

**GARFIELD COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVISION**

STUDY AREA FOUR

ADOPTED MAY 8, 2002

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GARFIELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

STUDY AREA FOUR – 2002

PREFACE

The Garfield County Comprehensive Plan (The Plan) has been developed to provide a general statement of direction for land use planning in unincorporated Garfield County. To ensure that the planning process and the guidelines developed are sensitive to constraints, pressures, opportunities and the unique characteristics of differing parts of Garfield County, five distinct ‘sub-areas’ or ‘study areas’ have been developed over time. This allows analysis and policies to reflect the special needs and characteristics of these places.

Individual Study Area Plans, as adopted by the Garfield County Planning Commission, are folded in to the overall Garfield County Comprehensive Plan and act as ‘chapters’ or ‘sections’ of that larger Plan, and are incorporated as part of the overall document. They become official parts of the larger Plan and where specific provisions are made that relate to a Study Area those provisions become official policy (An example being provisions for affordable housing which apply only to Study Area One – the unincorporated Roaring Fork Drainage).

As a result, it is not necessary to replicate the introductory, overview, legal and methodological language of the Plan for each of the Study Areas, as provisions that apply to the entire county are contained therein, and persons reviewing any specific Study Area Plan should understand that it is only a sub-set and part of that larger document.

At the same time, as Study Area Plans are often reviewed, refined and approved as discrete pieces of the larger county-wide Plan. It is helpful to highlight the context in which they are developed in terms of legal foundation, purpose and intent. As they can also trigger Zoning and other regulations and policies specific to that Study Area, should those be adopted, an understanding of this framework is helpful in understanding the role of a Study Area Plan.

The foundation for comprehensive planning at the county level is found in Section 30-28-106 of the Colorado Revised Statutes. In Colorado, counties are not required to adopt Master or Comprehensive Plans to serve as a basis for a valid Zoning Resolution and regulations – but where a comprehensive or master plan exists it should serve as a basis for shaping those regulatory instruments.

A Comprehensive Plan is generally advisory in nature and long range by definition. It attempts to look out with a planning horizon (typically 20 years) to examine the trends, pressures and forces at work that may collectively and cumulatively impact the residents of the area and the services and facilities needed to insure the public health, safety and welfare. It also provides a context for the citizenry to define values, characteristics and qualities that they desire to enhance or preserve.

Garfield County's Comprehensive Plan takes this analysis and summarizes the findings into Goals, Objectives, Policies and Programs. These summary points are then used as a basis to evaluate proposed developments, as 'Action Items' for specific work programs, as a basis and context for capital improvements programs, as a trigger for regulatory refinements and new policy development, and as a statement of community consensus for state and federal management and decision-making processes. As a result, while 'advisory' in nature, a Comprehensive Plan carries a lot of weight. The language of the Comprehensive Plan is heavily utilized in Planned Unit Development review as those proposals are essentially rezonings. To the extent that the Board of County Commissioners have adopted Comprehensive Plan language in decision-making authority the language becomes regulatory, where that language is specific enough to guide that decision-making. It is the one place where the citizenry and their government bring the longer term vision of what they want their community to become together with the day-to-day functioning and regulatory powers of that government.

Garfield County's Comprehensive Plan also utilizes an approach that incorporates mapping as an integral part of the planning process and to highlight areas of concern or special attention. The County has developed an extensive Geographic Information System (G.I.S.) capability, and is constantly refining the ability to map information as a useful tool in understanding our surroundings. Maps can show constraints (slopes, soil types, hazards, flood plains, etc.), values (viewsheds, vistas), infrastructure (roads, pipelines, power lines, sewer, water, etc.), constraints (airport clear zones, buffer zones), special places (historical sites, archeological sites, historic trails, etc.), fragile or special areas of concern (wetlands, wildlife nesting and breeding areas, riparian areas, unique habitat for plants and animals of concern) and existing land uses, proposed land uses, zoning and jurisdictional boundaries.

Maps can be official or advisory. The Garfield County Zoning Map is an official regulatory document. Other maps, such as soils, flood plains, slopes and geological hazards, are referenced in regulatory authority and must be consulted as part of a development process. A third set of maps is advisory only, with examples being wildlife range, migration routes and nesting areas, viewsheds, and threatened or endangered species habitat. Taken as a set, the maps provide the community with an overview that assists with broader land use and zoning decisions while also providing a developer or project proponent a first look at issues or concerns that will need to be addressed in any development proposal.

This is an especially useful tool both for the community and proponents of individual developments, as when the maps are overlain (a process perfected by Ian McHarg at the

University of Pennsylvania in the 1960's – and now known as a 'McHarg' type analysis in the planning and development professions) it gives a 'suitability analysis' for any given location. This allows the community to define concerns in layers and provides a development proponent with those concerns early and up-front as areas that will need attention and potential mitigation as they craft a specific proposal for a specific site.

The process of mapping is an evolving one. Maps are only as good as the base data used to feed their construction. Good, field checked data is often only developed when pressures arise to the extent that the cost of generating that data is justified by the demand for it. As a result, the more remote areas of Garfield County lack the kinds of mapping detail found along the I-70 and Highway 82 corridors. In these remote areas some maps paint a rather broad brush picture when applied to a given site or location, and should only be viewed as a 'point of departure' for site specific analysis. Garfield County regulations allow for a project proponent or developer, after referencing these maps, to undertake a site specific analysis and show whether a specific constraint or issue is present at that location.

INTRODUCTION

Study Area Four consists of almost one fourth of the total county land area, located in the northern and eastern most regions of Garfield County. (See Map #1) It contains approximately 665 square miles (22% of the county), and all but approximately 60 square miles are located on the White River and Routt National Forests. Approximately one third of the remaining land area is under BLM management. As a result, privately owned lands that are currently zoned as something other than O/S (Open Space) total only about 40 square miles, or six percent of the Study Area.

These privately held lands are located in two primary groupings, to the very easternmost (bordering Eagle County) and westernmost (bordering Rio Blanco County) within the Study Area. Additional private property is held in scattered in-holdings and along CR 155 into Trappers Lake.

Dominated by a geology that contains the Flattops ridges and divides, the Study Area is a headwaters for the White River draining into Rio Blanco County, the Yampa draining into Routt County and streams draining into the Colorado in Eagle County.

Little development pressure has been applied to this area over the past several decades with the exception of the Sweetwater area in the east, (CR 150 and 151). Private lands in the corridor into Trappers Lake have been in a single ownership and ranch that provides corporate retreat and vacation opportunities, has been maintained as a working ranch, and manages the property to maintain historic ambience and style. The westernmost area (CR 252 and 230) had historically been ranching and grazing country, but is now seeing some up-scale 35 acre subdivision activity and development. More recently, as well, the Sweetwater area is seeing investment and interest in higher-end home development and existing subdivision reconfiguration that would potentially stimulate development of additional housing units.

This remote area of Garfield County contains recreation destination attractions that serve as a draw for visitation to the area. As populations in surrounding areas increase it can be reasonably expected that pressures on county infrastructure and services will increase as well.

As in other remote areas, the provision of county services in law enforcement, search and rescue, EMT, fire protection and road maintenance are often done cooperatively and on a mutual aid basis with surrounding jurisdictions. This study Area Four revision for 2002 examines and inventories the infrastructure in place, possible future trends and demands, the regulatory tools in place to meet future needs, and concerns of neighboring jurisdictions and agencies. It concludes with findings and recommendations, which if adopted, become part of the Garfield County Comprehensive Plan.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area Four, along with Study Area Five, represents a somewhat unique problem in typical Comprehensive Plan or sub-area Plan analysis. The historic drawing of county line boundaries by the state legislature only partially reflected areas of influence, or natural watershed and trade area boundaries. When populations were sparse, and getting to the county seat to conduct business was a formative issue, those needs were juxtaposed with putting boundaries around vast amounts of unsettled territory to the state lines (See History, below).

As a result, Study Area Four contains no incorporated community within Garfield County that views this area as its ‘back yard,’ hinterlands, trade area or watershed. (See Maps 32 and 33) If divided along trade area or watershed lines, or looked at in terms of areas of influence and responsibility, this area of the county falls within the watersheds and influence areas of Meeker in Rio Blanco County (The Trappers Lake area), Oak Creek and Yampa in Routt County (the northern Flattops and Stillwater/YamColo Reservoirs area), and the Gypsum/ Eagle areas of Eagle County (Sweetwater and Deep Creek drainages). Spill-over impacts from development efforts historically, and current tourism and hunting activities, have had a limited trade and influence area relationship in the Study Area with all of these neighboring communities.

