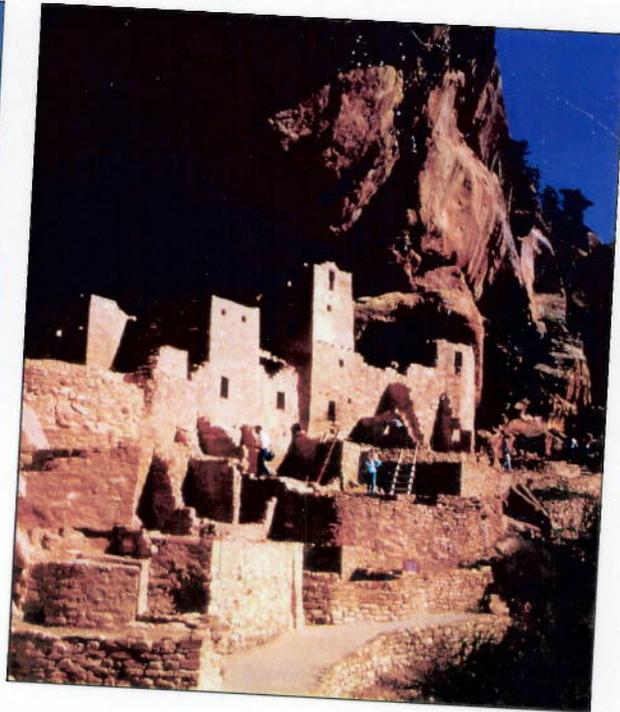
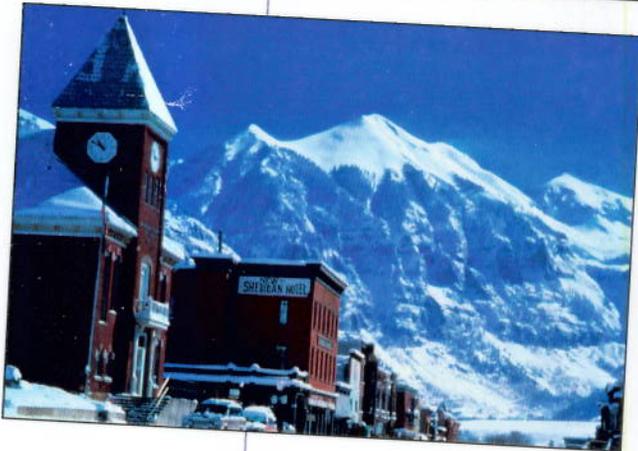
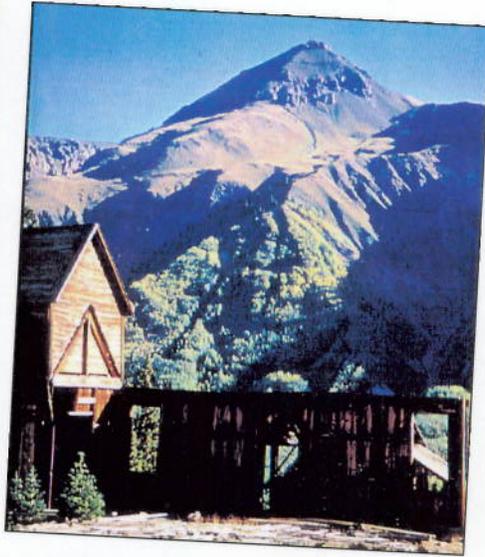
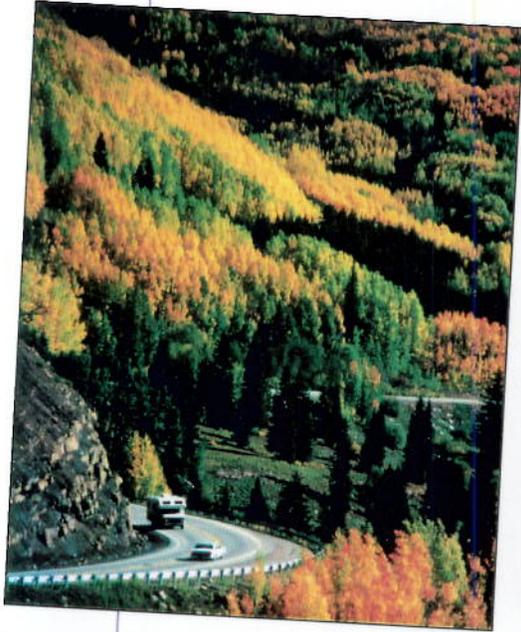


San Juan Skyway Corridor Management Plan

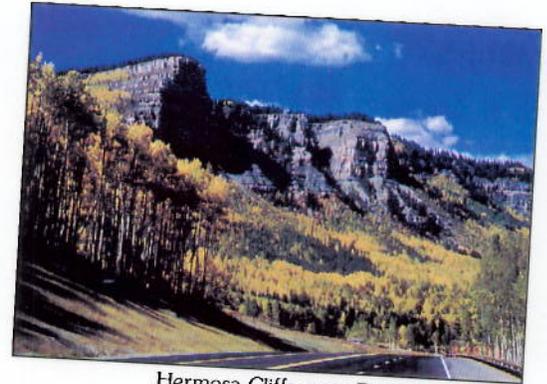


Prepared by the Friends of the San Juan Skyway Association
A public and private partnership dedicated to the preservation
and enhancement of the San Juan Skyway



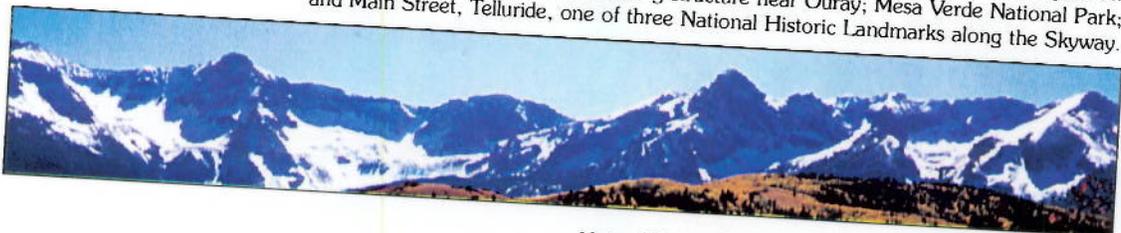
TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Introduction
3	Vision & Goals
4	Corridor Boundary and Major Land Use Map
5	Assessment of the Corridors Resource Qualities
6	Existing Scenic & Natural Areas
7	Existing Scenic & Natural Areas Map
8	Existing Recreation Resources
9-10	Existing Recreation Resources Map & Chart
11	Existing Archaeologic & Historic Resources Chart
12	Existing Archaeologic & Historic Resources Map
14	Resource Management Actions and Strategies
15	Proposed Scenic & Natural Actions
16	Proposed Scenic & Natural Actions Map
17	Proposed Recreation Resource Actions
17	Proposed Archaeologic & Historic Resource Actions
18	General Review of Transportation, Roadway Standard & Safety Actions
20	Public Participation Plan
21	Development Plan
22	Outdoor Advertising Controls and Sign Plans
23	Outdoor Advertising Actions Chart
24	Interpretation Plan
25	Existing Interpretive Sites Chart
26	Existing Interpretive Publications
27	Interpretive Zones Map
28-29	Interpretive Zones & Themes
30-32	Proposed Interpretative Site Charts & Map
33-34	Tourism Development
35	Review & Monitoring
35	Partnerships & Credits



Hermosa Cliffs, near Purgatory Resort, looking north from U.S. 550

Cover photography (clockwise from upper left): San Juan Skyway below Red Mountain Pass (U.S. 550); Historic mining structure near Ouray; Mesa Verde National Park; and Main Street, Telluride, one of three National Historic Landmarks along the Skyway.



Note: All photography contained in this report was taken along the 233 mile San Juan Skyway in Southwest Colorado.

Prepared by the Friends
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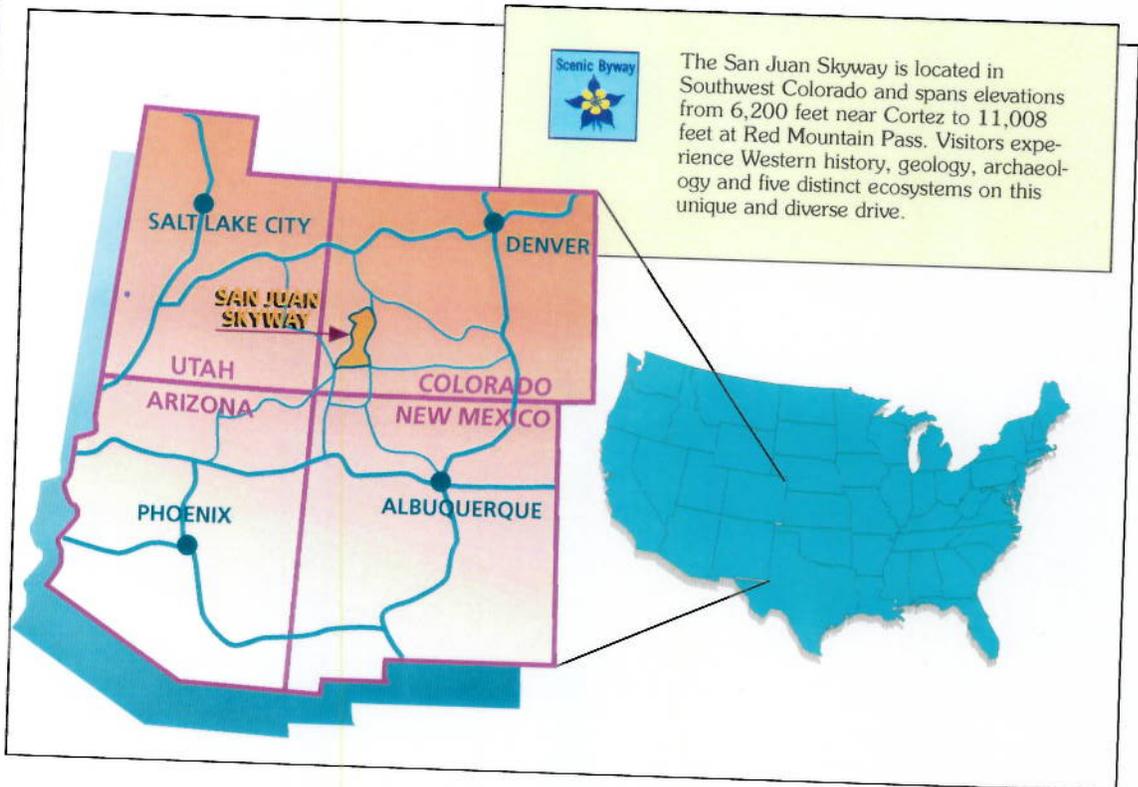
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INTRODUCTION

The San Juan Skyway has often been referred to as "one of the most scenic drives in America." In addition to its stunning mountains and geology, the drive is an excursion through history; from the ancient ancestral Pueblo cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park, to the mining and railroad antiquities located in some of the most romantic Victorian towns in North America. The name "Skyway" comes from the fact that this byway is truly a road "in the sky". It crosses over Red Mountain Pass at an elevation of over 11,000 feet and Molas and Lizard Head Pass, which are both in excess of 10,000 feet.

The diversity of the terrain is astounding. Traversing some of the most spectacular and rugged scenery in North America, this 233 mile byway connects the historic towns of Durango, Silverton, Ouray, Ridgway, Telluride, Rico, Dolores, Cortez, and Mancos, while passing through five distinct ecosystems.



Designated as a National Forest Scenic Byway on November 11, 1988, and by the State of Colorado as a Scenic and Historic Byway on September 22, 1989, it was the first byway within Colorado to receive these official designations. For years before these national and state recognitions, however, this byway was recognized as an outstanding auto touring experience, drawing people from all over the world who travel and enjoy its world class resources. A portion of this roadway, between Ouray and Silverton, is the notorious Million Dollar Highway, which was described in the 1940's for its "million dollar" price tag.

This corridor management plan has been prepared to assist the many agencies and interest groups involved with the Skyway in managing, developing, preserving and interpreting this nationally significant auto touring route, that has become a destination in itself.



VISION & GOALS

To assist with the preparation of this plan, the Friends of the San Juan Skyway Association was established to serve as a steering committee during the planning process. Members of this association consist of one representative from the each of the six involved counties (appointed by Board of County Commissioners); representatives from the San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests; and representatives from the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Parks, Division of Wildlife, Fort Lewis College Office of Community Servicers, Colorado Department of Transportation, and Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts.

Very early in the planning process, the steering committee developed the following vision statement for the San Juan Skyway.

VISION

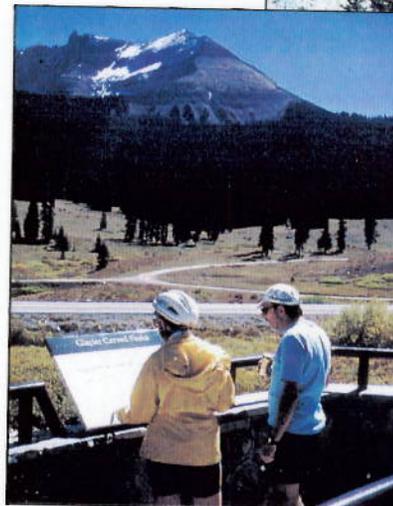
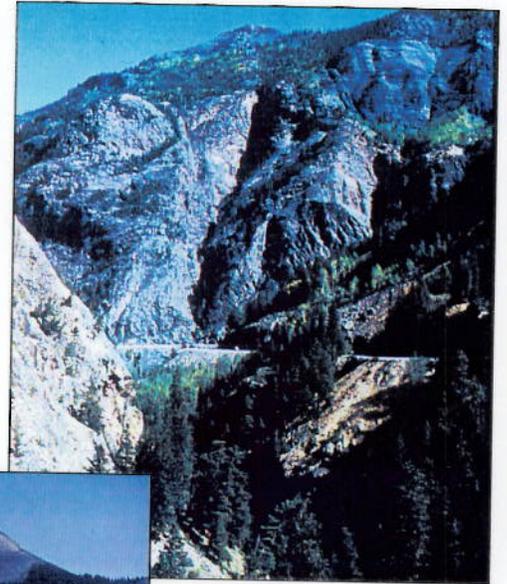
- Showcase the Skyway as the most scenic drive in America while preserving the corridor's outstanding and diverse resources.

With this vision, the following goals have been developed:

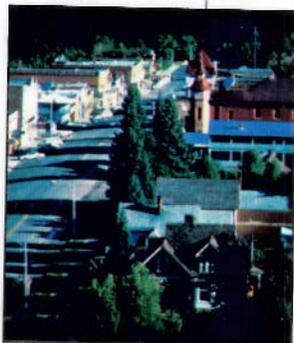
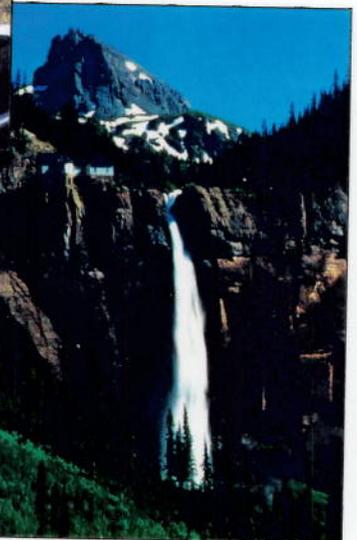
GOALS

- Preserve the corridor's resources, while developing the Skyway as a sustainable tourist and recreation attraction.
- Enhance public education, enjoyment and appreciation of Southwest Colorado's natural and cultural heritage.
- Enhance and reclaim those resources that have been degraded.
- Seek designation of the San Juan Skyway as an All-American Road.

