



ROARING FORK OUTDOOR COALITION

Decision Support Toolkit

FALL 2025

Acknowledgments

The Roaring Fork Outdoor Coalition Decision Support Toolkit for Regional Conservation and Sustainable Outdoor Recreation was developed in partnership with land management agencies within the Roaring Fork Watershed and the following individuals who participated on the Community Advisory Group.



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Introduction

The Roaring Fork Outdoor Coalition (RFOC) brings together land management partners from across the Roaring Fork Watershed to align conservation and recreation planning—ensuring that decisions made today support both ecological integrity and meaningful outdoor experiences for future generations. Across this diverse landscape of municipal and county open spaces, national forests, state lands, and private properties, decision-makers often face overlapping goals, data sources, and management priorities. The Decision Support Toolkit is designed to bridge these divides.

This toolkit is a shared resource to inform coordinated, cross-jurisdictional investments into conservation and sustainable outdoor recreation across the Roaring Fork Watershed. Developed with input from ecologists, recreation planners, and local stakeholders, the tools presented here form the best available science and local expertise. They are intended to help land managers, elected officials, nonprofit leaders, and community members answer key questions such as:

- + Where are the most ecologically significant areas, and how can we protect and manage them?
- + Where is recreation use the highest, and how is it changing?
- + Which areas offer opportunities to restore degraded habitats or improve visitor experiences?
- + How can we expand access to nature equitably across our diverse communities?

The toolkit includes a suite of maps, narratives, and evaluation tools which offer a decision-ready framework. It is organized into components that can be used individually or in combination:


- + Watershed Profile – a snapshot of land use, jurisdiction, and ecological context.
- + Conservation and Restoration Priorities – a science-based classification of land by ecological value and restoration potential.
- + Recreation Opportunity Classes – a data-driven framework for understanding how different sites support different recreation experiences and management needs.
- + Overlay Maps and Spatial Analysis – a synthesis of conservation and recreation data to highlight priority intersections.
- + Equitable Access Analysis – identifies underserved populations and gaps in recreation access.
- + Visitor Use Dashboard – delivers site-specific insights on use levels and patterns.
- + Project Evaluation Criteria – provides guideposts, goals and shared metrics for consistent evaluation across agencies.


Together these tools offer a common language and decision support structure for investing in the future of conservation and recreation in the Roaring Fork Watershed. Whether planning a new trail, protecting habitat, or prioritizing restoration, this toolkit is meant to support more informed, collaborative, and place-based decision-making.


Introduction

Watershed Profile

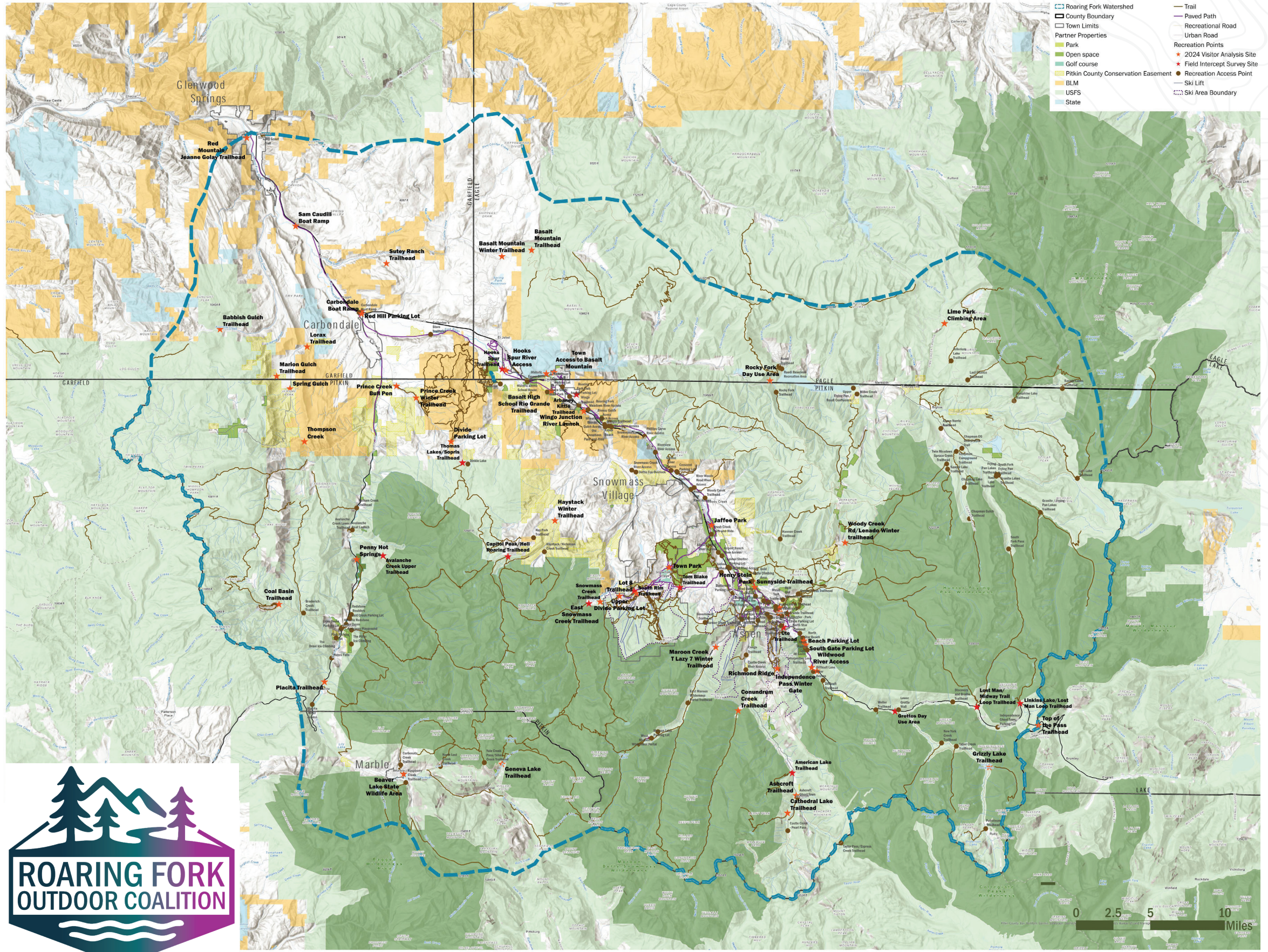
The RFOC encompasses the Roaring Fork Watershed, located on Colorado's Western Slope. The Roaring Fork Watershed begins at the headwaters atop the Continental Divide and runs to the confluence of the Colorado River in Glenwood Springs, and includes the Crystal River and Fryingpan tributaries. The watershed includes lands within Eagle County, Pitkin County, Garfield County and Gunnison County, and the municipalities of Aspen, Snowmass Village, Basalt, Carbondale and Glenwood Springs, and the unincorporated towns of Marble, Redstone, El Jebel, Meredith and Thomasville.

 43,000 Population of the Roaring Fork Watershed.

 1,454 sq miles in Land Area

 73% of the Watershed is Public Lands or Protected Areas

- + 652,895 acres US Forest Service
- + 4,817 acres Bureau of Land Management
- + 5,910 acres State of Colorado
- + 25 acres City of Glenwood Springs
- + 30 acres Town of Carbondale
- + 94 acres Town of Basalt
- + 826 acres City of Aspen
- + 859 acres Town of Snowmass Village
- + 133 acres Eagle County
- + 6,216 acres Pitkin County
- + 1,305 acres Others



1 COLORADO'S OUTDOOR STRATEGY DATA DASHBOARD, POPULATION 2022

Introduction

Guideposts of the RFOC

The RFOC partners have been working together since 2021 to explore opportunities to collaborate and support conservation and recreation at a watershed scale. In 2023, the RFOC adopted a Vision Framework, which was informed by extensive community engagement. That framework identified five Guideposts that form the basis for the continued work of the Coalition.

Guidepost 1



Cross Jurisdictional Partnerships

There are many partners within the Roaring Fork Valley who care deeply about our recreational spaces and shared ecosystems. However, differing goals, policies and boundaries create confusion around or duplicate efforts intended to support the environment. The RFOC strives to represent public municipalities and public lands that will serve as the bridge to other boards, advisors and collaborators.

Guidepost 2

Conservation Habitat and Connectivity



The Roaring Fork Valley watershed is blessed with large expanses of public land and wilderness areas and adequate space and corridors are needed to support the plant and wildlife health within. Unmanaged use can negatively impact biodiversity, ecosystem function and quality of life. The RFOC strives to collaborate and strategically leverage management tools that support conservation and connectivity of our public lands.

Guidepost 4

Education and Stewardship



Fostering relationships and connection to the outdoors is critical for individuals to have a sense of ownership and feel empowered to take action within outdoor places. Yet, cultural and systemic challenges exist which create barriers to participation. The RFOC strives to inspire individuals to become outdoor stewards by supporting accessible engagement opportunities that deepen connections within our Valley.

Guidepost 3

Access and Equity



Outdoor spaces should be inclusive, giving focus to underrepresented communities to allow for everyone to benefit from the diverse opportunities in the Roaring Fork Valley. The RFOC strives to break down barriers through increased efforts to make sure that our trails and recreational spaces are accessible and welcoming to all members of our community.

Guidepost 5

Recreation Volume and Impacts



By gaining a comprehensive understanding of how the environment and user experiences are affected by the increased usage of recreational resources, more effective and proactive maintenance and management measures can be taken. Coordinated management is needed to ensure the longevity of our shared ecosystem, which includes plants, wildlife and humans. The RFOC strives to collaborate with land managers and community collaborators to educate, monitor and strategically plan to ensure a healthy and resilient environment in the Roaring Fork Valley.

Community Advisory Group Role

This Decision Support Toolkit builds on the RFOC’s vision, mission, and guideposts by defining conservation priorities, recreation opportunities, watershed-wide goals, and shared decision-making resources based on broad community input. To ensure collaboration remains central, the RFOC established a 60-member Community Advisory Group (CAG) in 2025. The CAG guides RFOC’s direction and ensures diverse representation, including:

- + Conservation organizations and land trusts
- + Outdoor recreation groups (hunting, angling, motorized users)
- + Agriculture and private landowners
- + Underrepresented communities (Latino, physically impaired, youth-serving, and social service organizations)
- + Sportsman representatives and local businesses

Over 950 community members also contributed through statistically valid and opt-in surveys. Together, this input grounds the Toolkit in community values and practical tools for prioritization, investment, and action. RFOC hosted five CAG meetings this year:

MEETING 1: SETTING THE STAGE (JAN 30)

Introduced the project, reviewed existing studies, and clarified CAG roles and next steps.

MEETING 2: ANSWERING QUESTIONS (APR 17)

Provided a forum to discuss watershed conservation and recreation studies.

MEETINGS 3 AND 4: REVIEWING PRIORITIES (MAY 6&8)

Focused on RFOC Guideposts, regional priorities, and evaluation criteria for conservation and recreation.

MEETING 5: CLARIFYING PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA (SEP 24)

Reviewed survey results and refined goals and project evaluation criteria for the Roaring Fork Watershed.



Introduction

Survey Summary

STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY¹

349 residents were sampled from counties located in the watershed, including Pitkin, Garfield, Eagle and Gunnison County. Online survey invitations were sent via postcard and text message while additional surveys were administered over phone calls, available in both English and Spanish.

Data was weighted to reflect the demographics of the counties surrounding the Roaring Fork Watershed, specifically regarding age and gender.

Survey Timeframe: June 27th - August 13th, 2025

COMMUNITY WIDE OPT-IN SURVEY²

The online survey supplemented the findings of the statistically valid survey, advertised through the RFOC Partner's social media channels, the Community Advisory Group, local newspapers, newsletters, signage, engagement events, and flier and poster distribution. The survey and announcement media were available in both English and Spanish.

Survey Timeframe: August 14th - September 28th, 2025

TOP CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

Protecting resources, such as water, wildlife, and natural areas, and limiting the impact of current recreation on those resources are the leading conservation priorities.

