

Smuggler Mountain Open Space Management Plan

DECEMBER 2024 (ADOPTED BOCC ORD NO. 024-2024)



PARKS &
OPEN SPACE
CITY OF ASPEN



ASPEN VALLEY
LAND TRUST



PITKIN COUNTY OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD OF TRUSTEES MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Board of Trustees is to acquire, preserve, maintain and manage open space properties for multiple purposes including, but not limited to, recreational, wildlife, agricultural, scenic and access purposes; and to acquire, preserve, develop, maintain and manage trails for similar purposes.

The Pitkin County Home Rule Charter provision authorizing the Open Space and Trails Program defines open space and trails as follows:

“Open Space” shall be defined as primarily undeveloped lands and waters which meet one or more of the following criteria: Within public scenic view planes; bounding or within urbanized areas; incorporating or protecting significant wildlife habitat; preserving historic agricultural and ranching activities; protecting riparian or wetlands areas; protecting other public lands from the impacts of development, and preserving cultural, historic and archaeological resources lying within properties which are otherwise acquired for their customary Open Space characteristics.

“Trails” shall be defined as access ways, either separate from or within County and State road rights-of-way, meeting one or more of the following criteria: preserving historic routes of ingress and egress to public lands and waterways; providing access to and from recreational or urban destinations; providing transportation or recreational opportunities throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed.



CITY OF ASPEN OPEN SPACE & TRAILS BOARD MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Open Space and Trails Board is to continually acquire, preserve, manage and maintain Open Space and Trails within the community for the benefit of current and future generations. The Board makes recommendations to City Council and Staff on the acquisition and management of open space.

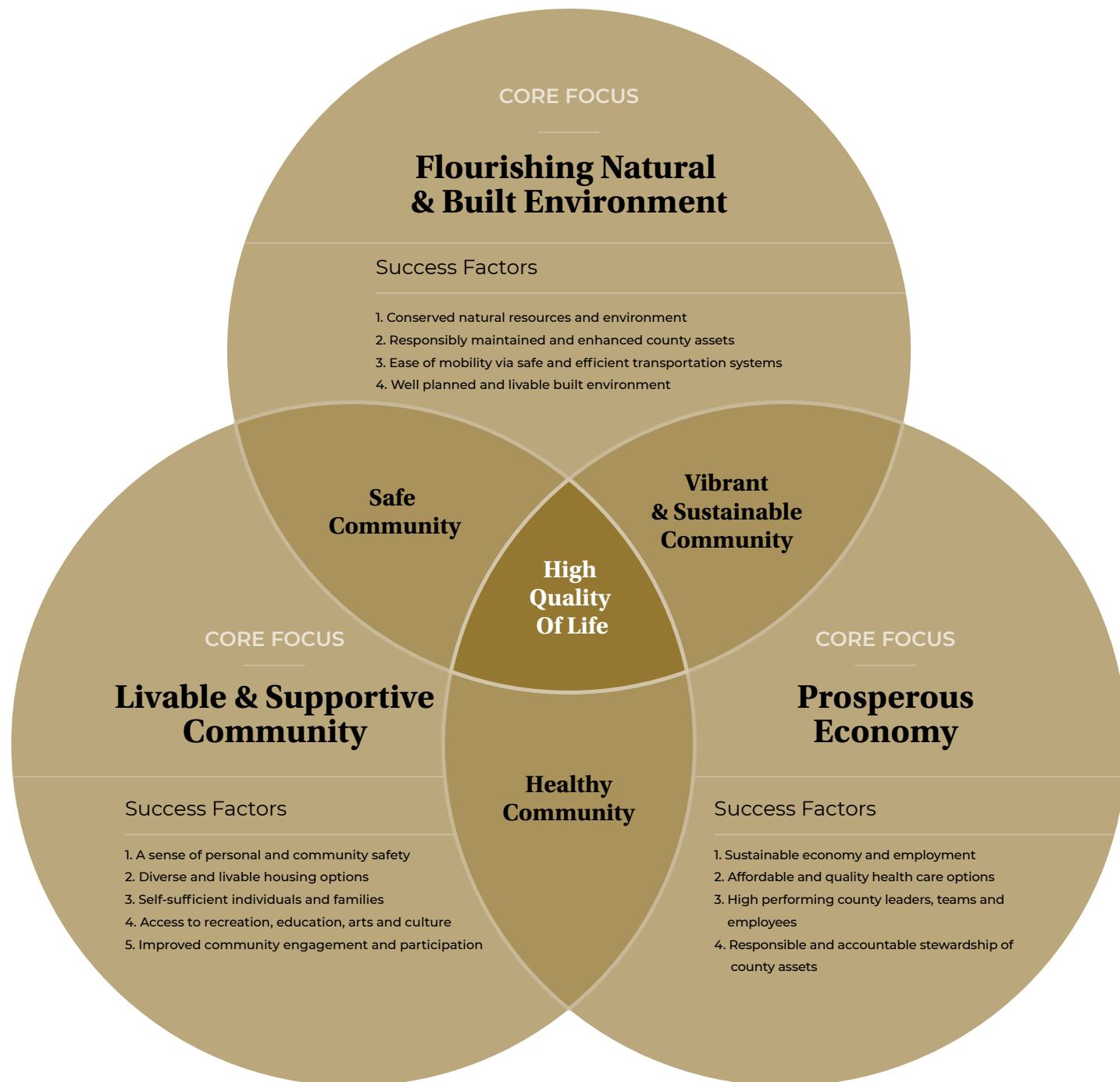


ASPEN VALLEY LAND TRUST MISSION STATEMENT

Aspen Valley Land Trust protects the open land and special places of the Roaring Fork and middle Colorado River valleys for wildlife, agriculture, and community, forever.



Autumn on the BTS Trail on Smuggler Mountain Open Space.



The Management Plan for Smuggler Mountain Open Space aligns with the 2011 Pitkin County Strategic Plan.

The Pitkin County Strategic Plan identifies three core Focus Areas: “Flourishing Natural and Built Environment,” “Livable and Supportive Community” and “Prosperous Economy.” The goal is for the three Focus Areas to work together to achieve the county’s vision and mission.

This management plan update aligns with the strategic plan in various ways:

Flourishing Natural and Built Environment

Success Factor 1: Conserved natural resources and environment

Smuggler Mountain Open Space conserves important natural resources and wildlife habitat on nearly 300 acres in Aspen’s “backyard.”

Success Factor 2: Responsibly maintained and enhanced county assets

This plan update builds upon actions identified following original parcel acquisitions, focusing on stewardship and maintenance, as well as safety improvements.

Livable and Supportive Community

Success Factor 4: Access to recreation, education, arts and culture

Management actions support access to year-round recreation and include educational interpretive sign updates and partnerships to provide educational programming.

Prosperous economy

Success Factor 4: Responsible and accountable stewardship of county assets

Pitkin County Open Space and Trails strives to maintain and enhance the health, function and resiliency of the natural resources and built environment at Smuggler Mountain Open Space.

[**MANAGEMENT ACTIONS
CLICK HERE**](#)

[**ACCIONES DE MANEJO EN
ESPAÑOL HAGA CLIC AQUÍ**](#)

Plan Summary

The 2024 management plan update for the 300-acre Smuggler Mountain Open Space, perched above Aspen on the flanks of Smuggler Mountain and wrapping around into the Hunter Creek Valley, continues the planning efforts that began with the original 2008 management plan. Pitkin County Open Space and Trails (OST), along with the City of Aspen (COA) and Aspen Valley Land Trust (AVLT), have implemented ongoing restoration and cleanup, expansion of recreational opportunities, wildlife and habitat protection, and improvements in forest health.

This plan update aims to build upon past achievements, incorporating natural resource and visitor use studies and input and expertise from partners, community members and visitors. The plan charts a course to continue protecting ecological resources in a changing climate, preserving habitat, and accommodating year-round recreational opportunities in this popular open space.

GOALS

This management plan prioritizes the long-term resilience of the multi-jurisdictional parcels that comprise Smuggler Mountain Open Space. The following goals have been modified from the 2008 management plan to reflect public and partner feedback collected during the 2024 planning process:

- Protect, manage and enhance the natural, historical and visual resources, including maintaining and promoting healthy ecosystems and their essential components and processes.
- Provide and promote safe and enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Provide educational opportunities regarding the values of the surrounding natural, historical and visual resources and the importance of responsible use and stewardship of the land.
- Define management actions with specific implementation steps, where appropriate, and roles and responsibilities.

OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS

To enhance the management of Smuggler Mountain Open Space in the present and future, OST, COA and AVLT gathered feedback from stakeholders and community members. Various local stakeholders shared their insights on current conditions, trends and needs at the beginning of the planning process. Public input was collected through an online survey in the summer of 2024. The survey aimed to understand general usage patterns, the most valued attributes and the aspects that are working well or need improvement. A total of 380 responses were collected. The draft management plan update was released for partner and public review in September 2024, and it was recommended for approval by the Pitkin County and City of Aspen Open Space and Trails boards in November 2024. Finally, the plan was adopted by the Pitkin County Board of Commissioners through Ordinance No. 024-2024.

KEY UPDATES

The 2008 plan provided management direction for parcels on Smuggler Mountain. This plan update adds adjacent acreage in the Lower Hunter Creek Valley, as well as the primary portal to the open space, Smuggler Mountain Trailhead, located on the Mollie Gibson parcel. Collectively, the area is referred to as Smuggler Mountain Open Space. This plan builds upon past accomplishments and celebrates the investments made to date.

The key updates include:

- Continue dog voice and sight control area on Smuggler Mountain Road and Hunter Creek Cutoff Trail and add singletrack trails to the voice and sight control area, with the exception of Lower Hunter Creek Trail where leashes are required. The mandatory leash law remains in effect from the Lower Hunter Creek Trailhead to the Forest Service boundary (**Smuggler Mountain Open Space Regulations**).

- Clarify enforcement of Smuggler Mountain Open Space regulations at Smuggler Mountain Trailhead, which sits on a portion of the Mollie Gibson parcel (**Smuggler Mountain Open Space Regulations**).
- Continue emphasis on the protection of natural resources and biodiversity through a range of management actions that cover forest health, wildlife, protection of rare species and water resources, and control of noxious weeds (**Natural Resource Management Actions**).
- Maintain healthy, resilient forests and implement treatments to promote habitat value and reduce wildfire risk (**Natural Resource Management Action 2 and 3**).
- Explore the feasibility of a portal trail to connect mountain bikers on the Hunter-Smuggler trail network to Aspen (**Recreation Management Action 1**).
- Designate the steep, rocky portion of the Lower Hunter Creek Trail for pedestrian use only, between the trailhead and the Benedict Bridge (**Recreation Management Action 2**).
- Support recreational use by visitors of all ages and abilities by adding a midpoint destination along Smuggler Mountain Road (**Recreation Management Action 4**).
- Increase awareness and compliance with dog waste rules (**Education and Outreach Management Action 3**).
- Continue natural resource monitoring through established intervals (**Monitoring and Stewardship Management Action 1**).
- Continue existing partnerships and maintain access to surrounding public lands for the purpose of resource management (**Monitoring and Stewardship Management Action 2**).

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This plan is a near- to mid-range planning tool to budget for management actions to preserve Smuggler Mountain Open Space for future generations. **Section 1** tracks the area's history and acquisitions leading to the open space that exists today and celebrates the numerous accomplishments made since adoption of the 2008 plan. **Section 2** provides the regional context, including area recreation and natural resources, and updates the current condition of the open space plus the newly added parcels in the Hunter Creek Valley, complete with references to relevant studies. **Section 3** summarizes feedback from stakeholders and the community. Appendix A contains the full engagement results. Management actions in **Section 4** are a product of background research, assessment of current conditions and stakeholder/public input. **Section 5** provides an easy-to-use matrix to measure progress in the years ahead.

Quick Facts

Investment: \$21 million

**Funding Partners:
Pitkin County Open
Space and Trails (OST),
City of Aspen (COA) and
Aspen Valley Land Trust
(AVLT)**

**Total Open Space
Acreage: 299.8 acres**

**Mollie Gibson Park
Acreage: 8.2 acres**

**Years of acquisition:
1974 - 2012**

**Open Space Values:
Wildlife habitat, scenic
views, recreation and
high biodiversity.**

Over 190 plant species identified, including 6 species of trees, 28 shrubs/subshrubs, 31 perennial graminoids, 106 perennial forbs, 2 ferns and fern allies, 16 annual/biennial forbs, and 1 annual graminoid.

77 bird species have been documented.

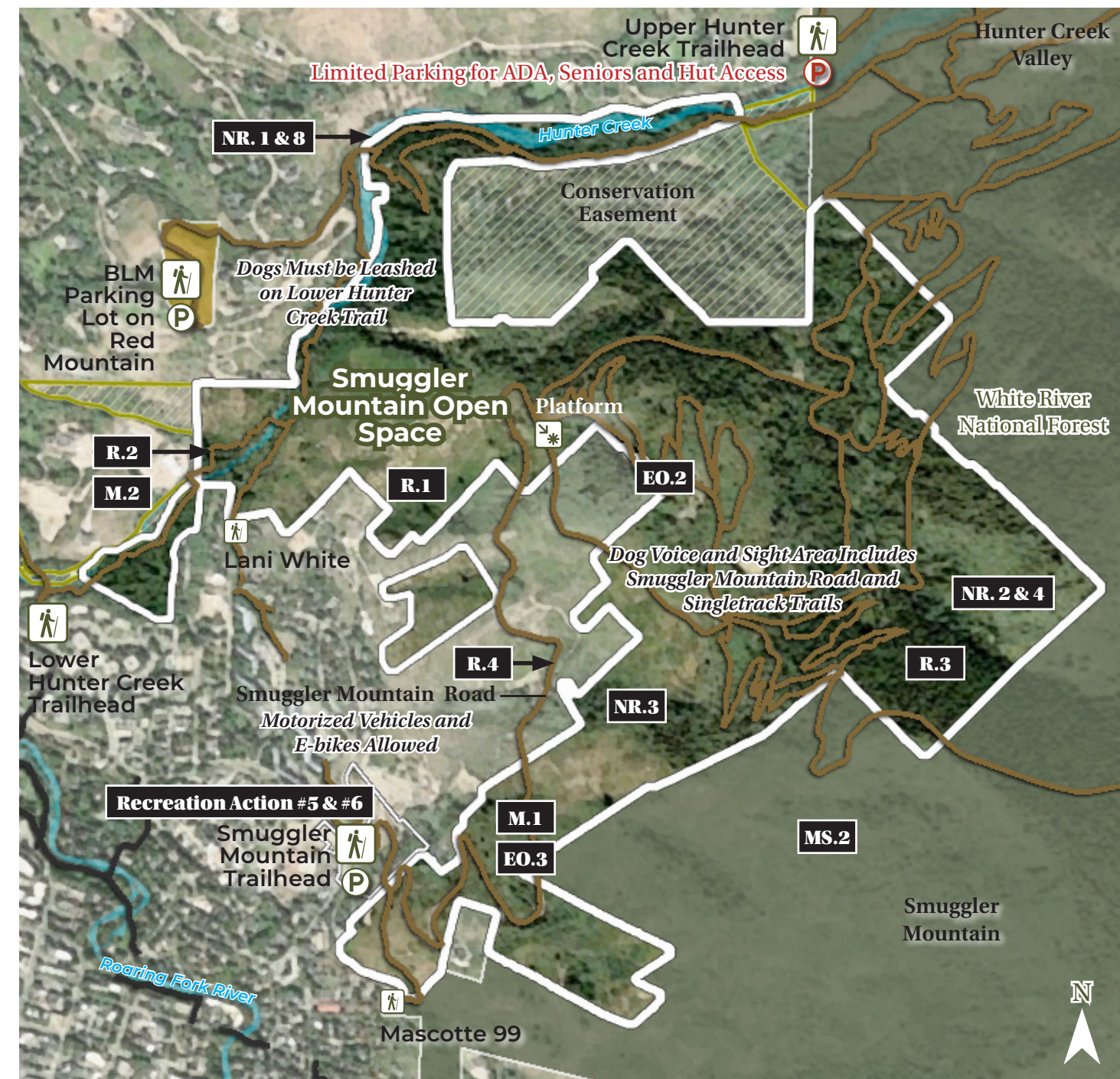
At least 14 mammal species are known to occur and at least 54 species are known or suspected to occur at Smuggler according to habitat needs.

Trail Miles: 11.5

SMUGGLER MOUNTAIN OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

NATURAL RESOURCES	
NR.1	Conduct assessment of riparian zones prior to any nearby vegetation, forest or trail work.
NR.2	Maintain and promote healthy, resilient forests.
NR.3	Implement treatment prescriptions (e.g. mechanical thinning) to maintain integrity and habitat value of oak-dominated shrublands and reduce wildfire risk.
NR.4	Implement small-patch cuts in forested areas.
NR.5	Maintain dead wood resources onsite to maintain ecosystem complexity.
NR.6	Ensure avian nesting sites are identified and protected on an as-needed basis.
NR.7	Maintain habitat quality for potentially occurring federally protected species.
NR.8	Collaborate on Hunter Creek protections and enhancements for long-term stream health and viability.
NR.9	Implement wolf reintroduction awareness as needed.
RECREATION	
R.1	Explore the feasibility of a lower access "portal trail."
R.2	Designate the steep, rocky portion of the Lower Hunter Creek Trail for pedestrian use only, between the trailhead and the Benedict Bridge.
R.3	Explore feasibility of constructing an advanced mountain biking trail on the north-facing slope connecting Smuggler Mountain Road to Lollipop Trail.
R.4	Add a midway viewpoint along Smuggler Mountain Road.
R.5	Install a new kiosk at Smuggler Mountain Trailhead and update information at BTS kiosk.
R.6	Install bicycle rack(s) at the base of Smuggler Mountain Road.
R.7	Maintain winter access to huts on surrounding public lands.
R.8	Review agreements for Mollie Gibson Park and determine whether an additional MOU, or similar document, is required for ongoing maintenance and use of the parcel.
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH	
EO.1	Update and install regulatory signage.
EO.2	Replace interpretive signs.
EO.3	Continue a campaign to address dog waste and dog-owner etiquette on Smuggler Mountain Road.
MONITORING AND STEWARDSHIP	
MS.1	Continue wildlife and vegetation monitoring at regular intervals.
MS.2	Maintain and improve collaboration with partner agencies that manage lands, animals and recreational activities on or adjacent to Smuggler and/or require access via Smuggler Mountain Road to manage their public assets.
MS.3	Monitor vegetative recovery at reclaimed mine sites and other areas of past disturbance.
MS.4	Conduct a cultural resource assessment to identify and evaluate the cultural resources of the Open Space.

MS.5	Continue to monitor recreational use.
MS.6	Evaluate elk calving (production) and rearing habitat to determine if it is active.
MAINTENANCE	
M.1	Maintain Smuggler Mountain Road at its current width and condition.
M.2	Improve boardwalks on Lower Hunter Creek Trail.
M.3	Create a maintenance agreement and schedule with defined responsibilities.
M.4	Actively manage noxious vegetation to promote the vigor of native biodiversity utilizing an integrated approach.



Resumen del Plan

La actualización del plan de manejo 2024 para el Espacio Abierto de Smuggler Mountain, situado sobre Aspen en las laderas de Smuggler Mountain y extendiéndose hacia el valle de Hunter Creek, continúa con los esfuerzos de planificación que comenzaron con el plan de manejo Original de 2008. El Departamento de Espacios Abiertos y Senderos del Condado de Pitkin (OST), junto con la Ciudad de Aspen (COA) y el Aspen Valley Land Trust (ALVT), han llevado a cabo restauraciones y limpiezas continuas, expansión de oportunidades recreativas, protección de la vida silvestre y su hábitat, y mejoras en la salud forestal.

Esta actualización del plan tiene como objetivo construir sobre los logros pasados, incorporando estudios de recursos naturales y uso de visitantes, así como el aporte y la experiencia de socios, miembros de la comunidad y visitantes. El plan traza un camino para continuar protegiendo los recursos ecológicos en un clima cambiante, preservando el hábitat y acomodando oportunidades recreativas durante todo el año en este popular espacio abierto.

METAS

Este plan de manejo prioriza la resiliencia a largo plazo de parcelas multi-jurisdiccionales que componen el Espacio Abierto de Smuggler Mountain. Los siguientes objetivos han sido modificados del plan de manejo de 2008 para reflejar los comentarios del público y de los socios recopilados durante el proceso de planificación de 2024:

- Proteger, gestionar y mejorar los recursos naturales, históricos y visuales, incluyendo el mantenimiento y la promoción de ecosistemas saludables y sus componentes y procesos esenciales.
- Ofrecer y promover oportunidades de recreación al aire libre seguras y agradables.
- Brindar oportunidades educativas sobre los valores de los recursos naturales, históricos y visuales circundantes y la importancia del uso responsable y la gestión del terreno.
- Definir acciones de gestión con pasos de implementación específicos, cuando sea apropiado, y roles y responsabilidades.

ASPECTOS PARA PROMOCIONAR

Para mejorar la gestión del Espacio Abierto de Smuggler Mountain en el presente y futuro, OST, COA y AVLT recopilaron comentarios de las partes interesadas y miembros de la comunidad. Varios actores locales compartieron sus ideas sobre las condiciones actuales, tendencias y necesidades al inicio del proceso de planificación. Se recopilaron opiniones públicas a través de una encuesta en línea durante el verano de 2024. La encuesta tenía como objetivo comprender los patrones de uso generales, los atributos más valorados y los aspectos que están funcionando bien o que necesitan mejoras. Se recolectaron un total de 380 respuestas. El borrador de la actualización del plan de gestión fue publicado para revisión de socios y del público en septiembre de 2024, y se recomendó su aprobación por parte de las juntas de Espacio Abierto y Senderos del Condado de Pitkin y la Ciudad de Aspen en noviembre de 2024. Finalmente, el plan fue aprobado por la Junta de Comisionados del Condado de Pitkin mediante una ordenanza #024-2024.

ACTUALIZACIONES CLAVE

El plan de 2008 proporcionó dirección de gestión para las parcelas en Smuggler Mountain. Esta actualización del plan agrega terrenos adyacentes en el Valle de Lower Hunter Creek, así como el portal principal al espacio abierto, el Sendero de Smuggler Mountain, ubicado en la parcela Mollie Gibson. Colectivamente, el área se denomina Espacio Abierto de Smuggler Mountain. Este plan se basa en logros pasados y celebra las inversiones realizadas hasta la fecha.

Las actualizaciones clave incluyen:

- Continuar con el área de control por voz y vista para perros en la carretera Smuggler Mountain y el corto al sendero Hunter Creek, y agregar senderos de un solo sentido a esta área de control, con la excepción del sendero Lower Hunter Creek, donde se requieren correas. La ley de correa obligatoria sigue en vigor desde el Sendero de Lower Hunter Creek hasta el límite del Servicio Forestal (**Reglamentos del Espacio Abierto de Smuggler Mountain**).
- Aclarar la aplicación de los reglamentos del Espacio Abierto de Smuggler Mountain en el Sendero de Smuggler Mountain, que se encuentra en una parte de la parcela de Mollie Gibson (**Reglamentos del Espacio Abierto de Smuggler Mountain**).
- Continuar enfatizando la protección de los recursos naturales y la biodiversidad a través de una variedad de acciones de gestión que abordan la salud forestal, la vida silvestre, la protección de especies raras y los recursos hídricos, así como el control de hierbas nocivas (**Acciones de Gestión de Recursos Naturales**).
- Mantener bosques saludables y resilientes e implementar tratamientos para promover el valor del hábitat y reducir el riesgo de incendios forestales (**Acciones de Gestión de Recursos Naturales 2 y 3**).
- Explorar la viabilidad de un sendero de acceso para conectar a los ciclistas de montaña en la red de senderos Hunter-Smuggler con Aspen (**Acción de Gestión Recreativa 1**).
- Designar Lower Hunter Creek Trail para uso exclusivo de peatones (**Acción de Gestión Recreativa 2**).
- Apoyar el uso recreativo por parte de visitantes de todas las edades y habilidades añadiendo un destino intermedio a lo largo de Smuggler Mountain Road (**Acción de Gestión Recreativa 4**).
- Aumentar la concienciación y el cumplimiento de las normas sobre desechos de perros (**Acción de Educación y Divulgación 3**).
- Continuar con el monitoreo de recursos naturales a intervalos establecidos (**Acción de Monitoreo y Gestión 1**).
- Mantener las asociaciones existentes y conservar el acceso a las tierras públicas circundantes con el propósito de la gestión de recursos (**Acción de Monitoreo y Gestión 2**).

CÓMO UTILIZAR ESTE PLAN

Este plan es una herramienta de planificación a corto y mediano plazo para presupuestar acciones de gestión que preserven el Espacio Abierto de Smuggler Mountain para las generaciones futuras. **La Sección 1** rastrea la historia del área y las adquisiciones que llevaron al espacio abierto que existe hoy en día, y celebra los numerosos logros alcanzados desde la adopción del plan de 2008. **La Sección 2** proporciona el contexto regional, incluyendo la recreación del área y los recursos naturales, y actualiza la condición actual del espacio abierto, además de las parcelas recién añadidas en el Valle de Hunter Creek, con referencias a estudios relevantes. **La Sección 3** resume los comentarios de las partes interesadas y de la comunidad. El Apéndice A contiene los resultados completos de la participación. Las acciones de gestión en **la Sección 4** son producto de la investigación de antecedentes, la evaluación de las condiciones actuales y la opinión de las partes interesadas/público. **La Sección 5** ofrece una matriz fácil de usar para medir el progreso en los años venideros.

Quick Facts

Inversión: \$21 millones

Socios Financieros:
Pitkin County Open
Space and Trails (OST),
City of Aspen (COA) y
Aspen Valley Land Trust
(AVLT)

Total de Acres en
Espacio Abierto: 299.8
acres

Acreaje del Parque
Mollie Gibson: 8.2 acres

Años de Adquisición:
1974 - 2012

Valores del Espacio
Abierto: Hábitat de
fauna, vistas escénicas,
recreación y alta
biodiversidad.

Plan de Manejo del Espacio Abierto de Smuggler Mountain

ACCIONES PARA EL MANEJO DEL ESPACIO ABIERTO DE SMUGGLER MOUNTAIN

RECURSOS NATURALES

NR.1	Llevar a cabo una evaluación de las zonas ribereñas antes de cualquier trabajo de vegetación, bosque o sendero cercano.
NR.2	Mantener y promover bosques saludables y resilientes
NR.3	Implementar prescripciones de tratamiento (por ejemplo, desbroce mecánico) para mantener la integridad y el valor del hábitat de los matorrales dominados por robles y reducir el riesgo de incendios forestales.
NR.4	Implementar cortes en pequeñas áreas en zonas boscosas.
NR.5	Mantener los recursos de madera muerta en el sitio para preservar la complejidad del ecosistema.
NR.6	Asegurarse de que los sitios de nidos de rapaces sean identificados y protegidos según sea necesario.
NR.7	Mantener la calidad del hábitat para las especies protegidas a nivel federal que puedan estar presentes.
NR.8	Colaborar en las protecciones y mejoras del Valle de Hunter para la salud y viabilidad a largo plazo del arroyo.
NR.9	Implementar la concienciación sobre la reintroducción de lobos según sea necesario.

RECREACIN

R.1	Explorar la viabilidad de un "sendero de acceso portal" en la parte baja.
R.2	Designar el Sendero Lower Hunter Creek para uso exclusivo de peatones.
R.3	Explorar la viabilidad de construir senderos avanzados para ciclismo de montaña en la ladera norte que conecten Smuggler Mountain Road con Lollipop Trail.
R.4	Agregar un destino recreativo a mitad de camino a lo largo de Smuggler Mountain Road.
R.5	Instalar un nuevo quiosco en el inicio del Sendero Smuggler Mountain y actualizar la información en el quiosco de BTS.

R.6	Instalar rack(s) para bicicletas en la base de Smuggler Mountain Road.
R.7	Mantener el acceso invernal a las cabañas en las tierras públicas circundantes.
R.8	Revisar los acuerdos para el Parque Mollie Gibson y determinar si se necesita un adicional.

EDUCACIÓN Y PROMOCIÓN

EO.1	Actualizar e instalar señalización regulatoria.
EO.2	Reemplazar los letreros interpretativos.
EO.3	Continuar una campaña para abordar la basura de perros y la etiqueta de los dueños de perros en la carretera Smuggler Mountain.

MONITOR Y ADMINISTRACIÓN

MS.1	Continuar el monitoreo de la fauna y la vegetación a intervalos regulares.
MS.2	Mantener y mejorar la colaboración con las agencias asociadas que gestionan tierras, animales y actividades recreativas en o adyacentes a Smuggler, y/o que requieren acceso a través de Smuggler Mountain Road para gestionar sus activos públicos.
MS.3	Monitorear la recuperación de la vegetación en sitios mineros recuperados y otras áreas de disturbios pasado.
MS.4	Realizar una evaluación de recursos culturales para identificar y evaluar los recursos culturales del Espacio Abierto
MS.5	Continuar monitoreando el uso recreativo.
MS.6	Evalúe el hábitat de parto (producción) y cría de los alces para determinar si está activo.

