ROARING FORK RAILROAD CORRIDOR
CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT
OCTOBER 20, 2021

Autumn leaves begin to show on the valley floor, Milepost 5.9

Prepared For:
Covenant Enforcement Commission
Roaring Fork Transportation Authority

Prepared By:
NEWLAND PROJECT RESOURCES, INC

I. Introduction, Approach to the Assessment

The Rio Grande Corridor is a 34-mile long stretch of property running from Glenwood Springs to Woody Creek, Colorado. It varies in width but is generally 100-feet wide with the former tracks at the center of the corridor. The Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA) owns the corridor and is charged with maintaining the property for public transportation and recreation purposes. A trail is currently located on the corridor that enjoys heavy use by trail enthusiasts. As a part of the purchase of the corridor, RFTA and the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund (GOCO), a funding partner, agreed to place a Covenant on approximately half of the corridor to preserve the "Conservation Values" on the property.

To monitor and enforce the covenant, RFTA created a Covenant Enforcement Commission (RFTA CEC) that is made up of representatives from each of the entities that the Authority serves. It is the responsibility of the Commission to meet annually to make an assessment of the rail corridor and to recommend to RFTA that it make any corrections necessary to ensure that the Conservation Values of the areas described within the Conservation Covenant are not compromised. An annual assessment of the corridor is conducted by a consultant and staff to determine if any potential violations exist. The report is then presented to and discussed by the RFTA CEC, usually in November.

The following report is a compilation of the assessment of the entire corridor conducted on September 27th and 28th of this year. During the visual inspection, the corridor is assessed for any potential violations. With respect to the Covenant, potential violations are categorized as follows:

1. Construction or buildings and/or Other Structures
2. Fences
3. New Crossings, Structures and/or Crossing Improvements
4. Harvesting of Timber
5. Mining
6. Paving and Road and Trail Construction (apart from Rio Grande Trail)
7. Trash
8. Weeds
9. Other

The report is organized as follows:

- Pages 2 and 3 summarize the new potential violations discovered and also lists previous violations that are in the process of being remedied.

- Pages 4 - 16 are formatted, detailed descriptions and images of the new potential violations (pages 4 – 8) and the violations that still need to be remedied (pages 9 – 16).

- Appendix A of this report describes the nine Conservation Areas.

As of 2018, the inspection started to include all portions of the corridor, not just the sections within the Conservation Areas. Observations of potential trespass or adverse use are referred to in the report as "potential" violations because further research will need to be made to determine if the potential violations are actually in the corridor or if they pre-date the purchase of the corridor (June 1, 1996). If the encroachment was present in a Conservation Area before the purchase date it is considered a baseline characteristic that is not applicable to the Conservation Covenant.

III. Summary

Based on the visual inspection of the corridor, the following is a summary of the remaining violations on the corridor:

New Violations Noted

Milepost	*Conservation Area*	*Description*	*Form #*
10.79	Area #4	Gravel storage & access in ROW	1
15.02	No	Possible fill in corridor	2
21.47	Area #6	Debris from Ditch in Corridor	3
25.45	No	New Private Trail to Corridor	4

Violations Being Remedied

Milepost	*Conservation Area*	*Description*	*Form #*
9.37	*No*	*Landscaping at Sign in ROW*	*5*
18.71	*Area #6*	*Trash Shed in Corridor*	*6*
19.80	*Area #6*	*Structure and berm in Corridor*	*7*
23.22	Area #7	T-post Fence in Corridor	8
24.92	Area #7	Markings in Corridor	9
25.32 – 25.49	No	Lawn Encroachments, Samuelson Subdivision	10
29.04	No	Private Access to River	11

Violations Remedied:

General Corridor Comments:

There were four new potential violations this year, two of which are within Conservation Areas. Overall, the corridor is in good condition, the trail is well used and maintained; most notably, no significant weed infestations or trash accumulations were present other than debris from ditch clearing, and the gravel pile noted above.

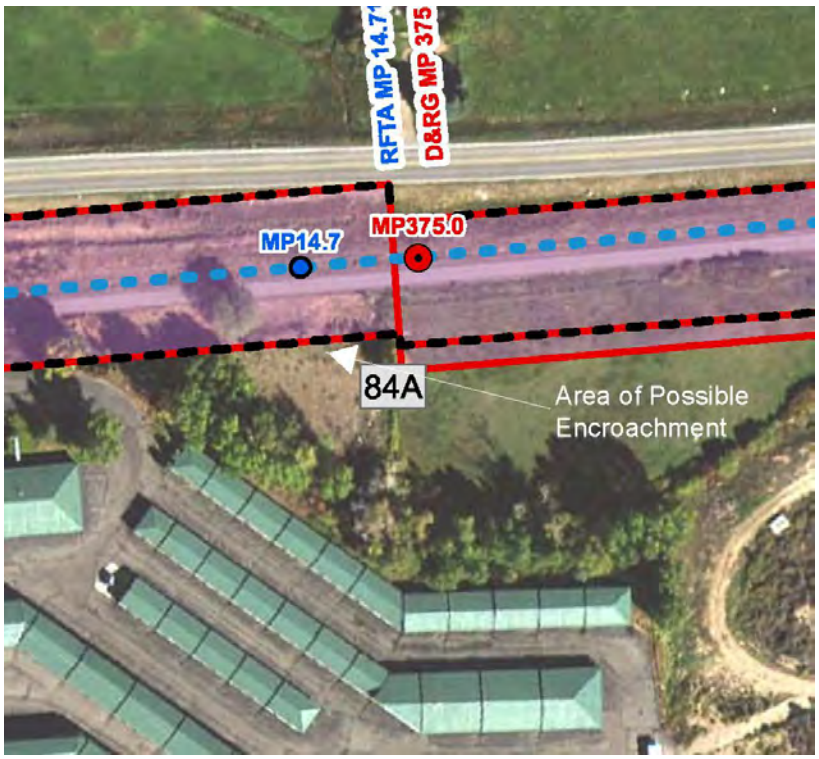
Conservation Enforcement Commission Comments:

(To be inserted after meeting)

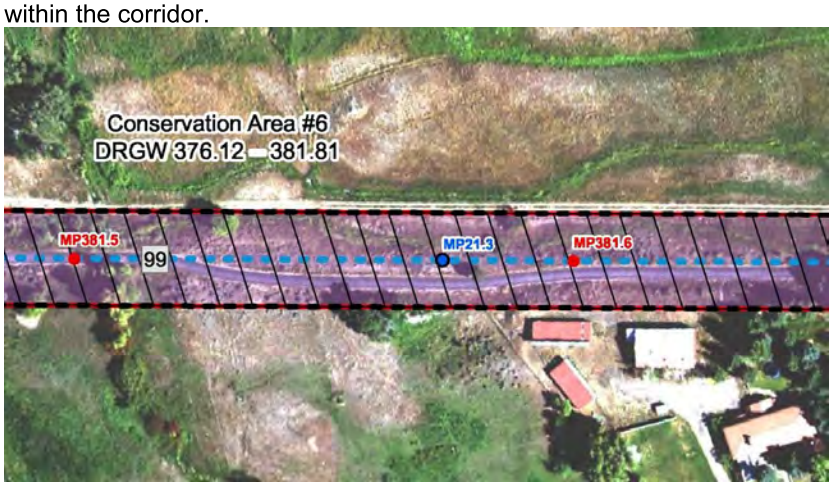
RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL COVENANT ENCROACHMENT

