

Georgetown Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 227 to 232)

Overview

The Georgetown-Silver Plume National 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 Georgetown are on the National Historic Register, and the Georgetown-Silver Plume District is a National Historic Landmark. The rugged terrain northwest of Georgetown is a major bighorn sheep and mountain goat viewing area. 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 Georgetown, deviations from the naturally appearing landscape within this unit include evidence of historic mining, a major electric power line, and the Corridor.



Georgetown, view west



Georgetown, view west

Georgetown Landscape Character

- Broad valley floor defined by steep side slopes
- 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
- Variable density montane zone with rocky eroded slopes
- South- and west-facing slopes are steep and rocky with open mountain scrub and intermittent barren slopes
- North- and east-facing slopes dominated by dense lodgepole pine (60 percent cover) with patches of Douglas-fir
- Large riparian floodplain along Clear Creek lined with narrowleaf cottonwood

Georgetown Landscape Context,

(Source: Town of Georgetown 2000 Comprehensive Plan)

- Jurisdiction: Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, unincorporated Clear Creek County, town of Georgetown
- Historic resources and Victorian image
- Mine tailings, shafts, tipples, and mill remains visible from I-70
- Casual appearance and lack of theme: western small town feeling; funky neighborhoods have eclectic mix of old and new
- Includes north end of Guanella Pass National Scenic Byway
- 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 Georgetown, 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 north end of the Guanella Pass National Scenic Byway is in Georgetown. The Georgetown to Silver Plume Express Trail and the historic Georgetown Railroad both connect Silver Plume to Georgetown. Several other designated recreation areas (parks and ballfields) are located within the town. 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.

Empire Area Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 232 to 233)

Overview

The Empire area is at the junction of two relatively broad valleys and is characterized by rugged terrain and historically mined areas. I-70 parallels Clear Creek in this area lined with narrowleaf cottonwood. South- and west-facing slopes include rocky eroded slopes with open mountain scrub and intermittent barren slopes. North- and east-facing slopes are dominated by dense lodgepole pine. To the east of the Empire area, the Corridor transitions from a glaciated U-shaped valley to V-shaped canyons. The Scenic Attractiveness of lands within the Empire unit consists 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 Empire, existing elements, such as the I-70 and US 40 Corridors, influence this unit.



Empire Junction, view west



Empire Junction, view west

Landscape Character

- Junction of two relatively broad valleys
- Rugged terrain: hard resistive rock, Idaho Springs Formation (metamorphic rock), light and dark colored banding
- Includes historically mined areas
- Glaciated, U-shaped valley transitions to V-shaped valley east of Empire area
- Variable density montane zone with rocky eroded slopes
- South- and west-facing slopes are steep and rocky with open mountain scrub and intermittent barren slopes
- North- and east-facing slopes dominated by dense lodgepole pine (60 percent cover)
- Large riparian floodplain along Clear Creek lined with narrowleaf cottonwood

Landscape Context

(Source: Clear Creek County web page)

- Jurisdiction: Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, unincorporated Clear Creek County, town of Empire
- 1860s gold mining camp
- Star-shaped valley traversed by Clear Creek
- Includes Colorado's first sawmill, gold mines, brewery, large Ute Indian campground
- Exit to Winter Park Resort
- Includes US 40 and Red Elephant Hill Trail
- Views dominated by Douglas Mountain
- Parallels Clear Creek

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

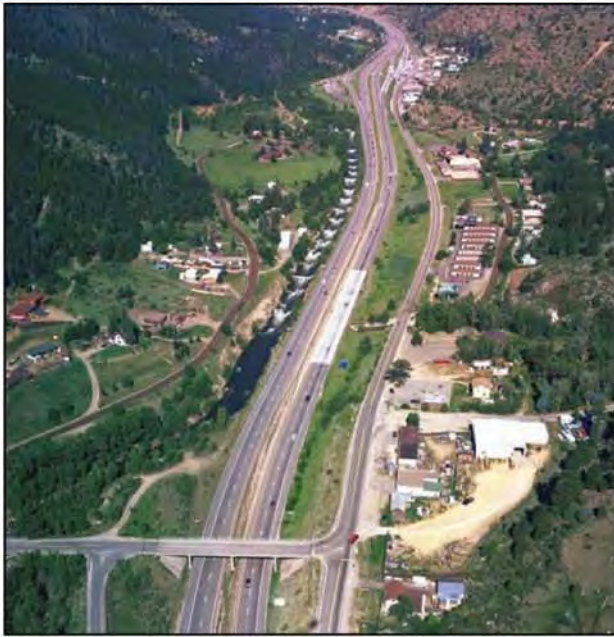
Sensitive viewpoints within this unit include Empire, Red Elephant Hill Trail, and US 40. The surrounding rugged terrain dominates the views from I-70 within this unit (see Key View photograph in Figure L-2).

