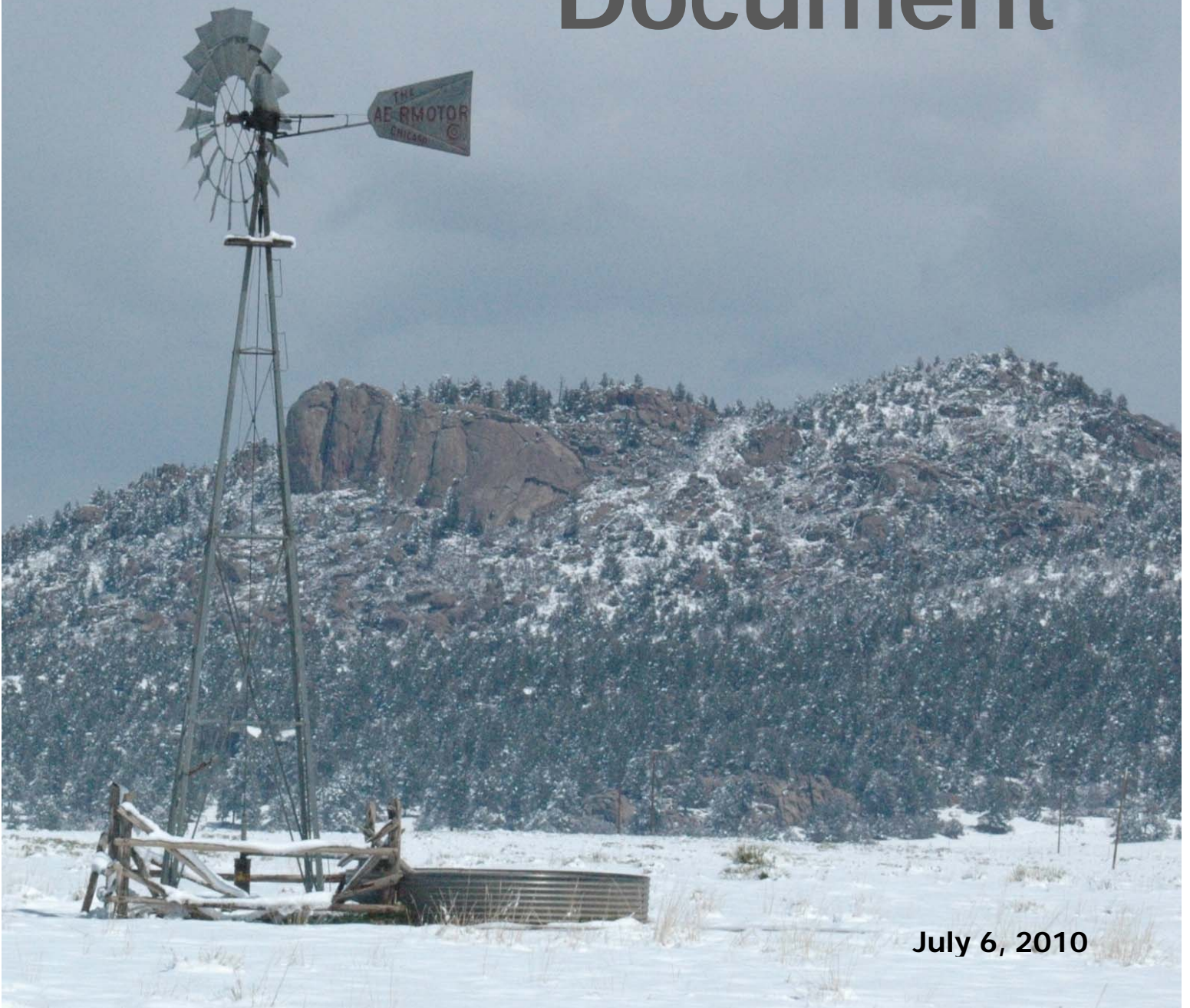


Custer County Master Plan Supporting Document



July 6, 2010

Vision Statement

Custer County, one of Colorado's most beautiful mountain landscapes, honors its rural, agricultural, mining, and western heritage, and seeks to connect its future with its past by protecting local values, preserving community assets, respecting property rights, accommodating managed growth and compatible economic, and serving as responsible stewards of its inspiring natural environment.

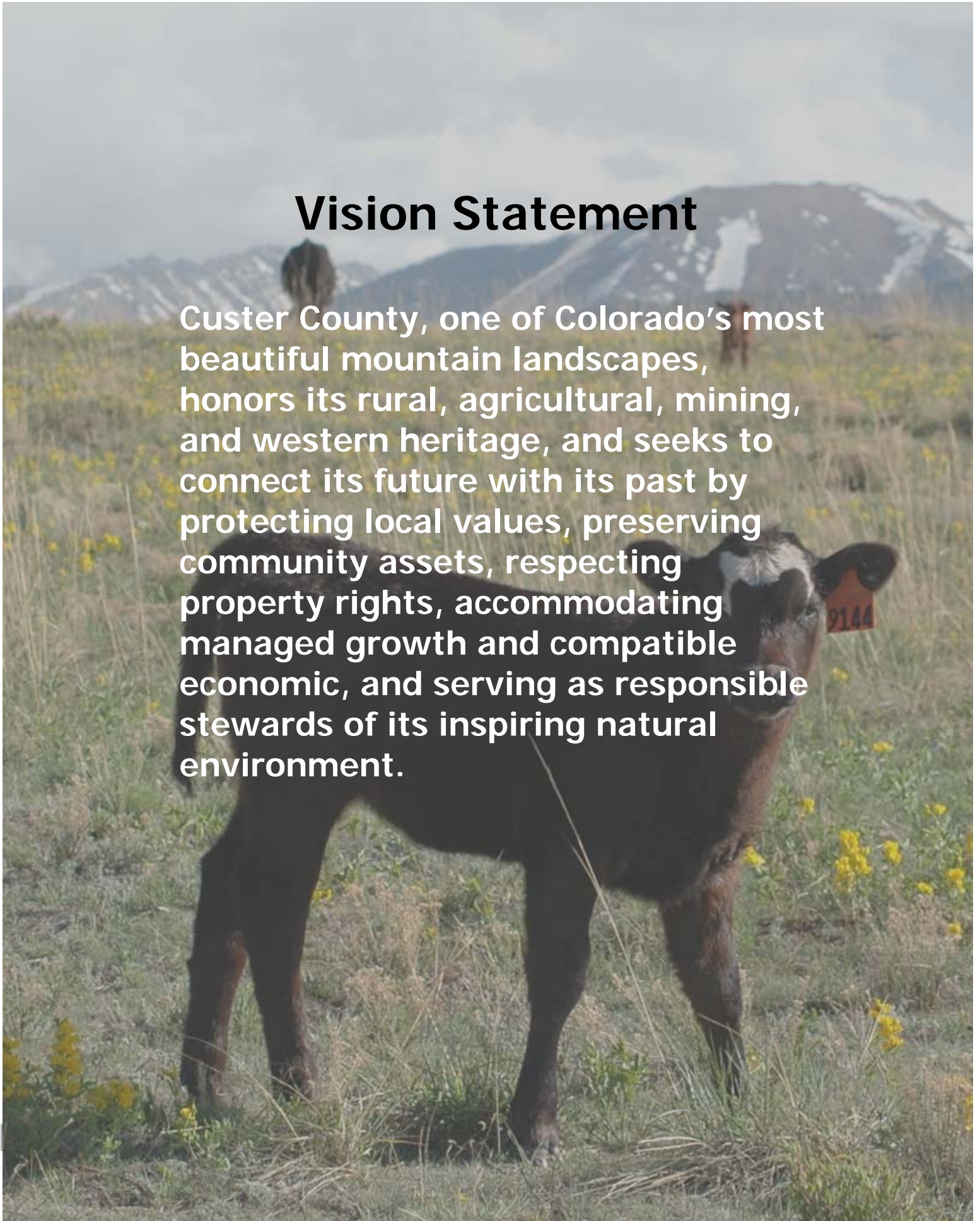


Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Purpose	5
Background.....	5
Planning Influences.....	8
Land Use.....	8
Context	8
Incorporated Towns.....	8
Land Use, Zoning and Subdivision	9
Environment.....	11
Topography	11
Climate	11
Air Quality.....	12
Geology	12
Soils	12
Noxious Weeds.....	14
Water	15
Wetlands	16
Wildlife	16
Economic Development	17
Housing	17
Historic Preservation	17
Sustainable Development	18
Services and Infrastructure	19
Government.....	19
Transportation	19
Utilities	20
Emergency Services.....	22
Education	23
Appendix A: Common Acronyms.....	29
Appendix B: Bibliography	30
Appendix C: Adoption Resolution.....	32
Acknowledgments	33