Federal land management agencies divide Study Area Four by watershed boundaries. BLM lands in the Sweetwater and eastern areas are managed from the Glenwood Springs Field Office. BLM lands in the western portion of the Study Area are managed by the White River BLM office in Meeker. The BLM manages outfitting and guide permits for the area, enforces their own management guidelines and undertakes supervision of uses including but not limited to range management, habitat, watershed protection, wildlife, tourism and recreation. The White River National Forest manages the majority of U.S.F.S. lands in the area, with the Routt National Forest administering lands in the northern Flattops area from their Ranger District in Yampa. The White River maintains administrative ranger districts in Rifle, Meeker and Eagle.

This set of administrative and economic circumstances led to the need to review and update Study Area Four with a strong emphasis on relationships with neighboring jurisdictions and communities. It also required seeking out interest groups: outfitters and guides, recreational organizations, grazing interests, seasonal users, environmental interest groups, hunters, federal land management agencies and respondents by interest area within their purview, major land owners, major mineral rights owners, state wildlife interests, conservation groups and other stakeholders, in taking a fresh look at this Study Area for county planning purposes. Many, if not most, of these stakeholders and jurisdictions have headquarters, offices outside of, or reside outside of Garfield County. Key respondents, meetings and interviews from all of these interest groups have been utilized in crafting this Plan revision. An extensive public noticing process was

undertaken which included publication in regional newspapers, written formal notice to all neighboring planning jurisdictions, public meetings, and extensive circulation of a Draft of this Plan for review prior to its adoption.

GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION CONCERNS

GEOGRAPHY

Study Area Four comprises the northern most portions of Garfield County and much of its eastern land area. (See Map # 1) It is bordered by Rio Blanco and Routt Counties on the north and Eagle County to the east. Communities nearby that benefit from economic and recreational activity in the Study Area include Meeker and the area around Buford, Oak Creek and Yampa and the western Eagle River Valley communities of Eagle, Gypsum and Dotsero. The Sweetwater drainage, extending from Sweetwater Lake down to the Eagle County line (approximately 3 miles) and then in Eagle County to the Colorado River, represents the highest concentration of human settlement in the Study Area.

Study Area Four is part of the White River Plateau region of the Rocky Mountains. The White River Plateau includes the Flat Tops, the Glenwood Canyon area and the Roaring Fork Valley. The higher elevations are one of three areas in the State of Colorado capped by volcanic rock (the other two being the West Elk Mountains and the San Juan Mountains).

The Flat Tops area is very much a headwaters point, with major drainages including the White River, Yampa River and Rifle, Elk and Deep Creeks. All water drained eventually ends up in the Colorado River, but the flows in all cardinal compass directions from the Flat Tops take these waters to the Colorado by very different routes, with northern drainages flowing first into Utah and the Green River prior to reaching the Colorado main stem.

Sheep Mountain, at 12,241 feet in elevation, is the highest point in Study Area Four with the ridges and plateaus of the Flat Tops ranging from 10,000 to 12,000 feet. Lower drainages exit the area at 6000 to 7000 feet. (2)

CLIMATE

Rainfall in the Study Area ranges from 20 inches yearly average in the valley areas to nearly 50 inches yearly at the higher capturing elevations, with the extreme eastern areas around Sweetwater being the only exception and much drier where lower elevations gain only 15 to 20 inches yearly. Snowfall in the higher plateau areas is usually sufficient to support extended motorized and non-motorized winter sports activity.

GEOLOGY

The geology of the area is well described in the Colorado Natural Heritage Program Survey of Critical Biological Resources: "The White River Plateau is a broad anticlinal

dome, composed of a complex mix of folded and faulted Paleozoic layers (Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, Mississippian, Permian and Pennsylvanian) that were uplifted during the Tertiary Period, and in some areas are capped by volcanic basalt flows. Deep canyons, carved through the rock during the Pleistocene, expose successively older layers, down to the Precambrian granite in Glenwood Canyon and other tributary canyons. Interesting features include the karst area of limestone deposits that are home to several caves..." (2)

The volcanic ridge lines of the Flat Tops have made the area a scenic treasure, and along with the extended high elevation plateaus, compose an area long regarded as special and worthy of preservation. A significant portion of Study Area Four is contained in the Flat Tops wilderness area. Drainages extending down carved deep and dramatic canyons, with Deep Creek presently under consideration for either Wilderness or Wild and Scenic designation at this writing. The BLM maintains Scenic View Shed designations of Class I and II in the Deep Creek and Hack Creek Special Resource Management Areas. Numerous small lakes dot the upper plateaus. Limestone caves in the southeastern portion of the Study Area have become a destination point for cavers. The very rugged and remote terrain has limited human settlement and incursion, with harsh winters and heavy snowfall amounts discouraging year-round settlement in all but the lowest valleys. These same features and attributes serve as a draw, for recreational activity and people equipped to enjoy summer and winter activities.

NATURAL RESOURCES

While part of the large mineralized belt of the larger Rocky Mountain Region, Study Area Four did not yield a commercially feasible deposit of ores despite a flurry of heavy prospecting activity in the early 1880's. The brief founding and subsequent demise of the Town of Carbonate on the plateau turned out to have been based on a hoax (See History, Below), but stimulated a dramatic influx of prospectors for a brief period that investigated and explored the region. (9)

The primary commercial extractive resource contained in Study Area Four is timber, with logging being an activity that has characterized portions of the Study Area since early in the previous century. Almost all feasible timber harvest areas are under the jurisdiction of the White River National Forest and managed to meet production and forest health guidelines by that agency.

VEGETATION

Climate and topography (See Map # 28a) preclude irrigated agricultural use of lands in Study Area Four. With the exception of very small portions of lower drainages, the vegetation in the Study area climbs from Mountain Shrublands (Gambel's oak, mountain mahogany, mountain sagebrush) up to Aspen Forests, Spruce-Fir Forests and Alpine Meadows (See Map # 2).

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Several areas have been identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program as having 'B2' rankings (or "very High Significance") for bio-diversity and species maintenance in Study Area Four (See Map # 30). These include Trappers Lake, Middle Fork Derby Creek, W Mountain, Main Elk Creek, West Elk Creek, Butler Creek and No Name Creek. These areas are contained within the National Forest and in some cases are also in the Flat Tops Wilderness. An ongoing concern in some areas is managing grazing to ensure that wetland and riparian areas are maintained in good health. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program reports are available for inspection and copying at the Garfield County Building and Planning Office, or are available for purchase from the Colorado Natural Heritage Program at C.S.U. in Ft. Collins at 254 General Services Building, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523 (970-491-1309) and via links on their web site www.cnhp.colostate.edu.

Maintenance of these important diverse plant communities and habitat areas falls chiefly to the White River National Forest, where preservation values are factored into timber and grazing management and recreational use in development of overall management frameworks and plans. A revision of the White River Forest Management Plan is near completion at this writing. (See also Proposed Wilderness Areas, Map # 18) (41)

HISTORY

PRE-HISTORIC HABITATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The elevation and terrain of Study Area Four did not lend itself to permanent pre-historic habitation sites, although the abundance of food, fiber and timber resources most certainly meant that the area was tapped for seasonal visitation for hunting, berry gathering, and harvesting plants for specialized uses.

Several areas of the Study Area have shown indications of seasonal migration routes or trails, notably County road 252 in the West which was a known Ute migration route from the Rifle area to the Meeker area when early contacts were made with the Utes, and areas around Sweetwater Lake and Hack Creek in the east which may have had fairly intensive seasonal use during summer periods. The limestone caves in the eastern portion have yielded some signs of pre-historic activity.