MANTENIMIENTO

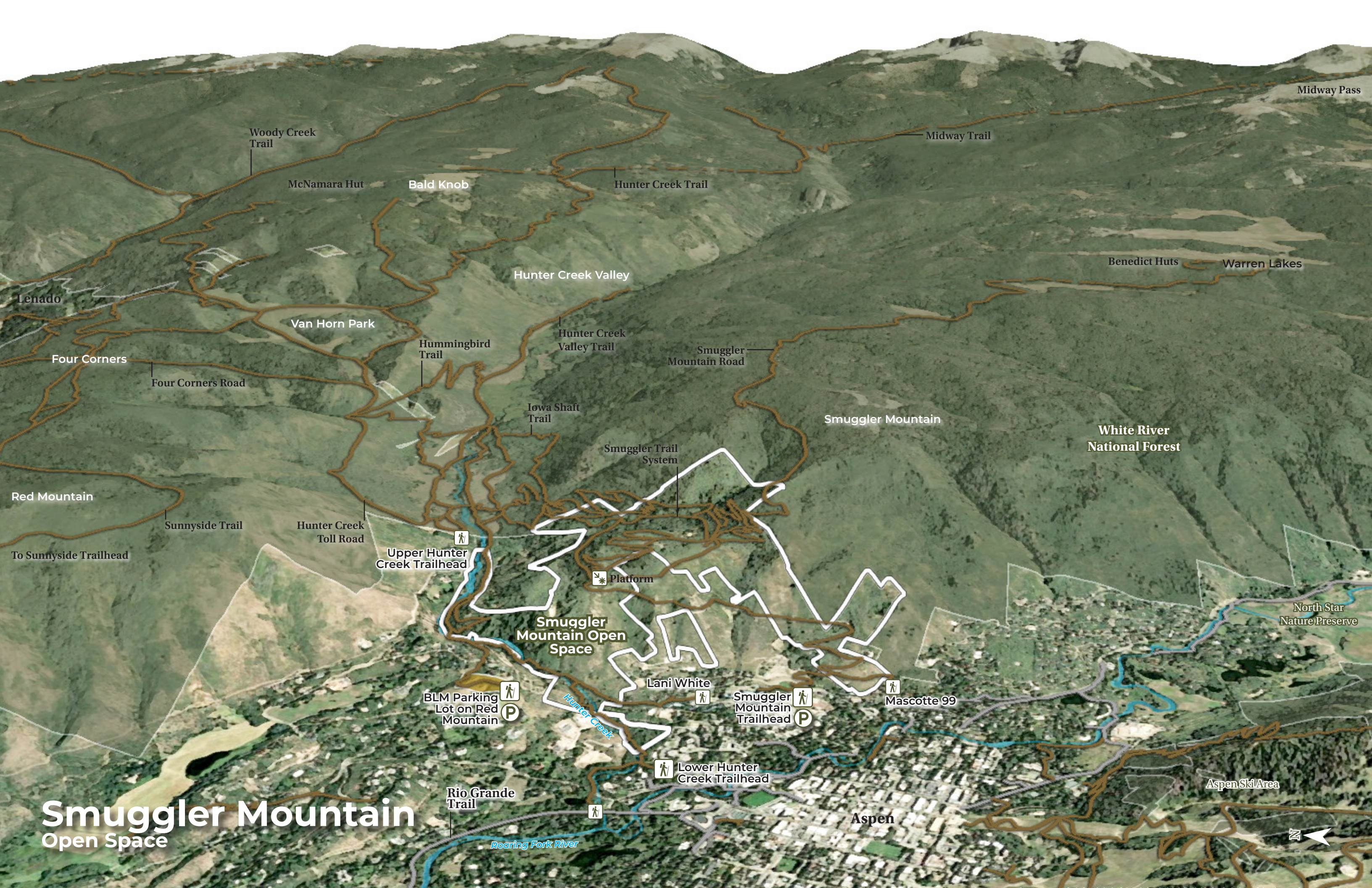
M.1	Mantener la carretera Smuggler Mountain en su ancho y condición actual.
M.2	Mejorar las pasarelas en el Sendero Lower Hunter Creek.
M.3	Crear un acuerdo de mantenimiento y un cronograma con responsabilidades definidas.
M.4	Gestionar activamente la vegetación nociva para promover el vigor de la biodiversidad nativa utilizando un enfoque integrado.

Especies de Plantas Identificadas: Más de 190, incluyendo 6 especies de árboles, 28 arbustos/subarbustos, 31 gramíneas perennes, 106 forbs perennes, 2 helechos y aliados de helechos, 16 forbs anuales/bienales, y 1 gramínea anual.

Especies de Aves Documentadas: 77

Especies de Mamíferos Conocidas: Al menos 14 especies se conocen que ocurren, y al menos 54 especies se conocen o se sospecha que ocurren en Smuggler según las necesidades de hábitat.

Millas de Senderos: 11.5



Smuggler Mountain Open Space

Woody Creek Trail

McNamara Hut

Bald Knob

Hunter Creek Trail

Midway Trail

Midway Pass

Hunter Creek Valley

Benedict Huts

Warren Lakes

Lenado

Van Horn Park

Hummingbird Trail

Hunter Creek Valley Trail

Smuggler Mountain Road

Four Corners

Four Corners Road

Iowa Shaft Trail

Smuggler Mountain

White River National Forest

Smuggler Trail System

Red Mountain

Sunnyside Trail

Hunter Creek Toll Road

Upper Hunter Creek Trailhead

Platform

Smuggler Mountain Open Space

North Star Nature Preserve

BLM Parking Lot on Red Mountain

Lani White

Smuggler Mountain Trailhead

Mascotte 99

Lower Hunter Creek Trailhead

Rio Grande Trail

Lower Hunter Creek Trailhead

Aspen

Aspen Ski Area

Roaring Fork River





Revegetated areas have taken hold along the Picnic Loop.

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[EN ESPAÑOL HAGA CLIC AQUÍ](#)

APPENDIX:

- A. COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
- B. PARTNER COMMENTS
- C. DRAFT PLAN PUBLIC COMMENTS
- D. NOXIOUS WEEDS AND PROPOSED TREATMENTS

1. Introduction

Smuggler Mountain Open Space is perhaps the most storied open space in Pitkin County. It is certainly among the busiest.

The 300-acre open space, perched above Aspen on the flanks of Smuggler Mountain and wrapping around into the Hunter Creek Valley, typically sees more use than any other holding in the county's Open Space and Trails system. The boundaries between open space and national forest are invisible as one traverses through Smuggler's forest or descends the mountain's north face into the Hunter Creek Valley. It could have been a far different experience.

The potential for development on what is now open space was extinguished parcel by parcel, over the course of roughly 30 years, as Pitkin County, City of Aspen and Aspen Valley Land Trust acquired parcels from private owners. The capstone came in 2005 with the joint city/county acquisition of 170 acres from a colorful man who ultimately abandoned his own dreams for the land and accepted \$15 million for his assemblage of mining claims. The joint purchase secured the heart of Smuggler Mountain Open Space as public land. It was, at the time, a record-setting price for a local open space property.

Restoration and cleanup of the newly acquired acreage began almost immediately. Adoption of the first management plan for Smuggler Mountain Open Space – a joint effort of the city and county – followed in 2008 (officially adopted by the BOCC in January 2009). Much has occurred in the intervening years to rehabilitate the land, expand recreational opportunities, protect wildlife and habitat, and improve forest health. This 2024 management plan update builds upon those achievements. It plots a course to continue the protection of ecological resources in a changing climate, safeguard habitat and accommodate year-round recreational opportunities on this hugely popular open space.

1.1 HISTORY

The story of Smuggler Mountain parallels the story of Aspen.

Once part of a pristine landscape where the nomadic Ute People wandered for more than 800 years, the mountain was ravaged by the industrial

frenzy that ensued shortly after the first prospectors arrived at the foot of Aspen Mountain in 1879.

Scarcely more than a decade later, Smuggler, and Aspen, would fall into quiet years of near abandonment and decay. Many of the great mine workings dotting Smuggler Mountain and elsewhere stood silent. Huge piles of mine waste at the base of the mountain and fanning out on its flanks dominated an otherwise denuded landscape.

The force of nature and the hand of man both played a role in the mountain's gradual reclamation, though telltale tailings piles and other evidence of Smuggler's former mining prominence remain. The legendary Smuggler Mine itself, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, sits at the base of the mountain.

Today, Smuggler Mountain is both wildlife habitat and recreational playground. Visitors and residents alike seek out Smuggler Mountain Open Space – 300 acres largely bounded by the White River National Forest and easily accessed directly from Aspen. That the open space is a place of trails and forest rather than homes and roads is a testament to the community's passion for the place and, ironically, one man's desire to develop it.

IN THE BEGINNING...

Smuggler Mountain is but a dot in a vast landscape where the native Utes wandered for centuries, though little physical evidence or documentation of their presence in the upper Roaring Fork Valley exists. By the time the first prospectors made their way from Leadville to what would become Aspen, the Utes were already being forced off the lands of western Colorado that had been ceded to them by treaty.

Historians generally believe the Utes hunted in the upper Roaring Fork Valley in summers, and camped at Ute Springs, near present-day Glory Hole Park in Aspen.¹ Early settlers were familiar with former native campsites that showed wear and tear from long use – the meadows at Ute Springs among them.² According to the Southern Ute tribe, however, no oral history of Utes in the Aspen area exists.³

¹ Ute People Pre-1879, Aspen Historical Society, aspenhistory.org/aspen-history/the-utes-pre-1879/

² "Roaring Fork Valley - An account of its settlement and development," Len Shoemaker, Sage Books, Denver CO, p17.

³ "The Utes and Aspen - More unknown that known," Tim Willoughby, The Aspen Times, May 21, 2023, p3.

The Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation has logged 50 known cultural sites within 12.5 miles of Aspen, but most are unassociated with native inhabitants and only two are arrow points of the type made by Utes.⁴ Various historical sites are documented, including buildings and ruins.

In an area encompassing most of Smuggler Mountain Open Space, seven historical sites have been recorded, but none involve Native American artifacts. Of 13 sites in the lower section of the Hunter Creek Valley, one has native connections, though it is not known whether it is Ute in origin.⁵

It is highly probable, however, that the Ute People wandered the length of the Roaring Fork Valley and were familiar with today's Smuggler Mountain and Aspen. There is no question about the activities that occurred once prospectors and investors established Ute City, as Aspen was initially known.

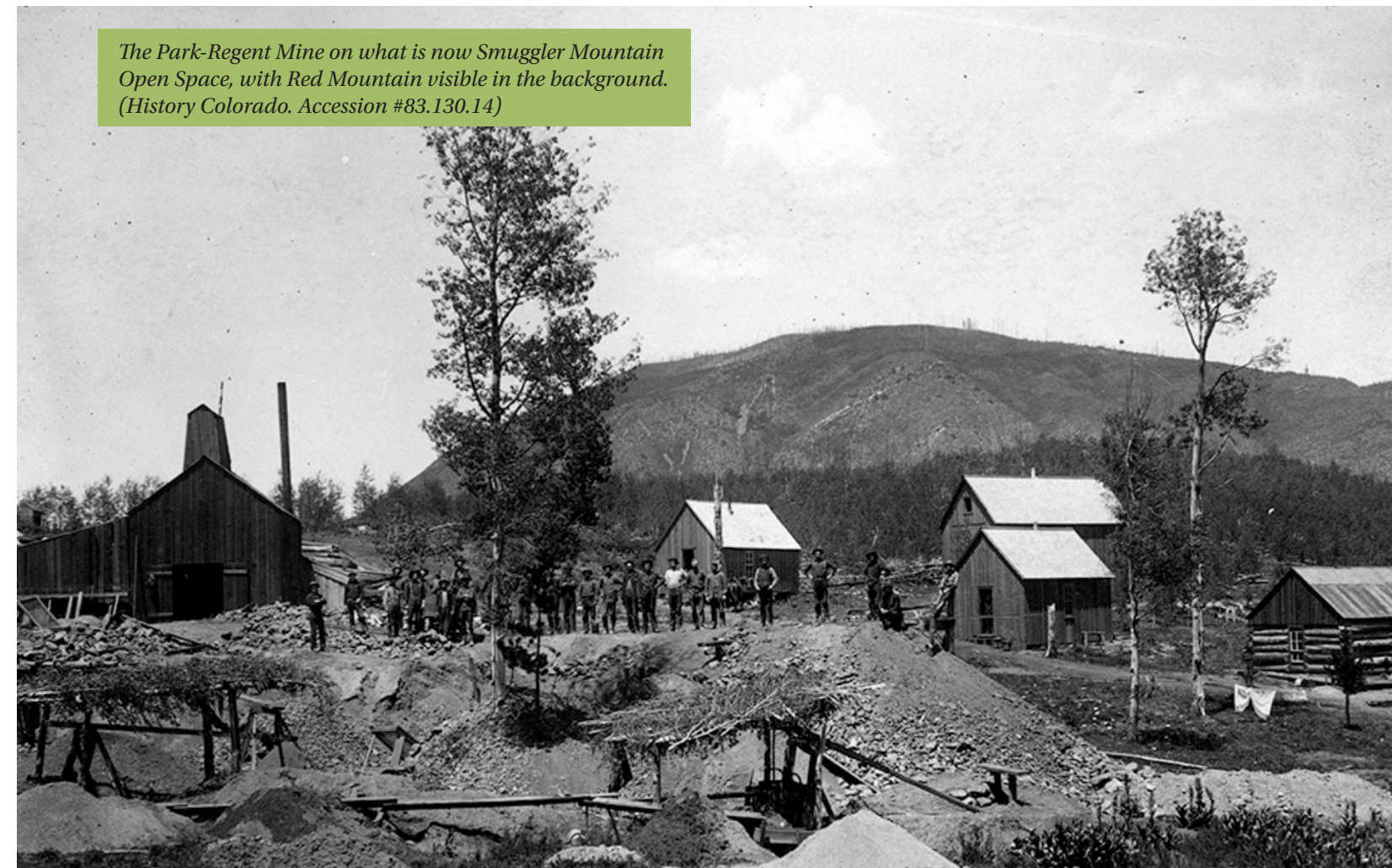
⁴ "The Utes and Aspen - More unknown that known," Tim Willoughby, The Aspen Times, May 20, 2023, p3.

⁵ Jason LaBelle, Colorado State University, via email, Feb. 1, 2024.

MINING: THE BOOM AND BUST

Miners extracted primarily silver, lead and zinc from Smuggler Mountain, driving tunnels thousands of feet below the surface. Massive amounts of timber were required to support the mines and other construction. The behemoth Smuggler Mine was a large industrial complex. Located at the base of Smuggler Mountain Road and still in existence today (minus most of the buildings that once served the undertaking), the privately owned mine marks the start of the ascent up the road for the hundreds of people who bike and hike it daily. Higher up, the Iowa Shaft, Bushwacker and Park-Regent mines were situated on what is now open space.

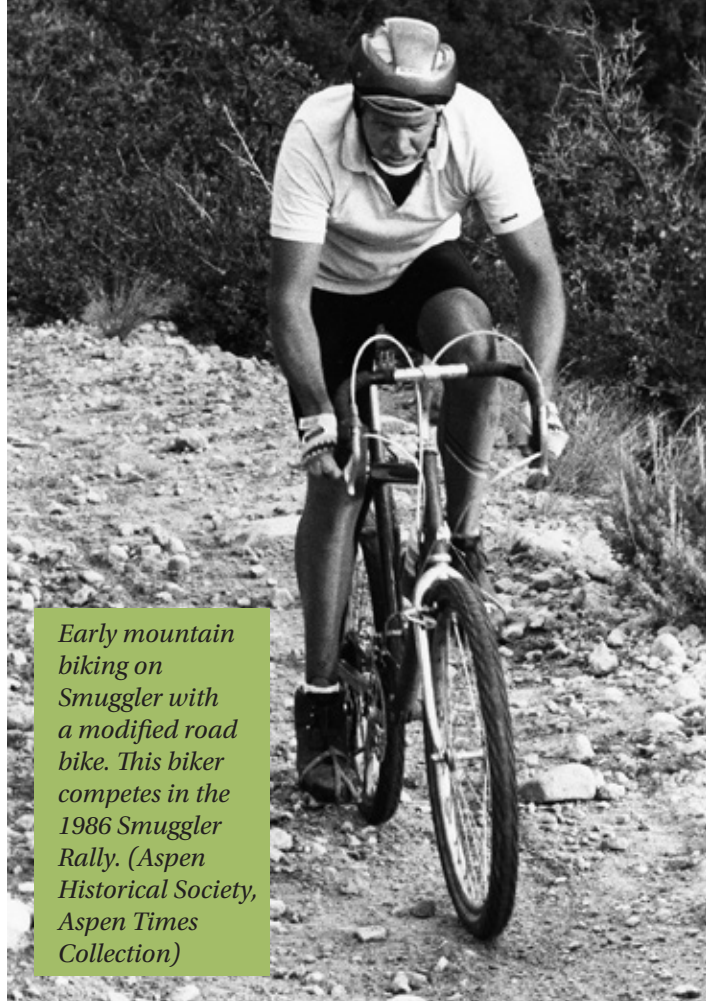
Smuggler's Della S claim, also part of the open space, was frequently in the news as the mining camp's newspapers played up developments at the area's many diggings. In 1892, for example, the Aspen Daily Chronicle reported a strike of exceedingly rich ore at the Della S, featuring "large flakes of pure silver and chunks of native." (Native silver is uncombined with other elements.)



The Park-Regent Mine on what is now Smuggler Mountain Open Space, with Red Mountain visible in the background. (History Colorado. Accession #83.130.14)



Part of the Cutoff Road is built from mine waste, originally placed to create a dam.



Early mountain biking on Smuggler with a modified road bike. This biker competes in the 1986 Smuggler Rally. (Aspen Historical Society, Aspen Times Collection)



The destruction of Wilk Wilkinson's Smuggler house, as heavy equipment pushes from behind. (Oct. 15, 1994 Aspen Daily News)

The Hunter Creek Cutoff Road, passing next to the Iowa Shaft mine, is partially constructed of rock waste from mining. It follows the top of a dam that diverted water running down the mountainside away from mine activity and may have captured water for mine use.⁶

A visible washout on the face of the mountain is also left from Aspen's mining era. Slicing through a segment of Smuggler Mountain Open Space above lower Hunter Creek, this scar resulted from water overflowing a flume that once carried Hunter Creek water to a power plant for the generation of electricity.⁷ The flume was under construction in 1886 and clearly visible from Aspen.⁸

The demonetization of silver in the first half of the 1890s resulted in an economic crash for Aspen. A few mines carried on in fits and starts, but operations and output slowed considerably and much of the town's populace departed. The goings-on on Smuggler Mountain largely ceased to be

⁶ "Signs of the past on Aspen's Smuggler Mountain," Janet Urquhart, The Aspen Times, Nov. 4, 2012, p1.

⁷ "The Story of Aspen," Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, Aspen Three Publishing, Aspen CO, p29.

⁸ "Light and water," Rocky Mountain Sun, May 22, 1886, p2.

newsworthy until the 1960s, when McCulloch Oil Co. renewed milling and mining operations on the mountain.⁹

Aspen's slow, decades-long rebound from mining town to year-round resort saw the collapse and dismantling of many of the mine works on Smuggler and elsewhere. Abandoned mine tunnels caved in or filled with water and tailings piles were smoothed over or simply left to settle into the landscape. Old cables, pipes and machinery rusted in place, or were scavenged as scrap, as was wood from vacant structures. Forests regenerated.

Smuggler Mountain Road and the Cutoff Road into the Hunter Creek Valley saw use by Jeeps and motorbikes, but not much else.

Youngsters on BMX bikes rode on the mine dumps at the base of Smuggler. Those lucky enough to own a minibike (an off-road, motorized bike that was smaller than a motorbike) found plenty of playgrounds, including a well-established, user-created track on a flat bench within what is now Smuggler Mountain Open Space, above the Overlook platform.

⁹ "Smuggler begins silver shipments," The Aspen Times, Sept. 15, 1966, p13b.

Lorenzo Semple, a pre-teen in Aspen in the 1970s, remembers only four-wheel-drive Jeeps, motorbikes and minibikes using Smuggler Mountain. It was not a favored hike and no one wanted to pedal up the rough road. Some drove up for the purpose of hunting or fishing at Warren Lakes high on the mountain.

"The concept of someone pedaling a bicycle up Smuggler was so foreign that no one even gave it utterance," Semple said.¹⁰

Existing 4-wheel roads began seeing mountain bike use as the sport gained traction in the 1980s because there were few other places to ride. The 1980s also brought another facet of the long-neglected mountain into the spotlight – its real estate.

ONE MAN'S BATTLE

George "Wilk" Wilkinson moved to Aspen sometime after first visiting the resort as a ski racer in international competition in 1960 and remained a full-time resident until 1995. Despite a diverse range of talents, from ski racing to filmmaking and

¹⁰ Lorenzo Semple, telephone interview, Feb. 23, 2024.

photography, his Aspen legacy is inextricably linked to Smuggler Mountain.¹¹

Through painstaking title work in the early 1980s to track down the owners of an assortment of mining claims on Smuggler, Wilkinson assembled about 220 acres (34 patented mining claims) as his own – the bulk of it a contiguous, mid-mountain piece above Smuggler Mountain Road, beyond the Overlook platform.¹²

What the public had come to think of as public open space was most certainly not. The simple, wooden deck that materialized at the Overlook was actually on private property. Elsewhere, the popular minibike track was largely on Wilkinson's land, until he used heavy equipment to destroy the attraction, according to Semple.

The mountain's long-forgotten squabbles over mineral deposits gave way to a modern fight – development versus conservation. The community's fondness for Smuggler and the desire to conserve it was one impetus for the formation of the county

¹¹ "Wilk' dies at 63, leaves Smuggler legacy," Scott Condon, The Aspen Times, Sept. 27, 2006, p1.

¹² "County wins Smuggler battle, war continues," Scott Condon, The Aspen Times, Feb. 1, 1994, p1.

open space program in 1990. That mindset, however, ran counter to Wilkinson's vision for his landholdings, triggering a tug-of-war with the county that consumed more than a decade.

Pitkin County, the City of Aspen and Aspen Valley Land Trust had slowly begun conserving pieces on the face of Smuggler as early as 1974, through donations, purchases and other mechanisms. A key acquisition came in 2000 with the proposed transfer of the 10-acre B&M Lode mining claim – site of the popular Smuggler Overlook platform – to the county. The deal was completed in 2005, though volunteers replaced the old platform with a new one in 2003.

Wilkinson, however, resisted open space overtures, even though his development applications went nowhere. Increasingly frustrated, Wilkinson contended the county was conspiring to stymie the development of Smuggler, even changing its land-use regulations to thwart his efforts. While the county conceded he had development rights, the two sides were miles apart on how many, with Wilkinson at one point proposing 86 units on his property. His land-use battles frequently spilled into the courtroom. At one point, in suing the county for \$159 million, Wilkinson also claimed his property was a “foreign state,” essentially seceding from Pitkin County.¹³

The feud escalated in the early 1990s, when Wilkinson constructed a substantial residence on his property. He had obtained a permit exemption for a single-story agricultural structure without water or electricity, but built a home that was partially two stories, had electrical outlets and water piped from a stream running through his land.¹⁴ When settlement negotiations fizzled, the county ordered the structure's demolition. A county crew put most of Wilkinson's belongings in storage, and the county continued to pay the storage fees for years, recalled then-County Manager Reid Haughey.¹⁵

Wilkinson apparently returned to residing on his land, joined by others. In the late 1990s, the county worked to evict renters living in makeshift structures and vehicles on his property, as well as in vehicles in the parking lot at the base of the mountain, over which Wilkinson claimed ownership. Wilkinson said he was providing affordable housing; the

13 “Wilk: Don't tread on me,” Scott Condon, *The Aspen Times*, Oct. 3, 1994, p1.

14 “County wants Wilkinson's buildings torn down,” Michael Bourne, *Aspen Daily News*, Oct. 9, 1990, p1.

15 Reid Haughey, telephone interview, April 25, 2023.

county alluded to fire danger and other safety and sanitary concerns arising from the tepees and other unpermitted residences on the mountain. In 2001, a man died from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning in the propane-heated bus he called home on Smuggler.¹⁶ In 2002, a squatter's camp along the road on county land was dismantled by a county crew. A vehicle, dilapidated camper and an outdoor deck replete with furniture were hauled away.

Ownership of the Smuggler base-area parking lot was not the only bone of contention in the county's ongoing battle with Wilkinson. In December 2000, Wilkinson ordered the county's Community Development director off the Hunter Creek Cutoff Road, claiming the road was private where it crossed through his property. Wilkinson had made similar claims about ownership of Smuggler Mountain Road on his property, as well, and the two sides were already in court over that issue. The Cutoff Road was added to the judicial review. The county ultimately prevailed.

In 2003, the Aspen City Council directed the city attorney to negotiate with Wilkinson for a potential open space purchase. City voters had approved an open space tax in November 2000 with Smuggler on their minds. Experts spent two years assessing Wilkinson's holdings, coming up with an \$8.1 million appraisal as a starting point. A \$10 million offer was rejected, so the city offered \$12 million. Wilkinson turned it down, countering with a complex proposal that the city attorney said he quit trying to figure out when the first two numbers in Wilkinson's pitch added up to \$21 million.¹⁷

Then, in August 2005, Wilkinson listed his property for sale for \$15 million. By then, his landholdings totaled 170 acres. That November, the county put the land under contract with the city committed to paying half of the sum. At the time, it set a record price for an open space acquisition. A handful of smaller acquisitions on Smuggler followed, including the purchase of mineral rights, ensuring mining activity on the open space would be relegated to the mountain's past.

Wilkinson had been diagnosed with brain cancer in April 2005 and died in September 2006.¹⁸ The

16 “Body found on Smuggler,” *Aspen Daily News*, Feb. 7, 2001, p3.

17 “City gives up on Smuggler,” Janet Urquhart, *The Aspen Times*, June 29, 2004, p1.

18 “Wilk' dies at 63, leaves Smuggler legacy,” Scott Condon, *The Aspen Times*, Sept. 27, 2006, p1.



Cleanup at Smuggler after the open space acquisition cost around \$60,000. Reclamation efforts that followed successfully rehabilitated impacted areas.

following summer, about two dozen friends and relatives gathered in a clearing on the Smuggler mountainside in remembrance. A stone, carved with part of a poem Wilkinson wrote, memorializes the spot. Though the etching has faded with time, it is still possible to read the inscription: “The dance of life touches those who participate in passion...” Loved ones scattered Wilkinson's ashes over the land he wound up playing a key role in conserving.¹⁹

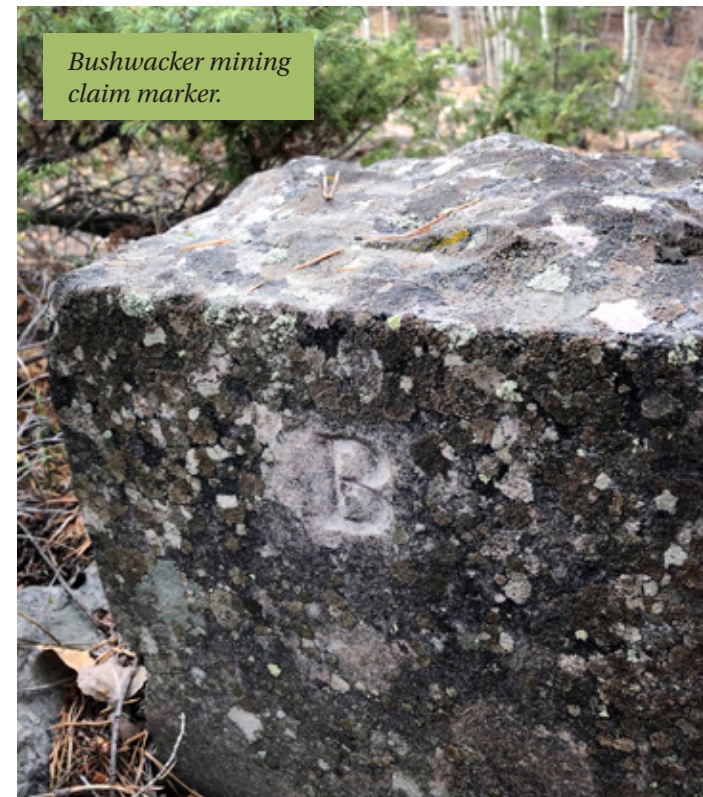
TRANSFORMING A LANDSCAPE

The purchase of Wilkinson's land necessitated a massive cleanup. His compound was closed to the public while old mines were secured (one mine opening was covered by a trash can lid) and truckloads of accumulated materials were hauled from the site. Large trucks and heavy machinery rumbled up and down Smuggler Mountain Road throughout late summer, 2006.²⁰

Items that had to be cleared from the landscape included large buses that had been turned into residences, a mobile home, huge volumes of wood and scrap metal, including drilling equipment dating back to the 19th century. The remains of the

19 “Wilk memorialized on Smuggler,” Janet Urquhart, *The Aspen Times*, June 15, 2007, p1.

20 “What Wilk left behind: Massive cleanup under way on Smuggler,” Chad Abrahams, *The Aspen Times*, July 28, 2006, p1.