List of Tables

Table 1: Historic Population	26
Table 2: Population Projections	26
Table 3: Public Land Use Acreage.....	26
Table 4: Private Land Use Acreage	26
Table 5: Selected Subdivision Activity	27
Table 6: Permit Activity	27
Table 7: Assessed Valuation.....	28
Table 8: Employment Projections	28
Table 9: Revenue/Expense Ratios.....	28

List of Maps

Figure 1. Location Map	24
Figure 2. Planning Influences Map	25

Introduction

Purpose

This Supporting Document was developed as part of the 2010 review and revision of the Custer County Master Plan. It includes the inventories, studies, surveys and analysis of current trends that indicate social and economic consequences of the Master Plan to the existing and projected population.

Background

In 1969, the Colorado State Planning Office, through an urban planning grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, prepared a Sketch Plan for Custer County, Silver Cliff and Westcliffe. The simple, two-sided Sketch Plan plot outlined goals and objectives and described existing land use, transportation, and community facilities.

In proposing future land use, the Sketch Plan depicted five categories of uses: urban, agriculture, mountain residential, resort residential and open space. Although never adopted, the Sketch Plan served a very useful planning purpose for Custer County – the future land use categories provided the initial foundation for Custer County's 1971 Zoning Resolution and its five zoning districts.

The second attempt to create a county master plan was initiated by the Upper Arkansas Council of Governments in 1975. Like the 1969 effort, the 1975 Custer County Comprehensive Plan

was funded by a HUD planning grant. Unlike the 1969 Sketch Plan, the 1975 Comprehensive Plan provided in-depth detail of Custer County, with over 35 maps and illustrations organized into four plan sections addressing environmental setting, cultural characteristics, land use determinants, and Colorado House Bill 1041. Over 35 years later, much of the information within the 1975 Comprehensive Plan is still relevant as reference material.

In 1984, Custer County contracted with a planning consultant to prepare a "comprehensive area plan", which included approximately one-third of the county, primarily the central growth areas. At the time, proposed development of the Conquistador Ski Area, the Lake De Weese area, and the Silver West Airport area were anticipated to create significant growth pressure in the Wet Mountain Valley and upon the towns of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe. The 1984 Custer County Comprehensive Area Plan ultimately was not supported primarily due to a desire to include the entire county in the comprehensive planning process.

New growth pressures during the mid-1990's spurred a "grassroots" initiative to develop a master plan. A local volunteer Master Plan Committee, appointed by the Regional Planning Commission, solicited input from local public officials and community groups, held numerous public meetings and created several drafts of a master plan. Approximately 250 people attended a workshop as part of the Custer County Community Forum on June 26, 1999, emerging with a top priority to adopt a master plan. The Custer County Regional Planning

Commission adopted a version of a draft master plan in December 1999. After additional public review, two additional drafts (April 6, 2000 and August 23, 2000) were created and subsequently tabled by the Custer County Planning Commission. Both the April 6, 2000, and August 23, 2000 drafts included a vision statement and goals and strategies addressing land use, environment, government/citizen participation, economic development, transportation, education, mineral resources, water resources, and mineral development.

In November 2001, the County Commissioners hired MJ Landers & Associates, Inc., a planning consulting firm, to facilitate additional public meetings and complete a master plan for adoption by the Custer County Planning Commission. Funded in part by an Energy Impact Assistance Grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, the project also included the preparation of a draft intergovernmental agreement between the County and the Towns of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe, an update to the County's 1972 Subdivision Regulations, and the creation of a Plan User's Workbook.

A steering committee comprised of the County Commissioners, the County Planning Commission, and the County Board of Zoning Adjustment guided the process to complete the County master plan, convening several work sessions to review and discuss material prepared by the consultant. Three public meetings, held in Westcliffe and Wetmore during January, February and March 2002, served as project milestones.

The 2002 version of the Custer County Master Plan was designed to build upon the previous planning efforts in Custer County over the past 35 years. The effort began with finding "areas of agreement" and resulted in a master plan draft in August 2000. Information collected from a variety of resources was compiled for analysis of environmental conditions, services and infrastructure, and land use, including work drawn from previous County plans, reports and related sources.

A revised vision statement in the 2002 Master Plan was based on citizen direction to refine, clarify, and "wordsmith" the 2000 draft master plan vision statement, with additional input received from the Custer County Community Forum held January 19, 2002. A Plan Direction was crafted that reorganized the goals and strategies of the August 2000 draft into refined goals, policies and actions, substantially based on established areas of agreement and the direction of County staff and the steering committee. Custer County adopted the Master Plan on April 10, 2002.

In February, 2009 the Custer County Planning Commission initiated a revision and update of the 2002 version of the Master Plan. During the year, nine public workshops and meetings were held by the Planning Commission. The workshops included members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment and representatives from a variety of local interest groups and interested citizens. At the first workshop, it was decided to have a Master Plan Supporting Document in lieu of the Plan User's Workbook to contain the updated charts and maps, detailed analysis of conditions, demographics, services and infrastructure of Custer County.

This revised Master Plan contains updated Goals, Strategies and Actions in the Plan Direction section based on current needs and experiences. Accomplishments since the 2002 version have been included in this edition.

This revised 2009 Master Plan was presented to the citizens at three public meetings held in the first quarter of 2010.

Planning Influences

Land Use

Context

Custer County is located in south central Colorado and is bordered by Fremont County to the north, Pueblo County to the east, Huerfano County to the south, and Saguache County to the west (See page 24, Location Map). Originally occupied by the Ute Indians, explored by Zebulon Pike, visited by Kit Carson and John Fremont, settled by German colonists, and named after the famous cavalry leader General George A. Custer, Custer County was established on March 9, 1877. Over the past 133 years, Custer County has become a special place with unique qualities and challenges which ultimately influence land use and development decisions.

Like many Colorado counties, the population of Custer County has fluctuated with “boom and bust” economies (see page 26, Historic Population). The surge of silver and gold mining activity in the 1870's brought a population to Custer County more than double what exists today. By 1890, the population dropped as mining claims were played out. Cattle ranching became the mainstay of the economy, even though it was difficult to get access to markets after the railroad was abandoned in 1937. Population continued to decline between 1940 and 1970. Between 1970 and 1990, population steadily increased with the growth of tourism and a relatively stable state economy. From 1990 to 2000 Custer County grew 82 percent, becoming the fourth fastest growing

county in Colorado, with its spectacular natural setting attracting new residents enjoying a strong state and national economy focused on information technology, recreation, tourism and services. The largest surge in population was among affluent individuals aged 45 to 64.

Population is expected to continue to grow, although not at rates experienced during the 1990's (see page 26, Population Projections).

Incorporated Towns

Two statutory towns, Silver Cliff and Westcliffe, are centrally located adjacent to each other with Westcliffe serving as the County seat.

Silver Cliff is one of Colorado's oldest mining communities, originating in 1879. Once one of Colorado's largest towns in terms of population, Silver Cliff is now one of Colorado's largest towns in terms of land area, having annexed over 7,000 acres in 1973. The 2000 Census population of Silver Cliff was estimated to be 512 persons, a 59 percent increase since 1990. In January 2002, Silver Cliff adopted its first Master Plan and Subdivision Regulations.

