1.5 Organization of the Management Plan

The Chaffee County Heritage Area Management Plan is organized into five main sections that provide a vision and a plan for the future of the Chaffee County Heritage Area and the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway. These five sections begin with a vision, followed by the identification of the county’s intrinsic qualities and those issues and opportunities that affect the Heritage Area. A wayfinding and interpretive strategy and a strategic plan are the core sections of the Management Plan. These two chapters include recommendations for future improvements to the Byway and identify partnerships that should be undertaken to improve the Heritage Area.

Chapter 1.0 provides an overview and introduction to the Chaffee County Heritage Area and the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway. The role of the Chaffee County Heritage Area Advisory Board is also described in this chapter. Chapter 2.0 presents a vision for the future of the Heritage Area that provides the basis for planning, infrastructure, and management recommendations that occur later in the report.

Chapter 3.0 provides a summary analysis of Chaffee County Heritage Area’s intrinsic qualities—its scenic, natural, agricultural, cultural, historical, archeological, and recreational resources. Intrinsic qualities are often defined as those inherent, essential, unique or irreplaceable features that are distinctly characteristic of an area. A series of illustrative maps completes the description of these qualities.

Issues such as growth and development, land use policy, scenic character, recreational conflicts, lack of knowledge of significant resources, economic viability, wayfinding, and visitor amenities all affect the Chaffee County Heritage Area. A summary of these issues and related opportunities is presented in Chapter 4.0.

Chapters 5.0 and 6.0 outline a series of recommendations and strategies that will guide the CCHAAB in managing the Heritage Area and Byway. The wayfinding and interpretive strategy is presented in Chapter 5.0, and provides a consistent county-wide approach for the interpretation of the scenic, natural, agricultural, cultural, archeological, and historical assets of the Heritage Area. Chapter 6.0 is the Strategic Plan, which is a comprehensive plan of specific actions that are to be undertaken by the Chaffee County Heritage Area Board (CCHAAB) and its partners to achieve the goals of the Chaffee County Heritage Area and the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway. The Strategic Plan is organized into three approaches: Preserve Scenic Character through Resource Protection, Identify and Protect Significant Historic Resources, and Educate and Engage the Community and Visitors. The Action Plan is the last section of Chapter 6.0, and provides the CCHAAB with a detailed list of projects to be undertaken in the next few years.
2.0 Vision for the Chaffee County Heritage Area

2.1 Vision

Development of the Management Plan was guided by the CCHAAB’s vision for the future of the Heritage Area and the Byway.

“The vision that the CCHAAB has of the future Chaffee County Heritage Area is of a community that has successfully balanced growth and economic development with protection of its rural and agricultural landscapes, scenic river and mountain views, natural areas, cultural traditions, and historical places, all of which give the county its sense of place and make it proud. It is a place where visitors and residents alike experience, understand and appreciate the county’s heritage resources through respectful exploration, learning and adventure.”

2.2 Goals of the Management Plan

In the broadest sense, the purpose of the Management Plan is to ensure that the future vision is effectively accomplished. The following specific goals have guided development of the Plan’s strategic actions to implement that vision.

- Identify and define the essential natural, archeological, historical, and cultural resources that shape the character of the Chaffee County Heritage Area.

- Preserve the heritage values of Chaffee County, while sustaining and enhancing the desirability of living, working, and recreating in the County.

- Promote the value of Chaffee County’s scenic character, and identify the underlying resources (agricultural, natural, historical, and cultural) that contribute to that scenic character.

- Encourage actions (including heritage tourism) that promote economic development while preserving a way of life that the community as a whole favors.

- Work in partnership with the local community including ranchers and property owners, residents, government agencies, public land managers, and historic preservation organizations to implement projects that promote good land stewardship and protection of heritage resources.

- Educate and engage residents and visitors about Chaffee County Heritage Area’s significant places through exploration and learning of the county’s heritage.
3.0 Intrinsic Qualities

This chapter provides a summary analysis of Chaffee County Heritage Area’s intrinsic qualities—its scenic, natural, agricultural, cultural, historical, archeological, and recreational resources. A brief description of each intrinsic quality is provided. More detailed information on the intrinsic qualities is presented in a subsequent chapter, Chapter 7.0 Background. This chapter also includes illustrative maps that complete the descriptions of these qualities.