Bushwacker mining claim marker.

house that had been demolished were still there, as was a large assortment of vehicles – some fairly new, some ancient and rusting. There were shipping containers crammed with items.²¹ The cleanup cost some \$60,000.²²

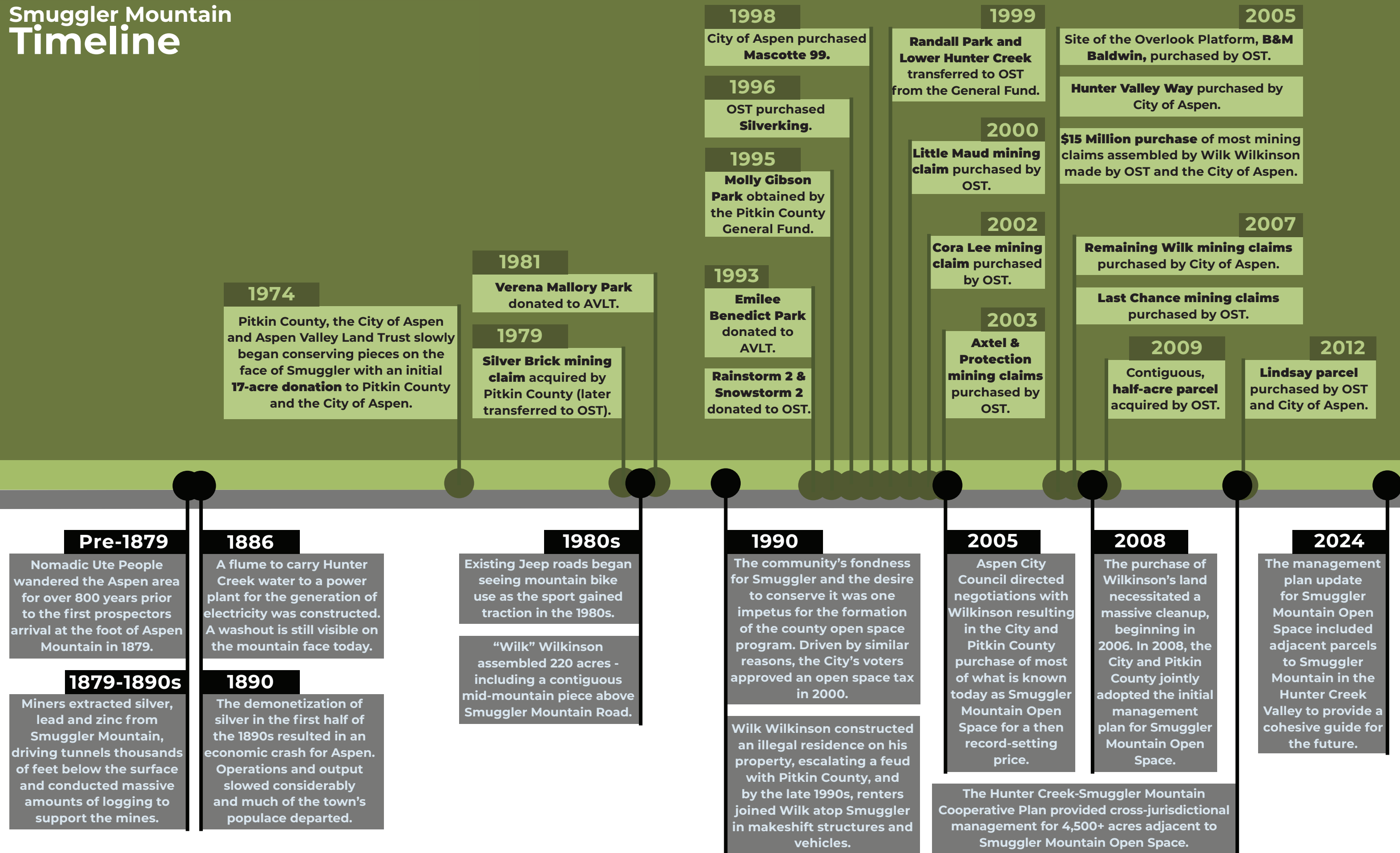
Once the land was cleared, a 6-year effort to reclaim the landscape commenced, involving the city, county and community volunteers who helped transform the open space through a series of Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteer projects. Old roads were converted to singletrack trails and new trails were constructed, picnic tables were installed and fencing was erected to protect areas from further damage, leaving Smuggler Mountain Road as the only vehicular route through the open space. Three mine sites – the Bushwacker, Iowa Shaft and Park-Regent – were established as historical sites with interpretive signs to give visitors insight into the mountain's past use.

Damaged areas were reseeded in the summer of 2012. That September, the reclamation effort was deemed complete and nature was allowed to finish the work. Today, many users likely can't tell that the grasses flanking the singletrack trails represent a real restoration success.

21 Ibid.

22 Gary Tennenbaum, Pitkin County Open Space and Trails director, February 2024.

Smuggler Mountain Timeline



Pre-1879

Nomadic Ute People wandered the Aspen area for over 800 years prior to the first prospectors arrival at the foot of Aspen Mountain in 1879.

1879-1890s

Miners extracted silver, lead and zinc from Smuggler Mountain, driving tunnels thousands of feet below the surface and conducted massive amounts of logging to support the mines.

1886

A flume to carry Hunter Creek water to a power plant for the generation of electricity was constructed. A washout is still visible on the mountain face today.

1890

The demonetization of silver in the first half of the 1890s resulted in an economic crash for Aspen. Operations and output slowed considerably and much of the town's populace departed.

1974

Pitkin County, the City of Aspen and Aspen Valley Land Trust slowly began conserving pieces on the face of Smuggler with an initial **17-acre donation** to Pitkin County and the City of Aspen.

1979

Silver Brick mining claim acquired by Pitkin County (later transferred to OST).

1981

Verena Mallory Park donated to AVLTL.

1980s

Existing Jeep roads began seeing mountain bike use as the sport gained traction in the 1980s.

"Wilk" Wilkinson assembled 220 acres - including a contiguous mid-mountain piece above Smuggler Mountain Road.

1993

Emilee Benedict Park donated to AVLTL.

Rainstorm 2 & Snowstorm 2 donated to OST.

1995

Molly Gibson Park obtained by the Pitkin County General Fund.

1996

OST purchased **Silverking**.

1998

City of Aspen purchased **Mascotte 99**.

1999

Randall Park and Lower Hunter Creek transferred to OST from the General Fund.

2000

Emilee Benedict Park donated to AVLTL.

Rainstorm 2 & Snowstorm 2 donated to OST.

2002

Cora Lee mining claim purchased by OST.

2003

Axtel & Protection mining claims purchased by OST.

2005

1990

The community's fondness for Smuggler and the desire to conserve it was one impetus for the formation of the county open space program. Driven by similar reasons, the City's voters approved an open space tax in 2000.

Wilk Wilkinson constructed an illegal residence on his property, escalating a feud with Pitkin County, and by the late 1990s, renters joined Wilk atop Smuggler in makeshift structures and vehicles.

2000

Little Maud mining claim purchased by OST.

2002

Cora Lee mining claim purchased by OST.

2003

Axtel & Protection mining claims purchased by OST.

2005

Aspen City Council directed negotiations with Wilkinson resulting in the City and Pitkin County purchase of most of what is known today as Smuggler Mountain Open Space for a then record-setting price.

The Hunter Creek-Smuggler Mountain Cooperative Plan provided cross-jurisdictional management for 4,500+ acres adjacent to Smuggler Mountain Open Space.

2005

Site of the Overlook Platform, **B&M Baldwin**, purchased by OST.

Hunter Valley Way purchased by City of Aspen.

\$15 Million purchase of most mining claims assembled by Wilk Wilkinson made by OST and the City of Aspen.

2009

Last Chance mining claims purchased by OST.

Contiguous, half-acre parcel acquired by OST.

2008

The purchase of Wilkinson's land necessitated a massive cleanup, beginning in 2006. In 2008, the City and Pitkin County jointly adopted the initial management plan for Smuggler Mountain Open Space.

2007

Remaining Wilk mining claims purchased by City of Aspen.

Last Chance mining claims purchased by OST.

2012

Lindsay parcel purchased by OST and City of Aspen.

2024

The management plan update for Smuggler Mountain Open Space included adjacent parcels to Smuggler Mountain in the Hunter Creek Valley to provide a cohesive guide for the future.

Year of Acquisition: 1999
Owners: Pitkin County
Acreage: 6.0 acres
Purchase Price: \$0 (Transfer from Pitkin County General Fund)

Little Maud mining claim

Year of Acquisition: 2000
Owners: Pitkin County
Acreage: 10.2 acres
Purchase Price: \$550,167

Cora Lee mining claim

Year of Acquisition: 2002
Owners: Pitkin County
Acreage: 1 acre
Purchase Price: \$0 (donation)

Axtel & Protection mining claims

Year of Acquisition: 2003
Owners: Pitkin County
Acreage: 20.4 acres
Purchase Price: \$475,000

B&M Baldwin mining claim

Year of Acquisition: 2005
Owners: Pitkin County (CE held by AVL T)
Acreage: 10.1 acres
Purchase Price: \$70,622 and donation

Hunter Valley Way

Year of Acquisition: 2005
Owners: City of Aspen (CE held by AVL T)
Acreage: 9.8 acres
Purchase Price: \$0 (donation)²

Smuggler mining claims

- **Smuggler Mountain (Park, Regent, Tiger, Lizzie, Jay Gould, North Star, Iowa#2, Cascade #2)**
- **Alpine and Bushwacker**
- **Rainstorm No.2**
- **Snowstorm No. 2**
- **Ballarat/General Jackson**
- **Pride of Aspen**
- **Robert Emmett**
- **Remaining portions of J.C. Johnson**

Year of Acquisition: 2005
Owners: Pitkin County, City of Aspen (CE held by

AVLT)
Acreage: 126.8 acres
Purchase Price: \$15 million

Smuggler mining claims

- **Contraband**
- **Result**
- **Della S**

Year of Acquisition: 2007
Owners: City of Aspen (CE held by AVL T)
Acreage: 19.6 acres
Purchase Price: \$3.4 million (Includes \$500,000 for mineral rights)

Last Chance

Year of Acquisition: 2007
Owners: Pitkin County
Acreage: 4.5 acres
Purchase Price: \$550,000

Smuggler Mountain II

Year of Acquisition: 2009
Owners: Pitkin County
Acreage: 0.5 acre

Lindsay

Year of Acquisition: 2012
Owners: Pitkin County
Acreage: 10.1 acres
Purchase Price: \$70,622 and donation

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Smuggler Mountain B&M Claim

Owner: Pitkin County
Holder: Aspen Valley Land Trust
Conservation Values: Open space, scenic, public recreation, natural and wildlife values.
Management Considerations:

Allowed uses:

- Public access
- Maintenance, reconstruction, relocation and replacement of existing trails the Smuggler Mountain Observation Deck.
- Removal of vegetation for wildfire and disease prevention.
- Surface disturbances as needed for recreational amenities maintenance.
- Removal of invasive species.
- De minimis commercial recreational use
- General public recreational use. Low-impact outdoor recreational uses, such as hiking, cross-country skiing and enjoyment of scenic views.
- Minimal external lighting for safety purposes.

Restrictions:

- No easements or new roadways, unless at the consent of the Trust.
- No removal or disturbance of relatively natural habitat (i.e. native plants).
- No ground disturbances by placement of or removal of soil, gravel, land fill or other natural abiotic materials.
- No introduction of non-native species.
- No fencing.
- No livestock or grazing on the property.
- Large-scale commercial use.
- No establishment of communication facilities.
- No establishment of utilities and water lines.
- No construction of buildings.

Smuggler Mountain Wilkinson Claim

Owner: Pitkin County
Holder: Aspen Valley Land Trust
Conservation Values: Scenic, open space, wildlife and recreational values.
Management Considerations:

Allowed uses:

- Public access.
- Restoration activities: may take whatever steps necessary to reclaim mining impacts on the property and to revert the property to wildlife habitat.
- Use of motor vehicles that is consistent with the preservation and protection of the conservation values and emergency situations.
- Modification of existing and new roads and trails for recreational purposes.

Restrictions:

- No construction of buildings.
- No easements or new roadways, unless at the consent of the Trust.
- No commercial feed lots or grazing.
- No manipulation of natural streams, wetlands, springs or other hydrological features.

² Ordinance #50, 2004

Smuggler Mountain Contraband Claim, Smuggler Mountain Della S Claim and Smuggler Mountain Result Claim

Owner: City of Aspen

Holder: Aspen Valley Land Trust

Conservation Values: Relatively natural habitat, open space

Management Considerations:

Allowed uses:

- Public access.
- Construct, maintain, replace and repair one cabin not to exceed 2,500 sq. ft. and satisfies the limitations and restrictions applicable to “Rural and Remote” cabins pursuant to the Pitkin County Land Use Regulations (e.g. no public utility connections, seasonal access, no improvement to existing roads).
- Removal of vegetation for ecological, wildfire and disease prevention.
- Surface disturbances as needed for habitat enhancement or restoration purposes.
- Removal of invasive species.
- De minimis commercial recreational use.
- General public recreational use. Low-impact outdoor recreational uses, such as hiking, cross-country skiing and enjoyment of scenic views.
- Motorized recreational uses on existing and designated trails and roads, in a manner consistent with the preservation and protection of the conservation values of the property.
- Construction of low-impact recreational amenities such as park benches and picnic tables.
- Use of chemicals (pesticides and herbicides) in a manner consistent with sound environmental conservation practices.

Restrictions:

- Shall not construct, improve, place, or replace any buildings, structures, parking lots, or billboards on the property (aside from allotted cabin).
- Pave, widen, or construct new roads without the consent of Trust.
- Unwarranted removal of vegetation or disturbance to soils (must serve ecological or hazard reduction purposes).
- No subdivision of land.
- No erection of communication facilities/infrastructure.
- Prohibited activities include: off-road use of motorized vehicles, introduction of non-native species, fencing, livestock grazing, accumulation/dumping or disposal of trash (including burn piles), industrial activity, installation of utilities and water lines, hunting and trapping.

TRAIL/RECREATION EASEMENTS AND LEASE AGREEMENTS

Verena Mallory

Owner: Aspen Valley Land Trust

Holder: Co-held by Pitkin County and City of Aspen

Management Considerations:

Allowed uses:

- Use of existing trail for hiking, horseback riding, nonmotorized bicycles, and cross-country skiing.
- Minimal clearing and earthwork for existing trail maintenance.
- Construction of picnic tables and shade shelter within “Picnic Envelope.”

Restrictions:

- No structures or improvements of any kind, including establishment of new trail (except for picnic structures in “Picnic Envelope”).
- No altering of natural vegetation or topography.
- No motorized vehicles, camping, firearms, noisy or otherwise offensive behavior, and commercial uses.

South Trail (Emilee Benedict)

Owner: Aspen Valley Land Trust

Holder: Pitkin County

Management Considerations:

In the event of any conflict between the provisions of the Deed and the South Trail Easement Agreement, the South Trail Easement Agreement shall govern and control. Pitkin County is responsible for trail maintenance, enforcement and insurances.

Allowed uses:

- Trail-associated amenities: Trail signage, drainage structures, and trail benches.
- Non-motorized, people-transporting commercial use (ski touring, horse packing, or similar).
- Pedestrian, non-motorized trail use.

Restrictions:

- No structures or improvements of any kind unless specifically identified in allowed uses.
- Removal of riparian vegetation with 20 feet of the ordinary high water mark of Hunter Creek.
- No motorized vehicles, camping, fires, firearms, noisy or offensive behavior.
- No commercial activities, unless specifically identified in allowed uses.

Lani White

Owner: Private

Holder: Pitkin County

Hunter Creek

Owner: Private

Holder: Pitkin County

BLM Red Mountain Right-of-way Grant COC 53783

Owner: Bureau of Land Management

Holder: Pitkin County Board of Commissioners

Acreage: 0.636 acres

Access road is 470ft long by 30ft wide

Parking Lot is 4,800sf

Trail is 880ft long by 10ft wide

Agreement: Construct, operate, maintain and terminate an access road, parking lot and trails.

AREA CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

McCloskey

Owner: Private

Holder: Pitkin County

Conservation Values: Relatively natural habitat, open space

Hunter Creek Estamar

Owner: Private

Holder: Aspen Valley Land Trust

Conservation Values: Relatively natural habitat, open space

1.3 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This plan update builds upon past accomplishments and celebrates the investments made to the open space since adoption of the first Smuggler management plan, prepared in 2008. The initial plan set forth management actions in three areas: natural resources, recreation and educational opportunities. With many of the management actions complete or underway, an update to the conditions at Smuggler Mountain are further detailed in ***Section 2***.

2008 to 2024 Accomplishments

Natural Resources

Inventoried forest resources and developed a forest resource management plan.

A Restored the heavily impacted observation area.

B Closed and reclaimed mine shafts, meeting Colorado Division of Reclamation and Mine Safety (CDRMS) requirements.

C Restored the old racetrack with native vegetation, added picnic areas.

D Completed forest regeneration and mechanical vegetation thinning projects that contributed to forest health and quality wildlife habitat.

E Supported prescribed fire on adjacent lands.

Assessed and treated for mountain pine beetle in response to outbreak in early 2000s.

Monitoring and Stewardship

Mapped vegetation types at Smuggler, established plant community transects for monitoring, conducted rare plant and noxious weed field surveys.

Conducted wildlife surveys, assessed habitat conditions.

F Aspen Global Change Institute installed a soil moisture monitoring station

G Added dog waste stations and increased ranger patrols.

Recreation

Restricted motorized uses to Smuggler Mountain Road.

H Constructed and/or formalized 7 miles of single-track trails including:

- BTS
- Picnic Point and Picnic Loop
- Lollipop and Lollipop cut-off
- Tootsie Roll

I Created a dog voice and sight control area.

J Limited trail development to the "2008 Potential Recreation Area."

Prohibited hunting on the open space but maintained access on Smuggler Mountain Road.

Outreach and Education

Completed over 50 volunteer work days with Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers.

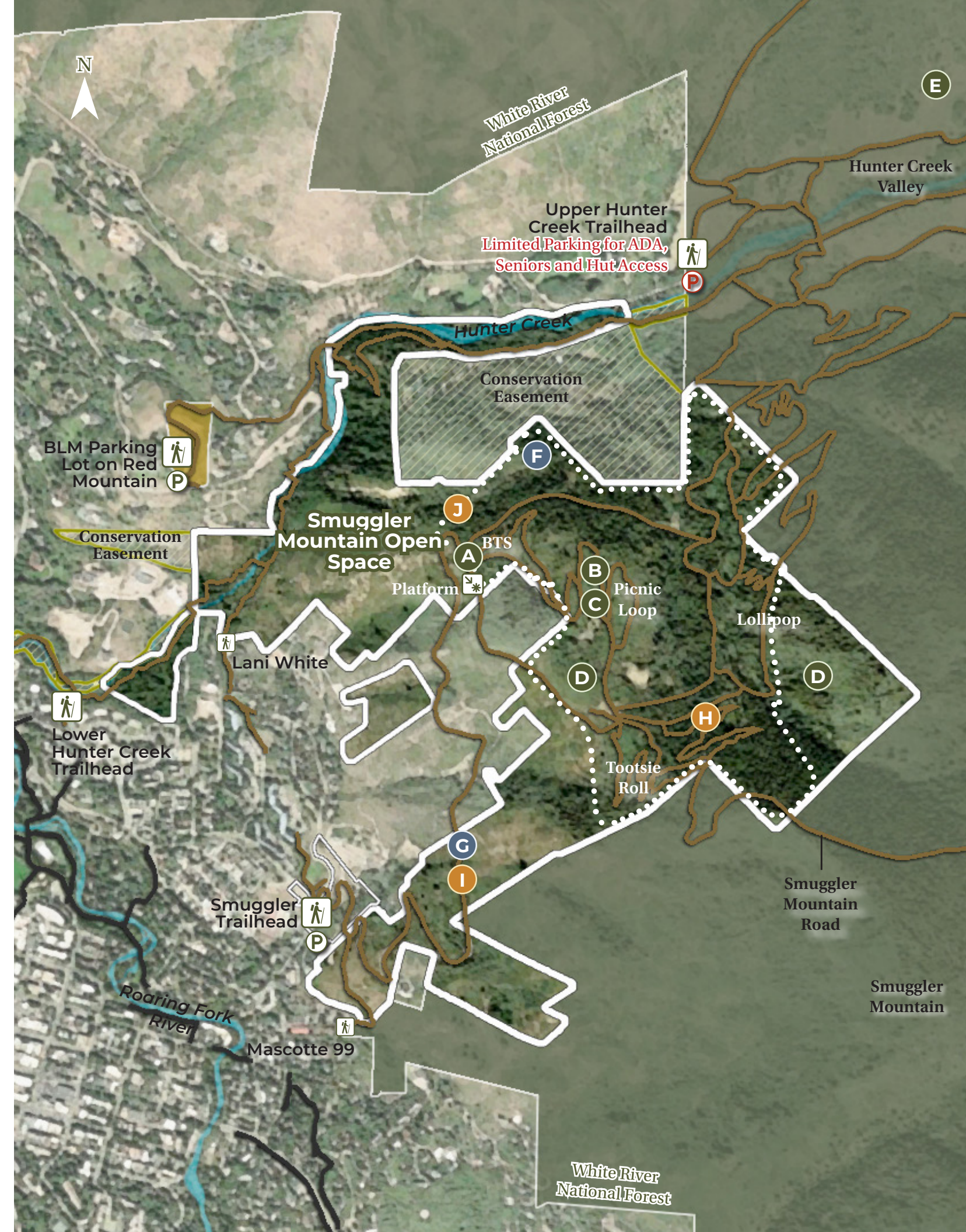
Developed interpretive signage to highlight mining history and Smuggler's importance.

Maintenance

Installed wayfinding, regulatory and interpretive signage.

Conducted noxious weed control.

Closed bandit/ unauthorized trails to prevent impacts on wildlife and vegetation.



2. Existing Conditions

2.1 LOCATION AND CONTEXT

Smuggler Mountain Open Space is located on the north and east sides of the City of Aspen, in unincorporated Pitkin County. The open space is situated on the northwestern flank of Smuggler Mountain and is embedded within a landscape that transitions from urban to national forest. The northern and eastern parts of the open space are surrounded by the White River National Forest, which is under the administration of the USDA Forest Service. The lands on the west are privately owned. Smuggler Mountain provides year-round recreational opportunities and protects native habitat for local flora and fauna.

The hillside of Smuggler Mountain and the Hunter Creek drainage are highly visible from many points within the City of Aspen. The open space can be seen from Highway 82 as far north as Brush Creek Road, from neighborhoods, from several local ski areas, and from public lands surrounding the city. The main feature when viewing Smuggler is the face of the open space, which is bisected by Smuggler Mountain Road. The vegetation on the hillside creates a mosaic of color and texture that changes with the light and the seasons. The south-facing and upper portions of the open space are dominated by stands of aspen and oak shrubland, which contrast with coniferous forest, creating a distinct, visually pleasing landscape. From Smuggler itself, users can enjoy views of the City of Aspen, the four ski areas and Mount Sopris.

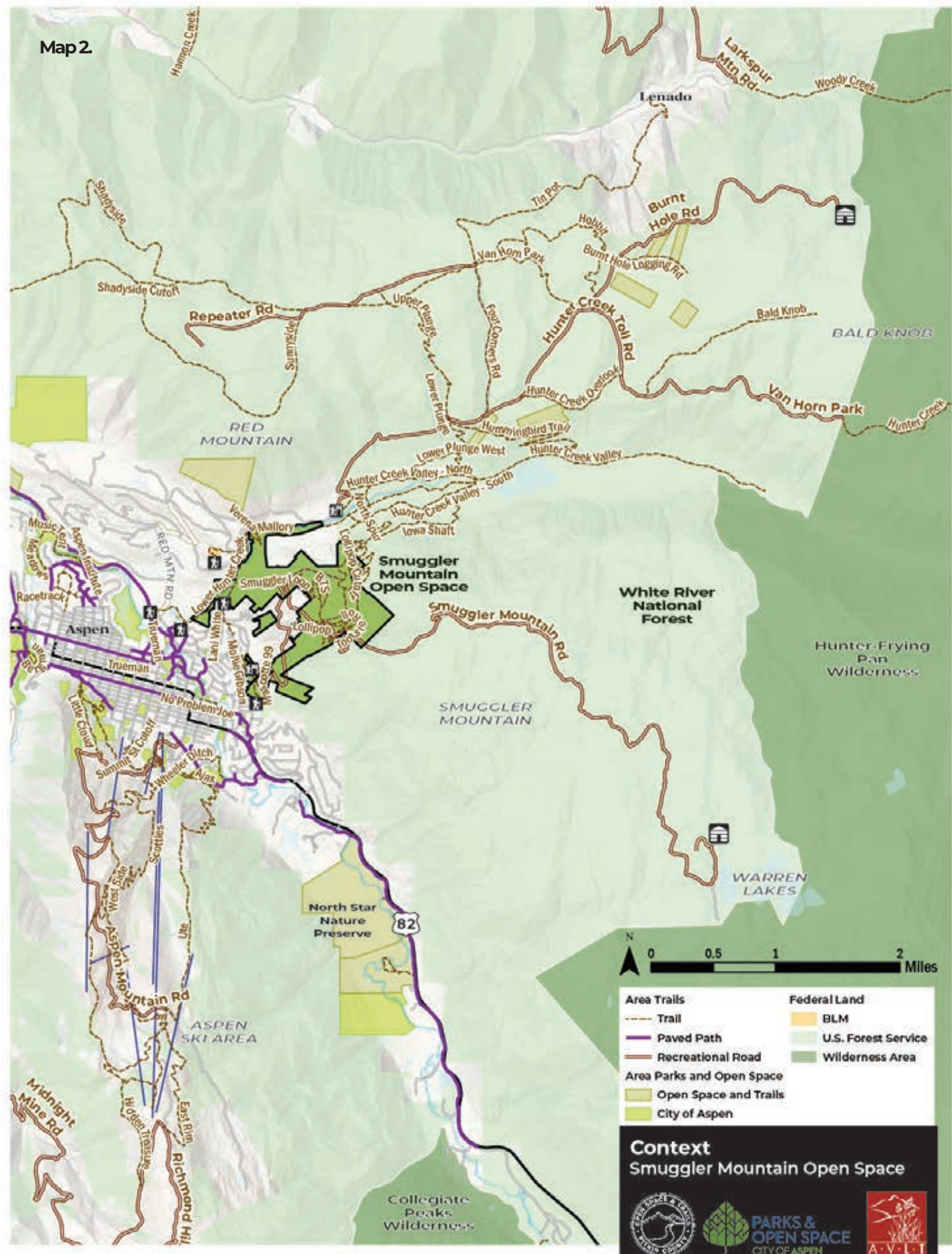


Smuggler trails wind through mature forests.

Smuggler Mountain Open Space protects wildlife habitat, viewsheds and outdoor recreational opportunities in Aspen’s “backyard.”

The compilation of properties helps maintain a significant amount of unfragmented wildlife habitat and open space, while also providing public trail access not only to the open space itself but also to the broader White River National Forest.

Map 2



ACCESS AND PARKING

Smuggler Mountain Open Space is accessible via four main points: Smuggler Mountain Trailhead, upper Hunter Creek and lower trailheads and the BLM parking lot on Red Mountain. Additional neighborhood access points include the Lani White Trail and the Mascotte 99 Trail. Smuggler Mountain Trailhead provides access to Smuggler Mountain Road, an unimproved dirt road that requires four-wheel drive / high-clearance vehicles. Access by vehicle, foot and bike can be gained by ascending Smuggler Mountain Road. Multiple non-motorized trails provide access through the open space and into national forest lands. From the Hunter Creek Valley, several recreational trails connect to the upper portions of the valley and to Smuggler Mountain.

