

Master Plan 2007
Emma Caucus Area
Existing Conditions Report



TG Malloy Consulting, LLC
402 Park Drive
Glenwood Springs, Colorado 81601
Phone: 907-945-0832

May, 2007

Master Plan 2007
Emma Caucus Area
Existing Conditions Report

Credits

Prepared for:

Emma Caucus Area Executive Committee & Pitkin County Community Development
Department
130 South Galena Street
Aspen, Colorado 81611

Planning Consultant:

Tim Malloy, TG Malloy Consulting
402 Park Drive
Glenwood Springs, Colorado 81601
Phone: 970.945.0832
E-mail: tgmalley@sopris.net

Pitkin County Staff:

Ellen Sasanno, Pitkin County Community Development Department (project manager)
Tyler Lambuth, Aspen/Pitkin County GIS Department (all mapping)
Jeanette Jones, Pitkin County Clerk and Recorder's Office (website management)

Emma Caucus Executive Committee:

George Newman, Moderator
Liz Newman, Secretary
Lis Conners, Treasurer
Dick Bird
Lucy Cerise
Norm Clasen
Marguerite Dykann
David Kelly
Lee Schwaller

Master Plan 2007
Emma Caucus Area

Existing Conditions Report

List of Figures

- Figure 1 – Emma Caucus Boundary Map
- Figure 2 – Parcel Map
- Figure 3 – American Elk Habitat Map
- Figure 4 – Mule Deer Habitat Map
- Figure 5 – Scenic Resources Map
- Figure 6 – Wildfire Hazards Map
- Figure 7 – Existing Land Use Map
- Figure 8 – Existing Zoning Map
- Figure 9 – Building Permits Map (2001-2006)
- Figure 10 – Historic Sites/Affordable Housing Inventory Map
- Figure 11 – Roads Map
- Figure 12 – Special Taxing Districts Map

Appendix

- Photographs of Caucus Area
- Historic Building Inventory Record for Inventoried Sites
- Parcel Data
- Building Permit Data



SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

1. Purpose of a Master Plan

The Emma Caucus is charged with protecting the natural environment of the Caucus Area and making recommendations related to land use applications for properties with the Caucus Area. In 2006, the Caucus commissioned a Sub-area Plan study to examine land use and other issues in the area near the intersection of Emma Road and Highway 82. This plan was completed and will be incorporated into this Caucus-wide Master Plan. In the spring of 2007, the Caucus began the process of preparing the Caucus-wide Master Plan in order to update the Downvalley Plan, which was prepared in 1986 and is the current adopted master plan for the Emma Caucus Area. The purpose of the Emma Master Plan is to define the community's vision for the future and establish plans and policies to help guide the area to realize that vision. The Master Plan process is intended to incorporate input from a wide range of those who live or own land in the Emma Caucus Area. The Emma Master Plan will serve as an extremely important advisory document in the review of land use applications and in the consideration of future proposed land use and zoning changes within the Caucus Area.

The preparation of this Existing Conditions Report is the first step in a five part process of preparing the Master Plan and future land use strategy for the Emma Caucus Area. The other steps include conducting a community input survey, establishing a set of goals and objectives to guide the development of the Master Plan and ensure its implementation once it has been adopted. The process will also result in the creation of a future land use strategy including the evaluation of alternative land use patterns for the Area and establishing a set of recommendations for implementation. The last step will be the preparation and adoption of the actual Master Plan document, of which this Existing conditions Report will be a chapter. Throughout the Master Planning process emphasis will be placed on community participation and there will be a number of opportunities for input on the Master Pan, including the community survey, which will be the next step in the process following the completion of this report.

2. Summary of Existing Conditions

The approximately 16,665-acre Emma Caucus Area includes mostly publicly-owned lands with privately-owned lands located along the drainage basins of East and West Sopris Creeks. Natural features in the valleys include the sage-oak-juniper hillsides that line the steep valleys of East and West Sopris Creeks and

the high meadows and mesas above the valley floor. The Caucus Area is predominantly rural residential and includes the large-lot subdivisions of Sopris Mountain Ranch, Tract 36, Flatbush Farm, Terliamis Tracts and Happy Day Ranch. Farming and ranching continue on the large properties that range from 35 acres to over 700 acres in size. The Sopris Mountain Ranch is a large development where homeowners support active agriculture on large areas of commonly-owned land. Other working ranches include McBride, Fender/McGuckin, Crown Mountain Ranch and Flatbush Farm. Handsome agricultural and historic buildings dot the landscape and compliment the open meadows and tight valleys within the Area. There are nearly 1,000 acres of permanently preserved lands comprised of several parcels located primarily in the northern portion of the Caucus Area.

Emma Road, Sopris Creek Road, East Sopris Creek Road and West Sopris Creek Road are the primary travel corridors within the Area and traffic flows at relatively uncongested levels along most of these main roads. East Sopris Creek Road connects to Capitol Creek Road and Highway 82 through Old Snowmass. Fishing, hiking, cycling and horse riding (including polo) are popular recreational activities within the Caucus Area. There are several trails on adjacent public lands, including connections up to the adjacent Crown area, which has an extensive system of trails.

The Caucus Area includes a wide variety of scenic environments ranging from steep narrow valleys to open meadows accented with historic agricultural buildings and back dropped by spectacular views of Mount Sopris.

BACKGROUND

Caucus Area Description and Regional Context

The Emma Caucus Area is located in north-central Pitkin County and contains approximately 16,665 acres. Figure 1 is a map showing the Caucus Area boundary. The Caucus Area abuts the Snowmass-Capitol Creek Caucus Area along its southeast boundary and the Crystal River Caucus Area along its western boundary. The Town of Basalt is located to the north and northeast of the Caucus Area. A portion of Basalt's Three-Mile Planning Area extends into the Emma Caucus Area (see Figure 1). The northern boundary of the Emma Caucus Area abuts both Eagle and Garfield Counties. The Caucus area contains Light Hill which forms its northeastern boundary. This ridge separates most of the developed portions of the caucus area from the Town of Basalt and the Highway 82 Corridor. Mount Sopris and the rest of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area, a sub-area of the White River National Forest, are located just south of the Caucus Area. The Crown, with its system of hiking and biking trails is located immediately to the west.

The Emma Caucus Parcel Map (Figure 2) shows the public and private lands within the Caucus boundary. Of the total acreage within the Caucus Area (16,665), approximately 7,589 acres are privately owned. The remaining 9,076 acres is owned by various public entities. The vast majority of the public land is owned and managed by the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Pitkin County Open Space and Trails also owns approximately 104 acres within the Caucus Area and the United States Department of Agriculture owns approximately 35 acres. There is no U. S. Forest Service (USFS) land within the Caucus Area, though USFS land abuts the Caucus Area along its southwest boundary as shown on Figure 2. Most of the privately-owned land is located along Sopris Creek and the East and West Sopris Creek Drainages.

Sopris Creek, and its tributaries, the major drainage in the Caucus Area, empty into the Roaring Fork River at a point just above Where Highway 82 crosses the river. The Roaring Fork River watershed is located within Pitkin, Eagle and Garfield Counties. The Roaring Fork River valley extends from the

headwaters at Independence Lake through the towns of Aspen, Basalt, El Jebel, Carbondale and Glenwood Springs.

Aspen, with a population of approximately 6,000, located about 14 miles east of the Caucus Area, is the major tourist draw in the region. The Town of Basalt immediately north and northeast together with the El Jebel area provides most of the commercial services for the residents within the Emma Caucus Area. The Town of Snowmass Village, also a tourist destination and ski resort, is located approximately 6 miles to the Southeast, though access to Snowmass Village by vehicle requires a much longer route utilizing Highway 82.

The Roaring Fork Valley, especially the area along Highway 82, has experienced aggressive growth over the past decade. Between 1997 and 2005 the adjacent Town of Basalt's population grew by more than 18%, while the adjacent Eagle and Garfield Counties grew by close to 10%. Pitkin County, with its more aggressive growth controls, grew by approximately 3.4 percent over that same period. Development pressure within the region has already spilled over to many of the rural areas of Pitkin County and presents a threat to the rural and agricultural lifestyle of even the most remote portions of the County. The BLM land within the Caucus Area and the US Forest Service lands to the south create a substantial buffer for the Emma Caucus Area. However, there is some potential for increasing development impacts to the north and on the vacant and agricultural lands within the Caucus Area.

