

CONEJOS COUNTY

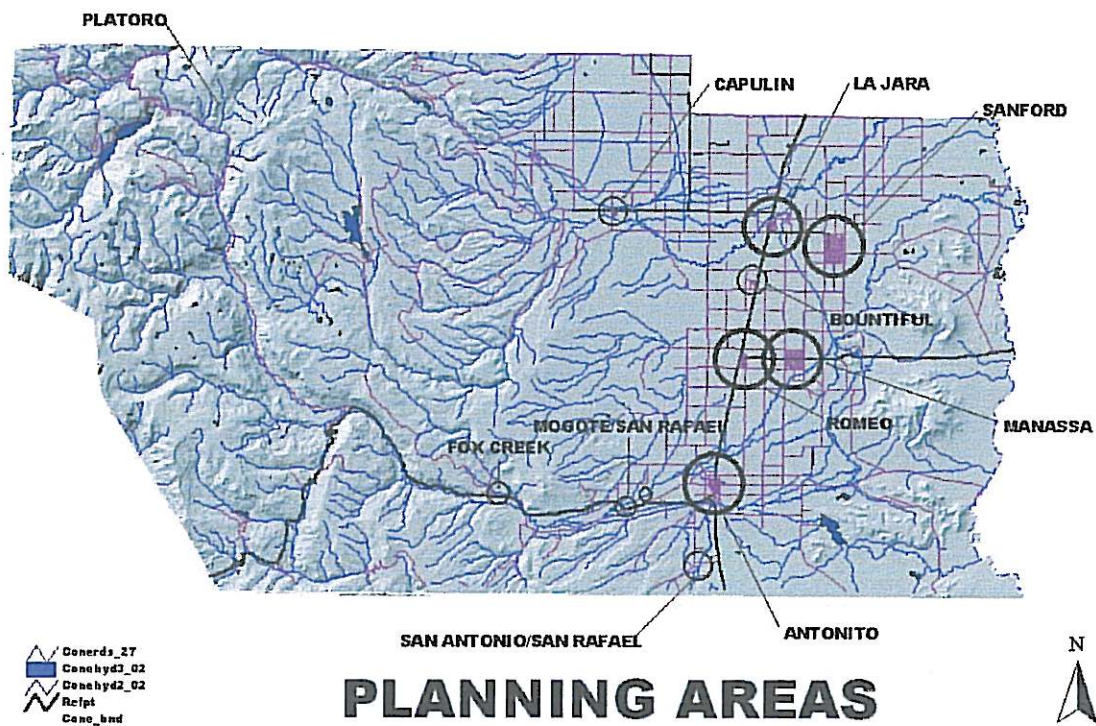
COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN



CONEJOS COUNTY PLANNING
COMMISSION

CONEJOS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

CONEJOS COUNTY



ADOPTED
NOVEMBER 19, 2003

CONEJOS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

**BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION
CONEJOS COUNTY RESOLUTION NUMBER: 2003-03
A RESOLUTION ADOPTING CONEJOS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN .**

WHEREAS, CONEJOS COUNTY, COLORADO, acting through its Planning Commission is empowered pursuant to Section 30-28-109, C.R.S. to make and adopt a Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Conejos County Comprehensive Plan has been prepared for the unincorporated area of the County, and

WHEREAS, The Conejos County Comprehensive Plan complies with the requirements of Section 30-2-106 and 30-28-107, C.R.S. and

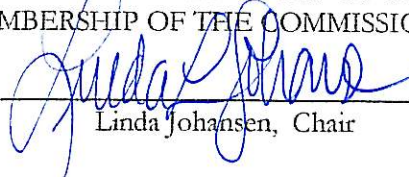
WHEREAS, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearings on Conejos County Comprehensive Plan on February 26, 2003, March 26, 2003, November 19th, 2003, and

WHEREAS, THE Planning Commission believes it in the best interest of the County that Conejos County Comprehensive adopted,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING
COMMISSION OF CONEJOS COUNTY, COLORADO;**

1. Conejos County Comprehensive Plan, dated 2003, be and hereby is adopted.
2. Conejos County Comprehensive Plan as adopted hereby, expressly includes maps and other matter, intended by the Planning Commission to form the whole of Conejos County Comprehensive Plan, all of which materials are contained within the plan document itself, and which plan document is hereby declared to be part of the Plan.
3. That the action of the Planning Commission adopting Conejos County Comprehensive Plan shall be recorded on Conejos County Comprehensive Plan by the identifying signature of the Acting Chair to the Commission.
4. A copy of this Resolution shall be attached to each copy of Conejos County Comprehensive Plan and shall serve as an attestation that each such copy is a true and correct copy of the Plan as adopted.
5. That an attested copy of Conejos County Comprehensive Plan shall be and hereby is certified to the Conejos County Board of Commissioners pursuant to 30-28-109, C.R.S.

MOVED, SECONDED AND ADOPTED ON THE 19th DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2003 BY THE AFFIRMATIVE VOTES OF NOT LESS THAN A MAJORITY OF THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION, BY A VOTE OF 5 YES AND 0 NO.


Linda Johansen, Chair

CONEJOS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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J. Steven McCarrol

CONEJOS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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Manassa Town Hall
Sanford Town Hall
La Jara Town Hall
Romeo Town Hall
Pete Magee, San Luis Valley GIS/GPS
Authority
CON-CEPTS

In Memory



Robert McCarrol, Conejos County
Commissioner (July 5, 1930– August
20, 2003), whose vision and support
for this plan never faltered

This plan was funded by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs via the Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance Program with matching funds by Conejos County.

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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is intended to serve as the process for updating the policies for growth and development decisions within Conejos County, Colorado. Its primary goal is to translate citizen vision into public policy, establishing planning tools that enable Conejos County and the communities of Antonito, Capulin, La Jara, Manassa, Romeo and Sanford to guide their future with forethought and purpose. Fundamental objectives of the project are: 1) an updated comprehensive plan for Conejos County that includes sub-area plans for municipalities; 2) land use code updates; and 3) intergovernmental agreements.

The plan is prepared in accordance with the state statutes that authorize the Conejos County Planning Commission to develop a master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory within Conejos County. Per C.R.S. 30-28-107, the purpose of the plan is “guiding and accomplishing a coordinated and harmonious development of the relevant territory, which, in accordance with present and future needs and resources, will best promote the general welfare of the inhabitants” of Conejos County.

The approach to master planning and this project is best described as character-based comprehensive planning. As with a traditional plan, statistical and demographic interpretive data are used to support land use, transportation, housing, and other plan elements. However, a character-based plan is founded on a “preferred plan direction”, which reflects community vision for existing and future land uses. Ideal for rural areas, character-based plans emphasize policies that retain a sense of place, recognize the diversity of the natural and built environment, and seek to achieve long-term economic sustainability. Most importantly the character-based plan is action-oriented, focusing on efforts to ensure that specific policies are implemented. Citizen involvement in charting a desired future is the cornerstone of character-based comprehensive planning, leading to greater acceptance of specific plan implementation measures inclusive of development code updates and intergovernmental agreements.

1.2 Land Use Planning History

Conejos County is in the process of re-evaluating its past and present land use activities, while planning for future growth and development. Over the past two decades and since the inception of land use planning and regulation there has been a myriad of land use applications ranging from residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational to community infrastructure improvements such as updating water and sanitation facilities. Overall, the goal of regulating land use and development has been to safeguard the health, welfare and safety of all the county's residents. Without proper land use controls Conejos County is faced with uncontrolled development that contributes to a diminished quality of life and deteriorating physical environment. A brief overview of Conejos County land use history provides a summary of the past activities that have led to the present state of land tenure in the county. It is important to look at the present state of the county and where it might be headed in this next century of land use, especially in context with shifting demographics and fringe rural growth.

The 2000 Census figures indicate a population increase of 947 persons or 12.7 per cent since 1990. The majority of the gain occurred in the unincorporated areas of the county. As population increases in Conejos County there will be more pressure and stress on the private lands and the agricultural economy. It is clear that the County is steadily growing while the amount of land available for development is diminishing. Along with the population growth is the diversity of potential land uses that new residents bring to the area.

Land use planning in Conejos County first began with the adoption of Subdivision Regulations in 1971 as mandated by the State of Colorado and in cooperation with the San Luis Valley Regional Development and Planning Commission. The subdivision regulations were enacted in order to provide a process for regulating land divisions and making sure that the proper provisions for infrastructure were in place. Prior to the enactment of the regulations subdivisions were platted into lots that disregard the natural landform and sizes equivalent to a fraction of an acre. By 1977, approximately one percent of Conejos County land had been subdivided into residential lots. Land divisions are still occurring with an emphasis on smaller family land divisions. Popular recreation related subdivisions are continuing to develop along the Conejos River and other water courses. These streamside areas are beginning to increase in density posing a threat to the contamination of the water quality due to effluent and discharges from septic tanks and illegal cesspools.



Figure 1 Lake Fork Development along Conejos River

1.3 The Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The comprehensive land use plan provides guidelines and policy for local officials to support their decisions about the quality, location, and amount of development that is to occur. The effective time frame for this plan is generally ten to twenty years. The Conejos County Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1977 is now twenty-four years old and in need of updating. Financing for this plan came from an Urban Planning Grant via The Department of Housing and Urban Development under the provisions of The Housing Act of 1954. The comprehensive plan was the first document to establish planning program goals, objectives, policies, and standards for land use development and activities in the county. Although the information and statistics are out of date the plan served as a general reference on Conejos County. The usefulness of the comprehensive plan lies in its capacity to serve as an advisory document for evaluating public policy and land use proposals at the pre-application phase in conjunction with zoning district regulations.

1.4 The Planning Process

The planning process used to create the master plan involves public participation with political acceptance and technical analysis with policy development. Three milestones of public involvement are: 1) creation of community dialogue and identification of public values; 2) evaluation and selection of plan alternatives; and 3) review and approval of plan documents. An Advisory Committee comprised of Conejos County Commissioners, County Planning Commissioners, and officials from Antonito, La Jara, Manassa, Romeo, and Sanford jointly guide the planning process. In addition, the Planning Director worked closely with the staff of the Conejos County Land Use Office to understand local culture, coordinate plan activities, and facilitate public meetings.

The planning area as represented by maps is constructed in successive layers of information based on a Geographic Information System (GIS). Next economic, population, and other relevant data is assembled into a community profile. Environmental, service, infrastructure, and land use information is compiled and mapped. An environmental conditions analysis identifies natural constraints to growth, service and infrastructure analysis evaluates capacity for development, and the land use analysis displays growth patterns and historic resources. Taken together and shaped by public values, planning alternatives and ultimately a preferred plan direction with specific goals and detailed policy actions emerge. This methodical planning approach establishes a solid foundation for updating codes, developing intergovernmental agreements, and initiating specific sub-area plans.

A meeting to formulate an advisory committee to plan for the upcoming County Forums was held on January 30, 2002. The advisory committee is composed of members from Conejos County Planning Commission and Land Use Office, County Administration, Municipalities, and CON-CEPTs.

Public involvement is the cornerstone of the planning process. Several "county forums" were scheduled throughout the county. The objective of the forums was to introduce the project, identify key issues, and discuss ideas for the future of Conejos County (See Appendix Two). All county residents have been invited to attend the meetings. As a supplement to these meetings and for the benefit of those residents unable to attend a newsletter was mailed to county residents in April. The newsletter contained information about the comprehensive plan, its elements and goals. Additionally, Conejos County Land Use staff met with communities, groups, and individuals interested in providing input to the planning process. The following table lists the forums and meeting venues:

FORUM LOCATION	DATE	MEETING VENUE
Capulin	Feb. 28, 2002	Community Forum
Romeo	March 11, 2002	Town Hall Presentation
Sanford	March 13, 2002	Town Hall Presentation
Conejos	March 20, 2002	Community Forum
Manassa	March 21, 2002	Town Hall Presentation
Los Sauses	April 4, 2002	Ditch Association Meeting
La Jara	April 11, 2002	Town Hall Meeting
La Jara	May 9, 2002	Community Forum
Conejos Canyon	June 12, 2002	Community Forum
Antonito	Oct. 10, 2002	Town Hall Worksession

After the public forums, a second newsletter and questionnaire was circulated to prioritize local and regional planning issues generated from the forums and meetings. Information from the forums and the questionnaire will be combined with the analysis of environmental, service/infrastructure, and land use conditions to create a set of plan alternatives. An open house event to review the plan alternatives was scheduled for October 16, 2002. A second questionnaire was circulated at the meetings and other public places to identify preferences from each alternative. Questionnaire results were used to prepare a recommended plan alternative, which become the basis for plan policies and action strategies (See Appendix Two).

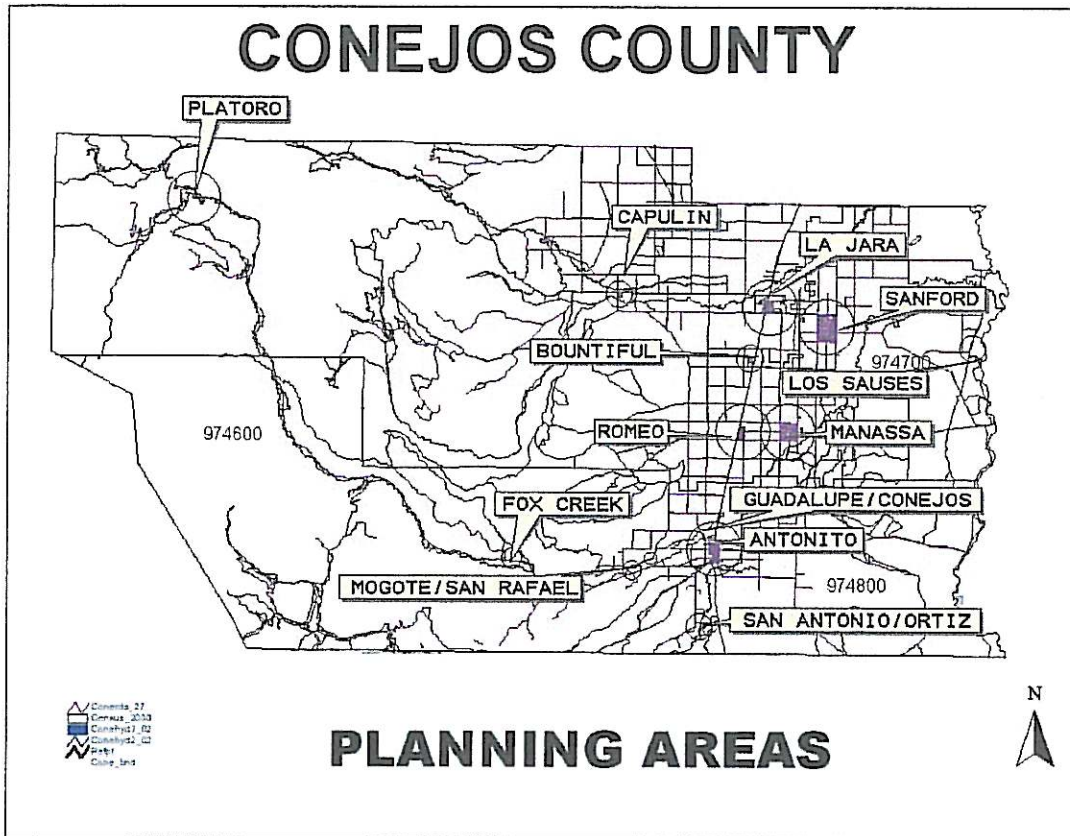


Figure 2 Conejos County Planning Area Map



Figure 3 Capulin Community Forum

SECTION 2 POPULATION, ECONOMY & LAND USE

2.1 Introduction

The population, economy, and land use within Conejos County are interrelated and have contributed creating the working landscape of today. Collectively, the historic settlements, cultural resources and economic conditions create land use patterns. Existing and future land use patterns are shaped by the environmental conditions and constraints as described in section two. Aside from the physical environment an understanding of population attributes, the local economic conditions and land use within Conejos County provide direction as to the type and rate of growth anticipated in the next few decades.

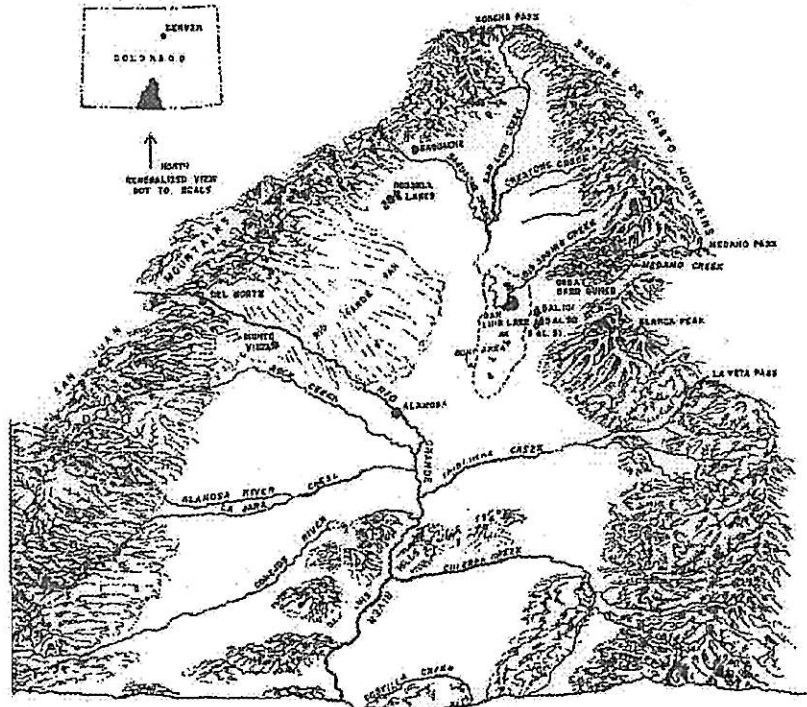


Figure 4 San Luis Valley Basin

2.2 San Luis Valley History

The history of the San Luis Valley is rich with agricultural farmland and large, sprawling ranches. Spanning 8,000 square miles, the San Luis Valley is the world's largest alpine valley. The average altitude in the valley is 7,500 feet. Almost every point within the valley offers beautiful views of rolling mountains. Many of the people native to the San Luis Valley are Spanish descendants whose forefathers came north from Mexico and New Mexico along the Santa Fe Trail, established their homes and businesses throughout the San Luis Valley and found that the rich farmland was excellent not only for agriculture, but for the raising of sheep and cattle. The descendants of the *pobladores*, or original settlers, have lived in the area for 150 years.

2.3 Native American Occupation of San Luis Valley

Humans have lived in the valley for at least 11,000-years. Paleo-Indians used the valley as a seasonal hunting and gathering ground for thousands of years. The Pueblos conducted rituals near Mt. Blanca, at the north-eastern end of the valley. The Navajo likewise considered Mt. Blanca as one of its sacred borders. By at least 1400 A.D. or earlier, the Utes arrived in the valley. Later, the Apache, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche used the valley for seasonal hunting as large buffalo herds grazed in the region each fall (Mondragon-Valdez, 2001: 6).

It was, however, the Ute people that called the San Luis Valley their home. The Ute called themselves the Nuche, or "The People," and were referred to as the Mountain People by Pueblo tribes (Simmons, 2001: 12). The Utes were, for the most part, a nomadic band that traveled in small groups and foraged for food. Occasionally they gathered as a larger group for communal sharing. However, the Utes struggled to maintain their land and lifestyle due to the attacks by other Native American tribes, growing conflicts with the Spanish, and ultimately to their final defeat by the United States military (Simmons, 2001: 12).

Although they occasionally gathered in the region to participate in communal hunting with other Native American groups, the Ute and Apache claimed the valley as their territory. Through their early contact with the Spanish, the Utes obtained horses and became excellent hunters and warriors. Trading relations with the Spanish were usually good and allowed group cooperation until the 1830s.



Figure 5 Nuche, or the Ute People

Initially, the Utes traded horses, skins, and meat for New Mexican material goods. This relationship allowed New Mexicans to access the valley and to use the numerous Indian trails to travel to the Great Plains and the Pacific. When competing Anglo-American trading forts were constructed in the 1830s in northern and western Colorado, the Utes were given guns and whisky in return for pilfered New Mexican livestock. As a result, raiding increased to the American occupation in 1846 (Mondragon-Valdez, 2001: 6-7). The battles the Utes fought were not just against armies, but also against illness, hunger and a decline in their population caused by the loss of their economic base resulting from the encroachment of settlers, hunters and the military.

2.4 Hispano Settlement in San Luis Valley

In the sixteenth century, Spanish colonizers occupied the “new” lands of New Mexico. Accompanied by a mixed-blood and Indian populace from the central valley of Mexico, the colonizers settled New Mexico in 1598. Although the first colonies were located within a hundred miles of the San Luis Valley, this region remained unsettled because the Utes, Jicarilla Apache, and other nomadic bands seasonally inhabited the valley (Mondragon-Valdez, 1997: 14). Colonized New Mexico began to see an increase in population in the eighteenth century, which began to deplete available resources. This forced many *Nuevo Mexicanos* to move outward and settle new villages in all directions. Although New Mexicans wanted to settle the valley because it contained lush grazing, they could never do so because of Ute and Apache resistance.

Americans looked with interest to the Mexican held territory. The Zebulon Montgomery Pike expedition entered southern Colorado on a scientific expedition by way of the Mosca Pass in 1807. In his journal Pike notes:

...followed down the ravine and discovered after some time that there had been a road cut out
(Colorado State Archives)

Pike’s narrative provides evidence of intense use by American Indians and Hispano settlers who used the region as a throughway to the east and west.

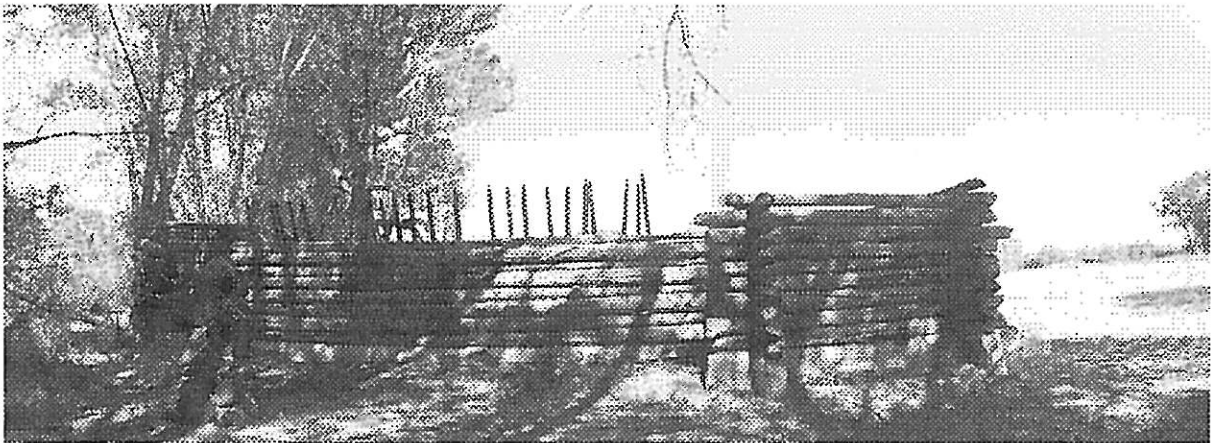


Figure 6 Pike Stockade near Sanford

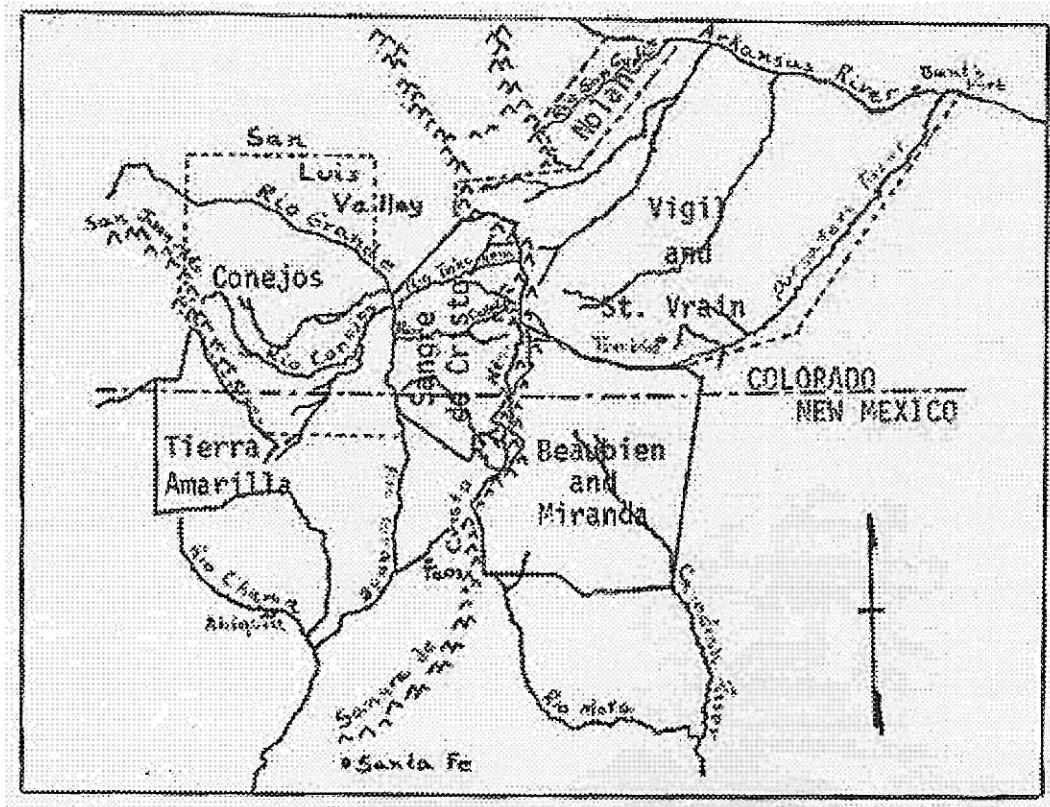


Figure 7 Land Grant Map

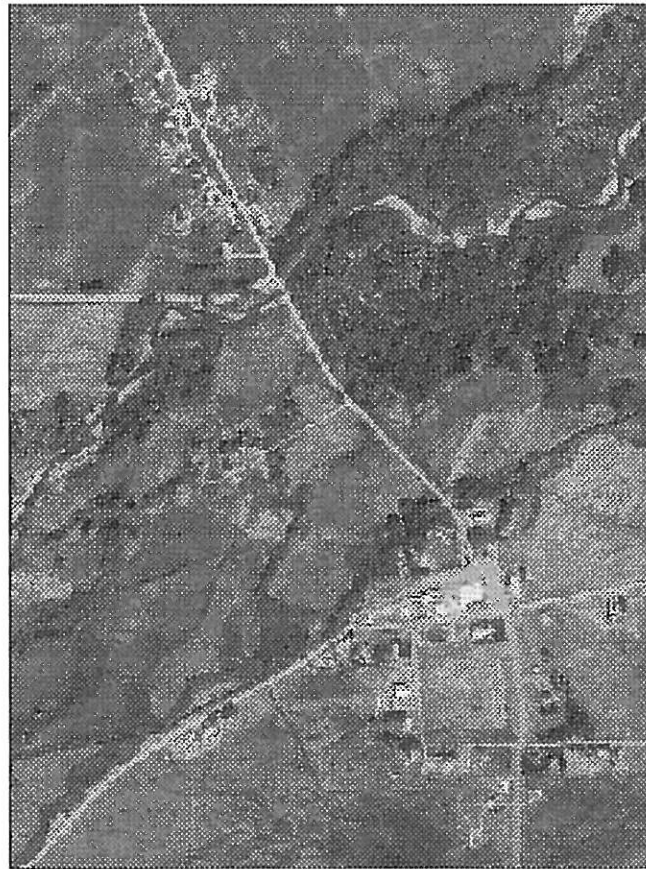
2.5 The Conejos Land Grant

Land holding by Hispanos stemmed from Roman and Spanish traditions that were transferred to the New World. Correspondingly, New Mexico was established by granting land to settlers who would build and protect a colony. These traditions were often abused and were modified through time. From the Spanish Period (1598-1821) to the Mexican Period (1821-1846), land grants kept New Mexico populated, creating a micro-economy based on raising livestock. As American and French interests started to venture into the New Mexico Territory, the government granted large land tracts in the San Luis Valley and in the northeast, to New Mexicans who would brave Ute and Apache attack. One of these grants was the Conejos Land Grant awarded in 1833.

The Conejos Land Grant land grant was bound on the north by La Loma de La Garita, on the east by the Rio Grande, on the south by El Cerro San Antonio, and on the west by La Sierra Montosa. There were about 80 families living on the original land grant that planted crops and dug out acequias (gravity fed irrigation systems). However, they did not stay because of the hostile environment.

In 1848, at the end of the Mexican war, the United States acquired the New Mexico Territory (part of which is now Conejos County). José Martínez, Antonio Martínez, Julian Gallegos, and Seledon Valdez petitioned to reassert their claim of the Conejos/Guadalupe Land Grant for over 2.5 million acres (Colorado State Archives). The claim was upheld by Mexico's prefect and stipulated that the land shall be cultivated and never abandoned and that the pastures and watering places shall be held in common for all the inhabitants.

Due to U.S. military protection from Native Americans, Nuevo Mexicanos began to migrate into the fork of the San Antonio and Conejos Rivers, as their renewed agreement mandated. Julian Gallegos, an original grant petitioner, filed a petition with then Colorado Governor Charles Bent to reaffirm the grant with the United States. Unfortunately, Governor Bent did not act upon the claim. In 1900 the Court of Private Land Claims heard the arguments and believing that the original grantees had not complied with the tenets of the Conejos Grant in its entirety, the court chose not to honor the claim (Colorado State Archives).



CONEJOS/GUADALUPE VICINITY



Figure 8 Aerial View of Conejos/Guadalupe

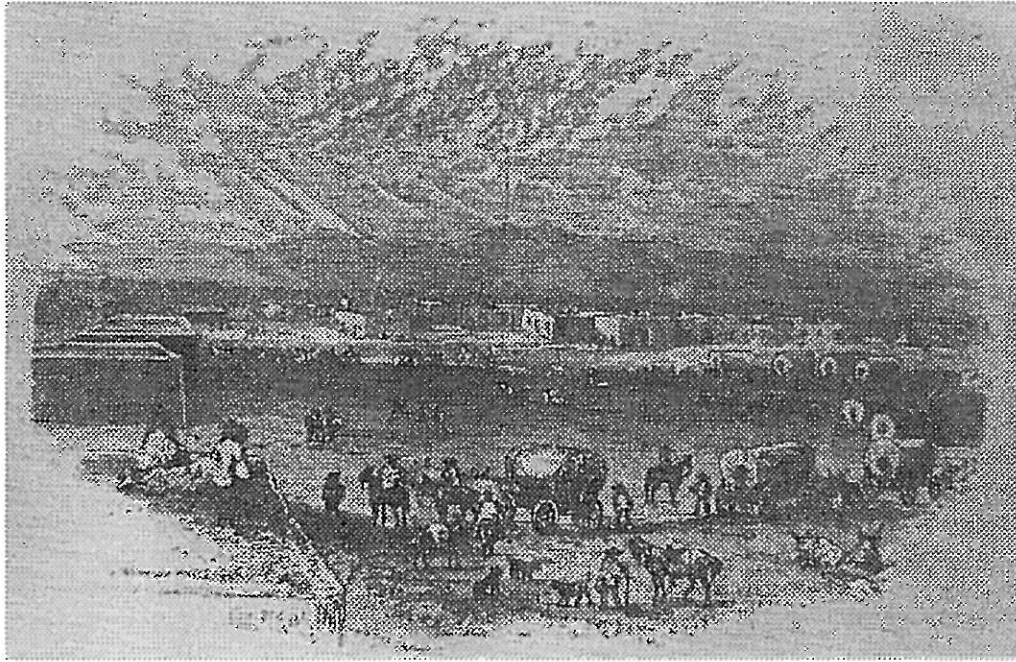


Figure 9 Guadalupe, ca. 1870's

2.6 The Hispano Way of Life

Settlers from New Mexico had moved about the Conejos River for a number of years, so that when the Conejos Land Grant was settled, there had already been a long established vernacular description of the area. When the grantees arrived on the land they found the soil to be rich and fertile, prairie lands covered with grasses and plenty of water flowing through the Conejos and San Antonio Rivers. Nuevo Mexicanos from the Chama Valley (located at the western end of New Mexico), who settled the Conejos Grant, brought with them their family traditions and religious customs.

The provisions of the land grants outlined the daily life of the grantees. The grants not only assigned land to each person but also designated common use of the pastures and watering places and gave instructions for roads. Because of the designation of the common areas, the grantees were required to defend the land and undertake specific municipal tasks. Therefore, the land grants were more than just a legal document; they also functioned as a way of life for the individual settlers (Lorenson, 1974: 10).

Hispano settlement patterns in the valley reflected a custom of equal proportioning of land as each settler received 200 *varas* along the riverfront. The *vara* is a Spanish unit of measure approximately three linear feet. The *vara* plots of land were narrow in width but very long in length. This was important for the settlers because each person had access to river usage, and a share to irrigable and pastureland (Lorenson, 1974: 15). Because the *vara* lands were so narrow, homes were located close to each other and reinforced equal distribution of water and land (Lorenson, 1974:15).

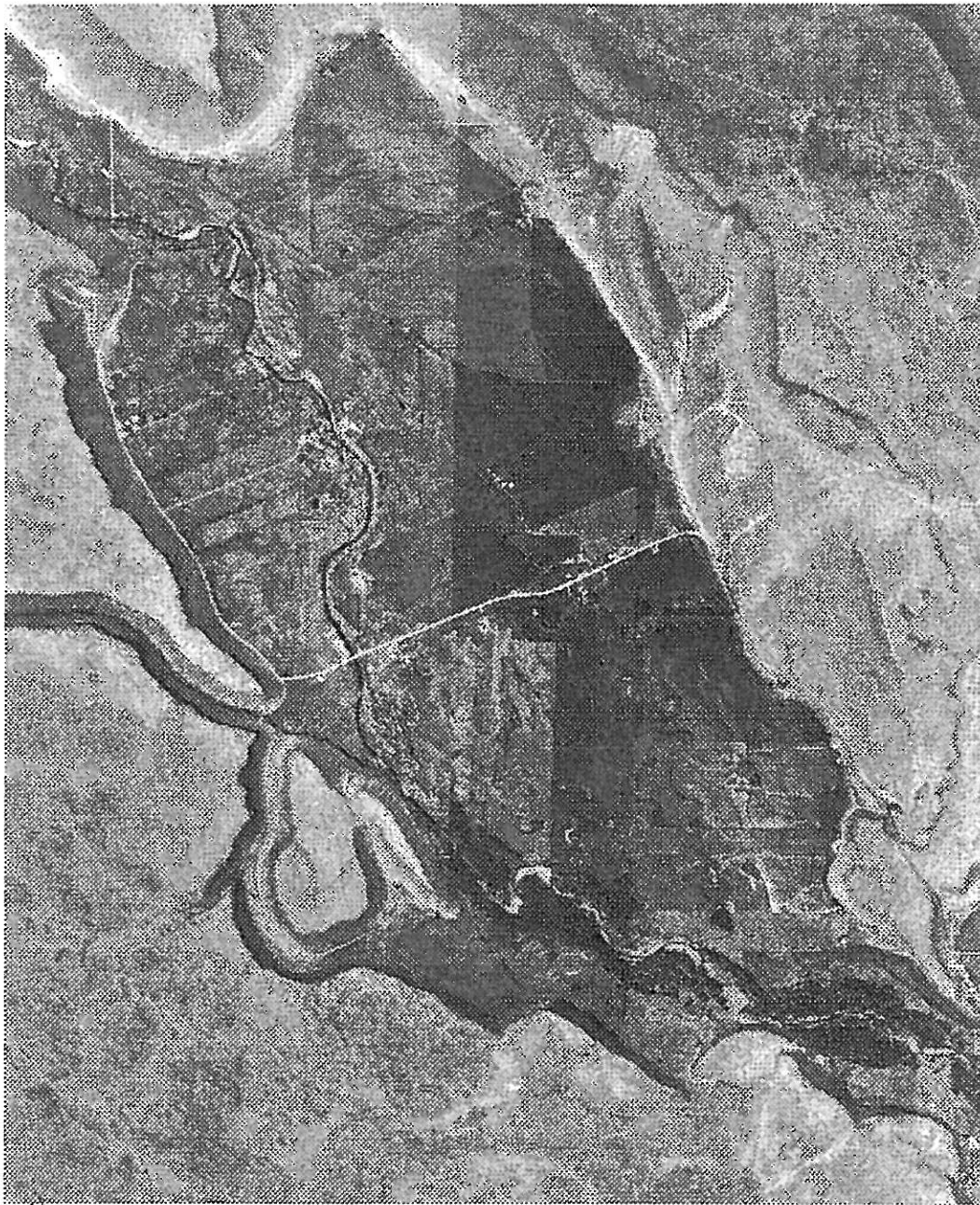


Figure 10 Aerial View of Ortiz/Los Pinos

Pobladores used the available resources to survive in a harsh upland climate. For example, the first houses of the valley were jacal structures; mud plastered, vertical log construction. Later the people started to build adobe homes because they added more protection. Adobe is a mixture of clay, sand, water and straw, and sometimes gravel, that is dried into bricks. Adobe-ros (adobe masons) plastered the structure inside and out with mud plaster to seal the walls.

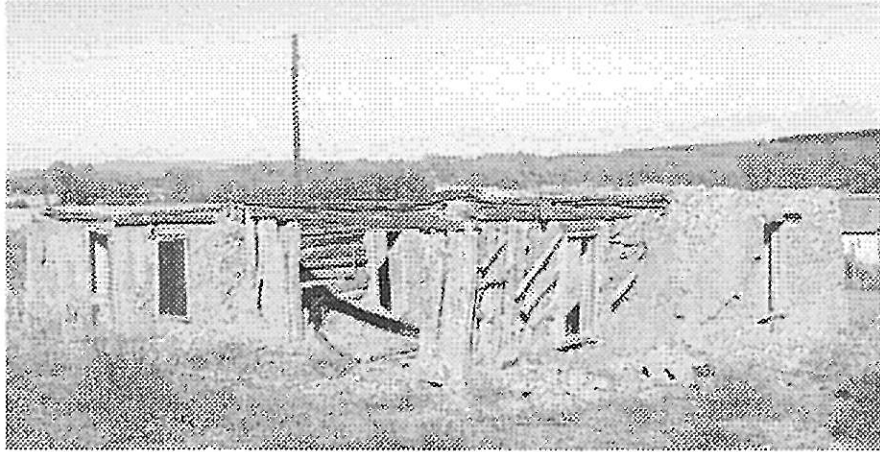


Figure 11 Jacal Construction in Ortiz

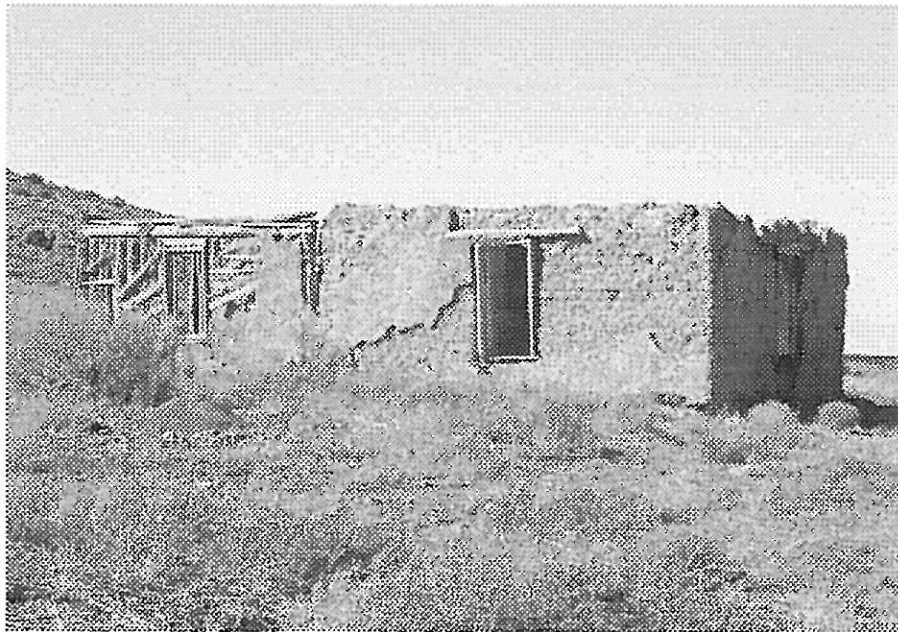


Figure 12 Jacal/Adobe Construction at Ortiz

2.7 Mormon Settlements

The late 1870s signaled a turning point in the San Luis Valley. With the coming of the Mormon population, also came a new culture, religious practice, land use, architecture, and economic change. The Mormon immigrant population settled in the lower Rio Grande, in the southern portion of the valley, mostly in the current day towns of Manassa and Sanford. Mormon settlers obtained land primarily through the Homestead Act, acquiring 160-acre parcels for each homestead (Carlson, 1997: 120). The Mormons developed a grid system for the towns of Manassa and Sanford, based on their religious practices in Utah. Residents preferred to live in the village, which provided safety and access to schools and the church. Agricultural land was required to be situated to the north and south at the outskirts of the town, with only a few farming and ranching utility structures. Consequently, Mormon land use patterns and architecture are strikingly different from the *cordillera* and long-lot patterns of the established Hispano villages in the valley. Initially, like Hispanos in the area, Mormon settlers were sustenance farmers and dependent upon irrigation for farming.



Figure 13 Aerial View of Manassa Town Plat



Figure 14 Antonito Railroad Station

Other Settlements

The Homestead Act magnetized other Anglo settlers to the valley. Under the Act, parcels of land were surveyed with the township and range system, with only four farmsteads per square mile. Homesteaders located their homes along the surveyed roads and lived much further away from each other in contrast to Hispanos and Mormons. The availability of large tracts of fertile land coupled with abundant water sources, afforded Mormon and other Anglo farmers the opportunity to quickly move from sustenance farming to commercial farming operations.

The 1880s saw a new wave of Anglo settlers to the valley that acquired large tracts of land, mostly through land companies, to pursue cattle ranching. The average ranch was approximately 3,500 acres, with some ranches as large as 160,000 acres (Carlson, 1967: 124). In the same decade, the arrival of the railroad continued to bring settlers of various ethnic backgrounds and new professionals seeking opportunities in the rural West. Immigrants included Syrian, Jewish, Swiss, English and Irish peoples. While the largest segment pursued farming and ranching endeavors, new professionals included doctors, lawyers, merchants, bankers, stonemasons, and builders.

2.8 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of the Population and Economic Element is twofold. First, it serves as a compilation of basic data which will be used for analysis in other Elements of this Comprehensive Plan to come. Information on population and economics presented here will be related to land use, housing, and transportation. The second function of this Element is to reveal a less tangible character of Conejos County. This will provide a feeling of what is important to the people of the County with respect to why they live and work here.

In the population portion of this Element, we will first examine the historical growth rate of Conejos County and consider fluctuations that may have occurred. A more in-depth analysis of why people moved to this region

was covered in the History Element and will not be considered here. We will look at the growth or decline in population, however, and try to discover why this has occurred. Finally, we will use information from this historical look, combine it with other economic data, and make a projection of Conejos County's population into the future.

The economic portion of the Element will seek to discover what industries are important to the region. We will look at major employers and examine trends. It is this portion that will reveal character in addition to data. We will see what is important to the people of Conejos County as a result of where they work and earn their living.



Figure 15 Main Street Antonito

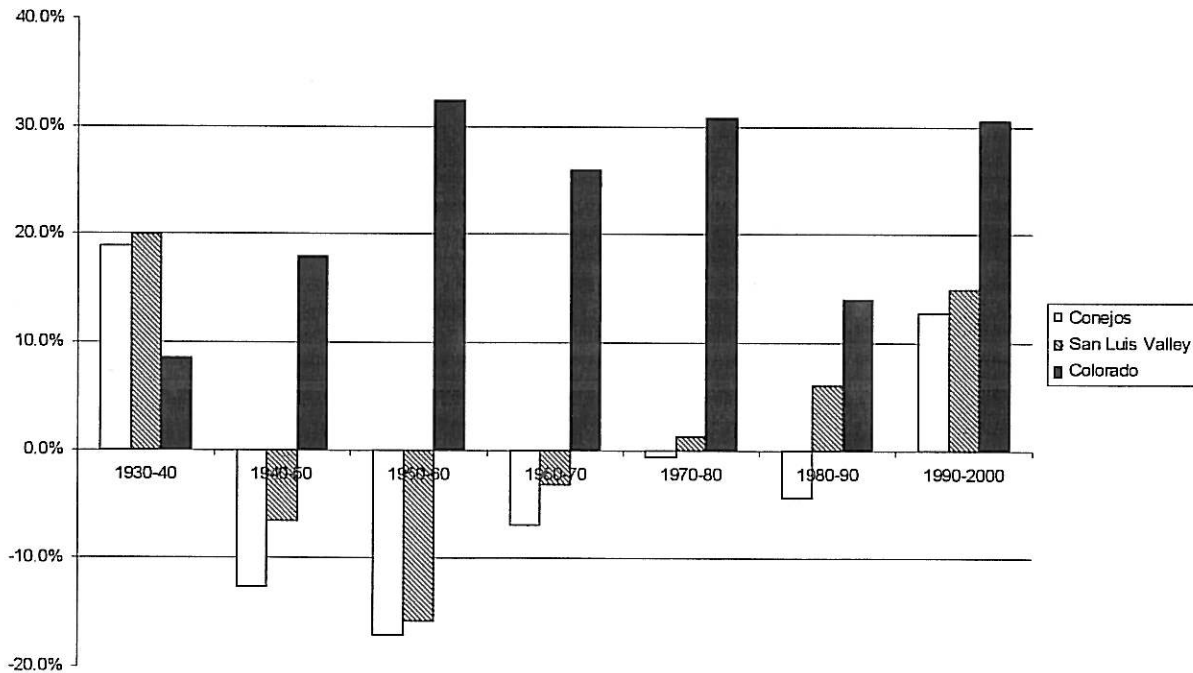
Table 1. Population and Poverty Statistics For Conejos County

Census Tract Code/Block	1990 Population	Number of Persons in Poverty	Percent of Persons Below the Poverty Level	Total Land Area in Census Tract
9746	428	173	44.4	816.7 Sq. mi
9747	3,338	1,167	34.9	253.62 Sq. mi
9748	1,818	666	36.5	190.10 Sq. mi
9749	1,869	504	27.2	48.31 Sq. mi
TOTAL	7,453	2,510	35.75%	1,287.3 Sq. mi

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census. Census Population 1990

From 1930-1990, Conejos County had negative rates of population growth in most decades. Conejos did show a positive average growth rate of 1.74% in the 1930's, but overall the county experienced an annual growth rate of -0.45%. Colorado's average growth rate was 1.96% during the same period. It is hypothesized that the majority of the decrease can be traced to economic and job growth outside of Conejos County drawing residents out of the county.

Comparative Population Growth 1930-2000



1990 Conejos County Census Tracts and Government Lands

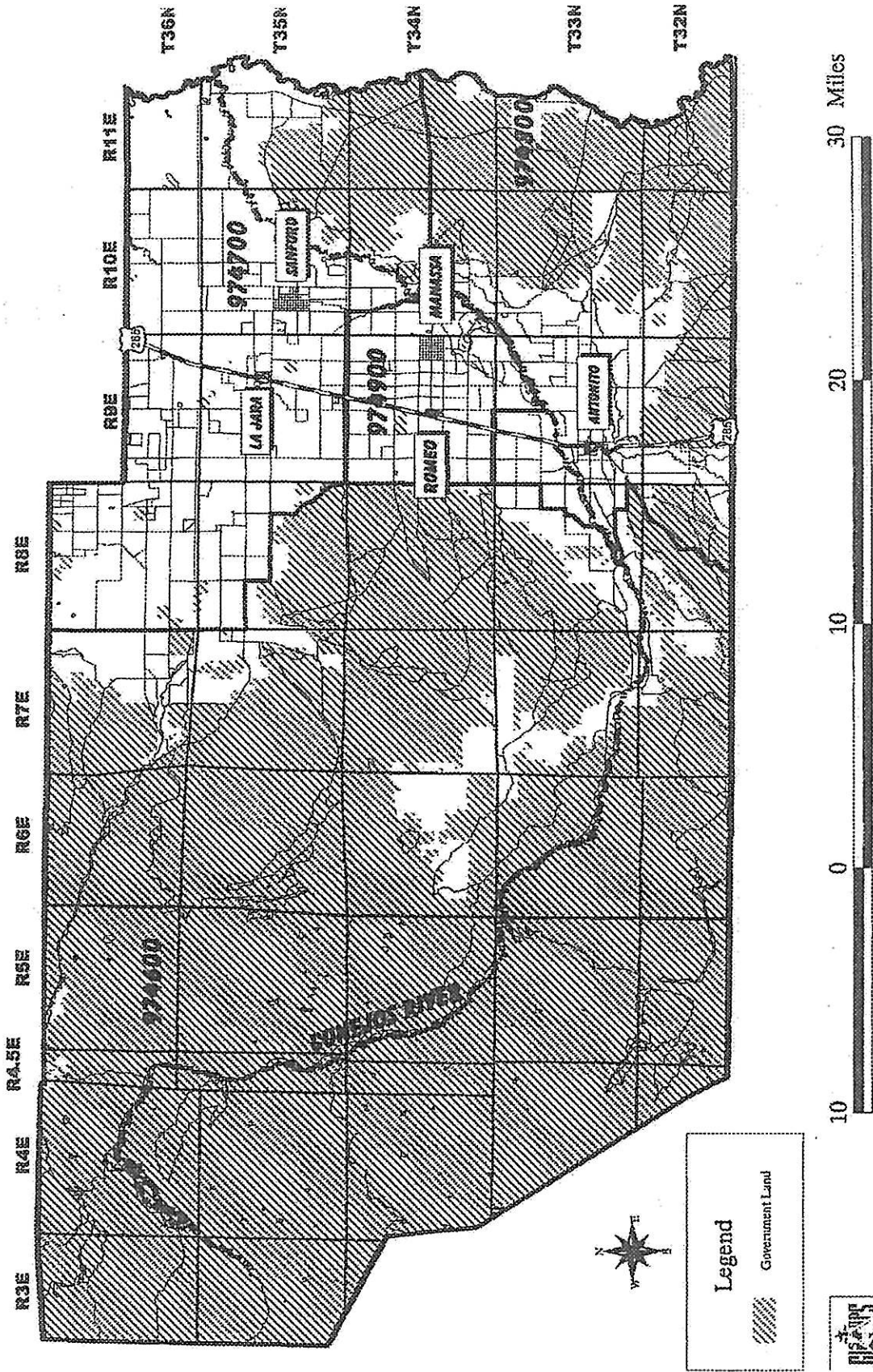


Figure 16 1990 Conejos County Census Tracts

Table 2 provides a look at more recent trends in population growth for the county. Conejos County experienced positive population growth throughout most of the 1990s. The population growth rate peaked at 1997 at 1.42% and hit its lowest point in 1992 at -0.70%. Conejos County, with an average annual growth rate of 0.76%, had a significantly lower growth rate than the state's average of 2.59% during the 1990s. In the future, the population for Conejos County is forecasted to have an annual average growth rate of 0.70% from 2000 through 2025, significantly below the projected 1.74% growth rate for Colorado. The expected growth patterns for the county and the state are somewhat different also. Colorado is projected to experience positive, yet slowly declining population growth rates from 2000 to 2025, while Conejos should have increasing growth rates between 2000 and 2010 before observing decreasing rates through 2025.

The natural increase of population (births minus deaths) in Conejos County can be seen in Figure 2. From April 1990-July 1999 the natural increase constituted 80.83% of the county's population change, while migration accounted for 26.45% of the change. This highlights the county's reliance on natural increases for population growth. These percentages are significantly different (and basically flipped) from the natural increase rate of 38.31% and the migration rate of 62.36% experienced by the state during the same time period. Figure 3 decomposes the total migration figures into the numbers of new residents originating from outside the United States, and those transferred from the federal government. Of the total migration, the county had 46.9% migrate in from the outside US borders and 51.1 % from domestic locations. The figures are different for Colorado (13.6% from international and 83.5% from domestic migration).