- + Preserving open spaces and natural areas (55%)
- + Protecting water quality (49%)
- + Protecting wildlife (44%)
- + Managing the impact of recreation on natural resources (44%)
- + Responsible use of water resources (42%)

TOP RECREATION PRIORITIES

Protecting natural resources and responsible recreation are the top two priorities for recreation in the Roaring Fork Watershed.

- + Protecting natural resources, including wildlife habitat and scenic views (67%)
- + Promoting the importance of recreating responsibly (51%)
- + Maintaining the current recreation infrastructure (32%)
- + Addressing crowding / visitor capacity (31%)

Top Conservation and Recreation priorities from the statistically valid survey.

¹ A FULL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY CAN BE FOUND IN APPENDIX A.
² A FULL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE COMMUNITY WIDE OPT-IN SURVEY CAN BE FOUND IN APPENDIX B.

Survey Responses



349 RESPONSES

Statistically Valid Survey

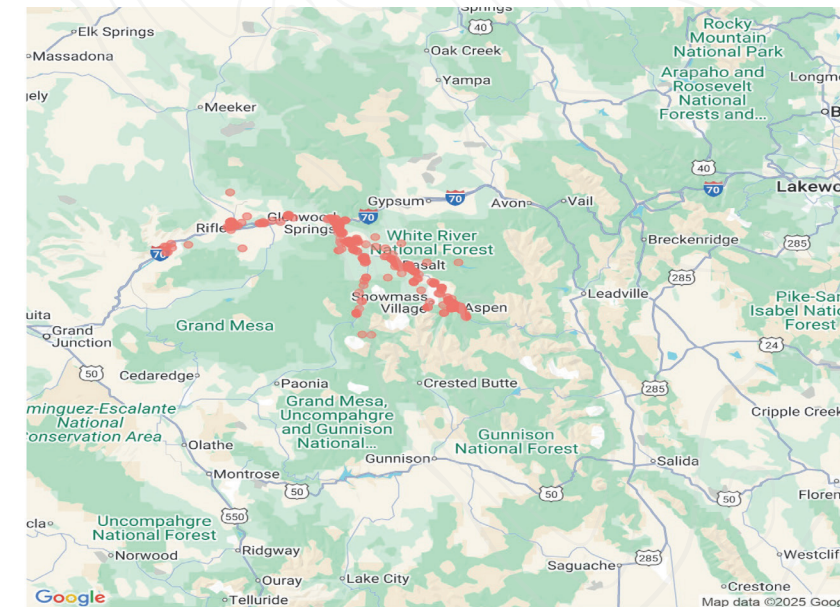


619 RESPONSES

Community Wide Opt-In Survey

MANAGING RECREATION

Nearly two in three Roaring Fork Watershed residents feel that focusing on maintaining existing areas that are most commonly used is the top conservation priority. A majority also support adding recreation areas where it will have the least ecological impact and limiting recreation opportunities in areas most critical to wildlife.



Response Location from Statistically Valid Survey, Y2Analytics

SHARED FUNDING

Residents support conservation and recreation initiatives in the Roaring Fork Watershed in general but differ in support of the best way to fund these efforts. Most respondents want to maintain current tax and fee structure but allocate some funds for these proposed initiatives. A significant group, about one in four, wish to keep the existing funding structure, while establishing new funding through additional taxes and fees.

Conservation and Recreation Priorities



CONSERVATION / PRESERVATION (30%)

Protecting wildlife habitats, water quality, maintaining natural spaces, preventing over development.



TOURISM / POPULATION MANAGEMENT (11%)

Reducing tourist numbers, controlling overcrowding, limiting infrastructure development.



RECREATION ACCESS (26%)

Managing trail usage, balancing access, trail connectivity, e-bike regulations.



ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION (8%)

Teaching responsible recreation, wildlife interaction guidelines, leave no trace principles, understanding local ecosystems.

Conservation and Restoration Priorities

In response to the growing pressures of habitat loss, fragmentation, and climate change, the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) in partnership with the Watershed Biodiversity Initiative (WBI) developed a locally driven framework to guide conservation and restoration priorities across the Roaring Fork Watershed. The resulting product is the 2022 Roaring Fork Watershed Biodiversity and Connectivity Study. This study provides goals and classifies lands into priorities based on current ecological value, restoration potential, and strategic importance for biodiversity.

This study includes a watershed-level map that locates the prioritized lands. From the WBI mapping, the RFOC has grouped five priorities—ranging from Biodiversity Strongholds to Developed Areas—to offer a science-based approach to prioritize action. The goal is to support land managers, policymakers, and conservation practitioners in making informed decisions for balancing protection, management, and restoration to sustain Colorado’s natural heritage.

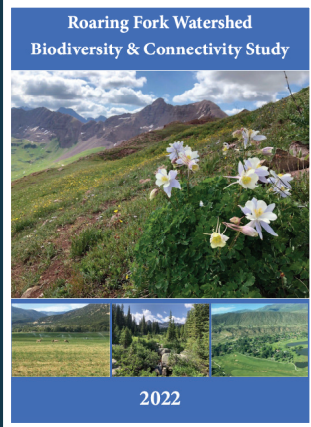
The conservation and restoration priorities on the following pages incorporate key findings from the WBI study, including definitions, as well as best practices from conservation and recreation expert advisors. Management considerations for each conservation and restoration priority area provide a general guide. However, it’s important to start by identifying the resources that each site is trying to protect. Considerations for specific sites will differ based on the most biologically intact components of a site, restoration goals, and human modifications present.

References:

Colorado Natural Heritage Program and Watershed Biodiversity Initiative. (2022). Roaring Fork Watershed Biodiversity and Connectivity Study.



Click here to view the study:



<https://cnhp.colostate.edu/projects/roaring-fork-study/>



C1: Biodiversity Strongholds

Priority (Defined by WBI): Highest Conservation Value

Action: Protect first and foremost

These are the most important places to protect in the watershed. They combine the best habitat for focal wildlife (like elk or deer) with exceptional biodiversity value—rare species, intact ecosystems, and strong natural processes. These areas are the “best of the best” and should be safeguarded from degradation and over-use. Keeping them intact is critical for long-term ecological health.

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:

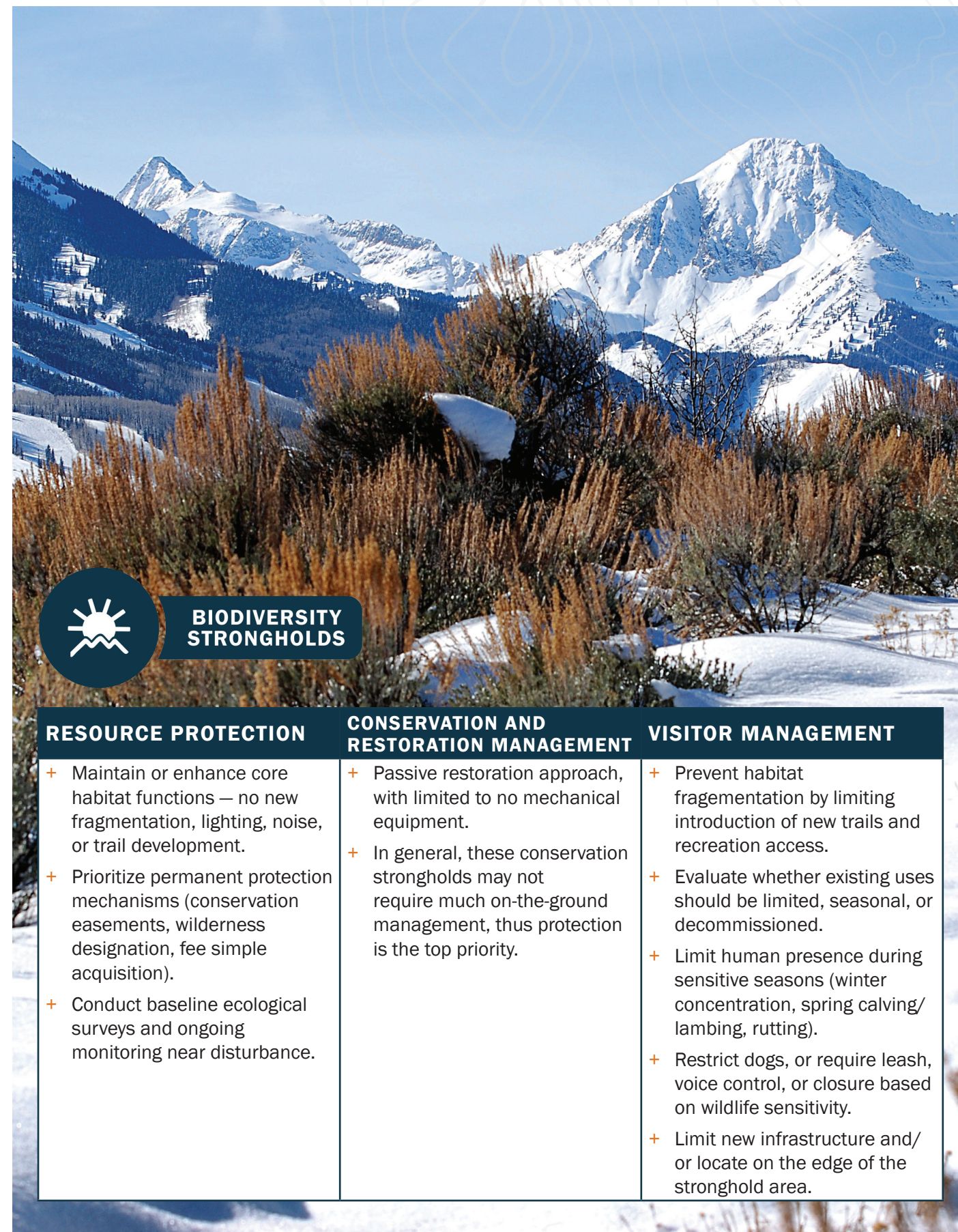
- + **Habitat for Focal Species:** Provides the highest quality habitat for elk, mule deer, and/or bighorn sheep.
- + **Highest Biodiversity:** Provides one or more additional components of biodiversity creating a rich biodiverse area, such as:
 - Location of rare species,
 - Location with wetlands,
 - National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area,
 - Calving/lambing or wintering ranges for focal species, and/or
 - Areas predicted to be more resilient to climate changes by the Nature Conservancy.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE:

- + If a wildfire does occur, consider minimal action, primarily associated with water movement, bank stabilization, and erosion.
- + Limit post-wildfire interventions, leaving downed and snag trees unless posing a risk to human safety.
- + Mechanical and prescribed fire mitigation should be a lower priority, especially in ecosystems that have a 300 yr fire return interval, e.g., Spruce-fir and Pinyon-Juniper. Oak shrubland thinning may enhance deer and elk and reduce fire risk, therefore, it is a high priority management tool for mountain shrubland communities.

Example Areas:

- + Thompson Divide
- + East Maroon Creek
- + Lenado
- + Sky Mountain Park
- + Grizzly Lake
- + Hunter Creek Valley, Red Mountain (Aspen)
- + West Maroon Pass
- + Braderich / South Thompson
- + Cattle Creek, Four Mile
- + Frying Pan Lakes



RESOURCE PROTECTION

- + Maintain or enhance core habitat functions — no new fragmentation, lighting, noise, or trail development.
- + Prioritize permanent protection mechanisms (conservation easements, wilderness designation, fee simple acquisition).
- + Conduct baseline ecological surveys and ongoing monitoring near disturbance.

CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION MANAGEMENT

- + Passive restoration approach, with limited to no mechanical equipment.
- + In general, these conservation strongholds may not require much on-the-ground management, thus protection is the top priority.

VISITOR MANAGEMENT

- + Prevent habitat fragmentation by limiting introduction of new trails and recreation access.
- + Evaluate whether existing uses should be limited, seasonal, or decommissioned.
- + Limit human presence during sensitive seasons (winter concentration, spring calving/lambing, rutting).
- + Restrict dogs, or require leash, voice control, or closure based on wildlife sensitivity.
- + Limit new infrastructure and/or locate on the edge of the stronghold area.



