

Appendix H

Special interest areas

Introduction

This appendix provides descriptions of areas of the White River National Forest that have been proposed for designation as special interest areas (SIAs). If designated, these areas will be managed according to the direction provided for Management Areas 2.1 and 3.1 of the 2002 Forest Plan. For the location of each proposed SIA, see the management area maps in the map packet.

Descriptions begin on page H-2.

CAMP HALE

Management area	3.1 Special interest area – emphasis on use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives C, I, and K
Acres	1,460 in C and I, 1,210 in K
Emphasis	Historic
Description of values	<p>Camp Hale, site of the US Army 10th Mountain Division base that housed 16,000 troops during World War II, is of special historic significance to veterans. The site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1992. Important historic values include the valley bottom modifications, the remnant structures, and the ambiance of the setting. This area is recommended as a SIA to enhance the historic values through implementing the management plan for the camp while answering public demands for recreational use of the area.</p>
Description of area	<p>The Camp Hale site occupies a heavily modified though revegetated high-elevation valley along the upper Eagle River. Lodgepole pine and aspen surround the grasslands of the valley. Remnants of the military camp are evident and roads still follow the undeviating linear paths laid out by the Army. A campground, picnic ground, and group campsite are located at the south end of the valley. Signs interpreting the history of the site are present in a few locations.</p> <p>The area in and near the site is heavily used in the winter by cross-country skiers and snowmobilers. In the summer, tours are given on off-highway vehicles (OHVs) in and near the site. Large events such as Camp Jeep are held at the site on an annual basis.</p>
Access	<p>State Highway 24 (a leg of the Top of the Rockies Scenic and Historic Byway) is adjacent to the site. A highway pullout with interpretive signing overlooks the valley. The Colorado Trail cuts through the southern end of the camp. Cross-country skiers traverse the site as they travel between backcountry ski huts: Vance’s Hut to the south and Fowler-Hilliard Hut to the northeast.</p>
Desired condition	<p>To increase the on-site and off-site interpretation so that the public may have a better feel for the cultural landscape Camp Hale represents as well as its importance. This must be done while continuing to accommodate the growing demands for recreational uses. A self-sustaining visitor’s center on-site to help interpret the site will help accomplish this goal.</p> <p>In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.</p>

CASTLE CREEK AND ASHCROFT

Management area	3.1 Special interest area – emphasis on use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives E and K
Acres	3,370 in E and 100 in K
Emphasis	Historic and scenic
Description of values	The Castle Creek corridor begins immediately south of the town of Aspen and follows Castle Creek to just above the ghost town of Ashcroft. The area’s scenic beauty attracts thousands of visitors year-round to this valley. The ghost town of Ashcroft, listed on the NHRP, provides a good example of mining culture in the Colorado high country from the late 1800s to early 1900s. The town site has many partially restored buildings and an active interpretation program in the summer and is one of the few ghost towns accessible to persons with disabilities. Ashcroft is under special use permit to the Aspen Historical Society to facilitate interpretation of the setting.
Access	From Aspen via a paved, county-maintained road, FR 102.
Desired condition	To maintain the scenic beauty of the area while increasing the interpretive efforts in order to enhance the public’s understanding and enjoyment of the area’s cultural heritage. Access would remain unchanged and the recreation opportunity spectrum setting would remain roaded natural. In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.

