

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 90

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
090A	From the Utah State Line southeast via Bedrock To SH 141-A at Vancorum
090B	From CR 90 and Shavano Valley Rd Southwest of Montrose Northeast To SH 50-A and SH 550-B in Montrose

Highway Location:

Counties: Montrose
Length (Miles): 42.135

OAHP Site Numbers (for previously recorded segments, if applicable)*:

<i>OAHP Site No.</i>	<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Assessment Date</i>	<i>Site Name</i>
5MN.8199.1	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible>Field eligible	09/04/2007>09/13/2007>07/03/2007	PARADOX ROAD, STATE PRIMARY ROAD 20, STATE HIGHWAY 90 - SEGMENT
5MN.8199.2	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	01/14/2009>10/14/2008	OLD HIGHWAY 90 - SEGMENT

Discussion of Site Forms (for previously recorded segments, if applicable):

Two Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms for previously recorded segments of this highway, including 5MN.8199.1 and 5MN.8199.2, were identified in Compass. Paradox Road/State Primary Road 20/State Highway 90 (5MN.8199.1) corresponds to an abandoned section of road bed that was determined officially eligible in 2007 because it played a role in economic and community development in the area and as a good example of early twentieth-century highway engineering with a ditched and crowned roadbed. A former segment of Old Highway 90 (5MN.8199.2) was determined not eligible in 2009.

Historic Districts located within 250 feet of highway (OAHP Site Number and Name)*:

<i>OAHP Site No.</i>	<i>District Name</i>	<i>Assessment (If Applicable)</i>
None	No historic districts are found on or adjacent to this highway	

*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHP

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Historical Data:

SH 90 is approximately 42 miles long and includes two segments. The western segment extends between the Utah border and SH 141 near Naturita for approximately 34 miles. The eastern segment travels west from Montrose for approximately 8 miles. The two segments were connected during the early history and development of the road. Southwestern Colorado is a generally mountainous region that owes much of its history to mining. The earliest transportation corridors in southwest Colorado were wagon roads that often followed trails established by Native Americans, explorers, fur trappers, and traders. The Colorado Gold Rush of 1859 brought an influx of people to Colorado's southwestern region in search of fortune and led to the establishment of mining camps through the area to supply activities at the mines and those working there. To the southeast of the highway towns, such as Silverton, Placerville, and Ouray, began as mining camps and supply centers for mining districts for gold, silver, lead, and zinc that were mined at various periods throughout the region. Uranium mining became an important industry in the post-World War II Era with mines located near Naturita (Colorado State Planning Commission 1941; 141, 426; Ubbelohde et al 2006; 175-177; Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Inventory Form, SH 141 (5MN.6048). Research did not find that SH 90 provided specific important connections for the mining industry in the region, as early roads in the region commonly were built to connect mining camps, mining districts, and communities. Important associations with mining is better illustrated by US 550, SH 141, and other highways in the region that are recognized as possessing significance.

The Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory form for 5MN.8199.1 indicates that the SH 90 corridor was likely established by the 1890s and extended from the Utah border through the communities of Naturita, Pinon, and eastward to Montrose. Between 1894 and 1904 the Colorado Cooperative Company worked to construct an 18-mile combination irrigation ditch near Naturita and the Paradox Road, a predecessor to SH 90, which served as an important transportation corridor at that time. (Ubbelohde et al 2006; 175-177; Wyckoff 1999; 53, Colorado State Planning Commission 1941; 423-425).

In 1904 the Colorado Cooperative Company established the community of Nucla, located to the north of Naturita accessed via SH 97, as a cooperative colony. The Colorado Cooperative Company was part of the larger national cooperative movement in the U.S. in which utopian colonies were founded based on principles of communal living. The impacts of the larger cooperative movement in Colorado include the efforts of the Colorado Cooperative Colony, which established the Union Colony, later renamed Greely, in 1870 and later the Colorado Cooperative Company which established Nucla. First named Pinon and later Nucla, the community was established as the result of the efforts of the Colorado Cooperative Company, which was incorporated earlier in 1894. Nucla operated as a camp and attracted hundreds communal settlers in the late nineteenth century. The work of the Colorado Cooperative Company included construction of an irrigation ditch to convey water to farms in Tabeguache Park, along with other community services and infrastructure. In 1904 the Nucla Town Improvement was organized. Later the Colorado Cooperative Company became the Colorado Ditch Company, which continues to provide water to Nucla. The Colorado Cooperative Company petitioned the Montrose County Commissioners to build a road between Paradox and Montrose, which resulted in the predecessor of SH 90, the Paradox Road. The Paradox Road was not completed until 1915 and became state primary road 20 before designated SH 90 (Frontier in Transition: A History of Southwestern Colorado; Ubbelohde et al 2006; 175-177; Wyckoff 1999; 53; Colorado State Planning Commission 1941; 423-425). Clark, 1999; Denver Public Library, 2013; Site Form 5MN8199.1). While the Colorado Cooperative Company petitioned for the construction of the Paradox Road to provide greater access within the region, SH 90 does not provide direct access or to have played a pivotal role in their operations. Important associations with the cooperative movement and the Colorado Cooperative Company is better illustrated by SH 97, which provided direct access and would have played a more pivotal role in the operations of the colony at Nucla.