C2: Core Habitat Areas

Priority (Defined by WBI): High to Moderate Conservation Value

Action: Protect and manage

These areas provide important habitat for wildlife, especially focal ungulates, and have moderate biodiversity value. They may not be hotspots for rare species, but they often serve as key connectors between more biologically rich areas. Most are unfragmented and support ecological integrity at the landscape scale. These lands are worth protecting now, and closer investigation may reveal more ecological significance.

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:

- + **Habitat for Focal Species:** Provides high quality habitat for elk, mule deer, and/or bighorn sheep.
- + **High Biodiversity:** Provides an additional component of biodiversity, such as:
 - A location of rare species and/or wetlands,
 - National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area,
 - Calving/lambing or wintering ranges for focal species, and/or
 - Areas predicted to be more resilient to climate changes by the Nature Conservancy.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE:

- + Wildfire mitigation should be only be used if there is a current issue that is impairing the habitat for the present focal species. Consideration may increase if near developed areas.
- + Any mechanical treatment that disturbs the soil should aim to keep the topsoil, which can be replaced at the end of the project, often eliminating the need to seed, due to the natural seed bank.

Example Sites:

- + Maroon Bells
- + Snowmass Lake
- + Buckskin Pass
- + Ruedi Reservoir
- + Independence Pass
- + Basalt Mountain
- + Dry Park

CORE HABITAT AREAS

RESOURCE PROTECTION	CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION MANAGEMENT	VISITOR MANAGEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Identify areas that may have rare species or plant communities + Apply threshold-based adaptive management — develop ecological indicators to monitor; modify use if ecological indicators decline + Incorporate adjacent private landowner coordination, including agricultural operators + Incorporate permanent protection mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Consider minor restoration measures to maintain or enhance habitat function. + Target invasive species prevention and removal while prioritizing native ecosystem composition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Allow low-impact recreation only if it does not compromise wildlife behavior or habitat structure. + Cluster access and concentrate trail locations to avoid sprawling footprints. + Use seasonal closures aligned with CPW timing guidance where ungulate sensitivity is high, such as limiting winter recreation in winter habitat for ungulates, or in summer calving grounds, to limit stress on wildlife.



C3: Conservation Buffer Areas

Priority (Defined by WBI): Lower Conservation Value

Action: Assess and support conservation interface

These areas tend to have lower habitat quality and fewer documented biodiversity features, often near developed areas. However, they may still play a supporting role in the broader ecosystem. More study is needed to understand their value. For now, they are not top priorities for conservation or restoration but may become more important in the future with better data.

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:

- + **Moderate Habitat for Focal Species:** Provides low to moderate quality habitat for elk, mule deer, and/or bighorn sheep.
- + **Limited Biodiversity:** Areas with limited documented biodiversity features, but could support other species or offer restoration potential. Further study of these areas is needed.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE:

- + Include climate smart seed mixes that include many different species, of which some are capable of hot and dry conditions
- + Fire mitigation could be a consideration in these areas (any fire mitigation should have stated goals that can be monitored).

Example Areas:

- + Coal Basin
- + Marble area
- + Prince Creek
- + Emma
- + Aspen Ski area
- + Cr-100 Missouri Heights
- + Sunlight Ski area
- + Snowmass Ski area



RESOURCE PROTECTION

- + Collect site-specific ecological and social data before major decisions (vegetation integrity, wildlife presence, disturbance patterns).
- + Develop a protection and management goal (don't forget to keep a connection to core habitat areas)
- + Encourage wildlife-friendly agricultural practices and development where working lands and/or homes/town limits intersect habitat buffers.

CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION MANAGEMENT

- + Implement educational and etiquette signage.
- + Consider baseline ecological surveys to understand restoration priorities.

VISITOR MANAGEMENT

- + Restrict night-time use and discourage artificial light/noise to concentrate human use during known periods of time for the benefit of wildlife.
- + Where recreation growth is proposed, co-locate facilities to avoid diffuse expansion.



C4: Restoration and Protection Opportunities

Priority (Defined by WBI): High to Most Significant Restoration Opportunity

Action: Restore for long-term conservation

These are high-value places for biodiversity that have been degraded or disconnected over time. Though they may not currently support strong habitat for focal wildlife, they offer significant potential for recovery. Restoration actions—like reconnecting corridors, improving vegetation, or protecting from further impact—can deliver benefits for species and the watershed as a whole. These areas are critical investment zones for ecological integrity.

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:

- + **Concentrated Infrastructure:** Areas with concentrated transportation infrastructure, often adjacent to rivers and streams.
- + **Biodiversity Opportunity:** Supports key biodiversity values, where conservation and restoration can support overall watershed biodiversity.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE:

- + Mechanical and prescribed fire mitigation should be a higher priority
- + Any seeding efforts should be climate-smart and include 25-30 species, including forbs and shrubs (be cautious with grass seeding as grasses can slow down succession)

Example Sites:

- + Smuggler Mountain
- + Weller Lake
- + Roaring Fork Gorge
- + Cozy Point
- + Snowmass Canyon
- + Lazy Glen
- + Catherine Store Rd.
- + Hwy 82 between Cattle Creek/Carbondale
- + Crystal River Corridor



RESOURCE PROTECTION

- + Reconnect wildlife corridors using overpasses/underpasses, lay-down fencing, and no-build buffer zones.
- + Monitor for hydrology, soil stability, vegetation establishment, and wildlife movement.
- + Protect wetland buffers.

CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION MANAGEMENT

- + Prioritize river, riparian, & floodplain restoration where feasible; pursue nature-based solutions, e.g., beaver dam analogs, or beavers, or simple rock structures; drift fences to encourage cattle to meander rather than straight line to water holes.
- + Remove or re-route infrastructure (fencing, abandoned roads, duplicate trails) to improve connectivity. Identify and fix poorly placed culverts.

VISITOR MANAGEMENT

- + Prohibit, temporarily limit, or reroute recreation access in areas identified for restoration and recovery
- + Utilize volunteers to assist with restoration, when feasible.
- + Develop before and after signage to educate the public.
- + Utilize community science to help collect data, when feasible.
- + If restoring an area for a rare species, citizen science may be able to assist.



C5: Developed Areas

Priority (Defined by WBI): Not a Conservation Priority

Action: Conservation and restoration are impractical

These are areas that are already highly developed or severely altered, such as towns, roads, and industrial zones. They no longer support meaningful conservation or restoration goals, and investing resources here is unlikely to produce ecological returns. Some mapped zones may also include natural non-vegetated areas (like rock outcrops or icefields).

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:

- + **Highly Developed Area:** Urbanized areas with the most human modifications, including housing and roads.
- + **Non-Vegetated Areas:** Non-vegetated areas that do not provide functional habitat for focal species.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE:

Example Areas:

- + City and Town Limits

RESTORATION & PROTECTION OPPORTUNITIES

RESOURCE PROTECTION	CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION MANAGEMENT	VISITOR MANAGEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Reconnect wildlife corridors using overpasses/underpasses, lay-down fencing, and no-build buffer zones. + Monitor for hydrology, soil stability, vegetation establishment, and wildlife movement. + Protect wetland buffers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Prioritize river, riparian, & floodplain restoration where feasible; pursue nature-based solutions, e.g., beaver dam analogs, or beavers, or simple rock structures; drift fences to encourage cattle to meander rather than straight line to water holes. + Remove or re-route infrastructure (fencing, abandoned roads, duplicate trails) to improve connectivity. Identify and fix poorly placed culverts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Prohibit, temporarily limit, or reroute recreation access in areas identified for restoration and recovery + Utilize volunteers to assist with restoration, when feasible. + Develop before and after signage to educate the public. + Utilize community science to help collect data, when feasible. + If restoring an area for a rare species, citizen science may be able to assist.

Recreation Opportunity Classes

Outdoor recreation in the Roaring Fork Watershed spans a wide range of settings—from remote peaks and wilderness areas to well-used trails, recreation sites, and river access points near communities. Visitors come with diverse motivations that shape the kinds of experiences they seek. To better understand and manage this diversity, Utah State University’s Recreation Ecology Lab conducted visitor surveys at fourteen recreation areas and used a data-driven approach to classify 53 sites across the watershed into five distinct recreation groups based on social use, environmental conditions, and management presence.

This process builds on and update the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) framework, which describes how physical settings, social conditions, and management levels influence visitor experiences. Analysis showed that visitors at more urban-proximate sites were motivated by spending time with family and friends and exercising, while those in more remote areas sought challenge, risk, and adventure. Across all sites, visitors consistently valued nature and tranquility, underscoring the importance of protecting natural resources. Together, the five recreation opportunity classes represent a spectrum from remote wilderness to developed hubs, providing land managers with a useful tool to align recreation opportunities and management strategies with both ecological conditions and visitor motivations.

References:

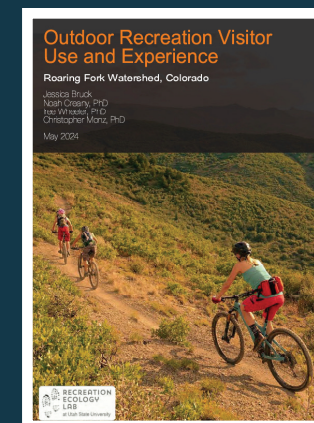
Bruck, J. (2025). The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum in Practice: A Classification of Visitors and Sites in the Roaring Fork Valley, Colorado, USA (Master’s thesis). Utah State University.

Clark, R. N., & Stankey, G. H. (1979). The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum: A Framework for Planning, Management, and Research. USDA Forest Service.

USDA Forest Service. (2024). Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Technical Guide: Practices and Resources for Implementing the 2012 Planning Rule.



Click here to view the study:



<https://pitkincounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/32660/Outdoor-Recreation-Visitor-Use-and-Experience>



R1: Primitive Areas

Setting: Remote, Undeveloped, and Quiet

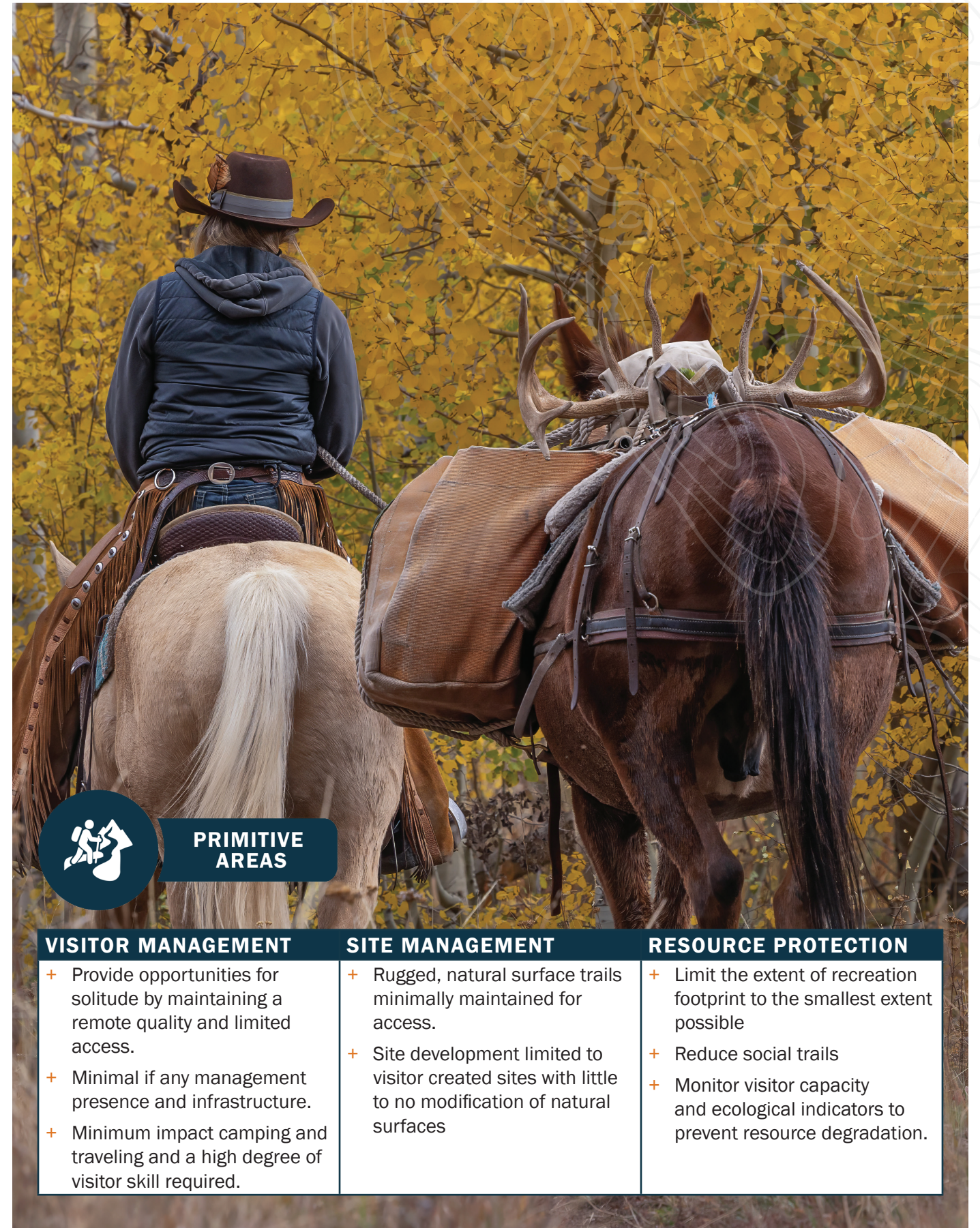
These areas offer a true backcountry experience, far from roads, noise, and crowds. These areas are ideal for people seeking solitude, adventure, and a strong connection to wild nature. Visitors often travel by foot or horseback and rely on outdoor skills. Facilities are minimal to nonexistent. These places help preserve natural soundscapes, dark sky areas, wildlife habitat, and quiet recreation.

