

Crystal River Valley Master Plan Revision

January 14, 2016

Table of Contents	
Major Topic	Page #
Introduction	1
Core Values	2
Executive Summary	3
Master Plan Sections	
I. Environment	5
II. Recreation and Open Space	7
III. Growth	8
IV. Housing	8
V. Commercial and Retail	9
VI. Infrastructure	10
VII. Social Services	11
VII. Agriculture	11

Introduction

This revision was initiated by a request from Pitkin County to update concerns and goals of Caucus members and to address Climate Change preparedness and other issues.¹ In a series of meetings in 2014 and 2015 the Caucus members reviewed, updated and modified the 2001 - 2003 Crystal River Valley Master Plan (CRVMP) documents. This text contains these agreed upon aims, edited and streamlined to facilitate communication with other Caucuses, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and County Departments. The original CRVMP documents are available for reference on the County's website portion devoted to the Crystal River Caucus. The Caucus requests that all County Departments consult with the Caucus early in the process of developing any significant new initiatives affecting the Crystal River Valley. i.e. the January 2012 Crystal Trail Planning agreement between Pitkin County Open Space and Trails and the Caucus calling for a community steering committee for the next stage of Trail development.

¹ The Crystal River Caucus decided to use the existing major topic sections from 2001-2003 CRVMP. However, most of the topics proposed by the Caucus Round Table were addressed: Climate Change & Preparedness, Food Security, Needs of Seniors, Economic Resilience, Renewable Energy, Water Resources, Air Quality, Wildfire, Telecommunications, Public Lands, Weeds, Agriculture, Roads and Bike Routes, Marijuana, Special Events, Mineral Development, Housing and Mosquito Abatement

Core values.

Our Valley is first and foremost a place where preservation of the natural environment and the protection of our rural character are valued. As the rest of our state becomes increasingly urbanized, the Crystal River Valley is a place where the rural character should remain substantially unchanged. We value the preservation of open space, wildlife habitat, the Highway 133 scenic corridor, and water quality in the Crystal River valley. The Caucus supports climate change mitigation and protection to prevent environmental deterioration. We enjoy the out of doors and believe recreational opportunities should be expanded -- including walking, hiking, cross-country skiing, bicycle riding, horseback riding and whitewater sports. The Caucus supports development of a Pedestrian and Bicycle Path as part of the West Elk Loop path within the existing highway right-of-way and/or on a separate grade where appropriate. The safety of users and wildlife protection should be paramount in planning such a path.

We support limiting growth in our valley, consistent with the core values outlined above, and believe that future development should not occur at the expense of endangering wildlife or habitat. Housing designs should be compatible with the environment and rural character of the Valley.

The County shall support small-scale commercial activities and the economic vitality of existing and home based businesses. To preserve the environment and rural character of the Crystal River Valley, other commercial development should be confined to the area defined by the Redstone Master Plan. Historical, cultural and archaeological sites are valued and incentives that encourage their preservation should be developed.

We support safety improvements on Highway 133 and the need to reduce highway noise. The Caucus is strongly opposed to the routine transportation on Hwy 133 of hazardous chemicals used in the drilling, fracking and extraction of fossil fuels. The potential for damage to the Crystal River and our Valley is simply too high. The Caucus requests that the County and State work to reduce or eliminate this hazard.

Social Services need attention and require improvement. Agriculture is recognized as an irreplaceable treasure in our valley and we support using a range of tools and/or steps to ensure its continued presence and viability.

Executive Summary

Maintaining the rural character and environmental integrity is an overarching goal of the entire Master Plan. The Caucus supports the following strategies to maintain ecosystem and cultural integrity.

Environment. Lands within the Crystal River Valley Planning Area should be maintained in a manner that protects the natural environment and maintains the rural and agriculture character of the valley. The Caucus supports federal Wild, Scenic and Recreational designation for the Crystal River. The Caucus believes recreational opportunities should be encouraged -- including walking, hiking, cross-country skiing, bicycle riding, horseback riding, whitewater sports and other non-motorized activities. The County should establish ongoing, scientifically defensible, air and water quality monitoring in the Crystal River Valley.

