ROARING FORK RAILROAD CORRIDOR
CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT
October 18, 2023

FINAL REPORT

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 rail corridor running from Glenwood Springs to Woody Creek, Colorado. The corridor is "rail-banked," a law enacted through the 1983 National Trails System Act, which allows out-of-service rail corridors to be used as trails until they might be needed again for rail service. 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 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. For the purposes of this report, an "encroachment" means an incursion, intrusion, or disturbance into, across or along the corridor by a person or corporation other than RFTA. This includes both structures and uses. The types of encroachments that are specifically listed in the Conservation Covenant are as follows: structures, fences, crossings, timber harvesting, mining activities, paving, roads, trash, weeds and "other improvements."

To monitor and enforce the covenant, RFTA created a Covenant Enforcement Commission (RFTA CEC) made up of representatives from each of the entities belonging to RFTA. It is the responsibility of the Commission to meet annually to assess the rail corridor and to recommend to the RFTA Board 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 entire corridor, including the nine Conservation Areas is conducted annually to determine if any potential violations exist. The report is then presented to and discussed by the RFTA CEC.

In 2018 the assessment was expanded to cover the entire length of the corridor from the main line tracks in Glenwood Springs to the terminus of RFTA ownership at Woody Creek Road. The format of this report has also been modified to account for this change. This report will first summarize all violations, showing which violations are new, which are in the process of being remedied, and which have been remedied. Encroachments are detailed on separate Encroachment Forms that describe the location, type of encroachment, background information on the encroachment, and a recommended remedy to resolve the issue.

Also included is Appendix A which describes the nine Conservation Areas.

III. Summary

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

New Violations Noted

Milepost	*Conservation Area*	*Description*	*Form #*
27.21	Yes, #8	New Fence in Corridor	1
27.21	Yes, #8	Buried Electric Line in Corridor	2

Violations Being Remedied

Milepost	*Conservation Area*	*Description*	*Form #*
9.37	No	Landscaping at Sign in ROW (Aspen Glen)	3
14.2	No	Fill for Parking Lot near Corridor (Mid-Continent Load Out)	4
18.71	Area #6	Trash Shed in Corridor (1122 Hooks Spur Road)	5
19.80	Area #6	Structure and Berm in Corridor (734 Hooks Spur Road)	6
24.55	Yes	Ramp over tracks (Roaring Fork Club)	7
25.32 – 25.49	No	Lawn Encroachments, Samuelson Subdivision (Lots 1, 5a, 5b, 6, 8 and 13)	8
25.49	No	Access Ramp to Trail from 122 Riverbend Road.	9

Violations Remedied:

Milepost	*Conservation Area*	*Description*
4.19	No	Homeless Camp: Area no longer being used in this fashion
7.00	No	Storage Structures in Corridor: Determined to be outside of corridor
23.1	Area #7	T-post Fence in Corridor: Determined to be outside of corridor.

Milepost	*Conservation Area*	*Description*
28.13	No	Realtor Sign in Corridor: Realtor signed removed

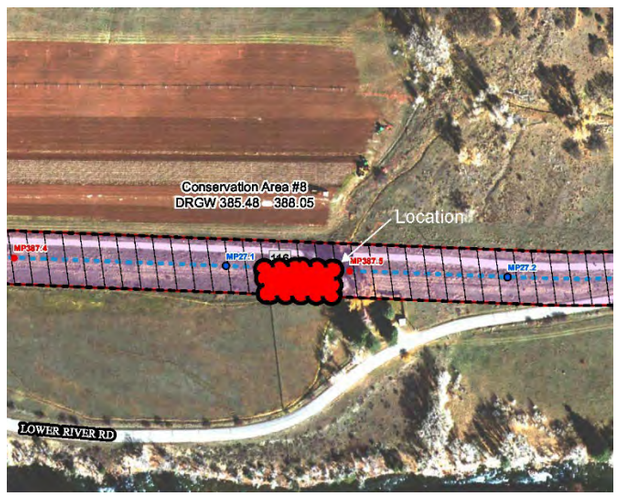
General Corridor Comments:

There were two new potential violations this year, both of which are located at the same mile marker, although different parcels, and within a Conservation Area. Overall, the corridor is in good condition, the trail is well used and maintained; most notably, no weed infestations or trash accumulations were present. Water leaking from ditches is still a concern, especially between Glenwood Springs and Carbondale.

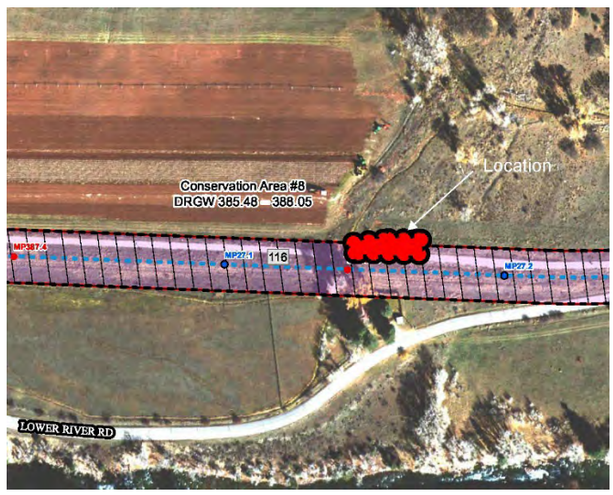
Conservation Enforcement Commission Comments:

Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for Commissioners comments.

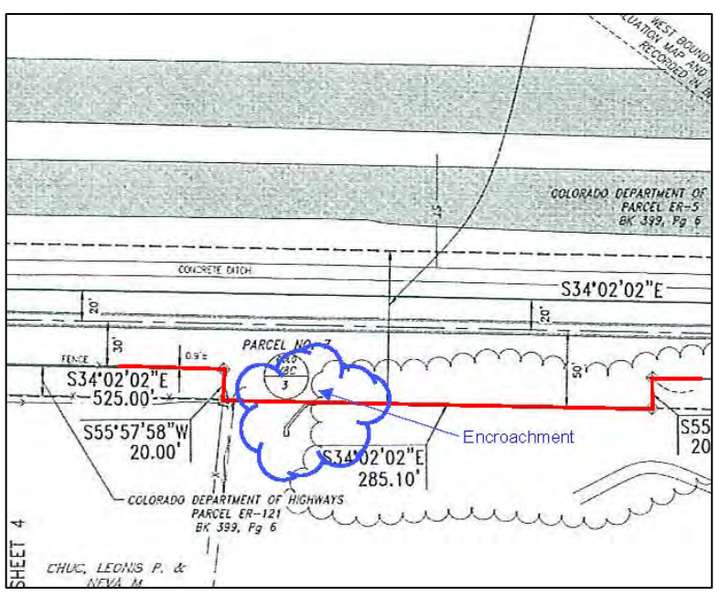
RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL COVENANT ENCROACHMENT