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:

- + **Natural & Remote:** Very little development; feels wild and untouched. Natural environment of fairly large size. Accessible only through unpaved roads.
- + **Low Use:** Few visitors; lots of solitude.
- + **Visitor Motivations:** Risk/adventure and nature/tranquility.
- + **Experience Opportunity:** High opportunity for isolation, immersion in the natural environment, challenge, and risk-taking.
- + **Minimal Management:** Limited signage.
- + **Recreation Activities:** Primarily used for overnight backpacking and Wilderness travel. Use is restricted to non-motorized activities. Backcountry hiking, camping, trail running, equestrian, climbing, backcountry skiing.
- + **Crowding:** Lowest levels of perceived crowding among all site types.
- + **Coping Behaviors:** Spatial (where) and temporal (timing) shifts in use patterns were often required to achieve desired outcomes.
 - Visitors were most sensitive to crowding.
- Commonly adjusted season, location, or timing (weekday vs. weekend) to avoid others.
- More likely to avoid areas with reservations or difficult parking.
- + **Conflict:** Very low levels of reported conflict or safety concerns.
- + **Visit Duration & Distance:** Visitors often spent longer periods and covered greater distances than other site types.
 - Average time spent: ~3.5 to 5 hours.
 - Average distance traveled: ~6 to 8 miles.
- + **Access Limitations:** These sites are typically remote, accessed by unpaved roads, and do not allow motorized vehicles.
- + **Visitor Behavior:** High use of GPS-based coping strategies, such as planning trips around solitude.
- + **Infrastructure:** Very minimal amenities (e.g., no toilets or signage).

Example Sites:

- + Avalanche Creek Trailhead
- + Capitol Creek Trailhead
- + Grizzly Lake Trailhead
- + Lime Park Climbing Area
- + Placita Trailhead
- + Snowmass Creek Trailhead
- + Lead King Loop
- + East Snowmass Creek Trailhead



PRIMITIVE AREAS

VISITOR MANAGEMENT	SITE MANAGEMENT	RESOURCE PROTECTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Provide opportunities for solitude by maintaining a remote quality and limited access. + Minimal if any management presence and infrastructure. + Minimum impact camping and traveling and a high degree of visitor skill required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Rugged, natural surface trails minimally maintained for access. + Site development limited to visitor created sites with little to no modification of natural surfaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Limit the extent of recreation footprint to the smallest extent possible + Reduce social trails + Monitor visitor capacity and ecological indicators to prevent resource degradation.



R2: Semi-Primitive Areas

Setting: Natural and Lightly Managed

These areas provide a balance of access and quiet. Visitors can enjoy the natural setting—forests, rivers, and trails—while still having access to basic signage or trailheads. Use levels are low to moderate. These zones are great for day hikes, birding, or peaceful family outings, where nature is the focus and development is kept to a minimum.

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:

- + **Natural & Remote:** Very little development.
- + **Moderate Use:** Some visitors, but not crowded.
- + **Mostly Natural:** Light development like trails or basic signage. Natural environment of moderate to large size.
- + **Visitor Motivations:** Nature/tranquility and spiritual/introspection.
- + **Experience Opportunity:** Some solitude with strong nature connection, moderate risk and skill practice.
- + **Simple Amenities:** Trailheads, parking, information kiosk.
- + **Gateway Function:** These sites often act as transition zones into Wilderness areas.
- + **Recreation Activities:** While mainly for hikers and equestrians, some sites (e.g., Thomas Lakes) also allow mountain biking.
 - Day hikes, trail running, mountain biking, UTV/ATV, Snowmobiles, Nordic skiing, backcountry skiing.
- + **Crowding:** Low perceived crowding, though slightly more than primitive sites.
- + **Coping Behaviors:** Coping is commonplace and will occur. Visitors are likely to choose less popular seasons or visiting at off-peak hours.
- + **Conflict:** Minimal reported issues; users generally felt safe and unimpeded.
- + **Visit Duration & Distance:** Longest durations and distances of all types.
 - Average time spent: ~4 to 6 hours.
 - Average distance traveled: ~8 to 10 miles.
 - Reflects use for long hikes and backcountry access
- + **Venture Into Wilderness Areas.**

Example Sites:

- + American Lake Trailhead
- + Cathedral Lake Trailhead
- + Conundrum Creek Trailhead
- + Ashcroft Trailhead
- + Lower Lost Man/Midway Trailhead
- + Upper Lost Man/Linkins Lake Trailhead
- + Thomas Lakes
- + Lorax Trail
- + Babbish Gulch Trailhead
- + Basalt Mountain Trailhead
- + Coal Basin Trailhead
- + Divide Parking Lot/Crown Trailhead



SEMI-PRIMITIVE AREAS

VISITOR MANAGEMENT	SITE MANAGEMENT	RESOURCE PROTECTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Provide a limited number and type of facilities (e.g., trailhead kiosks) to accommodate access, but maintain a primitive character. + Management presence limited to trailheads signs and safety features (boardwalks, bridges). Minimum- impact camping and traveling required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Trails primarily natural surface with some modification where necessary for access and safety. + Site development limited but some modification permissible with natural materials (e.g. rock borders) to minimize expansion and proliferation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Reduce undesignated uses (i.e. social trails, campsite expansions). + Monitor visitor capacity and ecological indicators to prevent resource degradation.

PHOTO: DUANE RALEIGH



R3: Concentrated Recreation Areas

Setting: Popular Natural Areas with Consistent Use

These are heavily used recreation zones where trails, viewpoints, and access points are concentrated. Noticeable infrastructure like maintained paths, restrooms, and signs may be present. The environment still feels mostly natural, but the presence of others is common. These areas cater to people seeking scenic experiences and easy-to-follow routes, while still staying connected to the outdoors.

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:

- + **Natural Feel with Signs of Use:** Visible trails and moderate infrastructure. Located closer to developed areas making access easier.
- + **Higher Use:** Visitors often encounter others.
- + **Visitor Motivations:** Socialization and exercise/fitness.
- + **Experience Opportunity:** Mix of nature and social engagement, opportunities for outdoor skills and moderate challenge. Balances nature with social opportunities and accessibility.
- + **Developed Amenities:** Paved paths, restrooms, and signage.
- + **Close to Communities:** While not urban, they are proximate to neighborhoods and easily accessible.
- + **Noticeable Management:** Some facilities and trail maintenance.
- + **Recreation Activities:** These sites support a wider variety of activities, especially mountain biking and dog walking. Hiking, trail running, mountain biking, river/water access.
- + **Crowding:** Noticeable but not overwhelming crowding reported.
- + **Coping Behaviors:** Visitors employed time-shifting strategies (e.g., visiting on weekdays or early mornings).
 - Some aversion to reservation systems and parking issues.
- + **Conflict:** Still low conflict reported, despite higher user densities.
- + **Visit Duration & Distance:** These sites often serve local recreation close to urban areas.
 - Average time spent: ~2.5 to 4 hours.
 - Average distance traveled: ~4 to 6 miles.

Example Sites:

- + American Lake Trailhead
- + Cathedral Lake Trailhead
- + Conundrum Creek Trailhead
- + Ashcroft Trailhead
- + Lower Lost Man/Midway Trailhead
- + Upper Lost Man/Linkins Lake Trailhead
- + Thomas Lakes
- + Lorax Trail
- + Babbish Gulch Trailhead
- + Basalt Mountain Trailhead
- + Coal Basin Trailhead
- + Divide Parking Lot/Crown Trailhead



CONCENTRATED RECREATION AREAS

VISITOR MANAGEMENT

- + Provide the number and type of facilities to support recreation demand at these locations.
- + Management presence increased through signs, facilities and personnel. Focus is on providing access to a diverse range of activity types, more social interaction, less opportunity or solitude.
- + Minimum-impact travel encouraged.

SITE MANAGEMENT

- + Parking, entry points, trail and site surfaces often natural but also use manufactured materials when needed.
- + Trailhead and visitor site development appropriate to accommodate a range of activity types and high demand.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

- + Maintain trail durability and reduce ecological impacts through hardened infrastructure and monitoring.
- + Monitor crowding, displacement effects, and visitor satisfaction to guide adaptive management.
- + Monitor wildlife species present and habitat utilization to guide adaptive management.