Climate change: response and preparedness. Present climate change trends present a significant threat to our Valley's character and ecosystems in the near and long-term. To mitigate and respond to these changes local efforts are important. The County is encouraged to work with private and public individuals and agencies on the following issues.

Renewable energy and energy efficiency: Mitigating the impact of climate change requires increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources.

Public lands within the Crystal River Valley shall be managed to protect and preserve the natural environment and maintain recreational uses and grazing.

Mining, mineral exploration and drilling: Protect lands within the Crystal River Valley from the impacts of mining, mineral exploration, oil and gas exploration, sand and gravel pits, rock crushers, concrete batch plants and other extractive operations.

Weed management: The County shall improve coordination between landowners to address noxious and invasive weed management. Distinction must be made between native plants beneficial to pollinators and those noxious to livestock.

Recreation and Open Space. A bicycle and pedestrian trail as part of the West Elk Loop should be developed. Trails should be designed to protect human safety and utility while minimizing impact upon wildlife, habitat, and stream health and integrity. The Caucus supports expanding non-motorized recreational activities, to maintain the integrity of the Valley's ecosystems (refer to the Environment Section.) Access for residents and visitors to these varied recreational activities should be maintained and improved.

Growth. To protect ecosystems, air and water quality and quantity the Caucus supports a limitation on growth to no more than the historic average. Residents of the Crystal River Valley wish to ensure that future growth is consistent with the rural character of the valley, reflects sensitivity to the natural and built environment; and is sustainable with respect to carrying capacity.

Housing. Promote residential development patterns that fit within the context of the Crystal River Valley's existing rural setting. Maintaining a balance between residential development and responsible environmental stewardship is essential.

Commercial and Retail. To preserve the rural character of the Crystal River Valley the County shall support home based businesses and small-scale commercial activities.

Infrastructure. New development must provide sufficient infrastructure that is compatible with the goals of the Master Plan. Safety improvements along Hwy 133 are important. The Caucus is strongly opposed to the routine transportation on Hwy 133 of hazardous chemicals used in the drilling, fracking and extraction of fossil fuels. The potential for damage to the Crystal River and our environment is simply too high. The Caucus requests that the County and State work to reduce or eliminate this hazard.

Social services. The Caucus supports the ongoing County efforts to expand Social Services, which are inadequate.

Agriculture The Crystal River Valley Caucus recognizes the value and benefits of its agricultural lands to its rural character, economic vitality and environmental sustainability. The Caucus recognizes the value of a sustainably sourced local supply to food security. Therefore, the Caucus and the County shall encourage these uses within the Crystal River Valley Planning Area. The County should modify planning and zoning requirements and fees to enhance the economic viability of agricultural producers.

I. ENVIRONMENT:

Lands within the Crystal River Valley Planning Area should be maintained in a manner that preserves and protects the natural environment, encourages non-motorized recreational activities and maintains the rural and agriculture character of the valley. The County should establish ongoing, scientifically defensible, air and water quality monitoring in the Crystal River Valley. The County should plan for and provide incentives to achieve the following more specific goals.

A. Future development must:

- Be sensitive to the unique landscape, physical features and visual beauty which define the valley;
- Minimize solid waste and pollution: including air, light and noise pollution.
- Promote an environmental ethic which reflects climate change and preparedness including effective wildfire management strategies and renewable energy awareness;
- Prevent the negative impacts associated with mineral development, and
- Protect wildlife and wildlife habitat, and air and water quality and quantity.

B. Protection of landscapes, views and ridgelines:

- Create a zoning overlay to protect the views along State Highway 133 and other designated corridors.
- Urge the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Board to purchase easements to protect the landscape and visual beauty of the valley.
- Protect landscapes, views and ridgelines by creating zoning overlays, purchasing easements, and revising regulations to achieve these goals.