COAL BASIN

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternative I
Acres	7,920
Emphasis	Historic
Description of values	Coal Basin is historically linked to the mining industry. As its name implies, coal is the resource that was obtained from this site on and off for the last 100 years. The area has been heavily affected by mineral extraction and currently is undergoing reclamation. This SIA is proposed to facilitate and accelerate the reclamation process.
Description of area	The area ranges in elevation from 8,000 to nearly 12,000 feet. Vegetation types include spruce-fir forests, aspen, Gambel oak, alpine meadow, and alpine tundra.
Access	From Redstone via FR 307. Several local mining roads are currently being rehabilitated as part of a mine land reclamation project. Two Forest Development Trails (FDTs) leave from the area, FDT 1951 and FDT 1952. FDT 1952 has been proposed as a leg for the American Discovery Trail.
Desired condition	<p>To restore the area to a natural-appearing landscape in which ecological processes will be the principle dynamic forces that serve to maintain and restore ecosystem characteristics. Maintenance of biological diversity will be emphasized as will the preservation and re-establishment of habitat for native species of plants and animals, especially threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.</p> <p>Grazing will not be allowed. Motorized travel will be restricted to that necessary for reclamation work, with the exception of the lamphouse road, which will remain open to access the trail system. Recreation access will be restricted to accelerate restoration efforts.</p> <p>This area will not be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals.</p>

COAL BASIN

Management area	3.1 Special interest area – emphasis on use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives E and K
Acres	3,010 in E and 1020 in K
Emphasis	Historic
Description of values	Coal Basin is historically linked to the mining industry. As its name implies, coal is the resource that was obtained from this site on and off for the last 100 years. Important historic values to be protected include the wagon road to Dexter Park and associated sawmill sites that milled lumber for the town site of Coal Basin. The town site of Coal Basin and the abandoned railroad bed to the town site are also important to coal mining history. This area will be proposed to the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District.
Description of area	The area ranges in elevation from 8,000 to nearly 12,000 feet. Vegetation types include spruce-fir forests, aspen, Gambel oak, alpine meadow, and alpine tundra.
Access	From Redstone via FR 307. Several local mining roads are currently being rehabilitated as part of a mine land reclamation project. Two FDTs leave from the area—FDT 1951 and FDT 1952. FDT 1952 has been proposed as a leg for the American Discovery Trail.
Desired condition	<p>To maintain, protect and interpret the significant historical features in the area. Grazing will continue because it offers no conflict with the intended emphasis. The area will continue to be managed for a semi-primitive motorized experience. The mine land reclamation project will progress as planned and as consistent with the historical values discussed here.</p> <p>The town site, the sawmill site, and the railroad bed may be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals. In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4. Locatable mineral activities in other locations in this special area will be managed, using existing laws and regulations to protect the identified values.</p>

COLORADO MIDLAND RAILROAD AND ASSOCIATED SITES

Management area	3.1 Special interest area – emphasis on use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives C, E, and K
Acres	350 in C, E, and 1;190 in K
Emphasis	Historic
Description of values	<p>The Colorado Midland Railroad played an important role in the area’s mining and industrial development. The site and its associated features will be nominated to the NHRP. This SIA consists of three segments. One includes the Hagerman Tunnel. A second segment is adjacent to lands that contained coke ovens during the mining era. A railroad tiehacking camp occupied the third parcel near Sellar Meadows. Important historic features include the railroad grade, the Hagerman Tunnel, and associated artifacts and remnant support camps.</p>
Description of area	<p>The forest vegetation in the area is lodgepole pine and aspen with Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir at higher elevations. The specific areas include both montane and alpine environments.</p>
Access	<p>Via FR 105, much of which is on the old Colorado Midland Railbed. This route also serves cross-country skiers accessing backcountry huts in the area.</p>
Desired condition	<p>To remain natural appearing. It is also intended to maintain, protect and interpret the significant historical features in the area. Grazing will continue, as it offers no conflict with the intended emphasis. The area will continue to be managed for a semiprimitive motorized experience in the summer while areas around the huts may be managed for non-motorized experiences in the winter.</p> <p>A sufficient area around the identified structures may be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals. In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4. Locatable mineral activities in other locations in this special area will be managed, using existing laws and regulations, to protect the identified values.</p>