R4: Urban Proximate Recreation Areas

Setting: Easy Access, Heavily Visited

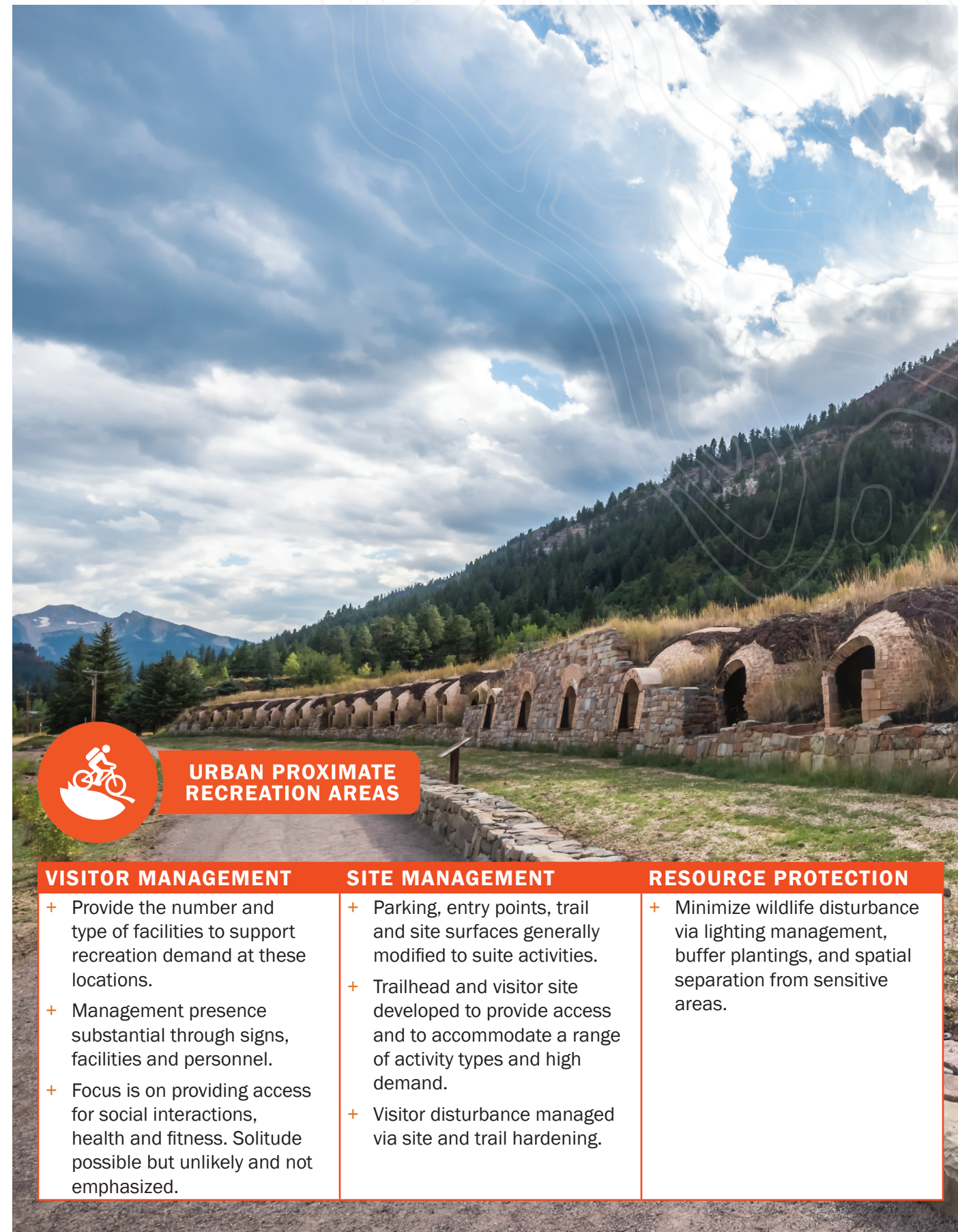
Located close to neighborhoods or developed communities, these areas provide quick, convenient access to nature. They're often paved or landscaped, and ideal for walking, biking, or dog-friendly outings. These sites are used frequently by locals, especially families, and are an important part of the community's daily connection to the outdoors. Socialization and accessibility are key features here.

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:

- + **Developed Areas:** Easily accessed from urban centers. Highly integrated with neighborhoods: Trails often start directly from town centers, making them ideal for daily or after-work use.
- + **High Use:** Popular with families and casual users.
- + **Visitor Motivations:** Family/friends, exercise/fitness, and socialization.
- + **Experience Opportunity:** Primarily social and fitness-oriented, with limited solitude or skill challenge. Emphasizes convenience, socializing, and short nature outings.
- + **Diversity of Use:** Local parks or greenbelts near housing.
- + **Repetition:** Users are often repeat visitors, sometimes daily.
- + **Community Recreation:** Serve as community staples for walking, jogging, or biking.
- + **Crowding:** Highest levels of perceived crowding among site types.
 - Crowding was more tolerated, reflecting a different expectation of the experience.
 - Tolerance for crowding: Visitors expect and accept high use levels.
- + **Coping Behaviors:** Visitors generally altered behaviors temporally (timing).
 - Visitors were less likely to change behavior in response to crowding.
 - More tolerant of reservation systems and parking limitations.
- + **Conflict:** Minimal reported conflict, though the potential for social friction (e.g., over trail use types) was acknowledged.
- + **Visit Duration & Distance:** Reflects shorter, accessible outings.
 - Average time spent: ~1.5 to 2.5 hours.
 - Average distance traveled: ~2 to 4 miles.
- + **Some Wilderness Proximity.**

Example Sites:

- Smuggler Mountain Ute Trail
- Beach Parking Lot (North Star)
- South Gate Parking Lot
- Wildwood River Access
- Stillwater Takeout
- Marolt Open Space
- Red Mountain/Jeanne Golay Trailhead
- Prince Creek Bull Pen
- Beaver Lake State Wildlife Area
- Jaffee Park



URBAN PROXIMATE RECREATION AREAS

VISITOR MANAGEMENT	SITE MANAGEMENT	RESOURCE PROTECTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Provide the number and type of facilities to support recreation demand at these locations. + Management presence substantial through signs, facilities and personnel. + Focus is on providing access for social interactions, health and fitness. Solitude possible but unlikely and not emphasized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Parking, entry points, trail and site surfaces generally modified to suite activities. + Trailhead and visitor site developed to provide access and to accommodate a range of activity types and high demand. + Visitor disturbance managed via site and trail hardening. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Minimize wildlife disturbance via lighting management, buffer plantings, and spatial separation from sensitive areas.



R5: Highly Developed Destinations

Setting: Built for Comfort and High Capacity

These are highly developed, high-traffic destinations with robust infrastructure—like interpretive signs, restrooms, parking lots, and paved paths. Visitors come for group experiences, events, or easy nature access with clear expectations for comfort and convenience. Nature is present, but so are more people. These areas are important for education, tourism, and inclusive access to outdoor spaces.

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:

- + **Developed Amenities:** Built infrastructure like restrooms, interpretive signs, parking lots.
- + **High Use:** Often crowded or busy.
- + **Visitor Motivations:** Family/friends, exercise/fitness, and socialization. Designed for comfort, accessibility, and group recreation.
- + **Experience Opportunity:** These sites have tourist appeal and are higher-traffic destinations, with waterfalls, climbing, and short trails that appeal to first-time or casual users.
- + **Heavy Management Presence:** Regular maintenance and signage.
- + **Diversity of Use:** Most diverse range of activities including hiking, water play, and sightseeing. Includes boat ramps, day use areas or popular picnic areas, multi-use trailheads.
- + **Crowding:** Due to its popularity and ease of access, these areas have some of the highest visitor counts.
 - Visitors appear less sensitive to crowding, likely due to expectations of busier environments.
- + **Coping Behaviors:** Visitors still adjusted timing of their visits but did not shift season or location as often.
 - Some dissatisfaction with parking availability.
- + **Conflict:** Remained low, even in high-use areas.
- + **Visit Duration & Distance:** Ideal for casual use, families, or quick outdoor access.
 - Average time spent: ~1 to 2 hours.
 - Average distance traveled: ~1 to 3 miles.
- + **Some Wilderness Proximity.**

Example Sites:

- + Grottos Day Use Area
- + Henry Stein Park
- + Top of the Pass Trailhead
- + Town Park (Snowmass Village)
- + Basalt State Wildlife Area Shooting Range
- + Nature Trailhead/Lot 7
- + Basalt High School Rio Grande Trailhead
- + Rocky Fork Day Use Area
- + Red Hill
- + Sam Caudill Boat Ramp
- + Carbondale Boat Ramp
- + Hooks Spur River Access

HIGHLY DEVELOPED DESTINATIONS

VISITOR MANAGEMENT	SITE MANAGEMENT	RESOURCE PROTECTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Locations managed to focus on visitor amenities provided with substantial access facilities. + Sites developed for specific activities (e.g., picnic tables, boat ramps). + Management presence substantial. Interpretive information provided to engage (potentially) first time visitors and tourists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Parking, entry points, trail and site surfaces typically modified to suite activities. + Trailhead and visitor site development to provide access and to accommodate a range of activity types and very high demand. + Visitor disturbance managed via site and trail hardening and concentration of use on hardened surfaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Urban wildlife considerations.

Conservation and Recreation Map

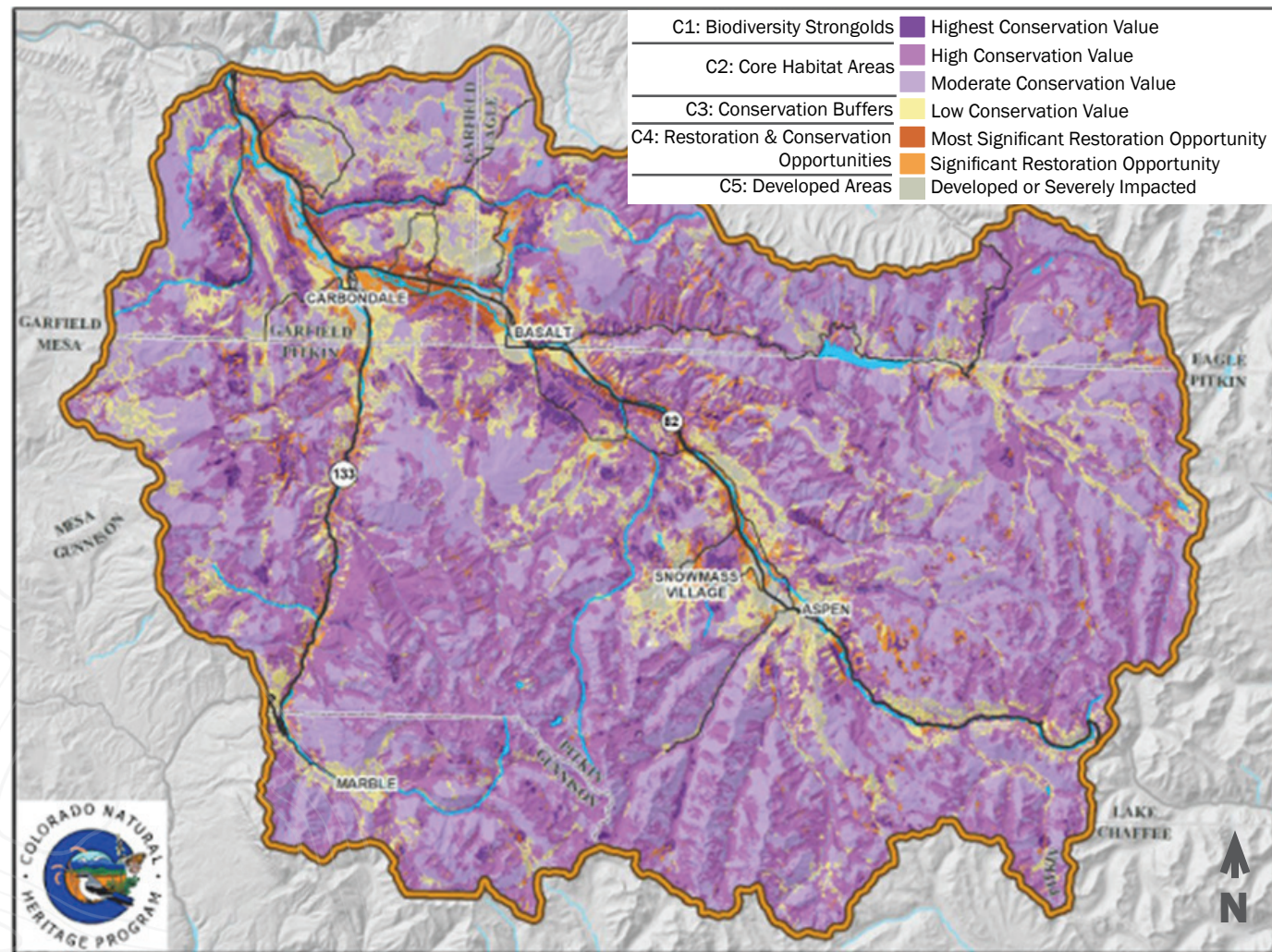
A key piece of this Decision Support Toolkit is the extensive mapping of conservation and recreation priorities and areas throughout the watershed. Using publicly available data sources, as well as original research, the mapping provides a detailed look at areas for key conservation prioritization as well as areas of opportunity for recreation activities. Coupling these data sources into a single mapping resource enables land managers, public officials, and the community important insight into the location and characteristics of conservation and recreation priorities – and where these are aligned or may be in conflict. This mapping is a tool for the evaluation of potential projects, policies, and funding for the watershed.



Conservation and Restoration Mapping

Conservation Opportunities Map

The following priorities map provides a spatially explicit, watershed-wide view of conservation value and restoration potential. It can be used to identify high-quality areas that warrant protection, degraded areas where restoration would be most beneficial, and areas with limited conservation value. It also helps illuminate how conservation and restoration can work together to protect ecological function across Colorado's landscapes.