Alternatives	Attributes
Minimal Action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downieville to Empire, Uphill, auxiliary lane (mp 232 to 234)* • Empire to Downieville, Downhill, auxiliary lane (mp 232 to 234) • Empire interchange (mp 232)* 	Interchange and auxiliary lane improvements

Lawson, Downieville, and Dumont Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 233 to 237)

Overview

The lands in this unit are characterized by rugged terrain, V-shaped valleys, and historically mined areas. Surrounding hillsides include variable density montane zone with rock and eroded slopes. South- and west-facing slopes include open montane scrub with intermittent barren slopes. North- and east-facing slopes are dominated by dense lodgepole pine. A large riparian floodplain along Clear Creek is lined with narrowleaf cottonwood. The Scenic Attractiveness of lands within this unit consists of Class B, indicating that lands have some distinctive features but are overall typical of the landscape. In addition to the community development associated with Lawson, Downieville, and Dumont, deviations from the naturally appearing landscape within this unit include evidence of historic mining, a major electric power line, and the Corridor. Due to the historic significance of much of the development, as well as the evidence of historic mining, these have become valued elements within this unit.



Dumont, view west



Lawson, view west

Lawson, Downieville, and Dumont Landscape Character

- Rugged terrain: hard resistive rock, Idaho Springs Formation (metamorphic rock) light and dark colored banding
- Includes historically mined areas
- V-shaped canyon
- Variable density montane zone with rocky eroded slopes
- South- and west-facing slopes are steep and rocky with open mountain scrub, juniper woodland, and intermittent barren slopes
- North- and east-facing slopes dominated by dense lodgepole pine (60 percent cover)
- Large riparian floodplain along Clear Creek lined with narrowleaf cottonwood

Lawson, Downieville, and Dumont Landscape Context

(Sources: J.F. Sato and Associates observation, Clear Creek County Comprehensive Plan)

- Jurisdiction: Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, unincorporated Clear Creek County
- Rural, historic atmosphere
- Magnificent natural setting
- Strong community identity
- Parallels Clear Creek

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

Sensitive viewpoints within this unit include residences and recreation areas. Residences are primarily located within the unincorporated communities of Lawson, Downieville, and Dumont. Other sensitive viewpoints include community parks and recreation sites both within the towns and in the ARNF lands south of I-70. Views from I-70 in this unit are dominated by rugged mountain terrain (see Key View photograph in Figure L-2). In select locations throughout this unit, views from I-70 are dominated by the community development closely bordering the highway.

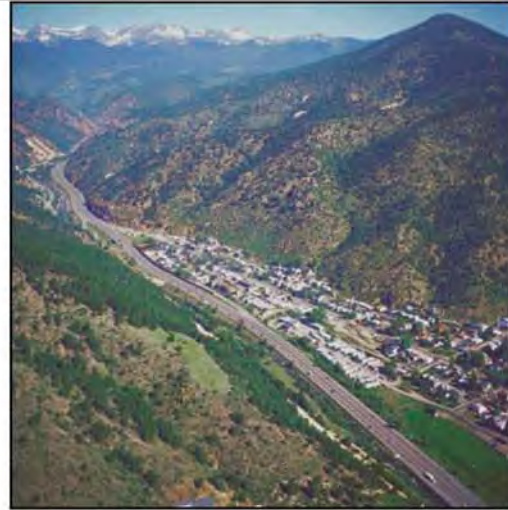
Idaho Springs/Chicago Creek Unit (Mileposts 237 to 243)

