

Brush Creek Valley/Droste Mountain Park Interim Management Plan



May 2011

1. INTRODUCTION

Pitkin County Open Space and Trails (OST), the Town of Snowmass Village, the City of Aspen, and the Aspen Valley Land Trust have partnered on one of the most dramatic purchases of Open Space in the history of the upper Roaring Fork Valley. The recently completed purchase of 845 acres from the Droste Family has connected over **2,500 acres of contiguous Open Space that permanently protects some of the most critical mountain ecosystems in the upper Roaring Fork Valley.** The acquisition is a major accomplishment for the citizens of Pitkin County, Snowmass Village, and the City of Aspen, protecting critical elk winter range and migration corridors within the Roaring Fork Valley. In addition to the protection of wildlife habitat, this connection of over 2,500 acres of open space provides spectacular recreational opportunities. The possibilities include trail opportunities for hikers, bikers, and equestrians that connect Aspen to Snowmass Village with spectacular views of all four ski area mountains and the surrounding Elk and Sawatch Mountain Ranges.

OST, the Town of Snowmass Village, and the City of Aspen have decided that combining all the properties into one seamless management plan would best serve the public and wildlife that depends on these protected properties. This interim plan is the start of a partnership to create a long-term plan for all the properties. The interim plan will outline the short-term management actions necessary to provide public access and set in motion a natural and historical resource study that will be combined with recreation user information to develop the long-term vision and plan for all the properties.

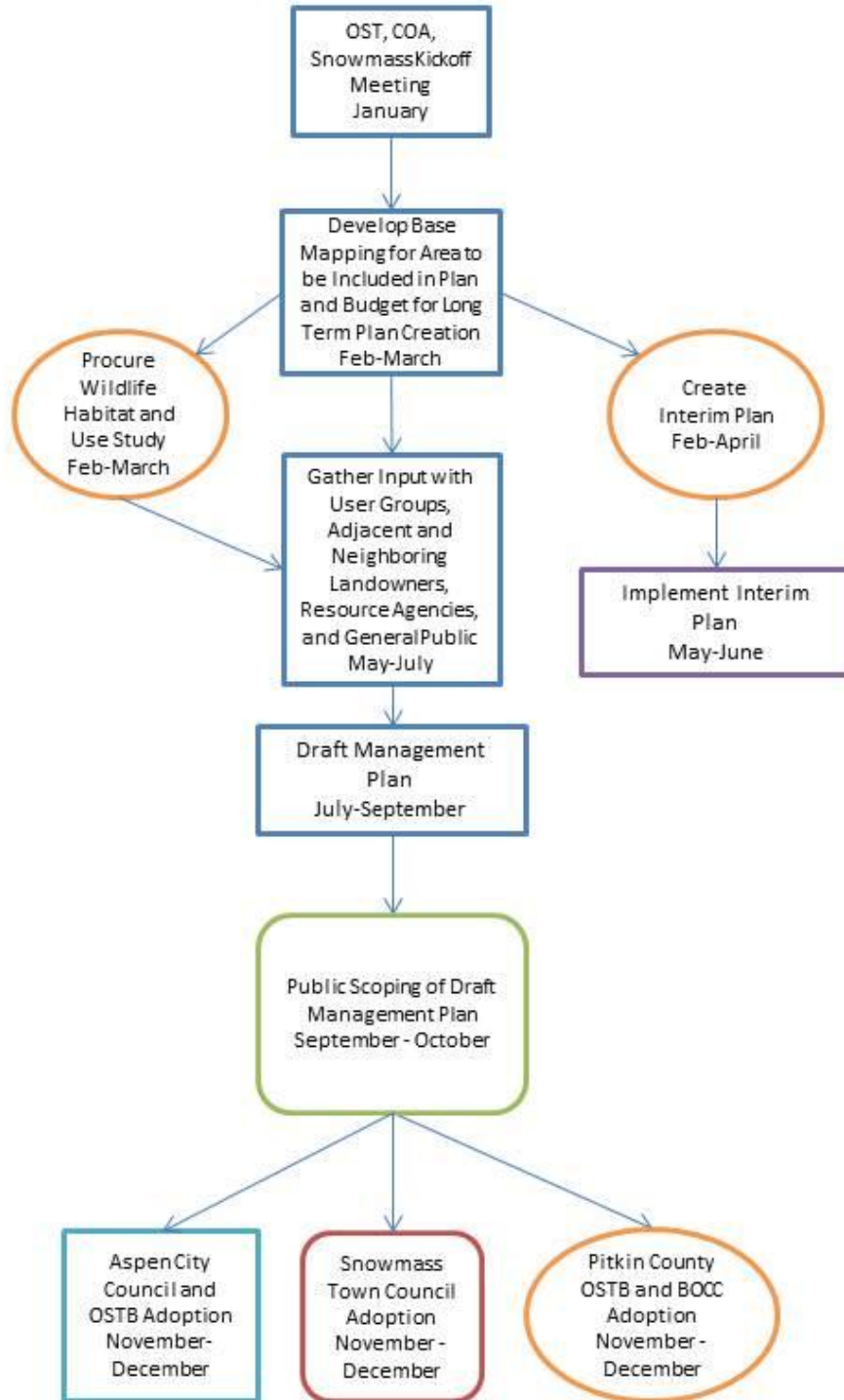
This interim plan will be in effect while the long-term plan is being completed and is intended to expire when the long-range plan is adopted.

