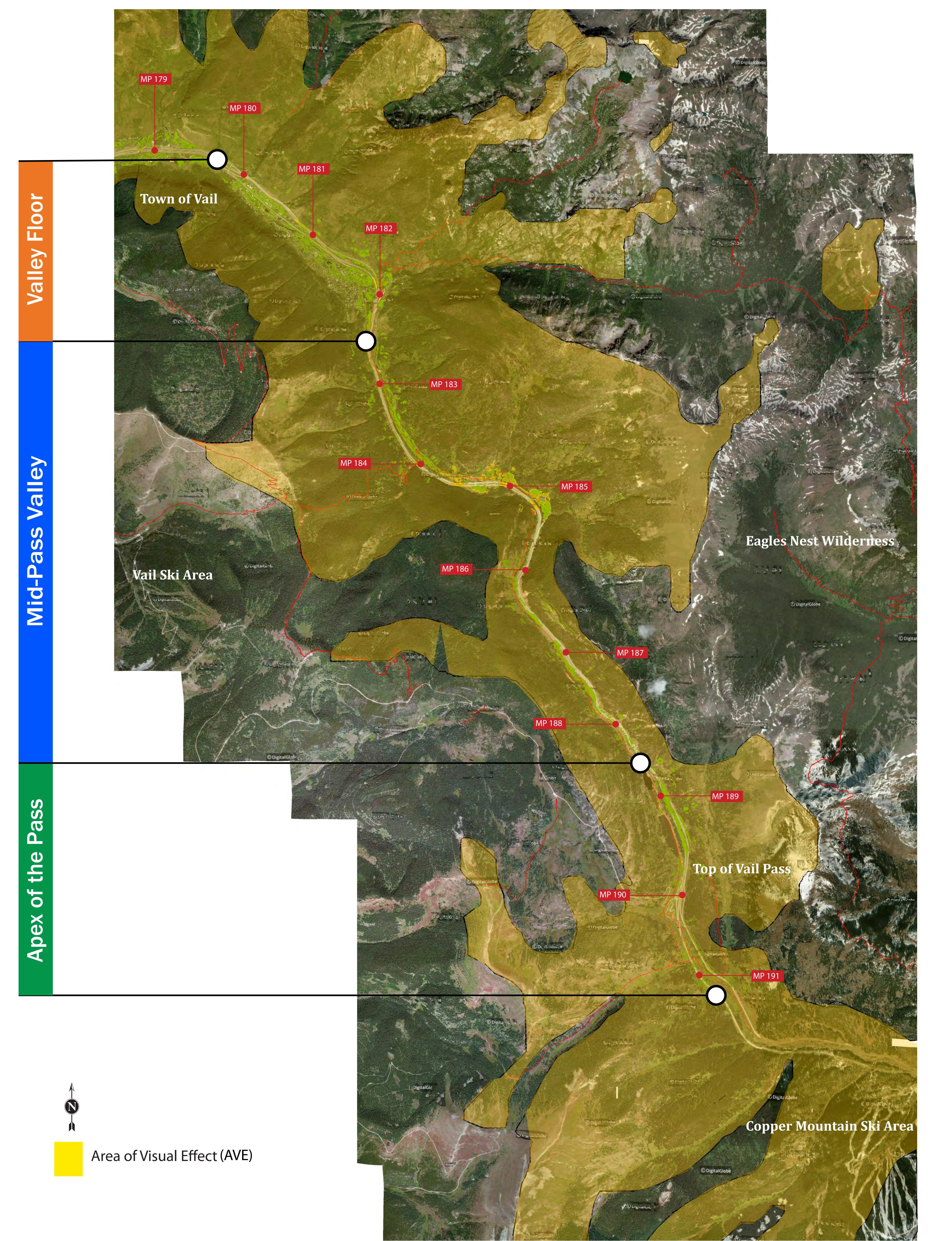


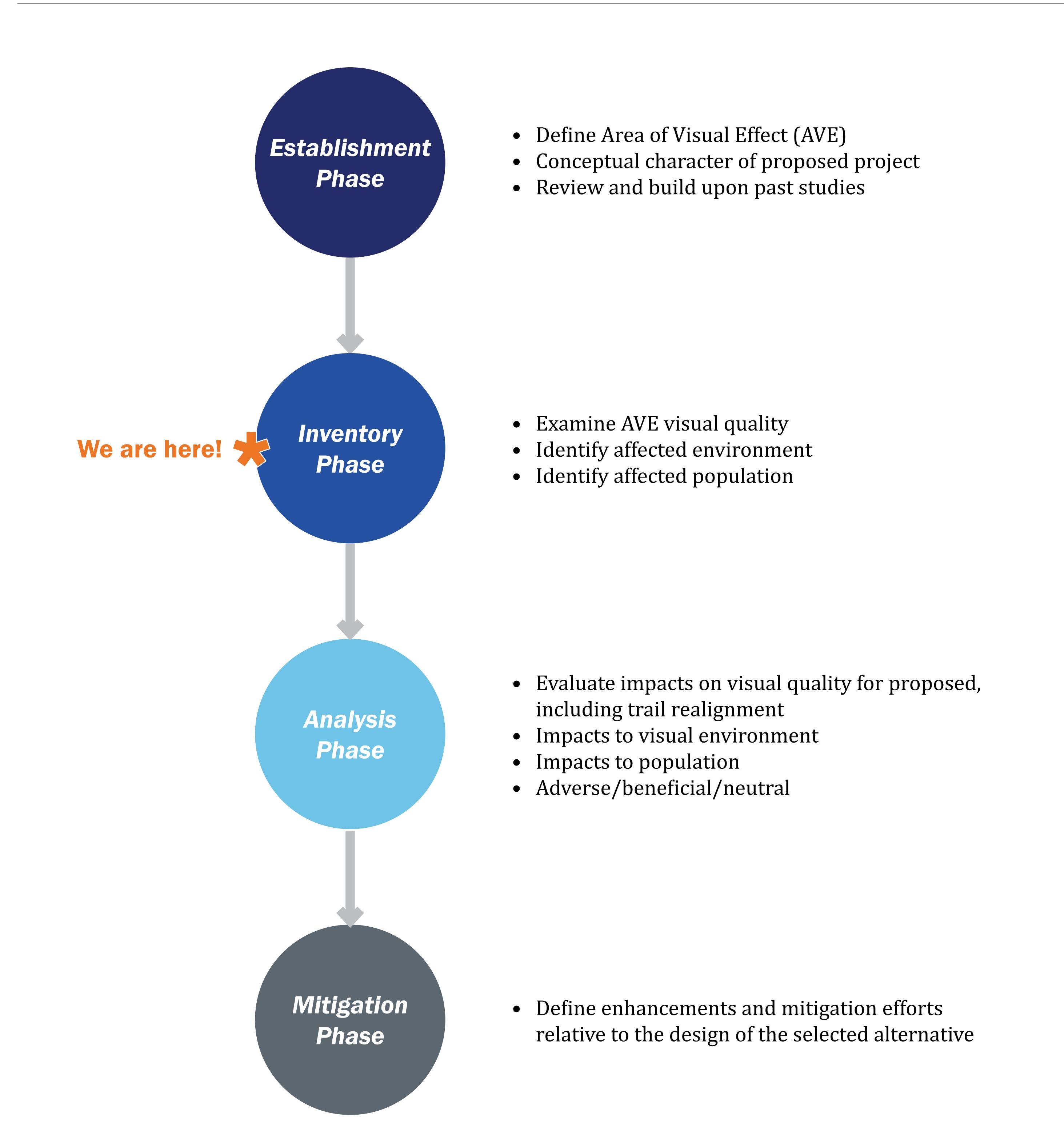


The visual character of West Vail Pass is a diverse landscape that encompasses a mix of wilderness, national forest, state land, recreational facilities, private land and urban landscapes. This landscape includes expansive views of the Rocky Mountains (including the Ten Mile and Gore Ranges), multiple ski resorts, deep valleys, mountain rivers, lakes, roadway structures, water quality features, avalanche paths, open meadows, sage brush, red sandstone, and dense forests.

West Vail Pass offers travelers and visitors the ability to experience an impressive and grand landscape that is representative of the diverse landscapes and ecological zones of Central Colorado.