Overview

The lands in this unit are characterized by rugged terrain, V-shaped valleys, and historically mined areas. Surrounding hillsides include variable density montane zone with rock and eroded slopes. South- and west-facing slopes include open montane scrub with intermittent barren slopes. North- and east-facing slopes are dominated by dense lodgepole pine. A large riparian floodplain along Clear Creek is lined with narrowleaf cottonwood. The Scenic Attractiveness of lands within this unit consists of Class B, indicating that lands have some distinctive features but are overall typical of the landscape. In addition to the community development associated with Idaho Springs, deviations from the naturally appearing landscape within this unit include evidence of historic mining, a major electric power line, and the I-70 and SH 103 Corridors. Due to the historic significance of much of the development, as well as the evidence of historic mining, these have become valued elements within this unit.



Idaho Springs, view west



Idaho Springs, view northwest

Idaho Springs/Chicago Creek Landscape Character

- Rugged terrain: hard resistive rock, Idaho Springs Formation (metamorphic rock), light and dark colored banding
- Includes historically mined areas
- V-shaped valley
- Variable density montane zone with rock and eroded slopes
- South- and west-facing slopes include open mountain scrub with intermittent barren slopes
- North- and east-facing slopes dominated by dense lodgepole pine (60 percent cover)
- Large riparian floodplain along Clear Creek lined with narrowleaf cottonwood

Idaho Springs/Chicago Creek Landscape Context

(Source: Idaho Springs Comprehensive Plan)

- Jurisdiction: Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, unincorporated Clear Creek County, town of Idaho Springs
- Urban mountain community with mountain vistas, open spaces, and clean air
- Downtown district and surrounding historic area have a visual identity as impressive as mountain views behind them
- I-70 bordered by Scott Lancaster Memorial Trail/Colorado Bikeway Route and Charlie Tayler Water Wheel
- Parallels Clear Creek

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

Sensitive viewpoints within these units include residences and recreation areas. Residences are primarily located within the incorporated community of Idaho Springs. I-70 in this area is bordered by the Scott Lancaster Memorial Trail/Colorado Bikeway Route. Other sensitive viewpoints include community parks and recreation sites both within the towns and in the ARNF lands south of I-70. Views from I-70 in this unit are dominated by rugged mountain terrain (see Key View photograph in Figure L-2). In select locations throughout this unit, views from I-70 are dominated by the community development closely bordering the highway.

Alternatives	Attributes
Minimal Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall River Road curve safety modification (mp 237 to 238)* • Idaho Springs interchanges (mp 239, 240, 241)* • Fall River Road interchange (mp 238)* 	Curve safety modification and interchange improvements

Floyd Hill Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 243 to 246)

Overview

The Floyd Hill unit is characterized by rugged and steep sculptured rock. This unit is a relatively enclosed landscape, with canyon enclosure along Clear Creek and contained views along I-70. This area is characterized by dense cover montane zone with a mix of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir on north- and east-facing slopes. South- and west-facing slopes are rocky with open juniper and mountain scrub. The Scenic Attractiveness of lands within the Floyd Hill unit consists of Class B, indicating that lands have some distinctive features but overall are typical examples of the landscape. Modifications to the landscape include dispersed residential development, a quarry, and rock/slope cuts associated with I-70, US 40, and US 6.



Floyd Hill, view west



Floyd Hill, view west

Landscape Character

- Enclosed, relatively contained views
- Canyon enclosure along Clear Creek
- Rugged terrain: hard resistive rock, primarily Idaho Springs Formation (metamorphic rock) with small pockets of Silverthorne Formation (granite, igneous rock)
- V-shaped valley
- Dense cover montane zone
- South- and west-facing slopes are rocky with open juniper and mountain scrub
- Mix of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and lodgepole pine on north- and east-facing slopes

Landscape Context

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

- Jurisdiction: primarily unincorporated Clear Creek County
- Almost devoid of designated recreation areas
- Corridor between historic mountain towns and dispersed suburban Jefferson County development
- Steep hill along I-70 with sharp curves
- Junction with Clear Creek Canyon and US 6
- South- and west-facing slopes are rocky with open juniper and mountain scrub
- North- and east-facing slopes include dense mix of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and lodgepole pine