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE LAND BRIDGE

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – limited use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives C, D, E, F, I, and K
Acres	1,020 in Alternative C; 1,030 in D; 1,027 in E; 970 in F; 980 in I; 4,430 in K
Emphasis	Zoological
Description of values	The land bridge is an important wildlife travel corridor over Interstate 70 (where the highway passes through the Eisenhower Tunnel), and is the only crossing of I-70 that is highly favorable to wildlife movement. Because it is on the Continental Divide, it links land areas to the north and south of I-70 directly and is not blocked by a river. The land bridge provides travelways to species such as bighorn sheep, mountain goats, mule deer, elk, pine marten, and potentially lynx and wolverine, connecting two large roadless areas to the north and south of the interstate.
Description of area	This SIA consists of lands to the west of the Continental Divide above the Eisenhower Tunnel.
Access	The easiest access is via ski lifts operated by Loveland Ski Area, which is located east of the Continental Divide.
Desired condition	In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.

DEAD HORSE CREEK

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives C, D, I, and K
Acres	1,280 in C; 1,300 in D; 1,270 in I; and 990 in K
Emphasis	Geologic
Description of values	Hanging Lake, and its associated Bridal Veil falls and Spouting Rock, is a unique waterfall and pool area formed from limestone deposition at the lower end of East Dead Horse Canyon. The area is proposed because it is rich in karst topography, a type of landscape that is formed over dolomite, limestone, or gypsum. Typical to these areas are sinkholes, caves, and underground drainages, although no cave locations are currently known in the area. There also are a couple of important plant associations within the boundary of this SIA associated with riparian areas and microclimates associated with a canyon environment.
Description of area	This area contains portions of both the East and West Dead Horse Creek watersheds. It is bounded by Hanging Lake on the south and extends toward the top of the White River Plateau in parts of the upper East Dead Horse Creek drainage. Vegetation includes Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, aspen, Douglas fir, and blue spruce. Meadow and shrublands occur as patches within forested areas.
Access	Access is cross-country, as there are no trails or roads into the actual SIA. The closest access is from Hanging Lake Rest Area on I-70, then via FDT 1850, the Hanging Lake Trail.
Desired condition	<p>To remain natural appearing and non-motorized. No trail construction is planned for the area. Livestock grazing is allowed but is almost nonexistent due to the nature of the canyons and the vegetation.</p> <p>In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.</p>

HOLY CROSS CITY – GOLD PARK

Management area	3.1 Special interest area – emphasis on use and interpretation
Included in	Alternative I and K
Acres	320 in I; 170 in K
Emphasis	Historic and scenic
Description of values	<p>Holy Cross City is a historic mining camp erected at an elevation of 11,335 feet during a short-lived early 1880s gold rush. Before the camp’s decline, the population reached a high of about 300. Remnants are still present of the Holy Cross Mill, shaft houses, and a few other buildings. The old stagecoach road to the town site currently is a very difficult but popular jeep road that challenges four-wheel-drive enthusiasts seeking to reach the site. Holy Cross City provides a good illustration of the area’s mining heritage and of the hardships faced by prospectors.</p> <p>Near Holy Cross City the SIA boundary adjoins the boundary of Holy Cross Wilderness and follows FR 759 east to Gold Park. The boundaries of the proposed SIA include some private inholdings (i.e., mining claims). These private property rights must be respected and the landowners need to be part of any proposed plans.</p>
Access	<p>Gold Park is accessed via Homestake Road (FR 703) about seven miles from U.S. Highway 24. From Gold Park, Holy Cross City is accessed via FR 759, a challenging four-wheel-drive road.</p> <p>The area receives seasonal visitation in snow-free months from four-wheel-drive enthusiasts and is a popular destination trip for jeep clubs. There are no interpretive signs at either Holy Cross City or Gold Park to let the public know what transpired here in the 1800s.</p>
Desired condition	<p>To continue the four-wheel-drive experience to Holy Cross City and to enhance a heritage tourism experience by developing and installing interpretive signage that tells the history of the area, its connection to the industrial development of the western United States, and the hardships faced by the miners within the town site.</p> <p>This area will not be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals.</p>