DATE	September 27, 2021	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#1**
MILEPOST	10.79		
CONSERVATION AREA	Conservation Area #4: Aspen Glen to Satank		
NEW/EXISTING	New		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Delivery and Storage of Gravel. Formerly an area where the neighbor stored corrugated metal. The metal has been removed but a load of gravel has been delivered to this are via the rail corridor. Notice truck tracks on trail shoulder.		
BACKGROUND	Upon researching this possible encroachment, it appears to be within the 100-foot wide right-of-way owned by RFTA. The plantings are to the left of the sign in the picture shown above.		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Contact property owner to discuss removal of items. Fencing might be appropriate along this area.		

RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL ENCROACHMENT

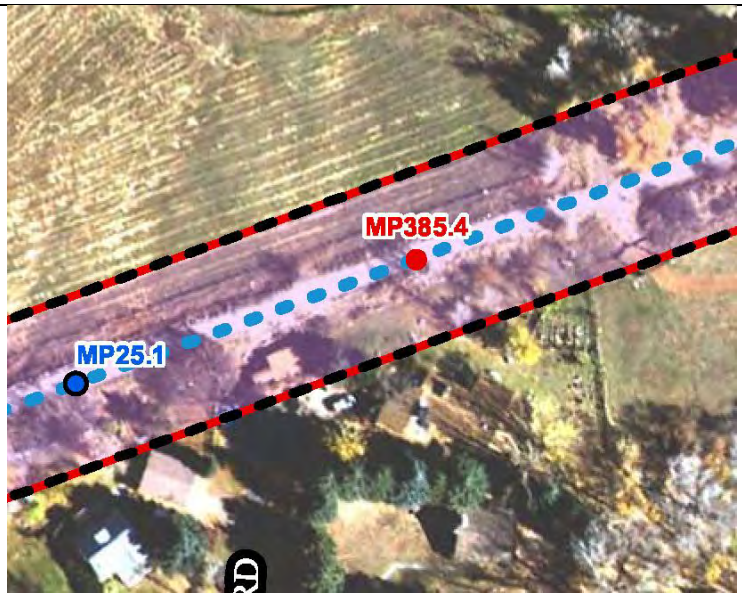
DATE	September 27, 2021	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#2**
MILEPOST	14.2		
CONSERVATION AREA	Not in Conservation Area		
NEW/EXISTING	New		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Newly excavated (filled) area adjacent to and possibly on the corridor. 		
BACKGROUND	Upon researching this possible encroachment, it appears to be close to or within the corridor. 		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Contact property owner to discuss removal of items. Fencing might be appropriate along this area.		

RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL ENCROACHMENT

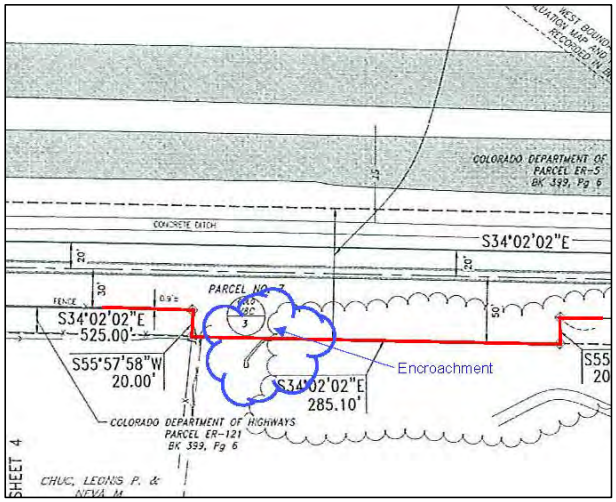
DATE	September 28, 2021	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#3**
MILEPOST	21.3		
CONSERVATION AREA	Conservation Area #6		
NEW/EXISTING	New		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Newly placed debris from irrigation ditch		
BACKGROUND	Upon researching this possible encroachment, it appears to be close to or within the corridor. 		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Contact property owner to discuss removal of items. Fencing/signage might be appropriate along this area.		

RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL ENCROACHMENT

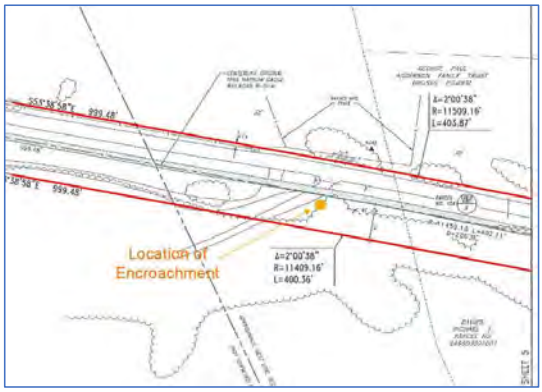
DATE	September 28, 2021	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#4**
MILEPOST	25.15		
CONSERVATION AREA	Not in Conservation Area		
NEW/EXISTING	New		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Private pathway in corridor. This new pathway is more substantial than the typical private trail placed to access the Rio Grande trail. The area of disturbance within the corridor is about 800 – 1,000 square feet. 		
BACKGROUND	Upon researching this possible encroachment, it appears to be within the corridor.		

	
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Contact property owner to discuss issues surrounding the private access, which include the safety of all trail users.

RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL ENCROACHMENT

DATE	September 24, 2020	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#5**
MILEPOST	9.37	*(Formally Encroachment 7)*	
CONSERVATION AREA	Outside of Conservation Area		
NEW/EXISTING	Existing since 2019		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	New landscaping around the "Aspen Glen" sign **2020 Assessment** **2021 Assessment**		
BACKGROUND	Upon researching this possible encroachment, it appears to be within the 100-foot wide right-of-way owned by RFTA. The plantings have matured and spread over the entire landscaped area, which takes up approximately 500 square feet of the RFTA corridor. Irrigation and lighting contained within the landscaped area are also encroaching in the corridor.  		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Contact Aspen Glen to discuss planted material.		

RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL COVENANT ENCROACHMENT

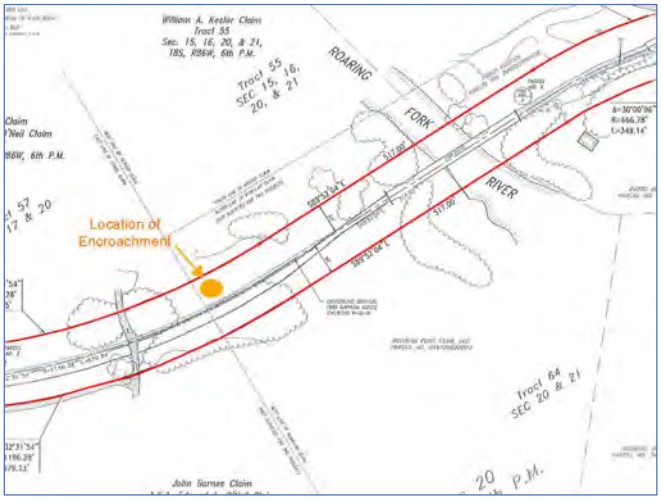
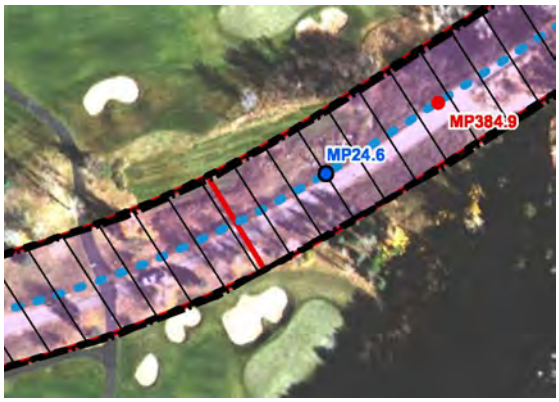
DATE	September 27, 2021	ENCROACHMENT	#6
MILEPOST	18.71	*(Formerly Encroachment #2)*	
CONSERVATION AREA	Yes Conservation Area #6: Catherine Store Bridge to Sopris Creek		
NEW/EXISTING	Existing		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Trash Storage Shed along at 1126 Hooks Spur Lane.		
BACKGROUND	Although previously listed as being remedied, however the shed continues to exist on the corridor.  **October, 2020** **September, 2021**		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY			

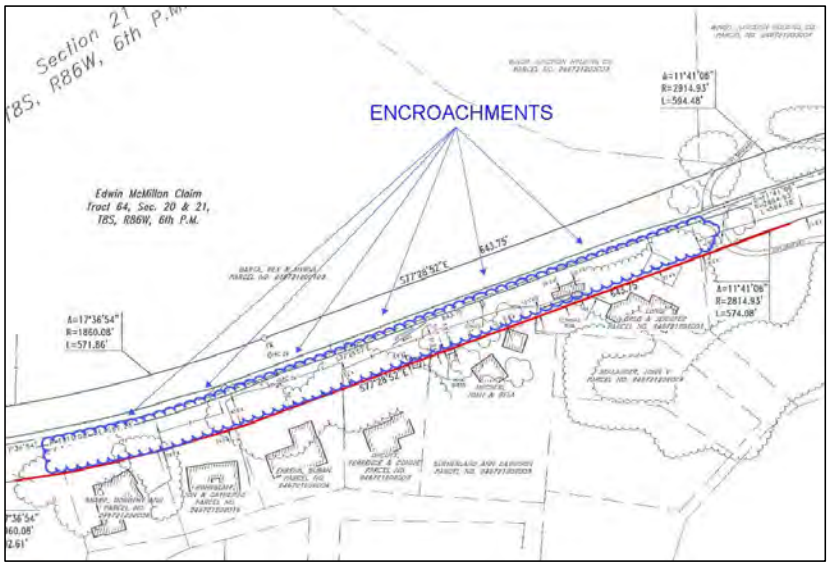
RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL COVENANT ENCROACHMENT

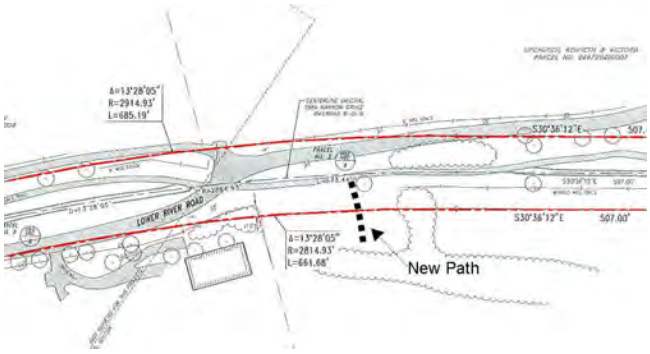
DATE	September 28, 2021	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#7**
MILEPOST	19.80	*(Formerly Encroachment #9)*	
CONSERVATION AREA	Yes	Conservation Area #6: Catherine Store Bridge to Sopris Creek	
NEW/EXISTING	Existing since 1996		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Berm and structure in rail corridor. **October 2020 Looking East** **October 2020 Looking East**		
BACKGROUND	 Upon researching this possible encroachment, it appears to be within the 100-foot wide right-of-way owned by RFTA. Notice the barn and shed are within the corridor.		
ACTIONS TAKEN:	RFTA staff has been working with the landowner and is close to determining a path forward.		

DATE	September 28, 2021	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#8**
MILEPOST	22.8 to 23.1	*(Formerly Encroachment #3)*	
CONSERVATION AREA	Yes Conservation Area #7: T-post and smooth wire fence in corridor; new signage in corridor		
NEW/EXISTING	Existing and New		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Fence has been placed by the rancher and Pitkin County Open Space. The ranch has been allowed to fence portions of the corridor in the past and it appears that the fencing was a part of this arrangement. **October 2020** **September 2021** Since last year the area has been cleaned up and the old fencing has been removed. However, a social trail that leaves the corridor heading northeast has been signed: 		

BACKGROUND	Although the fencing situation and trash accumulation appears to be corrected, the sign stating the trail is crossing privet property is located within the corridor.
RECOMMENDED REMEDY OR STEPS TAKEN	

DATE	September 28, 2021	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#9**
MILEPOST	24.55	*(Formerly Encroachment #4)*	
CONSERVATION AREA	Yes Conservation Area #7: Sopris Creek to Wingo Junction		
NEW/EXISTING	In Corridor since 2020		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Marking noticed along the edge of a green repair area, which is also close to or within the corridor. Could mean a new irrigation line or could mean a water hazard. Still there along with moved vegetation. October 2020 September 2021		
BACKGROUND	The RFTA Survey shows the area of encroachment:   		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY OR STEPS TAKEN	It is unknown whether these makings indicate the alignment of a new irrigation line or if it is a delineation of a water hazard for the golf course. The Roaring Fork Club should be approached on this matter.		