The Town of Basalt went through a phase of annexing adjacent lands to increase its tax base. However, in recent years, the Town has been working to contain the urban sprawl that might otherwise be occurring on the surrounding vacant lands. At the time this Master Plan was being prepared, Basalt was in the process of updating its Master Plan and reevaluating its growth boundary and future land use strategy. The Snowmass-Capitol Creek Caucus prepared a master plan, which was adopted by Pitkin County in early 2004. The Snowmass-Capitol Creek Valleys Master Plan is intended to preserve the natural environment and the existing rural character which is similar to the rural portions of the Emma Caucus Area. The Snowmass-Capitol Creek Caucus has a long history of fighting to protect the rural landscape and natural watersheds.



SECTION TWO: EXISTING CONDITIONS

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1. Topography, Soils and Geology

The Emma Caucus Area ranges in elevation from a high of 8,720 feet to a low of 6,540 feet above sea level¹. Most of the terrain is comprised of the steeply sloping hillsides that flank East and West Sopris Creeks and the large, more gently sloping mesa that leads up to the Hay Park area. The Sopris Mountain Ranch subdivision is located on this mesa.

There are relatively few rock outcroppings or other geologic features within the Caucus Area. Much of the area is characterized by steep to gradually sloping terrain with pockets of more level terrain typically adjacent to the creeks or on near the tops of mesas. Frequent exposed areas of Mancos shale can be seen along the north side of West Sopris Creek Road. There are also a few rock outcroppings along the stretch of West Sopris Creek Road just below the Sopris Mountain Ranch.

2. Hydrology - Water Resources

The Emma Caucus Area includes lands in the drainage basins of East and West Sopris Creek and Sopris Creek. Sopris Creek enters the Roaring Fork River at a point just south of the Two Rivers Road/Highway 82 intersection. There are also numerous other, named and unnamed tributaries to Sopris Creek within the Caucus Area.

The Roaring Fork Conservancy recently completed the *2006 Roaring Fork Watershed Water Quality Report*, which presents the results of ongoing water quality testing of the Roaring Fork River and several tributary streams. While Sopris Creek is not one of the streams monitored, there is a monitoring station just downstream of the point where Sopris Creek empties into the Roaring Fork River. The water taken in the sampling was tested for dissolved metals, nutrients, hardness, alkalinity, pH, dissolved oxygen and macro-invertebrates. Water temperature was also recorded. Macro-invertebrate data is important because it provides an indication of the biological integrity of a stream. The water taken from the monitoring station downstream of the confluence of Sopris Creek and the Roaring Fork River was given an overall rating of

¹ United States Department of the Interior Geologic Survey, Basalt Quadrangle (7.5 Minute Series), last revised 1987.

“healthy” in this study. This means that the water has not exceeded stated standards for any of the parameters tested, although on occasion a single parameter may test high.

Sopris Creek has, in the past, been impacted by cattle grazing the riparian vegetation along the stream banks. These impacts were especially severe since the soils along the creeks erode easily. However, these conditions have improved in recent years due to changes in agricultural practices and the conversion of lands to open space through conservation easements.

Pitkin County requires residential development to be located outside of the 100 year floodplain as identified on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps maintained by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These maps identify the floodplains for all the large creeks in Colorado. Mapping of the Pitkin County is available from the Pitkin County Public Works Department. The mapping is at a fairly gross scale. If a property is located close to an identified floodplain or rivers edge, more detailed review may be required in association with a development application.

There are a few wetlands within the Emma Caucus Area, most of which are located in close proximity to creeks and ditches. Wetlands are identified by type of soils, vegetation and intermittent presence of water. Streams, wetlands and riparian areas are protected under the Pitkin County Land Use Code. The Current Pitkin County regulations identify wetland and riparian area buffers as a minimum of 100 feet horizontally for all new development. However, if an applicant can show that there would be no water quality degradation or stream bank erosion, the setback can be reduced to no less than 50 feet. A greater setback of up to 150 feet may be required in specific circumstances, for example where there are highly erodible soils or when necessary to protect streamside vegetation, riparian habitat or wetlands. In some cases, wetlands may also be protected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These cases primarily involve wetlands which are tributary to streams and rivers that are considered navigable. This standard has been applied to wetlands and streams in the Roaring Fork Valley since the Roaring Fork River is tributary to the Colorado River, portions of which are considered navigable.

3. Vegetation

The diverse patterns of vegetation in Pitkin County reflect the differences in soils, topography and climate throughout the area. The Emma Caucus Area contains several vegetative communities common in Pitkin County. Including pinion-juniper/sagebrush shrublands, aspen forests, mountain shrublands, mountain grassland and riparian communities. The general characteristics of these plant communities are described as follows.

Pinion-juniper and Sagebrush vegetation occurs in the lower elevations between 6,500 and 8,500 feet. These plants are well suited to south facing, drier sites. Pinyon-juniper is very slow growing and takes many years to evolve into the mature species that dominate some of the low hills in the area. Although sage is thought of as a hardy species, it can be destroyed by overuse. It is critical winter habitat for deer and elk. Areas of sage on the edge of Gambel’s oak and juniper shrublands is known to support the globally-vulnerable Herrington’s Penstemon.

Aspen forests are widely distributed below 10,000 feet. They contribute greatly to the aesthetic qualities of the area with the contrast of their white trunks and their colorful foliage. Aspen are known to be soil improvers, and they often have a lush understory that provides forage for a variety of big game. Among the 150 species of plants found in the understory vegetation, yarrow, geranium and columbine are often seen. The Aspen forest areas are found primarily on the upper reaches of the north facing slopes toward the south of the Caucus Area.

Mountain shrub, characterized by Gambel’s oak along with serviceberry and mountain mahogany occurs in the transition zone between the vegetation of the moister higher elevations and the more xeric sites. Mountain shrub vegetation is important forage for deer and elk.

Riverside vegetation, also known as *riparian* vegetation, is a vegetation type pertaining to the emergent zone adjacent to fresh water and distinguished from adjacent uplands. Riparian vegetation communities provide many important functions to the creatures that inhabit the river ecosystem and to the quality of the water in the river. This attractive vegetation includes cottonwood trees, blue spruce, willows and dogwood. This community is found in the lowlands along streams and in wetland areas. Substantial cottonwood stands can be found in a few locations along East Sopris Creek.

Mountain grassland originally inhabited the open meadows of the valleys. Over time these meadows have been irrigated, cultivated and seeded to include such species as timothy grass or alfalfa. These grassy meadows are also important wildlife habitat as they support the birds and smaller mammals that are the base of the food chain for big game.

Wet meadow vegetation is found near ponds and ditches. Common species include sedge, rushes and willows. Abundant high-quality herbage is produced in these areas that also serve as resting places for waterfowl. Wet sites and the moist transition areas are inappropriate for construction as per the Pitkin County Land Use Code.

The *Roaring Fork Watershed Biological Inventory, 1997-1999*, identifies two Potential Conservation Area (PCA) sites, containing globally vulnerable plant species, either partially or mostly within the Emma Caucus Area. They are *The Crown* and *Light Hill* areas. While the main portion of the Crown is located to the west of the Emma Caucus Area, approximately one third of the PCA extends into the Caucus Area. The PCA covers terrain on both sides of West Sopris Creek from the western edge of the Caucus Area to the convergence of East and West Sopris Creeks. The Crown PCA has a biodiversity ranking of B2 (very high significance). The Crown contains excellent habitat for supporting Harrington's Penstemon, a globally-vulnerable plant which is restricted to Colorado and is found almost exclusively in Sagebrush habitat. Until recently, this species had only been found in an area centered on Edwards in Eagle County. However, in 2003 specimens were identified on Missouri Heights near Coulter Creek. While a majority of the land within the PCA is publicly owned (BLM) management is recommended to maintain or improve the quality of the potential habitat. Management should include restrictions on hiking, biking and motorized vehicle use. The *Light Hill* PCA has as biodiversity ranking of B3 (high significance) also for the occurrence of the Harrington's Penstemon. Management (weed control and restricted recreation access) is also recommended to protect and improve the habitat in the Light Hill PCA.