2.9 Race and Ethnicity

Conejos County is one of only two counties in Colorado that has a Hispanic majority. On a percentage basis, in Conejos, the Hispanic community had the largest representation at 64.55% of the total population in 1998 (up from 59.65% in 1990) and the White Non-Hispanic representation decreased from 39.44% in 1998 to 35%. The Asian and Black populations experienced small percentage increases during this time period, while the American Indian population showed no change.

The racial and ethnic composition of Conejos County is more similar to the rest of the San Luis Valley than to the State of Colorado as a whole. In 1998 about 59% of County residents identified themselves as being of Hispanic or Latino origin, compared with 47% for the San Luis Valley and 17% at the State level. The number of racial minorities in the County continues to increase, but at a slower rate than the State's. The origin of the Valley's Latino population differs significantly from the State's; State-wide, the majority of Latinos (61%) reported themselves as being of Mexican origin, compared to just 24% in Conejos County. Most Conejos County Latinos (76%) identified themselves as Other Hispanic, indicating the long-standing Spanish presence in the region.

Table 2 Population, Annual Growth Rates, and Forecasts
COLORADO

Year	Population	Growth Rate
1930	1,035,791	
1940	1,123,296	0.81%
1950	1,325,089	1.67%
1960	1,753,947	2.84%
1970	2,209,596	2.34%
1980	2,889,733	2.72%
1990	3,304,042	1.35%

Year	Population	Growth Rate
1991	3,374,724	2.14%
1992	3,478,398	3.07%
1993	3,588,015	3.15%
1994	3,689,174	2.82%
1995	3,782,170	2.52%
1996	3,867,348	2.25%
1997	3,954,452	2.25%
1998	4,054,340	2.53%

Year	Population	Growth Rate
2000	4,227,389	2.11%
2005	4,629,421	1.83%
2010	5,059,914	1.79%
2015	5,499,757	1.68%
2020	5,942,414	1.56%
2025	6,392,015	1.47%

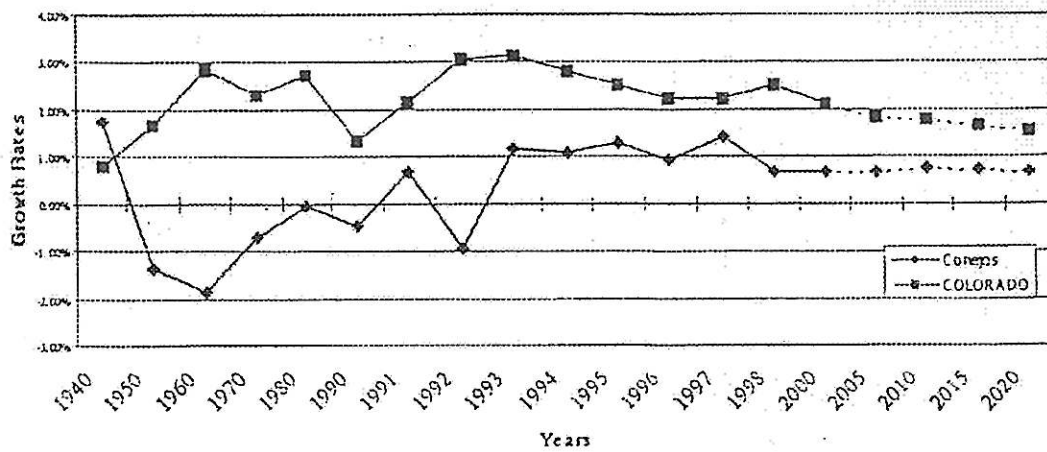
Conejos

Year	Population	Growth Rate
1930	9,803	
1940	11,648	1.74%
1950	10,171	-1.35%
1960	8,428	-1.86%
1970	7,846	-0.71%
1980	7,794	-0.07%
1990	7,451	-0.45%

Year	Population	Growth Rate
1991	7,502	0.68%
1992	7,432	-0.93%
1993	7,519	1.17%
1994	7,601	1.09%
1995	7,700	1.30%
1996	7,771	0.92%
1997	7,881	1.42%
1998	7,936	0.70%

Year	Population	Growth Rate
2000	8,047	0.70%
2005	8,323	0.68%
2010	8,646	0.76%
2015	8,971	0.74%
2020	9,280	0.68%
2025	9,566	0.61%

Population Growth Rates



Source: 1930-1990 Population: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990-2020 Demography Section of the Colorado Division of Local Government

Figure 2. Population Increase

County	Births	Deaths	Natural Increase	Net Migration	Residual	Population Change	Percent From Natural Increase	Percent From Net Migration	Population Count
Colorado									
1990									
1991	53,705	22,159	31,546	33,369	-1,210	63,705	49.52%	52.38%	3,303,862
1992	54,689	22,481	32,208	62,017	-1,797	92,428	34.85%	67.10%	3,367,567
1993	54,247	23,222	31,025	71,987	-2,123	100,889	30.75%	71.35%	3,459,995
1994	53,941	23,837	30,104	65,157	-2,235	93,026	32.36%	70.04%	3,560,884
1995	54,009	24,784	29,225	56,005	-1,079	84,151	34.73%	66.55%	3,653,910
1996	55,189	25,106	30,083	45,666	-1,094	74,655	40.30%	61.17%	3,738,061
1997	56,595	25,943	30,652	48,019	-94	78,577	39.01%	61.11%	3,812,716
1998	57,861	26,219	31,642	45,935	97	77,674	40.74%	59.14%	3,891,293
1999	59,709	26,853	32,856	53,188	1,122	87,166	37.69%	61.02%	3,968,967
Total 1990-99	513,908	225,699	288,209	482,229	-8,778	752,271	38.31%	64.10%	4,056,133
Conejos County									
1990									
1991	111	55	56	-14	-3	39	143.59%	-35.90%	7,472
1992	115	83	32	-90	-6	-64	-50.00%	140.63%	7,511
1993	124	68	56	30	-3	83	67.47%	36.14%	7,447
1994	113	72	41	106	-4	143	28.67%	74.13%	7,530
1995	116	77	39	37	-3	73	53.42%	50.68%	7,673
1996	129	70	59	22	-3	78	75.64%	28.21%	7,746
1997	128	67	61	-28	0	33	184.85%	-84.85%	7,824
1998	126	66	60	66	0	126	47.62%	52.38%	7,857
1999	134	69	65	32	-3	94	69.15%	34.04%	7,983
Total 1990-99	1,135	646	489	160	-25	605	80.83%	26.45%	8,077

Source: Annual Time Series of Population Estimates and Demographic Components of Change: April 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999, U.S. Census Bureau.

1-Births: Total number of live births occurring to residents of an area during the period.

2-Deaths: Total number of deaths occurring within the resident population of an area within the period.

3-Natural Increase: Calculated as births minus deaths in an area.

4-Net Migration: Calculated as the sum of all types of migration.

5-Residual: The difference between an area's population as estimated by the subnational population estimation procedure before and after imposing the constraint that the subnational estimates must sum to an independently derived estimate of the national population. The residual is not a demographic component of population change; rather it is a statistical artifact of the procedures employed in producing the estimates.

Age

Conejos County has the highest percentage of people under the age of 18 in the State, (32.1% for the County, 25% for Colorado). Even within the San Luis Valley, Conejos County is unusually young. The County's median age in 2000 was 34.2, as opposed to 34.3 for the State and 35.3 for the Valley as a whole. Conejos County also has the highest average family size in the State at 3.33 (State average is 3.09). However, the fastest growing age group over the next decade is projected to be 55 to 64, which should lead to an increase in the median age over time.

Conejos County had a larger percentage of the population in the 65+ category than the state (by 3.92% in 1998) and like the state, the percent of the county population in the 65+ group increased from 1990 to 1998. The county also observed an increase in the 35-54 and 55-64 age groups that is explained by natural aging, as the "Baby Boomers" have gotten older. The county experienced a decrease in the 0-17 and 18-34 age groups from 1990 to 1998. Even though the "Echo Boom" (the 0-17 group) decreased as a percentage of the overall county population, it was still the largest age group in the county. However, with the exception of the American Indian population, every ethnic group experienced a percentage decrease in this cohort. If the county continues to experience losses in the younger age groups, this could lead to shortages in the workforce for years to come.

The 2000 Census figures indicate a population increase of 947 persons or 12.7%. The majority of the gain occurred in the unincorporated areas of the county and in some of the municipalities. Over one half of the population lives in the unincorporated areas which are deficient in adequate provisions for public utilities.

2.10 Economy

Personal Income

Personal income measures money paid to households through wage or salary employment, investments, and transfer payments. According to Bureau of Economic Analysis statistics, personal income in Conejos County increased 20% between 1990 and 1999. During the same time period, personal income grew 43% in the State of Colorado. The 1999 personal income figures for Conejos County reveal that less than half of residents' income came from wage and salary employment. Wages accounted for a significantly higher share of personal income in the rest of the Valley (63.4%) and State (76.9%). Transfer payments, including Social Security, veteran's benefits, AFDC and unemployment insurance, make up a higher percentage of personal income in Conejos County than anywhere else in the State.

1999 Direct Basic Income



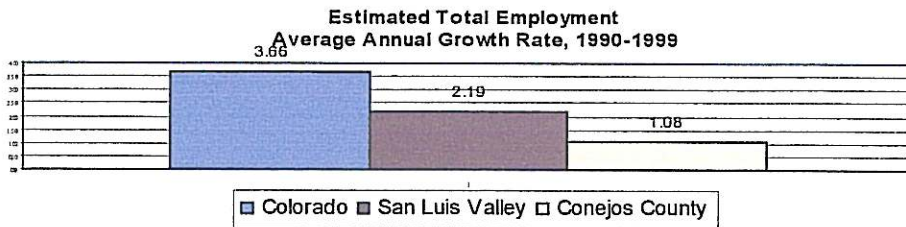
Figure 17 1999 Direct Basic Income

Direct Basic Income

Direct basic income is money received from outside the county. As with personal income, direct basic income in Conejos County is dominated by transfer payments from the State and Federal governments. Approximately half (51%) of the County's basic income in 1999 was attributable to government payments to either elderly residents (27% of the total) or other residents (24% of total). Agricultural products and service earnings were 19% of total direct base income.

Estimated Total Employment

This past decade, Conejos County's estimated total employment grew at a significantly slower pace than did employment in the San Luis Valley or in Colorado. While Conejos County did experience a positive annual growth rate in Estimated Total Employment (1.1%), the Valley's employment grew at twice the rate (2.2%) of Conejos and Colorado grew at greater than three times the rate (3.7%).



Direct Base Employment

In 1999, over half of all basic employment in Conejos County was related to agriculture. Retirement-related employment accounted for 17% of direct basic employment. Regional center services, some related to agriculture, accounted for 13%.

1999 Direct Basic Employment

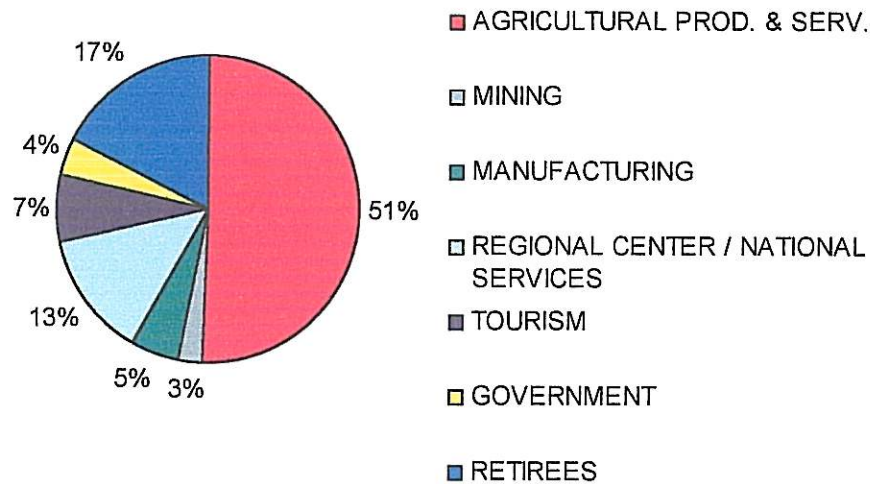


Figure 18 1999 Direct Basic Employment

2.11 Labor Force

For the past decade, Conejos County has consistently had unemployment rates higher than the United States, Colorado, or the San Luis Valley. The unemployment rate for Conejos County in 2000 was 6.8, compared to 6.4 for the Valley and 2.7 for Colorado.

2000 Labor Force Statistics

Region	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment
Colorado	2,275,545	2,213,044	6,2501	2.7
San Luis Valley	20,734	19,416	1,318	6.4
Conejos County	3,568	3,325	243	6.8

Source: Dept. of Labor and Employment, LMI, 8/2001.

Table 4 Labor Force Statistics

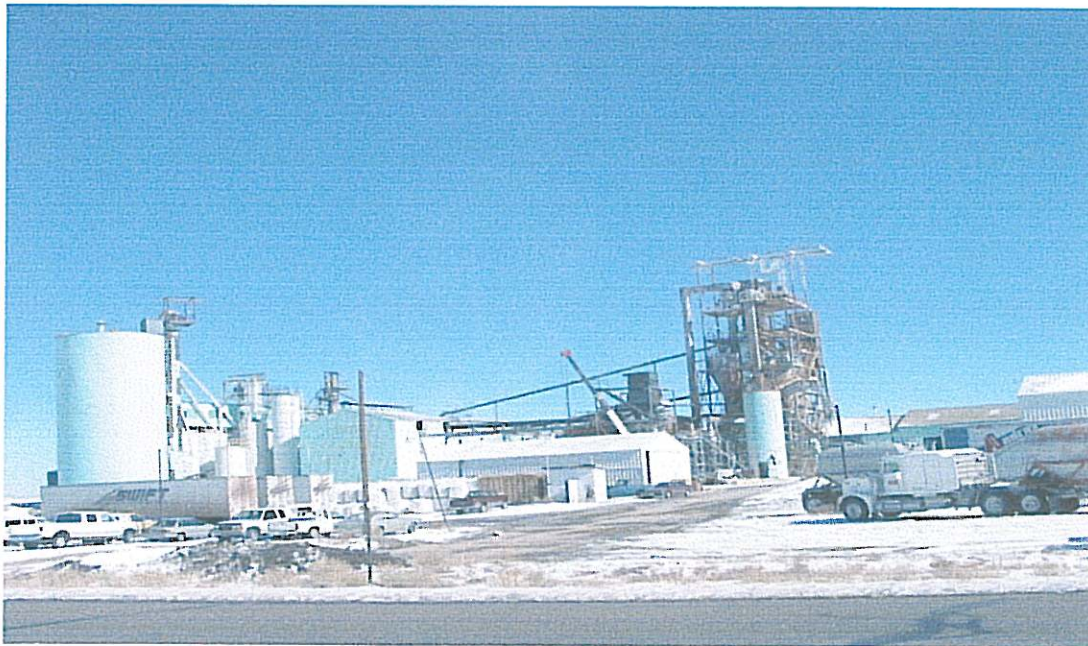


Figure 19 Perlite Processing Plant near Antonito

2.12 LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

The land use Element is basic to the proper physical development of Conejos County. Its primary purpose is to determine the best utilization of the land (i.e., locations for residential development, business, industry, etc.) to support necessary functions with minimum conflict and cost. These determinations are based on anticipated future population levels. This element translates the needs of future population into land use proposals for Conejos County. It establishes programs that provide for streets, schools, utilities, and other service requirements. Ultimately, the Land Use Element is the basis of development regulations and land use controls. It must, therefore, reflect the type of growth desired in Conejos County and be realistic in its projections of development potential and economic opportunities.

The Land Use Element contains the recommended directions in land use that government officials intend to pursue in achieving their mandated goals and objectives. Various inventories and data searches are required as the basis of this element. From this material, which includes historical trends in growth and land use and determinations of the external effects likely to influence development, projections can be made and conclusions drawn as to how to how the area might develop. The scope of this element involves natural resources, man-made structures and utilities, and population and employment characteristics.

The Land Use Element must consider all adopted plans, programs and special studies relating to physical development of Conejos County. The location, extent and purpose of land uses proposed or adopted in these plans should be recorded. The extent of public lands and uses should be inventoried. Completion of the environmental element is especially beneficial in pointing out present and potential development hazards and indicating areas of potential open space and recreational use. Land use regulations, particularly zoning ordinances and maps, should be studied to determine the number of people zoned areas would accommodate if they were developed to their allowed holding capacities. Finally, transportation plans should be consulted to determine the potential distribution patterns of new land use.



Figure 20 Conejos County Agricultural Lands

Future land use issues are central to the core of the Master Plan. This chapter sets out the basic framework for land use in unincorporated Conejos County. The land use concept draws on the themes established in the early stages of the planning process.

The Land Use Maps indicate two distinct land use types, *Urban* and *Rural*. Future urban areas are located adjacent to existing municipalities where urban level services are planned. Rural areas comprise the remainder of the County. In designated urban areas, future land use is based on adopted community plans such as the 3 mile area plans. In rural areas, land use and densities are based on existing County zoning.

The chapter discusses proposed Growth Management Areas (GMAs) and coordinated land use planning efforts between the County and the municipalities in the County. It introduces the concept of Rural Conservation Development (RCD) to achieve significant open space in developed parts of the rural area. It explains the land use classifications shown on the Land Use Maps and it references proposed 3-mile area plans and their policies. It establishes principles for patterns of new development and implementation strategies that will be used to achieve the planned settlement patterns.

2.12.1 Urban Land Use

Conejos County will not provide the range of services necessary to support a quality urban environment. The urban land use principles stated in this Master Plan are intended to strengthen the link between urban land use and eventual annexation by a city or town.

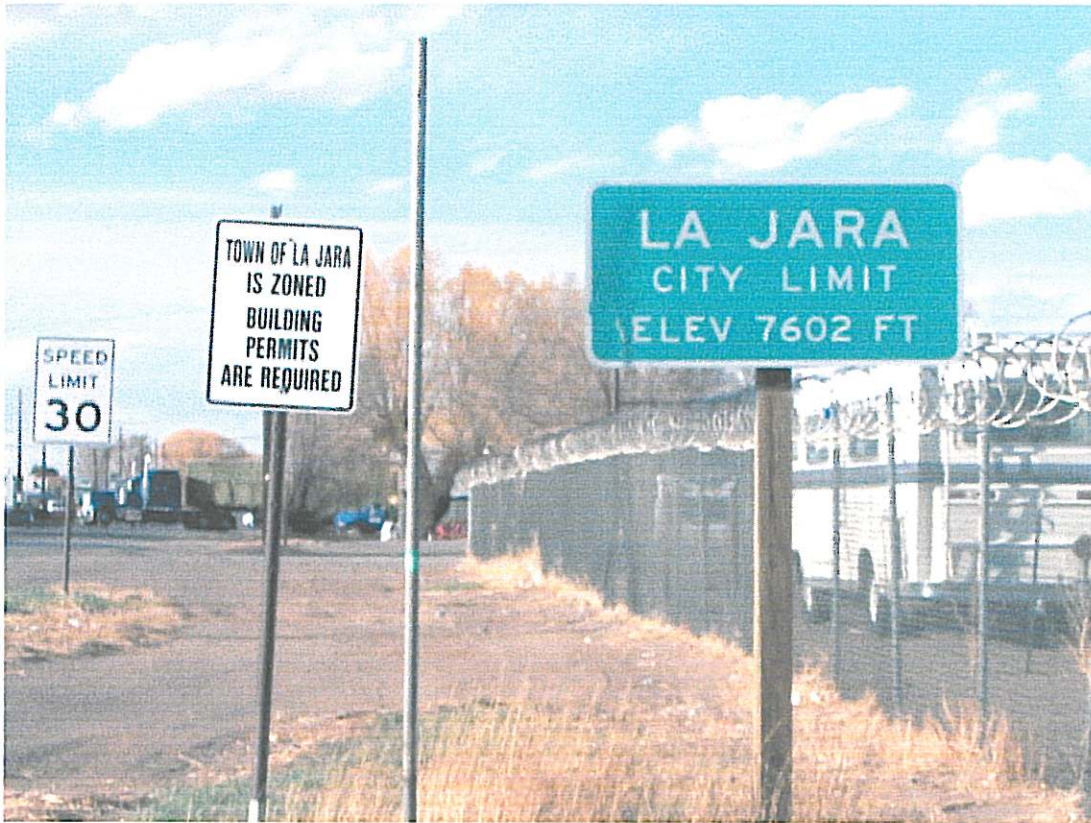


Figure 21 La Jara City Limits

2.12.2 Growth Management Areas

Principles for urban land use reinforce the concept that the most appropriate location for urban development is within municipal boundaries. Urban development should be within municipalities rather than the unincorporated portion of the County. Within proposed Growth Management Areas (GMAs) development can occur if it meets basic service levels and is designed to be compatible with the policy or land use plan for the adjacent city or town. These requirements are intended to make future annexation possible without costly improvements to streets and utilities and to ensure that development approved in the County can be integrated into the fabric of the community when it is annexed.

The urban land use principles also state that new commercial and industrial zoning should be limited to Growth Management Areas (GMAs) and specifically designated areas in adopted Area Plans, unless the specific uses need to be located away from urban areas for some supportable reason. In the past, scattered development of this type has sometimes been approved in order to encourage economic development. More recently, the importance of quality of life issues to economic development decisions has supported reinforcing urban development standards for all new commercial and industrial uses.

2.12.3 Rural Land Use

Most of the development applications that are received by the Land Use Office are for non-urban residential uses. Existing rural zoning in the unincorporated area supports a pattern of large-lot land divisions which consume large amounts of land that might otherwise be in productive use. They are costly to serve with public facilities, and present issues of compatibility with adjacent residential and agricultural uses.

State law allows division of property into lots with a minimum of 35 acres. The resulting development pattern from "35-acre" development creates even greater concerns with land consumption, cost of facilities and compatibility. *The Conejos County Code of the West* details the lifestyle and level of service that residents can expect in rural areas. The publication is available in the Land Use Office.

The land use planning process has largely focused on finding alternatives to these large-lot patterns of development, while still allowing a comparable return to landowners who have relied on land use regulations to estimate the value of their property. Two new development concepts are being proposed as alternatives: Rural Conservation Development (RCD) and the Rural Land Use Process (RLUP). Both generally rely on "clustering" to achieve a future land use pattern more consistent with the vision of maintaining the existing open character of rural areas. Cluster development is a type of development design that locates the same number of houses on smaller lots to allow the remainder of the site to be used for agriculture, private open space, natural resource protection and similar open, undeveloped uses. Location of the developed and open areas is based on the characteristics of the specific site.



Figure 22 Town Lot in Sanford, Colorado

2.12.4 Rural Conservation Development

The basic concept of Rural Conservation Development (RCD) is to require that proposed subdivisions outside designated urban areas be designed based on the characteristics of the specific site. RCD subdivisions are designed to preserve significant open space areas, without changing the maximum residential density as determined by the existing zoning of the property. Rural Conservation Development will generally include a minimum of 80% open space, and maximum allowed housing units will be determined by dividing the gross developable land area by the minimum lot size of the existing zoning district. Open space is achieved by allowing housing to be clustered on lots smaller than would otherwise be allowed by the existing zoning. The amount of required open space may be reduced in certain cases, if the number of housing units is also reduced, and/or there is community benefit. The proposed design must be consistent with applicable principles of the Master Plan including preservation of open character, protection of sensitive natural areas, neighborhood compatibility and efficient provision of utilities and services.

The open space portion of the development will remain undeveloped in perpetuity, except where this provision is explicitly changed by a special area plan adopted by the County. An example of an area where perpetual open space might not be appropriate is a defined area within a Cooperative Planning Area designated for future urban expansion in the sub-area plans. The ownership and management of the open space area will be determined by a management plan which will be reviewed and approved with each RCD application.

Site design principles emphasize considering the natural patterns of the landscape first, to ensure that sensitive natural areas are not considered as building sites. Ability to maintain the open area in agriculture may also be a prime consideration on appropriate sites. Compatibility with adjacent uses, including residential neighborhoods and agricultural uses, will also be considered. Generally, the cluster design concept will reduce infrastructure development costs because utility line and road lengths are minimized. In many cases, clustered development has also been found to increase the value of the building sites, due to the proximity to permanent open space.

The RCD subdivision process will not change the ability of landowners to divide property into lots with a minimum of 35 acres or to use the Rural Land Use Process.



Figure 23 Conejos River Villages at Platoro

2.12.5 Rural Land Use Process

Current State law allows 35-acre or larger parcels to be created without any county land use review. This law has been in effect since 1972. In Conejos County in 2002, there were 102 parcels of private, taxable land greater than 35 acres, for a total of 3,743 acres. In some cases, 35-acre development works well. However, in many cases, there are more desirable alternatives.

The Rural Land Use Process is intended to be voluntary, user-friendly and flexible, and to permit and encourage development patterns tailored to the characteristics of a specific property. The new process does not include a change in zoning for these lands nor does it propose to take away the ability to do 35-acre development. Instead, the Rural Land Use Process uses incentives to encourage alternative developments to help retain the rural and agricultural lands of Conejos County.



Figure 24 Conejos River Development at Lake Fork

2.12. 6 Area Plans and Studies

Special area land use plans and studies are appropriate where conditions present unique land use issues and opportunities. These conditions require more detailed investigation than is possible for the majority of the County area, usually including a great deal of public input. The outcome of the studies may be adoption of special land use principles and implementation strategies, which are tailored to the specific issues of the area. Area plans are particularly envisioned for Cooperative Planning Areas where the plans will be developed in partnership with the affected municipalities, landowners and residents.

2.12.7 Zoning

Zoning is the most common form of land use regulation. The composition of the Conejos County Ordinances includes written requirements and standards that define the permitted uses and conditional uses, minimum lot size, setback requirements, lot coverage and building height. Each designated zoning district has a corresponding set of requirements. Currently there are seven districts in Conejos County.

1. Rural
2. Residential Estate
3. Residential
4. Mobile Home Estate
5. Mobile Home District
6. Commercial
7. Industrial

The districts designate land uses that are appropriate or compatible to the land although they are somewhat inflexible and often require legalistic and public hearing procedures for re-zoning, conditional uses or other controversial issues.

Two years after the adoption of the 1977 Comprehensive Plan the Conejos County Planning Commission recommended to the Board of County Commissioners the adoption of zoning regulations. On March 5th 1979 the Board voted to officially adopt the regulations thus establishing zoning district regulations. The zoning regulations also known as the land use code have served as the basis for evaluating and approving land use proposals for over two decades. Although the zoning regulations have served as the guide for land use applications, the county's growing needs and requests for new applications such as communication towers, extractive industries and river corridor development have created a demand for new regulations to be incorporated into the basic ordinances. At the time of the adoption of the zoning regulations the population and land use activities were relatively small. Gradually over the years the county has experienced growth and increased pressures on private property development. With increased development occurring throughout the county concerns of the environmental quality have been articulated by the citizens of Conejos County. Both incoming and long-term residents have expressed a desire to preserve the quality of life, historic and cultural resources, scenic views and integrity of the physical environment.

Emerging concerns about the environment have promulgated new approaches to dealing with more site-specific zoning district evaluation methods. Overlay zoning districts are being considered to supplement traditional zoning districts. These could be historic overlays, watershed protection, streamside buffers, wildfire, geologic hazards, etc. Utilizing overlay zones in conjunction with conventional zoning will provide a more inclusive form for evaluating development proposals. With the advent of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) the mapping procedure for creating and updating overlay zones is greatly simplified.

A more recent inclusion to the ordinances was Resolution 99-24 concerning the issuance of building permits. This resolution established a building permit system whereby the county could regulate building construction in all unincorporated areas of the county. Although the building permit system has been effective in the past it also needs streamlining and clarification as to the governing standards and level of permitting for agricultural and accessory structures. Mobile and modular homes also need a separate permitting process and ordinance. Older pre-HUD mobile homes need to be evaluated for safety and compliance to newer standards.

Overall, the existing zoning regulations for Conejos County have been working to meet the basic needs of incoming applications. However, the procedures and application formats should be revised in order to streamline the paperwork and to include more contemporary zoning innovations such as overlay zones and performance zoning. As development proposals become more complicated there is a need to include additional narrative in the ordinances to address procedural processes and to clarify and simplify ambiguous language.

Conejos County is currently revising its ordinances. The new zoning regulations will be coordinated with the revised master plan.

2.12.8 Subdivision Regulations

Of all the land use regulations, the subdivision regulations were the first to be adopted in 1971. Prompted by Colorado Revised Statute Chapter 106-2-34 the subdivision regulations serve to regulate the division of land into lots offered for sale. The role of the regulations is to provide standards and safety requirements so that the lots can have access to facility improvements. Since about half of all the land in Conejos County is Federal and State lands with the remaining agricultural there is little land available for subdivisions. Most of the contemporary subdivisions have been platted in or around recreational areas such as Conejos Canyon (See Map 2). By far most of the land divisions are occurring among long term residents who are subdividing a small portion of their property in order to convey to other family members. The minor land divisions involve planning commission review and exemption from the subdivision regulations. Overall, the subdivision regulations function well for conventional land divisions meant for residential development but are not applicable to smaller categories of land divisions such as family land divisions which involve exemptions. Amending the subdivision regulations to include different categories of land divisions will help expedite minor land divisions while still allowing a modified form of review for classes lower than full fledged applications. References to clustering zoning and Planned Unit Developments (PUD) should be noted in future revisions of the regulations.

2.12.9 Other Plans, Rules, and Regulations

Along with revising the zoning ordinances there is a need to incorporate additional rules and regulations that will assist in evaluating the diversity of land development proposals. Road standards will assist in defining county road systems as well as providing technical criteria for construction, maintenance and repair. The FEMA mapping of floodplains and floodplain regulations will help safeguard development occurring within designated floodplains or river corridors. Water quality and sewage disposal systems are major concerns throughout the county especially since there are large numbers of illegal cesspools. The Individual Sewage Disposal System (ISDS) Regulations mandated by the State of Colorado are in effect and employed in the design and installation of new sewage disposal systems for new construction. Finally, the County should consider adopting regulations pertaining to Areas and Activities of State Interest modeled after House Bill 1041. These regulations will protect designated areas of State interest such as mineral resources, wildlife, geologic hazards, inter-basin water transfers, historic and cultural resources and water and sewer extensions.

2.12.10 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in conjunction with Global Positioning Systems (GPS) have revolutionized information gathering, analysis and data base management. Mapping and spatial data are critical components of land use planning especially in large rural areas. The use of a GIS system will assist the land use and assessors office in coordinating information on parcels, permits, road inventory, and addressing. In addition to these everyday practical applications GIS will enable the staff to create and print maps for field verification and will be an invaluable

2.12.11 Future of The Conejos Land Use : Framework for Regulating Development

The surge in population growth throughout the San Luis Valley and Colorado in general has resulted in new demographics for Conejos County as well as increased development pressures on private land holdings. As a result of new development proposals and departures from traditional land uses such as agriculture it has become necessary to incorporate new zoning ordinances, and information on application and enforcement procedures. The four cornerstones of the regulatory framework that are key to growth management within the county are: (1) comprehensive plans, (2) zoning ordinances, (3) subdivision regulations, and (4) capital improvement programs.

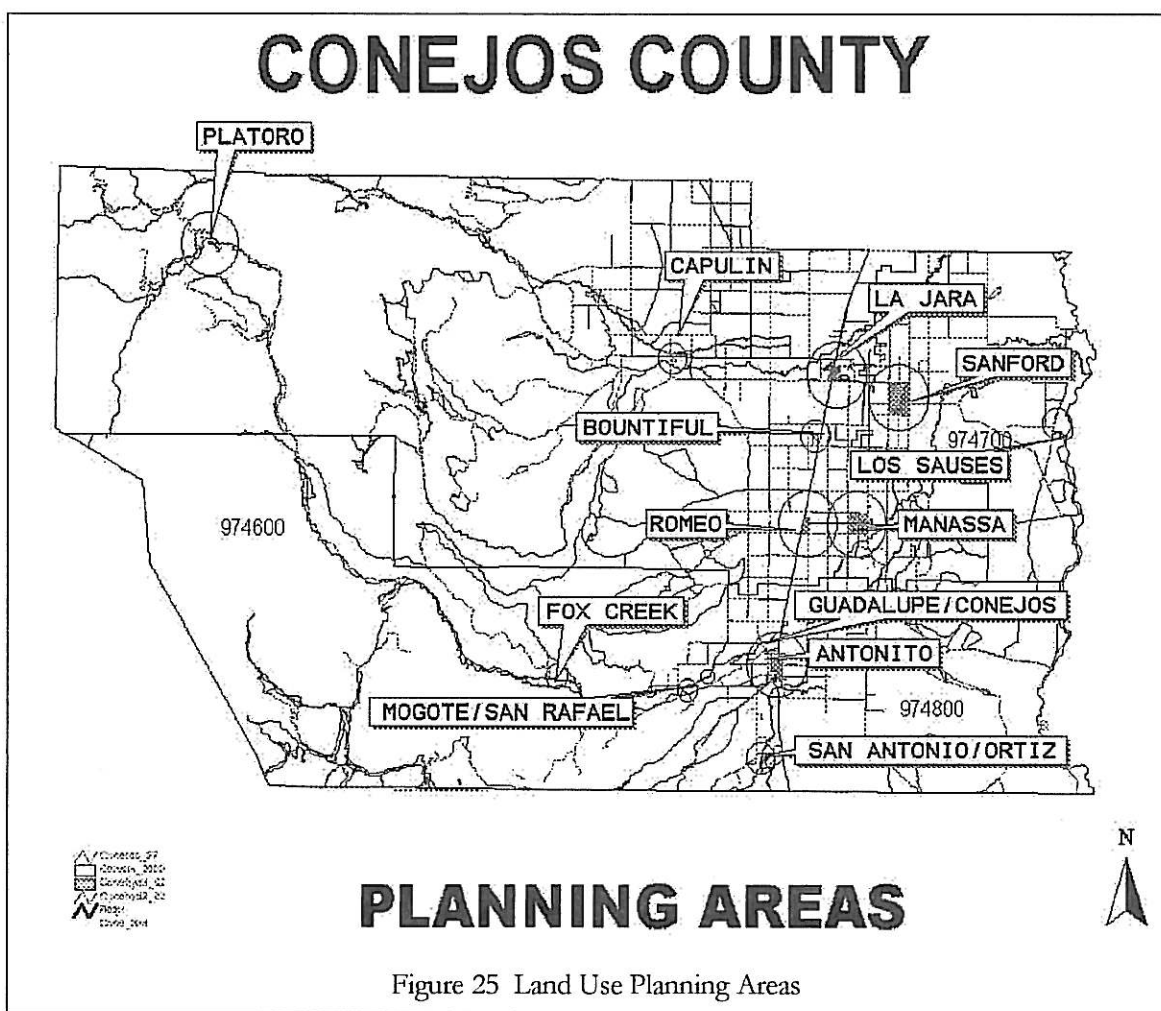
A recent survey of the existing regulatory documents and office procedures of the Conejos Land Use Office has revealed the need to update and streamline the various regulations so that they may become more user friendly, easier to navigate and interpret.



2.12.12 Land Use Maps

The Land Use Maps are intended to be a graphic depiction of the principles and implementation strategies contained in the Master Plan. They set forth a simplified diagram of how the County should evolve and develop in the future. Because the Master Plan is tied to a specific time frame, target population or land needs analysis, the timing of future development will depend on a number of factors including choices made by individual landowners and future availability of facilities and services.

Within urban areas, more detailed future land use information is contained in adopted community plans. As these plans are accepted by the County and incorporated into Intergovernmental Agreements, the more detailed land use categories and policies of the community plans will take precedence over the generalized Land Use Framework Maps. The Land Use Maps note where these detailed community plans exist.



2.12.13 Land Use Categories

Land use refers to the kind of activity for which any given parcel of land is being utilized. In the Conejos County Comprehensive Plan, land use will be divided into nine (9) categories. These nine categories include the following:

Urban and Community Functions

This category includes the various commercial, service, institutional, light industrial and other combinations of land use that are normally found in intricate complexes at central locations. They represent the “commercial center” or “central business district” of the community, or the various sub-centers and strip or scattered developments that provide similar services. This category may also include some residential use where it exists in areas which are predominantly commercial, service or light industrial.

Residential

This category includes the large areas of most communities which are devoted almost exclusively to residential use, perhaps including small areas where services are provided for the local neighborhood. Because purely residential land use is significantly different in landscape and economic effect from that of the “commercial center,” a separate major category is provided for it.

Industrial

This category is characterized by land uses that have very pronounced social, economic and other environmental effects in spite of the generally small areas they occupy. They often are the features representing critical economic functions of community support facilities. They also frequently have significant actual or potential visual impacts of polluting effects. Finally, they are frequently associated with the use of natural resources. Thus, their location, even more than the area they occupy, is of critical importance for planning.

Natural Resource Extraction

This category includes land uses similar to heavy industry in their environmental and economic significance, but, “resource extraction” is more closely related to the use of natural, or land-based resources. The resource extraction process itself has characteristic effects on the land, and furthermore, is directly dependent on the existence of natural resources and the manner in which they are removed.

Developed Outdoor Recreation

This category includes land on which the primary use is recreation, and on which recreational activity accounts for dominant characteristics of the land. The category includes all developed municipal, county, state, federal or private parks, campgrounds, ski areas, golf courses, or other recreational facilities involving large land areas. It includes playing fields, shooting ranges and major sports stadiums. It does not include areas that are undeveloped except for primitive trails, roads and campsites, such as wilderness areas of national forests and national parks. These areas should be classified as “low impact land use.”

Irrigated Farmland

Water is a critical resource in Conejos County, and the process of irrigation depends on its availability. Furthermore, in this region where cattle production is an avocation, hay crops are produced which are critical to livestock operations on unirrigated rangeland. For this reason, together with the increasing importance of food production and the more general environmental values, irrigated farmland is considered important enough to warrant identification as a major land use category.

Unirrigated Farmland

“Unirrigated Farmland” is considered to be that land which produces crops on a regular basis without artificially administered water to assist it. In some areas of the Country, this is a common land use, but in Conejos County, there is not enough precipitation to produce crops in this way.

Rangeland

This category includes land on which domestic livestock graze on “natural” vegetation. This vegetation is not considered a crop, thus the distinction between this category and Unirrigated Farmland. This category includes native grassland, open woodlands which are used for grazing and mountain meadows which are grazed by domestic stock but not mowed for hay.

Low Impact Land Use

This category includes areas with landscapes essentially unaltered by human activity. Such lands have important environmental functions as watersheds and recreational lands. They also include environmentally critical areas: high altitude tundra and meadows, steep rocky slopes, avalanche paths, and undeveloped floodplains. The category contains such diverse areas as legislatively-reserved wilderness and municipal watersheds. Although these areas have important recreational functions, they are differentiated from “developed outdoor recreation” because of their essentially natural character, relative absence of structures, low-intensity recreational use, and usually large areas.

2.12.14 LAND USE SURVEY

In 2002, a Land Use Survey was conducted by the Land Use Office for Conejos County. All privately owned land and all municipalities were mapped and classified on land use maps.

In addition to the land use data on these maps, the information gathered has been compiled in table form in Tables LU-1 and LU-2. Table LU-1, indicated land ownership for all land in Conejos County. The categories are divided into federal, state, municipal, and private ownership. In this table, we can see that 296,969 acres, or 35.9%, of the land in the county is owned by the federal government. Much of this, in the form of Bureau of Land Management Land, is leased via permits to private citizens in the county for their use, however. In as much as this federal land comprises such a large percentage of land within the county, it is of importance. The federal government pays taxes to the county for its use. Thousands of tourists visit this area annually and this is important to the residents of the county, as has been discussed in the Population and Economic Base Element. The Forest Service has prepared a long-range plan concerning roadless and wilderness areas in the forest and the decisions resulting from this plan will have major implications on the use of the land within the forest.

58,200 acres, or 7.1% of land in the county is Colorado State Land. Most of this land was originally designated "School Land" for use as school sites in the future. Much of it is located in the foothill areas of the San Juans and a large segment surrounds La Jara Reservoir. Most of this land is leased to farmers in Conejos County who use it to graze their cattle during the summer months. In addition to farming and ranching leases many of the state owned tracts are leased to extractive industries for the purpose of gravel mining and mineral leases. Occasionally this land is sold to private individuals and therein lies its true importance in this Land Use Element. The Planning Commission should be aware that this land is similar to the "Low Impact Land Use" category which was discussed earlier. At any time, portions of this Colorado State Land could become available for private use. Because of the location of much this land in the mountains, the Planning Commission should consider future development on this land in light of its net benefit to the County, just as development on existing private land should be.

Incorporated municipalities account for 1,879 acres, or .2% of the land in Conejos County. As discussed in the Population and Economic Base Element of the Comprehensive Plan, the five communities included in this category accounted for the county's 8,400 population in 2000.

TABLE LU-1
CONEJOS COUNTY LAND OWNERSHIP - 2002

<u>Land Ownership Category</u>	<u>Total Acres</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Rio Grande National Forest	296,969	35.9%
San Juan National Forest	4,242	.51%
Bureau of Land Management Land	193,329	23.39%
Colorado State Land	58,200	7.1%
Incorporated Municipalities of		
Conejos County	1,879	.22%
Conejos County Privately Owned		
Land and Unincorporated	<u>271,741</u>	<u>32.8%</u>
 TOTAL	 826,240	 100.0%

Source: Development Resources Group
 Conejos County Assessors Office

Finally, the privately owned land and unincorporated municipalities in Conejos County accounted for 271,741 acres, or 32.8 % of the land. It is this category, which is of primary concern in this Element and one, which will be discussed, in greater depth. Table LU-2, indicated the breakdown of this category by the land use classification previously discussed and what follows is an examination of these land use categories and their respective impacts on Conejos County.

TABLE LU-2

CONEJOS COUNTY LAND USE - 2002

(PRIVATELY OWNED LAND AND UNINCOPORATED MUNICIPALITIES)

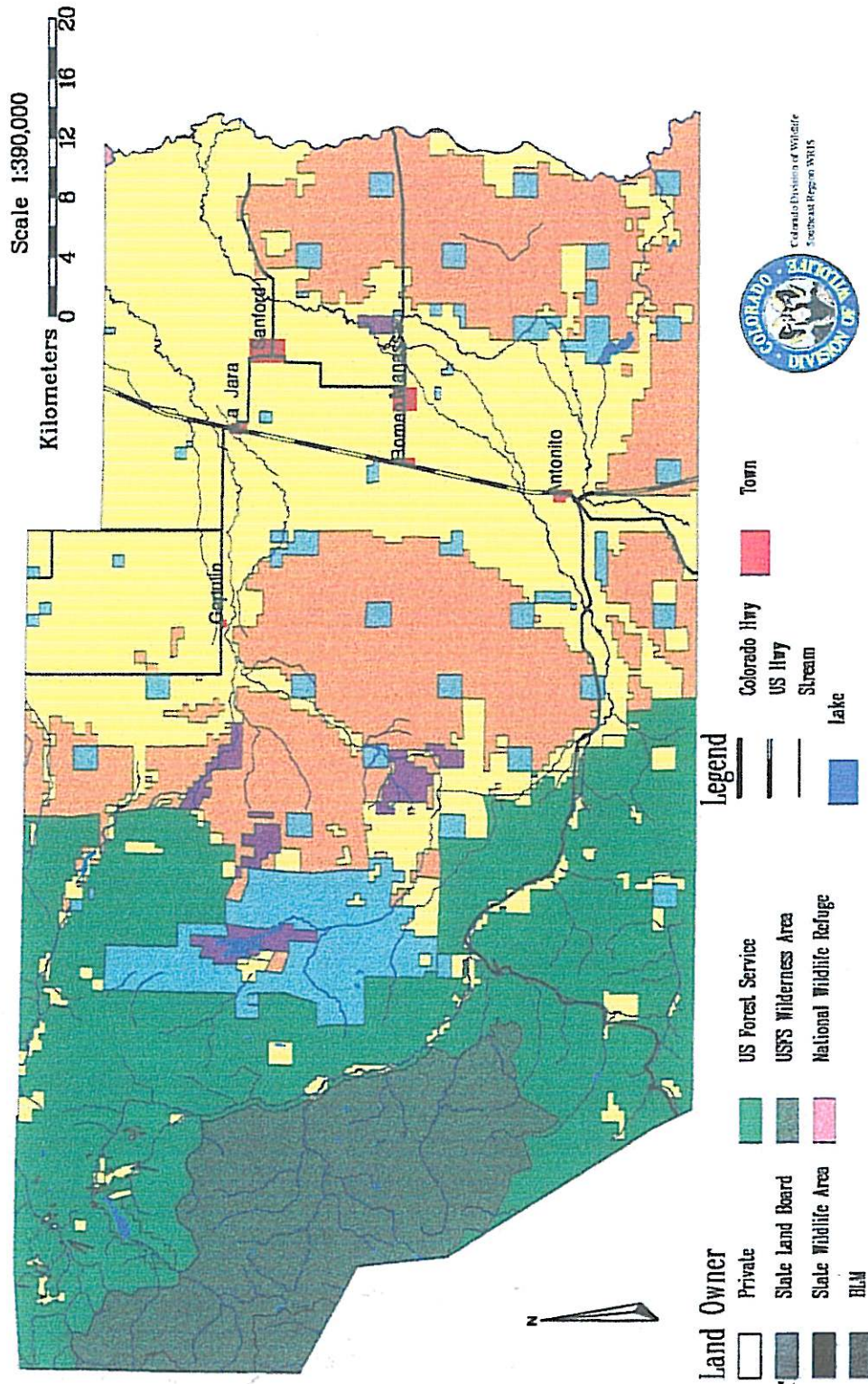
<u>Land Use Category</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Percent of All Land</u>
Urban & Community Functions	2,420	.89%
Residential	13,580	4.99 %
Industrial	674	.25%
Transportation	6,553	2.41%
Natural Resource Extraction	1946.5	.71 %
Developed Outdoor Recreation	1,380	.50%
Irrigated Farmland	150,119	55.24%
Unirrigated Farmland	0.0	0.00%
Rangeland	56,333.6	20.73%
Low Impact Land Use	38,736	14.25%
TOTAL	271,741	100.0%

Based on an estimated population of 8,400

Source: Development Resources Group, 2002

Natural Resource Conservation Service

Land Status Overlay Map Conejos County, CO



MAP 1 Conejos County Land Use Map

Urban and Community Functions

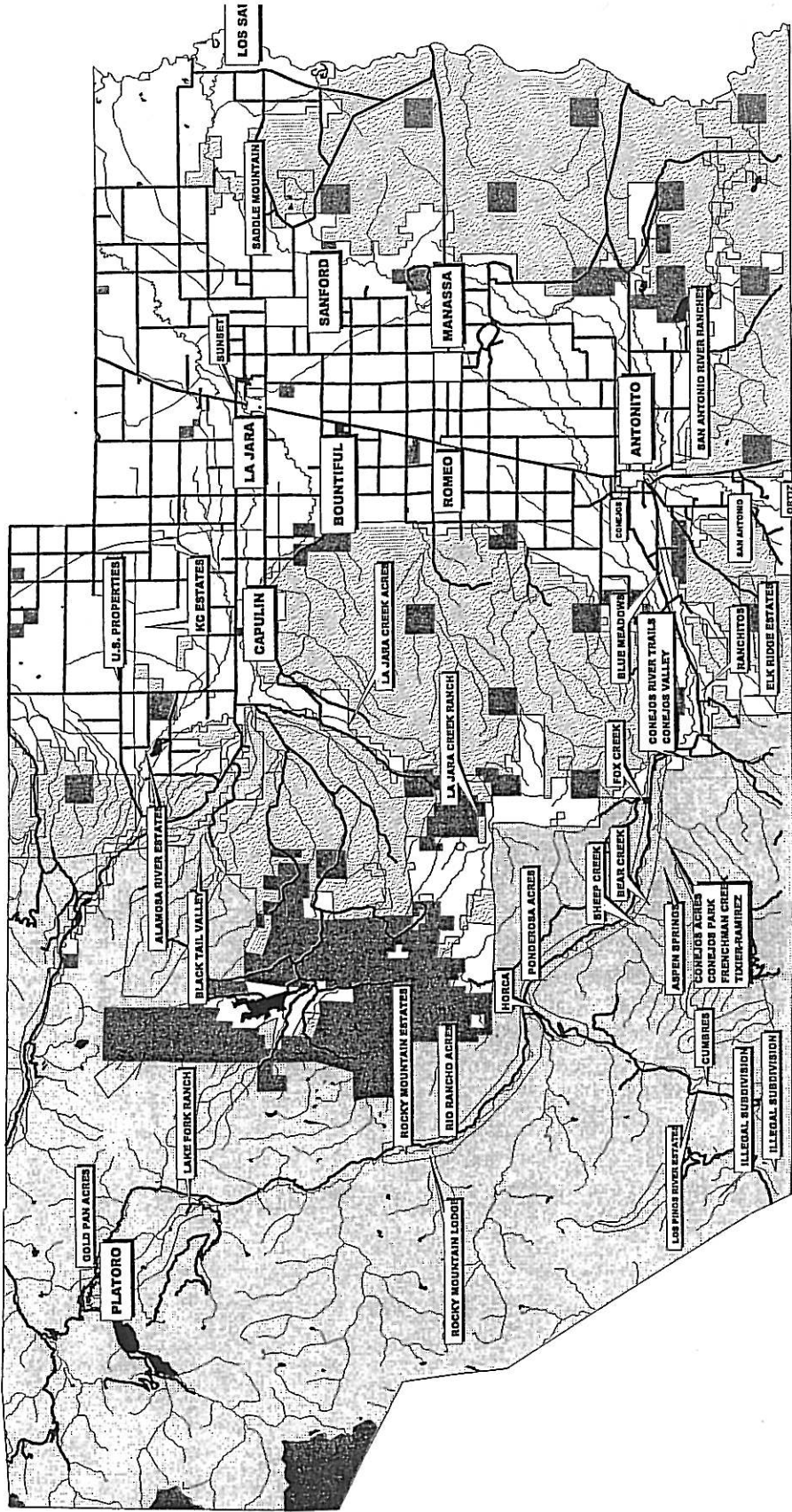
In this section, urban and community functions, refer to the unincorporated municipalities in Conejos County that do not merely exist as bedroom communities to larger surrounding towns. The town of Conejos, Capulin, Mogote, Ortiz, and San Antonio are examples, and Bountiful is another. Also included in this classification are related functions such as cemeteries. Presently, in Conejos County, there are 2,240 acres, or .92% of the private and unincorporated land committed to this use. All Urban and Community land use examples can be seen on Map 1. Most examples of this land use are situated between the San Luis Hills to the east and the gently rising foothills of the San Juan Mountains to the west. The early inhabitants of Conejos County settled in these communities because of their close proximity to fertile agricultural land and, in some cases, the rivers of the county. Most of the community and urban functions within the county lie on the main transportation line; U.S. 285/State Highway 17. Adjacent to it is the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railway. Between these two transportation systems, most freight, and passenger traffic is handled. Their existence serves as the life blood to commercial and manufacturing industries alike.

Some community and urban functions in rural Conejos County are located in lesser traveled highways. Their locations were established long before the existence of a State Highway, yet they still are able to function in farther proximity than most of the towns in the county. Today, these land uses exist for much the same reasons that they were originally established; small agricultural communities.

Residential

In Conejos County, 7,227 acres, or 2.66 % of the County's unincorporated and private land is devoted to residential use in the form of subdivisions. Most have been developed since 1960 in order to accommodate a growing seasonal resident traffic. All land use classified as Residential can be seen on Subdivision Map 2. Presently, the Rocky Mountain Estates, Ponderosa Acres, Conejos Valley Subdivision, Blue Meadows Subdivision, Bear Creek, Sheep Creek, Conejos Acres, and Gold Pan Acres lie on the banks of the Conejos River. Among them there are 502 platted lots for seasonal residential development. The Alamosa River Estates is the only subdivision on the Alamosa River and it has 276 platted lots.

There are two subdivisions in Conejos County which appear to be only speculative in nature. There is very little, if any, development in them and they are far removed from utilities and transportation lines. These two subdivisions are the Elk Ridge Estates south of the Conejos River, and the Black Trail Valley Subdivision in the mountains near the Alamosa River. Between the two there are 430 platted lots.