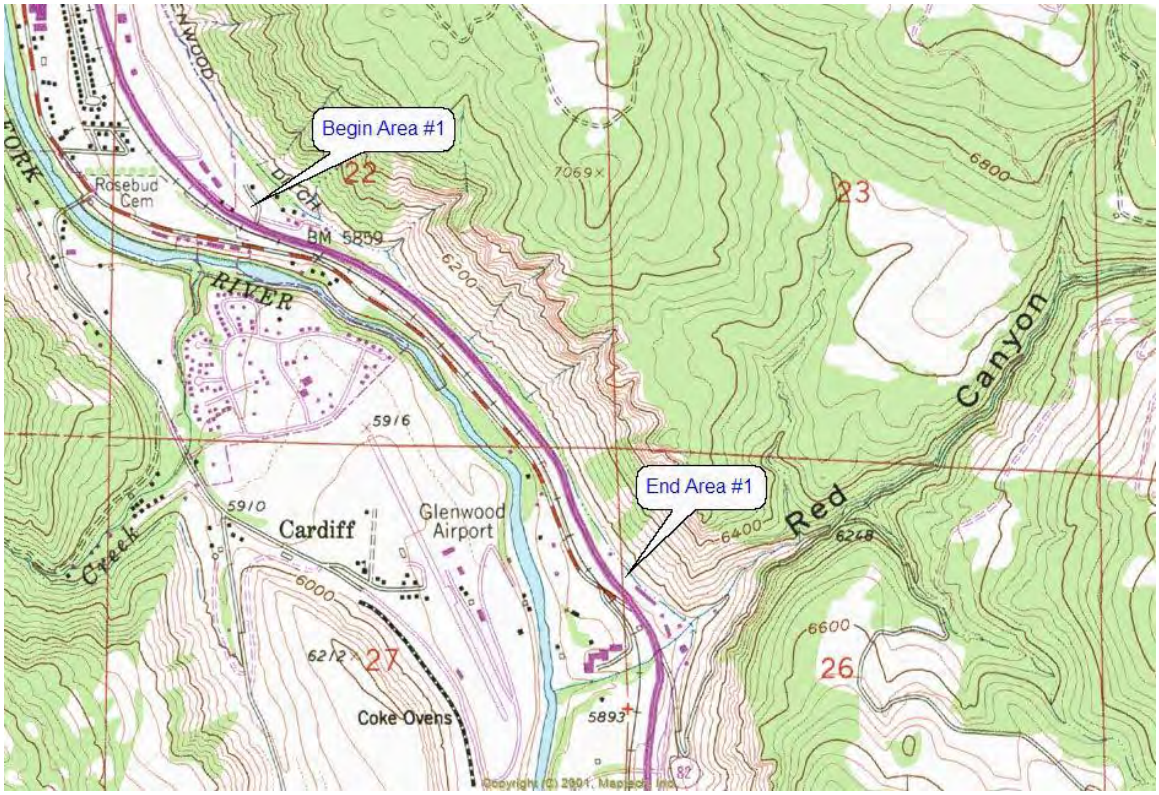
DATE	September 28, 2021	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#10**
MILEPOST	25.32 – 25.49	*(Formerly Encroachment #8)*	
CONSERVATION AREA	Not in Conservation Area		
NEW/EXISTING	Existing		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Lawn Encroachments into Rail Corridor		
BACKGROUND	Upon researching these possible encroachments, it appears to be within the 100-foot wide right-of-way owned by RFTA. Most of the lots have lawns encroaching and some have storage buildings encroaching. 		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Contact property owners to discuss options for compliance.		

DATE	September 25, 2020	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#11**
MILEPOST	29.04	*(Formerly Encroachment #6)*	
CONSERVATION AREA	Not in Conservation Area		
NEW/EXISTING	2020		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	New path to Private River Access from trail. The path does not cross the trail but starts on the south side of trail and goes to the river. **Path from trail to river** End of trail with "No Trespassing" sign Steps to Rio Grande Trail		
BACKGROUND	A new encroachment with a twist. Rather than building a path to connect private property to the trail, this path connects the trail to private property.  		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Consider what action would be appropriate to mitigate this use of public lands, if any. Contact property owner (DBS LOWER RIVER ROAD 2014 LLC, SPID# 246725302001) to discuss options for compliance.		

Appendix A: Description of the Conservation Areas

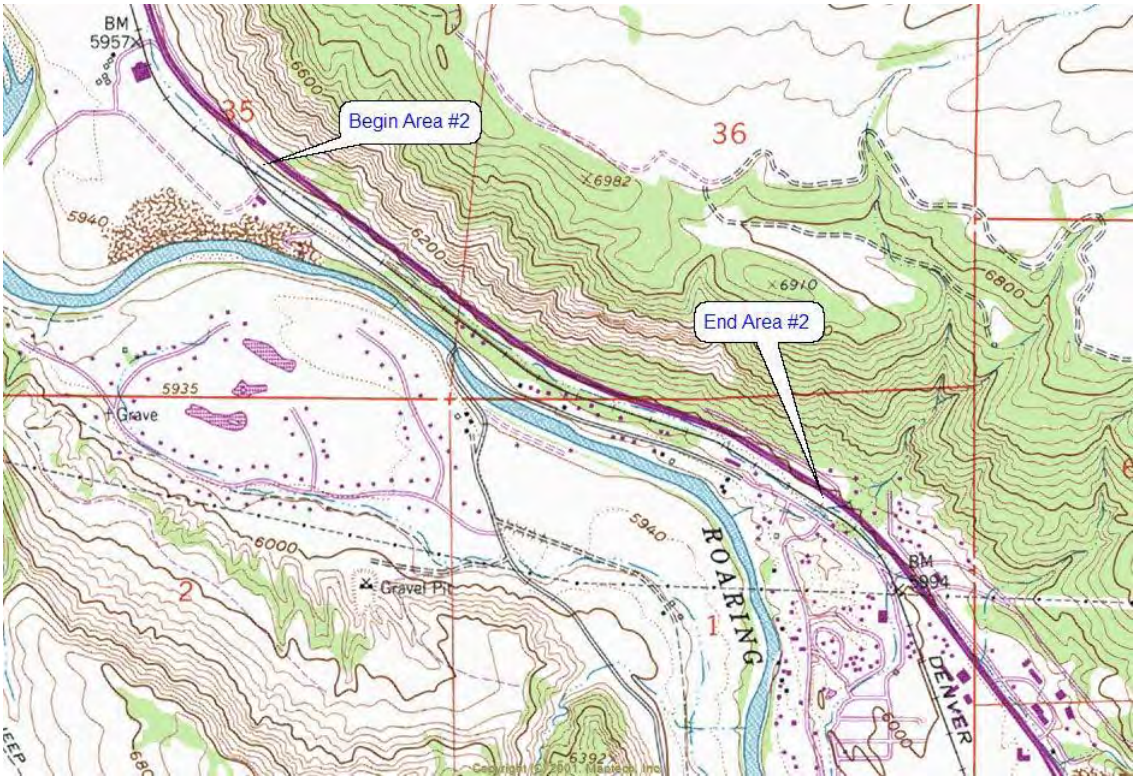
CONSERVATION AREA #1: Milepost 2.68 to 3.64, RxR Milepost 362.90 – 363.86 (0.96 miles)

Running from the Glenwood Springs City Limits south to the intersection of Highway 82 and Grand Avenue (old Highway 82), this area is well vegetated by native, scrub oak dominated mountain-shrub vegetation that offers excellent habitat for birds and small animals. Outstanding views of Mount Sopris are also provided on this section of the railroad corridor. The generally steep but benched hillside also provides a natural buffer between Highway 82 and Grand Avenue. Direct river access is offered from the railroad corridor over Grand Avenue.