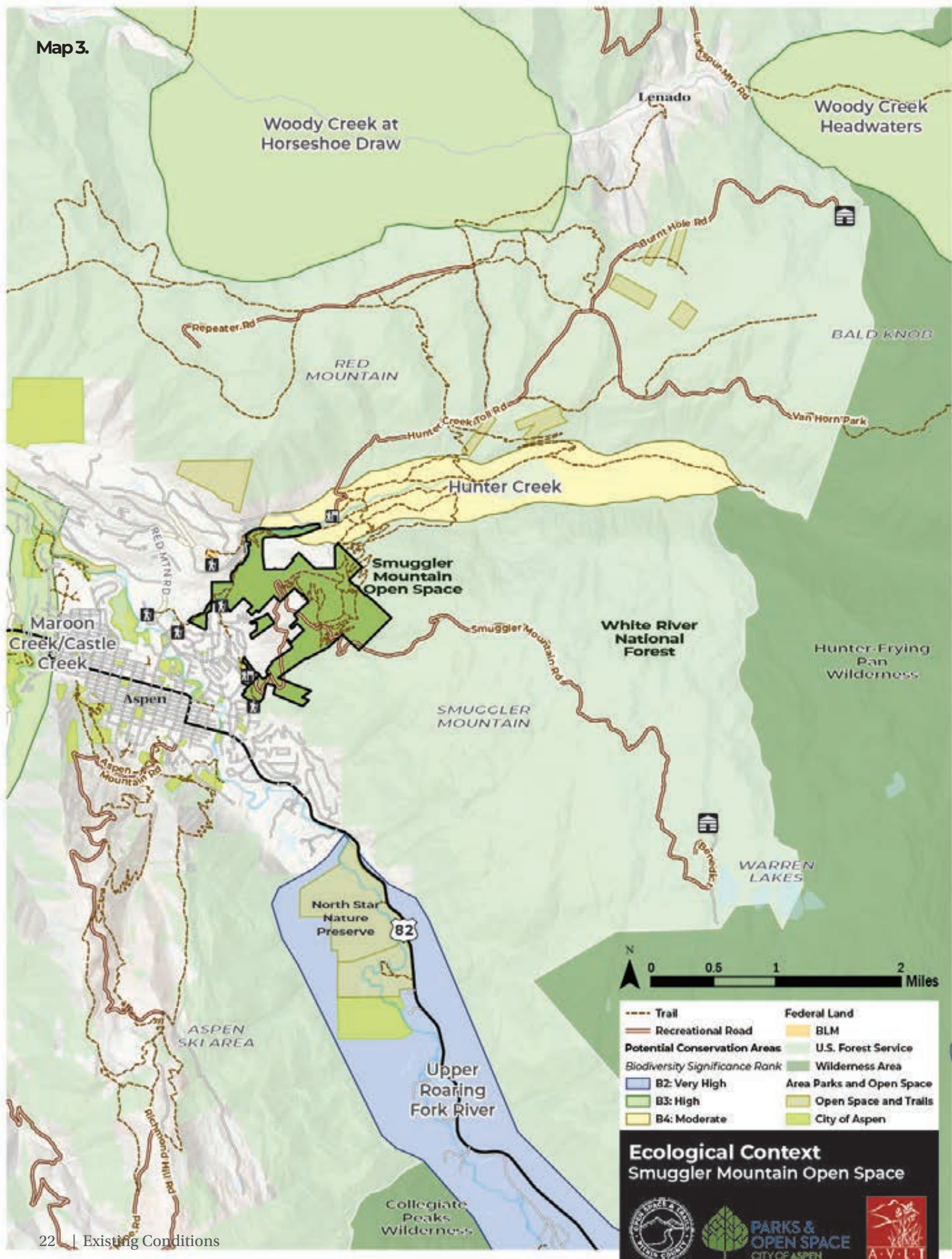
Two roads owned and managed by Pitkin County pass through Smuggler Mountain Open Space – Smuggler Mountain Road and the Hunter Creek Cutoff Road; the latter no longer functions as a road. Smuggler Mountain Road passes through Smuggler Mountain Open Space and continues to Warren Lakes within the national forest. The Pitkin County Asset Management Plan was amended in 2008 to grant the Open Space program jurisdiction to regulate non-motorized uses on Smuggler Mountain Road.

SURROUNDING LAND USE

To the southwest of Smuggler lies the City of Aspen, which has several planned unit developments. The most prominent of these is the Centennial Affordable Housing and Silverlode Mixed-Use Development. Near the trailhead to Smuggler Mountain Road is Mollie Gibson Park, a county-owned public park managed by the City of Aspen, as well as the Smuggler Mine Corporation (SMC). SMC is a private operation that offers historical tours into its mine.

The northwestern border of Smuggler Mountain Open Space extends into the Hunter Creek Valley. The lower portion of the valley contains multiple, privately owned, single-family parcels, City- and county-owned parcels, and private parcels protected by the Aspen Valley Land Trust. The northeastern, eastern, and southerly portions of the open space are bound by the White River National Forest. Efforts have been made to align regulations since much of the open space borders Forest Service lands.

Map 3.



2.2 NATURAL RESOURCES AND BIODIVERSITY

ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

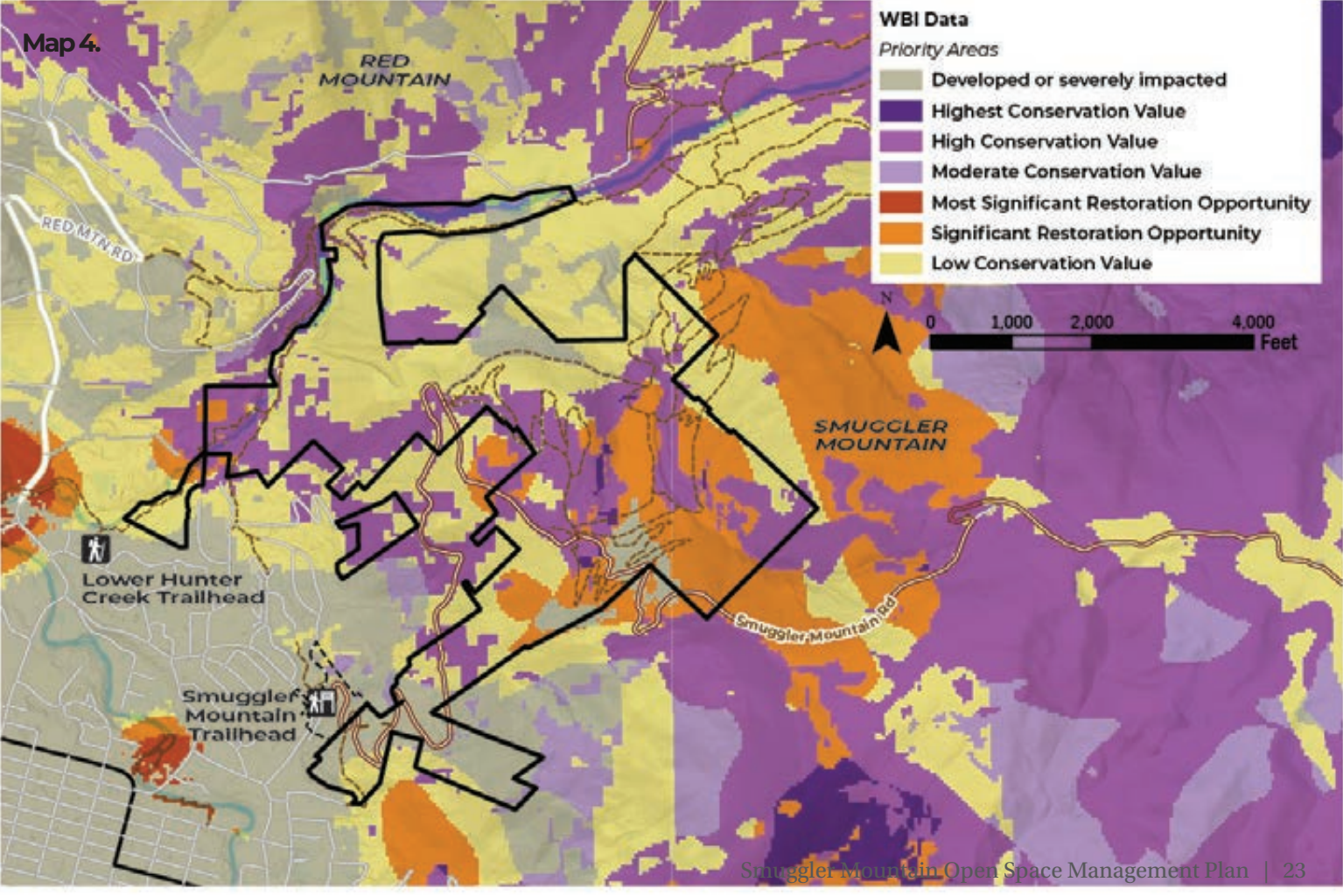
The importance of Smuggler Mountain to wildlife is largely related to its location between public lands administered by the USDA Forest Service and developed land in the City of Aspen. Residential and recreational development in the Aspen area has resulted in the direct and indirect loss of wildlife habitat and migratory routes for many species in the upper Roaring Fork Valley. Smuggler Mountain, even with its current level of recreational use, provides an important habitat corridor and a substantial buffer between the City of Aspen population center and the national forest.

Three Potential Conservation Areas (PCA) as identified by Colorado Natural Heritage Program occur within one mile of Smuggler Mountain Open Space, with one of these, the Hunter Creek PCA, overlapping the boundaries of Smuggler Mountain Open Space (Map 3). Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has mapped high-priority habitat in the area

for elk (migration corridor, severe winter range and production area), as well as aquatic native species conservation waters and sportfish management waters.¹ Portions of Smuggler Mountain Open Space closer to national forest lands are identified by The Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Network as "mostly resilient with some recognized biodiversity." The resilience, connectivity and biodiversity values increase with distance away from town. *The Watershed Biodiversity Initiative map* indicates a complex landscape of intermixed conservation value and restoration opportunity (Map 4).

Several habitat types are present at Smuggler, each contributing to the overall biodiversity of both flora and fauna. At the lower elevations, oak brush dominates, with strong components of serviceberry, sagebrush and bitterbrush. The oak brush gives way to healthy aspen stands at higher elevations, with mixed conifer elements. On the north-facing, upper-elevation slopes, lodgepole pine forests are dominant with components of Douglas fir, subalpine fir, and some Engelmann spruce. A small riparian area also offers critical moisture and habitat.

¹ Per SB181.



Physical Setting (Geology, Soils, Topography)

Elevations of Smuggler Mountain Open Space range from approximately 8,129 to 9,698 feet. The topography varies from relatively flat to very steep with a perennial, unnamed stream meandering southeast to north across the eastern side of the open space. Aspects are primarily northerly, westerly and southerly, which largely define land cover – the upper and north facing portions of Smuggler are forested, while the lower and southerly facing aspects are dominated by shrublands.

The geologic history of the area includes periods of encroaching and retreating seas, above- and below-ground volcanic activity, and glaciation, all with a consistent force of erosion through time. In a typical soil profile, the top four inches is a very dark, grayish brown loam, whereas the following layers are coarser material made up of gravelly sandy loam to cobbly loamy sand. Permeability is rapid with low available water capacity, creating an effective rooting depth of 60 inches. Slight differences in soil conditions and/or aspect can change the assemblage of species just enough to separate plant community types. Soil characteristics inform vegetation management, revegetation plans, trail construction and maintenance.

Aspen Global Change Institute (AGCI) operates and maintains one soil moisture-monitoring station on Smuggler at an elevation of around 9,030 feet, on a northwest-facing slope, as part of its Roaring Fork Observation Network (also known as iRON),

which tracks soil moisture and precipitation across an elevational gradient in the Roaring Fork Valley. The Smuggler station, installed in 2012, collects soil moisture data at three depths and basic weather data. Results show that water tends to pass through the soils very quickly here, leaving shallow soils dry much of the year, even after rainstorms. Long-term monitoring of these conditions may help track climate change impacts at the local scale and can be correlated with vegetation data at these locations.²

WATER AND RIPARIAN RESOURCES

The open space sits adjacent to Hunter Creek and contains one unnamed perennial stream. A previous property owner used water from this stream for domestic purposes; today, the water source and its associated riparian area provide important habitat for wildlife. No targeted riparian or wetland habitat assessments have been done to date; the riparian area appears to be vegetatively intact and functioning.

Hunter Creek flows through and adjacent to Smuggler Mountain Open Space for about 1.5 miles. A USGS stream gage is located upstream on the White River National Forest. Water quantity on Hunter Creek is impacted by diversions upstream that divert water into the transmountain diversion system, which conveys water to the Front Range. In

² AGCI, 2019 Tree Survey Report; <https://www.agci.org/projects/roaring-fork-observation-network/smuggler-mountain>

May and June, up to 50% of the flows from Hunter Creek are diverted.³ Other in-basin diversions further deplete water quantity in Hunter Creek, most notably the Red Mountain Ditch. Minimum flow shortages are prevalent on Hunter Creek, which likely has impacts on aquatic and riparian life, though no targeted studies of those elements have been done.⁴ CPW considers the Hunter Creek watershed a critical management zone for native cutthroat trout populations, but ditches, canals and diversions represent fish passage barriers (most of which occur outside the Smuggler Open Space boundary). Low flows in Hunter Creek below the Red Mountain diversion is one of the top areas of ecological concern in the upper Roaring Fork Watershed.⁵

Water quality sampling of Hunter Creek above the open space within the national forest indicates water quality is high. Upper portions of Hunter Creek within the Hunter-Fryingpan Wilderness are currently designated as “Outstanding Waters” by the Water Quality Control Commission of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. A lower portion of the creek received the same designation in 2024, extending the Outstanding Waters reach of Hunter Creek down to the Smuggler Mountain Open Space boundary. The designation provides additional protection to sections of streams that meet specific water-quality standards and

³ Lotic Hydrological. Upper Roaring Fork River Management Plan, A Joint City of Aspen and Pitkin County Project, 2017.

⁴ 2017 Upper Roaring Fork River Management Plan (URFRMP)

⁵ Lotic Hydrological. Upper Roaring Fork River Management Plan, A Joint City of Aspen and Pitkin County Project, 2017.

provide an outstanding natural resource.⁶ This is indicative of the value of Hunter Creek as it flows into Smuggler Mountain Open Space.

VEGETATION

Land cover at Smuggler includes primarily native shrublands and forests, and many nuanced vegetation communities within those types resulting from the combination of historic land use activities, slope, aspect and elevation. Most of the forests have been harvested, burned or otherwise altered for human benefit over the past century or more. As a result, except for the steepest slopes where humans were unable to harvest trees, most of the vegetation types at Smuggler are in various stages of development and succession. The floristic diversity and quality remain high on the open space with vegetation communities typical of the surrounding area. Noxious weeds, while present, are being contained. Some areas remain in degraded condition due to mining and other past land use activities.

Baseline vegetation monitoring, rare plant survey, noxious weed assessment, and floristic work was most recently conducted in 2018, and included an update to the vegetation classifications for the open space. Vegetation mapping was updated in 2024 from aerial imagery to match the extent of the updated planning area. From the initial survey conducted in 2007 to the survey in 2018 no significant differences were found. Overall, major vegetation communities show remarkably little change over the last decade. The vegetation cover was lower in the forested communities in 2018 than in 2007, but higher in the oak shrubland. The hot dry summer of 2018, much of it classified as an extreme drought over Pitkin County, may have been the causal factor in lower understory vegetative cover in 2018 for forested communities. A total of 190 vascular plant species were observed during field reconnaissance, only 28 of which are non-native.

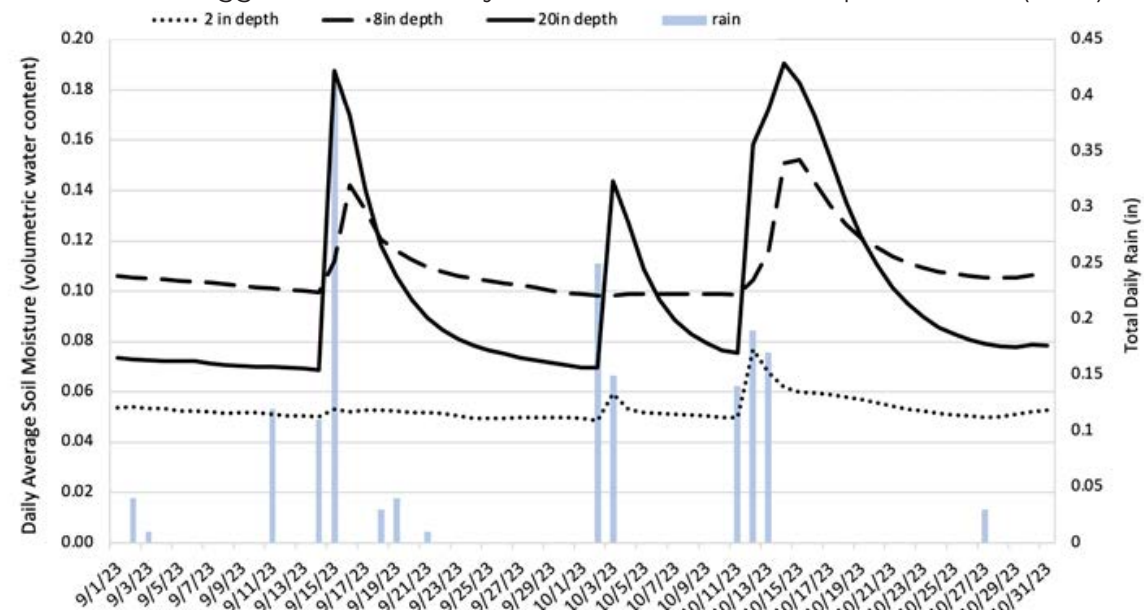
Plant Communities

Mountain Shrublands

Classified under the Gambel Oak – Mountain Snowberry Shrubland Alliance, this plant community exists on the steep, lower-elevation slopes of

⁶ Outstanding Waters Fact Sheet. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). (2018). Regulation No. 31- The Basic Standards and Methodologies for Surface Water (5 CCR 1002-31), effective 1/31/18.

Table 1. Smuggler Mountain Daily Soil Moisture and Rain Sept - Oct 2023 (ACGI)



Collected data shows that rainfall passes so quickly through the soils that the moisture doesn't register at the 2-inch depth. Moisture is reflected farther down in the soil column

Front Range water interests impact Hunter Creek today

Diversions from Hunter Creek for the transmountain Fry-Ark project sparked opposition and litigation from Pitkin County and the City of Aspen in the 1970s. The entities sought to protect local Hunter Creek streamflows and its fishery, but ultimately settled in a 1978 agreement that required the Colorado Water Conservation Board to file for minimum streamflow decrees in Hunter Creek to match the flows recommended by the Forest Service and federal and state wildlife agencies. Instream flows are designated for Hunter Creek today as a result of this, but streamflows remain altered from natural conditions.

(Aspen Times Weekly, Nov. 2, 1978, p. 9-C)

Smuggler. It includes other dominant species such as mountain snowberry, serviceberry, sagebrush, elk sedge and mountain mahogany. Noxious weeds are relatively absent from the oak shrublands, except on trailsides and some cheatgrass present on the west side. These intact, native plant communities denote responsible land management and public use.

The oak-dominated shrublands on Smuggler are overgrown due to the absence of fire. Gambel oak resprouts after fire and its shoots are highly palatable to browsing wildlife. Fire and/or mechanical treatment can enhance habitat by creating openings for animal movement and promoting better grass and forb production. Areas with a strong presence of mountain big sagebrush and antelope bitterbrush are not suitable for disturbance treatments as they are vital for wildlife habitat but do not resprout after fire. Two Gambel oak treatments have been conducted at Smuggler within the past 15 years.

Aspen Forests

Classified under the Rocky Mountain Aspen Forest and Woodland Alliance, aspen stands are a dominant vegetation community found at the higher elevations. Other species commonly dominant with the aspen here include serviceberry, buckbrush and tall forbs. In some of these aspen communities, subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce are encroaching, whereas other aspen stands appear to be persisting and regenerating without a conifer component.

The aspen stands on Smuggler Mountain Open Space act as either a seral tree (successional) or a climax tree (persistent), depending on the location. The strong aspen component is likely a result of all the human harvesting activities of the last century plus. Many persistent aspen stands in the upper elevations appear to be in good condition and do not require intervention. Where aspen is a seral species, they can eventually be replaced by conifers. Some of these stands show evidence of understory conifer encroachment or large old trees with little regeneration, so periodic disturbance may be beneficial. OST has implemented mechanical treatments mimicking natural disturbance processes in successional aspen stands by removing the understory conifer encroachment.

Riparian Aspen Forests

The proximity to water and the presence of obligate riparian species in the shrub and understory layers

distinguishes the Quaking Aspen Riparian Forest Alliance. This plant community comprises about seven acres of Smuggler. No riparian assessments have been done to date, but the age-class structure, regeneration, ample species diversity and healthy plants all indicate that it is in good condition.

Subalpine Fir – Aspen Forests

Classified under the Rocky Mountain Moist Forest Alliance, this plant community is distinguished from other aspen forests by the combination of conifers and aspen in the overstory, the lack of a distinct shrub layer, and abundant tall forbs. This is an example of how, without disturbance, conifers can eventually take over and shade out the aspen. Site-specific forest management treatments may maintain healthy aspen forest communities and the biodiversity they support.

Lodgepole Pine Forests

On the north-facing upper elevation slopes, lodgepole pine forests are dominant. Two lodgepole alliances exist at Smuggler: the Rocky Mountain Lodgepole Pine – Aspen Forest Alliance and the Rocky Mountain East Cascadian Lodgepole Pine Forest Alliance

The Rocky Mountain Lodgepole Pine – Aspen Forest Alliance, which includes the dominant species quaking aspens and snowberry, is found on gently sloping areas and encompasses about 31 acres. It is more likely indicative of past mining activities and selective cutting than natural succession.⁷ The current condition of this vegetation community is good to excellent, as species diversity, age-class structure and plant health are appropriate. In some areas, lodgepole pine appears to dominate, in others, the aspen dominates. The lodgepole will become dominant if there are no major disturbances, eventually reducing understory diversity due to increased shade. Noxious weeds are present in this area, particularly along the trails.

The Rocky Mountain East Cascadian Lodgepole Pine Forest Alliance is generally more dense, often mixed with other conifers including Douglas fir, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce. The understory shrubs include predominantly Buffaloberry, Scouler's willow and whortleberry. Currently, these forests are in good condition. Significant forest health efforts have occurred at Smuggler to control the mountain pine beetle outbreak in lodgepole. This included

⁷ (CWS & WPNRC 2008).

The Floristic Quality Assessment (FQA) is a standardized method used to determine the ecological condition of a site in terms of its native floristic quality. It is useful for assessing how human disturbances have affected plant community composition and for tracking changes in plant communities over time, which has practical implications in the continued management of open space areas and helps to form a complete picture of biodiversity. The results of the FQA show that Smuggler has a rich floristic diversity across all its habitats. The assessment also shows how little change in floristic quality there has been over the past 12 years, per monitoring of seven permanent transects. Further quantitative information and updated vegetation classifications can be found in the [*2019 Vegetation and Wildlife Monitoring Report*](#).



Mountain Shrublands



Lodgepole Pine Forests

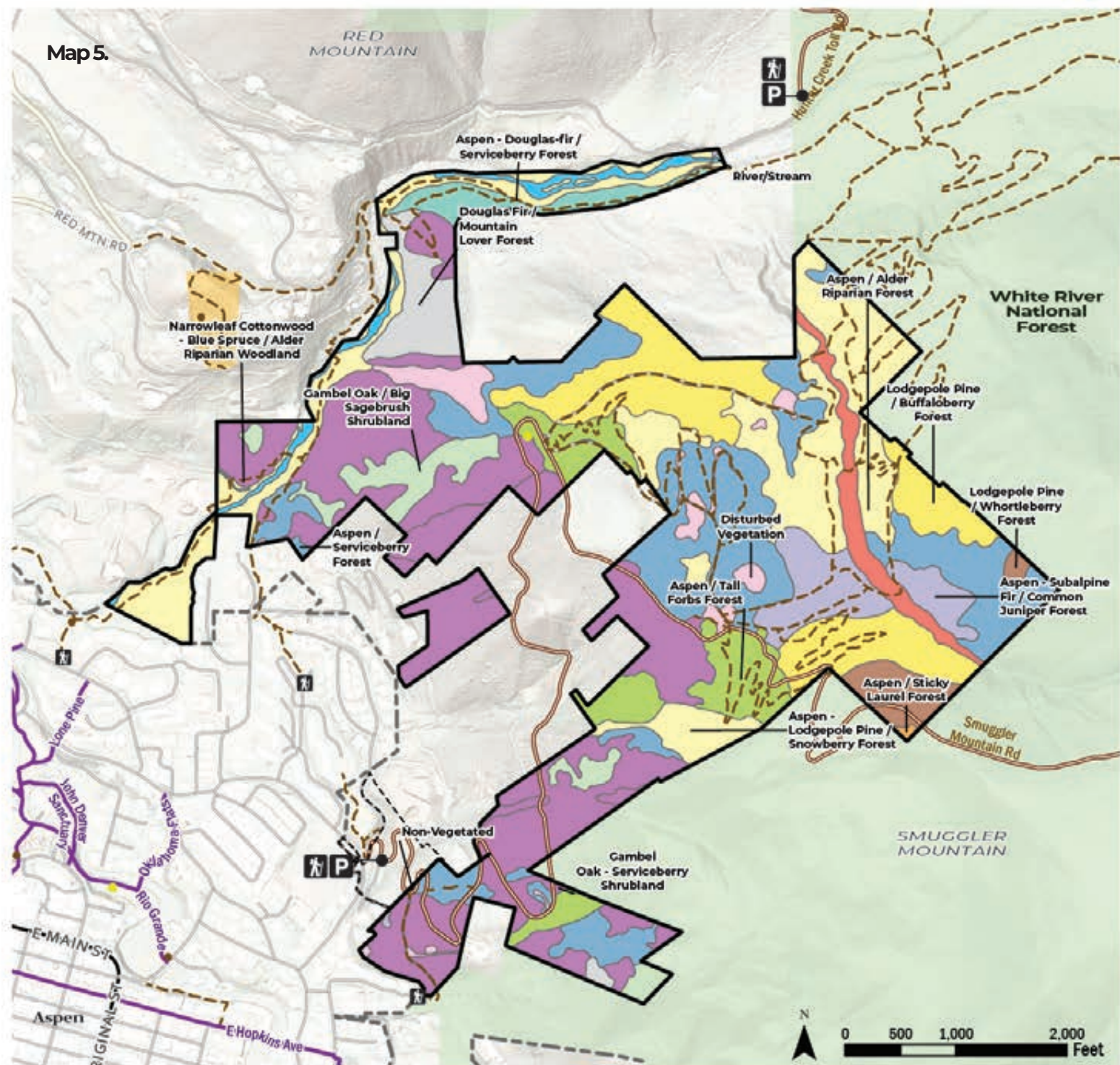


Aspen Forests



Douglas Fir Forests

Map 5.



AREA VEGETATION
Smuggler Mountain Open Space

Diverse plant communities at Smuggler meet diverse needs of elk

Elk utilize most of the plant communities at Smuggler Mountain Open Space. The conifer and conifer-aspen forest types provide thermal and hiding cover. The aspen forest provides important summer forage. The mountain shrubland types with more southerly to westerly aspects are heavily used during spring and fall transition and provide the most important winter habitat on Smuggler. The lodgepole pine forest types are primarily used during migration. In addition, the lower elevation aspen forest on Smuggler may provide elk calving habitat and most of the larger aspen stands not influenced by recreation are used as rearing habitat.

the removal of individual infested lodgepole trees, patch cuts to reintroduce disturbance and application of verbenone to repel the beetles, as well as post-treatment monitoring.⁸ Treatments have been effective in maintaining forest health at the landscape level.

Douglas Fir Forests

Classified under the Douglas Fir Southern Rocky Mountain Forest and Woodland Alliance, these fir-dominated forests are found on the lower parts of steep, north-facing slopes in the upper elevations. Although small and somewhat isolated, these stands are in good to excellent condition. Notably, conifer species diversity is particularly high, creating a highly resistant stand to a number of forest pests. The age-class structure of these species is also good, as there is a fair amount of regeneration within and around this stand of Douglas fir.

Plant Species of Conservation Concern

No rare plants have been documented at Smuggler Mountain Open Space. However, there are several species of relatively uncommon plants present including orchids and moonwort. Surveys of common moonwort (*Botrychium neolunaria*), a plant previously on a watch list but no longer considered rare, have been conducted and one plant was identified, both in 2007 and in 2018. Future rare plant surveys should focus on the riparian habitats.

Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds mainly occur along Smuggler Mountain Road and historic mining disturbances, and there are scattered noxious weeds present in vegetation treatment units and along trails. There are no Colorado List A Noxious Weeds however, there are eight List B species, three of which are slated for suppression in Pitkin County (Canada thistle, oxeye daisy and houndstongue). The most common species include scentless chamomile, oxeye daisy and plumeless thistle. Some toadflax and Canada thistle also occur. Cheatgrass is common in portions of the lower elevations in the Gambel oak woodland, and knapweed is present in the southwest corner of the open space along the Mascotte 99 Trail. See Table 2.

Table 2. Colorado Listed Noxious Weeds

NAME	NOXIOUS WEED LIST
Perennial Forbs	
<i>Cirsium arvense</i> / Canada Thistle	B
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i> / Oxeye Daisy	B
<i>Linavia vulgaris</i> / Toadflax	B
<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i> / Common tansy	B
Annual/Biennial Forbs	
<i>Arctium minus</i> / Lesser burdock	C
<i>Carduus acanthoides</i> / Plumeless thistle	B
<i>Centaurea stoebe subsp. micranthos</i> / Spotted knapweed	B
<i>Cynoglossum officinale</i> / Houndstongue	B
<i>Tripleurospermum perforatum</i> / Scentless chamomile	C
<i>Verbascum thapsus</i> / Mullein	C
Annual Graminoids	
<i>Anisantha tectorum</i> / Cheatgrass	C

⁸ (Gillete et al. 2010).

Oak Mastication Treatments

Two oak mastication treatments have been conducted at Smuggler Mountain Open Space. The first treatment occurred along Smuggler Mountain Road. All oak 5 feet and taller were avoided as were aspen. The oak is responding well in this area and supports a high diversity of other shrubs and subshrub species. Herbaceous species diversity is also high. A few scattered plumeless thistle plants, a noxious weed, were also observed, however they are not problematic. The second treatment occurs along the Mascotte 99 Trail in the southwest corner of Smuggler Mountain. Here, selected stands of oak were masticated, while most serviceberry and sagebrush were avoided.

In general, the shrubby and herbaceous vegetation appears to be healthy and is regenerating. However, there are several stands of noxious weeds including toadflax and spotted knapweed. There is also scattered plumeless thistle. From a habitat perspective, this treatment will effectively increase age-class diversity and improve forage quality for ungulates.

Landing Areas

Two helicopter landing areas were used to facilitate the forest management treatments. These areas generally have a low vegetative cover of desirable grasses and are relatively weedy with numerous plants of scentless chamomile, tarweed and plumeless thistle.