C. Preserve, protect and improve water resources and riparian and wetland habitat throughout the Crystal River valley. Variable and limited water remains a major limitation to development in the arid West. To achieve this complex goal the County should:

- Support Federal designation of the Crystal River as Wild and Scenic,
- Monitor water quality and quantity throughout the Crystal River watershed to maintain stream flows and protect groundwater,
- Support ecologically sustainable development setbacks from streams and encourage Best Management Practices (BMPs) for agricultural water users,
- Support changes in Colorado water law to prioritize water conservation,
- Oppose trans-basin and out-of-watershed diversions from the Crystal River and its tributaries, and
- Support the purchase of water rights from water rights holders and donation of those rights to the Colorado River Water Conservation Board for the benefit of aquatic wildlife.

D. **CLIMATE CHANGE, RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS.** Present climate change trends present a significant threat to our Valley's character and ecosystems in the near and long-term. To mitigate and respond to these changes local efforts are important. The County is encouraged to work with private and public individuals and agencies on the following issues.

- Wildfire:
 - Promote land use and forest management strategies to mitigate increased wildfire potential.
 - Enable landowners to create defensible spaces by helping to secure fire mitigation funding.
 - Encourage wildfire resistant building and landscaping.
- Weather variability is expected to increase both flood and drought frequency and severity. Therefore the County should:
 - Implement land use and natural resource management strategies to reduce flood hazard, and
 - Develop strong water conservation and wise water use recommendations to protect streams and rivers.
- Biodiversity:
 - Support forest management strategies that maintain native biodiversity focusing on ecological connectivity and resiliency.
- Resilient Infrastructure:
 - Consider design and location of climate-resilient building.
 - Provide tax incentives to encourage "climate-resilient" building. See also the section on housing.
- Economic Resilience:
 - Explore strategies to encourage a diverse economy to respond to changing snowpack and other climate related impacts upon tourism.

E. RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY. Mitigating the impact of climate change requires increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources. Therefore, the County should:

- Encourage the development of community and regional renewable energy sources within the Caucus area,
- Encourage Holy Cross and other energy suppliers to connect residents with regional renewable energy sources,
- Promote resource efficiency in existing and new structures to support community resiliency, economic vibrancy, environmental protection,
- Meet or exceed the goal of reducing energy from non-renewable sources by at least 20% throughout the County by 2020.

F. PUBLIC LANDS. Public lands within the Crystal River Valley shall be managed to protect and preserve the natural environment, while maintaining passive recreational uses and livestock grazing. To achieve this goal the County shall:

- Encourage the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to work to protect and preserve the natural environment and develop formal agreements to achieve this goal, and
- Strengthen the "Activities of State and Local Concern" provisions of 1041 in the Land Use Code to minimize the development of major new physical infrastructure within our Valley.

G. MINING, MINERAL EXPLORATION AND DRILLING: Protect lands within the Crystal River Planning area from the environmental impacts of mining, mineral

exploration, oil and gas drilling and exploration, sand and gravel pits, rock crushers, concrete batch plants and other extractive operations. The County shall:

- Ensure strict enforcement of all applicable regulations governing extraction and similar exploitation of natural resources. Amend state and federal laws to enable local regulation of such operations.
- Require such operations to maintain current air and water quality, and not diminish surface and ground water supply.
- Support policy initiatives that require minimum setbacks from homes for new oil and gas wells and grant local governments the power to enact environmental regulations more restrictive than State laws.

F. **WEED MANAGEMENT.** The County shall improve coordination with Caucuses and landowners to effectively address noxious and invasive weed management. Integrated weed management and spot spraying are preferred strategies to broadcast spraying of herbicides. A clear distinction must be made between native plants beneficial to pollinators and those noxious to livestock (e.g. milkweeds are essential to Monarch butterflies but are toxic to cattle and have been eliminated).