Finally, *weed control* is an important issue related to vegetation. There is much concern about the spread of invasive plants including thistle, dandelion and knapweed. The County has a weed control program that requires landowners to keep their properties free of noxious weeds, however not all landowners are aware of the program and it is not strongly enforced.

4. Wildlife

The Emma Caucus Area contains significant areas of important habitat for both American Elk and Mule Deer, which are considered important species for monitoring and preserving the overall health of wildlife habitat. Figures 3 and 4 show the mapped habitat for Elk and Mule Deer. Most of the important winter habitat occurs near The Crown, in the area northwest of the Terliamis Tracts and on Light Hill. The data for these exhibits comes from the Colorado Division of Wildlife and is updated every four years. These exhibits are divided into four panels, one for each habitat type. For example, in the case of the Elk habitat, the panels show Highway Crossings, Migration Corridors, Summer Range and Production (calving), and Severe Winter Range and Winter Concentration habitats. Descriptions of the mapped habitat types are provided below.

Winter Range (Elk & Mule Deer): That part of the overall range of a species where 90% of the individuals are located during the average five winters out of ten from the first heavy snowfall to spring green up, or during a site specific period of winter for each Data Analysis Unit (DAU).

Severe Winter Range (Elk & Mule Deer): That part of the overall range where 90% of the individuals are located when the annual snowpack is at its maximum and/or temperatures are at a minimum in the two worst winters out of ten.

Winter Concentration Area (Elk & Mule Deer): That part of the winter range where densities are at least 200% greater than the surrounding winter range density during the same period used to define winter range in the average of five years out of ten.

Production Area (Elk): That part of the overall range of Elk occupied by the females from May 15 to June 15 for calving (only known areas are mapped and this does not include all production areas for the DAU).

Summer Range (Elk & Mule Deer): That part of the range of a species where 90% of the individuals are located between spring green-up and the first heavy snowfall or during a site specific period of summer as defined for each DAU. Summer range is not necessarily exclusive of winter range: in some areas summer range and winter range may overlap.

Summer Concentration (Elk): Those areas where elk concentrate from mid-June through mid-August. High quality forage, security and lack of disturbance are characteristics of these areas to meet the high energy demands of lactation, calving, antler growth, and general preparation for the rigors of fall and winter.

Migration Patterns and Corridors (Elk & Mule Deer): A specific mappable site through which large numbers of animals migrate and loss of which would change the migration route.

Highway Crossing (Elk & Mule Deer): Those areas where animal movements traditionally cross roads, presenting potential conflicts between animals and motorists.

The Roaring Fork Biological Inventory also identified important habitat for the state-rare sage sparrow at the Light Hill PCA.

5. Visual Quality

Figure 5 shows the areas designated for scenic view protection in the Pitkin County Land Use Code. Substantial portions of the Caucus Area are mapped as Scenic View Protection Area. There is also one Public Viewplane identified within the Caucus Area on Figure 5. There is no ridgeline mapping within the Caucus Area. The Pitkin County Land Use Code strongly discourages development of structures within a Scenic Viewplane. The Code also includes detailed criteria for considering development within mapped Scenic View Protection Areas. There is also a specific set of criteria for the “rural areas,” which includes the entire Emma Caucus Area. The criteria are intended to preserve the existing scenic character of the rural areas by locating new development in areas where they will create the least visual impact as viewed from public roads. Several additional photographs taken within the Caucus Area can found in the Appendix to this document.



View of Mount Sopris from West Sopris Creek Road – Photo by Tim Malloy



View along south side of Emma Road at Hooks Lane – Photo by Tim Malloy

The Emma Caucus Area contains a wide variety of terrain and scenic highlights. The area is characterized by clusters of suburban and rural residential development interspersed among large tracts of federal open space and large agricultural parcels. Most of the area retains a rural/agricultural feel with numerous horse ranches and other agricultural operations. The Caucus boundary contains large areas of BLM lands and private properties that are encumbered by the steep slopes that form the valley walls of East and West Sopris Creeks. These ownership and physical limitations have resulted in the Caucus Area being largely preserved with limited pockets of development occurring in the flatter areas found along the creeks. This is particularly evident along East Sopris Creek Road,

which includes stretches where little or no development is visible from the road.

The area along Emma Road from the Emma Townsite to Hooks Lane is characterized by flat to gently sloping meadows with pockets of residential development including the Orchard Estates and Double K Ranches subdivisions. However, most of the land is still relatively sparsely developed and large pastures lined with split rail fencing are a common scene along both sides of Emma Road between Sopris Creek Road and Hooks Lane.

Sopris Creek Road begins at the Emma School House and proceeds south to the intersection of East Sopris Creek Road and West Sopris Creek Road. The Emma School House, which is surrounded by the Emma Open Space, provides an entry marker for the Caucus Area and sets the tone for the rest of the Caucus Area, which is scattered with historic and agricultural structures. While the area surrounding the intersection of East and West Sopris Creek Roads is fairly densely developed, the upper portion of West Sopris Creek Road offers wonderful views of Mount Sopris with the meadows and agricultural structures of the Sopris Mountain Ranch in the foreground. Some of the homes in



Emma School House – Photo by Tim Malloy

the Sopris Mountain Ranch are visible from West Sopris Creek Road but many of the homes are located further back on the mesa and are not visible from the public road. Similarly, the homes in the area commonly referred to as Tract 36, are not visible from either West Sopris Creek Road or East Sopris Creek Road, though most of the 35-acre parcels within the Tract 36 area have been developed.

6. Air Quality

The air quality in the Emma Caucus Area is excellent since there is a limited amount of development and related traffic. Residents of the valley enjoy the clear air and the bright night sky. Controlled burning does impact the air quality in the valleys, especially in the spring when ditches are being burned. Pitkin County has strict air quality control standards including limiting wood burning fireplaces to one per residence.

7. Wildfire

Figure 6 shows the wildfire hazards within the Caucus Area as designated on the adopted Pitkin County Wildfire Hazard Maps, which are maintained in the Community Development Department. The Wildfire Maps show the areas of “severe,” “moderate,” and “low wildfire hazard.” However, these maps are a general reference and actual wildfire hazards are required to be field verified. As a general guideline, “low hazard” is located on slopes of zero to twenty (0-20) percent with discontinuous fuels; “moderate hazard” is located on slopes of ten to twenty (10-20) percent with continuous fuels, or slopes greater than twenty (20) percent with discontinuous fuels; and “severe hazard” is located on slopes greater than twenty (20) percent with continuous fuels. The County regulates development within “Severe Wildfire Hazard” and “Low to Moderate Wildfire Hazard” areas. The Pitkin County Land Use Code in effect at the time this Master Plan was being prepared, discourages development within areas of “severe wildfire hazard.” Development within any area with a wildfire hazard at or above the low hazard level is required to comply with the wildfire development standards contained in the Pitkin County Land Use Code.

The Emma Caucus Area is located in the Basalt & Rural Fire Protection District. The District controls the burning of ditches and brush that is only allowed via permit. Given the abundance of Pinyon Juniper and Scrub Oak, ditch burning can be hazardous within the Caucus Area. There are extensive recommendations by the Colorado State Forest Service regarding locating homes and managing property to minimize the potential for wildfire.

EXISTING LAND USE, ZONING AND BUILD-OUT ESTIMATE

1. Existing Land Use Pattern

Figure 7 shows the existing land use pattern within the Caucus Area. The predominant characteristic illustrated by this map, is the amount of public land (BLM) and other open space within the Caucus Area. Approximately 54% of the Caucus Area is publicly owned. The public lands are divided into three major areas. These areas generally divide the privately-owned lands into two linear clusters, one located along West Sopris Creek and the other along East Sopris Creek. These clusters are buffered on both sides by BLM lands and on the south by BLM and U.S. Forest Service land. This land use and ownership pattern together with the rugged terrain create natural limitations to development and protect the existing privately-owned lands from the impacts of excessive development that might occur within the Caucus Area were it not for these factors. Table 1 shows the acreage in each land use category shown on the Existing Land Use Map.

