

## Interim Thompson Creek Open Space Management Plan

Mount Sopris dominates the view of Thompson Creek Open Space and is located just four miles from Carbondale. This 87 acre parcel was acquired via the Conservation Fund in a series of transactions involving the former Mautz Ranch and resulted in the conservation of over 1400 acres in a nearly contiguous block of land across the northern flank of Mount Sopris and along the Crystal River. In simultaneous transactions in 2005, 533 nearby acres were placed in a Conservation Easement granted by Richard and Debbie Jelinek on their Crystal Island Ranch to Pitkin County and the Aspen Valley Land Trust (AVLT). AVLT conveyed to the County a partial interest in existing conservation easements on 434 acres. Nearby, The Conservation Fund (Fund) granted a 84.5 conservation easement to the County and Land Trust, including a public trail easement along the east side of the river. The remainder interest in the 84.5 acres was then conveyed by the Conservation Fund to Crystal Island Ranch. Finally, the Conservation Fund also conveyed to the County outright ownership of this property, lying along the scenic byway between Highway 133 and the Crystal River with nearly one mile of river frontage.

### Mautz Ranch Conservation Chronology:




2000 - The Conservation Fund purchases the 440 acre property; 11 in lots with 6 residential development approvals and an approval for a large barn

2003 - a conservation easement on 245 acres is conveyed to Pitkin County, the remainder interest transferred by the Fund to Sustainable Settings with restricted development for agricultural and education purposes.

2005 - A Trail Easement across the property east of the Crystal River is conveyed to Pitkin County. A Conservation Easement on 84.5 acres (containing the trail easement) is conveyed to Pitkin County and AVLT. The encumbered land is conveyed by the Conservation Fund to CIR and restricted to agricultural and passive recreational uses. The remaining 87 acres of CVR is conveyed to Pitkin County at the Thompson Creek Open Space, for open space, recreational and agricultural uses.

Thompson Creek Open Space is being managed for agriculture and river stewardship. The property has been used for cattle production for the past 40 years and continues today. Pitkin County Open Space leases approximately 50 acres for grazing and haying. The other 36 acres is managed for riparian habitat conservation. Currently, the property is open to the public except in the areas used for grazing. This interim management plan will outline the uses allowed on the property and define the management actions occurring before the complete management plan is released by June 1, 2008.

### Management Goals:

-  Continue sustainable agricultural operations
-  Assess the need for public access
-  Restore impacted riparian habitat and preserve intact riparian vegetation

- 🌳 Create a management plan that will guide the future use and restoration of Thompson Creek Open Space

Recreation Resources:

Currently, areas not being used by grazing or haying are open to the public. There are no established trails or trailheads on the property. The property has approximately 1 mile of Crystal River frontage. Pitkin County Open Space and Trails has identified the following as issues that will be addressed in the complete management plan:

- 🌳 OST will work with the Colorado Division of Wildlife on a fisheries plan to be included in the complete management plan.
- 🌳 Place a Seasonal Closure for public access on the property from December 1 – March 31 to protect wintering bald eagles and mule deer winter habitat. This closure will be studied with the Colorado Division of Wildlife and any adjustments will be included in the complete management plan.
- 🌳 Work with the Colorado Department of Transportation on public access to the property from Highway 133.

Vegetation and Wildlife Resources:

The riparian habitat along the Crystal and to a lesser extent along Thompson Creek is the critical vegetation resource on the property. Along the Crystal River the following species have been identified:

- |                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 🌳 Bebb's Willow         | Salix bebbiana               |
| 🌳 Geyer's Willow        | Salix geyeriana              |
| 🌳 Rocky Mountain Willow | Salix monticola              |
| 🌳 Sandbar Willow        | Salix exigua                 |
| 🌳 Narrowleaf Cottonwood | Populus angustifolia         |
| 🌳 Thinleaf Alder        | Alnus incana ssp. Tenuifolia |
| 🌳 River Hawthorn        | Crataegus rivularis          |

Grazing on the property has impacted the riparian habitat and an electric fence has been installed to limit the impact and allow the riparian vegetation to recover.

Multiple species of wildlife use the property for food, shelter, and breeding. The only species of concern that has been identified on the property are bald eagles during the winter months and a seasonal closure will be implemented to limit disturbance and also provide less disturbance to mule deer browsing on the property during winter months.

The following are management actions OST has and will take to manage the property while the complete management plan is being created:

- 🌳 Limit grazing in riparian area using electric fencing.
- 🌳 Restore streambanks along Thompson Creek that are undercutting due to lack of native vegetation.
- 🌳 Enforce a Seasonal Closure to protect winter habitat for bald eagles and mule deer.

## Agriculture

Thompson Creek Open Space has water rights and pastures that have been used for decades for grazing and haying. Currently, OST has a lease on the property for a local rancher to use the property for agricultural purposes. The lease will help OST maintain the pastures and exercise water rights. OST plans to continue leasing the pastures for agricultural purposes and working with the lessee to sustain agricultural use of the property.

This Interim Management Plan is in effect from September 18, 2007 through adoption date of Final Management Plan on or about June 1, 2008