Westcliffe, incorporated in 1887, serves as the economic, cultural, and government center of Custer County. Originally conceived as a speculative development for a railroad terminus, Westcliffe evolved as a ranching community. The 2000 Census

population of Westcliffe was estimated at 417 persons, a 34 percent increase since 1990. The Town of Westcliffe adopted its first Master Plan in December 2000, and updated its Land Use Code in February 2001.

Land Use, Zoning and Subdivision

Custer County is primarily a rural county, with urban uses generally located within the incorporated towns of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe. Of Custer's County's 473,600 acres, 188,988 acres, or 40 percent, is public land, and 284,612 acres, or 60 percent, is private land (see page 25, Planning Influences Map).

Public land is managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), State of Colorado and the local governments of Custer County, Silver Cliff and Westcliffe (see page 26, Public Land Use Acreage). USFS lands include portions of the San Isabel National Forest, the Greenhorn Wilderness Area, and the Sangre De Cristo Wilderness Area.

Agricultural land comprises 75 percent of private land in Custer County (see page 26, Private Land Use Acreage). The 2009 assessed value of agricultural property is over \$19 million (see page 28, Assessed Valuation). Custer County adopted a Right to Ranch and Farm policy in 1998 to protect the viability of agricultural land use activities.

Since 1994, several organizations have worked to preserve over 33,000 acres of agriculture land, wildlife habitat and scenic open spaces with conservation

easements. State and federal grants, as well as private donations, have been essential to the effort. Currently, conservation easements in Custer County are held by the Palmer Land Trust, Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), Colorado Cattleman's Agriculture Land Trust, San Isabel Land Protection Trust, Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District and the Colorado Historical Foundation.

The majority of residential and vacant land is located in over 120 platted subdivisions in Custer County (see page 27, Selected Subdivision Activity). Of 8,954 tracts of land 80 acres or less in size, 4,919, or 55 percent, are vacant.

Commercial property is predominantly located in the towns of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe. Retail (merchandising) property has a 2009 assessed value of over \$1 million, as does special purpose commercial property (\$1.8 million), followed by offices (\$1.6 million), warehouses and storage (\$1.1 million) and lodging (\$703 thousand). By comparison, very little industrial development exists in Custer County, with a total 2009 assessed value of only \$250,000 (see page 26, Assessed Valuation). Other private land use includes property used for natural resource, recreational, and non-profit activities. Mining claims, prevalent in the Silver Cliff area, account for a significant portion (\$536,580) of the 2009 assessed value of natural resources, roughly equivalent to the 2009 assessed value of recreation property (\$832,100).

Custer County does not have a building code, although State electrical and plumbing, and State and County

July 6, 2010

septic codes must be followed. A zoning permit is required for all dwelling structures, and all accessory structures greater than 100 square feet in size. Custer County recently adopted a Compliance Inspection process that must be met before any dwelling owner completes their zoning permit requirements. Trends in zoning and septic permits are presented on page 27, Permit Activity.

Farming, ranching, residential, commercial, industrial, forestry, mining, recreational, and other land uses found within Custer County can best be described based on the zoning district within which they are permitted. Custer County zoning districts were adopted in 1971. All zoning districts allow farming, ranching, and residential uses as a "use by right", meaning that no additional approvals are required beyond a zoning permit. Only one single-family dwelling is permitted per parcel in any district, unless otherwise approved.

Special Use Permits (SUP's) are required for commercial, industrial, natural resource and other uses. The Custer County Zoning Resolution also requires that all structures be setback a minimum of 50 feet from property lines of lots one acre or larger, with a maximum building height not to exceed 25 feet from the highest point of grade. Special Events Permits are required for temporary or short term use that is public or commercial in nature.

Environment

Topography

Custer County encompasses 738 square miles of land area, extending from the high plains at its northeastern corner, across the Wet Mountains, into the Wet Mountain Valley and to the Sangre De Cristo Range. Elevation ranges from 6,081 feet in the northeastern community of Wetmore to the 14,294-foot summit of Crestone Peak in the Sangre De Cristo Range. Other peaks in excess of 14,000 feet, framing the western boundary of the county, include Crestone Needle, Kit Carson Mountain, Challenger Point, and Humboldt Peak, with numerous additional peaks ranging from an elevation of 10,185 feet (Middle Knob) to 13,931 feet (Mount Adams). The Wet Mountain Valley lies at an elevation of approximately 8000 feet between the Sangre De Cristo Range and the Wet Mountains, which rise to an elevation of 11,784 feet at St. Charles Peak.

The natural topography of the landscape can either accommodate future land use activity or be a constraint to development. As slope increases, land generally becomes less suitable for development, with increased risks for wildfire and unstable soils, problems with road design, construction and maintenance, and access difficulties for fire protection equipment.

Slopes generally greater than 15 percent present specific challenges to development, with slopes in excess of 30 percent considered hazardous. Slopes in excess of 15 percent are generally found in the Wet Mountains and the Sangre De Cristo Range. Slopes less than 15 percent are generally found in the Wet Mountain Valley, surrounding foothills and within the incorporated communities of Westcliffe and Silver Cliff.

The Zoning Resolution and Subdivision Regulations have been revised to address development activities in environmentally constrained areas such as steep slopes, wildlife corridors, and wildfire hazard areas, and areas with adverse soil properties.

Climate

Custer County has a high altitude, low humidity climate that fluctuates seasonally due to its varied topography. Based on climate data compiled since 1949, the average daily temperature in Custer County is 41.7 degrees Fahrenheit. The average January temperature at Westcliffe and Silver Cliff is 22.0 degrees Fahrenheit; the average July temperature is 63.4 degrees Fahrenheit. Other seasonal climate conditions in Custer County include average annual precipitation of 14.4 inches, an average snowfall of 92 inches, and an average wind speed, highest in April, at 10.4 miles per hour, although gusts occasionally exceed 100 miles per hour. The growing season is generally less than 90 days.

Air Quality

Air quality is considered to be excellent, and the scenery and panoramic views of the landscape attract both residents and visitors to Custer County. Fugitive dust from unpaved roads and open lands, and smoke from ditch burning, is a periodic air quality concern.

Geology

The geology of Custer County is as varied as its terrain and climate. The oldest formations are found in the Wet Mountains, which are composed primarily of Precambrian metamorphic felsic and hornblende gneisses derived from volcanic rocks. The Sangre De Cristo Formation of the Sangre De Cristo Range consists of arkosic conglomerate, sandstone and siltstone from the Permian and Pennsylvanian eras. The Wet Mountain Valley is composed of unconsolidated gravel and alluvium deposits from the Pleistocene era; siltstone, sandstone and conglomerates from the Miocene era. Lava deposits and ash flows from the Oligocene era are also found in the foothills of the Wet Mountain Valley.

As defined by the Colorado Geologic Survey, a geologic hazard is "a geologic phenomenon which is as adverse to past, current or foreseeable construction or land use as to constitute a significant hazard to public health and safety or to property." Potential geologic hazards in Custer County include ground subsidence in the old Silver Cliff, Ilse, Querida and Rosita mining districts, and rock falls, mudslides and avalanches, particularly on slopes in excess of 30 percent. While mining for minerals is not presently economical, the potential for mining

sand and gravel in the Wet Mountain Valley to support construction demand, and the existence of oil and gas resources in the northeast portion of Custer County, warrant consideration for developing plans to mitigate operational impacts.

Soils

There are seven soil units in Custer County mapped by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Soils characteristics in the San Isabel National Forest are not described or mapped by the NRCS. The seven soil units and their general characteristics are described as follows:

- 1) Leadville-Troutville-Ula: Moderately deep and deep, well drained and somewhat excessively drained, gently sloping to extremely sloping soils, generally located on benches, fans, foot slopes, mountainsides and stream terraces abutting the eastern edge of the San Isabel National Forest in the Sangre De Cristo Range on the western side of Custer County.
- 2) Norriston-Gelkie-Libeg: Deep, well drained and somewhat excessively drained, gently sloping to very steep soils, generally located on fans and terraces in the foothills of the Sangre De Cristo Range.
- 3) Venable-Alvarado: Deep, somewhat poorly drained, nearly level to moderately steep soils, generally located on fans, terraces, and foot slopes and in swales and drainages of the Wet Mountain Valley.