References:

Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). (2022). Roaring Fork Watershed Biodiversity and Connectivity Study. Colorado State University. Retrieved from https://cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2022/RoaringForkBiodiversityConnectivityStudy_FinalReport_SEPTEMBER2022.pdf

Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). (2022). Roaring Fork Watershed Biodiversity and Connectivity Study: Executive Summary. Colorado State University. Retrieved from <https://cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2022/EXECUTIVESUMMARY.pdf>

FIG 1. The Priority Areas map demonstrates that the majority of the Roaring Fork Watershed provides large blocks of intact, connected landscapes of moderate to high conservation value based on the presence of moderate to high quality habitat for elk, mule deer, and/or bighorn sheep, as well as multiple other elements of conservation importance.

The RFOC has grouped five priorities—ranging from Biodiversity Strongholds to Developed Areas—to offer a science-based approach to prioritize action. These are based on the analysis and categorization from the Watershed Biodiversity Institute (WBI) study. The goal is to support land managers, policymakers, and conservation practitioners in making informed decisions for balancing protection, management, and restoration to sustain Colorado's natural heritage.

TABLE 1. Definitions of categories used on the Conservation and Restoration Priorities map. *Highest priority for biodiversity = rarest/most imperiled species, wetlands, and/or greatest potential for climate resiliency. †Moderate priority for biodiversity = uncommon but less imperiled species and wetland types, and/or some potential for climate resiliency.

RFOC Group	Map Color	Priority	Watershed Biodiversity and Connectivity Study Map Description
	Dark Purple	Highest Conservation Value	Highest quality habitat for focal ungulates AND highest priority for biodiversity.
	Medium Purple	High Conservation Value	High or moderate quality habitat for focal ungulates AND moderate priority for biodiversity
	Light Purple	Moderate Conservation Value	High or moderate habitat quality for focal ungulates that are generally unfragmented but lacking other biodiversity values.
	Yellow	Low Conservation Value	Lower quality habitat for focal ungulates and fewer biodiversity values documented
	Dark Orange	Most Significant Restoration Opportunity	Lower habitat quality for focal ungulates but very high conservation importance for other biodiversity values.
	Light Orange	Significant Restoration Opportunity	Important for biodiversity but improvements in habitat quality/connectivity are likely needed for focal ungulates
	Grey	Developed or Severely Modified	Not practical conservation or restoration opportunities due to the dominance of urban or other developed areas and established transportation networks.

Conservation and Restoration Mapping

Recreation Opportunities Map

The following map provides a spatially explicit, watershed-wide view of recreation opportunities at the locations determined by the Utah State University Recreation Ecology Lab.

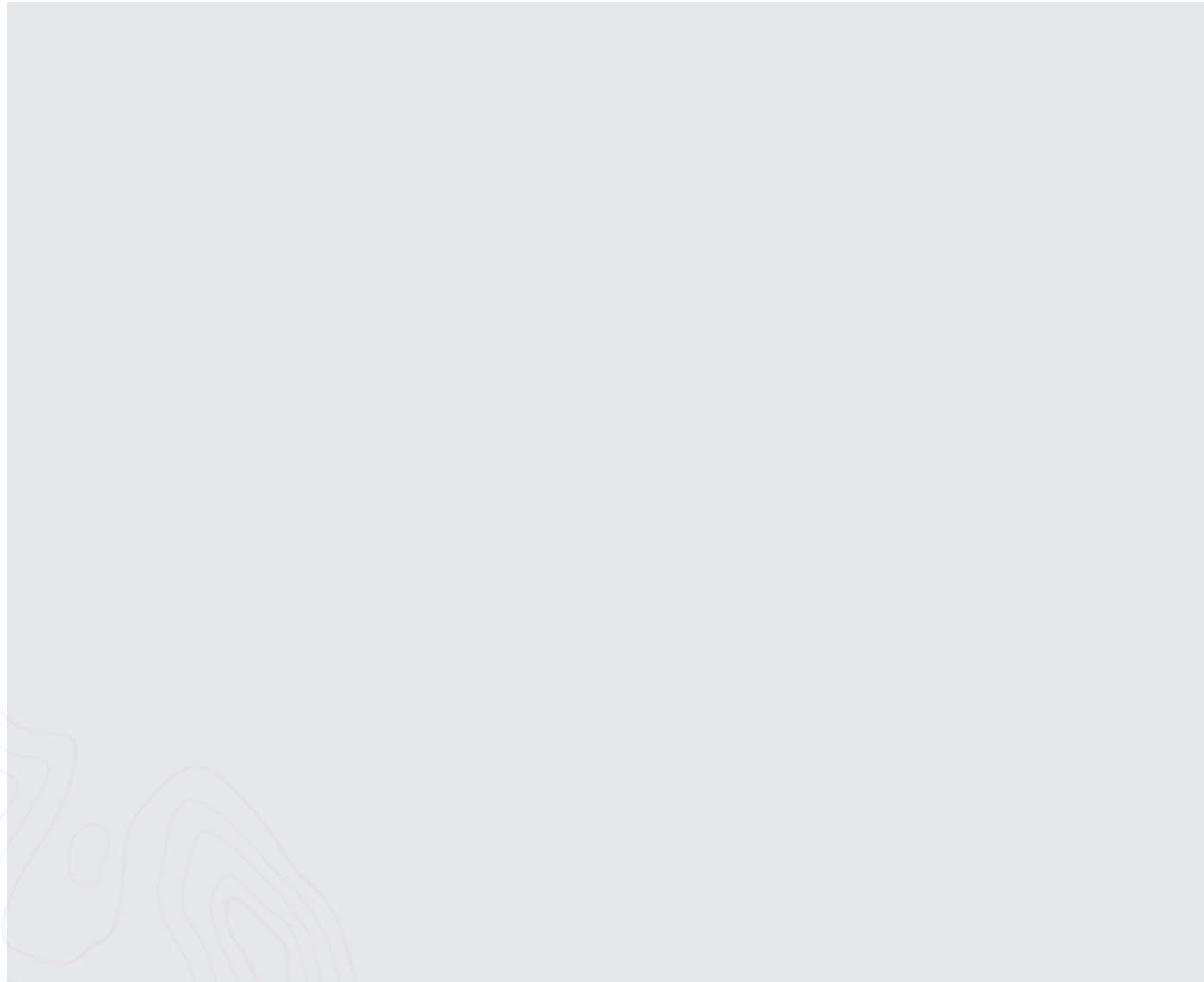


FIG 2. The Recreation Opportunity map links to the RFOC Conservation & Recreation Opportunity Mapping, showing the recreation locations identified by Utah State University

References:

Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). (2022). Roaring Fork Watershed Biodiversity and Connectivity Study. Colorado State University. Retrieved from https://cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2022/RoaringForkBiodiversityConnectivityStudy_FinalReport_SEPTEMBER2022.pdf

Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). (2022). Roaring Fork Watershed Biodiversity and Connectivity Study: Executive Summary. Colorado State University. Retrieved from <https://cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2022/EXECUTIVESUMMARY.pdf>

The Recreation Opportunities Map is part of the RFOC Conservation & Recreation Opportunity Map. Utah State University's Recreation Ecology Lab compiled recreation data points throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed and grouped them by opportunity class based on user feedback and myriad data collection methodologies. In the mapping, users can visualize the data points as one group: "All Recreation Opportunities", or, by "Recreation Opportunity Class", which groups the recreation locations by activity. The activity groups are: community gardens, athletic fields, winter trailhead, trailheads, water access, camping, back country hut, climbing, Sunlight Ski area, river access, recreation amenity, skate park, playground, Aspen-Snowmass Ski area, and nordic trails.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITY SYMBOLOGY KEY TO BE UPDATED PER PITKIN COUNTY MAP

PAGE TO MIRROR THAT OF CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY MAP ABOVE WITH DESCRIPTION AND MAP KEY.



Equitable Access Analysis

The equitable access analysis, utilizing data made available by the Trust for Public Lands, aims to identify areas within the Roaring Fork Watershed that have gaps in access to recreation resources, specifically within a measurement of those within and outside of a 10-minute drive and / or 10-minute walk to recreation outlets and opportunities.

While just about all Roaring Fork Valley residents live within a 10-minute drive or walk to a recreation area, car or public transit access remains a barrier for some. Walkability to access recreational areas is also generally good, though some areas lack walkable access, including parts of Missouri Heights, El Jebel, Old Snowmass, and stretches along Highway 82 between Carbondale and Glenwood Springs.

[LINK TO EQUITABLE ACCESS ANALYSIS - CONSERVATION AND OUTDOOR RECREATION MAP \(MAKE LIVE WHEN MAP IS READY\)](#)

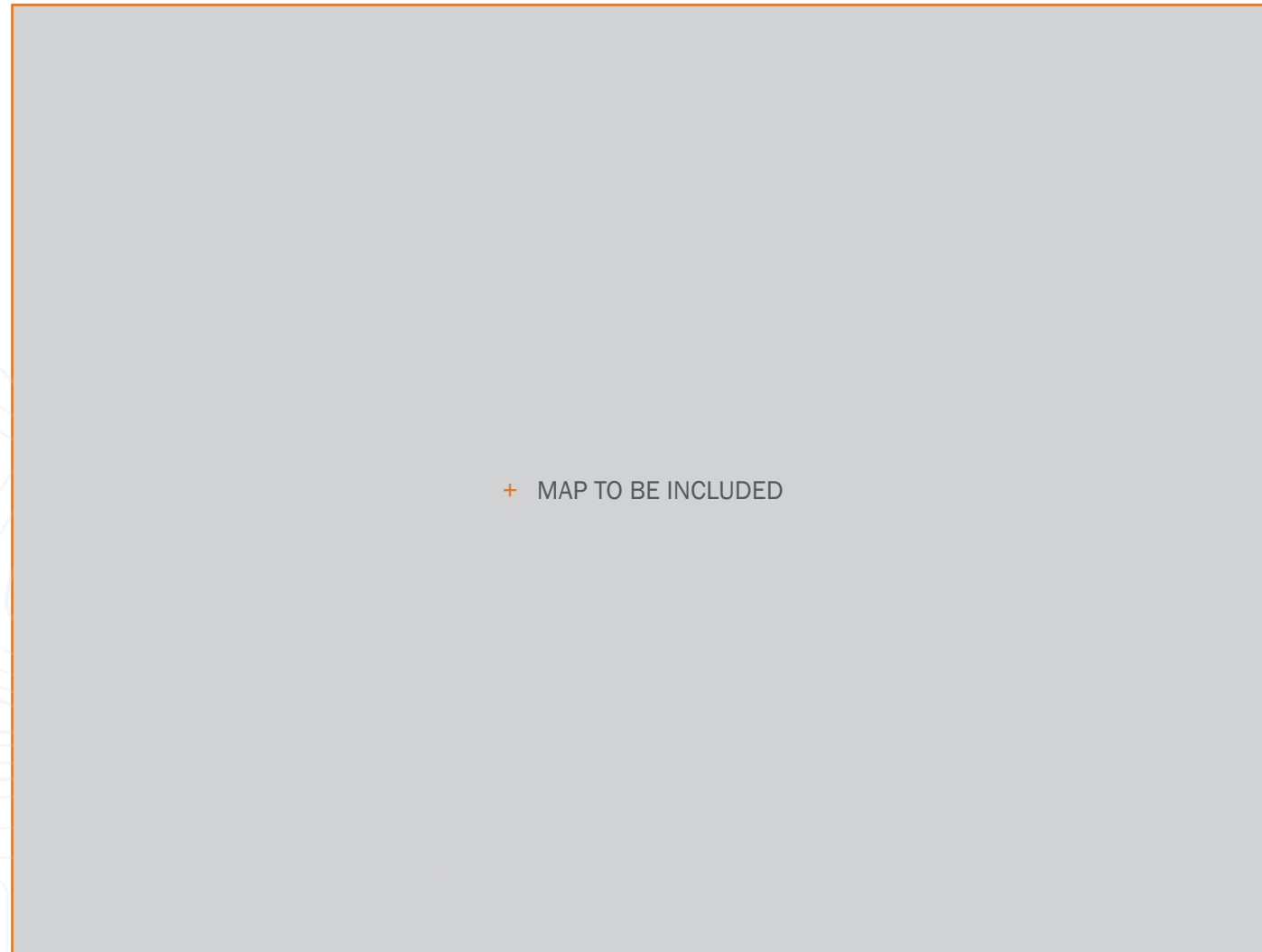


FIG 3. Equitable Access Analysis map shows 10-minute drive to recreation access in the Watershed.