2. PLANNING PROCESS

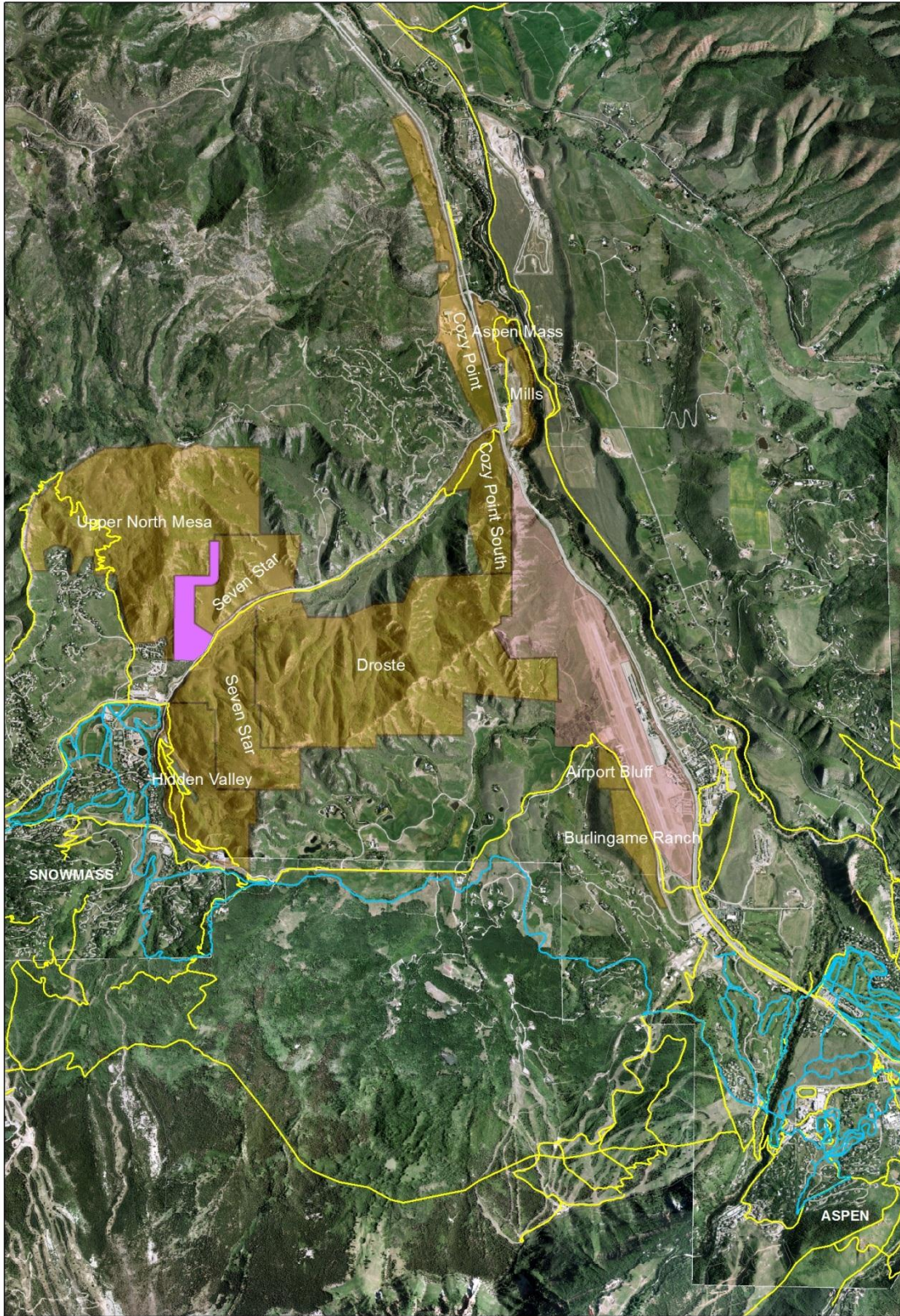
OST worked with the City of Aspen and the Town of Snowmass Village to develop this interim plan, which outlines management actions that need to occur before the long-term management plan is complete. The planning process for the long-term management plan is shown in the following process map.