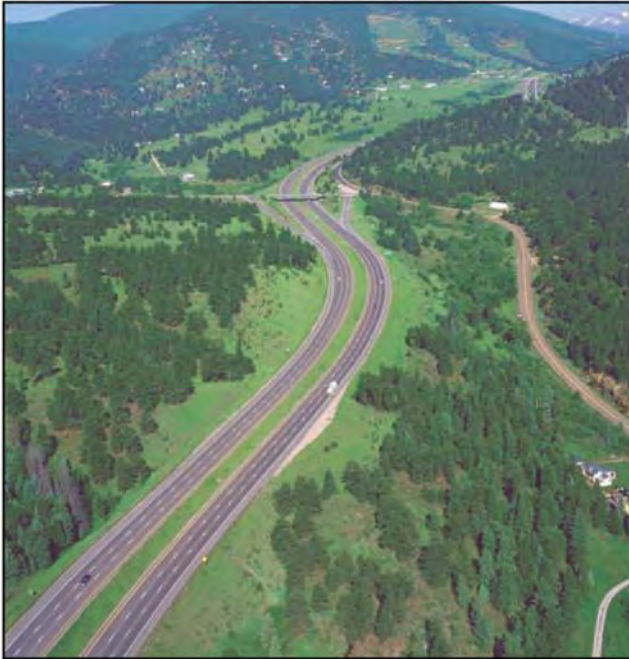
Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

The Floyd Hill unit is almost devoid of designated recreation areas; however, dispersed residential development is located at the east end of this unit, high on the hillsides above I-70. I-70, US 40, and SH 6 through Clear Creek Canyon are the vantage points from which most people experience this unit. Views along I-70 in this unit transition from open panoramic views at the top of Floyd Hill to enclosed views, within a canyon environment at the bottom of Floyd Hill (see Key View photograph in Figure L-2).

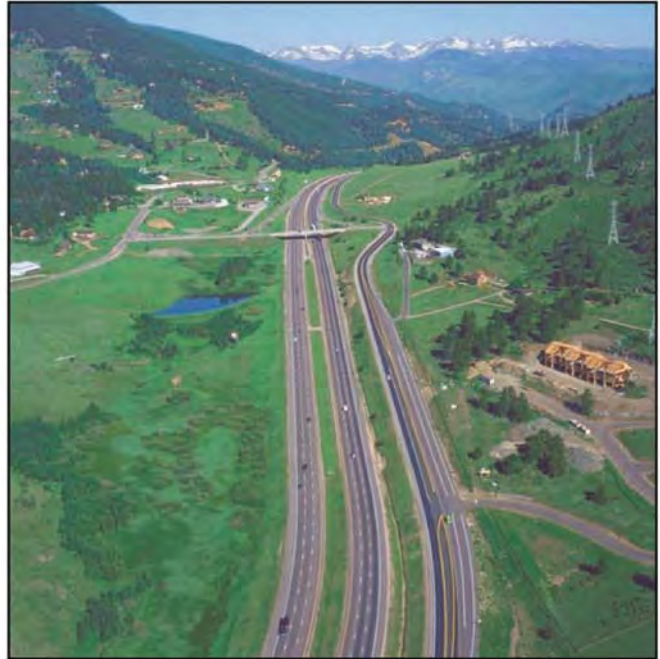
Beaver Brook Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 246 to 252)

Landscape Character

The Beaver Brook area can be characterized as a mountain residential community located between the historic mining districts of Clear Creek and the more suburban development of Jefferson County. A more open V-shaped valley characterizes the landscape. The vegetation in this area is characterized by open woodland montane zone with wetland complex that contains a mix of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir on north- and south-facing slopes. The Scenic Attractiveness of lands within the Beaver Brook unit consists of Class B, indicating that lands have some distinctive features but overall are typical examples of the landscape. In addition to residential development, modifications to the natural landscape character include a major electric power line, billboards, and the Corridor.