These have become the goals guiding the preparation of this San Juan Skyway Corridor Management Plan.



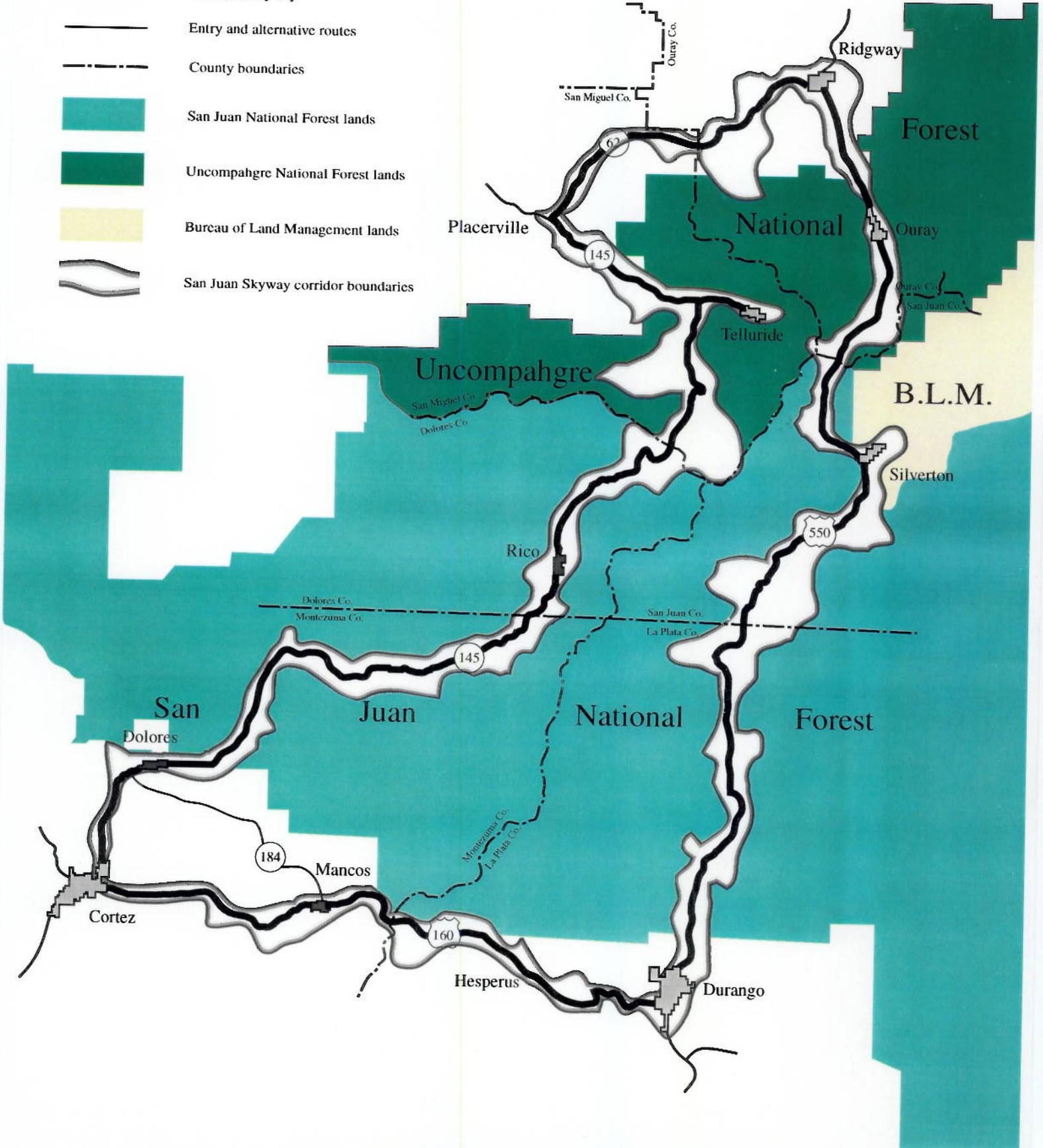
From top: A section of the "Million Dollar Highway" cutting through the Uncompahgre Gorge, south of Ouray; Lizard Head Pass interpretive site on S.H. 145; and Bridal Veil Falls at Telluride



Main Street, Ouray-
U.S. 550 North

Corridor Boundary and Major Land Uses

-  San Juan Skyway
-  Entry and alternative routes
-  County boundaries
-  San Juan National Forest lands
-  Uncompahgre National Forest lands
-  Bureau of Land Management lands
-  San Juan Skyway corridor boundaries





Assessment of the Corridor's Resource Qualities

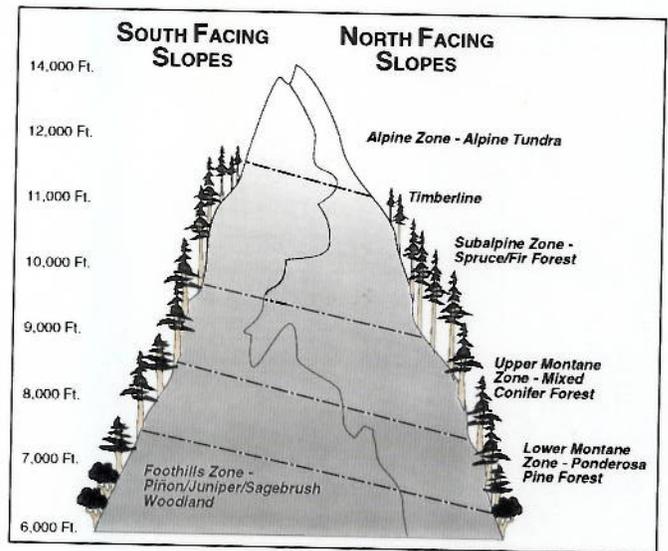
Because of the length and diversity of the San Juan Skyway, this assessment of the byway's resources consists of a general overview, which is immediately followed by a more detailed assessment of the scenic, natural, recreation, archaeological, historic, and cultural intrinsic qualities that make the Skyway special.

OVERVIEW

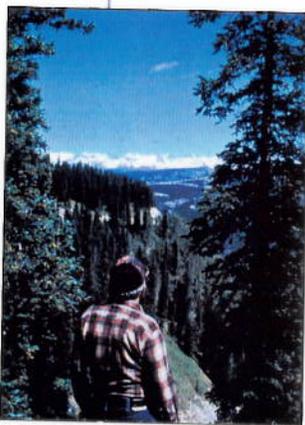
With the San Juan Skyway passing through five distinct ecosystems, it offers a very rich and diverse mix of natural resources equivalent to ecosystems found from Alaska to northern Mexico. The most prominent feature is the San Juan Mountain Range. With several peaks in excess of 14,000 feet and a mean elevation of 10,000 feet, this range is one of the four highest ranges in the United States.

From the high alpine meadows and spruce forests, the Skyway descends into the Cortez area, which has the highest density of archaeological sites of any region in North America. The prehistoric ancestral Pueblo Indians that occupied this region left remnants of their civilization throughout the area, most notably found at Mesa Verde National Park.

Virtually hundreds of recreation activities are available along the route, such as of camping, fishing, picnicking, hiking, mountain biking, wind surfing, boating (kayaking, rafting, motor boats), four-wheel driving, mountaineering, hunting, both cross-country and downhill skiing, ice climbing and snowmobiling. The majority of these activities are available within the 108 miles of the Skyway route administered by the San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests and Bureau of Land Management. Since the majority of the private lands along the route consist of narrow strips between the highway and the national forests, the route has only 39 miles of private property that are not immediately adjacent to these public lands.



Five ecosystems along the Skyway provide a diverse natural resource experience.



One of hundreds of spectacular views along the Skyway

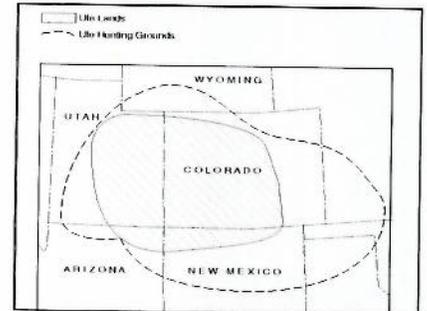
Four National Wilderness Areas—the Weminuche, Uncompahgre, Mount Sneffels, and Lizard Head are prominently viewed from the byway and directly accessible along the route. The Skyway also intersects with the Trail of the Ancients, Alpine Loop, and the Unaweep Tabeguache, which are three other of Colorado's designated scenic and historic byways offering the visitor additional driving for pleasure recreation opportunities. The Alpine Loop is also designated a BLM Backcountry Byway, requiring a four-wheel drive for certain sections.

There is an abundance of wildlife that live along the route, including elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, coyotes, black bear, bobcat, mountain lions, beaver, eagles, hawks, falcons, marmots and numerous songbirds.



The Ute Indians, unlike the Puebloans, were not farmers and sustained themselves with hunting game, gathering food plants, and making temporary camps. Their traditional territory was larger than the State of Colorado.

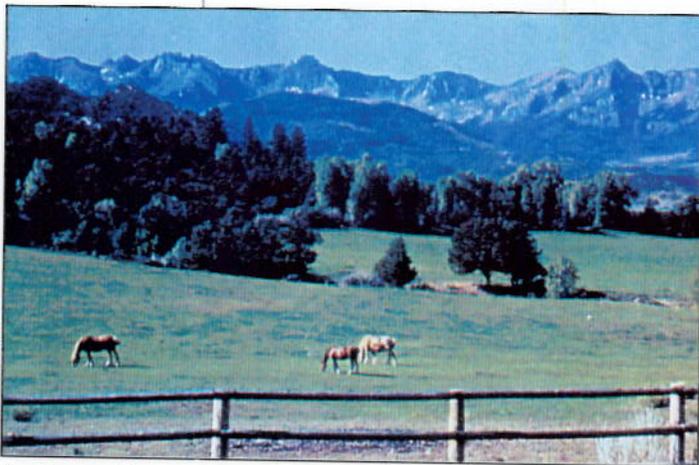
In the late 1800's, the Skyway's region experienced the economic mining boom of gold, silver, zinc, lead, and copper. Many historic mining structures remain visible along the route, in testimony to the incredibly hard work of pioneer miners who extracted over one billion dollars worth of ore. The 12 existing communities along the Skyway vary in size from 150 to 14,000 residents. Each has designations on the National Register of Historic places, offering visitors prime examples of Victorian architecture, mining ruins, historic transportation facilities and ancestral Puebloan relics.



Traditional Ute territory

"The San Juan Skyway follows ancient Indian trails. It traces the routes taken by eighteenth-century Spanish explorers when this was part of the Spanish Empire. It follows rivers used by mountain men for trapping when the San Juan Region was part of Mexico. Sections of the Skyway were once pack trails blasted into cliffs by the pioneers of a westward expanding United States." (A Historical Touring Guide to the San Juan Skyway, Ian Thompson, 1995).

From pack trails to toll roads, this route soon saw the coming of narrow gauge steam driven trains which eventually operated on railroads the full length of the Skyway, except for a short and rugged section south of Ouray. The historic roads soon became highways; abandoned railroad corridors are now being converted to recreational trails. We have come full circle—from prehistoric trails to trails again. The Skyway is truly a historic transportation route.



Looking south at the Sneffels Range, near the Dallas Divide on SH 62

Scenic & Natural Areas

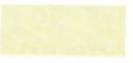
Scenic qualities are defined as the heightened visual experience of natural and man-made elements within the scenic byway corridor. The characteristics of the landscape are strikingly distinct and offer a memorable visual experience. All elements of the landscape- land form, water, vegetation, and man-made development- contribute to the quality of the corridor's visual environment.

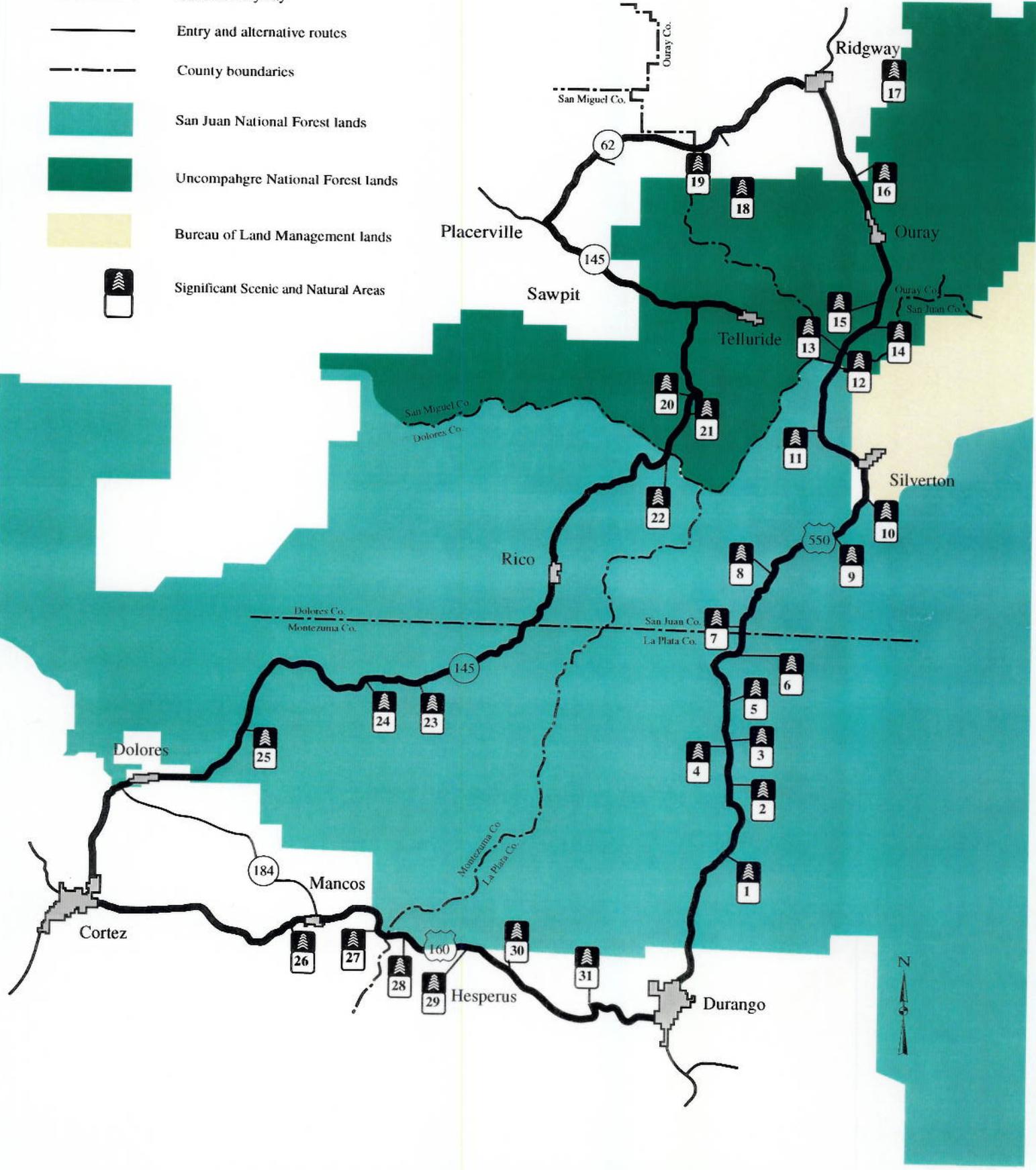
The sites most distinctive within the Skyway corridor range from the fragmented, high-elevation valleys, as depicted by the Uncompahgre Gorge south of Ouray, to the pastoral Animas Valley north of Durango, to the striking alpine peaks of the Needle Mountains near Silverton and Purgatory and Mount Sneffels near Ridgway.