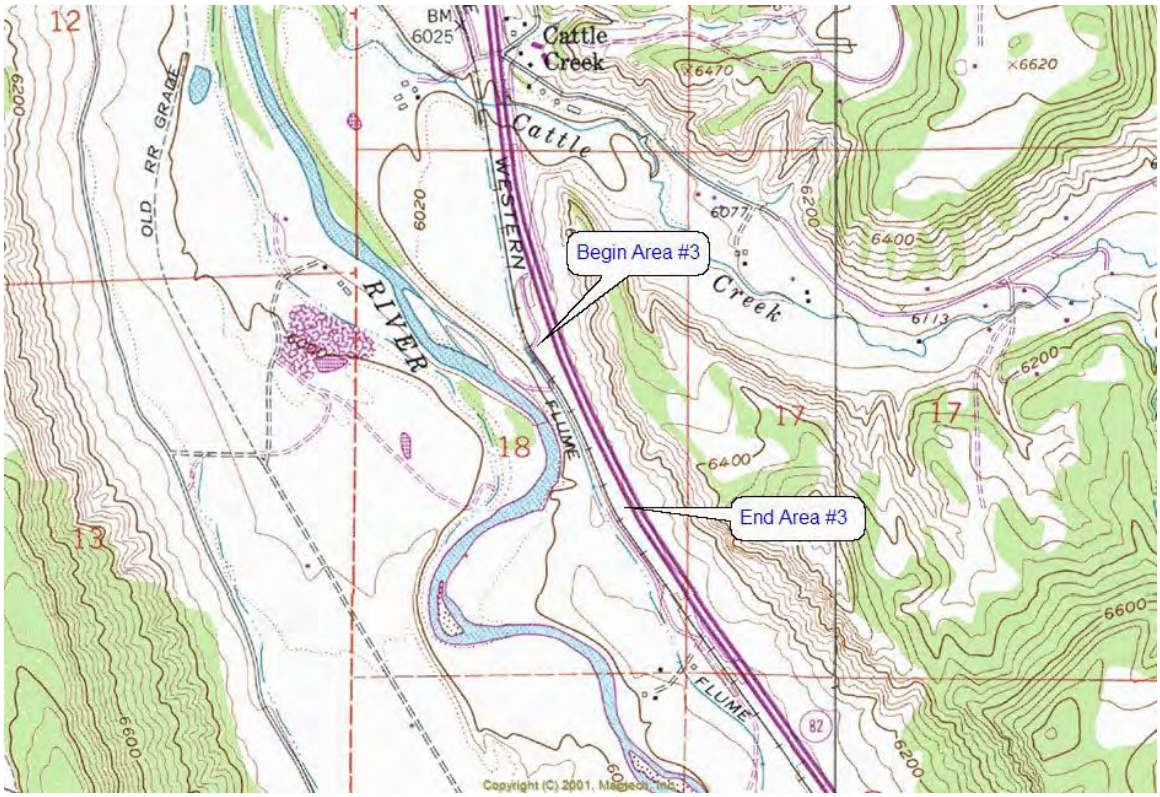
CONSERVATION AREA #2: Milepost 5.22 to 6.25, RxR Milepost 365.44 – 366.47 (1.39 miles)

This section begins at the crossing of County Road 107 (known as Coryell Ranch Road) to a location about ¼-mile west of the CMC Road/Highway 82 intersection. This area is well vegetated by mature native, mountain-shrub and related plant species that offer excellent habitat for birds and small animals. The generally steep but benched hillside also provides an excellent, natural buffer between Highway 82 and County Road 107. Direct river access is offered from the railroad corridor over County Road 107. Dramatic views of Mount Sopris are also provided on this section of the railroad corridor.



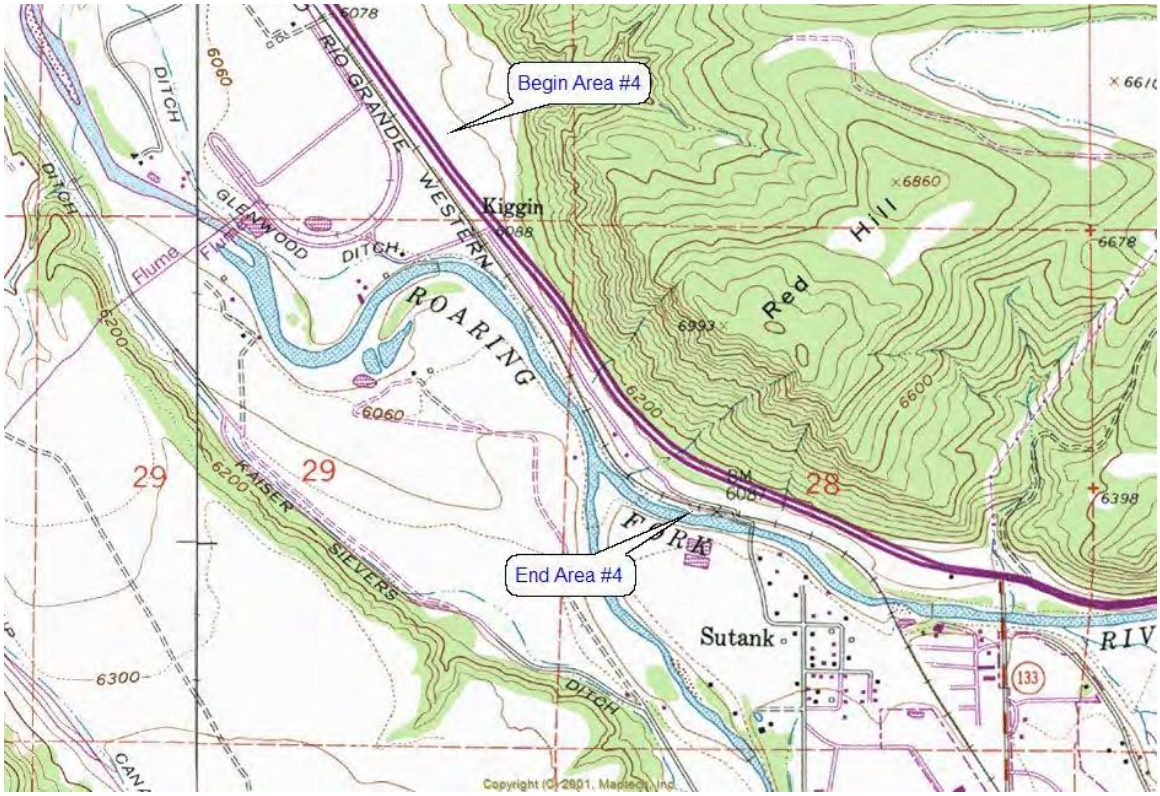
CONSERVATION AREA #3: Milepost 8.28 to 8.78, RxR Milepost 368.50 – 369.00 (0.50 miles)

This section of the railroad corridor covers the broad bend in the Roaring Fork River between the Bair Chase property and the ranchette parcels near Aspen Glen. Sage shrubs are predominant in this section that are some of the most mature sage plants in the valley. The mountain shrub ecosystem on the corridor in this area provides excellent habitat for birds and small animals. The Roaring Fork River sweeps towards then away from the railroad corridor, providing access opportunity and riparian habitat protection. Outstanding views of Mount Sopris are also provided on this section of the railroad corridor.