II. **RECREATION and Open Space:**

The Caucus supports expanding non-motorized recreational activities, which maintain the integrity of the Valley's ecosystems (refer to the Environment Section.) Access for residents and visitors to these varied recreational activities should be maintained and improved. Trails should be designed to protect human safety and utility while minimizing impact upon wildlife, habitat, and stream health and integrity. To achieve these goals the Caucus supports:

1. Extending the existing bicycle and pedestrian (or multi-use) path in the Crystal River Valley to be part of the West Elk Loop and Scenic Byway. The trail shall be designed for user safety, wildlife and habitat protection and consider best science, other available information and input from landowners along proposed routes.
2. Existing campgrounds. However, the Caucus is opposed to significant expansion of these or development of new campgrounds.
3. The efforts of the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Board and/or other conservation groups as they continue to acquire conservation easements or real property for the mutual benefit of landowners and the public.
4. The acquisition and designation of Open Spaces should be balanced between wildlife habitat and recreational use.
5. Sustainable wildlife management on Open Space lands, in co-ordination with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife.
6. Encourage cross-country skiing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, rafting, kayaking and other non-motorized uses on public lands, which are consistent with sustainable conservation practices.

Members are enthusiastic about the initial ~6 mile bicycle and pedestrian trail from Carbondale South to the Campground for its design, separation from the highway and functionality. The Caucus recognizes that it may not be feasible to continue such a trail within the Hwy 133 right of way the entire distance to McClure Pass.

III. GROWTH. Residents of the Crystal River Valley wish to ensure that future growth is consistent with the rural character of the valley, reflects sensitivity to the natural and built environment; and is sustainable with respect to carrying capacity. The following objectives are intended to mitigate impacts of growth upon our Valley. The County should review and modify code language to achieve the following goals.

1. To protect ecosystems and air and water quality, growth should be limited to no more than the historic average rate.
2. Regional watershed planning and collaboration is fundamental to maintaining healthy rivers and water quality. See the Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Report and the Roaring Fork Watershed Management Plan.
3. Development should not disturb the integrity of existing and natural drainage patterns, nor increase the potential for damage by flood, erosion or sedimentation, or water pollution.
4. Zoning and land use plans should encourage the development of low density and/or rural clustered detached single family homes, while providing incentives for the preservation of open, agricultural or other resource lands.
5. Revise the Future Land Use Map to accomplish the following:
 - Identify areas that may be appropriate for a voluntary agricultural zone district and related commercial use designation.
 - Identify those areas around Redstone that may be considered for a lower density (more than 10 acre) rural land use designation.
 - The County should identify and designate public lands that are appropriate for Forest and Natural Resource conservation.
6. The Caucus recommends that the County purchase the "BARN" parcel adjacent to the Redstone Castle as designated Open Space.
7. All uses not listed by right should be considered only by special review on a case-by-case basis.

IV. HOUSING: Promote residential development patterns that fit within the context of the Crystal River Valley's existing rural setting. Maintaining a balance between residential development and responsible environmental stewardship is essential.

1. Establish a house size square footage limitation that may be exceeded under specific circumstances, to a maximum house size cap, which may not be exceeded under any circumstances. These limits should be based upon existing housing and the average house size presently recorded on County maps in each sub-section of the Crystal River planning area.
2. Continue the use of Transferrable Development Rights (TDR's) as incentives for lower density housing and to preserve larger tracts of land (>35 acres).

3. Incentivize affordable housing for employees.
4. Encourage building of affordable, climate-resilient and environmentally friendly homes, the County should provide incentives for new buildings and renovations to promote such goals. Incentives might include: reducing the County's high construction or access fees as well as taxes and rebates for each goal achieved:
 - House size 20% or more smaller than the average for that area of the valley;
 - Building design which meets optimal energy efficiency standards and where feasible uses renewable energy extensively;
 - Building and landscape design which is wildfire resistant in materials chosen for the roof and exterior surfaces with optimal defensible space, and
 - Water conserving and bird friendly building features.

V. COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL

To preserve the rural character of the Crystal River Valley while providing employment within the Valley, the County shall support small-scale commercial activities and the economic vitality of existing and home based businesses. To achieve this goal the County should:

1. Consider small-scale commercial development as a special review use,
2. Limit commercial recreational activities to those that are low impact in nature,
3. Prohibit strip malls and big box stores,
4. Work with the Towns of Redstone and Carbondale to assure that the goals of the Crystal River Valley Master Plan are incorporated into their future acquisition and development plans, and
5. Limit the development of new, and the expansion of old lodges, hotels or motels in the Crystal River Valley corridor outside the Village of Redstone. To achieve this the County should:
 - Amend the Tourist zone district in the Land Use Code to update it relative to uses and scale appropriate for the Crystal River.
 - Place a limitation on the size and square footage of commercial structures to be exceeded only by special review.
6. However, the County shall work with new and existing enterprises to ensure their economic viability (e.g. those on Redstone Blvd, Avalanche Ranch and the KOA Campground).
7. Assure that the Pitkin County Land Use Code requires new or expanded commercial or lodge activities to mitigate their housing and road impacts. Home based businesses and small-scale agricultural commercial uses, which meet yet to be developed standards, may be exempted from mitigation as an incentive to support economic vitality in the County.

VI. INFRASTRUCTURE: New development must provide sufficient infrastructure compatible with the goals of the Master Plan. Safety improvements along Hwy 133 are important. The Caucus is strongly opposed to the routine transportation on Highway 133 of hazardous chemicals used in the drilling, fracking and extraction of fossil fuels. The potential for damage to the Crystal River and our environment is simply too high. The Caucus requests that the County and State work to reduce or eliminate this hazard. The County should develop code language that requires infrastructure be adequate to support any proposed development.

2. To address the following transportation issues along Highway 133 the County and CDOT should:

- Create significantly wider shoulders on the highway;
- Mitigate road-kill by enabling wildlife's safe daily and annual migratory movement across Hwy 133 using "state of the science" motion detector-triggered warning lights;
- Support the use of wildlife-friendly fencing as recommended by Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

(<https://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/LandWater/PrivateLandPrograms/FencingWithWildlifeInMind.pdf>) An ideal wildlife-friendly fence:

- Is highly visible to ungulates and birds;
- Allows wildlife to jump over or crawl under;
- Provides wildlife access to important habitats and travel corridors.

3. Limit heavy truck traffic carrying hazardous material that is likely to result in chemical spills into the Crystal River of carcinogenic and toxic chemicals used in extractive energy development.

- Limit the transport of hazardous materials not destined for use within our Valley (e.g. propane, diesel fuel, etc.).
- Reduce the impacts from heavy truck traffic including noise, traffic level and environmental degradation.

4. Adopt Colorado Natural Heritage Program's BMPs to Conserve Roadside Populations of Colorado's Globally Imperiled Plants.

5. The County and State should work together to achieve better speed limit enforcement.

6. The County and State should work to improve access and safety to Redstone Blvd, especially at the South entrance where we recommend:

- A delineated left hand turn lane for southbound traffic on Hwy 133,
- Clear sight distance at the corners of Redstone Blvd and Hwy 133, with natural entrance landscaping set back from the entrances,
- Delineated trail crossing signage for pedestrians accessing the coke ovens with consideration given to an under or over highway pedestrian crossing, and

• Signage to inform oncoming traffic of a busy intersection. **MASS TRANSIT:** The Caucus favors the development of mass transit as the population of the Valley, including Marble continues to expand steadily. The Counties should work together and with RFTA to develop such a program, which might

begin with a jitney/small bus program. Such service might initially be confined to weekend service to access entertainment and shopping.