Natural qualities in a relatively undisturbed state apply to the features along the Skyway. These features predate the arrival of human populations and include many geologic formations, fossils, land forms, water bodies, vegetation, and wildlife. There may be some evidence of human activity, however the disturbance is minimal. The mountains, valleys, and escarpments along the San Juan Skyway date to two billion years ago, showing evidence of sea inundation, volcanic activity, and glacial scour. The seas have come and gone leaving deposits of sandstone and shale that are thousands of feet thick. Volcanoes have blasted their way into the sky, depositing thick layers of volcanic material, only to be shaped by glaciers that have carved deep bowl-like cirques into the mountain ranges with "U"-shaped valleys in the lower elevations.

Resource Assessment

Existing Scenic & Natural Areas

-  San Juan Skyway
-  Entry and alternative routes
-  County boundaries
-  San Juan National Forest lands
-  Uncompahgre National Forest lands
-  Bureau of Land Management lands
-  Significant Scenic and Natural Areas





Many of these areas remain in their pristine condition. These rugged mountains and grass filled valleys provide habitat for deer, elk, big horn sheep, and many other animal species. Small glaciers continue to etch away the mountains and provide water that fills the streams, lakes, and rivers along the Skyway corridor. Annual snowfall ranges from 300-plus inches in the highlands to as low as 36 inches in the lowlands.

Some of the more significant scenic and natural areas along the Skyway are identified on the adjacent chart and map on preceding page.

RECREATION RESOURCES

Recreation resources provide outdoor activities directly associated with the landscape along the San Juan Skyway corridor. These recreational activities provide opportunities for both active and passive experiences. The Skyway corridor passes through millions of acres of public lands, along 151 miles of river banks, and through diverse ecosystems that range in elevation from 6,000 feet to over 11,000 feet.

With this diversity, the topography, vegetation, and climate provide thousands of recreational opportunities throughout the year. Activities include fishing in rivers and lakes; downhill skiing and snowboarding at Purgatory, Telluride, and Hesperus Hill; camping in 28 public campgrounds with 648 campsites; open camping opportunities throughout the forest; hundreds of miles of summer hiking and biking; winter cross-country skiing and snowmobiling trails. Additional opportunities are found along four National Recreational Trails (Colorado Trail, Bear Creek Trail, Highline Trail, and Calico Trail) and four National Wilderness Areas (Weminuche, Uncompahgre, Mount Sneffels, and Lizard Head). Opportunities for water recreation are found at both Ridgway State Park and McPhee Reservoir. Multiple "driving for pleasure" opportunities are discovered as the Skyway intersects with the Unaweep/Tabeguache, Alpine Loop, Trail of the Ancients Scenic and Historic Byways and some of the most spectacular four-wheel drive tours anywhere are readily available.

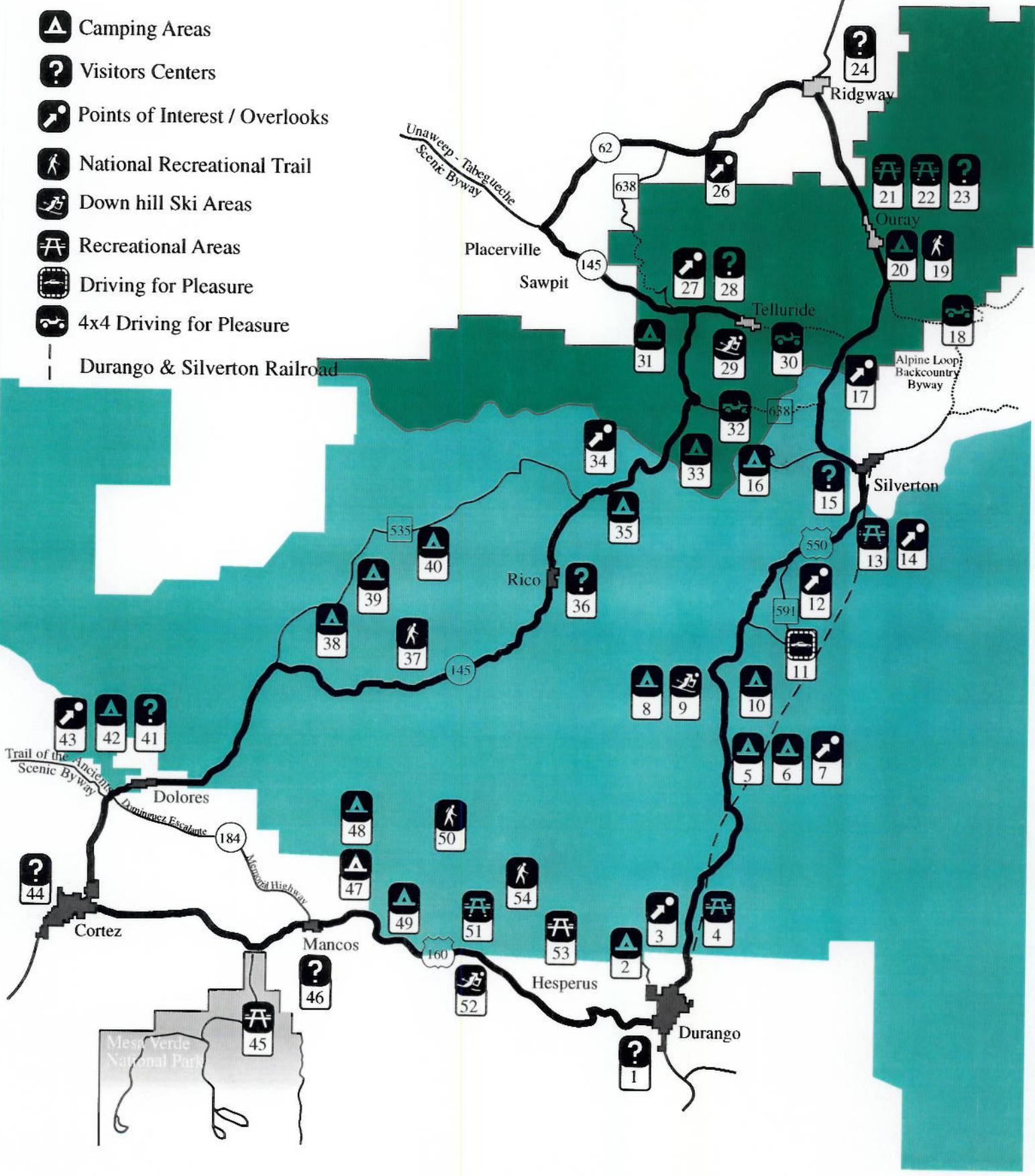
It is impossible to succinctly describe all of the recreational opportunities available along the Skyway. The following list and map describes developed recreation areas; however, it should be noted that hiking, biking, fishing, camping, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and hunting opportunities are available throughout the corridor, not confined to just the following area list. (Numbers in the table correspond with sites on "Developed Recreation Areas" map.)

Scenic and Natural Areas

#	SITE NAME -- SCENIC AND NATURAL AREAS
1	Shalona Lake
2	Haviland Lake
3	Weminuche Wilderness Area
4	Hermosa Cliffs
5	Purgatory Flats
6	Engineer Mountain
7	Twilight Peak
8	Sultan Peak
9	Molas Pass
10	Kendall Peak
11	South Mineral Creek
12	Red Mountain Pass
13	Ironton Valley
14	Uncompahgre Gorge
15	Black Bear Falls
16	Ouray Valley
17	Court House Mountain/Chimney Rock
18	Mount Sneffels Range
19	Dallas Divide
20	Gold Gulch
21	Ophir Needles (National Natural Landmark)
22	Lizard Head Pass
23	Bear Creek
24	Red Burn Ranch
25	Dolores River Valley
26	Mancos Valley
27	Thompson Park
28	Cherry Creek
29	Montoya Ranch
30	La Plata Canyon
31	Hesperus Hill/Durango Valley

Developed Recreation Areas

-  Camping Areas
-  Visitors Centers
-  Points of Interest / Overlooks
-  National Recreational Trail
-  Down hill Ski Areas
-  Recreational Areas
-  Driving for Pleasure
-  4x4 Driving for Pleasure
-  Durango & Silverton Railroad





Developed Recreation Areas

#	RECREATION AREA SITE NAME	ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES
1	Durango Visitor Center	Recreation and Services Information
2	Junction Creek	Camping, Biking, Fishing, Hiking/Colorado Trail Access
3	Animas Overlook	Scenic Overlook
4	Trimble Hot Springs	Swimming, Picnicking
5	Haviland Lake	Camping, Boating, Fishing
6	Chris Park	Camping, Hiking, Biking
7	Animas-Silverton Wagon Road	Point of Interest
8	Sig Creek	Camping, Hiking, Biking
9	Purgatory Ski Area	Winter Skiing, Summer Biking, Hiking, Alpine Slide
10	Purgatory Campground	Camping, Hiking
11	Lime Creek Road	Backcountry Road, Biking, Fishing, Hiking
12	Coal Bank Pass Rest Area	Scenic Overlook, Hiking
13	Andrews Lake	Fishing, Picnicking, Hiking
14	Molas Pass Point of Interest and Molas Lakes	Interpretive Exhibits, Colorado Trail, Fishing, Camping, Hiking
15	Silverton Visitor Center	Recreation & Services Information
16	South Mineral Campground	Camping, Hiking, Fishing
17	Red Mountain Pass Overlook	Rest Area, Scenic Overlook, Interpretive Exhibit
18	Alpine Loop Byway/Engineer Pass	4-Wheel Drive Route
19	Bear Creek National Recreation Trail	Hiking, Scenic Overlooks
20	Amphitheater Campground	Camping, Hiking, Scenic Overlook, Picknicking
21	Box Canyon Falls	Hiking, Scenic Vistas
22	Ouray Hot Springs	Swimming, Picnicking
23	Ouray Visitor Center	Recreation & Services Information
24	Ridgway Visitor Center	Recreation & Services Information
25	Ridgway State Park	Camping, Boating, Fishing, Hiking, Biking
26	Dallas Divide	Scenic Overlook
27	Keystone Point of Interest	Interpretive Exhibits
28	Telluride Visitor Center	Recreation & Services Information
29	Telluride Ski Area	Winter Skiing, Ice Skating, Summer Hiking, Biking, Golf
30	Imogene Pass	4-Wheel Drive Route, Biking
31	Sunshine Campground	Camping
32	Ophir Pass/Ames	4-Wheel Route, Biking, Historic Mine Tour
33	Matterhorn Campground/Galloping Goose Trail	Camping, Hiking, Mt. Biking
34	Lizard Head Pass Point of Interest, Trout Lake	Scenic Overlook, Hiking, Fishing, Mt. Biking, Historic Features
35	Cayton Campground	Camping, Hiking
36	Rico Visitor Center	Recreation & Services Information
37	Calico National Recreation Trail	Hiking, Backpacking
38	Emerson Campground	Camping, Hiking
39	Mavreeso Campground	Camping, Hiking
40	West Dolores Campground	Camping, Fishing
41	Dolores Visitor Center	Recreation & Services Information.
42	McPhee Recreation Area	Camping, Boating, Fishing, Hiking
43	Anasazi Heritage Center	Archaeology, Museum, Hiking, Scenic Overlook
44	Cortez Visitor Center	Recreation & Services Information
45	Mesa Verde National Park	Archaeology, Camping, Hiking, Biking
46	Mancos Visitor Center	Recreation & Services Information
47	Mancos State Park	Camping, Fishing, Boating
48	Transfer Campground	Camping, Hiking, Biking
49	Target Tree Campground	Camping, Point of Interest
50	Colorado National Recreational Trail	Trail Head, Hiking, Backpacking
51	Cherry Creek Picnic Area	Picnicking, Rest Area
52	Hesperus Ski Area	Winter Skiing, No Summer Access
53	La Plata Canyon Area	Camping, Hiking, Fishing, 4-Wheel Driving
54	High Line National Recreation Trail	Trail Head, Hiking, Backpacking



ARCHAEOLOGIC & HISTORIC RESOURCES

Numerous cultural resource sites are found within the corridor. They represent the physical evidence of prehistoric and historic activity. These resources have scientific significance, plus they help educate the visitor regarding the heritage of Southwest Colorado.



Al Wetherill and exploration party at Cliff Palace, in the early 1900's

The Cortez area has the highest concentration of archaeological sites due to the vast number of ancient ancestral Pueblo ruins located in the area. Evidence shows that occupation of the Four Corners Region of the United States began by prehistoric people around 1000 BC. Originally these people were nomadic by nature following the migration patterns of game. It was not until around 100 AD that they began to settle into an agrarian existence. At some point prior to 500 AD these early settlers began to construct permanent pit houses, based on the design of earlier storage pits. The best preserved of these pit houses is found in the vicinity of Durango, Colorado.

Around 700 AD, these people began the transition from pit structures to a Pueblo style of architecture. For over 300 years, the ancestral Puebloan people constructed structures of stone masonry that began to rise from the surface of the ground, reserving the subsurface structures for ceremony. This was a time of tremendous population growth, causing more building of structures and developing of cities. These cities consisted of multi-storied structures with many contiguous rooms and plazas. The ancestral Puebloan people also began a period of innovation and development that had no rival in the region. Between 900 and 1100 AD the ancestral Puebloan people built their most impressive dwellings. They raised structures to previously unknown levels, became proficient with pottery and crafts, and devoted themselves to religion. The population of these people during this time is estimated to have exceeded the population of the Cortez area today. The ancestral Puebloan people abandoned the region near the end of the thirteenth century. The reason for this abandonment is still unknown. Many theories suggest that there may have been continual raids by bands of wandering Shoshonean hunters, several years of drought, the combination of the two, or some reason yet to be discovered. Indications suggest that the drought, from 1276 to 1299, was the main factor that ended the ancestral Puebloan peoples' reign.