Brush Creek Valley/Droste Mountain Park Planning Process 2011

Long Term Plan

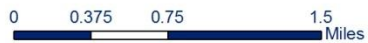


3. PLANNING AREA



Management Planning Area

-  Management Plan Parcels
-  Seven Star Conservation Easement
-  Trails
-  Nordic Trails
-  Airport



4. INTERIM MANAGEMENT PLAN GOALS

Obtain Resource Data

Develop baseline scientific data for wildlife, vegetation, and historical resources.

Create Sustainable Access

Provide access portals to existing trails to allow limited recreation opportunities while the long-range planning effort is being completed.

Outreach

Meet with stakeholders, user groups, neighbors, and the public to gather community input on the properties

Naming

Determine what to call the mountain park system and how to sign the property.

Restoration

Develop recommendations for the long-term management plan and continue noxious weed treatments and native seeding.

5. NATURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES

OST, the Town of Snowmass Village and the City of Aspen have agreed to study the natural and historical resources of the overall planning area. One of the main components of the management planning process is to gather the requisite data on wildlife and vegetation. All three jurisdictions feel it is imperative to combine wildlife and vegetation data that has been collected in the past and fill in the gaps with detailed information on critical habitats, threatened and endangered species, and wildlife use patterns. With this data in hand, the land managers can propose recreation corridors that minimize disturbance to wildlife and rare plants, habitat improvement projects, and accurate seasonal closure dates. This Wildlife and Vegetation Study will be completed by consultants in consultation with the Colorado Division of Wildlife and in coordination with the Airport Master Planning process, which is studying wildlife use in and around the airport.

Over the years there have been many studies, including some by the Town of Snowmass Village, Pitkin County, Aspen Ski Company and Division of Wildlife that obtained valuable wildlife data. The goal of this study is to review the previously completed studies and analyze any gaps so that the final report can show how wildlife uses the 2,500 acres of open space and the overall habitat condition. Vegetation data is critical to map rare, threatened, and endangered species along with habitat types and condition. OST has completed a vegetation and wildlife study on Seven Star Open Space and has found a rare plant, the Rollins' twinpod, which is only found in three counties in Colorado. Locating other

populations of this and any other rare plant is critical for being able to plan for sustainable trails and potentially restore areas to support these rare species.

The study will be completed this summer and the data used to create the long-term management plan during the late summer and fall. Currently, there is a closure on all Pitkin County Open Space properties till May 15 and on the Rim Trail on Upper North Mesa till June 20th to protect elk winter range, migration corridor, and calving area.

Noxious Weeds and Restoration

Since the purchase of Seven Star Open Space by Pitkin County in the mid 90's restoration of the heavily disturbed areas from past grazing has been the main focus of management on the properties. This will continue and as new populations are found on the newly purchased properties, management will occur to control the noxious weeds and reseed with native species.

Mapping of noxious weed populations will occur with management prescriptions that will be included in the long-term management plan.

To protect the properties all equestrians will be required to use certified weed free hay.

Agriculture

Cozy Point Ranch and the meadow on Cozy Point South are managed for agricultural uses. There are existing leases on these lands that will continue through the lease periods and most likely indefinitely since these properties have significant water rights and have a long history of agriculture use. In the interim period no other property in the management plan area will be considered for agriculture operations.

