Chapter 5 – Complexes: Area-Specific Management Recommendations

This section contains our detailed, area-specific proposal utilizing the theme based approach to land management. As an organizational tool, this proposal divides the Pike-San Isabel National Forest into eleven separate ***Complexes***, based on geo-physical characteristics of the land such as mountain ranges, parklands, or canyon systems. Each complex narrative provides details and justifications for our management recommendations for specific areas. In order to emphasize the larger landscape and connectivity of these lands with the ecoregion, commentary on relationships to adjacent non-Forest lands are also included.

Evaluations of ecological value across public and private lands are used throughout this chapter. The Colorado Natural Heritage Programs rates the biodiversity of Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs) as General Biodiversity, Moderate, High, Very High, and Outranking Significance. The Nature Conservancy assesses the conservation value of its Conservation Blueprint areas as Low, Moderately Low, Moderate, Moderately High and High. The Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project's Wildlands Network Vision recommends land use designations of Core Wilderness, Core Agency, Low and Moderate Compatible Use, and Wildlife Linkages. Detailed explanations are available from the respective organizations.

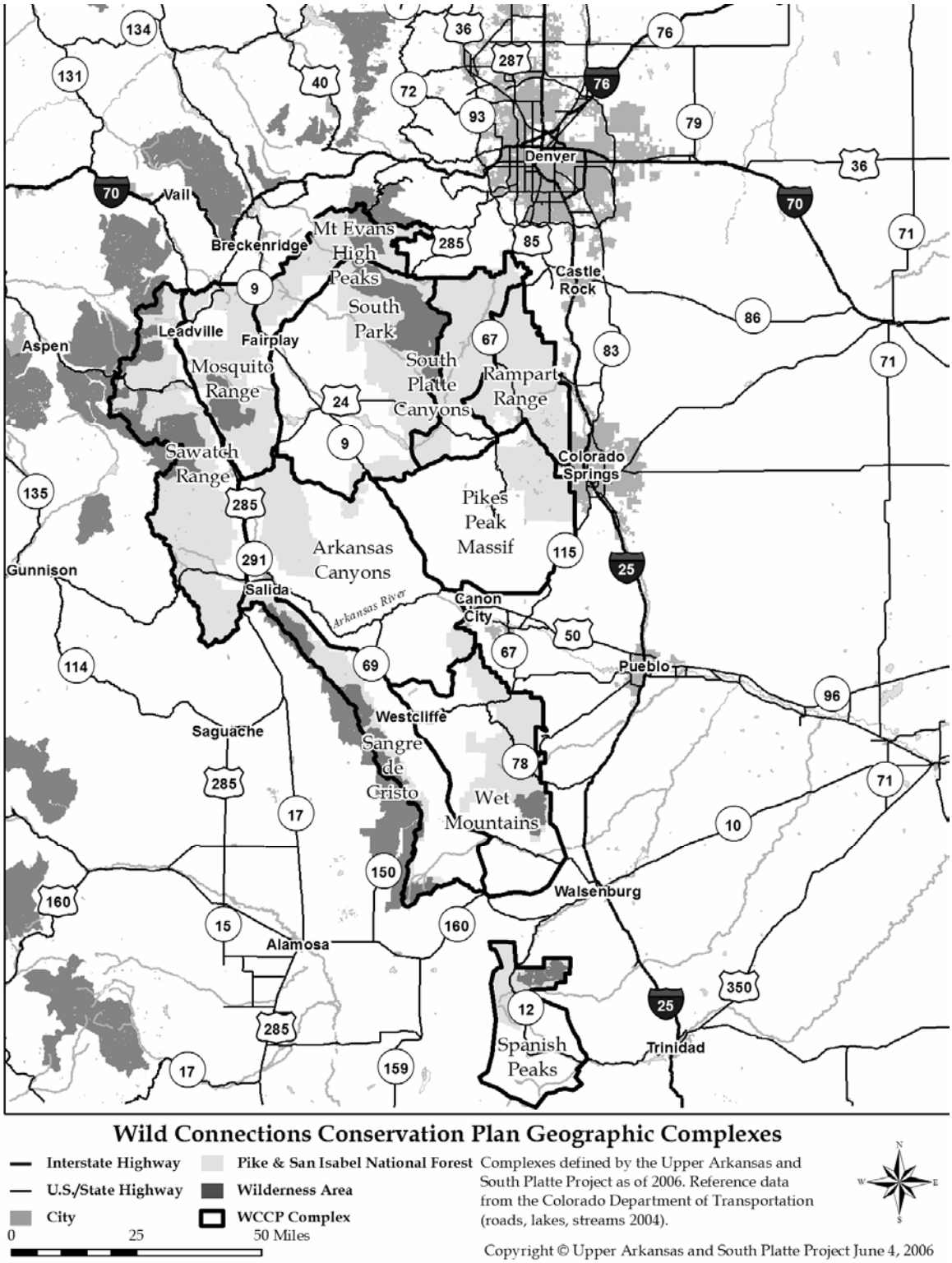
Complexes – Summary List by Watershed

Table 5.1: Summary of WCCP Complexes

Watershed	Complex	Ranger District
South Platte	Mount Evans High Peaks	South Platte & South Park
	South Park	South Platte & South Park
	South Platte Canyons	South Platte & South Park
South Platte and Arkansas	Mosquito Range	South Park, Leadville and Salida
	Pikes Peak Massif	Pikes Peak
	Rampart Range	South Platte & Pikes Peak
Arkansas	Sawatch	Leadville and Salida
	Arkansas Canyons	Salida, San Carlos & BLM Royal Gorge Resource Area
	Sangre de Cristo	Salida and San Carlos
	Wet Mountains	San Carlos
	Spanish Peaks	San Carlos