Aspen – Conifer Encroachment

This area saw the majority of understory conifers removed. The aspens appear healthy, numerous young aspen suckers are present, and the understory is dominated by herbaceous plants. Although modest in scale, this effort helps to maintain the representation of aspen forest on Smuggler which will benefit many species of wildlife, including red-naped sapsuckers, northern goshawks, elk, black bears, and a myriad of smaller mammals and songbirds.

Mixed Conifer Treatment

This small-patch cut had all conifers greater than 6 inches in diameter removed. There are young subalpine fir, Douglas fir, and lodgepole pine present in the patch cut, as well as regenerating aspen. In addition, there is a diverse herbaceous layer and shrubs. A few noxious weed thistles (plumeless and Canada thistle) are present, as well. The patch cut appears to have been successful in reducing density and increasing the likelihood of resilience in the face of threats such as beetle outbreaks. The methods were also effective in improving conditions for early seral lodgepole and preferred wildlife forage plant species.

Aspen Regeneration

This treatment unit was designed to stimulate the growth of new aspen. The treatment appears to have been quite effective with a plethora of new aspen growth as well as serviceberry shrubs and herbaceous vegetation. As with the Aspen – Conifer Encroachment treatments, this treatment has effectively encouraged aspen regeneration, which will in turn contribute to maintaining or improving habitat conditions for many wildlife species that occur at Smuggler Mountain Open Space.

Lodgepole Cuts

Three small lodgepole patch cuts were completed. All units show some regeneration of aspen and a good diversity of native graminoids and forbs. Common shrubs and subshrubs are present, too. Noxious weeds sporadically occur, including mullein and plumeless thistle. As a habitat treatment, these cuts have been successful in improving conditions for lodgepole pine seedlings, which are a preferred forage species for snowshoe hares which are, in turn, preferred prey for Canada lynx. This should be repeated on a long-term basis to create a multi-aged mosaic that ensures the representation of early seral lodgepole in the Hunter Creek – Smuggler Mountain area. Since mature lodgepole pine provides little wildlife habitat resources and early seral lodgepole will increase snowshoe hare density, this type of long-term lodgepole management will increase overall wildlife habitat conditions.



Smuggler Mountain Road Oak Mastication



Mascotte 99 Oak Mastication



Aspen-Conifer Encroachment



Mixed Conifer Treatment



Aspen Regeneration



Lodgepole Cuts

WILDLIFE

Smuggler Mountain is by no means pristine wildlife habitat. The area has been heavily impacted by human activities like mining, logging, anthropogenic fires, infrastructure development, and recreation development over the past 150 years. But there is still wildlife habitat in fair to excellent condition that provides valuable resources for over 138 wildlife species, some of which are permanent residents while others pass through the area on an occasional or seasonal basis. The diversity of habitats provides an abundance of food, cover and reproduction sites for various animal, insect and herptile species. Aspen forests on the lower reaches of Smuggler Mountain provide particularly valuable wildlife habitat. Aspen habitats, especially when associated with riparian vegetation, typically support much greater diversity, richness, and abundance of birds and other wildlife than adjacent habitats.

OST regularly studies wildlife at Smuggler Mountain Open Space. For detailed methods and additional results on the mammal and avian surveys, see the [2019 Smuggler Mountain Wildlife and Vegetation Monitoring Report](#).

Mammals

The 2018 wildlife surveys by Colorado Wildlife Sciences show the three most abundant species recorded were mule deer, red squirrel and black bear, in order of abundance. At least 14 mammal species were identified during the surveys, and at least 54 species are known or suspected to occur at Smuggler according to habitat needs.

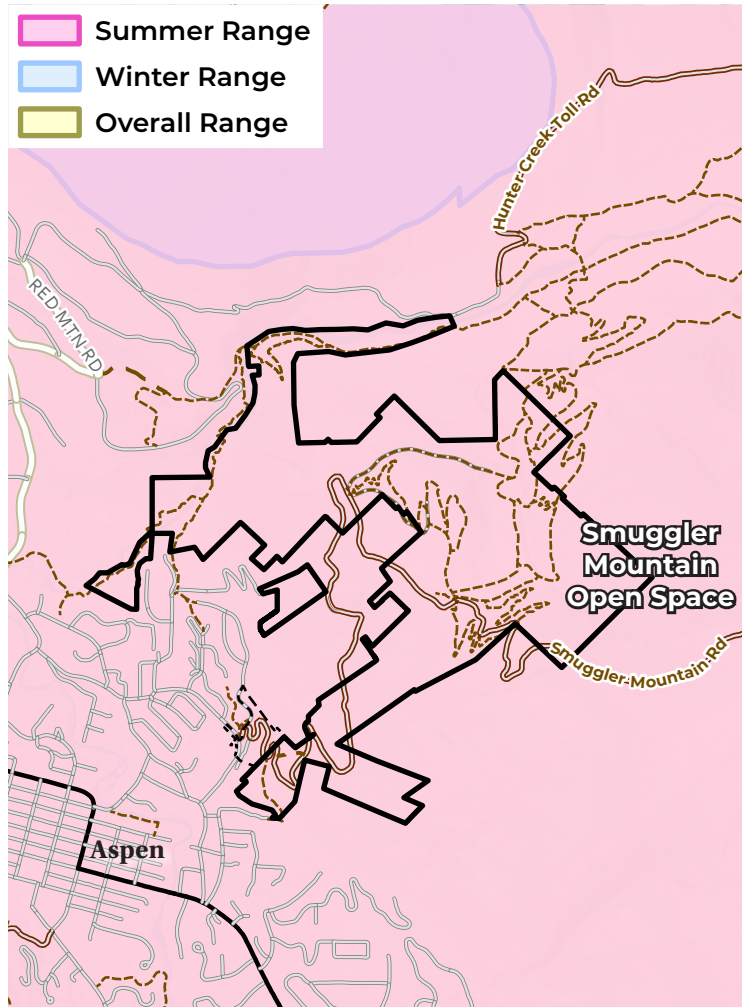
Ungulates

Smuggler Mountain provides important habitat for mule deer, North American moose, and Rocky Mountain elk. Mule deer occur throughout the non-winter months, but most heavily during the spring and fall transition periods as they migrate between their summer and winter ranges. The mountain shrubland provides excellent forage for mule deer, and the adjacency of forests to the shrublands provides a sense of security. Moose frequently travel across Smuggler as they move between the excellent habitats of the Roaring Fork River valley at North Star Nature Preserve and the Hunter Creek valley. Smuggler provides important elk winter range and severe winter range and is situated within an important elk migration corridor and transition range. Abundant grass and forb understories at Smuggler provide nutritious forage for elk from early summer through the fall.

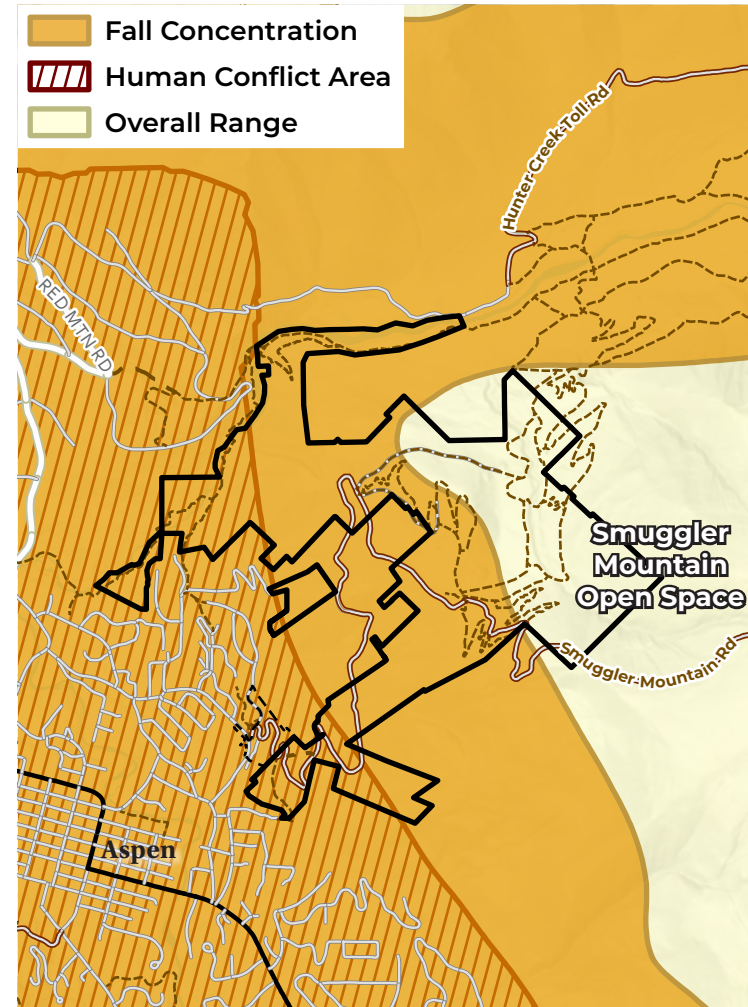
Predators and Bears

Nine species of carnivores are known to occur at Smuggler Mountain: Pacific (formerly American) marten, long- and short-tailed weasels, striped skunk, bobcat, mountain lion, coyote, red fox and black bear. Canada lynx and American badgers may also occur, but have not been documented. The elevation range and variety of aspects and habitats have the potential to provide black bears with all of the habitat types they require and the interspersed plant communities provides ample spring, summer and fall forage for bears in the forms of insect larvae, grasses/forbs and acorns. Unfortunately, when weather or climatic events such as droughts or late freezes impact acorn and berry production (important fall bear foods), bears tend to venture into areas of human habitation, potentially resulting in conflicts with people.

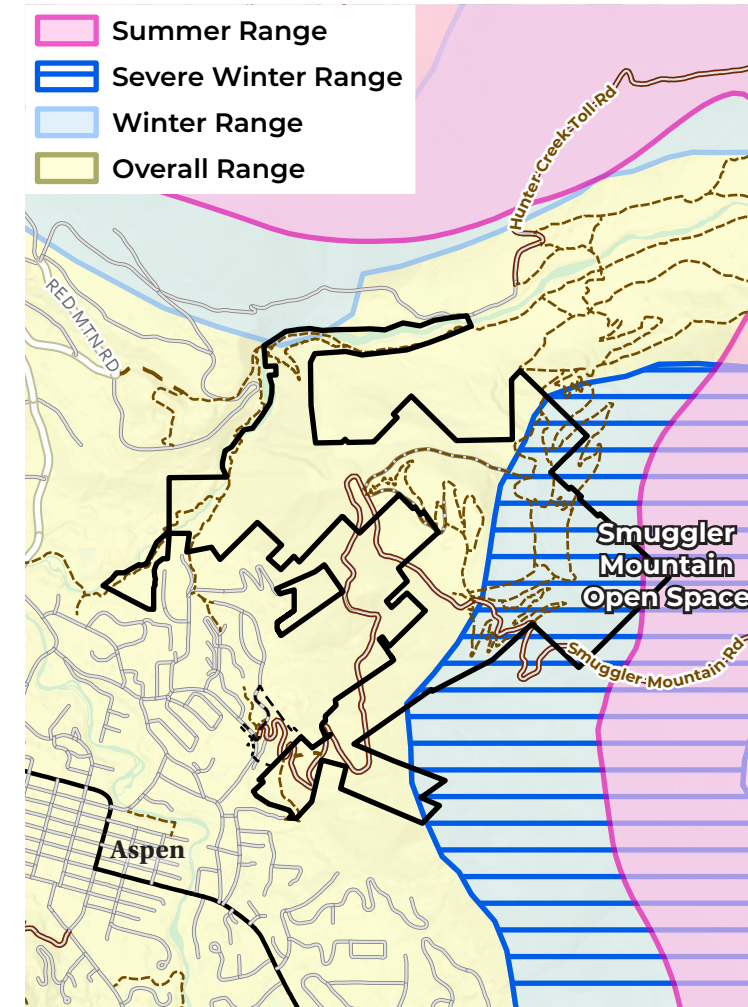
Map 6. Mule Deer



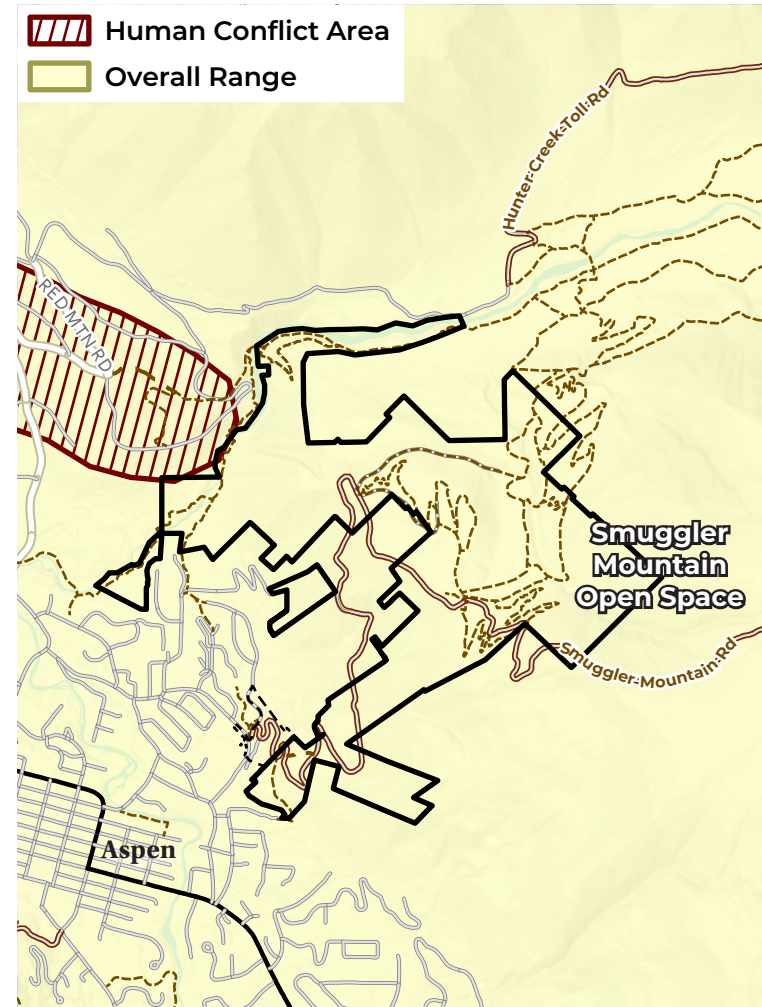
Map 7. Black Bear



Map 8. Elk



Map 9. Mountain Lion



Small Mammals

Often overlooked, small mammals remain an important component of the ecological communities at Smuggler. In addition to increasing species richness, they play a major role in the food web, consuming plants and invertebrates, and in turn serving as prey for a number of species of snakes, raptors and mammals. Small mammals are numerous, and include shrews, voles, pocket gophers, pine squirrels, porcupines and snowshoe hares. The snowshoe hare is of particular note because the lodgepole pine forests at Smuggler provide adequate understory growth (often absent in other mature lodgepole forests) for snowshoe hare habitat and foraging needs.

Bats also play an important role – eating insects, pollinating plants and dispersing seeds – with up to seven species of bats occurring at Smuggler. The Park Regent, Iowa Shaft and Bushwacker shafts were surveyed for wildlife in 2008 and did not contain bats. However, some of the old mines are likely used as habitat by the big brown bat, little brown bat, long-eared myotis, long-legged myotis, and Townsend's big-eared bat. Disturbances to mines and caves are the primary threat to bats.

Birds

Seventy-seven bird species are known or suspected to occur on Smuggler. Fourteen of these species are of particular conservation interest. The diversity of habitat types support a relatively high proportion of habitat-interior species (e.g., bluegray gnatcatcher, plumbeous vireo), habitat specialists (e.g., brown creeper, red-naped sapsucker, Virginia's warbler) and species known to be sensitive to human activity and anthropogenic habitat change. This is an indication that Smuggler, in its current state and level of human activity, does indeed provide effective habitat and range for a wide variety of species and general bird populations, and future management of these habitat conditions is important for those species to persist.

Generally, the more diverse and structurally complex the plant community is, the greater diversity of avifauna. At Smuggler, the diverse understory and multi-tiered canopy of the aspen forest communities provides greater opportunities for food, cover and nest sites than the surrounding conifer forest types and shrublands, especially compared to the nearby lodgepole forests that lack understory complexity. Birds have benefited from forest health improvement projects as those efforts increase habitat opportunities. Snags, or standing dead trees, are critically important bird habitat in all forest types, for perches, foraging on invertebrates that inhabit snags, and cavity nests.

Smuggler Mountain Open Space provides suitable breeding habitat for falcons, hawks and owls. American kestrels, Cooper's hawks, northern goshawks, sharp-shinned hawks, and red-tailed hawks have been observed at Smuggler during the breeding season. Although no formal owl surveys have been completed, flammulated owls, great-horned owls, northern pygmy owls, northern saw-whet owls and



American three-toed woodpecker

- Depend on mature to old-growth lodgepole and spruce forest and benefit from beetle outbreaks
- Occur within the older mixed aspen/conifer, lodgepole pine, and Douglas fir communities
- “Watchlisted” by Partners in Flight



Olive-sided flycatchers

- USFS Region 2 Sensitive Species and a CPW Tier 2 SGCN¹
- Found at Smuggler, primarily in mixed conifer-aspen forests
- Prefer openings with standing dead trees near water, burns and blowdowns



Virginia's warblers

- Strongly associated with mature Gambel oak
- CPW Tier 2 SGCN
- Ranked “high global priority” by Partners In Flight, reflecting the vulnerability of populations throughout the species’ range



Northern Goshawk

- USFS Region 2 and BLM Sensitive Species and a CPW Tier 2 SGCN
- Smuggler provides excellent nesting habitat
- Primary threats are tied to the alteration of forests
- Evidence suggests that large patches of mature or old growth forest surrounding goshawk nests are important for maintaining local populations

¹ Species of Greatest Conservation Need: Chapter 2, Colorado Statewide Wildlife Action Plan, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 2015.

western screech owls may occur here based on habitat preference and conditions onsite.

Reptiles and Amphibians

No reptile or amphibian surveys have been conducted at Smuggler, however based on habitat presence and observations, western terrestrial garter snakes, Boreal chorus frogs, northern leopard frogs and smooth green snakes are the herpetofauna species that do or may occur here.

Species of Conservation Concern

One federally protected species may occur on or adjacent to Smuggler Mountain – the Canada lynx, federally listed as Threatened. The presence of snowshoe hares may increase the likelihood of lynx presence at Smuggler (they depend on the hare for food). However, the recreational activity at Smuggler decreases the likelihood of lynx presence. Species on the State of Colorado list of State Endangered and Threatened species that do, or could potentially, occur at Smuggler include the Pacific marten, bald eagle and Townsend's big-eared bat.

2.3 RECREATION

Smuggler Mountain Road slices diagonally across the northwest face of the lower mountain in full view of the City of Aspen, drawing tens of thousands of users annually, most on foot or bicycle. Two primary motivations for visiting Smuggler trails emerged from a 2022 intercept survey: exercise/fitness and socializing (see the survey summary on **page 40**). Smuggler regulars and visitors are typically completing the popular 2.9-mile, round-trip workout hike to the Smuggler Overlook, exploring Aspen's backyard on the popular Hunter Creek Trail, or using the open space as a gateway to trails and roads extending into the White River National Forest.

In 2008, the majority of the recreational use took place along the Smuggler Mountain Road corridor and the Hunter Creek Cutoff Road. Hunter Creek-area trails were not included in the original management plan. Developed trail mileage within the previously defined Smuggler Mountain Open Space totaled about 3 miles and included Smuggler Mountain Road, Smuggler Loop Trail and the Hunter Creek Cutoff. Average summer use on Smuggler Mountain Road was over 400 users per day.

The trail system has grown to provide a network of over 11 miles of developed trails within the revised Smuggler Mountain Open Space management boundary. These trails provide connections to over 33 miles of trails largely maintained by the Forest Service. Trails constructed at Smuggler, since the 2008 management plan identified a recreation area, have been concentrated on the upper reaches of the open space, with other trails outside of both the original recreation area and planning area within Lower Hunter Creek.

The natural topography and dense vegetation dominating most of the front of the mountain and the hillsides of Hunter Creek do not lend themselves to recreational uses. For this reason, this part of the recreation area identified in 2008 for construction of new trails is not carried forward with this plan update. In place of an identified area for recreation, the management actions in **Section 4** establish a process for development of new trails that includes use of targeted studies, best available science and discussions with CPW and ecologists to assess potential impacts to wildlife and biodiversity.

TRAILHEADS

Smuggler Mountain Trailhead

The trailhead for Smuggler Mountain Road originates from the intersection with Silverlode Drive at the base of Smuggler Mountain. Parking for approximately 9 vehicles is provided spring through fall in a small lot at the trailhead and overflow parking (approximately 30 spaces) is available along Park Circle. Parking at the trailhead is coordinated with local law enforcement in order to maintain parking spaces for Smuggler Mountain users and to enforce winter closures and no overnight parking.

The Smuggler Mountain Trailhead is located on the 8-acre Mollie Gibson property, which includes the adjacent Mollie Gibson Park. The Pitkin County General Fund owns this property and the City of Aspen maintains the adjacent park. Prior to this plan update, rangers were not authorized to enforce Title 12 and Smuggler-specific regulations on this property. See the **Section 4** for management updates to this trailhead.

Lower Hunter Creek Trailhead

The Lower Hunter Creek Trailhead provides access to the Lower Hunter Creek Trail. This trailhead is nestled in multi-family residential development. No recreation-specific parking is provided; on-street parking is available along Lone Pine Road and a RFTA bus stop is located across the street from the trailhead.

Hunter Creek Trailhead on Rio Grande

The Hunter Creek Extension Trail connects the Rio Grande Trail, near the Aspen Post Office, to the Lower Hunter Creek Trail. No parking is available.

Upper Hunter Creek Trailhead

The Upper Hunter Creek Trailhead provides access to the network of trails in the Hunter Creek Valley, with connections to Smuggler Mountain. This trailhead is a 10-minute drive from Aspen. Limited parking is restricted to ADA and seniors only as a result of a settlement agreement in 2004. This agreement also permits the gate and road to be opened during hunting season. In the winter, two parking spaces are provided for 10th Mountain Hut users. Parking enforcement is the responsibility of the Pitkin County Code enforcement officer.

BLM Parking Lot on Red Mountain

A small Bureau of Land Management parcel located on Red Mountain provides a trailhead and parking area. This parking area connects to the Hunter Creek Valley Trail via the BLM Parking Lot Access Trail. Pitkin County holds a right-of-way to construct, operate and maintain an access road, parking lot and trails. Access to the trailhead is from Hunter Creek Road, off of Red Mountain Road.

Neighborhood Access Points

- Lani White Trail connects to Spruce Street through a 14-foot recreation easement.
- The Mascotte 99 Trail connects Smuggler Mountain Road to residential development on Midland Park Place.

RECREATION USE

A trail counter installed in 2012 tracks overall recreation use over time. Table 5 and 6 illustrates use trends and annual use counts. The counts do not correspond to total trail users; a counter is triggered each time someone passes by (one user may trigger it more than once per outing). While Smuggler Mountain Road remains one of the most-visited trails in the city and county's network of trails, use counts indicate wide variations from year to year since tracking began at a location on the road, near the Smuggler Observation Platform. In 2012, 119,400 uses were recorded. In 2023, the total use was 79,900. Like many trails in the valley and statewide, trail use saw a surge in 2020 (129,000 uses on Smuggler) associated with COVID-19 outdoor recreation trends. Use counts indicate year-round visitation remains fairly consistent: summer months (May to October) see an average of 9,500 trail use counts and winter months (November to April)

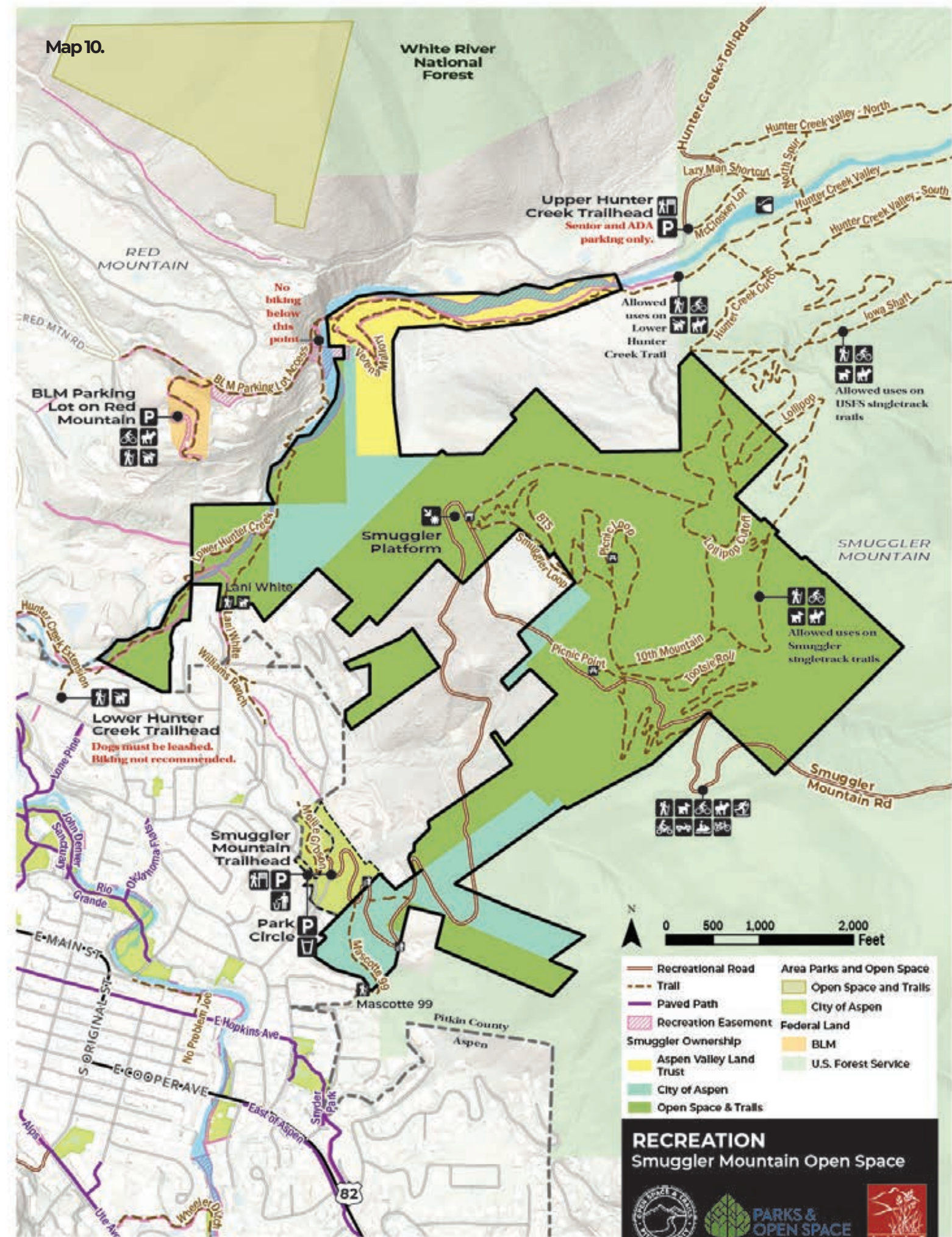


Table 3. Smuggler Mountain Open Space Trails

TRAIL	MILES	MAINTAINED BY	ALLOWED USES				DOG POLICY
			Hike	Bike	E-bike	Horse	
Smuggler Mountain Road (Kiosk to Tootsie Roll Jct)	2.1	Pitkin County/OST	Y	Y	Y	Y	Voice/Sight
Mascotte 99	0.2	COA	Y	Y	N	Y	Voice/Sight
Tootsie Roll	1.0	COA/OST	Y	Y	N	Y	Voice/Sight
Picnic Point	0.1	COA/OST	Y	Y	N	Y	Voice/Sight
Picnic Loop	0.4	COA/OST	Y	Y	N	Y	Voice/Sight
Lollipop	2.3	COA/OST	Y	Y	N	Y	Voice/Sight
Lollipop Cutoff	0.3	COA/OST	Y	Y	N	Y	Voice/Sight
10th Mountain	0.4	COA/OST	Y	Y	N	Y	Voice/Sight
Smuggler Loop	0.3	COS/OST	Y	Y	N	Y	Voice/Sight
BTS (Behind the Sign)	0.65	COA/OST	Y	Y	N	Y	Voice/Sight
Hunter Creek Cutoff	1.1	COA/OST/USFS	Y	Y	Y	Y	Voice/Sight
Hunter Creek Valley (Lower Hunter Creek to Hunter Creek Cutoff)	0.67	USFS	Y	Y	N	Y	Voice/Sight
Varena Mallory	0.4	OST	Y	Y	N	Y	Leashed
Lower Hunter Creek	.9	OST	Y	N	N	N	Leashed
Lani White	0.2	OST	Y	N	N	Y	Leashed
BLM Parking Lot Access	0.5	OST	Y	Y	N	Y	Leashed
TOTAL TRAIL MILES	11.5						

