage covered hills. This setting gradually gives way to urbanization as the Byway nears Gunnison, the largest town on the Byway. At Gunnison the Byway turns north on Colorado State Highway 135. Transitioning through rural residential subdivisions, the Byway again continues through the open ranch lands of the Gunnison River valley. Nearing the small community of Almont, the character of the land changes quickly to enclosed canyon-like, riparian woodland setting at the confluence of the Taylor and East Rivers.

Just beyond Almont is the Colorado Division of Wildlife Roaring Judy fish hatchery. Here the valley widens again and ranches continue to dot the valley. The hills defining the valley become higher as the Byway proceeds up the East and Slate River valleys through an area of rural residential subdivisions and into the historic mining town and popular winter recreation area of Crested Butte. Here the valley pinches off into a number of narrow valleys and drainages bounded by high mountain peaks. To the north are the peaks of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area, and to the northwest are the peaks of the Raggeds Wilderness Area.

From Crested Butte, the Byway turns west and enters Coal Creek Canyon on Gunnison County Road 12. Almost entirely on the Gunnison National Forest, County Road 12 is an improved gravel road that continues west over Kebler Pass and down into the Anthracite Creek drainage. This portion of the Byway is closed in winter.

## *Location and Description*



This is an extensive area through which the Byway winds over a gravel road in a scenic, high mountain setting. There are alternately panoramic views to scenic mountain peaks and views enclosed by topography or vegetation. The town site of Irwin and various historic mining sites add to the interest of the area.

Dropping steeply down into the Anthracite Creek drainage to the west, the Byway enters a narrow, deep river valley bounded closely by steep, forested mountain slopes. The creek is clear and very swiftly flowing over a rocky bottom. Several ranches, residences and guest ranches are located along the Byway in this area. At the mouth of Anthracite Creek, the Byway returns to a paved road at the intersection of Colorado State Highway 133.



# **C**hapter II - Intrinsic Qualities

## **A. Introduction**

The intrinsic qualities of a scenic byway, as defined by the Federal Highway Administration, include its scenic, natural, recreational, historic/cultural and archaeological resources. These are the characteristics that make the lands along a byway special, give it definition and establish its unique character. They are the special qualities for which the Byway was designated. As such, it is essential to understand and protect them.

The discussion of the intrinsic qualities of the West Elk Loop Byway in this section of the Plan is therefore closely linked to Section III, Resource Protection, which describes the goals, objectives and means of protecting the Byway's intrinsic qualities.

Map 2 provides information about the location and nature of the Byway's intrinsic qualities, except its scenic characteristics, which are shown on Map 3. The intrinsic quality information is shown in two forms. The first is color-coded dots, which indicate the specific location of intrinsic qualities. Also shown are parallel lines along the Byway, similarly color-coded, which identify the intrinsic qualities that best characterize major travel segments.

## **B. Intrinsic Quality Assessment**

### **1. Scenic**



The character and significance of the various intrinsic qualities of the West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway are highlighted below.

The Byway is near the heart of the Rocky Mountains and at the edge of the Colorado plateau and canyon country. The magnificent landscapes of both regions have immediate and almost universal recognition nationally and, increasingly, internationally as well. The scenic qualities of the West Elk Loop Scenic Byway are truly outstanding and varied. They include both dramatic, natural landscapes as well as lands whose character has been enhanced by visible signs of the long and hard-earned tenure of those who have come to settle the land.

The Byway covers an elevation range of almost 5,000 vertical feet - from just over 5,000 feet at Hotchkiss to just under 10,000 feet at Kebler Pass. Over this elevation range it passes through open mountain valleys and near high rugged peaks, through grasslands and conifer forests, alongside



clear flowing mountain creeks and rivers, along lakes, through narrow, enclosed canyons and over panoramic prominences. It also passes through historic towns, working ranch lands, and richly productive farmland and orchards.

Over the 205-mile length of the Byway, the scenery is continually engaging as it transitions from the visual and spatial experience of one landscape type to another. Map 3 provides information about the various aspects of the scenic resource. Included are the locations of landscape focal points, important ephemeral qualities, such as wild flower and fall colors areas, locations of development in rural areas, urban development, and segmentation of the route into distinctive segments according to the visual character of the landscape. The landscape character segments are numbered and keyed to narrative descriptions, which can be found in Appendix B.

From the Town of Carbondale on the north, the Byway enters mountain ranching country in the Crystal River Valley. At the foot of Mt. Sopris the Byway enters a confined canyon setting in the White River National Forest, where canyon walls, conifer and aspen trees and the clear flowing Crystal River predominate. At the head of the Crystal River Valley, the Byway climbs up a mountainside to McClure Pass. From this highly elevated prominence, panoramic views down into the Crystal River Valley, and beyond to the peaks and mountain valleys of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area lie at your feet.

The Byway then makes its way briefly through an aspen woodland before emerging to broadly panoramic views to the west over the hills and valleys leading to the Grand Mesa. Gradually, it makes its way down into broad valleys that begin to narrow and deepen as they descend to the mouth of Muddy Creek, along Paonia Reservoir.

Here the Byway enters the North Fork Valley, a winding canyon complex of rock and conifer walls enclosing the river and its associated riparian woodland. From this canyon setting the Byway exits out into a lush agricultural valley of fields and orchards interwoven with riparian stringers and backdropped by the imposing peaks of the West Elk Wilderness. Skirting the peaks of the West Elk Wilderness to the south, the Byway gradually climbs up an expansive, gently sloping mesa, which then provides elevated views back to the agricultural valley below and the Grand Mesa beyond.

The Byway then enters an elevated, open valley ranching setting, which is bounded by the distinctive formations of the West Elk Wilderness to the east. From here it climbs up through oak brush hillsides to the edge of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. It then winds back and forth along the steep oak, aspen and conifer hillsides high above the dark canyon bottom. Numerous pull-offs and developed overlooks provide opportunities to view deep into the canyon as well as to look beyond the canyon rim at panoramic views to the south, which in places extend all the way to the San Juan Mountains.

The Byway gradually winds its way along the canyon edge to an opening where the enclosing canyon walls transition to hills that recede in size and distance, creating a much more open setting. At this location a dam has been constructed to form the extensive Blue Mesa Reservoir. For the next several miles the Byway parallels the edge of Blue Mesa Reservoir in the Curecanti National Recreation Area. Near the eastern end of the recreation area, the Byway enters another winding, canyon-like setting along the water's edge. This canyon setting in turn gives way to an open ranching landscape of sage/grass covered rolling hills that enclose the Gunnison River valley with its well-developed riparian woodland corridor.

This setting continues on past the Town of Gunnison to the community of Almont, where the Byway enters a brief but memorable narrow riparian canyon. Beyond Almont, the Byway transitions back into a high valley ranching landscape with enclosing hills that transition to mountainsides as the road approaches the Town of Crested Butte. Just beyond this historic town are the peaks of the Raggeds and Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Areas.

Just west of Crested Butte, the Byway enters the Gunnison National Forest in a forested, mountain canyon setting that leads up to Kebler Pass, the highest point along the Byway. No panoramic views can be seen from this point, however. In fact, the enclosing mountainsides provide an opportunity to reflect on the lingering reminders of the rich mining history of this area. Beyond Kebler Pass, the Byway winds through enclosing aspen groves that alternate with expansive views to the nearby Raggeds and West Elk Wilderness Areas (the latter of which has now been almost entirely circled by the Byway). The Byway then descends off this high country, top of the world setting, into a deepening

and ever-enclosing canyon where Anthracite Creek runs free and clear alongside the Byway. At the mouth of Anthracite Creek, the Byway returns to the North Fork Valley.

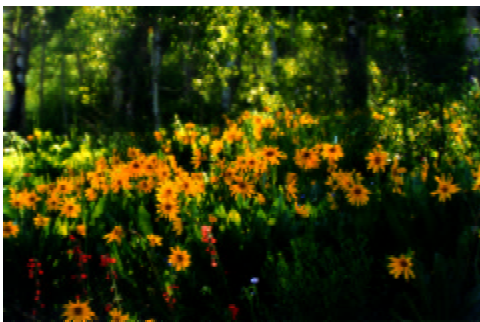
## **2. Natural**



The natural features found along the Byway are truly rich and diverse, and therefore lend themselves to both casual enjoyment and serious study. It is the many natural qualities of the lands within the Byway corridor that create the diversity and scenery discussed above. It is principally the geologic forces that created the mountain peaks and well-watered valleys of this high elevation region, which have given it identity and distinctiveness. Its forces, and their consequences, are manifested in the conical form of Mt. Sopris, the jagged peaks of the Raggeds, the columnar forms of the West Elk Mountains, and the much photographed pyramidal forms within the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area.

It is the forces of mountain building and erosion that have also created the monumental Black Canyon of the Gunnison and the countless other, more minor canyons and valleys through which the Byway winds. It is these forces that have created the white marble of Marble, the black coal of Bowie and Somerset, the red canyons of Redstone, the silver of Irwin, and the fertile soils of Paonia and Hotchkiss. It has at once created the glaciers and the hot springs, large rivers and countless clear flowing streams. And it is the result of these same forces that have, in turn, given rise to the vast array of plants and animals stratified along the 5,000-foot elevation range of the Byway.

## **3. Recreational**



A wide array of both developed and undeveloped recreation opportunities can be found along the Byway. In terms of formal designations, the West Elk Loop Byway passes through or adjacent to the following:

- two designated National Historic Districts (Redstone and Crested Butte)
- a National Recreation Area (Curecanti)
- two State Parks (Paonia and Crawford)
- a National Park (Black Canyon of the Gunnison)
- two National Forests (Gunnison and White River)
- five Wilderness Areas (Maroon Bells-Snowmass, West Elk, The Raggeds, Gunnison Gorge, and Black Canyon of the Gunnison)
- three BLM Resource Areas (Glenwood Springs, Uncompahgre and Gunnison)
- a major downhill ski area (Mt. Crested Butte)
- a National Conservation Area (Gunnison Gorge – BLM)

**a. Developed Recreation**

A brief description of some of the activities that are provided at the major developed recreational attractions on or near the Byway follows:

**Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park** – Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument was redesignated as a National Park in October of 1999. The spectacular north rim of the canyon is located just 11 miles off of Colorado 92. Visitor opportunities include sightseeing at canyon overlooks, hiking, camping, fishing, and rock climbing. A ranger station is open from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

**Cimarron** – Though not on the Byway, Cimarron is of special interest to railroad enthusiasts. It is located on Highway 50, 17 miles west of the junction with Colorado 92. It was a former narrow gauge helper engine station on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. It features a visitor center and railroad exhibits of historic significance.



**Crawford State Park** – Crawford State Park is located on Colorado 92 just south of the Town of Crawford. Available activities include fishing, boating, water skiing, sailing, swimming, camping, ice skating and cross-country skiing. Facilities include campgrounds, drinking water and flush toilets.

**Crested Butte Mountain Resort** – This ski area is located off Colorado 135, just north of the Town of Crested Butte, and provides a diverse and challenging mix of slopes for skiers. The area consists of 81 trails served by 11 ski lifts, situated on 877 acres of land in the Gunnison National Forest.

**Crystal River Fish Hatchery** – The Crystal River Hatchery has been a brood hatchery for trout since 1941. Located on the west side of Colorado 133 a mile south of Carbondale, it uses an abundance of natural spring waters. The hatchery produces 15 million eggs a year from rainbow and cutthroat trout. The hatchery is open daily during daylight hours.

**Curecanti National Recreation Area** – Curecanti National Recreation Area stretches for approximately 35 miles along Highways 50 and 92. Elk Creek serves as park headquarters for this 42,000-acre recreation area. A visitor center is open from mid-May to mid-September. Exhibits and an audio/visual presentation tell about Curecanti's natural and cultural history and introduce its many recreational activities, which include:

- **Sightseeing** – Scenic Colorado 92 skirts the Black Canyon’s north rim for spectacular views. Pioneer Point and other overlooks offer views into this deep canyon and a chance to learn of its history.
- **Hiking** – Curecanti’s trail system offers varied hiking experiences. Birders especially enjoy the 0.5-mile Neversink Trail with its lush, streamside habitat that birds favor. The 2.5-mile Dillon Pinnacles Trail threads dry mesa country to the spectacular Dillon Pinnacles and on for an impressive view of Blue Mesa Reservoir. Curecanti Creek and Hermits Rest Trails lead to Morrow Point Reservoir from Colorado 92. The Pine Creek Trail descends steeply to Morrow Point Reservoir where a tour boat offers excursions during the summer.
- **Camping** – Curecanti’s major developed campgrounds are at Elk Creek, Lake Fork, Stevens Creek and Cimarron. Smaller areas along Blue Mesa Reservoir at Dry Gulch, Red Creek, Ponderosa and Gateview offer more seclusion. Group campsites are available at East Elk Creek and Red Creek.
- **Picnicking** – Picnic areas with water and toilets are available along the Gunnison River on the park’s east end, and picnic tables are available along Highways 50 and 92.
- **Water-Based Activities** – The 20-mile long Blue Mesa Reservoir has 96 miles of shoreline. It offers a range of water-based recreation activities including fishing, boating, water skiing, wind surfing and diving.
- **Handicapped Access** – The Elk Creek Visitor Center and two information stations are wheelchair accessible.
- **Services** – Marinas offering a small grocery store, boat rentals, guide service, slips and showers are operated by concessionaires at Elk Creek and Lake Fork. There is a restaurant at Elk Creek. Boat tours are available at Morrow Point.

**Historic Districts of Redstone and Crested Butte** – These attractions are discussed in the Historic/Cultural section below.

**Marble** – The Town of Marble is located just six miles off of Colorado 133 near the base of McClure Pass. The first half of the road into Marble is the old railroad bed of the Crystal River and San Juan Railroad Company, which operated from 1905 to 1941. This is the rail line that hauled the marble from the Strauss and Yule quarries that built the Lincoln Memorial and the Unknown Soldier's tomb in Washington, D.C. Important sites accessible by this roadway are the quarries, the Crystal Mill and the Town of Marble.

**Paonia State Park** – Paonia State Park is located on Colorado 133 in the Muddy Creek drainage just above the confluence of Anthracite Creek and the junction of 133 and Gunnison County Road 12 (Kebler Pass road). Available activities include boating, camping, water skiing and fishing. Facilities include campsites, picnic tables and vault toilets.

**Roaring Judy Fish Hatchery** – Located on Colorado 135 just north of Almont, this is the only fish hatchery in the state to have natural salmon return annually. Over ½ million trout are produced at this 860-acre site each year, along with two million kokanee salmon. Two miles of the East River and two ponds are open to the public for fishing.

A number of undeveloped day-use and destination scale recreation areas exist along, or in close proximity to, the Byway. These include the following:

**b. Undeveloped Recreation**

**Black Canyon of the Gunnison Wilderness** – The Black Canyon of the Gunnison Wilderness consists of 15,599 acres within Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The Black Canyon is considered to be the deepest narrow canyon in North America. Difficult routes (not maintained trails) descend an average of 1,800 feet to the canyon floor.

**Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area** – The Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area (NCA) is located just downstream from the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. It encompasses approximately 57,725 acres and is administered by the Bureau of Land Management. It includes a diverse landscape ranging from “adobe badlands” to rugged pinyon juniper covered slopes to the spectacular double canyon of the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness Area.



**Gunnison Gorge Wilderness** – The Gunnison Gorge Wilderness is located in the heart of the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area within the double canyon of the Gunnison River. It encompasses approximately 17,700 acres of public lands, including 14 miles of the Gunnison River. Hiking, backpacking, fishing, river-rafting and kayaking are popular recreational activities.

**Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness** – This Wilderness takes in more than 181,000 acres on the Gunnison and White River National Forests. Elevations range from 9,000 to 14,000. There are more than 100 miles of trails for foot and horse travel through extremely rugged terrain.

**Raggeds Wilderness** – The Raggeds Wilderness is a 64,992 acre area on the Gunnison and White River National Forests. Elevations range from 7,000 to about 13,000 feet. There are more than 90 miles of constructed trails in this Wilderness.

**West Elk Wilderness** – The West Elk Wilderness on the Gunnison National Forest is about 176,000 acres ranging from 7,000 to more than 13,000 feet in elevation. More than 200 miles of constructed trails are available for both foot and horse travel through sometimes rugged terrain.

In addition, the many thousands of acres of undeveloped Forest Service and BLM lands adjoining, or accessible from the Byway, offer a wide variety of undeveloped outdoor recreation opportunities. They include hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, boating/kayaking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, sight seeing, nature study, off-road vehicle use, mountain biking, horseback riding and many other related activities.

#### **c. Community Events**

A number of annual festivals and fairs take place in the communities along the Byway. In the Crystal River Zone, they include the following:

- Carbondale – outdoor concerts – Summer
- Carbondale – Mountain Fair – July
- Carbondale – Potato Day Celebration – October
- Redstone – outdoor concerts – Summer
- Redstone – Labor Day Weekend Art Show
- Redstone – The Grand Illumination – Friday following Thanksgiving
- Redstone – Sled Dog Races – Winter
- Marble – Symposium – Summer



Annual events in the North Fork Valley Zone include the following:

- Paonia – Cherry Days – 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend
- Crawford – Pioneer Days – second weekend in June
- Hotchkiss – Summerfest and Arts Festival – June
- Hotchkiss – Delta County Fair – August

Annual events in the Gunnison Valley Zone include:

- Gunnison – Cattlemen’s Day Celebration – July
- Crested Butte – Wildflower Festival – July

Recreation activities of a different kind can be found in the various communities along the Byway. These include parks, museums, shops, theaters, restaurants and various other urban related activities.

#### **4. Historic/Cultural**



The West Elk Loop offers a journey through history as varied as its many features. From the earliest Indian inhabitants of this region to the fur traders, explorers, mining prospectors, cattlemen and farmers who were to follow, the area is rich in stories of historical explorations, mining, railroads and agriculture. Earliest inhabitants of the West Elk area were migratory Indian hunters and gatherers. Nomadic Utes followed, drawn by the climate, plentiful game and tranquil surroundings. The Dominguez and Escalante expedition of 1776, which was led by two young Franciscan priests to open an overland trail from Santa Fe to newly found missions in California, interrupted this solitude when the friars began the first systematic mapping and recording of Colorado. A portion of the historic Dominguez and Escalante Trail follows Colorado 133 from Hotchkiss to Bowie, north of Paonia.

After an uprising of the Utes in 1879 at the White River Indian Agency, the Northern Ute Indians were relocated to Utah in September 1881 and confined to reservations. The first white settlers moved into the area lured by the fertile lands and dreams of silver and gold. These hardy individuals dwelled first in tents and later in cabins. Towns were quickly established, railroads were built, and ranchers and farmers soon discovered the potential riches of this land.



Thus began the tradition and culture of this region, which remains strong and is visually evident today along much of the Byway. The ranching culture of the region is manifested in various locations along the Byway; most notably along portions of Highway 135 between Crested Butte and Gunnison, and continuing along Highway 50 to the upper end of Blue Mesa Reservoir. It is also strongly evident from Hotchkiss, south along Highway 92 to Black Mesa. A smaller stretch also remains between the outskirts of Carbondale on Highway 133, south to the Forest Service boundary.

The historic farming culture of the North Fork Gunnison River Valley, from Hotchkiss to east of Paonia along Highway 133 is strongly evidenced here. The mining culture is still very much alive further up the North Fork Gunnison River Valley in the communities of Bowie and Somerset, where coal continues to be actively mined. Evidence of the rich mining heritage of the past remain evident at Redstone, Irwin, Gothic, Marble and any number of smaller sites such as Janeway and Placita scattered through the region.

Two National Historic Districts are located along the Byway. They include the following:

**Crested Butte** – Crested Butte is famous for both its history and Victorian architectural character. It was designated a National Historic District in 1974. The town was incorporated in 1880, the same year that the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad laid their narrow gauge railway from Gunnison. Crested Butte served as a supply center for the outlying mining camps until the mid 1890s. Today Crested Butte is known as the “Wildflower Capitol of Colorado” and the “Fat Tire Birthplace of the World.”

**Redstone** – Redstone is the historic mining town along Highway 133 where John C. Osgood not only developed coal mines in nearby Coal Basin, but also built a model factory town complete with a European style country inn for the coke oven workers and a manor house for himself. The town was designated a National Historic District in 1989. Today, visitors can see the historic coke ovens where coal was turned into coke to be used in the steel-making process. Tours through the Redstone Castle, Osgood’s palatial home, are also available. Redstone is also known as an artists’ community where visitors can view and purchase artwork at several art galleries and gift stores.

Other historic sites that remain from these early days include the following:



**Almont** – The town was originally founded in 1879 on a 200-acre government land claim by Sam Fisher as a toll road and bridge site. He bridged the Taylor River and opened a road from Almont northeast to the mouth of Spring Creek. Almont was named after a famous Hambletonian stallion. A post office was granted in 1882, and through the years the town became a famous fishing and hunting resort.

**Irwin/Ruby** – In July 1879, silver was discovered in Ruby Gulch by a down and out prospector named A.T. Gilkerson. Other significant discoveries quickly followed. The Town of Ruby was laid out by Charlie Christopher, a quarter mile below Irwin. Irwin, named after prospector Dick Irwin, was plotted and surveyed in November of 1879. The town boasted 529 homes, stores, 3 churches, a post office, school, bank, stamp mill, 6 sawmills, a theatre, 23 saloons, 7 dance halls, a newspaper and numerous bawdy houses by the fall of 1880. The Windsor Hotel accommodated such dignitaries as U.S. Grant, John Jacob Astor, William Vanderbilt and Horace Tabor. Over two million dollars worth of silver and gold were extracted from the area from 1879 to 1897.