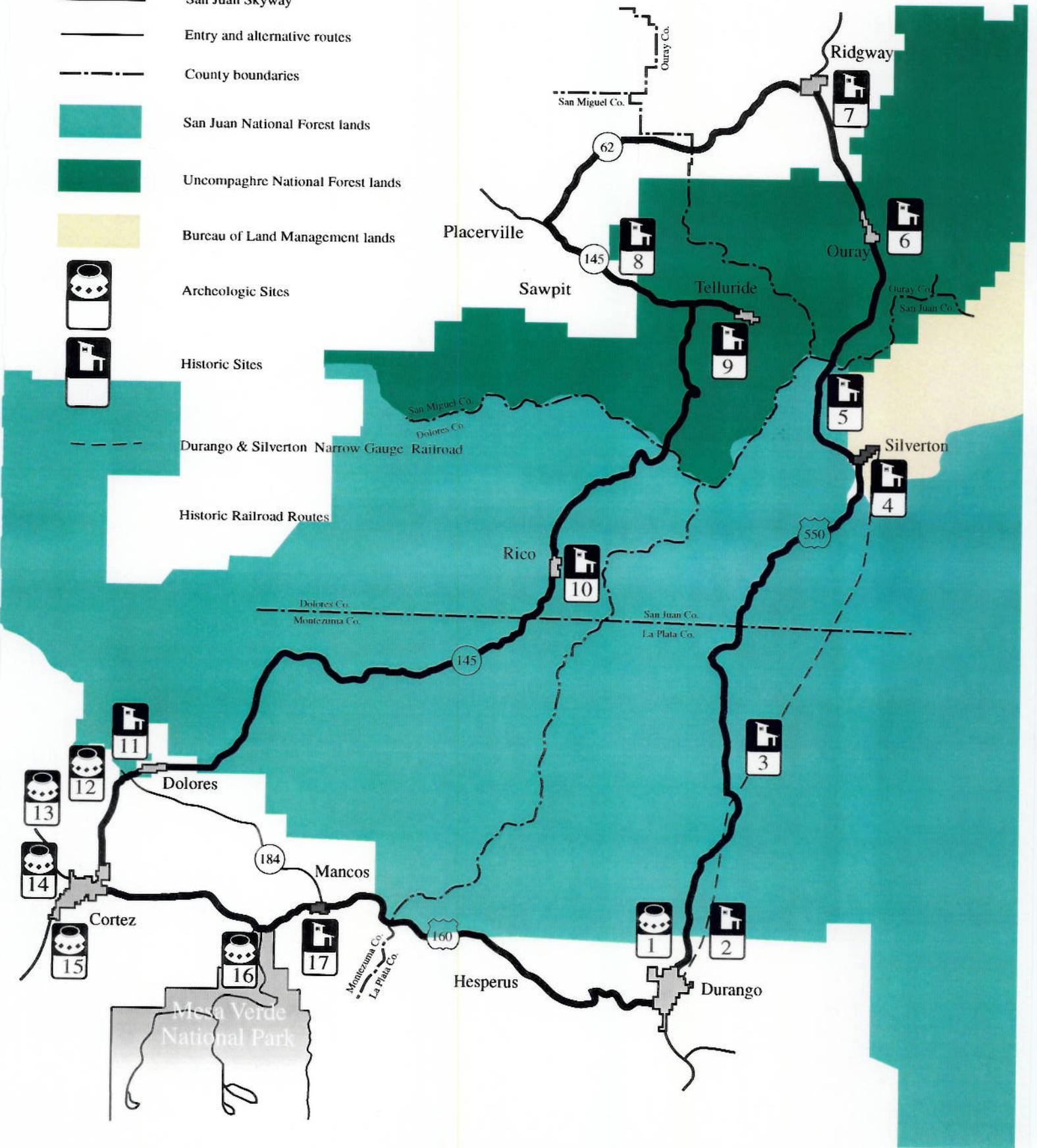
Ancient cultures and living traditions

Archaeologic & Historic Sites

#	SITE NAME	ARCHAEOLOGIC OR HISTORIC
1	Durango Rock Shelters	Archaeologic
2	Durango Historic Business and Residential Districts	Historic
3	Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad	Historic
4	Silverton National Historic and District and Landmark	Historic
5	Red Mountain Mining District	Historic
6	Ouray National Historic District	Historic
7	Ridgway Historic Town	Historic
8	Vanadium Town Site	Historic
9	Telluride Historic District and Landmark	Historic
10	Rico Historic Mining Town	Historic
11	Dolores Historic District	Historic
12	Anasazi Heritage Center	Archaeologic
13	Hovenweep National Monument	Archaeologic
14	Crow Canyon Archaeologic Center	Archaeologic
15	Sand Canyon	Archaeologic
16	Mesa Verde National Park	Archaeologic
17	Mancos Historic District	Historic

Existing Archaeologic & Historic Sites

-  San Juan Skyway
-  Entry and alternative routes
-  County boundaries
-  San Juan National Forest lands
-  Uncompahgre National Forest lands
-  Bureau of Land Management lands
-  Archeologic Sites
-  Historic Sites





In 1776, Dominguez and Escalante, on an expedition from Santa Fe trying to find a route to the missions on the Pacific Coast, were the first to note evidence of earlier human occupation. A pair of ancestral Pueblo ruins were discovered on a ridge near what was named the Dolores River, now the site of the BLM Anasazi Heritage Center.

The next written description of the area came from Lieutenants Simpson and Emory, on a geologic expedition in 1846-48 for the United States Government and later by Powell's Geologic Survey. Not long after Powell's expedition, silver, then gold was found in the San Juan Mountains, dictating the settlement patterns of southwestern Colorado. The Gold and Silver Rush in the mid 1800's widened the foot paths of the Indians into pack trails used by mules and wagons servicing the booming mine towns and retrieving ore from the mountains. In time these pathways were widened to accommodate the railroad.



Original Otto Mears' Toll Road, just south of Ouray on what is now the San Juan Skyway

Tourism began to be an economic asset to the region with the railroad hosting a Circle Tour by rail and very similar to today's Skyway route; others hosted tours of Mesa Verde and other ancestral Pueblo ruins. While gold, silver, lead, zinc and copper continued to flow from the mountains, the communities continued to grow. The wooden structures were slowly replaced by Victorian style brick homes and businesses. The railroad expanded throughout the region linking Durango to Denver. More recently, uranium milled in Durango and near Telluride was used in the research and development of atomic technology.

Virtually hundreds of archaeological and historic sites exist along the Skyway. A Geographic Information System (GIS) project recently completed by Fort Lewis College, and funded by the National Scenic Byway Program, mapped 1,234 such sites within a two-mile wide Skyway corridor.

Historic museums are located in the communities of Durango, Silverton, Ouray, Ridgway, Telluride, Dolores, Cortez, and Mancos. Each of these museums offers expanded interpretations of the area's heritage. The archaeological and historic chart and map on pages 11 and

12 represent several significant sites that are open to the public and of general interest to visitors in the region. It should be noted that the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (#3), the Silverton Historic District (#4) and the Telluride Historic District (#9) are also designated National Historic Landmarks. There are only thirteen such landmarks in Colorado, and these three are on the Skyway. Additionally, Mesa Verde National Park (#16) is a World Heritage Site.

Cultural Features

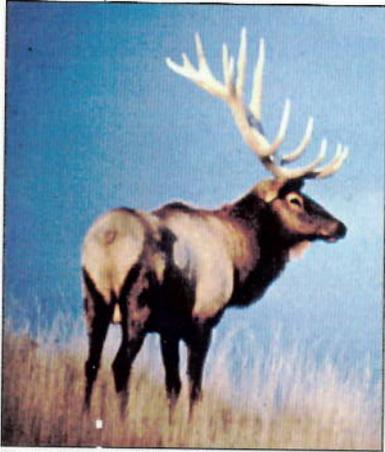
Cultural features are evidences and expressions of customs and traditions of an area's people. These include, but are not limited to- crafts, music, films, festivals, food, special events, and architectural features. Cultural activities and features are found throughout the year in all of the communities as they celebrate their cultural heritage with festivals and special events. Fifty-plus events and festivals are held annually. These include annual county fairs, rodeos, and events such as the Cowboy Poetry Gathering and Pro-Rodeo series in Durango; the Hard Rock Mining and Brass Music festivals in Silverton; the Victorian House Tour in Ouray; the multiple music festivals in Telluride; the Ute and Navajo Indian Dances and Indian Story Teller series in Cortez; the Ute Mountain Indian Bear Dance at Towaoc; and the Fine Arts Festival in Mancos.

Additionally, the communities along the Skyway all exhibit examples of Victorian architecture that expresses the cultural and climatic diversity of the region.



Resource Management Actions & Strategies

If the vision and goals for the San Juan Skyway are to be realized, several management actions dealing with the corridor's scenic, natural, recreation, historic, and archaeological resources must be implemented. Additionally, the establishment of a sustainable, nonprofit management entity consisting of public and private partners working to implement the management actions described below is of critical importance. Although an informal Friends of the San Juan Skyway Association now exists, this organization should be formally established to include a broad base of support from private businesses, local chambers of commerce, state and federal land management agencies, the Colorado Department of Transportation, and other interest groups supportive of the vision and goals that have been established for the Skyway.



Deer, Elk, Big Horn Sheep and other wildlife thrive in Southwest Colorado

SCENIC & NATURAL AREA GOALS

The overall goal for scenic and natural areas along the Skyway is the maintenance and enhancement of the scenic and natural character of the corridor through the preservation of significant open space areas. The maintenance and enhancement of the corridor will be accomplished utilizing a variety of land use planning, design, and other non-regulatory techniques to minimize the impacts resulting from development along the corridor.

A scenic view analysis and intrusion report for the Skyway corridor were prepared during the summer of 1995. The full copy of this report is available at the office of the San Juan National Forest, in Durango. The following are general and specific actions for managing the scenic and natural resources of the Skyway corridor.

SCENIC & NATURAL AREA GENERAL ACTIONS

1. Develop a strategic plan, in cooperation with county planning offices and area land conservation trusts, for preserving significant open space lands currently in private ownership. The Association has been awarded grant funding from the Great Outdoors CO Trust to pursue this strategy in 1996.
2. Request that Dolores, La Plata, and Montezuma Counties adopt land use regulations (similar to those now being used by Ouray, San Juan and San Miguel Counties) that address preserving scenic and natural values along the San Juan Skyway.
3. Request that the San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests identify the Skyway as a "Special Management Area" within their forest management plans, with particular emphasis upon preserving the corridor's scenic and natural qualities, while maintaining multiple uses.
4. Request that the San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests implement land exchange programs to further the protection of key open space lands that are currently in private ownership.
5. Adjust construction and maintenance practices along the Skyway, in cooperation with the Colorado Department of Transportation, to limit cuts and fills within roadway rights-of-way. When adjacent hillsides are used for fill material, they should be limited and be reclaimed.



The historic Strater Hotel in downtown Durango, one of several National Historic Districts on the Skyway



6. Request that the companies providing electric utility service to the area screen electrical substations within the corridor. Additionally, these companies will be requested to use, as an example, the reconstruction methods and techniques used on the utility lines along the Skyway from Rico to Lizard Head Pass. This project, completed by San Miguel Power Company, with technical assistance from the United States Forest Service, has resulted in a model of cooperation resulting in significant improvements to the scenic qualities of this corridor.

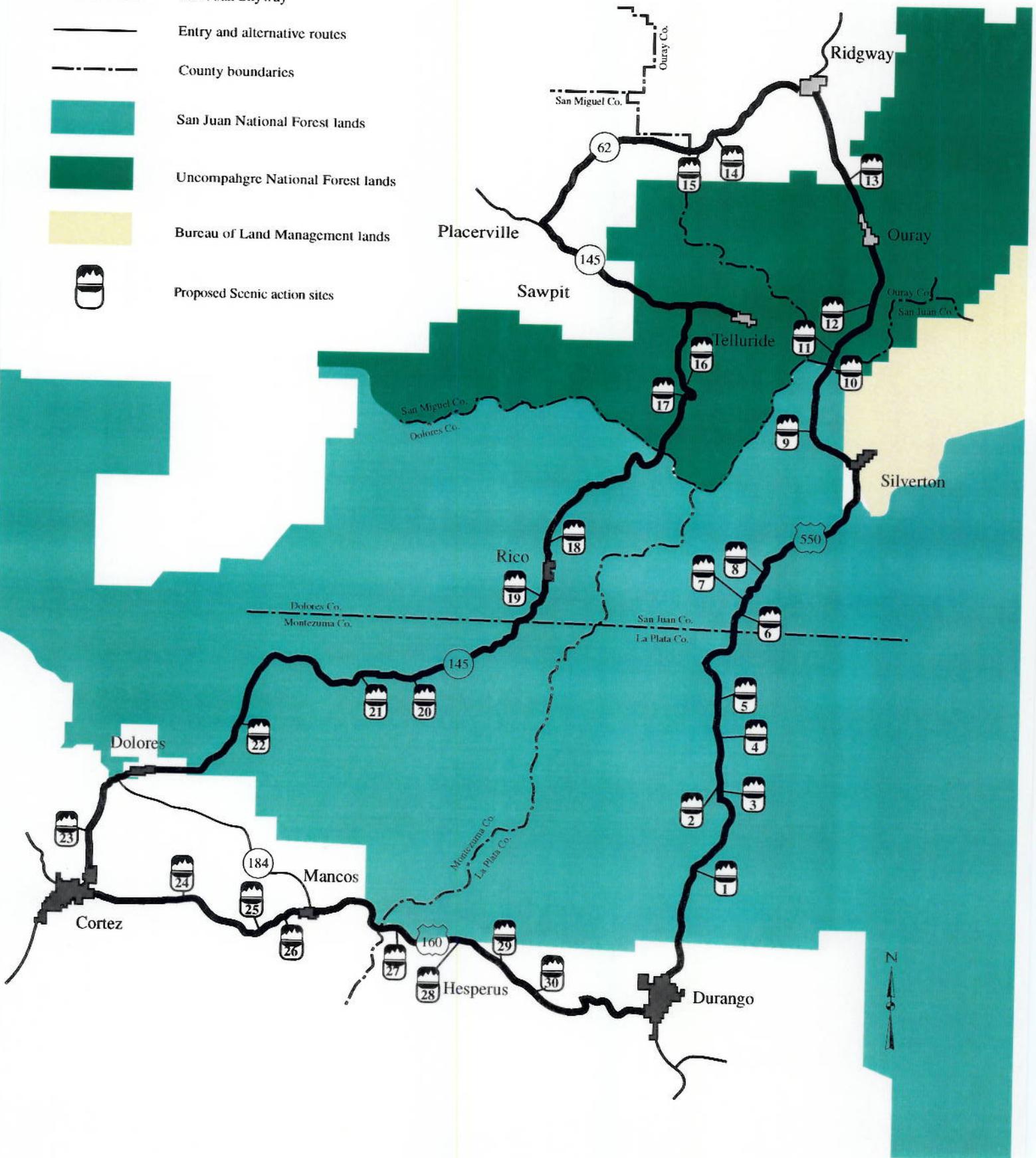
SCENIC & NATURAL SITE SPECIFIC ACTIONS

A detailed scenic and natural resource assessment report for the Skyway corridor was completed during the Summer of 1995. It is available for review in the San Juan National Forest Supervisor's office in Durango, Colorado. The following list describes specific actions for preserving and enhancing key scenic and natural areas.

Proposed Scenic & Natural Site Actions			
#	SCENIC & NATURAL AREA PROPOSED SITE ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
1	Preserve views, mile marker 32-34, US 550.	2	La Plata County, USFS, Land Trust
2	Thin trees at Shalona Lake Overlook at mile marker 38, US 550.	1	USFS
3	Thin trees at Haviland Lake Overlook, mile marker 39.2, US 550.	3	USFS
4	Preserve views at mile marker 43.5, US 550.	2	La Plata County, USFS, Land Trust
5	Preserve views from Weminuche Overlook Site, mile marker 45.2-45.7, US 550.	1	La Plata County, Land Trust
6	Thin trees at Purgatory Flats Overlook site.	2	USFS
7	Thin trees at mile marker 56, US 550.	3	USFS
8	Preserve views of Purgatory Flats to the south, mile marker 54.8, US 550.	2	La Plata County, USFS, Land Trust
9	Thin trees at South Mineral Creek, mile marker 73.1-73.4, US 550.	1	USFS
10	Preserve views of Ironton Valley, mile marker 75-78, US 550.	1	Ouray County, USFS
11	Naturalize reclaimed mining areas at mile marker 86, US 550.	3	Colorado Dept. of Health, USFS
12	Preserve views at Uncompahgre Gorge, and Bear Creek Tunnel.	2	Ouray County, USFS
13	Preserve views of Ouray watchable wildlife site, mile marker 98.3-99.2, US 550.	2	Ouray County
14	Preserve views at mile marker 10.5-11.5, CO 62.	1	Ouray & San Miguel Counties, USFS
15	Preserve views at mile marker 11.5-18.5, CO 62.	2	Ouray County, USFS
16	Thin trees at pulloff north of Ophir at mile marker 65.7, CO 145.	2	USFS
17	Thin trees at mile markers 65-66, CO 145.	3	USFS
18	Thin trees at Rico Overlook, mile marker 48, CO 145.	3	USFS
19	Preserve views of Bear Creek, mile marker 34-34.5, CO 145.	2	Montezuma County, USFS
20	Preserve views of Taylor Creek, mile marker 27.7-30.5, CO 145.	2	Montezuma County, USFS
21	Preserve views from mile marker 25.3-27.1, CO 145.	1	Montezuma County, USFS
22	Maintain landscape character at Line Camp, mile marker 19-22, CO 145.	2	Montezuma County
23	Preserve views of farm land between Cortez and Dolores, mile marker 2.5-3.5, CO 145.	2	Montezuma County
24	Thin trees at CDOT rest stop east of Cortez to view Sleeping Ute Mt., US 160.	2	Colorado DOT
25	Preserve views of Mud Creek Valley west of Mancos, mile marker 54, US 160.	3	Montezuma County
26	Maintain landscape of Mancos Valley as viewed to south, mile marker 52.2-53.4, US 160.	2	Montezuma County
27	Preserve views of Thompson Park, mile marker 61.9-64.9, US 160.	1	La Plata County
28	Preserve views at mile markers 67-71, US 160.	3	La Plata County
29	Maintain landscape character of La Plata Canyon entry area, mile marker 71-72, US 160.	2	La Plata County
30	Maintain landscape of Durango area as viewed from the west at the Hesperus Hill crest, mile marker 73.8-74.2, US 160.	2	La Plata County, USFS, BLM

Proposed Scenic & Natural Site Actions

-  San Juan Skyway
-  Entry and alternative routes
-  County boundaries
-  San Juan National Forest lands
-  Uncompahgre National Forest lands
-  Bureau of Land Management lands
-  Proposed Scenic action sites





RECREATION RESOURCE ACTIONS

General management actions for recreation resources include:

- Manage recreation to minimize environmental impact.
- Disperse use away from heavily used areas and into those areas less utilized along the Skyway
- Improve the visitors' recreation experience through the provision of improved facilities, particularly for the physically challenged.
- Provide for improved and safe bicycle travel within the Skyway corridor.