6. RECREATION

Trails

Popular trails currently exist on many of the properties included in the management planning area. The Brush Creek, Highline, Cozy Point Ranch, Aspen Mass, Mills Fishing Access, and the Rim Trails are existing trails that will continue to allow public access subject to any existing closures.

Providing public access to the newly acquired Droste property is a priority for the interim plan. An access corridor was created with the assistance of the Snowmass Village Trails Committee and the Division of Wildlife to align one trail from Hidden Valley Open Space to the existing road on Seven Star Open Space. This existing road is labeled the ridge trail and will be used during the interim period while the long-term management plan is being completed. The ridge trail will connect to the Pitkin County Airport radar road, which then connects to the Owl Creek Trail. The actual trail alignment will be located in the spring with guidance from the natural resource consultants, Division of Wildlife, and trail enthusiasts. This is the only new trail that will be created during the interim period and will be located to be sustainable and avoid any sensitive vegetation and wildlife habitat. To further the

protection of wildlife during the interim plan period dogs are prohibited on Pitkin County Airport, Seven Star, Cozy Point South, Droste, and Airport Bluff properties. Dogs are allowed on the Highline, Lowline, Brush Creek, Aspen Mass, and Mills Fishing Access trails, but must be leashed and all dog waste removed. Dogs are not allowed on the Rim Trail North section and this will be signed to let users know where dogs are allowed on the Rim Trail.

The new Hidden Valley and Airport access trails provides the essential connections between Aspen and Snowmass Village and will provide spectacular views. The new trail will be open to non-motorized users including hikers, equestrians, and bikers. In the interim period there will be no commercial use on any Pitkin County Open Space. Other jurisdictions have existing commercial use on their properties and this will continue. Some guided educational walks will be provided by the Roaring Fork Conservancy and other non-profit organizations.

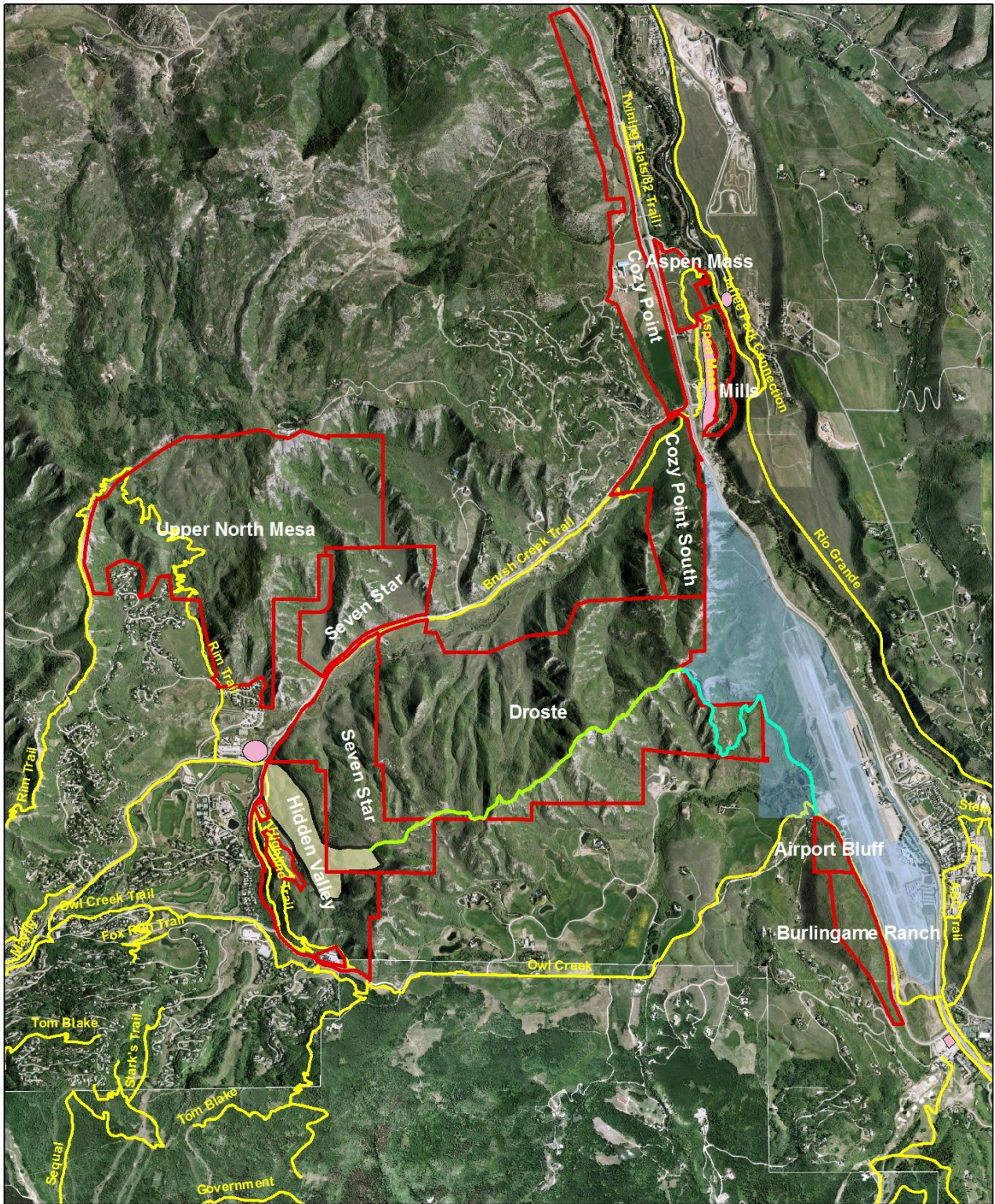
Recreation will be limited to the existing ridge road and newly created access trails on the Seven Star and Droste Properties. To protect wildlife habitat that is being surveyed during the summer of 2011 all trail users must stay on these trails as the property surrounding the trails is closed to access. There will be extensive signage and enforcement to protect wildlife habitat as it is being researched.