**Sapinero** – Originally laid out as the railroad town of Soap Creek by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, Sapinero served as the temporary end of the line in 1881. During the winter of 1881-1882, over 1,000 men picked and shoveled away in the Black Canyon to push the railroad westward. These hard men, mostly Irish and Italian immigrants, braved unbelievable working conditions, unpredictable rock and snow slides, and consequences of unreliable explosives. Sapinero was surrounded by ranches and was a shipping point for livestock. Today, the original town site is submerged under Blue Mesa Reservoir.

Virtually all the communities along the Byway are historic in the sense that they got their start near the time when this region was first settled. A brief historical sketch of the rest of the Byway communities follows:

**Carbondale** – Established as a railroad town on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad between Glenwood Springs and Aspen, Carbondale became a railhead for the Crystal River and San Juan Railroad, which eventually extended up the valley through Redstone to Marble. In the early 1900's, Carbondale became a major center for the production of potatoes.



**Crawford and Maher** – The Hartman Cattle Trail, established in 1881 as the first cattle crossing from the Gunnison River valley to the North Fork Valley, parallels Colorado 92 over Black Mesa to Crawford. The Crawford-Maher area was the center of the Diamond Joe Cattle Company that ran over a hundred thousand head of longhorn cattle in the region to supply mining camps with beef.

**Gunnison** – Gunnison was founded in 1880 on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad and served as a supply point for the booming mining areas of the San Juan Mountains. In 1911, Western State College was established there.

**Gunnison Tunnel** – The first successful inner-canyon exploration of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison was completed by William Torrence and Abraham Lincoln Fellows in 1901. Survey work during this trip led to the construction of the 5 ½ mile Gunnison Tunnel bringing water to the thirsty Uncompahgre Valley. The resulting farm and ranch products fed the mining communities of the San Juan Mountains. The east portal of the Gunnison Tunnel is visible today from the terminus of the Dead Horse Trail within the National Park.

**Marble** – Located six miles off the Byway, Marble was established as a marble quarry and mill town. It is now a historic site on the National Register. Marble from this quarry has been used in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., as well as many federal and commercial buildings in Colorado and the West.

**Paonia and Hotchkiss** – As early as 1881, Enos Hotchkiss and Samuel Wade determined that the region along the North Fork of the Gunnison to be fine fruit country. By June 1882, these towns had been established, orchards had been planted and irrigation ditches had been constructed. Early ranchers sold their produce to peddlers who in turn peddled the fruit to the surrounding mining towns. The success of this area was assured when the Denver and Rio Grande laid track up the valley from Delta to the Somerset mine above Paonia. In 1904, 1000 carloads of fruit were shipped out of this region.

**Somerset, Bowie and Oliver** – In the early 1900's, there were approximately 40 coal mines in the upper North Fork Valley. The communities of Somerset, Bowie and Oliver were home to first generation immigrants from Italy, Yugoslavia, Germany, Wales, Sweden and Greece who came to work these mines.

There are a number museums located along the Byway which offer informative insights to the history and culture of the region. Museums are located in Gunnison, Hotchkiss, Paonia, Marble, Redstone and Carbondale. In addition, the National Park Service provides wayside exhibits along the Byway which provide information on the railroad, mining and ranching history of the area. And although not on the Byway, the Ute Indian Museum in Montrose is an excellent source of information on the Ute tribes and their historic use of the area.

## **5. Archaeological**

While it is widely known that this region was used by the Ute Indians, and by other migratory Indian hunters and gatherers before them, archaeological sites are sensitive and as such have not been developed to encourage public visits or examination. Two existing Byway interpretive wayside exhibits (one at Carbondale and one at Placita) pay tribute to these early residents.



# **C**hapter III - Resource Protection

## **A. Existing Conditions**

### **1. Issues**



The West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway contains a number of significant resources. As discussed in Section II, above, they include scenic landscapes, outstanding natural features, diverse recreational resources, nationally significant historic sites, and distinctive cultures and ways of life. It is these intrinsic qualities for which the Byway was established. It is also the qualities that make this a distinctive and special place for the people who reside here. For both reasons, it is critically important to protect the resources, and way of life, found along the Byway.

Because of differences in ownership, management and location, some of these resources are already adequately protected, while others are vulnerable; some are facing immediate pressures while others are not. Because of the inherent differences in these resources, some are more susceptible to disturbance or disruption than others, and some are abundant while others are rare. For these reasons, it is not necessary, or appropriate, to give all Byway resources the same level or type of protection.

Some of the key considerations in determining an appropriate prescription for resource protection include ownership, existing management plans or review mechanisms, pressures/risks, and resource sensitivity and significance. Together, these considerations also help to establish priorities for protection.

### **2. Land Ownership**

Much of the land on or closely adjacent to the Byway is in federal ownership – either U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, or National Park Service, as previously discussed (see Map 1). As such, these lands are automatically protected from certain types of disturbance. Management of these lands is prescribed by the respective land and resource management plans of these agencies. However, as also shown on Map 1, there are large areas of the Byway which are in private ownership, and the values they contain are subject to pressures of the market place and the inclinations and needs of the owner. In most areas, the use of these lands is also influenced, to some degree, by existing county level plans and/or codes. Within the five counties along the Byway, these plans and codes vary widely, as discussed below. The need for resource protection, and the approach to addressing it, therefore varies significantly along the Byway based on ownership.

### 3. Existing Plans, Codes and Policies

Essentially all lands along the Byway are subject to some form of agency oversight or review procedures for actions that would measurably affect the use or character of the land. Some review and approval mechanisms are very specific and limiting, while others are very general and permissive. The management plans and other relevant documents of the various jurisdictions along the Byway were reviewed in an effort to identify the degree to which they presently provide protection of the intrinsic qualities of the Byway. A brief summary of these agency plans and policies is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Agency Management Policy**

Agency	Management Document	Management Objectives	Key Provisions or Features of the Policy
US Forest Service & Bureau of Land Management	Land and Resource Management Plans (USFS), Resource Management Plans (BLM)	Multiple-use management.	Various individual management units, each with a particular management emphasis. All management actions require preparation of an EA or EIS.
National Park Service	General Management Plan & Resource Management Plans	Resource protection and recreation on federal park lands.	Management prescriptions range from “developed” to “protected,” including various recreation designations. New plan (1997).
Garfield County	Zoning	Review of proposed residential development within the agricultural area.	1970’s zoning, does not mesh with 1994 Comprehensive Plan. Subdivision proposals require review process; include avoidance of geologic hazard areas, visual impacts, floodplains, environmentally sensitive areas.
Pitkin County	Crystal River Valley Zoning, Redstone Master Plan, and Redstone Historic Preservation Guidelines	Residential development is encouraged in such a way as to preserve open land and agriculture, maintain the rural lifestyle, and protect wildlife habitat and historical values.	Provides for low and moderate density residential development, advocating the clustering of development to preserve open space. In Redstone, historic preservation is emphasized.
Gunnison County	Land Use Resolution	High emphasis on visual and ecological considerations for county development.	The Land Use Resolution, amended 1994, is in the process of being revised. All applicants for development must go through a land use change review and public hearing. Proposals compared against ~20 considerations, including a design review. Larger proposals are also reviewed by agencies.

Table 1 continued

Agency	Management Document	Management Objectives	Key Provisions or Features of the Policy
Delta County	Master Plan	Preserving open space and agriculture; maintaining the rural lifestyle; protecting private property rights; requiring new development to 'pay its own way.'	New plan (1996). Three planning areas affect Byway. Minimal restrictions on development; no zoning, no building code, no land use regulations except for subdivisions. Subdivisions may require a Scenic Impact Report detailing visual impact on the Byway and mitigation of any adverse impacts.
Montrose County	County Zoning, Subdivision Regulations	Manage growth with an emphasis on preservation of agriculture.	A Master Plan is currently being developed which, once approved, will utilize a variety of growth management tools, including zoning and subdivision regulations in concert with a land use plan, transportation plan, natural resources plan and regional plans.
Bureau of Reclamation	Resource Management Plans	Irrigation, power production, resource management (water & land).	Protection of land and water resources while meeting the needs water compacts and treaties, irrigation storage and delivery, flood protection, power production, and recreation.
Colorado Department of Natural Resources, State Parks and CDOW	Resource Management Plans, Master Management Plans	Provide recreation, wildlife protection and enhancement; and hunting and fishing access and regulation.	Operate under BOR RMP's at BOR reservoirs. Protection of resources; lands protected from development.



#### 4. Pressures and Risks to Byway Resources



The pressures and risks to Byway resources vary with location and by type. One of the greatest threats to the quality and character of the lands along the Byway is from development – most often rural residential development. This is particularly true for areas within a few miles of the principal Byway communities. Rural residential development, both acreages and subdivisions, is developing rapidly along some portions of the Byway. This is particularly an issue along Highway 135 between Gunnison and Crested Butte, along Highway 133 south of Carbondale and in the North Fork Valley, and along Highway 92 between Hotchkiss and Crawford. Commercial and residential developments also threaten to alter the tradition and character of communities steeped in history, such as Redstone and Crested Butte.

Risks and pressures to resources at other points along the Byway include mineral development (coal), oil and gas development, timbering, off-highway vehicle use, grazing, recreation use, and growth induced impacts.

#### 5. Resource Vulnerability

Resource vulnerability is a term used to classify the potential for resource disturbance based on conditions of ownership, management, existing protection mechanisms, and pressures/risks to the resource. As a first step, all lands within the Byway corridor were classified according to common characteristics of these variables and mapped into “Management Units”. Each unit was sequentially numbered and a table was prepared summarizing their characteristics.

Criteria were then developed to assign levels of Vulnerability to Change, as follows.

<b>Very High</b>	Lands lacking protection and facing strong development pressure.
<b>High</b>	Lands lacking protection but not currently facing strong development pressure. <b>OR</b> Lands with weak protection mechanisms (e.g. comp. plans, policies, goals, etc.) in place and facing some development pressure.
<b>Moderate</b>	Lands with weak protection mechanisms in place (as above), not facing strong development pressure.
<b>Low</b>	Lands with current protection in place, but which may be amended (e.g. most USFS and BLM management prescriptions).
<b>Very Low</b>	Permanent protection in place (e.g. designated wilderness, etc.)

Table 2 (at the end of this chapter) summarizes the conditions within each of these management units and shows the resulting Vulnerability rating.

## 6. Resource Significance and Sensitivity



As noted above, not all of the Byway's intrinsic qualities have the same significance and sensitivity. Those that are more subject to disturbance, or more rare should be given a corresponding greater level of protection. The second major variable in determining priorities for protection (in addition to Resource Vulnerability as defined above) is the sensitivity and significance of the resource itself. While inherently subjective to some degree, an attempt was made to establish a relative scale of resource significance and sensitivity for the intrinsic qualities of the Byway. This was guided by a structured consideration of five variables: visibility, sense of place, uniqueness, attitudes/recognition and sensitivity, as follows.

- **Visibility** – Is the quality something tangible that can be seen from the Byway?
- **Sense of Place** – Is the quality something that contributes in a significant way to creating a sense of place along the Byway?
- **Uniqueness** – Is the quality unique or highly distinctive?
- **Attitudes/Recognition** – Is the quality something that is widely recognized and/or highly valued by residents of the local community?
- **Sensitivity** – Is the quality something that is inherently sensitive to change or disturbance?

The intrinsic qualities within each of the management units along the Byway were rated according to these criteria on a simple, but standardized numerical scale, by the Byway steering committee. This resulted in final ratings on an overall relative scale ranging from Very High to Very Low.

## 7. Priorities for Protection

Determining priorities for resource protection was the result of two primary considerations:

- The *vulnerability* of the Byway's intrinsic qualities to change (based on ownership and management), and
- The inherent *significance and sensitivity* of the resource.

The highest priorities for protection should be given to those resources, sites and areas with high vulnerability to change and high sensitivity/significance. Resources already well protected or of less sensitivity, while valuable and important, have less priority in terms of near-term expenditures of money and effort, given the practical reality of limited means.



The results of this analysis are presented in Map 4. On this map, each of the management units are delineated with an indication of the priorities for protection on a scale of Very High to Very Low. Table 3 (at the end of this chapter) provides a summary of the conditions within each of these units. It indicates the unit number and location (which is keyed to the Map), ownership, the pressures and risks facing that area, the vulnerability of the resources within each unit, the sensitivity/significance of the resources, and the resulting protection priority which resulted.

As this table and map illustrate, the highest priorities for protection (VH) are typically private lands that are facing strong development pressure, where there are few protection mechanisms in place. Three areas are notable in this regard. They include the following.

- The private lands between Carbondale and the White River National Forest boundary that are facing increasingly strong residential development pressure (Unit #3).
- The private in-holdings in the White River National Forest, further up the Crystal River Valley, are in rural residential subdivision use, which will continue to develop in this area along the Byway (Unit #5).
- Extending west of Paonia along the south side of the Byway is an area that has recently been approved for sewer expansion. Residential and commercial development is anticipated to increase quickly in this rural, agrarian area as this service is provided (Unit #23). Pressure to develop the private agricultural lands throughout this valley also continue (Unit #21).
- Of greatest significance, in terms of size, are most of the lands along the Byway between the towns of Gunnison and Crested Butte where rural residential development is rapidly changing the character of this ranching country (Unit #s 48, 49, 54, 56, and 74).



A larger number of areas show a lesser, but still High, priority for protection. They include the following:

- The private in-holdings in the White River National Forest, in the vicinity of the Marble turnoff, are in rural residential subdivision use, which will continue to develop in this area along the Byway (Unit #8).
- Lands in the Muddy Creek drainage are seeing increasing pressure from rural residential development (Unit #10).
- The BLM lands on the north side of the North Fork Valley may be affected by future coal expansion (Unit #17).
- Private lands from the North Fork Valley extending south down to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison are a high priority for protection because of potential rural residential development (Unit #s 25, and 32).
- Private lands along Curecanti National Recreation Area are at risk from potential residential development and heavy recreation use (Unit #37).
- The community of Crested Butte is changing rapidly because of development pressure and heavy recreation use (Unit #55).
- An area of private land just south of Kebler Pass is subject to possible residential development (Unit #s 60 and 64).

Combined, these High priority areas encompass most of the lands from Paonia to Blue Mesa Reservoir, with scattered lands extending farther, along the Curecanti NRA boundary and up the North Fork Valley.

## **B. Management Direction**

Various interim goals and objectives were established during the course of the study to guide data collection and analysis efforts (see Appendix A). Most of these have been accomplished in the course of conducting the study. The following goals and objectives remain as guiding principles for the long-term management of the Byway:

## 1. Goals and Objectives



**Goal:** Protect the quality, character and integrity of the intrinsic qualities of the region and communities, for which the Byway was established.

**Objective:** Implement and monitor a highly effective resource protection plan that (1) is comprehensive in scope, (2) is broadly and actively coordinated among local interest groups and agencies, and (3) which integrates the full range of intrinsic qualities.

**Goal:** Enhance the intrinsic qualities of the Byway where appropriate, in ways consistent with the overall objectives of the State Scenic and Historic Byways Program, to rehabilitate, develop, maintain, interpret, and provide accessibility to these sites and resources as appropriate.

**Objective:** Implement and monitor a coordinated resource enhancement and recovery program targeted at maintenance of sites and resources, rather than significant additional development.

## 2. Plan Elements

### a. Overlay Zone

To be effective, protection of the Byway's intrinsic qualities must be attentively pursued, broadly coordinated, and multi-faceted. No single recipe for success exists. One that comes close, however, is the concept of an overlay zone, as discussed below. Additional techniques that can supplement an overlay zone are also discussed.

An overlay zone is a designation created by a governing agency that establishes criteria in addition to those regulations already in place. In effect, it overlays all existing zoning designations and adds to the regulations or performance standards already there.

In this context, a Byway overlay zone would be a zoning designation that is applied to the lands in view of, or closely associated with, the Byway. It would contain regulations that are directed toward protection of the intrinsic qualities found there. Because the 205-mile West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway crosses through a large number of jurisdictions, an overlay zone would have to have broad acceptance by a large majority of these jurisdictions to be effective overall. The Byway was originally established with the broad support of these jurisdictions and because most have remained involved, either directly or indirectly, in the development of this plan, the creation of such a zone appears to be broadly supported. The great value of such an

approach is that it would establish nearly uniform guidance and procedures instead of those that might be established and applied piecemeal.

Because of their preliminary receptivity, the concept of an overlay zone will be formally presented to the five counties crossed by the Byway for their consideration. As currently envisioned, it would function as follows.

The Byway Overlay Zone would not establish mandatory prescriptive standards, but rather it would be performance based. It would use language that conveys the intent, but gives flexibility to the applicant in meeting the standards of performance. Once the applicant submits a proposal for county review and approval, the planning staff would determine if it has the potential to impact any of the Byway's intrinsic qualities. If this review finds that there is potential to adversely affect any of these qualities, it would refer the submittal to a local Byway Review Committee within the appropriate Byway zone for further review. This group would then make recommendations back to the local planning commission.

The overlay zone would include all lands within the Byway Corridor (as indicated on Map 7). As part of the county development application process, an applicant would be advised if the development fell within the overlay zone. If it did, the applicant would be given a set of standard design criteria and suggested considerations for meeting these standards, as part of the original application packet. This would provide the applicant an opportunity to design the development with those objectives in mind.

The local review committees might be comprised of interested community members and representatives with recognized expertise or knowledge of the various Byway's intrinsic qualities, such as a wildlife officer, a member of a local historical society, a landscape architect, a recreation planner, etc.

The design standards and guidance given to applicants would be developed with language similar to the following:

*All new development and expansion of existing development that falls within local jurisdictional review within the West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway viewshed are recommended to be constructed and maintained in a manner that is consistent and*





compatible with the visual character and natural qualities that currently exist. This standard applies to all project components, including structures, access, utilities, signage, fencing, outdoor storage, etc. Lighting and noise levels associated with the proposal must also be compatible with the setting in which they are proposed. No project or project component that will detract from the natural character of the Byway setting, or otherwise adversely impact the intrinsic qualities of the Byway, will be recommended for approval unless appropriate measures to mitigate the impacts are taken. The intrinsic qualities to be considered include scenic, recreation, natural (vegetation, wildlife/fisheries, water, air, geology, soils, etc.), historic, cultural and archaeological assets.

Discretion is given to the project applicant in meeting these standards. As an aid in facilitating compliance with the intent of these regulations, the following are offered as considerations that may be helpful in project planning.

- **Siting** – Proper initial siting is the single most effective means of reducing visual contrast. Locating in areas that help to conceal the project can simply put much of the modification out of sight.
- **Disturbance** – Keeping disturbance of the ground and vegetation to a minimum is of substantial help in reducing the visual evidence of a landscape modification – what isn't disturbed doesn't have to be reclaimed.
- **Design Materials** – The use of materials and colors that are borrowed from the surrounding landscape are most effective in reducing visibility. Materials with reflective surfaces (such as roofs, siding, etc.) become significantly more visible than non-reflective surfaces. Darker colors are often less visible than lighter colors, depending upon the setting.
- **Ridgelines** – Structures or other types of modifications on ridgelines and topographic prominences are substantially more visible than those which are located on flat ground or which are viewed against an inconspicuous topographic or vegetative background.

- **Compatibility** – Visual compatibility, land use compatibility, and neighborhood compatibility are important objectives.
- **Setbacks** – Moving developments away from the viewer helps to maintain foreground context and diminish the prominence of development.
- **Landscaping/Reclamation** – Landscaping can help to reduce the impacts of disturbance and soften or conceal the visibility of development. The use of indigenous species is the most effective type of landscaping for maintaining a natural appearance and the integrity of the natural biological community.
- **Lighting or noise**, which is greater or significantly different than that in the surrounding landscape, is likely to be readily noticed and disruptive to the setting. Lighting that dilutes the night sky or causes spill and glare from unshielded fixtures would be seen as adverse.
- **Access** – Access can be particularly disruptive to the setting if not done in a sensitive and subdued fashion. Road cuts/fills on steep slopes are particularly visible, damaging to the landscape, and difficult to ever effectively reclaim. Large or distinctive entry features can create a setting that would conflict with the rural character of most of the Byway. The appropriateness of road surface materials should be considered. Existing public access to recreation areas and other Byway attractions should not be adversely affected.
- **Utilities** – Overhead structures such as utilities and communication facilities are readily visible and obtrusive in a natural setting. Burying overhead utilities puts them out of sight and reduces impacts where important types of environmental sensitivities would not be unduly compromised.
- **Clustering** – Clustering has the advantage of reducing the amount of land affected by development and retaining the remainder in natural open space.





- **Best Management Practices (BMP)** – The use of BMP is expected as routine practice, as a way of reducing site specific impacts that might otherwise occur.
- **Visualization** – Technically accurate and context realistic simulations or drawings/renderings, while not required, may help to facilitate the County and Byway Committee's review and clarify issues in question.