The Existing Land Use Map also shows two areas of more dense development, one surrounding the intersection of Sopris Creek Road with East and West Sopris Creek Roads and the other near the intersection of Emma Road and Highway 82. There are eight (8) subdivisions within the Caucus Area, including two small-lot subdivisions and one with condominiumized cabins. The small-lot subdivisions include Orchard Estates, which contains 22 lots that are generally one (1.0) acre in size and the Double K Ranches Subdivision, which contains 19 lots with an average lot size of two (2.0) acres.

**TABLE 1
EXISTING LAND USE**

	Acreage	Percent of Total
Residential		
Farm/Ranch Residential	3328.7	19.97%
Rura Residential	408.6	2.45%
Suburban Residential	86.0	0.52%
Sub-Total	3823.3	22.94%
Agriculture		
Agriculture Irrigated	1049.1	6.30%
Agriculture Dryland	1335.0	8.01%
Sub-Total	2384.1	14.31%
Commercial		
Light Industrial	7.8	0.05%
Sub-Total	7.8	0.05%
Public/Quasi-Public		
Public Facilities	1.0	0.01%
Sub-Total	1.0	0.01%
Open Space		
Public Open Space Federal	8971.5	53.83%
Public Open Space County	104.5	0.63%
Private Open Space	467.2	2.80%
Sub-Total	9543.2	57.26%
Other		
Vacant	905.6	5.43%
Conservation Easement*	1109.0	na
Sub-Total	905.6	5.43%
Grand Total	16665.0	100.00%

* This acreage is not included in the totals.

2. Active Agriculture and Open Space Conservation

There is still some active agricultural use, other than horse operations, remaining in the Emma Caucus Area. Several of the larger operations are located on either side of Emma Road between the Orchard Estates Subdivision and Hooks Lane. There are also a few small operations scattered around the Caucus Area. The Clarke's run cattle on the Crown Mountain Ranch, located south of the Double K Ranches and Orchard Estates subdivisions. However, most of the larger parcels in the Caucus Area contain horse operations. There are relatively few parcels remaining in the Caucus Area that are large enough to support active agriculture. There are only nine (9) parcels with more than 100 acres in the Caucus area, with the largest parcel being approximately 729 acres. There are approximately 89 parcels in the 35 to 50-acre range, many of which are "gentleman ranches" that accommodate a small number of horses. There are also a few instances where adjacent parcels are owned in common, creating a larger land holding. These include the Crown Mountain Ranch, which includes several parcels that have been assembled by the Clarks; and Flatbush Farm, which includes several 35-acre lots and one or two adjacent metes and bounds parcels under common ownership. There are also two or three lots in the Nystrom Tracts area which are commonly owned.

In addition to the lands owned by the Federal Government, there are several publicly-owned open space parcels within the Caucus Area, including two that are owned by Pitkin County Open Space and Trails and one by the Department of Agriculture. These parcels are shown on the Existing Land Use Map (Figure 7), the combined area of these parcels is approximately 105 acres. The Pitkin County parcels include the Emma Open Space and Brackett Open Space.

The Emma Open Space is located east of Sopris Creek Road behind the Emma School House. The Rio Grande Regional Trail divides the property into two parcels with the north parcel containing 18.3 acres, and south parcel containing 39.7 acres. These parcels were purchased by the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Board in June of 2000 and have been encumbered by a conservation easement that limits their future use to open space, recreation, wildlife habitat, and agricultural uses. The property had historically been used for irrigated pastures and is traversed by the Cramer Supply and Home Supply irrigation ditches. The Emma Open Space Interim Management Plan describes the uses and management strategies for the Emma Open Space. The management plan includes provisions for weed control and continued agricultural use. The County currently has a contract with a local rancher to maintain the irrigated pastures on the property. The Emma Open Space provides significant wildlife habitat including a migration corridor for Mule Deer. There is an existing wildlife underpass that provides a grade-separated access under Highway 82 to allow animals to move between the Light Hill and the Basalt State Wildlife Area, which is located on the north side of the Roaring Fork River. There are no structures or other improvements on the property.

The Brackett Open Space is located above and to the northwest of the Happy Day Ranch Subdivision and contains 49 acres. There is a trail, known as Nancy's Path, which starts in the Happy Day Ranch subdivision and connects to the Brackett Open Space.

There are several large parcels within the Caucus Area that have been permanently preserved through the recordation of conservation easements. These parcels are identified on the Existing Land Use Map (diagonal pattern); they contain approximately 1109 acres and are listed as follows:

- Crown Mountain Ranch – 560 Acres;
- Clarke Ranch – 105 Acres
- Sopris Mountain Ranch – 279 Acres;
- Parker Property – 26 Acres;
- Dept. of Agriculture – 34 Acres;
- Emma Open Space – 58 Acres;
- Brackett Open Space – 47 Acres.

The Crown Mountain Ranch is comprised of six (6) parcels and was conserved toward the end of 2006. The conservation easement reserved the right to develop four homesites on the conserved area. The Clarke Ranch is located immediately to the north of the Crown Mountain Ranch. The easement on this property is held by the Aspen Valley Land Trust. The conserved portion of the Sopris Mountain Ranch includes two adjacent parcels located near the southwest corner of the Caucus Area on the upper portion of West Sopris Creek Road. These parcels are owned by the Sopris Mountain Ranch Homeowner's Association but are encumbered by a conservation easement held by the Aspen Valley Land Trust. In all, the Sopris Mountain Ranch Homeowner's Association owns five (5) parcels, including the conserved parcels, totaling 360 acres. These parcels are used for agricultural and recreation purposes for homeowners within the Ranch.

The Parker Property was preserved through a conservation easement and contains the trail easement for Nancy's Path, which was mentioned previously. This trail is shown on the Parcel Map (Figure 2).

In recent years, there have been a number of large ranches in the County that have been preserved through limited development schemes that allow a small number of residential lots clustered on a portion of the ranch leaving the remainder to be permanently preserved through the recordation of a conservation easement deed. The Crown Mountain Ranch is an example of this limited development approach to conserving large parcels. This could be a valuable tool for conserving other lands within the Caucus Area. The Pitkin County Land Use Code includes a Conservation Development PUD option, which was incorporated when the Code was rewritten during 2005 and 2006. This provision includes an exemption from GMQS for two (2) residential dwelling units (including a limited amount of floor area) for each 160 acres held in common ownership. Another option allows certain commercial uses that are consistent with the existing agricultural operations on a given property. This option also allows residential development, though on a more limited basis than for the option where only residential development is contemplated. These options have been created to provide the owners of larger tracts of land options other than just converting the property to residential use.

3. Zoning

The amount and type of development that may occur in the Emma Caucus Area is controlled by the land use regulations of Pitkin County, especially zoning. Figure 8 shows the existing zone districts within the Caucus Area, of which there are only three, Resource/30-Acre (RS-30), Agricultural Residential/10-Acre (AR-10) and Rural/Remote (R/R). The following table provides a summary of the existing zone districts in the Emma Caucus Area, the amount of privately-owned land in each district and the intent and most important permitted uses in each district.

**TABLE 2
ZONING AND ACREAGE
(Privately-Owned Lands)**

Zone District	Intended Use	Min. Lot Size	Acreage	% Total
RS-30	SF Residential w/Resource Protection	30 Acres	6509.2	86%
AR-10	SF Residential and Agriculture	10 Acres	695.1	9%
R/R	SF Residential & open space	35 Acres	385	5%

The zone districts that comprise the Caucus Area are primarily intended to promote resource protection while allowing limited single-family residential development. The Down Valley Plan, which is the current adopted master plan for the Emma Caucus Area, designates most of the Caucus Area for Agriculture/Wildlife/Reserve (AWR), Rural Residential (RR) and Open Space (OS) uses. This shows that there is a history of intent to preserve the lands within the Caucus Area for open space, wildlife habitat and very low-density residential development through master planning and zoning. In 2006, the County approved the Crown Mountain Ranch rezoning and subdivision exemption project. The project resulted in the creation of a 385-acre parcel which was rezoned Rural Remote. In addition the project included the dedication of a conservation easement on the 560 acres that used to be Fender Ranch and an additional 105 adjacent acres that were owned by the Clarkes.