The popularity of the automobile increased dramatically throughout the state between 1910 and 1920. The Good Roads Movement and founding of the Colorado Highway Department in the first decades of the twentieth century led to the establishment of a highway network throughout the region and state (Carter and Mehls 1984: 138-141).

Paradox Road first became part of the state system as State Primary Road 20 and the counties through which it traveled were responsible for maintenance and upgrades. Historic state highway maps confirm that the corridor was in place by 1916. The road was designated SH 90 by 1926 and extended from the Utah border through Paradox to U.S. Highway (US) 50 in Montrose at that time. Historic state highway maps indicate that by 1954 the majority of the route was turned back except for a small segment on the west side of Montrose, which corresponds to the present-day eastern segment. As summarized on the Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory form for 5MN.8199.1, a subsequent uranium boom eventually led to the reinstatement of SH 90 between Utah and Vancorum; however, the route between Vancorum to Montrose remained a local road and according to Salek, bypassed Paradox rather than

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through Paradox as it had before. In 2010 U.S. Highway (US) 50 was routed onto the San Juan Bypass around downtown Montrose; it had previously come south on Townsend and east on Main Street. As a result, SH 90 no longer met US 50 in Montrose.

Road building in mountainous areas addressed challenging terrain and high altitude passes; however, no information was found to indicate the design, engineering, or construction of this highway differed from other roads in the region. This road was one of many that functioned to supply and support towns and area industries by providing links to regional transportation corridors, towns, and cities. Research, literature review, and historic mapping does not indicate that this highway provided direct access to destinations related to important historic themes. SH 90 was not a prominent route and was relinquished and its length shortened. Historically it comprised one component of the overall transportation network by linking other highways and providing access to local destinations.

(Unless otherwise indicated, sources used in the preparation of this section included state highway maps, the Highways of Colorado by Matthew Salek, Highways to the Sky: A Context and History of Colorado's Highway System, Colorado State Roads and Highways, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission, plans in the Online Transportation Information System (OTIS), and site forms for previously surveyed resources in Compass when available.)

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Not Significant - No historical significance identified
 Significant - Historical significance identified (see details below)

Property Type and Areas of Significance:

A detailed explanation why this highway possesses historical significance is provided in the Significance Statement below.

Cultural:

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)

Engineering:

Subtypes

- Farm-to-Market Road
- Limited Access, Multiple-Lane, Divided Highway/Freeway
- Highway Bypass

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)
- Engineering achievement (Engineering)

Aesthetic:

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)
- Engineering achievement (Engineering)
- Landscape architecture (Landscape Architecture)

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Historic periods of highway construction:

- Pre-territorial (pre-1861)
- Territorial and pre-automobile state roads (1861-1890)
- Automobile age (1890-1930)
- Depression and World War II (1930-1945)
- Postwar Interstate Era (1945-1973)
- Completion and Augmentation of Interstate System (1973-2000)

Level of Significance:

- Local
- State
- National

Significance Statement:

SH 90 is classified as an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS.

Criterion A

The road corridor that eventually became SH 90 was constructed prior to 1916 as the Paradox Road and represents an early project completed by the Colorado Highway Department. While the route served as an early transportation corridor that connected Paradox, Naturita, and Montrose, it was one road among many in this region of the state that served mining activities and provided goods and services to communities. Other roads better represent important associations with mining activities. While the route is associated with the Colorado Cooperative Company and its efforts to establish Nucla, this road did not provide direct access and this theme is better illustrated by SH 97. Research did not indicate the road was built or improved as part of a Depression-era federal work relief program or that it served as a farm-to-market route connecting an agricultural region to larger market centers. For these reasons, SH 90 does not possess significance under Criterion A.

Criterion B

Research did not reveal this highway to be directly associated with the events or work of a person important in history, nor does research indicate the highway represents the efforts of a specific individual to secure construction of this highway for the economic development of a community or area of the state. Therefore, this highway does not possess significance under Criterion B.