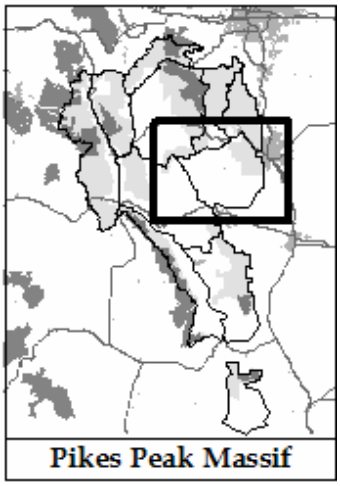
Complexes – Map Locater

Map 5.1: Wild Connections Complexes



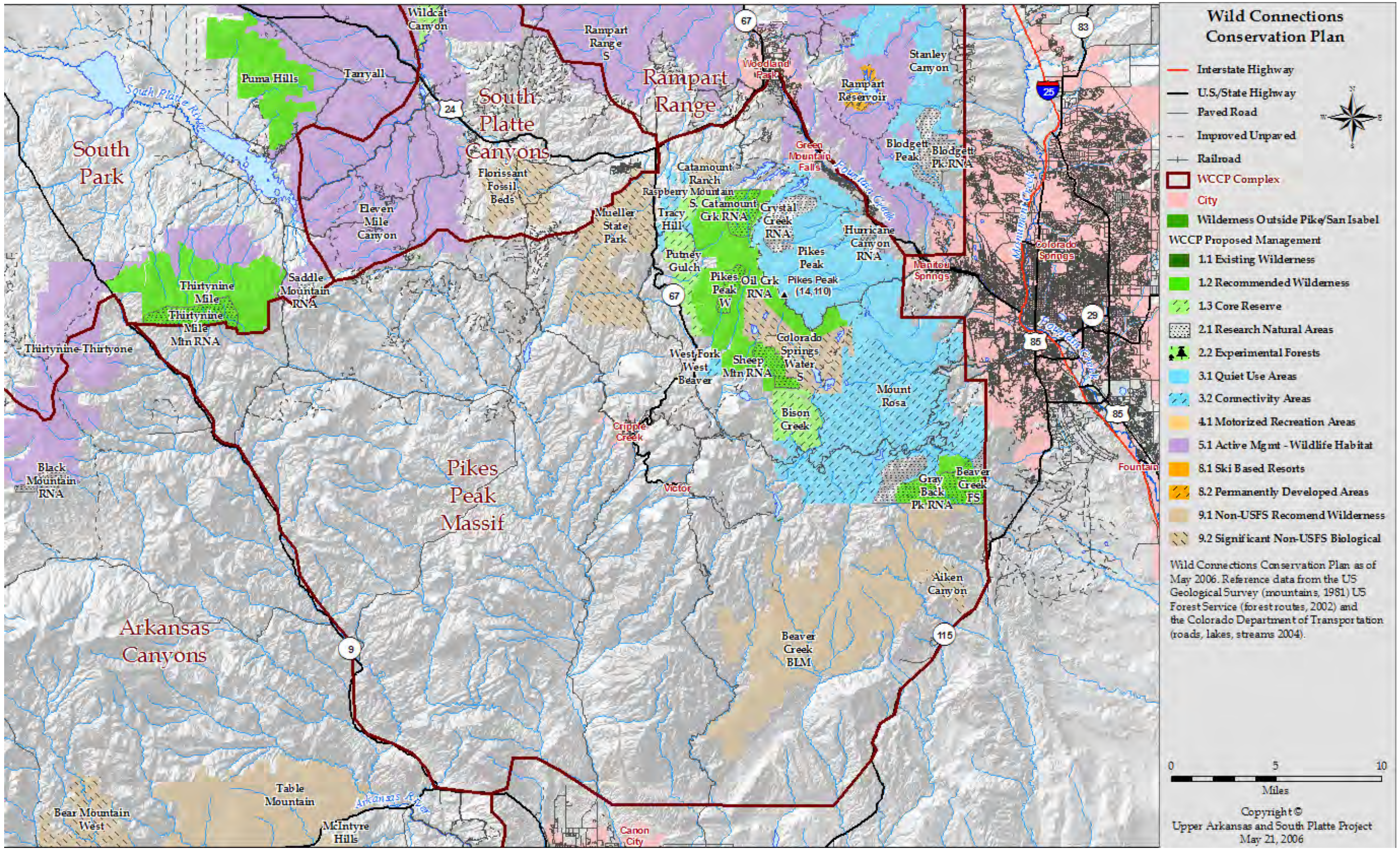
The Pikes Peak Massif Complex

Pikes Peak West roadless area



The Pikes Peak Massif Complex includes Pikes Peak and the lower elevation areas across BLM lands to the south, as well as a large area of mixed ownership to the west

Eleven complexes centered on geographical features encompass sections of the Pike-San Isabel National Forest, adjacent BLM, state, and private lands. Fitting together like a mosaic, they cover the headwaters of the South Platte and Arkansas Rivers.


Wild Connections Conservation Plan
Interstate Highway
U.S./State Highway
Paved Road
Improved Unpaved
Railroad
WCCP Complex
City
Wilderness Outside Pike/San Isabel
WCCP Proposed Management
1.1 Existing Wilderness
1.2 Recommended Wilderness
1.3 Core Reserve
2.1 Research Natural Areas
2.2 Experimental Forests
3.1 Quiet Use Areas
3.2 Connectivity Areas
4.1 Motorized Recreation Areas
5.1 Active Mgmt - Wildlife Habitat
8.1 Ski Based Resorts
8.2 Permanently Developed Areas
9.1 Non-USFS Recomend Wilderness
9.2 Significant Non-USFS Biological
Wild Connections Conservation Plan as of May 2006. Reference data from the US Geological Survey (mountains, 1981) US Forest Service (forest routes, 2002) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (roads, lakes, streams 2004).
0
5
10
Miles
Copyright ©
Upper Arkansas and South Platte Project
May 21, 2006
South Park
South Platte Canyons
Rampart Range
Pikes Peak Massif
Arkansas Canyons
Wildcat Canyon
Rampart Range S
Puma Hills
Tarryall
South Platte River
Florissant Fossil Beds
Eleven Mile Canyon
Mueller State Park
Woodland Park
Rampart Reservoir
Stanley Canyon
Blodgett Peak
Blodgett Pk. RNA
Green Mountain Falls
Fountain Creek
Catamount Ranch
Raspberry Mountain
S. Catamount Grk RNA
Tracy Hill
Crystal Creek RNA
Hurricane Canyon RNA
Putney Gulch
Pikes Peak W
Oil Grk RNA
Pikes Peak (14,110)
Manitou Springs
Colorado Springs
Fountain Creek
Saddle Mountain RNA
Thirtynine Mile
Thirtynine Mile Mtn RNA
Thirtynine-Thirtyone
West Fork West Beaver
Sheep Mtn RNA
Colorado Springs Water S
Mount Rosa
Bison Creek
Cripple Creek
Victor
Gray Back Pk RNA
Beaver Creek FS
Aiken Canyon
Beaver Creek BLM
Black Mountain RNA
Table Mountain
Bear Mountain West
McIntyre Hills
Arkansas River
Canon City
Fountain
67
24
25
83
85
29
9
115

Map 5.5: Pikes Peak Complex Proposed Management

Note: This map is located in the pocket at back of the document for usability.

Description

Overview

The Pikes Peak Massif Complex is anchored by Pikes Peak on the northeast and includes Forest Service, BLM, State, County, City, and private lands west to the rolling hills south of Thirtynine Mile Mountain and south to the Cañon City and Penrose area. Major roadways, watersheds or agency boundaries define the complex: US Highway 24 from Colorado Springs through Woodland Park to Divide; southwest following the watershed divide between the South Platte and Upper Arkansas basins to the south side of Thirtynine Mile Mountain north of Guffy; Colorado Highway 9 to its intersection with US Highway 50; Highway 50 briefly before departing and staying north of Cañon City along the BLM lands; and finally Colorado Highway 115 north to rejoin Highway 24. The bulk of the complex is located on private or BLM lands, such as the Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area, with Pike National Forest land concentrated on the northeast around Pikes Peak. Other land ownership includes Mueller State Park (State of Colorado) as well as the City of Colorado Springs watershed areas and Teller County open-space lands. The complex includes lands in Teller and Fremont Counties, with parts of El Paso County on the east. The internationally famous Pikes Peak is the domineering landscape formation from virtually any perspective across the complex.