INDEPENDENCE PASS

Management area	3.1 Special interest area – emphasis on use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives E, K
Acres	8,750 in E; 180 in K
Emphasis	Historic and scenic
Description of values	Snaking between Hunter-Fryingpan Wilderness and Collegiate Peaks Wilderness, the Independence Pass corridor is very heavily traveled in the summer months by tourists crossing between the Arkansas River Valley and Aspen. It is known mainly for its outstanding scenic values, from an aspen ecosystem near the town of Aspen to the alpine tundra at Independence Pass. There are many scenic pullouts and vista points. The Old Independence town site, listed on the NHRP, provides a good example of the Colorado high country’s 19th century mining heritage, and is one of the few good remaining examples located on a major public thoroughfare. Paralleling the highway is the old Independence Pass Toll Road—still evident in many places.
Description of area	Vegetation ranges from aspen and lodgepole pine at lower elevations to Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir and alpine vegetation at the highest elevations. The scenery is spectacular, especially at Independence Pass. There are many scenic pullouts and vista points. Four campgrounds, the Grottos day-use area, and several trailheads complement the visitor’s experience. In April 1971, the Colorado Legislature designated this area as a scenic area highway by amending CRS 1963, Article 5 of Chapter 120.
Access	Via State Highway 82 from either Aspen or Twin Lakes. The route is closed during the winter months.
Desired condition	<p>To maintain the scenic beauty of the area while increasing the interpretive efforts in order to enhance the public’s understanding and enjoyment of the area’s ecological and cultural heritage. Access will remain unchanged and the ROS setting will remain rural.</p> <p>In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.</p>

JAKEMAN EAST

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternative I
Acres	3,170
Emphasis	Ecological
Description of values	This area has been heavily affected by recent timber harvest activities. Designation as an SIA is proposed to facilitate and accelerate restoration. Under this form of management, the area will add to the core of the Hardscrabble roadless area and will provide an expanded wildlife security area.
Description of area	This area includes alpine meadow, aspen, spruce-fir, and lodgepole vegetation types. Elevations range from 9,400 to 10,800 feet. Present use has been timber harvest, firewood gathering, and grazing, with most recreation use occurring during the hunting seasons.
Access	Via FR 400 from Eagle or Thomasville, then FR 512. Access by vehicle will be prohibited except for administrative purposes on FR 512 beyond the junction with Powerline Road.
Desired condition	<p>Previous vegetation units that have been treated will be monitored for regeneration. Grazing will be allowed if it does not interfere with threatened and endangered species (TES) management objectives. Non-motorized recreation will be allowed. Motorized recreation will be allowed on Powerline Road and FR 512 to the junction with Powerline Road.</p> <p>This area will not be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals.</p>

LEEMAN

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternative I
Acres	1,130
Emphasis	Ecological
Description of values	The Leeman area has been heavily affected by recent timber harvest activities. The area also provides opportunities for dispersed recreation including big game hunting. The area is proposed as an SIA to facilitate and accelerate its restoration.
Description of area	The majority of the vegetation in this area is aspen, but there is a small amount of sagebrush.
Access	About 13 miles south of Eagle on West Brush Creek Road (FR 400) to Sylvan Lake, then on FR 413 about one mile.
Desired condition	To return the area to a natural condition and rehabilitate signs of disturbance. Travel will be managed for non-motorized uses only. Habitat for big game will be maintained or improved. This area will not be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals.

