

Officers Gulch and Tenmile Canyon Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 195 to 201)

Overview

This unit is primarily characterized by its rural, forest setting. Development within this unit is primarily related to recreation. Copper Mountain and Tenmile Canyon units are dominated by the imposing peaks of the Gore and Tenmile mountain ranges that tower more than 13,000 feet in elevation. The landscape within these units is an example of outstanding scenic attractiveness and is considered to be Class A scenery. Minor deviations from the natural landscape character are present; however, they are subordinate to the characteristic landscape and include I-70 and US 6.



Tenmile Canyon, view southwest



Tenmile Canyon, view southwest

Landscape Character

- Dominated by Gore and Tenmile mountain ranges and Copper Mountain Resort
- Tenmile Formation
- Resistive granite
- Area not mined
- Glaciated, broad U-shaped valley
- Lower subalpine to subalpine zone
- North- and south-facing slopes dominated by lodgepole pine with large stands of aspen
- Riparian areas centered on Tenmile Creek and pond complex toward Copper Mountain

Landscape Context

(Source: J.F. Sato and Associates observation)

- Jurisdiction: White River National Forest, unincorporated Summit County
- Copper Mountain Resort elements detract from natural setting
- Paralleled by Tenmile-Vail Pass National Recreation Trail
- Eagles Nest Wilderness Area north of I-70
- Parallels Tenmile Creek

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

Much of this unit is within foreground views from recreation sites, such as the Tenmile-Vail Pass National Recreation Trail, North Tenmile Trail, and Wheeler Lake Spur Trail. I-70 throughout this unit is paralleled by the Tenmile-Vail Pass National Recreation Trail, which extends from east Vail to Silverthorne. Many other trails depart from locations near I-70 and extend either to the north or south of the interstate. Views along I-70 are enclosed by local terrain and are dominated by the peaks of the Tenmile and Gore mountain ranges, as well as the Copper Mountain ski runs (see Key Views photograph in Figure L-2).

Blue River Valley Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 201 to 208)

Overview

The Blue River Valley unit is centered on the confluence of Tenmile Creek, Blue River, Straight Creek, and Snake River. A broad north/south-oriented valley encompassed by the Gore and Williams Fork mountain ranges characterizes the Blue River Valley unit. This unit is composed of both Class A and Class B scenery. Distinctive landscape features within this unit include rugged peaks of the Gore mountain range within the Eagles Nest Wilderness Area. Deviations from the natural landscape character are present in the Blue River Valley unit, primarily associated with community development; minor cut-and-fill slopes associated with I-70, SH 9, SH 6; and the Dillon Dam Reservoir. Community developments influencing this unit include Frisco, Silverthorne, and Dillon.



Blue River Valley, view west



Blue River Valley, view west

Landscape Character

- Broad river valley with both sides characterized by steep hillsides
- Defined by Gore Mountain Range (west) and Williams Fork Mountain Range (east)
- Midvalley sedimentary rock; soft rock, dark gray shale, Mancos Formation and Dakota sandstone
- Area not mined
- Glaciated, U-shaped valley
- Broad riparian zone centered on Blue River
- Blue spruce, cottonwood, aspen, willow
- South- and west-facing slopes include dense sagebrush with lodgepole pine
- North- and east-facing slopes include dense aspen and lodgepole pine

Landscape Context

(Source: Summit County Comprehensive Plan)

- Jurisdictions: White River National Forest; unincorporated Summit County; towns of Frisco, Silverthorne, Dillon
- Easy access to numerous recreation facilities: Gold Medal trout fishing, golf, skiing, Dillon Reservoir amenities
- Established as makeshift construction camp for workers building Dillon Dam
- Surrounded on two sides by forest and wilderness area; adjacent to Eagles Nest Wilderness Area
- Gateway to Summit County and western Colorado
- I-70, SH 9, and SH 6 traverse unit
- Confluence of Tenmile Creek, Blue River, Straight Creek, and Snake River

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

Due to the developed nature of this unit, project alternatives would be almost completely within foreground views from the communities of Frisco, Silverthorne, and Dillon, as well as from recreation areas. Designated recreation is abundant in this unit, including WRNF-designated recreation complexes, campgrounds, picnic areas, scenic overlooks, and trails. The communities in this unit also encompass designated open space, parks, and trails. Sensitive viewpoints within the Blue River unit also include residents, designated recreation areas, and roadways. Residents are primarily located within the communities of Frisco, Silverthorne, and Dillon. Primary roads that traverse this unit, in addition to I-70, include SH 9 and SH 6. Views from the interstate within this unit are relatively enclosed within a broad river valley that is bordered on both sides by the Gore and Williams Fork mountain ranges.