A description of the landscape, vegetation, wildlife and ecological values, including detailed descriptions of roadless areas, is followed by the recommendations for the complex organized according to the management themes. A discussion of connectivity within the complex and to adjacent complexes is found at the end

The Landscape and Wildlife

At 14,110 feet, Pikes Peak is not the highest peak in Colorado; however, when you look in all directions from the top, easily accessed now by a road, you understand how Katherine Lee Bates who ascended the summit in 1893, came to write “American the Beautiful.” The low point of the Pikes Peak Massif complex is along Fourmile Creek in the south portion at about 5,700 feet. The highest peaks that surround Pikes Peak are Sachett Mountain at 12,599 feet, Sentinel Point at 12,527 feet, Sheep Mountain at 12,397 feet and Almagre Mountain at 12,367 feet. Other notable mountains in the Pikes Peak complex are Cow Mountain at 11,143 feet, Rosa Mountain at 11,499, Big Chief Mountain at 11,224 feet, and Cheyenne Mountain at 9,565 feet, along with Thirtynine Mile Mountain at 10,815 feet. A number of creeks, all in the Arkansas drainage, flow across the complex, including Beaver Creek, Fourmile Creek, West Fourmile Creek, Eightmile Creek, Wilson Creek, Turkey Creek, and Currant Creeks.

Vegetation coverage is incredibly diverse due to the large elevation range within this complex. There are three predominant patterns. The Forest Service lands are ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir in the lower elevations that transitions on Pikes Peak to Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir, bristlecone, limber pine and tundra as elevation increases. Across the northern part of the complex to the west of Pikes Peak, beautiful patches of aspens intermingle with ponderosa pine and mountain grasslands. The southern part of the complex transitions from Douglas-fir and aspen to piñon-juniper woodlands and Gambel oak shrublands as the complex drops into the lower elevations of the Arkansas basin.

Black bear, bighorn sheep, deer, elk, and pronghorn habitat is found across various parts of complex. There are bighorn sheep production areas and winter range covering most of Pikes Peak itself, as well

as a small part of Mueller State Park and on some BLM lands in the center of the complex, with an important corridor south from Pikes Peak to Beaver Creek (BLM). Elk, mule deer and black bear ranges include almost the entire complex, with large elk calving areas and winter range on the north slope of Pikes Peak and in Mueller State Park. Several of the few remaining pure populations of greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*), along with Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucid*), and peregrine falcon are found in this complex. There are many rare plants, as well, such as alpine bluebells, various moonworts, Pikes Peak spring parsley, Rocky Mountain columbine and yellow lady's-slipper to name a few.

Ecological values of the Pikes Peak Massif Complex

Five proposed Research Natural Areas (RNA) in addition to the Hurricane Canyon designated Research Natural Area; three BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); seventeen Colorado Natural Heritage Program's Potential Conservation Areas, five State Wildlife Areas, the Aiken Canyon Nature Conservancy Preserve and Mueller State Park attest to the ecological importance of the Pikes Peak Massif. In addition, the majority of the complex is rated by The Nature Conservancy's Conservation Blueprint (TNC Blueprint) be of moderate biological value and Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project's Vision (SREP Vision) shows three roadless areas as core wilderness, with the rest of the National Forest Land as low use and the BLM lands as wildlife linkages.

Wilderness and Roadless Areas

Although the western part of the Pikes Peak Massif Complex is non-federal land, the eastern part has large roadless areas on Forest Service lands including Pikes Peak itself and the south slopes as the land drops in elevation to become BLM lands toward the Arkansas River. Table 5.8 lists the roadless areas and they are described below.

Table 5.8: Pikes Peak Massif Roadless Areas

Name	Acres (UASPP)	Roadless Under Roadless Rule
Beaver Creek /Gray Back Peak	38,200	No*
Catamount Ranch	1,300	n/a**
Colorado Springs Water South	7,300	n/a**
Mueller State Park	11,900	No
Pikes Peak East	15,800	Yes
Pikes Peak West	25,600	Yes†

** Includes land managed by the US Forest Service and by the Bureau of Land Management.*
***Lands not managed by the US Forest Service.*
†Roadless rule area has significantly fewer areas than UASPP inventory.

Wilderness Areas

There are currently no Congressionally designated Wilderness Areas within the Pikes Peak Massif complex. However, most of the Beaver Creek roadless area is a BLM Wilderness Study Area, which means that it is managed essentially as Wilderness until Congress acts on its designation.

Unprotected roadless areas

The Roadless Areas exhibit a great diversity of vegetation and wildlife, with great elevational contrast between the high tundra of the two areas on Pikes Peak and the low elevation in the southern Beaver Creek area. Table 5.8 lists the roadless areas in the Pikes Peak complex. The roadless areas on National Forest lands are described below from north to south.

Pikes Peak East

The Pikes Peak East Roadless Area, located in the north-east corner of the complex, is bounded on the south by the forest boundary and the cog railway, on the west by the Pikes Peak Highway, and on the northeast by forest road 334, the forest boundary, and forest road 329. One cherrystemmed route on the northeast, forest road 330, provides access to the North Fork of Frenchman Creek and popular canoeing and fishing lakes for the public. The roadless area at

15,800 acres is larger than the Roadless Area Conservation Rule Inventoried Roadless Area, as the North Fork of Frenchman Creek boundary is moved to the cherrystemmed road and some smaller expansions were made on the south and east.

The Pikes Peak East roadless area increases in elevation from east to west as it nears the summit of Pikes Peak. Therefore, ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and aspen dominate the eastern edges, transitioning to Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir and bristlecone/limber pine, then to alpine tundra and the bare rock that characterizes the summit. Several creeks originate and drain to the east of the roadless area, including the North and South Forks of Frenchman Creek, Ruxton Creek which flows down through Manitou Springs, and Severy Creek which joins Cascade Creek, all providing areas of riparian vegetation. Rare plants include alpine bluebells (*Mertensia alpina*), clawless draba (*Draba exunguiculata*), James' telesonix (*Telesonix jamesii*), narrowleaf grapefern (*Botrychium lineare* , pale and reflected moonwort (*Botrychium pallidum* and *B. echo*), Pikes Peak spring parsley (*Oreoxis humilis*), Rocky Mountain columbine (*Aquilegia saximontana*) and yellow lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus ssp parviflorum*).