Beaver Brook, view west



Beaver Brook, view west

Landscape Character

- Open, panoramic environment
- Rugged terrain: hard resistive rock, primarily Idaho Springs Formation (metamorphic rock) with small pockets of Silverthorne Formation (granite, igneous rock)
- Open parkland montane zone with wetland complex
- Mix of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir on north- and south-facing slopes
- South- and west-facing slopes include dense ponderosa pine
- North- and east-facing slopes include open stands of Douglas-fir

Landscape Context:

(Source: Evergreen area community plan)

- Jurisdiction: unincorporated Clear Creek and Jefferson counties, town of Evergreen
- Designated recreation in Genesee Park
- Valued for large areas of natural, undeveloped open lands
- Mountain residential community; working population commutes to businesses outside the area
- Majority of commercial development planned between downtown Evergreen and I-70

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

Sensitive viewpoints within this unit include dispersed residences in unincorporated Jefferson County and dispersed and designated recreation within Genesee Park. Views along I-70 are characterized by open woodland setting and dispersed residential and commercial development.

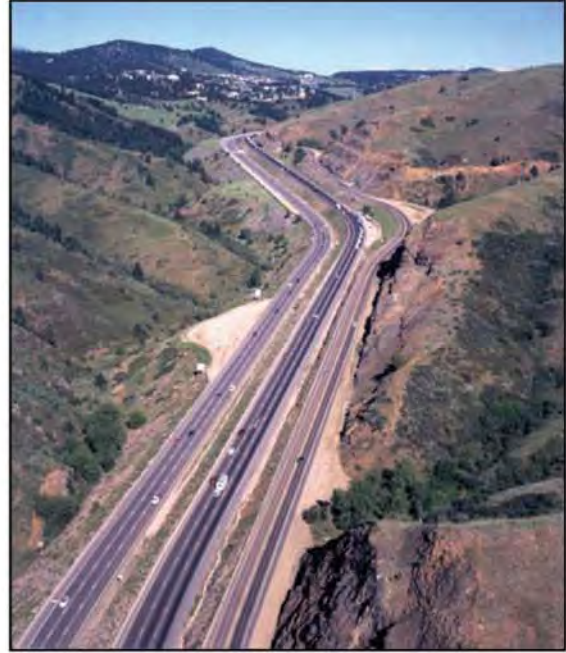
Mount Vernon Canyon Scenery Analysis Unit (Mileposts 252 to 259)

Overview

The Mount Vernon Canyon unit is a V-shaped valley environment, primarily enclosed, except for an area with panoramic views at the high point along I-70 in this area. This high point coincides with a single span bridge over I-70 (Genesee Park Bridge, Exit 254) that frames the first views of the Continental Divide for westbound travelers. This bridge is locally known as the “picture bridge.” (See Key View photograph in Figure L-2.) Vegetation in this unit is characterized by mountain scrub and a mix of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. While spectacular views to distant landscapes exist from this unit, the Scenic Attractiveness of lands within the Mount Vernon Canyon unit consists of Class B, indicating that lands have some distinctive features but overall are typical of the landscape. Existing elements, such as the dispersed development and roadside cut slopes, which exposes steep rock faces, remain subordinate to the setting.



Mount Vernon Canyon, view west



Mount Vernon Canyon, view west

Landscape Character

- Primarily enclosed canyon environment with panoramic views at west end high point
- Rugged terrain: hard resistive rock, primarily Idaho Springs Formation (metamorphic rock) with small pockets of Silverthorne Formation (granite, igneous rock)
- Area not mined
- V-shaped valley
- Foothills and lower montane zone
- Mountain scrub, mix of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir
- South-facing slopes contain 80 to 100 percent shrub coverage with some grass cover
- North-facing slopes have mountain shrub interspersed with ponderosa pine and lodgepole pine; Douglas-fir in drainages
- Developed areas between exits 256 and 254

Landscape Context

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

- Jurisdiction: unincorporated Jefferson County, town of Genesee
- Gateway to the Rockies for tourists and skiers
- Principal growth and commuting corridor for residents in central mountains
- Provides panoramic vista to distant mountains (Exit 254 “picture bridge” frames the first view of the snow-capped Rockies)
- Many hiking and bike trails located within Jefferson County open space lands
- Close proximity parks and recreation areas include Genesee Park, Matthews/Winters Park, Hogback Park
- Bison and elk in Denver’s largest mountain park (Genesee Park) are a primary attraction

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

Sensitive viewpoints within the Mount Vernon Canyon unit include residences within the community of Genesee, as well as dispersed residences and subdivisions within unincorporated Jefferson County. While views along I-70 throughout the Mount Vernon Canyon unit are primarily enclosed, there are panoramic views west to the Continental Divide and east to Denver along a high point between mileposts 254 and 255. Along the lower elevation portions of this unit, views are enclosed by rugged terrain.