Visual Impact Assessment Process



Identified Viewers

A critical element of visual impact assessments is identifying people's perception of the project area's visual environment. Cataloging the views of people have as they move within the project area will lead to the identification of key views and viewsheds that may or may not be impacted by the proposed project. A critical first step in identifying the projects visual existing condition is determining viewers, their activities, and their use of the land.

- **Residents** Within the project area residential uses and populations are concentrated at the foot of the pass within the East Vail Neighborhood. Visual analysis not only established views and viewsheds from I-70 but determined views and viewsheds from East Vail to I-70.
- **Recreationists** Outdoor enthusiasts frequent the study area due to the pristine and accessible natural environment of Vail Pass. Capturing the visual environment of diverse recreation users was an important determinant in defining the visual quality of West Vail Pass.
- **Travelers** The vast majority of viewers in the West Vail Pass project area are vehicular travelers moving along I-70.

Area of Visual Effect (AVE)

What is the AVE?

The project's visual area (highlighted in yellow on the map)

How is it determined?

Through visual analysis of static, dynamic, and restricted views of all viewer types

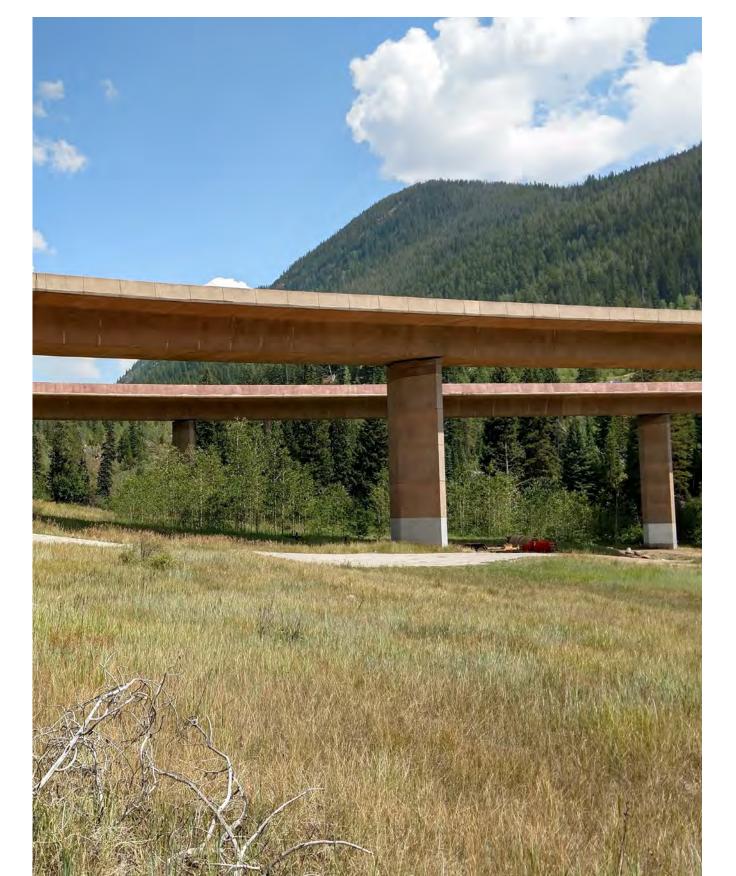
What is it used for?

It serves as the formal existing condition to measure impacts of the proposed project improvements on the area's visual environment