CONEJOS COUNTY SUBDIVISIONS

MAP 2 CONEJOS COUNTY SUBDIVISIONS

CONEJOS COUNTY SUBDIVISION DATA (AS OF DECEMBER, 2002)

Subdivision Name	No. of Lots	Total Acres	Vacant lots	Percent Vacant
Alamosa River Estates	256 now	167.77	254	99.2%
Aspen Springs	38	67.26	25	65.8%
Barrel Ranches	58	2,030	58	100%
Bear Creek Phase 1-2G	180	219.32	152	84.4%
Conejos River Trails	85	454.3527 orig; now 148.014	77	90.6%
Conejos Valley	49	55.086	40	81.6%
Cumbres	58	186.01	43	74.1%
Elk Ridge Estates	320	1600 plus	320	100%
Fox Creek	26	160.640	24	92.3%
Frenchman Creek	14	40.96	11	78.6%
Horca	192	80.07	98	51%
KC Estates #1	20 lots on plat	820.620	18	90%
KC Estates #2	8	316.173	7	87.5%
La Jara Creek Acres	98	293.59	94	96%
Los Pinos River Estates	29	35.002	26	89.7%
Ponderosa Acres	72	No Info.	41	57%
Ranchitos del Rio Conejos	16	30.221	14	87.5%
Rio Rancho Acres	35 lots on plat	36.57	9	25.7%
Rocky Mtn Estates 1	31	19	19	61.3%
Rocky Mtn Estates 2	34	14.3	19	55.9%
Saddle Mountain	17	741.511	17	100%
Sheep Creek #1 & #2	41 on plat	83.43	52 vacant in all 3 PUDS	82.5%
Sheep Creek #2	22 on plat	44.516		
Sunset	37	14.471	34	92%
Tixier Ramirez	34	44.97	23	67.6%
Conejos Acres	27		1	3%
Conejos Park	8	21.98	4	50%

Total Lots:1805 Total Acres: 7271.48 Total Vacant:1,480 Total % Vacant:82%

Industrial

Industrial uses represent only a minor use of the land in Conejos County with 674 acres, or .25% of the County's privately owned land. This can be seen on Map 1. This land use is concentrated near Antonito, Manassa, and between La Jara and Sanford; incorporated municipalities where the majority of the non-agricultural workers in the County are congregated. The locations of this land use are also near the major transportation systems in the County: U.S. 285/State Hwy. 17 and the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. In the case of the Perlite Processing Plant and aggregate plant near Antonito, their location is important for easy distribution of their products.

Natural Resource Extraction

The extraction of mineral resources accounts for only 1,946.5 acres, or .71%, of the privately owned land in Conejos County. This land use can be seen on Map 1. Most mining activity takes place in the western part of the County around Platoro in the form of silver extraction. This is only minor, however, and does not account for a significant amount of either employment or production in the County.

Of greater importance, perhaps, are the turquoise mining operations to the east of Manassa. It is here that turquoise is extracted to be processed into jewelry in Manassa and Sanford. The fact that it is linked to secondary production, accounts for its economic importance in the County.

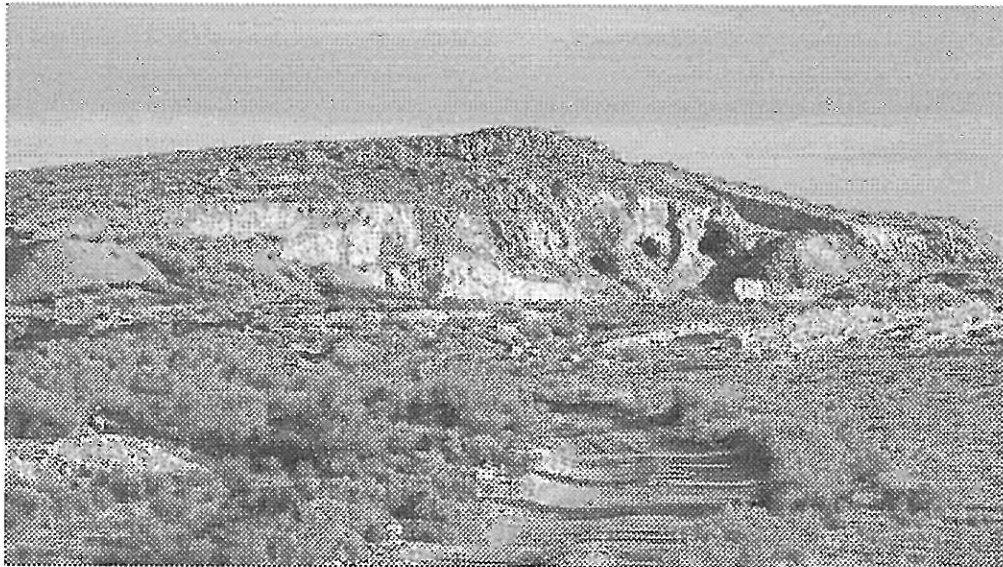


Figure 26 Turquoise Mine near Manassa

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Figure 26 Turquoise Mine near Manassa

Developed Outdoor Recreation

Developed outdoor recreation has one of the smallest allotments of land of any land use in the County with only 1,380 acres, or .50% of the privately owned land. This land use can be seen on Map 3. As can be seen, most developed outdoor recreation is situated in the areas where tourists are most likely to congregate; along the Conejos River. Most are campgrounds used for camping for short periods of time, while the recreators enjoy the outdoor beauty, and fishing.

One reason that more developed recreation sites aren't located on the Alamosa River is that there are no fish in that river. Pollutants from Summitville Mine upstream have eliminated them, thus reducing the number of tourists and developed recreation sites. Some of the recreation sites are located next to subdivisions.

There are some developed recreation sites near the communities of the County. These are primarily designed for spectator sporting events and are located for easy access by the majority of the population.

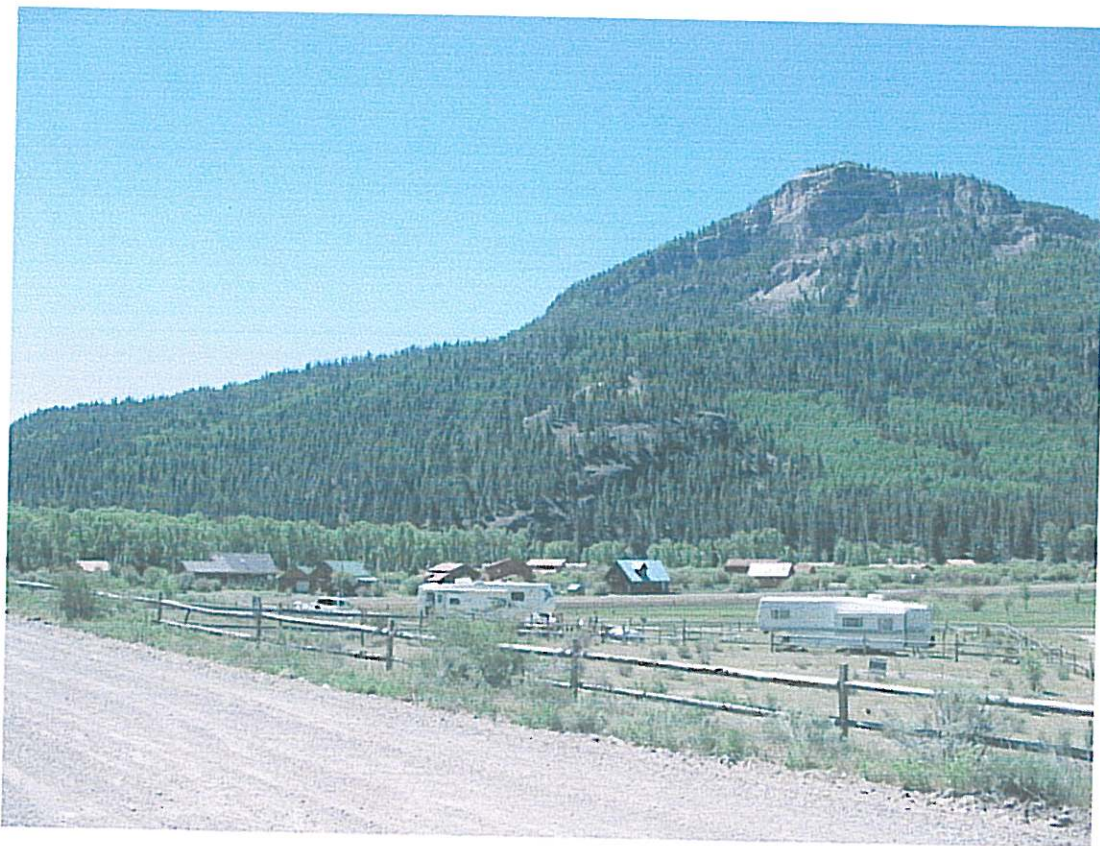
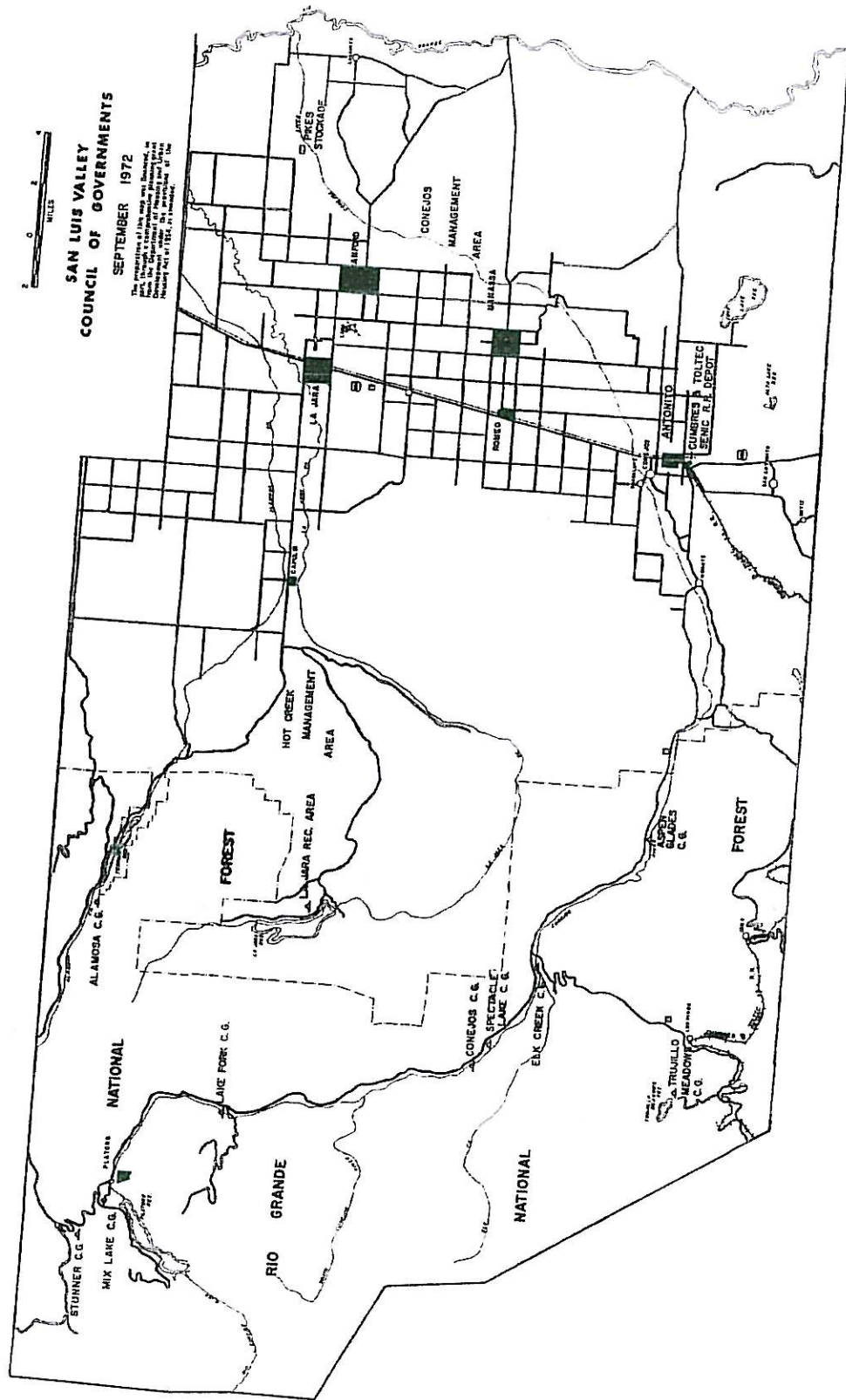


Figure 27 HORCA RV Site



Irrigated Farmland

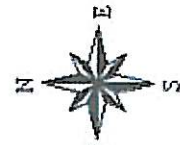
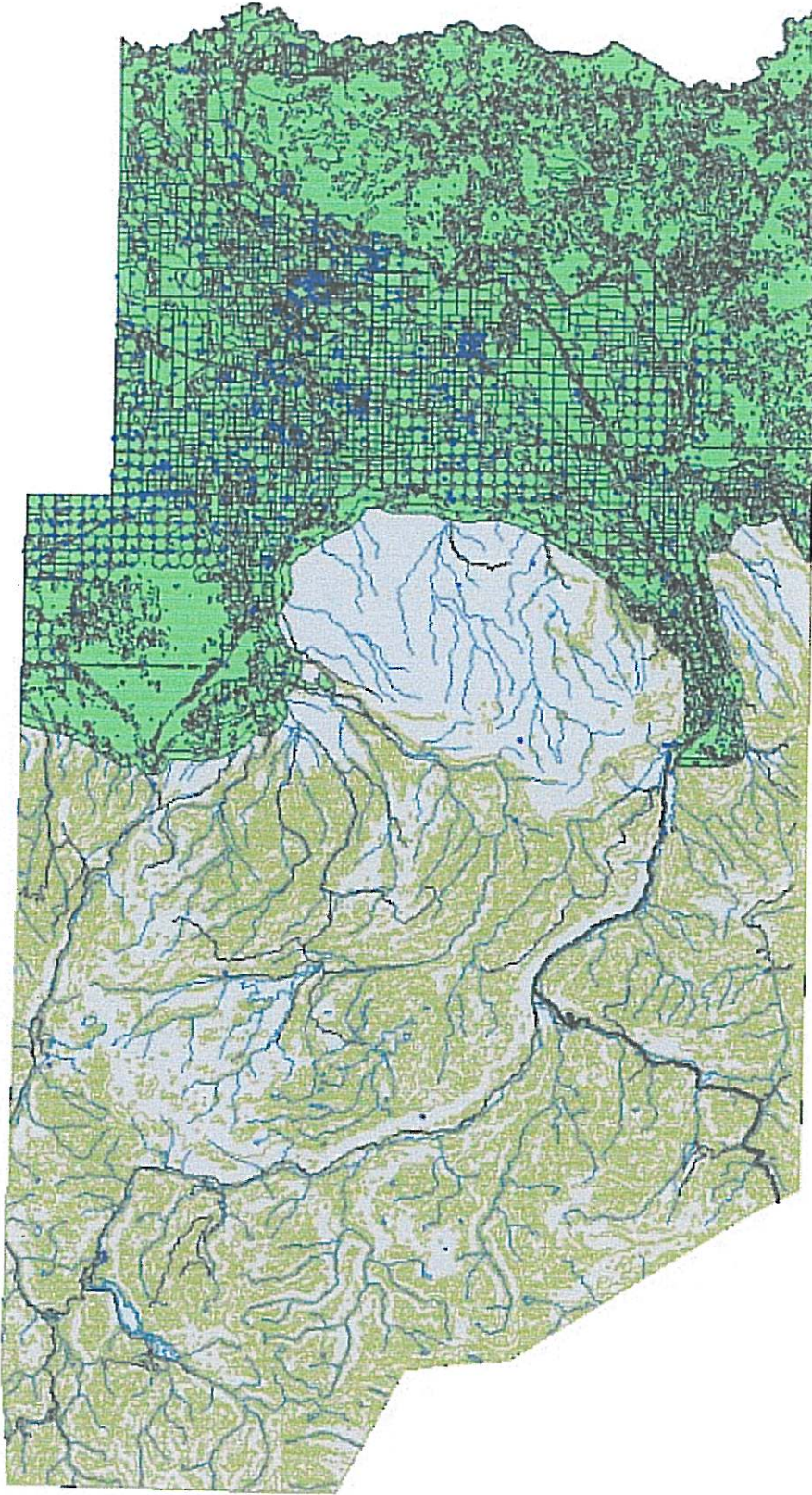
Irrigated farmland is by far the most prevalent land use in the County with 150,119 acres, or 55.26%, of the privately owned land as illustrated on Map 4. It lies in the valley between the San Luis Hills to the east and the sloping foothills of the San Juan Mountains to the west. It literally surrounds all other land uses with its total acreage. Its importance is thus visually obvious to the reader. As was mentioned in the Direct Basic Employment Chart (Figure 18) of this Comprehensive Plan, over 20% of the workforce in Conejos County listed farming related jobs as their occupation in 1999. As expansive as this land use is in the County in terms of economics, there is actually very low residential impact related to it. Although it is estimated that 90% of the farm related workers live in rural Conejos County, that only amounts to one person for every 10.6 acres when all the farm related land uses are added together.

The true impact of this land use is related to water. The national average shows that 90% of all available water is used for agricultural purposes, while only 9% is used for industrial use and 1% for domestic use. Conejos County averages under 10 Inches of precipitation a year in the east part of the county, therefore, irrigating farmers must depend on runoff from mountain snowpacks and underground aquifers. Well fed water sprinklers are increasingly popular in the County as a means of watering crops.



Figure 28 Agricultural fields in rural Conejos County

CONEJOS COUNTY



IRRIGATED AGRICULTURAL LANDS

- County Wellhead
- Cone Irrigation
- County Road
- County CD
- Cone Irrigation
- Cone Irrigation
- Cone Irrigation

MAP 4 Irrigated Farmland

Rangeland

Rangeland accounts for 56,333.6 acres, or 20.73% of the privately owned land in Conejos County. This land use is much more extensive than this, however, because most of the Bureau of Land Management Land and much of the Colorado State Land in the County is leased to livestock owners for the purpose of grazing cattle and sheep during the summer months. Most rangeland is used only in the summer when weather permits access. This land use is not artificially irrigated, nor is it plowed or otherwise tended. Therefore, natural crop production is essential. Again, the impact of water on this land use is important. Most rangeland is located along the waterways of the County and in the foothills of the San Juans and the San Luis Hills, on the outskirts of the fertile bottomland used for raising crops. As mentioned in the Population and Economic Base Element of this Comprehensive Plan, the raising of cattle and sheep and the production of hay in Conejos County go hand in hand. An examination of the relationship of the farm related land uses quickly shows this.

Low Impact Land Use

Low Impact Land Use in Conejos County accounts for 38,736 acres, or 25 %, of the privately owned land. Including areas essentially unaltered by man, this takes in most privately owned land in the high mountain areas of the San Juans. Upon closer examination, we can see that these areas have difficult accessibility and are isolated from other land uses, and services. Most are nestled between Forest Service land.

As its name mentions, this land is presently low impact. The true concern is that its existing use is pivotal and that it could be altered. Given its isolated locations, this could be very risky; most notably if it involved change to a high impact land use, such as Residential. The costs involved with doing this could be great and should be thoroughly weighed before doing so.



Figure 29 Low Impact Land Use

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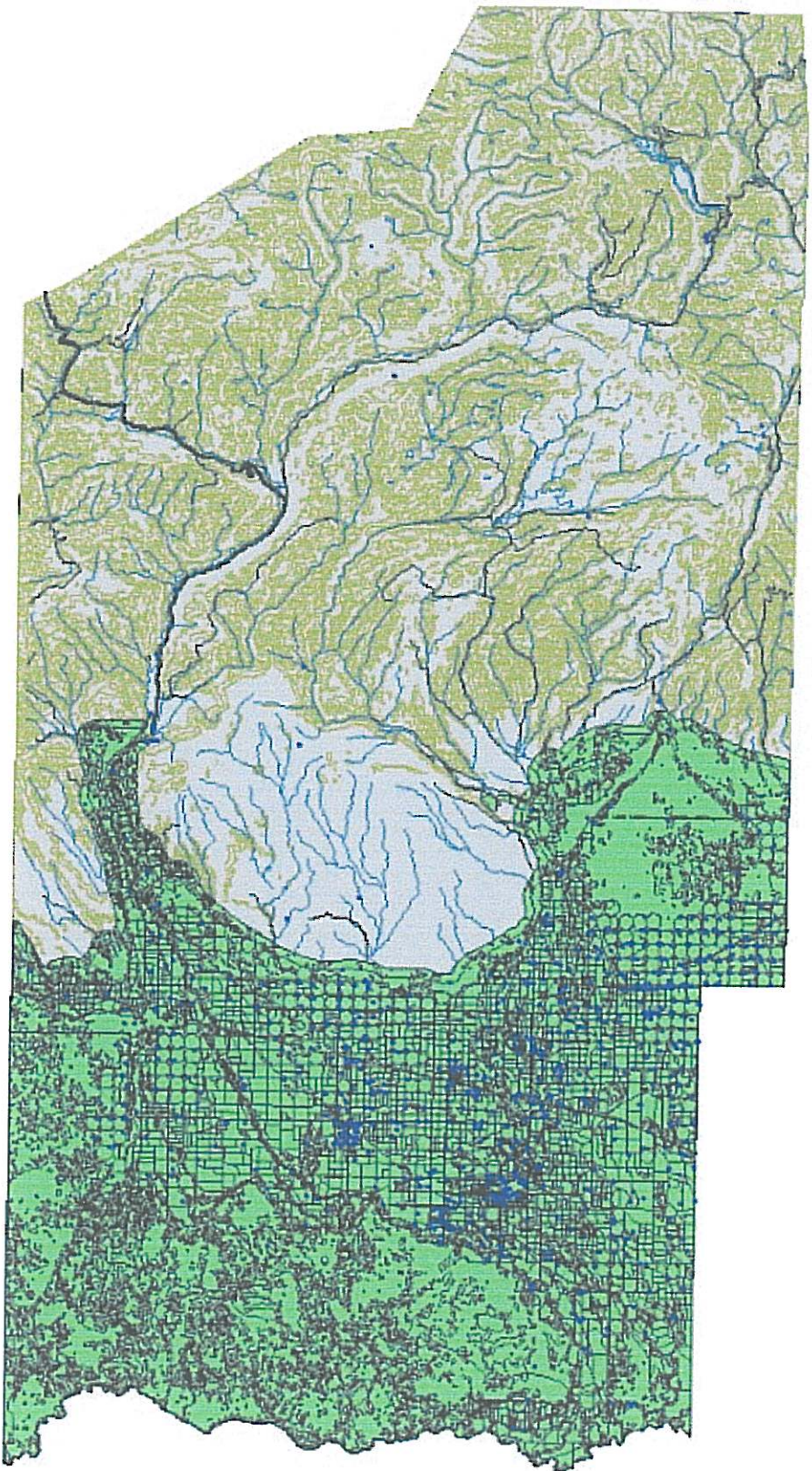
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Figure 29 Low Impact Land Use

CONEJOS COUNTY



- Designated Wetlands
- County Boundary
- County Seat
- County Administration
- County Seat
- County Seat

IRRIGATED AGRICULTURAL LANDS

MAP 4 Irrigated Farmland



Irrigated Farmland

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The true impact of this land use is related to water. The national average shows that 90% of all available water is used for agricultural purposes, while only 9% is used for industrial use and 1% for domestic use. Conejos County averages under 10 Inches of precipitation a year in the east part of the county, therefore, irrigating farmers must depend on runoff from mountain snowpacks and underground aquifers. Well fed water sprinklers are increasingly popular in the County as a means of watering crops.



Figure 28 Agricultural fields in rural Conejos County



Figure 30 Skyline Lodge Sign at Platoro

2.12.15 CONEJOS COUNTY'S FUTURE LAND USE NEEDS

Thus far in the Land Use Element, there has been a discussion on the existing land use allotments and distribution in Conejos County. Also in this Element, the factors are examined which have an impact on existing uses of the land for the future of Conejos County and how these needs can be met. It is important here to outline the criteria in making these decisions.

It is the intent of the Board of County Commissioners to look favorably on any future development which will be of net benefit to the County. Although it will be up to the developer to establish the net benefit of his proposal to the Commission, he will have several guidelines at his disposal. As discussed in this Element, there are certain environmental constraints which must be mitigated prior to development. Failure to do so may place undue health and safety burdens on County residents. Also, the County has developed Subdivision and Septic Tank Regulations which outline requirements for certain types of development. Finally, any development that would place an undue economic burden on the County to provide roads and utilities would not be looked at favorably. Naturally, certain types of development analyzed in the Population Economy and Land Use Element of this Comprehensive Plan as being beneficial to the County would be encouraged. But even these would require all physical and environmental constraints to be met.

Introduction

In developing future land use needs, population projections established in the Population Economy and Land Use Element are very important. When projecting land use for urban and community functions and residential development, future population projections will be used. In analyzing other land uses, their relationships to these two land uses and others will be considered.

Urban and Community Functions

In the Population Economy and Land Use Element, a projection of future population was made for Conejos County to the year 2020. In analyzing the future needs of this land use, we will be required to look at the population growth for rural Conejos County only. These figures constitute the permanent, year-round residents of the County. By using this permanent population increase, we can project the number of new households to the year 2025. These figures are shown in Table LU-3. As can be seen, 506 units will be needed. Therefore, given 506 units and assuming a minimum of one acre per unit, there will be a need for a minimum of 506 acres for permanent residences by the year 2020.

As was mentioned in the Land Use Survey portion of this Element, this land use classification is ideally, and historically located in the valley between the San Luis Hills and the San Juan foothills. The need for this additional land will most likely come from land which is presently used for agricultural purposes on the Valley floor between the San Luis Hills and the San Juan Mountain Foothills.

TABLE LU-3
HOUSEHOLDS REQUIRED BY PERMANENT RESIDENTS
CONEJOS COUNTY 2000-2025

Year	Permanent Population (Growth Rate)	Total Housing Units	Average Family Size	Households Required
2000	8,047(.70)	2,980	3	
2005	8,322 (.68)	3,072	3	92
2010	8,646 (.76)	3,180	3	108
2015	8,971 (.74)	3,288	3	108
2020	9,380 (.68)	3,424	3	136
2025	9,566 (.61)	3,486	3	62
Households Required				506
				Total New

Residential

According to the 2000 Census, there were 544 seasonal residences in Conejos County at that time. In 1976, as part of a Housing Survey completed by the San Luis Valley Council of Governments, 451 seasonal housing units were counted. This is an increase of 93 over twenty four years, or an average of 4 per year. If this trend continued, there would be an additional 100 seasonal units by the year 2025. This seems highly unlikely, based on two factors: 1) the highly unstable fuel situation in the world today, and 2) the addition of the Environmental Constraints to the Subdivision Regulations in 2003. These constraints require minimal development take place in potential flood plain areas. The Conejos River, with the several subdivisions already along its banks, and the prime location of seasonal residential development in Conejos County, is a prime flood plain area. So to is the Alamosa River, with the Alamosa River Estate on its banks, these subdivisions were approved prior to 1975. In as much as these are choice seasonal residential locations, however, this will certainly limit the number of additional subdivisions on these two rivers. For these reasons, we will project half of the average yearly seasonal residences to the year 2025; that will be, 50 units. This can be seen in Table LU-4.

As mentioned earlier, there are several hundred platted lots in the subdivisions along the Conejos River and in the Alamosa River Estates on the Alamosa River. Many of these are developed and many are potentially hazardous to develop on. For these reasons, it is extremely difficult to judge how many available developable sites for seasonal residences there are. The subdivision chart shows that the majority of subdivision lots in existing subdivisions are vacant. In order to be safe, therefore, we will speculate that all units to be developed in the future will require newly platted lots. We should point out here that we consider the 430 platted lots in Elk Ridge Estate and Black Trail Valley subdivision to be speculative and are, therefore may be vacated, not including them as developable sites. At one acre per site, that means a total requirement of 50 acres for seasonal residences by the year 2025. This is calculated in Table LU-5. Most likely, the additional acreage in this land use will come from the higher rangeland along the banks of the Conejos River.

TABLE LU-4
HOUSEHOLD REQUIRED BY SEASONAL RESIDENTS
CONEJOS COUNTY 2000-2020

<u>Year</u>	<u>Residences Required</u>	<u>(4 units/year)</u>
2000	544	20
2005	564	20
2010	584	20
2015	604	20
<u>2020</u>	<u>624</u>	<u>20</u>
TOTAL		100



Figure 31 Seasonal Residence at Horca Subdivision

Rangeland

Rangeland is a vulnerable land use. Presently, it exists on the outskirts of irrigated agriculture as well as along the stream banks of almost every aquifer in the County, and Conejos River. Certainly seasonal residences will replace some this land use along the Conejos, and developed recreation will replace some more. Because there is Federal and State land available for this use, if irrigated agricultural land were to expand, it too would displace this land use.

Low Impact Land Use

Because of the location of most low impact land, it is extremely important that an in-depth analysis be made when replacing it with another land use. We speculate that low impact land use will be replaced by developed recreation by the year 2020 because of its location in the heart of the beautiful San Juan's. Other land uses, however, would be suitable in many of these areas; far from traveled roads, and utilities. This should be a major concern of all local officials when examining such requests in the future.



Figure 32 Rangeland near Manassa

Plan Direction and Action Strategies For Land Use

In the section below, each primary paragraph (in bold type) is a statement of plan direction. The sub-paragraphs are actions for implementing the plan direction.

URBAN LAND USE

LU-1 The preferred location of urban land use is within municipal boundaries where urban levels of service are available. The County will not provide urban services.

LU-1-s1 Conejos County will work with municipalities to encourage location of new urban development within city and town boundaries.

LU-1-s2 The County will work with cities and towns to encourage annexation of existing development that is within Growth Management Areas but currently outside city limits.

LU-1-s3 The County will ensure that any proposed Intergovernmental Agreements and revised Land Use Code do not create disincentives for annexation of land within Growth Management Areas, either before or after development.

LU-2 New urban-density residential uses shall locate only in areas specifically designated for urban development, i.e., (Growth Management Areas).

LU-2-s1 Conejos County will work with municipalities to designate Growth Management Areas consistent with municipal plans and which can be expected to be incorporated into the municipality within a reasonable time.

LU-2-s2 The County will approve zoning requests for increased residential density and urban-intensity commercial and industrial uses in areas specifically designated for urban development in an adopted 3 Mile Area Plan. All zoning changes must be consistent with an adopted land use or policy plan.

LU-2-s3 Outside Growth Management Areas the County may designate "receiving areas" for a transfer of development rights program from agriculture to non-agricultural areas as appropriate for higher density development, after considering compatibility, impact on sensitive natural areas and availability of facilities and services. Location of higher densities in these areas shall be consistent with the principles of the Master Plan.

LU-3 New development within unincorporated Conejos County will be designed to be consistent with and to support adopted community plans.

LU-3-s1 Within the limits of existing County land use regulations, all new development in Growth Management Areas will be compatible with the municipality's adopted land use or policy plan. The County will rely on review comments from the municipality to help determine if requests for zoning or other development approvals are consistent with the intent of the community plan.

LU-3-s2 Intergovernmental Agreements shall limit the types of development applications which allow exceptions from the land use and development standards contained in the Agreements. These exceptions should be carefully evaluated and the process of considering variances and waivers to standards for all development within Growth Management Areas should be designed to ensure that City and County policies are not compromised.

LU-3-s3 New development in other designated urban areas shall be consistent with an adopted area plan if available.



RURAL LAND USE

LU-4 In rural areas, allowed uses and residential densities shall be based on the current zoning of the property.

LU-4-s1 The maximum number of allowed dwelling units in new rural subdivisions shall be determined by the minimum lot size and zoning requirements of the district.

LU-4-s2 Changes in existing zoning shall be approved only when the change supports rural uses and maintains the rural character of the zoning district.

LU-4-s3 Up-zoning to increase residential density in rural areas shall not be approved with the exception of cluster development

LU-4-s4 Requests for commercial and industrial zoning and special reviews which have specific requirements preventing location within Growth Management Areas may be approved in rural areas, if the uses are consistent with principles of the Master Plan. Examples of uses that may be appropriate outside Growth Management Areas are tourist-related businesses adjacent to major highways or tourist routes, agribusiness, utilities and mining operations.

LU-5 All new rural residential development shall be designed to maintain the open character of rural areas and to protect and maintain agricultural uses and sensitive environmental areas.

LU-5-s1 New subdivisions outside Growth Management Areas shall be designed as Rural Conservation Development (RCD) with at least 80% open space in zoning districts with a minimum lot size of 100,000 square feet or greater, and 50% open space in other districts, for agricultural operations, natural areas or other undeveloped open uses.

LU-5-s2 Clustered housing shall be located in accordance with principles for protecting sensitive environmental areas, agriculture and efficiency of service provision. The Land Use Code shall include design standards for Rural Conservation Development.

LU-5-s3 The Land Use Code shall include standards for consideration of exceptions to the percentage of required open space, whereby decreases in housing units and/or provisions for community benefit may result in decreases in required open space. The standards shall be based on applicable principles of the Master Plan, including LU-5 above.

LU-5-s4 The ownership and management of open space created through Rural Conservation Development shall be set forth in a management plan which will be reviewed and approved with each RCD application. Open space shall remain undeveloped in perpetuity except where this provision is explicitly changed by a special area plan adopted by the County.

LU-5-s5 New rural subdivisions shall be designed to locate structures away from highly visible areas. To the extent possible, considering site limitations and hazard areas, design should avoid building sites on ridge lines. Housing sites should be located on the least fertile soils for agricultural and forestry uses.

LU-6 Clustered development shall be designed to implement its own level of facilities and services independent of rural villages and small towns.

LU-6-s1 Rural Conservation Development shall be designed to limit the number of dwelling units in individual clustered areas, considering both the proposed development and existing adjacent uses and undeveloped lots. Proposed development which adds sufficient dwelling units that an area approaches the character of a village or small town shall be avoided.

LU-6-s2 If a development plan for a large clustered area is proposed, review shall include the need for urban-level facilities and services, including neighborhood parks and schools, fire stations, arterial roads and provisions for supporting enhanced law enforcement patrol capabilities. Development of this scope shall be reviewed as an Area Plan amendment to the Master Plan.

LU-6-s3 The Land Use Code shall require the "Code of the West" to be referenced in the protective covenants for development outside Growth Management Areas.

LU-7 The Rural Land Use Process shall be encouraged and supported as an alternative to creation of 35-acre tracts.

LU-7-s1 The provisions of the Rural Land Use Process shall be incorporated into the Land Use Code.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL DEVELOPMENT

LU-8 Undevelopable land shall be defined in the Land Use Code and shall include the Floodway Plain zone district and land below the high water mark of existing bodies of water.

LU-8-s1 New development shall not occur on areas defined as Undevelopable land in the Land Use Code and allowable density calculations shall not include Undevelopable land.

LU-9 All new development shall be located and designed for compatibility with sensitive natural areas.

LU-9-s1 The Land Use Code shall include the provision that mapping of natural hazard areas, wetlands, ridgelines and other natural and cultural resource area information available from the Land Use Office, be included on initial development submittals and considered in development design. Additional natural resource information that becomes available through the development review process should be incorporated in the design.

LU-9-s2 New development shall not occur in wetlands and natural hazard areas. Natural hazard areas include all slopes greater than 30%, geologic hazard areas classed categories 5, 6 or 7 in mapping available in the Land Use Office and 100-year flood plains.

LU-9-s3 The Land Use Code shall establish standards to control erosion and prevent infestation of noxious weeds during construction of new development.

LU-9-s4 The Land Use Code shall include guidelines for the use of design elements such as landscaping and buffer areas to help achieve compatibility.

LU-9-s5 Landscaping plans shall be required as part of all major development applications and all multi-family, commercial and industrial building permits. Existing vegetation shall be maintained wherever possible, except in wildfire hazard areas where thinning to achieve defensible space is necessary. Native plants, existing drainage patterns and natural designs should be used to increase the sustainability of the landscaping.

LU-10 Site design of commercial and industrial uses shall enhance and protect the aesthetic quality of community gateways and other high visibility corridors, including US Highways and 285, and Colorado Highway 142.

LU-10-s1 The Land Use Code shall establish aesthetic standards and guidelines for commercial and industrial development addressing landscaping, screening of outdoor storage and operations, orientation of buildings (so that businesses do not back onto high visibility corridors), parking lot design and similar design considerations.

LU-10-s2 Intergovernmental Agreements shall address implementation of road corridor and entryway plans adopted by the municipality.

LU-11 New development in wildfire hazard areas shall be designed to allow defensible space around structures and otherwise mitigate potential hazards to life and property.

LU-11-s1 Recommendations for site design contained in the *Conejos County Fire Plan*, should be used as a guide for establishing standards in the Land Use Code.

LU-12 Energy-efficient design, including the potential for solar access, shall be considered in subdivision design and in the orientation of individual building sites.

LU-12-s1 The Land Use Code shall include performance standards for solar access.

LU-13 New roadways, including Conejos County roads, shall be designed and constructed in a manner that minimizes the impact on water quality and sensitive environmental areas and considers aesthetics.

LU-13-s1 The Land Use Code shall establish road design and construction standards which consider protecting scenic vistas by minimizing road scars, protect water quality by minimizing erosion and protect native plant communities by minimizing disturbed areas and requiring re-vegetation with native plants and control of noxious weeds.

CONEJOS COUNTY LAND USE ISSUES

OPPORTUNITIES AND PROBLEMS

The most important land use issue and/or problem in Conejos County is that of what the future holds for the County. Presently, the major land-use related problems in the County are the recent drought and potential impact on the agricultural economy. Other issues associated with the economy are the lack of job opportunities or employment. There is also a lot of concern regarding the integrity of the environment and solid waste disposal. Another question is the future of the seasonal-recreation related development. This type of development depends in large part upon national trends outside the control of Conejos County, i.e., the national economy, the price of gasoline, building costs, etc. If too much land is subdivided and the economy falters and/or gas prices increase, then Conejos County will have an excess of subdivided land with no prospects for development on that land. Conversely, if the economy stabilizes or flourishes and gasoline prices do not rise dramatically, the demand for seasonal-recreation homes/lots will increase and development on these lots will also undoubtedly increase. The question then becomes how will Conejos County provide the required services to accommodate this new development?

CONEJOS COUNTY LAND USE PLAN

In Chapter 2, Conejos County's Plan Direction and Action Strategies relating to land use were delineated (see pp.53 to56). The next task at hand is how to achieve these goals and objectives given the information provided in the preceding sections.

Most literature on land use planning recognize three alternative approaches in dealing with future land use, (1) trend growth, (2) concentrated growth, and (3) directed or managed growth.

The trend growth alternative projects the way the study area would continue to develop without any major changes in public policy toward growth. The concentrated growth alternative contains the growth within the existing urban areas to the greatest extent possible. This is accomplished by infilling vacant and underdeveloped parcels and by redevelopment of underutilized areas to higher intensities of use. The directed or managed growth alternative assumes public policies that fairly rigidly direct growth to several well-defined areas with resources to accommodate new development. This alternative may allow for growth to take place inside and away from existing communities.

The Conejos County Planning Commission discussed at length the pros and cons of choosing each one of these approaches. And although they felt that focusing growth in and around existing municipalities was most desirable, they did not feel that adopting specific policies or regulations leading to this end would serve the needs of the County's residents. Consequently, they have chosen the managed growth approach with some modification to guide the County's future growth. More specifically, they felt that major problems have occurred as a result of past land use trends and that a continuation of these trends would pose substantial foreseeable problems.

LAND USE SUITABILITY AND "NET BENEFIT"

AS GUIDES FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Having chosen the managed growth approach to guiding future growth, Conejos County must now seek a way to ensure that this approach to growth takes into account environmental, health, safety, economic and resource considerations important to all County residents. The approach decided upon by the Planning Commission is to use land development suitability mapping based upon existing land use information gathered through the utilization of a Geographic Information System (GIS) and fiscal analysis of proposed subdivisions to determine their environmental and economic impacts.

Section 3 Environment and Natural Resources provides all known information on environmental hazards and important resource areas. The fiscal impact analysis can be completed by the Conejos County Land Use Administrator at the Planning Commission's request. The Conejos County Planning Commission feels that by using this information, adequate protections exist for present and future residents of Conejos County.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Conejos County has already adopted several land use related regulations which are presently being used to determine a developments suitability in the County. These include subdivision regulations, mobile home park regulations, and septic tank regulations. However, several additional regulations are being considered in the updating of the zoning regulations as means to help implement this Comprehensive Plan. In addition, several other "non-regulatory" actions could be undertaken in the County to improve the well being of the County's residents. These include:

1. Complete, hold hearings on, and adopt the Revised Conejos County Zoning Regulations.
2. Organize a rural development committee to actively explore the development possibilities in Conejos County and to pursue projects deemed feasible and desirable for the County.
3. Distribute the Conejos County Code of the West geared toward Conejos County citizens, and prospective land purchasers. The purpose of such a guide is to inform them of existing land use regulations and infrastructure in Conejos County.
4. Adopt a set of administrative procedures and a checklist that will be followed when reviewing specific land use requests, e.g., zoning change or variance, subdivision request, etc.
5. Urge the appropriate associations to complete studies presently underway or being planned that are referred to in this text, i.e., Revised Soils Study; Historic and Cultural Site Survey; FEMA Mapping.
6. Seek out and encourage development deemed beneficial by the Planning Commission and County Commissioners.
7. Evaluate yearly the adequacy of the County's Comprehensive Plan and land use regulations to make sure they reflect the ideas and meet the needs of the County's residents.

THE IMPACT OF STATE AND FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT

State and Federal agencies play a big role in deciding how land is used in Conejos County. Over sixty-six (66) percent of the County's total acreage is administered by either the State or Federal government. The resources of these lands are very important to the County's economy and the lifestyle of its residents.

Which Agencies Affect Land Use in Conejos County?

Land use development in Conejos County is affected by the State Board of Land Commissioners, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service.

Why Are These Lands Important?

State and federally administered lands are an important source of income for Conejos County. Ranchers utilize much of this land for grazing their sheep and cattle during the summer months. These lands area also leased for mining and timbering which provide jobs to the County's residents.

Federal lands also provide a wide array of recreational opportunities for residents and tourists. Tourist activity stimulated by recreational opportunities can boost the County's economy by providing additional demand for goods and services. State and federal agencies can also provide land for such things as County dump sites and firewood gathering.

It should be emphasized, however, that State/Federal land management practices can have drawbacks at times. Mineral extraction activities must be examined for their impact on the water quality of streams and rivers, and the need for County road maintenance. Cutbacks in grazing allotments must be examined for its impact on the County's economy. Designation of federal land as wilderness might inhibit recreational access, timbering, mining, and grazing.

While federal and state lands are not subject to County property taxation, some revenue is returned through the "payment in lieu of taxes" program, and the fees charged for grazing, mining, and timber removal. Under the "payment in lieu of taxes" program, federal agencies return a portion of money to the County based on its amount of federally owned land, or its population. The fees which are obtained from leasing federally owned land for grazing, mining, and timber are allocated in the following manner – fifty (50) percent of the total fees are returned to the County, and fifty (50) percent for further improvements (i.e. – fencing, access roads, etc.)

HOW CAN A COUNTY INFLUENCE STATE/FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES?

While each agency's activities are mostly influenced by state and federal laws, there are often opportunities for local people to give their input. The opportunity for local input into the decisions of the State Board of Land Commissioners is quite limited as their goal is to "preserve and manage the lands for the purpose of obtaining the maximum possible revenue from them." However, federal legislation requires land management agencies such as BLM and the U.S. Forest Service to consider the wishes of local residents.

The Forest Services Resource Planning Act and requiring the consideration of local ideas when land use plans are prepared. The BLM legislation is especially significant. Under the "consistency provision" of BLM's Federal Land Policy and Management Act, land use plans must consistent with state and local plans, within the limits of federal law.

In light of these opportunities for local input, and the importance of State and Federal land to Conejos County, a set of policies have been prepared which formalize the County's position on key land use issues. It is our hope that federal and state agencies will utilize these policies as a "barometer" for incorporating local desires into their planning processes.

CONEJOS COUNTY POLICIES ON STATE AND FEDERAL LAND USE MANAGEMENT AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

1. Public lands should be managed under the "multiple use" concept; all existing used of state and federal lands shall be preserved unless it is clearly undesirable from a economic and environmental standpoint.
2. The County will monitor wilderness designation with a thorough analysis of the impact on the local economy, recreational opportunities, and future mineral resource development.
3. Present vehicular access to all areas of the County which are of agricultural, recreational, silvicultural, commercial, and firewood gathering importance should be maintained provided that such access does not become detrimental to environmental resources.
4. Roads opened for resource utilization should be left open for other activities (such as hunting, fishing, and firewood gathering), provided that they can be maintained economically, and environmental resources are not damaged.
5. Prior to any "major change" in state or federal land use, County Commissioners shall review and discuss possible environmental and economic impacts. "Major Changes" include: road closures, closing an area to hunting and fishing wilderness designations, or changing from one major land use to another (i.e.-from grazing to recreation).
6. Conejos County supports land purchases which will not significantly reduce property tax revenue or reduce the economic opportunities available to County residents.
7. Due to the importance of the livestock industry's use of public land to the economy of Conejos County.
 - A. Present range management practices such as rotational or deferred grazing, proper salting and riding, and necessary range improvements should be encouraged and improved.

B. State and federal land managers, permittees, and lessees should be encouraged to coordinate any changes in grazing or allotment plans.

C. Changes in AUM's should not be unilateral and permittees/lessees should be given the opportunity to present their own expert testimony.

D. State and federal revenue gathered from leasing range land should be used to maintain or increase AUM's where economically and environmentally feasible. Measures which such revenue should be used for include grass seeding, shelter belts, erosion control, and noxious weed control.

8. State and federal land management agencies are encouraged to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities provided that range lands important to the County economy are not diminished, and environmental resources are not destroyed.

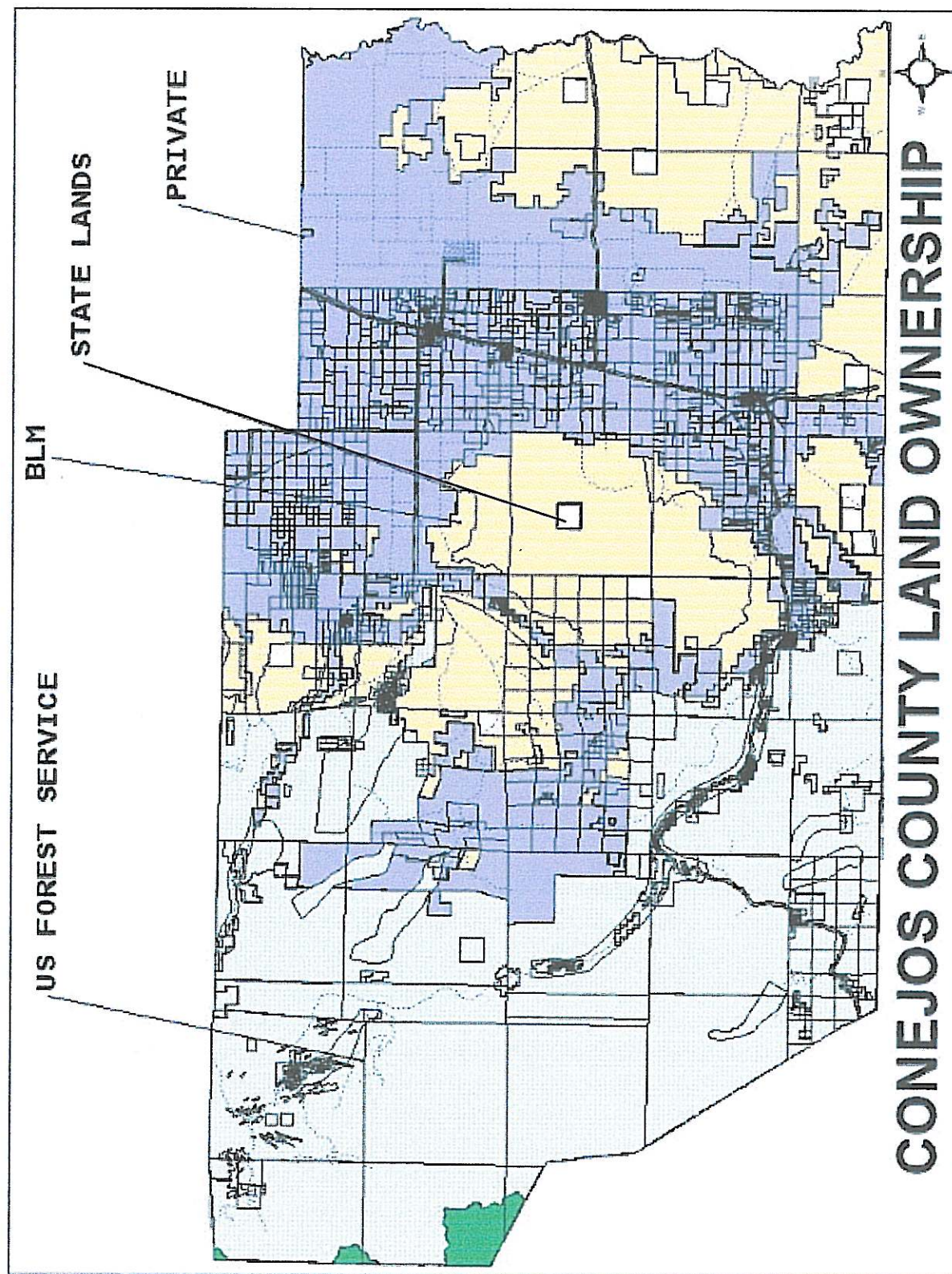
9. Whenever possible, timber stands shall be managed on a "sustained yield" basis provided that water quality and important wildlife habitats are not damaged.

10. The County supports properly conducted select cutting (removing overmature or diseased tree stands) which increases water yield, enhances wildlife diversity, has minimal visual impact, and does not lead to soil erosion, water pollution, or damage to nearby tree stands.

11. When considering the reforestation of fire damaged forest land, state and federal agencies should examine the impact on the local economy and ecosystem (i.e.-burned forest land which has become grassland, and is used by local residents for grazing).

12. Mining operations on state and federal land within Conejos County should only be allowed if water quality, wildlife habitats, and soils are not damaged, visual impact is minimal, and the developer agrees required (i.e.-if approval of a mine would result in the need for road improvements, bridges, or culverts, the developer should be responsible for paying for their installation.

13. State and federal land management officials should meet with the Board of County Commissioners on a semi-annual basis to designate areas within state and federally managed land which could be used for County landfills, gravel and other road materials (for use on County maintained roads through state and federal land), camping facilities, and firewood gathering.



CONEJOS COUNTY LAND OWNERSHIP

MAP 5 CONEJOS COUNTY LAND OWNERSHIP

SECTION 3 ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Conejos County is located in south-central Colorado at the southern end of the San Luis Valley, an area within the Greater Southern Rocky Mountains. The San Luis Valley (Colorado Region 8) includes a six county area consisting of Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande and Saguache. The valley covers 8,194 square miles with a population of 46,190 persons listed in the 2000 Census. The central portion of the valley consists of a vast, mostly treeless, sagebrush plain at 7,500 elevation. Bordered on the east and west by the heavily forested Sangre De Cristo and San Juan Mountain Ranges the valley has 20 peaks over 14,000 ft. While precipitation on the valley floor averages only 7 inches annually, the Rio Grande and Conejos river systems support an extensive agricultural economy.

The eastern boundary of Conejos County is the Rio Grande River; the western boundary, the continental divide; and the southern boundary, the state of New Mexico. Rectangular in shape, the county has an east and west length of 45 miles, a width of 30 miles, and a total area of 1,274 square miles.