DATE	September 27, 2023	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#1**
MILEPOST	27.21		
CONSERVATION AREA	Yes, #8		
NEW/EXISTING	New		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Temporary stockyard placed adjacent to corridor		
BACKGROUND	Black, temporary metal fencing placed in corridor adjacent to existing horse paddocks.  		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Approach and discuss this with property owner: 964 Lower River Road WHEATLEY TRACT 2 LLC 555 NE 185TH ST #201 MIAMI FL 33179		

RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL COVENANT ENCROACHMENT

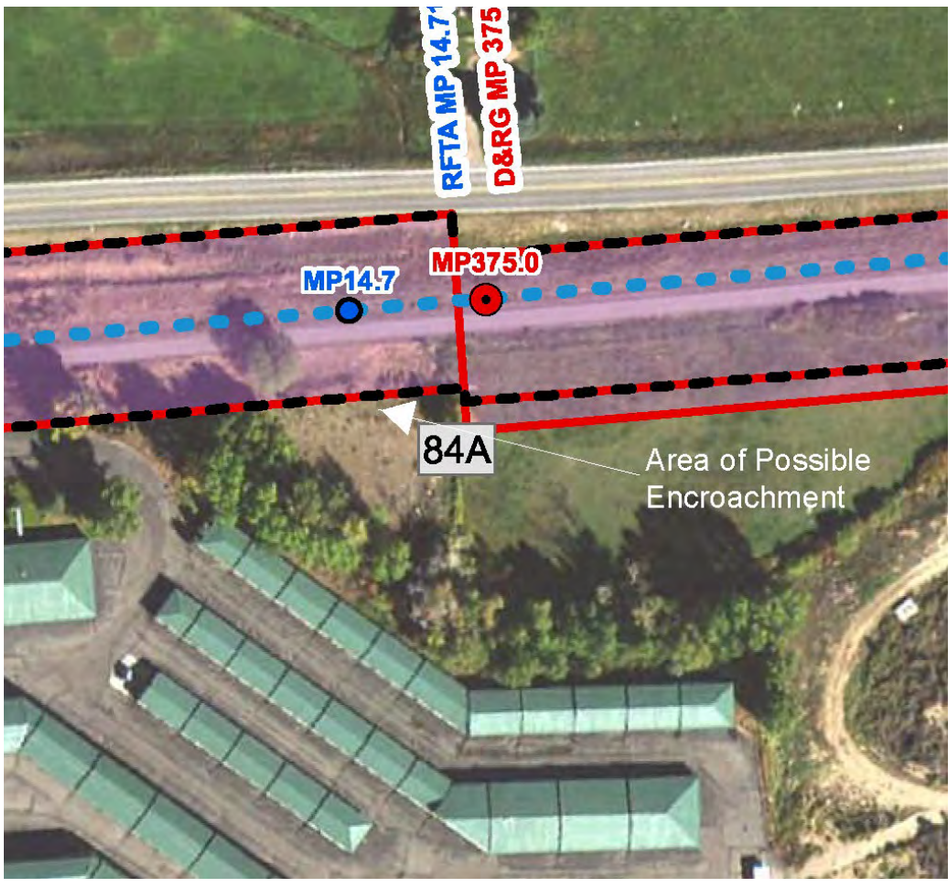
DATE	September 27, 2023	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#2**
MILEPOST	27.21		
CONSERVATION AREA	Yes, #8		
NEW/EXISTING	New		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Electric Utility line buried in corridor. No revegetation applied to covered trench		
BACKGROUND	Utility line is buried from pole to location of new irrigation pump.  		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Approach and discuss this with property owner: Wheatley Tract Pitkin County Open Space And Trails 530 E. Main St Aspen, Co 81611		

RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL ENCROACHMENT

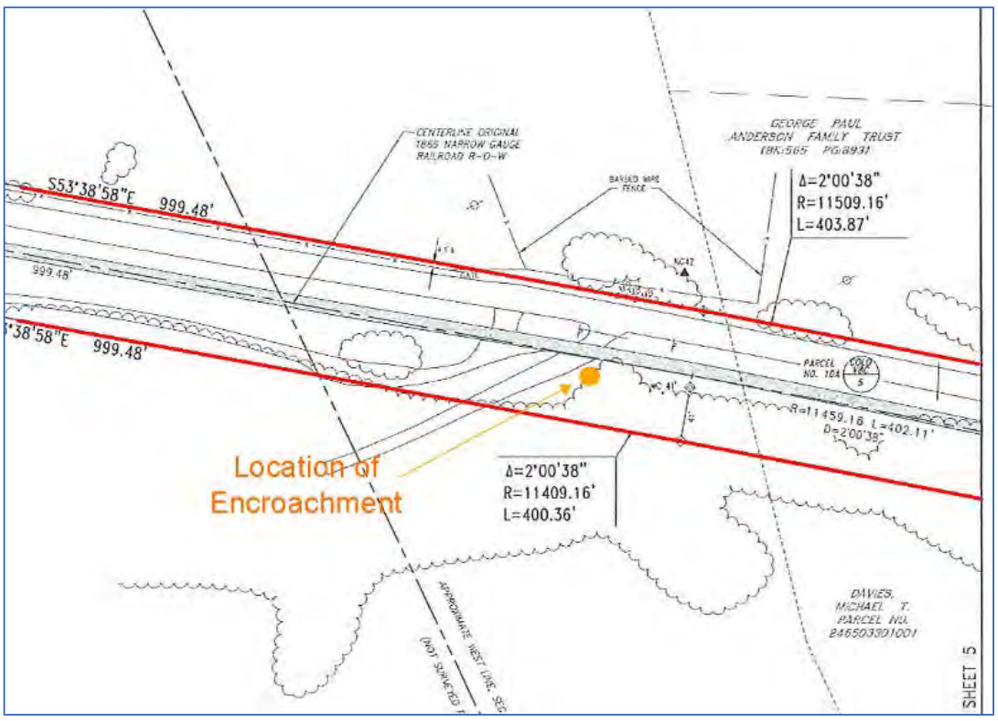
DATE	September 26, 2023	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#3**
MILEPOST	9.37		
CONSERVATION AREA	Outside of Conservation Area		
NEW/EXISTING	Existing since 2019		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	New landscaping around the “Aspen Glen” sign 		
BACKGROUND	Upon researching this possible encroachment, it appears to be within the 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 ENCROACHMENT