Table 4. Smuggler/Hunter Creek Valley Surrounding Area Trails

TRAIL	MILES	TRAIL	MILES
Smuggler Mountain Rd (USFS)	4.2	Hummingbird	1.7
Iowa Shaft	0.9	Upper Plunge	1.3
Hunter Creek Valley - South	0.8	Secret	0.8
Hunter Creek Valley (east of Hunter Creek Cutoff)	2.8	Four Corners Rd	1.0
Hunter Creek Valley North	1.0	Hobbit	1.8
Hunter Creek Toll Rd	3.6	Burnt Hole Rd	2.3
McCloskey Lot	0.1	Hunter Creek Overlook	0.8
North Spur	0.1	Bald Knob	1.3
Lazy Man Shortcut	0.1	Van Horn Park	0.6
Lower Plunge	0.4	Van Horn Park Rd.	1.7
Lower Plunge East	0.3	Hunter Creek	4.6
Lower Plunge West	0.4	TOTAL SURROUNDING TRAILS	32.6

Table 5. Smuggler Platform Annual Trail Counts

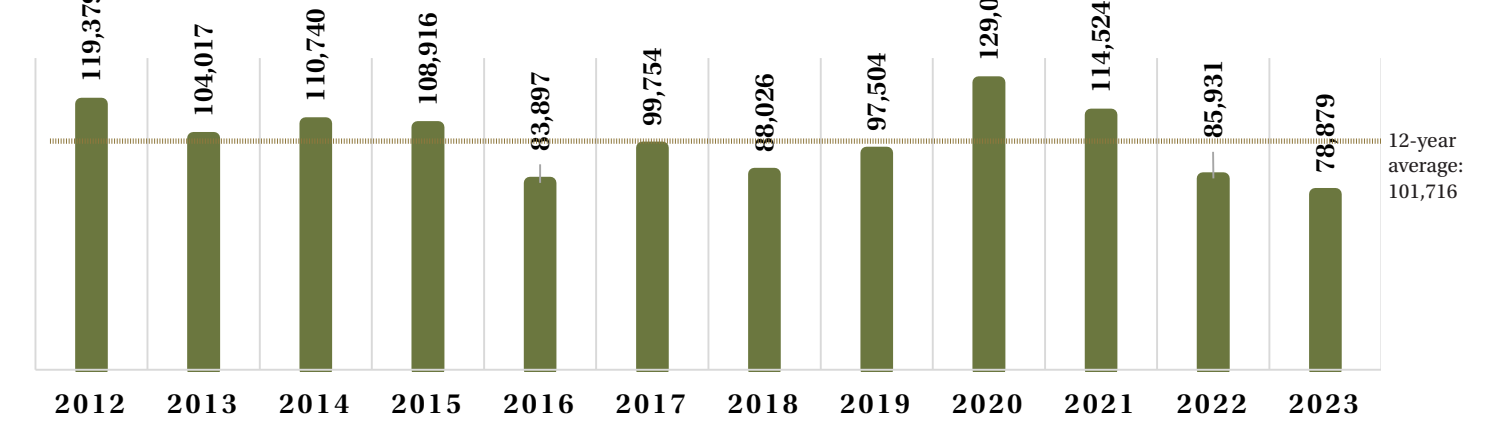
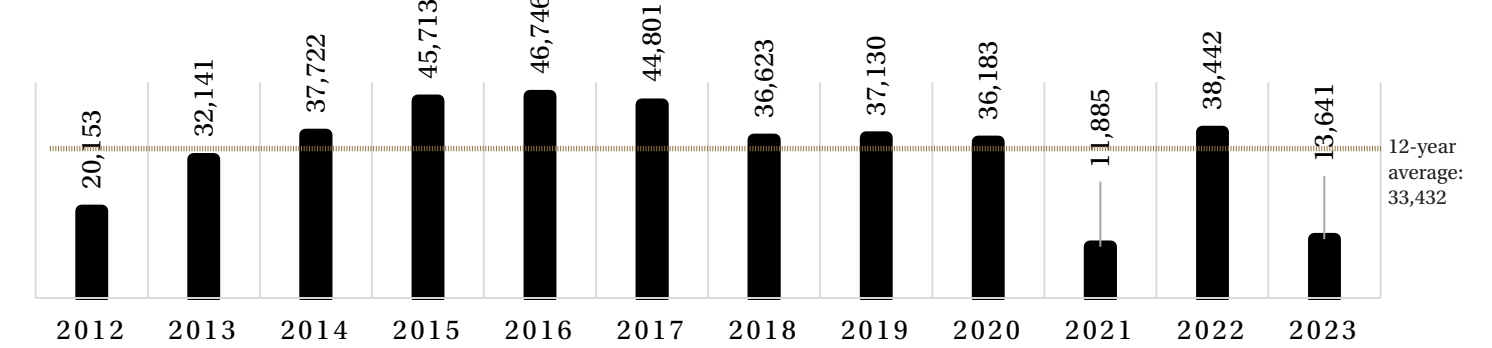


Table 6. Lower Hunter Creek Annual Trail Counts



see an average of 7,300 trail use counts (Table 7). The Hunter Creek Trail sees markedly lower annual trail counts than Smuggler. Hunter Creek records an annual average of 33,400 uses, compared to Smuggler's 101,700 annual average. This trail counter is located along a portion of the Lower Hunter Creek Trail that sees primarily pedestrian use; mountain biking is not recommended..

Summer Recreation

Smuggler Mountain has always been a popular destination for recreation, even before its designation as open space. Smuggler visitors usually start their outing from Park Circle and head toward the Observation Platform – a popular destination. In addition to hikers and bikers, there is use by vehicles, motorbikes and e-bikes. Equestrian use is permitted, though few equestrians utilize trails on Smuggler Mountain. From the Observation Platform, non-motorized users can access a network of over 40 miles of trails that connect Smuggler Mountain to the Hunter Creek Valley trails and the national forest. Many users complete a loop linking the Lower Hunter Creek Trail to Smuggler Mountain Road. Hiking is popular on the single-track Lower Hunter Creek Trail.

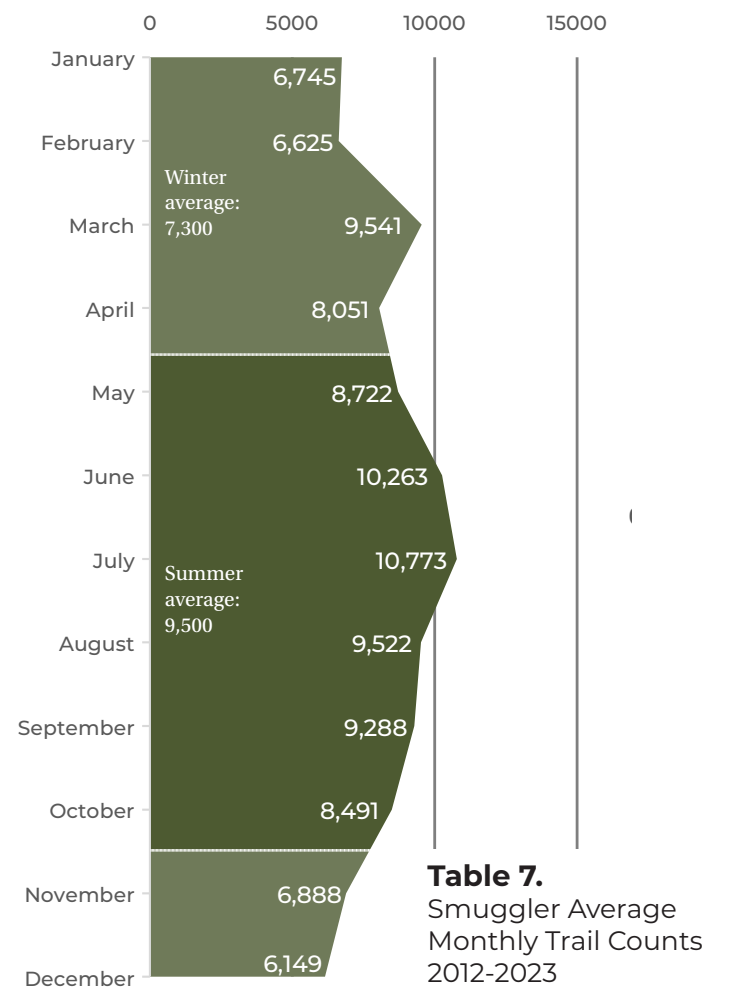
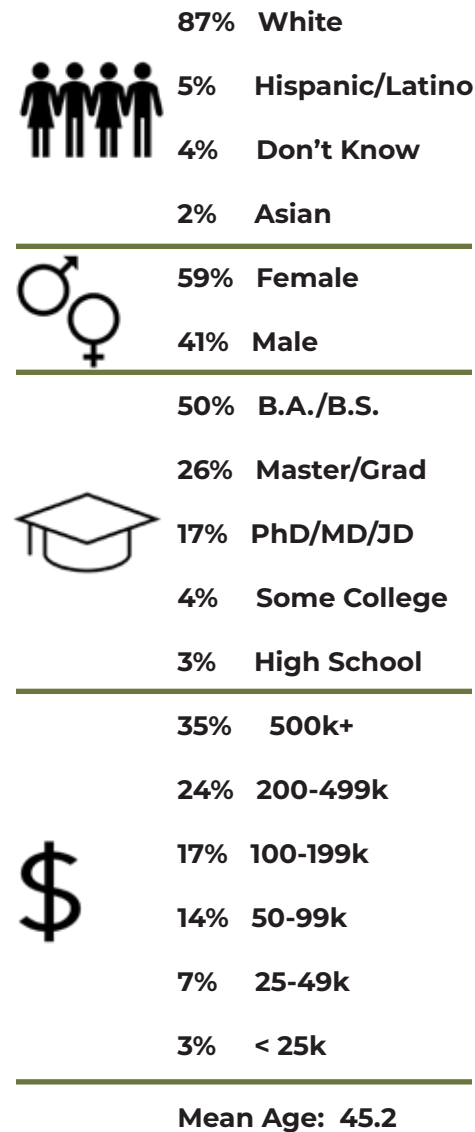


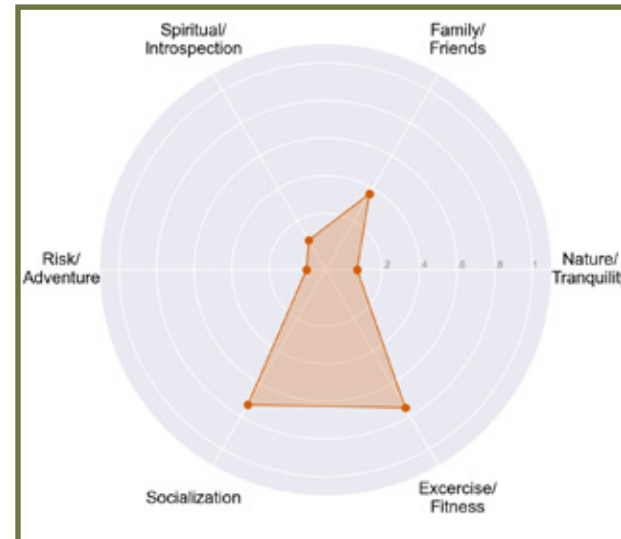
Table 7. Smuggler Average Monthly Trail Counts 2012-2023

Smuggler Mountain Trailhead Visitation Patterns & Use

The Outdoor Recreation Visitor Use and Experience report summarizes findings of a multi-year, visitor-use study at 14 recreation areas in the Roaring Fork Valley, including Smuggler Mountain Open Space. This study was developed to understand the visitor experience, visitor demographics and to identify the volume and spatial extent of recreational use. A total of 120 surveys were administered at Smuggler Mountain Trailhead in the summer of 2022, accompanied by 73 GPS tracks of trail users' routes. The survey results show that users originating from Smuggler Mountain Trailhead are highly motivated by socialization and exercise/fitness. Just under half of survey respondents were primary residents but most had visited Smuggler before – 87% were returning users. Trail use was reported to be highest in midmorning, but parked vehicles at Smuggler Trailhead and Park Circle remained steady throughout day. Unlike some other popular areas, visitors reported infrequently altering the time or day of their visit to avoid crowds and few experiencing conflict or unsafe conditions. Included here are the findings relevant to visitation patterns and use at Smuggler.



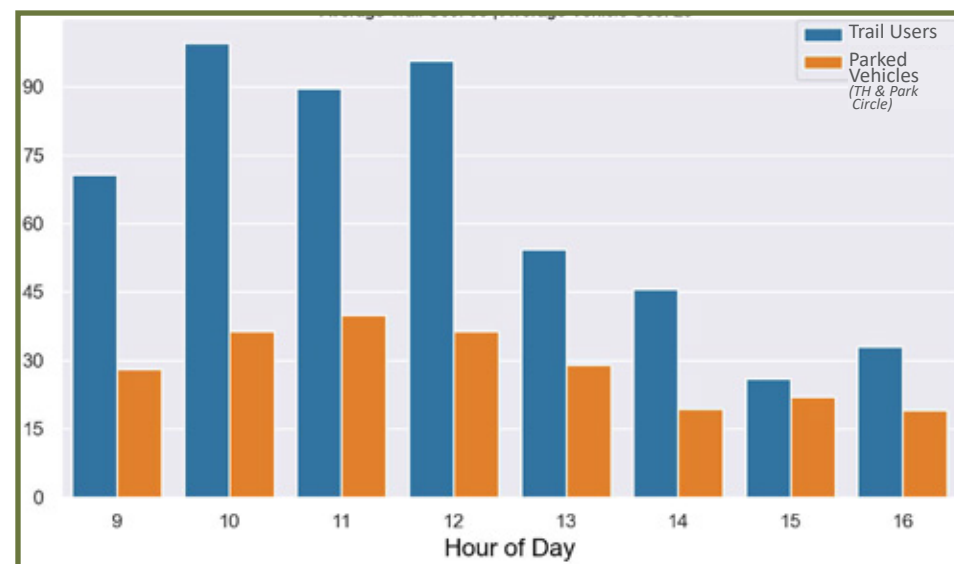
What motivates people to visit Smuggler?



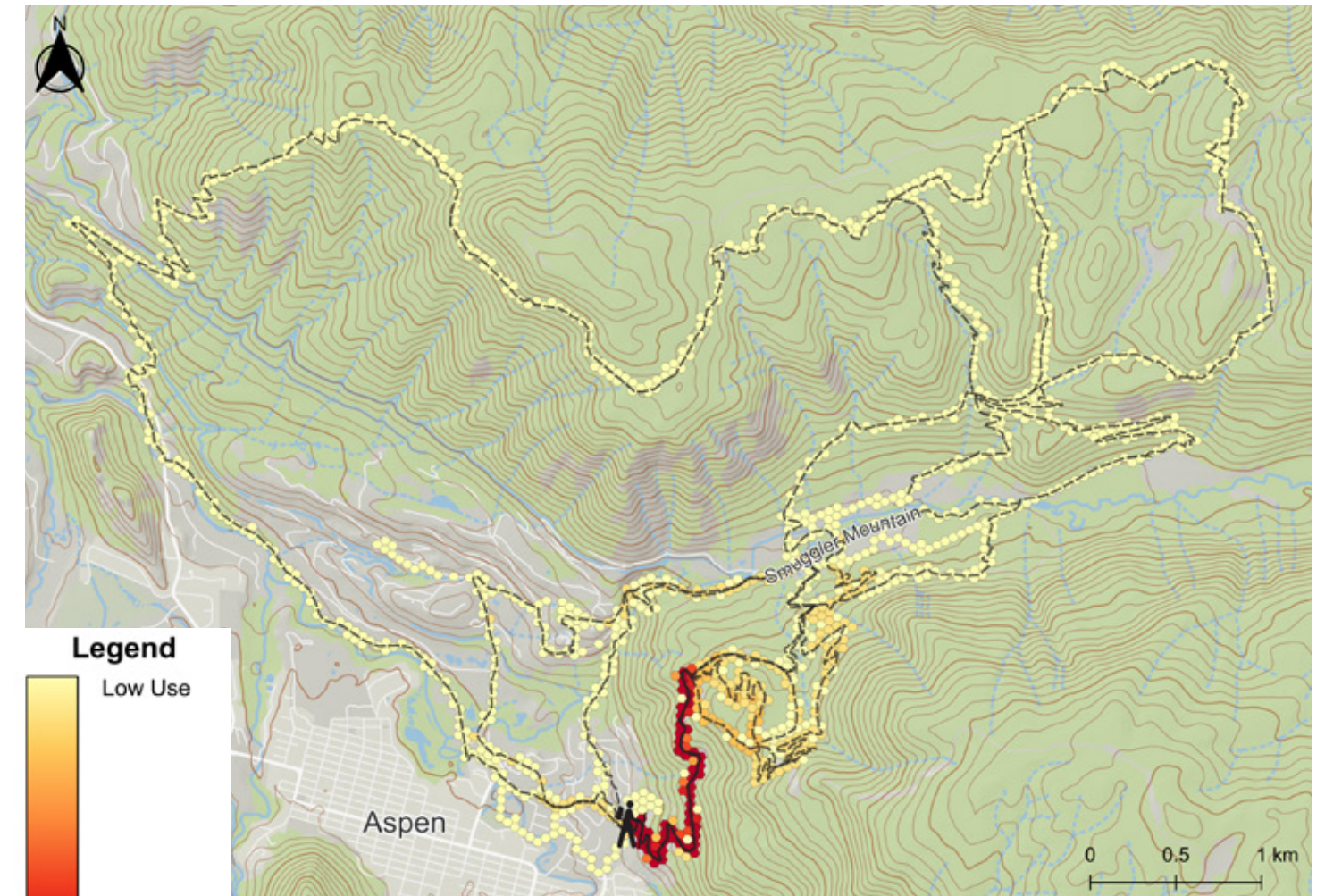
Top Activities

- 86% Walking/Hiking
- 12% Biking
- 5% Dog Walking
- 1% Fishing
- 1% Running
- 1% Bird Watching
- 1% Other (Mine Tour)

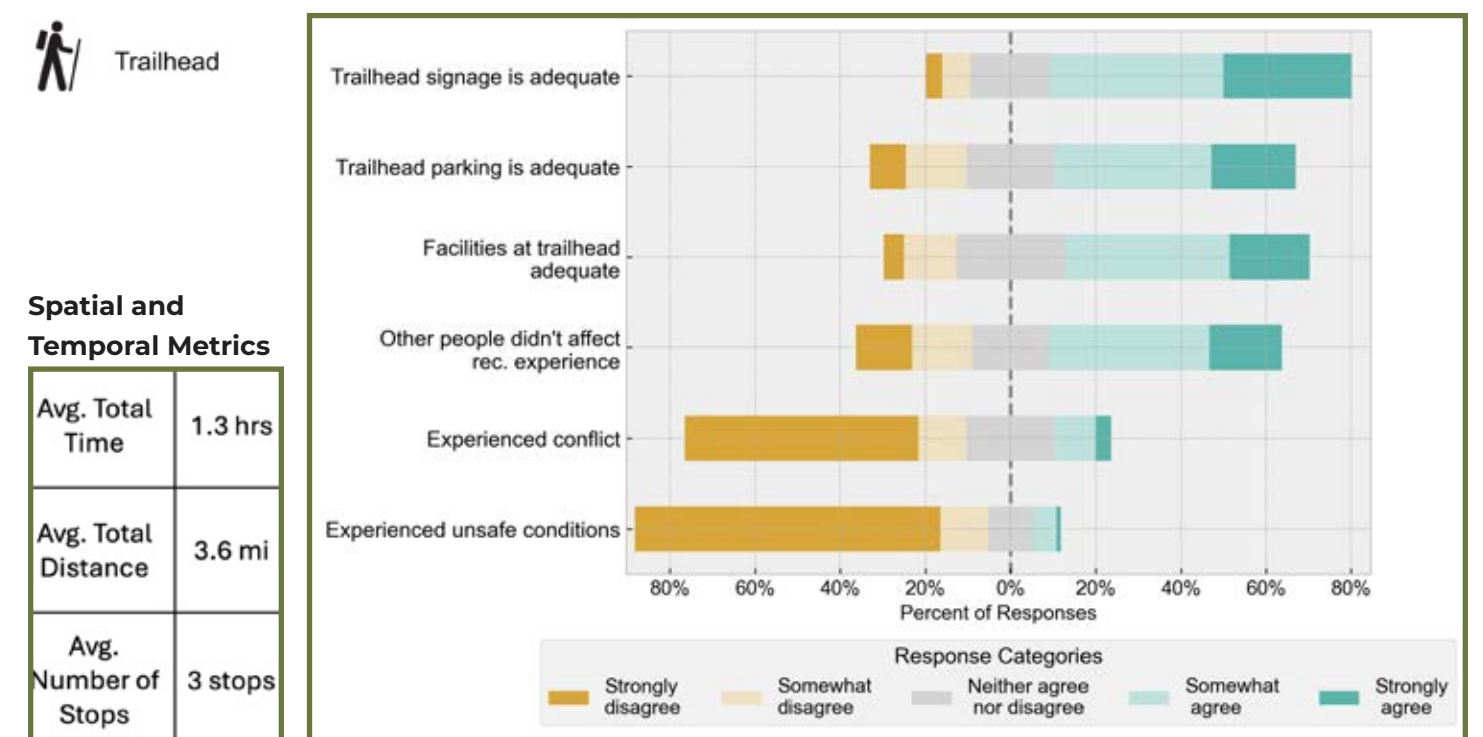
Average daily trail use by hour (Summer)



Map of use density and spatial extent of survey participants originating from Smuggler Mountain Trailhead.



Crowding evaluations of site conditions and visitor experience.



Spatial and Temporal Metrics

Avg. Total Time	1.3 hrs
Avg. Total Distance	3.6 mi
Avg. Number of Stops	3 stops

Winter Recreation

Winter recreation in the area includes hikers, snowmobilers and backcountry skiers. Backcountry skiers use parts of Smuggler-area trails to access the 10th Mountain System Benedict Huts: Fritz and Fabi.

In 2006, the staff collaborated with the 10th Mountain Hut System and relocated the hut trail to the Smuggler Loop Trail. The trail is open year-round and is accessible to all non-motorized users.

DOGS

The 2008 Management Plan allowed dogs under voice and sight control to be walked off-leash on Smuggler Mountain Road. The plan provided for ongoing monitoring of this departure from Title 12 Regulations, which may be amended by subsequent board action if it is determined to be unworkable. Dogs must be leashed on the Lower Hunter Creek Trail, Lani White Trail and Verena Mallory Trail. Dog leashes are provided to trail users with dogs for the leashed portions of the Hunter Creek and Lower Hunter Creek Trails.

COMPLIANCE

City and County Open Space rangers are responsible for the education and enforcement of regulations, and assist law enforcement agencies, and emergency personnel in responding to emergency/public safety-related activity on Smuggler Mountain and in the Hunter Creek Valley. Smuggler Mountain Open Space is the third most patrolled zone by rangers, behind North Star Nature Preserve and Sky Mountain Park. Staff are authorized to enforce the regulations listed in **Section 4** on Pitkin County Open Space and Trails, City of Aspen and AVLTL properties.

Open Space rangers face several challenges on Smuggler Mountain Open Space. These include the abandonment of dog waste and trash/dog waste bags, as well as the failure to keep dogs under voice and sight control. Dog waste abandonment, while a persistent issue, has improved over the years, likely due to visitor education and signage to help elicit behavioral change. Illegal overnight parking at the parking area and on the county right-of-way, as well as the use of e-bikes on single-track trails, are also common issues. In addition to these challenges, rangers also respond to medical incidents and wildlife calls, with moose sightings being the most common.

VISITOR AMENITIES

Wayfinding and Informational Signage

Informational kiosks are located at the base of Smuggler Mountain Road, at the four-way intersection near the viewing platform, at the intersection of the 10th Mountain Trail and the Hunter Creek Cutoff and at the USFS boundary along the Lower Hunter Creek Trail. An additional trailhead kiosk is located at the intersection of the Rio Grande Trail and the Hunter Creek Extension. Signs indicating the open space name are located near the Upper Hunter Creek Trailhead, the Hunter Creek Trailhead, on Smuggler Mountain Road near the Overlook Platform and west of the junction of the Hunter Creek Valley and Hunter Creek Cutoff trails.

Trail wayfinding signage has been installed at primary intersections. Some signage requires updating for consistency.

Interpretive Education

Interpretive signs are located throughout mine sites at Smuggler as well as some sites where restoration projects have occurred. Some signs are in poor condition. Signage will require maintenance updates, which should be coordinated with an overall interpretive sign plan.

Smuggler Overlook Platform

The platform offers 270-degree views, east toward Independence Pass and west toward Mount Sopris, providing vistas as far as Sunlight Mountain.

Picnic Areas

Continuing beyond the Smuggler Overlook, up either the Smuggler Loop Trail or Smuggler Mountain Road, to the Picnic Loop Trail, are three picnic tables. The picnic area, known as Robbie Wade Park, is located in the old “racetrack” that was heavily degraded by motorized vehicles. The area around the picnic area has been fenced to exclude vehicles and restored.

Dog Pots and Waste Receptacles

At the base of Smuggler Mountain Road there is a dog waste receptacle near the kiosk, maintained by OST. There are two additional dog waste receptacles along the road, maintained by OST, with the final one located at the end of winter plowing. Dog poop

bags are provided. A fourth dog bag receptacle was installed as part of an adjacent property’s development approvals and is maintained by the homeowner.

Additional Amenities

Offsite, but in close proximity to the Smuggler Mountain Trailhead, are amenities that support visitation to the Smuggler-area trails. These amenities include a restroom at Mollie Gibson Park and a bike fix-it station and water bottle filling station at Park Circle. There is also a “storybook trail” along on the Hunter Creek Extension, which connects to the Rio Grande Trail.

2.4 COMMERCIAL USE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Open Space and Trails has issued a variety of commercial and special-use (event) permits for Smuggler Mountain Road and the open space. Permits have included organized hikes, non-profit trail runs and races, commercial and non-profit bike rides and races, commercially guided mountain-bike instruction, a commercial video shoot and one Jeep Jamboree (limited to five vehicles). An Aspen Cycling Club race and Aspen Backcountry Marathon, both non-commercial uses, have consistently brought the largest annual events to the open space and adjacent national forest. Educational uses have included history-focused Aspen Historical Society Jeep ride/trail tours during the summer and fall in 2017 and 2019, and commercially guided walking tours that offer historical, cultural and natural interpretations through storytelling.

2.5 HISTORICAL RESOURCES

MINING

Smuggler Mountain has at least six known mineshafts: Iowa Shaft, Boulder Shaft, Bushwacker, Park-Regent, Drill Rig Shaft, and an unnamed shaft. None of these mines or open pits are in the State Historical Register, and the State Office for Mine Safety and Reclamation identified all for closure. Initial closing procedures for the mines included fencing and signs. Mine tailings were studied to determine any potential toxic or heavy metal pollution. Staff worked to identify all tailings

and planned appropriately for reclamation and restoration. Following reclamation, public access to closed areas was restored.

Mines and related operations on Smuggler Mountain Open Space are now marked as historic sites with interpretive signs to give visitors a sense of the mountain’s past. Without photographs, it is difficult to imagine the magnitude of the industry that once scarred the landscape, from the dirt and grime to the labyrinth of ore cart tracks, boilers, compressors, hoists, smokestacks, shacks, shaft buildings and immense piles of accumulating mine waste. All of it was laid bare by the near clear-cutting of trees to provide timber for the mine tunnels and construction.

In 2009, an historical assessment of Smuggler Mountain Open Space and a few adjacent properties was conducted. The objective was to identify any historical features or resources that might warrant protection and management, however, there was insufficient evidence to suggest the need to register or safeguard these sites as historical resources. The Aspen Historical Society collected and cataloged all of the historical materials prior to a scrap and trash cleanup.

Other activities such as logging and trade corridors were essential to the mining heritage and town growth, but no records have provided geographical locations of these endeavors on Smuggler Mountain.

SMUGGLER MOUNTAIN ROAD

The historic segment of Smuggler Mountain Road originates 500 feet east of the entry of Struggler Mine property and traverses Smuggler Mountain in a series of switchbacks. The road is evident in most photographs as far back as 1893 and was included in the U.S. Geological Survey report of 1898. Smuggler Mountain Road represents an identifiable community character and speaks to Smuggler Mountain’s historic past. The road potentially meets criteria for the National and State Registry of Historic Properties (CSRHP) and may be eligible for listing.

3. Planning Process and Public Input

3.1 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

PLANNING PROCESS

Phase 1: Baseline Data Collection

The initial planning phase involved reviewing relevant plans and policies, as well as assessing natural resource and wildlife monitoring reports and existing conditions. Information collected is summarized in [Section 2](#).

Phase 2: Partner and Public Outreach

Staff from Pitkin County Open Space and Trails, City of Aspen Parks and Open Space and AVL T jointly consulted with key stakeholders to gain perspective on top priorities and areas of concern. Stakeholder meetings were hosted in May 2024 with the following organizations:

- Aspen Center for Environmental Studies
- Aspen Chamber Resort Association
- Aspen Historical Society
- Aspen Fire
- Aspen Global Change Institute
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Roaring Fork Mountain Biking Association
- Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers
- U.S. Forest Service
- Wilderness Workshop

To understand the community's use of Smuggler Mountain Open Space and desires for future management, public input was gathered through a community survey conducted from mid-June to mid-July 2024. The survey was promoted by the City of Aspen, Aspen Valley Land Trust, and Pitkin County through social media and outreach tables at the Smuggler trailhead, as well as stakeholder newsletters. A total of 380 community members responded to the survey. The complete survey responses can be found in Appendix A, with key points summarized in Section 3.3.