The County's Land Use Code also includes other provisions intended to protect the environment and visual character as well as govern the amount of development permitted in the rural areas of the County. These provisions are intended to control the rate of growth within the county and to minimize the scenic and environmental impacts associated with development. The Growth Management Quota System (GMQS) is a competition for residential floor area for new projects and for increasing the size of existing development. The GMQS system includes a Transferable Development Rights (TDR) program, which allows new development and additional floor area for existing homes in areas that meet the relevant criteria to receive square footage from areas that are less appropriate for development.

4. Residential Development and Build-out Analysis

There are approximately 232 privately-owned parcels (not including the Sopris Creek Cabins, which are condominiumized) that are located totally within the Emma Caucus Area. The Assessors records show that the Emma Caucus Area includes thirteen parcels that straddle the Pitkin/Eagle County boundary. These parcels are shown with a diagonal cross hatch pattern on Figure 2 of this report. Of the 232 privately-owned parcels, only 52 are either vacant residential lots or vacant agricultural parcels (excludes properties with conservation easements). This includes approximately 33 vacant residential lots and parcels. As shown in Table 2, 86% of the acreage of privately-owned land is zoned RS-30 and most of the future build-out would occur on those lands. Only 13 privately-owned properties have enough acreage to be subdivided within the RS-30 zone district. Four of these parcels are encumbered by conservation easements that either severely limit or eliminate their development potential, and one other is owned by the Sopris Mountain Ranch Homeowners Association. Similarly, there are only 13 privately-owned parcels within the AR-10 zone district that contain enough acreage to be subdivided and four (4) of these are encumbered by conservation easements and four (4) others contain at least one (1) existing dwelling unit.

Currently, there are approximately 173 dwelling units, including 10 condominiumized cabins, within the Caucus Area. A build-out analysis was conducted for the Caucus Area and is summarized in Table 3. This analysis shows that the potential exists for an additional 158 dwelling units for a total build-out of 331 units. The build-out calculation was done using the Pitkin County Assessor's parcel data based on existing zoning and parcel size and includes infill development on all parcels that do not currently contain a residential dwelling. The analysis excludes public lands, open space parcels and parcels encumbered by conservation easements; with the exception of the Crown Mountain Ranch (the conservation easement allows two new homesites). The analysis assumes that all lands would be fully developed and does not consider environmental constraints that may limit development such as critical wildlife habitat, steep slopes or other geologic factors. These numbers do not consider possible future employee housing units such as Caretaker or Employee Dwelling Units that might be constructed within the Caucus Area.

When preparing Basalt's most recent Master Plan, planners used half of the zoned density for the Pitkin County portion of the Three-Mile Area as a way of taking development constraints and growth management into account. This deduction resulted from conversations with the Pitkin County Community Development Department and was based on the planning staff's experience with land use approvals in recent years. If this deduction were applied to the build-out calculation shown in Table 3 the number of potential units would be reduced to 96.

Based on the household size for the unincorporated portion of Pitkin County in the most recent U.S. Census Data (2.39), the potential units calculated in the build-out analysis for the Emma Area would generate approximately 377 additional persons. This represents a population increase of approximately 94% given an estimated existing population of 403 persons.

**TABLE 3
EXISTING DWELLING UNITS AND BUILD-OUT POTENTIAL
(Privately Owned Lands)**

Zone District	Acreage	Existing Units	Potential Units	Total Build-out Units
RS-30	6509.2	110	119	229
AR-10	695.1	63	39	102
R/R	385.0	0	na	0
Total	7589.3	173	158	331

Source: *TG Malloy Consulting, LLC*

House size is controlled in Pitkin County. A house size of up to 5,750 SF is the baseline, but additional floor area can be acquired through TDR's and Growth Management Allocations. The average house size within the Caucus Area ("Heated Area" from Pitkin County Assessor's records) is 2,755 square feet. There are only 8 structures, whose total area exceeds the 5,750 square foot threshold according to the Assessor's Office data (Heated Area). This suggests that there is significant potential for additions to increase house size within the Caucus Area.

5. Growth Rate/Building Permit Trends

Building permit data for the years 2001 through 2006 was analyzed for this report. The data shows that building permits were issued for a total of 23 dwelling units, including 4 duplex units (two duplex structures) over those six years. Figure 9 shows the parcels for which building permits have been issued between 2001 and 2006. The parcels for which permits have been issued during this time frame are indicated by dot within the parcel boundaries. There are a few parcels for which several permits have been issued during this time frame and these are identified by multiple dots which correspond to the symbols in the map legend. Assuming all of these units are constructed, and based on the household size for the unincorporated portion of Pitkin County in the most recent U.S. Census Data (2.39), this translates to a population growth of 55 persons or 13.8% over the past six years. This represents an annual growth rate of approximately 2.3%, which is lower than the annual average for all of Pitkin County in recent years (3.4% for 2000-2005)² and considerably lower than the annual average for the unincorporated portions of Pitkin County (5.1% for 2000-2005).² This is not surprising given the limited number of vacant residential lots that exist within the Caucus Area.

Building permits have been issued at a rate of approximately 3.8 new dwelling units per year for the past six years. There have also been 19 permits, or an average of 3.2 permits per year, issued for additions and alterations to existing structures during that same period. The building permit data provided for this analysis did not provide information regarding the square footage of new structures or additions.

6. Commercial/Institutional Development

There is no commercial zoning within the Caucus Area. However, there are currently three commercial uses within the Caucus Area. These uses are discussed in detail in the Emma Sub-Area Plan, which was completed in April of 2006. The three parcels are identified on the Existing Land Use Map as industrial uses. Two of the commercial uses are contractor storage uses and the third is a vehicle and equipment storage use. According to the current owner of the vehicle storage use, the vehicles and equipment are all owned by him and several of his relatives. The property includes one large storage building, which contains vehicles, equipment and other materials. There is also a small welding contractor who uses the property to store materials, etc. The property is relatively small and has a triangular configuration.

Another of the commercial uses is located just east of the Double K Ranches Subdivision on the south side of Emma Road. The property is approximately 4.2 acres in size and has been used as a contractor storage yard since the early 1970's. The property contains a large shop building which is used to store and maintain vehicles used in the earthmoving business, which operates on the site. The property does not include a residence and no one lives on the property at this time. There is an existing stand of trees located along the western property line that helps screen the vehicle storage areas and shop building from adjacent properties to the west. There is also a large stand of spruce trees located to the east of the entry drive. These trees provide some screening for the property as viewed from the east but screening for the existing use could be improved by locating trees along the east and north property lines.

The second commercial use is also a contractor storage facility and is located on the north side of Emma Road directly north of the other contractor storage yard discussed above. The property is approximately 3

² Colorado Demography Office.

acres in size and contains a small dump truck business as well as a single-family residence, which is lived in by the operator of the trucking business. This property has been in the current owner's family since the mid 1930's and, according to the current owners, has been used for a trucking business for over 30 years. Sopris Creek runs through the site from south to north and divides the property roughly in half. The business involves the maintenance and storage of approximately 6 dump trucks and other equipment. There is a small building in the area where the trucks are located. Presumably, this building is used for business purposes. The drivers of the trucks meet at the site and park their personal vehicles on the property during the day. The current configuration of the property is the result of the Highway 82 relocation, which significantly impacted the property for residential use. The Rio Grande Trail runs along the north side of this property. There is an underpass, which provides pedestrian access under Highway 82, near this property.