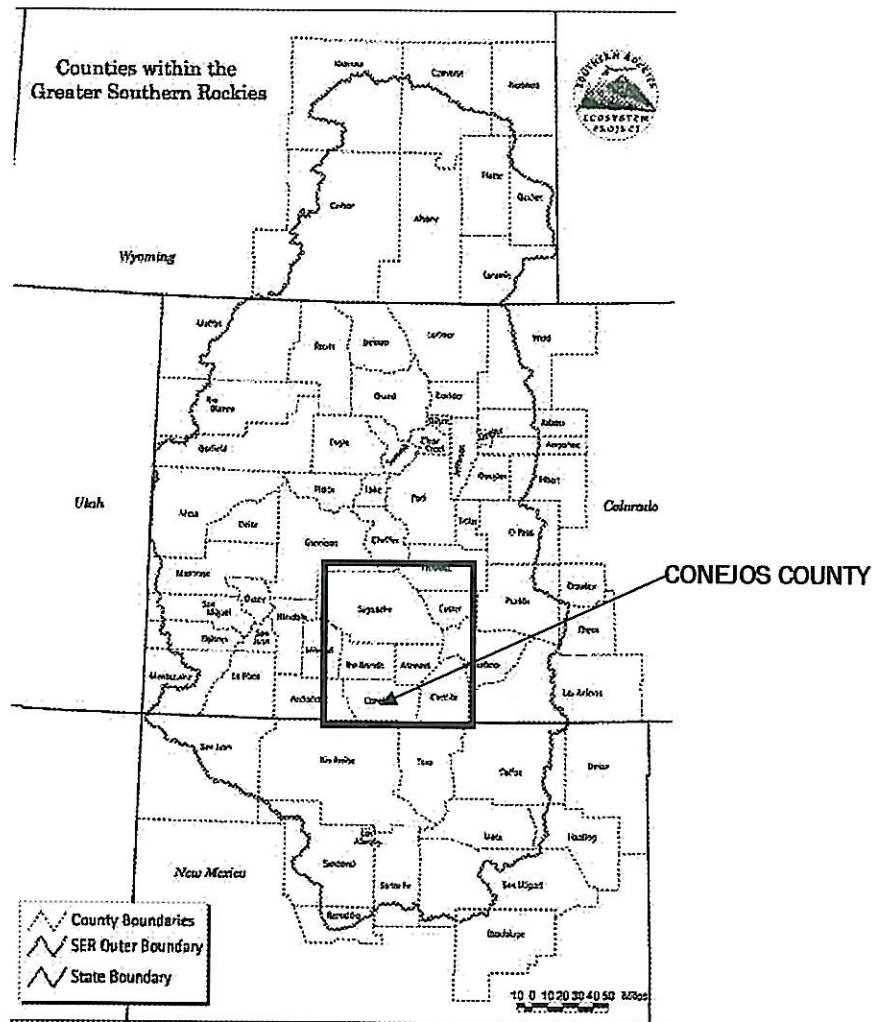


Figure 33 Regional Context for Conejos County

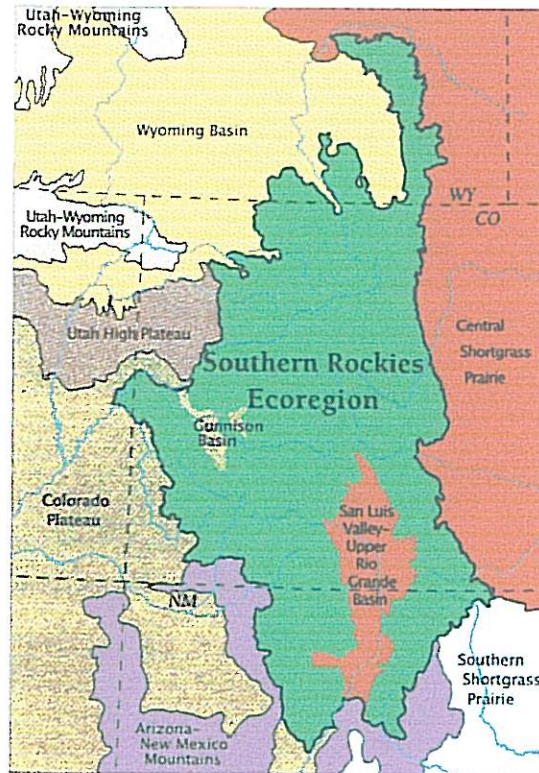


Figure 34 Regional Context for the San Luis Valley & Conejos County

3.1 ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES

- (1) Desert Shrublands and Grasslands: In the San Luis Valley shrublands are found as high as 7,500-8,000 feet in elevation. Low elevation shrublands can be grouped into three major categories: semidesert, sagebrush, and mountain. Semi desert shrublands exist in areas where precipitation averages less than 10 inches and are dominated by either greasewood or various species of salt-brush. Plant species tend to be low and exposed soil may represent 50% or more of the ground cover.
- (2) Low to Mid-Elevation Forests and Woodlands: In the foothills and lower mountains of the valley, (between 6,000 and 8,000 feet) open forests and woodlands form a green canopy that contrasts starkly with the arid lands below. Juniper and Pinyon pine are dominant, though sparse.
- (3) Mid to High Elevation Forests: Dense strands of fir blanket the mountain range (between 8,000 and 9,500 feet.) Douglas fir and white fir are dominant species. At the lower elevations, white pine and ponderosa pine prevail. Engelman and blue spruce, as well as aspen and corkbark can be found.
- (4) Alpine Tundra, Meadows and Rock Slopes: Landscape of broken forest and montane grasslands, and, higher up, alpine tundra and rocky outcrops. This zone which can be found as low as 10,000 feet, extends up to the highest peaks over 14,000 feet

CONEJOS CLIMATE

Summers are warm or hot in most valleys and much cooler in the mountains. Winters are cold in the mountains. Valleys are colder than the lower slopes of adjacent mountains because of cold air drainage. Precipitation occurs in the mountains throughout the year and a deep snow-pack accumulates during winter. Snowmelt usually supplies much more water than can be used for agriculture in the county. In valleys, precipitation in summer falls as showers and some thunderstorms occur. In winter the ground is covered with snow much of the time. Chinook winds, which blow down slope and are warm and dry, often melt and evaporate the snow.

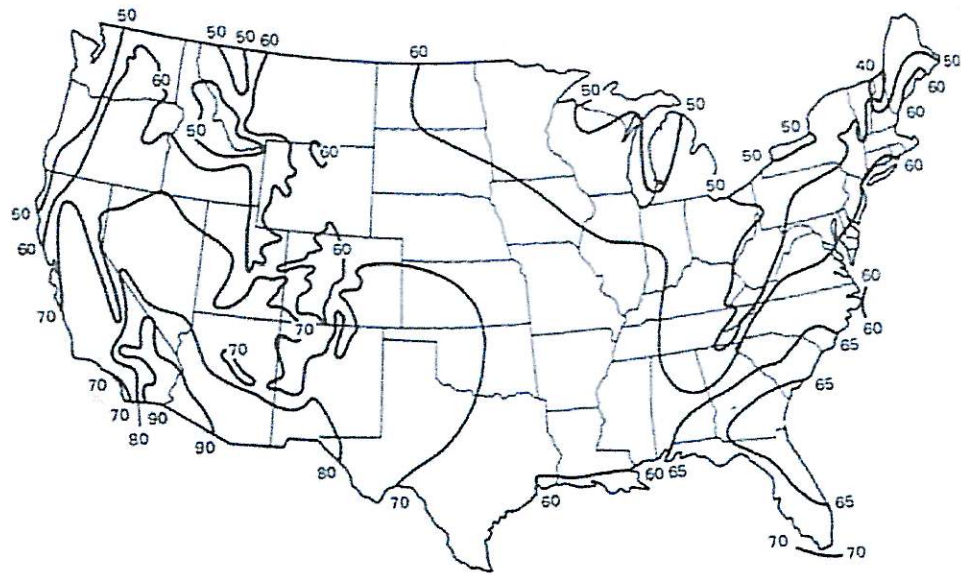
In winter the average temperature is 21.6 degrees F and the average daily minimum temperature is 4 degrees. The lowest temperature on record (-34 degrees) occurred on January 12, 1963. In summer the average temperature is 61.4 degrees and the average daily maximum temperature is 79.6 degrees. The highest recorded temperature (94 degrees) occurred on July 13, 1971.

The total annual precipitation is 5.52 inches. 71 percent usually falls in April through September, which includes the growing season for most crops. The growing season averages 110 days. The heaviest one day rainfall recorded during the period of record was 1.45 inches on August 5, 1954. There are about forty four thunderstorms each year, thirty of which occur in summer.

Average seasonal snowfall in the mountains is 28 inches. The greatest snow depth at any one time during the period of record was eleven inches. On the average, four days out of the year have at least one inch of snow on the ground, but the number of such days varies greatly from year to year.

The average relative humidity in mid afternoon in spring is less than 35 percent; during the rest of the year it is about 45 percent. Humidity is higher at night and the average at dawn is about 77 percent. The percentage of possible sunshine is 77 percent in summer and 73 percent in winter. The prevailing wind is from the south-southwest. Average high windspeed is 10.4 miles per hour, in April.

Climatic data in this section were prepared by the National Climatic Center, Asheville, North Carolina.



MEAN ANNUAL PERCENTAGE OF POSSIBLE SOLAR RADIATION

Figure 35 Solar Radiation Map

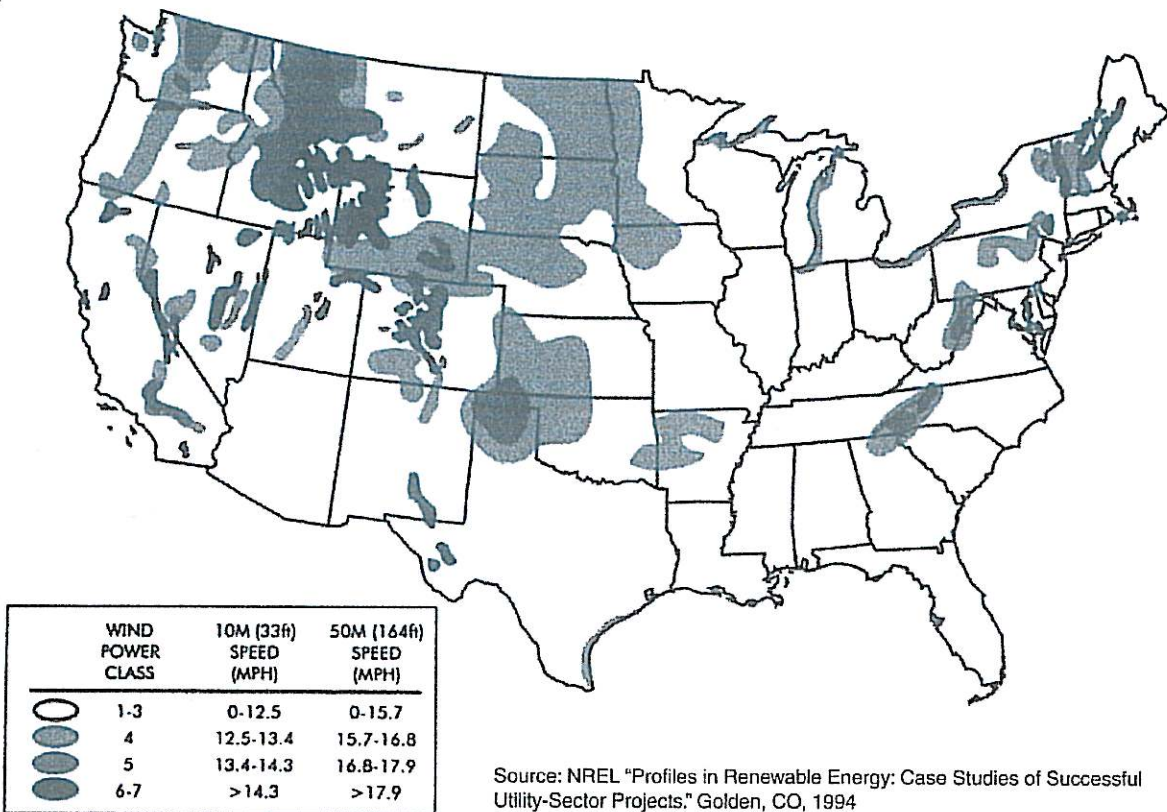


Figure 36 Wind Energy Map of the United States

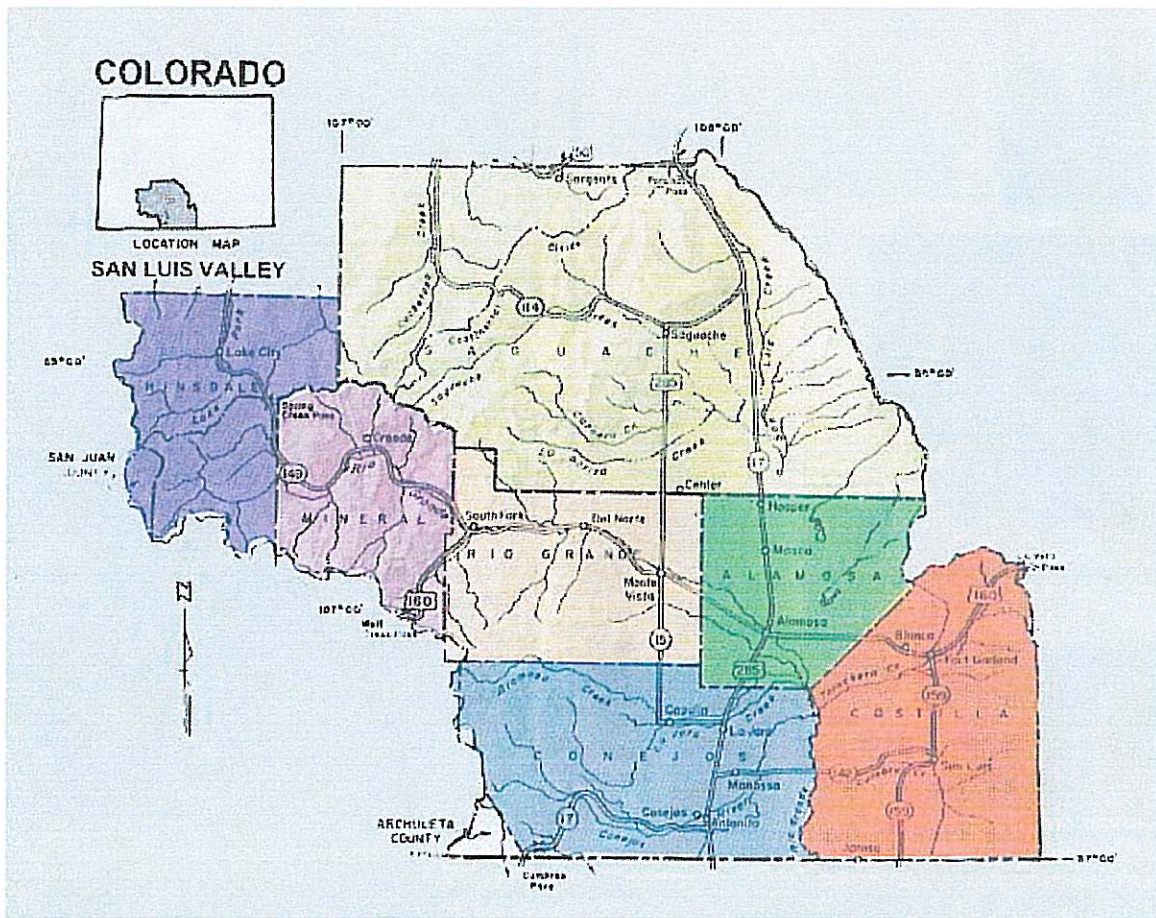


Figure 37 Map of the San Luis Valley

The primary purpose for including environmental considerations in the Comprehensive Plan is to identify the most important aspects of the natural and manmade environments, their interrelationships, and the major problems and/or opportunities they represent for community development. As a consequence, it is essential that the Comprehensive Plan access those environmental features which should be recognized so as to minimize hazards to life and property, to minimize unwise use of or damage to our natural resources.

3.3 GEOLOGIC SETTING

Conejos County is comprised of three separate but related physiographic subdivisions: The Alamosa Basin (San Luis Valley Floor), the San Luis Hills, and the San Juan Volcanic Field (which forms the San Juan Mountains). Figure 37 gives the approximate boundaries of these physiographic subdivisions in Conejos County.

The Alamosa Basin forms the eastern half of Conejos County (see Figure 37). The principal characteristics of the Alamosa Basin in Conejos County are its featureless floor and the recency of the deposits in the basin. Streams entering the Alamosa Basin from the west originate in the San Juan Mountains, and have developed broad and gently sloping alluvial fans. Consequently, the Conejos County portion of the Alamosa Basin is essentially an area of deposition underlain by modern alluvial fan deposits.

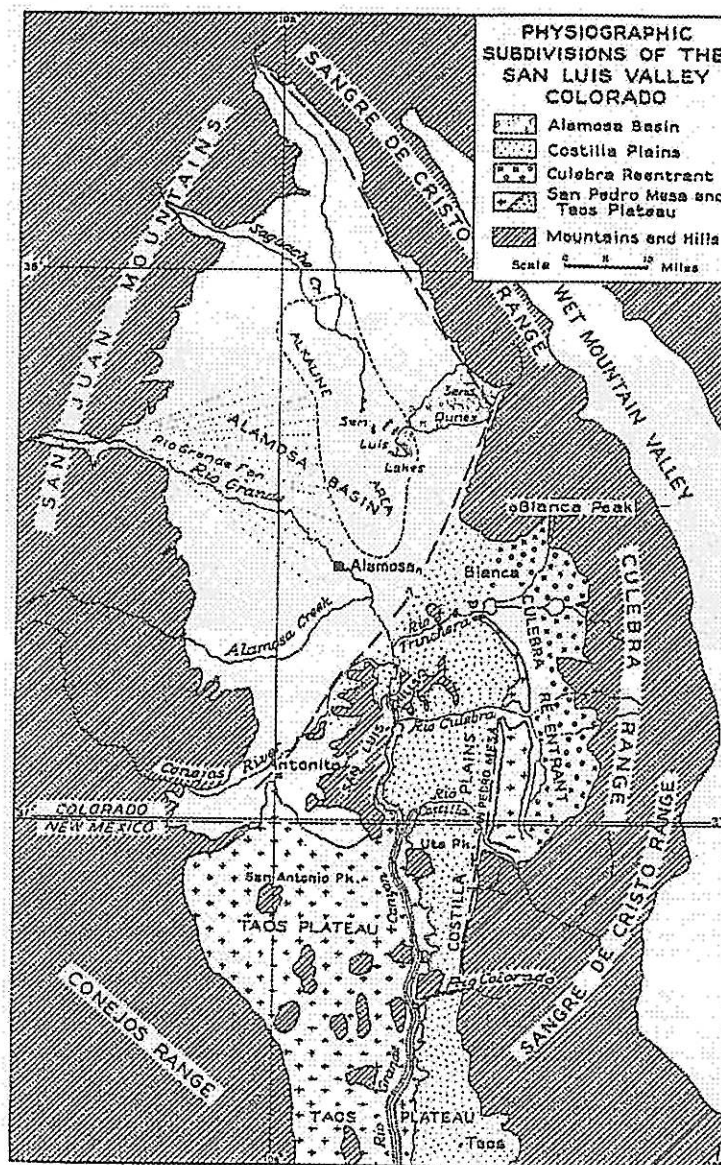


Figure 38 Physiographic Subdivisions of the San Luis Valley

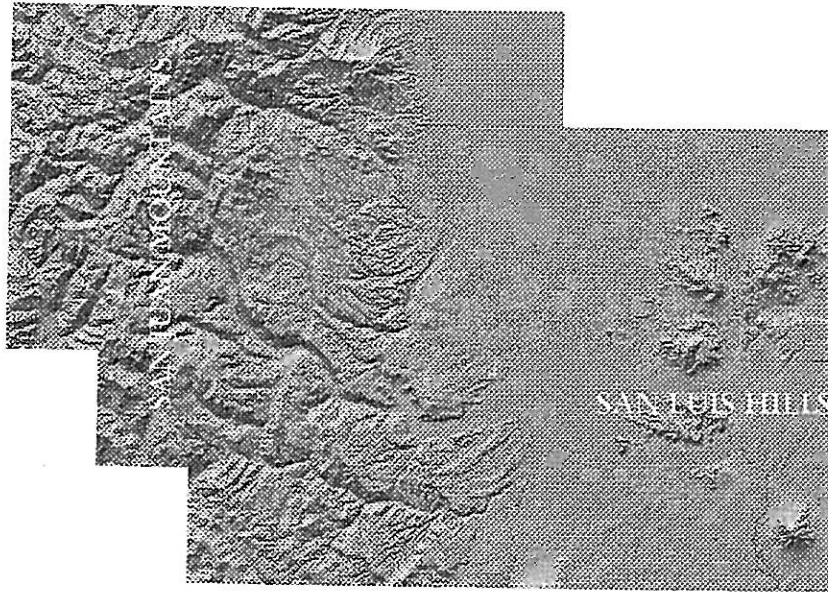


Figure 39 Topographic Model of Conejos County

3.3.1 The San Luis Hills

The second physiographic subdivision of Conejos County is the San Luis Hills. The physiographic subdivision constitutes a rugged mass of hills and tilted mesas 500 to 1,000 feet high and extend from near the town of Antonito to approximately 5 miles east of Sanford. The San Luis Hills consist of volcanic rocks of the Tertiary Conejos Formation intruded by Late Oligocene stocks, dated at 27.7 million years. After a period of faulting which dissected the San Luis Hills between Conejos and Costilla Counties (roughly approximately the course of the Rio Grande), the San Luis Hills were surrounded by basalt flows belonging to the Hinsdale Series.

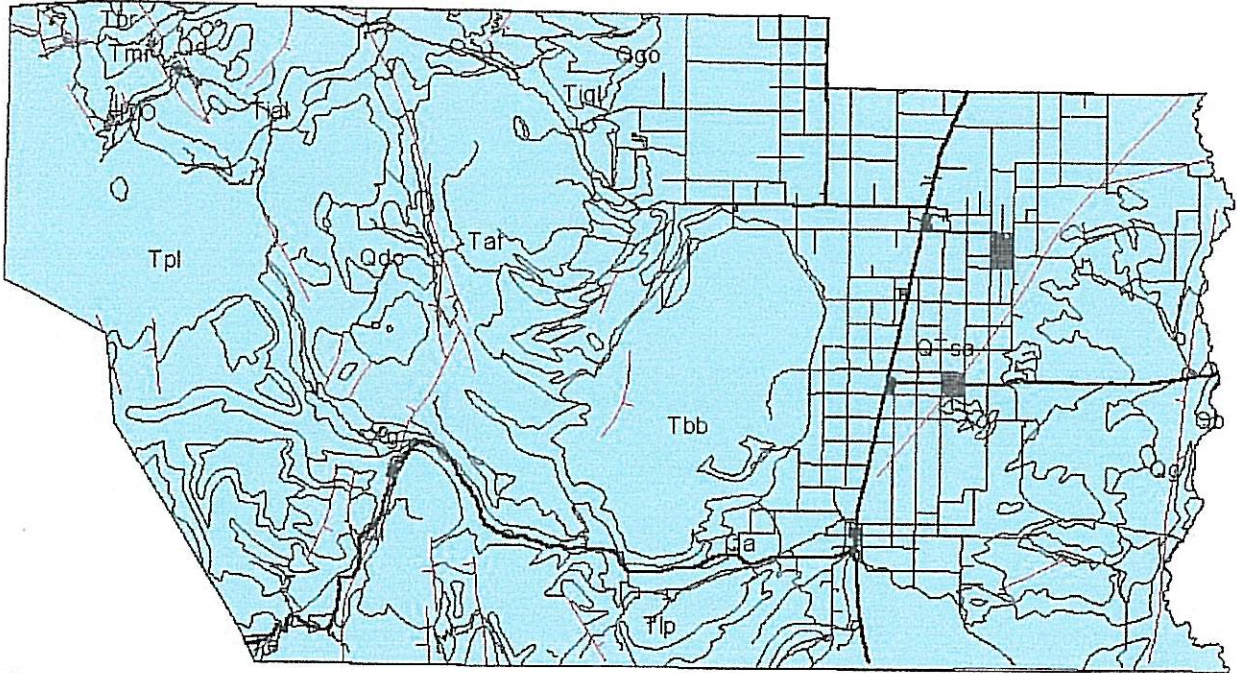
3.3.2 The San Juan Mountains

The western half of Conejos County is part of the San Juan volcanic field commonly referred to as the San Juan Mountains. The San Juan volcanic field covers about 25,000 Km in southwestern Colorado and northern New Mexico (see Figure 1). It is the largest remnant of a once nearly continuous volcanic field that extended over much of the southern Rocky Mountains in Oligocene and later time. According to Lipman (1975) the general volcanic sequence for the San Juan Mountains was relatively simple:

“...initial intermediate-composition lavas and breccias, followed closely in time by more silicic ash-flow tuffs, and ending with a compositionally bimodal association of basalt and rhyolite.”

The San Juan Mountains of Conejos County consist almost entirely of volcanic rocks and related shallow intrusive rocks of middle or late-Tertiary age. Although no detailed studies have been made of the entire San Juan mountain region in Conejos County, several investigators have studied the area around the Platoro caldera in the northwestern part of the County. According to Bird (1973), the major rock units in the southern portion of the Platoro caldera are the Conejos Formation, the Treasure Mountain Tuff La Jara Canyon, Ojito Creek and Ra Jadero Members, the Summitville Andesite, and the Hirsdale Formation.

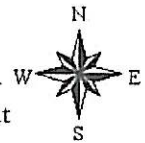
CONEJOS GEOLOGY



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Figure 40 Geologic Map of Conejos County

In general, the geologic structure of Conejos County is quite complex, Figure 39 shows the systems of faulting in Conejos County at a relatively small scale.



- Tial: Intra-Ash Flow Andesitic Lavas
- Tbr: Rhyolitic Intrusive Rocks and Flows
- Tmi: Middle Tertiary Intrusive Rocks
- Taf: Ash Flow Tuff
- Tpl: Pre-Ash-Flow Andesitic Lavas, Breccias, Tuffs, and Conglomerates
- Tipl: Intra-Ash Flow Andesitic Lavas
- Tmi: Middle Tertiary Intrusive Rocks
- Tlp: Los Pinos Formation
- Tbb: Basalt Flows and Associated Tuff, Breccia, and Conglomerate
- Qtsa: Unclassified Surficial Deposits and Underlying Alamosa Formation
- Qgo: Older Gravels and Alluviums (Pre-Bull Lake Age)
- Ql: Landslide Deposits
- Ql: Glacial Drift (Pinedale and Bull Lake Glaciations)
- Qd: Glacial Drift (Pinedale and Bull Lake Glaciations)
- Qa: Modern Alluvium
- Xg: Granitic Rocks
- Te: Prevolcanic Arkosic and Bouldary Gravel
- KJdw: Dakota, Burro Canyon, Morrison, and Wanakah Formations
- Km: Mancos Shale

3.4 SOILS

Conejos County has fifty seven soil types, the following two groupings are the most common types:

1. Soils dominantly on flood plains, fans, and terraces, are nearly level to moderately steep, somewhat excessively drained to poorly drained. Deep to shallow soils occur throughout the Conejos County area except in the extreme western part. There are eight map units in this group of soils. They make up eighty four percent of the area.
2. Soils on hills, mountains, mesas, and intermingled fans and terraces are gently slopping to very steep, well drained with deep to shallow soils. These soils occur mainly in the extreme western edge of Conejos County and in a small area on the eastern edge of the county. There are three map units in this group of soils. They make up about 16 percent of the Conejos County area.

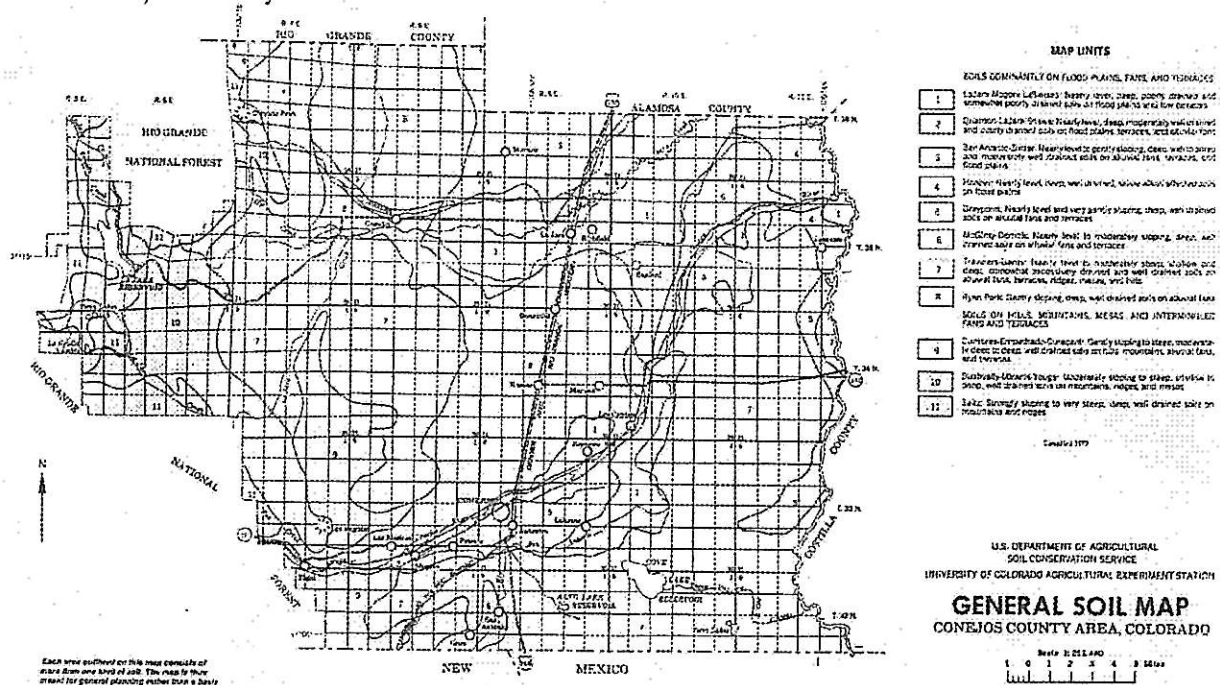


Figure 41 General Soil Map of Conejos County

A potential environmental constraint to future land use in Conejos County is the soil. Different soil types pose different problems to development such as soil instability, septic tank limitations, expansive or clay soils, etc. Consequently, knowledge of soils information is imperative in order to make informed decisions regarding future land use.

A field survey of soil types in Conejos County was completed by the Agricultural Soil Conservation Service in 1977. Copies of the soil maps and general analysis of each type are available. The water table in the valley portion of Conejos County is high and poses problems to septic tanks. Clay formations are also evident in the county which effect leaching fields because of their low permeability factor.

3.4.1 SLOPE ANALYSIS

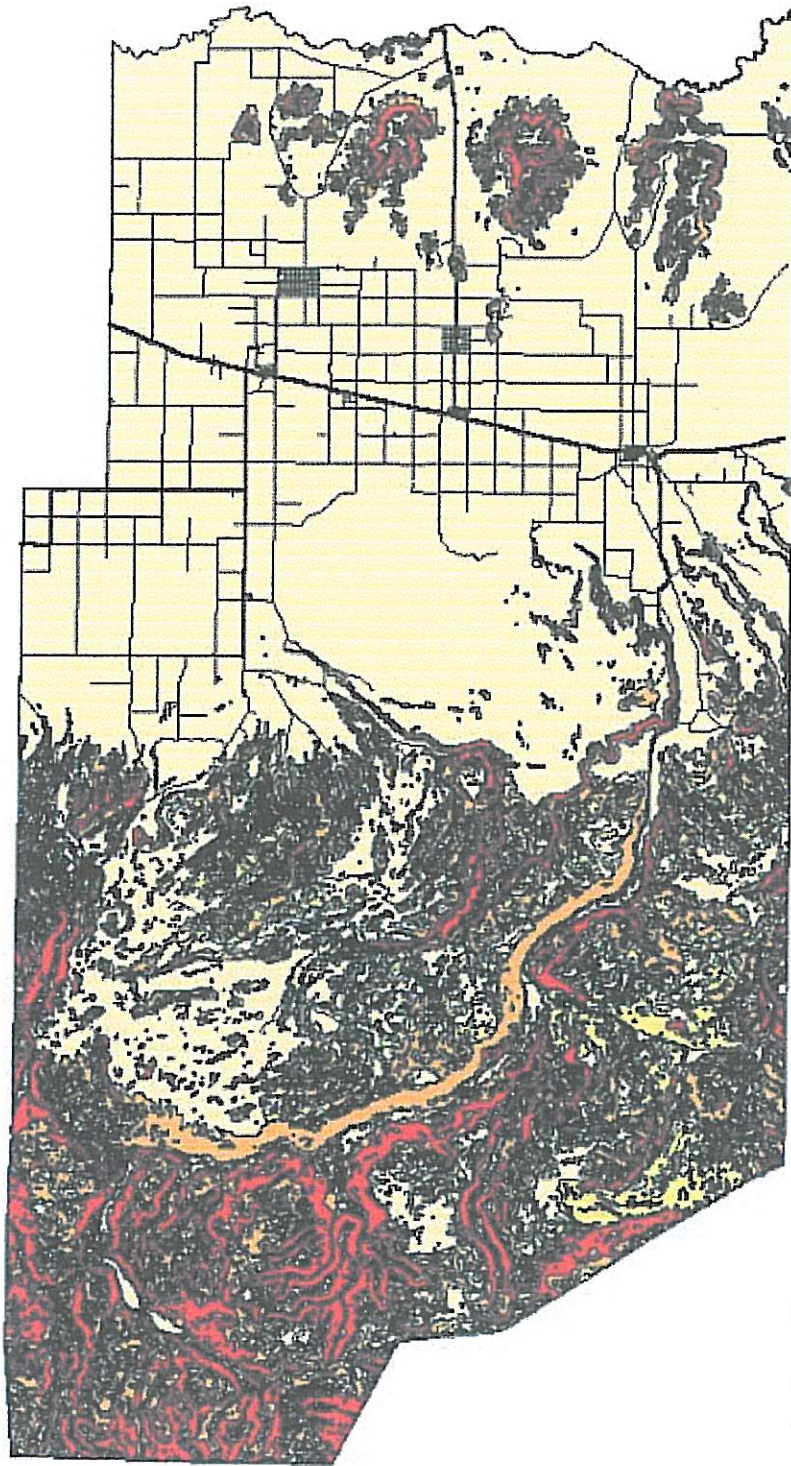
The majority of the sloped land in Conejos County is located in the western part of the county along the San Juan Mountain Range. Slope is a major factor which must be considered in determining the future use of land. As slope increases, land becomes less suitable for development because increasing slope frequently means problems for access and road maintenance, etc. Therefore, the greater the slope, the greater the potential for problems in using land. Slopes in excess of eight percent is a principle base constraint within Conejos County. The slope analysis classifies slopes into four categories:

1. Slopes between 0% and 8%. Most road design standards and building codes allow construction within this range.
2. Slopes between 9% and 15%. Some mitigation may be necessary, with possible structural reinforcement along with undesired cut and fill activity.
3. Slopes between 16% and 33%. Significant mitigation is necessary, with need to evaluate proposed construction on a case-by-case basis.
4. Slopes greater than 33%. Any mitigation not recommended, due to potential risk of haz-

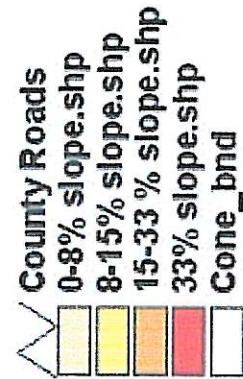
3.4.2 GEOLOGIC HAZARDS

In addition to soils, another related environmental constraint to future land use in Conejos County is geologic hazards. According to the Colorado Geological Survey, "geologic hazard means a geologic phenomenon which is so adverse to past, current, or foreseeable construction or land use as to constitute a significant hazard to public health and safety or to property." It includes nine types of hazards, five of which are relevant to Conejos County including avalanches, landslides, rockfalls, mudflows and debris fans, and unstable or potentially unstable slopes.

CONEJOS COUNTY



SLOPE ANALYSIS



MAP 6 Slope Map of Conejos County

3.5 Mineral Resources

The General Assembly of Colorado states in C.R.S. 34-1-301 that commercial mineral deposits are essential to the state's economy. These deposits should be extracted according to a rational plan that avoids waste of the minerals and causes the least practicable disruption of the ecology and quality of life of the citizens of the areas affected.

The mineral extraction plan facilitates preservation and protection of the county's commercial mineral deposits from encroachment by incompatible land use that would limit the options of future decision makers in considering the demand for aggregate resources. At the same time, applicants for an extractive use in an aggregate resource area must address all environmental and compatibility issues to be assured approval. Nothing in the designation of aggregate resource areas is intended to preclude approval of applications for extractive uses outside the designated areas if all county requirements are met.

Beyond protecting areas of known mineral resources for eventual extraction, Conejos County is interested in reclamation of sites after the resources are removed. The State Mined Land Reclamation Board has developed standards and procedures for reclamation plans. Within its authority, the county will work with mining permit applicants to identify appropriate uses and landscape forms for the reclamation plan.

Preferred uses for mineral extraction consistent with the adopted land use plan and provide quality recreation, open space and wildlife habitat opportunities. In defining "commercial mineral deposits," the following factors are considered:

1. Aggregate resources as mapped by Colorado Geological Survey.
2. Wetlands and critical riparian areas and wildlife habitat.
3. Size of the potential area.
4. Existing development that effectively precludes extraction.

Other site-specific factors rendering extraction inappropriate in light of the countervailing factors listed in C.R.S. 34-1-304(1), include the quality of life of the residents in and around areas which contain commercial mineral deposits and the ability to reclaim the area.

State statutes emphasize protection of mineral resources and require extensive mapping by the Colorado Geological Survey. Important mineral resources exist in Conejos County that have not yet been inventoried or mapped.

3.6 Air Quality

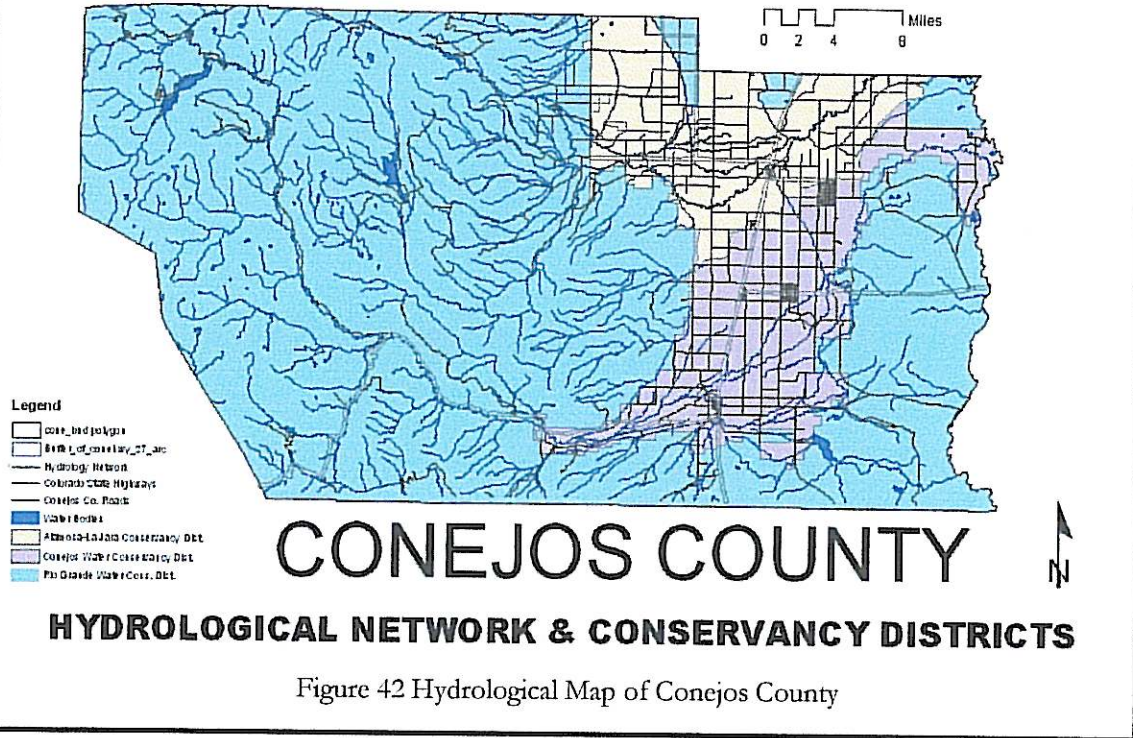
In general, the air quality of Conejos County is considered good. Most of the undesirable particulate matter originates from the mineral processing facilities near Antonito. Gravel pits and hot-mix plants are another source of dust and air pollution. Forest fires in the vicinity have resulted in smoke drifting into the San Luis Valley settling for several days reducing visibility and creating potential health hazards for people with respiratory illnesses or other diseases. There are no regulatory mechanisms or standards in the valley for dealing with air quality. The main source of information and standards in Colorado that apply to all counties are the Colorado Air Pollution Prevention and Control Act. The Air Quality Control Division is responsible for regulating air quality.

3.6.1 Noise, Glare and Odor Conditions

Noise, glare and odor conditions are an important component of the health, safety, and quality of life of Conejos County residents. As new development occurs, residents should be protected from unreasonable changes in conditions beyond the property boundaries of the development site. Performance standards will define permissible levels of noise, glare and odors which apply to all zoning districts and all use classifications.

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3.7 WATER RESOURCES

Water is crucial to the survival of life and the agricultural economy. Aquatic and riparian ecosystems provide water and support a diverse habitat for the region's native species. Water resources are identified by drainage basins, reservoirs, streams, and the ditches, or acequias. The hydrological regime for Conejos County is composed of a network of streams that originate in the San Juan Mountain Range and flow eastward towards the Rio Grande.

Each drainage basin is within a water conservancy district. The two water conservancy districts are the Alamosa-La Jara, and the Conejos Districts located in Division 3, District 21. Both of these districts also lie within the Rio Grande Water Conservancy District, of the San Luis Valley.

The Conejos, Alamosa, La Jara Creek, and San Antonio Rivers are the main water courses. Each of these rivers is fed by snow melt, seepages, and springs. A network of ditches divert off of the rivers forming the irrigation channels for distribution to the agricultural production. Eventually, the main water courses, or rivers, converge at the Rio Grande. The Rio San Antonio near the Colorado/New Mexico State line consists of 33 ditches while the Conejos River main channel consists of 74 ditches with the north branch of 17 ditches, for a total of 91 ditches. La Jara Creek main channel consists of 36 ditches with the Hot Creek branch consisting of 5 ditches. At the upper end of the county the Alamosa River branches out into 51 ditches. These figures are based on the information available in 1975 by the Colorado Office of the State Engineer. Since then, there have been numerous abandonments.

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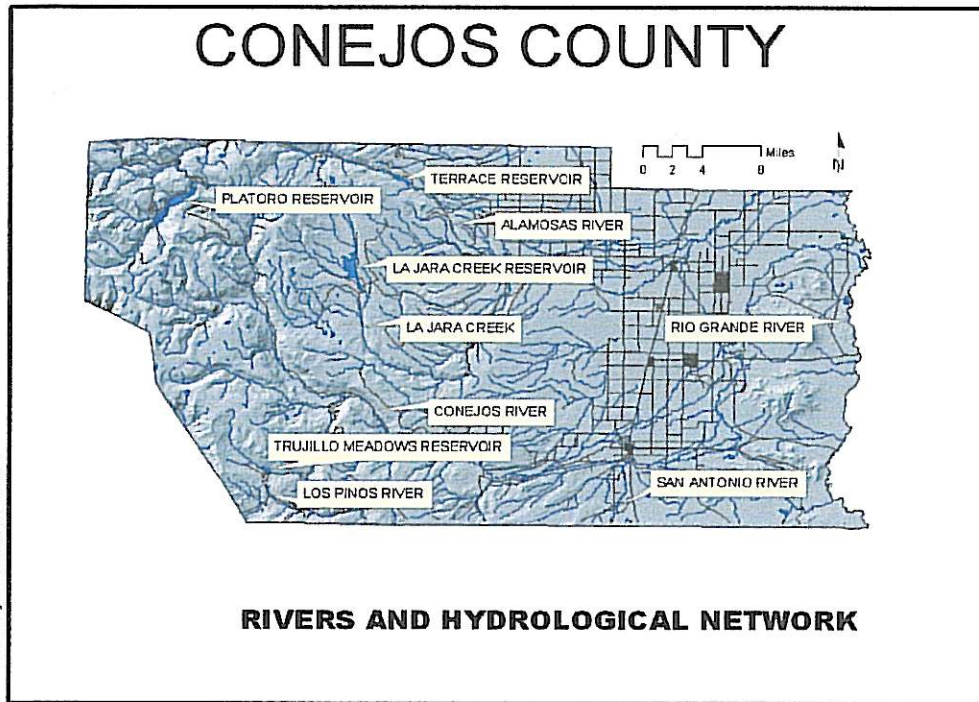


Figure 43 Rivers and Hydrological Network of Conejos County

Reservoirs were built in an effort to store flood-waters and for the irrigation systems. Completed in 1951, Platoro Reservoir, located at 10,027.5 feet in elevation. The Platoro Reservoir provides an impoundment of 53,506 acre-feet of water providing supplemental irrigation to 73,890 acres. The Terrace Reservoir built on the Alamosa River in 1911 has a smaller capacity of 13,000 acre-feet with a drainage basin area of 116.5 square miles. The La Jara Reservoir built in 1908 has a storage capacity of 14,052 acre-feet and a drainage area of 25,600 acres. All three reservoirs have Emergency Preparedness Plans with floodplain delineations.

Water quality is fundamentally related to land use. In order to establish policies for water resources protection local governments must have the authority to regulate private lands. Watershed protection on public lands must be primarily the responsibility of federal and state agencies. Land use regulation for water quality protection is most effective using a watershed approach, which takes into account potential water quality impacts including:

- Erosion Control
- Management of stormwater runoff
- Limitations of disturbance on steep slopes
- Hazardous material management
- Wastewater system standards
- Watershed Districts or sensitive area overlay district
- Water body buffer systems



Figure 44 San Antonio River

3.7.1 Water Quality and Quantity

Water quality is essential to the health, welfare and quality of life of Conejos County residents. Local, state and federal standards exist for water quality. The development review process will insure compliance with these standards. Polluted runoff has the potential to impact both surface and groundwater supplies. The State of Colorado has exclusive authority to set water quality standards for streams and groundwater, and to regulate the discharge of point source discharges. Existing county requirements for erosion and drainage control will be augmented in the Land Use Code. Applicants must show they have obtained a Colorado Stormwater permit for construction activities, industrial uses, and mining activities. All are required to meet thresholds under State law. Colorado Stormwater permits require applicants to identify and carry out appropriate best management practices to minimize polluted runoff from their sites.

Because of their relationship to public health and safety, drinking water sources should be provided the highest achievable levels of environmental protection. The county will support any municipal authority wishing to maintain the quality of domestic water supplies. The Land Use Code will provide regulations concerning the discharge of stormwater into a water supply reservoir. Water quality management plans are required to address water chemistry, as well as sediment transport and control.

In addition, uses with the potential to negatively affect groundwater levels, such as mining operations, will be required to provide evidence acceptable to the State's Division of Water Resources that impacts will be acceptable. Conejos County is also very interested in maintaining the historic amount of water - both for agricultural and other uses - in the basins serving the County.

3.7.2 Wetlands

Within Conejos County, priority has been given to inventorying wetlands. These environmental resources are among the most environmentally important ecosystems in the area and also the most vulnerable to development pressures. Ecological consultants from The Colorado Natural Heritage Center inventoried and mapped wetland resources in Conejos County and recommended strategies for protection. The resulting maps and report, *Biological Inventory of Rio Grande and Conejos Counties, Colorado Volume II: A Natural Heritage Inventory and Assessment of Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Rio Grande and Conejos Counties*, are available in the land use.

The classification system used in the wetlands mapping incorporates both the Clean Water Act (CWA) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife (FWS) wetland definitions, as well as a local classification system designed to quantify the importance and function of each wetland.

CWA wetlands are defined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as those areas “inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. These wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas”. CWA wetlands are regulated by the Clean Water Act. Development which might result in disturbance of wetlands activates a permit process through the U.S. Corps of Engineers.



Figure 45 Wetlands Near Manassa

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) defines wetlands as “land transitions between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water”. FWS wetlands must have one or more of the following attributes:

1. At least periodically, the land supports predominantly hydrophytes.
2. The substrate is predominantly undrained hydric soil.
3. The substrate is non-soil and is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season of each year.

The FWS definition was used in addition to the CWA definition to include riparian areas, salt flats, vernal pools, and farmed and other disturbed wetlands in the survey. The wetlands study incorporates three factors in evaluating site plans:

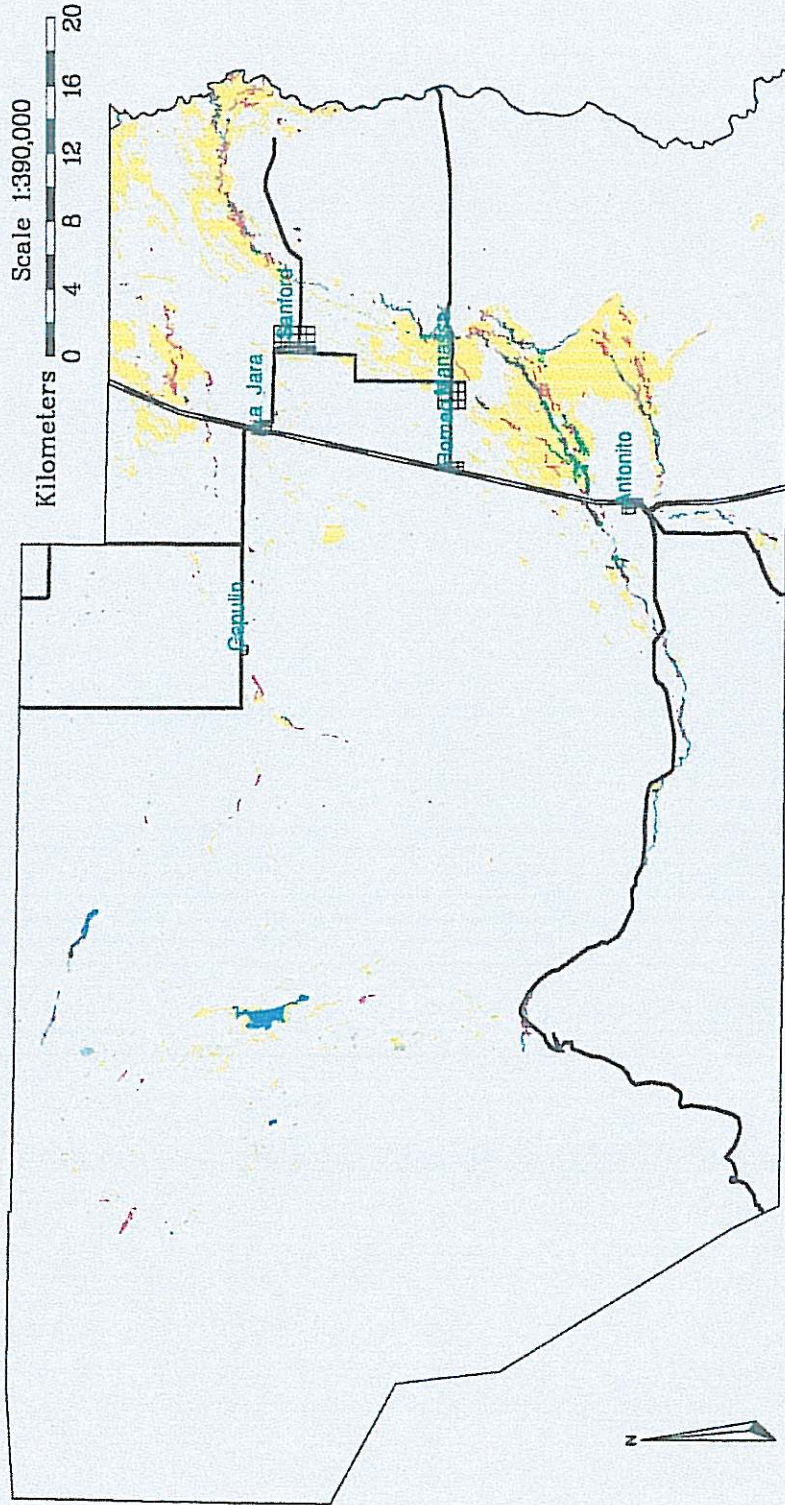
- wetland importance,
- wetland quality and
- wetland sensitivity.