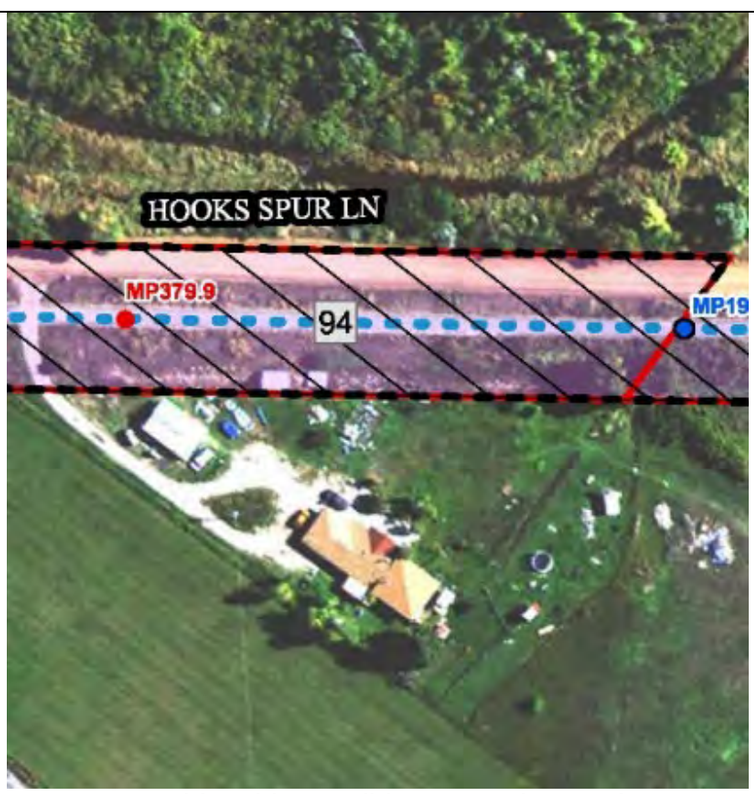
DATE	September 26, 2023	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#4**
MILEPOST	14.2		
CONSERVATION AREA	Not in Conservation Area		
NEW/EXISTING	Existing		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	An excavated (filled) vehicle storage area adjacent to and possibly on the corridor. RFTA survey stakes do show that although the parking area is removed from the corridor, the slope of the fill used to create the parking area is within the corridor.		

BACKGROUND	
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Discuss with owner how to remove fill from corridor.

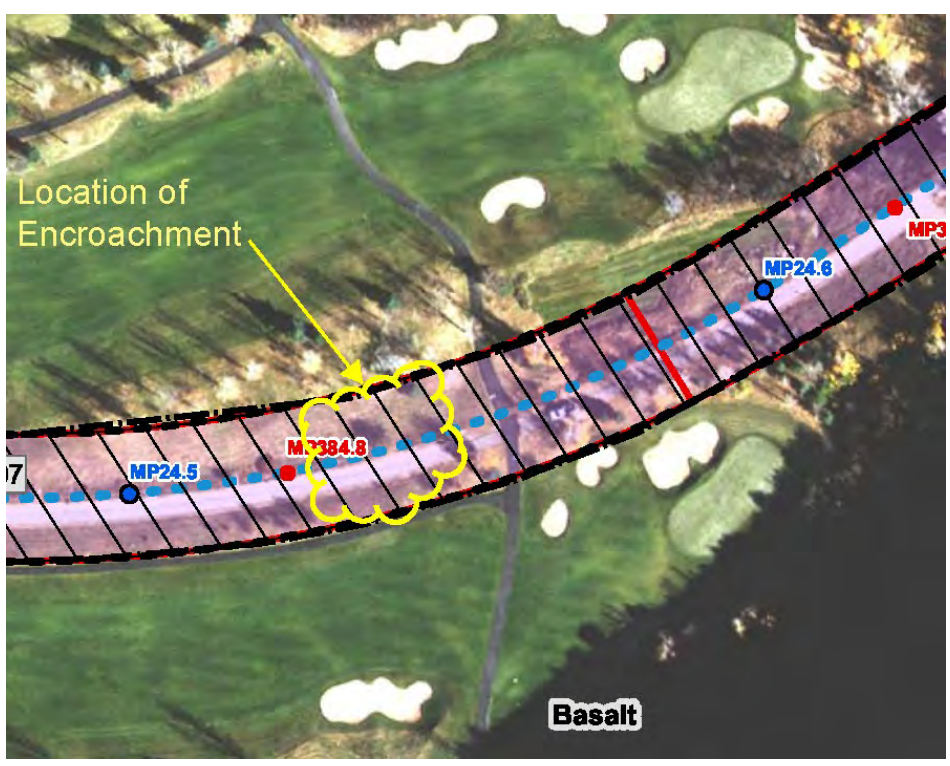
RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL COVENANT ENCROACHMENT

DATE	September 26, 2023	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#5**
MILEPOST	18.71		
CONSERVATION AREA	Yes Conservation Area #6:		
NEW/EXISTING	Existing		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Trash Storage Shed within corridor at driveway for 1126 Hooks Spur Lane.		
BACKGROUND	Although previously listed as being remedied, the shed continues to exist in the corridor.  		

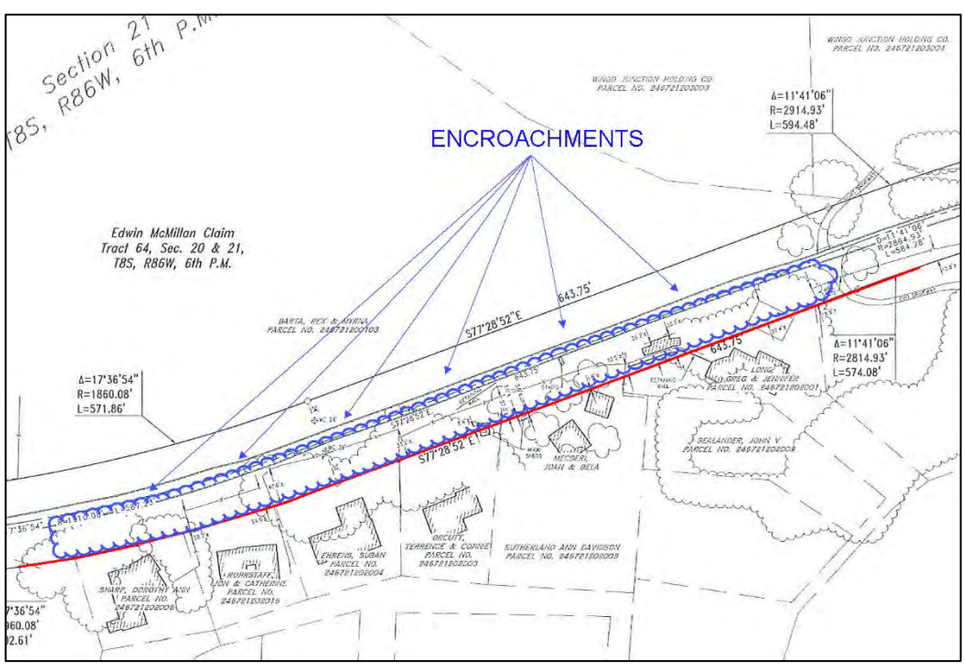
RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL COVENANT ENCROACHMENT

DATE	September 27, 2023	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#6**
MILEPOST	19.80		
CONSERVATION AREA	Yes	Conservation Area #6:	
NEW/EXISTING	Existing since 1996		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Berm and structure in rail corridor at 734 Hooks Spur Road.		
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.		