Visitor Use Dashboard

The Visitor Use Dashboard, developed by Utah State University's Recreation Ecology Lab, utilizes mobility data captured by Streetlight Inc, to understand visitor use trends at recreation sites throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed. The data is representative of two sources, mobile devices (cell phones) and connected vehicles (vehicles with V2X communication systems in place). The study classified recreation areas into various site types, including climbing access, parks and open space, parking areas, water access, state wildlife areas, trailheads, and winter recreation areas.

[Click here to view the Dashboard.](#)

https://ncreany.shinyapps.io/rfoc_recreation_use_dashboard/#sites-map

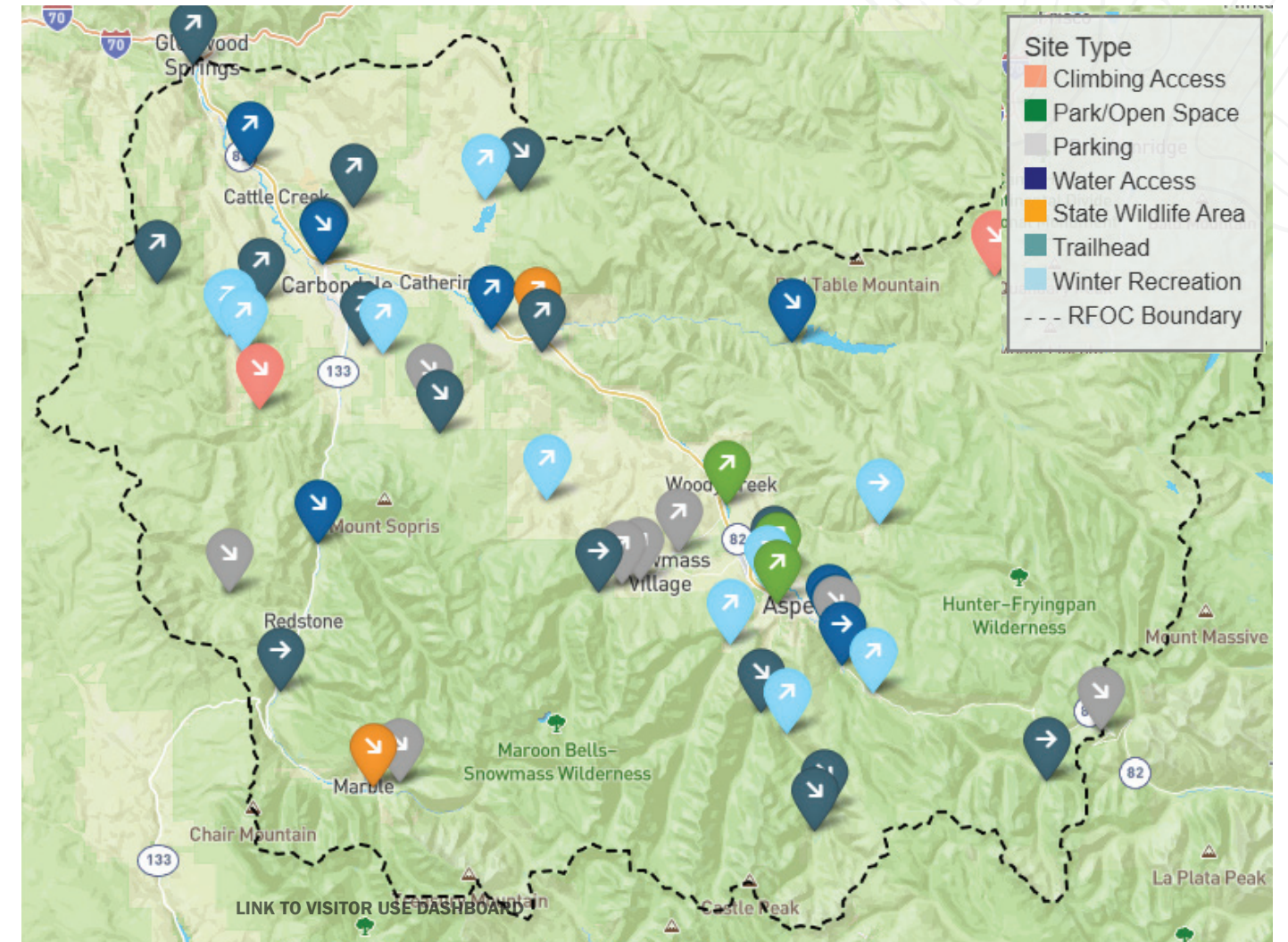


FIG 4. Image of USU's Visitor Use Dashboard.

Project Evaluation Criteria






The project evaluation framework for regional conservation and outdoor recreation serves to evaluate the alignment of potential projects and initiatives with the Guideposts of the Roaring Fork Outdoor Coalition. Each Guidepost includes goals established through feedback from the general public, the Community Advisory Group and RFOC Partners and evaluation criteria associated with each goal. The evaluation criteria are organized as questions to assess alignment with accompanying measurable indicators that can be used to determine the effectiveness and impact of projects. This framework and accompanying tools in the decision support toolkit can be adapted to a variety of project types and scales.



Project Evaluation Criteria

GUIDEPOSTS

GOALS

 <p>CROSS JURISDICTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS</p>	<p>1. Work together to provide consistent and coordinated management across federal, state, and local jurisdictions.</p> <p>From municipal open spaces in Glenwood Springs to wilderness areas above Aspen, the Roaring Fork region is managed by many entities with overlapping goals. RFOC serves as a connector—helping align agencies, nonprofits, and community voices to streamline efforts, share resources, and foster a unified approach to conservation and recreation in the watershed.</p>	<p>2. Promote collaboration and partnerships between land managers and local organizations within the Roaring Fork Watershed.</p>
 <p>CONSERVATION, HABITAT AND CONNECTIVITY</p>	<p>3. Reduce habitat fragmentation.</p> <p>The ecological integrity of the Roaring Fork Watershed—its critical wildlife habitat corridors, riparian areas, and alpine habitats—relies on thoughtful conservation. RFOC works to conserve habitat, strengthen landscape connectivity, and reduce fragmentation by encouraging collaboration across public and private lands throughout the valley.</p>	<p>4. Protect or improve biodiversity</p>
 <p>ACCESS AND EQUITY</p>	<p>5. Create outdoor spaces for everyone</p> <p>A Roaring Fork Watershed where everyone—regardless of background, language, or ability—feels welcome and empowered to enjoy the outdoors. RFOC works to remove barriers—like cost, language, transportation, and accessibility—and to ensure our trails and open spaces reflect the diverse needs of outdoor recreationists.</p>	<p>6. Provide accessible, diverse, high-Quality outdoor opportunities for all user groups</p>
 <p>EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP</p>	<p>7. Empower visitors through education and clear communication</p> <p>Fostering a culture of stewardship throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed starts with accessible, place-based education. RFOC supports unified communication and programs that inspire residents and visitors to care for the land, deepen their connection to the region, and protect shared outdoor spaces.</p>	<p>8. Build a culture of stewardship and community involvement</p>
 <p>RECREATION VOLUME AND IMPACT</p>	<p>9. Ensure a positive recreation visitor experience for all</p> <p>Growing recreational use in the Watershed places pressure on landscapes and user experiences. RFOC brings together towns, counties, land managers, and community groups to align goals, reduce overlap, and plan for sustainable recreation for future generations.</p>	<p>10. Protect the places we love to recreate and manage human impact</p>

Scoring Criteria & Project Evaluation Checklist

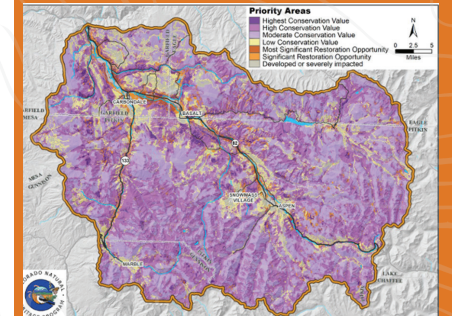
This Decision Support Toolkit is intended to provide a coordinated resource for the Roaring Fork Outdoor Coalition to evaluate programs and policies that can have a meaningful impact on the conservation and recreation priorities in the watershed. Community organizations are encouraged to identify projects and initiatives that can support the overall goals of the Roaring Fork Outdoor Coalition. The Coalition will use the evaluation criteria to review each proposed project and initiative to determine the level of financial and other support that can be provided. To qualify, each project or initiative must complete an application that provides project information and an assessment of alignment with the Coalition's goals.

Use the following form to assess the proposed project or policy impact related to the Implementation Goals of the Roaring Fork Outdoor Coalition (RFOC). Review the Evaluation Questions, then craft a description of how—if at all—the question applies to your proposal. Do so for each question that applies to the project.

Step 1: Create a Project Summary, identifying the following information:

- + Project/Initiative Title
 - Provide the name of the proposed project or initiative.
 - _____
 - _____
 - Identify the sponsoring group(s) or individual(s).
 - _____
 - _____
- + Brief Description
 - Provide a brief description of the proposed project including which RFOC Guideposts are represented by the project, land management / local organization partnerships, and anticipated project timeline.
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

Step 2: Click the Map below. Download, follow the directions below, and include with submission:



Update hyperlink and include text link below once Pitkin County makes RFOC map live

Conservation Context

- Locate the project on the Conservation and Recreation Overlay Map using the Conservation and Restoration data layers.
- Identify the project area conservation and restoration priorities, as defined by the Watershed Biodiversity Initiative.

Outdoor Recreation Context

- Locate the project on the Conservation and Recreation Overlay Map using the Recreation data layers, and identify proximate recreation opportunities and gaps.
- Identify the project on the Regional Spectrum of Recreation Opportunities.
- Identify area use trends, using the Recreation Volume and Trends Dashboard.

Project Evaluation Criteria

Guideposts and Goals

Each project and initiative should align with the overall goals of the RFOC and the adopted Guideposts. Use the following list as you prepare a project summary.

Step 3: Self evaluate how the proposed project helps to support each of the goals under the applicable guideposts and outline opportunities under each guidepost for community supported values:

+ Guidepost 1: Cross-Jurisdictional Partnerships

Strengthen partnerships and unify planning, communication, and resources across jurisdictions to achieve cohesive, landscape-scale management.

+ Guidepost 2: Conservation Habitat and Connectivity

Protect and reconnect fragmented habitats, manage invasive species, enhance ecological resilience, and support biodiversity.

+ Guidepost 3: Access and Equity

Remove barriers to physical, financial, cultural, and informational access so outdoor spaces are welcoming and available to all.

+ Guidepost 4: Education and Stewardship

Promote recreation best practices and consistent communication among land managers, partners, and community organizations.

+ Guidepost 5: Recreation Volume and Impacts

Support diverse recreation experiences while addressing ecological impacts—especially in high use areas.

Checklist Scoring

Step 4: Complete the following Scoring Criteria Checklist:

- + Alignment with RFOC Vision and Mission
 - Identify how the project meets the overall mission of RFOC to turn ideas into action for the benefit of conservation and recreation in our region.
 - Identify how the project aligns with the five Guideposts and subsequent goals, using the next pages for guidance.

Scoring Criteria is established to help the Coalition review and evaluate potential projects and programs, ensuring prioritization for support and funding are consistently applied and address the different Coalition Guideposts.