"Importance" rates wetland functionality in terms of sediment trapping and nutrient retention, flood storage, bank stability, food chain support, wildlife habitat, and recreation. "Quality" ranks disturbance state and restoration potential. "Sensitivity" relates to sensitivity to human use. Most of the wetlands receiving the lowest rating were gravel quarries, irrigation ditches, or plowed vernal pools. The principal method of protecting wetlands and riparian areas is to require a Wetland Mitigation Plan for any development which impacts an identified wetland area. Requirements and performance standards for Wetland Mitigation Plans will be included in the Land Use Code. They will address the possibility of off-site mitigation of wetland loss through replacement or restoration of degraded wetlands.



Figure 46 Wetlands Near Los Sauses

NWI Wetland Habitat Overlay Map Conejos County, CO



NWI Classification

Riverine	Palustrine	Unconsolidated shore	Shrub
Stream, perennial	Limnetic	Aquatic bed	
Stream, intermittent	Terrestrial	Unconsolidated bottom	Forested

Legend

US highway	CO highway	Town
------------	------------	------

Colorado Division of Wildlife
Southeast Region WRIS

MAP 7 Conejos County Wetlands

3.8 ECOSYSTEMS AND HABITAT CONSERVATION

Important Wildlife Habitat

For many years, Conejos County has endeavored to protect wildlife through the development review process. New development applications have been reviewed by the Division of Wildlife and project design has been used to mitigate negative impact on known species using the site. This approach has had many successes but is limited in its ability to deal with cumulative impacts of development, both beyond the project site and over time. The Master Plan recommends two changes to enhance wildlife protection:

1. The new pattern of clustered development, using the Rural Conservation Development model, is expected to significantly reduce the area of habitat disturbance from development.
2. Mapping high priority habitat, including corridors where applicable, will assist the County in

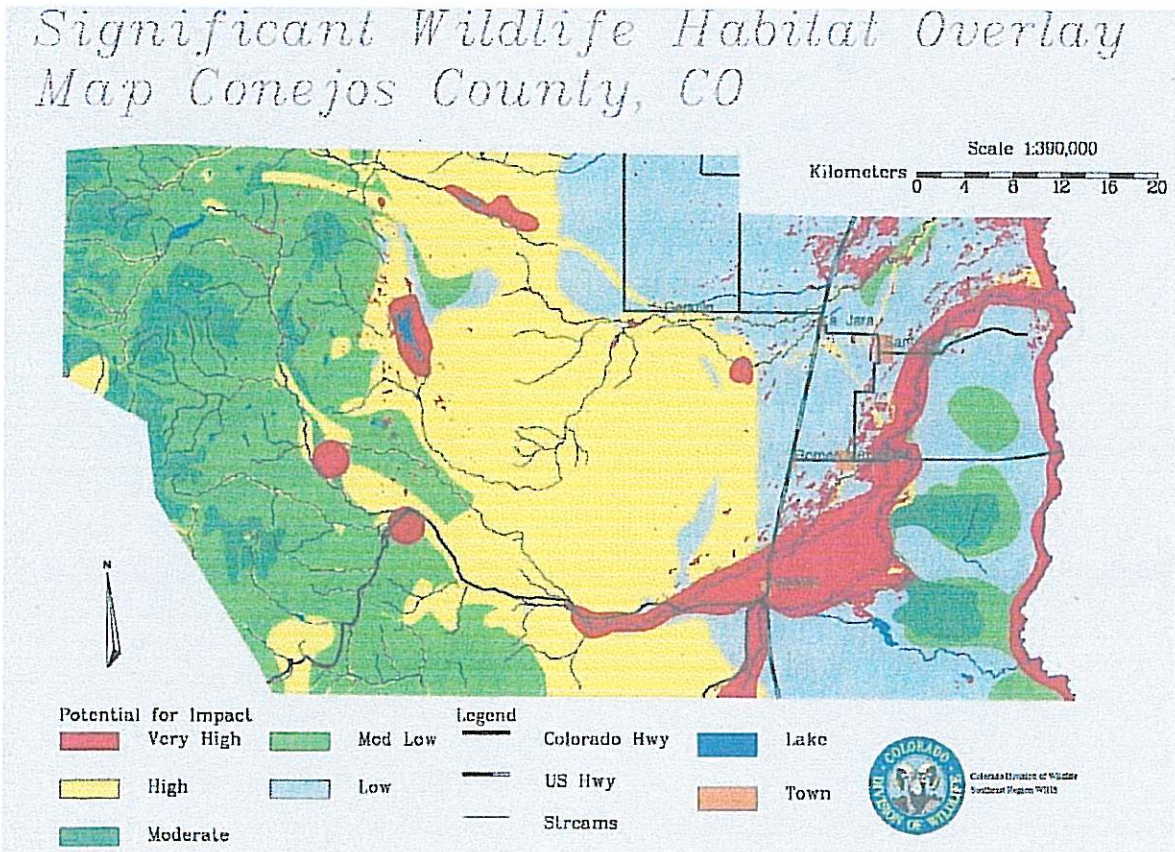


Figure 47 Map of Significant Wildlife

Setting priorities for habitat conservation requires making decisions about which types of habitat are most important. Conejos County in cooperation with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, developed maps of important habitat. Four criteria have been selected as the basis for determining wildlife criteria :

1. ***Rare vegetation types.*** Rather than attempting to design conservation plans for the more than 400 species of vertebrates in Conejos County, important habitat maps focus on the species' associated vegetation communities. Highest priority goes to protecting vegetative communities that are rare and stand in the path of development.

2. ***Areas known to contain rare and threatened species.*** There are areas of the County where populations of rare and imperiled species are known to live. Loss of these areas of habitat will threaten the existence of these species within the county, the region or even globally. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program has conducted an inventory of rare plants and animals in the county. This inventory provides maps of conservation sites ranked according to urgency of protection.

3. ***Areas supporting an unusually large number of species.*** Some areas of Conejos County support many different species of wildlife or areas of high species diversity. Protecting these areas will achieve greater conservation than areas of low diversity.

4. ***Areas providing habitat for species of importance to the people of Conejos County.*** This criteria includes areas that are moderately to highly impacted by development and known migration corridors. The following specific areas are included:

- Pronghorn concentration areas
- Mule deer winter concentration areas
- Elk severe winter range
- Duck winter range
- Bighorn sheep lambing areas
- Mule deer migration corridors
- Elk migration corridors

3.9 HUMAN-WILDLIFE INTERACTION

An important component of identifying habitat and creating wildlife management for growing areas is human/wildlife interactions. The human/wildlife interaction is defined as an area or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wild land. Simply as the human/wildlife interface continues to be developed, encounters with wildlife occupying those areas are increasing. Problems include damage by human pets, destruction of vegetation and property by feeding animals, concerns about disease transmission, and increasing calls by the community for the removal or destruction of wildlife. For development proposals on the urban-wildlife interface, management plans should specifically address these concerns and reduce detrimental human-wildlife interaction.

3.9.1 Colorado Natural Heritage Program

The Colorado Natural Heritage Program has mapped plant and animal communities of State and National importance within Conejos County. This mapping project included preliminary identification of sites from existing data and interpretation from aerial photographs. The information from this program includes recommendations for resource management/stewardship plans to protect resources of the area. The data from the Heritage Program will be used to identify important natural resources on and adjacent to development sites and to assist in development design to best protect the wildlife and their habitat.

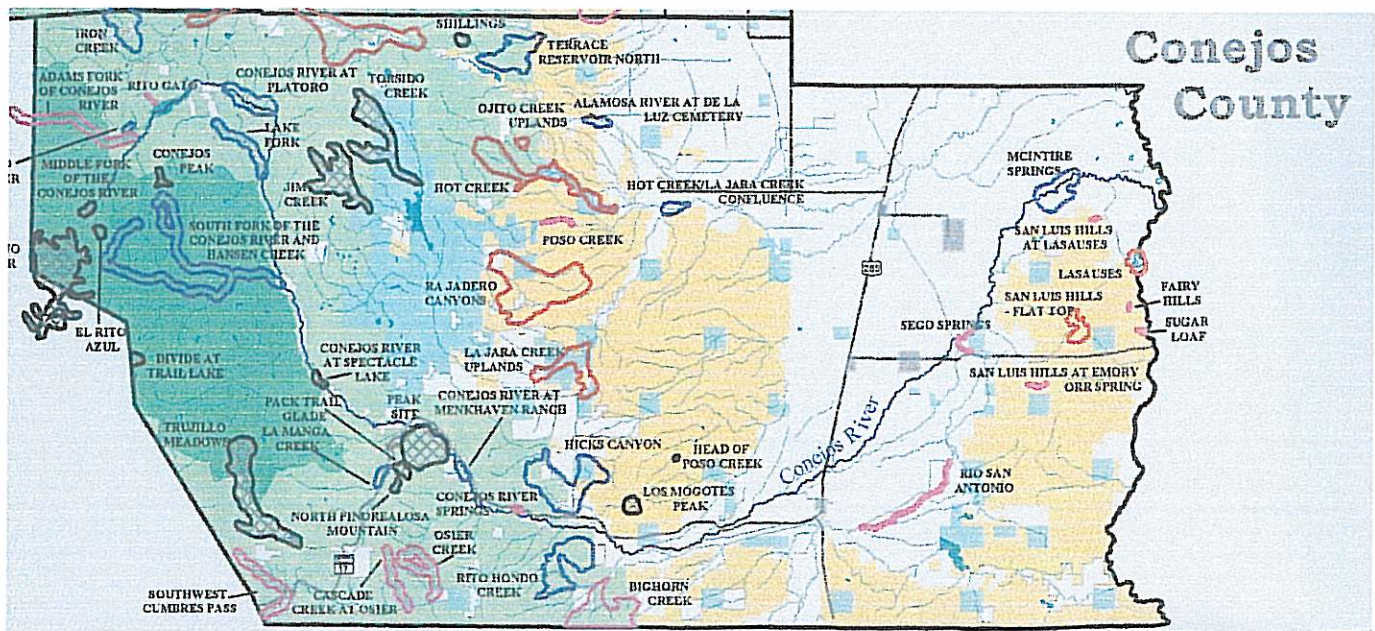


Figure 5. Potential Conservation Areas in Rio Grande and Conejos Counties

Figure 48 Map of Potential Conservation Zones

3.9.2 Rare and Endangered Species

The development review process will support State and Federal standards and regulations regarding rare and endangered species, including vegetative communities. The data base established through the Colorado Natural Heritage Program of Wildlife and Plant Communities of State and National importance will be the initial indication of the existence of a protected species (see Section on Ecosystems and Habitat Conservation). All new development projects will be referred to the Colorado Division of Wildlife at the initial stage of application. Any subsequent indication that a protected species is present on the site will require further investigation and referral to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If a protected species is present on the site, a mitigation plan will be required.

3. 10 Hazard Areas

Hazard areas, or areas prone to natural disturbance occur throughout Conejos County. These natural disturbances include wildfire, flooding, landslide, rockfall, mud flow and debris fans, unstable or potentially unstable slopes, seismic zones, ground subsidence and expansive soils and rock.

The classification of hazard areas generally depends on the consequences of the natural disturbance upon life and property. "Severe" hazard areas are defined as places where the natural disturbance pose a significant threat to health, life, limb or property. "Moderate" hazard areas occur where there is not a significant threat to life or limb, but where there can be intolerable damage to property. In addition, there are areas where natural conditions may cause significant harm to health or property but where mitigation efforts can successfully eliminate the potential impact. These areas are classified as "Constraint" areas. The following definitions are used in the Master Plan and the Land Use Code:

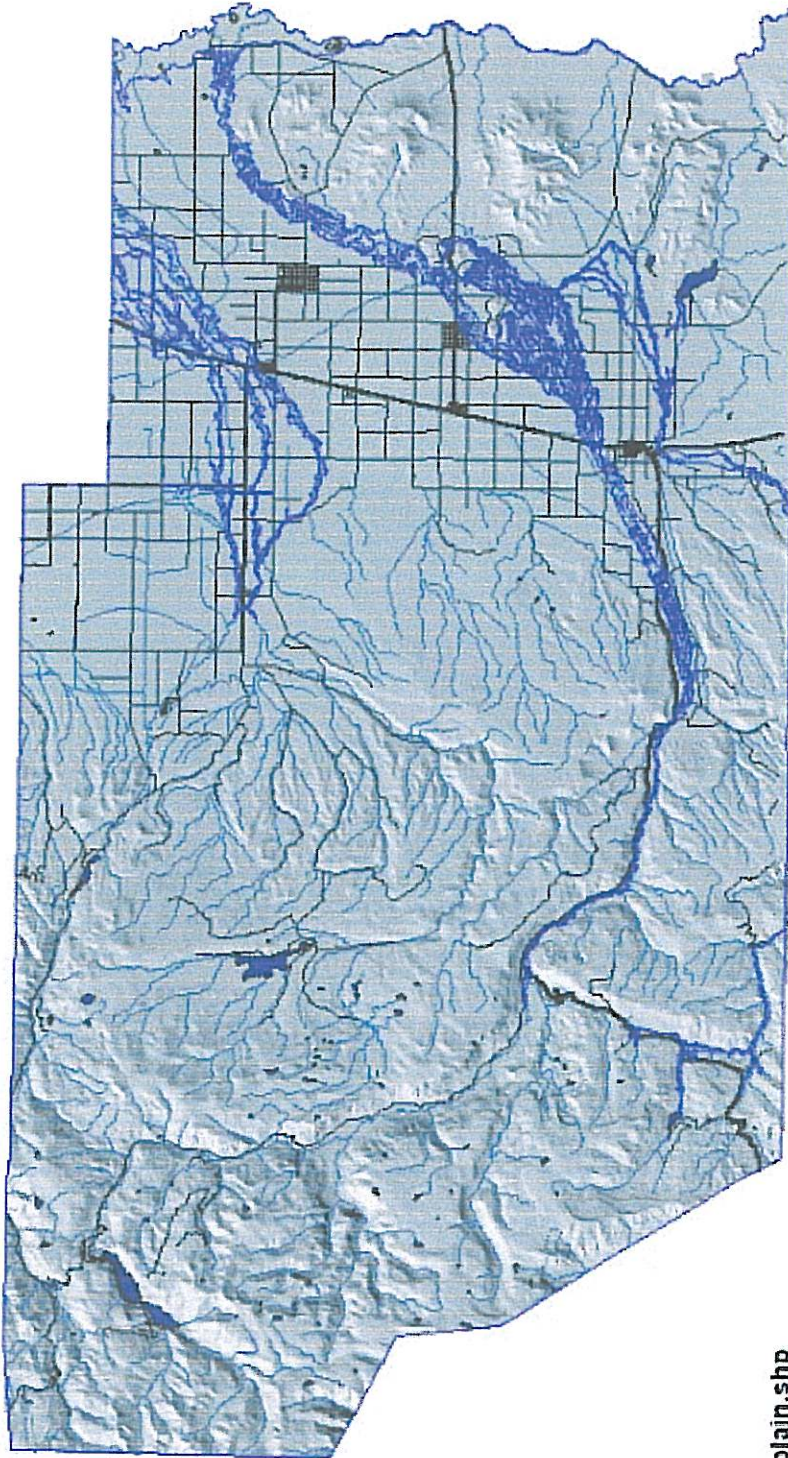
- **Severe Hazard Areas:** Flood Way (FW) Zoning Districts as adopted on official zoning maps, are areas classified on the official Geologic Hazards Maps with slopes greater than 30 percent. This hazard poses potential threats to the life and property of landowners choosing to build in floodplains. As a consequence, development in floodplains should be discouraged unless proven mitigation procedures are followed.
- **Moderate Hazard Areas:** Flood Fringe (FF) Zoning Districts as adopted on official zoning maps are areas classified on the official Geologic Hazards Maps with slopes 20 - 30 percent, dam breach areas.
- **Constraint Areas:** Areas of expansive soil and rock, radon areas.





Many of the hazard areas in Conejos County have been mapped and the severity of the potential natural disturbance classified. In areas where hazard mapping is not complete and for hazard types which have not been mapped, such as dam breach areas, the applicant must provide additional information. The applicant may be also required to coordinate with the State Geologist, State Engineer or other agencies when a hazard area is located on the project site.

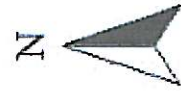
With the exception of the 100-Year Flood Maps prepared under direction of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the hazard area mapping currently adopted by Conejos County, It is not sufficient to delineate precise hazard areas at the site level. Where the adopted mapping indicates that a hazard or constraint area exists on a site under consideration for development, the applicant is responsible for providing sufficient information as part of the development application to locate and classify the extent of the hazard area on the property and to demonstrate that the potential natural disturbance for that area has been successfully avoided or mitigated.

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-  Floodplain.shp
-  County Roads
-  Conehyd3_02
-  Conehyd2_02



CONEJOS COUNTY FLOODPLAIN MAPS

MAP 8 Conejos County Floodplains

3.11 Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Areas

The potential for loss of life and property due to wildfire has increased dramatically in the San Luis Valley, as more and more residents choose to live in the foothill and mountain areas.

The wildland/urban interface is defined as an area or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. Conejos County has an estimated 99,242 acres of wildland / urban interface (SLV GIS/GPS Authority). Several subdivisions in this area have a high fire-loss potential.

Colorado State statutes designate the county sheriff as "fire warden" on state and private lands. Therefore Conejos County is responsible for wildfire suppression and associated costs. Large wildfires often cause the County to rely on contingency funds.

Wildfire hazard areas have been mapped in Conejos County. However, increased public concern and rising costs have led the County to adopt a more comprehensive approach to wildfire hazards than for other hazard types. Although certain areas can be identified with a high risk for wildfire, wildfire mitigation is important even in "low-hazard" areas. For example, high winds during wildfire episodes can carry embers for long distances and ultimately threaten lives and property.

Conejos County Hazard Analysis Map SLV Project Impact 2002 Fire Hazards

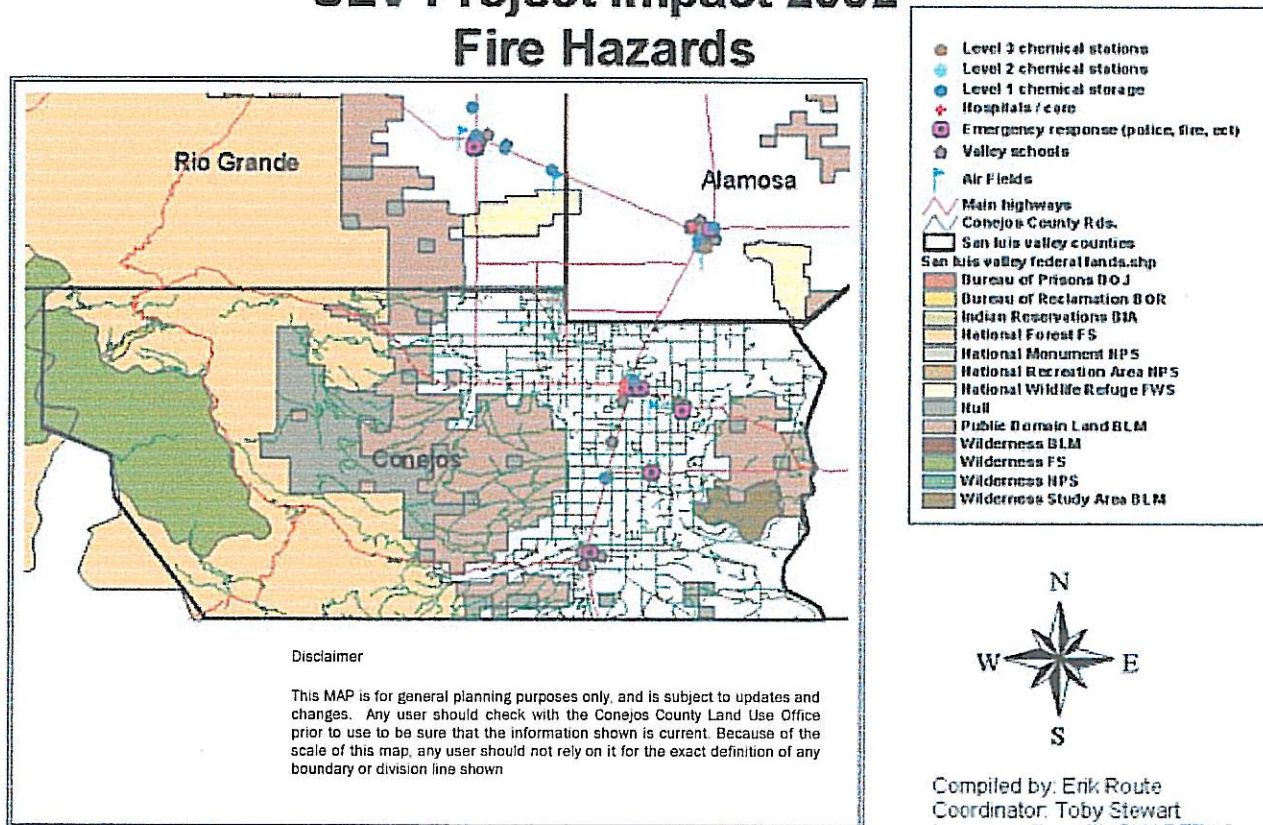


Figure 49 Conejos County Hazard Analysis Map

CONEJOS COUNTY FIRE PLAN

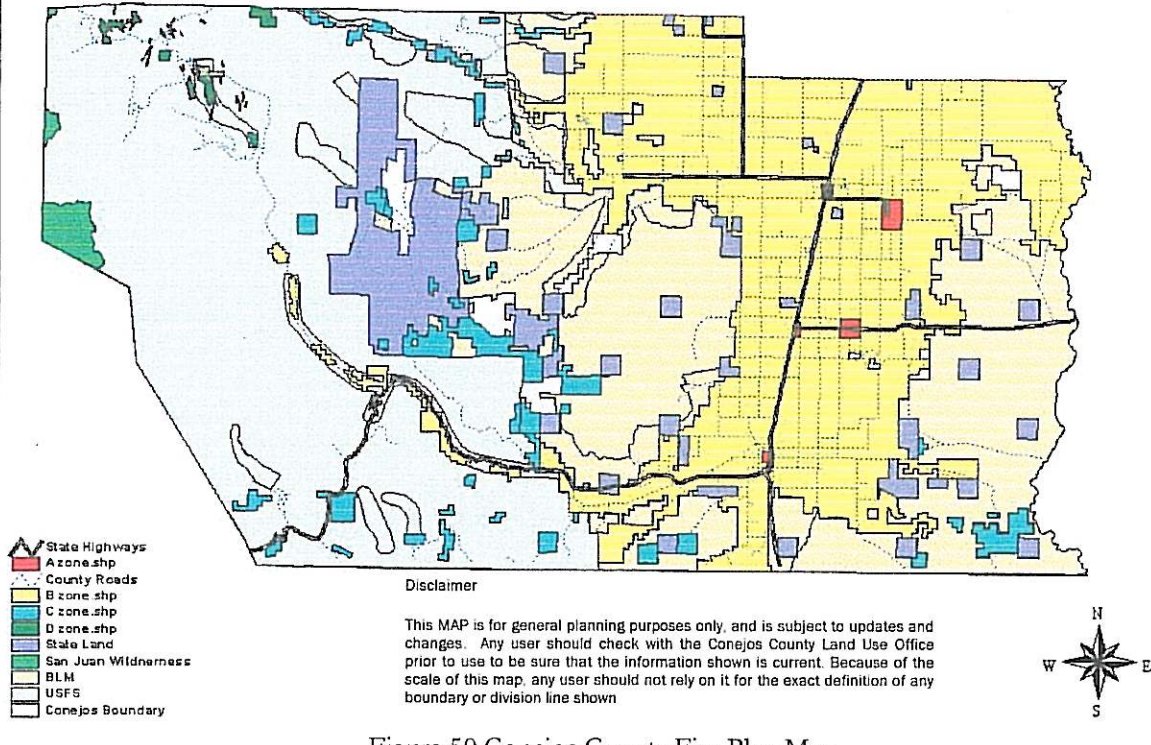


Figure 50 Conejos County Fire Plan Map

Conejos County Hazard Analysis Map SLV Project Impact 2002 General Hazards

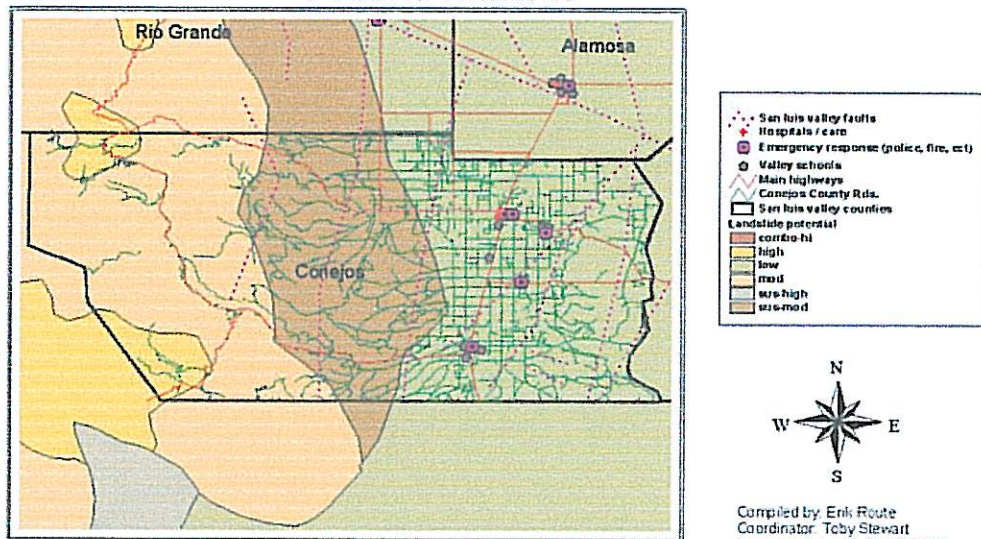


Figure 51 Conejos County General Hazards Map

Compiled by Erik Route
Coordinator, Toby Stewart
In cooperation with SLV RETAC,
Rio Grande CEM,
and FEMA Region 8

3.12 Special Places: Archaeological, Cultural and Aesthetic Resources

Conejos County contains a wealth of historic, and archaeological resources, some of which are included on the State and Federal Registers of Historic Places. These Registers are voluntary, incentive-based programs, which may offer tax breaks or grants to help protect the integrity of historic structures and archaeological sites. The Environmental Review checklist will include identification of any mapped or registered sites or structures on or within 1200 feet of the proposed development site, as well as other known landmarks of local interest.

Every effort will be made to maintain the integrity of the identified landmark. In the case of those on State or Federal Registers, the developer will be encouraged to maintain the structure or site in a manner consistent with program guidelines. Wherever possible, landmarks will be considered amenities to the development site. Issues of ownership, access and maintenance will be considered as appropriate for each individual development. In the case of geologic features, the applicant and staff will work together on a site-specific basis to maintain these unique features in recognition of their irreplaceable character and importance to the quality of life in the county.

In the future, Conejos County may wish to develop a local register of historic, and archaeological sites and if warranted, the county may create an overlay Historic District Zone. The Historic District Overlay Zone could be tied to an incentive program to assist landowners in maintaining cultural resources. The county may also wish to consider further identification of other special features of the landscape including unique geologic features and viewsapes. A specific and important feature in this category is ridgelines. The identification process shall include guidelines for protecting the features. The process would require amendments to the Master Plan and the Land Use Code, after appropriate public review.

A number of citizens have expressed a strong interest in protecting ridgelines from development and the Master Plan supports ridgeline protection as a goal. This issue is very complex and involves subjects such as quality of life, private property rights, fairness, and compensation. A detailed citizen process is necessary to move this process forward and fully consider the subjects noted above.

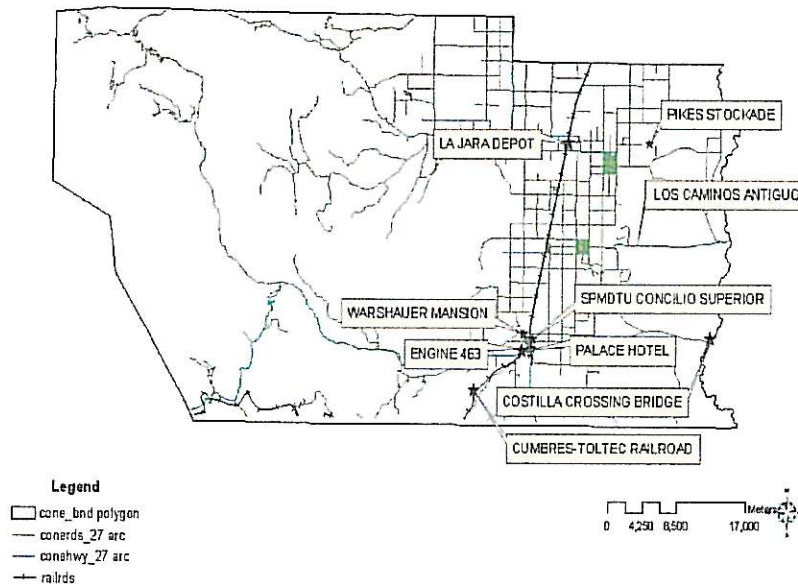


Figure 52 Conejos County Historic & Cultural Resources

3.13 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

Many of the environmental conditions discussed above pose a constraint to development either in terms of physical constraints such as wetlands, excessive slope, or in terms of environmental resource preservation, such as protection of significant wildlife and endangered species.

Environmental constraints will be classified in composite form on the Environmental Constraints Map. This map will have a series of overlays illustrating the limitations on private land development. Areas of constraint are areas where development is not recommended, either due to extensive mitigation, the presence of environmental hazards, or other factors limiting development activity.

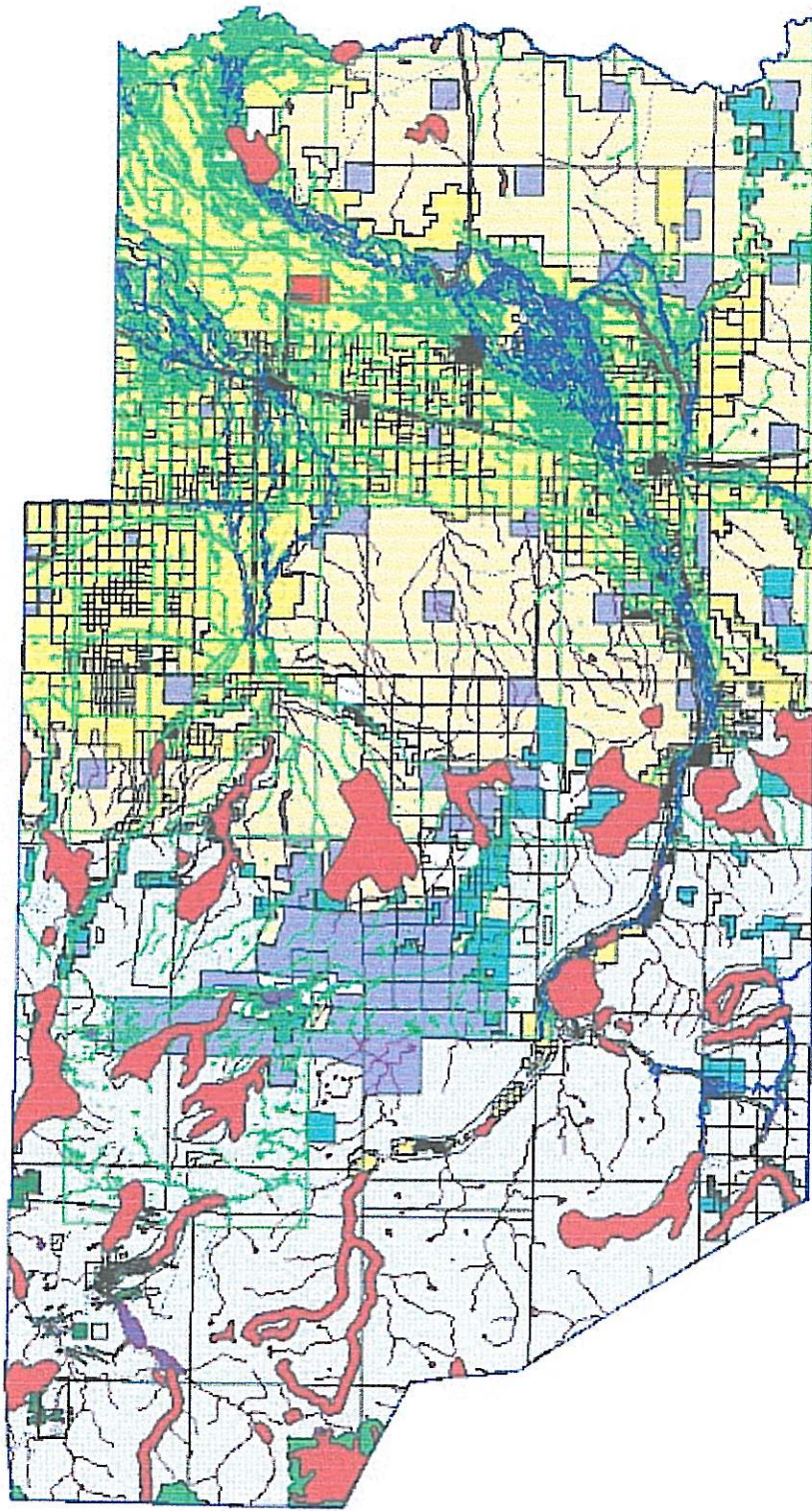
3.13.1 Mapped Constraints

A Geographic Information System utilizing data obtained from The San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority and other state agencies has provided the environmental data used in mapping the environmental constraints. Mapped constraints include the following:

- Water Bodies/Hydrological network
- Major Wetlands
- Flood Plains
- Sensitive Wildlife Habitat
- Potential Conservation Areas
- Public Lands
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Wildfire Hazards
- Geological Hazards
- Soils: Prime Agricultural Lands

Disclaimer

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CONEJOS COUNTY LAND USE

MAP 9 Conejos County Mapped Constraints

Concern for protecting environmental resources has been expressed throughout the citizen participation portion of the Conejos County Forums. In the past, county resource protection has been accomplished on a case-by-case basis, as part of the land use permit process. Since the county lacked detailed mapping of sensitive environmental resources, explicit policies, and standards to ensure protection of the resources judged to be most important it has been severely limited

The Conejos County Land Use Office is now responsible for identifying gaps and opportunities in county actions involving environmental issues. As part of its contribution to the master plan, the Land Use Office prepared recommendations concerning protection of natural and cultural resources to be incorporated in the Master Plan and the Land Use Code. The Land Use Office recommended the following six-step strategy for resource protection:

1. Define resources.
2. Inventory resources.
3. Analyze impacts.
4. Define tools for protection and mitigation.
5. Consider cumulative impacts.
6. Monitor the impact of development.

The Land Use Office also identified several categories of resources that the county should identify, conserve and protect because of their importance to the quality of life of Conejos, County. The full recommendation is available in the Land Use Office.

The Master Plan pulls together new and existing information on environmental resources and provides definitions and principles for identifying priorities for protection.

A framework for environmental review is proposed as a strategy to link environmental principles to development design and approval. Principles to aid in the development of explicit performance standards for resource protection and mitigation in the Land Use Code are also included.

3.13.2 Resource Inventory and Environmental Review

Landowners, developers and the County share in the responsibility to protect the environment. To this end, it is important to identify resources and conditions that are potentially impacted by proposed development in the initial stages of the project. This process provides the best resource protection and is also fair to the developer. Early identification of possible adverse impacts helps avoid costly redesign of the project later in the review process. This environmental review will be a formal process, based on standards contained in the Land Use Code, to ensure that the environmental review is fairly and equitably applied to all development projects.

3.13.3 Environmental Checklist

The environmental review will include resources and conditions mapped and/or identified or defined by the county, and for which local, State or Federal standards exist. Other environmental resources and values identified by the Land Use Office and others may become subject to this process in the future. When additional information becomes available the code can be amended. The following resources will be included on an environmental checklist and mapped on the sketch plan as part of the initial development review application. Maps of these resources are available at the County Land Use Office. The type and source of information is described in more detail in the following sections.

Resources for Environmental Checklist:

Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals

Colorado Natural Heritage Program Inventory: Biological Inventory of Rio Grande and Conejos Counties, Colorado

Water Resources, Wetlands

Colorado Natural Heritage Program Inventory: Biological Inventory of Rio Grande and Conejos Counties, Colorado, Volume II

National Wetlands Inventory: Wetland Maps for Conejos County

100-Year Flood Plains

Colorado Water Conservation Board/SLVGIS/GPS GIS Map

Colorado Geological Survey: 1041 Floodplain mapping for Conejos County

Soils

USDA Soil Conservation Service: Soil Survey of Conejos County Area, Colorado

Geologic Hazards and Topography

Colorado Geological Survey: Geological Hazards Avoidance or Mitigation

Colorado Geological Survey: 1041 Geological Hazards Mapping for Conejos County

Wildfire Hazards

Colorado Department of Local Affairs Office of Emergency Management: Colorado State-Wide Fire Hazard Analysis

San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority: Conejos County Fire Plan

Cultural Resources and Geologic Features

Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

Important Wildlife Habitat and Corridors

Colorado Division of Wildlife: WRIS Mapping: Composite Map of Significant Wildlife Habitat Conejos County, Colorado.

Commercial Mineral Resources

San Luis Valley Council of Governments: Mineral Resources Inventory for Conejos County.

3.13.4 Cumulative Impacts

In addition to considering the resources existing on a potential development it is important to address cumulative impacts on resources if they exist. One subdivision in an area may have a negligible impact on wildlife habitat. Yet as subdivisions accumulate on nearby parcels, the habitat may become so fragmented that it no longer supports some species.

In general, there are two aspects of cumulative impacts: temporal and spatial. Temporal cumulative impacts are those that accumulate over time. Spatial cumulative impacts, in this context, consider impacts beyond a given development site. In most cases, both types of cumulative impacts are present.

The land use planning process proposed in this plan for future implementation addresses both aspects of cumulative impacts differently. The spatial aspects of cumulative impacts generally require considering an area larger than the individual development parcel. For some resource types (see Section Air Quality) the necessary area is so large that a regional planning approach is needed to assess cumulative impacts. For many resources, however, such as habitat and wetlands, knowledge of the system off-site can lead to better resource protection through site design. The strategy for addressing spatial cumulative impacts has five steps:

1. Continue to improve maps of county resources to better understand the connections between individual ownership parcels.
2. Use resource protection as the primary criterion for designing clustered development to protect resources both on- and off-site.
3. Define management practices for resource protection that consider both on- and off-site impacts.
4. Initiate and participate in regional studies and implementation strategies concerned with resource protection.
5. Where feasible and appropriate, identify specific high-priority resources and long-term plans for managing and protecting them.

To address temporal cumulative impacts the primary strategy is monitoring and evaluating development on the natural and cultural environment. The results over time can be used to adjust standards and management practices to continually improve the protection system. Monitoring must occur in two separate contexts:

1. Examining the status of indicators for natural and cultural resources, as they exist and function in the county. This will insure that new development is constructed and maintained so that it complies with performance standards and conditions of approval designed to protect the resources.

The Land Use Office suggests that "monitoring the status of the natural and cultural environment can best be accomplished through a partnership with government and private organizations and a commitment to perform specific monitoring where data are not available" (see Monitoring and Evaluation).

Designing a meaningful monitoring system will require additional research and input from several fields of expertise. This process should have a high priority, so data can begin to accumulate after adoption of the new Land Use Code. Monitoring the development process for compliance with conditions of approval will require adequate commitments of budget and staffing. One possible source of funding for project monitoring is a dedicated fee collected at the time of final project approval

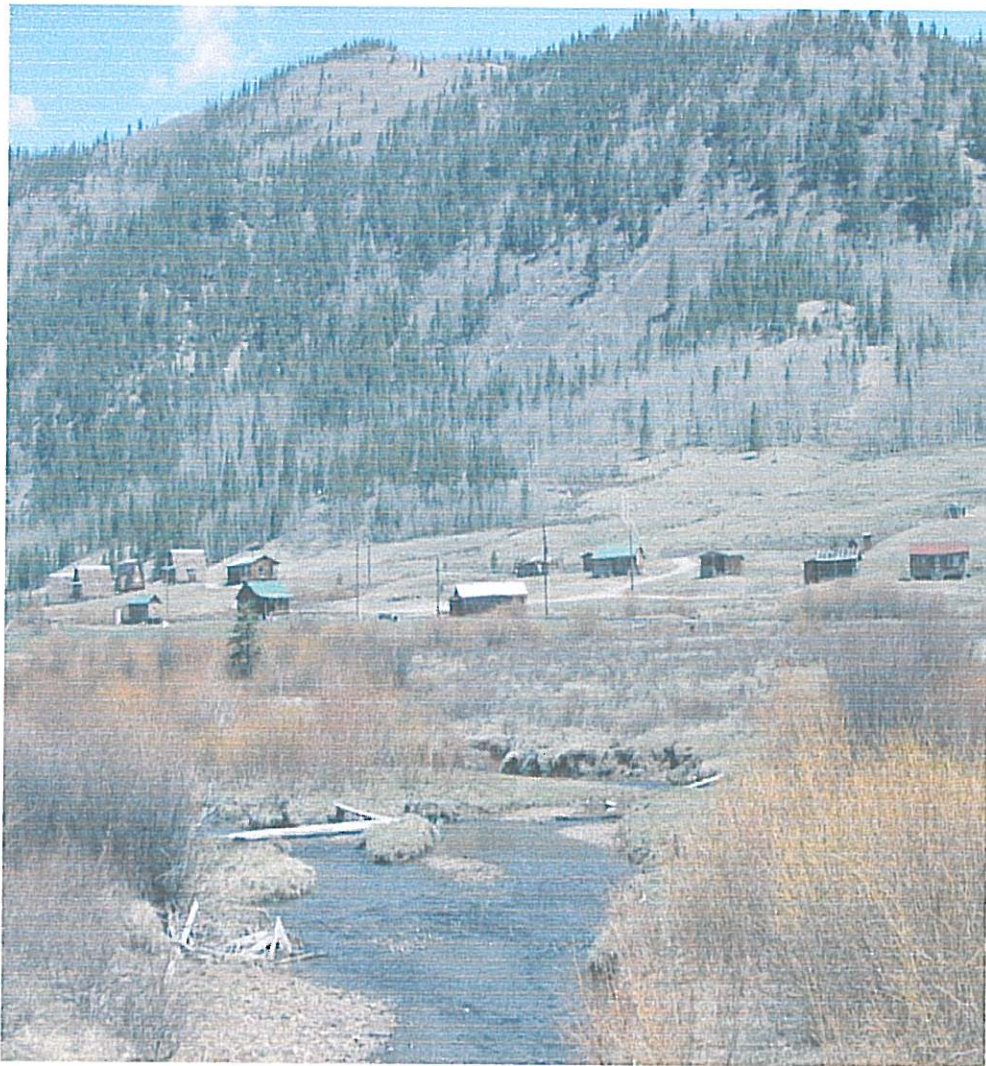


Figure 53 Development at Rocky Mountain Lodge Area

PLAN DIRECTION AND ACTION STRATEGIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND HAZARDS

In the section below, each primary paragraph (in bold type) is a statement of Plan Direction. The sub-paragraphs are actions or strategies for implementing the Plan Direction.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

ER-1 Resources and environmental conditions potentially impacted by proposed development shall be identified in the initial stages of the project to best design development that protects the environment. The following actions are only recommendations and changes to the land use code cannot be implemented unless the changes are approved by the BOCC.

ER-1-s1 Environmental review shall be a formal required process beginning at the concept stage of all new development projects. Applicants will submit a checklist indicating which environmental resources and conditions will have significant, mitigable, or no significant impact. In addition, resource information available from the Land Use Department, pertaining to the project site and the area at least 1200 feet beyond project boundaries, shall be included on the concept plan submitted with the application.

ER-1-s2 Resources and conditions to be included in the Environmental Review shall be identified in the Land Use Code. Performance standards for these resources shall also be included in the Code. As additional information becomes available new maps, principles, and standards will be developed for the Master Plan and Land Use Code.

ER-2 Monitoring of environmental conditions is a critical part of the environmental protection strategy.

ER-2-s1 A process for identifying and monitoring key environmental factors shall be established to validate the success of environmental performance standards. The results of the monitoring process shall be used as the basis for subsequent amendments to the Master Plan and Land Use Code.

ER-2-s2 Monitoring during the development process is necessary to ensure compliance with performance standards. The Land Use Office will incorporate this function into its proposed work plan and budget. Adequate staffing will benefit both the developer and citizenry by providing a level playing field and consistency of monitoring and enforcement.



Figure 54 Open Pit Mine East of Manassa

MINERAL RESOURCES

ER-3 Conejos County shall protect its commercial mineral resources, pursuant to 34-1-302(1) C.R.S.

ER-3-s1 "Commercial mineral resources" are defined on the Aggregate Resource Maps, pursuant to 34-1-302(1) C.R.S., .

ER-3-s2 Aggregate Resource Areas shall be those underlain by "commercial mineral resources." Aggregate Resource Areas shall not include the following lands:

- 1) Wetlands identified and mapped as Class III or IV on adopted Wetland Maps, and their required buffer areas.
- 2) Critical wildlife habitat areas, as identified and adopted in the Master Plan or on a site specific basis.
- 3) Public open space areas.
- 4) Areas where existing development effectively precludes extraction or where extraction has been completed.
- 5) Areas within Growth Management Areas, where existing or previous capital improvement commitments effectively preclude mineral resource development.
- 6) Areas or parcels remaining after the exclusions contained in 1 through 5 above, where the contiguous surface area underlain by a commercial mineral deposit is 20 acres or less.
- 7) Any specific site where the mineral extraction of a commercial mineral deposit would not be appropriate in light of the countervailing factors listed in 34-1-304(1), C.R.S.

ER-4 Intensive land uses shall be strongly discouraged in Aggregate Resource Areas, including residential subdivision of land into lots of less than 35 acres.

ER-4-s1 Aggregate Resource Areas may be included in required open space areas for Rural Conservation Development and Rural Land Use Process applications after extraction and reclamation is complete, but extraction activities must be terminated prior to approval of a subdivision request.

ER-5 All applications for an extractive use, whether within a designated Aggregate Resource Area or not, shall be subject to county regulation including Special Review.

ER-5-s1 The requirement for special review shall include sub-surface and open mining for any mineral or earthen material and mining of any mineral by means of in situ leaching, as well as all accessory activities related thereto.

ER-5-s2 Special review for an extractive use will consider both on- and off-site impacts to natural resources, adjacent uses and public facilities.

ER-5-s3 Leaching with cyanide ore-processing reagents in conjunction with open mining for gold or silver shall be prohibited in Conejos County.

ER-5-s4 Gravel Pits shall be prohibited within one mile (to either side, ie. Buffer zone) from the center-line of the Conejos River, Alamosa, La Jara Creek, and San Antonio Rivers.

ER-6 In cooperation with the Colorado Mined Land Reclamation Board and its staff, the County shall require that all "affected land" as defined by Colorado Statute, be reclaimed whether the mining activity is open or subsurface mining.

ER-6-s1 Within its authority, the county will work with special review applicants to establish appropriate uses and landscapes for reclamation sites. The goal of the reclamation plan shall be to return the site to a use that is a benefit to the community and the landowner.

AIR QUALITY

ER-7 Conejos County shall use cooperative efforts, development standards and incentive programs to protect air quality.

ER-7-s1 Conejos County shall continue to participate in regional air quality and transportation planning efforts and to implement recommendations agreed to by the regional councils.

ER-7-s2 All new development shall comply with local, State and Federal air quality standards. No new development expected to create particulate levels above State standards. Commercial and industrial uses shall meet all applicable permitting requirements prior to final approval of uses.

ER-8 Development proposals shall minimize negative air quality impacts to the maximum extent possible.

ER-8-s1 The Land Use Code shall require applicants to address mitigation of potential air quality impacts for large-scale developments and to implement management practices to reduce or eliminate sources of air emissions. Incentives to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation shall be incorporated into all new development design to the maximum extent possible. The county shall identify design and management practices appropriate for reducing air emissions for large-scale developments.

ER-8-s2 Development applicants shall comply with State requirements for controlling dust emissions during the construction phase of development. The Land Use Code shall reference performance standards for dust control.



Figure 55 Forest Fire Smoke over Conejos, County 2002

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

ER-9 Water quality shall be protected by analyzing potential impacts of development proposals, best management practices to reduce or control sources of contamination, and a demonstration of compliance with local, State, and Federal, requirements.

ER-9-s1 Applicants for new development shall address potential water quality impacts for properties that contain surface water or have the potential to impact surface or groundwater quality. A water quality management plan shall be included as part of the stormwater report in the development review process.

ER-9-s2 Drinking water sources shall be provided the highest achievable levels of environmental protection. Stormwater from new developments must not be discharged into a drinking water supply reservoir unless it can be demonstrated that water quality will not be impaired. Water quality management plans shall address water chemistry, as well as sediment transport and control.

ER-9-s3 Develop a Wellhead Protection Plan to reduce the likelihood of contamination of the county's drinking water supply. A wellhead protection plan would examine the hydrology of the area to delineate a wellhead protection zone, inventory existing and potential contaminants, create management guidelines, develop contingency plans in case of contamination, recommend siting criteria for new wells in case of expansion if necessary, and promote public involvement and education programs

ER-9-s4 Local and State requirements for individual on-site sewage disposal systems shall be considered in the initial stages of the development review process. All new lots to be served with individual septic systems shall be at least 1 acre and shall demonstrate the ability to meet local standards and setbacks prior to preliminary subdivision approval or building permit issuance.

ER-9-s5 Applicants for construction activities, industrial uses and mining activities, which meet thresholds under State law shall demonstrate that they have obtained a Colorado Stormwater Permit. Colorado Stormwater permits require applicants to identify and carry out appropriate best management practices to minimize polluted runoff from their sites.

ER-10 All new development shall be required to adequately provide for stormwater management in a manner which reflects current engineering practice and which takes into account up-to-date hydrologic standards.

ER-10-s1 The Stormwater Management Manual shall form the basis of review of new development. The manual will be updated periodically to reflect the most accurate scientific data possible for defining the relationship between the magnitude and frequency of rainfall events. Requirements for construction of stormwater facilities will be those that provide a cost-effective level of service based on up-to-date scientific data on flood frequencies.

ER-11 Conejos County will explore options to protect and provide adequate water resources for present and future uses in the County, in partnership with other affected interests.

ER-11-s1 Conejos County will not support future transfers of existing water resources out of the county without consideration of the impacts on present and future land uses including agriculture.

ER-11-s2 Water conservation will be an important component of the strategy to maintain adequate water resources.

ER-11-s3 The acequia ditch system shall be maintained in a natural state. Any development that occurs upstream of irrigated lands shall consider measures to prevent adverse impacts on water supply for downstream agricultural operations.

WETLAND PROTECTION

ER-12 Conejos County shall endeavor to protect all identified wetland areas of the county, in recognition of their importance in maintaining water quality, wildlife habitat, flood protection, and other critical environmental functions.

ER-12-s1 Conejos County wetlands shall be defined to include both Clean Water Act (CWA) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) wetland areas. Wetlands shall include swamps, marshes, bogs, riparian areas, salt flats, vernal pools, and farmed and other disturbed wetland areas, as described in the Wetland Map.

ER-12-s2 The Wetland Map, adopted by reference as part of the Master Plan, shall be the basis for the initial Environmental Review process, which is required for all new development projects. County staff and the landowner will work together on a case-by-case basis to identify and prioritize wetlands that do not appear on the Wetland Map due to scale and size limitations, or in areas not yet inventoried.

ER-12-S3 A Wetland Mitigation Plan shall be developed for any project which impacts a wetland. Requirements and performance standards for the mitigation plan shall address Federal Standards as established by the Army Corps of Engineers and EPA.



Figure 56 Wetlands near Los Sauses



Figure 57 Moose grazing in Field near Romeo

WILDLIFE HABITAT PROTECTION

ER-13 Conejos County shall endeavor to protect all areas identified as highest priority on the Significant Wildlife Habitat Overlay Map, which is adopted by reference as part of the Master Plan.

ER-13-s1 The county will use a wide variety of tools available, including clustering and the Rural Land Use Process, in a manner that is fair to property owners.

ER-13-s2 The Significant Wildlife Habitat Map, available in the Land Use Office, is the basis for the initial Environmental Review process, required for all new development projects.

ER-13-s3 A Wildlife Impact Mitigation Plan shall be completed for any development project which impacts an Important Habitat or which presents concerns of detrimental human-wildlife interaction. Requirements and performance standards for the mitigation plan shall be clearly established in the Land Use Code and shall be the basis for approval of the plan.