Little is known about the pre-historic era in this region, as vegetative cover and higher precipitation levels make artifacts and vestigial signs of use difficult to discover or to have been preserved. Additionally, no major development efforts have triggered or required any exhaustive surveys of the area. The Ute Tribe does attach some significance to trail sections in the Sweetwater area and they are consulted by the Forest Service and the BLM in management planning for the area. (41)

HISTORIC EXPLORATION AND HABITATION

With the Dominguez and Escalante exploration in 1776 having passed well to the west, the first European explorers of the region were Mountain Men fur trappers working the higher streams of the region seeking beaver pelts in the 1830's and 1840's. These trappers would most probably have entered and exited the region to the north, seasonally, meeting up at rendezvous and exporting their goods overland to the North Platte. The market for beaver pelts collapsed when the hats went out of fashion in the 1840's, but there is also some indication that overtrapping may have seriously depleted the resource in the region anyway. (9)

They would have encountered the Ute Indians. The Utes had emerged as a series of smaller bands that had been hunter-gatherers and primarily seasonal users of the region, seeking warmer and more temperate locations to winter. They had acquired horses by the 1700's greatly expanding their range of activities and territory covered. (9)

Subsequent exploration was a mixture of genuine scientific and geographic exploration and attempts to establish east-west transcontinental routes for trade and commerce. John Wesley Powell surveyed the Colorado (then the Grand) River from Middle Park to the Green in 1868. Ferdinand V. Hayden did an exhaustive survey of the larger region in the 1870's. As a largely impassable region, with impassable canyons (for the technology of the times), Study Area Four drew little attention from the early route explorers.

As the Study area did not sit astride or adjacent to a logical transportation route or confluence area, it did not serve as a logical site for a trading post, Indian agency or early small attempts at agriculture.

Gold was first discovered in Colorado in 1859, and the early strikes and rush of prospectors was mostly contained along the Front Range and up to the continental divide in places like Central City, Cripple Creek near Denver and Colorado Springs. Subsequent strikes in Leadville and the San Juans led to an exploration and prospecting boom in western Colorado. By the 1870's Leadville had become a major staging area and capital formation source for outfitting explorations into this general region. Prospectors flowed over the passes into the upper Eagle and Roaring Fork drainages, and started seriously prospecting the reaches of west-central Colorado. Some of those prospectors also noted agricultural and ranching opportunities to support the mining industry and the railroads to follow – but western Colorado was still officially Ute territory and not open to settlement.

Mining, railroad and expansionist interests first in Denver and then also in Leadville (which by then rivaled Denver, Golden, Central City and Cripple Creek in size) had been agitating for the removal of the Utes to reservations for some time. Things came to a head in 1879, when Nathan Meeker at the White River Agency had pressed the Utes there to diminish their horse herd and adopt farming practices to the point of bitter arguments and confrontations. Meeker had seen some of the handwriting on the wall, and might arguably have been attempting to show that the tribe could become settled and agrarian and have a rightful presence to remaining in place as a result. He'd also seen that his diplomatic skills were lacking, and had called for help from federal troops stationed at Ft. Russell in Rawlins, Wyoming. Those troops responded under command of Major Thornburgh in command of black cavalry and a load of supplies. It was a large expedition with 153 soldiers and 25 civilians and it was seen as a threat by the Utes. The expedition was ambushed and Thornburgh was killed. Shortly later, Meeker and all the men at the White River Agency were killed – Meeker in the act of plowing up ground for farming on the Ute's horse racing track. The women and children were abducted with the Ute's fleeing to mountain hideouts. A peaceful release of the hostages was later negotiated by Chief Ouray, but the damage had been done and the stage set for the official removal of the Utes to reservations in 1881. (12) (13)

Colorado had become a state in 1876, and this part of the state was contained in Summit County. The first major settlement in what was to become Garfield County, and its first county seat, was founded as the Town of Carbonate in 1883. Carbonate was located at the end of Coffee Pot Road (CR 140 – 142) a little over a mile south of Heart Lake, at

10,000 feet out on the high plateau. It turned out that Carbonate was founded on a hoax, by Leadville prospectors who had formed the Defiance Prospecting District. This enterprise turned out to have been a speculative land scam, with the ore that had been taken to Leadville for assay to show potential rich silver deposits having been tampered with higher-grade specimens from other locations.

It took a couple of seasons of prospecting and sending ore samples to Leadville to establish that the hoped for strikes to be found on the Flat Tops would not materialize as commercially feasible. During that time however, Carbonate is estimated to have peaked at a population of 3000, a still not an inconsiderable number for area towns to this day. It was the county seat, and Garfield County was established during that period in 1883 with a territory that encompassed present day Rio Blanco County as well. Rio Blanco County subsequently petitioned for their own county status. (9) (14)

The county seat was transferred off of the high plateau as Carbonate emptied out as fast as it had boomed, to Glenwood Springs.

RANCHING AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

There are historic records of early ranching and water diversion activities in Study Area Four, consisting of corrals, line camps, cabin sites and water containment and diversion efforts. Historic sites have been noted and catalogued representing early ranching practices and artifacts. (7) Not unlike their pre-historic counterparts, early ranchers found lush seasonal grazing opportunities but no hospitable sites for wintering quarters or bases for permanent settlement. Most of this seasonal activity is on lands now public and managed by the Forest Service or the BLM. (See Map # 27)

The most significant human settlement activities in the Study Area were in water development and storage, as ranchers and farmers in lower valleys sought to store and manage flows for optimal stream use at lower elevations. The most significant of these, although modest in comparison with other regional irrigation efforts, were in the upper Sweetwater and Upper Yampa drainages in the early 20th century and significant reservoir development and enhancement in the Yampa drainage (CR 159) beginning later as public and special district funding mechanisms became available and continuing to the near present. The resulting reservoirs and altered stream flows have modified the landscape and provided opportunities for concentrated, and relatively easily accessed, camping, boating and fishing recreational activities.

TOURISM AND RECREATION

In the history of recreation and tourism, Study Area Four not only has an important role within the county and regionally, but nationally as well. Within the boundaries of Study Area Four we find the genesis of a departure in national thought about management and conservation. That genesis is at Trappers Lake, and it began in 1919 when a 27 year old landscape architect in the employ of the Forest Service by the name of Arthur H. Carhart was assigned to survey the lake and surroundings for development.

A context for this departure in thinking had been some time in the making, and some famous historical figures participated in it. Key among these was President Theodore Roosevelt, who was no stranger to this region. He had declared the area's timber reserve as the White River National Forest in 1905 in response to mounting concerns about the wholesale exploitation of timber and wildlife resources in the west. He had a personal interest, having been here on several "hunting" expeditions with an entourage that more nearly resembled safaris and where copious amounts of game were bagged in short periods of time, with plenty of press in attendance, fueling an image of the American West as a vast treasure chest not only of adventure but bounty for the sportsman. Roosevelt had gotten here early, seen the bounty and participated in exploiting it, but was unwilling to let developing trends continue to destroy what he had treasured and enjoyed.

America was coming into a 'golden age' in the 1890's and a rapidly expanding upper class with money and leisure time was starting to take advantage of railroad access and emulation of European spas to explore 'wild places' in a previously unknown and luxurious fashion. Entrepreneurs were quick to respond, with opulent resorts 'springing' up in Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs, Hot Sulfur Springs, Idaho Springs and Glenwood Springs – along with other places like Estes Park that didn't have 'springs' in their place names. Through the 1920's, 'Taking the Waters' or 'Taking the Vapors' was seen as both a social and a health opportunity.

Added to the European spa image was the wildness of the west in general and the fascination and lure of hunting, fishing, exploration by horseback and 'camping out.' The image of the hunting lodge, once the exclusive domain of the very rich, began to drive smaller resort developments and dude ranches which the newly developing upper middle classes could partake of, if only as customers rather than owners for short periods of time.

Permanent Chautauqua camps were also springing up around the nation at this time, along with other more modest and 'middle class' resort settlements that were more or less organized as summer retreat centers consisting of small rustic cabins, often ringed a lake or other natural feature. These small retreat colonies would often have some common organizational structure, either as an organized Chautauqua with a summer program, church retreat, or simply as an association with a common lodge or meeting hall and recreational facilities.

The Boulder Chautauqua grounds and camp are vestige of this era, as is the Grand Mesa Homeowner's Association on Grand Mesa. A subdivision at Sweetwater Lake dates back to this early period as well, with very small cabin lots centered on the lake and surrounding area.

With this as historical context, Carhart was sent in 1919 to survey Trappers Lake for 100 home sites as a subdivision, commercial sites and marinas and a looping road around the lake. It is important to note that up until this time there were no public campgrounds or facilities on national forest lands – they were still essentially timber reserves. Public

recreational use outside of a resort type of setting and leases was unknown. (The first public campground on a national forest was funded by business interests in Pueblo on the San Isabel National Forest in the early 1920's).

After his survey, Carhart went back to Denver to report his findings, and advocated that Trappers Lake not be developed as a resort location, arguing that its pristine nature and scenic beauty required other management techniques and that larger public values should be held intact in this location. He was persuasive, and included concerns about Meeker's water supply, and alternative plans for recreational development that would keep public incursion away from the lake itself and the surrounding high country. This was revolutionary thinking, and the plan was reviewed for three years and finally approved in 1922.