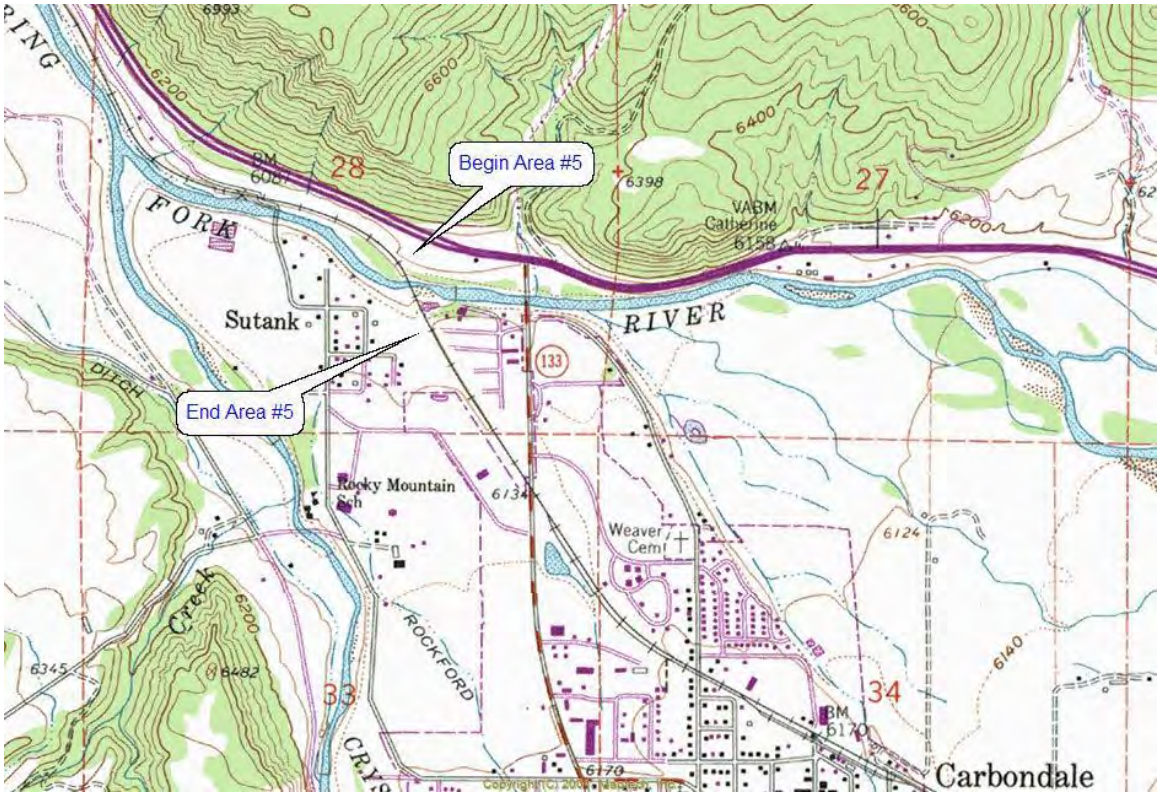
CONSERVATION AREA #4: Milepost 10.28 to 11.07, RxR Milepost 370.50 – 371.29 (0.79 miles)

This section goes from about a ¾-mile south (up valley) of the Aspen Glen entrance to a private crossing located just below the confluence of the Crystal River and the Roaring Fork River. This area is well vegetated by mature native, mountain-shrub and related plant species that offer excellent habitat for birds and small animals. Direct access to the Roaring Fork River is provided over the moderately sloping hillside that the railroad corridor crosses. Two significant irrigation ditches also follow within the railroad corridor, providing wetlands and riparian habitat. Views of Mount Sopris and the confluence of the Crystal and the Roaring Fork rivers are also provided on this section of the railroad corridor.



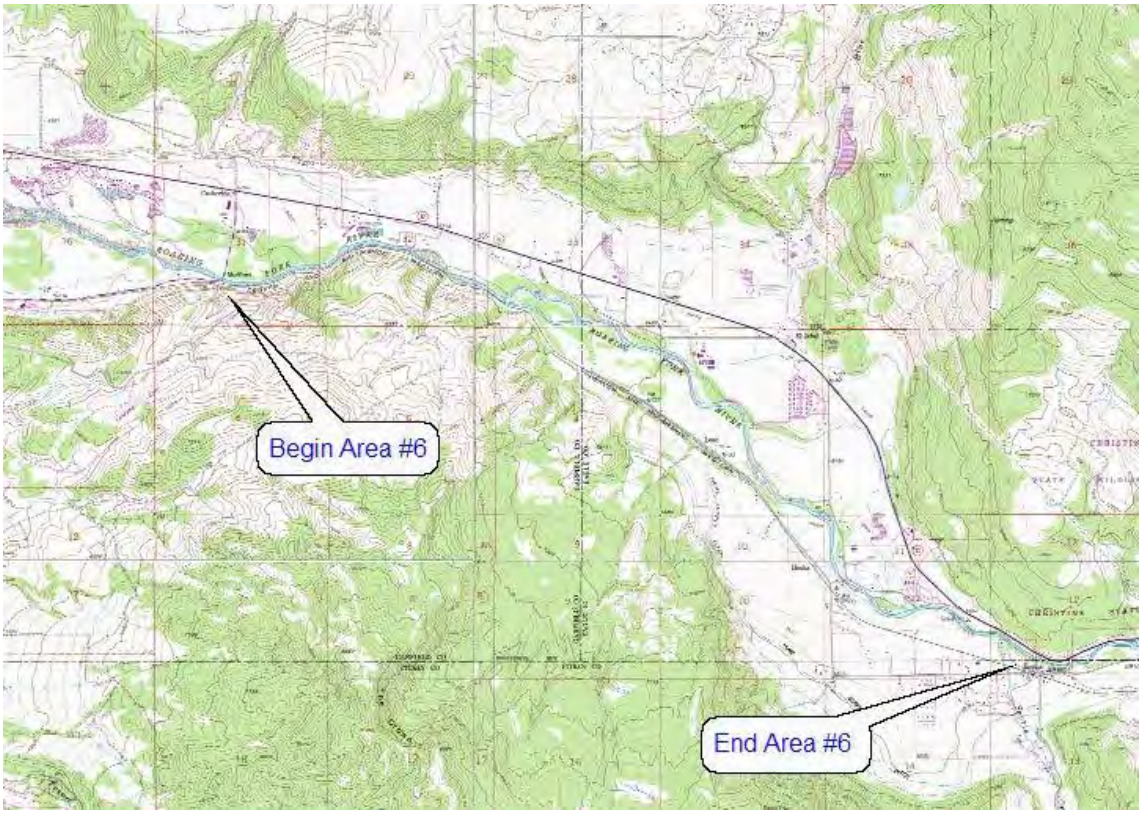
CONSERVATION AREA #5: Milepost 11.47 to 11.61, RxR Milepost 371.69 – 371.83 (0.16 miles)