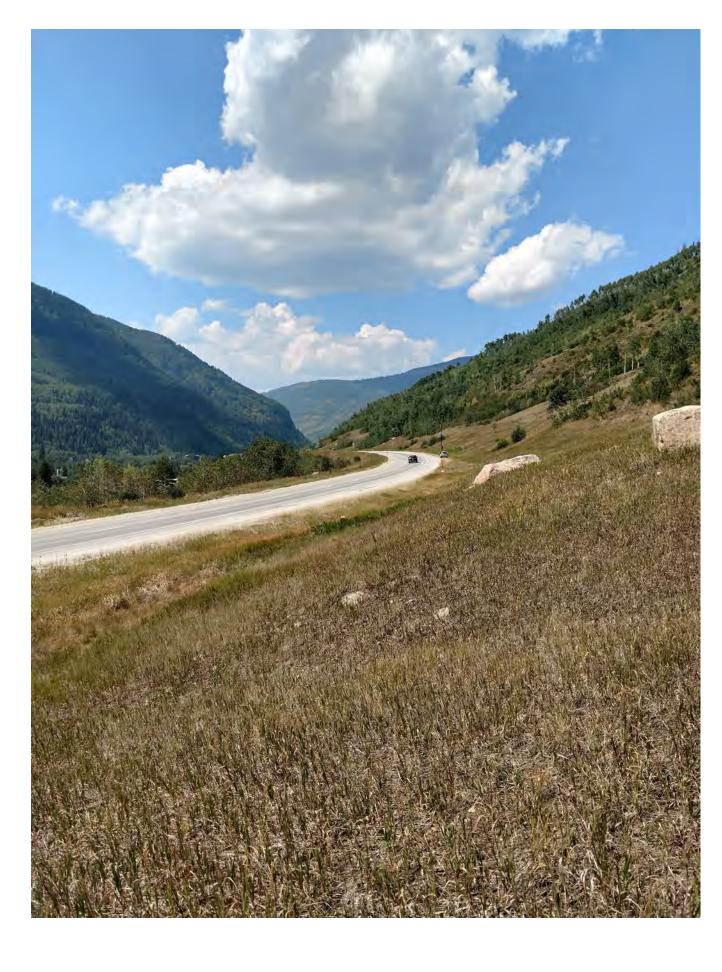
Three Distinct Landscape Units

A landscape unit is geographic area within the AVE used to organize the visual character, viewers, and visual quality at a more detailed level. Landscape units are defined by viewsheds and landscape types. The West Vail Pass visual assessment has determined three preliminary landscape units:

The Valley Floor

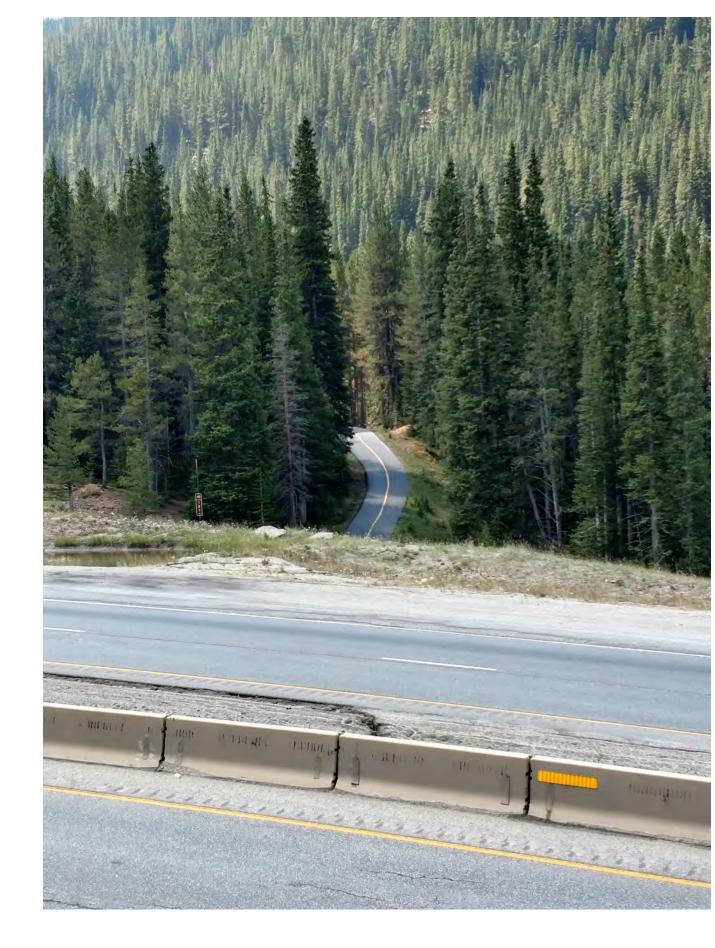




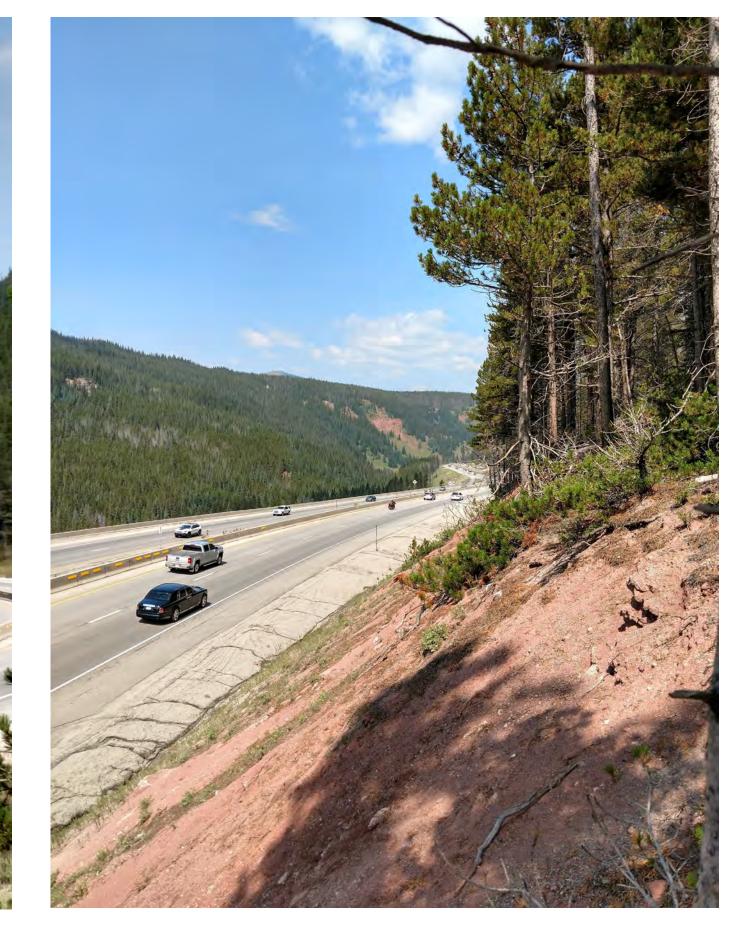


- From Mile Post 180 on the west to one half mile east of Mile Post 182 on the east. Includes the extreme east end of the Vail Valley and encompasses the Town of Vail, Eagle County, and the National Forest Service land.
- Has the most visible human presence due to the Town of Vail and Vail Ski Resort
- Transitional elevation (8,000 ft) where the semi-desert sagebrush and grasslands found west of Vail transition into the forested montana found just east Vail
- Gains elevation when moving from west to east