*Proposals which are then submitted and evaluated by the County Planning Staff as adversely affecting any of the Byway's intrinsic qualities may be referred to the local Byway chapter or a review committee appointed by the West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway Steering Committee for the purpose of such review and recommendation. Design enhancement measures may be suggested as a way to lessen the impact if the Byway Review Committee confirms adverse affects. Such measures may relate to any of the design considerations identified above. It may also recommend other design or enhancement measures such as a wildlife protection plan to protect wildlife habitats, sites or corridors, a historic protection plan, an access management plan, or other conditions as appropriate.*

**b. Other Resource Protection Techniques and Mechanisms**



As indicated, no single approach is expected to be fully effective in protecting the intrinsic qualities of the Byway. In addition to the overlay zone, a number of other land and resource protection techniques are finding success elsewhere. Most of these are mechanisms that respect the vested rights of private landowners. A brief description of some of the more common of these land use and resource protection tools follows:

- **TDRs** – Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) provide a mechanism whereby development rights in a sensitive area can be sold to another party in a less sensitive area (receiving area), thereby protecting the lands and resources of the lands in which the rights were acquired.
- **PDRs** – Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs) is the direct purchase of the development rights to a property to maintain existing resource values; usually financed through an open space sales tax or grants.

- **Conservation Easements** – A conservation easement, similar to a PDR, involves the owner voluntarily agreeing to place a long-term or perpetual easement on his/her land that precludes development of specified types. Conservation easements are donated or sold to an organization or other entity, such as a land trust, because of a specific interest. These interests may include preservation of agriculture, maintenance of open space, protection of wildlife values, or a combination of goals. The owner generally benefits by direct monetary compensation, tax benefits, estate planning advantages, or a combination thereof.
- **Exaction** – As a condition of obtaining subdivision approval, a local government requires developers to pay a fee or dedicate land to a trust fund for open space.
- **Preferential Assessment** – Under state laws, agricultural and other special districts can be established to assess land as farmland, forestland, etc., rather than its highest and best use. Uses then must conform to those allowed under that designation.
- **Fee Simple Acquisition** – The lands are purchased in fee and ultimate control is thereby secured; usually financed through an open space sales tax or grants.

In addition to agency land protection efforts, there are a number of private organizations actively involved in resource and open space protection. Most notable in this regard are land trusts and conservancies. These organizations operate at a variety of scales, from national organizations with broad land protection objectives to local organizations focussed on specific types of lands and issues. A number of land trusts and conservancies are active within the region. They include the following.

Land Trusts/Conservancies	Local Contact
American Farmland Trust	Jeff Jones, Western Slope Office, P.O. Box 328, Palisade, CO 81526 (970-464-4963)
Aspen Valley Land Trust	Reid Haughey, P.O. Box 940, Aspen, CO 81612 (970) 920-3806
Crested Butte Land Trust	Vicki Church, P.O. Box 2224, Crested Butte, CO 81224 (970) 349-1206
Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust	Lynne Sherrod, 8833 Ralston Rd., Arvada, CO 80002 (303) 431-6422
Colorado Open Lands	Dan Pike, 274 Union Blvd., Suite 320, Lakewood, CO 80228 (303) 988-2373
Colorado Wildlife Heritage Foundation	Edward Alexander, P.O. Box 211512, Denver, CO (303) 291-7212
The Conservation Fund	Tom Macy, 1942 Broadway, Suite 323, Boulder, CO 80302 (303) 444-4369
Gunnison County Land Preservation Board	Fred Field, Gunnison County Commissioner, 200 East Virginia Ave., Gunnison, CO 81230 (970) 641-0248
Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy	Joni Clark, 108 West Tomichi, Suite 1, Gunnison, CO 81230 (970) 641-4386
Lake Fork Land Trust	Rosemary Knight, P.O. Box 242, Lake City, CO 81235 (970) 944-2803
The Nature Conservancy	Heidi Sherk, 1881 9 <sup>th</sup> St., Suite 200, Boulder, CO 80302 (303) 444-2950
Pitkin County Open Space and Trails	Jennifer Pierce, 530 E. Main St., Suite 301, Aspen, CO 81611 (970) 920-5232
Roaring Fork Conservancy	Jeanne Beaudry, P.O. Box 323, Basalt, CO 81621 (970) 927-1290
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	Thom Woodruff, P.O. Box 8249, Missoula, MT 59812 (800) 225-5355 ext. 553
Three Rivers Land Trust	Robert Hayutin, 3943 North 80 Lane, Paonia, CO 81428 (970) 527-6891
Trust for Public Land	Doug Robotham, 1410 Grant St., Suite B-304, Denver, CO (303) 837-1414
Valley Land Conservancy	Tony Hoag, 635 E. Main, Montrose, CO 81401 (970) 252-1481

- c. Outdoor Advertising Control** Colorado State law provides for the control of outdoor advertising along the Byway. It has proved effective in keeping off-premises signage off the Byway. Pitkin County and others have strict sign codes that apply as well.

## C. Implementation

Implementation of the Resource Protection element of the plan will require a combination of short-term action items, long-term action items, and monitoring.

### 1. Short-Term Action Plan

The following are a list of short-term action items necessary for implementation of the resource protection plan for the Byway. Associated with each is an indication of the time frame and group or individual(s) responsible for its implementation.

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
Finalize the language to be used in the draft overlay zone performance standards/regulations.	By December 2000	Persons serving on the Byway Steering Committee with ties or affiliations with the five counties.
Formally submit overlay zone concept and draft language to each of the five counties in a coordinated approach. Revise as appropriate and institute the process.	Submit by March 2001	Same as above.
Identify key individuals with appropriate credentials who are willing to serve on the three Byway Chapter or Review Committees.	By March 2001	Individuals from each of the three Byway Chapters.
Establish contact with representatives of land trusts and conservancies who are active in the region, and communicate the resource protection goals and objectives of the Byway and the resource protection priorities that have been established.	By March 2001	Individuals of the Byway Steering Committee who are familiar with these organizations and/or willing to establish a working relationship.
Identify indicators of change for monitoring the success or failure of protection mechanisms.	By November 2001	Persons on the Byway Steering Committee with interest and expertise in the various intrinsic resources.

## 2. Long-Term Action Plan

Following establishment and implementation of the resource protection plan, there are longer-term maintenance and review functions that should be given attention as noted below.

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
Maintain active coordination and dialogue with representatives of all interested and affected agencies (preferably through a representative serving on one of the Byway Chapters).	Ongoing	Members of the Byway Chapters as appropriate.
Review the goals and objectives initially established for resource protection, and revise if needed to maintain their relevance and appropriateness to current conditions.	Periodically	All members of the Byway Chapters.
Maintain active communication with the county planners and administrators regarding the overlay zone and the review process.	Ongoing	Any members of the Byway Chapters or Review Committees who have involvement in the process, as occasion permits.

## 3. Monitoring

To assure the long-term success of the resource protection plan, key aspects of the program and its effectiveness in resource protection need to be monitored. An objective method of monitoring would be to develop and apply indicators of change. Changes along the Byway should then be reviewed annually and, by the use of these indicators, the successes and failures of the preceding year should be documented and reviewed.

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
Apply indicators and review/document successes and failures of the resource protection plan.	Annually	Members of the Byway Steering Committee with an interest or expertise in the intrinsic resources of the Byway.
Implement a monitoring program.	November 2001	Members of the Byway Steering Committee interested in maintaining ongoing, active involvement in the management of the Byway.

Table 2. Resource Vulnerability to Change

#	Byway Area	Ownership	Mgmt. Prescription/ Land Use	Pressures/Risks (Type & Level)		Protection Mechanism	Vulnerability VH* (see end)
				Commercial (H)	Urban Mix		
1	SH 133 in Carbondale	Private	Urban Mix			City Zoning and Garfield County	
2	SH 133 in Garfield County S. of Carbondale	Private	Agriculture and Rural Residential	Suburban Development (H)		County Zoning and Comp Plan	VH
3	SH 133 Lower Crystal River Valley Pitkin County	Private	Agriculture, Small Acreage Residential, BRB	Rural Residential Development (H)		County Zoning RS-30 PLUD	VH
4	SH 133 S. of Carbondale	BLM—Glenwood Springs Resource Area	Jerome Park (Protected Easement)	Grazing (L), Oil and Gas (L), Visitor Impacts (H)		NEPA/County Zoning	H
61	SH 133 Thompson Creek Natural Env. Area	BLM—Glenwood Springs Resource Area	Protect scenic, geologic, recreation, and primitive values	Recreation Use (L)		Special NEA Designation	VL
5	SH 133 Upper Crystal River Valley	Private	Natural Environment, Rural Subdivisions, Marble Quarry	Rural Residential Infill (H)		County Zoning RS-30 PLUD, RS-20 PLUD Forest Plan	VH
6	SH 133 Upper Crystal River Valley	USFS—White River National Forest	MA 2A, 2B, 3A, 5A, 6B, Recreation, Wildlife, Grazing, Timber	Recreation (M), Wildlife (L), Grazing (L), Timber (M)			M
7	SH 133 Upper Crystal River Valley	Maroon Bells/Snowmass Wilderness	MU 8A, 8B and 8C	Dispersed but increasing recreation (M)		Wilderness Designation	VL
8	Gunnison Cty. Upper Crystal River Valley	Private	Rural Residential and other uses (?)	Rural Residential Development (H)		Land Use Resolution	H
9	Gunnison Cty. Upper Crystal River Valley	Private, recommend sale to government	Grazing	Rural Residential (H), Grazing (L), Recreation (H)		Land Use Resolution	L
10	SH 133 along Lee and Muddy Creek Gunnison County	Mixed Private & Public	Natural Environment, Agriculture, Timber Harvest	Rural Residential (H), ORV (H), Oil and Gas (M)		Land Use Resolution	H
11	SH 133 W. of McClure Pass	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 2B—Scenic Byways, Recreation, Timber Harvest Area	Visitor Impacts (M), Forestry (L), Visual Impacts (L to M (Forestry))		NEPA	L
12	SH 133 W. of McClure Pass; W. of Paonia Reservoir	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Recreation, Grazing, Wildlife (MA 6A, 6B, 4B)	Recreation (L), Grazing (L), Wildlife (L), ORV (L)		Forest Plan	L
13	SH 133 N. of Crested Butte	USFS—Gunnison National Forest, Raggeds Wilderness	MA 8A, 8B, and 8C	Dispersed Recreation (L)		Wilderness Designation	VL
14	SH 133 near Paonia Reservoir	BLM—Uncompaghere Basin Resource Area	Grazing	Grazing (L)		RMP	L

Note: Units are listed in order of geographic occurrence and are not in numerical order in all cases. Units #67, #69 and #72 were combined with other units and given new numbers.



Table 2. Continued

#	Byway Area	Ownership	Mgmt. Prescription/ Land Use		Pressures/Risks (Type & Level)		Protection Mechanism		Vulnerability
			State Recreation Area	Land Use	Recreation (M)	Development (M)	SRA Designation	Land Use Resolution	
15	Paonia Reservoir	Colorado	Mountainous Natural Environment, Rural	Recreation	Rural Residential and Resort Development (M7)			Land Use Resolution	L
16	Kebler Pass Rd. in Anthracite Creek Drainage	Private	Mountainous Natural Environment, Rural	Recreation	Rural Residential and Resort Development (M7)			Land Use Resolution	H
17	SH 133 near Paonia	BLM—Uncompaghere Basin Resource Area	MU 7—Existing and Potential Coal Development	Coal Mining, Grazing, Natural Environment, Rural Residential	Coal Mining (H), Oil and Gas (L), Forestry (M7), ORV (H)		NEPA	NEPA	H
18	SH 133 along N. Fork Gunnison River, Gunnison County	Private	Coal Mining, Grazing, Natural Environment, Rural Residential	Coal Mining, Grazing, Natural Environment, Rural Residential	Coal Mining (H), Rural Residential (L)			Land Use Resolution	H
19	SH 133, Eastern Delta County	Private	Coal Mining, Agriculture, Natural Environment, Rural Residential	Coal Mining, Agriculture, Natural Environment, Rural Residential	Coal Mining (H), Rural Residential (L)			Subdivision Review, County MP (Advisory), Area Plans (Pending)	H
20	Hotchkiss/ Paonia Valley	BLM—Uncompaghere Basin Resource Area	Wildlife Winter Range	Wildlife Winter Range	Recreation (L)		RMP	RMP	L
21	SH 133, Paonia-Hotchkiss Valley Delta County	Private	Agriculture, Industry, Rural Residential, Commercial	Agriculture, Industry, Rural Residential, Commercial	Rural Residential (M), Commercial Development (M)			Subdivision Review, County MP (Advisory), Area Plans (Pending)	VH
62	SH 133, Paonia-Hotchkiss Valley Delta County	Private	Agriculture, Industry, Rural Residential, Commercial	Agriculture, Industry, Rural Residential, Commercial	Rural Residential (M), Commercial Development (M)			Subdivision Review, County MP (Advisory), Area Plans (Pending)	VH
22	Hotchkiss and Paonia	Private	Urban Mix	Urban Mix	N/A			Subdivision Review, County MP (Advisory), Area Plans (Pending)	H
23	SH 133 Paonia Sewage Expansion Delta County Area	Private	Agriculture, Industry, Rural Residential, Commercial	Agriculture, Industry, Rural Residential, Commercial	Rural Residential (H), Commercial Development (H)			Subdivision Review, County MP (Advisory), Area Plans (Pending)	VH
24	SH 92 S. of Crawford	BLM—Uncompaghere Basin Resource Area	MU 16—General Resource Lands	MU 16—General Resource Lands	Oil and Gas Leasing (L), Mineral Development (L), ORV (H)		NEPA	NEPA	M
25	SH 92 Grand View Mesa Delta County	Private	Agriculture	Agriculture	Rural Residential Development (M)			Subdivision Review, County MP (Advisory), Area Plans (Pending)	H
26	SH 92 S. of Crawford	BLM—Uncompaghere Basin Resource Area	MU 3—Sustained Use Forestry	MU 3—Sustained Use Forestry	Forestry (L), Oil and Gas Leasing (L)		NEPA	NEPA	L
27	SH 92 Crawford	Private	Urban Mix	Urban Mix	N/A			None	H
28	East of Hotchkiss; N of SH 133 at Paonia	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 3A—Semiprimitive Nonmotorized Recreation	MA 3A—Semiprimitive Nonmotorized Recreation	Recreation (L)			Forest Plan	L
30	SH 92 Crawford State Recreation Area	State/USBR	Recreation	Recreation	Recreation Use (H)			Park Designation	VL
31	SH 92 Alkali Creek Delta Cty.	Private	Agriculture, Rural Residential	Agriculture, Rural Residential	Rural Residential Development (M)			Delta County Planning Areas	H

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Table 2. Continued

Table 2. Continued									
#	Byway Area	Ownership	Mgmt. Prescription/ Land Use		Pressures/Risks (Type & Level)		Protection Mechanism		Vulnerability
			Agriculture, Rural Residential		Rural Residential Development (M)		Zoned Gen. Ag., MP in works		
32	SH 92 Montrose Cty.	Private							H
33	SH 92 North of Morrow Point, and N. of 133 at Paonia	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 6B—Grazing, Wildlife, Timber			Grazing (L), Wildlife (L), Timber (L)	Forest Plan		L
34	SH 92 N. of Morrow Point	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 2B—Scenic Byways, Recreation, Timber Harvest Area, Agriculture			Visitor Impacts (L), Forestry (L), Visual Impacts (L to M (Forestry)), Agriculture (M)	Forest Plan		L
35	Curecanti	NPS—Curecanti	Semi-Primitive Areas			Visitor Impacts (L)	NPS Protection/ Preservation Mission		VL
36	Curecanti	BLM—Gunnison Resource Area	MU 16, 12, and 13—General Resource Lands, Wildlife			Grazing (L), Recreation (L), Wildlife (L)	RMP		L
37	U.S. Hwy. 50 and adjacent to SH 92 Gunnison County	Private	Ranching and Natural Environment			Rural Residential Development (L), Recreation Use (M), Grazing (M)	Land Use Resolution, Conservation Easements		H
63	U.S. Hwy. 50 Pinnacles property	Private	Ranching and Natural Environment			Rural Residential Development (L), Recreation Use (M), Grazing (M)	Land Use Resolution, Conservation Easements		H
38	West Elk Wilderness	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 8A, 8B and 8C			Dispersed Recreation (L)	Wilderness Designation		VL
39	Curecanti	NPS—Curecanti	Lake-intensive Recreation			Recreation (M)	NPS Protection/ Preservation Mission		VL
40	Curecanti	BLM—Gunnison Resource Area	MU 9—Dillon Pinnacles ACEC			Visitor Impacts (L)	Management Prescription		VL
41	N. and S. of US 50, DOW Wildlife Management Areas	State	Wildlife Management			Recreation Use (L)	Management Designation/ Ownership		L
42	Curecanti	BLM—Gunnison Resource Area	MU 7—West Antelope Creek ACEC (Wildlife)			Oil & Gas (L), Mineral Development (L), Visitor Impacts (L)	Management Prescription		VL
43	Curecanti	NPS—Curecanti	Developed Areas			Visitor Impacts (H)	NPS Protection/ Preservation Mission		L
44	Curecanti	NPS—Curecanti	Protected Resource Areas			Visitor Impacts—Land (M) and Water (H)	NPS Protection/ Preservation Mission/NEPA/ Sec. 106 (Archaeology)		VL
45	US 50 W. of Gunnison Gunnison County	Private	Agriculture, Range, and Rural Residential			Rural Residential Development (M)	Land Use Resolution		H

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Table 2. Continued

#	Byway Area	Ownership	Mgmt. Prescription/ Land Use	Pressures/Risks (Type & Level)	Protection Mechanism	Vulnerability
46	US 50 and SR 135 Gunnison Suburbs	Private	Scattered Rural Residential and Commercial	Increasing Urbanization	Land Use Resolution	H
47	US 50 and SR 135 Gunnison	Private	Urban Mix	N/A	City Zoning	H
48	SR 135 Gunnison River	Private	Agriculture and Rural Residential	Rural Residential (H)	Land Use Resolution	VH
49	SR 135 Jacks Cabin Valley	Private	Ranching and Rural Residential	Rural Residential (M)	Land Use Resolution	VH
74	SR 135 Jacks Cabin Valley	Private	Ranching and Rural Residential	Rural Residential (H)	Land Use Resolution	VH
50	SR 135 N. of Almont	State (Land Board)	Grazing	Grazing (L)	State-owned	L
51	SR 135 N. of Jack's Cabin, and N. of Blue Mesa Reservoir (US 50)	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 5A—Big Game Winter Range and 6B—Grazing	Grazing (Low), Wildlife (Low)	Forest Plan	L
52	Throughout Gunnison Nat'l Forest near West Elk Wilderness	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 2A and 2B, Recreation and Visual	Recreation (L), ORV (L)	Forest Plan	L
53	SR 135 N. of Almont	State (DOW—Fish Hatchery)	Fisheries Management	Recreation Use (L)	Management Prescription	L
54	SR 135 S. of Crested Butte	Private	Range and Rural Subdivisions	Rural Residential (H)	Land Use Resolution	VH
55	SR 135 Crested Butte	Private	Urban Mix/Natural Environment Open Space	Urban Residential	City Zoning, Subdivision Regulations	H
56	SR 135 N. and W. of Crested Butte	Private, BLM, Gunnison National Forest	Mountainous Natural Environment and Rural Residential, Urban Areas, Open Space	Rural Residential (H)	Land Use Resolution	VH
57	Crested Butte and Sunlight Ski Areas	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 1B—Ski Resort	Recreation (M), Base Area Development (M)	Forest Plan, Leasing Agreements?	M
58	West of Crested Butte below Keystone Mine	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 10C—Special Interest Area (Protection)	Recreation (L)	Management Prescription	L
59	Kebler Pass	Private	Historic Mining	Minerals (M)	Land Use Resolution	H
64	Mt. Emmons	Private	Historic	Minerals (H)	Land Use Resolution	VH
60	Floresta	Private	Scenic, Natural , Recreation	Rural residential (H)	Land Use Resolution	VH

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Table 2. Continued

#	Byway Area	Ownership	Mgmt. Prescription/ Land Use	Pressures/Risks (Type & Level)	Protection Mechanism	Vulnerability
65	Fruitland Mesa SW. of Crawford	BLM Uncompahgre Resource Area	MU 1, Grazing, Wildlife	Oil and Gas (L), Grazing (L), Minerals (L)	NEPA	L
66	Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument	NPS-BCOG	Primitive Recreation	Visitor Impacts (L)	NPS Protection/Preservation Mission	VL
68	N. of SH 133 at Paonia; N. of SH 92 at Curecanti	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 7A—Even-aged Sawtimber Management	Timber (L)	Forest Plan	L
70	S. of Hotchkiss	BLM Uncompahgre	MU 5—Reduce Salinity Loads on Upper Colorado River Basin	ORV (VL), Grazing (L), Oil and Gas (L), Minerals (L)	NEPA	M
71	N. of SH 133 at Paonia	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	MA 4D—Aspen Management, Visual Quality	Timber (L), ORV (L), Grazing (L)	Forest Plan	L
73	W. of SH 133 near Redstone	USFS—White River National Forest	MA 7E—Sawtimber Production	Timber (M)	Forest Plan	L

\*Vulnerability rankings:

VH—Lands lacking protection and facing strong development pressure.

H—Lands lacking protection but not currently facing strong development pressure, or lands with weak protection mechanism in place facing some development pressure.

M—Lands with weak protection mechanism in place, not facing strong development pressure (e.g. Comp Plans, policies, goals, etc.).