MAIN ELK

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives D, F, and K
Acres	6,290 in Alternative D; 1,640 in F; 4,680 in K
Emphasis	Zoological, botanical, and scenic
Description of values	Main Elk is a very primitive and scenic canyon that has a population of Colorado River cutthroat trout. It features natural barriers in the form of waterfalls and would lend itself well to a large meta-population of cutthroats, with elimination of brook trout in the system. Vegetation in the area is somewhat unusual, with limber pine on the canyon ridgetops, and on its eastern edge the Rifle Ranger District's only stand of lodgepole pine. Main Elk also has evidence of bison historically using the area.
Description of area	Main Elk canyon is a deeply incised canyon with Douglas fir, oakbrush, aspen, riparian vegetation, and rock cliffs. It ranges in elevation from 6,200 to 9,400 feet.
Access	Via County Road 245 out of New Castle to County Road 243 to reach the south end.
Desired condition	To maintain the pristine canyon riparian ecosystem, which may someday provide habitat for a pure population of Colorado River cutthroat trout. The maintenance of biological diversity will be emphasized. In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.

MITCHELL CREEK

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives C, D, and K
Acres	3,930 in Alternative C; 4,550 in D; 4,790 in K
Emphasis	Zoological
Description of values	Mitchell Creek has a very pure, stable population of Colorado River cutthroat trout, a Region 2 sensitive species that may be federally listed in the future. A state fish hatchery is located on Mitchell Creek, thus water quality is very important.
Description of area	The area ranges from 8,000 feet elevation to approximately 10,000 feet, and contains primarily oakbrush, aspen, and Douglas fir vegetation types. The area is on the south side of the White River Plateau, and contains three branches of Mitchell Creek. Two plant species of special concern as classified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program are within the area.
Access	Three miles north of Glenwood Springs on County Road 132 up to the fish hatchery. From there a primitive trail exists (FDT 1845).
Desired condition	To protect and maintain the pure population of Colorado River cutthroat trout by protecting water quality, and to maintain primitive non-motorized access. Steep slopes in the vicinity of Mitchell Creek, and areas where sensitive plants are found may be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals. In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.

PORCUPINE

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternative E and K
Acres	1,570 in both
Emphasis	Botanical
Description of values	This area is in excellent ecological condition and provides excellent representation for some of the high-elevation ecosystem types of the forest, including spruce-fir and lodgepole pine forest, alpine, and willow carr and wetland communities.
Description of area	This area encompasses the upper reaches of the Porcupine drainage. It includes high mountains with moderate-to-steep slopes, and large cirque basins. The area is a vacant allotment, thus it is not currently grazed.
Access	There are no system trails or roads within the area and it is closed to motorized use. Some winter backcountry skiing does occur.
Desired condition	<p>To remain natural appearing. Emphasis is on the maintenance of current biological diversity and preservation of habitat for all native species of plants and animals. The area will continue to be managed for non-motorized travel and may be administratively closed to backcountry ski use.</p> <p>Fens may be withdrawn from future locatable mineral entry. In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.</p>

QUAKER MESA

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternative D
Acres	4,730
Emphasis	Ecological (botanical and zoological)
Description of values	Quaker Mesa features a large stable stand of quaking aspen that has not experienced much active management or human influence. The area has no legal motorized use, has not had any stock pond construction or previous timber harvest, and has very light cattle grazing. The value of this large area is in providing reference conditions in a stable (determinate) aspen stand for scientific and ecological purposes.
Description of area	Quaker Mesa is at an elevation of approximately 8,500 feet to 9,000 feet, in an unroaded area in the upper West Divide watershed. It is one of the largest areas of continuous aspen on the forest, as well as Colorado as a whole. Vegetation consists of mixed spruce-fir and aspen forest interspersed with open meadow and parklands. Recreation use is low except during hunting seasons.
Access	Via FR 800, which runs along West Divide Creek. The site is about one mile from the road, in T9S, R90W, Section 16.
Desired condition	To maintain, protect and monitor the ecological systems and processes in the area, and to allow natural occurrence regimes in the area, i.e. fire and conifer succession. Light grazing will continue because it does not conflict with the intended emphasis. The area will continue to be managed for a primitive, non-motorized experience. This area will not be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals.