The Mid-Pass Valley

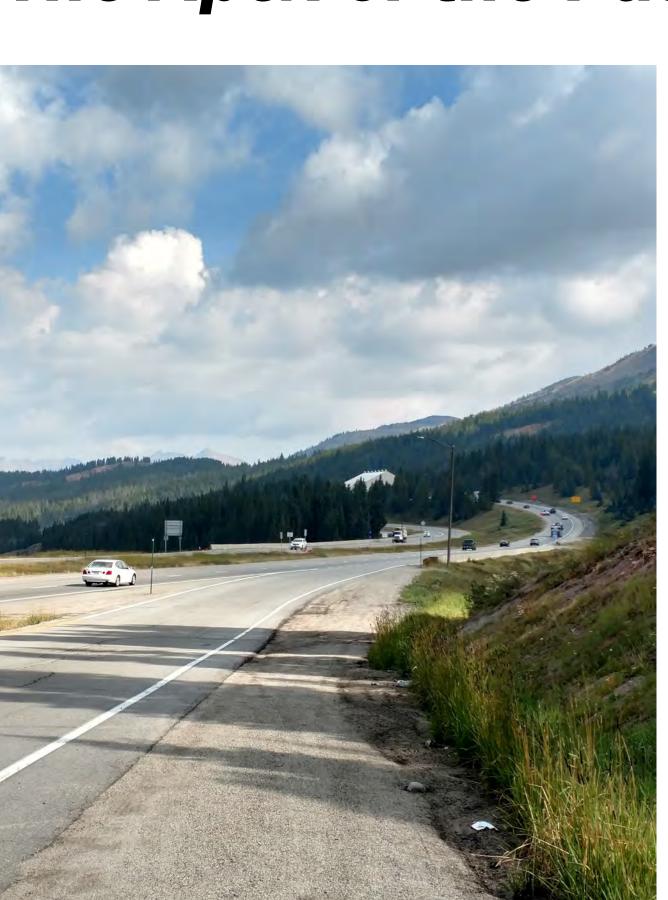




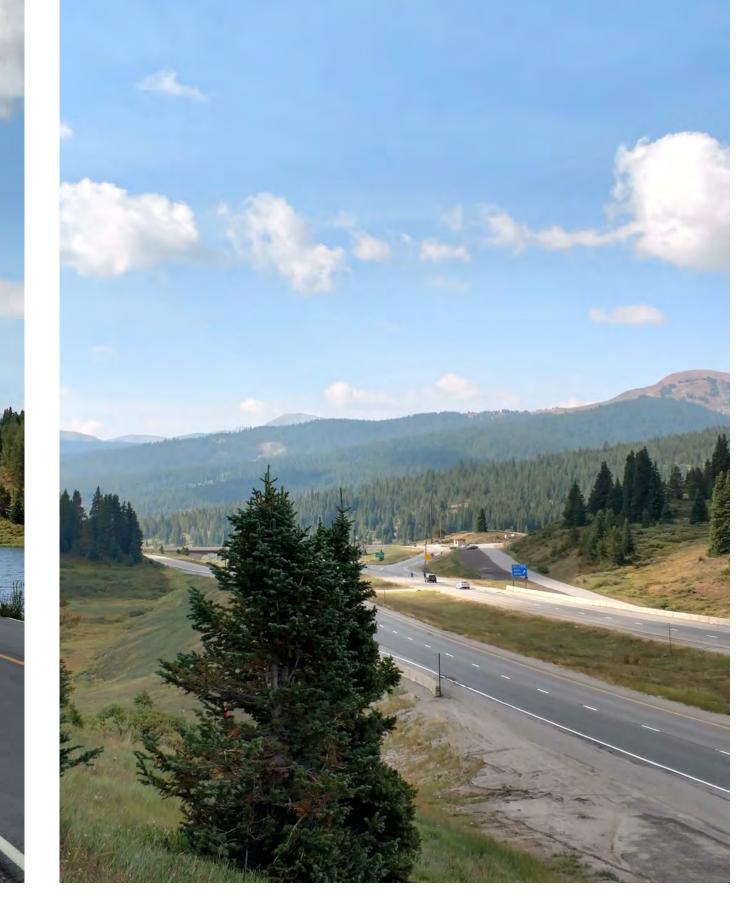


- From just east of Mile Post 182 to Mile Post 187
- Transitional unit connecting the lower elevations of the Valley Floor to the higher elevations of the Apex of the Pass landscape unit
- Some of I-70's steepest grades and tightest curvatures due to the constraints of surrounding land forms
- Ridge lines are not as high as those in the Valley Floor landscape unit
- Close proximity of the valley walls to the roadway limit background views
- Foreground and middle ground views dominate the visual environment for travelers
- Limited views of the Gore Range and the Ten Mile Range
- Montane forest with steep slopes populated by coniferous trees and aspens
- Intermittent open meadows
- Red sandstone cliffs form nodes of visual interest, particularly in the winter when white snow blankets that pass

The Apex of the Pass







- From Mile Post 187 to Mile Post 190
- Highest elevation of the landscape units, which offers generous background views of the Ten-Mile and the Gore Ranges
- Sub-alpine montane environment located just below tree line. In many cases trees are stunted and twisted by elevation and exposure to extreme conditions. This slow and low growth forest is visually distinct from the taller forest found at lower elevations.
- Large open sub-alpine meadows allow visual access to a large and expansive mountain environment
- Expansive views are made possible at the top of Vail Pass by wide valleys to the west and the south
- Western background views terminate at the distant peaks of the Gore Range and southern background views terminate at the ridge-line connecting Ptarmigan Pass and Shrine Mountain. Background views to the east terminate with views of Copper Mountain and the Ten-Mile Range beyond.