Black bear have a summer activity area on the east half of the roadless area with a narrower band of high fall activity on the extreme east. Elk, mule deer, and mountain lion are found in suitable habitat, with elk wintering in the lower elevations to the northwest in the adjacent Pikes Peak West roadless area and toward Mueller State Park. Bighorn sheep have a large production area and concentrate in summer on the higher elevation western section of this area, moving down the slopes to the southwest into the Colorado Springs Watershed and Pikes Peak West roadless area. Mule deer and elk have summer range across the whole area. Perhaps the most notable species is found in Severy Creek – the greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*). Introduced populations of greenbacks have been established in Bear Creek and North Cheyenne Creek. These are part of only a dozen or so healthy populations in the southern Front Range Mountains. Another population is in the Boehmer Creek drainage and reservoirs to the south in the Colorado Springs Watershed

The Pikes Peak East roadless area is biologically rich, with a number of noteworthy locations. The western edge of the roadless area includes part of the large Pikes Peak Potential Conservation Area of outstanding significance (PCA), extending from the summit area nearly ten miles to the south; the Cascade Creek corridor on the northeast likewise is of outstanding significance, and Severy Creek is of very high significance. RNAs in the roadless area include the proposed Crystal Creek RNA and the currently designated Hurricane Ridge RNA. The whole roadless area is rated as moderate conservation value by the Nature Conservancy, while the two RNAs are highlighted in SREP's Vision as core agency and the remainder as low use.

Pikes Peak West

The Pikes Peak West roadless area is adjacent to Pikes Peak East, separated only by the Pikes Peak Highway and the cog railroad. These western and southern flanks of Pikes Peak West are bound by the National Forest boundary on the north and west, except for a detour around Raspberry Mountain and a cherrystem of forest road 383 that leads to the Mennonite Camp and the Crags Campground, as well as providing access to a major private land inholding. On the far southeast, forest road 376 is the boundary north to the Colorado Springs Watershed, where the roadless area then follows the watershed northwest, then southeast and finally northeast to rejoin the cog railway. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule Inventoried Roadless Area is much smaller the 25,600 acre area inventoried by UASPP because the land southeast of the West Fork of Beaver Creek into Sheep Mountain and Bull Park has been included in Pikes Peak West. The landscape is dominated by Pikes Peak to the east and Raspberry Mountain in the northwest corner.

Pikes Peak West is dominated by Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir and large alpine meadows and tundra as you climb in elevation to the summit of Pikes Peak, with large pockets of limber/bristlecone pine, aspen and Douglas-fir on the north and west sides, as well as considerable aspen on the south. Rare plants include alpine bluebells (*Mertensia alpina*), Pikes Peak spring parsley (*Oreoxis humilis*), arctic and clawless draba (*Draba fladnizensis* and *D. exunguiculata*), James' telesonix (T*elesonix jamesii*), lance-leaved, pale, reflected western moonwort (*Botrychium lanceolatum var lanceolatum*, B. *pallidum, B. echo* and *B. hesperium*), and Rocky Mountain columbine (*aquilegia saximontana*). A natural community of bristlecone pine/Arizona fescue (*Pinus aristata/Festuca arizonica*) montane woodlands is found on the far south side.

Bighorn sheep summer and winter ranges cover the south two-thirds of the area, and there is a large lambing area from the summit south to the forest boundary. Black bear and mountain lion are found here. Elk and deer use the area in the summer, with the deer concentrated in the southern part. A small area of elk winter range is found on the south central side overlapping the Colorado Springs Watershed, but the major wintering habitat is south and west of the roadless area. A large elk calving location is on the north side. Like Pikes Peak East, the greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*) in the Boehmer watershed is of great importance as the trout slowly recover from near extinction. American peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) have been recorded here in the south portion.

Three proposed RNA's are within the boundary: South Catamount Creek, Oil Creek and Sheep Mountain. The large Pikes Peak PCA curves from the summit south and east across the eastern third of the roadless area. Pikes Peak West is part of the larger Nature Conservancy's large Pikes Peak area of moderate conservation value, and SREP's Vision shows the area as core wilderness.

Beaver Creek

The 38,200-acre Beaver Creek roadless area, in the southeast of the complex, is defined by agency land ownership more than by roads. The BLM has designated the vast majority of the area as a Wilderness Study Area (WSA) up to Grayback Peak on National Forest land to the north. The portion of the Beaver Creek roadless area on Forest Service land was never included in the Roadless Area Conservation Rule inventory. The south boundary of the Beaver Creek area is approximately 6 miles north of Highway 50 near Cañon City and Penrose; the west boundary follows the Phantom Canyon Road for a few miles before the road goes westerly toward Victor while the area boundary continues north along the BLM boundary. Near the Teller-Fremont County line the area is defined by BLM boundaries and a number of 4WD roads in the headwaters of East and West Forks of Beaver Creek and south of the Penrose Rosemont Reservoir. The northern boundary is along forest roads 369 and 371 located north of Grayback Peak. The eastern boundary follows the BLM land southwest paralleling Highway 115. The defining topography of Beaver Creek are the exceptionally rugged and steep canyons of East and West Beaver Creeks that join together about 1.5 miles before the stream exits the WSA on the southeast side.

The southern two-thirds of the roadless area is dominated by piñon-juniper, transitioning to Douglas-fir, aspen and ponderosa as you move upslope to the north-east. The Forest Service portion is primarily Douglas-fir with some aspen in the Turkey Creek headwaters, ponderosa pine on the east and a few scattered areas of mountain shrubland near the BLM boundary. The great range in elevation from 6,000 feet in the south to 9,300 feet in the north, the headwaters of Rock Creek and Little Fountain Creek on Grayback Peak, and the major riparian zones of East and West Beaver Creek all contribute to the biodiversity of the area. Natural communities of importance include three types of montane riparian forest narrowleaf cottonwood-Douglas-fir

(*Populus angustifolia/Pseudotsuga menziesii*), narrowleaf cottonwood/thinleaf alder (*Populus angustifolia/Alnus incana*), and narrowleaf cottonwood/Rocky Mountain juniper (*Populus angustifolia/Juniperus scopulorum*), as well as thinleaf alder/mesic graminoid (*Alnus incana/mesic graminoid*) *montane riparian shrubland,* water birch/mesic forb (*Betula occidentalis/mesic forb*) foothills riparian shrubland, and Geyer's willow-Rocky mountain willow/mesic forb (*Salix geyeriana-Salix monticola/mesic forb*) *riparian shrubland.* Rare plants include birdbill day-flower (*Commelina dianthifolia*), gay-feather (*Liatris ligulistylis*), New Mexico cliff fern (*Woodsia neomexicana*), prairie goldenrod (*Unamia alba*), and yellow lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus ssp parviflorum*).