Intrinsic qualities are those characteristic features that give a landscape its own sense of place. Intrinsic qualities are often defined as those inherent, essential, unique or irreplaceable features that are distinctly characteristic of an area.

The Chaffee County Heritage Area and Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway have five intrinsic qualities that combine to give the county its distinct rural community—scenic; natural; agricultural; cultural, historical and archeological; and recreational resources. A brief description of each of these intrinsic qualities follows.

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**Chaffee County Heritage Area’s Five Intrinsic Qualities**

- Scenic Beauty
- Natural Diversity
- Agricultural Lands
- Cultural, Historical, and Archeological Heritage
- Recreation
Scenic Byway Viewshed Analysis

PLAN LEGEND

Visibility Resources
- Not Visible from the Scenic Byway
- Visible from up to 3 miles of roadway
- Visible from 3-7 miles from the roadway
- Visible from more than 7 miles of roadway

Line-of-Sight to a Structure

Figure 2
3.1 Scenic Beauty

The scenic beauty of Chaffee County is without parallel in the Rocky Mountain West. The Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway provides a 57-mile corridor that accesses the high mountain valley of the Arkansas River. It provides scenic views of its two major life zones and Colorado’s impressive mountain range of ‘14ers’ (mountains with a summit of 14,000+ feet above sea level). A spectacular view of at least one of these impressive mountains is possible from almost anywhere in the county.

The county’s scenic character was analyzed through a three-part process that included a viewshed analysis, a skyline analysis, and a scenic quality composite. Four graphic maps illustrate the findings from this analysis:

- Scenic Byway Viewshed Analysis (Figure 2)
- Scenic Byway Viewshed Analysis – Excluding Public Lands (Figure 3)
- Skyline Analysis (Figure 4)
- Character Zones and Priority Views (Figure 5)

The viewshed analysis documented those areas along the Byway that are most visible to a traveler by identifying the regions, at ground level, that are visible from a series of viewpoints along the Byway. The analysis revealed that most of the foreground along the Byway is visible to the traveler. Both man-made and natural elements are visible, and many contribute to the scenic character. The working landscapes of the valley’s ranches, the Arkansas River, and diverse natural areas are elements of the foreground that are significant. These foreground views accent the long views from the Byway toward the ‘14ers’ and of the surrounding hills that are equally visible and equally important. The Skyline Analysis identified locations where a structure of 35 feet (the height allowed by building code) would interrupt views to the skyline. As stated in the Citizen’s Land Use Foundation recommendations as a site standard for rural residential, development in this land use will respect the intent of the Byway and not disrupt the view corridor where feasible.
Scenic Byway Viewshed Analysis - Excluding Public Lands

Plan Legend
- Viewshed
- Downtown Area
- Scenic Byway
- Arkansas River
- Federal Highway
- Local Road
- Trail
- Stream/River
- County Line

Visibility Resources
- Not Visible from the Scenic Byway
- Visible from up to 3 miles of roadway
- Visible from 3-7 miles of roadway
- Visible from more than 7 miles of roadway

Line of Sight to a Structure

Figure 3
The Character Zones and Priority Views map identifies points along or adjacent to the Byway that offer ‘priority’ views (those that provide most significant or characteristic views into the river valley and towards the 14ers) showcasing significant natural, historical, and agricultural resources. The ‘priority’ views were identified through field reconnaissance with additional input from the CCHAAB, the local community, and the Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan.

These ‘priority’ views reflect the community’s collective agreement on where the most significant views occur. These views are numbered on the Character Zones and Priority Views map (Figure 5), and include the following list.