This decision stayed under dispute for almost 50 years, with power plant proposals and opposition from logging interests vying for differing views of land management for the area. In 1975 the Flat Tops Wilderness was approved, including Trappers Lake. In 1985, then White River Forest Supervisor Richard Woodrow stated "Trappers Lake in Northwest Colorado Flat Tops Wilderness has finally been accorded the distinction it deserves as the birthplace of the wilderness concept. And Arthur Carhart, the concept's father, has finally been given his due." (42)

As a result, Trappers Lake (the spellings vary with or without the apostrophe, depending on the map utilized and the literature reviewed), is promoted as the "cradle of wilderness" by private and public entities alike. Trapper's Lake Lodge is eligible for the National Historic Register. (7)

Moving beyond Trappers Lake to the larger Study Area, other sites and activities benefit from this historic legacy, including the private Rio Blanco Ranch which owns most of the private lands in the corridor in Garfield County leading up to Trappers Lake and is used as a corporate and private retreat and vacation center, Budge's White River Resort at the end of Coffee Pot Road which dates its activities as a remote resort back to this time period, and the many outfitters and guides who utilize the backdrop, setting and historic camps to continue a tradition of bringing a wilderness experience to the larger public. Sweetwater Lake, while never fully maturing as a rustic resort subdivision or resort itself, is a product of the same early 20th century times and those forces at work. The current businesses in the Sweetwater area maintaining a lodge atmosphere, cabin rental, outfitting and guiding, and making recreational opportunities available inherit and continue this tradition.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Study Area Four is one of the more remote portions of Garfield County, and is predominately administered by federal land management agencies. The isolation of the areas with private lands and property owners has required that area residents be very self-reliant and react to storms, power outages, flooding and other emergencies using their own resources until help can arrive or those services are restored. Many of these services and first response capability are provided by near-by jurisdictions and operations in Eagle, Routt and Rio Blanco Counties.

Much of the research in updating the Comprehensive Plan for Study Area Four is an inventory and analysis of both formal and informal agreements to provide these services and ensure that they are working well. This revision suggests recommendations for exploration of, and periodic updating, of these agreements where in place.

ROAD AND BRIDGE ISSUES

The vast majority of the miles of roads in Study Area Four are contained within the White River and Routt National Forests. The county and the Forest Service have for some time negotiated a yearly cooperative maintenance agreement that specifies segments to be maintained and the level of maintenance expected. Timber harvesting permits on the Forest also specify weight limit, travel times and seasonal access. This arrangement appears to have been working well to date. (23) (28) (41) (43)

In the western portion of the Study Area, County Roads 252 and 230 are primarily maintained by Garfield County, although there is some sharing of maintenance back and fourth on CR 252 at the border with Rio Blanco County. CR 252 has some constrained maintenance issues due to R.O.W. and fence line issues, and northern stretches need continued attention to road base improvement. The development of 35 acre parcels in this area will probably see increased demand and traffic loading in the foreseeable future. Southern stretches have recently had greatly improved road base and drainage features. (28)

In the northern portions of the Study area, CR 155 to Trapper's Lake has historically been maintained by Rio Blanco County. This corridor is subject to high snow pack and major run off problems. While routine maintenance has not been an issue in the recent past, some upgrades of culverts and ditches would be advisable. These would represent capital expenditures and would need to be negotiated separately with Rio Blanco County if we wish to have them undertake construction, or contract that out ourselves. (23)

Also in the northern portion of the Study Area, CR 159 has historically been maintained by Routt County (The access to YamColo – Stillwater Reservoirs and adjacent campgrounds and trailheads). This road is within the Routt National Forest. The Forest is planning to do major upgrading of the camping facilities in the summer of 2002, and will be opening its own gravel pit near-by in Routt County to assist with that effort. This represents a possible cooperative three-way effort to do some road upgrading between Garfield and Routt Counties and the Routt National Forest this next year. Some road sections in Garfield County have been problematic for maintenance in the past, and improving the road base and drainage would assist with that in the future. (44)

County Roads 150 and 151 in the Sweetwater area receive the heaviest use in terms of county resident traffic. CR 150 has been paved through the more populated portions of this area to reduce dust and maintenance problems, and gravel sections are treated periodically and are for the most part well maintained for a rural road section. Most maintenance is through cooperation with Eagle County. The intersection of CR 150 and Cr 151 has difficult sight distance problems that will need rectifying in the future subject to R.O.W. constraints. The road has school bus traffic and residents are concerned that as traffic increases guardrails should be constructed in areas with steep banks and shaded areas that ice up in the winter. School bus pullouts should also be considered in permitting any new development. CR 151 has a steep gradient, which makes routine maintenance difficult. Development along it has been in 35 acre or more parcels over which the county had little control. The county's position is that landowners along CR 151 knew they were building in a remote location on a primitive road with difficult access and can undertake major road improvements cooperatively themselves, but should expect only incremental and normal improvements by the county over time. (45) (46)

Right of Way issues (where the county road is a pre-emptive, historic use, and rights of way are not well defined) appear to be most problematic in the western portion of the Study Area. Roads on the National Forests are not included in this set of issues or concerns.

Pull-outs, for access to view areas, fishing, trailheads, horse pack trips, snowmobile staging areas, school busses, etc. are going to be an increasing need along all corridors and roads in the foreseeable future. In several cases, county roads transition at some point to no winter maintenance for vehicular traffic, but are used and maintained for snowmobile and snowcat traffic (coffee pot road and the access to Trapper's Lake), and transition and staging areas at differing elevations to handle seasonal changes may be in need of improvement.

WINTER RECREATION AND SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

A unique aspect of Study Area Four is the winter trail system. This is a cooperative arrangement between the White River National Forest, the BLM, and the Flattoppers and Rifle Snowmobile Clubs as well as support from the Snowmobilers in Meeker and a variety of search and rescue organizations. A winter trail system is signed and groomed

connecting Dotsero (via Coffee Pot Road) to Glenwood (via transfer trail) to Rifle Creek north of Rifle and Buford in Rio Blanco County. Numerous extensions and loop tours are maintained as well. Several sections of the trails also provide access for cross county skiing and snowshoeing. Trapper's Lake Lodge maintains a commercial snowcat service for lodge patrons and snowmobile tours in winter months on CR 155.

Sign maintenance and grooming is done cooperatively by participating entities. The trail system provides access to extensive areas in winter months for recreation and management activities and also for search and rescue operations. This partnership is in place and appears to be working well. (32) (43)

COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES

As in most remote areas, there are sections of terrain that are not in line of sight from translator or repeater towers or cellular services. As the vast majority of the terrain in Study Area Four is within the National Forests, almost all communications upgrading would be done in participation with those agencies.

Study Area Four contains especially important scenic values, and any telecommunications upgrading or additional electronic site development would need to be sensitive to visual intrusion.

LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

The Garfield County Sheriff's Department has the local law enforcement jurisdiction for all of Study Area Four. Other agencies police the area as well, including the Forest Service, the BLM and the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Patrolling by the county is not conducted on a regular basis. Garfield County is likely to be the first respondent in western sections of the Study Area. Rio Blanco and Routt County agencies would likely be the first respondents in northern areas, and Eagle County in eastern areas.

There are no indications of increased trends in complaints or violations, nor are there any developments on the horizon that would likely trigger a specific law enforcement concern. Present mutual aid and first response arrangements appear to be working well. (31) A growing concern, however, is in law enforcement on public lands, where budgets for the BLM and Forest Service have been cut and enforcement presence is now spread very thin. With recreational use, hunting and other pressures likely to increase in the foreseeable future and this area being an attractive destination for a variety of uses, the conversation about ongoing responsibility for a police presence and division or sharing of responsibilities will certainly be necessary. (41) (43)

SEARCH AND RESCUE ISSUES

In Colorado the County Sheriff is statutorily responsible for search and rescue issues and operations. As in most rural areas and smaller communities, this function is augmented by volunteer citizens, who contribute their skills and expertise to assist in search and

rescue activities. The Sheriff provides some funding and equipment, pools of funding at the state level can be tapped for training and equipment as well as capital improvements, and operational costs are reimbursed by the State Search and Rescue Fund where the party being assisted has purchased a state license that includes an earmarked fee for that fund (hunting and fishing) or the newly developed insurance card. Some costs may also be covered by a party's own insurance. As not all costs are typically covered by these sources, search and rescue operations also depend heavily on donations and local fundraising to support their activities.