As a low-elevation area, it provides critical habitat for a number of species. Summer bear activity is high across the whole area, with high fall activity concentrated in the north. Bighorn sheep have both summer and winter range across the central portion. Mule deer and elk move across whole area in summer, with deer winter range concentrated on the south and east, and elk winter range is found in the north central area. This is also mountain lion country. Mexican spotted owl (*Strix lucida occidentalis*) and American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) are rare birds of Beaver Creek, with the canyons providing ideal habitat. The owls frequent Phantom Canyon on the west and the general Turkey Creek canyons on the east, migrating seasonally up and down the canyon and east to Ft. Carson. They are one of the few breeding populations left on the southern mountain front.

Beaver Creek ACEC covers East and West Beaver Creeks in the center of the area, and a part of Phantom Canyon ACEC is found on the western edge of the roadless boundary. Beaver Creek State Wildlife area also follows the mainstem and two forks of Beaver Creek. Four PCAs are located here. Blue Mountain PCA on the north third is of high significance; Windmill Gulch in the central section is of moderate significance, while Cliffside PCA encompasses all of the Beaver Creek drainage and Adelaide is located in Phantom Canyon, both of very high conservation significance. The southern two-thirds of the Beaver Creek roadless area is included in The Nature Conservancy's designation of moderate conservation value, while the northern third is considered of moderately high conservation value. Beaver Creek is listed as core Wilderness in SREP's Vision. The Nature Conservancy's Aiken Canyon Preserve is adjacent to the Beaver Creek area on the northeast, providing an important area of protected land in the rapidly developing exurban area west of Highway 115. Outstanding features of Aiken Canyon include two globally rare plant communities - piñon, one-seeded juniper/Scribner needlegrass woodland and Gambel oak-mountain mahogany shrubland, several native tall grass species and more than 100 species of birds, including a good representation of raptors with Coopers and sharp-shinned hawks, golden eagles, prairie falcons, and northern harriers are found here.

Historical and Cultural Features of Pikes Peak Massif

Some archeological, historical and cultural features of note include the following:

- The Ute Indian people, perhaps the region's earliest residents, gave the mountain known today as Pikes Peak the name of Tava, meaning the mountain of the sun. The mountain became a revered landmark for their homeland
- Pikes Peak inspired the penning of "America the Beautiful" by Katharine Lee Bates in 1893. She remembered her journey: "One day some of the other teachers and I decided to go on a trip to 14,000-foot Pikes Peak. We hired a prairie wagon. Near the top we had to leave the wagon and go the rest of the way on mules. I was very tired. But when I saw the view, I felt great joy. All the wonder of America seemed displayed there, with the sea-like expanse."
- In the late 1850's, Pikes Peak was a symbol to the gold seekers heading west. "Pikes Peak or Bust" became their slogan.

- Pikes Peak is a destination for countless people every year, including those hiking and biking the Barr Trail that was completed to the summit in December of 1918. Others ride the Manitou Springs Cog Railroad, built in 1889-90, and drive up the Pikes Peak Toll road Highway, begun in 1915, which follows the old carriage road built between 1886 and 1888.
- The Pikes Peak Timber Reserve was created in 1892 by President Benjamin Harrison. In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt designated the reserve and lands to the north and west the Pike National Forest, a part of the nationwide resource system.

Management Recommendations

Significant portions of the eastern part of the complex are recommended for Theme 1, with Beaver Creek (the National Forest land and Beaver Creek WSA) and Pikes Peak West being recommended for Wilderness (Theme 1.2), with adjacent lands to the west and south of Pikes Peak West as Core Reserve (Theme 1.3). Five Research Natural Areas (Theme 2.1) are proposed along with one existing Research Natural Area. The northeastern part of the complex is recommended primarily for Theme 3, with Pikes Peak East and adjacent land north of Trails 666 and 667 recommended for 3.1 Quiet Use and the remainder of the forest lands south of Trails 666 and 667 as 3.2 Connectivity Area. The Pikes Peak Massif also contains valuable non-Forest lands (Theme 9) on the northeast and southern range. Table 5.9 lists the management units in the Pikes Peak Massif Complex by theme. Refer to the Pikes Peak Massif complex map for specific locations and refer to the roadless area descriptions for more details on the unit.

Table 5.9: Pikes Peak Massif Management Recommendations

Name	Acres	Recommended Management
Theme 1 – Natural Processes Dominate		
Beaver Creek FS	4,300	1.2 Recommended Wilderness (with BLM area Beaver Creek)
Pikes Peak West	17,700	1.2 Recommended Wilderness
Bison Creek	3,600	1.3 Core Reserve
Putney Gulch	2,900	1.3 Core Reserve
Raspberry Mountain	1,300	1.3 Core Reserve
Theme 2 – Special Areas		
Crystal Creek RNA	2,500	2.1 Research Natural Areas
Gray Back Peak RNA	6,000	2.1 Research Natural Areas
Hurricane Canyon RNA	500	2.1 Research Natural Areas
Oil Creek RNA	1,100	2.1 Research Natural Areas
S. Catamount Creek RNA	2,000	2.1 Research Natural Areas
Sheep Mountain RNA	1,700	2.1 Research Natural Areas
Theme 3 – Natural Landscapes with Limited Management		
Pikes Peak	23,000	3.1 Quiet Use Areas
Mount Rosa	28,600	3.2 Connectivity Areas
Tracy Hill	1,900	3.2 Connectivity Areas
West Fork West Beaver	500	3.2 Connectivity Areas
Theme 9 – Significant Lands (Non-USFS)		
Beaver Creek BLM	33,900	9.1 Non-USFS Recommended Wilderness
Aiken Canyon	1,600	9.2 Significant Non-USFS Biological
Catamount Ranch	1,300	9.2 Significant Non-USFS Biological
Colorado Springs Water South	7,300	9.2 Significant Non-USFS Biological
Mueller State Park	12,500	9.2 Significant Non-USFS Biological

Theme 1 – Natural Processes Dominate
Lands in Theme 1 are managed to maintain highly natural conditions and management activities are virtually unnoticeable. They may include Wilderness and semi-primitive lands that provide user opportunities that are inconsistent with Wilderness such as mountain biking.

Theme 1.2 – Recommended Wilderness
Recommended Wilderness areas are those that stakeholders advocate for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. All of the proposed wilderness areas meet the capability requirements of the Wilderness Act of 1964 for designation

The Wild Connections Conservation Plan calls for Wilderness designation of Pikes Peak West and the Forest Service part of the greater Beaver Creek proposed Wilderness. These areas are described in detail in the roadless area descriptions above. In general, the proposed Wilderness boundary of Pikes Peak West is the same as the UASPP roadless boundary except on the west side. There the boundary is drawn along the proposed Ring the Peak trail, with the roadless sections west of the trail recommended for Core Reserve. The Beaver Creek Forest Service area recommended for Wilderness is located at Grayback Peak. It is part of the Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for BLM Lands which was introduced as legislation by Representative Diana DeGette. The following benefits were considered in recommending these areas for Wilderness designation: permanent protection to enhance wildlife habitat and connectivity, protect sources of domestic water, provide for native plant and animal species, and balance motorized, high impact recreation in other parts of the complex with opportunities for quiet, challenging back country recreation. The Pikes Peak West and Beaver Creek Wilderness recommendations will also increase the effectiveness of wildlife connectivity, protection, and dispersal by adding Wilderness Areas in a complex which currently does not have any exiting permanent protective status designations.