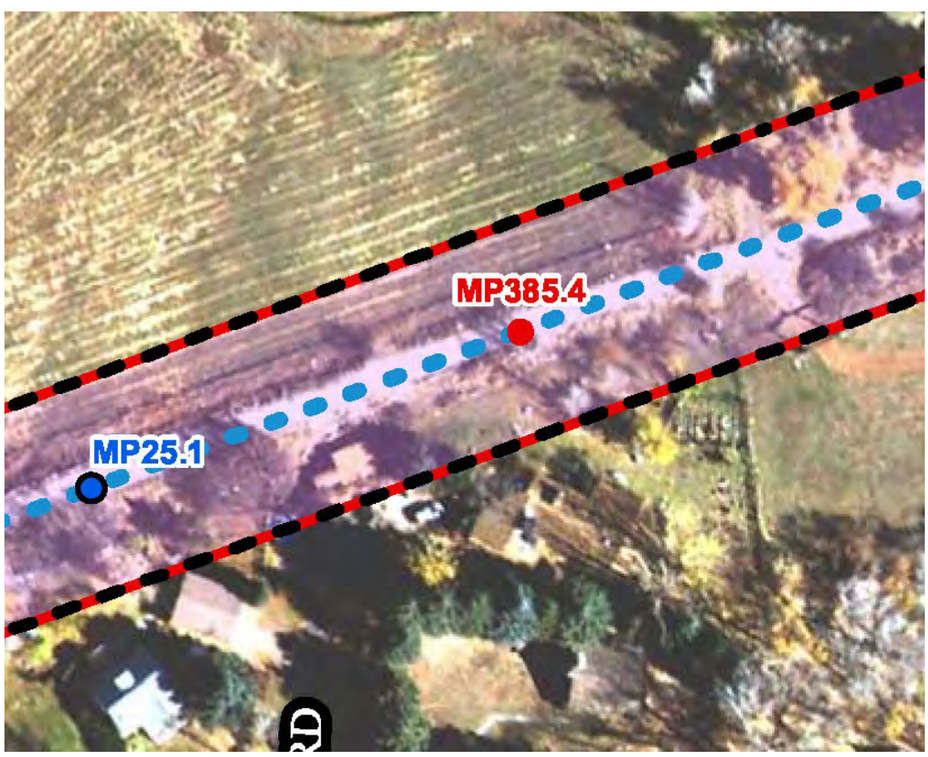
RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL COVENANT ENCROACHMENT

DATE	September 27, 2023	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#7**
MILEPOST	24.55		
CONSERVATION AREA	Yes, Conservation Area #7		
NEW/EXISTING	New		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	A ramp has been placed over the railroad tracks in the corridor within the Roaring Fork Club.		
BACKGROUND	The RFTA Survey shows the area of encroachment: 		
RECOMMENDED REMEDY	Contact golf course regarding removal of ramp.		

RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL COVENANT ENCROACHMENT

DATE	September 27, 2023	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#8**
MILEPOST	25.32 – 25.49		
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.		

RFTA CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT
POTENTIAL ENCROACHMENT

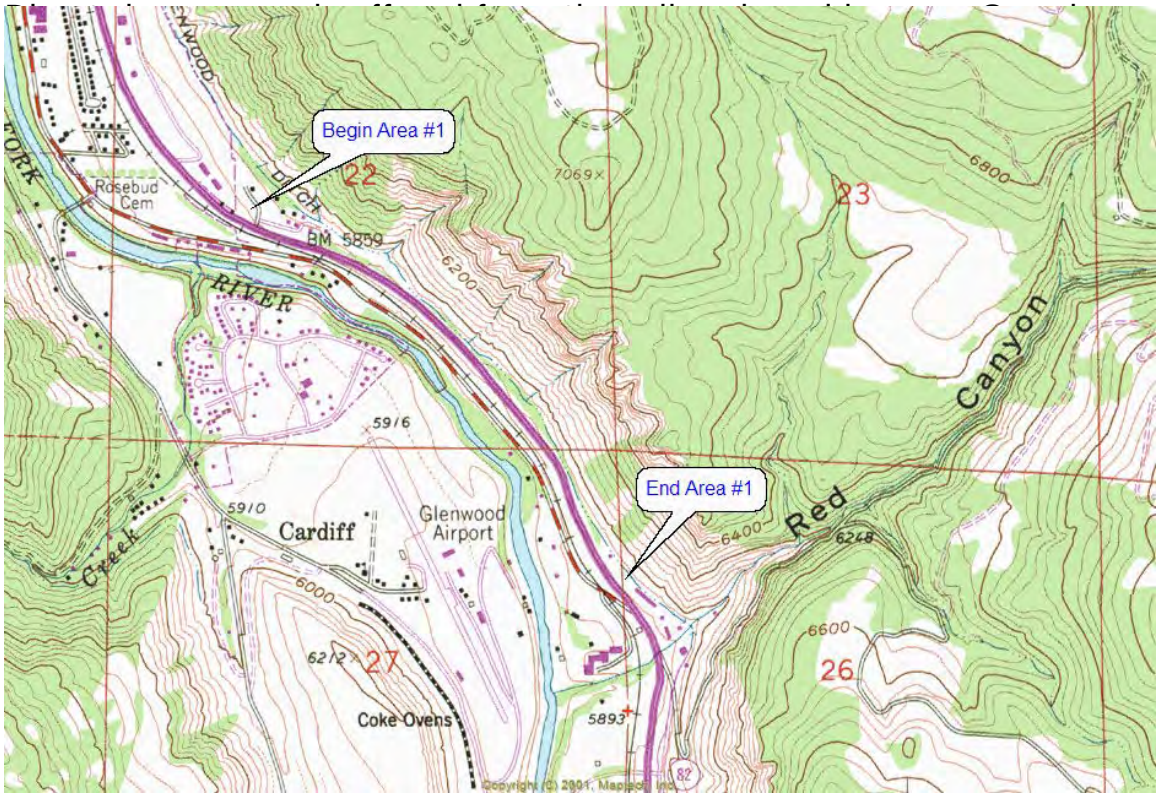
DATE	September 27, 2023	**ENCROACHMENT**	**#9**
MILEPOST	25.45		
CONSERVATION AREA	Not in Conservation Area		
NEW/EXISTING	Existing since 2021		
TYPE OF ENCROACHMENT	Private pathway in corridor. This pathway is more substantial than the typical private trail placed to access the Rio Grande trail. The 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.		