ER-13-s4 Riparian vegetation shall be preserved whenever possible through the use of setbacks, clustering or other techniques, in order to preserve wildlife habitat.

ER-13-s5 Update Land Use Code to require a building setback or buffer zone from all stream corridors

HAZARD AREAS

ER-14 Approval of development in hazard areas shall require a finding that the proposed development is compatible with the potential hazards and that future owners or the County shall not be subject to safety hazards or economic costs associated with development related to the natural disturbance.

ER-14-s1 Structures for human use or occupation shall not locate in severe hazard areas. These areas shall be avoided in development plans. Open space areas shall be located where severe hazard areas exist. In addition, restrictions shall be placed on activities that might increase the potential for natural disturbance.

ER-14-s2 Moderate hazard areas shall be avoided wherever possible or the potential disturbance must be adequately mitigated. The Land Use Code shall establish guidelines for mitigation plans and require that the plans be reviewed by professionals having demonstrated expertise in the appropriate field, i.e., geology or wildfire management consultant.

ER-14-s3 Potential disturbances shall be eliminated in constraint areas as part of the development design process. Approval of development in constraint areas shall be conditional, based on adequate mitigation of the potential natural disturbance. Strategies for follow-up monitoring to ensure that mitigation has occurred shall be incorporated when appropriate.

ER-15 New development in wildfire hazard areas shall be designed to create communities less susceptible to loss of life and property from wildfire.

ER-15-s1 All new development in designated wildfire hazard areas shall complete and implement a wildfire mitigation plan specific to that development. Mitigation plan standards and guidelines shall be clearly established in the Conejos County Fire Plan and shall be the basis for plan approval. Standards shall include provisions for emergency equipment access and year-round water supply.

ER-16 Structures in wildfire hazard areas shall be designed to minimize the potential for loss of life and property from wildfire.

ER-16-s1 Building codes shall be modified to include site planning and construction materials appropriate to reduce wildfire hazards. Homes built in wildfire hazard areas shall be designed to include defensible space and fire-resistant construction materials. Standards and guidelines for defensible space and fire-resistant construction materials shall be established in the Conejos County Fire Plan.

ER-17 Limit floodplain development to maintain public safety and protect the integrity of riparian corridors.

ER-17-s1 Development in designated floodplain areas shall be avoided. Where development is unavoidable, all construction shall be designed to prevent damage due to flooding in accordance with FEMA guidelines. In no event shall development in designated floodplains be permitted to raise the flood elevation of downstream property.

NOISE, GLARE AND ODORS

ER-17 Conejos County shall develop noise and glare performance standards and enforce State odor condition standards to protect the health, safety and welfare of County residents.

ER-17-s1 Noise standards from the County Noise Ordinance shall be used in the development review process to ensure that new development does not create unacceptable noise conditions beyond its property boundaries. The Land Use Code shall reference maximum permissible noise levels consistent with the County Noise Ordinance. If the county has reason to believe that a proposed use may cause noise, which would be objectionable or otherwise cause a nuisance, a noise mitigation plan may be required as part of a development application.

ER-17-s2 Performance standards for glare shall be addressed in the development review process to limit off-site impacts associated with glare and light level disturbance. The Land Use Code shall specifically address outdoor lighting standards and provide a review process for outdoor lighting activities and uses such as lighted playing fields and outdoor arenas.

ER-17-S3 State standards for odor conditions shall be referenced to limit odors permissible beyond the property boundaries. Residential and business uses, schools and churches shall be protected from odor conditions of new development. . If the County has reason to believe that a proposed use may cause odors which would be objectionable or otherwise cause a nuisance, an odor mitigation plan may be required as part of a development application.



Figure 58 Perlite Processing Plant South of Antonito

SPECIAL PLACES

ER-18 The development review process shall assist in the protection of the special places of Conejos County.

ER-18-s1 Sites and structures listed on State and National Registers of Historic Places shall be included on the environmental checklist at the initial stages of a development project. Other landmarks of local interest shall also be included on the checklist. The development review process shall consider options for preserving and protecting these features and sites.



Figure 59 Pictograph near Rio grande

ER-18-s2 Preservation of unique or distinctive natural features shall be considered in the design of the development. As with other resources, open space areas shall be used to protect and preserve the special places of the county.

ER-18-s3 Ridgelines shall be protected from development using a variety of tools which are fair to landowners. The county shall work with landowners on techniques and strategies to address ridgeline protection in a fair manner.

ER-18-s4 All buildings and structures shall be integrated with their natural surroundings. Building placement and height shall be designed to avoid blocking scenic views from public rights-of-way-, historic byways, parks, and other public spaces. All electric utilities shall be placed underground where feasible.

ER-18-s5 Update Land Use Code with design guidelines that screen road cuts, structures, and sign regulations that protect scenic view along roadways in Conejos County.

ER-18-s6 A county wide survey of historic and cultural resources should be initiated in conjunction with the Colorado Historical Society. This survey will serve to identify, catalog, and prioritize historic resources within Conejos County.

ER-18-s7 Incorporate a historic preservation ordinance in the revised zoning regulations and form a certified local government to obtain State Historic Funding.

ER-19 Protect prime agricultural land from development.

ER-19-s1 Annexation and subdivision of productive agricultural land shall be discouraged

ER-19-s2 The practice of agricultural protection techniques such as purchase of development rights, voluntary donation of conservation easements, land trusts, and related mechanisms, which preserve the rural character and agricultural economy of Conejos County shall be encouraged.

ER-19-s3 Enact a right-to-farm ordinance.

ER-19-s4 Create agricultural zoning districts on most productive lands.

SECTION 4 PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

The public facilities and services in Conejos County involve many entities. For some services, the County is responsible for part of a system of facilities, such as transportation and park and open space systems. Lastly, many services and facilities that are essential to County residents are provided by municipalities, special districts such as schools, fire protection, cemeteries, and central water and sewer.

This chapter provides more detailed information about existing facilities and services and known present and future needs. It establishes principles that can be used to determine levels of service in the Land Use Code. It recommends a coordinated long-term planning approach for public facilities, including those that are not directly provided by Conejos County. Lastly, it provides principles for developing a system of capital expansion fees.

4.1 Description of Existing Facilities

This section provides background information on service providers, current levels of service and issues related to growth and development for the following facilities and services:

- Water
- Wastewater
- Fire Protection and Emergency Response
- Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space
- Schools
- Solid Waste and Recycling
- Electricity and Natural Gas Networks

4.2 Water Facilities

Water service in Conejos County is provided by municipalities, water districts, and individual wells (Map of Public Water Systems, Map of Individual Wells). Water quality in public supplies is regulated under the Colorado Primary Drinking Water Regulations which are administered by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

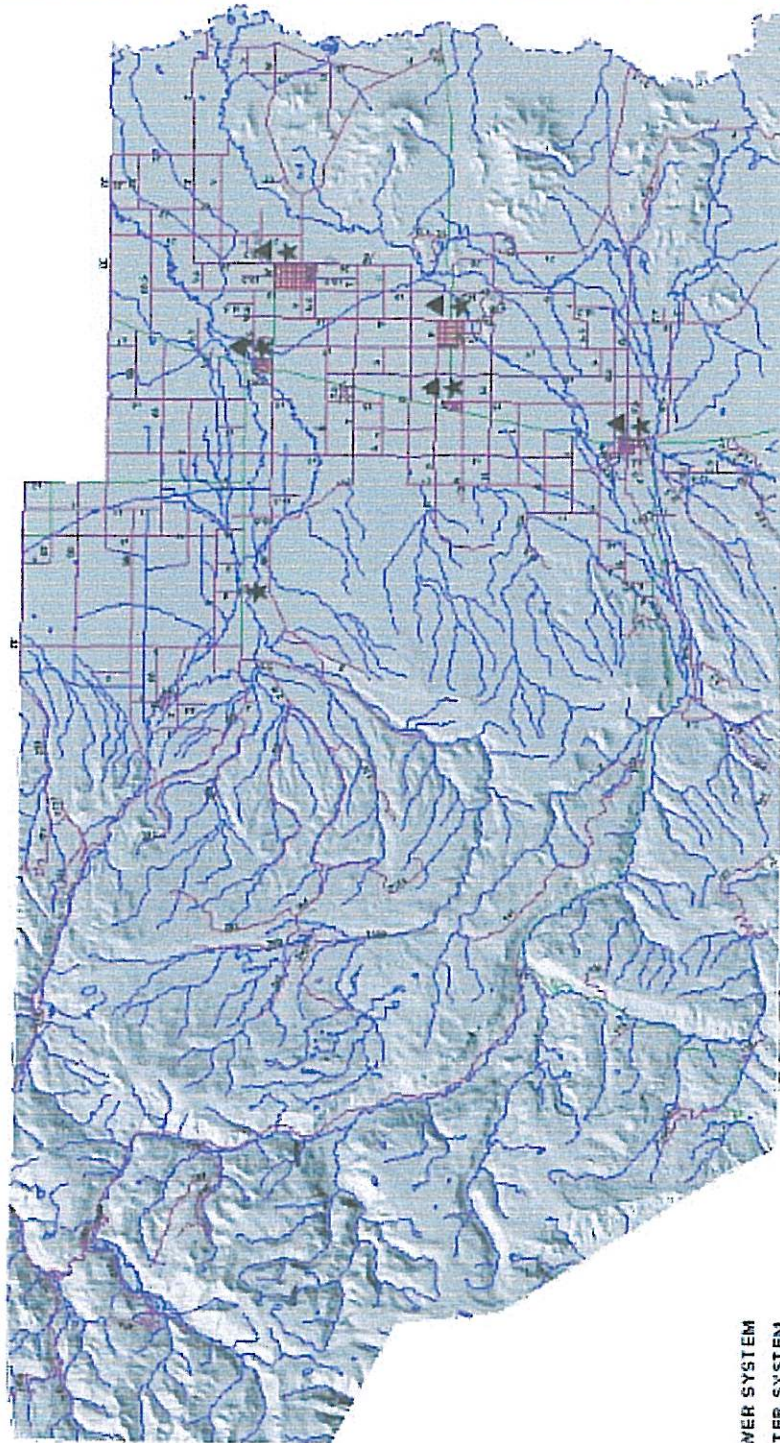
Two classifications of public supplies are recognized. The larger supplies, known as public *community* water systems, provide service to most of the county. The other type of public supplies are termed *non-community* systems. They include facilities open to the public that are connected to individual wells. Examples include schools, motels, guest ranches, camps and restaurants.

Private water wells must be approved by the Colorado Division of Water Resources before they are drilled. In 1995 the Division made a change in their procedures for making comments to Counties regarding the availability of water for new developments. They no longer make comments for development proposals that do not involve subdivision of land. Included in this category are zone changes, special use reviews and division by exemption. In those cases where wells are proposed as the water source, this change results in a gap in information about water availability during the planning process. Potable water is available from a community water system in most of the county. Not all areas with domestic service are able to meet requirements for fire protection. Domestic water can often be provided through a distribution system of smaller lines, but fire hydrants usually require at least a 6-inch line diameter to ensure adequate fire flow.



Figure 60 Water Supply System for Antonito

CONEJOS COUNTY



WATER AND SEWER PLAN

Map 10 WATER AND SEWER PLAN FOR CONEJOS COUNTY

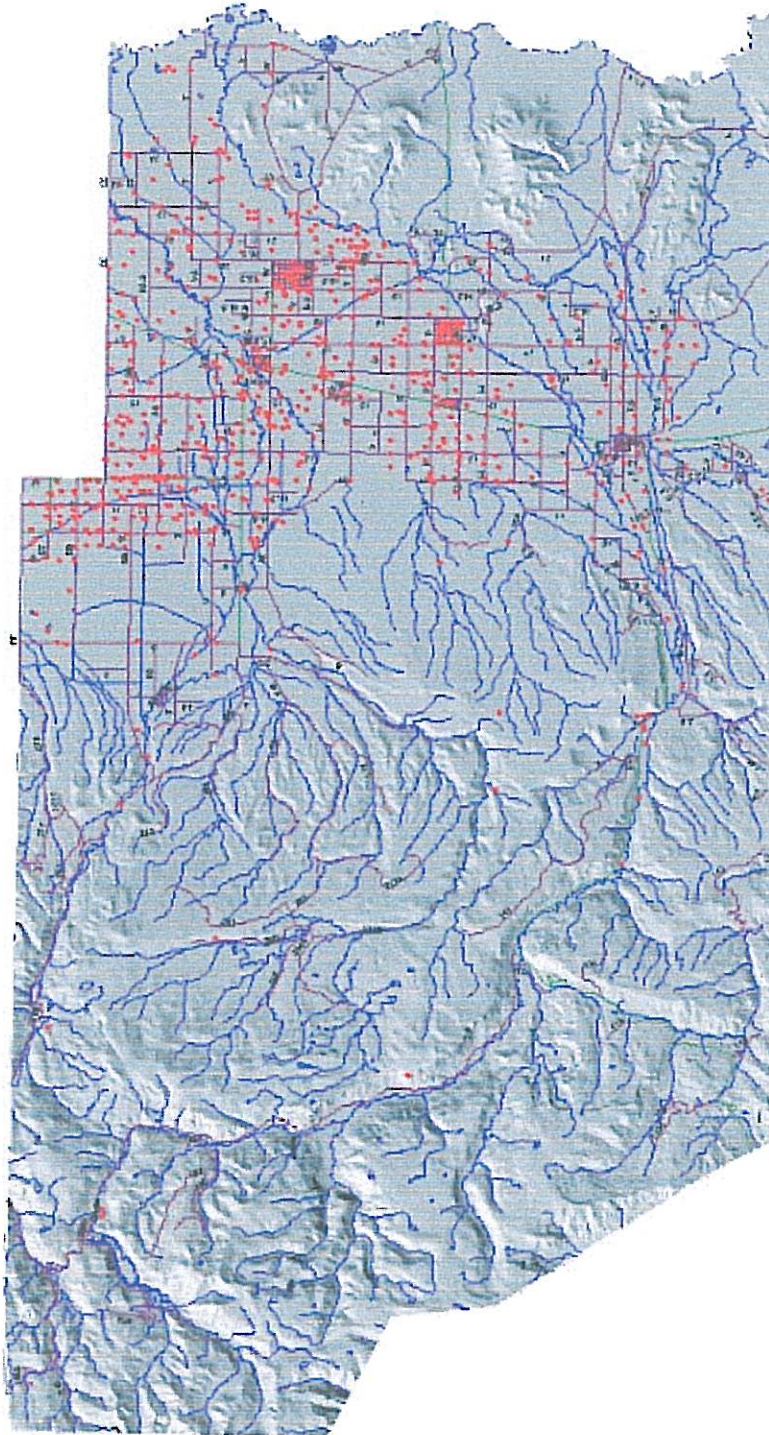
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▲ SEWER SYSTEM
★ WATER SYSTEM

CONEJOS COUNTY

WELLS: DOMESTIC/COMMERCIAL



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- Conejos_wells.shp
- Conejords_27
- Cone_munic
- Conehyd2_02
- Relipt
- Cone_bnd

Map 11 CONEJOS COUNTY DOMESTIC & COMMERCIAL WELLS

The following issues are specific to water facilities and service in unincorporated Conejos County:

1. Coordination of the planning process with water providers is important for insuring that investments in infrastructure are made where they are most needed. The County should examine mechanisms for increasing levels of interaction and cooperation. The potential for intergovernmental agreements should be considered.
2. As part of the planning process, Conejos County is reviewing and revising existing development standards and procedures. The Adequate Public Facilities section sets forth principles and strategies for determining standards and continuing to monitor and review standards as needs change over time. Service providers should be an integral part of this process.
3. In the case of development proposals where wells are to be the source of water and where the Colorado Division of Water Resources no longer makes referral comments, provisions should be made for addressing potential water availability. Options include requiring applicants to obtain opinions either from independent water experts or directly from the Division, or considering conditional approval in cases where water availability is uncertain.
4. Some areas within the county have community water distribution systems that cannot meet current and/or proposed standards for rural residential use. The County should work with service providers to improve existing systems where possible to provide a uniform minimum level of service to County residents. At the same time, the County should not approve new development in areas where adequate services are not available.



Figure 61 Waste Water Treatment Plant at Manassa

4.3 Wastewater Facilities

Wastewater treatment in unincorporated Conejos County is provided by public central sewer, operated by municipalities and sanitation districts; by community systems, operated by homeowners associations; and by individual on-site septic systems. (Waste Systems Map 10)

The operation and treatment efficiency of sewage treatment facilities are regulated by State statutes and regulations administered by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Water Quality Control Division. These regulations apply to both public sewer providers and homeowners associations operating community systems. Discharge permits are issued with requirements regarding volume and quality of effluent, and planning and construction for new capacity as plants approach their design capacities. The planning process and document are the principle means of coordinating planned land use patterns and expansion of treatment facilities and service areas in the County.

The diverse management arrangements for sewer service can result in inefficient service, poor treatment levels and high frustration on the part of homeowners. Experience has shown that, in general, special districts, cities and towns provide the highest level of service. Sewer systems operated by homeowners associations experience the most difficulty. Discussions with public sewer providers indicate that extension of sewer lines within municipal or district service areas is almost always a more economical solution than developing small treatment plants, and provides the best long-term service to homeowners. For development outside current sewer service areas, individual on-lot septic systems on large lots also provide adequate service.



Figure 62 Typical Septic Tank and Leach Field System

4.4 On-Site– Septic Systems

On-site sewage treatment systems are regulated by the County Department of Health and Environment. Soil test data is required prior to the issuance of permits. Inspections are made during the construction phase to insure that new systems meet design standards. Approximately 1,021 on-site sewer systems are in use in the County. A discussion of the land use implication of these systems is contained in the Conejos County Department of Health and Environment titled *ISDS regulations*. County policy and regulations specify that individual on-lot septic systems require a minimum lot size of 43,560 square feet (1 acre).

The following issues relate to wastewater treatment in Conejos County:

1. Decisions made by sanitation districts concerning service area and line capacities have major impacts on land use patterns. A mechanism needs to be developed to coordinate the visions of land use development in the County, the cities and towns, and the sanitation districts. The incorporated areas or municipalities are required by State Statute to develop 3-mile area plans for the purposes of considering planning for streets, waste treatment and annexation of adjacent lands.
2. Current standards for public sewer provision within urban growth areas leave some gaps and loopholes. Exceptions to the public sewer standard create problems in cost-effective expansion of service within the urban area, and thus potential roadblocks to annexation, as well as levels of development that are not consistent with the urban area. Examples of these communities are Guadalupe, Capulin and Platoro.
3. The strategy for requiring clustered development throughout the rural area of Conejos County raises issues of appropriate levels of service for sewer. A proliferation of private package sewage treatment plants operated by homeowners associations can lead to inadequate financial planning, poor treatment levels, and potentially, a future bailout at the expense of County taxpayers. Within public sewer service areas privately-owned and managed treatment plants may also present obstacles to the logical extension of public sewer service. Discussions with public sewer providers indicate that extending sewer lines within municipal or district service areas is almost always a more economical solution than developing small treatment plants, and provides the best long-term service to homeowners. New community sewer systems should only be located within defined public sewer service areas if the sewer system will be owned or managed by the applicable sewer district or municipality.
4. Community sewer systems proposed outside public sewer service areas should demonstrate through an economic analysis that the cost of extending and connecting to public central sewer exceeds the cost of design and construction of the community package plant. A plan for operation and maintenance of the community sewer system should also be considered as part of the

4.5 Fire Protection and Emergency Response

Fire protection and emergency response in Conejos County are provided by fire protection districts, volunteer fire departments and, in areas not otherwise covered, by the Conejos County Sheriff's Department. In addition, the US Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service have responsibility for fire fighting on public lands. The Sheriff's Department maintains a Mutual Aid Agreement with the districts, departments and agencies engaged in fire suppression to facilitate voluntary sharing of manpower, equipment and expertise.

In Conejos County, four districts and authorities have fire stations (NW Conejos, NE Conejos, South Conejos and Central Conejos). Emergency medical response is an important part of the service currently not provided by fire protection districts and authorities(Fire Districts Map)

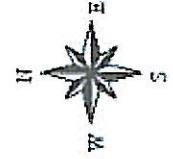
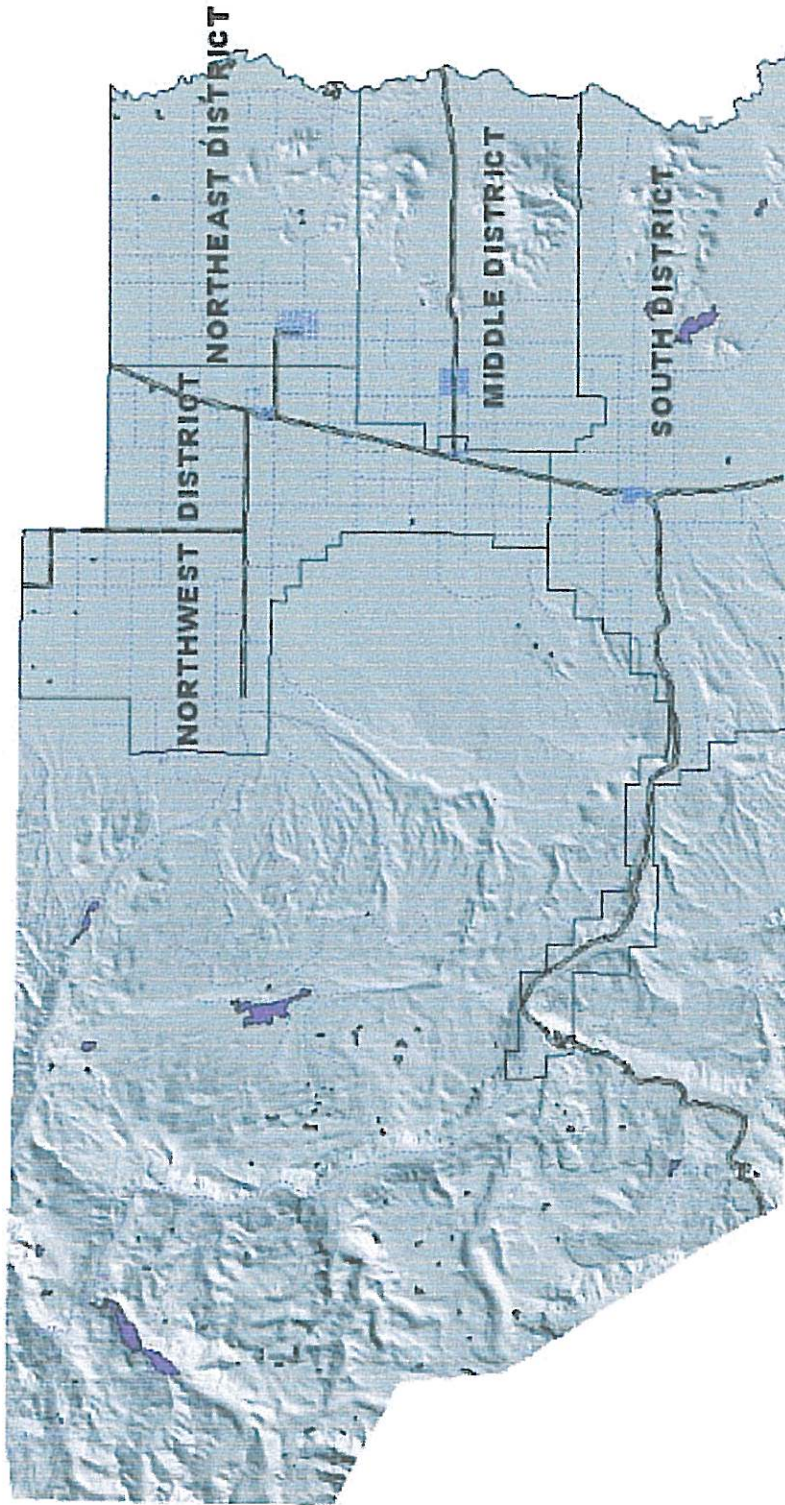
Wildfire is an important issue in the foothill and mountain areas which comprise much of the County land area. (Fire Hazards Map) The primary responsibility for wildfire protection within Conejos County government is with the fire districts of Conejos County. Costs of wildfire suppression continue to increase. In Colorado, counties are responsible for fire suppression costs on private and state lands.

Conejos County, the San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority, the Colorado State Forest Service and the Rio Grande National Forest are working on developing a county-wide fire plan. The fire plan analyzes wild land / urban interface fire hazards and notes common factors among structures susceptible to wildfire. Some deal with construction materials and location in hazardous areas. However, some relate directly to fire protection facilities: limited water supply, resources and personnel arriving too late, and poor access to structures.

Whether in urban, flatland rural or mountain areas, successful fire fighting requires bringing together fire fighters, equipment and water supply in adequate amounts and in a timely manner. For this reason, coordination between fire service providers and water providers is essential to developing standards for fire protection. The key elements to consider are the water supply (measured in gallons per minute) available at the site and the response time of fire fighters. In more rural areas, on-site water storage can be used. Where response time is longer than the preferred alternative, structural sprinkler systems can be an option. But while structural sprinkler systems may be effective in saving lives, they are generally less effective in saving structures.

On-site fire protection facilities can provide a reasonable alternative to public facilities in locations where public facilities are not available. However, regulations need to identify options clearly and ensure that at least one of the viable options is available to all new development.

CONEJOS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICTS



- South
- Jfw_cone
- Jle_cone
- Central
- County Roads
- State Highways
- WATER BODIES
- Conejos Boundary

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MAP 12 CONEJOS COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS

Conejos County Hazard Analysis Map SLV Project Impact 2002 Fire Hazards

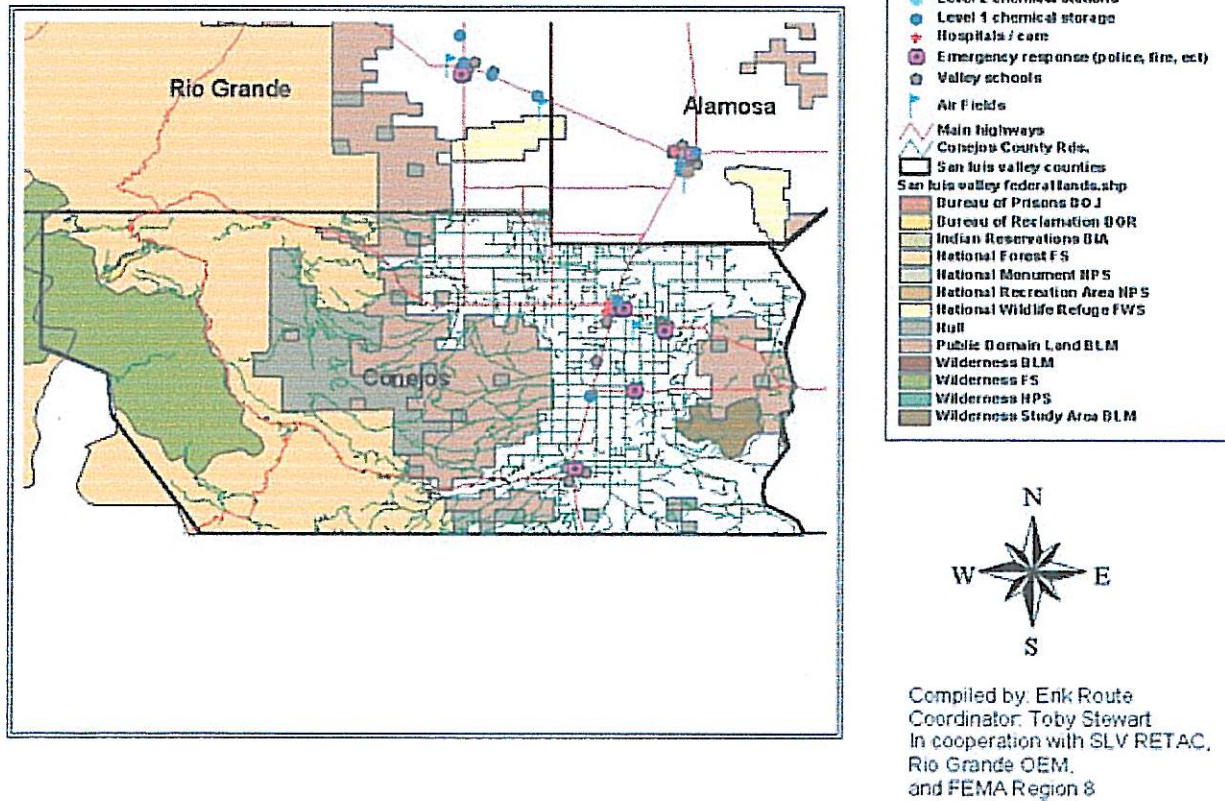
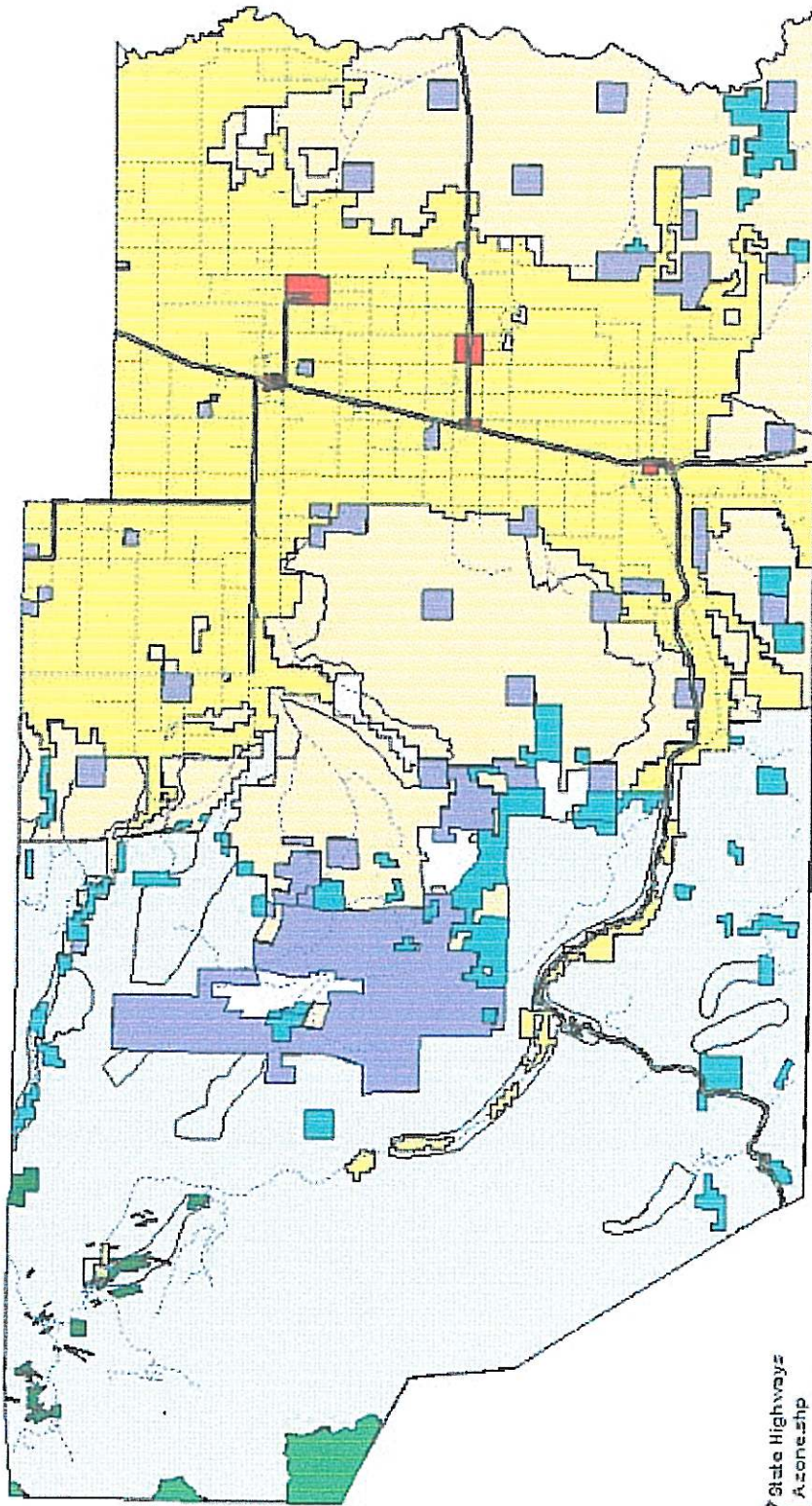


Figure 63 Hazard Analysis Map For Conejos County

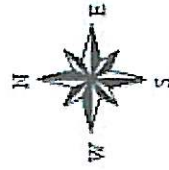
The following issues pertain to fire protection and emergency response:

1. As part of the land use planning process, Conejos County is reviewing and revising existing development standards and procedures. In the past, development standards for fire protection have considered primarily water supply. A more comprehensive approach is to develop standards based on coordination with both water and fire protection service providers. Standards will be developed for fire response, either using time, distance or a combination of both. The standards should also consider the increasing importance of emergency medical response as part of the role of fire protection service providers.
2. Wildfire will increase as an issue in Conejos County as development moves into more remote mountainous terrain such as the Conejos Canyon.

CONEJOS COUNTY FIRE PLAN



- State Highways
- A zone.shp
- County Roads
- B zone.shp
- C zone.shp
- D zone.shp
- State Land
- San Juan Wilderness
- BLM
- USFS
- Conejos Boundary



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MAP 13 CONEJOS COUNTY FIRE PLAN

4.6 Parks and Open Space

The abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities in Conejos County is a key element of the area's quality of life. Open spaces help define the character of the County and provide a welcome contrast to the compact urban form of our communities. Large parts of the County are owned by Federal land management agencies – Rio Grande and San Juan National Forest (37%) and Bureau of Land Management (23%) - but this land is located in the western two-thirds of the County away from the majority of the population.

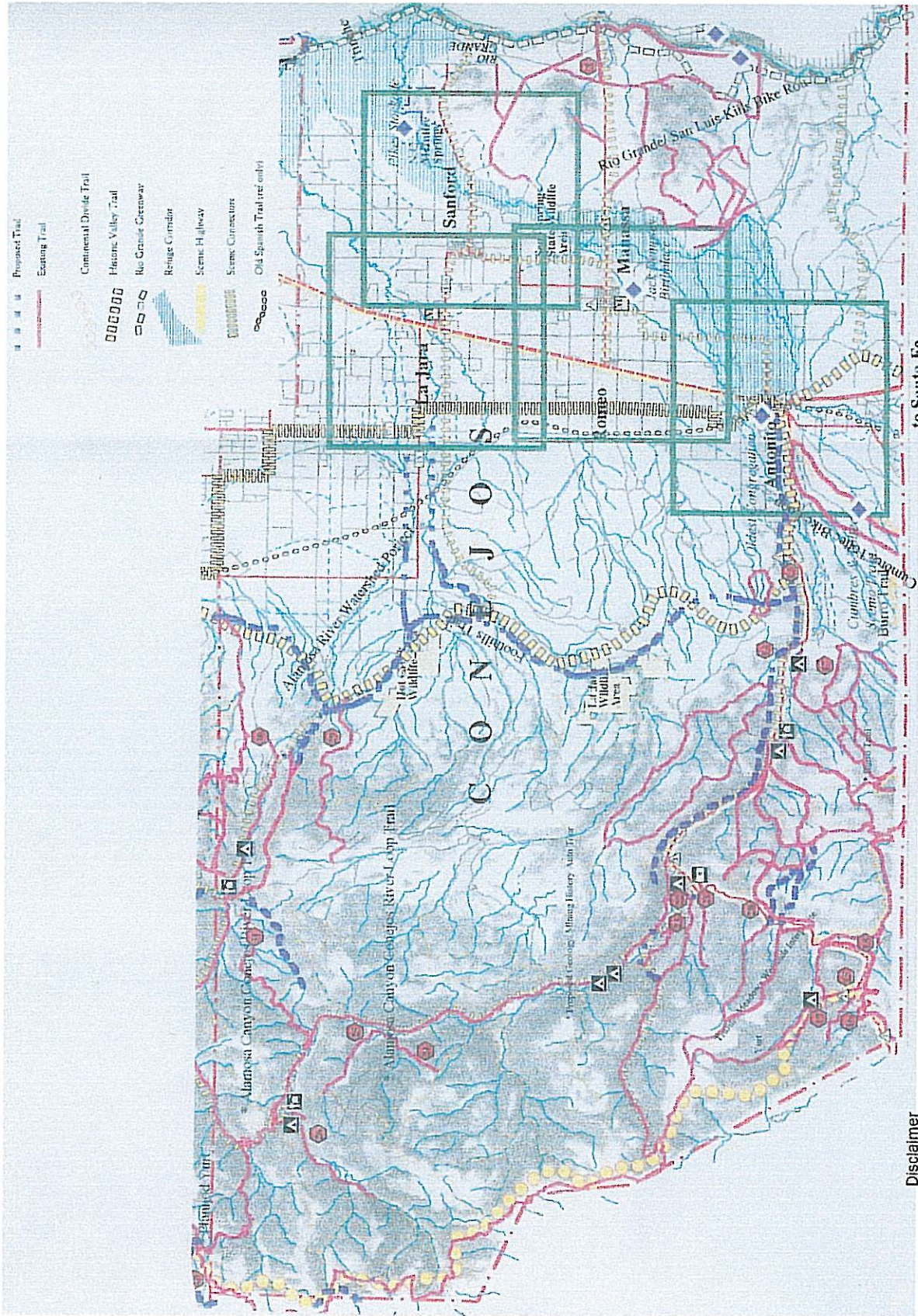
Conejos County adopted the Great San Luis Valley Trails & Recreation Master Plan in 1998. The Plan outlines three major objectives: upgrading existing facilities, extension of the regional trail system, and establishment of new open space areas.

State statutes enable the county to include provisions for dedication of land or fees in lieu of land for parks and schools as a part of the subdivision process. In the process of approving a subdivision the board of county commissioners shall take into account the size, location and characteristics of the proposed subdivision, the current and likely future uses of the surrounding area, and the impact of the subdivision on public services and facilities. The amount of land dedicated for public purposes shall not exceed the amount roughly proportionate to the impacts of the subdivision.

Conejos County has the potential for developing a popular and successful parks and open space program. The primary issue regarding the program relates to maintaining the program's quality in light of increasing demands resulting from new growth and development.



Figure 64 Town Park at La Jara



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MAP 14 CONEJOS COUNTY TRAILS MASTER PLAN

4.7 Schools

Public schools in Conejos County are provided primarily by four districts: RE-1J, RE-10, 6-J, and RE-11 (School Districts Map).

Growth and development throughout the County has a direct impact on public school facility needs, personnel and operating costs. New school facilities can also impact the County, for example, by increasing demand on the County transportation system. The County may collect an impact fee for new residential building permits in subdivisions where this condition was required by the County Commissioners.

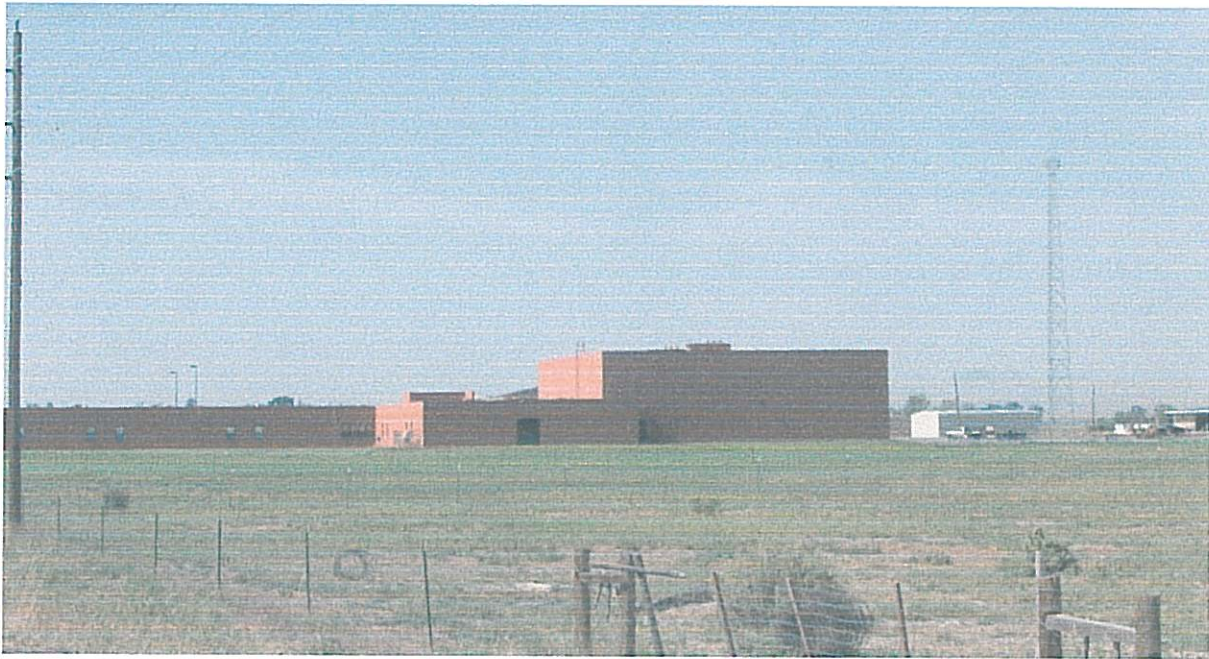
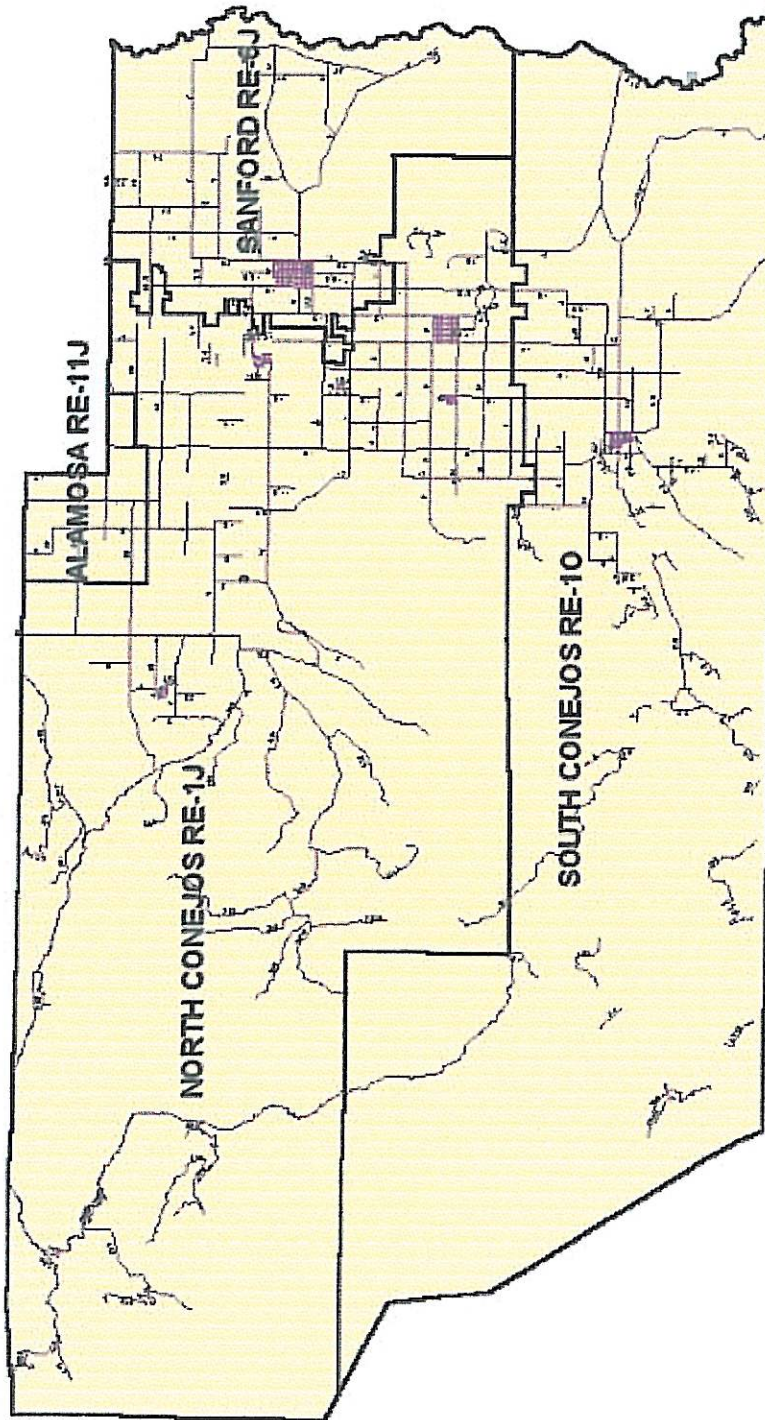


Figure 65 North Conejos School District Facilities

CONEJOS COUNTY

SCHOOL DISTRICTS



- Conerds_27
- Cone_sch_dist
- Conehycd2_02
- Refpt
- Cone_bnd

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MAP 15 CONEJOS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

4.8 Stormwater Management

Stormwater management facilities generally include a means of conveying excess stormwater runoff from individual lots and streets downstream to an acceptable point of discharge. In some cases runoff is routed through a detention pond to slow the rate of discharge before being released into downstream facilities. In other cases, runoff may be discharged into a lake or other body of water. The latter may require some type of treatment to ensure that water quality is not degraded. The issue of stormwater management is also related to flood plain management and water quality and quantity issues.

In urban areas, the high percentage of impervious surfaces greatly increases the amount of stormwater runoff from individual lots. The provision of urban stormwater management services requires highly technical information and analysis to be effective. As with other urban-level services, municipal governments are better able to provide the more technical level of service required for effective stormwater management in urban areas. The staffing and available resources of the County are more geared toward rural areas. Conejos County will look to its respective municipalities for assistance and collaboration in the area of urban stormwater management. Also, the paths of stormwater flow do not follow jurisdictional boundaries, and thus multi-jurisdictional solutions may be needed.

Even in rural areas, the County is not able to provide more than a basic level of service. Generally, stormwater management in rural subdivisions includes conveyance via roadside ditches into a detention pond located within the development. The detention pond is designed to discharge runoff at a rate no greater than the historic rate from the property. In most cases the County does not maintain rural stormwater drainage systems. The County expects rural residents to be active in the maintenance of their stormwater systems. The County may act as a facilitator to provide assistance to rural residents wishing to form stormwater districts to retrofit stormwater facilities and provide a higher level of maintenance in rural areas.

Stormwater management facilities are also an essential part of new development. Any new development seeking the approval of the County in either urban or rural areas will be expected to provide adequate facilities for disposition of stormwater. New developments will also be expected to provide for maintenance of those facilities.

4.9 Solid Waste and Recycling

Conejos County currently has no sanitary landfill and recycling center. Transfer stations near the communities of Sanford and Manassa are operated by private contractors.

The Land Use Office estimates current solid waste generation rates at between 4 and 5 pounds per person per day for all Conejos County residents. Recent growth and new construction has resulted in increased demand for a landfill. A Solid Waste Task Force is currently assessing the solid waste options for Conejos County. Policies are pending the outcome of the Task Force recommendations.



Figure 66 Illegal Solid Waste Dump Site

4. 10 Utility Systems: Electricity, Natural Gas

Electrical power distribution comes from two providers. Public Service Company of Colorado serves the majority of Conejos residents. The San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative serves northern portions of the county near the Alamosa county line. Power supply lines originate in northern Colorado from coal-fired plants. The high voltage power lines are the main trunk line for the state-wide distribution network (Electric Power Distribution Maps).

Natural Gas is extracted from wells in the western slope and is piped to Conejos County where it is distributed throughout the county serving most of the communities (Natural Gas Map, Figure 67)

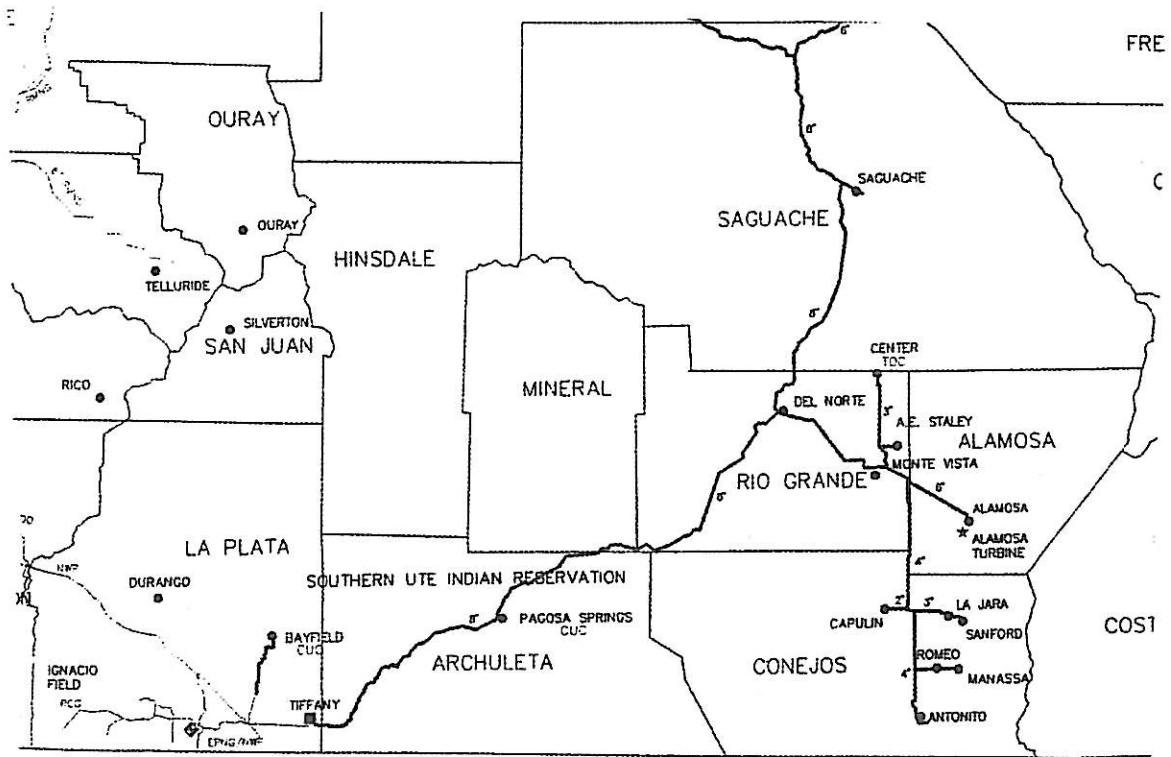


Figure 67 Natural Gas Distribution Network

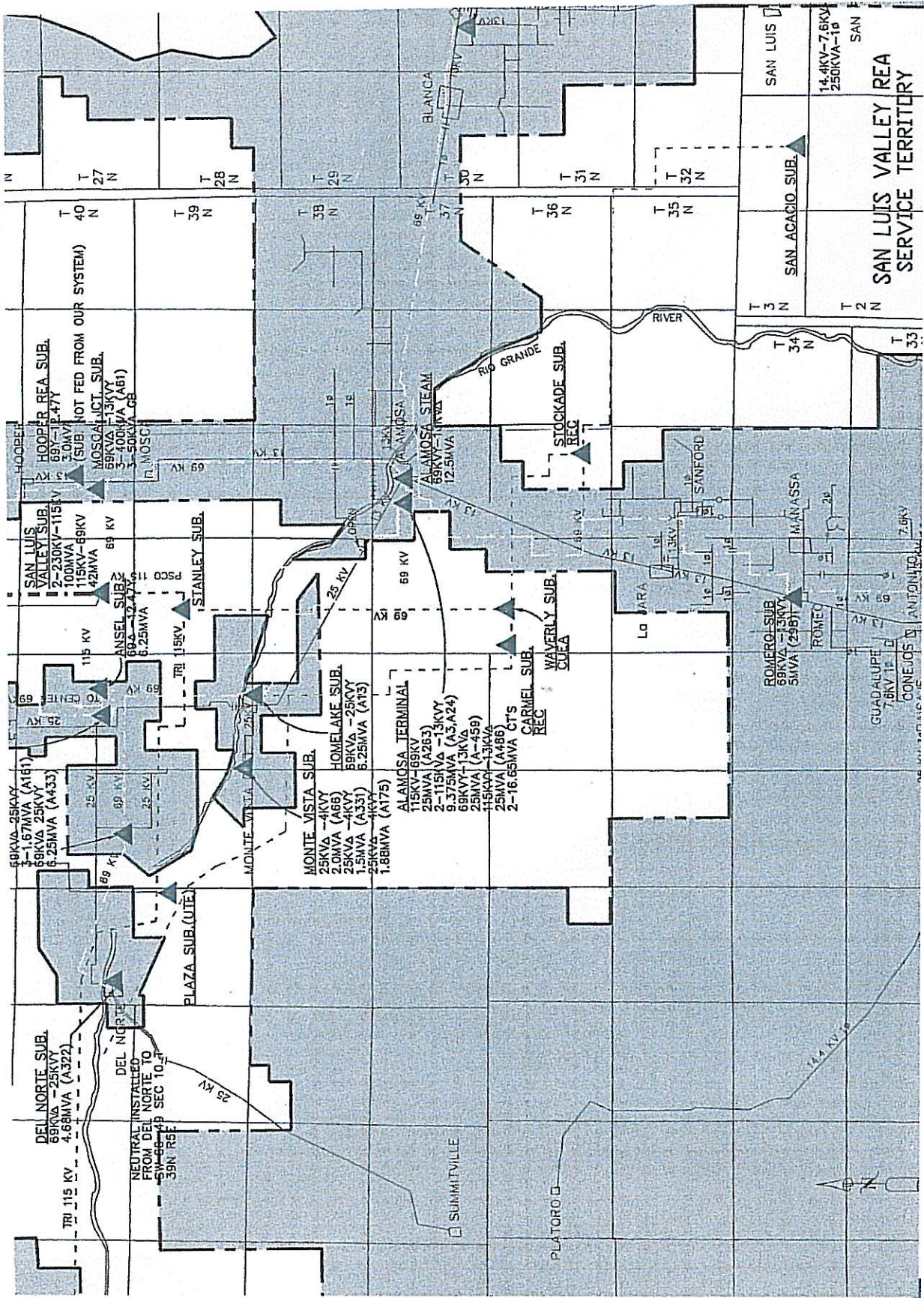


Figure 68 Electrical Distribution Network

4.11 Approach for Public Facilities and Services

The County's principle strategy for linking development and provision of facilities and services may be accomplished via the adoption of an Adequate Public Facilities regulation. The concept of an Adequate Public Facilities (APF) regulation as a growth management tool is being researched. The APF regulation would require a detailed review of new development proposals for consistency with adopted level of service standards. There are three components to this proposed strategy:

1. Establishing minimum service levels that consider differences between different densities and intensities of development and also the realistic ability of service providers to meet the service levels.
2. Strengthening the coordination of land use planning and capital improvement programming, both within the County and with municipalities and special districts.
3. Developing and refining fees that relate growth and development to expansion of public facilities.