- 4) Feltonia-Coutis-Silvercliff: Deep, well drained, gently sloping to very steep soils, generally located on fans, terraces, foot slopes, and terrace edges and in drainage ways of the Wet Mountain Valley.
- 5) Rogert-Woodhall-Boyle: Shallow and moderately deep, well drained, gently sloping to very steep soils that have dark colored surface layer, generally located on hills, hilltops, uplands, ridges, and mountainsides in the Wet Mountains.
- 6) Redfeather-Wix: Shallow and moderately deep, well drained, gently sloping to very steep soils that have a light colored subsurface layer, generally located on hilltops, side slopes and mountainsides in the Wet Mountains.
- 7) Granile-Peeler-Lake Creek: Moderately deep and deep, well drained, moderately sloping to extremely steep soils, generally located on mountainsides and mountain foot slopes in the Wet Mountains.

Soil properties may pose constraints on land use or development activity. Poorly drained soils on low terraces with a seasonally high water table, such as those found in the Venable-Alvarado soil unit west of Westcliffe, may be best suited for agricultural uses, and pose limitations on other types of land use. Limitations on placement of septic systems and dwellings (with or without basements) are typical in areas with adverse soil properties (e.g., shrink/swell potential), which are present throughout Custer County.

Additional information about soils in Custer County is available at <http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/manuals/scripts/CO635/0/custer.pdf>

Vegetation

The natural vegetation within Custer County is dominated by diverse grasslands and woodlands. Blue grama grasslands of the high plains give way to pinon and juniper shrubs near Wetmore to the woodlands of the Wet Mountains, with its stands of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, white fir, blue spruce and aspen trees. The high mountain grasslands of the Wet Mountain Valley vary from large grass expanses to pinon and juniper shrubs. More lower mountain woodlands west of the valley floor rise to sub-alpine woodlands with stands of spruce, fir and aspen mingling with Thurber's fescue meadows, capped by alpine regions above timberline, with sedges and numerous forbs.

A ten-acre site with rare plant habitat near Brush Creek is the only site in Custer County registered with the Colorado Natural Area Program. The Colorado Natural Area Program registration is similar to a conservation easement, protecting sites with a high quality feature of statewide significance, such as native or rare plant communities.

Generally, the potential for wildland fire exists on dry, vegetated hillsides. A comprehensive wildfire protection plan was adopted in September, 2007 which detailed how homebuilders in rural areas may mitigate wild land fire hazards using "defensible space" and other techniques. BLM is also proposing to create fire fuel breaks and conduct prescribed burns in select areas. The health of the forests in Custer County

also affects wild land fire potential, with large outbreaks of pine beetle, dwarf mistletoe, excessive accumulations of dead trees, and overly dense small trees indicators of poor forest health. Poor forest health and large accumulated fuel loads may threaten adjoining lands and developed residential communities.

Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds are becoming an ever increasing threat to the natural diversity and balance of ecosystems in Custer County. Noxious weeds are species of plants that are not native to Colorado, are invasive, degrade property values, and often overtake native vegetation. Invasive species have both an economic impact on property values and agricultural production, as well as an environmental impact on native plant and wildlife species, including songbirds and pollinators.

The Colorado Noxious Weed Act (Colorado Revised Statutes 35-5.5) was originally signed into law in 1991 and amended in 1996 and 2003. It directs the boards of County Commissioners of each county in the State to adopt a Noxious Weed Management Plan for all unincorporated land within each county (CRS 35-5.5-105). Custer County Board of County Commissioners approved the Custer County Noxious Weed Management Plan and Implementation in September, 2008. The act states that it is the duty of all landowners to use integrated methods to manage noxious weeds if the same are likely to be materially damaging to the land of neighboring landowners (CRS 35-5.5-104).

NRCS, Silver Cliff Field Office, CSU Extension, Custer County Office, and the Custer County Weed Advisory Board are local resources for information concerning noxious weeds.

The noxious weeds listed below have been identified as problematic in Custer County.

- Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*)
- Bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)
- Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
- Common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*)
- Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*)
- Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*)
- Hoary cress (*Cardaria draba*)
- Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*)
- Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)
- Mullein (*Verbascum Thapsus*)
- Musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*)
- Oxeye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*)
- Russian knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*)
- Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*)
- Yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*)

Water

Custer County is situated in the Arkansas River watershed, with five major stream basins: Grape Creek, Texas Creek, Oak Creek, Hardscrabble Creek, and the St. Charles River. Grape Creek, fed by snowmelt from the Sangre De Cristo Range and the Wet Mountains, is the largest stream basin in Custer County, covering approximately 273,000 acres, followed by the Hardscrabble Creek basin (77,500 acres), Texas Creek basin (54,000 acres), St. Charles River basin (46,000 acres), and Oak Creek basin (21,000) acres.

Custer County does not have Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood hazard mapping. Regardless of the lack of flood hazard mapping, development along streams and dry wash channels is not recommended in order to minimize increases in downstream flood elevation, potential life or safety hazards, and property damage.

Custer County is covered by approximately 520 acres of lakes and reservoirs. The 208-acre De Weese Reservoir dams Grape Creek and has a capacity of 2,783 acre-feet of water. Another 25 lakes are located in Custer County, the majority of which are in the Sangre De Cristo Range.

One notable exception is the 36 acre Lake San Isabel, located in the Wet Mountains in southeastern Custer County.

Approximately 425,000 acre-feet of water recharge the watershed in Custer County, primarily from the Sangre De Cristo Range. An estimated 1.5 million acre-feet of groundwater is stored

within the upper 100 feet of the Wet Mountain Valley. The groundwater is recharged by lakes, streams and return flows, although withdrawals are increasing consistent with an increase in active wells and demand on existing municipal wells.

During the past fifteen years, the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District (UAWCD) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) have been monitoring wells recording data regarding groundwater quantity, but not quality. The Arkansas River watershed has a water quality ranking of "3" on a scale of "1" to "6", indicating less serious water quality problems and a low vulnerability to toxic pollutants. A new hydrological study is underway by the USGS and the UAWCD to determine groundwater quality and quantity, monitoring approximately 40 wells in the Wet Mountain Valley, 10 wells in the Wetmore area, and 10 wells in the San Isabel area.

Wetlands

Wetlands generally are located in flat areas associated with streams in the Wet Mountain valley. The US Fish and Wildlife Service publishes National Wetland Inventory Maps that need to be verified by the US Army Corp of Engineers and/or private wetland consultants for accuracy. Any development in, or disturbance of, defined jurisdictional wetlands is subject to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act as administered by the US Army Corp of Engineers.

Wildlife

Custer County has abundant wildlife. The CDOW identifies 73 species of birds and 38 mammal species in Custer County. Mule deer and elk habitat is found throughout the county. Bobcat, mountain lion and black bear habitat is found in the Sangre De Cristo Range and the Wet Mountains. Bighorn sheep are found at higher elevations in the Sangre De Cristo Range and the Wet Mountains. Antelope habitat is mapped by CDOW north of De Weese Reservoir, although antelope are found throughout the country. Federally listed threatened or endangered species include the American peregrine falcon, bald eagle, lynx, greenback cutthroat trout, meadow jumping mouse, Mexican spotted owl, southwestern willow flycatcher, and whooping crane.

Wildlife is impacted by reduction of habitat and barriers to movement, generally resulting from land subdivision, building, road and fence construction. For example, areas where wildlife forage is inadequate could result in dwindling herd sizes through starvation, and destruction of remaining habitat by overgrazing. Problems

associated with wildlife displacement can be reduced significantly if the potential for wildlife impact is addressed during the development review process. Custer County requires a Wildlife Review for any potential PUD or subdivision development.

Household and commercial waste should be stored in such a manner as to prevent animals from foraging in such discarded materials. The use of closed storage areas such as garages, metal buildings, and metal lidded latching dumpsters is encouraged.