Recreation abounds

Regarding the above actions, it should be noted that San Miguel and Ouray Counties are making significant progress in improving bicycle travel along the Skyway. In partnership with the Uncompahgre National Forest, the Galloping Goose Trail, which uses the abandoned Rio Grande Southern Railroad, is under construction. Additionally, planning work has been initiated to extend the trail along the railroad from Telluride to Ridgway. Ouray County has designated the old railroad between Ouray and Ridgway as a multiple use road suitable for bicycle travel.

Funding has also been received by the Skyway Association to inventory the abandoned railroad corridor in Dolores, Montezuma, and La Plata Counties and determine the feasibility of developing a similar "rails to trails" project for these areas.

HISTORIC & ARCHAEOLOGIC RESOURCE ACTIONS

The diversity of heritage resources along the Skyway offers outstanding opportunities for interpreting the prehistory and history of the region. However, many of these resources have been and continue to disappear and be damaged due to natural causes, development activity, and looting by residents and visitors alike. In an effort to conserve these resources, the following are all Priority 1 Actions for implementation.

Proposed Archaeologic & Historic Resource Actions

#	HISTORIC & ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE ACTION	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
1	Develop a comprehensive inventory and map significant heritage resources.	1	Fort Lewis College in cooperation with San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests, and BLM.
2	Develop a strategic plan for the preservation of visible heritage resources within the corridor.	1	Skyway Association in cooperation with BLM, county historical societies, and USFS.
3	Initiate cooperative preservation efforts with the Alpine Loop Byway Association.	1	Skyway Association in cooperation with BLM and communities of Silverton, Ouray, and Lake City.
4	Inventory, map, and preserve historic railroad corridors and significant historic elements (water tanks, trestles, etc.) (see Recreation Actions).	1	Skyway Association in cooperation with BLM, county historical societies, and USFS.
5	Utilize interpretive facilities and materials to educate the public regarding the heritage of the region and need for preservation.	1	Skyway Association in cooperation with BLM, county historical societies, and USFS.

- It should be noted for Number 1 above that a Geographic Information System (GIS) base map with 1,234 archaeological and historic sites has been recently completed.

Additionally, Fort Lewis College, in cooperation with the Skyway Association, has been awarded a Colorado Historical Society Grant for preparing a strategic plan for preserving historic mining structures visible from the Skyway. This project will begin in 1996. Historic railroad corridors will also be inventoried as part of this project and coordinated with the "rails to trails" project discussed in the Recreation Management Actions section of this plan.



General Review of Transportation, Roadway Standards & Safety Actions

The San Juan Skyway corridor is included in the Gunnison Valley and the Southwest Colorado Regional Transportation Plans, which have been incorporated into the Colorado Statewide Transportation Plan. A review of the five year plans for these areas indicates that there are two major construction projects proposed along the Skyway. These include the reconstruction of US 160 west of Durango, and SH 145 north of Dolores. There are also several minor projects that involve such improvements as constructing guard rails; adding acceleration and deceleration lanes; adding passing

lanes and turnouts; constructing bike lanes; and improving key intersection areas. These improvements will be constructed in compliance with Colorado Department of Transportation design and construction standards and are expected to have minimal impact upon the resources and intrinsic qualities of the San Juan Skyway.



Traffic volumes are not a problem for most of the Skyway

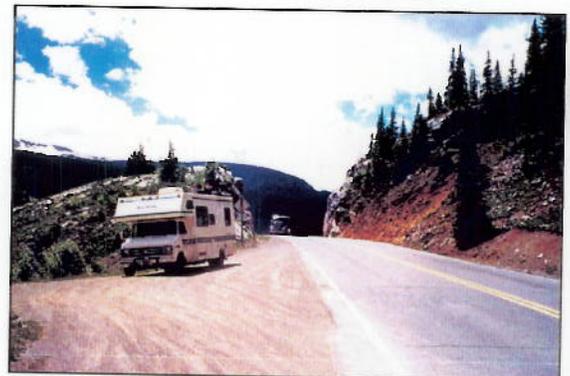
VOLUME TO CAPACITY RATIOS

Colorado Department of Transportation research indicates that Volume to Capacity Ratios are generally good for the majority of the San Juan Skyway route. An exception to this good ratio (0-.50) is the ratio of .50-.65, applied to three of the areas. These more congested areas consist of eight miles of SH 62 from Ridgway west; ten miles of SH 145 from Sawpit to Telluride; and SH 145 south from Society Turn.

SAFETY AND HAZARD AREAS

Safety conditions on the Skyway are generally good, however, hazardous locations have been identified by the Colorado Dept. of Transportation for five sections of roadway. Reasons for the hazardous designation range from congestion to construction and design complications due to topography. The following are identified locations:

- US 160 west of Durango for approximately 3 miles;
- US 550 north of Durango for approximately 10 miles;
- US 550 north of Durango around Purgatory Ski Area;
- SH 145 from Telluride west for approximately 3.5 miles;
- SH 145 in and around the Ophir Road for approximately 3 miles.



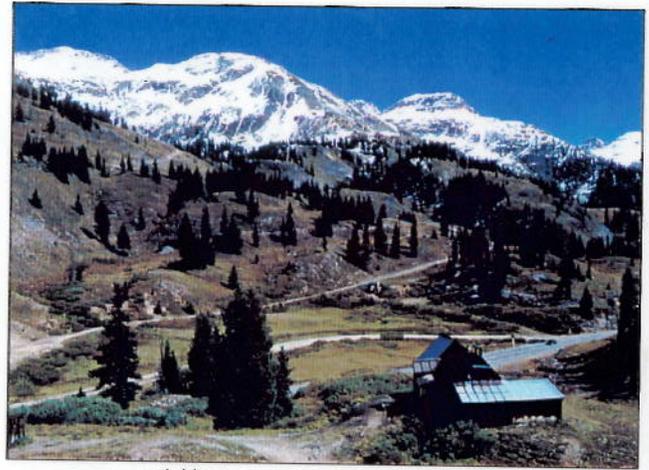
Slow traffic pull-outs are needed to improve safety

Transportation
Volume
& Safety



ROADWAY SURFACE CONDITIONS

Like most of Colorado, the surface conditions of the San Juan Skyway vary from good to fair to poor, with most of the roadway being in the fair to poor range. This does not mean that the Skyway is not driveable, but based upon Colorado Department of Transportation standards, the majority of the byway's road surfaces need to be repaved.



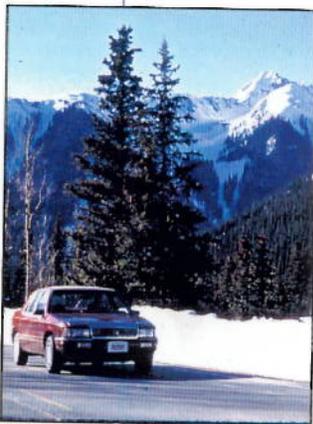
Additional pull-outs and rest areas will assist visitors in learning about the rich history along the Skyway

During the winter, avalanche hazards exist for several miles on Coal Bank, Molas, Red Mountain, and Lizard Head Passes. The Colorado Department of Transportation utilizes pro-active methods to manage these avalanches and temporarily closes these passes when conditions are most dangerous.

The regional transportation plans for these areas have addressed most of the problems. However, the urbanization of the roadway corridor in some areas and the challenges of maintaining winding, high mountain roadways with severe climatic conditions may always keep this road from achieving better than a fair roadway surface condition in some locations.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY ACTIONS

In addition to the construction items identified in the regional and state transportation plans that involve the Skyway, there is a need for some bank stabilization and the construction and signage of slow traffic pullouts heading uphill in several locations. When the planning team met with citizens and interest groups as part of this plan preparation, the construction of these pullouts was a common request. Many of these pullouts can utilize existing, but informal pullouts that have developed over the years. Working in cooperation with the Colorado Department of Transportation, the following safety actions are recommended.



U.S. 550 near Coal Bank Pass

Proposed Safety Actions

#	SAFETY ACTION	PRIORITY
1	Slow traffic pullout at or near mile marker 56, US 550.	1
2	Stabilize bank at Coal Creek Trail, mile marker 58, US 550.	1
3	Stabilize bank near Deer Creek Trail, mile marker 59.5, US 550.	1
4	Slow traffic pullout between mile markers 71-73, US 550.	2
5	Stabilize bank one mile northwest of South Mineral Creek, US 550.	1
6	Stabilize bank at Chattanooga Overlook, US 550.	1
7	Slow traffic pullout between mile markers 75-78, US 550.	1
8	Slow traffic pullout between mile markers 95-100, US 550.	3
9	Slow traffic pullout between mile markers 1-11.5, CO 62.	3
10	Slow traffic pullout between mile markers 71-77.3, CO 145.	1
11	Slow traffic pullout between mile markers 66-70, CO 145.	1
12	Slow traffic pullout between mile markers 58-65, CO 145.	2
13	Slow traffic pullout between mile markers 45.8-57.5, CO 145.	2
14	Slow traffic pullout between mile markers 25-44, CO 145.	2



Public Participation Plan

During the development of the San Juan Skyway Corridor Management Plan, a Steering Committee comprised of county representatives, federal and state land management agencies, the Colorado Department of Transportation, and others was established to guide the preparation of the plan. Additionally, meetings were held with groups and citizens in nine different communities to discuss the corridor plan and to solicit their input.

During this process, there was significant interest and support expressed for the vision and goals developed by the steering committee for the Skyway. The particular interest of many of these people and participating agencies is the opportunity to be informed and involved in Skyway projects and programs developed in and near their respective communities, or involving resources for which they are responsible.

As described earlier in the management strategy section of this plan, the current Friends of the San Juan Skyway Association will seek an expanded membership and formally incorporate as a non-profit organization. The mission of this association will be the implementation of the actions described in this plan.

Critical to the success of the association will be the involvement and support of the many entities responsible for managing resources along the byway and providing visitor services. These include county planning commissions, non-profit land conservation groups, chambers of commerce, regional tourism organizations, and area historic preservation groups. Many of these entities are participating partners now and have already made commitments to the management of the Skyway.

To facilitate citizen involvement, the association will rotate its scheduled meetings from community to community. Advance news releases regarding the association's meetings and agenda will be distributed to area media, with invitations for the public to attend and specifically to comment on proposed actions to implement the goals and strategies of this plan. Post meeting news releases will also be prepared and distributed to media throughout the Skyway corridor to help keep the public informed.



The public will be involved in planning new interpretive sites



Forest Service and BLM personnel lead workshops concerning resource conservation and interpretation

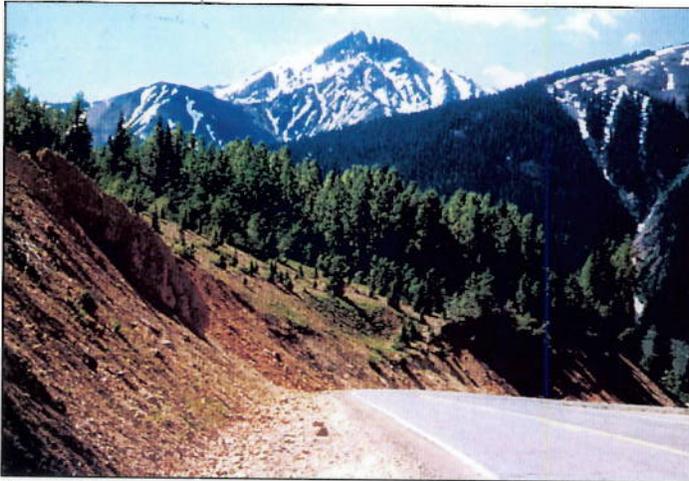
Public Participation



Development Plan

Management of the resources along the San Juan Skyway is enhanced by the fact that a very large majority of the corridor is managed by the San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests. Both of these Forests have made significant commitments to preserve the route's intrinsic qualities.

As these National Forests update their forest management plans, they will be requested to designate the San Juan Skyway as a "Special Management Area" in order to enhance the stewardship of the corridor resources. The forest is visible from every vantage point along the Skyway corridor.



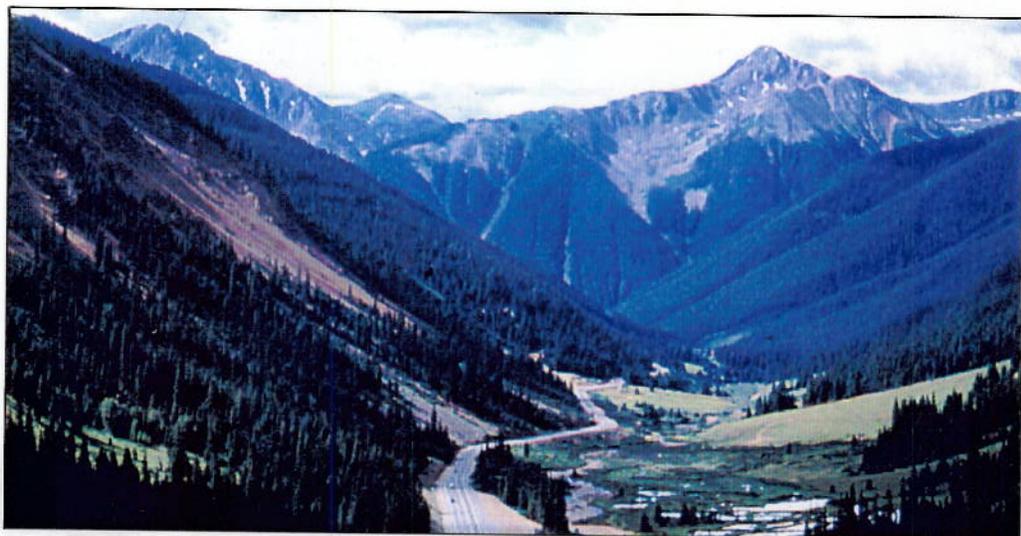
Proper planning and corridor management is necessary to ensure that cuts, as in the example above, are reclaimed

On non-forest lands along the Skyway, six counties are involved in managing land use and development. Due to the variations in political support for land use planning and regulations among these six counties, there are significant differences in how development is being permitted while preserving the intrinsic qualities of the corridor. San Miguel, Ouray, and San Juan Counties have zoning and subdivision regulations that

both limit development adjacent to the corridor and utilize design techniques to limit the impacts of new development. Redevelopment of existing properties in these counties also comes under their planning and development regulations.