L—Current protection in place but amendable (e.g. Most forest and BLM management prescriptions, county zoning, etc.).

VL—Permanent protection in place (e.g. Designated wilderness, scenic area, ACEC, primitive area, etc.).

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Table 3. Resource Priorities for Protection

#	Barway Area	Ownership	Pressures/Risks (Type & Level)	Vulnerability	Resource Value	Protection Priority
1	SH 133 in Carbondale	Private	Commercial (H)	VH* (see end)	11	M
2	SH 133 in Garfield County S. of Carbondale	Private	Suburban Development (H)	VH	11	M
3	SH 133 Lower Crystal River Valley Pitkin County	Private	Rural Residential Development (H)	VH	23	VH
4	SH 133 S. of Carbondale	BLM—Glenwood Springs Resource Area	Grazing (L), Oil and Gas (L), Visitor Impacts (H)	H	12	VL
61	SH 133 Thompson Creek Natural Env. Area	BLM—Glenwood Springs Resource Area	Recreation Use (L)	VL	12	H
5	SH 133 Upper Crystal River Valley	Private	Rural Residential Infill (H)	VH	13	VH
6	SH 133 Upper Crystal River Valley	USFS—White River National Forest	Recreation (M), Wildlife (L), Grazing (L), Timber (M)	M	23	M
7	SH 133 Upper Crystal River Valley	Maroon Bells/Snowmass Wilderness	Dispersed but increasing recreation (M)	H	16	VL
8	Gunnison Cty. Upper Crystal River Valley	Private	Rural Residential Development (H)	H	22	H
9	Gunnison Cty. Upper Crystal River Valley	Private, recommend sale to government	Rural Residential (H), Grazing (L), Recreation (H)	L	20	VL
10	SH 133 along Lee and Muddy Creek Gunnison County	Mixed Private & Public	Rural Residential (H), ORV (H), Oil and Gas (M)	H	21	H
11	SH 133 W. of McClure Pass	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Visitor Impacts (M), Forestry (L), Visual Impacts (L to M (Forestry))	L	12	VL
12	SH 133 W. of McClure Pass; W of Paonia Reservoir	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Recreation (L), Grazing (L), Wildlife (L), ORV (L)	L	15	VL
13	SH 133 N. of Crested Butte	USFS—Gunnison National Forest, Raggeds Wilderness	Dispersed Recreation (L)	VL	15	VL
14	SH 133 near Paonia Reservoir	BLM—Uncompaghe Basin Resource Area	Grazing (L)	L	20	VL
15	Paonia Reservoir	Colorado	Recreation (M)	L	23	L
16	Kehler Pass Rd. in Anthracite Creek Drainage	Private	Rural Residential and Resort Development (M7)	H	20	M

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Table 3. Continued

#	Bypass Area	Pressures/Risks (Type & Level)		Vulnerability	Resource Value	Protection Priority
		Ownership				
17	SH 133 near Paonia	BLM—Uncompaghe Basin Resource Area	Coal Mining (H), Oil and Gas (L), Forestry (M?), ORV (H)	H	24	H
18	SH 133 along N. Fork Gunnison River, Gunnison County	Private	Coal Mining (H), Rural Residential (L)	H	19	M
19	SH 133, Eastern Delta County	Private	Coal Mining (H), Rural Residential (L)	H	19	M
20	Hotchkiss/ Paonia Valley	BLM—Uncompaghe Basin Resource Area	Recreation (L)	L	14	VL
21	SH 133, Paonia- Hotchkiss Valley Delta County	Private	Rural Residential (M), Commercial Development (M)	VH	24	VH
62	SH 133, Paonia- Hotchkiss Valley Delta County	Private	Rural Residential (M), Commercial Development (M)	VH		H
22	Hotchkiss and Paonia	Private	N/A	H	19	M
23	SH 133 Paonia Sewage Expansion Delta County Area	Private	Rural Residential (H), Commercial Development (H)	VH	21	VH
24	SH 92 S. of Crawford	BLM—Uncompaghe Basin Resource Area	Oil and Gas Leasing (L), Mineral Development (L), ORV (H)	M	19	L
25	SH 92 Grand View Mesa Delta County	Private	Rural Residential Development (M)	H	24	H
26	SH 92 Near Crawford	BLM—Uncompaghe Basin Resource Area	Forestry (L), Oil and Gas Leasing (L)	L	20	VL
27	SH 92 Crawford	Private	N/A	H	23	H
28	East of Hotchkiss; N of SH 133 at Paonia	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Recreation (L)	L	22	L
30	SH 92 Crawford State Recreation Area	State/USBR	Recreation Use (H)	L	25	L
31	SH 92 Alkali Creek Delta Cty.	Private	Rural Residential Development (M)	H	22	H
32	SH 92 Montrose Cty.	Private	Rural Residential Development (M)	H	22	H
33	SH 92 North of Morrow Point, and N. of 133 at Paonia	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Grazing (L), Wildlife (L), Timber (L)	L	16	VL
34	SH 92 N. of Morrow Point	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Visitor Impacts (L), Forestry (L), Visual Impacts (L to M (Forestry)), Agriculture (M)	L	22	L
35	Curecanti	NPS—Curecanti	Visitor Impacts (L)	VL	21	VL

Note: Units are listed in order of geographic occurrence and are not in numerical order in all cases. Units #67, #69 and #72 were combined with other units and given new numbers.



Table 3. Continued

#	Byway Area	Ownership	Pressures/Risks (Type & Level)		Vulnerability	Resource Value	Protection Priority
			Grazing (L), Recreation (L), Wildlife (L)	Rural Residential Development (L), Recreation Use (M), Grazing (M)			
36	Curecanti	BLM—Gunnison Resource Area			L	17	VL
37	U.S. Hwy. 50 and adjacent to SH 92 Gunnison County	Private			H	22	H
63	U.S. Hwy. 50 Pinnacles property	Private			H	25	H
38	West Elk Wilderness	USFS—Gunnison National Forest			VL	16	VL
39	Curecanti	NPS—Curecanti	Dispersed Recreation (L)		VL	21	VL
40	Curecanti	BLM—Gunnison Resource Area	Recreation (M)		VL	14	VL
41	N. and S. of US 50, DOW Wildlife Management Areas	State	Visitor Impacts (L)		L	15	VL
42	Curecanti	BLM—Gunnison Resource Area	Recreation Use (L)		VL	17	VL
43	Curecanti	NPS—Curecanti	Oil & Gas (L), Mineral Development (L), Visitor Impacts (L)		L	20	VL
44	Curecanti	NPS—Curecanti	Visitor Impacts (H)		VL	21	VL
45	US 50 W. of Gunnison County	Private	Visitor Impacts—Land (M) and Water (H)		H	19	M
46	US 50 and SR 135 Gunnison Suburbs	Private	Rural Residential Development (M)		H	12	L
47	US 50 and SR 135 Gunnison	Private	Increasing Urbanization		H	16	L
48	SR 135 Gunnison River	Private	N/A		VH	22	VH
49	SR 135 Jacks Cabin Valley	Private	Rural Residential (H)		VH	24	VH
74	SR 135 Jacks Cabin Valley	Private	Rural Residential (M)		VH		VH
50	SR 135 N. of Almont	State (Land Board)	Rural Residential (H)		L	22	L
51	SR 135 N. of Jack's Cabin, and N. of Blue Mesa Reservoir (US 50)	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Grazing (L)		L	21	L

Note: Units are listed in order of geographic occurrence and are not in numerical order in all cases. Units #67, #69 and #72 were combined with other units and given new numbers.

Table 3. Continued

#	Byway/Area	Ownership	Pressures/Risks (Type & Level)	Vulnerability	Resource Value	Protection Priority
52	Throughout Gunnison Nat'l Forest near West Elk Wilderness	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Recreation (L), ORV (L)	L	21	L
53	SR 135 N. of Almont	State (DOW—Fish Hatchery)	Recreation Use (L)	L	18	VL
54	SR 135 S. of Crested Butte	Private	Rural Residential (H)	VH	25	VH
55	SR 135 Crested Butte	Private	Urban Residential	H	24	H
56	SR 135 N. and W. of Crested Butte	Private, BLM, Gunnison National Forest	Rural Residential (H)	VH	25	VH
57	Crested Butte and Sunlight Ski Areas	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Recreation (M), Base Area Development (M)	M	15	VL
58	West of Crested Butte below Keystone Mine	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Recreation (L)	L	15	VL
59	Kebler Pass	Private	Minerals (M)	H	16	L
64	Mt. Emmons	Private	Minerals (H)	VH	21	H
60	Floresta	Private	Rural residential (H)	VH	19	H
65	Fruitland Mesa SW. of Crawford	BLM Uncompahgre Resource Area	Oil and Gas (L), Grazing (L), Minerals (L)	L	21	L
66	Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park	NPS-BCOG	Visitor Impacts (L)	VL	20	VL
68	N. of SH 133 at Paonia; N. of SH 92 at Curecanti	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Timber (L)	L	15	VL
70	S. of Hotchkiss	BLM Uncompahgre	ORV (VL), Grazing (L), Oil and Gas (L), Minerals (L)	M	19	L
71	N. of SH 133 at Paonia	USFS—Gunnison National Forest	Timber (L), ORV (L), Grazing (L)	L	15	VL
73	W. of SH 133 near Redstone	USFS—White River National Forest	Timber (M)	L	18	VL

\*Vulnerability rankings:

VH—Lands lacking protection and facing strong development pressure.

H—Lands lacking protection but not currently facing strong development pressure, or lands with weak protection mechanism in place facing some development pressure.

M—Lands with weak protection mechanism in place, not facing strong development pressure (e.g. Comp Plans, policies, goals, etc.).

L—Current protection in place but amendable (e.g. Most forest and BLM management prescriptions, county zoning, etc.).

VL—Permanent protection in place (e.g. Designated wilderness, scenic area, ACEC, primitive area, etc.).

Units #67, #69 and #72 were combined with other units and given new numbers.

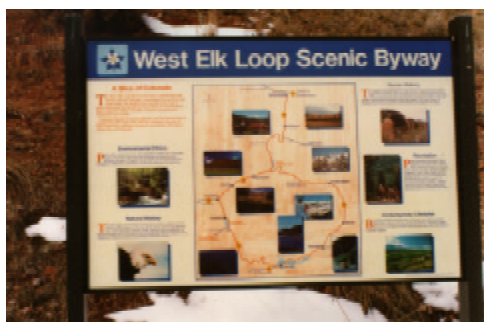
# **C**hapter IV - Interpretation

## **A. Existing Conditions**

Various types of interpretive information are provided along the Byway, in a variety of forms including kiosks, wayside interpretive panels, monuments/markers, and brochures. Some of this information is provided by the Byway organization itself, while other information is provided by agencies and outside organizations. The following is an overview of current interpretation along the Byway, presented by type of format.

### **1. Wayside Exhibits**

#### **a. Byway Kiosks**



Informational kiosks have been provided at five locations along the Byway (see Map 5). Most are multi-purpose, wooden structures that contain a variety of regional visitor information. As shown on Map 5, they are located on Colorado Highway 82 just north of Carbondale, on Gunnison County Road just off Highway 133, on Highway 133 just north of Paonia, on Highway 92 at Crawford, and on Highway 92 just off Highway 50 at Blue Mesa Dam.

At each of these locations, a large (approximately 3' x 4'), standard, full color fiberglass embedded graphic exhibit is provided. Across the top is a large blue and white banner titled "West Elk Loop Scenic Byway" with the state scenic byway columbine graphic. It contains a large map of the Byway with a number of colored photos of representative scenes along the route. It also includes information on the topics of Environmental Ethics, Natural History, Human History, Recreation, and Contemporary Lifestyles.

In all cases, except the panel provided on Gunnison County Road 12, a paved parking area is provided which can accommodate a number of passenger cars. In most cases, highway signs indicate the location of these information stops in advance.

#### **b. Byway Sponsored Interpretive Panels**



There are currently six Byway sponsored interpretive panels in four locations along the Byway, as shown on Map 5. All are located in the Crystal River Valley. The location and general content of each exhibit is summarized below.

Location of Byway Wayside Exhibits	Topics Addressed
At the Carbondale Museum site.	"Carbondale: Farming for Gold," about Native American use, early settlement and potato production in the lower Crystal River Valley.
At the historic site of Janeway (approximately 6 mi. north of Redstone), on the east side of the Byway.	"On the Way to Janeway," about the Crystal River and San Juan Railroad and the community of Janeway.
Redstone, on the east side of the Byway.	"Hard Work Pays Off," about Redstone and its development.
Same as above.	"Genesis of an Empire," about Coal Basin and the coke ovens.
At the historic site of Placita, on the east side of the Byway.	"Once Indian Territory," about Ute Indian occupation.
Same as above.	"Little Place or Placita," about the settlement of Placita and mining.

### c. Other Interpretive Panels



The interpretive signage at all locations consists of waist-height, post-mounted panels with metal frames and two-color fiberglass embedded graphics. They are consistent in format and graphic style and are in good condition.

At each of these four sites, a small gravel pull off and parking area is provided. There is no highway signage indicating their location. Only the Redstone and Placita sites are at all evident from the Byway.

Interpretive panels sponsored by other interests are also present on the Byway. These include those placed by the National Park Service within the Curecanti National Recreation Area, and a few placed by the Bureau of Reclamation in the vicinity of Blue Mesa Dam. These panels address various natural and human history topics including geologic formations and processes, the community of Sapinero, construction of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad through the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, and the construction and operation of the dams.

They are generally similar in appearance to the Byway sponsored interpretive panels. Instead of two-color fiberglass embedded graphic panels, however, the NPS panels are constructed of a Permaloy™ type metal material with a single color of text and graphic imagery. The Bureau of Reclamation panels are produced on etched metal.

In most cases, these exhibits are located in paved parking areas or pull-offs, and are signed.

#### d. Markers and Monuments

Other Byway wayside exhibits fall into the general category of markers and monuments. Two are located on or near Colorado Highway 133 in the North Fork Valley. One is a concrete marker with an embedded Permaloy<sup>TM</sup> plaque marking the route of the Dominguez-Escalante expedition of 1776. It is located on Highway 133 between Paonia and Hotchkiss on the south side of the road. A small informal, paved pull-off has been provided.

The other wayside monument of note is located in the town of Paonia. It is a bronze statue of a miner, and commemorates the North Fork Valley coal miners who have been killed in mining related accidents.

#### 2. Brochures

Promotional type brochures were individually developed for two of the three Byway zones in 1995 (Crystal River and North Fork). These are simple, but attractive and engaging 11" x 14", double-sided, one or two color brochures, folded in quarters. The cover features a map of the overall Byway route, with an indication of which zone is addressed by that brochure. The content of each brochure is focussed entirely on the history and attractions of that Byway zone.

There are a couple of brief mentions in the Crystal River brochure that encourage respect for the land and place. There are no other mentions about environmental sensitivities and etiquette.



In 1998 the Byway Steering Committee was responsible for publishing a guide that covered the entire Byway. This is a 128 page, 8" x 11" two color, landscape format guide, with a full color cover entitled Elk Mountains Odyssey – West Elk Loop Scenic/Historic Byway Guide. In addition to identifying and describing the attractions along the Byway, this guide provides abundant information on the history and culture of the region. It is organized by five geographic segments with an introduction to the region at large, including the pre-settlement Ute peoples and early exploration. This publication is widely available at locations along the Byway. A visit to the region is greatly enhanced by having access to this excellent, professional quality guide.

#### 3. Signage

The standard statewide scenic byway logo and identifier signs are posted at regular intervals along the Byway. There is no other Byway related signage or markers along the route.

## **B. Management Direction**

A number of interpretive goals and objectives were established to guide the corridor management planning study. The majority of these have been met through the course of the study. The following are the goals and objectives that apply to the implementation of the interpretive element of the plan.

### **1. Goals and Objectives**

**Goal:** Provide an interpretive program to educate, inform and enhance the quality of a visit to the Byway by the public and by local residents, in a manner that will foster an appreciation for the lands, resources and communities along the Byway and promote responsible behavior.

*Objective:* Develop an interpretive concept plan that can serve as the overall guide to implementation of an ongoing interpretive program.

*Objective:* Continue to develop/implement interpretive materials and facilities (wayside exhibits, brochures, etc.) in coordination with other Byway programs and needs, and outside interests.

*Objective:* Develop and implement an ongoing monitoring program to review the effectiveness and condition of existing interpretive materials and developments, and to review the need for additional facilities and materials.

### **2. Management Issues and Opportunities**

#### **a. Environmental Education**

It is recognized that interpretation can provide not only enjoyment and enrichment of an activity or place, but it can educate as well. In this sense it can affect behavior.

Interpretation, in the form of environmental education, is one of the best means of educating visitors regarding the environmental and cultural sensitivities of this region. It can, therefore, be a significant and important element in the protection of Byway resources. Opportunities abound in the development of wayside exhibits, brochures, and other interpretive media (such as videos or interactive CD's) to more directly address this important role of interpretation.

#### **b. Signage and Parking**

The Steering Committee made a previous decision not to provide advance roadside signage for wayside exhibits. Therefore, some of these exhibits likely go unnoticed by many travelers.

Accommodation for parking is sometimes inconsistent, ranging from small gravel, informal pull-offs, to well developed, paved and striped lots. Opportunities for providing consistency and gaining more exposure through greater utilization of these areas are important enhancement considerations.



**c. Interpretive Themes and Topics**



The rich palate of natural features and historic events within the region provide abundant opportunity to develop additional wayside exhibits on these topics. Information on wildlife is another topic of broad general public interest. Currently it is not represented among the Byway interpretive topics.

Formal interpretive themes have not been developed in the past for the Byway; however, the subject matter of the wayside exhibits that exist are taken from the immediate site context. The most appropriate Byway themes should also be derived from this same context; that is, the intrinsic qualities of each major portion of the Byway and the issues that affect them. The existing exhibits would therefore fit well into the proposed Byway themes for future exhibits identified below.

**3. Plan Elements**

The elements of the interpretive portion of the Corridor Management Plan include the interpretive themes and topics, waysides and signage, brochures, and other interpretive media.

**a. Interpretive Themes and Topics**

Interpretive themes for individual Byway segments have been developed as part of this plan, which fit into an overall Byway theme. These themes and associated interpretive topics are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4. Proposed Byway Interpretive Themes and Topics**

Overall Byway Interpretive Theme: Cultural History and the Natural World			
Byway Segment	Proposed Interpretive Theme	Existing Interpretive Exhibits and Topics	Interpretive Exhibit and Topic Opportunities
Hwy. 133 – Carbondale to the Forest boundary	History and Culture of the Lower Crystal River Valley	One wayside exhibit on early farming history. Brochure coverage of communities and history.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recreation, urbanization and their impact on the disappearing western ranching lands and culture (in ranch lands in view of Carbondale).</li> <li>Respect for private property.</li> </ul>
Hwy. 133 – Forest boundary to McClure Pass	History and Leisure: The contrast of use yesterday and today.	Five wayside exhibits on history: Utes, mining and the railroad.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Penny Hot Springs.</li> <li>Contrast what we now see in this valley (scenery and recreation) with what those of other cultures and times have seen (hard won opportunity).</li> <li>Scenic overlook at/near the top of McClure Pass.</li> <li>Sensitivity of mountain environments.</li> </ul>
Hwy. 133 – McClure Pass to Gunnison Co. Rd. 12	Forces of Nature	Brochure mentions Paonia Reservoir and world's largest elk rack.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Settlement of the "Muddy."</li> <li>Dominquez-Escalante expedition (unsuccessful trek through difficult country).</li> <li>Mudslide (nature is still fighting back).</li> <li>World's largest elk rack.</li> <li>Paonia Reservoir (history/purpose).</li> </ul>
Hwys. 133 & 92 – Gunnison Co. Rd. 12 to Black Mesa	Productive Land – Vulnerable Land	Dominquez-Escalante marker, and miners memorial monument. Brochure coverage of above and mines, flowers, orchards and cattle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coal mining heritage and continued operations today.</li> <li>Agricultural productivity of the North Fork Valley.</li> <li>Ranching heritage of Crawford and Maher.</li> <li>Volcanism of W. Elk Mtns. (Needle Rock, etc.).</li> <li>The Hartman Trail.</li> <li>Threats to agriculture, ranching and way of life due to urbanization and rural residential development.</li> <li>Respect for private property.</li> </ul>
Hwys. 92 & 50 – Black Mesa to SW of Gunnison	Spectacular Recreation Opportunities	Various NPS and BOR wayside exhibits and brochure coverage of geologic processes, the dams, Sapinero, and railroad construction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reservoir construction, history and need.</li> <li>Recreation and agricultural uses of the Gunnison River.</li> <li>Wildlife management on DOW lands.</li> </ul>

**Table 4. Proposed Byway Interpretive Themes and Topics**

Overall Byway Interpretive Theme: Cultural History and the Natural World			
Byway Segment	Proposed Interpretive Theme	Existing Interpretive Exhibits and Topics	Interpretive Exhibit and Topic Opportunities
Hwys. 50 & 135 – SW of Gunnison to Crested Butte	Lands in Transition	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settlement of the Gunnison River Valley.</li> <li>• History of Almont.</li> <li>• Roaring Judy Fish Hatchery and its salmon run.</li> <li>• Transitions: mining and ranching to ranchettes and recreation – the forces at work.</li> <li>• Respect for private property.</li> <li>• Birth of the mountain bike.</li> </ul>
Gunnison Co. Rd. 12 – Crested Butte to Kebler Pass	Mining Heritage	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mining riches and the Victorian architecture of Crested Butte.</li> <li>• The old Kebler Pass Wagon Road.</li> <li>• Irwin and reference to other historic mining communities in the region.</li> </ul>
Gunnison Co. Rd. 12 – Kebler Pass to Hwy. 133	Scenic Panoramas and Winding Roads	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenic overlooks near Marcellina Mountain and Watson Flats.</li> <li>• The three nearby wilderness areas and wilderness management.</li> </ul>

## b. Interpretive Waysides and Signage

Development of additional wayside exhibits should continue to be designed and constructed according to the standard appearance of the six existing panels, and consistent with the interpretive themes of the Byway.