Appendix A: Description of the Conservation Areas

CONSERVATION AREA #1: Milepost 2.68 to 3.64

0.96 miles

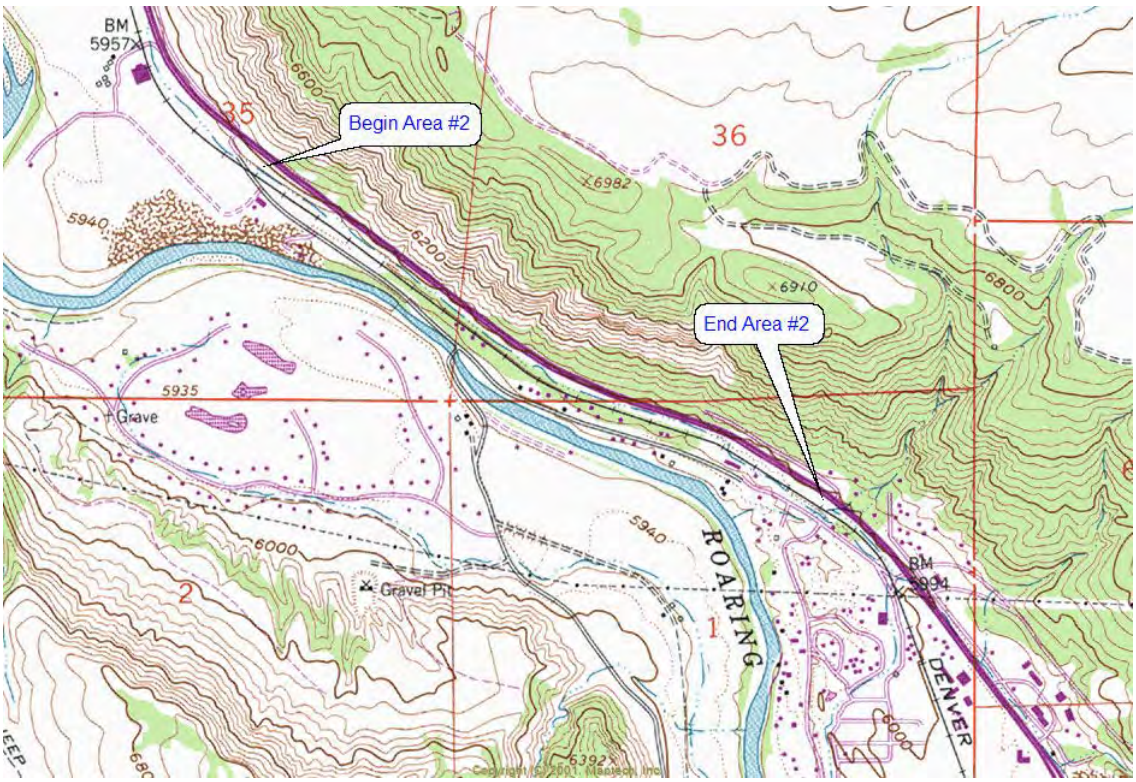
Running from the Glenwood Springs City Limits south to the intersection of Highway 82 and Grand Avenue (old Highway 82), this area is well vegetated by native, scrub oak dominated mountain-shrub vegetation that offers excellent habitat for birds and small animals. Outstanding views of Mount Sopris are 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.



CONSERVATION AREA #2: Milepost 5.22 to 6.25

1.03 miles

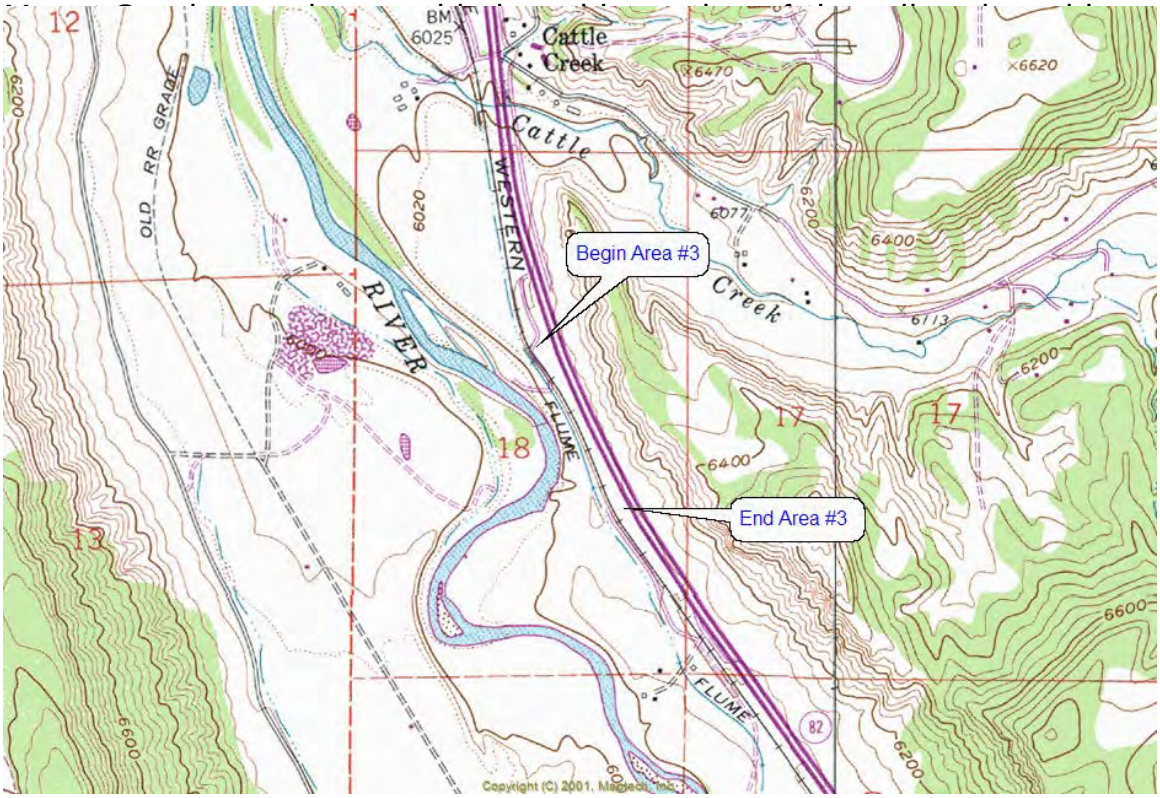
This section begins at the crossing of County Road 107 (known as Coryell Ranch Road) to a location about ¼-mile west of the CMC Road/Highway 82 intersection. This area is well vegetated by mature native, mountain-shrub and related plant species that offer excellent habitat for birds and small animals. 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