Wildlife Friendly Fencing

Use of privacy fencing, chain link fencing, and other fencing that would negatively impact wildlife movements should be limited to the immediate area surrounding the domicile or within the designated building envelope and should not be used as a method to designate boundaries of larger lot sizes. Construction of impassible fences such as woven wire or wrought iron with speared tops is discouraged as wildlife may be injured or killed attempting to cross over such fencing. The bottom wire on electric fences should not be electrified to allow animals such as antelope to safely go under the fence. The CDOW provides guidelines for wildlife friendly fencing.

Economic Development

As a result of the 2002 Custer County Master Plan, the Custer County Community Economic Development Committee (CCCEDC) was established in January, 2005. The CCCEDC created a Community Economic Development Assessment Report and Community Action Plan based on community leaders and stakeholder's participation and input. Four areas of importance have been identified. These are:

Natural Resources – The focus for Natural Resources is to utilize and preserve our natural resources for the good of the community and in a way that maintains our quality of life within Custer County.

Business and Community Development – The focus of Business and Community Development is to assist the business community in a viable approach to education, collaboration and partnerships between the public, social and private sectors of Custer County in an attempt to stimulate business growth and opportunities.

Tourism and Marketing – The focus of Tourism and Marketing is to increase economic activity in Custer County by helping to stimulate the growth of tourism in the county. To achieve this, the committee will work with the Custer County Tourism Board and other groups pertaining to economic growth to educate the local businesses, as well as Custer County and the State of Colorado. The committee will also help encourage new businesses by obtaining an inventory list of what is needed and what is here.

Human Resources – The focus of the human resources team is education, affordable housing, identify the talents and expertise of citizens in our community, and to attract, equip and retain a viable Colorado Workforce Center in Custer County.

County employment projections are presented on page 28, Employment Projections.

Housing

According to the 2000 Census, Custer County has 2,989 housing units, of which 1,480 (50 percent) are owner-occupied. Another 1,315 dwelling units (44 percent) are seasonal or second homes, leaving 194 units (6 percent) vacant. The total number of housing units in Custer County has increased almost 35 percent since 1990, while the number of seasonal housing units has increased only 5.1 percent since 1990.

The number of households (owner-occupied units) almost doubled since 1990. The average household size is 2.36 persons per dwelling unit. Households with families comprise 73 percent of all households.

Historic Preservation

Historic preservation efforts in Custer County are led by several organizations, including but not limited to the Custer Chapter of the Fremont-Custer Historical Society, Custer County Historical Society, All Aboard Westcliffe, Friends of Beckwith Ranch, and Frontier Pathways. Since designation of State Highway 96 in 1998 as a Scenic and Historic Byway,

over \$500,000 of private donations, state and federal grants have funded numerous projects in Custer County. Projects have included renovation of the Historic Beckwith Ranch, an interpretive center in the "Westcliff" School, stabilization of the Mingus Homestead, and a historical survey of the Wet Mountain Valley.

The following sites in Custer County are listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

- Mingus Homestead, in the San Isabel National Forest, Fairview vicinity
- Beckwith Ranch, 64159 SH 69, north of Westcliffe
- Hope Lutheran Church, 310 South 3rd Street in Westcliffe
- Kennicott Cabin, 63161 SH 69, north of Westcliffe
- National Hotel/Wolff Building, 201 South Second Street in Westcliffe
- Westcliffe Jail, 116 North Second Street in Westcliffe
- "Westcliff" School, 116 South Fourth Street in Westcliffe
- Squirrel Creek Recreational Unit, San Isabel National Forest, Wetmore
- Willows School, on Willow Lane between Muddy Lane and Schoolfield Lane

In addition to the sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the following sites are on the Colorado State Register of Historic Places:

- Original Silver Cliff Town Hall and Engine House, 606 Main Street in Silver Cliff
- D&RG Engine House, Rosita Avenue west of Second Street in Westcliffe
- Wetmore Post Office, 682 County Road 395, Wetmore
- Mercier House, 215 South 6th Street in Westcliffe

Sustainable Development

Custer County looks forward and encourages behavior that will build resiliency. Custer County residents will be in a position to survive and thrive whatever the future offers by encouraging our citizens to work together to solve challenges as they arise.

It is important that we preserve our agricultural water for ranch and farm use, and encourage water and energy efficient homes utilizing renewable energy. The Sustainable Ways organization plans to promote and increase the farmers market for locally grown and raised crops and developing more transportation options for all of our citizens.

Services and Infrastructure

Government

Custer County provides an array of services to county taxpayers, normally categorized as public works, public safety, social services, and administration. The County administrative offices are located in the Custer County Courthouse on 6th Street in Westcliffe. The courthouse also houses the Colorado State University Extension Office. The County Commissioners, the Planning Commission, and Board of Zoning Adjustment each conduct meetings at the courthouse.

Silver Cliff and Westcliffe are statutory town governments that provide services to residents within their incorporated boundaries. Both Silver Cliff and Westcliffe have administrative offices at their Town Hall located on Main Street in their respective communities. Each Town also has an elected Board of Trustees and an appointed Planning Commission that addresses community issues.

Several special districts operate in Custer County, including the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District, the Round Mountain Water and Sanitation District (RMWSD), the West Custer County Hospital District, the West Custer County Library District, the Wet Mountain Fire Protection District, and the Consolidated C-1 School District.

The majority of property taxes assessed in Custer County (48 percent) go to the Consolidated C-1 School District, followed by County Services (32

percent), various special districts (19 percent), and the towns of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe (1 percent). Conversely, the majority of sales tax revenue flows to the towns, where retail services are primarily located.

A Cost of Community Services study sponsored by the San Isabel Land Protection Trust, Custer Heritage Committee, Sonoran Institute and American Farmland Trust in 2000 measured the impact that various land uses have on Custer County's tax base. The study found that agricultural, commercial and industrial land generates more tax revenue than services provided, whereby residential land generates more service costs than tax dollars collected (See page 28, Revenue/Expense Ratios).

Transportation

State Highways

Five State Highways serve Custer County: SH 69, SH 96, SH 165, SH 78, and SH 67. SH 69 transects Custer County from north to south, extending from Texas Creek at US 50 in Fremont County to Walsenburg and Interstate 25 (I-25) in Huerfano County.

SH 96, a national scenic byway known as "Frontier Pathways", is the principle east-west arterial in the county, originating as Main Street in Westcliffe and extending east through Silver Cliff and over the Wet Mountains to Wetmore, Pueblo and beyond. SH 165, also a scenic highway, originating at SH 96 at McKenzie Junction and extending south to San Isabel, Rye, Colorado City and I-25. SH 78, also known as Twelve

Mile Road, extends from SH 165 at Greenhill Divide to Beulah and Pueblo. SH 67 is a short spur in Custer County, providing access north to Florence from SH 96 at Wetmore.

Average annual daily traffic (AADT) volumes (total of all vehicles/365) compiled by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) indicate that traffic volumes more than doubled between 1990 and 2000 at the highest volume intersection in Custer County, SH 69 and SH 96 in Westcliffe. CDOT projects that traffic volume will increase at this intersection from a current estimate of 5,300 AADT to 6,890 AADT in 2017.

Local Roads

Local public roads in Custer County, besides those in the jurisdictions of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe, consist of 357.41 miles of paved and unpaved roads maintained by the Custer County Road and Bridge Department. In addition to those roads maintained by Custer County, many rural subdivisions are served by private roads maintained by a homeowner's association. Other private roads have not been dedicated to the County nor are they maintained by a homeowner's association. The County routinely records traffic counts on primary roads.

Airport

The Silver West Airport is centrally located in the Wet Mountain Valley, nine miles south of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe off SH 69. The Silver West Airport provides general aviation services, including hanger rental, tie downs, and fueling. Operated by the Custer County Airport Authority and providing service to private and

chartered aircraft, the Silver West Airport has a 7000-foot-long, 40-footwide paved runway.

Utilities

Waste Disposal

The current Custer County landfill opened in 1994. Private haulers transport refuse to the landfill, located on CR 328 (Rosita Road) adjacent to Silver Cliff's southern boundary. A drop-off recycling center for glass and aluminum cans was added in 2009. Recycling of newspaper, aluminum, glass, tin, fine paper and magazines can be dropped off at the recycling center located east of the Custer County Sheriff's Department. This effort is coordinated as part of a four-county recycling program by the Upper Arkansas Area Council of Governments (UAACOG).