1 – view south from Granite along US 24  
2 – view west towards Clear Creek (route to Vicksburg and Winfield)  
3 – view south in the Narrows towards Railroad Bridge  
4 – view west from Cottonwood Pass  
5 – view west from Buena Vista  
6 – panoramic views from Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA)  
   Collegiate Peaks Scenic Overlook  
7 – views west on Trout Creek Pass towards Mt. Princeton  
8 – views south on US 285 to river valley and agricultural lands  
9 – views west on Chalk Creek Road towards Mt. Princeton  
10 – views west from US 285 and Chalk Creek Road  
11 – panoramic views from US 285 to the north at high ridge  
12 – views west all along US 285 west towards 14ers  
13 – views north on US 285 at ridge north of Poncha Springs  
14 – views north along CO 291 from Salida,  
15 – views north from Poncha Pass on US 285  
16 – views to and from Tenderfoot Mountain

The protection of Chaffee County’s scenic character is critical to the Heritage Area and Byway. Of particular importance is the protection of the significant views, including the foreground views, and the viewsheds, and those elements that contribute to these views. The scenic character is important to the county’s tourism and recreational base, and is also highly valued by residents as it provides a sense of place and contributes to the county’s quality of life.
Skyline Analysis

PLAN LEGEND

Visibility Resources

- Not Visible from the Scenic Byway
- Visible from up to 3 miles of roadway
- Visible from 3-7 miles from the roadway
- Visible from more than 7 miles of roadway

Line-of-Sight to a Structure

0 1.2 2.5 3.75 5 Miles

Where:

- Viewshed
- Downtown Area
- Scenic Byway
- Arkansas River
- Federal Highway
- Local Road
- Trail
- Stream/River
- County Line

Figure 4
Character Zones and Priority Views

PLAN LEGEND

- Overlook
- Viewshed
- Scenic Byway
- Arkansas River
- Federal Highway
- Local Road
- Trail
- Stream/River
- County Line
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- Forest
- Forest Service Wilderness
- State Land
- State Park, Wildlife, or Recreation Area
- Private w/Conservation

Figure 5
3.2 Natural Diversity

The county’s natural resources were inventoried and mapped to identify the extent of wildlife habitat, riparian areas, and other important natural resources that contribute to the character of the Heritage Area and the Byway. A number of sources were consulted in the inventory preparation, including the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) and the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW).

The detailed natural resource inventory, and maps illustrating individual natural resources such as wildlife distribution, riparian areas, and potential conservation areas are presented in Chapter 7.0 Background.

This section provides a summary description of those natural resources that characterize the Heritage Area. It also includes the Natural Resource Composite (Figure 6, page 22), a map that combines the individual natural resource maps to illustrate those areas with a high occurrence of overlapping resources.

Natural Resources

Among the most outstanding natural features of the upper Arkansas Valley and the Chaffee County Heritage Area are the glacial characteristics of its topography. The rocky remnants of its giant glacial moraines, evident from Buena Vista to Salida, are what make this valley different from other major river valleys in the region. About 70 million years ago, the shallow inland sea that had been covering Colorado retreated for the last time due to a tremendous period of mountain building that affected the whole Rocky Mountain chain. This uplifting raised the sedimentary rocks that had been deposited on the floor of the sea upward into today’s Sawatch Range, which includes the Collegiate Peaks that dip west and the Mosquito Range to the east. The two mountain ranges are separated by what is now the valley of the Arkansas River. Evidence of the earlier inland sea remains near the town of Granite in northern Chaffee County, where Precambrian granite that is hundreds of millions of years old also occurs.

After the mountain building had raised these two ranges, climate conditions turned very cold causing a vast cooling across the region. Immense mountain glaciers formed near the crest of the mountains and slowly ground their way down to the valleys. They steepened slopes and carved cirques in their paths, and deposited great masses of rock, known as terminal moraines, where they ended. These glaciers were the primary agents
creating the landscapes we see today: very steep upper slopes, great cirques carved near the ridgelines, and tremendous masses of rubble deposited near the bottoms of the slopes nearer the river.

As the glacial ice melted, streams began to flow eastward, forming valleys. The Arkansas River is one of these mountain streams, starting high in the Sawatch Range above Leadville, meandering through mountain valleys, and running through steep-sided gorges before finally flowing out into the plains.