Straight Creek Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 208 to 214)

Overview

The Straight Creek unit is dominated by steep, rugged terrain associated with the Continental Divide. The Scenic Attractiveness of lands within the Straight Creek unit consists of Classes A and B. Straight Creek is relatively undeveloped with the exception of I-70 and the EJMT. Deviations from the naturally appearing landscape are primarily related to the roadway cut-and-fill slopes associated with I-70 and the pull off/parking area near the west portal of the EJMT.



Straight Creek, view west



Straight Creek, view west

Landscape Character

- Views dominated by Continental Divide, Williams Fork Mountain Range, Buffalo Mountain
- Steep, rugged terrain: hard resistive rock, Idaho Springs Formation (metamorphic rock), light and dark colored banding
- High mountain range due to resistive rock and faulting
- Area not mined
- Glaciated, U-shaped valley
- Upper subalpine zone
- Dense, homogeneous mix of Engelmann spruce and lodgepole pine with patches of aspen
- Elevations above 11,200 feet are alpine meadow grassland with krummholz

Landscape Context

(Source: J.F. Sato and Associates observation)

- Jurisdiction: White River National Forest, unincorporated Summit County
- I-70 parallels Straight Creek west of the EJMT and Clear Creek east of the EJMT
- Steep grade down to Blue River Valley
- West portal to EJMT
- Bordered on north side by Ptarmigan Wilderness Area

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

Due to the rural nature of this unit, most of this unit is within background distance zones from recreation sites and middleground and background distance zones from the community developments of Silverthorne and Dillon. Sensitive views within this unit include the Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Area and trails within the WRNF. Views along I-70 within this unit range from panoramic as one travels west out of the EJMT, to more enclosed as one continues west entering the Blue River Valley. The rugged peaks of the Gore and Tenmile mountain ranges dominate these views (see Key View photograph in Figure L-2).

Loveland Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 214 to 217)

Overview

The Loveland unit is dominated by steep, rugged terrain associated with the Continental Divide. The Scenic Attractiveness of lands within the Loveland unit consists of Classes A and B. Deviations from the naturally appearing landscape, such as the Loveland Ski Area (ski runs, lodge, and parking area), major cut-and-fill slopes associated with I-70, and the east portal of the EJMT, begin to dominate. Overall, noticeable deviations within this unit remain visually subordinate to the landscape character being viewed.



Loveland, view west



Loveland, view west



Loveland, view northwest from Loveland Pass along SH 6

Landscape Character

- Dominated by Continental Divide
- Steep, rugged terrain: hard resistive rock, Silver Plume Formation (igneous rock), consistent gray granitics
- High mountain range due to resistive rock and faulting
- Area not mined
- Rolling terrain, glaciated, U-shaped valley
- Subalpine zone
- Homogeneous mix of Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir with pockets of lodgepole pine
- Pockets of aspen, especially on south-facing slopes
- Elevations above 11,200 feet are alpine meadow grassland with krummholz

Landscape Context

(Source: J.F. Sato and Associates observation)

- Jurisdiction: Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests
- Includes Loveland Ski Area and Loveland Pass Trail
- EJMT entrance to Western Slope
- High mountain parks
- Seven Sisters avalanche chutes
- Parallels Clear Creek

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

All of this unit is within foreground views of recreation resources. Sensitive viewpoints within this unit are primarily related to the Loveland Ski Area and trails, such as the Loveland Pass Trail and the Bakerville to Loveland Trail within the ARNF. Views within the Loveland unit are enclosed and dominated by the rural forest setting and slopes of the Continental Divide. The alpine peaks of the Continental Divide, as well as the unnatural vegetative patterns associated with the Loveland Ski Area, dominate views from I-70 within this unit. A key view of this area is shown on Figure L-2.

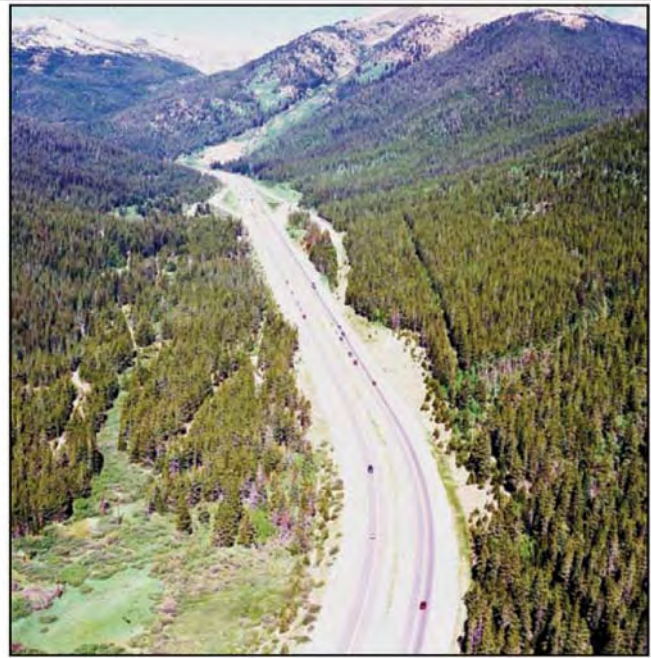
Herman Gulch Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 217 to 221)