Calls requiring search and rescue response range from lost hikers or skiers, hunting accidents, people stranded in remote areas by storms, boating and swimming accidents, plane crashes, and other similar incidents that require specialized skills and equipment to gain access to more remote places to assist. Calls requiring search and rescue operations have increased at a steady pace in Garfield County as a whole, especially as back country recreation, river sports and trails usage, both in summer and winter, have increased. Calls in Study Area Four are increasing, as usage of the area as a destination increases for a variety of uses, over a variety of seasons. Anomalies like plane crashes are unpredictable, but as the area is remote and vast a certain level of occurrences can be foreseen if not predicted in any given year. Of particular concern in Study Area Four are the deep and remote canyon areas of Deep Creek, where extraction and access are very difficult, and the specialized requirements of cave rescue should an occurrence demand those skills and equipment. Protocols for motorized and flight access to Wilderness areas and Wild and Scenic areas need to be refined and worked out in advance.

A set of concerns for the area does exist in coordination and the establishment of first response procedures to initiate action by search and rescue squads. The ability to trigger quick reaction from a variety of locations is seen by some as needing refinement.(32) In the case of a plane crash, and often in winter sports activities where there is an indication of lost skiers or snowmobiles, it is not often clear what their exact location is or who's jurisdiction they are in and who can provide the quickest and most effective response. In some cases it may be prudent and make the most sense to deploy teams from several jurisdictions and entry points simultaneously. Protocols for that and cost sharing may need further work. (32) (33) A positive note on the horizon is that a new voluntary insurance card has been instituted by the State (\$3 cost) that will hopefully generate additional funds in statewide pools to cover operational costs and augment existing funds.

WATER AND SEWER

The entirety of Study Area Four is served by individual wells and septic systems on site. Existing and proposed densities in the Study Area are not anticipated to trigger needs for centralized water and sewer systems. The Sweetwater drainage is experiencing increased development pressures, historically and so far to date on individual lots. Density pressures may require an examination of septic system placement and standards, in conjunction with Eagle County and the Sweetwater Community, to ensure that existing standards and regulations protect well water and stream water quality. Any proposed development requesting higher than historic densities within the Sweetwater drainage

should be given special attention in reviewing water and sewer or septic concerns. Current zoning in Eagle County does not foresee, nor does there appear to be any proposal, that would suggest a higher density development below the Garfield County line. Should any such proposal surface, at any point within the drainage, the two counties should work cooperatively to explore water and sewer mitigation issues and the potential for cooperative or unitized efforts. (47)

FIRE PROTECTION

The majority of Study Area Four falls under Forest Service and BLM fire protection protocols. (See Map # 13, Fire Districts) The BLM has recently developed a fire protection plan that recognizes the concentration of private homes in the Sweetwater area and ranks that area accordingly. (48) The BLM and National Forests now have a unitized and integrated fire protection system and capability serving the region. (41) (48) Informal relationships exist with fire protection agencies in Rio Blanco, Routt and Eagle counties based on humanitarian response. At this writing the Garfield County Commissioners have expressed interest in exploring whether all sections of Garfield County should be included in a fire protection district. (45) This is also of interest to the Garfield County Building and Planning Department as fire protection recommendations from a local Fire District are considered as part of any development proposal. Currently, generic best practice principles are applied in proposal review absent any specific jurisdictional coverage. Development in forested or high fuel areas (See Map # 34a) will be examined and reviewed using current urban/wildfire interface standards.

WEED MANAGEMENT

In May, 2000, Garfield County adopted the County Noxious Weed Management Plan. The intent of the plan is to provide guidelines for managing designated noxious weeds that represent a threat to the continued economic, environmental, and agricultural value of lands in Garfield County. This plan provides for the implementation of the Colorado Noxious Weed Act by detailing management options for designated noxious weeds. Options include education, preventive measures, good stewardship, and control techniques. The intent is to incorporate those options that are the most environmentally feasible and are practical, timely, and economically viable. It is the responsibility of all landowners to use integrated methods to manage noxious weeds, and the responsibility of local governing bodies to assure that these plants are in fact managed on public and private lands. In Study Area Four, most of these activities will be carried out and enforced with the Forest Service and the BLM.

GARFIELD COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED LIST

Common name

Scientific name

Leafy spurge

Euphorbia esula

Russian knapweed

Acroptilon repens

Yellow starthistle

Centaurea solstitialis

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Plumeless thistle | <i>Carduus acanthoides</i> |
| Houndstongue | <i>Cynoglossum officinale</i> |
| Common burdock | <i>Arctium minus</i> |
| Scotch thistle | <i>Onopordum acanthium</i> |
| Canada thistle | <i>Cirsium arvense</i> |
| Spotted knapweed | <i>Centaurea maculosa</i> |
| Diffuse knapweed | <i>Centaurea diffusa</i> |
| Dalmation toadflax | <i>Linaria dalmatica</i> |
| Yellow toadflax | <i>Linaria vulgaris</i> |
| Hoary cress | <i>Cardaria draba</i> |
| Saltcedar | <i>Tamarix parviflora</i> |
| Saltcedar | <i>Tamarix ramosissima</i> |
| Oxeye Daisy | <i>Chrysanthemum leucanthemum</i> |
| Jointed Goatgrass | <i>Aegilops cylindrica</i> |
| Chicory | <i>Cichorium intybus</i> |
| Musk thistle | <i>Carduus nutans</i> |
| Purple loosestrife | <i>Lythrum salicaria</i> |
| Russian olive | <i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i> |

In May, 2001, Garfield County also adopted an amendment to the Weed Management Plan entitled the Garfield County Revegetation Guidelines. The Guidelines state that at the discretion of the Board of County Commissioners, as part of the Planning and Zoning approval process, for land disturbances outside the building envelope, the County may require, at preliminary plan and prior to Final Plat, the following items:

- A Soil Plan
- A Revegetation Plan
- A Revegetation Bond

Noxious weed management is now a major part of Garfield County's broad range of concerns, and applies to reclamation practices, well site management, road construction, timbering activity and all land stewardship activities in Study Area Four. (49)

In partnership with three local Soil Conservation Districts, Garfield County has created a noxious weed cost-share program that provides financial assistance for eligible landowners in their weed management efforts. Funds are limited and are available on a first-come, first-serve basis through an application process. For further information contact the Garfield County Vegetation Management department (970-625-3969) or the Soil Conservation District (970-945-5494 ext.101)

SOCIAL SERVICES, PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING ISSUES

The remote nature of Study Area Four, and the limited potential for development, results in no foreseeable demand for public transportation or assisted housing efforts. Social Services are handled on a case-by-case basis with neighboring jurisdictions where such services can be provided in a cost effective manner, but the majority of constituents

needing services in Study Area Four are as proximate to Garfield County providers as those of neighboring jurisdictions.

RECREATION AND TOURISM USES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Study Area Four is a recreation paradise by almost any criteria set one would apply. While not home to a major resort destination, its aggregate set of attractions support significant economic activity for residents and surrounding communities.

Almost the entirety of recreational infrastructure within the Study Area is maintained and managed by the two National Forests. Interface areas of concern and interest to the county are primarily in the area of trailheads, pull-outs, and other concerns that involve county roads and potential congestion points or conflicting uses.

Recreational use also implies a degree of accidents and policing, covered above, which require close and ongoing joint cooperation to respond to incidents and ensure an enforcement presence.

Unlike some other similar areas in the state, Garfield County appears to be blessed, for the time being at least, with “Enough room to roam” for interest and user groups which necessitates cooperative understanding but not intensive management and enforcement at this time. Winter sports in the Study Area being an example, where motorized winter sports participants tend to like the open plateau areas for snowmobiling, while cross country skiers and snowshoers tend to like more wooded terrain with varied topography. Current trail access allows both sets of user groups to stage and access their preferred terrain and use areas. As uses increase, these understandings and delineations may need to be negotiated and enforced, but at present it appears that these user groups accommodate each other well and conflicts are limited. (32) (43)

Proposals to designate areas as Wilderness or as Wild and Scenic Rivers have been reviewed by the county, and no major concerns have surfaced regarding changes in recreational opportunity, access or economic impact – so long as the existing trail systems and uses are left intact. Boundary enforcement issues may, however, surface in the future if areas are delineated that are not obvious and become difficult to enforce.