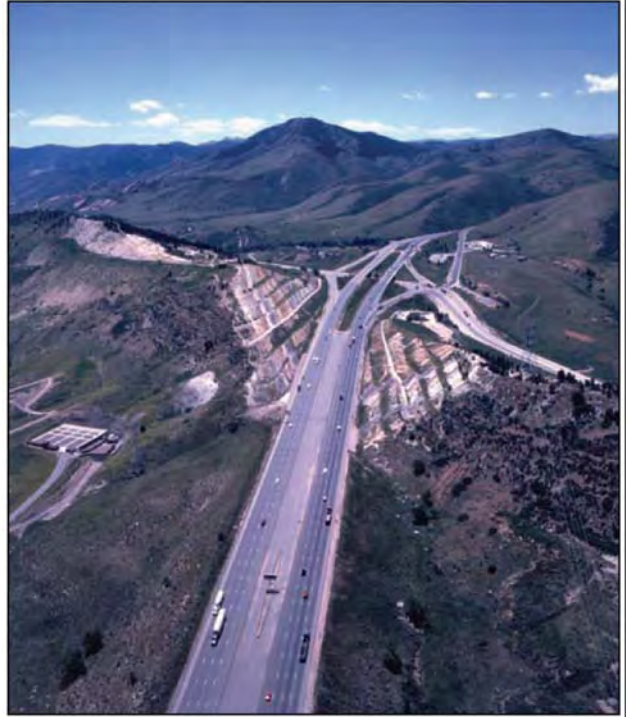
Hogback Scenery Analysis Unit (Milepost 259)

Overview

The Hogback (also known as Dakota Hogback and Dinosaur Ridge) is a sharp-crested ridge with steep slopes on both sides, formed by the erosion of steeply tilted rock layers. Vegetation along this ridge includes a mosaic of grassland, mountain scrub, and juniper woodland. Jefferson County open space surrounds much of this ridge, which is highly valued for recreation and educational opportunities and for geologic and paleontological resources. This area is also a popular migration corridor for many raptors, including eagles, hawks, kestrels, merlins, falcons, turkey vultures, and ospreys. The Scenic Attractiveness of lands within the Hogback unit consists of Class B, indicating that lands have some distinctive features but overall are typical examples of the landscape.



Hogback Ridge, view south



I-70 cut through Hogback Ridge, view west

Landscape Character

- Sharp-crested ridge with steep slopes on both sides formed by erosion of steeply tilted rock layers
- Formed along eroded flanks of large, tightly folded anticlines and synclines
- Located in foothills east of Front Range
- Formed by vertical and steeply dipping layers of Dakota sandstone
- Abrupt change in elevation from Dinosaur Ridge down to Rooney Valley floor
- Mosaic of grassland, mountain scrub, and juniper woodland

Landscape Context

(Source: Central Mountain Community Plan)

- Jurisdiction: unincorporated Jefferson County
- Many lands within Jefferson County open space designation
- Close proximity parks include Matthews/Winters Park and Hogback Park
- I-70 cut exposes colorful array of geologic bedding layers
- This area is valued for its recreation and educational opportunities; geologic and paleontological resources
- Easy access from Front Range communities

Key Viewpoints and I-70 Views

Sensitive viewpoints in proximity to the Hogback unit include residences of Golden. Many hiking and bike trails are located within these Jefferson County open space lands. The Dinosaur Ridge Hogback dominates views from I-70 in this unit. I-70 passes through a major cut in the Hogback Ridge that has exposed colorful banding of geologic bedding layers.