The annual landfill budget for the recycling program is \$3,000, with 600 yards of recycling materials necessary to make the recycling center cost effective. In 2009, 544 yards of material were collected from the recycling center. Subsidies from the towns of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe and the UAACOG are a necessity to operate the recycling program.

Water and Wastewater

The RMWSD provides water and wastewater service in the Silver Cliff and Westcliffe vicinity, with 656 residential and commercial water taps connected (696 sold), and 640 wastewater taps sold. The majority of businesses and residences in Silver Cliff and Westcliffe are connected to the water and wastewater system, with

some exceptions.

While the RMWSD district covers 6,345 acres, water service is not feasible generally east of Silver Cliff Town Park, until a new water tank can be installed to provide adequate water pressure. Likewise, sanitary sewer service is also not available generally east of Silver Cliff Town Park. There are also many areas on the periphery of the existing service area in the RMWSD, both within and outside the incorporated town limits of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe, that cannot be served without additional investment in, and improvement of, the physical plant. Landowners within the RMWSD are generally expected to extend water and sanitary sewer lines to serve new development, although exceptions are made to allow well and septic permits where such extensions are not feasible.

Efforts to address water and sanitary sewer service needs are ongoing. After losing an estimated \$2 million worth of water rights in 1996 as the result of remedies to a water court decision, the RMWSD went from having sufficient water rights to serve four times its district population to barely meeting the needs of its existing customers. To make up for this shortfall, the RMWSD purchased a 320-acre ranch in 2000 with water rights to serve current and future customers. As a result of the ranch purchase and to re-build reserves for future capital improvements, tap fees and service fees were significantly increased in September 2000.

The wastewater treatment plant is at 85 percent of design capacity, and the RMWSD installed an additional 2,400 linear feet of infiltrator beds and has added 8.5 acres of land permitted for the application of treated waste water. The RMWSD is also in the process of

identifying future sanitary sewer service expansion areas and locations for related easements.

Properties located outside the RMWSD boundaries require permits for water wells and septic systems. Well permits are administered by the State Engineer's office, and typically restrict water use to residential purposes on parcels less than 35 acres in size. The quality and quantity of well water varies considerably throughout the county, as do the costs for drilling wells and pumping water.

Septic permits are administered by Custer County. The ability to install an approved Individual Sewage Disposal System is highly dependent on size, capacity, soil conditions, and proximity to water supplies. In particular, adverse soil conditions limit placement of septic systems in many areas of the county, although technical advances and new methods are providing alternatives to standard septic systems.

Energy

Black Hills Energy, the Sangre De Cristo Rural Electric Association and the San Isabel Rural Electric Association provide electric power to Custer County residents, where available. A 69 kilovolt line owned by Black Hills Energy extends from Canon City to the Skinner substation in Silver Cliff, and has excess capacity. Alternative power sources include solar energy and wind generators. Propane is available through local providers; natural gas service is not available in Custer County.

In Custer County there is a strong public interest in protecting our night sky from light pollution caused by excessive, misdirected and unshielded artificial lighting. The beautiful, unpolluted night sky enhances the quality of life for many who live in Custer County.

A citizens group, that recognizes unpolluted night sky as a valuable natural resource that should be protected, is available to work with community groups and individuals to encourage the use of fully-shielded street, utility, residential and commercial lights as long as they do not jeopardize safety or create unnecessarily high energy use.

Telecommunications

CenturyLink Communications owns the majority of telecommunications infrastructure in Custer County. CenturyLink is installing fiber optic cable to improve digital telecommunication capabilities. Qwest Communications also provides telephone service to areas in eastern Custer County. Private providers also offer cellular, Internet, satellite and cable television services. High speed internet service is available in most areas of the county and is provided by the local telephone companies and several wireless/satellite providers.

Emergency Services

Law Enforcement

The Custer County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement services throughout Custer County, including the towns of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe. The Sheriff's Department is staffed by a

sheriff, an undersheriff, nine deputies, a jail sergeant, four detention officers, five dispatchers and a secretary. The County has enhanced 911 services, and Custer County Search and Rescue operations are based at the Sheriff's Department. The Colorado State Patrol patrols the 162 miles of state highways in the County, and assists the Sheriff's Department as requested.

Fire Protection

The Wet Mountain Fire Protection District (WMFPD) serves county residents west of McKenzie Junction, providing fire suppression, fire protection, Advanced Life Support first response, specialty rescue, and public education services to a 585 square mile area. The WMFPD is staffed by 30 volunteer firefighters, two certified as emergency medical technicians (EMT). The main station is located at 215 North Fourth Street in Westcliffe and has fire substations located in Rosita, Hillside, Hermit Basin, Boneyard Park, and Lake De Weese. Wetmore has a voluntary fire department consisting of 15-20 members. In 2002, the Wetmore Fire Department received a land donation at 200 CR 290 on which they erected a new fire station which was funded by a gift.

Medical

The West Custer County Hospital District (WCCHD) provides emergency services as well as comprehensive health care services.

The WCCHD, located at 704 Edwards Avenue in Westcliffe, offers comprehensive family practice, cardiac and trauma life support, rehabilitation, physical therapy, patient education, and EKG, laboratory and x-ray services. The

business office of the Custer County Ambulance Corp is also located at the WCCHD and provides basic and advanced life support services, cardiac and trauma life support, and 24-hour patient stabilization. San Isabel is served by the Rye Fire Protection District for ambulance service through an agreement with the County. Additionally, the Florence Fire Protection District provides EMS service along SH 96 from McKenzie Junction to Wetmore through a mutual aid agreement with the County.

Education

Public Schools

Custer County is served by two public school districts: Custer County School District C-1 and Fremont County RE2. The Custer County School District C-1 provides kindergarten through grade 12 education at its Consolidated School on Main Street in Westcliffe. Enrollment during the 2008-2009 academic year was 514 students, an increase of 8 percent since 2001. In 2000, Custer County voters approved two bond initiatives totaling \$6 million to expand and remodel the Westcliffe Consolidated School, which was originally constructed to educate 190 students. In 2002, voters approved a bond issue totaling \$2.4 million to construct a new athletic facility. The Custer County Pre-School is located on Jerry Court in Westcliffe. No other communities in Custer County have a public school, so many students are bussed either to Westcliffe or other school districts. Depending on location, students are bused to Fremont County RE2 schools in Florence, Fremont County RE3 schools in Cotopaxi, or Pueblo District 70 schools in Rye.

Private Schools

The Sangre De Cristo Seminary is the only private school in Custer County. The seminary is located approximately eight miles southwest of Westcliffe and offers post-secondary degrees in theology.

Libraries

Custer County is home to two libraries. The West Custer County library is located on Main Street in Westcliffe. The West Custer County library contains over 11,500 publications and has five public access computers plus two laptop plug-in stations. Programs include a summer reading program, microfilm reader/printer, a writer's group, author visits, a book club, a chess club, computer classes, rotating artist's exhibit by the Sangres Art Guild, inter-library loan and courier system, and the Chautauqua Series. The Wetmore Community Center library is located off SH 96 in Wetmore, contains 10,000 publications, and offers a summer family program and two computers for Internet access.