During the purchase of the Droste property OST acquired the ability to allow equestrian use on the Brush Creek trail through the Droste property. Currently there is only hard surface. OST will install a soft-surface trail adjacent to the Brush Creek Trail during the interim planning period to facilitate equestrian use of the trail.

During the development of the long-term plan future travel corridors will be explored with user groups and balanced with the protection of wildlife habitat.

Parking/Trailheads

Until the long-term plan is completed, parking is limited to existing trailheads. The parking lot at Town Park in Snowmass Village, Brush Creek Intercept Lot, Jaffee Park, and Buttermilk are the main parking areas for trail access. There is a pull-off on Brush Creek Road at the Snowmass Village Welcome Sign that can be used to access the Brush Creek Trail, but parking is limited.



Interim Management Plan Trails and Trailheads

- ⬮ Parcels for Management Plan
- ⬮ Airport Radar Road
- ⬮ Existing Trails
- ⬮ Airport
- ⬮ Existing Ridge Trail
- ⬮ New Trail Corridor
- ⬮ Trailheads



7. INFRASTRUCTURE

During the long-term plan development all existing infrastructure will be inventoried and future use determined. This will include any potential uses of the properties for agriculture, trailheads, memorials, etc.

8. NAMING

OST, the Town of Snowmass Village, and the City of Aspen have created an incredible Mountain Park complex of properties. Branding this vast array of properties is crucial for future marketing and signage. Staff from all three jurisdictions will begin a branding process to determine the best name for the combined properties and how to market these to the public.

9. INTERIM MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

- Survey the natural and historical resources of the properties.
- Create a new trail to access the existing Ridge Trail on the Hidden Valley and Seven Star properties.
- Work with the Airport to allow public access on the Radar Road.
- Close to any use the following Pitkin County Open Space properties, except for management, existing agriculture use, resource surveys, and the Ridge and Brush Creek Trail:
 - Cozy Point South
 - Seven Star
 - Droste
- Prohibit dogs on Cozy Point South, Seven Star, and Droste properties to protect wildlife while conducting natural resource surveys. The lone exception is the Brush Creek Trail, which allows dogs on-leash May 15 – October 15.
- Reroute the existing Ridge Trail in areas that have erosion or grade issues.
- Meet with stakeholders, user groups, neighbors, and the public to gather community input for development of the long-term management plan.
- Continue noxious weed management and native seeding.
- Create a name for the mountain park system.
- Create a soft-surface trail adjacent to the Brush Creek Trail through the Droste Property to facilitate equestrian access.
- Develop the long-term management plan.