QUANDARY PEAK

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – limited use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives C, D, E, I, and K
Acres	2,050 in Alternative C; 8,690 in D; 1,890 in E; 2,050 in I; 4,080 in K
Emphasis	Botanical
Description of values	<p>The Quandary Peak SIA contains a high-quality representation of common tundra plant communities dominated by <i>Acomastylis rossii</i> and <i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>, in addition to a diverse mosaic of alpine wetlands, fens, and scree communities. It includes high-elevation wetlands above 13,000 feet on flat benches beneath Fletcher Mountain and Pacific Peak. The area is potential habitat for 12 state rare species, and is known habitat for at least two of these species (the larger SIA under Alternative D includes the known sites for all 12 state rare species). The area is pristine and rarely visited by humans. It was evaluated as a potential RNA but was excluded from this classification because of its small size.</p>
Description of area	<p>The area is predominantly alpine with elevations that vary, depending on the alternative, up to the 14,265-foot summit of Quandary Peak.</p>
Access	<p>Access to the area is cross-country. Although Quandary Peak is one of the easiest fourteeners in Colorado to climb, there is no system trail to the top.</p>
Desired condition	<p>To remain natural appearing. Emphasis is on the maintenance of current biological diversity and preservation of habitat for all native species of plants and animals, especially threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.</p> <p>Natural ecological processes will be the principal dynamic forces that serve to maintain and restore ecosystem characteristics in conditions that reflect little modification by humans. As impacts of recreationists accessing the peak increase, a designated route will be established for summer hikers.</p> <p>Areas of known sensitive and rare plant species may be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals. A temporary withdrawal is recommended for the rest of the area until plant surveys are completed. In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.</p>

STERRY LAKE

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives D and K
Acres	3,640 in D; 2,520 in K
Emphasis	Zoological
Description of values	The Sterry Lake SIA is a unique wetland complex comprised of several lakes, large ponds, streams, and wet meadows. This area supports the Forest’s only known population of northern leopard frogs, a Region 2 sensitive species. The area also produces a diversity of waterfowl species and has been documented as providing important montane waterfowl nesting habitat. What makes this area unique is the high concentration of wetlands interspersed through forested cover of both spruce-fir and aspen. These attributes make the Sterry Lake SIA valuable for supporting a large diversity of wildlife species.
Description of area	The area is located on the south side of Blanco Ranger District. Elevations of this wetland complex range from 8,400 to 9,000 feet. The area is comprised of spruce-fir, aspen, mountain shrub, and mountain grasslands. There are several lakes, and numerous small ponds and wet meadows, where vegetation consists of a variety of willow, carex, and rush species.
Access	From Meeker, County Road 8 to Buford, then County Road 17 south, which turns into FR 245 (known as the Buford-New Castle Road). About two miles past the forest boundary, east on FR 240. Sterry Lake is about one mile on FR 240. The remainder of the wetland complex can be accessed from this point on foot or horseback.
Desired condition	<p>To maintain a natural-appearing landscape in which ecological processes will be the principle dynamic forces that serve to maintain and restore natural ecosystem functions. The maintenance of biological diversity will be emphasized, as will the preservation and re-establishment of habitat for native species of plants and animals. Primary focus will be on waterfowl and other wetlands species, especially TES species (particularly the northern leopard population that currently inhabits this area).</p> <p>Short-duration grazing will be allowed, as long as it does not conflict with the ecological goals expressed above. It is important to maintain riparian vegetation at sufficient heights to provide successful waterfowl nesting and brood-raising habitat. Noxious weeds will continue to be treated aggressively to restore the area to a more natural condition, and to promote the growth of native vegetation.</p> <p>In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.</p>