Figure 69 Antonito Water Distribution Site

Plan Direction and Action Strategies For Public Facilities and Services

In the section below, each primary paragraph (in bold type) is a statement of plan direction. The subparagraphs are actions or strategies for implementing the principle.

ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES

PF-1 New development shall be approved only when adequate public facilities and services are available, or when necessary improvements will be made as part of the development project.

PF-1-s1. Adequate facilities and service levels shall be clearly defined in the Land Use Code and shall include standards for water, sewer, fire protection, stormwater management and transportation at a minimum. In Growth Management Areas, service level standards shall be compatible with those of the adjacent municipality, as specified in an Intergovernmental Agreement with the municipality. In other areas, standards shall be based on the density and intensity of the use.

PF-1-s2. The facilities need either to be in place or to have funding commitments made prior to completion of any project, to ensure that new residents are not left without required facilities and services. For facilities that will be the responsibility of individual property owners to develop, i.e., wells and septic systems, the Land Use Code should include provisions to ensure that the facilities can actually be provided as proposed in a development application.

PF-2 On-site alternatives for the provision of public facilities shall only be allowed where they do not potentially conflict with planned expansions of public systems.

PF-2-s1. Within designated urban areas, public sewer shall be a requirement for all types and levels of development.

PF-2-s2. Public sewer is the preferred alternative within sewer service areas. For rural development where public sewer service is not available, individual on-lot septic systems may be considered on lots of at least 1 acre, while maintaining minimum open space requirements. New community sewer systems will be considered only outside sewer service areas.

PF-2-s3. Stormwater management services in rural areas will be provided by property owners through the establishment of self help programs, such as the voluntary formation of a drainage improvement district.

PF-2-s4. Conejos County shall encourage development of fire departments and fire protection districts in rural areas, where adequate services are not currently available.

PF-2-s5. Conejos County shall consider adopting 1041 Regulations for the control of expansion of water and sewer districts,

PF-2-s6. The County may, where possible, expedite any land use review process for proposed fire stations and waive or reduce fees associated with the land use review process and building permits for constructing fire stations. During the land use review process, the County may look for opportunities to designate land for future fire stations and other appropriate assistance.

COORDINATED PLANNING

PF-3 Conejos County with its planning process shall continue as the lead agency to facilitate coordination of land use planning and sewer system capital improvement programming.

PF-3-s1. The Land Use Department shall seek increased participation in the planning process in order to facilitate coordination.

PF-4 Conejos County water service providers and fire protection districts shall coordinate domestic water service standards and fire protection standards for water supply to ensure that all County residents have adequate water supplies for domestic use and for fire protection.

PF-4-s1. Level of service standards in the Land Use Code shall be coordinated with service providers.

PF-5 Conejos County will continue to use the *Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation master Plan* and other adopted plans as a guide to acquiring and developing parks, trails and open space.

PF-5-s1. Guidelines for defining, acquiring and maintaining open lands will be contained in the Open Space Initiative and in the Mission Statement for the Conejos County Open Lands Program, to be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

PF-5-s2. All Conejos County acquisition of open space shall require a willing seller-willing buyer condition.

PF-6 In Growth Management Areas and Cooperative Planning Areas, the County shall collaborate with adjacent municipalities to develop and implement basin-wide stormwater management plans.

PF-6-s1. The County will work with its respective municipalities to develop urban-level stormwater management standards that are mutually acceptable to the jurisdictions.

PF-7 Conejos County shall encourage the School Districts that serve the County to coordinate land use planning and school facility expansions in order to allow cost effective services to be provided while minimizing negative impacts on the existing facilities of each jurisdiction.

4.12 TRANSPORTATION

The transportation system plays a key role in determining land use patterns. On the other hand, land use is an important factor in determining roadway functions and designs. Consequently, land use planning and transportation planning must be coordinated to achieve the objectives of each. The primary purpose of a transportation system is to move people and goods in a safe and efficient manner. A variety of different travel demands need to be considered to fulfill this purpose, as in the case of traffic passing through the County versus traffic from rural parts of the County with a city destination. The movement of people and goods also involves various transportation modes - vehicular, transit, pedestrian and bicycle - to provide for a high degree of mobility to all segments of the population.

The County roadway system is currently the key element of the transportation system in accommodating the majority of travel needs outside municipal limits. This is likely to remain the case into the foreseeable future as some form of private automobile remains the primary mode of transportation. Therefore, it is important to develop a transportation plan that will enable the County to identify a system to satisfy the travel needs of County residents. In the past, the County roadway network was designed to serve rural and regional needs. Arterial and local roads were constructed in conjunction with low-density development patterns. Recent growth and development in the County have created an increase in traffic demands on this roadway network that are not easily accommodated.

The County's ability to construct new roads and improve existing roads is severely limited due to lack of funding. A majority of the County's road and bridge budget is currently used for maintenance and repair of existing roads. These maintenance costs are directly attributable to a high number of road miles serving a large geographic area of somewhat low density and scattered development.



Figure 70 Colorado State Highway East of Manassa

4.12.1 Assessment of Existing System and Its Deficiencies

In an effort to understand how transportation is currently provided within the County, an inventory of the existing system's elements was conducted for Conejos County. The existing transportation system was inventoried through a variety of sources, including the County roadway database, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) bridge inventories, public meetings and citizens' comments. This inventory focused primarily on the roadway network but also included the rail transportation system and airports.

4.13 INVENTORY OF EXISTING FACILITIES

4.14 Railroads

Rail service is provided to Conejos County by the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company. Twenty-one (21) miles of track in Conejos County run on a north-to-south direction, roughly parallel to U.S. Highway 285. In-bound and out-bound service is provided every weekday, and "as required" on weekends. Freight can be loaded to unloaded at La Jara, Bountiful, Romeo and Antonito.



Figure 71 Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad

4.13.2 Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad

The Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, owned jointly by the states of Colorado and New Mexico, consists of 64 miles of the former Denver & Rio Grande narrow gauge mainline along with one of the world's most extensive collection of narrow gauge steam locomotives (10) and railway cars (192). The C&TSRR is a living museum of late nineteenth century railroading, with trips offered daily from May to October from the railroad's Antonito, Colorado and Chama, New Mexico depots. The structures, sites and equipment on the CTSRR are on the National Register of Historic Places.

4.14 Airports

There are no commercial airfields in Conejos County. The County does have one (1) private airfield that allows public access. The Lana Airport southeast of La Jara consists of a five thousand one-hundred (5,100) foot partially paved runway, but no lighting is available.

CUMBRES AND TOLTEC SCENIC RAILROAD

COLORADO - NEW MEXICO

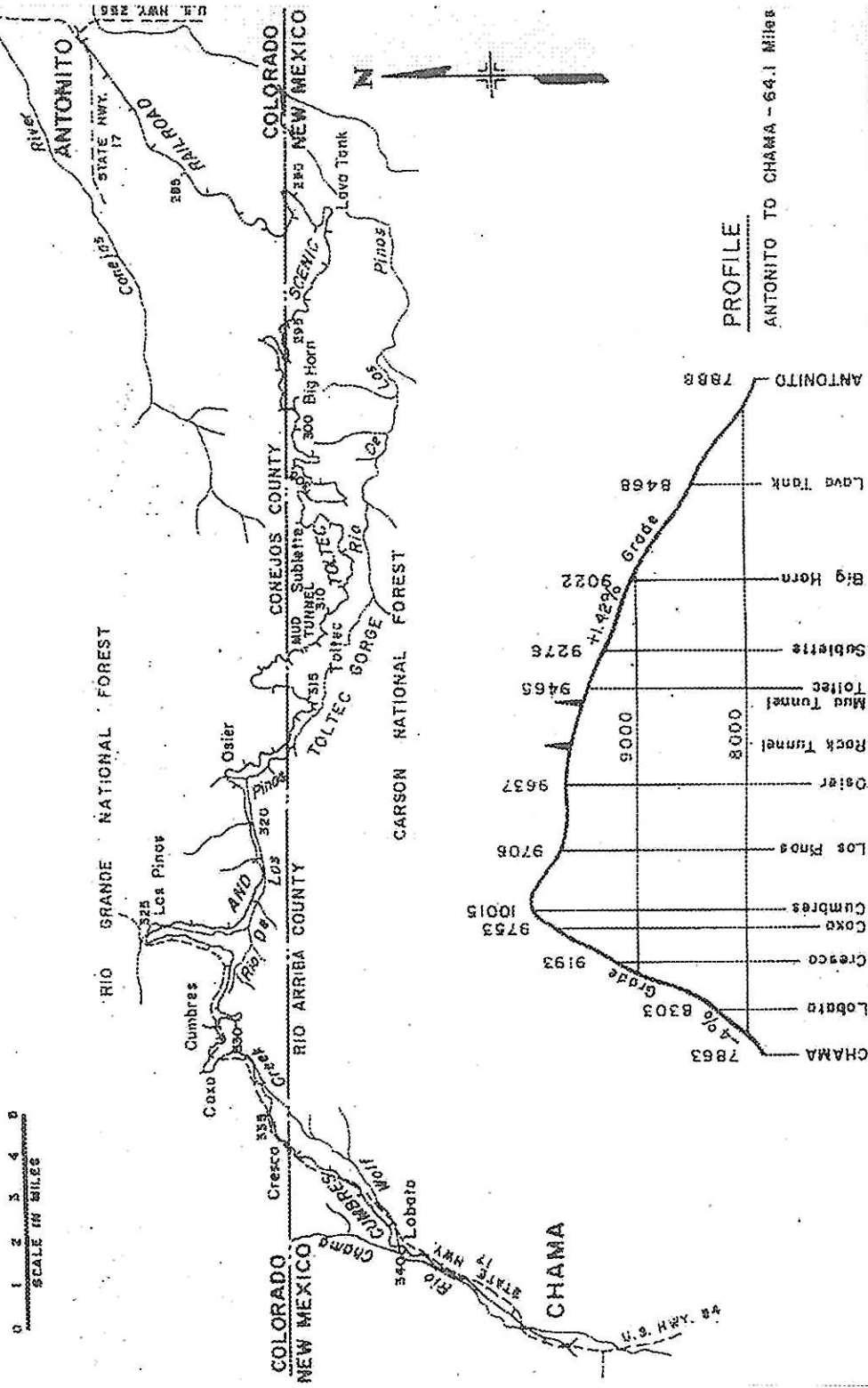


Figure 72 Cumbres-Toltec Railroad Route

4.15 Existing County Roadway Network

Along with the state highway system which serves as a backbone within Conejos County, the County roadway system provides the dominant transportation network in the region. A roadway network is typically comprised of a hierarchy of road types. *In* general, roads serve two functions: access and mobility. The degree to which a road serves these functions defines the *functional classification* of the road. Local roads and collector roads principally provide access to businesses, residential developments, schools, etc. Arterial roads primarily provide mobility by connecting major destinations.

Identifying the functional classification of existing and proposed roads is important for day-to-day planning and engineering activities in at least two ways: (1) it defines the right-of-way that needs to be acquired or reserved for future roadway improvements and (2) it determines the spacing of access points onto the roadway. The functional classification, in combination with design standards for each of the roadway classes, also determines the improvements that are necessary to existing roads and how new roads should be designed and constructed. Table 6 summarizes the mileage of existing County roads.

Minor Arterials: Arterial streets provide for direct traffic movement from one central area to another. They frequently form boundaries for developments and provide access to abutting developments.

Major/Minor Collectors: Collector streets are the main interior streets within and between the development areas. Their main functions are to collect and distribute traffic from the local streets. Generally, collector streets do not provide access to adjacent developments. Collector street traffic typically has an origin or destination nearby.

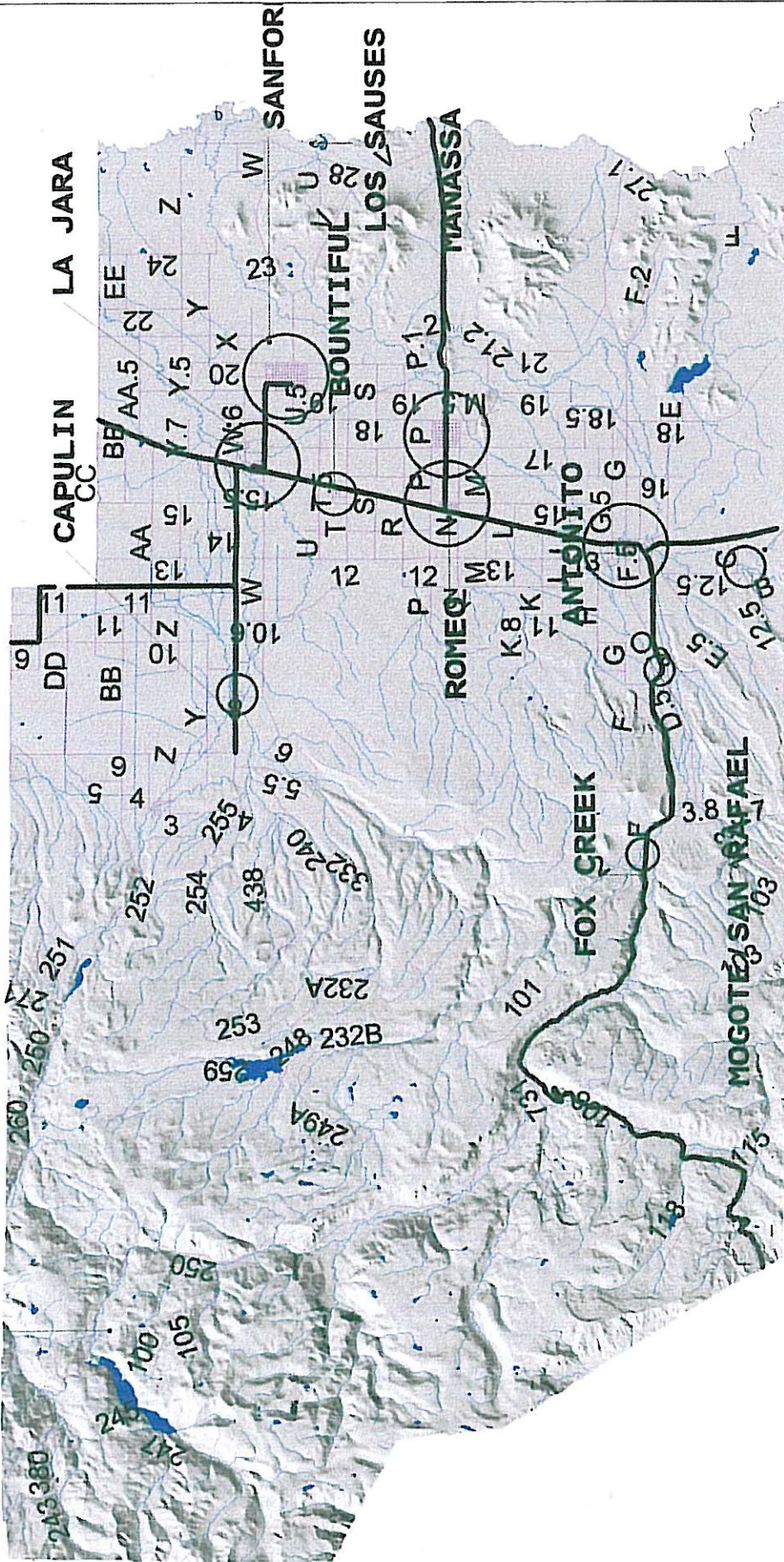
Local Roads: The primary function of a local road is to provide access to adjacent land uses in the area. Local roads typically have lower travel speeds and through traffic is highly discouraged. However, this is not necessarily the case in some rural areas of the County where local roads

Table 6 Roadway Miles By Classification

Functional Classification (Existing)	Total County Roads (Miles)	Percentage of total County Miles
Minor Arterial	316.46	
Major Collector		
Local Road	286.71	
Total		

Source: Conejos County Road and Bridge





SAN ANTONIO/ORTIZ



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ROADWAY SYSTEM

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4.16 County Roadway Deficiencies

Vehicular travel, transit systems and the majority of bicycle travel in this area rely heavily on a well maintained and complete roadway system and network. Overall the County roadway system in Conejos County is in fair condition. Deficiencies are noted in congestion (traffic volume exceeding capacity), structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges, unpaved roadways where traffic exceeds County average daily trip (ADT) standards, needed road improvements based on projected roadway needs, re-alignment and roadway widening and locations with high accident/hazard levels. This list of deficiencies does not include improvements needed on existing roads where travel lanes and shoulders need widening, as new design standards for each road functional classification have not yet been developed

4.16.1 Existing Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes indicate the relative importance of a roadway in an area. When compared to roadway capacity estimates, traffic volumes also reveal, in a general way, how a road is functioning (level of service) and if improvements are necessary to increase capacity.

The most commonly used measurement of traffic volume is Average Daily Traffic (ADT). ADT is defined as the total number of vehicles passing a certain point in both directions in a 24-hour period. Existing traffic volume data were compiled from two main sources, Conejos County Road & Bridge and Conejos County Land Use Office. The data provided were collected over the last five years.

4.16.2 Bridge Structures

Bridges are an important element of the roadway system. Deterioration of bridges is becoming a serious problem throughout Conejos County. Bridges are inspected and evaluated by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) on a regular basis. Through this inspection program, structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges are defined as follows:

Structurally Deficient: Those bridges in advanced stages of deterioration or in marginal structural condition but still functioning at a minimal level. This category also includes bridges that do not have desired load-carrying capacities.

Functionally Obsolete: Those bridges that have acceptable load carrying capacity but that impose unacceptable physical restrictions such as narrow width, restricted vertical clearance, limited sight distances, speed-reducing curves or insufficient waterway capacity.

Bridges are routinely inspected and rated based on a sufficiency rating from zero to 100. Any bridge rated below 80 is a potential candidate for rehabilitation or replacement. Currently, 40 bridges within Conejos County are included in CDOT's bridge inspection program, which includes all structures that are 20 feet wide or more. CDOT has identified 6 bridges eligible for rehabilitation or replacement projects.

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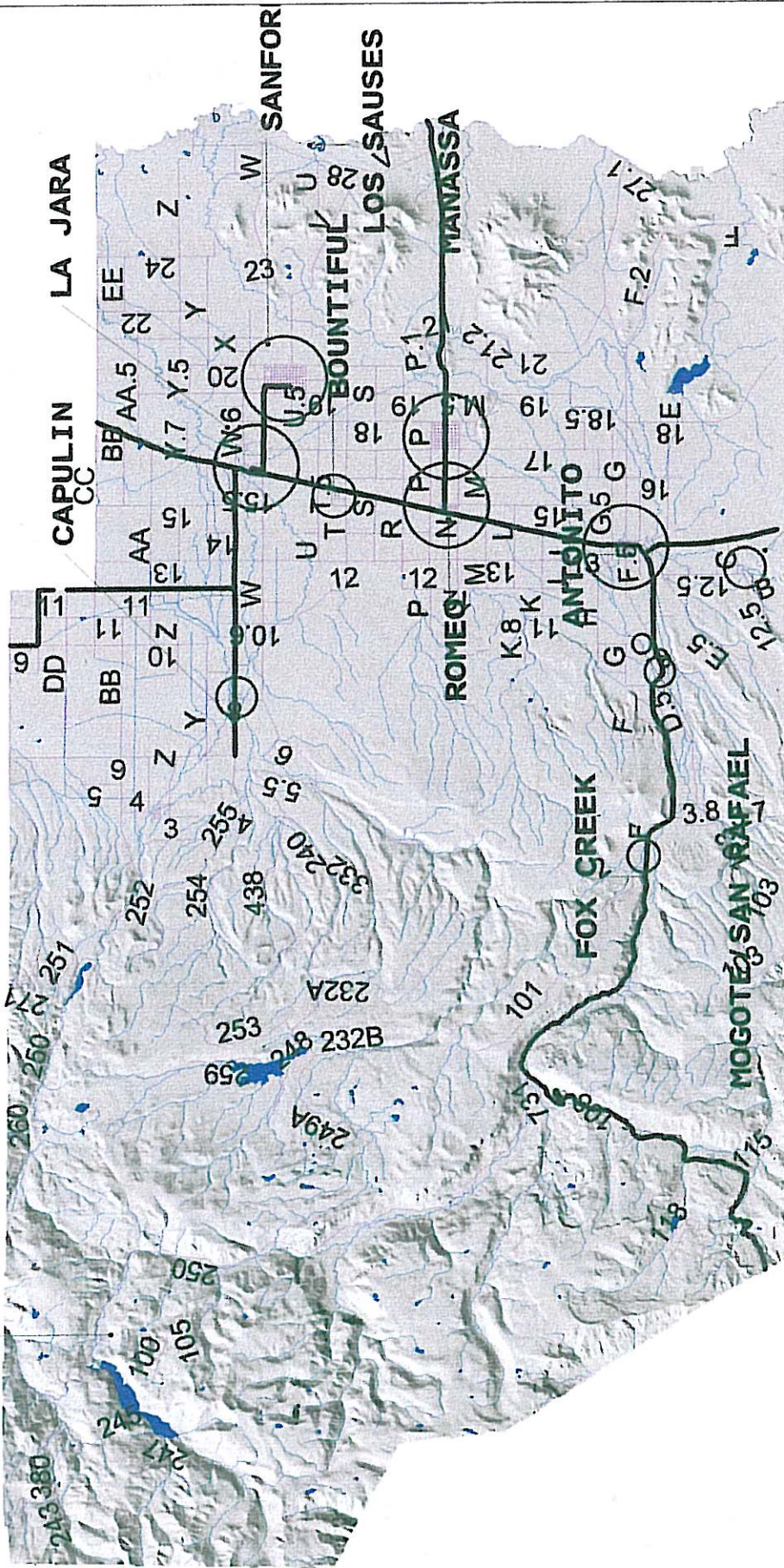
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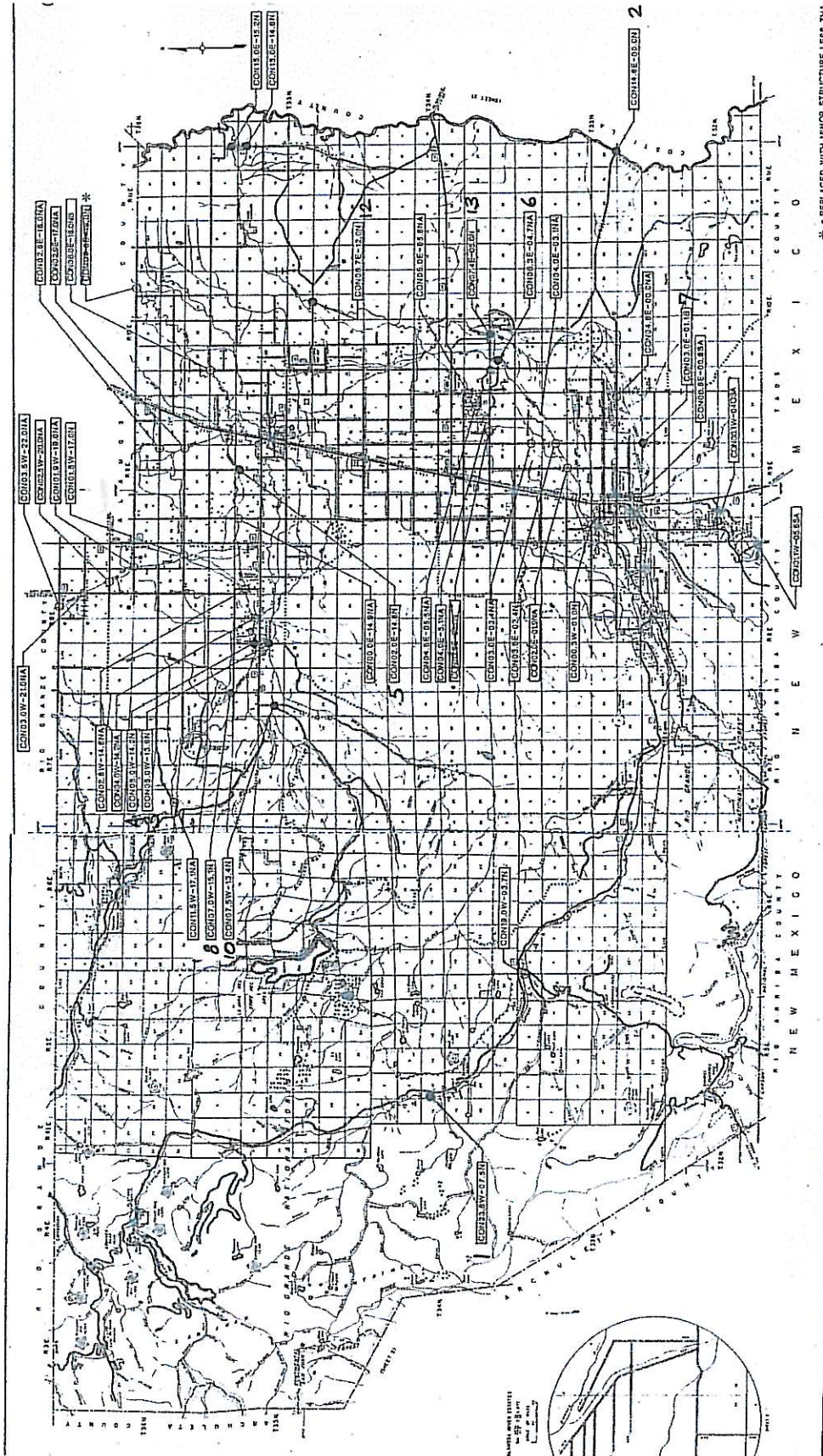
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ROADWAY SYSTEM

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MAP 17 CONEJOS COUNTY BRIDGES

* - REPLACED WITH MINOR STRUCTURE LESS THAN



Figure 73 Costilla Crossing Bridge, AKA Lobatos Bridge

4.16.3 Bridge Repair

There are a number of bridges in Conejos County which are structurally unsound, or unsafe from a design standpoint. The location of these bridges are shown on Map 17. To meet the goal of supplying adequate transportation to the residents of Conejos County, bridges should be reinforced or rebuilt.

Another problem with many of Conejos County's bridges is inadequate culverts. Many of the older bridges only have sixteen (16) foot culverts which frequently do not permit good stream flow. To remedy this problem, it is recommended that Conejos County replace the sixteen (16) foot culverts with twenty-four (24) foot culverts as finances permit.

4.17 Unpaved Roadways

The inventory indicates that about 533 miles of roadways in the County are currently unpaved. State air pollution regulations require owners and operators of unpaved roads with vehicle traffic exceeding 200 vehicles per day to use all available, practical, reasonable methods to minimize particulate emissions. Paving is the most effective available control method. Using these criteria, approximately 70 miles of the existing roadway system have been identified as requiring paving for all of Conejos County.

4.17.1 Paved Roadways

Roadway deficiencies were identified based on projected roadway needs, re-alignment and roadway widening. Approximately 70 miles of roadway in the County were considered for improvements based on these needs.

4.17.2 Safety And Intersection Deficiencies

A review of reported accidents over the last four years and calculated accident rates within the County identified numerous high accident locations. Perceived high accident/hazard locations were also identified by the Conejos County, and the general public. This process identified 2 projects.

1. The Costilla Crossing Bridge also known as the Lobatos Bridge located on County Road G spanning over the Rio Grande.
2. The stretch of U.S. Highway 285 from La Jara one mile north.

4.17.3 Road Improvements

The responsibility for road construction and maintenance is divided between the State Division of Highways and Conejos County.

Major construction projects on State Highways must be included in the Division of Highways' Transportation Plan. Maintenance on State Highways is provided by the local office of the Division of Highways.

Road construction and maintenance at the County level is divided among the three (3) County Commissioner Districts. Each District maintains a crew of some 12-15 employees in the summer, and six-eight employees in the winter. The road maintenance equipment possessed by each district is shown in Table 7.

DISTRICT	GRADERS	LOADERS	DUMP TRUCKS	BULLDOZERS
District 1	4	1	3	0
District 2	4	1	4	0
District 3	5	1	4	0

TABLE 7 Road Maintenance Equipment

4.18 Road Paving Needs

In the future, the County envisions the need for paving certain roads. While the following is a list of these “paving” needs, some words of caution are warranted. In recent years, the cost of paving materials has become outrageously expensive due to the high price of oil. Consequently, it will become more and more difficult for the County to engage in road construction and repaving. Instead, the focus in the coming years will be “filling and patching. Nevertheless, the County feels that it is important to identify its road paving needs so that future policy makers will have some guidance if funds do become available. The future of road construction and maintenance in Conejos County also hinges on how the Highway Users Fund is allocated in the future. Currently, the revenues from taxes on motor vehicle fuel and automotive parts is allocated according to the following ratio:

60% - State

20% - Cities

20% - Counties

The exact amount that each County receives is dependent upon the number of motor vehicle registrations.

Here are the road paving needs for Conejos County.

1. Paving of approximately three (3) miles of Garcia Lane to the Bountiful Road.
2. Paving of three (3) mile long section of the first road east of S.H. 371 north to the County Line.
3. Paving of “Gunbarrel” Road north of the County line.
4. Paving of approximately a four (4) mile section of “River Road” to Las Sauses.
5. Paving of approximately five (5) miles of County road from U.S. Highway 285 west of Carmel road.
6. Paving of three (3) miles of County Road west from the Guadalupe School to slightly past San Rafael.
7. Canon Road “G.5”
8. San Antonio Road
9. County Road “C”

4.19 Transit System

The existing transit system serving County residents includes public and specialized providers. Inter-city bus service (TNM&O and Greyhound) is available in Conejos County. Conejos County participated in the *San Luis Valley 2020 Regional Transportation Plan* in 1998-99, which identifies improvements to transit services in the San Luis Valley and Conejos County to help provide effective transit services in the region. The plan was developed through the San Luis Valley Regional Planning Commission. The Regional Transportation Plan identifies how transit services can be improved.

In rural Conejos County, the mission is *"To work together to provide public and specialized transit services which contribute to a balanced multi-modal transportation system in the county, which foster the economical social and environmental well-being of the area, and which are financially feasible."*

Rail System

The rail transportation system in Conejos County serves the primary purpose of moving freight. Although passenger rail service in Conejos County is not available at this time, the concept of commuter rail to serve this area should be explored

Bicycle Facilities

There are currently no bicycle facilities in Conejos County. The San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Plan has identified existing and proposed trails and bike paths within Conejos County.

Future Transportation Plan

Conejos County is in the process of developing a Transportation Plan based on existing conditions, projected land uses and expected growth and development in the region, and the principles and strategies of this Master Plan. The Transportation Plan will contain several parts, including: a revised functional classification for the County roadway system, and a bikeway plan that addresses the needs of recreational users.

When the Transportation Plan is complete, it will be adopted as an element of the Conejos County Master Plan. Additionally, the County will develop design standards for roads and bike-ways, which will be incorporated into the Land Use Code, and a methodology for developing the capital improvement program for transportation facilities.

Potential Mobility Corridors

The concept of a mobility corridor is to provide/accommodate future transportation technologies including light rail or other passenger rail systems. It is anticipated that mobility corridors will be a key in the future transportation system serving development centers identified by the land use plan.

The purpose of identifying potential mobility corridors is to reserve right-of-way in the development of land use planning for future roadway extensions and expansions to accommodate this concept. Therefore, as part of the future roadway network, it is essential that various mobility corridors be identified for future transportation needs. The following roadways have been identified by the PLUS Steering Committee and the Technical Advisory Group as potential mobility corridors: Colorado State Highway 285

4.19.1 Other Transportation Needs

The high price of gasoline will make it increasingly difficult for the low-income and elderly residents of Conejos County to travel by conventional means. Participation by the County in a public bus system could alleviate this problem.

The County has no Countywide airport. At the present time, it does not appear that there is sufficient demand for such a facility, but this could change in the future.



Figure 74 Railroad Tracks at La Jara

Plan Direction and Action Strategies for Transportation

In the section below, each primary paragraph (in bold type) is a statement of principle. The subparagraphs are strategies for implementing the principle.

TR-1 The Conejos County transportation planning process shall complement the development patterns and principles of the Master Plan.

TR-1-s1 The Functional Road Classification Map shall be used as the official future roadway plan for the County.

TR-1-s2 The Land Use Code shall establish roadway standards that enhance capacity and safety, improve air quality and aesthetics and implement the development patterns of the Land Use Framework Map.

TR-1-s3 County road projects shall be designed and constructed in a manner that minimizes the impact on water quality and sensitive environmental areas and considers aesthetics.

TR-2 New development shall occur only where existing transportation facilities are adequate or where necessary improvements will be made as part of the development project.

TR-2-s1 Adequate facilities and service levels for transportation shall be clearly defined in the Land Use Code. In Growth Management Areas, service level standards shall reflect those of the adjacent municipality. In other areas, standards shall be based on the density and intensity of the use.

TR-2-s2 The Land Use Code shall establish traffic impact requirements to identify the need for improvements created by future development in order to meet adopted level of service standards.

TR-3 New development shall pay its equitable share for necessary improvements to the County transportation system.

TR-3-s1 The Land Use Code shall require construction of improvements identified through a traffic impact study.

TR-3-s2 The Land Use Code shall include a traffic improvement fee to support other future improvements to the County transportation system made necessary by the impact of the development, including cumulative impacts.

TR-3-s3 The Land Use Code shall establish a mechanism to allow a party who initially funds an improvement to be reimbursed by future developments that also impact that facility.

TR-4 Conejos County shall encourage the development and use of alternative modes of transportation.

TR-4-s1 Conejos County will continue to participate in cooperative efforts with cities and counties in the region to develop a preferred transit system within Growth Management Areas and between cities and towns, consistent with the adopted San Luis valley 2020 Regional Development Plan.

TR-4-s2 Conejos County shall establish a bicycle plan that recognizes the need to serve recreational users and that coordinates with the plans of adjoining cities and counties.

TR-5 Conejos County shall establish a **Capital Improvement Program for County transportation facilities.**

TR-5-s1 The Capital Improvement Program shall identify a methodology for prioritizing projects which emphasizes the importance of maintaining the existing roadway system.

TR-5-s2 The Capital Improvement Plan for roadway maintenance and improvement shall consider consistency with the Master Plan as an element of project prioritization.

TR-5-s3 The Capital Improvement Program shall identify methods to share costs with adjacent cities and other governmental entities.

TR-5-s4 The Capital Improvement Program shall consider funding for alternative transportation mode projects including facilities for bicycles and transit



SECTION 5 Growth Management

The heart of the Conejos County Master Plan is a growth management process designed to ensure that the County operates within its resources, protects the environment and enhances the lives of its residents. For this system to be successful, it will require close cooperation with the cities, towns, special districts and State and Federal agencies that are involved in land use and environmental protection within the County. This final chapter in conjunction with the Implementation Strategies from Section 2, Page 62, provides an overview of the system and the roles and responsibilities that the County and others will assume for implementing it.

The growth management process established in this Plan will shape urban and rural development patterns in the unincorporated areas of the County and guide what happens in the foothills, mountains and agricultural areas, as well as in the community separator areas. More specifically, the growth management strategy in this Plan is intended to reflect five factors that will guide decision-making:

- Need to conserve and enhance sensitive biological resources, protect viable agricultural lands and conserve rural lands.
- Need to protect public investment in infrastructure.
- Need to balance land use with availability of services and provide alternatives to auto-dependent uses.
- Need to work in partnership with municipalities and special districts.
- Need to set priorities to provide clear direction for both public and private land use investments.



Figure 75 Main Street at La Jara

5.1 Growth Management System

The Conejos County growth management approach builds on, and refines, the themes that have been identified to guide the County in its planning and implementation efforts. This approach has four key dimensions.

5.1.1 Consistency: The implementation documents, particularly the Land Use Code that will include zoning and subdivision regulations, and incentive programs, will be consistent with Master Plan principles and policies.

5.1.2 Concurrency: Adequate public facilities and services are provided concurrent with new development and they must either be in place, or adequate funding mechanisms established, prior to completion of any project, so new residents are not left without required facilities and services. Level of service standards will be established for urban areas and rural areas consistent with the County's capital improvement program and fees collected to offset the costs of growth.

5.1.3 Cooperation: An intergovernmental growth management approach is more effective than having individual jurisdictions act independently on growth management policies. The County will continue to work with cities and towns to plan for future urban areas adjacent to communities and help the municipalities implement community separators. The County will also continue to coordinate with the State and Federal land management agencies that have planning and management responsibilities in the County.

5.1.4 Compatibility: New development needs to be compatible with existing uses and with the environment. The idea is to be a good neighbor and a good steward of the land. Compatibility will be enhanced through neighborhood meetings, buffering requirements and environmental review.

These four key dimensions are addressed throughout the Master Plan and in the Land Use Code.

The growth management system includes strong commitments to environmental resource protection and provision of adequate public facilities. The system uses level of service standards and performance standards to protect resources, while at the same time offering creative options for site planning. The performance-oriented approach allows more flexibility than traditional zoning and it will allow development to reflect the rural character of disparate parts of the county.

This growth management system affects the timing, location and quality of new development with the overall objective of enhancing livability within the County for existing and future residents. Because this will be a major new step, it will be important to monitor progress of Plan implementation and the effects of these measures on existing resources. The County will identify those resources and indicators to be used to monitor the impacts of new development and identify where potential problems may be occurring so remedial measures or mitigation can be put in place to avoid adverse effects.

5.2 Adequate Public Facilities and Capital Expansion Fees

One of the major growth management challenges in Conejos County is to ensure that development does not cause a deterioration in the level of service provided to existing residents. The County's proposed growth management system relies on a combination of regulatory and financial mechanisms - adequate public facility regulations, capital expansion fees and capital improvements planning - to ensure that facilities are in place to serve new development as it occurs.

The County's proposed growth management approach emphasizes a regional, multi-jurisdictional approach to ensuring adequate public facilities. A regional approach is necessary because the systems of facilities and services required to serve new development cross jurisdictional boundaries. On the one hand, many of the public facilities that serve development in unincorporated areas, including water, wastewater and fire protection, are provided by municipalities or special districts. On the other hand, many of the facilities and services provided by the County, including detention facilities, open space and County roads that function as regional transportation corridors, benefit residents of both incorporated and unincorporated areas.

Recognizing the need for multi-jurisdictional solutions, the County's growth management system includes adequate public facility standards that are coordinated with municipal and special district service providers and regional capital expansion fees that may be assessed on new development in unincorporated areas, where appropriate. Implementing such a regional approach will require close cooperation between the County, municipalities and special districts.

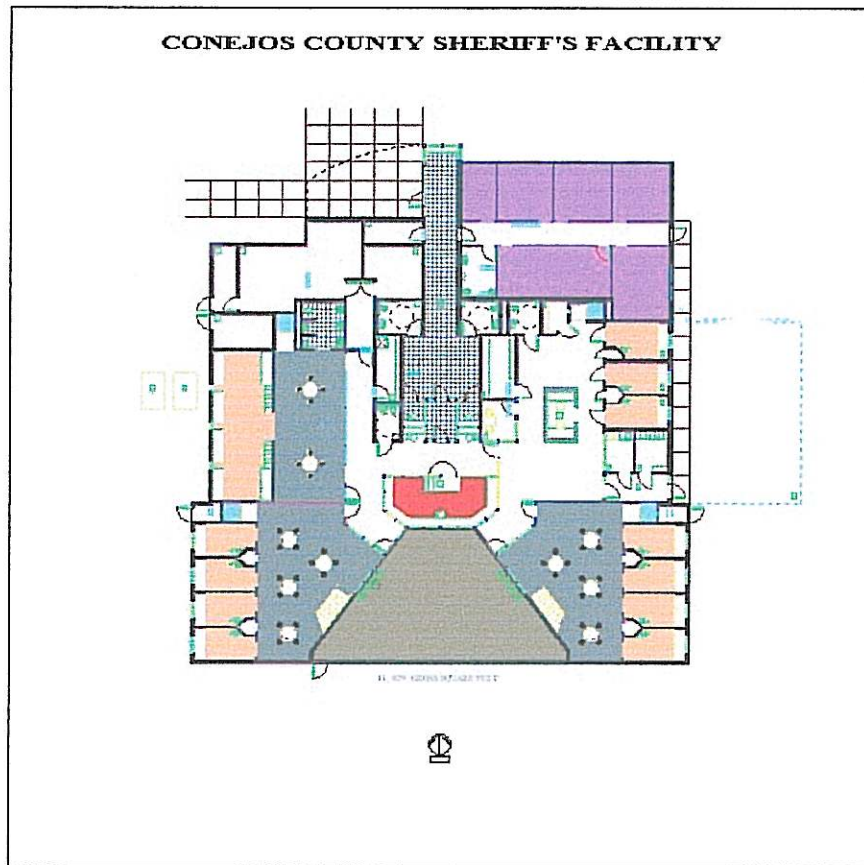


Figure 76 Proposed Conejos County Detention Facility

5.3 Adequate Public Facilities

A key feature of the growth management system is the requirement that adequate public facilities be available in order for new development to occur. The adequate public facilities (APF) regulations will require detailed review of development applications in relation to adopted level of service standards for specific public facilities. APF requirements are a means of preventing premature development in remote areas where major system facilities are inadequate or of controlling the pace of development in areas where facilities are congested. If existing public facilities are not adequate to accommodate the development, the developer will have several options: wait for facilities to be improved, finance the needed improvements or select a different site. For certain facilities, reducing density or intensity might also be an option - but not within Urban Growth Areas where both urban densities and urban facilities are required.

Adequate Public Facility (APF) regulations are most defensible in the context of a long-range plan for providing major public facilities. They are not designed to be a means of preventing growth or of requiring developers to construct major system facilities having community-wide benefit. In the event that a developer offers to construct or contribute a portion of the cost of such a facility in order to have it in place earlier than would be possible with existing funding sources, reimbursement agreements, pro rata agreements or other mechanisms will be encouraged to ensure that the developer is not forced to contribute a disproportionate share of the cost.

The County's approach to ensuring adequate public facilities is based on quantifiable standards that can be measured, mapped and monitored. In many cases, these standards are different for urban and rural areas, in recognition of the different levels of service that are appropriate in very different environments. For example, the traffic threshold triggering the need for dust mitigation or paving of gravel roads is more stringent in urban areas due to the higher population densities that characterize urban areas.

In some cases, it is appropriate to establish different standards within urban or rural areas. For example, water storage requirements for fire fighting purposes are higher in wildfire hazard areas. Similarly, different standards may be appropriate when the affected facility is an existing facility that is difficult to upgrade existing road row right-of-a brand new more difficult (e.g., an with narrow) than facility.



Figure 77 Irrigation Well East of Antonito

5.4 Capital Expansion Fees

The County's proposed growth management system is grounded on the principle that new development should pay its fair share of the cost of the capital facilities needed to keep up with growth. Capital expansion fees, which are one-time charges assessed on new development, are designed to address this need. Colorado State Statutes, 29-20-104.5, specifically authorize statutory counties such as Conejos County to collect certain narrowly defined capital expansion fees, such as fees-in-lieu of school and park land dedication.

In order to implement its principle of growth paying its own way, the County needs to implement the capital expansion fees which are specifically authorized, proceed cautiously on an expanded capital expansion fee program and work with other jurisdictions to clarify the role of capital expansion fees in growth management systems, through the legislative and judicial processes.

Capital expansion fees must be clearly tied to the impacts of development on public facilities, and must be used to provide or improve facilities that benefit the development in question. In order to meet these legal requirements, the County must perform a careful analysis of existing conditions and the public facility needs which are attributable to new development. The County may begin with a study of the County road system, to determine the feasibility of using capital expansion fees to finance improvements made necessary by growth and development. The County will also review other fees, dedications and fees-in-lieu to ensure that the methodologies for calculating land and fee requirements are consistent with current case law and are fair.

Wherever possible, the County will seek to establish partnerships with other entities providing similar public services, i.e. transportation, to share capital expansion fee revenues and coordinate improvement projects.

While capital expansion fees can be used to finance some growth-related improvements, the County also has a number of existing capital needs, such as obsolete bridges, that cannot be attributed to future growth. Consequently, the County's capital needs will be addressed through a long-range capital improvements plan that is funded with a variety of revenue sources in addition to fees. This two-pronged financing approach will result in an equitable sharing of the capi-

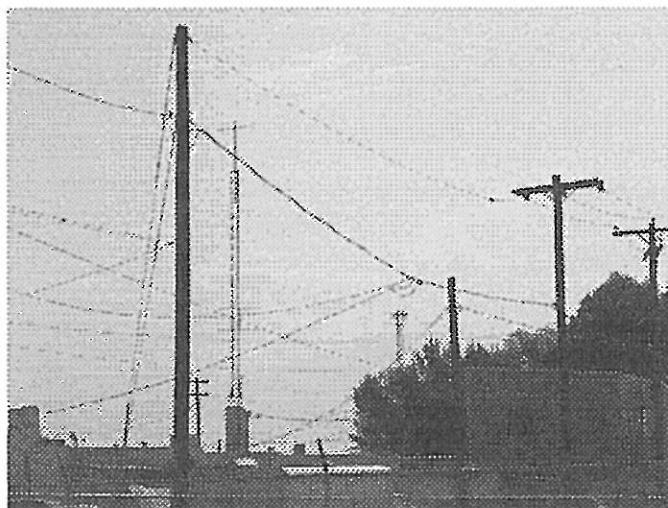


Figure 78 Utility Lines at La Jara

5.4.1 Intergovernmental Agreements, Growth Management Areas and Cooperative Planning

Comprehensive planning in Conejos County implies coordination with a number of entities and jurisdictions that are responsible for planning and growth management within their areas. The County's system for coordinated planning and growth management needs to build on: Intergovernmental Agreements, Growth Management Areas, and Cooperative Planning Efforts.

5.4.2 Three Mile Area Plan, Intergovernmental Agreements and Growth Management Areas

The Conejos County Master Plan uses the term "Growth Management Area" (GMA) to refer to Urban Growth Areas or areas adjacent to existing municipalities. In addition, the Master Plan recommends the establishment of a three mile area or zone extending from the current city limits. This three mile zone provides authority for the city to plan outside of its territorial limits as specified by Colorado Statutes, including provisions of the annexation and subdivision laws. C.R. S. 31-12-105 (e) states that no annexation may take place that would have the effect of extending a municipal boundary more than three miles in any direction in a single year. It also states that:

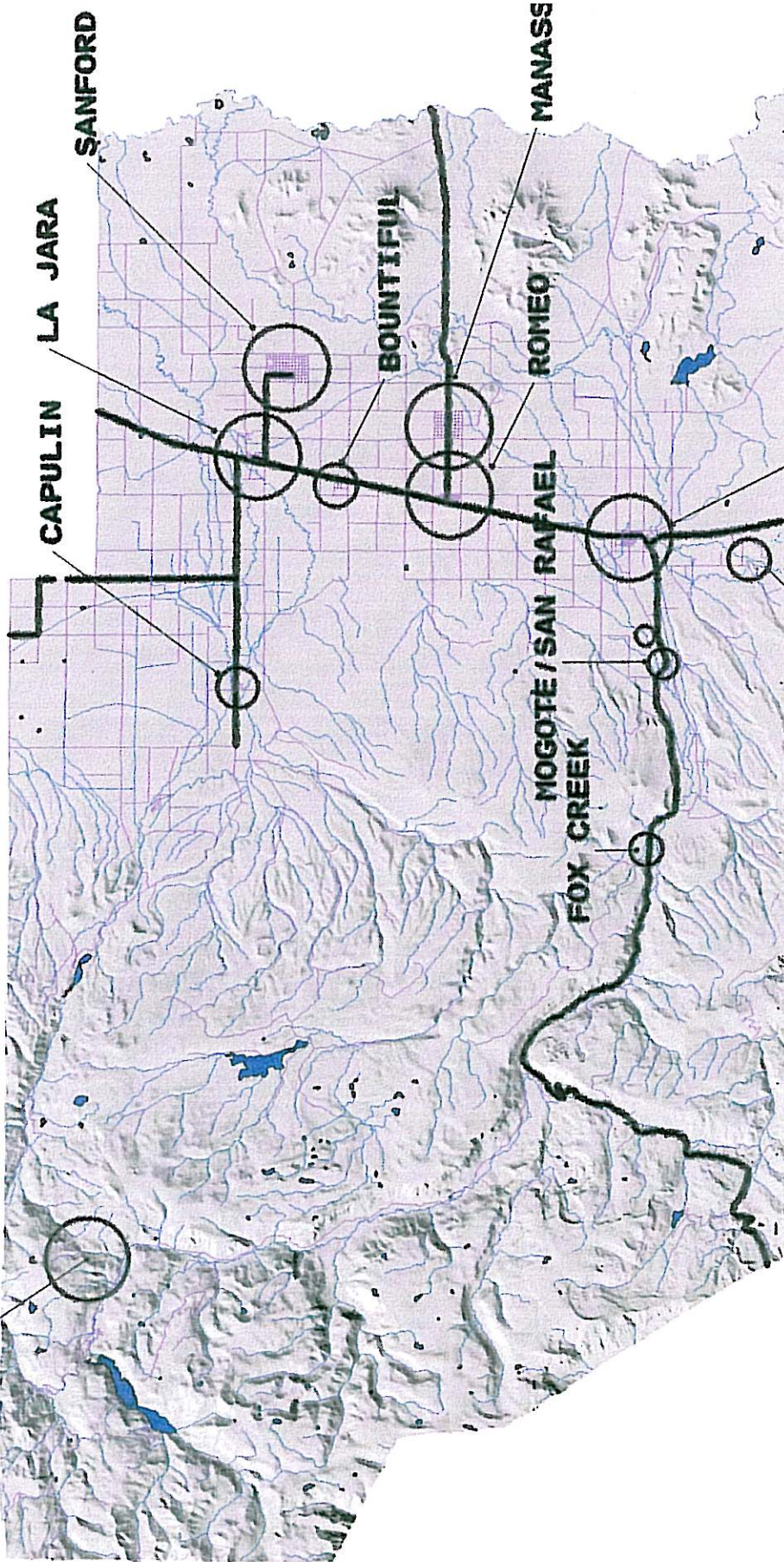
"Prior to completion of any annexation within the three mile area, the municipality shall have in place a plan for that area, which generally describes the proposed location, character and extent of streets, subways, bridges, waterways, waterfronts, parkways, playgrounds, squares, parks, aviation fields, other public ways, grounds, open spaces, public utilities and terminals for water, light, sanitation, transportation, and power to be provided by the municipality and the proposed land uses for the area. Such plan shall be updated at least once annually."