Some time in the future, the Steering Committee may want to revisit their decision not to provide advance wayside signage. Such signage would provide a uniform manner in advance to alert travelers to an upcoming wayside. One possibility would be to utilize the blue columbine logo with wording such as, “Interpretive Wayside Ahead,” and posted 500 feet in advance of the wayside location. Adequate, formally delineated parking should be provided at the interpretive waysides.

Design and fabrication of the exhibits can often be done by partnering arrangements with outside organizations and agencies, or through GOCO, TEA-21, or State Historic Society grants. Partnering opportunities for exhibit and parking area maintenance also need to be established. A number of local resources with interpretive expertise or support capabilities are present within the region. A partial list includes the following:

- Aspen Center for Environmental Studies – 925-5756
- Bureau of Land Management, Gunnison – 641-0471

- Colorado Department of Transportation, Montrose – 248-7225
- Colorado Division of Wildlife, Montrose – 252-0600
- Colorado Mountain College, Carbondale – 963-2172
- Colorado State Parks, Crawford – 921-5721
- Local Historic Societies and Museums
- Aspen Historical Society – 925-3721
- Crested Butte Mountain Heritage Museum – 349-1880
- Delta County Historical Society – 874-8721
- Fort Uncompahgre Living History Museum, Delta – 874-8349
- Pioneer Museum, Gunnison – 641-4530
- Ute Indian Museum, Montrose – 249-3098
- National Park Service, Gunnison – 641-2337
- Rocky Mountain Biological Lab, Gothic – 349-7231 or 7481
- U.S. Forest Service
- Gunnison – 641-0471
- Paonia – 527-4131
- Carbondale – 963-2266
- Western Colorado Interpretive Association, Delta – 874-6695

**c. Interpretive Brochures**

Redesign and printing of a Byway-wide interpretive brochure should be undertaken. The newly designed brochure should complement the Byway interpretive themes and topics presented at the interpretive waysides and should also include well developed environmental education messages that are designed to promote awareness of the environmental and cultural sensitivities of the region. Information on other attractions such as festivals and museums may also be included. The brochure should be coordinated among the three Byway Chapters and be made available for distribution through local chambers of commerce and merchants.

**d. Other Interpretive Media**

Other opportunities exist to provide interpretive material to the visiting public as well as to local citizens. A video should be developed that highlights the intrinsic values found along the Byway and encourages visitor behavior which help protect these values. The video could represent each of the seasons and discuss a wide range of recreational opportunities, community activities, natural and cultural highlights, etc. Copies could be made available to local area schools and organizations to build awareness of Byway issues and gain support for Byway goals. Other copies could be made available for sale at businesses, chambers of commerce, and agency outlets.

Another interpretive media which could be developed is an interactive CD, which would allow the user to explore in greater depth the history, natural resource values, and recreational opportunities that abound along the Byway. Such a CD might be developed through the assistance of a college or university, with a goal of utilizing the product in local schools, or again, as a sales item to interested visitors.

## C. Implementation

The following short-term action items should be initiated as noted below to implement the interpretive element of the Corridor Management Plan.

### 1. Short-term Action Plan

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
Finalize interpretive themes and topics.	September 2000	Byway Steering Committee.
Prioritize interpretive needs.	September 2000	Byway Steering Committee.
Establish coordination with potential partners and sources of grant monies.	September 2000	Byway Steering Committee member(s) with ties to or interest in agencies and associations that may make potential partners.
Redesign and print new Byway zone interpretive brochure.	May 2001	Byway Steering Committee members with interest in interpretive writing.
Distribute new Byway interpretive brochures.	August 2001	Byway Zone Committee members.
Investigate and develop a Byway interpretive and informational site at the junction of SH. 92 and the Black Canyon Road. Topics may include the National Park, State Park and Curecanti NRA; road conditions; recreation opportunities, etc.	May 2002	Byway Zone Committee members in coordination with NPS and State Parks.

### 2. Long-Term Action Plan

The following are action items that are needed to maintain long-term success of the Byway interpretive program.

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
Regularly review the condition of Byway waysides and exhibits to keep them in good condition.	Ongoing	Byway Zone Committee members with affiliations with involved partners or interest in maintenance of these facilities.
Review Byway interpretive materials and exhibits to keep the messages current and identify the need for information on new topics.	Ongoing	Byway Zone Committee members interested in interpretation and/or marketing messages.

### **3. Monitoring**

Evaluating the success and effectiveness of the Byway interpretive messages will require monitoring.

<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Review the effectiveness of Byway environmental stewardship messages by monitoring the condition of waysides and Byway resources.	All members of the Byway Steering Committee or Zone Review Committees.



# Chapter V - Trails

### A. Existing Conditions

A trails element has been included in the Corridor Management Plan as a result of the desire to establish a non-motorized trail on, or adjacent to, the Byway. An inventory of road shoulder and right-of-way conditions was initiated to identify the potential for locating segments of a Byway trail within the existing road right-of-way. This included investigations of CDOT plans for road widening/improvement projects which might facilitate development of a bike lane. At the same time, an inventory of existing trails was initiated to identify any that closely parallel the Byway and could be incorporated into a Byway trail network.

#### 1. Road Shoulder Conditions

The results of the road shoulder inventory are presented on Map 5. Four classes of roads are identified:

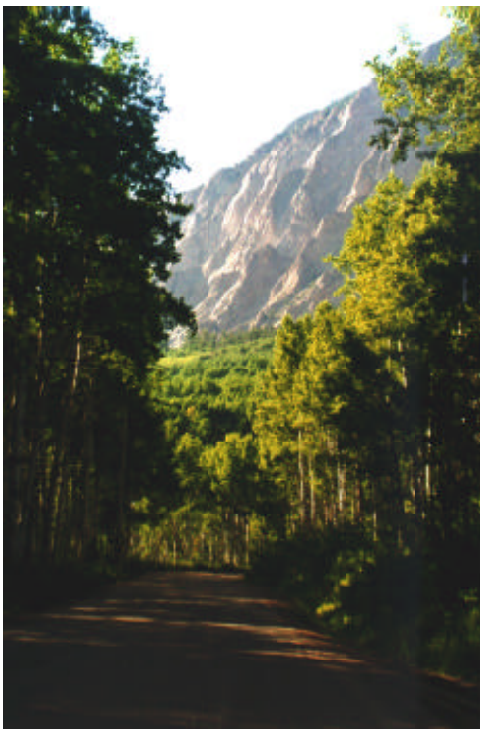
- Paved roads with 4' or wider paved shoulders
- Paved roads with less than 4' paved shoulders
- Paved roads with no shoulders
- Gravel roads with no defined shoulders

As Map 5 illustrates, only four locations around the Byway, totaling **45** miles, have existing paved shoulders of 4' or greater. These include:

- Highway 50 from the junction of Hwy 92 to Gunnison.
- Highway 135 from Gunnison to just north of Gunnison.
- Highway 135 between Almont and Crested Butte (expected completion in 2001).

Approximately **41** miles of the Byway have roads with less than 4' wide paved shoulders. This occurs entirely on Highway 133 between Carbondale and the upper end of Paonia Reservoir. Substantial bicycle use has been observed on this segment of the Byway but, because of the narrowness of the road and often-limited sight distances, it represents a serious safety hazard. It is just wide enough (approximately two feet) to encourage bicycle traffic but too narrow to be safe.

The majority of the Byway, **90** miles, has paved roads with no shoulder suitable for bicycle use. The remainder of the Byway, **29** miles, is the Kebler Pass gravel road, which has no defined shoulders. Traffic on this road is relatively light and use of the roadway by bicyclists, equestrians or hikers does not generally represent a serious safety hazard.



## 2. Road Improvements



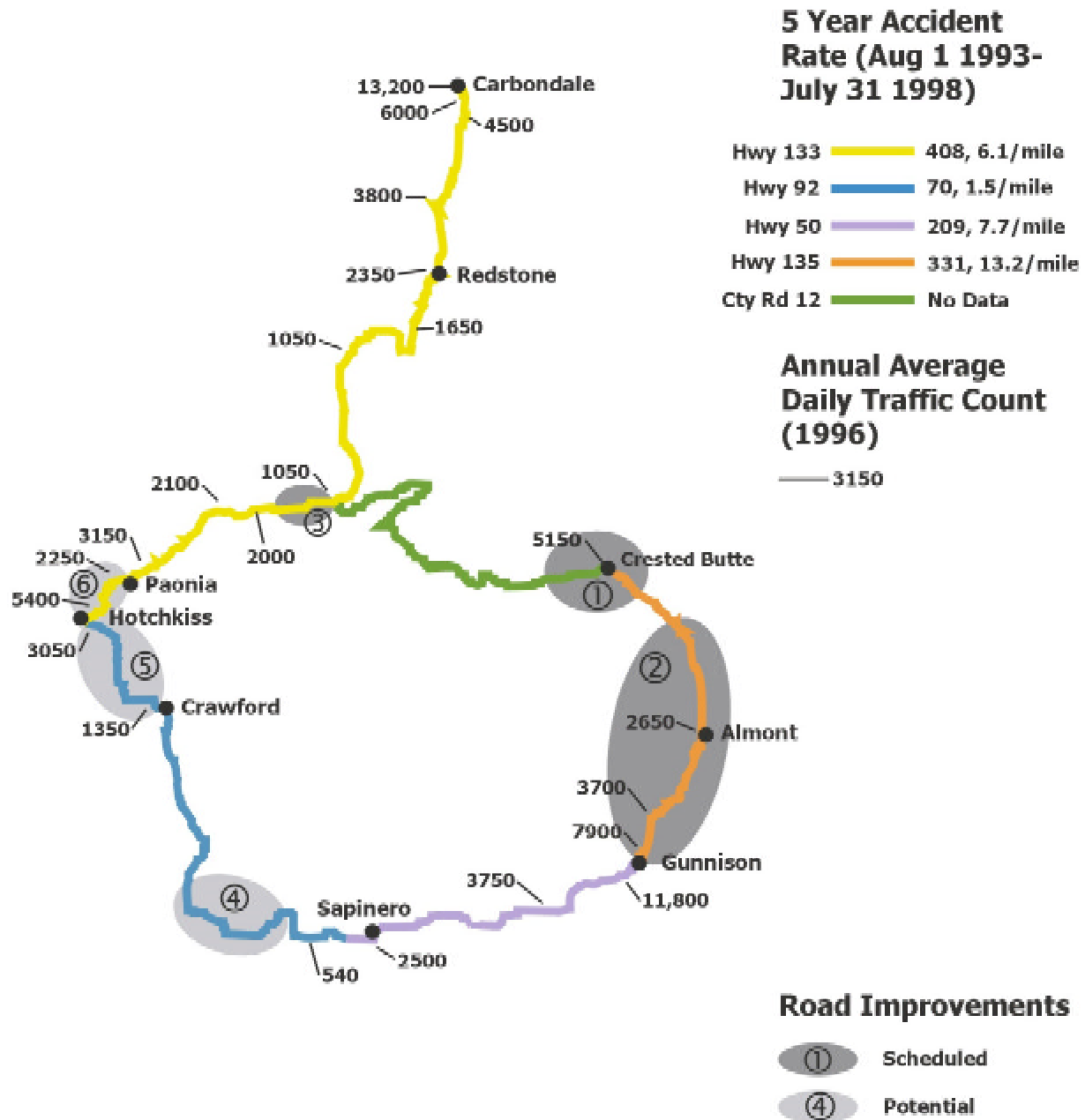
The schedule of future Byway road construction projects was reviewed to determine if it would be possible to integrate bike lanes into the design and determine the potential time frame for doing so. Two types of designations are given to distinguish scheduled, near-term projects from projects that appear in the 20-year plan but which have no specific schedule or priorities assigned at this time. The results of this inquiry are summarized and illustrated in graphic form on Map 6.

### **Scheduled road improvements:**

1. Hwy. 133—From the Kebler Pass turnoff (Gunnison County Road 12), west 3 miles to Mike's Cabin, the road will be improved to include 8' shoulders.
2. Gunnison County Road 12—In the summer of 1999 and 2000, approximately three miles of shoulderless road immediately west of Crested Butte will be widened to include 8' paved shoulders.
3. Hwy. 135—Beginning in the summer of 1999, starting at the CDOT Maintenance Barn and working south toward Gunnison, the road will be widened to include 8' paved shoulders. Every year thereafter (except 2000), 2-3 miles will be widened until the work ends at Gunnison. In 2000, additional right-of-way will be purchased. Construction will resume in the summer of 2001.

### **Potential road improvements (included in the 20-year plan):**

4. Hwy. 92—Resurfacing of the road along the Black Mesa highlands has a low to moderate priority. There is a possibility this work will occur during 2001. Widening is not part of this improvement.
5. Hwy. 92—Resurfacing of the road between Crawford and Hotchkiss has a low priority and may potentially occur. Widening is not part of this improvement.
6. Hwy. 133—Widening of the road between Hotchkiss and Paonia to include 8' paved shoulders has moderate priority but no firm plans as yet.



Map 6. Traffic and Safety

Completion of the scheduled projects will increase the amount of paved road with greater than 4' shoulders to approximately **62** miles and provide paved bike lanes for essentially all of Highways 135 and 50 (Crested Butte to Blue Mesa Dam).

Completion of the portion of Highway 133 identified under the 20-year plan would provide another **11** miles and, with the currently authorized 3 mile reconstruction near Paonia Reservoir, would complete a majority of the segment between Hotchkiss and Paonia Reservoir.

These plans would, however, leave essentially all of the Highway 92 segment (Hotchkiss to Highway 50), and the Highway 133 segment from Carbondale to Paonia Reservoir, a total of **106** miles, with serious bicycle/pedestrian safety issues for the foreseeable future.

### 3. Existing Trails

Sources for trail information include Federal and State agencies, as well as regional trail advocacy groups listed later in this chapter. Examples of data available include USFS, BLM and NPS maps, Gunnison County Trails Master Plan, North Fork Trails Network Trails Map, the Club 20 trails report, etc.

Map 5 shows the location of existing trails that parallel the Byway as well as some selected side trails. As this map illustrates, there are few existing trails that closely parallel the Byway. A summary of their characteristics is presented in Table 5.

As indicated in Table 5, some of these existing trail segments offer long, generally parallel routes in locations where there is currently inadequate room to safely accommodate a non-motorized trail on the Byway.

Table 5. Existing Parallel Trails

Trail Name	Description and Location Relative to Byway	Comments
Unnamed trail west of McClure Pass	Short, 5½-mile trail from McClure Pass down Chair Creek. Located within 1½ miles of Byway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short segment</li> <li>• Steep climb</li> <li>• Byway has no shoulders here</li> </ul>
Ragged Mountain Trail (#820)	11-mile trail from near McClure Pass to Anthracite Creek, and connection to Dark Canyon Trail. Located 2-3 miles from Byway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long, parallel segment</li> <li>• Separated from Byway but good panoramic views</li> <li>• Byway has no shoulders in this area</li> </ul>
Dark Canyon Trail (#830)	13-mile trail from Anthracite Creek, north around Marcellina Mountain to near Kebler Pass. Connections to Ragged Mtn. Trail, Old Kebler Pass Wagon Road and Lake Irwin. Up to 3+ miles from Byway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long segment</li> <li>• Wide separation from Byway</li> <li>• Byway is gravel road here</li> <li>• Good connection to two other parallel trails</li> </ul>
Old Kebler Pass Wagon Road	10-mile trail from west of Kebler Pass/Lake Irwin to near Crested Butte. Connection to Dark Canyon Trail. Very close parallel to the Byway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long segment, parallels gravel segment of the Byway</li> <li>• Gunnison County Trails Commission will soon be starting work to convert the Old Wagon Road to a non-motorized trail</li> </ul>
Old Railroad Grade	5½-mile abandoned railroad grade, south of Crested Butte. Very close parallel to Byway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short segment</li> <li>• Byway has new 8' shoulders here</li> <li>• Close proximity to Byway</li> <li>• Private land issues</li> </ul>
Old Railroad Grade	18-mile segment of abandoned railroad grade between Gunnison and Almont. Close parallel to the Byway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long segment</li> <li>• Byway has no shoulders here</li> <li>• Close proximity to Byway</li> <li>• Private land issues</li> </ul>
Gunnison Bike Route	Bike route encircling the City of Gunnison. Follows rural perimeter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short segment</li> <li>• Currently at bike standards</li> <li>• Circumvents business district</li> </ul>
Hartman Trail	12-mile historic cattle trail over Black Mesa from Curecanti Creek to Crystal Creek. As much as 6 miles from Byway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long segment</li> <li>• Byway has no shoulders here</li> <li>• Distant from Byway</li> <li>• Avoids miles of winding, shoulderless road but misses best parts of Black Canyon</li> <li>• Historic trail</li> </ul>

## **B. Management Direction**

### **1. Goals and Objectives**

**Goal:** Coordinate design and construction of a non-motorized recreation and transportation trail to accompany the Byway (where the ROW does not accommodate a trail, an off-road trail may be appropriate).

**Objective:** Investigate the potential to work with outside trail interests and agencies in the region in development of the trail.

### **2. Issues and Opportunities**

#### **a. Trail Alignment**

The potential for developing a non-motorized trail to accompany the Byway faces a number of issues. To help understand overall picture and the options available, Table 6 summarizes the issues involved in developing an alignment for each major segment of the Byway.





**Table 6. Byway Trail Alignment Issues and Opportunities**

Byway Segment	Issues	Opportunities
Hwy. 133 – Carbondale to the Forest boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrow shoulders</li> <li>No plans to widen/improve in 20-year plan</li> <li>No parallel trail exists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Terrain would allow construction of roadside trail</li> <li>Use of CR&amp;SJ RR grade is being discussed by trail advocates</li> <li>Work to get improvements on the 20-year plan, then on the near-term schedule</li> </ul>
Hwy. 133 – Forest boundary to McClure Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrow shoulders</li> <li>No plans to widen/improve in 20-year plan</li> <li>Terrain will not permit construction of roadside trail</li> <li>No other parallel trail exists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of CR&amp;SJ RR grade is being discussed by trail advocates</li> <li>Eventual road improvement to accommodate a wide shoulder</li> <li>Incremental highway improvements to address most dangerous areas</li> <li>Work to get improvements on 20-year plan then on the schedule</li> <li>Sign regularly to alert motorists to presence of bicyclists.</li> </ul>
Hwy. 133 – McClure Pass to Kebler Pass Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrow road shoulder</li> <li>No improvements included in 20-year plan</li> <li>Road is unstable</li> <li>Terrain will not permit construction of roadside trail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop linkage from McClure Pass and use Ragged Mountain Trail</li> <li>Eventual road improvement to accommodate a wide shoulder</li> </ul>
Hwy. 133 – Kebler Pass Road to Hotchkiss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant portions with no shoulder</li> <li>Terrain presents significant constraints to construction of roadside trail</li> <li>Improvement of Paonia to Hotchkiss portion are in 20-year plan but not scheduled</li> <li>No parallel trail exists but other roads in agricultural valley exist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconstruction of east end will be completed soon and include 8' shoulders</li> <li>Improvements to add 8' shoulder to remainder are in 20-year plan</li> <li>Use of designated agricultural road route through valley</li> </ul>
Hwy 92 – Hotchkiss to Crystal Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No road shoulders exist</li> <li>No parallel trail exists</li> <li>No plans for road improvement in 20-year plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Terrain would allow construction of roadside trail</li> <li>Portions of some county roads could be designated</li> </ul>
Hwy. 92 – Crystal Valley to Hwy. 50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No road shoulders exist</li> <li>No plans for road improvement in 20-year plan</li> <li>Terrain will not permit construction of roadside trail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Hartman Trail as an alternate route</li> <li>Sign regularly to alert motorists to presence of bicyclists</li> </ul>
Hwy. 50 – Hwy. 92 to Gunnison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New roadway with 8' paved shoulders is in place throughout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enjoy!</li> </ul>
Hwy. 135 – Gunnison to Almont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No road shoulders exist</li> <li>Improvements will take several years to complete</li> <li>Highest traffic accident segment of Byway</li> <li>Entire route is paralleled by abandoned railroad grade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate further the use of abandoned railroad right-of-way</li> <li>Terrain would permit construction of roadside trail</li> <li>Potential to use portions of the abandoned railroad grade if private land issues are resolved</li> <li>Work for accelerated construction schedule given accident rates</li> </ul>
Hwy. 135 – Almont to Crested Butte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No shoulders exist for half this segment</li> <li>Improvements will take a few years</li> <li>A 4-mile segment of abandoned railroad grade exists along the route</li> <li>Highest traffic accident segment of Byway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Terrain would permit construction of roadside trail</li> <li>Potential to use portions of the abandoned railroad grade if private land issues are resolved</li> <li>Work for accelerated construction schedule given accident rates</li> </ul>
Gunnison Co. Rd. 12 – Crested Butte to Kebler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gravel road, no shoulders</li> <li>No plans to improve road</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Old Kebler Pass Wagon Road once restored</li> </ul>

When looking at the Byway in total, much of the route has either adequate provision for a non-motorized trail or acceptable opportunities for providing for one. However, there are two major areas with serious difficulties remaining. Most significant is Highway 133 from the Forest boundary to McClure Pass. This road is narrow and quite constrained by topography and the river. There are no existing trails that would be feasible as an alternative and there are no plans to upgrade or improve the road on the 20-year planning horizon.