Overview

The Herman Gulch unit has a unique character within the Corridor in that it is the first dominant rural, forest setting that appears to be comparatively undeveloped as one travels west from C-470 on I-70. The landscape character of this unit is enclosed and defined by steep, U-shaped mountain slopes. Vegetation in this unit consists of a fairly homogeneous mix of Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir with occasional pockets of lodgepole pine and aspen. The Scenic Attractiveness of lands within the Herman Gulch unit consists of Classes A and B. Class A scenery is associated with the Continental Divide.



Herman Gulch, view west



Herman Gulch, view west

Landscape Character

- Enclosed corridor defined by valley slopes
- Steep, rugged terrain: hard resistive rock, Silver Plume Formation (igneous rock), consistent gray granitics
- High mountain range due to resistive rock and faulting
- Rolling terrain, glaciated, U-shaped valley
- Subalpine zone
- Few landscape character deviations evident
- Homogeneous mix of Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir with pockets of lodgepole pine
- Pockets of aspen, especially on south-facing slopes

Landscape Context

(Source: J.F. Sato and Associates observation)

- Jurisdiction: Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests
- Valued recreation opportunity for high country hiking
- Corridor to Loveland Ski Area
- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail passes under I-70 via Herman Gulch
- Parallels Clear Creek

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

Alternatives within this unit would be almost completely within foreground views from recreation resources and within foreground and middleground from community development. Sensitive viewpoints within this unit include designated recreation within the ARNF. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail crosses under I-70 in this unit (via Herman Gulch). Views from I-70 within this unit are enclosed and dominated by the rural forest setting and slopes of the Continental Divide (see Key View photographs in Figure L-2)

Silver Plume Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 221 to 227)

Overview

The Georgetown-Silver Plume Historic District encompasses an area of extensive historic mining activities with many mine tailings, shafts, tipples, and mill remains visible from I-70 and surrounding areas, as well as many colorful and historic buildings. The Colorado Historical Society operates the narrow-gauge railroad between Georgetown and Silver Plume, as well as an old mine and mill operation. Many properties and buildings in Silver Plume are on the National Historic Register, and the Georgetown-Silver Plume District is a National Historic Landmark. The Scenic Attractiveness of lands within this unit consists primarily of Class B, indicating that lands have some distinctive features but overall are typical examples of the landscape. In addition to the community development associated with Silver Plume and Georgetown, deviations from the naturally appearing landscape within this unit include evidence of historic mining, a major electric power line, and the Corridor.



Silver Plume, view west



Silver Plume, view west

Silver Plume Landscape Character

- Steep, rugged terrain: hard resistive rock, Silver Plume Formation (igneous rock), consistent gray granitics
- High mountain range due to resistive rock and faulting
- Includes historically mined area
- Glaciated, U-shaped valley
- Subalpine zone
- North- and south-facing slopes include mix of Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir with pockets of lodgepole pine
- Pockets of aspen, especially on south-facing slopes
- East-facing slopes are steep and rocky with open mountain scrub and intermittent barren slopes
- Large riparian floodplain along Clear Creek lined with narrowleaf cottonwood

Silver Plume Landscape Context

(Source: A Plan for the Historic Preservation of Silver Plume)

- Jurisdiction: Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, unincorporated Clear Creek County, town of Silver Plume
- Historic resources; very small, old rural mining town typical of Rocky Mountain high country
- True western mining flavor of architecture (false front buildings with elements of Victorian architecture)
- Within one of Colorado's first National Historic Landmark Districts
- Georgetown Loop Railroad connects Georgetown and Silver Plume communities
- Parallels Clear Creek

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

Sensitive viewpoints within these units include residences, roadways, and designated recreation areas. Residences within these units are located primarily within the community of Silver Plume, which is lower in elevation than I-70. Views within this community toward I-70 are dominated by large fill slope banks associated with the highway grade. The Georgetown to Silver Plume Trail and the Historic Georgetown railroad both connect Silver Plume to Georgetown. Several other designated recreation areas (parks and ballfields) are located within these towns. Views from I-70 in these units are enclosed and dominated by Columbia, Republic, and Democrat mountains to the north and Saxon, Woodchuck, and Griffith mountains to the south.