We believe that both of these areas meet the capability, availability, and suitability criteria of the Wilderness Act and Forest Service Wilderness Handbook. These are discussed for the complex as whole below, with notations as to particular values or potential conflicts.

Capability
These areas meet the general requirements for Wilderness. The Pikes Peak West area is larger than 5,000 acres and, while the Forest Service Beaver Creek proposed Wilderness is less than 5,000 acres, it should be considered part of the much larger Beaver Creek proposed Wilderness. The areas do not have system roads and the imprints of human activities are substantially unnoticeable. There are excellent opportunities for solitude and challenging back country recreation.

Availability
To the best of our knowledge, there are no major impediments to designation of these areas as Wilderness areas. There are no immediate projects planned in this complex which would preclude Wilderness designation. Private inholdings are mostly located along the boundaries of the wilderness areas and are excluded from the designation. The proposed Ring the Peak Trail, which allows mechanized use, and the motorized Pikes Peak Highway are excluded from the Wilderness boundaries. Parts of the Fourmile C&H grazing allotment would be grandfathered in with Wilderness designation, although over time they should be retired where feasible. This does not present a problem for Wilderness designation.

Suitability
Mountain biking would be foregone on the Crags Trail to Devil's Playground, which passes

through very steep and ecologically fragile terrain. Recommendations for Wilderness might limit the type of fuels treatments available.

There are numerous values that support the designation of the proposed Wildernesses and contribute to the National Wilderness System:

- Add montane and alpine ecosystems to the Pike-San Isabel and Region 2 Wilderness System
- Protect important wildlife habitat for all the species that depend on ecosystems in these areas (including the BLM portion of the Beaver Creek proposed Wilderness), such as greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*), Mexican spotted owl (*Strix lucida occidentalis*), American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), elk, and bighorn sheep.
- Protect rare plants in these areas (including the BLM portion of the Beaver Creek proposed Wilderness), including alpine bluebells (*Mertensia alpina*), Pikes Peak spring parsley (*Oreoxis humilis*), arctic and clawless draba (*Draba fladnizensis* and *D. exunguiculata*), James' telesonix (T*elesonix jamesii*), *lance*-leaved, pale, reflected western moonwort (*Botrychium lanceolatum var lanceolatum*, B. *pallidum, B. echo* and *B. hesperium*), Rocky Mountain columbine (*aquilegia saximontana*), birdbill day-flower (*Commelina dianthifolia*), gay-feather (*Liatris ligulistylis*), New Mexico cliff fern (*Woodsia neomexicana*), prairie goldenrod (*Unamia alba*), and yellow lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus ssp parviflorum*).
- Enhance the opportunities for challenging and unconfined non-motorized recreation, including some four-season backcountry recreation.
- Provide scenic and natural settings in a range of ecosystem types.
- Reduce the fragmentation of landscapes within the Wilderness boundaries by confining motorized recreation to a system of designated trails outside of important wildlife habitat areas.
- Protect the crucial ecological link along Beaver Creek between the alpine high country of Pikes Peak and the arid rangelands of the high plains.

Theme 1.3 – Core Reserve

Core Reserves are areas of unroaded land which have been shaped primarily by natural forces but that are not desirable for designation as wilderness. They emphasize the maintenance and sustainability of current biological diversity.

Raspberry Mountain, Putney Gulch and Bison Creek, though essentially roadless, did not fully meet Wilderness standards and so are recommended instead for Core designation.

- Raspberry Mountain is located north of the Crags Campground. Rising to 10,605 feet, Raspberry Mountain transitions from aspen and some Douglas-fir to Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir, with significant areas of bristlecone/limber pine forests. Raspberry Mountain was excluded from the proposed Pikes Peak West Wilderness area to accommodate for the mechanized Ring the Peak Trail which separates the two areas. Although Raspberry Mountain is not suitable for Wilderness due to this trail, it contains intact wildlands and provides critical wildlife habitat and migration access to Mueller State Park.
- Putney Gulch is located south of the Crags Campground and west of Sentinel Point with the eastern boundary along Trails 704 and 704A, part of the proposed Ring the Peak Trail system. This allows mechanized use adjacent to the Pikes Peak West proposed Wilderness. Vegetation is a mixture of Douglas-fir, aspen, bristlecone/limber pine, and Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir. It provides important connecting habitat between Pikes Peak West proposed Wilderness and Dome Rock State Wildlife Area especially for bighorn sheep.

- Bison Creek is located just south of the proposed Pikes Peak West Wilderness, lying south of Sheep Mountain and the Colorado Springs Watershed South lands, bounded on the east by Forest Road 376, stretching south to Gold Camp Road. It is predominantly aspen and limber pine with some Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir. It includes an excellent representation of montane woodlands composed of bristlecone pine and Arizona fescue grass (*Pinus aristata/ Festuca arizonica*) in the proposed Cathedral Park PCA, which is also noted for its magnificent rock formations.

Theme 2 – Special Areas
These special areas will protect or enhance a number of important or unusual biological characteristics. Intensity of management will vary based on the area objectives.

Theme 2.1 – Research Natural Areas

Theme 2 areas are managed to protect or enhance areas with unusual characteristics, including Research Natural Areas, special biological or geological areas, cultural/historical areas or other special designations.

To supplement the range of research opportunities and increase the ecosystem representation, Gray Back Peak, Crystal Creek, Oil Creek, South Catamount Creek and Sheep Mountain should be added to the already designated Hurricane Canyon RNA. Each proposed RNA has its unique combination of ecological values which will enhance the RNA system. Four are within proposed Wilderness and two are in the Pikes Peak proposed Quiet Use area.