La Plata and Montezuma Counties are each actively engaged in developing comprehensive plans to manage growth and development within their respective jurisdictions. Dolores County has recently completed a planning and land use needs assessment as the initial steps in determining the support for developing a comprehensive plan and land use regulations.

As part of the management strategy for the Skyway, these counties will be encouraged to adopt development regulations and design standards. These planning matters are further discussed in the Scenic and Natural Areas Assessment.



U.S. 550 looking south from Cunningham Gulch, below Red Mountain Pass



Outdoor Advertising Controls & Sign Plans

Consistent with federal and Colorado State laws prohibiting any new billboards, the Colorado Department of Transportation is not issuing any new permits for the erection of new billboards and outdoor advertising devices along the San Juan Skyway. A roadway sign evaluation project has been completed for the San Juan Skyway and is on file at the San Juan National Forest Supervisor's office in Durango, Colorado. This evaluation has determined that the following areas need corrective action.

- Several areas have far too many directional, regulatory, and informational signs. Some of these signs can be eliminated; and in most instances, some can be combined to limit the visual intrusion.

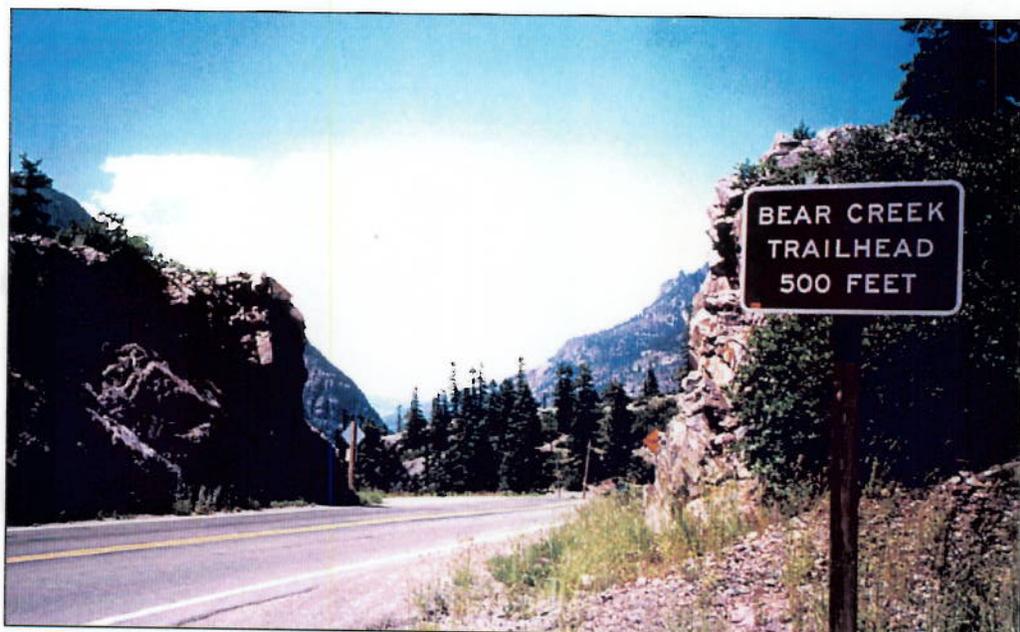


Outdoor advertising controls will help preserve the natural beauty and integrity of the roadside

- Advance information signs need to be installed at several recreational and interpretive resource locations in order to enhance the touring visitors experience on the Skyway.

- Some visitor information signs need to be replaced due to poor condition and/or inadequate information.

The following chart is a list of recommended actions, which must conform to Colorado Department of Transportation guidelines.



Advance information signs will help visitors identify scenic, natural, historic, archaeological and recreation resources

Corridor Signage

Recommendations For Signage Controls & Improvements

#	OUTDOOR ADVERTISING CONTROLS AND SIGN PLANS – ACTIONS	PRIORITY
1	Consolidate current regulatory, directional, and informational signage at the intersection of US 550 and US 160.	1
2	Install advance information signs at Chris Park/Haviland Lake Campground.	1
3	Replace current signs at Haviland Lake Recreation Area.	3
4	Install advance information signs at Purgatory Campground.	1
5	Install advance information signs at Engineer Overlook Site.	1
6	Install advance information signs at Cascade Creek.	2
7	Install advance information signs at Lime Creek Road.	1
8	Install advance information signs at Coal Bank Pass Rest Area.	1
9	Replace current signs at Deer Creek Trailhead.	3
10	Install advance information signs at Lime Creek Burn Rest Site for north bound traffic (south bound traffic currently has an advanced information sign).	1
11	Install advance information signs at Andrew's Lake Rest Area.	1
12	Install advance information signs at Molas Pass Interpretive Site.	1
13	Replace current Colorado Trail signs at Molas Pass.	3
14	Install advance information signs at Silverton Visitors Center.	2
15	Install advance information signs at BLM Alpine Loop junction with Skyway.	1
16	Replace current camping signs at South Mineral Creek.	3
17	Install advance information signs at Ophir Pass (four-wheel drive road).	1
18	Install advance information signs at Red Mountain Pass Rest Area, and Black Bear 4-wheel drive road.	1
19	Install advance information signs at Amphitheater Campground.	1
20	Consolidate current regulatory, directional, and informational signage at intersection of US 550 and CO 145.	1
21	Install advance information signs at Keystone Interpretive Site.	1
22	Install advance information signs at Sunshine Campground.	1
23	Install advance information signs at Matterhorn Campground.	1
24	Install advance information signs at Lizard Head Interpretive Site.	1
25	Install advance information signs at Lizard Head Pullout.	1
26	Replace current signs at Cayton Campground.	3
27	Install advance information signs at Scotch Creek Historic Toll Road.	3
28	Install advance information signs at Bear Creek Road.	2
29	Install advance information signs at Priest Gulch Trailhead.	2
30	Install advance information signs at the southern junction of CO 145 and FR 535 (Dunton Road).	1
31	Consolidate current regulatory, directional, and informational signage at junction of CO 184 and CO 145.	2
32	Install adv. information signs at the w. junction of CO 145 and CO 184 for the Anasazi Heritage Ctr. and McPhee Res.	2
33	Replace and consolidate regulatory, directional, and informational signage at Skyway entrance to Cortez.	1
34	Install advance information signs at rest area east of Cortez on US 160.	1
35	Consolidate current regulatory, directional, and informational signage at junction of CO 184 and US 160.	2
36	Consolidate current regulatory, directional, and informational signage at Echo Basin Road junction.	2
37	Install advance information signs at Target Tree Campground.	1
38	Install advance information signs at Cherry Creek Picnic Area.	2
39	Install advance information signs at La Plata Canyon Recreation Area.	2





Interpretation Plan

The San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests' staff have prepared an interpretive guide for the San Juan Skyway, with the goal of enhancing the enjoyment and experience of the visitor. This guide, which is available for public review at the office of the San Juan National Forest Office in Durango, Colorado, examined interpretive themes and forty-eight potential sites.

"If you should, in your imagination, put together in one small group, perhaps 12 miles square, all the heights and depths, the rugged precipices and polished faces of rock, and all the sharp pinnacles and deeply indented crests, and twenty times the inaccessible summits that both of us have ever seen, you would not have a picture equal to this". (W. H. Holmes. Letter to Ferdinand Hayden describing the San Juan Mountains. September 7, 1876).

INTRODUCTION

This interpretive plan evaluates the users, management goals, existing conditions, and natural and cultural resources in order to develop primary interpretive themes and potential interpretive sites along the San Juan Skyway.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Driving for pleasure is by far the most popular outdoor recreational experience for the

American public. Visitors to the San Juan Skyway include residents of the Four Corners, visitors from across the nation, and international tourists. A large number of visitors are repeat visitors who are returning for another trip to the region. The majority of visitors are from other parts of Colorado, followed by California, New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. They generally arrive in passenger cars or vans, but some arrive in recreational vehicles, motorcycles, buses, and rental cars. Although attracted to the region for its scenic amenities, many arrive for special activities including riding the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, visiting Mesa Verde National Park, visiting family or friends, participating in or viewing motorcycle rallies, bicycle races, kayak races, whitewater rafting, downhill skiing, viewing fall colors, taking four-wheel drive tours, or hunting.

The Four Corners area is geographically isolated from major population areas. As a result, most visitors have seen maps of southwest Colorado and are at least somewhat knowledgeable about some recreational opportunities of the region. Most, however, are very eager to receive additional information, to orient themselves to the land, buy real estate, and to learn about the local and regional history. Most visitors are very appreciative of information, as it allows them to relate to the people and places that make southwest Colorado special.

INTERPRETIVE GOALS & MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- To provide information to visitors about the natural and cultural resources on the San Juan Skyway in a manner that they might use this information to better appreciate the land and the resources.



Interpretive sites provide added information and enhance visitors' appreciation



- To increase the public awareness of management activities of the National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service (Mesa Verde and community Historic Districts) as major providers of outdoor recreation in the American West.
- To develop barrier-free facilities to accommodate all people to the San Juan Skyway.
- To utilize a variety of media, including wayside exhibits, brochures, guides, audio tapes, video tapes, Internet and interactive computers to accommodate all visitors including nontraditional visitors such as the elderly, for eign travelers, and people with special needs.
- To stimulate the economies of local communities in Southwest Colorado.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

As sites are identified and interpretive opportunities developed, we would like the public to:

- enjoy southwest Colorado, but leave natural and historic sites undisturbed;
- gain a greater appreciation for the natural and cultural resources of southwest Colorado; and
- experience a safe stay throughout their trip to southwest Colorado.



The Skyway corridor plan calls for 31 additional interpretive sites

EXISTING INTERPRETIVE SITES

At the present time, eight interpretive sites have been constructed along the 233 mile San Juan Skyway. These facilities are identified in the following table.

A number of interpretive signs, markers, and plaques have been installed over the years at various locations along the San Juan Skyway. Although well intended, most are in need of modification, do not encourage the public to stop, or should be incorporated into site plans. (Site plans should include safety pullouts, parking areas, kiosks, barrier-free access, and other amenities that encourage the public to stop.)

Existing Interpretive Sites						
Location	Year Built	Adequate Parking	# Interpretive Signs	Meet Themes	Barrier Free	Amenities
Lizard Head Pass	1991	Yes	6	Yes	Yes	Restrooms, Overlook
Keystone	1993	No	4	Yes	Yes	Rock Plaza
Molas Pass	1994	Yes	5	Yes	Yes	Overlook, Rock Plaza
Andrews Lake	1995	Yes	10	Yes	Yes	Overlook, Restrooms, Fishing, Trailhead
Durango-DACRA	1991	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	Visitor Contact Facility
Silverton Visitor Center	1990	Yes	1	Yes	No	Visitor Contact Facility
Cortez Welcome Center	1994	Yes-Street	4	Yes	Yes	Visitor Contact Facility
Ridgway	1990	Yes	5	Yes	Yes	Kiosk, Visitor Contact Facility



Signs, markers and plaque locations:

Dominguez and Escalante	1 plaque
Coal Bank Pass	1 elevation sign, rest room
Cortez Rest Area (Sleeping Ute)	1 sign
Telluride	1 peak finder sign
Placerville	1 sign
Trout Lake	1 peak finder sign
Ouray	1 welcome sign
Engineer Mountain	1 peak finder sign
Riverside Snowslide	2 plaques w/ monument
Ironton	1 reclamation sign
Alpine Loop Junction	1 sign
Red Mountain Pass	1 sign, 1 plaque
Silverton Overlook	1 welcome sign
Lime Creek Rest Area	1 sign, rest room

Visitor contact facilities along the San Juan Skyway include the Cortez Welcome Center, the BLM Anasazi Heritage Center, the Galloping Goose Historical Society in Dolores, the Rico Center in Rico, the Telluride Historical Museum, the Ouray County Museum in Ouray, the San Juan County Museum in Silverton, the Silverton Visitor Center in Silverton, the Animas Museum in Durango, the Durango-DACRA at Gateway Park, the Mancos Visitor Center in Mancos, Mesa Verde National Park, as well as Forest Service District Offices in Mancos, Dolores, Norwood, and Durango.

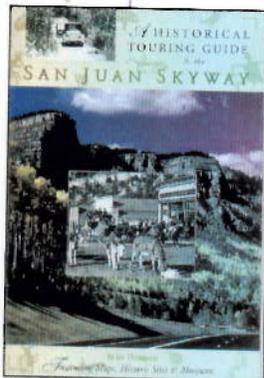
EXISTING INTERPRETIVE PUBLICATIONS:

There are currently a number of outstanding publications, maps, books, audio tapes and video tapes that feature the San Juan Skyway. Some of these include:

- “Discover Colorado - Colorado Scenic & Historic Byways,” by the Colorado Scenic & Historic Byway Commission;
- “San Juan Skyway;” Forest Service Brochure;
- “A Historical Touring Guide to the San Juan Skyway;” by Ian Thompson, Book (96 Pages);
- “The Million Dollar Highway;” by Marvin Gregory, Book (96 Pages);
- “San Juan Skyway;” by Scott Warren, Book (64 Pages);
- “Audio Tour of the San Juan Skyway;” Audio Cassette; and
- “San Juan Skyway;” Video Cassette.



Books, videos, audio guides and brochures are available to enhance visitors' appreciation

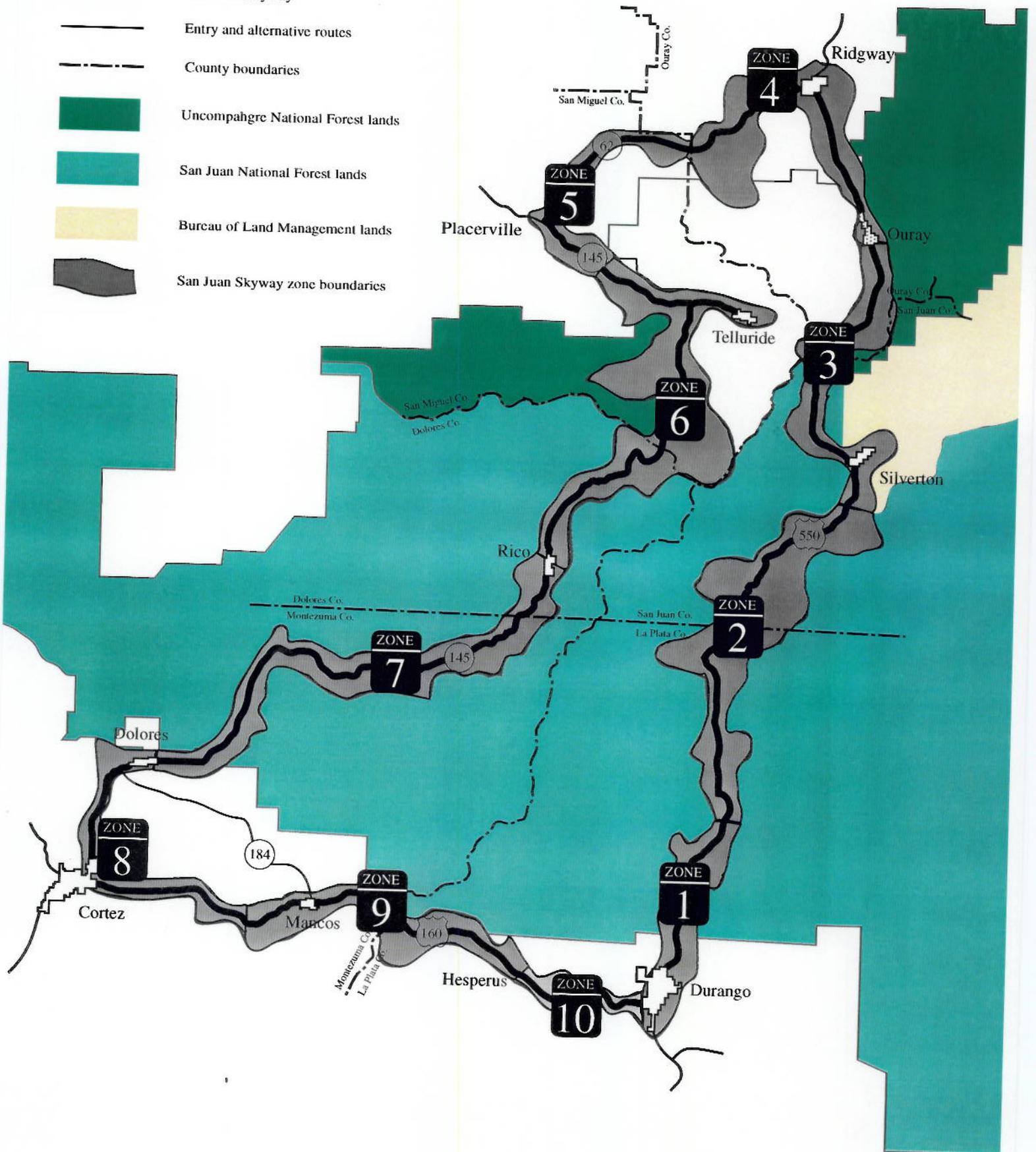


Award winning Skyway historical interpretive guide

There are also a variety of brochures on recreational opportunities accessible from the San Juan Skyway. These publications include campground guides, jeep tours, mining tours, ancestral Pueblo tours, and bicycle tours. One specific brochure that needs to be mentioned is the “Discover Colorado—Colorado’s Scenic and Historic Byways” produced by the Colorado Byway Commission. This publication has been produced in several languages including Spanish, French, German, and Japanese.