7. **TELECOMMUNICATIONS:** The Caucus supports County research and facilitation of the extension of affordable wireless communication and Internet services, to address the needs of governments, businesses, and citizens of Pitkin County. Provision of service should minimize associated negative impacts.

VII. SOCIAL SERVICES: Social Services warrant improvement.

1. The Crystal River Caucus supports the provision of access to services such as education, public safety, affordable quality health care, and access to recreation, arts and culture as a means of strengthening the quality of life and wellbeing for residents, including seniors.
2. The County should work with RFTA to provide daily shuttle bus service for residents to and from Redstone to the Carbondale RFTA lot, with additional stops along the route. Service for seniors should be subsidized or free.
3. Mental Health Services including inpatient and outpatient services are inadequate. At present, there are neither crisis intervention services nor any acute care inpatient psychiatric beds in Pitkin or Garfield Counties. Such services and facilities are urgently needed.
4. The Caucus encourages the development of lower cost housing options. Housing designs should be compatible with the environment and rural character of the Valley. Refer to the section on housing for several options to create incentives to meet this goal.

VIII. AGRICULTURE. The Crystal River Valley Caucus recognizes the value and benefits of its agricultural lands to its rural character, economic vitality and environmental sustainability. The Caucus recognizes the value of a sustainably sourced local supply to food security. Therefore, the Caucus and the County shall encourage these uses within the Crystal River Valley Planning Area. The County should modify planning and zoning requirements and fees to enhance the economic viability of agricultural producers.

1. *Food Security:* Support local growers and markets, to have reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious, locally grown food. In addition the County should:
 - Support development of community gardens;
 - Encourage neighborhood farm and food stands and the necessary supportive signage (e.g. signs of at least 10 sq. ft., or the blue CDOT roadside advertisements with no annual renewal fees);
 - Lease appropriate lands for agricultural uses.
2. *Economically viable agriculture:* The County should support local growers by:
 - Providing common sense variances for agricultural buildings.

- Meeting infrastructure needs that maintain financial viability of farm and ranch activities. County code should:
 - Permit onsite housing for farm laborers;
 - Promote agro-tourism by permitting lodging for farm stays and special events on site;
 - Designing rules that are responsive to changing market forces and that enable commercial viability, examples include:
 - Composting operations and waste stream recycling;
 - Greenhouses;
 - Mobile animal processing; and
 - Value added processing of farm products and related infrastructure.
3. *Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture:* The County should:
 - Protect water quality and quantity essential to agriculture.
 - Discourage the use of environmentally persistent pesticides and herbicides.
 - Encourage integrated pest management in farming practices. (At www.Xerces.org see Farming for Pest Management.)
 - Work with landowners to close waste stream loops.
 - Work with landowners and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to implement best soil conservation practices.
 - Re-establish a relationship with a local CSU extension agent.
 4. *Zoning and land use policies* within the overall planning area should encourage agricultural vitality within the Valley. The County should:
 - Add flexibility to the current Planned Unit Development (PUD) and 1041 regulations to promote agriculture;
 - Establish zoning, legislation and code requirements to encourage continued preservation of productive farm and ranch lands in the Valley;
 - Identify areas on the Future Land Use Map where an agricultural overlay/district may be applied;
 - Prioritize agricultural land uses over exurban development;
 - Adopt right to farm/ranch laws to protect agricultural uses;
 - Promote conservation policies and conservation easements that maintain the landowner's agricultural vitality;
 - Maintain and upgrade as indicated the County Code's current Growth Management Quota System and the use of Transferrable Development Rights (TDRs) and other rules to maintain the rural character of the Valley.
 5. The Caucus supports agricultural production of hemp for fiber, oil and other products.
 6. The Caucus remains open to considering applications for grow, manufacturing or lab sites for marijuana on a case-by-case basis. The Caucus previously rejected retail marijuana outlets in the Caucus area.