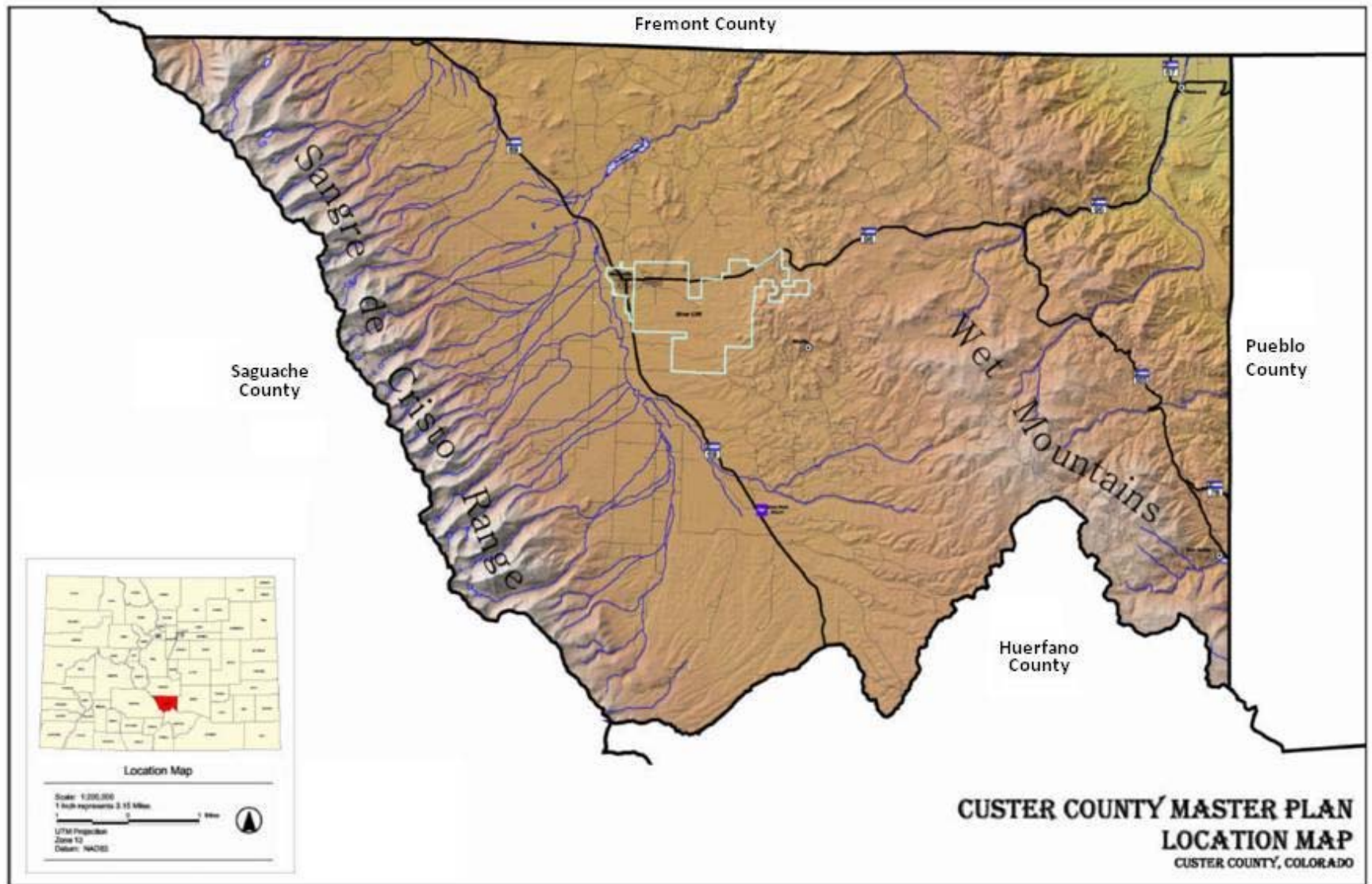


Figure 1. Location Map

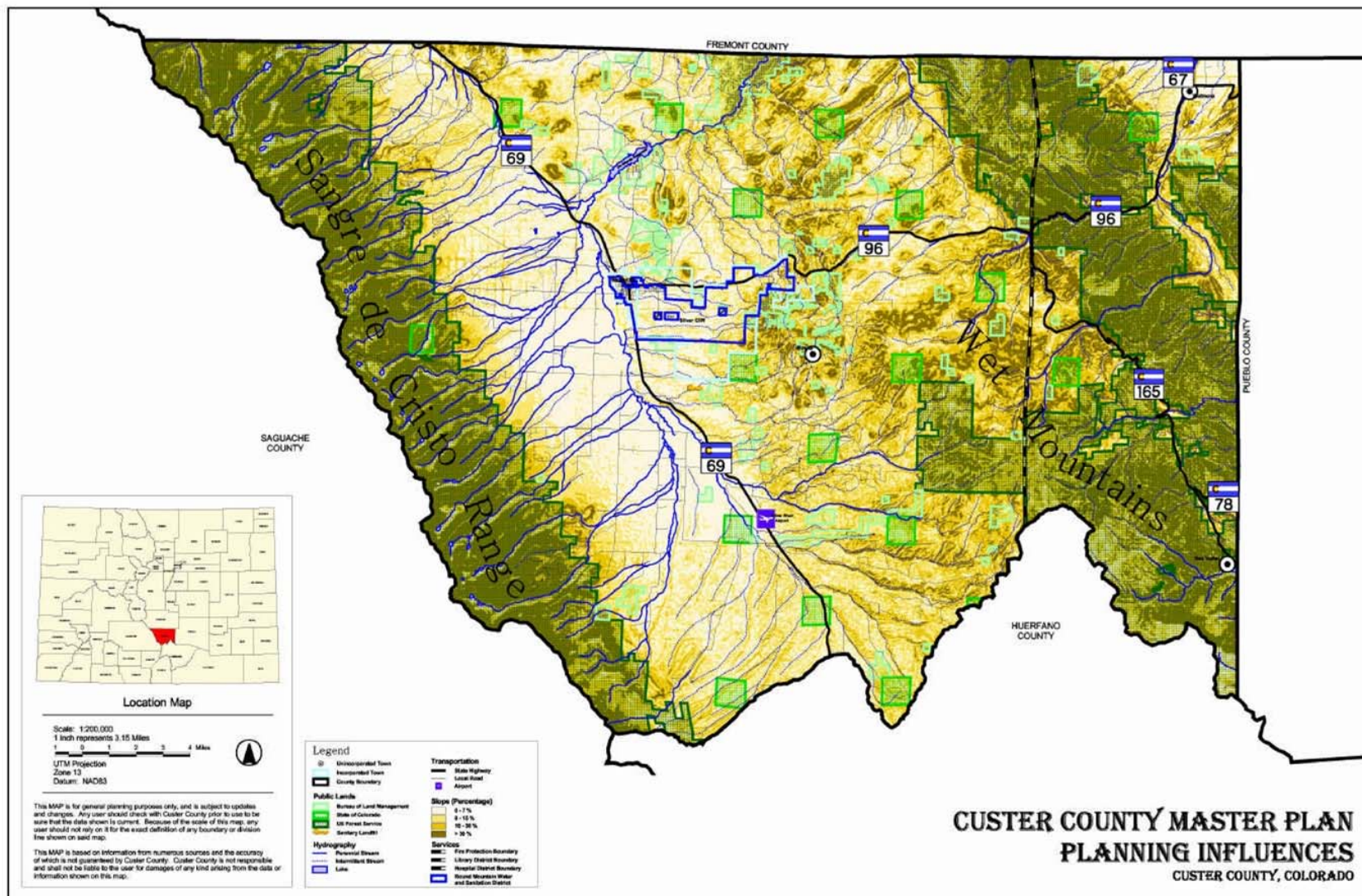


Figure 2. Planning Influences Map

Table 1: Historic Population

Historic Population												
1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
7,967	2,970	2,937	1,947	2,172	2,124	2,270	1,573	1,305	1,120	1,528	1,926	3,503

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2001

Table 2: Population Projections

Population Projections					
2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
4,550	5,368	6,289	7,181	8,045	8,848

Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs; October, 2008

Table 3: Public Land Use Acreage

Public Land	Number of Acres	Percentage of Total
U.S. Forest Service	163,647	86.59%
Bureau of Land Management	14,776	7.82%
State of Colorado	10,165	5.38%
Local Government	400	0.21%
TOTAL	188,988	100%