Interpretive Zones

-  San Juan Skyway
-  Entry and alternative routes
-  County boundaries
-  Uncompahgre National Forest lands
-  San Juan National Forest lands
-  Bureau of Land Management lands
-  San Juan Skyway zone boundaries





INTERPRETIVE ZONES & THEMES

The interpretive theme for the San Juan Skyway can be stated as:

Geologic and climatic processes, some as old as 70 million years, have determined where people settled, traveled, explored, sought their fortune, raised their families, grew crops, developed industries, built railroads, roads, and trails, and have shaped recreational experiences in southwest Colorado for the past 10,000 years. The San Juan Skyway now provides the link to explore this outstanding scenic area through events and people that have created the history of the Four Corners' region.

Due to the length of the San Juan Skyway and the variety of resources, the Skyway has been divided into ten Interpretive Zones. Within each zone, the following interpretive sub themes were developed that highlight significant resources.

Zone 1 — Durango to Hermosa Cliffs

- A. The Animas River Valley was the commercial and transportation center that exchanged agricultural goods to the northern mining towns and provided access to Denver and the outside world.
- B. The early architecture of small boom towns carried a distinctive Victorian identity that may be seen in Durango, Silverton, Ridgway, Ouray, Telluride, and Rico.

Zone 2 — Hermosa to Molas Pass

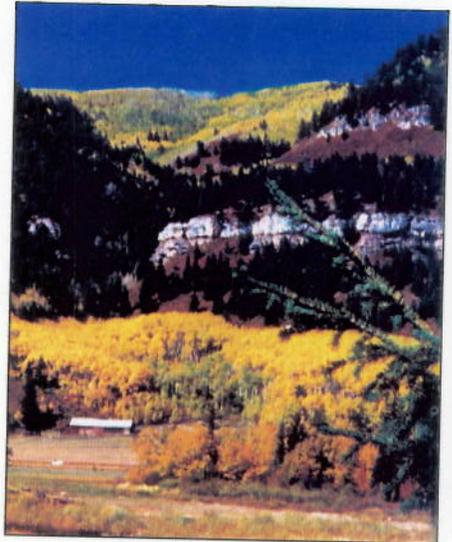
- A. The topographically diverse and accessible landscape allows for an equally diverse range of recreational experiences including hiking, downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, camping, backpacking, rock climbing, jeeping, and riding the railroad on National Forest land.
- B. The San Juan Mountains encompass many of the highest, most rugged wilderness, and inaccessible peaks in the Rockies; some of which are over 14,000 feet.

Zone 3 — Molas Pass to Ouray (including Silverton)

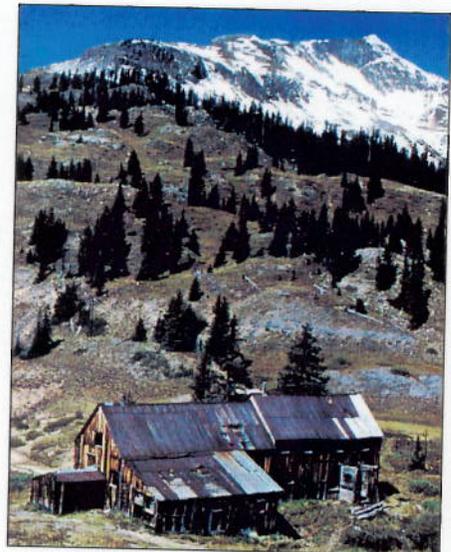
- A. The mineral rich San Juan Mountains resulted in the most important mining district in the southern Rocky Mountains and brought settlement to this area.
- B. The San Juan Mountains created an impenetrable barrier for early miners and prevented the extension of the railroad from Red Mountain Pass to Ouray. Today, historic mine roads provide spectacular access to the high country.

Zone 4 — Ouray to Dallas Divide

- A. Early Colorado ranching history depended on lush pastures from high mountain meadows to lowland valleys for grazing cattle and sheep.
- B. Southwest Colorado was traditional hunting and gathering land for the Ute Indians. As settlers moved into Ute land, the Utes were obligated to sign a number of treaties that relinquished ownership of the land and restricted the Utes to reservation land in Utah and southern Colorado.



Hermosa Cliffs looking west from U.S. 550 North



Mining antiquity below Red Mountain Pass, between Silverton and Ouray



Zone 5 — Dallas Divide to Vanadium

A. The area has experienced a variety of “boom” and “bust” development cycles, including uranium mining, placer gold mining, ski area developments, ranching, and railroading. Changing economic conditions and the harshness of the West played a hand in yielding “disappointment.”

Zone 6 — Vanadium Townsite to Rico

A. The mineral rich San Juan Mountains resulted in the most important mining district in the southern Rocky Mountains and brought settlement of this area.

B. The topographically diverse and accessible landscape allows for an equally diverse range of recreational experiences including hiking, downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, camping, backpacking, rock climbing, and jeeping on National Forest land.

Zone 7 — Rico to Dolores

A. Ancestral Pueblo People to Ute Indians, trappers to ranchers, miners to passengers on the Rio Grande Southern Railroad have traveled along the San Juan Skyway on historical routes.

B. The Dolores River, running through the Dolores River Canyon, features mountain sides of aspen trees at their height of fall colors.

Zone 8 — Dolores to Mancos

A. The lower reaches of the Great Sage Plain provided suitable hunting and gathering land and farmland for the ancestral Pueblo People known as the Basketmakers and the Anasazi, who inhabited this land for nearly 1,300 years.

B. Water played a vital role in the settlement and development of this area.

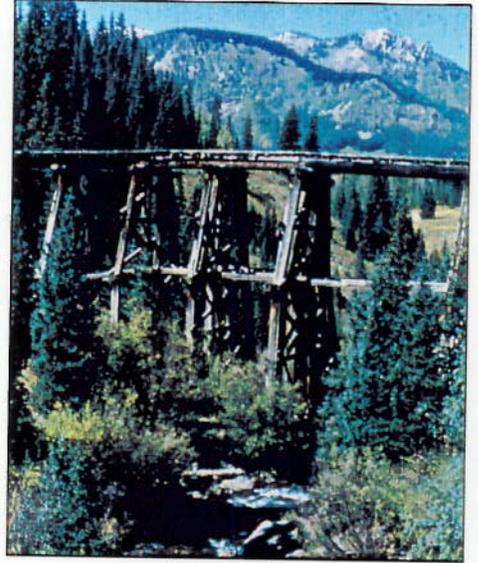
Zone 9 — Mancos to Hesperus

A. Ranching and timber played a major role in settlement patterns of the Mancos and Thompson Park area and provided an income for the miners that worked claims in the La Plata Mountains.

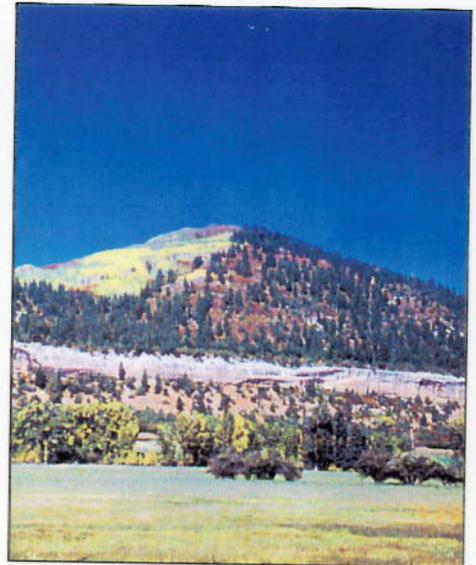
Zone 10 — Hesperus to Durango

A. The area has experienced a variety of “boom” and “bust” development cycles, including coal mining, placer gold mining, ski area developments, ranching, railroading, and military outposts. Changing economic conditions and the harshness of the West played a hand in determining settlements.

B. A major travel route along the southern end of the San Juan Mountains and the La Plata Mountains was used for nearly 2,000 years. This route was used by a number of Spanish expeditions, including Juan Rivera in 1765 and Dominguez Escalante in 1776, and was known as the Old Spanish Trail, connecting the missions in California with the Spanish settlement in New Mexico.



Galloping Goose railroad trestle near Trout Lake, to be restored



Sandstone cliffs, north of Dolores on SH 145



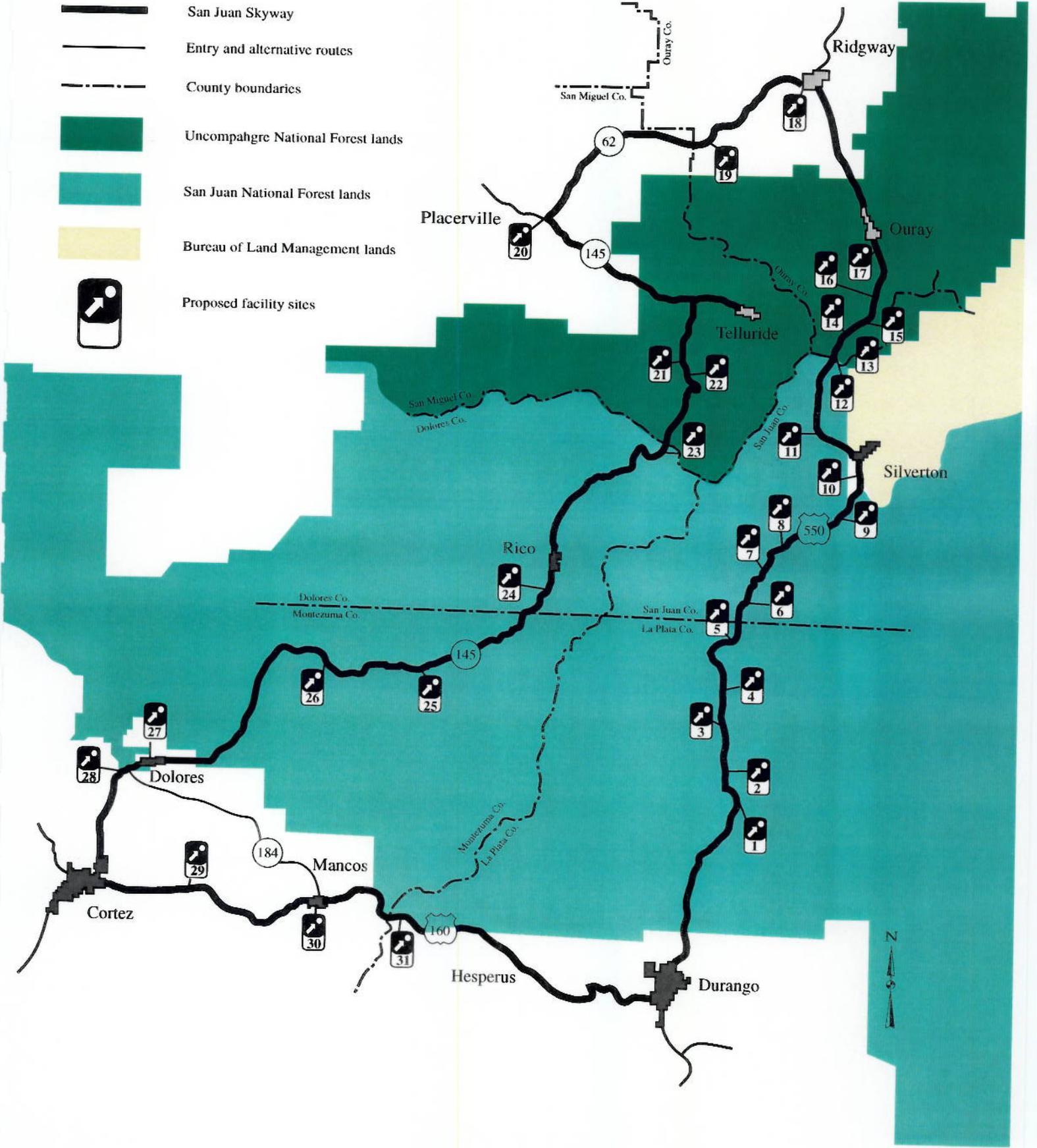
The following list represents specific interpretive project proposals. The location of each is illustrated on the map that follows. For more information on these sites, refer to "A Development and Interpretive Guide for the San Juan National Forest" at the San Juan National Forest Office in Durango, Colorado. Before these sites can be developed, they must conform with Colorado Department of Transportation access standards.