Private entrepreneurial activities that capitalize on these assets will in almost all instances in the Study area require a lease or use permits, and that mechanism is in place. A trend is noted on private lands adjoining these recreation resource rich areas to establish dude ranches, hunting retreats, and up-scale mini-resorts. This type of activity is currently proposed along the Colorado main stem in Eagle County between Sweetwater and Burns. (47) (50) These mini-resorts resemble in some ways the historic tradition of small resorts described above. They may contain, as examples, a golf course, ranges for various types of shooting sports, equestrian facilities, pools, private fishing areas, and small conference or retreat centers.

Garfield County's current zoning and subdivision regulations may be inadequate to fully examine and give direction for the impacts of such development, especially in the areas of impacts of shooting sports on surrounding properties, number of cabins or units allowed, water use, and standards for infrastructure provision.

While the soon-to-be-released Forest Management Plan for the White River National Forest will provide some insight on internal forest recreation planning, there is a concern that a cumulative recreational spectrum analysis and ongoing framework for dialog to address the array of recreational concerns shared by the multiple jurisdictions is not fully in place for areas where jurisdictions border or overlap. Staging areas and parking areas for certain activities (river sports and popular trails) are at capacity in some cases on the edges of Study Area Four (Hanging Lake Trail, Glenwood Canyon rest areas and Dotsero rafting take-outs). (43) (51)

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

TRENDS AND INDICATORS

This update and revision of Study Area Four is primarily an inventory of existing conditions and well as an analysis of probable future trends. Social and economic forces at work may influence land uses, development pressures, infrastructure requirements, and may necessitate regulatory adjustments that would address areas of county concern as they develop over time.

The purpose of this update and revision is to evaluate the existing Garfield County Comprehensive Plan of 2001 provisions as they apply to Study Area Four, and by inference the Garfield County Zoning Resolution of 1978, as amended, to review the applicability and appropriateness of the regulatory framework currently in place.

For internal review, and as a guiding direction to staff, this updating process has been framed in the form of a question:

“Does the Garfield County Comprehensive Plan, and its Zoning Resolution, adequately reflect the vision and desires of the local community and stakeholders for the future of Study Area Four; and are the tools and guidelines in place to ensure that the county meets its responsibilities and obligations to promote that vision and provide for its implementation?”

The current Garfield County Comprehensive Plan of 2001 identifies five primary issue areas of concern, as a framework for this analysis (I-3):

COMPATIBLE LAND USES

The current comprehensive plan states that, “The relationship between adjacent land uses is considered a cornerstone of responsible land use planning and policies.” With the exception of the Sweetwater area, and some 35 acre developments on the west, little has changed over the past 20 years in Study Area Four (See Map # 35). This shouldn’t be surprising given the small amount of private lands as a percentage of the Study Area. The entirety of private lands within the Study Area are zoned A/R/RD (Agricultural/Rural/Rural Density) which allows for a density level based on a two acre minimum lot size – which is also the minimum lot size for the placement of an individual

septic system (See Map # 36). All public lands are zoned O/S (Open space – Public Lands).

A pre-existing and grandfathered “resort subdivision” exists next to Sweetwater Lake with lot sizes too small to accommodate individual septic systems as a land designation that is now an anomaly, and which was platted without consideration of road, parking and set-back standards that would now be considered appropriate.

The A/A/RD zoning remains appropriate, and subdivision processes apply only to development on parcels under 35 acres in size by state statute. As road upgrading concerns cannot be applied to development on parcels 35 acres or greater, a tension will continue to exist and probably develop further between persons who develop homes on 35+ acre parcels and the County which has historically maintained primitive rural roads as ranch access and farm to market arteries, rather than for rural vacation homes and exurban residences. Garfield County strongly urges persons or development interests exploring 35+ acre developments to factor road upgrading costs into their plans, or to understand that maintenance and upgrading will not change significantly given that increased traffic volumes (even with development in these rural areas) pales in terms of needs being generated on county roads in more urban areas of the county, and in places where subdivision approval does provide a portion of road upgrading expenses to match the needs.

As many of these private land areas border on Rio Blanco, Routt and Eagle Counties, these jurisdictions were consulted to determine if our current zoning and known development plans are compatible with theirs. Our two-acre lot size allowed density is of some concern to our neighbors, but realistic private land availability and geographic constraints probably limit any really significant impacts. Conversely, potential development in the Dotsero area of Eagle County may have some indirect impacts on traffic as people seek to access recreation areas and trail systems in nearby Garfield County, and the development of small high-end mini-resorts along the Colorado main stem from Dotsero to Burns may trigger some additional or comparable interest on land in Garfield County. Routt County does not see any major development occurring in the planning horizon south of Yampa. Rio Blanco County’s primary concern is preservation of the scenic qualities along the Buford to Yampa corridor. (5) (37) (47) (50) (52)

View corridor maintenance is important to Rio Blanco County, which is making an investment in promoting the scenic byway between the Buford area and Yampa in Routt County. The Trappers lake road takes off from this scenic byway just at the county line, and probably should have been included as a stub. (37) View issues are also important to the BLM as they await future designations of the Deep Creek area on the White River Forest. They currently have some areas along Deep Creek as Class I, or highest view preservation areas. (48)

The County is proposing to consolidate all of its rural zoning designations into one, unified rural zoning framework. This conclusion stems from examination of multiple rural designations in other rural areas of the county. That consolidation may place

somewhat higher emphasis on geographic and geologic constraints, as well as visual intrusion issues (covered more fully in the following section).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economy of Study Area Four is primarily one of recreation and forest products. Both activity areas probably sustain residents outside of the Study Area far more than residents themselves, as many homeowners living in the Study area work in other counties at jobs not necessarily related to the driving economic forces of Study Area Four. Ranching is an historic activity that has utilized public lands within the Study Area and formed some of the character and stewardship of the private lands within it.

Outfitters, Guides, Dude Ranches, Lodges, Tour organizers and Eco-Tourism businesses all utilize aspects of the study area for formal recreational activities and as a business; while informal hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, and horseback riding provide an activity set which supports a variety of area businesses and suppliers in nearby communities.

Management of the qualities and values that preserve and enhance these economic generators falls primarily to the U.S. Forest Service and tangentially to the BLM in Study Area Four. These qualities are significant to surrounding communities both in terms of generating outside, imported dollars into local economies and for the quality of life for local residents. They also encompass and contain an historic tradition and culture of land use, and represent a living architectural and use tradition dating back nearly 100 years.

While visual intrusion and encroachment of competing land use types is mostly dealt with on public lands by public entities, some interface areas on private lands may become areas of concern (See Map # 29). The Deep Creek, Sweetwater Lake, and Trappers Lake Corridor areas could have the potential for major visual intrusion should development there not be sensitive to these larger value sets and neighborhood character.

Minimizing the intrusive nature of any activity is therefore key to the economic health, property values and business activities conducted in the area and supported by it. The current Comprehensive Plan has guidelines that suggest intrusion avoidance: buffering, clustering, sensitivity to riparian areas, accommodating access and trails, avoiding ridgetop development, etc. Elements such as light and glare pollution, noise, dust, paint schemes, reflectivity, use of native materials and design criteria to avoid visual and other intrusion need to be strengthened to suggest ‘best practices.’

Neighborhood character is defined in the north by the Trapper’s Lake Lodge, the Rio Blanco Ranch, and the dude ranches, cabins and homes around Buford. It is a character that is largely intact from Buford east – utilizing natural materials, unobtrusive signage, earth tone colors, and placement on the landscape to minimize intrusion on views. The neighborhood character of Deep Creek is defined by wilderness qualities. Sweetwater has an ‘eclectic’ neighborhood character with a wide variety of types and styles, from a variety of eras. This may well reflect a neighborhood quality that the residents of the

Sweetwater area enjoy and would like to affirm! (And it may well be in this current era of gated communities with very protective covenants, that eclecticism and a very democratic mix and diversity of style is something deserving of preservation in its own right.) If there are neighborhood visual issues of concern to Sweetwater residents, where there is some consensus, those concerns can be incorporated into this Study Area update.

Support for economic activity in Study Area Four most probably consists of continued examination of trailhead areas, making provision for multiple uses in parking and staging areas, addressing some county road safety concerns, and support for telecommunication utility upgrades over time.

ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY

The Comprehensive Plan states: “Garfield County includes a multitude of sensitive ecosystems, including riparian and wetlands resources (Map # 30), wildlife habitat (Map # 26) and important visual corridors (Map # 29).” As part of the updating and information gathering process since the last version of the Plan was adopted, the county has undertaken an inventory of many of those resources conducted by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program and includes mapping of those resources as noted herein. Most of those resources are on public lands.

Current proposals to slightly expand the Flattops Wilderness area (Map # 18), where they don’t impact trails or historic use, enhance environmental protection and have little economic impact of the county. Proposals for either a Wilderness or a Wild and Scenic designation for the Deep Creek Area likewise have little impact on the county economically, as this area has essentially been managed for these values for some time and is mostly inaccessible for exploitation. The primary issue at this writing appears to be water rights. Garfield County affirms the need to preserve fragile ecosystems and habitat populations within Deep Creek, while working with historic downstream water users to preserve their vested use rights, and trusts that a “win-win” set of solutions can be crafted to resolve those issues over time. Area boundaries are another set of issues, where the county is concerned about the ability to police uses if Coffee Pot Road is set as a boundary or the boundary is too near the road, as it is an acknowledged major summer and winter access corridor. At this writing it is hoped that some compromise between the road itself and the canyon rim can be negotiated between the proponents of the differing proposals.

A special concern is the continued health of Sweetwater Creek and the riparian area it supports. Development along the creek should show special care and attention to disturbance of riparian areas, siltation during construction, septic system setbacks, runoff and drainage issues.

Garfield County currently has in place zoning and regulatory frameworks to encourage conservation on a voluntary basis by property owners and developers. These provide an incentive to preserve agricultural activity, wildlife habitat and range, and areas of high ecological diversity and value. Garfield County does not have, at this writing, the means

to purchase, outright, areas of exceptional sensitivity or significance. Other public, quasi-public and private sources do exist to achieve conservation through such purchases or easements (Great Outdoors Colorado, The Nature Conservancy, area Land Trusts, etc). The County will work actively with property owners and third party funding sources to explore development and preservation options that protect environmental values.

JURISDICTIONAL COORDINATION

A high level of coordination and cooperation is necessary between local governments, and between local governments and state and federal agencies to maintain infrastructure, manage uses, monitor activities and provide for health, safety and welfare in remote regions such as Study Area Four.

For the most part, the visions contained in long range planning documents by the three main jurisdictions of interest for Study Area Four (Forest Service, the BLM and Garfield County) have been consistent with each other and reinforce each other. Relationships with surrounding counties and agencies have historically worked well. No key respondents identified specific problems. At the same time, several respondents identified the need to update or re-affirm intergovernmental agreements and memoranda of understanding. The specific agreements would cover roads, search and rescue (and specifically access as necessary to wilderness areas with motorized equipment), law Enforcement, and emergency services. Some of that updating and affirmation is underway as a result of this planning process. To ensure that intergovernmental agreements are periodically reviewed and renewed when necessary, an internal institutional approach needs to be crafted that triggers that review on an annual basis.

A specific concern expressed by the Garfield County Board of County Commissioners is the lack of fire district coverage in the area (Map # 13). Efforts need to continue to explore the feasibility of incorporating Study Area Four in a working relationship with appropriate adjoining fire protection districts. The lack of fire protection district coverage also results in the lack of specific fire protection standards and fire interface zone requirements for development that needs to be resolved. The slight tax burden to property owners would likely be offset by insurance rate decreases, but the ability and willingness of fire districts to obligate themselves to servicing the area remains in question.

Garfield County currently has a good working relationship with the counties surrounding Study Area Four. The one potential area of urbanization that impacts the Study Area is that of Dotsero, although lands at the eastern end of Glenwood Canyon within Garfield County are almost entirely within BLM's jurisdiction, and development in the Dotsero area would likely just add an increment to recreation and traffic pressures generated by general increasing regional population.

Garfield and Eagle counties should affirm that development in upper and lower Sweetwater, beyond single house and lot permits, should be examined in close

coordination between the two counties and that cumulative impacts in that drainage may require some special joint analysis in the future.

PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

The current Comprehensive Plan states that “Garfield County recognizes that owners have an inherent right to develop property, as long as the development is in the best interests of the health, safety and welfare of the County, does not adversely affect adjacent property rights, and is consistent with the general land use goals and policies of Garfield County.”

The findings and conclusions of this revision of Study Area Four of the Comprehensive Plan affirm and support this statement. To the extent that certain values are highlighted in this plan revision (conservation, minimizing intrusiveness, scenic qualities, impact mitigation) and specific objectives and programs suggested, all are presented in a context of incentive based, voluntary compliance and recommended guidelines wherever possible. The issues of intrusion may lead to regulatory revisions, and where that occurs in the future the predominant aim and goal will be to preserve and enhance commonly held property values and secure those rights for individual property owners and lease holders where development pressures exert themselves. This Plan revision recognizes and affirms that property owners in Study Area Four are the chief and most important stewards of the area, and therefore affirms and recognizes traditional community values and area characteristics. It allows for newly developing opportunities, but suggests non-intrusive standards and contextual sensitivity for any such developments.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

CURRENT AND SHORT-RANGE POLICY ISSUES

1. Garfield County recognizes that Intergovernmental Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding are crucial to the public health, safety and welfare of its citizenry, especially those living in more remote areas, and that intergovernmental cooperation needs to be reaffirmed and fostered on a regular basis. To that end, The Board of County Commissioners directs the County Administrator to ensure from each appropriate office, department or agency in writing, on an annual basis as part of the budget process, a status report on all Agreements and Memoranda in place to include expiration dates, fiscal impacts and any unresolved issues or concerns as appropriate. Such reports will be required as part of the annual budget process from, but not limited to, the Sheriffs Department, Search and Rescue, County Road and Bridge, the Building and Planning Department, and Social Services.

2. Garfield County recognizes the transportation concerns and safety issues identified in the Study Area Four Plan Revision process, specifically the concerns on CR 150 in the Sweetwater area, and that this road segment has the most traffic and school bus operations in the Study Area. This road segment should be reviewed, in conjunction with Eagle County, to identify sight distance, pull outs, and guard rail improvements that can be instituted over time. Additionally there is a need to upgrade various culvert, road surface (Trappers Lake) and sight distance issues on other county roads in the area, and integrate those concerns into a long range transportation and capitol improvements program. The county will also re-examine its policy regarding use of All Terrain Vehicles on county roads for recreational purposes and farm and ranch operations. Long range transportation planning issues shall include regulatory issues, rights of way, staging areas and communication strategies with specialized user groups.

3. Garfield County affirms that the public has the right to access public lands. Historic public rights of way, specifically and especially designated county roads, will be maintained as open to the general public without locked gates.

4. Garfield County recognizes that fire protection is of the highest priority and that relationships should be established to ensure fire protection coverage and standards for

all rural areas of the county. Active negotiations with Fire Protection Districts and encouragement of coverage shall be undertaken in the near future. In the absence of any formal agreement, minimum standards for fire protection for individual projects and defensible space requirements for development will be adopted into county policy for uncovered areas.

5. Garfield County supports a uniform and broad, statewide provision of funding for search and rescue operations and realistic voluntary and attached fees to licenses and permits to provide that support, and cost sharing arrangements where search and rescue activities involve multi-county efforts.

6. Garfield County supports integrated and strategic solutions to communications upgrading issues in Study Area Four, and will participate in partnership arrangements to enhance and upgrade existing communications and provide communications in areas where holes exist wherever feasible and practical.

7. Garfield County will support extending Scenic Byway status to CR 155 from the county line to the Trapper's Lake Lodge, as a logical addition to the existing Scenic Byway.

8. Garfield County supports the modest and logical additions to the Flattops Wilderness Area where existing trails and historic uses are not impinged on by such additions, and further supports continued cooperative arrangements and cost-sharing to maintain and promote the Flattops Trail System.

9. Garfield County supports a special management designation for the Deep Creek area on both Forest Service and BLM lands, and viewshed protection on public lands, provided that issues of water rights can be resolved over time and boundary issues do not place an undue burden on the county for enforcement activities or responsibility. In any case, the Coffee Pot road, CR 140, is affirmed as a summer and winter transportation corridor, and any use restrictions adjacent to that road should be realistic – recognizing that the road is the center of a multiple use corridor not just contained within a limited Right of Way, especially for winter utilization.

PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN NARRATIVE

Section 4.0 Commercial and Industrial Uses. Programs 4.3, new language inserted:

“A revised Zoning Resolution Text Amendment for Garfield County will be drafted and adopted to change existing zoning from A/A/RD, A/I and R/L to an inclusive zoning designation incorporating all three private lands zoning throughout the County, consisting of and containing the language and provisions, as appropriate, in the current R/L zoning pertaining to extractive industry and geomorphology (elevation and slope constraints).”

Section 4.0 Commercial and Industrial Uses. Programs 4.4, new language inserted:

“Policies governing the permitting of extractive activity and materials processing and storage, including but not limited to timber operations, landfills, tailings piles, gravel pits, pipelines, compressor stations, well sites, material transfer stations and other related activities will be developed with special attention to, but not limited to, the following: Visual intrusion and required buffering, screening and camouflaging, weed control, runoff and water quality issues, noise standards, lighting and glare standards, dust standards, emissions standards, traffic generation, storage on site, phasing of operations and reclamation.”

Section 5.2 Recreation and Open Space. New Section 5.2.2.

“As specific corridors in Study Area Four, the corridor from the Rio Blanco county line to Trappers Lake will receive support for Scenic Byway designation. The Sweetwater area may propose visual standards, at the discretion of the community association acting as a local forum for community input, for County consideration. Viewshed enforcement issues for the areas surrounding Deep Creek will be developed for consideration with the BLM.”

Section 8.0 Natural Environment. Programs. New Section 2.0

“Garfield County will pursue and entertain active partnerships with funding sources and encourage the development of tax and development incentives, which preserve important riparian, wetland, wildlife and plant community areas in cooperation with private land owners, state and federal agencies and public and private funding sources where mutually achievable conservation goals can be attained. Resource inventories that are in place which prioritize the importance of the area to be conserved shall serve as a basis for allocation of funding and incentive resources where there is competing demand for such resources ”

ADOPTION AND INCORPORATION

The adoption of this Study Area Four Plan by the Garfield County Planning Commission shall serve as an amendment to, and addition to, the Garfield County Comprehensive Plan of 2001, and a “Neighborhood or Sub-Area” Plan governing issues of compatibility for any development proposal submitted subsequent to its adoption. Adoption of the Plan Amendment in terms of policy guidance is advisory in nature for issues of county policy to be determined by the Board of County Commissioners, but acts as a regulatory framework for issues of permitting development proposals to the extent allowed by law.

GARFIELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY AREAS FOUR AND FIVE

COMBINED NOTES

1. Morgan, Dale L, The State of Deseret, Utah Historical Society, Utah University Press, 1987.
2. Survey of Critical Biological Resources, Garfield County, Colorado. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Colorado State University, April, 2001.
3. Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Garfield County, Colorado. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Colorado State University, May 2001.
4. Savage, Harry K. The Rock That Burns. Pruett Press, Boulder, Colorado. 1967.
5. Jeff Devere, Director, Rio Blanco County Development Department, 555 Main Street, Meeker, Colorado, 81641 970-878-5081. Series of personal communications and meetings, 2001
6. Heather Hoyt, Uinta County Planning Department, 152 E. 100 N., Vernal Utah, 84078 435-781-5482. Telephone communications, 2001
7. State of Colorado, State Historic Preservation Office, Listing of Sites, 2000
8. Sisyphis Site Analysis Study, Reference Section, Glenwood Springs Library
9. Mehls, Steven F., The Valley of Opportunity: A History of West-Central Colorado. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Denver, Colorado. 1982
10. Catherine Robertson, Field Manager, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Grand Junction Field Office, Interview, 2001
11. Jim Cagney, Associate Field Manager, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, White River Office, Meeker, Colorado. Interview, 2001

12. Athearn, Frederic J., An Isolated Empire: A History of Northwestern Colorado. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Denver, Colorado. 1982
13. Sprague, Marshall. Massacre: The Tragedy at White River. University of Nebraska Press, 1957
14. Crook, Judy; and Cullen, Mark. "Garfield County, Colorado: A Short History and Description." WWW.rootweb.com/-cogarfie/history.htm
15. Rifle Shots: The Story of Rifle, Colorado. Reading Club of Rifle Colorado, 1973
16. Bender, Henry E. Jr., Uintah Railway: The Gilsonite Route. Howell-North Books, Berkeley, California. 1970.
17. Polley, Roger. Uintah Railway Pictorial. Sundance Publications, Denver, Colorado 1999.
18. The Citizen Telegram, Rifle, Colorado, Vol. 98 # 45, September 6, 2001, Page 8.
19. Jim Evans, Executive Director, Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado, Personal Interview, 2001.
20. Kim Bartel, Recreation Planner, U.S. Bureau of Land Mangement, Vernal, Utah Telephone Interview, April, 2001.
21. Russ Von Koch, Resource Advisor/Recreation, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Moab, Utah. Telephone Interview, April, 2001.
22. Anne E. Huebner, Field Manager, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Glenwood Springs Field Office. Meeting including staff, 2001.
23. Garfield and Rio Blanco County Road and Bridge Departments. Jerry O. Steele, Director, and Ronald D. Leeper, R&B Coordinator, Meeting, Meeker, Colorado, June 19, 2001.
24. Dave Warner, Grand County (Utah) Road and Bridge Department, Moab, Utah. Telephone Interview, June, 2001.
25. Steve Yamashita, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Grand Junction, Colorado. Telephone Interview, June, 2001.
26. David Lehmann, Natural Resources Specialist, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Grand Junction Field Office, Telephone Interview, June, 2001.
27. Meeting in DeBeque, Colorado with Town Clerk, several Trustees, and Steve Strong, Superintendent, DeBeque 49JT School District. May 2001.

28. Tom Russell, Director, Garfield County Road and Bridge Department. Ongoing Consultation. 2001.
29. John Martin, Chairman, Garfield County Board of County Commissioners. Ongoing Consultations, 2001.
30. Northwest Colorado Oil and Gas Forum, Meeting in Rifle, Colorado, May 10, 2001
31. James H. Sears, Undersheriff, Garfield County, Colorado. Interview, May, 2001.
32. Lanny Grant, Garfield County Search and Rescue Advisory Board, Safety Director, and member of the Snowmobile Association. Interviews. June and August, 2001.
33. Tim Sarmo, Field Representative, Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Grand Junction, Colorado. Telephone Interview. June, 2001.
34. Dennis Stranger, Economic Development and Planning Consultant, Town of DeBeque. Telephone Interview, June, 2001.
35. Keith Fife, Michael Warren and Jim Hinderaker, Mesa County Long Range Planning Division, Grand Junction, Colorado. Meeting, April 24, 2001.
36. Article in the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel, Colorado West, by Alice Wright, May, 1973.
37. Rio Blanco County Planning Commission and Jeff Devere, Meeting with the Planning Commission, 2001.
38. Randy Russell, Senior Planner, Garfield County Building and Planning Department. Personal Observations, childhood, late 1950's and early 1960's.
39. The Denver Post. "Piceance Bounty Enough to Fuel State for Century." Article by Steve Raabe, September 30, 2001.
40. D.D. Johnson. Public and Government Affairs, ChevronTexaco. Personal Interview, October 25, 2001.
41. Martha J. Ketelle, Forest Supervisor, White River National Forest, Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Ongoing Consultation, 2001
42. Martin, Erik, J. "A Voice for the Wilderness." Monograph distributed by the White River Ranger station in Meeker and the Meeker Museum.
43. David Silvieux, District Ranger, Rifle Ranger District, White River National Forest, Rifle, Colorado. Personal interview, 2001

44. Paul Draper, Director, Routt County Road, Bridge and Engineering. Routt County, Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Personal Interview, 2001
45. Garfield County Board of County Commissioners.
46. Sweetwater Community Association Annual Meeting, June 3, 2001. Presentation and public input.
47. Joseph Forinash, Planner, Department of Community Development, Eagle County, Meeting and communications, 2001
48. Brian Hopkins, Community Planner, BLM. Glenwood Springs Resource Area, Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Personal interview and communications, 2001
49. Steve Anthony, Garfield County Vegetative Management Program, Written input, 2001
50. J. Rebecca Leonard, Senior Planner, Department of Community Development, Eagle County. Meetings and communications, 2001
51. Eagle Ranger District staff, White River National Forest, Meeting and communications, 2001
52. Chad L Phillips, Assistant Director, Routt County Regional Planning Department, Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Meeting, 2001
53. Don Peach, Mayor, Town of Rangely, 209 E. Main, Rangely, Colorado. Telephonic and Written communications, 2002