Source: Custer County Assessor's Office; 2009

Table 4: Private Land Use Acreage

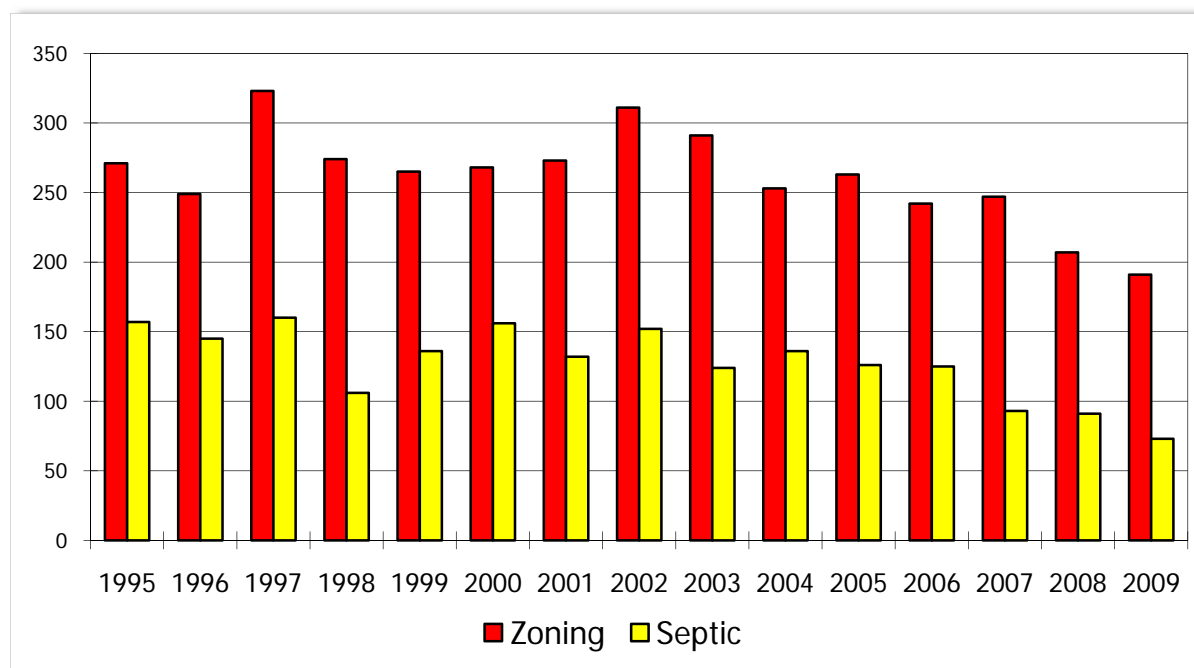
Private Land Use	Number of Acres	Percentage of Total
Agriculture	225,845	79.35%
Residential	31,458	11.05%
Commercial	842	0.30%
Industrial	21	0.01%
Vacant	24,357	8.56%
Other	2,089	0.73%
TOTAL	284,612	100%

Source: Custer County Assessor's Office; 2009

Table 5: Selected Subdivision Activity

Subdivision	Number of Lots	Number Built	Percentage Built-Out
Antelope Valley	187	75	40.11%
Blumenau	315	116	36.83%
Brush Creek Estates	48	38	79.17%
Bull Domingo Ranch	347	170	48.99%
Centennial Ranch	412	69	16.75%
Cristo Vista	217	60	27.65%
Cuerno Verde The Pines	528	149	28.22%
Dilley Ranch	83	33	39.76%
Eastcliffe	145	75	51.72%
McKinley Mountain Ranch	46	34	73.91%
Mountain Springs Country Estates	23	16	69.57%
Ponderosa Park	44	32	72.73%
Rosita Hills	380	136	35.79%
Silver Cliff Heights	569	228	40.07%

Source: Custer County Assessor's Office; 2009

Table 6: Permit Activity

Source: Custer County Planning and Zoning Department; 2010

Table 7: Assessed Valuation

2008 Assessed Valuation	
Property Type:	Assessment:
Vacant Land	\$ 24,253,050
Residential	\$ 38,147,730
Commercial	\$ 8,080,830
Industrial	\$ 250,090
Agricultural	\$ 19,314,850
Natural Resources	\$ 608,810
Producing Mines	\$ 0
Oil and Gas	\$ 0
State Assessed	\$ 4,127,600
Assessed Value	\$ 95,862,700
Exempt Valuation	\$ 6,571,150
Total Valuation	\$ 102,433,850

Source: Custer County Assessor's Office; 2009

Table 8: Employment Projections

Employment Projections						
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
Total Jobs	1,977	2,454	2,962	3,415	3,810	4,091

Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs; 2009

Table 9: Revenue/Expense Ratios

Custer County Revenue/Expenditures Ratios	
Residential	\$1.00/\$1.16
Commercial/Industrial	\$1.00/\$0.71
Agricultural	1.00/\$0.54

Source: The Cost of Community Services in Custer County, Colorado; 2000

Appendix A: Common Acronyms

AADT	Average Annual Daily Traffic
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CCCEDC	Custer County Community Economic Development Committee
CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
CDOW	Colorado Department of Wildlife
CSFS	Colorado State Forestry Service
IGA	Inter Governmental Agreement
NRCS	National Resources Conservation Service
PUD	Planned Unit Development
RMWSD	Round Mountain Water and Sanitation District
SH	State Highway
SUP	Special Use Permit
UAACOG	Upper Arkansas Area Council of Governments
UAWCD	Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District
USFS	United States Forest Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WCCHD	West Custer County Hospital District
WMFPD	Wet Mountain Fire Protection District

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Appendix C: Adoption Resolution

BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION CUSTER COUNTY, COLORADO

WHEREAS, Custer County, Colorado, acting through its Planning Commission, is empowered pursuant to Section 30-28-106 through 30-25-100, C.R.S. to make and adopt a Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Custer County Master Plan is an advisory document, and if through State mandate it changes to become mandatory, then it shall be reviewed in its entirety by the Planning Commission using the same process as used to adopt the original Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Custer County Master Plan complies with the requirements of Section 30-28-106 and 30-26-107, C.R.S., and


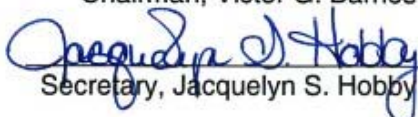
WHEREAS, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on the Custer County Master Plan on July 6, 2010 and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission believes it is in the best interest of the County that the Custer Master Plan be adopted,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF CUSTER COUNTY, COLORADO:

1. The Custer County Master Plan, originally dated March 5, 2002, be and hereby is adopted with revisions, agreed upon today, July 6, 2010.
2. The Custer County Master Plan as adopted hereby, expressly includes maps and other matter, intended by the Planning Commission to form the whole of the Custer County Master Plan, all of which materials are contained within the plan document itself, and which plan document is hereby declared to be a part of the plan.
3. That the action of the Planning Commission adopting the Custer County Master Plan shall be recorded in the Custer County Clerk and Records Office with the identifying signatures of the Chairman and Secretary to the Commission.
4. A copy of this action shall be attached to each copy of the Custer County Master Plan and shall serve as an attestation that each such copy is a true and correct copy of the Plan as adopted.
5. That an attested copy of the Custer County Master Plan shall be, and hereby is, certified to the Custer County Board of Commissioners pursuant to § 30-28-109, C.R.S.

MOVED, SECONDED AND ADOPTED ON THE 6TH DAY OF JULY BY THE AFFIRMATIVE VOTES OF NOT LESS THAN A MAJORITY OF THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION, BY A VOTE OF X YES AND X NO.


Chairman, Victor G. Barnes

Secretary, Jacquelyn S. Hobby

Acknowledgments

Custer County Board of County Commissioners

Lynn Attebery, Chairman
Jim Austin, Vice Chairman
Carole Custer

Custer County Planning Commission

Vic Barnes, Chairman
Keith Hood, Vice Chairman
Pat Bailey
Rod Coker
Bill Donley
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Custer County Board of Zoning Adjustment

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Custer County Staff

Jackie Hobby
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Chuck Ippolito

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Skip Northcross, *BZA Chairman*
Chuck Ippolito, *Custer County Information
Technology*
Present and former Board Members and County
Commissioners

...and everyone who worked toward the
completion of Custer County's Master Plan!