All three of these uses would require special review use approval from Pitkin County under the current Land Use Code. No special use permits had been granted at the time this Existing Conditions Report was prepared. During the Emma Sub-Area planning process, it was determined that, if they are found to have been legally established, the Emma Caucus community would support the continued operation of these three uses for the life of the current owner or the sale of the property by the current owner, whichever comes first. After that point the properties should be converted to a use allowed under the zoning in place at the time of transition. When the Emma Sub-Area Plan was being prepared, it was acknowledged that the mechanism for allowing these uses to continue could vary depending on the actual use and its past history. The Emma Sub-Area Plan did not recommend, or support, rezoning of any of these properties to accommodate the existing use. It was recommended that other avenues be pursued to confirm or establish the legal status of the uses. One avenue for accomplishing this is for the property owner(s) to demonstrate that the use was established prior to the adoption of the Pitkin County Land Use Code of 1975.

There may be a significant number of residents that work from their homes. Home occupations that are conducted entirely within a residence by a person who lives in the residence and is incidental to the residential use are allowed within the AR-10 and RS-30 zone districts, provided they do not change the residential character of the property. The Land Use Code also includes a list of a dozen so commercial uses which do not qualify as home occupations. An attempt will be made to gather more information regarding home occupations through the community profile survey process, which will be conducted during the next phase of this master plan process.

7. Cultural and Historic Sites³

The Emma Caucus Area contains 14 sites with structures identified in the Pitkin County Historic Inventory (see Table 4). The County's historic inventory is somewhat informal at this time and the County is seeking to formalize and refine the inventory in the near future. The location of these sites is depicted on Figure 10. The number on Figure 10 corresponds to the map number in the left-hand column on Table 4. The most visible and well known of these structures are the Emma Schoolhouse and the brick buildings located near the intersection of Highway 82 and Sopris Creek/Emma Road. These building were part of the original Emma Townsite, which was built around a rail stop on the Aspen Branch of the Denver & Rio-Grande railroad line and is a unique historic resource in the region. The town was reportedly named after Mrs. Emma Robinson Shehi, who cooked for the railroad crews. Settlement in the Emma Townsite area seems to have begun around the late 1880's, with many of the historic structures identified in the Inventory being built around this time or later. The train stop was used to deliver goods to the ranching and farming community that existed at that time and to deliver food produced by ranchers and farmers in the surrounding region. During World War II this area was reportedly instrumental in producing food for the war effort. While it is believed that the Emma Townsite included a number of buildings, including a train station, the only structures that remain are the Emma Schoolhouse and the

³ Most of the information in this section comes from the Colorado Historic Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, *Historic Building Inventory Record*. Other information provided by Suzannah Reid, Reid Architects.

white house and other brick buildings on the Minney property, which is located on the north side of Highway 82.

The largest brick building on the Minney property (Item 2 on Table 4) contained the original Emma Store (east half) and the livery stable, jail and produce storage (west half). The smaller building, located to the north of the Emma Store building, was a storehouse. All of these buildings, including the white house, were built around 1898 and were determined to be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Buildings back in 2000 when they were surveyed. The house has been renovated and is in good condition. However, the Emma Store and Storehouse buildings are in very poor condition and may be in danger of collapsing.

According to Suzannah Reid, the County’s historic preservation consultant, destruction of the buildings on the Minney property or the Emma Schoolhouse would be a significant loss. As the only examples of commercial and public buildings of the ranching community in the Mid-valley area, these structures have region-wide significance.

The Emma School house was built during the same era and is also a candidate for inclusion on the National Register. At one time, there was an effort to have the Emma Schoolhouse included on the State Register. The building has been used as a gathering place for many years and has been well maintained.

**TABLE 4
HISTORIC INVENTORY SITES**

Map #	State ID No.	Property Address	Historic Name	PID No.
1	5PT27	Sopris Creek Rd and Emma Rd	Emma School	246513200801
2	5PT323	1611 Emma Rd	Emma Store / Mather Mercantile	246512400015
3	5PT782	4236 W. Sopris Creek Rd	Sloss Ranch House	246533201003
4	5PT783	3706 W. Sopris Creek	Theos Ranch Homestead	246528401003
5	5PT784	0300 Vagneur Lane	Davis Homestead	246524201019
6	5PT786	0321 Sopris Creek Rd	Chatfield Homestead	246513200016
7	5PT787	1776 Emma Rd	W.D. Philips Ranch Homestead	246513200014
8	5PT788	2127 Emma Rd	Mackey Barn	246511400002
9	5PT789	2250 Emma Rd	Dossigny Residence	246514100003
10	5PT790	2956 Emma Rd	None listed (Happy Day Ranch)	246514200001
11	5PT791	3004 Emma Rd	Robinson Homestead	246510400002
12	5PT792	Emma Rd, Basalt	Mather Residence, Emma Store House	246512400015
13	5PT818	2211 E. Sopris Creek Rd	None listed (Scales)	246525200003
14	na	0513 Sopris Creek Rd	Fender Ranch	246513300004

Source: Suzannah Reid, Ried Architects

The Emma Caucus Area has a long history of agriculture and most of the remainder of the historic sites contain farm and ranch homesteads and other agricultural structures. The ranch lands within the Caucus Area were typically used to raise cattle, sheep, chickens, pigs, hay and potatoes. A full set of Historic Building History Record documents for the inventoried sites within the Emma Caucus Area is included in the Appendix of this report.

Site number 14 in this inventory is a portion of the Crown Mountain Ranch (formerly known as the Fender Ranch). Two of the structures on this property were found to be eligible for inclusion on the Pitkin County Register of Historic Places during the review of the Crown Mountain Ranch Subdivision Exemption application in 2006. A deed restriction agreement was recorded for this property in December of 2006. The deed restriction provides some protection for the historic structures on the property. A copy of the deed restriction agreement and associated attachments is included in the Appendix of this report.

8. Affordable Housing Inventory

There are very few fully deed restricted affordable housing units within the Caucus Area. According to the inventory kept by the Aspen/Pitkin County Affordable Housing Office, there are a total of seven (7) deed restricted units located on two parcels, not including Caretaker and Employee Dwelling Units. These deed restricted affordable housing units are shown on the Historic and Affordable Housing Map (Figure 10). The two parcels are Lot 5 of the Happy Day Ranch and the Sopris Creek Cabins property. There are 6 fully deed restricted ownership units on the Sopris Creek Cabins property that have been in the inventory for many years. These units are referred to as Lots 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 and 9. The units on Lots 1, 2, 5, 7 and 9 are restricted to Category 3 price and income level, while the Lot 8 unit is restricted to the Category 1 level. Lot 5 of the Happy Day Ranch was donated to Pitkin County and then Pitkin County donated the lot to Habitat for Humanity, who built a single-family residence on the property. The property was then sold with some form of deed restriction. The exact details of the deed restriction were not researched for this Report.

There is also some number of Caretaker and Employee Dwelling Units located within the Caucus Area, the exact number has not been determined for this analysis. These units are small (750 square feet for CDUs and 1,500 square feet for EDU's) and are not fully deed restricted. The deed restriction for CDU's does not require that they be rented and allows them to be occupied by family members. Employee Dwelling Units (EDU) are required to be rented and for periods of not less than six months. Many properties within the Caucus Area are eligible for construction of an EDU or CDU, pending the required land use approval from the County. Proliferation of these units would have an impact on the overall density of development within the Caucus Area and on the related impacts of development.

9. Mineral Exploration or Extraction

There is no known mineral exploration or extraction occurring within the Emma Caucus Area at this time.

ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

1. Roads

Figure 11 shows the roads within the Emma Caucus Area. The primary roads are Emma Road, Sopris Creek Road, East Sopris Creek Road and West Sopris Creek Road. These are the only roads, other than Highway 82 which passes through a very small portion of the Caucus Area, which connect through to other areas of the County. All of the other roads in the Caucus Area are either dead-end or loop roads that serve primarily local residents. The main access to the Caucus Area off Highway 82 is at the Emma Road/Sopris Creek Road intersection, near the Emma Schoolhouse. Access to Highway 82 can also be obtained via Snowmass Creek Road by taking East Sopris Creek Road and Capital Creek Road through the Snowmass/Capital Creek Caucus Area. This route is probably only used by those who live along East Sopris Creek Road and a few others.