Phase 3: Draft Plan Development and Public Comment

Using the existing conditions data, reports and public input, staff compiled a draft management plan with updated action items to guide future management. The management action items were reviewed with stakeholder organizations. The first draft of the management plan was presented at a joint meeting of the Pitkin County and City of Aspen Open Space and Trails boards for comment



and direction on September 19, 2024. Following the reviews, the draft Management Plan was released for public comment, facilitated through an online survey. The one-month comment period was advertised through direct emails to the initial survey, emails to stakeholders and social media to highlight elements of the plan and encourage the public to provide comments. Responses were collected from 222 community members. Complete survey responses are in Appendix C.

Phase 4: Final Plan Revisions and Adoption

Following the draft plan public comment period, staff discussed the feedback received and updated the plan with recommended revisions. The final plan was reviewed by the Pitkin County and City of Aspen Open Space and Trails boards and adopted by the Pitkin County Board of County Commissioners and the Aspen City Council.

3.2 STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Partners were engaged at two points during the plan update process. Early in the planning process, key stakeholders were tapped to identify top constraints, opportunities, and opportunities for coordination. Stakeholders were then provided the draft plan and asked to submit formal comments. Letters of support can be found in Appendix C.

ASPEN CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

OST, COA and AVL T collaborate on projects and programming in the Aspen area with staff from ACES. Suggested considerations from ACES include:

- Balance this recreation amenity with the wildlife habitat the area provides.
- Continue restoration projects.
- Manage trails and access.
- Collaborate and plan across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Address recreation opportunities for all abilities and ages.

ASPEN CHAMBER RESORT ASSOCIATION

ACRA collaborates with land managers in the Aspen area on outreach efforts. Suggested considerations

from ACRA include:

- Address parking and coordinate with campaigns to encourage alternative transportation to trailheads.
- Collaborate on general etiquette and education messaging.
- Provide a restroom.
- Maintain off-leash area.
- Consider future demand for events as spaces become more limited.

ASPEN FIRE

Aspen Fire collaborates with land managers in the Aspen area on wildfire risk and fuel-reduction efforts. Suggested considerations from Aspen Fire include:

- Coordinate planning and projects with the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
- Protect public property and any other values (infrastructure, source water protection, etc.) through wildfire risk reduction projects in areas of concern on Smuggler and Hunter Creek.
- Maintain Smuggler Road as it is a valuable line of defense in event of wildfire.
- More signage and/or education about fire restrictions.

ASPEN GLOBAL CHANGE INSTITUTE

AGCI is an independent nonprofit organization that maintains a soil moisture-monitoring station on Smuggler Mountain. Suggested considerations from AGCI include:

- Continue data collection. Collected data from Smuggler is unique in the system and may be useful for future knowledge of steep, mixed conifer areas and fire risk.
- Manage social trails.

ASPEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Aspen Historical Society preserves local history in the area. Suggested considerations in the Smuggler area for their organization include:

- Increase interpretive signage to inform visitors of the area's history and the conservation efforts to protect this community asset.
- Ensure that educational hikes and tours can continue.

COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE

OST, COA and AVLТ collaborate on projects and planning in the Aspen area with staff from CPW. Organization concerns and suggested considerations in the Smuggler Mountain and Hunter Creek Valley include:

- Protect critical wildlife habitat, including critical winter habitat and elk production areas in Hunter Creek.
- Protect riparian habitat.
- No new trails as expanded recreation has the potential to fragment habitat.
- Limit trails in undeveloped areas and reclaim unauthorized routes.
- Maintain hunting access on Smuggler Road.
- Increase education on wildlife and human interactions.

ROARING FORK MOUNTAIN BIKING ASSOCIATION

RFMBA supports the development and maintenance of mountain bike trail systems in the region. Suggested considerations from RFMBA include:

- Explore alternative ascents/descents from Aspen to single-track trails on Smuggler Mountain and Hunter Creek for user safety and to offer a better experience.
- Address issues of user-created motorbike trails.
- Follow USFS e-bike restrictions on single-track trails, especially if they change in the future.
- Improve kiosk maps and wayfinding signage.
- Highlight “suggested” routes for hikers and bikers.
- Explore potential for designated downhill routes.

ROARING FORK OUTDOOR VOLUNTEERS

RFOV promotes the stewardship of public lands in the region. Suggested considerations from RFOV include:

- Address increasing user numbers and recreation pressure.
- Preserve and/or develop more trails.
- Increase wildfire risk management projects.
- Improve education on responsible recreation.
- Consider recreation offerings for all abilities and ages.

WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST

Aspen is surrounded by the White River National Forest. Key considerations and opportunities for improvement from the perspective of the Forest Service include:

- Ensure that Smuggler remains a portal to public lands.
- Maintain motorized access on Smuggler Road.
- Maintain the value of wildlife habitat and habitat connectivity in close proximity to Aspen.
- Trail additions on USFS lands is not supported.
- Reduce hazardous fuels on steep slopes.
- Collaborate on plans and projects across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Maintain winter access to backcountry huts.

WILDERNESS WORKSHOP

Wilderness Workshop promotes the protection of public lands in western Colorado. Organization concerns and suggested considerations include:

- Protect connected landscapes that provide important wildlife and biodiversity values.
- Address proliferation of motorized and mechanized illegal trail development and off-trail motorized use.
- Close and revegetate illegal/unauthorized trails.
- Maintain public access for pedestrians and cyclists at current levels.
- Limit motorized use with seasonal closures.
- Incorporate equity into the plan and ensure that new signage is presented in a bilingual Spanish/English format.
- Update existing sign infrastructure.

3.3 PUBLIC OUTREACH

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Participation in the initial online community survey, which ran from June 15 to July 26, 2024, was high: 380 participants responded to the survey. Within the online survey, over 90 write-in comments were collected in response to an open-ended question on near- and long-term management needs. The survey, developed by OST, COA and AVLТ, aimed to understand general usage patterns of residents and visitors (such as preferred activities, frequency of use, access points, etc.), as well as to identify the most valued attributes of the open space and gather

feedback on what the community believes is working well or needs to change.

Demographics

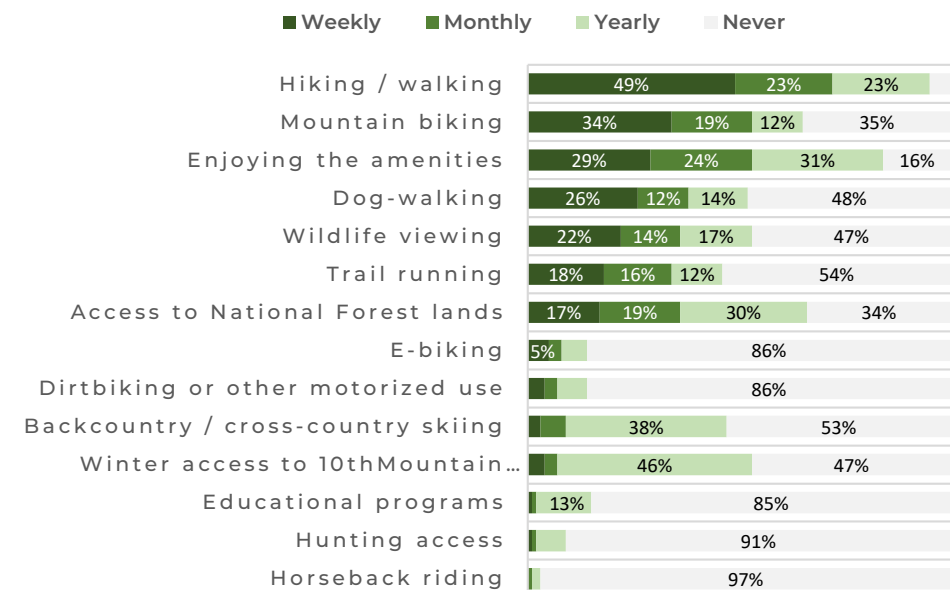
The results provide valuable insight representing users, neighbors and individuals who wish to preserve the wildlife, scenic views, and overall experience of this recreation destination. Respondents came from across the Roaring Fork Valley: 60% from Aspen, 4% from Snowmass Village, and collectively 22% from downvalley communities. About 3% of the respondents were visitors and 6% were second-home owners. The survey covered adult age groups, with similar representation from nearly all age groups from 31 to 60. Seniors aged 61 and over accounted for 20% of the responses. Young adults, aged 20 to 30, provided just 11% of responses, and no responses were received from individuals under the age of 19 though young users are often observed on the area’s trails.

Activities

The survey indicated that the most popular and frequent activity at Smuggler Mountain Open Space is hiking, with 49% of respondents saying they participate in it weekly. Other frequent activities include mountain biking, enjoying the amenities, dog walking and wildlife viewing.



Participation in and Frequency of Activities



Survey Participation

Total Survey Respondents
380 individuals

Most Frequent Activities

1. Hiking / Walking
2. Mountain Biking
3. Enjoying the Amenities

Travel to the Trailhead

By Car	40%
By Bike	30%
By Foot	28%
By Bus	1%

Most-Used Trailheads

Smuggler Trailhead	91%
Lower Hunter Creek	43%
Upper Hunter Creek	33%
Lani White	29%
BLM Red Mountain Lot	19%
Mascotte 99	9%

Respondents by Age

Under 19	0%	Ages 41-50	21%
Ages 20-30	11%	Ages 51-60	22%
Ages 31-40	26%	Over 61	20%

Respondents by Residence

Aspen	60%
Downvalley (Basalt, Carbondale, Glenwood Springs)	22%
Second-home owner	6%
Snowmass Village	4%
Visitor	3%

Attributes of Smuggler Ranked by Importance to Respondents

- 1 Beauty/Scenic Views 100%
- 2 Recreation Opportunities 96%
- 3 Ecology/Habitat/Natural Resources 96%
- 4 Culture/History/Character 79%
- 5 Support Tourism 40%

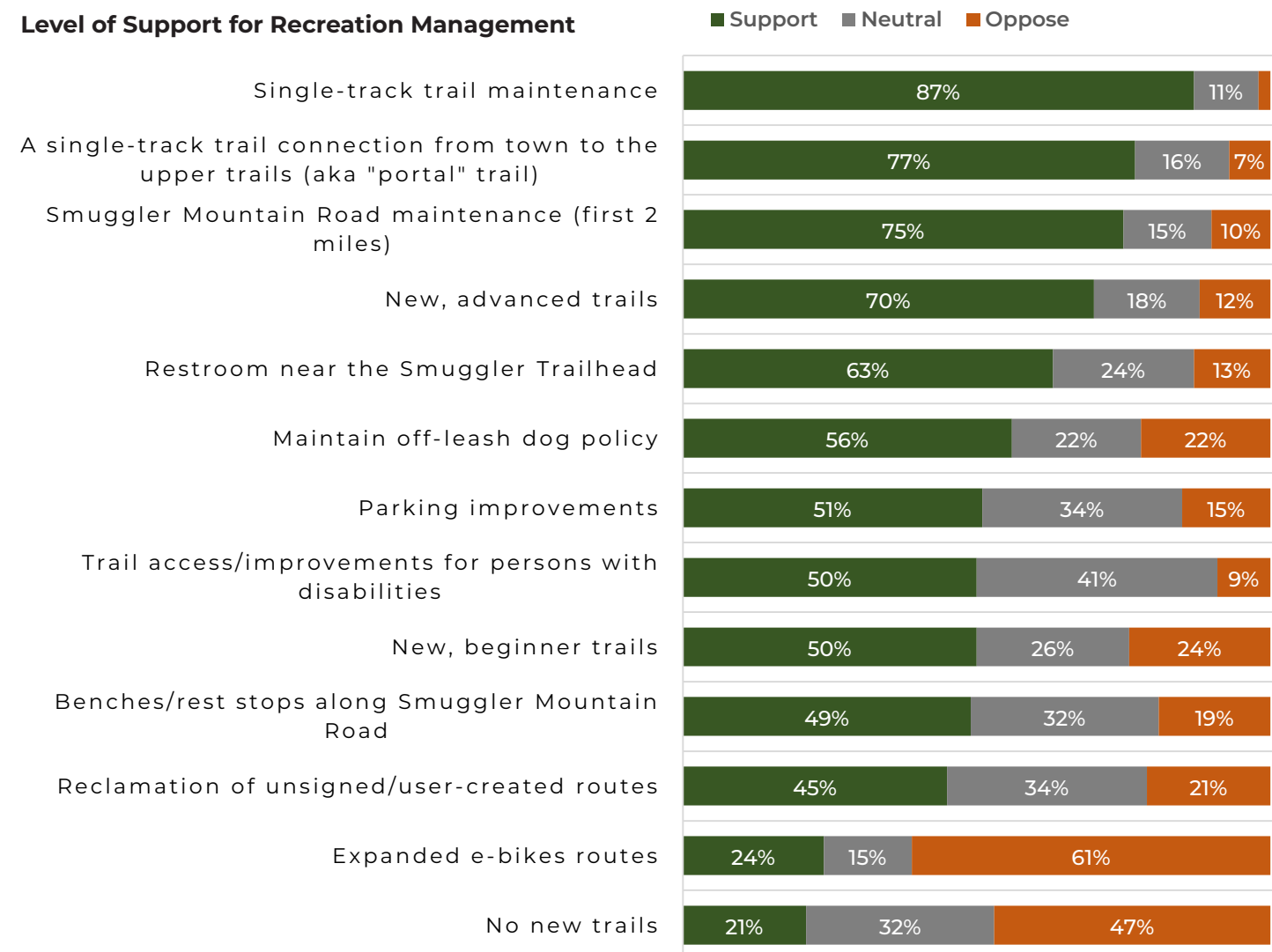
Important Qualities

The beauty and scenic views that Smuggler Mountain and Hunter Creek offer were ranked as the most important attributes of the open space by respondents (nearly 100% rated them very important, important or somewhat important), followed closely by recreation opportunities (96%), ecology/wildlife habitat and natural resources (96%) and culture/history and character (79%). Conversely, about 60% of respondents felt that attracting and supporting tourism was not important.

Current Conditions

Respondents were generally satisfied (50% or more very satisfied or satisfied) with the trailheads, trail difficulty, trail types and variety, interpretive signs, wayfinding signs and access to Hunter Creek. The greatest number of respondents were neutral on accessibility and inclusivity conditions (29%). Parking areas (13%) and dog-waste receptacles (15%) received

Level of Support for Recreation Management



the highest reports of being unsatisfactory. Just over one-third of respondents do not use the water filling station or bike tools located at Park Circle. More than half of respondents (59%) prefer to maintain the current level of event use; few (8%) would prefer to see the amount of event use increase.

Forest Health Management

Most respondents (86%) would prefer to see the current forest health approach continue with projects as needed for habitat diversity; few (5%) would prefer a hands-off approach to forest health. When it comes to wildfire, 83% of respondents are interested in increased coordination with other agencies and fire districts in the implementation of mechanical projects primarily for the benefit of wildfire risk reduction. Additionally, just over half of respondents would support prescribed fire in the Smuggler area.

Recreation Management

The highest level of support for future recreation management, indicated by respondents, was for single-track trail maintenance (86% of respondents strongly or somewhat support). A single-track trail connection from town, Smuggler Mountain Road maintenance, new advanced trails, a restroom at the trailhead, continuing the off-leash dog policy, parking improvements, trail access for persons with disabilities and new, beginner trails were supported by half or more respondents. Expanded e-bike routes was the only listed item that was opposed by more than half of respondents.

Signage Updates

Updates to wayfinding and interpretive signage received very little opposition from survey respondents; generally, most respondents were fairly neutral on signage updates. Updating wayfinding signage was supported by just over half of respondents (56%). Around 40% of respondents were neutral to bilingual signage and updated interpretive signage; still, just under half of respondents indicated support for signage improvements. Respondents were split in their support and opposition of interactive or digital history information.

DRAFT PLAN COMMENT PERIOD

The Draft Management Plan was released for public comment in September 2024 and comments were received for a one-month period. All responses are included in Appendix C. In total, 222 members of the public responded to the draft plan comment survey. The survey permitted respondents to rate their level of support for the draft management actions and, overall, 85% of respondents support the plan's management actions. Respondents could further provide their preference for the top three priorities. Of the listed management actions, the top 5 management actions supported by respondents were (in this order):

- R.3 (Advanced Downhill Trail): 79% of respondents cited this as one of their top three priorities.
- R.1 (Portal Trail): 75%
- NR. 2 (Healthy forests): 17%
- R.7 (Hut Access): 14%
- EO 3. (Dog Waste): 10%

There were no difference in the top priorities of

respondents from the upper Roaring Fork Valley and County residents compared to the overall priorities of all respondents. A comment box allowed the public to share their comments on the draft action items supported or recommend changes or additions that should be considered for the final plan; a total of 115 write-in comments were received.. Themes of the write-in comments indicated support for:

- a portal trail
- trail additions and more advanced downhill mountain biking trails
- preference to see wildlife protected over the construction of new trails
- expanded e-bike access.

3.4 RELEVANT PLANS AND POLICIES

JOINT CITY OF ASPEN & PITKIN COUNTY

2008 Smuggler Mountain Open Space Management Plan

This initial management plan provided a framework for managing the newly acquired lands and assembled lands dating back to the 1970s. The goals of this plan, jointly developed by the City of Aspen and Pitkin County Open Space and Trails, included:

- Protect, manage and enhance the natural, geologic, cultural and visual resources, including maintaining and promoting healthy ecosystems and their essential components and processes.
- Provide and promote safe and enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Provide educational opportunities regarding the values of the surrounding natural, geologic, cultural and visual resources, and the importance of responsible use and stewardship of the land.
- Define implementation policies, programs and responsibilities for the above goals, as well as provide specific implementation steps where appropriate.

Progress toward the 2008 management actions can be found in Section 1. This 2024 plan update adds contiguous acreage in the Hunter Creek Valley to create a seamless plan for the area and will replace the 2008 Management Plan.

2012 Hunter Creek-Smuggler Mountain Cooperative Plan

The Cooperative Plan was a joint effort with the City of Aspen, Pitkin County, the USDA Forest Service and the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies. The plan provides cohesive management and a vision for an area that consists of 4,681 acres adjacent to Smuggler Mountain Open Space. Projects in the plan relevant to the Smuggler Mountain Open Space planning area include:

Extend theming and signage design on adjacent open space properties onto national forest lands within the planning area.

Consider separation of trail uses on single-track trails.

Grading of key sections of Smuggler Mountain Road, for approximately the first 4 miles.

2014 Lindsay Parcel Management Plan

Pitkin County Open Space and Trails (OST) and the City of Aspen (COA) partnered to purchase the Lindsay Parcel in 2012. The Lindsay Parcel encompasses approximately seven acres located on the northwest side of Smuggler Mountain and lies within the Hunter Creek Valley. The goals of this plan included:

- Identify critical wildlife or vegetation resources,
- Identify recreational opportunities, and
- Manage the property cohesively with the Smuggler Mountain Open Space Management Plan.

Through a public process, significant support for the development of a multi-use, recreational trail providing alternative access to the Hunter Creek Valley from town emerged. The recreation management actions reflect this trail connection and established a potential recreation area.

General management actions stipulate that dogs must be leashed on this parcel, which is consistent with the current leash requirements on the Lower Hunter Creek Trail.

Upon adoption of this plan, it was to be incorporated into the management recommendations for the greater Smuggler Mountain Open Space. This plan update will replace the Lindsay Parcel Management Plan.

PITKIN COUNTY OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS

Title 12 of the Pitkin County Code

All properties and trails managed by Pitkin County Open Space and Trails are subject to regulations set forth in Title 12 of the Pitkin County Code. Individual properties may be subject to additional terms established in their respective management plans.

Open Space Board Policies Protection of Natural Biodiversity and Management of Human Use (adopted in 2016)

This policy requires that human uses on OST properties be managed in a manner that preserves and protects native biodiversity. The OST program seeks to rely on the best available science to guide management decisions, inform specialized habitat management needs and identify opportunities to restore healthy, natural functions in degraded habitats.

2014 Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Signage Design Guidelines

The 2014 Signage Design Guidelines are an update to the Trail Design and Management Handbook. The update covers materials, graphics, types, templates, installation and maintenance for signs on Pitkin County Open Space and Trails properties.

2024 Other Power Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMD) Management Plan

The OPDMD Management Plan looks at trail conditions in the Pitkin County system and designates them as either open, closed or restricted for OPDMD use. OST takes pride in providing excellent recreational opportunities and works to make these opportunities accessible when possible.

PITKIN COUNTY

2023 Pitkin County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Pitkin County, Colorado's 2023 Hazard Mitigation Plan aims to reduce the potential for harm to people, property and the environment from natural and human-caused hazards. The plan encourages incorporation of recommended mitigation actions into other local government planning mechanisms,

like management plans. Relevant mitigation actions encourage efforts to improve forest health, reduce fuel loads and create defensible space within wildland-urban interface areas.

2023 Pitkin County Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Interagency cooperation, resources, community access, and evacuation planning are essential for effective wildfire response and mitigation, according to the Pitkin County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. This plan highlights the varying levels of risk faced by different areas within Pitkin County due to wildfires, emphasizing the importance of wildfire risk management and mitigation efforts. Relevant to Smuggler Mountain Open Space, this plan encourages strategies such as fuel breaks, defensible space, and structural ignitability as crucial for reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfires and protecting communities.

2003 East of Aspen/Independence Caucus Plan

This plan addresses the area of Smuggler/Hunter Creek. Relevant to Smuggler, the Caucus supports maintenance of the face of Smuggler Mountain as an undeveloped hillside as viewed from Aspen, protection of the natural environment and the preservation of Smuggler Mountain Road as a gateway to vistas and recreation.

CITY OF ASPEN

Open Space Regulations

All open space parcels managed by City of Aspen Parks and Open Space are subject to open space regulations. Individual properties may be subject to additional terms established in their respective management plans.

City of Aspen Uphill Economy Recreation Plan

This multimedia plan aims to create an economy centered around uphill recreation activities like hiking, skinning, backcountry skiing, cross-country skiing and mountain biking. The plan explores ways to improve trail systems, add trailheads, and promote backcountry skiing areas.

Proposed backcountry hut policies include:

- Support expanded summer operations of nearby huts.
- Explore opportunities for a new hut near Aspen.

Proposed hiking and biking policies include:

- Support and collaborate with stakeholders on responsible improvement and development of mountain bike trails in accordance with adopted plans, suitability analyses, conservation mapping, and outreach processes.
- Work to expand opportunities for fat biking in the Aspen area.
- Work with local partners and land managers to enhance the sustainability and trail experience of the Smuggler Mountain trails.

STATE OF COLORADO

2024-2028 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Every five years, Colorado Parks and Wildlife leads development of a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan to maintain eligibility for funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and to inform additional investments from other federal, state, local and private programs. SCORP priorities reflect the current trends, opportunities and challenges facing Colorado's outdoor recreation resources. High levels of involvement to create this plan were required from outdoor recreation stakeholders. Four priority areas are intended to be integrated into outdoor recreation and conservation efforts across the state:

- Access and Opportunity – All Coloradans and visitors have access to and opportunity for sustainable outdoor recreation.
- Stewardship – Coloradans and visitors enjoy and care for natural and cultural resources and commit to stewarding them for future generations.
- Land, Water and Wildlife Conservation – Private and public lands and waters are conserved to support sustainable outdoor recreation, the environment and wildlife habitat.
- Financial Sustainability – Enhanced and varied funding sources combined with greater collaboration across recreation sectors directs more resources to support outdoor recreation and conservation.

4. Management

4.1 MANAGEMENT GOALS

- Protect, manage and enhance the natural, historical and visual resources including maintaining and promoting healthy ecosystems and their essential components and processes.
- Provide and promote safe and enjoyable outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Provide educational opportunities regarding the values of the surrounding natural, historic and visual resources and the importance of responsible use and stewardship of the land.
- Define management actions with specific implementation steps, where appropriate, and roles and responsibilities.

4.2 REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

Smuggler Mountain Open Space is in unincorporated Pitkin County, and Pitkin County Title 12 regulations of the Pitkin County Code apply to the property. Specific regulations pertaining to Smuggler Mountain Open Space were prepared with public safety as a primary goal.

Both City of Aspen and Pitkin County Open Space rangers are authorized to enforce these regulations to streamline administrative efficiency and allow for mutual enforcement across jurisdictional boundaries. In addition to education and enforcement of property regulations, Rangers also assist the Sheriff's Office, other law enforcement agencies, and emergency personnel in responding to public safety-related activity at Smuggler.

TITLE 12

Title 12, Section-04-030 of the Pitkin County code outlines the "Rules Regarding Public Use of Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Program." Some of the regulations that apply to county-owned parcels on Smuggler Mountain Open Space.

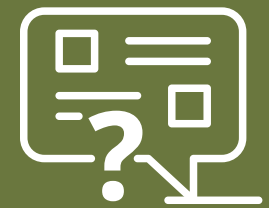
- no camping,
- no hunting,
- no campfires,
- no entry into closed areas,
- no discharging of firearms,
- no fireworks,
- no littering,
- no vandalism, property damage or removal of resources,
- no harassment of wildlife, etc.,
- a valid fishing license is required.

SMUGGLER MOUNTAIN OPEN SPACE REGULATIONS

Pitkin County Title 12 and City of Aspen regulations allow for management plans to provide for individualized regulations. The



Fairy slipper orchids bloom along Lollipop Trail.



Public feedback informs the management actions contained in this plan update for Smuggler Mountain Open Space. A total of 602 responses were collected from the public through the initial online survey and final comments to the draft plan.

following regulations apply to all parcels within Smuggler Mountain Open Space, superseding Pitkin County Title 12 and City of Aspen regulations unless otherwise precluded by easement language.

Dog Voice and Sight Area

Dogs are permitted on all established trails. Smuggler Mountain Road, Hunter Creek Cutoff Trail and singletrack trails are managed as a voice and sight control area. A mandatory leash law is in effect on Lower Hunter Creek Trail, from the trailhead to the Forest Service boundary. The very narrow nature of the trail, below the junction with the BLM Parking Lot Access Trail, and the proximity of the creek to the trail necessitate this leash law for safety and resource protection.

Voice and sight control is subject to review and can be revoked at any time to address changing circumstances, based on use, conflicts, and other unforeseen issues. The following rules apply to voice and sight control areas:

- Dogs must be in sight of guardian.
- Dogs must be under voice control and respond the first time the guardian commands the dog to come.
- Dogs not under voice and sight control must be leashed at all times.
- Guardian must carry one leash per dog.
- Guardian must carry and use dog waste bags, which may not be left along the trail.
- Dog waste must be removed and carried out/ placed in a waste receptacle.
- No more than two (2) unleashed dogs per guardian are allowed.
- Violations are subject to fines under Title 12.

Motorized Vehicles

Licensed motorized vehicles are permitted on Smuggler Mountain Road. Pitkin County Title 12 and City of Aspen regulations prohibit motorized recreation on the rest of Smuggler Mountain Open Space. Maintenance and emergency vehicles are allowed.

Hours of operation

There are no night time or seasonal closures on Smuggler Mountain Open Space.

E-Bikes

Electric bicycles, also known as e-bikes, are allowed

on Smuggler Mountain Road. E-bikes are not permitted on any other trails on Smuggler Mountain Open Space. Any potential changes to e-bike regulation at Smuggler Mountain Open Space as a result of Forest Service policy changes on adjacent federal lands will be reviewed with the City and County Open Space boards, Pitkin County Board of County Commissioners and Aspen City Council.

Accessibility

Use of mobility devices by persons with mobility impairments on Smuggler area trails is addressed in the Pitkin County Other Power Driven Mobility Device Management Plan.

SMUGGLER MOUNTAIN ROAD

Smuggler Mountain Road traverses land owned by Pitkin County, City of Aspen and private lands before entering National Forest lands. To best manage the significant use of Smuggler Mountain Road as a recreational road, the 2022 Pitkin County Road Maintenance and Management Plan authorizes Rangers to enforce provisions of Title 12, including but not limited to open space parking restrictions and specialized management plans.