TAYLOR PASS

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternatives C, D, and K
Acres	860 in Alternative C; 500 in D; 860 in K
Emphasis	Sensitive and endangered species
Description of values	The area to the south of Taylor Pass is significant for the number of identified threatened and endangered high-alpine plants that have been found to occur there. This high-alpine environment is also home to bighorn sheep and mountain goats.
Description of area	Spruce-fir forest, Krummholtz ecotone, alpine tundra, and rock barrens.
Access	Via Express Creek Road (FR 122) from the Ashcroft town site.
Desired condition	<p>To restrict summer motorized access off FR 122. No grazing will be permitted in the management area. Winter wildlife movements will take precedence over winter-motorized access.</p> <p>In the final analysis and determination for the need for a formal locatable mineral withdrawal, alternative protection opportunities will be considered as directed by FSM 2761.4.</p>

UPPER GYPSUM CREEK

Management area	2.1 Special interest area – minimal use and interpretation
Included in	Alternative I
Acres	680
Emphasis	Ecological
Description of values	Upper Gypsum Creek, which adjoins a proposed wilderness area in Alternative I, has been affected by recent timber harvest activities. The area is proposed as a SIA to facilitate and accelerate its restoration.
Description of area	This SIA is in two pods of approximately 420 and 260 acres respectively. The vegetation in the area is mainly aspen and lodgepole pine. The area provides habitat for some management indicator species, and also provides dispersed recreation opportunities including big game hunting.
Access	Via FR 412, about 15 miles southeast of Gypsum.
Desired condition	To return the area to a natural condition and rehabilitate signs of disturbance. Travel will be managed for non-motorized uses only. This area will not be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals.

WARREN LAKES

Management area	3.1 Special interest area – emphasis on use and interpretation
Included in	Alternative K
Acres	340
Emphasis	Biological
Description of values	<p>A former private land inholding surrounded by national forest land, this parcel has recently been acquired by the Forest Service. The land contains a large, unique, high altitude (11,000 ft.) peat-producing fen (wetland). Private ownership since the late 1800s led to development of dams to create a fishery, and ditch drainages systems to allow for peat mining. The area contains one existing trout pond and one reconstructed wetland pond. There is potential and plans to reconstruct one additional wetland in the SIA.</p> <p>This particular peat fen is one of the oldest in Colorado. In previous academic investigations it has provided historical pollen, fire, and vegetation data for the past 12,000 years. Most other fens in the state were glacially scoured 3-4 thousand years ago. Reclamation of the ditched area to a functional peat-producing fen is allowing this fen to continue to build bio-historical records, and preserve those already in place.</p>
Description of area	<p>The ponds within the project area have been restored to retain only what is calculated as the natural water holding potential for the fen. This provides habitat for several sensitive species found at this elevation including boreal toad and northern leopard frog. A plant on the Regional Forester’s sensitive species list, altai cotton-grass, <i>Eriophorum altaicum</i> var. <i>neogaeum</i>, is found on this property. There are three colonies of only 25 known populations of this plant in the state.</p> <p>The area is used by tiger salamander, mallards, teal, spotted sandpiper, killdeer, and other waterfowl. Since the ponds have been dry for some time, it is unknown as to the exact waterfowl potential. However, similar elevation wetlands on the nearby Flattops Wilderness provide habitat for uncommon waterfowl such as Barrow’s goldeneye, and this species plus hooded merganser and common loon have been observed in the vicinity. The property also provides habitat for blue grouse, snowshoe hare, and mule deer. It also has extensive use as an elk wallow and is surrounded by excellent lynx habitat.</p> <p>Current use of the project site is recreation use, including hiking, bicycling, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, hunting, and fishing. A Tenth Mountain Hut Association hut (Benedict Hut) is located on site and portions of the property are adjacent to the Hunter-Fryingpan Wilderness.</p>
Access	Via Smuggler Mountain Road (FR 131) northeast of Aspen.
Desired condition	<p>To increase the on-site and off-site interpretation so that the public can see the positive effects of restoring the area to its original biological and physical function. On site interpretation signs are provided for visitors at the Benedict ski hut.</p> <p>This area will not be withdrawn from future entry for locatable minerals.</p>