0.5 miles

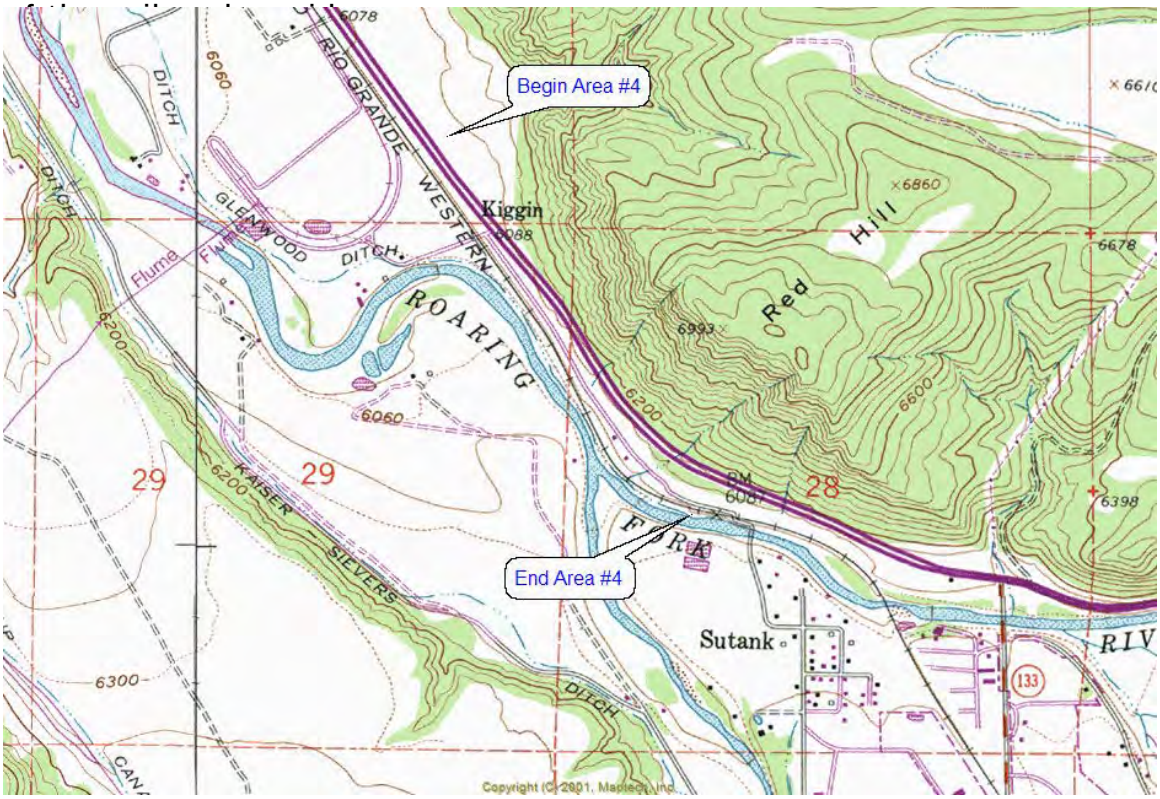
This section of the railroad corridor covers the broad bend in the Roaring Fork River between the Bair Chase property and the ranchette parcels near Aspen Glen. Sage shrubs are predominant in this section that are some of the most mature sage plants in the valley. The mountain shrub ecosystem on the 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



CONSERVATION AREA #4: Milepost 10.28 to 11.07

0.79 miles

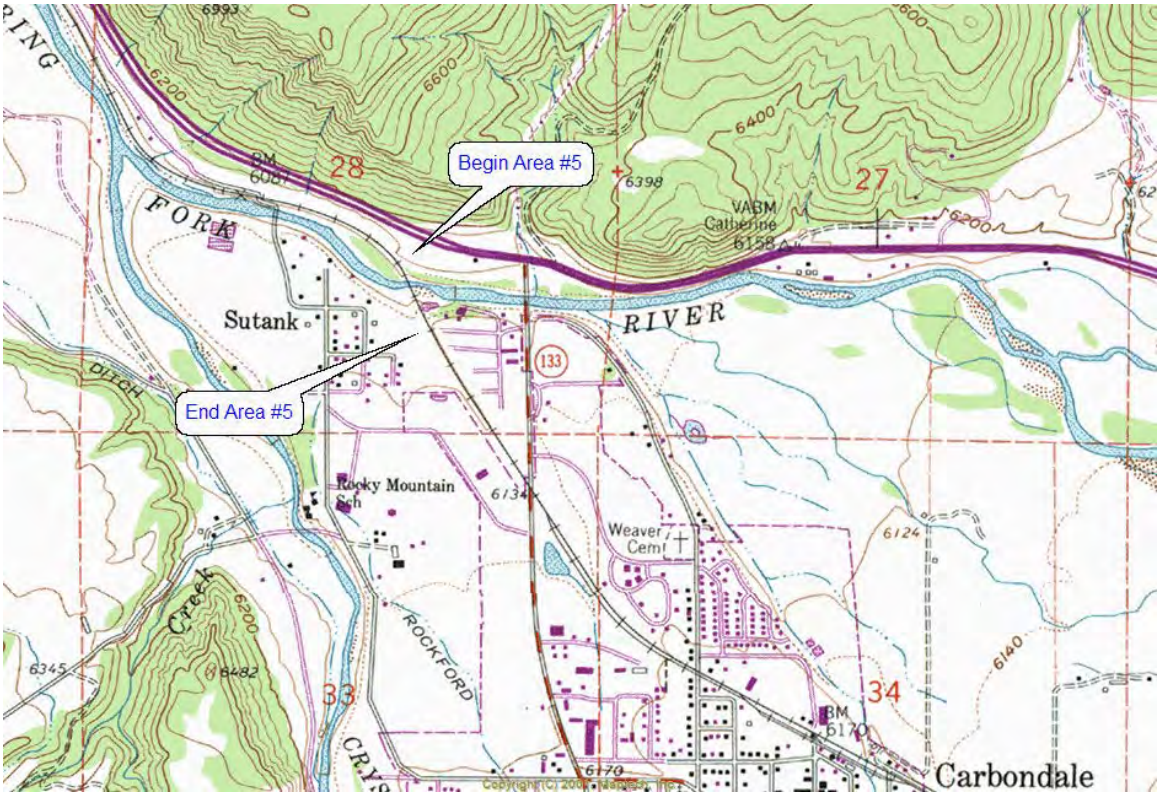
This section goes from about a ¾-mile south (up valley) of the Aspen Glen entrance to a private crossing located just below the confluence of the Crystal River and the Roaring Fork River. This area is well vegetated by mature native, mountain-shrub and related plant species that offer excellent habitat 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