In a nod to its glacial heritage, and like most Colorado rivers in the high mountains, natural flows in the Arkansas River occur primarily as a result of snow melt runoff. Snowfall accumulates in the mountains during the winter and early spring months and as it begins to melt in late spring and early summer, it often leads to high intensity short duration runoff events. This interaction of snow melt, runoff, and geomorphology forms distinct vegetation communities. For example, flooding inundates vegetation, physically dislodging seedlings/saplings, and altering channel morphology through erosion and deposition of sediment.

The Heritage Area supports a diversity of vegetation communities that in general can be divided into ecological zones based on elevation. Within these zones, vegetation can be further characterized by its relationship with water (hydrologic regime). These ecological zones include uplands with forests and grasslands that are not supported by the Arkansas River or its tributaries, and riparian areas of deciduous trees and shrubs that are present around modern-day reservoirs or along the Arkansas River and are supported by adjacent sources of water. Wetlands of herbaceous plants and shrubs also occur along the Arkansas River and its tributaries; these are supported by the Arkansas River and/or its shallow subsurface waters (alluvial aquifer).

The wide bottom lands of the Arkansas River, along with the county’s diverse vegetation communities, provide important habitat for many wildlife species. In addition, the extensive acreage of public lands, including large tracts of specially designated lands, such as the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness Area and Brown’s Canyon Wilderness Study Area, protect important natural areas. Several species of predators, ungulates (hoofed mammals), and raptors (i.e., bald eagle and peregrine falcon) occur
The Natural Resources Composite map was generated by adding the NDIS wildlife distribution map layers, riparian areas and the Colorado Natural Heritage Potential Conservation Areas together. The NDIS layers were assigned values of 1 if the species distribution occurred and 0 if it did not. Riparian areas were assigned a value of 1. The CNHP areas were assigned values of 1 - 3 (1=General Biodiversity, 2=Moderate - High Biodiversity, 3= Very High - Outstanding Biodiversity). The resulting map indicates the areas of greatest natural resource overlap.
within the Heritage Area. Although it is rare for a traveler to see some of these species, the likelihood of viewing wildlife in this area is much greater than in many other areas of Colorado. Elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep (hoofed mammals) may be commonly seen during winter and spring months crossing the Collegiate Peaks Scenic Byway. The severe winter range for mule deer and winter concentration areas for elk occur in the wide expanses of the Arkansas River Valley. Bighorn sheep are common in the high altitude areas and within the Brown’s Canyon Wilderness Study Area.

In an effort to establish a viable population of Canada lynx, the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) initiated a reintroduction effort in 1997, with the first lynx released in February 1999. From 1999 to 2006, more than 200 lynx were released in Colorado, including some in the county. Because Chaffee County has many lands above 9,500 feet in elevation, it is possible that the area supports some of the surviving Canada lynx.

Notable raptors common in the Heritage Area include the osprey, peregrine falcon, and bald eagle. Osprey forage in the Arkansas River north of Salida, and peregrine falcon nest within the Chalk Creek corridor and near Clear Creek Reservoir. Wintering bald eagles use large trees near open water and/or riparian habitats for establishing diurnal perches near feeding areas. Bald eagles may occasionally migrate through the corridor en route to breeding or wintering habitat.

**Natural Resource Composite**

The natural resource inventory and the Natural Resource Composite (Figure 6, page 22) are objective analyses that illustrate areas of natural resource importance, where modifications can be predicted to have consequences on habitat or wildlife. The Natural Resource Composite map is not intended to imply that all the high coincidence areas shown should be conserved, whether by public acquisition or by other means. However, it does provide information on those major areas that could be considered for future protection, monitoring or mitigation.

The Natural Resource Composite was created by overlaying several mapping layers into a single map. These included the NDIS (Natural Diversity Information Source) wildlife distribution map layers, documented riparian areas, and the Potential Conservation Areas developed by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. The NDIS layers were assigned a value of 1 if the species distribution occurred and 0 if it did not; riparian areas were assigned a value of 1; and the CHNP were assigned values of 1 to 3 (i.e., low to high) based on biodiversity. Areas in white have no mapped resources. As greater overlap occurs, areas get ‘hotter’ in color. For example, those areas with the greatest natural resource overlap are in red and dark orange.