Proposed Interpretive Sites (part 1)

#	PROPOSED INTERPRETIVE SITES	PRIORITY
1	The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad Overpass Point of Interest. Interpretation will highlight railroad history. This existing site will include viewing decks, interpretive signs, and a highway underpass for pedestrian safety. (Mile marker 36.6, US 550).	2
2	Shalona Lake Overlook. Interpret the historical use of the forest and early settlement in the area. This existing site will have an interpretive sign, a Forest Service entry sign, and parking. (Mile marker 38.1, US 550).	1
3	Hermosa Cliffs and Wetland Point of Interest. Interpretation will focus on the Peregrine Falcon, wetland wildlife, and the geological formation of the cliffs. This site will have a viewing platform, a nature trail, benches, and interpretive signs. (Mile marker 42.3, US 550).	2
4	Weminuche Wilderness Overlook. Interpretation will focus on the wilderness area (the largest in Colorado) and its management objectives. This site will require the construction of a pullout along with the installation of interpretive signing. (Mile marker 45.4, US 550).	2
5	Potato Hill-Purgatory Flats Overlook. Interpretation will discuss the southern San Juan Mountains, fur trade of the 1820 & 30's, and the famous mountain men that were present here. This site will be developed in conjunction with the construction of a CDOT maintenance facility. It will have parking, a short trail with a viewing deck, and interpretive signs. (Mile marker 52.1, US 550).	2
6	Coal Bank Pass Rest Area. The interpretative theme will discuss the recreation opportunities, historical travel, ecology, and avalanches in the area. This existing site will have a redesigned rest area, a short nature trail, tables and benches, interpretive signs, parking, and a viewing deck. (Mile marker 56.7, US 550).	1
7	Twilight Peak Overlook. Interpretation will depict the skyline of the west Needle Mountains, their elevations, river drainage, etc. This existing site has a pullout with parking and removable interpretive signs for the winter. (Mile marker 57.4, US 550).	2
8	Lime Creek Burn. The historic Lime Creek Burn of 1879 will be featured. This existing site will have a redesign of the parking lot, a short trail, a viewing area, a picnic area, and interpretive signs. (Mile marker 59.1, US 550).	3
9	Kendall Peak Point of Interest. Interpretation will discuss the historical mining in the Silverton area. A vista area for views of the surrounding mountains, interpretive signs, and parking will be constructed. (Mile marker 66.3, US 550).	3
10	Silverton Visitors Center. This site will be developed in cooperation with the community of Silverton, the BLM (Alpine Loop), and the Colorado Historical Society. A kiosk will provide interpretation on the history of Silverton, the Alpine Loop, and the San Juan Skyway.	1
11	Chattanooga. The old mining town that was once here will be interpreted. The site will have a pulloff with removable interpretive signage for the winter months. (Mile marker 78.1, US 550).	3
12	Ironton Yankee Girl Overlook. Illustrating the historic mining boom towns and camps. This site will have parking, a viewing deck, and interpretive signs. (Mile marker 82.4, US 550).	1
13	Upper Uncompahgre Gorge. This site will utilize the existing turnout for interpretative signs of the mountain range and the geological formation of the Uncompahgre Gorge. (Mile marker 87, US 550).	3
14	Riverside Slide Snowshed. Interpretation will describe the history and dynamics of avalanches in this area. This existing pullout will have barriers for snow plowing and removable interpretive signage for the winter. (Mile marker 87.6, US 550).	2
15	Uncompahgre River Waterfall and access to the Alpine Loop Scenic Drive. Interpretation here will discuss the water tunnel and the BLM Alpine Loop Scenic Byway. This site will have improved parking and interpretive signage. (Mile marker 89.3, US 550).	3

Proposed Interpretive Site Actions

-  San Juan Skyway
-  Entry and alternative routes
-  County boundaries
-  Uncompahgre National Forest lands
-  San Juan National Forest lands
-  Bureau of Land Management lands
-  Proposed facility sites



Proposed Interpretive Sites (part 2)

16	Bear Creek Falls Overlook, The Otto Mears Toll Road and Pay Station, which existed here, and a sketch of the falls will be the focus of the interpretation. An improved, safer walkway to the falls will be constructed. (Mile marker 90.4, US 550).	2
17	Ouray Overlook. The interpretive theme will focus on the settlement and geologic features of the valley. This is an existing site. Future development will replace current signs with interpretive signs that are removed during the winter. (Mile marker 92.1, US 550).	1
18	Ridgway Town Park. Developed in partnership with the Colorado Historical Society and Town of Ridgway. The interpretive theme will focus upon the settlement and transportation history of the area.	1
19	Dallas Divide Overlook. Signage will include a peak finder of the Mount Sneffels Range, the Stagecoach line, and rail construction. In addition to interpretive signs, this site will have parking and a proposed trail to the top of a knoll where viewing would allow a 360 degree panoramic view. (Mile marker 13.8, CO 62).	1
20	Placerville Skyway and Unaweep Tabeguache Byways Introductory Site. This site will orient travelers coming from the west via CO 145 and relate the recreation opportunities and side attractions along both the Skyway and Unaweep Tabeguache Byways. This site would have parking and interpretive signs. (Mile marker 84.4, CO 145).	1
21	Gold Gulch Overlook. Interpretation will focus on Mount Wilson and Sunlight Peaks, the railroad along the side of the mountains, and the historic Ames Power Plant. This site would have parking and interpretive signs. (Mile Marker 84.4, CO 145).	1
22	Grassy Knoll Overlook. The Ames Power Plant and the Ophir Needles will be discussed here. The site will have a rest area, parking, tables, a trail with a viewing pad, and interpretive signage. (Mile marker 65.9, CO 145).	3
23	Lizard Head photo site. This site, beside a paved pullout, will include interpretive signs discussing the history and geology of Lizard Head Peak. (Mile marker 57.5, CO 145).	3
24	Rico Coke Ovens Point of Interest, pointing out the coke ovens and describing the ore smelting process. This site will have a turnout and interpretive signs. (Mile marker 45.7, CO 145).	3
25	Aspen view overlook. Interpretation will discuss the botanical aspects of aspen and the beauty of the autumn leaf change. This site will have a pullout with an interpretive sign. (Mile marker 29.4, CO 145).	3
26	Red Cliffs. Highlighting the geology of the red sandstone rock formations and the story of high elevation ranching, this site will have a pullout and interpretive signage. (Mile marker 25.9, CO 145).	3
27	Dolores Visitor Center. Interpretation will focus upon the Galloping Goose Railroad theme and the timber industry's role in the history of the Dolores/McPhee area. The site will have one or two interpretive signs.	1
28	McPhee Reservoir. Interpretation will depict the planning, construction, and the role water played in shaping the cultures that have inhabited this area from prehistoric to contemporary times. This site will have a pullout with an interpretive sign. (Mile marker 9, CO 145).	3
29	Sleeping Ute Overlook at the Cortez Rest Area. The legend of Sleeping Ute, the La Plata Mountains, and the prehistoric ancestral Puebloan culture will be interpreted in conjunction with the Colorado Historical Society. This site will utilize a tower, a paved trail, parking, and interpretive signage. (Mile Marker 46.5, US 160).	1
30	Mancos Visitor Center. Interpretation will focus on early agricultural and ranching settlement of the Mancos Valley. This site will have one or two interpretive signs.	1
31	Thompson Park/Caviness Mountain. Interpretation will focus on multiple uses of the forest and the traditional ranching operation which can be seen below. (Mile marker 62, US 160).	1





Tourism Development

Southwest Colorado has been and continues to be a vacation destination for both national and international visitors. Key attractions are the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Train, Mesa Verde National Park, (a World Heritage Site), and the San Juan Skyway. These destinations annually attract 600,000—700,000 visitors to Mesa Verde National Park and 250,000-plus riders on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Train.

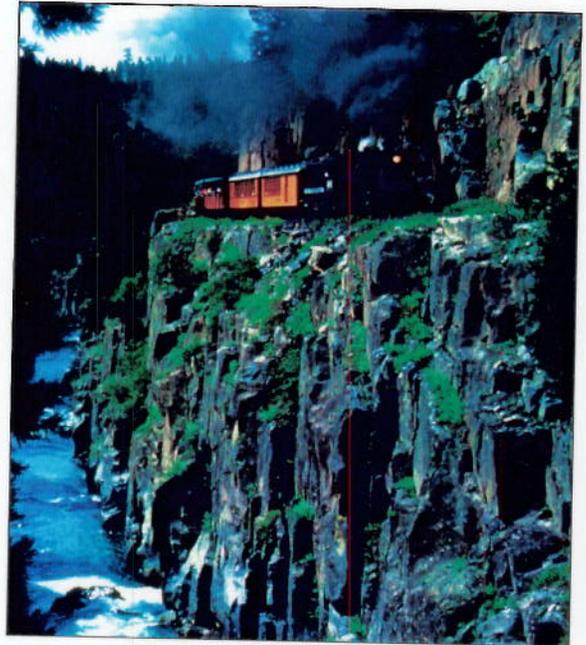
VISITOR SERVICES

Over the last several years, the economies of the communities along the San Juan Skyway have been in transition from relying upon agriculture and the extractive industries of mining, timber production, and energy development to economies that have increasingly become based upon tourism and recreation. In response to this economic trend, visitor services have developed to accommodate a steady growth in tourism. These services appear to be adequate, except for a few days during the peak season in July when lodging facilities are at capacity. To accommodate the ever increasing numbers of visitors to the region, construction of additional lodging facilities continue along the Skyway.

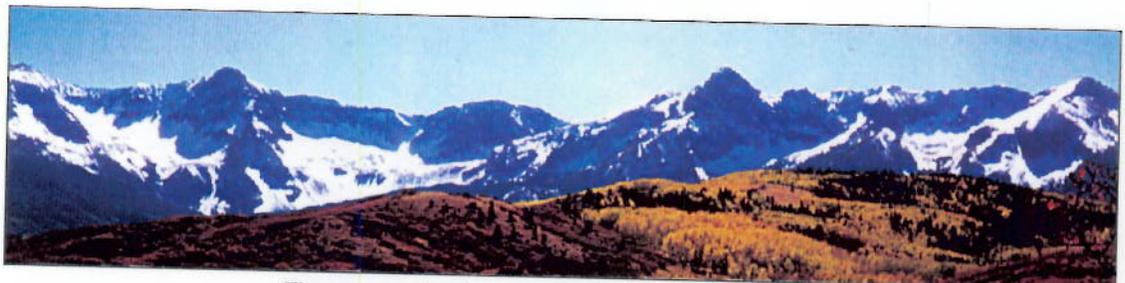
There is also a unified effort among all Skyway communities to direct more of their marketing to attract visitors during the shoulder seasons of fall and spring, when there is excess tourism service capacity. In the winter, Telluride and Purgatory are popular ski resorts, and Ouray is known for world class ice climbing.

The Visitor Center in Cortez is also an official state Welcome Center. Additionally, the San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests and Bureau of Land Management provide visitor information services at a variety of locations along the Skyway. Forest Service and Colorado Department of Transportation rest areas are also available at several sites, adding to the convenience of the touring visitor.

If the San Juan Skyway receives designation as an All-American Road, any increases in tourism should be accommodated with little difficulty.



The Durango/Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad attracts over 225,000 visitors each year



The awesome San Juan Mountains, some of the most rugged and spectacular in the state with eight peaks over 14,000 feet elevation. The Skyway truly does take visitors to the sky and back



TOURISM PROMOTION PLAN

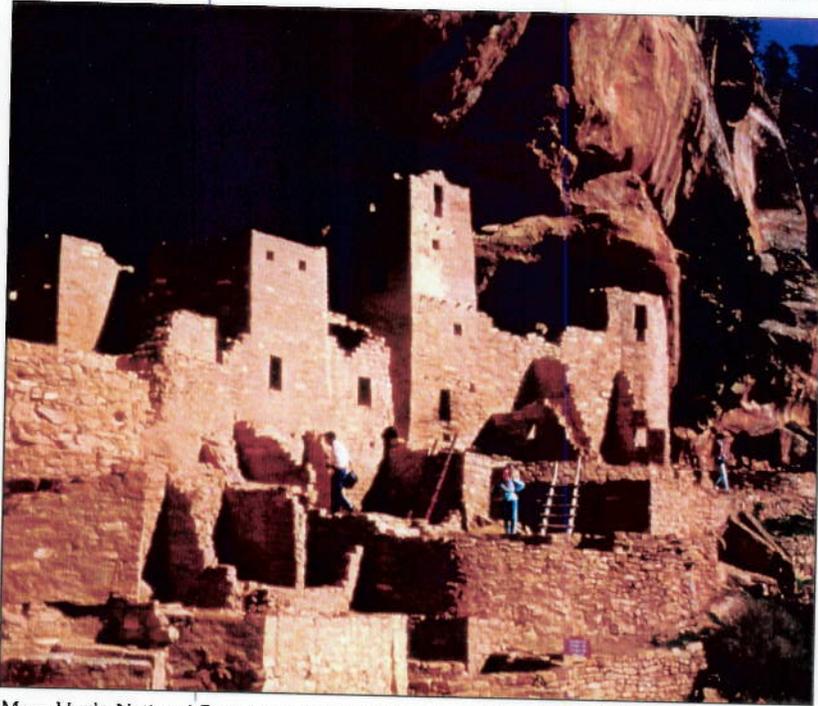
Even before the San Juan Skyway received official designation both as a National Forest Byway and a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway, communities along this route promoted this "world class scenic drive." Now that official designations are in place, this promotional effort by many public and private sector interests has increased.

A broad array of tourism marketing media, including community and regional brochures, media news releases, videos, guide books, and state tourism and byway

publications describe the San Juan Skyway. Most of this promotional effort is confined to the domestic market.

For the San Juan Skyway itself, an attractive brochure, video, audio tape, and two guides (one scenic and the other historical) are used to both promote the Skyway, as well as enhance the visitors' touring experience.

With the availability of the above promotional efforts and promotional and educational materials, the only areas needing additional work involve increased promotion to international visitors; the development of foreign language interpretive materials; and the development of resource protection and environmental education materials.



Mesa Verde National Park is the largest attraction in Southwest Colorado, drawing over 3/4 of a million visitors annually

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

1. One recommendation is that the Friends of the San Juan Skyway Association seek funding to translate the San Juan Skyway brochure into German, Japanese, French, and Spanish. These promotional brochures will be distributed in Europe and other Spanish speaking countries via the United States' international offices and travel and trade shows. Additionally, these brochures will be made available to visitor centers and land management agencies along the byway for use by international tourists seeking information or already touring the Skyway.
2. In cooperation with area tourism organizations and recreation providers, interpretive signage and information will be developed using international symbols for communicating the availability of visitor services.
3. It is recommended that an Internet "Homepage" be developed featuring San Juan Skyway recreational opportunities, environmental education, the "Leave No Trace" program, heritage protection statements, and sales information.
4. It is recommended to involve children in protecting the San Juan Skyway through the Junior Ranger program that encourages resource protection, litter campaign and activities.
5. It is recommended to develop an environmental education program using video, and accessible by computer, to educate tourism providers and visitors about protecting our natural and cultural heritage, and being considerate of other resource users.

Tourism
Development

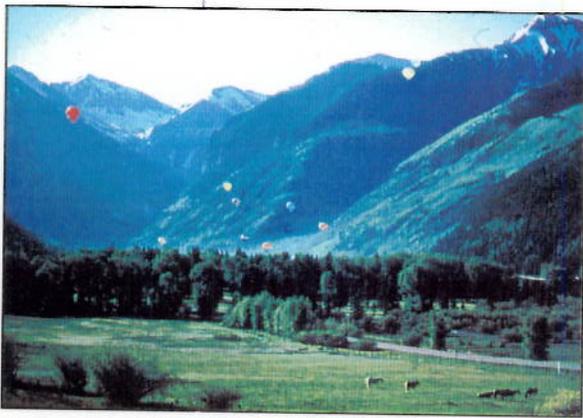


Review & Monitoring

An annual review of this plan will be done to monitor progress and make adjustments where necessary to accommodate changes. This monitoring review will be done by the Skyway Association, and any changes will then be incorporated into the planning document.

Credits

The preparation of this corridor management plan, partially funded with National Scenic Byway grant funds, involved many people from a variety of interest groups and communities along the Skyway. The Planning Steering Committee members include:



Balloons launch from Telluride, SH 145

- Joe Audino, Colorado Dept. of Transportation
- Rich Bechtolt, Colorado Dept. of Transportation
- Tom Condos, Uncompahgre National Forest
- Jim Craft, San Miguel County Representative
- Marlene Hazen, Dolores County Representative
- Glen Henshaw, Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Bill Norman, San Juan County Administrator
- Beverly Rich, San Juan County Historical Society
- Katherine Roser, Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts
- Dan Schler, La Plata County Representative
- Douglas Secrist, Colorado State Parks
- Richard Speegle, Bureau of Land Management
- Allan Staehle, Ouray County Representative
- Mike Talcott, Montezuma County Representative

Staff and consulting assistance in preparing the plan was provided by:

- Dick Ostergaard, San Juan National Forest
- Todd Tucker, San Juan National Forest, Americorps
- Jamie Maslyn, San Juan Forest Association & Utah State University
- Mark Franklin, San Juan National Forest
- Paul Dunn and Staff at Artworks, Inc.
- Gaye Furry, Fort Lewis College, Office of Community Services
- Ken Francis, Fort Lewis College, Office of Community Services

Information regarding the San Juan Skyway and this San Juan Skyway Corridor Management Plan can be obtained by contacting the following:



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