This section surrounds the Railroad Bridge at Sutank and offers excellent river and recreation access opportunities and preserves wetland and riparian habitat. Views of Mt. Sopris are provided on the bridge.



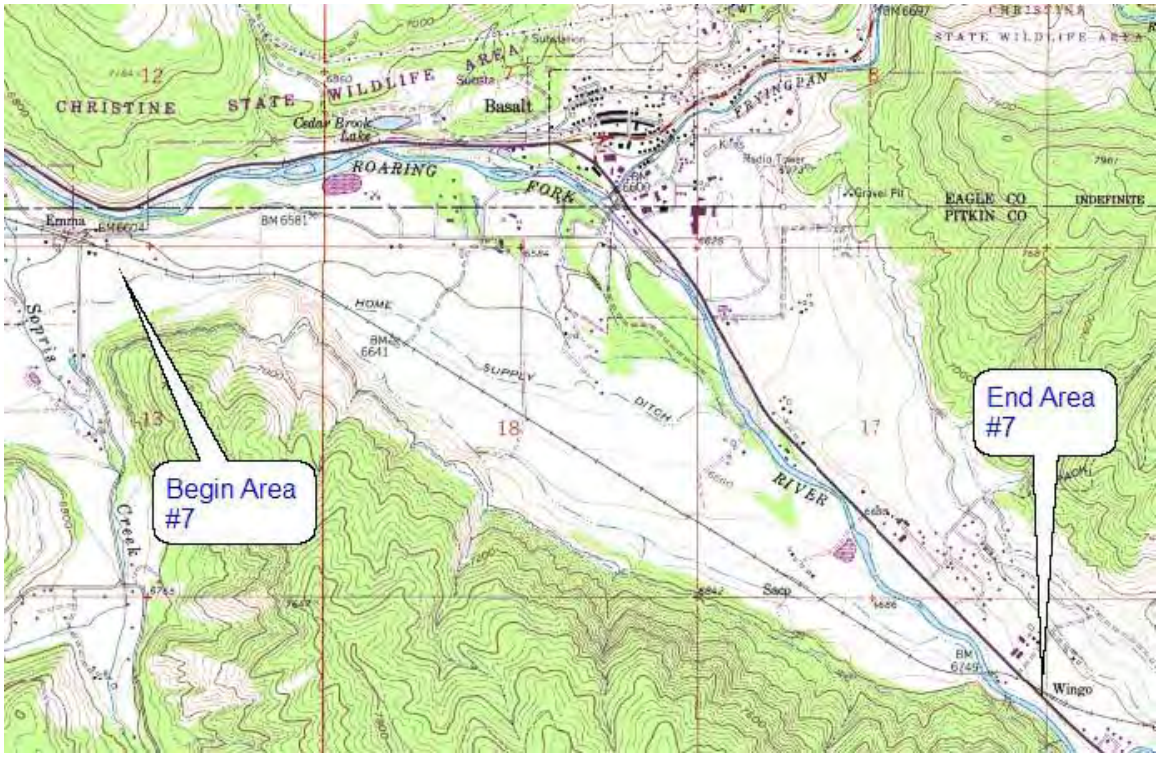
CONSERVATION AREA #6: Milepost 15.92 to 21.60, RxR Milepost 376.14 – 381.82 (5.76 miles)

This section begins near the Catherine Store Bridge (County Road 100) and continues southeast to Emma Road including the Rock Bottom Ranch property. Rock Bottom Ranch is owned by a non-profit entity, the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies, as a nature preserve. The nature preserve is also encumbered by a Conservation Easement held be the Aspen Valley Land Trust (AVLT). The railroad corridor is nestled between a broad, riparian area of the Roaring Fork River and Bureau of Land Management property. A number of conservation values are provided within this section of the corridor including riparian and wetland habitat protection; access to river recreation opportunities; access to public lands; preservation of habitat critical to eagle, hawk and heron populations in the valley; and preservation of winter range migratory patterns for macro fauna (mule deer and elk).



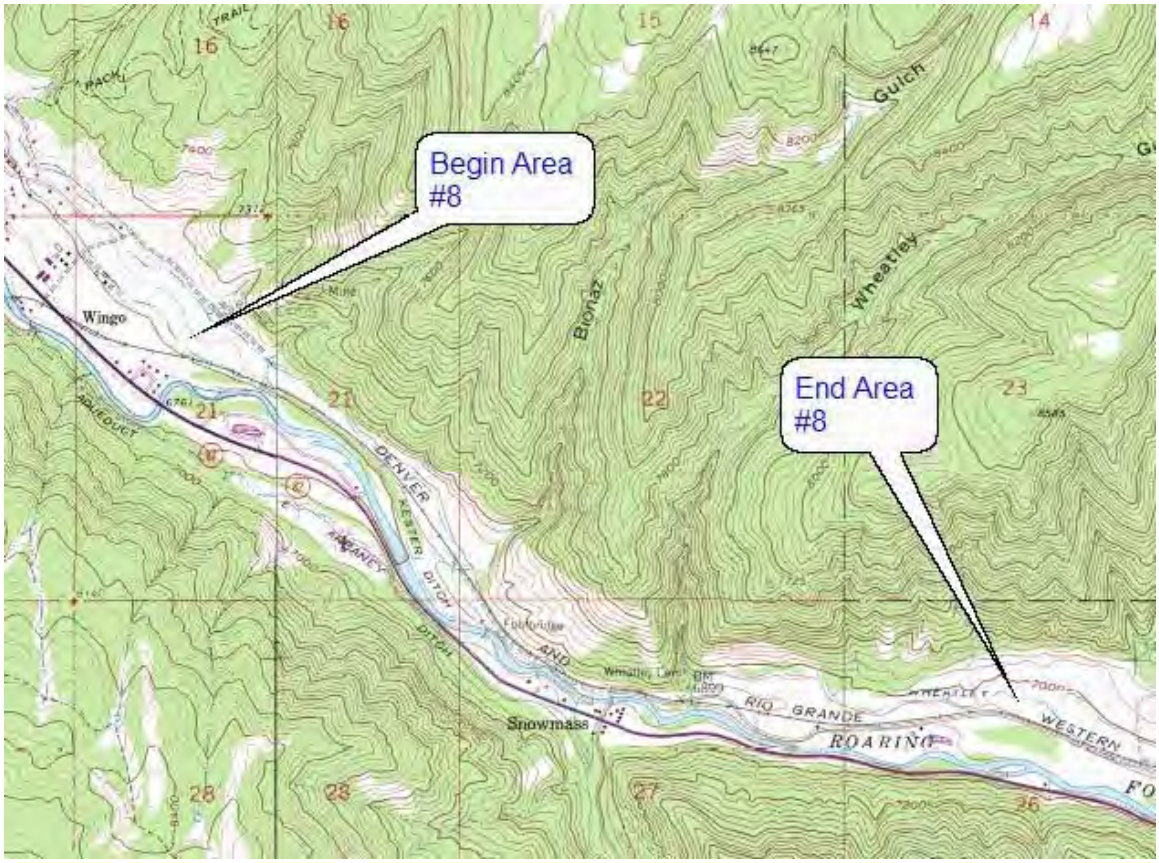
CONSERVATION AREA #7: Milepost 21.97 to 24.88, RxR Milepost 382.19 – 385.10 (2.91 miles)