The Coalition uses a Tiered Impact Scoring, which identifies the anticipated contribution a proposed project furthers the conservation and recreation goals and priorities. Each Project Evaluation Question will be reviewed and scored based on their anticipated level of impact. This approach **keeps scoring comparable across different project types (trail, restoration, outreach).**

On the score sheet, score each question by expected impact level based on the following ranking system.

- + 0 = No contribution or not applicable to the project
- + 1 = Low Contribution (minor, indirect)
- + 2 = Low-Med contribution (minor, direct)
- + 3 = Medium Contribution (moderate, direct)
- + 4 = Med-High contribution (moderate, measurable)
- + 5 = High Contribution (major, measurable)

Project Evaluation Criteria

Scoring Criteria Checklist

GOALS AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS	IMPACT DETAILS	IMPACT SCORE
<h3>CROSS JURISDICTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS</h3>		
<p>GOAL 1 - WORK TOGETHER TO PROVIDE CONSISTENT AND COORDINATED MANAGEMENT ACROSS FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL JURISDICTIONS</p>		
<p>How does the proposed project support combining efforts towards a common goal? (i.e. eliminating working in silos)</p>		 <p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
<p>How does this project encourage consistent messaging for a variety of user groups? (i.e. mountain biking, trail running, hunting, horseback riding, hiking, water-based recreation use, etc.)</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
<p>How will the proposed project support land managers at the federal, state, or local levels in combining efforts towards a common goal?</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
<p>How does the proposed project support a joint, and adaptive, management plan?</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
<p>GOAL 2 - PROMOTE COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN LAND MANAGERS AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE ROARING FORK WATERSHED</p>		
<p>How will the proposed project support land managers and local organizations in combining efforts towards a common goal?</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>

GOALS AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS	IMPACT DETAILS	IMPACT SCORE
How does the project align with relevant plans?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
How does the project encourage collaboration among agencies, nonprofits, and private stakeholders (e.g. ranchers, outfitters, irrigation districts)?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5

CONSERVATION, HABITAT, CONNECTIVITY



GOAL 3 – REDUCE HABITAT FRAGMENTATION

Describe how the project protects and/or improves wildlife habitat.		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
Is human use is anticipated? If so, what mitigation measures are proposed? (i.e. seasonal closures, limited access points, etc.)		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
How does the project enhance connected habitat areas, foraging and shelter, through the protection or expansion of conserved land, including agricultural lands?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5

GOALS AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS	IMPACT DETAILS	IMPACT SCORE
GOAL 4 – PROTECT OR IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY		
How does this project advance resiliency to a changing climate? (i.e. adaptable to changing landscape conditions?)		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
How does the project offer protections for existing areas of quality habitat, and/or restore degraded habitats to effectively support a wide variety of plant and animal species?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
Does this project require habitat improvement, if so what is needed and how would you measure success.		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
How does the project propose ongoing monitoring specific to biodiversity? Does the project accommodate adaptive management to respond to needs?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
ACCESS AND EQUITY		
GOAL 5 – CREATE OUTDOOR SPACES FOR EVERYONE		
How does the project provide resources for participating safely in outdoor recreation?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5



GOALS AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS	IMPACT DETAILS	IMPACT SCORE
How does the project ensure accessibility for people with disabilities and for different recreation types?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
How does the project reduce known barriers to participation? (e.g., crowding, cost, transportation, parking)		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
How does the project serve multiple user groups?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
GOAL 6 - PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, DIVERSE, HIGH-QUALITY OUTDOOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL USER GROUPS		
How does the project enhance connectivity to an existing recreation experience, or fill a gap of a missing recreation experience?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
How does the project enhance connectivity to trails, corridors, or communities to other recreation opportunities?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5

GOALS AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS	IMPACT DETAILS	IMPACT SCORE
<p>How does the project provide and/or diversify opportunities to multiple user groups across seasons, skill levels, and settings (primitive vs. highly developed)?</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
<h2 style="margin: 0;">EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP</h2>		
<h3 style="margin: 0;">GOAL 7 – EMPOWER VISITORS THROUGH EDUCATION AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION</h3>		
<p>How does the project provide consistent and multilingual messaging about responsible recreation, wildlife, and the environment, that extends across jurisdictional and private land boundaries?</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
<p>How does the project reach both visitors and residents through signage, outreach, and digital tools?</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
<p>How does the project identify gaps in existing education resources?</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
<h3 style="margin: 0;">GOAL 8 – BUILD A CULTURE OF STEWARDSHIP AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</h3>		
<p>How does the project follow stewardship best practices for the conservation priority it is located within and/or reflect the recreation Opportunity Class?</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5



GOALS AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS	IMPACT DETAILS	IMPACT SCORE
<p>To what extent does the project encourage participation from multiple interests, land managers, partner organizations, and community members?</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
<p>How does the project encourage ongoing stewardship and/or long-term community involvement beyond one-time events?</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5

RECREATION VOLUME AND IMPACTS



GOAL 9 – ENSURE A POSITIVE RECREATION VISITOR USE EXPERIENCE FOR

<p>Describe the anticipated visitor motivations for recreating in this area, and how those will be accommodated through the project</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
<p>Does the project address needs associated with recreation and visitation such as traffic, parking, facilities, conservation, and recreation demands?</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
<p>Does the project address visitation volumes – maintaining low use areas where appropriate and alleviating pressure in high use areas?</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5

GOALS AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS	IMPACT DETAILS	IMPACT SCORE
GOAL 10 - PROTECT THE PLACES WE LOVE TO RECREATE AND MANAGE HUMAN IMPACT ON NATURAL AREAS		
Is there capacity or a plan in place to sustainably manage and maintain this project long-term?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
Does the project accomodate recreational demand and also protect natural resources, wildlife, and water?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
Does this project potentially have a negative impact on the natural area? If yes, how does the project minimize recreation impacts and/or enhance natural resources?		<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THE ROARING FORK OUTDOOR COALITION PROJECT EVALUATION CHECKLIST!		Tally total score here:

Progress Indicators






Establishing clear and measurable goals is essential for the RFOC to effectively advance its five guideposts. Progress indicators will serve as transparent tools to measure success over time. These indicators will be included in the annual reports for the Outdoor Coalition.

The adjacent table lists progress indicators aligned with the guideposts and goals. As available, indicators will be measured against a baseline established in the first year, with progress categorized as follows:

(1) No Progress Made: no measurable developments.

(2) Some Progress Made: some advancements toward goals.

(3) Significant Progress Made: substantial advancements toward goals

	GOALS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
 CROSS JURISDICTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS	1. Work together to provide consistent and coordinated management across federal, state, and local areas.	+ Cross-jurisdictional collaborative successes.
	2. Promote collaboration and partnerships between land managers and local organizations within the Roaring Fork Watershed.	+ Annual land manager and local organization partnership successes.
 CONSERVATION, HABITAT, AND CONNECTIVITY	3. Reduce habitat fragmentation.	+ Total acreage of protected lands, including conservation easements. + Restoration projects and/or investment successes
	4. Protect or improve biodiversity	+ Acreage of protected quality habitat. + Acreage of protected and / or restored wetlands.
 ACCESS AND EQUITY	5. Create outdoor spaces for everyone	+ Annual engagement of underrepresented or marginalized communities successes. + Bilingual signage updates and outreach successes.
	6. Provide accessible, diverse, high-Quality outdoor opportunities for all user groups	+ Percent of the households within a 10-15 minute walk to public recreation area, including trails, open space, parks and water-based recreation.
 EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP	7. Empower visitors through education and clear communication	+ Education events and participants' successes. + Number of citations and reported incidents and Ranger staff capacity.
	8. Build a culture of stewardship and community involvement	+ Volunteer events and participation successes.
 RECREATION VOLUME AND IMPACTS	9. Ensure a positive recreation visitor experience for all	+ Estimated number of users at recreation areas. + Improvements to outdoor recreation opportunities.
	10. Protect the places we love to recreate and manage human impact	+ Outdoor recreation and resource protection project or initiative successes.

Definitions

Definitions utilized by the RFOC are aligned with those from the Colorado Outdoor Strategy.

Agricultural Lands

Refers to private and public lands used by the owner of the land or a lessee for farming, ranching, or grazing. Adapted from the DOLA.

Accessible Outdoor Recreation / Access to Outdoor Recreation

Accessible outdoor recreation and access to outdoor recreation can be interpreted in numerous ways. Unless otherwise specified, the Strategy interprets accessible outdoor recreation and access to outdoor recreation broadly. When specified and/or contextualized, the Strategy uses the following definitions:

- Outdoor recreation that meets the needs of disproportionately impacted communities and people experiencing disabilities (including ADA/ABA standards) to explore the outdoors and be part of the larger community despite mobility or other limitations. Adapted from Adaptive Adventures.
- Trails, open space, parks, and water-based recreation located within a 10-minute walk or 10-mile drive of someone's home. Adapted from the Trust for Public Land.
- Public access for fishing and hunting on public lands and waters, including streams and landlocked public lands. Adapted from Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.

Baseline Measure

Provides a foundation for understanding existing conditions and identifying and tracking progress toward Strategy goals and objectives. Progress can be tracked directionally and qualitatively (e.g., increase, decrease, sustain) and/or quantitatively and with time-bound targets. In most cases, the Strategy does not specify quantitative targets; reasons for this decision include lack of available data for many desired measures, and the critical importance of regional and local contexts to identify relevant, desired targets.

Biodiversity

The varieties of life and their relationships between each other and the ecosystems upon which they depend. Adapted from the National Wildlife Federation.

Climate-Resilient Conservation

Actions that improve the ability of species, habitats, ecological processes, ecosystem services, and people and communities to persist in the face of climate change and other stressors. Adapted from The Nature Conservancy's Center for Resilient Conservation Science.

Conservation

Enabling the preservation, protection, and enhancement of lands and waterways to ensure they are high-quality and functioning. Adapted from GOCO.

Exceptional Outdoor Recreation

Outstanding and high-quality experiences that enhance individual and community health and well-being, including the social and economic well-being of local and agricultural communities. The Strategy aims to provide exceptional outdoor recreation experiences for all, understanding that this will look different to different recreationists in different locales over different time spans.

Ecosystem Function

The physicochemical and biological processes that occur with ecosystems to maintain terrestrial and aquatic life and provide ecosystem services that benefit human well-being.

Ecosystem Restoration

The process of assisting in the recovery of and/or enhancing an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed by human or natural-caused impacts.

Focal Wildlife

Animals whose spatial and functional requirements are indicative of the environmental needs in a broader area. In the Roaring Fork Watershed, focal species include elk, mule deer, and bighorn sheep.

Habitat Connectivity

Refers to the degree to which the landscape facilitates the movement of fish, wildlife, and other species and ecological processes such as seed dispersal.

Inclusive Planning

Planning that welcomes and incorporates the interests, needs, values, and knowledge of a diversity of people, perspectives, communities, and organizations.

Inclusive Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation that intentionally promotes a sense of belonging where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized, regardless of their unique abilities, qualities, and perspectives.

Landscape Scale / Landscape Scale Planning

Conservation, outdoor recreation, and climate resilience planning that addresses whole, large, interconnected, and/or unfragmented landscapes. This approach to planning centers systems-level understanding of both the natural world and human systems (including rural and urban communities); underscores the importance of habitat connectivity across scales; and transcends arbitrary boundaries

and moves beyond site-specific, parcel-by-parcel approaches.

Outdoor Recreation

The broad range of nature- and place-based experiences offered by the outdoors and enjoyed by a diversity of people.

Outdoor Recreation Benefits

Positive benefits afforded by exceptional and equitable outdoor recreation, including physical and mental well-being; economic prosperity; and increased quality of life. Adapted by the 2019-2023 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)

A classification system used by land management agencies to define and manage the different combinations of physical setting, social conditions, and management intensities that shape visitor experiences.

Stewardship

An ethic that embodies the responsible management and care of Colorado's public lands and waterways by the public and land managers alike.

Sustainable Outdoor Recreation

The ability to sustain exceptional outdoor recreation experiences while meeting the environmental, social, and economic needs of present and future generations, including the health of ecosystems, communities, agricultural lands, and local economies.