Criterion C

Previous documentation indicates that the route may possess significance as a representative example of early twentieth-century highway engineering of a ditched and crowned roadbed; however, research and literature review yielded no evidence to indicate the use of innovative or important engineering techniques that serve to distinguish this highway from other roads within mountainous areas of the state. The highway's design and construction appear to have utilized techniques common to other roads in this area. Overall this highway appears to reflect the standard types of design and construction practices and it does not appear to possess distinctive features resulting in significance under Criterion C.

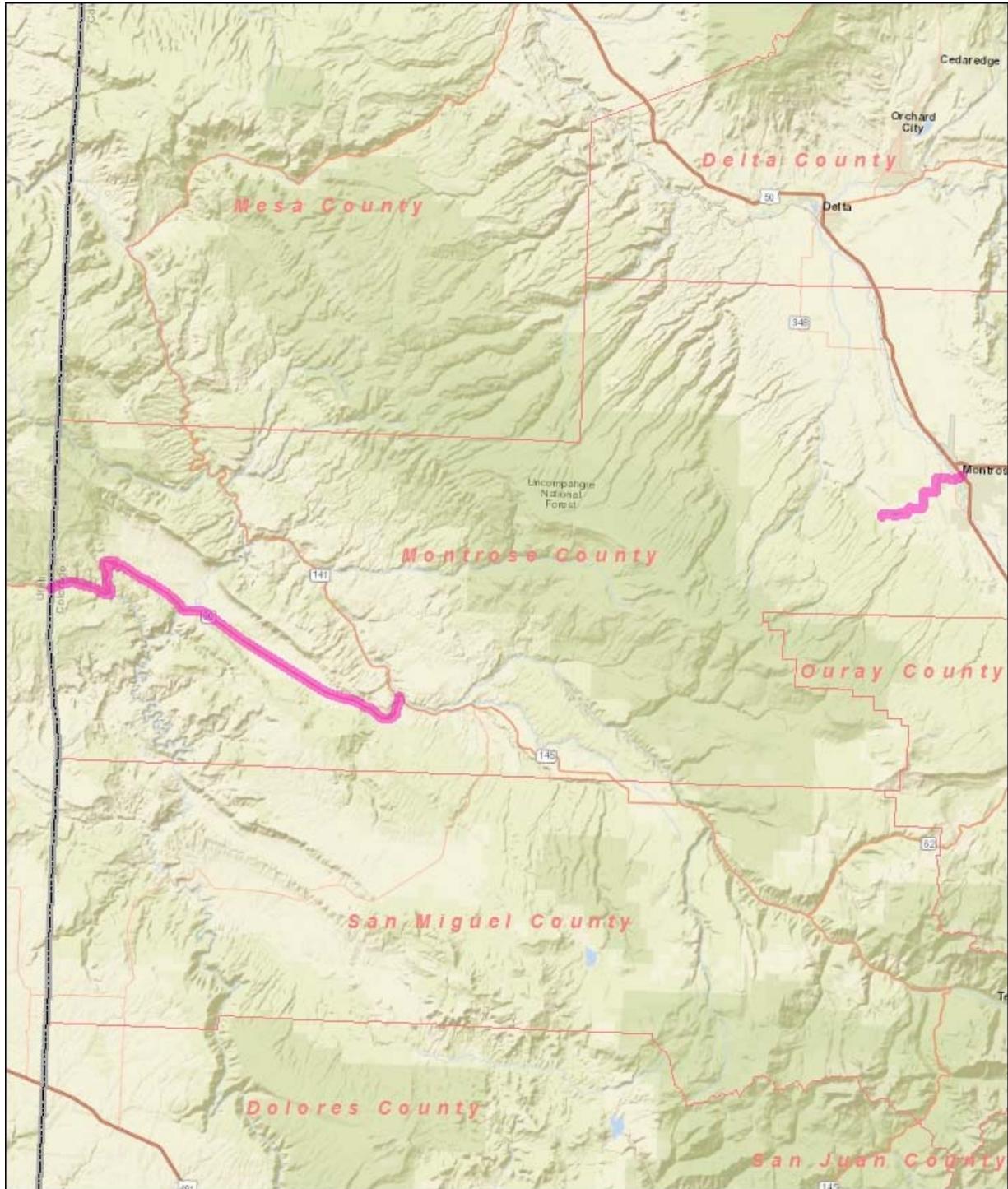
Criterion D

For a property to possess significance for information potential, the information yielded by the property must answer specific important research questions that cannot be otherwise answered. The technology of highway construction is well understood and documented. As such, this highway is unlikely to yield important information that cannot be discerned from archived plans and other records. Therefore, this highway does not possess significance under Criterion D.

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- SH 90
- State Boundary
- County Boundary

0 3 6 12 18 24 Miles

SH 90



Map indicates the extent of the highway based on CDOT GIS data; portions co-signed with other highways may not be indicated.

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