CONSERVATION AREA #5: Milepost 11.47 to 11.61

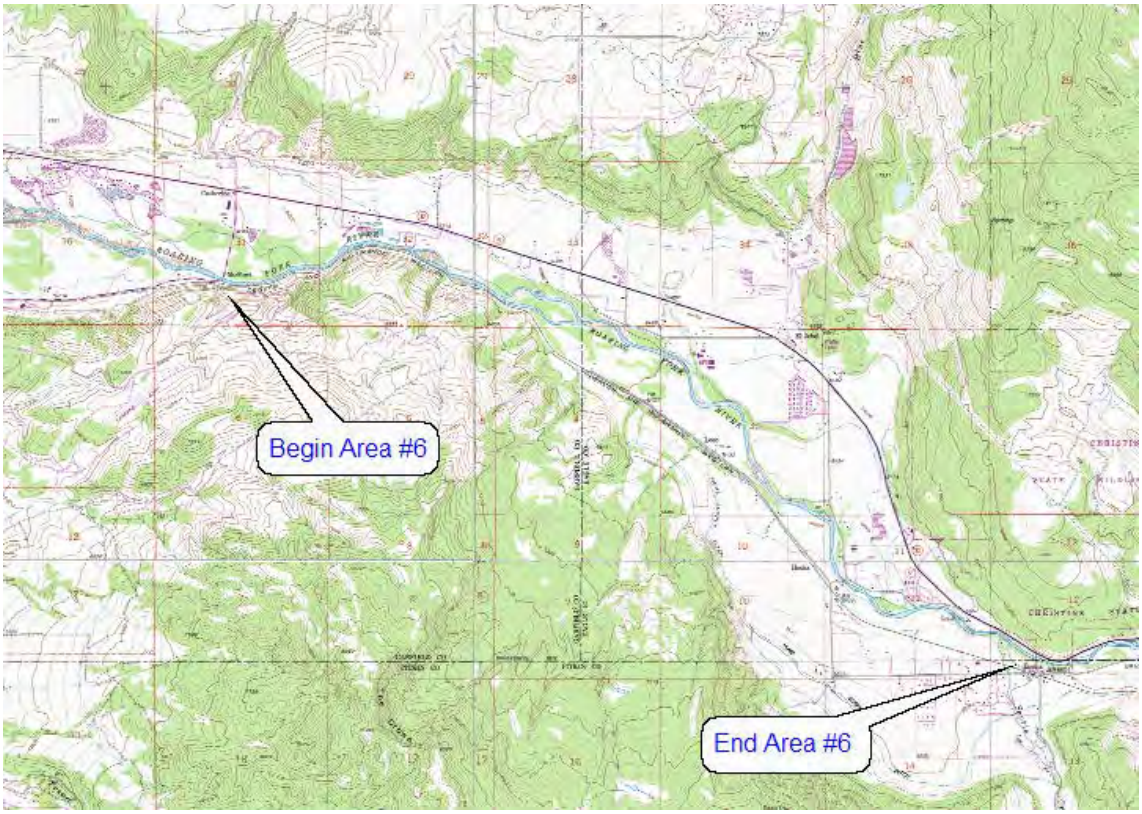
0.14 miles

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
5.68 miles

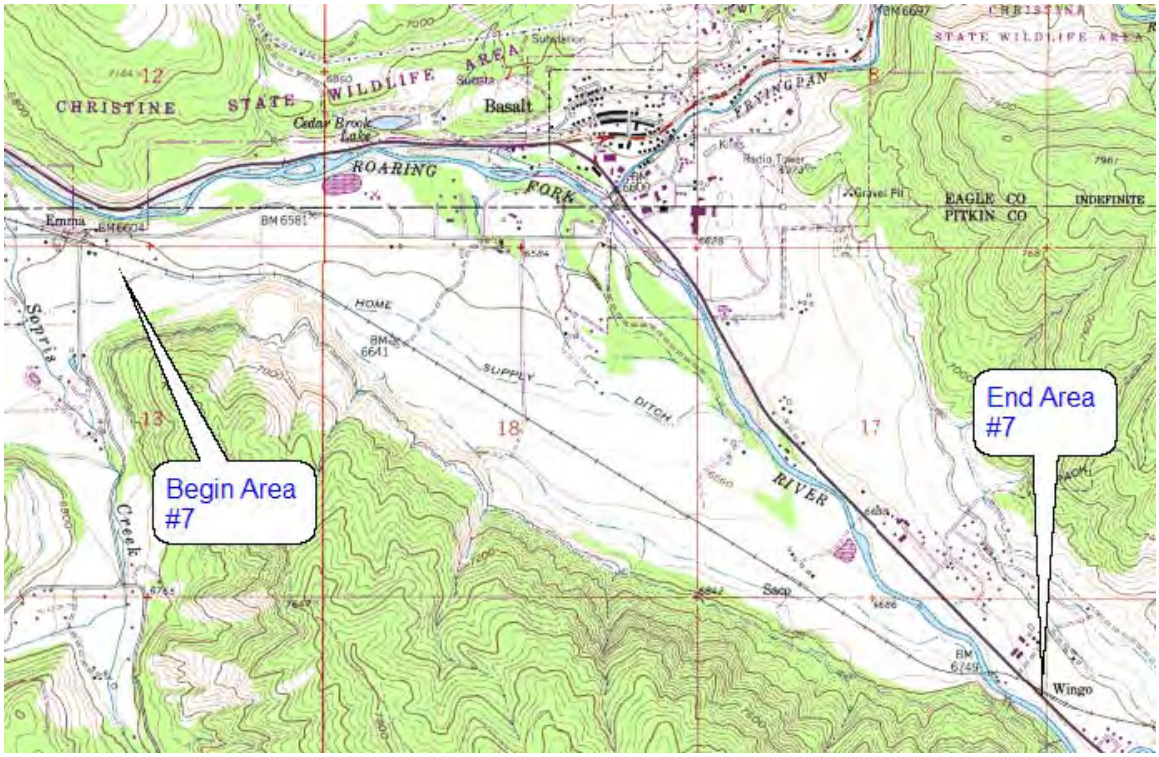
This section begins near the Catherine Store Bridge (County Road 100) and continues southeast to Emma Road including the Rock Bottom Ranch property. Rock Bottom Ranch is owned by a non-profit entity, the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies, as a nature preserve. The nature preserve is also encumbered 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