- Hurricane Canyon RNA encompasses 500 acres of Douglas-fir-dominated mixed conifer forest, montane grassland, and oak thicket cover types. The mixed conifer forest of Hurricane Canyon RNA is a complex mosaic of intergrading plant associations. It is located at the north-east corner of the Pikes Peak Massif complex, along the rugged flank of Mount Manitou. It was established as RNA in 1931, and was designated a Colorado Natural Area in 1980. The Colorado Natural Areas survey noted (Colorado Natural Areas Program Site Summary for Hurricane Canyon, December, 1996): Fire and disease are closely related in the lower montane forest ecosystem. The last major fire in the RNA occurred about 1850, according to the 1929 Establishment Record. Fire suppression since that time resulted in a dense forest highly susceptible to outbreaks of spruce budworm. Severe infestations occurred in the 1970s, resulting in the mortality of 20%-75% of the Douglas-fir canopy within the RNA. The Wild Connections Conservation Plan recommends sustaining the RNA designation for Hurricane Canyon to further study the effects of fire and insect disease, specifically due to the relatively large number of inventory reports on hand for this site. CNAP files contain several site visit and condition reports, dated 1929 (US Forest Service), 1966 (US Forest Service), 1979 (CNAP), and post-1980 (CNAP).
- Gray Back Peak potential RNA encompasses 6,000 of ponderosa pine, mixed-conifer, aspen, and oak thicket cover types. It is located at the southeast boundary of the National Forest just north of the BLM Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area, and is included within the Wild Connections proposed Beaver Creek Wilderness Area. The Colorado Natural Areas survey noted (Decker, Karin. Colorado Natural Areas Program Ecological Evaluation for Gray Back Peak, March, 1998):

    > The area supports outstanding examples of plant associations typical of the Pike's Peak region, including ponderosa pine, mixed-conifer, and oak shrubland communities. Plant communities at this site are superior to those at nearby proposed or established RNAs. The extensive acreage of closed canopy coniferous forest provides good habitat for Mexican spotted owls (*Strix occidentalis lucida*), which

have been reported from this area. The quality of the site is further enhanced by the presence of the state-imperiled yellow lady's-slipper orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus ssp. parviflorum*).

- Crystal Creek potential RNA encompasses 2,500 acres of wetland, alpine meadow, and mixed-conifer, Engelmann spruce, aspen, and limber pine forest cover types. It is located due north of the summit of Pikes Peak, on the northern slope. Elevation ranges from 8960 to 11,838 feet. The Colorado Natural Areas survey noted (Sanders, Mary. Colorado Natural Areas Program Ecological Evaluation for Crystal Creek, March, 1998):

  The large wetland at the head of Severy Creek is significant both within the potential RNA and when compared to other established and potential RNAs. Although the wetland shows signs of moderate to heavy elk use, it has not been affected by domestic livestock grazing. Inclusion of this wetland within the potential RNA will result in the protection of most of the upper watershed of Severy Creek. No other significant wetland areas exist within the potential RNA, and wetlands of this size are not currently well represented within the RNA system. On the south edge of the large wetland mentioned above, there are old-growth stands of Engelmann spruce. These stands are of good quality and show very little sign of human disturbance. High elevation ridges and steep upper slopes support conifer stands containing very old bristlecone pine. These old trees measure up to 27.1 inches (68.8 cm) DBH and are estimated to be well over 500 years old. Like the old-growth Engelmann spruce forest, these stands are of good quality and show little or no sign of human impact. Older trees have multiple fire scars, suggesting that this type is persistent on high ridges.
- Oil Creek potential RNA of 1,100 acres is predominantly high elevation grasslands and includes occurrences of the rare white arctic draba (*Draba fladnizensis*). It is located between West Beaver Creek and Sentinel Point and is the headwaters of Oil Creek, which is part of the Fourmile Creek watershed. It is part of the Pikes Peak PCA of outstanding significance and the Pikes Peak TNC portfolio site of high uniqueness. Winter range and lambing areas for bighorn sheep area found here as well.
- South Catamount Creek potential RNA encompasses 2,000 acres of ponderosa pine, aspen, bristlecone/limber pine, Douglas-fir and Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir forests. It is located within the Wild Connections proposed Pikes Peak West Wilderness area, along the northern boundary. Four different moonwort species (*Botrychium hesperium*, *Botrychium lanceolatum var. lanceolatum*, *Botrychium echo*, and *Botrychium pallidum*) listed as state imperiled plants have been sighted in area. Two of these moonwort species are also globally imperiled. One of these moonwort species is not found in other proposed RNAs in region.
- Sheep Mountain potential RNA is 1,700 acres of intermixed Engelmann spruce and aspen stands, with many alpine meadows and wetlands. It is located near the center of the Pikes Peak Massif complex, running along the southern boundary of the Colorado Springs Watershed South land in the headwaters of East Fork of Beaver Creek. Boehmer Creek, which flows across the north part of the RNA, is habitat for the critically important greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*). The RNA is within the Wild Connections proposed Pikes Peak West Wilderness area.

Theme 3 – Natural Landscapes with Limited Management

Theme 3 management maintains or restores the natural character of these areas while providing limited opportunities for recreation, including backcountry motorized and non-motorized settings. Fuels treatment and prescribed fire are conducted primarily to maintain or restore natural ecological conditions. Livestock grazing is common

Theme 3.1 – Quiet Use Areas

Management emphasizes non-motorized recreation opportunities in a natural or natural-appearing landscape with little or no evidence of recent human-caused disturbance.

The Pikes Peak proposed Quiet Use Area is located on the east and northern flank of Pikes Peak, with the western boundary following the Pikes Peak highway, the northern and eastern boundary along the Forest boundary, and the southern boundary following the Bear Canyon Trail and Bear Creek. The majestic and historical Barr Trail is located within this area; however the Cog Railroad was cherrystemmed out due to its motorized use. The motorized area and private land in Bear Creek south of Mount Arthur and Mount Garfield are also excluded from the Quiet Use area. There are numerous trails for hiking that make this an ideal quiet use area overlooking the city of Colorado Springs.

Theme 3.2 – Connectivity Areas

Management emphasis is to facilitate daily, seasonal, and natal dispersal movements of native wildlife between larger blocks of suitable habitat.

Tracy Hill, even though it is roaded and in isolated parcels, serves as connectivity land between Raspberry Mountain and Putney Gulch Core Reserves and Mueller State Park. It is particularly important for elk, as it is summer and winter range, part of a larger elk calving area and overlaps the large winter elk concentration area in Mueller State Park.

Mount Rosa is located between the Pikes Peak area, Bison Peak area, and the Grayback Peak RNA and Beaver Creek proposed Wilderness. It has many motorized and nonmotorized trails and the northern boundary follows the Bear Canyon Trail and Bear Creek. Although the trails fragment the habitat, it still provides connections for black bear in an area of high summer and fall activity, bighorn sheep winter ranges in Bison Creek area and the central Beaver Creek WSA/proposed Wilderness. In addition Bear Canyon has a population of greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*).

West Fork West Beaver is a small area adjacent to the southwest corner of Pikes Peak West Wilderness that was excluded from the wilderness primarily because of indefensible boundaries. It is a deer concentration area and winter range for bighorn sheep.

Theme 9 – Significant Lands (Non-US Forest Service)

Theme 9 management is used to highlight and acknowledge other lands critical to both habitat and connectivity, such as adjacent BLM lands. It is critical that National Forest management considers the greater ecosystem to which it is connected and that forest activities be compatible with management activities on these adjacent public lands.