SMUGGLER MOUNTAIN TRAILHEAD

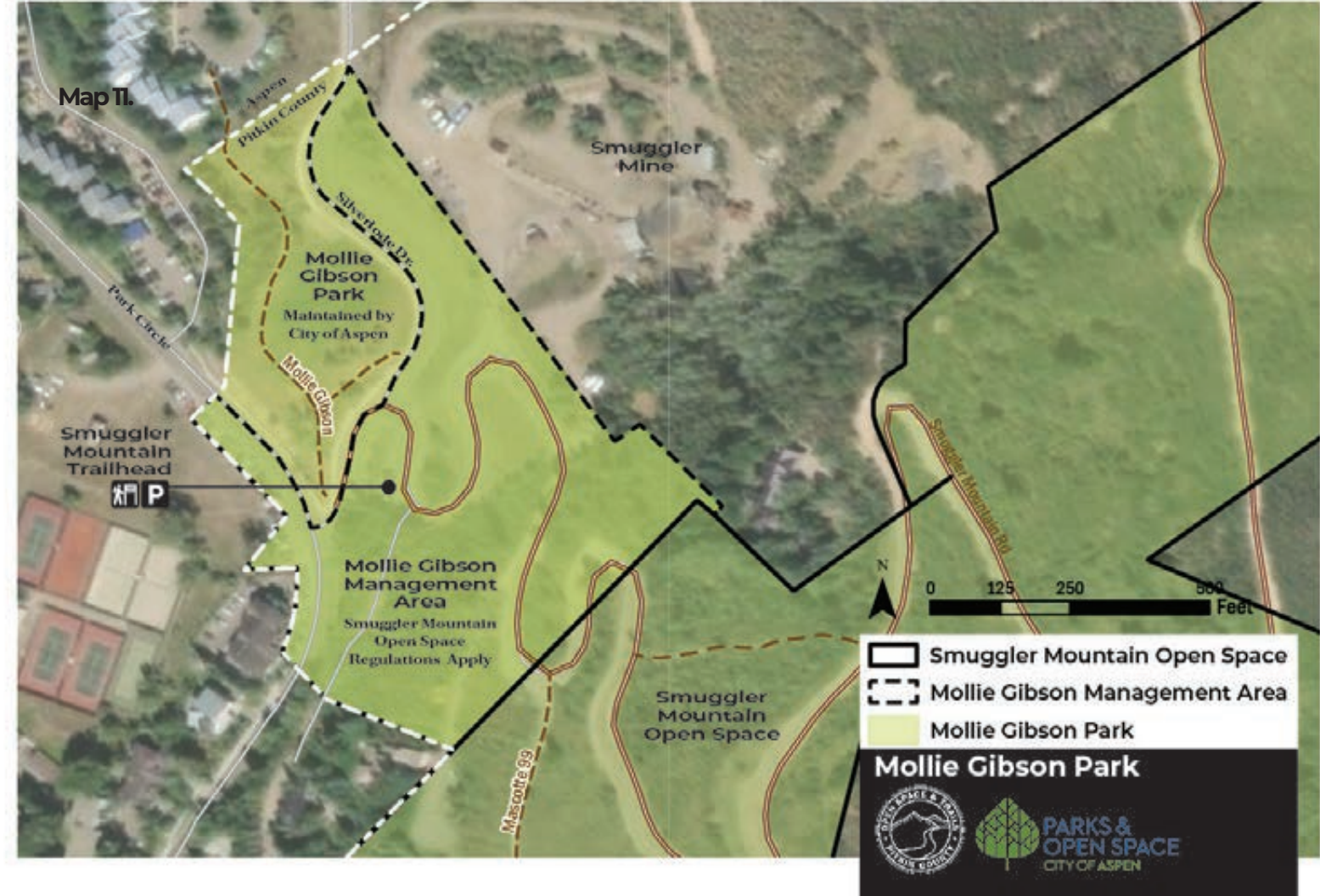
Smuggler Mountain Trailhead is located on a portion of the Mollie Gibson parcel that includes the trailhead and dirt parking lot in addition to Mollie Gibson Park and parking at Park Circle. Pitkin County Title 12 and Smuggler Mountain Open Space regulations are enforceable on the Mollie Gibson Management area, as depicted in Map 11.

MOLLIE GIBSON PARK

This park is maintained and managed by the City of Aspen. City of Aspen Regulations are enforceable at Mollie Gibson Park.

VERENA MALLORY PARK AND EMILEE BENEDICT PARK

Aspen Valley Land Trust owns the Varena Mallory and Emily Benedict Park parcels, within the Smuggler Mountain Open Space boundary. Pitkin County Title 12 and Smuggler Mountain Open Space regulations are enforceable on the entirety of the parcels.



SPECIAL AND COMMERCIAL-USE REGULATIONS

Commercial Use

A Pitkin County Open Space and Trails permit is required for commercial uses that take place on Smuggler Mountain Open Space properties, including filming and photo shoots and guided services. Group size limits may be limited as a condition of a permit due to use, safety, resource impacts and time of day.

Special Uses and Events

Special-use permits from Pitkin County Open Space and Trails are required for any organized use of the property. Community development permits may apply. Use of Smuggler Mountain Road, a county right-of-way, requires a permit from Community Development.

MEMORIAL POLICY

All memorials placed on Pitkin County Open Space and Trails properties and trails are addressed in the adopted Stewardship Policies, which allows for individual management plans to determine the memorial policy for individual properties. For all parcels included in this plan, no additional memorials are permitted.

4.3 MANAGEMENT ACTIONS NATURAL RESOURCES

Action 1.

Conduct assessment of riparian zones prior to any nearby vegetation, forest or trail work.

Desired Outcome:

Full understanding of riparian conditions is gained and critical elements are protected from nearby activities.

Proposed Steps:

- Conduct field-based assessment of creek and riparian areas prior to implementation of any management actions that have the potential to impact the riparian zone. Methodology may be a rapid qualitative assessment of riparian corridor health utilizing the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) methodology (USDA-NRCS 1998) or other OST protocols.
- Actions include but are not limited to forest health improvement projects, machinery or equipment traveling through the riparian zone, upslope/upstream projects that disturb soil, recreational corridors entering the area, etc.

Action 2.

Maintain and promote healthy, resilient forests.

Desired Outcome:

Forests of all types are maintained for general health and resilience with the overall goal of letting natural processes (e.g. vegetation succession, pest cycles, fire) proceed. A well-managed forest will result in quality wildlife habitat, will be wildfire resilient and will be more resistant to disease.

Proposed Steps:

- Consider recommendations from the Forest Health Assessment for specific project implementation to respond to changed conditions with a focus on forest health.
- Convene Hunter-Smuggler Cooperative to prioritize and implement recommended actions at Smuggler and adjacent parcels owned by the City of Aspen and USFS.

Action 3.

Implement treatment prescriptions (e.g. mechanical thinning) to maintain integrity and habitat value of oak-dominated shrublands and reduce wildfire risk.

Desired Outcome:

A disturbance regime in Gambel oak-dominated shrublands is maintained at intervals as needed to create and maintain age class diversity of this plant community across the Smuggler area landscape, for ecological resiliency, direct habitat benefits to ungulates, bears, birds and other wildlife species and co-benefits public safety through reduced fuel loads.

Proposed Steps:

Prioritize and implement actions recommended for oak-dominated shrublands contained in the Forest Health Assessment. Additionally, Smuggler-specific recommendations include:

- Implement mechanical thinning in areas of overly mature/unhealthy oak shrublands, as identified by field-based assessments.
- Follow best management practices during project implementation, including but not limited to:
 - Avoid areas with sagebrush or bitterbrush as co-dominant, as they do not resprout, instead focusing on serviceberry, snowberry and mountain mahogany co-dominated areas.
 - Noxious weed pre-treatment should be taken before any treatments on mountain shrublands on the west side, or anywhere where there are occurrences of cheatgrass and other invasive plant threats.
- Maintain areas of mature oak on the landscape; these areas are important for avifauna, acorn production and general age-class diversity.
- Fire may be considered instead/in addition to mechanical treatments when and where safety allows, for even more effective ecological benefit.

Action 4.

Implement small-patch cuts in forested areas.

Desired Outcome:

Age-class diversity exists in lodgepole pine dominated forests, with canopy openings and active regeneration occurring to provide long-term forest health and short-/long-term wildlife habitat improvements via increased habitat complexity.

Proposed Steps:

- Review recommendations in the Forest Health Assessment and priorities identified across the OST system.
- Identify and evaluate feasibility of implementation in recommended zones.
- Monitor forest health over time to inform decisions on project size, scope and implementation.
- Follow best management practices, including but not limited to:
 - Conduct raptor surveys prior to any treatments and amend units to avoid nest areas
 - Evaluate human safety and trail impacts of projects.
 - Let natural processes drive recovery, but monitor and adaptively manage project areas as needed (i.e. weed control).

Action 5.

Maintain dead wood resources onsite to maintain ecosystem complexity.

Desired Outcome:

Coarse woody debris exists throughout all forest types on the property, providing nesting, denning, and winter habitat for small mammals, long- and short-tailed weasels, and American marten. Standing dead/snags exist for avifauna habitat and cavity nesters.

Proposed Steps:

- Engage an ecologist, natural resource specialist or other qualified individual on any tree removal project, including trail, mastication, thinning, wildfire-risk reduction or other such projects to ensure balanced objectives are met overall.

OST's overall philosophy and approach to managing natural resources now, and in the future, is to foster resiliency of the natural ecosystem – to support the health and function of local ecosystems so that native flora, fauna and natural processes can persist and adapt in a changing world.

Action 6.

Ensure avian nesting sites are identified and protected on an as-needed basis.

Desired Outcome:

Raptors, songbirds and ground-nesting birds are protected during their sensitive nesting periods.

Proposed Steps:

- Avian surveys will be completed prior to any nearby vegetation, forest or trail work that is to occur during sensitive nesting periods.
- If significant raptor activity and/or nesting behavior is observed on site, conduct raptor surveys to verify any nesting activity and consider temporal and/or spatial buffers to prevent potential recreational disturbance impacts on active nests. Consider spatial buffers for nests at 400 meters around any active or recently active Northern goshawk or Cooper's hawk nest, or best available science.
- Consider temporal buffers based on best available science for each species, with a priority on encompassing at least the early fledgling period to prevent potential premature fledging and/or decreased prey deliveries to dependent fledglings caused by human activity disturbances.

Action 7.

Maintain habitat quality for potentially occurring federally protected species.

Desired Outcome:

Management actions do not negatively impact lynx/snowshoe hare habitat, cutthroat trout or golden eagle habitat.

Proposed Steps:

- Within areas identified as potential lynx habitat, analyze potential impacts of proposed projects that would increase snow compaction, which could facilitate travel of predators that are competitors with lynx in and around the area.
- Maintain snowshoe hare habitat, particularly the subalpine fir-aspen forest and lodgepole pine forest, to allow for increases in current hare population levels that might benefit lynx.
- Consider Colorado Parks and Wildlife's recommended a quarter-mile buffer around any active golden eagle nests from December 1 through July 31.

Action 8.

Collaborate on Hunter Creek protections and enhancements for long-term stream health and viability.

Desired Outcome:

Hunter Creek water quality and quantity is monitored at a regional level and protected and/or improved as possible, both within Smuggler and in the broader landscape.

Proposed Steps:

- Provide in-kind support and access for water quality monitoring.
- Collaborate in efforts as identified in the 2017 Upper Roaring Fork River Management Plan, including but not limited to maintaining instream flows for aquatic life and ecosystem function, filling data gaps on Hunter Creek stream function, and other goals.
- Work with CPW on native fish projects in Hunter Creek as they are implemented. Potential actions include improving fish movement, removal of non-natives, etc. See Hunter Creek Cutthroat Trout Management (Upper Roaring Fork River Management Plan 2017).
- Consider participation in ditch and water conveyance efficiency projects for residential and agricultural properties that use water diverted from Hunter Creek (e.g. Salvation Ditch, Red Mountain Ditch) if water efficiencies may benefit Hunter Creek.

Action 9.

Implement wolf reintroduction awareness as needed.

Desired Outcome:

Ensure staff, local residents and land managers are aware of Colorado's wolf reintroduction project and best management practices to adapt to this species' presence in Colorado.

Proposed Steps:

- Staff to monitor the reintroduction process.
- Coordinate with CPW.
- Provide education to the public in the case of wolf presence at Smuggler.

RECREATION

Action 1.

Explore the feasibility of a lower access "portal trail."

Desired Outcome:

Explore the potential for a portal trail to connect mountain bikers on the Hunter-Smuggler trail network to Aspen, therefore, improving the recreation experience and reducing bike traffic on Red Mountain Road. Public comment reflects a desire for this trail. Pitkin County and City of Aspen staff previously explored options for a portal trail in 2014, but an easily identifiable location for a portal trail was not evident given the topography of the area, land ownership constraints and mapped wildlife habitat. Staff will do its due diligence to explore additional options for a potential route. The findings will be documented to assist with future planning efforts in the area. Should land ownership change, alternative locations will be reviewed and considered.

Proposed Steps:

- Review the possibility for a portal trail.
- If a future opportunity arises, targeted studies, best available science and discussions with CPW and ecologists would be required to assess potential impacts to wildlife and biodiversity.
- Recommendation for approval by City of Aspen and Pitkin County Open Space boards.

Action 2.

Designate the steep, rocky portion of the Lower Hunter Creek Trail for pedestrian use only, between the trailhead and the Benedict Bridge.

Desired Outcome:

Potential conflicts with hikers and leashed dogs is reduced by eliminating mountain bike traffic on this steep, rocky trail, which is currently signed as mountain-biking not recommended.

Proposed Steps:

- Formally designate Lower Hunter Creek Trail from the trailhead to the intersection with the BLM Parking Lot Access Trail as pedestrian only.
- Install signage and update trail information.



Public Desire for a "Portal Trail"



2014 Lindsay Parcel Management Plan

Through the public scoping process, a clear desire was expressed to utilize the Lindsay Parcel for the development of a multi-use, recreational trail that would create an alternate access to the Hunter Creek Valley.

2024 Smuggler Open Space Management Plan Update

Survey results indicate continued support for a singletrack trail connection to and from town and the upper trails at Smuggler and the Hunter Creek Valley. This recreation management action was the second-most supported action for staff to consider, with 59% reporting strong support and 18% somewhat supporting.

Public feedback on the draft management plan indicated that the completion of a portal trail ranked among the top three priorities of this management plan.

Action 3.

Explore feasibility of constructing an advanced mountain biking trail on the north-facing slope connecting Smuggler Mountain Road to Smuggler trails.

Desired Outcome:

Address community desire for downhill-only, advanced mountain biking trails.

Proposed Steps:

- Designate a zone that minimally impacts known wildlife concerns and explore alternative routes for downhill-only, mountain biking (Map 12). Consider overall trail connectivity and volume of use.
- If a trail is feasible, targeted studies, best available science and discussions with CPW and ecologists would be required to assess potential impacts to wildlife and biodiversity.

- Recommendation for approval by City of Aspen and Pitkin County Open Space boards.
- Design/build the trail utilizing local volunteers and designate use. Install appropriate signage.

Action 4.

Add a midway viewpoint along Smuggler Mountain Road.

Desired Outcome:

Support recreational use from visitors of all ages and abilities by adding a midway viewpoint with seating along Smuggler Mountain Road.

Proposed Steps:

- Evaluate potential locations.
- Install a bench and complete associated landscape improvements.

Action 5.

Install a new kiosk at Smuggler Mountain Trailhead and update information at BTS kiosk.

Desired Outcome:

Provide current information and maps for visitors to Smuggler Mountain Open Space.

Proposed Steps:

- Review current sign content and update needs. Provide direction to nearby restrooms.
- Fabricate and install a new kiosk, per Maintenance Action #3.

Action 6.

Install bicycle rack(s) at the base of Smuggler Mountain Road.

Desired Outcome:

Encourage bicycle use by providing safe bike storage for visitors to Smuggler Mountain Open Space. Bike racks will facilitate alternative transportation among Smuggler users.

Proposed Steps:

- Purchase and install one or more bike racks in a suitable location that is visible to potential users and does not impact maintenance operations.

Action 7.

Maintain winter access to huts on surrounding public lands.

Desired Outcome:

Maintain winter access to the 10th Mountain Hut System.

Proposed Steps:

- Coordinate with the 10th Mountain Division and update access routes if future needs/improvements are needed.

Action 8.

Review development agreements for Mollie Gibson Park and determine whether additional documentation is required for ongoing maintenance and use.

Desired outcome:

Clarify and establish responsibilities for long-term maintenance and management of the Park.

Proposed steps:

- Review development agreements.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Action 1.

Update and install regulatory signage.

Desired Outcome:

Maintain signage with current regulations.

Proposed Steps:

- Review current conditions, information and visibility of regulatory signage.
- Replace outdated signage.

Action 2.

Replace interpretive signs.

Desired Outcome:

Educate visitors about the historic / cultural significance of the area and the natural resource management that has occurred.

Proposed Steps:

- Remove signs in poor condition as needed.
- Explore options for interactive/digital historical signage.

Action 3.

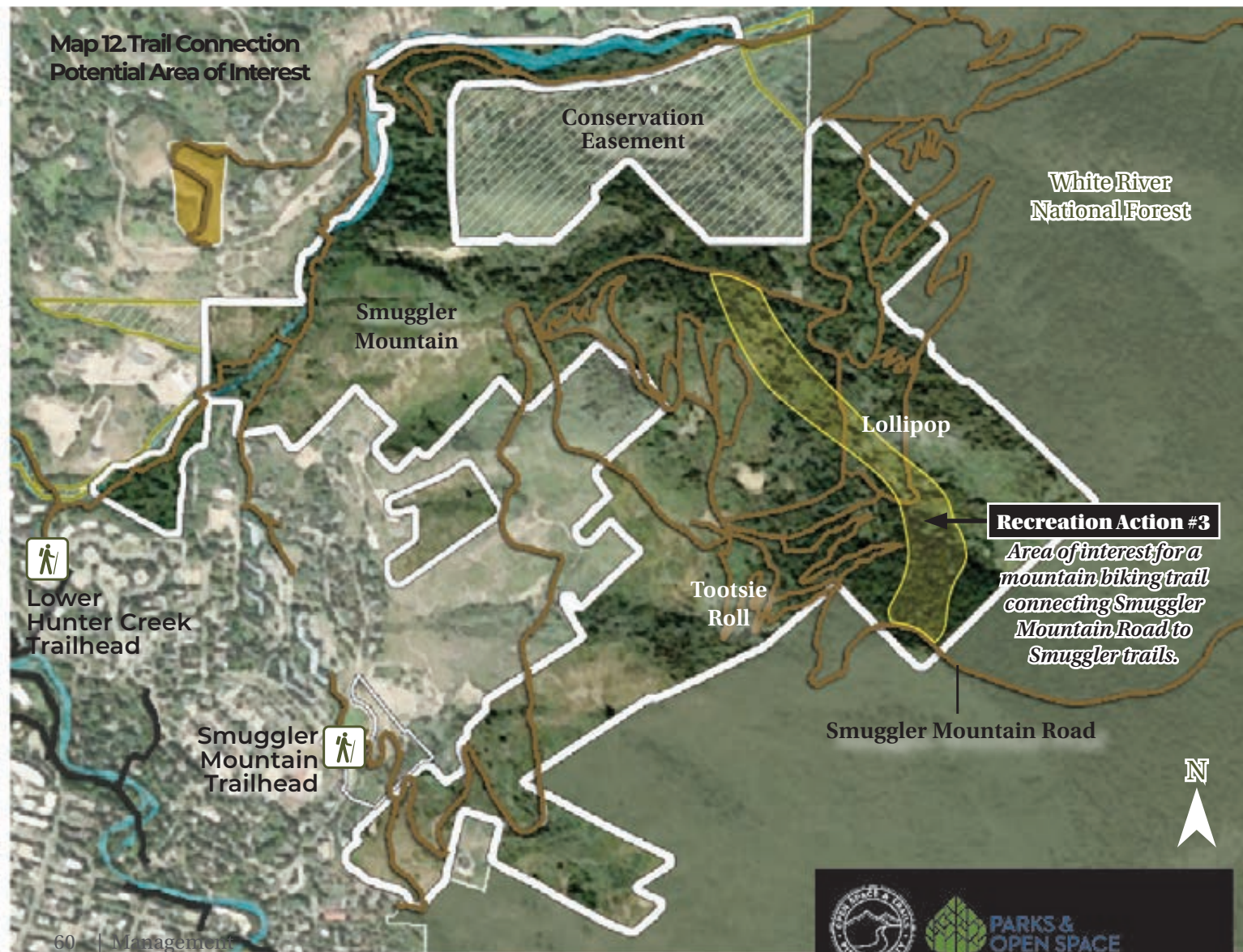
Continue a campaign to address dog waste and dog-owner etiquette on Smuggler Mountain Road.

Desired Outcome:

Increased dog-owner awareness and compliance with dog waste rules.

Proposed Steps:

- Study / review of best practices to encourage desired behavioral change.
- Design of eye-catching and informative signs, advertising and/or media.
- Coordinate with ACRA to expand messaging related to dog waste and dog-owner etiquette.



MONITORING AND STEWARDSHIP

Action 1.

Continue wildlife and vegetation monitoring at regular intervals.

Desired Outcome:

Managing partner agencies continue to collect relevant ecological data to scientifically inform adaptive management.

Proposed Steps:

- Follow recommended monitoring intervals for wildlife and vegetation resources.
- Engage ecological consultants and/or staff to implement monitoring.
- Review reports with partners, evaluate for management implications and archive data.

Action 2.

Maintain and improve collaboration with partner agencies that manage lands, animals and recreational activities on or adjacent to Smuggler and/or require access to the via Smuggler Mountain Road to manage their public assets.

Desired Outcome:

Increase collaborative management of natural resources at the landscape scale and across jurisdictional boundaries.

Proposed Steps:

- Maintain communication with CPW, USFS, BLM and other partner agencies and support cross jurisdictional efforts.

Action 3.

Monitor vegetative recovery at reclaimed mine sites and other areas of past disturbance.

Desired Outcome:

Ensure disturbed ground is on a trajectory toward recovery with native vegetation.

Proposed Steps:

- Visit sites of ground disturbance, including roads, historical mine activity sites, project sites, etc., and evaluate the need for and feasibility of additional vegetation establishment.
- Prioritize and implement revegetation projects.

Action 4.

Conduct a cultural resource assessment to identify and evaluate the cultural resources.

Table 8. Natural Resource Monitoring Schedule

PARAMETER	INTERVAL
Update vegetation type map, revise floristic inventory and conduct rare plant surveys in high quality habitat	As needed.
Quantitative Permanent Transects	Every ~10 years.
Qualitative habitat condition and animal use evaluation	Every ~7-10 years.
Noxious Weeds	See maintenance plan

Desired Outcome:

Ensure the protection of important cultural heritage.

Proposed Steps:

- Engage a consultant to conduct an archaeological and cultural resource survey in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.
- Further testing and/or protection of archaeological and historical sites as necessary.
- Through consultation and agreement with federal, state, local and tribal authorities, develop a strategy to safeguard the area from any adverse impacts.

Action 5.

Continue to monitor recreational use.

Desired Outcome:

Understand the amount of use as well as compliance with rules and regulations.

Proposed Steps:

- Continue placement of trail use counter(s).

Action 6.

Evaluate elk calving (production) and rearing habitat to determine if it is active.

Desired Outcome:

Elk have the space and protection from disturbance to utilize habitat on Smuggler for calving and rearing their young.

Proposed Steps:

- Coordinate research on elk activity with CPW.
- Engage consultants to conduct field reviews for evidence of calving/rearing as needed.
- If elk production and/or rearing is confirmed, consider recreation restriction in coordination with impacted agencies for areas with elk reproduction activity from May 1 – June 28.

MAINTENANCE

Action 1.

Maintain Smuggler Mountain Road at its current width and condition.

Desired Outcome:

Continue to accommodate multiple uses, both vehicular and non-vehicular, and provide access for area land management, emergency response and residential use.

Proposed Steps:

- Coordinate maintenance with Pitkin County Road and Bridge on an as-needed basis.
- Continue to allow licensed vehicles on Smuggler Mountain Road.

Action 2.

Improve boardwalks on Lower Hunter Creek Trail.

Desired Outcome:

Improve and extend boardwalk sections on Lower Hunter Creek (LHC) Trail.

Proposed Steps:

- Assess current boardwalk effectiveness and identify design improvements that could be implemented to improve the functionality and aesthetics of the boardwalk.
- Identify sections of trail where boardwalk sections should be extended.
- Create scope of work and bid design/build project out to local carpentry contractors.

Action 3.

Create a maintenance agreement and schedule with defined responsibilities.

Desired Outcome:

Formalize roles and responsibilities for the maintenance of trails and open space amenities between Pitkin County Open Space and Trails and City of Aspen Open Space and Trails.

Proposed Steps:

- Identify general maintenance needs, create a schedule and define responsibilities.
- Identify sign standards and update intervals for informational, wayfinding and interpretive signage.
- Document an internal agreement between City of Aspen and Pitkin County staff.

Action 4.

Actively manage noxious vegetation to promote the vigor of native biodiversity utilizing an integrated approach.

Desired Outcome:

In accordance with the best available science, regulations and resources, the collaboration of land managers (OST, City of Aspen, AVL) will prevent the introduction of new species, eradicate noxious species with isolated populations, and contain and reduce populations that are well established and widespread.

Proposed Steps:

- Continue annual noxious weed control.
- Develop and implement noxious weed protocols with partners and adjacent landowners. Include in maintenance plan (See Action M.3). See Appendix D. for the table of noxious weed species and proposed treatment methods.
- Routinely monitor the establishment of new populations and effectiveness of prescribed treatments.

Smuggler Mountain Open Space Management Actions





5. Implementation

SMUGGLER MOUNTAIN OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS		TIME FRAME	PARTNERS	BUDGET
NATURAL RESOURCES				
NR.1	Conduct assessment of riparian zones prior to any nearby vegetation, forest or trail work.	Ongoing	OST, COA, AVLT	As needed
NR.2	Maintain and promote healthy, resilient forests.	Short- and long-term	OST, COA, AVLT	-\$\$\$\$
NR.3	Implement treatment prescriptions (e.g. mechanical thinning) to maintain integrity and habitat value of oak-dominated shrublands and reduce wildfire risk.	Short- and long-term	OST, COA, AVLT, Aspen Fire	-\$\$\$\$
NR.4	Implement small patch cuts in forested areas.	Short- and long-term	OST, COA, AVLT	-\$\$\$\$
NR.5	Maintain dead wood resources onsite to maintain ecosystem complexity.	Ongoing	OST, COA, AVLT, CPW, USFS	As needed
NR.6	Ensure avian nesting sites are identified and protected on an as-needed basis.	Ongoing	OST, COA, AVLT, CPW	As needed
NR.7	Maintain habitat quality for potentially occurring federally protected species.	Ongoing	OST, COA, AVLT, CPW	As needed
NR.8	Collaborate on Hunter Creek protections and enhancements for long-term stream health and viability.	Ongoing	OST, COA, AVLT, CPW	As needed
NR.9	Implement wolf reintroduction awareness as needed.	As needed	OST, COA, AVLT, CPW	None at this time
RECREATION				
R.1	Explore the feasibility of a lower access "portal trail."	Short- and long-term	OST, COA, AVLT, CPW, USFS	As needed
R.2	Designate the steep, rocky portion of the Lower Hunter Creek Trail for pedestrian use only, between the trailhead and the Benedict Bridge.	Short-term	OST, COA, AVLT	\$
R.3	Explore feasibility of constructing an advanced mountain biking trail on the north-facing slope connecting Smuggler Mountain Road to Lollipop.	Short-term	OST, COA, CPW, USFS, RFMBA	\$\$
R.4	Add a midway viewpoint along Smuggler Mountain Road.	Short-term	OST, COA	\$
R.5	Install a new kiosk at Smuggler Mountain Trailhead and update information at BTS kiosk.	Short-term	OST, COA	\$
R.6	Install bicycle rack(s) at the base of Smuggler Mountain Road.	Short-term	OST, COA	\$
R.7	Maintain winter access to huts on surrounding public lands.	As needed	OST, 10th Mountain Division	N/A
R.8	Review agreements for Mollie Gibson Park and determine whether an additional MOU, or similar document, is required for ongoing maintenance and use of the parcel.	Short-term	OST, COA	N/A

SMUGGLER MOUNTAIN OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS		TIME FRAME	PARTNERS	BUDGET
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH				
EO.1	Update and install regulatory signage.	Short-term	OST, COA, AVLT	\$
EO.2	Replace interpretive signs.	Long-term	OST, COA, AVLT, Aspen Historical Society	\$\$
EO.3	Continue a campaign to address dog waste and dog-owner etiquette on Smuggler Mountain Road.	Ongoing	OST, COA, AVLT, ACRA	\$
MONITORING AND STEWARDSHIP				
MS.1	Continue wildlife and vegetation monitoring at regular intervals.	Ongoing	OST, COA	\$\$
MS.2	Maintain and improve collaboration with partner agencies that manage lands, animals and recreational activities on or adjacent to Smuggler and/or require access via Smuggler Mountain Road to manage their public assets.	Ongoing	OST, COA, AVLT, CPW, USFS, others	N/A
MS.3	Monitor vegetative recovery at reclaimed mine sites and other areas of past disturbance.	Short-term	OST, COA	None at this time
MS.4	Conduct a cultural resource assessment to identify and evaluate the cultural resources of the Open Space.	Long-term	OST, COA, AVLT, USFS, Aspen Historical Society	\$\$
MS.5	Continue to monitor recreational use.	Ongoing	OST, COA	\$
MS.6	Evaluate elk calving (production) and rearing habitat to determine if it is active.	Ongoing	OST, COA, AVLT, CPW	As needed
MAINTENANCE				
M.1	Maintain Smuggler Mountain Road at its current width and condition.	Ongoing	Pitkin County Road and Bridge	N/A
M.2	Improve boardwalks on Lower Hunter Creek Trail.	Short-term	OST, COA, RFOV	\$\$
M.3	Create a maintenance agreement and schedule with defined responsibilities.	Short-term	OST, COA, AVLT	N/A
M.4	Actively manage noxious vegetation to promote the vigor of native biodiversity utilizing an integrated approach.	Ongoing	OST, COA, AVLT	Annual Operating Budget

KEY	
\$	<\$10,000
\$\$	\$10,000 - \$75,000
\$\$\$	>\$75,000
Short-Term	0-5 years
Long-term	5+ years
Ongoing	Annual / routine

Anticipated costs represent a range of possible expenditures, subject to change over time.