The lower portion of Sopris Creek Road, between Highway 82 and the intersection of East and West Sopris Creek Roads is the most heavily traveled road segment in the Caucus area. According to the Pitkin County Asset Management Plan (2006), this stretch of road receives between 1,000 and 5,000 trips per day. This segment of Sopris Creek Road and the segment of Emma Road between Highway 82 and Hooks Lane are the only road segments that are included in the County's "high service area" classification. Both East Sopris Creek Road and West Sopris Creek Road fall into the "moderate service area" category. The westernmost .44 miles of West Sopris Creek Road, as it approaches the intersection with Prince Creek Road, is in the "low service area" category. These service area designations are used to define the level of service that the County provides to the roads it manages. Table 5 describes the

management characteristics of the major roads in the caucus area. The following are excerpts from the Pitkin County Asset Management Plan explaining the service area designations.

“High Service Area: *The high service area includes roads within or adjacent to the more densely developed population areas such as the Aspen / Snowmass metro area or collector roads which are used for commuting to and from these population centers. These roads are built to Class 2-B specifications or better, and they form the primary road system. Roads within the high service area will receive the greatest level of maintenance by the County. Ease of travel by vehicles will be the primary goal of these maintenance efforts. Non-vehicular uses will be accommodated within road right-of-way in a safe and effective manner, based upon the policies stated above. Road maintenance practices are based on the type of vehicles most appropriate for the service area. Road maintenance in (sic) high service area roads will provide the greatest level of service for all vehicles.”*

“Moderate Service Area: *The moderate service area includes roads that allow access to medium-density residential developments and improved subdivisions and may be used as commuting alternatives to Highway 82. Roads in this service area are built to Class 3 specifications or better and serve as the secondary road system. They typically carry less traffic than the high service area roads. Maintenance of roads in the moderate service area will attempt to provide comfortable safe travel. These roads will not receive the priority maintenance of the high service area roads, but will be maintained for safe passage. Road maintenance in (sic) moderate service area roads will be consistently maintained at a level lower than the high service area roads, and will not allow improvements such as widened shoulders, straightened alignments, or improved sight distance to occur simply to improve ease of travel. Improvements may occur on road segments when warranted by safety reasons. Heavy transport vehicles may be restricted in moderate service area roads. ”*

“Low Service Area: *The low service area includes roads that allow access to low-density residential, ranching and public uses but are removed from high travel corridors and population centers. Roads in this service area are usually built to Class 4 specifications or better. These roads typically access low-density developments or popular recreational destinations. Maintenance of the roads in the low service area will attempt to provide access to specified areas, but not necessarily comfortable travel. These roads will not receive maintenance levels as high as those seen in the moderate area of service. Road users can expect the roads in this service area to be passable and adequately maintained at most times. However, the user must accept a reduced ease of travel on these roads because of the policies followed by the County. Snow plowing may not occur in as timely a fashion as seen in the moderate service area. This reduced level of plowing may temporarily limit ease of passage. Motorized vehicles will share the driving surface with other modes of travel and must accommodate these additional uses. Road maintenance in low service area roads will be a low priority. Basic services will be similar to moderate service area roads, but will be a lower priority than the moderate level of service. Capital road improvements will be made only when warranted by safety reasons.”*

TABLE 5
MANAGEMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF COUNTY ROADS
(Pitkin County Asset Management Plan, 2006)

ROAD NAME	LENGTH (miles)	SERVICE LEVEL	ACCESS TYPE	WINTER MAINTAINENCE	MAINTAIN
Apple Drive	0.49	Moderate		plowed	Pitkin
Bear Ridge Road			unimproved		
Cherry Lane	0.06	Moderate		plowed	Pitkin
Dry Creek Road			unimproved		
E Fork Lane					
E Sopris Creek Road	5.22	Moderate	local	plowed	Pitkin
Emma Road	1.50	High	local	plowed	Pitkin
Emma West Road			local		
Greenfields		Low	primitive		
Hooks Lane					
Horseshoe Drive	0.56	Moderate		plowed	Pitkin
Old Herron Road					
Plum Street	0.06	Moderate		plowed	Pitkin
Sage Rim Circle					
Skookum Lane			unimproved		
Sopris Moutain Ranch Road					
Spring Creek Road					
Stone Road			unimproved		
Vagneur Lane					
West Sopris Creek Road	6.33	Moderate	rural	plowed	Pitkin

Source: *Pitkin County Asset Management Plan (2006)*.

Where the table above does not show Pitkin County in the “Maintain” Column, these roads are within the subdivisions and are maintained by entities other than Pitkin County, typically a homeowner’s association.

The Pitkin County Public Works Department is in the process of preparing a Transportation Master Plan for the next 20 years. This Plan will include a 20-Year Capital Improvements Plan. The Capital Improvements Plan will be used to guide decisions regarding safety improvements and pavement management throughout the County. As part of this effort, the Public Works Department is seeking input from the various caucus groups throughout the county regarding where people would like to see roadway infrastructure improvements. The Public Works Department is hoping to submit a list of findings to the Board of County Commissioners for review and prioritization in June or July of this year. This is a good opportunity for the Emma Caucus Area since questions regarding the roadway and transportation system can be addressed during the preparation of the Caucus Master Plan and conveyed to the Public Works Department for consideration in the County’s long-term capital improvements planning.

2. Transportation

The RFTA local bus route on Highway 82 between Glenwood Springs and Aspen has stops at several locations in the Basalt Area. The nearest stop is at Aspen Junction, which is located near the intersection of Two Rivers Road and Highway 82 and includes a Park & Ride lot. Due to the low density of the area, there is no public transportation within the Emma Caucus Area.

TRAILS AND RECREATION

Public Landowners: The United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Pitkin County Open Space and Trails and The U.S. Department of Agriculture are the three public landholders in the area. The United States Forest Service controls lands to the south of Caucus Area. The BLM controls lands scattered throughout the Caucus Area, while Pitkin County owns the Emma Open Space and Brackett Open Space properties.

In March of 2007 the BLM launched a process to update the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for BLM-owned lands located within the jurisdiction of the Glenwood Field Office. This includes the BLM lands located within the Emma Caucus Area, which represent a substantial portion of the total BLM land located within Pitkin County. The RMP provides the overall framework for managing BLM-administered lands. The process of updating the RMP will require the approval of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A record of decision (ROD), the final step in the process of approving the revised RMP, is not expected to be issued until late in 2009. However, the planning issues that will be analyzed during the RMP process were being identified during a scoping process, which was expected to be completed by early May of 2007. Some of the preliminary planning issues that had been identified at the time the Emma Caucus Existing Conditions Report was being prepared were listed in the Scoping Information Packet for the Glenwood Springs Filed Office and are repeated here as follows:

- **Oil and Gas Development** – How much land should be open, closed, or subject to constraints for oil and mineral leasing?
- **Range Health/Upland Management (livestock grazing)** – How will livestock grazing be managed to also allow for a mix of vegetative types, structural states, and landscape and riparian functions?
- **Water/Riparian Issues** – How will riparian and wetland systems be managed to improve or maintain habitat quality for fish, wildlife, plants, and invertebrates while also meeting tribal, state, and local water quality requirements/standards/regulations?
- **Recreation Demands and Uses** – How will increasing recreation and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use be managed?
- **Comprehensive Travel Management and Transportation** – What are the appropriate travel management areas to meet RMP goals and objectives?
- **Cultural Resources** – What measures will be implemented to proactively manage, protect, and use cultural resources, including traditional cultural properties, while also allowing for the development or use of other resources in the planning area?
- **Maintaining Habitat for Sage Grouse and Sagebrush Obligate Species** – How will the sagebrush steppe ecosystem be managed to balance uses while conserving sage and grouse and sagebrush-obligate species?
- **Rapidly Expanding Urban Interface Areas** – How will BLM accommodate foreseeable growth while balancing the want and needs of the surrounding communities?

The above list, while not complete, includes some of the issues which the BLM and others consider to be the foremost issues facing the BLM field offices in this region. The Emma Caucus may wish to use the Caucus Master Plan process to gather public input and information to be used to provide input to the BLM during the RMP update process.