The second difficult area, which faces similar constraints, is Highway 92 between Highway 50 and Crystal Valley. The Hartman Trail could be used as an alternative to much of this Byway segment, but it would also substantially limit exposure to one of the Byway's most significant features, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. It is doubtful that a majority of users would opt for this alternative, although it is available to those especially concerned about safety.

### 3. Plan Elements

The primary objective of the CMP with respect to Trails is exploration of locational options and documentation of issues for a non-motorized trail to accompany the Byway. Additional objectives have to do with documentation of major considerations in trails planning, and identification of potential resources for its development.

#### a. Location



Various perspectives, all of them with merit, can be used to identify the most appropriate approach to the development of a non-motorized trail to accompany the Byway. Two the key questions need to be answered in defining a recommended approach. They are:

- Does the trail need to be on or adjacent to the Byway for the entire length, or can segments of it generally parallel the Byway at some distance, as long as the traveling experience is roughly equivalent?
- Is the proper perspective short-term, or long-term, in weighing costs, benefits, safety and efficiency?

The following recommendations are made based on the assumption that the trail does not need to be on or adjacent to the Byway for the entire length if the traveling experience is roughly equivalent, and that the best perspective is the long view. For example, the Muddy Pass segment of Highway 133 is not on the 20-year planning horizon so use

of an existing but somewhat distant trail is proposed. On the other hand, scheduled improvements of Highway 135 are several years from completion, but will likely be completed prior to implementation of some other new initiative. Therefore, use of the Highway 135 shoulder by cyclists is the only viable (albeit unsafe) option for the near-term. Table 7 below provides trail recommendations based on the above assumptions.

**Table 7. Byway Trail Recommendations**

Byway Segment	Recommendations
Hwy. 133 – Carbondale to the Forest Boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Highway 133 (generally open and straight) while working with City, County and CDOT for development of a roadside trail.</li> </ul>
Hwy. 133 – Forest boundary to McClure Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work to get Highway 133 improvements on the 20-year plan and then onto a near-term schedule.</li> <li>Implement special signage to alert drivers that this is a “shared road.”</li> <li>Continue to be a voice in advocating use of the CR&amp;SJ RR grade and active in investigating its feasibility.</li> </ul>
Hwy. 133 – McClure Pass to Kebler Pass Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with the Forest Service, designate the Ragged Mountain Trail as an alternate, non-motorized Byway route in this area, and improve as needed (mountain bikers, hikers and equestrians).</li> <li>Implement special signage to alert drivers that Highway 133 remains a “shared road” (road cyclists).</li> </ul>
Hwy. 133 – Kebler Pass Road to Hotchkiss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Highway 133 to east of Paonia where improvements end.</li> <li>Designate a county agricultural road through the valley from east of Paonia to Hotchkiss as an alternate, non-motorized trail route (mountain bikers, hikers and equestrians).</li> <li>Implement special signage to alert drivers that Highway 133 remains a “shared road” (road cyclists).</li> </ul>
Hwy. 92 – Hotchkiss to Crystal Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designate portions of county ranching roads from Hotchkiss to Crawford as alternate, non-motorized trail routes.</li> <li>Continue to use Highway 92 (generally open and straight) while working with Delta and Montrose Counties, and CDOT to develop a combination roadside-existing county road trail.</li> </ul>
Hwy. 92 – Crystal Valley to Hwy. 50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designate the Hartman as an alternate, non-motorized trail for this segment.</li> <li>Implement special signage to alert drivers that this is a “shared road.”</li> </ul>
Hwy. 50 – Hwy. 92 to Gunnison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use existing paved 6’-8’ shoulder throughout.</li> </ul>
Hwy. 135 – Gunnison to Almont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Highway 135 while advocating an accelerated construction schedule due to the high accident rate.</li> <li>Implement special signage to alert drivers that this is a “shared road.”</li> <li>Pursue development of separated route using railroad grade and other opportunities (due to high national biking use).</li> </ul>
Hwy. 135 – Almont to Crested Butte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Highway 135 while advocating an accelerated construction schedule due to the high accident rate.</li> <li>Implement special signage to alert drivers that this is a “shared road.”</li> <li>Pursue development of separated route using railroad grade and other opportunities (due to high national biking use – “Mecca”).</li> </ul>
Gunnison Co. Rd. 12 – Crested Butte to Kebler Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In cooperation with the Forest Service and Gunnison County, designate and improve (as needed) the Old Kebler Pass Wagon Road as the non-motorized trail.</li> </ul>
Gunnison Co. Rd. 12 – Kebler Pass to Hwy. 133	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use County Road 12 and, in cooperation with the Forest Service, designate the Dark Canyon Trail as an alternate, non-motorized trail route.</li> <li>Implement special signage to alert drivers that this is a “shared road.”</li> </ul>

**b. Planning Considerations**

Some of the primary considerations in trails planning include: trail alignment as determined by land ownership, topography, proximity to attractions/scenery, proximity to other trails/trail systems, and safety; trail infrastructure such as culverts, bridges, fords, handrails, etc.; trail maintenance and maintenance responsibility; liability; and funding and support including networking with other regional trails organizations.

**c. Development**



Development of a major trail such as this is a significant endeavor requiring a substantial amount of work to bring it to fruition. Fortunately, however, there are various avenues for funding, and there are organizations and individuals that are committed to the development of non-motorized trails within the region who could provide valuable assistance. Planning, design and construction assistance may be available largely through potential partners. The following is a list of trail advocacy groups within the region followed by a list of funding/grant sources.

**d. Regional Trail Advocacy Groups**

- *CDOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Program*, Colorado Department of Transportation – Gay Page, Manager – (303) 757-9982
- *Crested Butte Land Trust* – Vicki Church, Crested Butte – (970) 349-1206
- *Pitkin County Open Space and Trails* – Dale Will, Aspen – (970) 920-5232
- *Gunnison County Trails Commission* – Joellen Fonken, Chair, Gunnison – (970) 641-0044
- *High Country Citizens' Alliance* – Pamela Hathaway, Development Director, Crested Butte – (970) 349-7104
- *North Fork Trails Network* – John Barcus, Crawford – (970) 921-3340
- *Region 10 – League for Economic Assistance and Planning* – Mike Braaten, Community Development Coordinator, Montrose – (970) 249-2436
- *Colorado Division of Parks* – Stewart MacDonald, Trails Coordinator – (303) 866-3203 x 306
- *Club 20* – Stan Broome, Grand Junction – (970) 242-3264

- *Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC)* – Kate Boland – (303) 715-1010

#### e. Funding Sources

The following list identifies some departments and agencies that have funds available for trails and related projects.

- *Colorado Greenways Project*: State of Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. 50% matching grants for trail project construction only.
- *Colorado Land and Water Conservation Grant*: State of Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. 50% matching grants for acquisition of land or water or for development of outdoor recreation facilities.
- *Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21), Transportation Enhancements Activities*: Colorado Department of Transportation. 20% match for bicycle and pedestrian enhancements. Contact Steve McCulloch, CDOT – (303) 757-9247.
- *Colorado Division of Parks*. Contact Stewart MacDonald, Trails Coordinator – (303) 866-3203 x 306.
- *Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21), Recreational Trails Program*: Colorado Department of Transportation. Variable funding for non-highway transportation development. Contact Richard Perske – (970) 248-7212.
- *State Lottery Fund*: Great Outdoor Colorado Board. Variable funding for trail construction. Contact GOCO – (303) 836-7522.
- *State Historical Fund*: Colorado State Historical Society. Grants for restoration or protection of historic resources. Contact CSHS – (303) 866-2825.
- *Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado*. Donate time and materials for construction of trails. Contact VOC – (303) 715-1010.
- *Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program*. National Park Service, Denver. Contact Duane Holmes – (303) 969-2855.

## C. Implementation

Implementation as it relates to the Trails element of the plan has more to do with continued coordination efforts to move the planning and development forward. Much remains to be done. The Byway Steering Committee can play a meaningful role as the sponsor of the Byway trail plan in seeing this plan come to life.

### 1. Short-term Action Plan

Short-term action items needed to initiate implementation of the trails plan include the following.

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
Establish contact and regular coordination with trail advocacy groups and potential funding partners.	September 2000	Members of each Byway Chapter with organization/agency ties, or trail interest.
Finalize route location plan/approach from among the options	May 2001	Members of each Byway Chapter with organization/agency ties, or trail interest.
Work with agencies and other partners to develop funding grant applications.	As application dates arise following May 2001	Members of each Byway Chapter with organization/agency ties, or trail interest.

### 2. Long-term Action Plan

Long-term action items needed to see the plan through to development include the following.

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
With technical and planning partners, refine and develop the trails plan.	Ongoing, as relationships are developed	Members of each Byway Chapter with organization/agency ties, or trail interest.
In association with agencies and trail advocacy groups, promote development of the trail within the region.	Ongoing	Members of each Byway Chapter with organization/agency ties, or trail interest.
With agencies and other partners, implement trail developments.	Ongoing, as funds are available.	Members of each Byway Chapter with organization/agency ties, or trail interest.

### 3. Monitoring

Monitoring has more to do with monitoring the development and implementation of the trails plan than monitoring of the trail. Associations with partners should be established and responsibilities for maintenance and oversight should be developed with representatives of agencies and interest groups. The Byway Chapter members should primarily be advocates and provide support as needed and as available.



# **C**hapter VI - Highway Conditions and Safety

## **A. Existing Conditions**

### **1. General Road Conditions**



The Byway consists of a variety of road widths and types. Colorado Highway 133 from Carbondale to Hotchkiss is a two lane paved road maintained in good condition. It is generally a mountainous type road with varying shoulder conditions. From Carbondale to the upper end of Paonia Reservoir, it has a minimal paved shoulder of 2 feet or less. About half the remaining distance to Hotchkiss is newly constructed road with greater than 4' paved shoulders, and the other half has no paved shoulders (see Map 5).

It can be characterized as a mountainous road overall. In the Crystal River Valley it is a winding road in a canyon environment, often with short sight distances. It reaches an elevation of 8,763 feet at McClure Pass.

Portions of this road in the Muddy Creek drainage have been rerouted to the other side of the creek due to a massive mudslide that closed the road for several months in 1986. Portions of the road are still suffering from a combination of mass movement, erosion and rockfall, and jersey barriers line the road in some areas.

From Hotchkiss south to Highway 50, the Byway is located on Colorado Highway 92. This is a two-lane paved road with no paved shoulder. It is characterized by long, straight, open stretches in the northern portion and tortuous winding turns in the south as it weaves along the rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. It has been well maintained.

The Byway then follows U.S. Highway 50 to the town of Gunnison. This entire stretch has recently been upgraded to a wide, two-lane paved road with 6-8' paved shoulders. It is in excellent condition and winds gently through the Gunnison River valley.

From Gunnison, the Byway is located on Colorado Highway 135, which takes it to Crested Butte. This road travels through gentle open valleys characterized by long straight segments. The northern one-third has been recently upgraded to a wide, two-lane paved road with 6-8' paved shoulders. The southern two-thirds is a much narrower two lane paved road with no paved shoulders. It is currently on a schedule that will see the remainder improved to the new wider standards at a rate of 2-3 miles per year. It is in good condition.

The final link in the Byway is Gunnison County Road 12, connecting Crested Butte to Highway 133. It is a well-maintained gravel road which winds its way up and over Kebler Pass to an elevation of 9,980 feet. This road is closed in the winter months, making Highway 135 a dead-end road during this period of time.

## **2. Traffic Volume**



Traffic volume information was collected for each of the Byway roads except for Gunnison County Road 12, which has no volume information available. This information is illustrated in Map 6. All information is for 1996. As would be expected, the highest traffic volumes are in or near the larger communities of Carbondale (13,200 annual average daily traffic count, or ADT) and Gunnison (11,800 ADT). After these two areas, all counts drop off significantly; the highest being 6000 ADT for outlying Carbondale and 7,900 for outlying Gunnison.

Somewhat surprising is the count for Highway 133 between Hotchkiss and Paonia of 5,400, which was higher than any of the remaining locations including Crested Butte, with an ADT of 5150. Apart from Gunnison County Road 12, for which there is no volume information, Highway 92 appears to have the lowest volume, especially the southern portion. Most of the remaining locations appear to have generally comparable traffic volumes of between 2000 and 3000 ADT.

## **3. Accidents and Safety**

Accident data is available for a five-year period—August 1, 1993 through July 31, 1998—by highway segment. This information is summarized on Map 6. During this period, the Byway segment with the highest number of accidents was Highway 133 with 408. This might be expected because it is the longest segment with some of the heaviest traffic. In looking further, Highway 135 actually had the highest accident rate per mile of highway, with 13.2 accidents per mile of road over the five-year period. As might be expected, Highway 92, which has the lowest volume of traffic, also had the lowest accident rate with 1.5 accidents per mile over the five-year period.

Because this information is available for broad segments only, it is difficult to identify particular hazard areas. In looking at the traffic location data that was available for one of these years, 1996, the location of accidents appeared to be relatively uniformly distributed within each of the respective segments. Additional inquiry was made to the highway patrol office in Montrose who is responsible for this area.



They indicated that they have not seen any particular highway safety concerns as might be evidenced by an area with repeated accidents. They have observed occasional heavy rockfall in wet weather on Highway 133 around Paonia Reservoir and from the top of McClure Pass to the Marble intersection. Also, the turnoff to Marble is a bad avalanche area, with winter road closings common. In summary, they indicated that there are no major problems with any of the Byway roads and that there is no place that is particularly accident-prone.

There are only two passing lanes on the Byway, both on Highway 50. The two places on the Byway where passing is problematic are Highway 133 from the White River National Forest Boundary to McClure pass and Highway 92 within Curecanti National Recreation Area. Both areas have relatively narrow roadways and winding alignments for extended distances, making passing difficult. In essentially all other locations, passing zones occur at regular intervals.



In addition, there are a large number of both formal and informal pull-offs, as illustrated on Map 5. A few of these are potentially hazardous due to the limited amount of space available. However, on balance, the majority of informal pull-offs provide release points for slower traffic to pull over and let commercial and other faster moving vehicles past. This is particularly true of Highway 133 from the White River National Forest Boundary to McClure Pass and Highway 92 through Curecanti NRA, both having a large number of informal pull-offs. Such areas might actually benefit from selectively enlarging and formalizing a number of these to provide more locations that can be easily accessed. Logical locations include the locations of future interpretive waysides and overlooks.

#### **4. Road Improvements**

The schedule of road improvements is shown on Map 6. Two categories of improvements are identified: scheduled and potential. Scheduled improvements have set time frames for completion, while potential improvements are those that are included in the 20-year plan but have no defined schedule or funding. A summary of the improvements to be done at each location is provided below.

Scheduled road improvements:

1. Hwy. 133—From the Kebler Pass turnoff (Gunnison County Road 12), west 3 miles to Mike's Cabin, the road will be totally reconstructed (including bridge). It will be widened to include 8' shoulders and improved to current standards.
2. Gunnison County Road 12—In the summer of 1999 and 2000, approximately three miles of the paved, shoulderless section of the Kebler Pass road immediately west of Crested Butte will be improved. The road will be widened to include 8' paved shoulders.
3. Hwy. 135—Beginning in the summer of 1999, starting at the CDOT Maintenance Barn and working south toward Gunnison (Mileposts 17-19), the paved shoulderless road will be widened to include 8' paved shoulders. Every year thereafter (except 2000), 2-3 miles will be widened until the work ends at Gunnison. In 2000, additional right-of-way will be purchased. Construction will resume in the summer of 2001.

Potential road improvements (included in the 20-year State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP)):

4. Hwy. 92—Resurfacing of the road along the Black Mesa highlands has a low to moderate priority and may potentially occur but there are no firm plans as yet. Must have Federal funding to accompany state funding as this area is in USFS ownership.
5. Hwy. 133—Widening of the paved shoulderless road between Hotchkiss and Paonia to include 8' paved shoulders has moderate priority and is included in the first six years of the STIP.
6. Hwy. 92—Resurfacing of the road between Crawford and Hotchkiss has a low priority and is not included in the STIP.

## 5. Signage



There are two general types of signage along the Byway. The first is the standard regulatory and advisory signage provided by CDOT for all state highways. These include stop signs, yield signs, speed limit signs, winding road or curve graphic image signs, etc. They seem to be adequate and appropriately located. The second general type of sign that is allowed within the road right-of-way is Tourist Oriented Directional Signs (TODS). TODS is official signing that gives specific information regarding activities or sites of “significant interest to the traveling public”. They can include motorist service information (gas, food, lodging, etc), tourist attraction, or commercial interest signs.

Among the special TODS signage are the standard State Scenic Byway identifier signs with the columbine flower logo which mark the Byway route. These are placed at regular intervals along the Byway and at or near all Byway intersections. Both a Byway “Begin” and “End” sign is located in Carbondale near the intersection of Highway 133 and Highway 82. These signs are located at places that are both busy from a traffic standpoint and a visual standpoint. As a result, neither is particularly visible. This may be a mixed blessing because the “Begin” sign is located in front of a utility substation, which seems to fly in the face of the concept of a scenic byway.

There are no signs to caution motorists that bicyclists and others may be sharing the road.

## B. Management Direction

### 1. Goals and Objectives

**Goal:** Provide a safe, efficient and pleasurable driving experience for both tourist and local traffic through a well designed and maintained highway system, recognizing that the primary responsibility in this area lies with the state and county departments of transportation.

**Objective:** Establish and maintain an active dialogue and ongoing coordination with appropriate contacts at CDOT and the county highway departments.

### 2. Issues and Opportunities

#### a. Resources and Contacts

There are a number of agencies that deal with various aspects of road conditions and highway safety. A partial list of those agencies and contact individuals (where known) is provided below.





### **CDOT (Design, Construction, Maintenance, Administration)**

- Doug Aden, Vice-Chairman, Colorado Transportation Commission, Grand Junction – (970) 245-5942
- Darryl Carlson, Resident Engineer, CDOT, Montrose – (970) 249-5285
- Ray David, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, CDOT, Montrose – (970) 249-5285
- Jim Noll, Traffic Engineer, CDOT, Grand Junction – (970) 248-7213
- Bob Heidelmeier, Region 3 Traffic Operations Engineer, CDOT, Grand Junction – (970) 248-7230
- Michael Smith, Highway Operations and Maintenance, Denver – (303) 480-0506

### **Enforcement**

- Sgt. Clark, Colorado State Police, Montrose – (970) 249-9575
- Richard Murdie, Gunnison County Sheriff Office – (970) 641-1113
- Warren Waterman, Montrose County Sheriff Office – (970) 249-6606
- Bill Blair, Delta County Sheriff – (970) 874-2000
- Robert Braudis, Pitkin County Sheriff – (970) 920-5300
- Thomas Dalessandri, Garfield County Sheriff – (970) 945-9151

### **Maintenance and Operations**

- Marlene Crosby, Gunnison County Public Works Director – (970) 641-0044
- Sherman Taylor, Montrose County District 2 Road Foreman – (970) 323-5587
- Ralph Clark, Delta County Road Foreman – (970) 874-2116
- Brian Pettet, Pitkin County Road Superintendent – (970) 920-5390
- Tom Russell, Garfield County Road Superintendent – (970) 625-8601

### **Other Agencies and Organizations**

- Mike Braaten, Community Development Coordinator, Region 10, Montrose – (970) 249-2436



**b. Signage**

Signage to alert motorists to the presence of bicyclists is lacking. In portions of the Byway with less than 4' shoulders and a confined or winding alignment, this is a particularly important safety issue.

**3. Plan Elements**



Responsibility for the condition and safety of the Byway road and right-of-way is the primary responsibility of various state and local agencies. The Byway organization's primary responsibility is one of coordination and advocacy for the interests of the Byway and the traveling public.

The condition of the Byway's various highway and road segments is good overall and being improved. There appear to be no site-specific accident-prone locations that would indicate the possible presence of a highway design or maintenance issue. The fact that Highway 133 has the greatest accident rate no doubt has to do with the use of this area as a one way route to a major ski destination. As such it receives heavy winter traffic use, both from recreationists and the many resort-related employees who commute to work here each day.

The two issues that should be addressed as elements in the Highway Condition and Safety portion of the plan have to do with coordination and with bicycle safety. An active and ongoing coordination program with individuals of agencies who have the primary responsibility for highway condition and safety should be part of the plan. In addition, addressing specific issues that might from time to time arise that concern highway condition and safety should be part of the Byway committee members' ongoing responsibility.

At present, the primary issue related to highway condition and safety is signage that cautions motorists to be alert and "share the road" with others. The identification of hazardous conditions should be identified as part of this message, e.g., "reduced sight distance ahead", "narrow roadway – no shoulder ahead", etc.