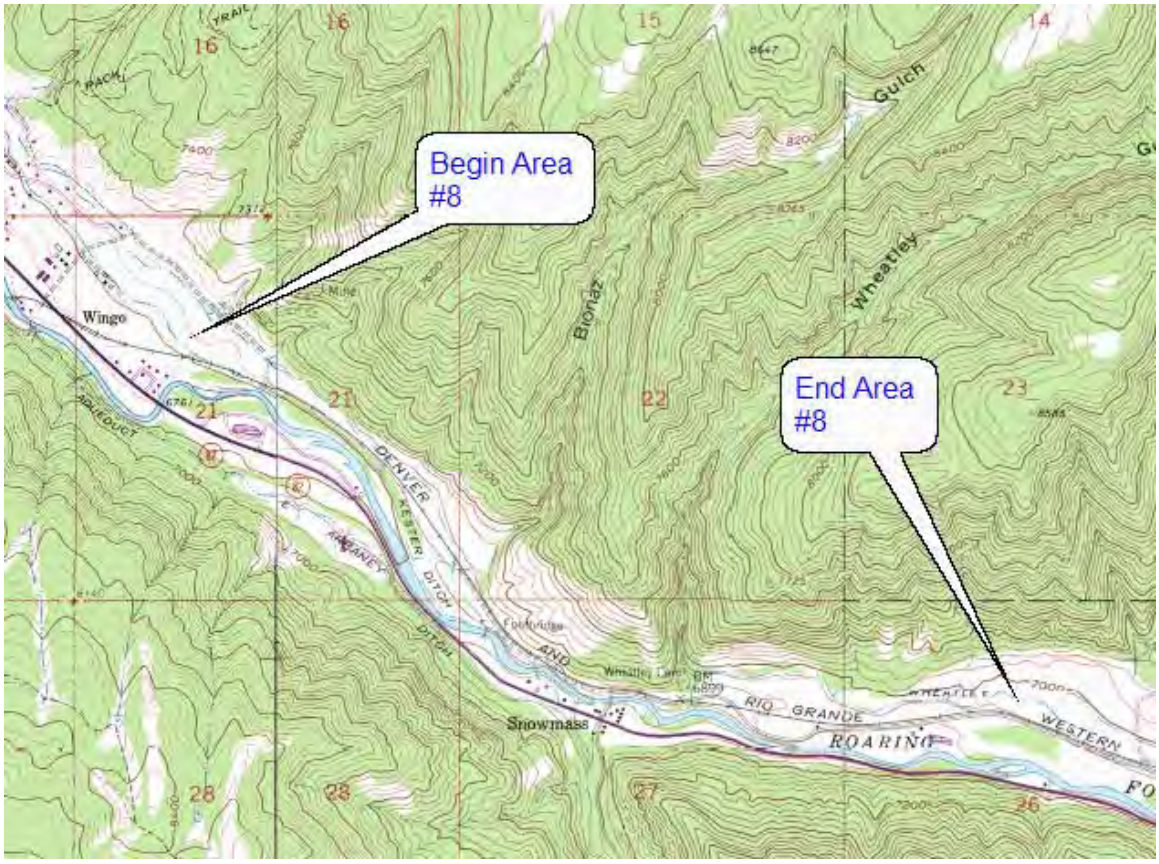
2.91 miles

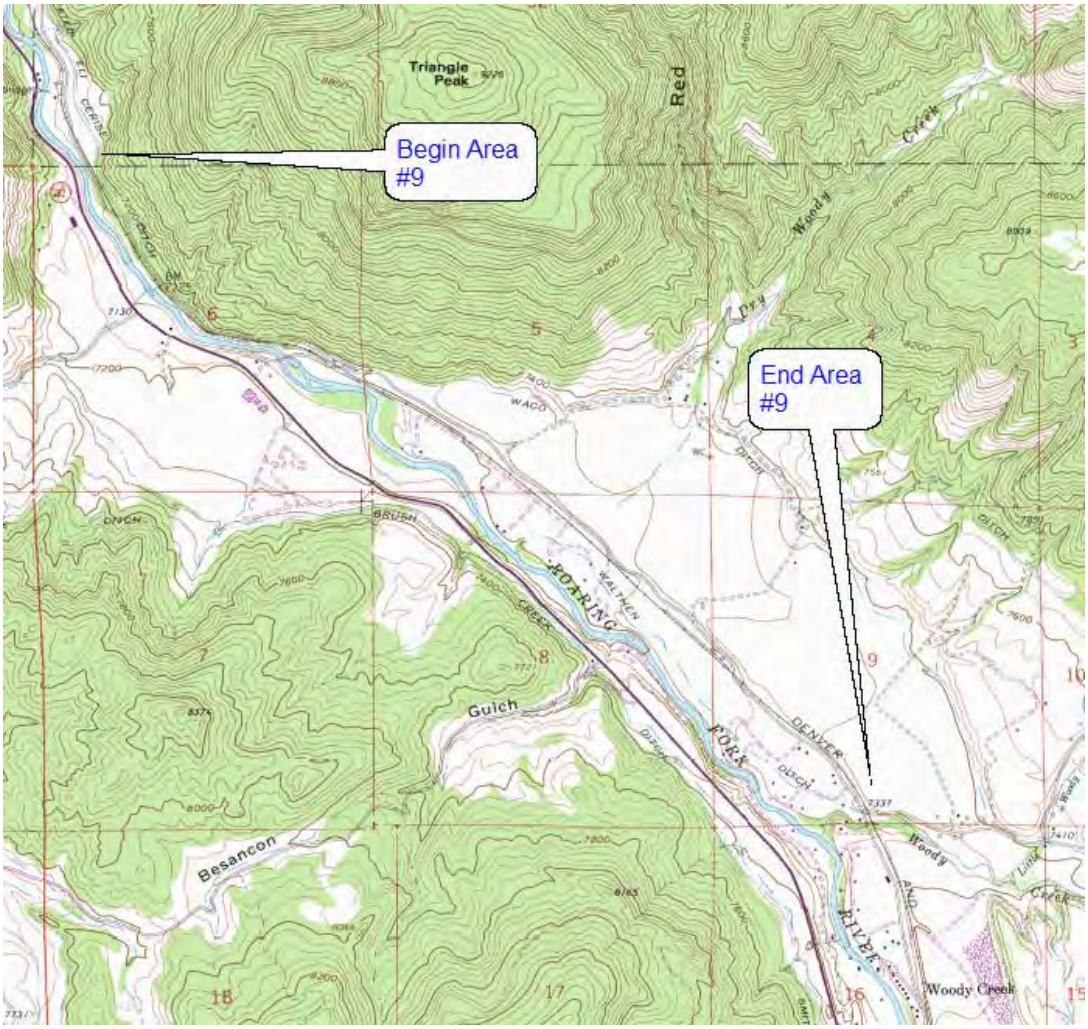
This section begins directly east of the Emma Road/Highway 82 intersection, continues toward the Basalt High School between ranch properties and federal lands and ends just east of the Wingo pedestrian bridge over Highway 82. A parcel of land owned by the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Program along 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.



<u>CONSERVATION AREA #8: Milepost 25.26 to 27.83,</u>
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
3.29 miles

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.