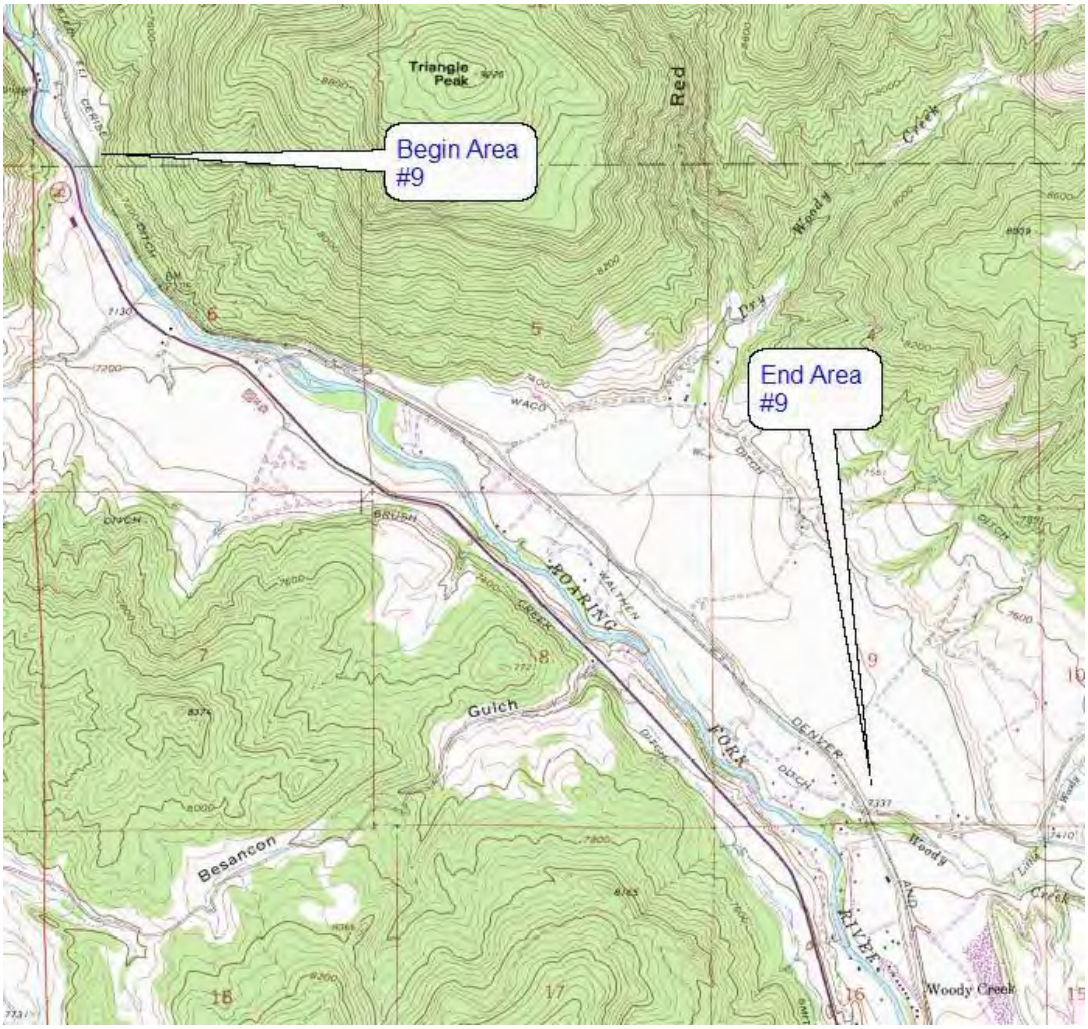
This section begins directly east of the Emma Road/Highway 82 intersection, continues toward the Basalt High School between ranch properties and federal lands and ends just east of the Wingo pedestrian bridge over Highway 82. A parcel of land owned by the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Program along the corridor contains a conservation easement to preserve a known migratory route for mule deer and elk. Another portion of private property in this area now contains a golf course and very low-density housing. This area is well vegetated by mature native, mountain-shrub and related plant species that offer excellent habitat for birds and small animals.



CONSERVATION AREA #8: Milepost25.26 to 27.83, RxR Milepost 385.48 – 388.05 (2.65 miles)

This section starts at the east side of the Wingo Subdivision and continues southeast to the end of the Dart Ranch on Lower River Road. Several conservation values are present on this section of the corridor, including habitat for birds and small animals along the interface between mountain shrub and grassland habitat; access to the Roaring Fork River for recreation; access to National Forest lands; and preservation of critical habitat for macro fauna (mule deer and elk). A significant portion of this section is surrounded by a conservation easement held by Pitkin County on the Dart Ranch. Riparian vegetation along the Roaring Fork is also present. The railroad corridor can access several fisherman easements along the Roaring Fork River.



CONSERVATION AREA #9: Milepost 30.36 to 33.45, RxR Milepost 390.58 – 393.67 (3.29 mi)

This section begins near the crossing of Lower River Road, continues through the Woody Creek area until the end of the corridor at Woody Creek Road. The river side of this section contains mountain shrub and riparian vegetation that offers excellent habitat for birds and small animals. The railroad corridor is situated on a steep slope that comes down from Triangle Mountain (National Forest lands) and ends at the Roaring Fork River. The railroad corridor affords access to both the Roaring Fork River and National Forest lands. In addition, the railroad corridor can access several fisherman easements along the Roaring Fork River. The uphill side of the railroad corridor contains primarily steep shale hillside and includes or is adjacent to Lower River Road. In the Woody Creek area, the rail corridor is perched on a short but steep hillside that affords excellent views of the Elk Mountain range and Aspen-area ski resorts.