## C. Implementation

The following are short and long-term action items for implementation of the Highway Condition and Safety portion of the Corridor Management Plan.

### 1. Short-Term Action Plan

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
Identify individuals at the various appropriate agencies to establish and maintain contact with.	September 2000	Individual Byway Chapter members with existing contacts or interest in highway issues.
Seek to involve appropriate individuals within these agencies in the Byway Chapters.	December 2000	Individual Byway Chapter members with existing contacts or interest in highway issues.
Identify bicycle safety as an issue that should be addressed in the near term.	March 2001	Byway Steering Committee spokesperson(s) as mutually identified.
Provide assistance as needed in implementing a signage program for bicycle safety.	As needed	Individual Byway Chapter members and Byway partners as available.

### 2. Long-Term Action Plan

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
Provide regular input on transportation related issues of the Byway to contacts at the various agencies.	Ongoing	Individual Byway Chapter members with existing contacts or interest in highway issues.
In coordination with CDOT and others, pursue an evaluation of pull-outs to identify those where enhancements are needed or safety is an issue.	May 2001	A representative from each Byway Chapter in coordination with CDOT.

### 3. Monitoring

Monitoring of highway condition and safety is primarily a job of informal but ongoing coordination with established agency contacts in conjunction with informal, routine observations of Byway road and right-of-way conditions by all members of the various Byway Chapters.

# **C**hapter VII - Marketing

## **A. Existing Conditions**



Marketing of the Byway takes place from a number of perspectives, in a number of ways, by groups and agencies outside the Byway organization such as chambers of commerce and tourism entities. Many of these groups identify the West Elk Scenic and Historic Byway as an attraction in their various marketing materials. The position of the Byway organization, however, is one of “de-marketing,” or not actively seeking to promote the Byway to those outside the region. Because of these differing perspectives, it is important to distinguish internal (Byway organization) marketing from external (groups outside the Byway organization) marketing.

As part of the study effort, a number of marketing entities within the region participated in one of the Steering Committee meetings to identify how the Byway fits into their various marketing messages and materials. As would be expected, they range from featured coverage of the Byway to brief mentions; from elaborate materials to simple brochures; and from those with wide distribution to those with very limited distribution. In each case, however, the objective is to identify a range of local attractions which would entice the traveler to either journey here or, once here, to linger longer.

Currently there are no efforts underway by the Byway organization to market the Byway. In 1995, brochures were developed for the Byway Chapters. The content of these brochures focused on the resources and attractions along the Byway. They were made available to the public at numerous locations within the region. In this sense, they served more as an interpretive guide to visitors already in the region rather than as a marketing tool to draw visitors to the area. They have never been reprinted and few of these brochures remain.

## B. Management Direction

### 1. Goals and Objectives

**Goal:** Seek to manage tourism rather than promote it.

*Objective:* Identify and coordinate with other ongoing regional tourism efforts to clarify the marketing goal of the West Elk Byway and to coordinate future activities.

*Objective:* Provide information regarding the sensitive nature of the area's resources and attractions in any marketing efforts of the Byway organization and other regional marketing entities for inclusion in future marketing materials.

*Objective:* Provide appropriate messages to visitors before and during their visit.

### 2. Issues and Opportunities

#### a. Internal Marketing



There are numerous entities from state and national to local agencies and organizations that promote the Byway to people outside the region. Within the past 10 to 15 years, a large number of rural Colorado communities have seen what they consider to be undesirable changes in their lands and way of life as a result of the visitation and relocation of people to their area. This recognition raises concern that the special qualities of this region will be in increasing jeopardy as visitors are encouraged to travel here. For this reason, it is not the intent of the Byway organization to proactively market the Byway outside of the region. Rather, it is to provide interpretive information and messages of environmental sensitivity, through local visitor contact points, to those who do come.

The proposed avenue for this information is a single brochure that would take the place of the separate Byway zone brochures previously produced and serve as a guide to Byway visitors. Its content would focus on interpretive and educational information about the intrinsic qualities of the Byway, and their sensitivity.

#### b. External Marketing

There are a number of local entities active in marketing visitors. It should be up to the individual communities and businesses along the Byway to capture the visitor. The Byway organization and these interests can, and should, develop mutually beneficial relationships. It should be the responsibility of the Byway organization to advise other marketing entities of its marketing objectives to ensure that they are not working at cross-purposes with each other. The Byway organization should provide a complementary and voluntary review of the marketing materials of other marketing entities to assist with, and assure the accuracy of, information.

Providing a message of environmental sensitivity is essential to preserving the intrinsic qualities that make the Byway so special. It is assumed that some marketing materials will reach people outside the region in advance of their visit. As such, it is important to include a clear message of sensitivity of the environment and way of life which encourages visitors to act in ways that help protect these values. This message can also be reinforced through Byway sponsored media, such as brochures, videos and wayside exhibits.

### 3. Plan Elements



The primary elements of the Marketing component of the Corridor Management Plan are: 1) coordination with other marketing entities, and 2) development of a Byway brochure, as discussed above. A partial listing of those agencies and organizations active in marketing of the region include the following:

- Carbondale Chamber of Commerce – (970) 963-1890
- Colorado Travel and Tourism Authority – (303) 832-6171
- Crawford Chamber of Commerce – (970) 921-4725
- Crested Butte Chamber of Commerce – (970) 349-6438
- Delta Chamber of Commerce – (970) 874-8616
- Delta County Tourism Cabinet – P.O. Box 753, Delta, CO 81417
- Gunnison Country Chamber of Commerce – (970) 641-1501
- Gunnison County Lodging Tax Panel – (970) 641-1501
- Hotchkiss Chamber of Commerce – (970) 872-3226
- Montrose Chamber of Commerce – (970) 249-5000
- Montrose Visitors and Convention Bureau – (970) 240-1429
- Paonia Chamber of Commerce – (970) 527-3886
- Redstone Community Association – (970) 963-3126
- Scenic Byways Program, Colorado Department of Transportation – (303) 757-9786
- Southwest Colorado Travel Region – (970) 247-9621

Potential sources of grant money for the development of a brochure include the Colorado Historical Society and TEA-21 money through CDOT. The Colorado Historical Society has been particularly supportive of Byway interpretive materials and exhibits.



## C. Implementation

The following are the short and long-term action items that will be needed to implement the Marketing element of the plan.

### 1. Short-Term Action Plan

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
Establish formal contact with outside marketing entities and identify the goals and objectives of the Byway organization with respect to internal and external marketing.	November 2000	Individuals on each of the three Byway Chapters who have established relationships or interest in serving as a liaison.
Develop grant application for the development of a Byway brochure.	November 2000	Steering Committee designees.
Determine the format and draft content of the Byway brochure.	November 2000	Steering Committee working group.
Finalize camera-ready brochure and print.	As grants/funds are available	Steering Committee working group.
Provide brochures to local visitor contact points.	Upon printing	Individuals on each of the three Byway Chapters within their geographic area.

### 2. Long-Term Action Plan

Action Item	Time Frame	Responsibility
Maintain coordination with the outside marketing entities and provide guidance and input as appropriate.	Ongoing	Individuals on each of the three Byway Chapters who have established relationships or interest in serving as a liaison.
Continue to supply local outlets with brochures as needed.	Periodically	Individuals on each of the three Byway Chapters.
Review internet sites, especially the CDOT State Scenic Byway web site, for marketing content and opportunities.	Annually	Individuals on each of the three Byway Chapters.

### 3. Monitoring Plan

Action Item	Responsibility
Review marketing/informational materials of outside entities with respect to the Byway as occasion permits.	All members of the Byway Chapters as they become aware of them.
Monitor success of the brochure and the effectiveness of its messages as judged by comment, and evidence of behavior with respect to the Byway and its resources.	All members of the Byway Chapters as they have information to share with the group as a whole.



## Chapter VIII - Byway Organization

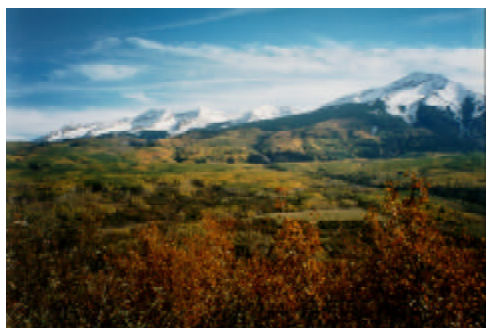


The West Elk Scenic and Historic Byway Steering Committee has been active as a group for approximately 10 years. Since the development of the nomination packet in 1990, participation by the group has been consistent, despite the number of professional and other community service commitments of the individuals serving on the committee. Past accomplishments are evidence of the effectiveness of this group of volunteers. One of the most notable in this regard is their Byway tour guide, *Elk Mountains Odyssey*, which they published in 1998. This is, without question, one of the best Byway information and interpretive pieces to have been produced anywhere.

In reviewing and considering a large number of alternative organizational structures and administrative models during the course of developing this Corridor Management Plan, the clear consensus of the group was to implement the plan under the same type of informal organizational structure that has guided them so well thus far. The group strongly favors remaining an informal organization and serving as a steering committee to local efforts rather than becoming a formal centralized group. This informal arrangement enables the participation of the federal agency representatives.

For reasons of both efficiency and convenience, the Byway has been informally subdivided into three zones: 1) the Crystal River, 2) the North Fork, and 3) the Gunnison. Each zone is represented by a subcommittee, or Chapter. The Chapters, collectively, comprise the Byway Steering Committee. The future Byway organization that carries this plan to implementation will function in essentially the same way: as Chapters, meeting periodically as needed to address local issues, and as a combined Steering Committee, at regularly scheduled meetings. Because of the long distances involved, the location of these combined meetings should be rotated among the various communities along the Byway.

An additional administrative responsibility will come with implementation of the Byway overlay zone by the various counties. As a condition of this designation, any proposed developments or other potentially impacting actions that come before the various county review agencies may be



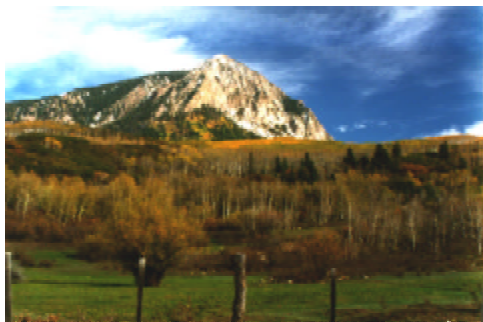
referred to the individual Byway Chapters or Byway Review Committees for review if there is the potential to adversely impact any of the Byway's intrinsic resources.

Financial and fiduciary responsibilities and procedures are accomplished through representatives from affiliated agencies and organizations such as the Western Colorado Interpretive Association. It is believed that such arrangements and associations will prove adequate for implementation of the Byway Corridor Management Plan.

# C

## hapter IX - Conceptual Master Plan

### A. Plan Development



Map 7 illustrates some of the key physical elements of the West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway Corridor Management Plan. This plan was developed over the course of a little more than a year through the combined efforts of the West Elk Byway Steering Committee and their consultant, EDAW, Inc. During this time, the key elements of the plan (resource protection, interpretation, trails, highway condition and safety, marketing and Byway organization and administration) were investigated, discussed, documented, and formalized through a cooperative and iterative process, which began with the development of goals and objectives (see Appendix A).

One of the fundamental underlying objectives of the study was to identify components and actions that would go beyond simply meeting the goals and objectives established for each of the individual study elements. It was seen as essential to the success of the plan that the actions recommended be mutually reinforcing, thereby integrating these separate plan elements into a cohesive management plan that would meet the overall mission of the Byway as stated in the Vision Statement:

*"Protect, enjoy and share the scenic, historic, natural and cultural characteristics of the communities linked by the Byway."*



Other key objectives that guided the development of the plan were that the actions are feasible and implementable, and that they meet the specific needs of those who would implement and live with it. To these ends, a range of alternative approaches and actions were reviewed through the course of the study, and those that were the most appropriate in meeting the needs of the Steering Committee in achieving their Vision of the Byway were ultimately selected.

The members of the Steering Committee are to be highly commended for the unselfish commitment of their time and resources, particularly in light of the long travel distances and their many other personal and civic obligations. Their commitment to the successful completion of this plan was unwavering, and their attitude was one of always helpful

enthusiasm. This plan will help to assure that the qualities and intrinsic values will remain intact into the indefinite future, despite the significant pressures these lands are facing.

## **B. Plan Overview**

The plan is detailed in terms of the specific action/implementation items outlined in the various sections of this plan document. Those physical elements that lend themselves to mapping, are also illustrated in Map 7, the Conceptual Master Plan, as discussed below.

Resource protection is one of the central elements of the plan. Some of the outcomes and action items of the resource protection plan include:

- Identification of resource protection priority areas
- Establishment of a Byway overlay Zone
- Documentation of lands with existing protection mechanisms in place

The High and Very High priority resource protection lands are shown on this Map. In all cases, these lands are private lands with some combination of development pressure and vulnerability to this pressure. Also pictured are the other private lands that would be covered by the Byway overlay zone (all private lands, regardless of their priority designation would be subject to the Byway overlay zone).

Agency lands are classified into two broad types: those that are essentially in multiple use management, and those that have some special protective designation. In the first category are all BLM lands, all state lands, and all Forest Service lands except the designated wilderness areas. The resources located there are given a management prescription within the broad multiple-use concept, based on the quality and type of resources, the prevailing public sentiment, and other agency considerations. These lands are then governed by management plans that are periodically updated and revised. The management prescriptions are therefore subject to change. Despite the management prescription, which can range between a resource utilization emphasis and resource protection emphasis, these lands are always protected from private development by virtue of their agency status.

The second type of land is those lands designated with essentially a perpetual protection status. They include Forest Service Wilderness Areas and all National Park Service lands.

These lands are not subject to the periodic revisions to their management status and will remain essentially unchanged, except for minor recreation related modifications at Curecanti NRA.

Also shown on Map 7, is the location of possible future interpretive sites. The interpretive section of the Plan (Section IV) details the specific types of topics that might be associated with each of these sites. They range from those designed to simply inform to those designed to educate. The intent is to provide these sites at regular intervals along the Byway so as to provide frequent opportunities to stop and be informed by messages that will provide an overall understanding of this region, as well as messages of environmental sensitivity, designed to be continually reinforcing.



In addition, the Conceptual Master Plan includes an indication of the location of a non-motorized trail to accompany the Byway. As this map indicates, and the text of the plan explains in greater detail, the trail location would include a combination of segments on the shoulder of the Byway, and variants that would be located on parallel trails. A variety of actions are needed to see this trail system developed as described in the text. The ultimate objective would be to have a complete Byway trail that would provide a combination of on and off-Byway segments that would provide a significantly greater measure of safety than is presently afforded to cyclists, hikers and equestrian users who may tour the Byway.

As noted, the plan contains a much larger number of action items, many of which for various reasons do not lend themselves to a physical representation. This map should therefore be reviewed in context with the full text and other data maps provided.

# **A**ppendix A – Study Goals and Objectives

## **RESOURCE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT**

### **PRELIMINARY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Goal: Protect the quality, character and integrity of the intrinsic qualities of the region and communities for which the Byway was established.**

1. Objective: Understand fully the nature and context of the Byway’s intrinsic qualities (both public and private) and identify available protection mechanisms so that these qualities may be properly protected.

- ◆ *Action:* Compile and map information regarding the Byway’s intrinsic qualities
- ◆ *Action:* Identify sensitivities/vulnerability of the Byway’s intrinsic qualities.
- ◆ *Action:* Identify a range of protection mechanisms and avenues (i.e. land trusts, Open Space (O.S.) tax \$, TEA 21 funds, regulations and policies, public awareness and support, agency coordination and involvement, etc.), and initiate dialogues with appropriate entities.
- ◆ *Action:* Identify available resources to achieve goals of resource protection and make data available on the Internet.
- ◆ *Action:* Engage ranching, farming, and mining representatives to better understand their views and to establish the basis for long-term dialogue and involvement with them.

2. Objective: Develop and implement a highly effective resource protection plan that: is comprehensive in scope, is broadly and actively coordinated among local interest groups and agencies, and, which integrates the full range of intrinsic qualities.

- ◆ *Action:* Explore the concept of an overlay zone which could encompass the values/goals of the Byway which are held in common, yet encourage individual solutions that are appropriate for each community.
- ◆ *Action:* Encourage each community to develop appropriate solutions for that community’s section of the Byway.
- ◆ *Action:* Identify existing community resources and incorporate new data.

**Goal: Enhance the intrinsic qualities of the Byway where appropriate, in ways consistent with the overall objectives of the State Scenic and Historic Byways Program, to rehabilitate, develop, maintain, interpret, and provide accessibility to these sites and resources as appropriate.**

1. Objective: Identify opportunities and needs for resource enhancement activities along the Byway.

- ◆ *Action:* Compile and map information regarding enhancement needs and opportunities.
- ◆ *Action:* Identify individual, interest group and agency resources that are available to assist in addressing these needs and opportunities and initiate a dialogue with them.
- ◆ *Action:* Establish priorities for resource enhancement activities.



## *Study Goals and Objectives*

2. Objective: Develop and implement a coordinated resource enhancement and recovery program.

◆ *Action:* To be determined

3. Objective: Develop objectives for signage, parking, setbacks, access that would help mitigate the impacts on resource enhancements.

“ *Action:* Develop a toolbox of mitigation objective to address issues such as: trash, air and water quality, strip development, traffic speed and volume, water quality, wildlife, signage, access control, kiosk landscaping, and viewshed protection.

## **INTERPRETATION**

### **PRELIMINARY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Goal: Provide an interpretive program to educate, inform and enhance the quality of a visit to the Byway by the public and by local residents, in a manner that will foster an appreciation for the lands, resources and communities along the Byway and promote responsible behavior.**

1. Objective: Identify initial interpretive needs and opportunities along the Byway.

- ◆ *Action:* Document existing interpretive facilities and activities.
- ◆ *Action:* Document previously identified interpretive opportunities.
- ◆ *Action:* Contact appropriate outside parties and initiate a dialogue to identify and coordinate interpretive needs and opportunities along the Byway.
- ◆ *Action:* Develop and maintain a list of Byway interpretive needs and opportunities.

2. Objective: Develop an interpretive concept plan that can serve as the overall guide to implementation of an ongoing interpretive program.

- ◆ *Action:* Identify appropriate interpretive themes for Byway segments.
- ◆ *Action:* Identify and prioritize long and short-term interpretive goals.
- ◆ *Action:* Develop a list of outside interests with whom coordination of interpretive matters should be maintained.
- ◆ *Action:* Identify funding sources.

3. Objective: Continue to develop/implement interpretive materials and facilities (kiosks, brochures, etc.) in coordination with other Byway programs and needs and outside interests.

- ◆ *Action:* Determine interpretive needs and priorities.
- ◆ *Action:* Seek funding for interpretive facilities and materials.
- ◆ *Action:* Provide and build interpretive facilities and/or materials as funds permit.
- ◆ *Action:* Incorporate ADA standards where reasonable.

4. Objective: Develop and implement an ongoing monitoring program to review the effectiveness and condition of existing interpretive materials and developments, and to review the need for additional facilities and materials.

- ◆ *Action:* To be determined.

## **TRAILS PLANNING**

### **PRELIMINARY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Goal: Conduct a feasibility study to identify opportunities and issues related to the development of a non-motorized (hiking and biking) recreation and transportation trail to accompany/parallel the Byway.**

1. Objective: Document the physical opportunities and issues regarding locating and developing the trail such as established and proposed trails that could function as segments of a Byway trail (or to which such a trail might reasonably connect), and document conditions of the Byway shoulder and right-of-way.
  - ◆ *Action:* Identify and map existing and proposed trails that meet the above intent.
  - ◆ *Action:* Identify historic trails which may no longer be in use but which might play a role in the “Byway trail”.
  - ◆ *Action:* Document road shoulder and right-of-way conditions to identify areas with potential to accommodate the trail.
  - ◆ *Action:* Identify those segments of the Byway where trail will have to use highway right-of-way or adjacent lands.
2. Objective: Investigate the potential to work with outside trail interests and agencies in the region in the development of the trail.
  - ◆ *Action:* Contact agencies and groups that have trails programs to identify the nature of their programs or plans and their interest in coordinating these activities with the Byway organization.
  - ◆ *Action:* Contact CDOT to identify the nature and schedule of road improvement plans and investigate the receptivity for planning future improvements to include adequate shoulders for bike travel.
  - ◆ *Action:* Investigate further the use of TEA 21 and other funding mechanisms to develop a Byway trail.

**Goal: Develop a conceptual Byway trails plan.**

Objective: Develop a stand alone plan for a Byway trail in sufficient detail to provide the Byway organization with future direction. Contents would include strategic goals and objectives, a map of the conceptual alignment and linkages to other trails and points of interest in the region, and funding/partner opportunities.

- ◆ *Action:* Document the results of the feasibility study and broadly address design and maintenance considerations.

**Goal: Coordinate design and construction of a non-motorized recreation and transportation trail to accompany the Byway (where the ROW does not accommodate a trail, an off-road trail may be appropriate).**

## **HIGHWAY CONDITION AND SAFETY**

### **PRELIMINARY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Goal: Provide a safe, efficient and pleasurable driving experience for both tourist and local traffic through a well designed and maintained highway system; recognizing that the primary responsibility in this area lies with the state and county departments of transportation.**

1. Objective: Establish and maintain an active dialogue and ongoing coordination with appropriate contact with CDOT and the county highway departments.