Theme 9.1 – Non-Forest Service Recommended Wilderness

Wild Connections has explicitly included seven large BLM managed roadless areas as they are integral to our overall vision as wilderness core reserves.

Beaver Creek WSA and the adjoining Beaver Creek National Forest area at Grayback Peak are proposed for Wilderness designation. These lands are located in Fremont, Teller, and El Paso counties, midway between Colorado Springs and Cañon City. The BLM's Royal Gorge Field office manages the southern seven-eights of the proposed Wilderness Area. Suitable Wilderness lands extend to the north of the BLM WSA onto Forest Service Lands, including the proposed Gray Back Peak RNA. This whole area is described in the Beaver Creek roadless area description above. Beaver

Creek proposed Wilderness forms a crucial ecological link between the alpine high country of Pikes Peak and the arid rangelands of the high plains.

Theme 9.2 – Significant Non-Forest Service Biological Areas

Mueller State Park is, in a way, a large stand alone island of protection and biological diversity. The critical value of Mueller is in its lower elevation lands, to complement the higher elevation Pikes Peak West, Pikes Peak East, and Colorado Springs Watershed South roadless areas, which lay just to the east across Colorado Highway 67. Mueller was originally acquired by The Nature Conservancy, and is now managed by Colorado State Parks and the Colorado Division of Wildlife primarily for wildlife and low impact recreation. The Dome Rock State Wildlife Area on the southern boundary is named for the 800 foot-high dome of granite rising above the valley floor. Once a working ranch, most of the network of ranch roads have been closed to motorized traffic with several serving as established hiking and mountain biking trails. The campground on the north end, with 130 sites and the amenities associated with a state park, is an area of high human use in the summer.

Mueller State Park provides bear, mountain lion, elk, mule deer, and bighorn sheep with year round habitat here, especially as it is at lower elevation. The Dome Rock portion sees high bear activity in both summer and fall, and there is a large area of bighorn sheep winter range, with a substantial lambing area. Dome Rock is closed from December 15 to May 15 for bighorn grazing and lambing. Mueller is a major nexus for the greater Pikes Peak elk herd which historically ranged over the lower mountain slopes and north, west, and south to Florissant Fossil Bed National Monument area and High Park. Today, seasonally migrating elk must navigate across highways and around subdivision, so Mueller and Florissant Fossil Bed remain areas of security, especially during the fall rut and spring calving. There is an established elk calving area in the northwest part of the roadless area.

Catamount Ranch is managed primarily for long-term natural resource conservation and will remain commercially undeveloped. Teller County acquired the Catamount Ranch through its county open space program. The original Resource Protection Plan (1997) provides a management vision to preserve the wild, unique beauty of this land on the north slope of Pikes Peak as a significant, protected wildlife habitat.

Colorado Springs Watershed South lies across the south-eastern flank of Pikes Peak, and is one of the most critical areas for watershed protection for the municipally of Colorado Springs. Although it is not federal land and is not totally roadless, it is described here because of its biological diversity, connectivity role between Pikes Peak East and West, and its contribution to municipal water sources. It ranges in elevation and ecosystem type from the southeast to the northwest tundra, progressing from ponderosa pine and aspen to Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir and to alpine tundra and meadows. Alpine bluebells (*Mertensia alpina*) and Pikes Peak spring parsley (*Oreoxis humilis*) are two rare flowers of this area. Five reservoirs and one lake contain and store vital water supplies for Colorado Springs.

This large municipal watershed has many wildlife values. Black bear and mountain lion are found across the area. The large Pikes Peak bighorn sheep habitat, which includes summer and winter range and a substantial lambing area, covers the higher elevation western section of this area. Mule deer and elk have summer range across the whole area. Boehmer Creek flows south and east though the watershed, and harbors greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*) in the creek and associated reservoirs. An area of biological richness is found in the higher elevation lands. The large Pikes Peak PCA of outstanding significance covers the western third of the area and overlaps the southern and eastern boundary. Colorado Springs Watershed South is included in the larger Nature Conservancy conservation area of moderate conservation value, and SREP's Vision shows the area as core agency.

Aiken Canyon Preserve is managed by The Nature Conservancy for long-term natural resource conservation and public education. In 1991, the Conservancy signed a 99-year conservation lease, giving it exclusive right to manage 1080 acres of state land. Since then, the Conservancy has acquired another 541 acres, bringing the entire Aiken Canyon Preserve to 1,621 acres. Aiken Canyon is one of the last high-quality examples of the southern Front Range foothills ecosystem. The preserve is composed of a mosaic of habitat types, including shrublands, tall grass prairie meadows, piñon-juniper woodlands and mixed coniferous woodlands.

Connectivity

An important aspect of the Wild Connections conservation perspective is connections between protected core areas. Connectivity between the roadless areas is nearly restricted to the Forest Service lands on Pikes Peak and to BLM Beaver Creek WSA lands, forming a reverse-crescent shape along the eastern edge of the complex. However, these lands are generally contiguous with no major barriers, other than topographical ones, between them. The western two-thirds of the complex is dominated by a complicated mix of land ownership, with small, intermixed parcels of BLM, private and state lands. Within the complex, the major barrier to animal movement is US Highway 67 from Divide to Cripple Creek. Gambling in Cripple Creek has increased traffic along this narrow route during the last decade. The popularity of this route during the fall aspen season also creates increased traffic during times of critical migration.

There are major barriers to connectivity between the Pikes Peak Massif and the Rampart Range, South Platte Canyons, South Park, and Arkansas Canyons Complexes. The major barrier between the Pikes Peak Massif, Rampart Range, and the South Platte Canyons Complexes is US Highway 24. Running east-west along the valley floor, Highway 24 has exponentially increased in traffic use levels during the last decade, predominantly due to exurban development in Teller county, as well as growth around Woodland Park. The major barrier between the Pikes Peak Massif, South Park, and Arkansas Canyons Complexes is the complicated mix of land ownership within the western two-thirds of the Pikes Peak Complex. The major barrier between the Pikes Peak Massif and Wet Mountain is US Highway 50. The designation of Beaver Creek as a Wilderness Area is critical in ensuring a vital corridor link between the Pikes Peak Massif and the Wet Mountains. However, there still exists a large gap of unprotected land between the two, further complicated by Highway 50 and Cañon City.

Summary

The Pikes Peak Massif complex provides a great variety of ecosystems and land forms from the summit of Pikes Peak to the canyon lands in Phantom Canyon to the high meadows and mixed conifer forests on private and state lands to the west. It location adjacent to metropolitan Colorado Springs and Cañon City makes many recreation opportunities available to residents and tourists alike. It is an important part of the wildlands network that will sustain the integrity of the Pike-San Isabel National Forest, both now and in the foreseeable future.