Public Trails: There are relatively few trails or other recreational facilities in the Caucus Area. The best known trails are the Rio Grande Regional Trail and the Emma Trail. The Rio Grande Trail, a regional trail that will eventually extend from Aspen to Glenwood Springs, runs through the Emma Open Space and is paved within the Caucus Area. The Emma Trail connects East and West Basalt and runs down the old Emma Road right-of-way on the north side of Highway 82. These two trails are connected via an underpass which extends under Highway 82 and is located approximately 400 feet west of the Emma Road intersection. Other trails within the Caucus Area include Nancy's Path, which starts at East Fork Lane in the Happy Day Ranch Subdivision and extends up to the Brackett Open Space and other points on the Crown. The Light Hill Trail begins on East Sopris Creek Road, very near the southern boundary of the Caucus Area, traverses up onto Light Hill and connects to the Gateway Subdivision. There is also a trail that runs along the ridge of Crown Mountain above West Sopris Creek Road. This trail can be accessed off of Stone Road and off of West Sopris Creek Road at a point west of the Caucus Area boundary. Each year the use on these trails increases with associated impacts to vegetation and drainage. The Dinkle Lake Trailhead, which provides access to the Hay Park and Thomas Lakes Trails on the White

River Forest, is located just south of the Caucus Area. This is one of the most popular trailheads in the region and the Hay Park Trail is a very popular cycling trail.

Because of the rural character of the area, many residents enjoy walking, running or riding on local roads.

Equestrian Activities (horseback riding and polo): There are many privately-owned horses in the Caucus Area. Sopris Mountain Ranch has a large horse operation. Polo is popular in this area and there is at least one mowed hayfield on East Sopris Creek Road that has been used for polo events in the past.

Hunting: The Forest Service controls commercial use of the backcountry and they issue use permits to backcountry outfitters. Individuals may also acquire hunting permits for bow and arrow hunting or regular deer and elk hunting during the appropriate seasons.

Winter Activities: X-country skiing occurs on several of the local hiking trails and on privately owned lands.

SPECIAL DISTRICTS, ADJACENT JURISDICTIONS & UTILITIES

1. Special Districts

Tax areas, and the special taxing districts with authority to levy taxes in each area, are shown on the Special District Map (Figure 12). The Emma Caucus Area traverses three taxing areas that collect taxes for several special taxing districts. However, there are no privately-owned lands within the easternmost taxing area (069) and only six (6) privately-owned lots in the western district (014). The vast majority of the privately-owned lands within the Caucus Area are located in Tax Area 016. Taxes for the following special taxing district are collected within Tax Area 016:

- Aspen Valley Hospital;
- Basalt Fire District;
- Basalt Library District;
- Roaring Fork School District;
- Basalt Water Conservancy;
- Crown Mountain Parks and Recreation District.

2. Adjacent Jurisdictions

The Emma Caucus Area is unique in Pitkin County in that it abuts two other counties and an incorporated municipality. The regulatory environment of the Caucus Area and surrounding lands involves zoning regulations and planning documents from several jurisdictions, including Pitkin, Garfield and Eagle Counties and the Town of Basalt. The Caucus Area is located entirely within Pitkin County and most of the properties within the Caucus Area fall under Pitkin County jurisdiction with respect to planning and zoning. There are a few small parcels that straddle the boundary between Pitkin and Eagle Counties and most of them fall under Eagle County jurisdiction, since the building site is located on the Eagle County side of the property.

The Town of Basalt's Three-Mile Planning Area extends into the Emma Caucus Area as shown on Figure 1. While the Town of Basalt does not have jurisdiction over areas outside its municipal boundaries, it has gathered information for the Three-Mile-Area in an effort to better understand the land use and development issues affecting the land surrounding the Town. In reality, the Town of Basalt is highly unlikely to consider annexation or other actions that would affect the Emma Caucus Area because the portion of the Caucus Area nearest the current Town limits is encumbered by the steep slopes of Light

Hill, which provides a formidable barrier between the Town and the developed lands within the Caucus Area. The Town has entered into an intergovernmental agreement with Pitkin County. This agreement provides both jurisdictions with referral authority in land use applications and other planning matters.

The regulatory environment for Eagle County and the Town of Basalt is summarized in the following paragraphs. Since there is no privately-owned land in the portion of the Emma Caucus Area that abuts Garfield County, there is no need to review Garfield County's planning or zoning regulations.

Eagle County

Zoning: There are thirteen parcels, which are partially located in the Emma Caucus Area, that are under the jurisdiction of Eagle County. These are lots within the Wirkler Subdivision on the north side of Highway 82 and along the north side of Emma Road west of Horseshoe Drive (see Figure 2). The lots in the Wirkler Subdivision are designated Rural Residential (RR) on the Eagle County Zoning Map. This zone district is intended for low-density single-family residential development with lot sizes of 2 acres and greater. The Wirkler Subdivision lots are all over 4 acres in size, so technically there is additional development potential associated with these lots. The zoning for the Eagle County portion of the properties along the north side of Emma Road includes Resource (R) and Agricultural Limited (AL). These zone districts are intended to maintain the open rural character of areas outside of the County's towns, community centers and resorts and to protect and enhance the appropriate use of natural resources and agricultural uses, while allowing limited low density residential development. The minimum lot size in the Resource zone district is 35 acres and 5 acres for the Agricultural Limited zone district. Most of the properties along the north side of Emma Road are smaller than the required minimum lot size, leaving little development potential under the current zoning.

Town of Basalt

Basalt Master Plan: The current Basalt Master Plan was adopted in 1999 and contains several policies related to development in the Three-Mile-Area. It should be noted that the Town was in the process of amending its Master Plan when this report was being prepared. The Master Plan goals and policies discussed in this report relative to the Emma Area have not been altered to this point in the amendment process. One change that has been discussed is to improve the connections, both vehicular and pedestrian, between East and West Basalt.

In general, the Basalt Master Plan seeks to preserve agricultural land and open space around the existing developed areas. One objective of the plan that deals specifically with the Emma Area is to *"maintain an open space buffer between East Basalt and West Basalt to prevent urban scale development which would merge these two developed areas."* Another pertinent objective of the Basalt Master Plan reads as follows; *"Strictly enforce the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and Urban Service Area (USA) identified in this Master Plan to ensure that future development occurs within or close to existing developed areas."* The UGB and USA boundaries define an area relatively close to the existing Town boundaries. No portion of the Study Area is located within the UGB or USA boundaries. As part of the current Master Plan update the Town is reevaluating its urban growth boundaries.

The Future Land Use Map contained in the 1999 Basalt Master Plan shows the lands within the Emma Caucus Area as agriculture, public open space and rural residential. The approach taken when the Future Land Use Map was developed was to show all lands outside of the UGB with the land use that existed on these properties at that time.

When the Grace Church proposal was being reviewed by Pitkin County, the application was referred to the Town of Basalt for comment, pursuant to the terms of the intergovernmental agreement between the Town and Pitkin County. The Town of Basalt's Planning Commission reviewed an original proposal, and then a revised proposal, in 2004 and urged the County to deny the proposal citing, among other things,

that the facility constituted urban level development outside of the Town's UGB and that such a facility should be built within the UGB and not within the rural area. This position is consistent with goals and objectives of the Basalt Master Plan and is a relatively recent expression of the Town's position regarding development within the Emma Area.

3. Utilities/Services

Central sewer and water service are not currently available in any portion of the Emma Caucus Area. Telephone and electricity are available throughout the Caucus Area. Fire Protection is provided by the Basalt and Rural Fire District. The nearest fire stations are located in El Jebel (Station 42), East Basalt (Station 41) and on Snowmass Creek Road near the Lazy-O Ranch (Station 44). Due to the large and often remote nature of the Basalt and Rural Fire District, they state that it's impossible for them to accurately calculate response times to a structure fire in outlying areas. Factors affecting response times include season, weather, time of day, road conditions, and availability of responding volunteer personnel. For these reasons, the Fire District and Sheriff's Department encourage residents in outlying areas to be prepared to self-rescue in the event of a wildfire. The Fire District also provides a guide, the *Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Information Guide*, to inform people about ways to protect themselves and their property in rural areas.