- ◆ *Action:* Identify appropriate persons in the various agencies with whom to initiate contact.
- ◆ *Action:* Seek to involve representatives from these agencies in the Byway planning effort.
- ◆ *Action:* Provide regular input on transportation related issues of the Byway to representatives of these agencies.

2. Objective: Develop an initial inventory of Byway conditions (road conditions, shoulder width, pull-offs, passing lanes and accident records) to aid in identifying transportation-related issues.

- ◆ *Action:* Inventory road conditions and request accident information.
- ◆ *Action:* Map traffic and roadway information in order to aid in identifying highway operation and safety issues.

3. Objective: Develop criteria for transportation planning on the secondary highways of Byway (SH 92, 133 and 135) that is based on the carrying capacity of highway rather than on projected traffic demand.

*Action:* Conduct daily traffic counts on secondary roads to determine if above or below current carrying capacity.

## **MARKETING**

### **PRELIMINARY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Goal: Generally, seek to manage tourism rather than promote it.**

1. Objective: Identify and coordinate with other ongoing regional tourism efforts to make the marketing goal of the West Elk Byway clear and to coordinate future activities.

- ◆ *Action:* Identify other regional and local entities involved in marketing the region, initiate a dialogue.
- ◆ *Action:* Establish an ongoing coordination mechanism with appropriate entities.

2. Objective: Provide information regarding the sensitive nature of the area's resources and attractions in any marketing efforts of the Byway organization and other regional marketing entities.

- ◆ *Action:* Clarify the de-marketing goal of the Byway.

**Goal: Develop a marketing strategy/plan that will provide direction to guide future marketing and public relations efforts.**

1. Objective: Develop specific marketing goals and objectives in order to provide clear messages to the visiting public and which respond appropriately to differing views on marketing throughout the Byway.

- ◆ *Action:* Clarify the goals and objectives of the various Byway community participants.
- ◆ *Action:* Develop a marketing strategy that clarifies and accounts for the desires of the Byway communities.

**Goal: Implement the Byway marketing strategy.**

1. Objective: Use a variety of means in an effort to provide appropriate messages to visitors before and during their visit.

- ◆ *Action:* Provide visitors with maps, brochures or other printed materials which reinforce the Byway.
- ◆ *Action:* Integrate appropriate Byway messages into the permanent interpretive exhibits.

## **ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **PRELIMINARY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Goal: Maintain a strong, effective and lasting Byway organization through an informal alliance of community interests and outside agencies.**

1. Objective: Continue to identify and seek participation of interested parties and potentially helpful outside entities.
2. Objective: Implement the corridor management plan.
  - ◆ *Action:* Make the corridor management plan publicly available on the Internet.
  - ◆ *Action:* Establish a program to regularly monitor and review the implementation of the corridor management plan.
3. Objective: Assert through consistent and positive means the Byway organization's rightful stewardship and leadership voice.
  - ◆ *Action:* Advocate the importance of the quality and character of the lands, resources, and developments within the Byway corridor.
  - ◆ *Action:* Contact Byway governmental entities with regard to same.
  - ◆ *Action:* Build a solid base of community understanding and support for the Byway sufficient to motivate active, broad-based citizen participation. Use publications, web site, etc.
  - ◆ *Action:* Recruit a stable financial base of support with partners and volunteers.



# A Appendix B - Landscape Character Descriptions

## West Elk Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan Visual Character Units

Unit Number	Unit Name
1	<p><b>Carbondale</b></p> <p>The Byway passes through an area of relatively recent commercial strip and residential development rather than through the more established town center. It is difficult in this setting to determine where the Byway starts - the Begin/End Byway signs are actually adjacent to a utility substation. The lands along the Byway are essentially developed out in the commercial area; but in the residential areas toward the south end of town, additional infill is possible.</p> <p>Vulnerability: The primary vulnerability is continued infill and expansion of various urban land uses to the south.</p>
2	<p><b>Rural Carbondale</b></p> <p>There is a spotty mixture of new residential development and agriculture in the transition area between town and the open agricultural lands to the south. The urban influences relatively quickly give way to a more cultural landscape of ranching. Most residences in this area are ranch and farmsteads, but some new homes are also located here. The area is primarily rolling irrigated pasture/hayland with stringers of cottonwood along the drainages and irrigation ditches bounded by sage and juniper covered ridges. The valley becomes increasingly enclosed and narrower as one travels to the south as the adjacent ridges rise higher. Mt. Sopris is a dominant focal point in this view.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Increased pressure for rural residential development.</p>
3	<p><b>Lower Crystal River Valley</b></p> <p>The lower Crystal River Valley is more properly termed a canyon. The valley bottom is narrow and visually punctuated by the clear flowing Crystal River and associated riparian vegetation (cottonwood, willow, alder). The enclosing valley walls are made up of steep to sheer red rock in a variety of interesting formations. Evergreen vegetation is well established on the lower slopes and is scattered elsewhere where slope and exposure will permit. The Byway winds through this unit with ever changing, engaging views of the river, the red rock formations and occasionally to distant mountain peaks. Pockets of residential development occur at regular intervals along the Byway.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Continued infill of residential development on the private parcels along the river.</p>
4	<p><b>Crystal River Red Rock</b></p> <p>This is a portion of the valley where rock outcrops often occur along the Byway or are visible at higher elevations. Often they are red in color and have interesting or massive forms. The river is an equally dominant influence, being clear, swift and flowing over a large rocky bottom. The slopes (where not exposed rock) are a combination of conifer, aspen and oak. The scene is made up of several strong visual elements - vegetation, landform and water. There are a number of very visible residences in this area however. Most are well designed but they detract from the more natural quality that would prevail if these were absent or less visible.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Almost certain additional residential development.</p>
5	<p><b>Placita</b></p> <p>A place name of a community now gone on the Crystal River. This unit is narrow and winding, bordered by steep mountain slopes of conifer and aspen rising 2,000'-3,000' high. The clear flowing Crystal River is a dominant attraction when visible. Cottonwoods are often associated with the river but are thin and discontinuous. Attention is often drawn to the high mountain slopes and distant mountain peaks. Some residences are located here, especially a large number near the Marble turnoff.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Residential development.</p>

<b>Unit Number</b>	<b>Unit Name</b>
6	<p><b>East McClure Pass</b></p> <p>This very steep mountain side is covered by conifer and aspen and is scenic in its own right, but it is the very panoramic views afforded from this steep mountain side of highly scenic peaks to the south, east, north and scenic Crystal Valley below that give it a unique quality.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Much is on private lands but development potential would be low due to steepness of the slopes.</p>
7	<p><b>West McClure Pass</b></p> <p>High elevation mountain pass dominated almost entirely by mature aspen woodland. A relatively short segment of the Byway. Views are generally oriented to the Forest Service because of somewhat enclosing topography and dense aspen vegetation.</p> <p>Vulnerability: All on Forest Service – low.</p>
8	<p><b>Lee Creek</b></p> <p>Lee Creek is a broadly defined drainage that increases in breadth with increasing elevation. It encompasses a very large bowl at the upper end. Vegetation at the lower portion is primarily grass and oak brush grading into aspen and conifer near the top. To southbound travelers, a panoramic view is afforded from the upper end looking west and south. To northbound travelers, an inferior view of a broadly sweeping mountain bowl covered almost entirely by aspen woodland can be seen. The creek is relatively small but contains beaver ponds and is visually noticeable from some locations.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Mostly Forest Service in upper portions. Lower portion is private. Development pressure seems unlikely.</p>
9	<p><b>Muddy Creek</b></p> <p>This creek is well named, being relatively low in flow but nevertheless quite noticeably muddy. It is located in a narrow, steep sided valley – also covered by a combination of pines and oak brush, with oak brush generally predominant. Some significant stands of cottonwood occur along the creek but are quite intermittent. A few scattered residences are located here. The roadway is on unstable ground with large rock faces breaking off into the edge of the road. In several places the creek appears unnaturally aligned or constrained by bank armoring on the east and the roadway on the west.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Mostly private but remote, making significant development unlikely.</p>
10	<p><b>Paonia Reservoir</b></p> <p>This is a relatively narrow unit in the Muddy Creek Drainage that has been dammed to form a long, shallow lake for irrigation water. It is therefore almost dry by summer's end, creating an unattractive mud flat/slope. The hills enclosing the valley are relatively steep and alternately covered by oak brush and pine, often in various combinations.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Low. Paonia Reservoir State Park is located here.</p>
11	<p><b>North Fork Gunnison River Canyon – Forested</b></p> <p>This unit is much the same as the following, except that its slopes are predominantly forested and there is no coal or other development present.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Probably relatively little, although future coal development is possible. A mixture of private and public lands.</p>

Unit Number	Unit Name
12	<p><b>North Fork Gunnison River Canyon – Oak Brush</b></p> <p>A deep, well-defined river canyon with somewhat narrow to narrow bottom. The hillsides on both sides are high and very steep and generally covered by oak brush, but with groves and scattered individual conifers. The hill slopes on the north side often have prominent exposed bands of caprock and are irregular in nature. Where the valley width permits, limited agriculture is taking place – orchards or irrigated hayfields. Strongly defined and well-developed riparian woodland (cottonwood and willow) are almost continuous along the river. The river itself is visually conspicuous and attractive (clear) as it moves swiftly over the rocky bottom. This unit has 2-3 areas of conspicuous coal production. Bowie is a small town just off the Byway with a coal mine associated with it further up the ridge. The Town of Somerset and the Bear Mine Coal Generation further upstream are very conspicuous and may warrant interpretation.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Probably relatively little, although this unit is primarily on private lands and additional coal reserves are known.</p>
13	<p><b>North Fork Gunnison River Valley Agriculture</b></p> <p>This area appears almost idyllic with rich and prosperous appearing orchards and hay fields on the valley bottom and on some intermediate mesas and terraces, intermingled with bands and stringers of natural vegetation. All this is backdropped by the West Elk Mountains, which rise abruptly immediately to the south.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Expansion of Hotchkiss and Paonia, especially in light of new development that might follow the sewer extension west of Paonia.</p>
14	<p><b>Hotchkiss</b></p> <p>The Byway skirts the eastern edge of Hotchkiss, so from the Byway proper the primary image of the town is of the peripheral commercial uses and scattered residences. The development extends from the North Fork Gunnison River on the south to Hanson Mesa. It is generally a pleasant town as viewed from the Byway, but lacks a sense of order or permanence unless the traveler gets off the Byway and goes into town where it has the appearance of a vital and well established community.</p> <p>Vulnerability: As Hotchkiss continues to grow additional scattered residential and commercial development is expected adjacent to the Byway.</p>
15	<p><b>Mesa Agriculture</b></p> <p>An elevated series of sloping mesas (Spurlin, Cottonwood and Grand View). As the name implies, Grand View Mesa in particular provides elevated, panoramic views to the north to the North Fork Gunnison River Valley and the Grand Mesa beyond. Also to the West Elk Mountains to the east. Land use is a mix of predominantly ranching and farming (cattle and irrigated pasture) but with a sprinkling of rural residences. An area of dry, broken adobe hills divides the two agricultural areas.</p> <p>Vulnerability: An increasing influx of residences could alter the pastoral character.</p>
16	<p><b>Crawford</b></p> <p>A well established, compact town with attractive character. Several significant old buildings, including the town hall and community church with it's adjacent cemetery, add a sense of permanence and history. Set on a gently sloping hillside below Young's Peak, it has a visually attractive setting as well.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Lack of land use regulations or town plan and additional growth could alter the unique setting and charm of this small town.</p>
17	<p><b>Crawford Reservoir</b></p> <p>Crawford Reservoir is managed as a state park. It therefore is strongly influenced by campground, picnic, parking and maintenance facilities. The large reservoir is unusual in this region which makes it visually inviting. The water is used for irrigation so that late season drawdowns are visually evident.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Little chance for change because of USBR ownership and state parks management.</p>

Unit Number	Unit Name
18	<p><b>Upper Agricultural Valleys</b>  Medium to broad, gently sloping agricultural valleys – cattle and irrigated hay meadows, bounded by mesas/ridges to the west and the West Elk Mountains to the east and north. Ranching predominates; few rural residences other than farms and ranches. Gould Reservoir is very shallow and dry by summer's end. It is very visible from the Byway and generally positive. Views are strongly drawn to the east and north to the high mountains. Focal points are Cathedral Peak and Needle Rock as well.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Several 35-acre parcels for sale here. Very little is protected by Forest Service ownership except the very high country. Concern regarding transition from pastoral agriculture to residential.</p>
19	<p><b>Crystal Creek</b>  A diverse landscape unit or rather a transition of different landscape units. Beginning from the south in an elevated topographic position with scattered trees and oak brush, transitioning to lower elevations through oak brush, then to the Crystal Valley of small-scale agriculture with a thin band of cottonwood.</p> <p>Vulnerability: North portion has some pressure for private sale.</p>
20	<p><b>Morrow Point Reservoir</b>  Several miles of very winding road in the steep, high, northern slopes above Morrow Point Reservoir. The vegetation on the north-facing slopes is relatively heavy and almost uniformly covered by evergreens. The slopes are so high and irregular that despite the monoculture, the views are very interesting. Attention is most strongly drawn to the canyon, which is visible to the bottom in very few locations from the Byway. However at established overlooks, opportunities to view down into the canyon bottom are possible. The vegetation along the Byway on the south-facing slopes is a mixture of aspen, evergreen, oak and sage in various combinations. In places, the road is very enclosed and in others it is very open. Overall, this area is visually striking and memorable.</p> <p>Vulnerability: The highway skirts in and out of private lands, and early signs suggest some subdividing of 35 acre parcels for residential use.</p>
21	<p><b>Western Blue Mesa Reservoir</b> (<i>portion with Byway on south side of reservoir</i>)  Large open water body but bounded by interesting, diverse and prominently elevated topography. Of greatest visual interest are the Dillon Pinnacles. Also, rimrock mesas and bench formations are diverse and add a visually interesting backdrop to the reservoir. West Elk Mountains to the far north are visible. Evergreen vegetation on the elevated north-facing slopes to the south add interest and noticeably add an element of interest lacking for considerable distance to the east.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Private lands border the Byway in two places immediately to the south. Residential development is evident in one and near the other at Sapinero.</p>
22	<p><b>Blue Mesa Reservoir</b>  Very broad, open reservoir – several miles long and ½+ to 1+ mile in width. Bounded by rolling but somewhat prominent elevated sage covered hills. No sense of enclosure – actually a real sense of exposure. Very broad, open, large scale. Very few trees. Some drainages from the north contain clumps of cottonwoods and appear inviting. Overall it feels barren.</p> <p>Vulnerability: The road skirts private land to the north, which has some commercial, recreation-oriented development. More development within close proximity to the lake would be expected.</p>

Unit Number	Unit Name
23	<p><b>Middle Reservoir Area</b></p> <p>This is an area of low to moderate sized rolling/rounded landforms with sage vegetation. It appears barren and somewhat bleak because there is no sign of the reservoir except for a few brief glimpses. Development of the park visitor center, admin building, service structures and residences are evident from the highway. They are of various architectural styles and spread over a large area, giving it a non-unified appearance. Wood H-frame transmission line goes through this area as well.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Some areas outside the NRA are very close. In fact in one area, the road is outside the NRA making development on both sides of the road a possibility.</p>
24	<p><b>Gunnison River Canyon</b></p> <p>Winding canyon with very steep walls of 200' to 300'. Very enclosed and engaging with water as strong visual element. The Byway is very close to the water and nearly at the same level.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Little since it is all within the Curecanti NRA.</p>
25	<p><b>South Gunnison River Valley</b></p> <p>Open ranching country in valley bottom bordered by low rolling sage hills to north. The Gunnison River cottonwood riparian forest is dominant element to the south, and in some areas the river itself is visible and attractive.</p> <p>Vulnerability: The hills to the north (especially to the west) show some residential development. Concern about the farmland – one marginal parcel for sale. Sale for home sites along the river is also potential, which would effectively isolate the Byway from the presence of the river.</p>
26	<p><b>Gunnison West Outskirts</b></p> <p>Mix of land use. Open to view – not well screened. From west to east: scattered rural residences gradually increasing in density, then to scattering of commercial with residential, then to various commercial types.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Expansion of residential and commercial gradually westward as well as infill seems likely.</p>
27	<p><b>Gunnison</b></p> <p>Substantial town, established, permanence, substance – well maintained. All basic services with choices.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Expansion of sprawl development around the town, which colors the perception of the town – the longer it takes to get through the sprawl the less favorable the image of town.</p>
28	<p><b>North Gunnison Outskirts</b></p> <p>A mixture of various urban land uses (primarily residential) mixed with some natural-appearing parcels. Numerous large trees are scattered throughout, which somewhat softens the visual impact of an otherwise hodgepodge of land uses. One's feelings are not so much of this area but anticipation of actually getting into town (if traveling south) or actually getting out of town (if traveling north).</p> <p>Vulnerability: Continued expansion and infill seems likely.</p>
29	<p><b>Gunnison River</b></p> <p>This is primarily flat open land with more distant views of relatively low, enclosing, non-distinctive, sage covered landforms. The dominant visual element is the river and associated cottonwood riparian area. The river is much larger than upstream and invites attention. Two areas of scattered residences also attract attention and give the feeling of approaching a town. Overall land use is large-scale ranching, which is interesting and somewhat attractive.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Increased rural residential development. Of particular concern is the area between the Byway and river.</p>

Unit Number	Unit Name
30	<p><b>Almont</b> A small residential community nestled in an enclosed canyon at the junction of the East and Taylor Rivers, which then become the Gunnison River. The strong feeling of enclosure in a visually inviting setting is memorable. The hillsides are a combination of conifer and sage. The rivers and associated cottonwoods are strongly dominant. The town is primarily authentic old structures, which is also very interesting. You would like to stay or slow down to see more and find out more; undoubtedly some do.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Increased development seems probable.</p>
31	<p><b>East River</b> The height and prominence of surrounding mountain slopes is much reduced (from State River unit below). Ranching is the predominant land use. Numerous authentic ranch operations are visually evident. Most engaging natural feature is the well-developed riparian cottonwood forest along the East River. At most places, it is very near the Byway and from a few locations can be seen from an elevated viewpoint.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Probably eventual residential development replacing both a way of life and a landscape. Residences or any development on hills would be highly visible and strongly influencing because of the low, open sage cover. The Roaring Judy Fish Hatchery is located here but not strongly visible.</p>
32	<p><b>State River Valley</b> This area is a mixture of broad, undeveloped valley with few distinguishing characteristics and large, somewhat chaotic-appearing subdivided residential areas. Chaos of subdivisions has to do with random orientation of homes and wide disparity of building styles – a mix of well designed to those that look homemade. The subdivisions strongly compete for attention with the high scenic, forested, enclosing mountain slopes. Wood pole H-frame transmission line runs along west side of valley although not strongly noticeable. Very noticeable and discordant appearing industrial park is located along a ½+ mile stretch of highway.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Continuation of residential development.</p>
33	<p><b>Crested Butte (Town – outlying residential areas)</b> Appears to be well planned with respect to lot size and building style. Attention drawn to road, primarily due to traffic and irregular traffic patterns and number of close intersections. Crested Butte Peak looms strongly and is very attractive.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Continued residential and other urban development.</p>
34	<p><b>Crested Butte (Town) (Historic Core)</b> Authentic Victorian era gold mining town with many substantial buildings. Narrow streets. Very engaging visually – invites exploration. Attention is inward.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Increasing traffic congestion probably inevitable.</p>
35	<p><b>Wildcat Creek (above Crested Butte)</b> Heavy forested, steeply sloping, north-facing slopes and sage-aspen south-facing slopes. Attention drawn to Crested Butte Peak for eastbound travelers. Keystone Mine is visible but not strongly distracting.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Expanding residential development on private lands – especially likely on south-facing slopes (north-facing slope is very steep and without suitable access).</p>
36	<p><b>Kebler Pass</b> This is an extensive area through which the Byway winds over a gravel road in a scenic, high mountain setting. There are alternately panoramic views to scenic mountain peaks and views enclosed by topography or vegetation. Extensive areas of aspen create interesting patterns and contrasts with the otherwise evergreen forest. The town site of Irwin and various historic mining sites add to the interest of the area.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Possibly only from over use from recreation. The gravel surface gives a distinct “out of the way” feeling to the Byway. There is pressure to pave it.</p>



<b>Unit Number</b>	<b>Unit Name</b>
37	<p><b>Watson Flats</b></p> <p>This is an elevated forest setting with numerous opportunities for panoramic views across forested lands to very high peaks and mountain ranges. The land is undulating and gently rolling to steeply sloping. Vegetation is a combination of oak brush, large aspen woodlands and conifer forest often mixed in interesting patterns. Its visual interest lies in its remoteness, occasional sense of vegetative enclosure and often panoramic views.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Probably only over use from recreation as this area is almost entirely in Forest Service ownership. There are several residences/ranches to the north outside of the Forest.</p>
38	<p><b>Anthracite Creek</b></p> <p>This is a narrow, deep river valley bounded closely by steep forested mountain slopes. Views of distant high peaks are common. The creek is clear and very swiftly flowing over a rocky bottom. Several ranches, residences and guest ranges are located along this road.</p> <p>Vulnerability: Increased development and building. Property is for sale.</p>