5.4.3 Growth Management Area (GMA) boundaries should be based on a plan for providing urban-level services to the area within a 20-year time frame. The area does not necessarily need to be served exclusively by the municipality for all services, but the designated area should be serviceable by an existing urban service provider. For example, the GMA may include areas currently served by a water or sanitation district, with which the municipality has established a service area agreement. The municipality should, however, intend to annex the Growth Management Area within the 20-year time frame, and to provide the GMA with a full range of urban services in the future.

Within Growth Management Areas, the County would agree to approve only urban-level development according to the city's adopted plan, and the cities would agree to annex all properties when they become eligible. Policies and regulations in the Intergovernmental Agreements should specify required facilities, design standards and phasing criteria for new development. The County would agree that urban development will not be approved outside the GMAs except in specifically named areas and according to the adopted County Plan.

The intent of the County is to reinforce Growth Management Areas as the only location of future urban-level development in the County. The County will work with each of the cities and towns in Conejos County to reach mutually-beneficial Intergovernmental Agreements which address the principles of the Master Plan and the growth management concerns of each jurisdiction.

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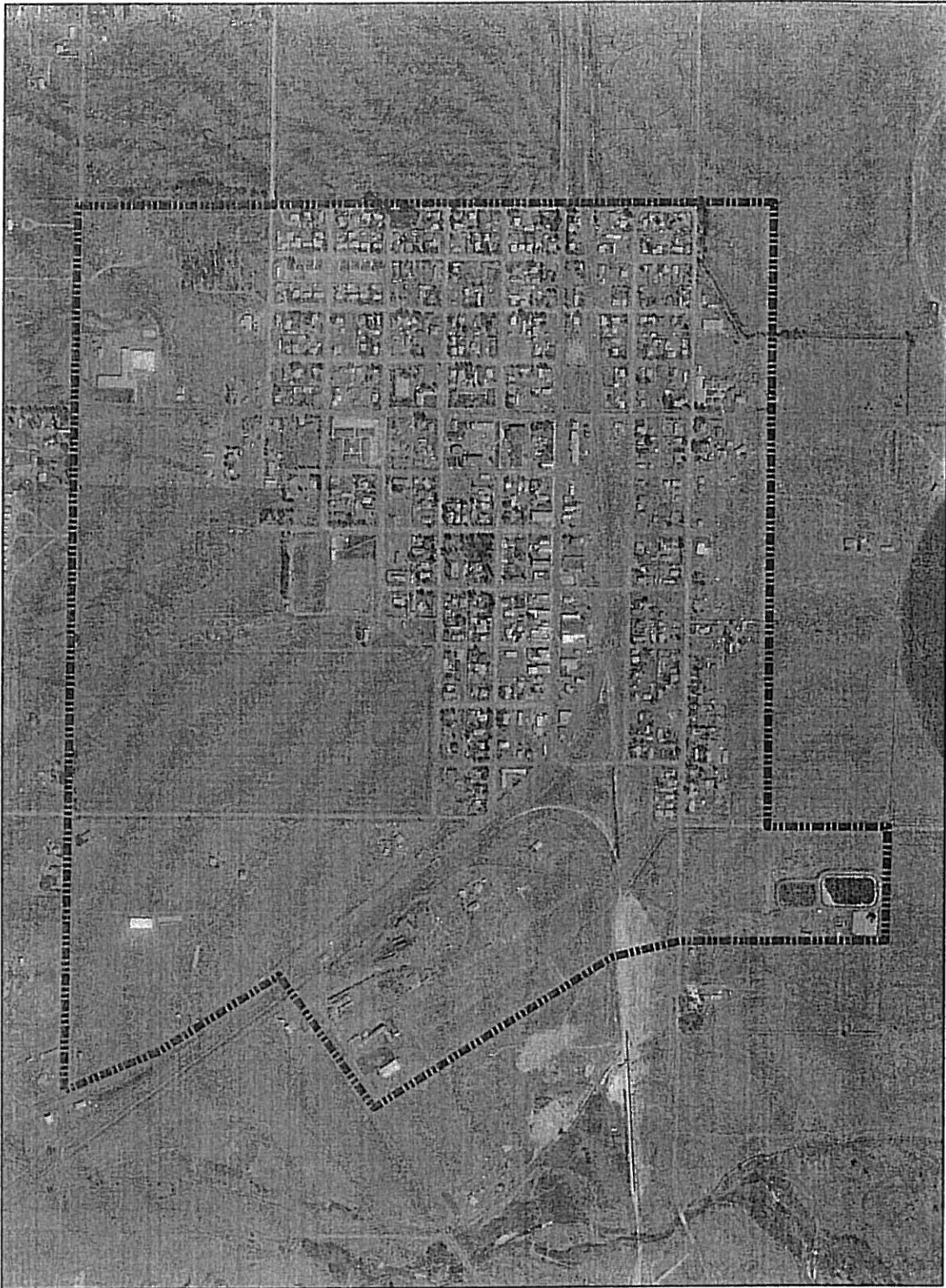
PLANNING AREAS

Disclaimer

This MAP is for general planning purposes only, and is subject to updates and changes. Any user should check with the Conejos County Land Use Office prior to use to be sure that the information shown is current. Because of the scale of this map, any user should not rely on it for the exact definition of any boundary or division line shown on this map.

Map 18 PLANNING AREAS

ANTONITO PROPOSED 3 MILE AREA PLAN



Disclaimer

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Map 19 Antonito Three Mile Area Plan

The various municipalities in Conejos County have differing definitions of “urban development” and “urban services.” To provide a policy basis for working with municipalities to define and establish GMA boundaries, the County will define these terms to mean an average density of at least 2 housing units per acre and existing or planned availability of public water and public sewer.

The County will also work with jurisdictions on approaches for areas which are not planned for urban development and/or but where development may have an impact on present and future city growth patterns. These areas are termed

5.5.1 Cooperative Planning Areas (CPAs). The CPA is a cooperative strategic planning area for the residents and landowners, the municipality, and the County. It may include areas that could eventually be annexed and provided urban services based on topography or other service provision factors. It may also include areas that because of existing development patterns, service-delivery constraints or other factors, are not planned for urban development or services (as defined above).

Municipalities such as Romeo and Manassa that could someday “grow together” could jointly identify their respective cooperative planning areas so they do not overlap, and therefore avoid having future disputed annexation areas. This arrangement could be used to avoid future “annexation wars,” and to plan for community buffers or separators.

5.5.2 Urban and Rural Form

The preceding sections address the approaches Conejos County will use to guide the timing and the location of new development. The remaining elements of a growth management system concern the *quality* of development; i.e., protecting environmental resources, rural character, agriculture and economic viability.

Three new growth management tools addressing resource protection through incentives and performance standards are proposed to be included in the Land Use Code:

- Clustered Development
- Agricultural Districts

In addition, several initiatives are underway to develop strategies and programs concerning agricultural protection, economic development and affordable housing. All these issues impact quality of life for the citizens of Conejos County. The relation of these initiatives to growth management is reported below.

5.5.3 Clustered Development

A new rural development pattern of clustered development is a major tool for protection of environmental resources and rural character. Clustered development is a type of development design that locates building lots on specific portions of the site to allow the remainder of the site to be used for agriculture, private open space, natural resource protection and similar open, undeveloped uses. Resource mapping will occur early in the design process so the undeveloped areas can be used to protect the most critical parts of the development site.

5.5.4 Agricultural Districts and Related Programs

In Conejos County a variety of part-time and full-time agricultural activities take place on both irrigated and non-irrigated land. Grazing lands provide needed forage and support livestock operations. Many specialized types of agricultural production exist, including horse breeding and boarding, horticulture, fish production, tree and sod farms and others. Public forums revealed that most residents wish to maintain agricultural land and water in production whenever possible. Among agricultural producers there is consensus that a non-regulatory or incentive-based approach should be used to accomplish this. Those who wish to continue farming or ranching need assurance that incompatible uses that might disrupt their operations could be kept out of agricultural areas. Rural residents near agricultural operations must understand the rights and responsibilities of producers and the norms and responsibilities incumbent on them if they wish to live near agricultural operations.

The Board of County Commissioners would like to establish an Agricultural Task Force to propose principles and strategies to protect the future of agriculture in Conejos County. The concepts which relate most closely to the physical development of the County are listed here.

The major growth management strategy proposed which pertains to agriculture is the creation of a voluntary Agricultural District. An agricultural district is envisioned as working with a package of incentives (for example, tax incentives, priority lands for transferring or purchasing development rights, limited development options, etc.) to producers who volunteer to participate. In turn, for example, producers might agree to withhold their land from development for a specified period of time and to offer first right of refusal to area land and water banks should they later decide to develop.

Four other programs will require additional work to more fully develop and implement. These future programs include:

- Adoption of a Right to Farm Resolution;
- Creation of Agricultural Enterprise Zones;
- Creation of a regional land and water bank, in cooperation with other jurisdictions;
- Purchase of development rights on agricultural land.

In addition, the County Commissioners may appoint a permanent Agricultural Advisory Board and outline tasks and responsibilities for such an Advisory Board, including taking an active and aggressive role in promoting the interests of agriculture through public policy and public education.

5.5.5 Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is defined as housing which has a sales price or rent within the means of a low or moderate income household as defined by local, state or federal legislation. This type of housing is generally not provided by the private housing market without some type of subsidy.

The Conejos County Housing authority has been active in housing programs for many years. Programs have included a very successful Weatherization Program which provides home improvements to promote energy efficiency to low income households. The Department coordinates a Housing Rehabilitation and construction program which qualified renters can use to buy-down housing costs.

The primary role of the County is to support municipal and private efforts to create affordable housing.

Beyond the policies and programs which provide or encourage affordable housing as defined above, there is great concern with the impact of planning policies and regulations on the cost, or affordability, of housing in general. Rapid and sustained growth has pushed housing costs to new highs throughout the region. The drafters of the Master Plan believe that its principles and strategies are generally neutral on the issue of housing affordability. The primary reason for this belief is that residential densities will not change under this Plan; that is, downzoning to larger residential lot sizes will not be required. In some cases, however, requirements for Adequate Public Facilities will increase development costs which will be passed on to new home buyers. This strategy is viewed as preferable to the alternatives of having taxpayers subsidize public facilities made necessary by new development, or allowing service levels to deteriorate.

The dual issues of affordable housing and housing affordability will remain priorities. The Master Plan recommends an on-going work program to develop strategies for affordable housing, including possible provisions in the Land Use Code and Building Code to eliminate barriers to private sector affordable housing.



Figure 79 Public Housing at Antonito

PLAN DIRECTION AND ACTION STRATEGIES FOR URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURAL LANDS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In the section below, each primary paragraph (in bold type) is a statement of Plan Direction. The subparagraphs are actions or strategies for implementing the Plan Direction.

URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

GM-1 Conejos County shall plan for long-term growth and physical expansion based on environmental, land use, community design and infrastructure considerations.

GM-1-s1 The Land Use Code shall be designed to implement the principles of the Master Plan and shall include provisions for environmental review and protection, consideration of compatibility issues and site design, and adequate public facilities.

GM-2 Service demands of new development shall not exceed the capacities of existing roads and streets, utilities or public services.

GM-2-s1 The Land Use Code shall define level of service standards and require that all new development meet or exceed the adopted standards. Level of service standards shall be geared to the needs of urban areas and rural areas and the County's financial resources.

GM-3 Conejos County shall continue to allow for urban development within cities and designated urban areas.

GM-3-s1 Urban development areas will be designated only where public water and sewer are available or planned, and where projected densities are at least 2 units per acre.

GM-3-s2 Intergovernmental Agreements shall clearly define an annexation policy that is consistent with city and County growth management principles. In development not eligible for immediate annexation, the County will require applicants to meet city criteria, standards and fee structures adopted by the County, so that the areas may eventually be annexed as they become eligible without extensive capital improvements or costs. The County also will encourage annexation of land that is to be developed with urban uses or at urban densities so provision of urban level services by Conejos County is minimized. Binding annexation agreements also will continue to be required.

GM-4 Conejos County, in cooperation with municipalities and after consultation with residents, landowners and other affected interests, shall establish Cooperative Planning Areas (CPAs) adjacent to Growth Management Areas (GMAs), where appropriate, to provide for protection of future City or Town interests.

GM-4-s1 Strategies for growth management in Cooperative Planning Areas will be detailed in planning studies and included in Intergovernmental Agreements.

GM-4-s2 Conejos County shall send referrals to all municipalities within their respective Community Influence Area.

GM-5 Conejos County shall cooperate with municipalities to maintain distinct and separate urban areas.

GM-5-s1 Responsibility for defining and providing buffers between communities shall be shared between the adjacent municipalities and the County and shall be defined in Intergovernmental Agreements.

GM-5-s2 Cities and the County may jointly pursue acquisition strategies including transfer of development rights programs to implement protection of community buffers.

GM-6 To protect rural character, the County shall maintain current zoning and provide new standards and performance requirements for Adequate Public Facilities, Rural Conservation (cluster) Development, neighborhood compatibility, protection of environmental resources and restrictions in hazardous areas.

GM-6-s1 Existing zoning uses and minimum lot sizes will be the basis for new development in rural areas. Purpose statements will be established for all zoning districts to clarify how they will be applied. Additional site development standards, buffering requirements and performance standards also will be incorporated into the Land Use Code to implement this principle.

GM-6-s2 New rural clustered development will be encouraged using new requirements for Rural Conservation Development. The character of rural development will vary, based on the natural characteristics of the site, distance from public facilities and accessibility.

GM-6-s3 The Rural Land Use Process will be encouraged in rural areas as an alternative to 35 acre rural development.

AGRICULTURAL LANDS

GM-7 Agriculture shall be recognized as an important economic, cultural and environmental resource value-provider for the County.

GM-7-s1 The Land Use Code may provide a mechanism for creating a voluntary agricultural district. An agricultural district is envisioned as working with a package of incentives (for example, tax incentives, priority lands for transferring or purchasing development rights, limited development options, etc.) to producers who volunteer to participate. In turn, for example, producers might agree to withhold their land from development for a specified period of time and to offer first right of refusal to area land and water banks should they later decide to develop.

GM-8 Permanent and on-going communication between agriculture and the County is essential.

GM-8-s1 The County shall establish a permanent Agricultural Advisory Board made up primarily of full-time farmers to keep it informed on agricultural issues and to assist in keeping agriculture important and viable in Conejos County.

GM-9 The protection of agricultural land and water in Conejos County shall be based on a combination of incentives, voluntary participation and measures to strengthen the viability of agriculture.

GM-9-s1 The Agricultural Advisory Board shall develop implementation strategies to protect agricultural land and water in Conejos County.

GM-10 To retain agriculture and the resulting open space, environmental quality, wildlife habitat, etc., afforded by it, it is necessary to adopt programs that will help agriculture be economically viable and reasonably competitive with other potential uses of agricultural land.

GM-10-s1 Conejos County shall continue to study and implement programs which assist the business of agriculture. Agricultural Enterprise Zones and creation of a regional land and water bank shall be considered and a Right-to-Farm Resolution shall be adopted.

GM-10-s2 Regulation of farm improvement projects and routine agricultural operations shall be required only to the extent to protect health, safety and welfare.

GM-11 Respect for private property is essential to the maintenance of agriculture.

GM-11-s1 Agricultural landowners must be able to exclude public access in order to protect crops, livestock and conservation practices and to limit liability, littering, pollution, disruption of agricultural activities and other problems.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GM-12 Conejos County supports the development of a local economy which is increasingly self-reliant and that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations.

GM-12-s1 County-sponsored economic development activities shall be supportive of existing businesses and retain existing employment, as well as fostering new employment opportunities which create a positive impact on the County.

GM-13 The role of Conejos County government in economic development is to support and facilitate other public and private economic development efforts which are consistent with the adopted CON-CEPTS Policy for the County.

GM-13-s1 The Economic Development Advisory Board shall continue to coordinate with other economic development agencies in the region and provide recommendations to the County regarding requests for County support of economic development activities and projects.

GM-13-s2 Conejos County shall consider incentives and/or otherwise support economic development projects and programs which are consistent with growth management, land use and other principles and strategies of the Master Plan.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

GM-14 Conejos County government shall encourage the development of affordable housing as needed through support and incentives to other public, nonprofit and private sector developers, rather than developing, owning and operating housing units.

GM-14-s1 Conejos County will continue to work with affordable housing advocates to propose modifications to the Land Use Code and Building Code that will encourage development of affordable housing without compromising principles of the Master Plan or building safety.

GM-14-s2 The County shall adopt a uniform definition of “affordable housing” to provide clarity and uniformity when considering issues and requests related to affordable housing.

GM-15 Affordable housing in Conejos County shall include efforts to provide an appropriate mix of housing types and opportunities to meet the needs of all persons in need of housing.

GM-16 As much as possible, new affordable housing development shall be located close to relevant services.

GM-16-s1 Development of affordable housing is seen as a regional issue and the County will partner with other government entities to address the problem.

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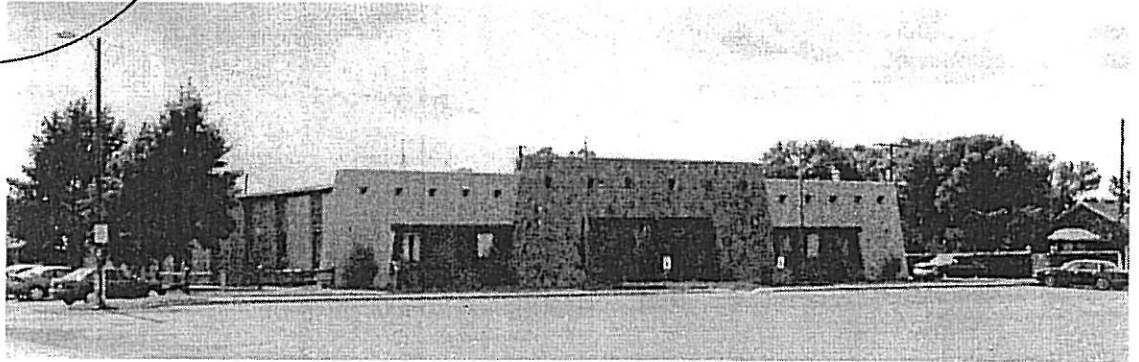
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Appendix One

Project Publicity

CONEJOS COUNTY NEWS

APRIL 2002



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WELCOME TO CONEJOS COUNTY NEWS

Greetings from Conejos County. Welcome to the first issue of our bi-annual newsletter. This publication is being prepared and sent to all property owners in County in an effort to inform all citizens on the activities and news of the County and local organizations on current issues and direction of your government.

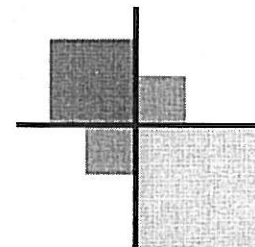
forts and philosophy behind this newsletter is to keep you informed on the present state and future activities of the County so that we may better serve your needs as we move forward into the 21st Century.

Phone: 719-376-2014

Email: landuse@fone.net

In addition to news items from each department this issue will largely be devoted to the announcement of the updating of the Conejos County Comprehensive Land Use Plan or master plan. The center pages will present information on the plan development, upcoming forums and process that will ensue.

We welcome any comments you might have regarding this publication and its contents. Our ef-



COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN UPDATE

Conejos County is preparing a new comprehensive land use plan, last updated in 1977. The planning area includes Conejos County and the communities of Antonito, Romeo, Manassa, Sanford, La Jara and Capulin. The plan is "comprehensive" because it will address land use, growth, recreation, transportation, economic, environmental and infrastructure issues. Recommendations will also be made for updates to zoning codes, and agreements for land use cooperation with adjacent municipalities.



CONEJOS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



A meeting to formulate an advisory committee to plan for the upcoming County Forums was held on January 30, 2002. The advisory committee is composed of Conejos County Planning Commission and Land Use Office, County Administration, Municipalities, and Conejos-Community, Economy & Environment Progressing Together (CON-CEPTs).

Public involvement is the cornerstone of the planning process. Several "county forums" are being held throughout the County. All county residents are invited and encouraged to attend the meetings. The objective of the forums is to introduce the project, identify key issues, and discuss ideas for the future of Conejos County. As a supplement to these meetings and for the benefit of those residents unable to attend a questionnaire and newsletter will be mailed to all county residents. The questionnaire will contain issues, concerns and ideas generated at the forums. Also, Conejos County Land Use staff will be visiting non-municipal communities to meet with groups or individuals interested in providing input to the planning process.

The comprehensive or land use plan for Conejos is a blueprint or guide to provide residents and officials of Conejos County with information on which to make sound development decisions. Information from the forums and the questionnaire will be combined with the analysis of environmental, service/infrastructure and land use conditions to create a set of alternatives or different ways to proceed with land use development. An open house event to review the plan alternatives is scheduled in June. A second questionnaire will be circulated to identify preferences from each alternative. Questionnaire results will be used to prepare a recommended plan alternative, which will become the basis for plan policies and action strategies. The draft plan is anticipated to be completed by September, with additional meetings scheduled for public review and comment.

The preparation of the Conejos County Comprehensive Plan is funded through Department of Local Affairs Energy Impact Assistance Program. The planning process will be headed by Arnold Valdez, Planning and Zoning Director, with the assistance of Conejos County Land Use Office and the Planning Commission. For more information, please contact Conejos County Land Use Office, P.O. Box 197, Conejos, Colorado 81129. (719-376-2014) email:landuse@fone.net.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE OR LAND USE PLAN?

- A framework and guide for accomplishing county aspirations and intentions.
- States goals and objectives and recommends policies for future growth and development of land, public facilities, services and environmental protection.

Plan Elements

- Environmental Element
- Cultural/Historical/Social Setting
- Land Use Plan
- Transportation Element
- Housing Element
- Utility & Facility Plan
- Urban Influence Area
- Energy Element
- Educational Facilities
- Relationship of Plan to the Trends of the region
- Statement of Objectives, Policies and programs



Project Goals

- To update 1977 Comprehensive Plan
- To adopt new zoning ordinance
- Establish working agreements with all stakeholders
- Create a vision for a sustainable future in Conejos County

PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

The purpose of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan is to provide the residents and officials of Conejos County with information on which to make sound development decisions. The community, including County Officials, private developers and residents, can consider alternative growth patterns and implied costs then establish basic policies regarding future development and growth which would result in a community we would all like to live in. The Comprehensive Plan will be of value to:

- The Planning Commission and County Commissioners regarding zoning, subdivision and planning capital improvements.
- Private developers by knowing ahead of time the county policies regarding future development.
- Individual citizens and members of the Conejos County business community by protecting existing investments and by providing information pointing out various opportunities as well as physical limitations for private planning and development.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Citizen participation helps to guide the planning commission in making decisions and promoting community understanding of planning needs and issues. We urge and encourage your participation in the upcoming public forums. The dates of the forums will be announced in the newspaper and will be posted at public places throughout Conejos County.

If you can not attend the meetings we would still like to hear from you regarding the following topics:

- Issues and Concerns: what are current issues that you would like to see addressed?
- Values: What do you value in Conejos County and how would you like to see these values protected?
- Ideas: What kind of ideas do you have that might contribute towards the welfare and enhancement of the county overall?

Call or write The Land Use Office about your opinions and thoughts regarding the future and development of Conejos County.

Conejos County Land Use Office, P.O. Box 197, Conejos, CO 81129

719-376-2014 email:landuse@fone.net

Debbie Pittman 589-2553

Conejos land use plan in the works

CONEJOS — Conejos County is preparing a new comprehensive land use plan, last updated in 1977. The planning area includes Conejos County and the communities of Antonito, Romeo, Manassa, Sanford, La Jara and Capulin. The plan is "comprehensive" because it will address land use, growth, recreation, transportation, economic, environmental and infrastructure issues. Recommendations will also be made for updates to zoning codes, and the preparation of intergovernmental agreements for land use cooperation.

A meeting to formulate and advisory committee to plan for the upcoming Country Forums was held on January 30. The advisory committee is composed of Conejos County Planning Commission and Land Use Office, County Administration, Municipalities, and CON-CEPTs.

Public involvement will be the cornerstone of the planning process.

Several "country forums" will be scheduled throughout the county. The advisory committee is currently planning to contact various groups and organizations to establish meeting dates and locations for forums.

All county residents are invited and encouraged to attend the meetings. As a supplement to these meetings and for the benefit of those residents unable to attend a questionnaire and newsletter will be mailed to all county residents. The questionnaire will contain issues, concerns and ideas generated at the forums.

Also, Conejos County Land Use staff will be visiting non-municipal communities to meet with groups or individuals interested in providing input to the planning process.

The objective of the forums is to introduce the project, identify key issues, and discuss ideas for the future of Conejos County. After the public forums, a questionnaire will be circulated to prioritize local and regional planning issues. Information from the forums and the questionnaire will be combined with the analysis of environmental, service/infrastructure and land use conditions to create a set of plan alternatives.

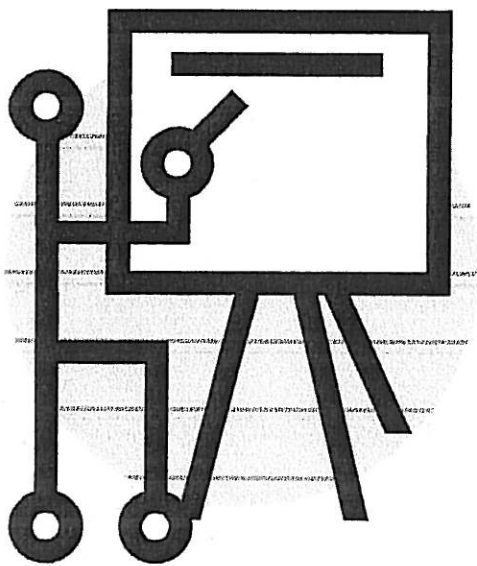
An open house event to review the plan alternatives is scheduled in June. A second questionnaire will be circulated to identify preferences from each alternative. Questionnaire results will be used to prepare a recommended plan alternative, which will become the basis for plan policies and action strategies.

The draft plan is anticipated to be completed by September, with additional meetings scheduled for public review and comment.

The preparation of Conejos County Comprehensive Plan is funded through Department of Local Affairs Energy Impact Assistance Program. The planning process will be headed by Arnold Valdez, Planning and Zoning Director, with the assistance of Conejos County Land Use Office and the Planning Commission. For more information, please contact Conejos County Land Use Office, P.O. Box 197, Conejos, CO 81129. (719-376-2014) email landuse@fone.net.

CONEJOS COUNTY COMMUNITY FORUM

YOU ARE INVITED TO COME AND PARTICIPATE IN A FORUM FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING AND PLANNING THE FUTURE OF CONEJOS COUNTY LAND USE. THE UPDATING OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IS UNDERWAY AND NEEDS YOUR INPUT



Date: MARCH 20, 2002

Time: 7:00 PM

Location

CONEJOS COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The forum will present information on the comprehensive plan with a public discussion regarding issues and concerns as well as values and ideas for creating a sustainable future.

For more information please contact:

Conejos County Land Use

P.O. Box 197

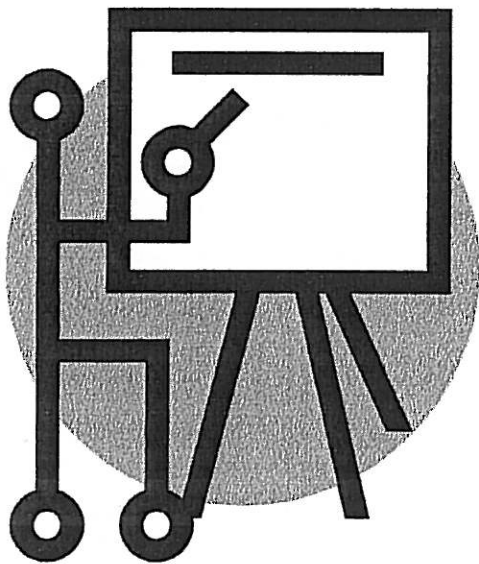
Conejos, Colorado 81129

Phone: 376-2014

CONEJOS COUNTY COMMUNITY FORUM

YOU ARE INVITED TO COME AND PARTICIPATE IN A FORUM FOR THE PURPOSE OF REVIEWING AND DISCUSSING THE PLAN ALTERNATIVES FOR THE UPDATING OF THE CONEJOS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN. WE NEED YOUR VISION AND INPUT FOR DIRECTION ON THE NEW COUNTY-WIDE LAND USE PLAN.

What are the Alternatives?



For more information please contact:
Conejos County Land Use
P.O. Box 197
Conejos, Colorado 81129

Phone: 376-2014

Date: October 16, 2002

Time: 7:00 PM

Location:

Conejos County

Courthouse

The forum will present information on the comprehensive plan with a public discussion regarding the land use policies and direction the new master plan should take as well as ideas for creating a sustainable future.

Conejos County citizens respond to planning forums

CONEJOS - The updating of the Conejos County Master Plan, which began early this year, will continue into the next few months until the final draft is completed and reviewed by the Planning Commission. Key to the success of the plan is public participation. Several public forums have been held throughout the county as well as presentations to the municipalities at their regular town hall meetings. The presentations by the land use office staff have served to illustrate the components of the comprehensive or master plan as well as to inform the public about the planning process. The forums have also been used to solicit input on what residents value in Conejos County as well as issues and concerns they might have. Ideas or potential solutions to the issues raised have also been expressed.

Agriculture, education, environment, historic and cultural resources, and tourism have surfaced as aspects of life in Conejos County that residents value. The preservation of the agricultural economy and lifestyle as well as the high quality of products produced is predominant among most rural residents. The school system is valued with additional resources being advocated to supplement the existing facilities. The younger residents will ultimately be the leaders of tomorrow so it is important that the county retain their talents and intellectual capacities.

The integrity and preservation of the environment has been expressed in all of the forums. Clean air, water, wetlands, wildlife as well as the working landscape is important to the health and vitality of the public and private lands. Special natural areas such as the Rio Grande and Conejos River are valued for their recreational aspects and scenic beauty. There is an abundance of historic and cultural resources that need to be recognized and celebrated through avenues such as the scenic byways, museums and a potential designation of a National Heritage Area. Tourism is a venue for the existing economy and continues to gain attention as a result of the strong sense of place in Conejos County. Most residents value the rural lifestyle or small town character created by multi-generations of families with historical ties to the area, open space, security, independence and relatively low cost of living.

Issues and Concerns

In addition to what residents value throughout the county there are also numerous issues and concerns that have been articulated via the forums. On top of the list are concerns about the state of the economy and lack of jobs, environmental issues, growth and development, and sanitation. Other areas of concern are agriculture, communication, education, local government, safety and general welfare of the citizens, subdivisions, youth opportunities, transportation, and tourism infrastructure. Many people feel there is little or no interest from residents about the county's future, an attitude which stems from resistance to change, lack of knowledge about what is going on in the county and from the lack of follow up on past projects.

Ideas

Despite the issues and problems there is a general optimism about the future of the county. A long list of ideas was generated that corresponds to the values and issues. The ideas range from simple solutions to more utopian ideals. A questionnaire based on all the input received to date is currently being developed and will be mailed to all the county's postal box holders in the next few weeks. The questionnaire will compile responses and information from the questions posed resulting from the public forums and discussions. Once the questionnaires are received the land use staff will be working on developing plan alternatives that will be presented for public review early this summer. Meanwhile, input to the updating of the master plan will continue. The residents of Conejos County are encouraged to participate in the planning process and in creating a vision or blueprint for the county to follow in the next decades. Please contact the Conejos County Land Use Office for more information: 376-2014.

Conejos County works on Master Plan

CONEJOS — In this year of drought it is no surprise that Conejos County residents are speaking up about the protection of water quality and quantity in this county, but residents also have a lot to say about preserving the county's historic communities, scenic mountain vistas, and rural atmosphere as well as promoting a diversified and sustainable economy.

The process of updating the Conejos County Master Plan, which began early this year, has been soliciting input from residents of the county on these and other issues in order to help determine the direction of County goals and policies.

This planning process will continue into the next few months until the final draft is complete and reviewed by the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners. Key to the success of the plan is public participation. During the first few months of 2002, several public forums were held throughout the county and presentations were made to the municipalities at their regular town hall meetings. These forums and presentations were used to discuss the components of the comprehensive or master plan and inform the public about the planning process. In addition, the forums were used to solicit input on what resident's value in Conejos County as well as issues and concerns they might have. Ideas or potential solutions to the issues were also raised.

A questionnaire, based on all the public input received through the forums, was mailed to all the county's postal box holders in late June. To date 115, or 3.4%, of the questionnaires have been returned from 3,285 that were mailed. The questionnaires received were analyzed by the land use office and will be used to develop comprehensive plan alternatives that will be presented for public review early this fall. Meanwhile, public in-

put is still welcome. The questionnaires are still available at the Conejos County Land Use Office. Everyone who has not filled one out is encouraged to pick one up and respond with your thoughts and ideas.

Seventy-five percent of the public responding to the questionnaire strongly agree that Conejos County is unique due to its historic communities, scenic mountain vistas and rural atmosphere. In fact, the integrity and preservation of the environment has been expressed as a top priority. Clean air, water, wetlands, wildlife as well as the agricultural landscape is important to the health and vitality of the public and private lands in the county. Water, especially in this year of drought, is a critical resource that should be protected in terms of quality while making sure the county has an adequate supply in its aquifer.

When asked about how much money individuals would allocate towards various needs in the county, the respondents overwhelmingly supported funding for the protection of water, air and soil. In particular, special natural areas such as the Rio Grande and Conejos River are valued for their recreational aspects and scenic beauty. Second on the list, was the preservation of the agriculture economy; third, attracting new business and development; and fourth, was building a landfill. A majority of residents also thought that the county should focus on strategies to implement renewable energy such as solar, wind and bio-mass.

According to residents, Conejos County has an abundance of historic and cultural resources that need to be recognized and celebrated. This could be accomplished through scenic byways, museums or a potential designation of a National Heritage Area. Tourism is seen as one way to improve the existing economy as well as to promote the strong sense of

place in Conejos County. Most residents value the rural lifestyle or small town character created by multi-generations of families with historical ties to the area, open space, security, independence and relatively low cost of living.

Issues and Concerns

In addition to what residents value and want to preserve throughout the county there were also numerous issues and concerns that were articulated. Many people feel there is little or no interest from residents about the county's future, an attitude which stems from resistance to change, lack of knowledge about what is going on in the county and from the lack of follow up on past projects.

On top of the list are concerns about the state of the economy and lack of jobs, environmental issues, growth and development, and sanitation. Other areas of concern are agriculture, communication, education, local government, safety and general welfare of the citizens, subdivisions, youth opportunities, transportation, and tourism infrastructure. Regarding growth and development in Conejos County, many residents felt that the impacts upon their roads, communities and county services should be paid for by imposing impact fees rather than local government footing the bill.

Overall the responses to the questionnaire have provided valuable input and direction as to some possible ways that the comprehensive plan could be structured. The next step is to use the information to create the plan alternatives. These scenarios will reflect various combinations of policies that the county could pursue. Early this fall the plan alternatives will be presented at another round of public forums. These gatherings will allow the public to view and comment on the scenarios and ultimately determine the future.

Appendix Two

Questionnaire Results

**CONEJOS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
COUNTY FORUM & TOWNHALL MEETINGS**

5/10/02

VALUES

Agricultural

- Preserve agriculture
- Agricultural Lifestyle
- High quality of food and agricultural products

Education

- Three school systems

Environmental

- Environmental protection
- Watershed protection
- Open space protection
- Wetlands protection
- Clean air
- Wildlife
- Landscape
- Rio Grande and Gorge
- Riparian areas/watersheds

Historic

- Historic cultural resources, architectural protection
- Protection of religious sites (Moradas, cemeteries)
- Potential designation of National Heritage Area
- History/culture
- Landscape
- Archeological sites
- Museums(Sanford)
- Railroad
- Los Caminos Antiquos designation

Sense of Place

- People
- Senior Citizens Welfare
- Low cost of living
- Small town and rural character
- Independence
- Lack of over regulation
- Safe place to live

- Multi-generations
- Privacy
- Not congested/open space

Tourism/Recreation

- Hunting, fishing, climbing, other recreation
- Mountains and forest access (Public Lands)
- Tourism
- Artists/Creative skills

Water

- Water is our lifeblood
- Acequia/ditches water system protection
- Well-head protection
- Quality and quantity of water

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Agriculture

- Preserving agricultural base

Communication

- Communication
- Isolation & lack of communication
- Poor telecom systems
- Cell tower regulations

Economic

- Economy
- High unemployment
- Pro-actively determine economic development
- Add value to existing economy
- Vacant buildings, commercial, residential
- Lack of jobs/ economic development
- Threat of hospital closing
- Big Box stores and impacts on small community business
- Economic/social trade offs in economic development
- Conejos CO. not a good location for manufacturing, more likely to become a retirement center

Education

- Education of youth

Energy

- Assessment & plan for alternative energy sources implementation

Environmental

- Wildlife preservation
- Watershed preservation
- Drought
- Natural resource extraction, i.e. timber, mining
- Impacts of mining/timbering
- Open Pit cyanide mining
- Air quality-potential pollution
- Conejos Canyon growth & environmental concerns
- Older gravel pits with no reclamation plans

Government

- Lack of detention facility
- Land Use Code enforcement
- Over-regulation

- Lack of County infrastructure in some areas
- Antiquated zoning codes in municipalities
- Stray Dogs, lack of animal control ordinances
- No county sales tax
- Inaccurate town surveys
- Town Plat/ alleys
- Upgrade cemeteries
- Taxation for county
- Sales tax for county
- Representation-new residents in Conejos Canyon

Growth

- Growth or no growth
- Type and extent of growth
- Appropriate siting of development
- Annexation conflicts and avoiding them adjacent to agriculture
- Controlled growth
- Conejos Canyon growth & environmental concerns
- Increasing cost of buying land
- Don't want to see Conejos Canyon look like South Fork
- Limit Commercial Growth up Conejos Canyon

Safety

- Fire Hazards
- Militia and terrorist groups
- Bio-terrorism on agricultural industry
- Ditches- burning debris, fire hazards
- Hazardous route designation for SH 285

Sanitation

- Landfill/space
- Illegal dumping, widespread trash problem
- Adequacy of sewage system
- Wrecking yards are an eyesore and cause environmental problems

Subdivision

- Subdivision development
- Subdivisions/moratorium (consolidation of land)
- Old subdivisions
- Land divisions
- Infrastructure for subdivisions (utilities, water source)
- Subdivision control

Tourism/Recreation

- Tourism-places to stop on Highway 285
- Tourism management
- Cumbres/Toltec long term planning (master plan)
- Need for gathering places at historic churches & sites
- Historical interpretation programs, markers
- Recreational district
- Limit placement of billboards

Transportation

- Road/bridge conditions
- Hazardous route designation of Highway 285
- Lack of transportation; especially for elderly & the sick

Water

- Water storage
- Water abandonment
- Low water pressure
- Water metering
- Low water pressure in community systems
- Groundwater pollution from cesspools, Conejos River development
- Groundwater resources for growth and water quality
- Over pumping of aquifer and exportation of water
- Impact of drought

Youth

- Crime - lack of youth activities
- "Brain drain" –loss of best & brightest talent to city migration

Other

- People resistant to changes
- Problem completing projects, lack of follow up
- Failed projects-lack of collaboration; people not in it for the long haul
- Lack of knowledge about what is going on in the county

IDEAS

Agriculture

- Micro-agriculture, organic farming
- Encourage agricultural use of subdivision land
- Potato processing plant in La Jara
- Large scale farm efficiency & regional marketing opportunities
- Small-scale farms
- Value-added opportunities for ag producers- e.g. USDA packing plant, weaving facilities
- Use hay here in the Valley instead of trucking it out
- Stop mining our soils
- Water bank for selling/leasing water

Communication

- Create a county website for better access to information
- Improve communication networks

Economic

- Industry/jobs
- Strategies for small business loans (work with financial institutions) - invitations to bankers
- Financial assistance for small business
- Preserve assets, encourage home-based businesses
- Develop culture-based business to stimulate new economic growth
- Mondragon Model for linked coops-maintaining local resources & building on them.
- Support local businesses first
- Create jobs while preserving environment
- Limit commercial growth in Conejos Canyon, bring residents into existing towns to shop

Education

- Education/mentoring/sharing of skills
- Provide parenting classes
- Child literacy programs
- Need good schools to attract employees of service based industries

Energy

- Solar and wind energy, appropriate technology applications
- Biomass/methane gas production

Environmental

- Preserve Open space
- Keep vacant lots for open space
- Firewood Coop to thin Forest Service Land
- Controlled Burning
- No open pit cyanide mining should be written into code

- Natural beauty is County's greatest asset- don't lose it

Government

- Impose extraction taxes on natural resources
- Update zoning regulations
- Institute uniform building regulations
- Improve county-town communications
- Emergency service facility at Conejos Canyon
- Formation of additional cemetery districts
- Work with Municipalities to improve infrastructure- e.g. pave roads in towns
- Find ways to recoup tax dollars lost to Alamosa County
- Conejos sales tax
- Avoid losing privately owned land to Fed. Gov., put under conservation easement instead and on County tax rolls

Growth

- "Growth pays its own way" (Impact Fees)
- Moratorium on new subdivisions until the existing ones are developed
- Lot consolidation - subdivisions
- Cluster developments/open space
- Lot swaps
- Limit growth in Conejos Canyon- preserve the appeal of the canyon
- Fewer regulations for subdivision development on Valley floor than in canyon
- Preserve pristine private properties in mountains from subdivision development
- Preserve prime agricultural land from subdivision development

Health

- Improve ambulance service in Antonito
- Satellite health clinics
- Provide expanded health insurance

Historic/Cultural

- Identify and protect historical sites
- Cultural awareness enhancement
- Ordinances to protect historic/cultural resources

Housing

- Utilization of local natural resources for housing construction
- Build an assisted living facility
- Re-hab programs for old mobile homes and unsafe housing

Infrastructure

- School systems/Conejos CO.- share school facilities for community recreation, education, etc.

- Retirement centers with access to recreation facilities

Recreation

- Rails to Trails Program
- Develop recreational facilities
- County-wide recreation district for utilization of GOCO Funding
- Hire teens to transport youth to summer recreation programs

Sanitation

- Solid waste facilities/recycling
- Additional transfer stations/trash collection bins
- Dumpsters at US Forest Service & BLM Lands
- Work with other Counties to develop a landfill
- Stiff regulations on wrecking yards
- Establish property tax to pay for landfill fees so that individual residents don't have to pay when they deliver trash- to discourage dumping.

Tourism/Beautification

- Tourism taxes
- Revitalize and beautify towns (main street)
- Rest area across from Cumbres/Toltec railroad
- Keep train riders in town (Antonito)
- Funding for tree planting
- Focus on Cumbres & Toltec train
- Connect Cumbres & Toltec Train with Antonito
- Managed tourism
- Clean up/fix up days
- No billboards
- Make communities attractive to attract employees of service based industries

Water

- Explore water banking
- Maintain ground water level

Youth

- Develop youth opportunities

THE FUTURE OF CONEJOS COUNTY: A QUESTIONNAIRE

WATER ISSUES

1. We should focus on protection of water quality while making sure the county has as adequate supply in its rivers, reservoirs and aquifer and irrigation systems.

225 AGREE 10 DISAGREE 10 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

2. We should provide rules and guidelines for building and development to protect springs, streams, rivers, wetlands, domestic wells and ditch water systems.

217 AGREE 15 DISAGREE 13 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

3. We should create regulations that protect riparian areas (areas next to the streams and rivers)

175 AGREE 30 DISAGREE 40 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

4. We should create regulations that stop mining activities (such as on-pit cyanide gold mining and in-stream gravel pits) that threaten water quality.

186 AGREE 26 DISAGREE 33 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

AGRICULTURE

1. We should minimize non-agricultural development on agricultural land.

145 AGREE 51 DISAGREE 49 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

2. We should encourage land trusts and conservation easements to protect agricultural land and open space.

148 AGREE 34 DISAGREE 63 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

3. Weld County increased the minimum acres that can be subdivided without a permit from 35 to 80 acres on prime agricultural land. We should do this also.

76 AGREE 101 DISAGREE 68 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

4. We should restrict the subdivision and development of sprinkler corners.

111 AGREE 86 DISAGREE 48 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. We should encourage small, home-based businesses in each community.

212 AGREE 12 DISAGREE 21 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

2. We should encourage diverse and organically based agriculture.

186 AGREE 14 DISAGREE 45 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

3. We should create jobs through "value added" agriculture? (Local processing of raw agricultural products.)

204 AGREE 6 DISAGREE 35 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

4. We should create job opportunities by attracting alternative building technologies such as adobe, straw bale, etc.

179 AGREE 27 DISAGREE 39 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

5. We should improve tourism infrastructure (such as campsites and picnic areas) throughout the county.

187 AGREE 27 DISAGREE 31 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

6. We should make sidelines for Los Caminos Antiguos Byway (the road from Antonito to Romeo and across to San Luis) to protect its historic character.

162 AGREE 35 DISAGREE 48 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

7. We should try to improve the Highway 285 corridor to make it more beautiful and to protect the scenic views (such as screening gravel pits, restricting billboards or screening or prohibiting working yards)?

191 AGREE 24 DISAGREE 30 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

8. We should encourage changes that would help Antonito to be a "gateway community"(for example landscaped entryway with signs, lighting, an improved visitor's center, walkways)?

171 AGREE 28 DISAGREE 46 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

9. The Cumbres & Toltec railway yard has been designated as a historic district. New building in that area should be required to have a historic look and character.

170 AGREE 36 DISAGREE 39 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

10. We should conduct a county-wide survey of "cultural and historic resources" for future protection?

190 AGREE 17 DISAGREE 38 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

INFRASTRUCTURE

1. We should upgrade telecommunication systems to promote new business development in Conejos County.

201 AGREE 12 DISAGREE 32 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

2. We should create a plan for the siting of wireless communication systems (i.e. cell towers) in the county.

132 AGREE 60 DISAGREE 53 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

3. We should upgrade existing roads and transportation network.

146 AGREE 54 DISAGREE 45 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

4. We should construct youth facilities and develop youth programs in each community.

194 AGREE 20 DISAGREE 31 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

5. We should update our Emergency Disaster Plan for the county.

207 AGREE 6 DISAGREE 32 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

6. We should provide solid waste collection and recycling facilities.

209 AGREE 19 DISAGREE 17 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

1. We should maintain open land between La Jara, romeo and antonito and limit speed all along Highway 285?

124 AGREE 67 DISAGREE 54 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

2. We should establish agreements between conejos County and the towns of La Jara, Sanford, Manassa, Romeo and Antonito to guide land development in a 3-mile area outside of town limits.

132 AGREE 60 DISAGREE 53 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

3. We should establish agreements between Conejos County and the towns of La Jara, Sanford, Manassa, Romeo and Antonito to cooperate on land use planning within the town limits and other matters of mutual interest.

146 AGREE 54 DISAGREE 45 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

4. We should create "village center" guidelines that allow commercial and residential uses to exist side by side in communities such as Conejos, Guadalupe. Los Sauses, Ortiz, San Antonio, Mogote and San Rafael?

137 AGREE 39 DISAGREE 69 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

5. We should limit the number of new subdivisions in the conejos Canyon and Conejos River.

175 AGREE 24 DISAGREE 46 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

6. We should create incentives for consolidation of existing residential subdivision lots (encourage lots to be combined) to achieve lower density rural residential development.

143 AGREE 46 DISAGREE 56 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

7. We should adopt regulations to revoke "antiquated" subdivisions (a subdivision has been present for x years with no development having taken place).

136 AGREE 45 DISAGREE 64 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

8. We should have new subdivisions "cluster" rural residential development to preserve "open-space" for existing agricultural uses and to protect view sheds and wildlife habitat.

160 AGREE 37 DISAGREE 48 NO OPINION/ NOT SURE

9. Developers should be able to "transfer development rights" to shift density from existing subdivisions in rural areas to areas near towns.

126 AGREE 53 DISAGREE 66 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

10. Conejos County should implement policies to require growth and development to pay its own way wherever possible through impact fees charged to the developers.

175 AGREE 29 DISAGREE 41 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

11. We should adopt a "no vacant lot" policy, stopping the development of any new subdivision lots until existing lots are either built upon, consolidated or vacated.

136 AGREE 63 DISAGREE 46 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

12. We should limit development in areas with steep slopes, geologic and wildfire hazards, flood plains and special wildlife areas.

165 AGREE 38 DISAGREE 42 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

13. There should be guidelines that restrict residential development on ridgetops.

162 AGREE 30 DISAGREE 53 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

14. We should develop a regional trail system that connects communities within the county, and connects existing trails together?(As planned for in the San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan)

146 AGREE 36 DISAGREE 63 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

15. We should develop public trails and recreation opportunities along the Rio Grande Corridor?

176 AGREE 26 DISAGREE 43 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

16. We focus on strategies to implement renewable energy sources, such as solar energy.

148 AGREE 11 DISAGREE 86 NO OPINION/NOT SURE

Appendix Three

Project Bibliography

Project Bibliography

<u>Publications/Plans/Articles</u>	<u>Date</u>
Biological Inventories for Rio Grande and Conejos Counties, Colorado, Vols. I/II	2000
Conejos County Abstract of Assessment and Tax Levies	2002
Conejos County Real Estate Abstract by Land Use Code	2002
Conejos County Subdivision Parcel Count	2002
County Information Service, Conejos County	8/2002
Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan	2000
CON-CEPTS	10/2001
Population and Housing Unit Counts	1940-1990
Estimates of the Population of Places: Annual Time Series	1991-1997
Final Environmental Impact Statement	1995
General Profile for Conejos County, Colorado	1990
General Profile for Antonito, Colorado	1990
CDEIS Community Profile for Antonito, Colorado	1997
CDEIS Community Profile for La Jara, Colorado	1997
CDEIS Population Projections	1995-2020
CDEIS Colorado County Profile	1994-1997
CDEIS Colorado County Economic Series	1994-1997
CDEIS County and Municipal Finance	1994-1997
Community Health Profile of the San Luis Valley	1997
San Luis Valley COG Regional Comprehensive Plan, Vols. I/II	1974
San Luis Valley Development Resources Group	8/2001
San Luis Resource Area	1991
Preliminary Land Use Plan—San Luis Valley	1973
Comprehensive Plan for Conejos County	1978
Conejos County Land Use Codes	1998
Town of Antonito Zoning Ordinances	1995
Architecture Site Summary Report	1998
Colorado Historical Society List Historic Sites and Buildings	3/1999
Colorado Prevention Related Indicators Report	1998
Colorado State—Wide Fire Hazard Analysis	1999
Los Caminos Antiguos: Scenic and Historic byway Partnership Plan	12/1999
Southwestern Wildlands Initiative: A Project of Forest Guardians	1998
Model Zoning Ordinance for Conejos and Costilla County Towns	1979
Managing Development for People and Wildlife	1995
A Glimpse of ... Our Community: San Luis Valley Community Health Report	1999
Blueprint for Economic and Community Development in Rural Communities	1999
Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan	1996
The San Luis Valley Regional 2020 Transportation Plan	11/1999
The San Luis Valley Historian: Fort Garland—A Window onto Southwest History	1992
The San Luis Valley Historian: San Luis Valley Water	1996
The Rio Grande Corridor Proposed Plan and Final EIS	8/1998
Conejos County Courier: Assorted Press	1/2001– 6/2002
The State of the Southern Rockies Ecoregion: A Report by the Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project	2000

Maps

Conejos County GIS Coverage's	1997-1999
Conejos County Zoning Maps	1998
Conejos County Subdivisions	1998
Conejos County Land Use and Natural Plant Communities	1976
Conejos County General Soil Map	1972
Flood Insurance Rate Maps	1991
DOW Composite Map of Significant Wildlife Habitat, Conejos County, Colorado	1998