

Farmlands Technical Report

**State Highway 82 / Entrance to Aspen
Environmental Reevaluation**

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**Colorado Department of Transportation, Region 3
and
Federal Highway Administration, Colorado Division**

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1.0 Affected Environment

This report provides a reevaluation of farmlands resources presented in the 1997 State Highway 82 Entrance to Aspen Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) as they relate to the Preferred Alternative selected in the 1998 Record of Decision.

1.1 Methodology

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey for the area was reviewed to confirm the presence or absence of federally-defined prime and unique farmlands in the project area (NRCS, 2006). Pitkin County was also contacted to confirm the presence or absence of locally protected farmlands.

1.2 Regulatory Overview

There have been no changes in regulatory requirements for farmlands since publication of the 1997 FEIS (page IV-69 and IV-70).

1.3 Description of the Existing Condition

There are no federally protected prime or unique farmlands in the project area (NRCS, 2006). The Pitkin County Planning Office confirmed that there are no “Valued Agricultural Lands” in the project corridor (Clarke, 2006). Therefore, there are no locally protected farmlands in the project area.

Two components of the Preferred Alternative have been constructed since the publication of the FEIS and ROD: (1) Owl Creek Road and West Buttermilk Road have been relocated to create a new, signalized intersection with State Highway 82 near the Buttermilk Ski Area; and (2) the roundabout at the Maroon Creek Road intersection has been completed.

In addition, the Maroon Creek Bridge Replacement Project is currently under construction, scheduled for completion by spring of 2008. This project is being constructed as a bridge replacement without any increase in roadway capacity. However, it will accommodate the Entrance to Aspen Preferred Alternative in the future by removing the center median and re-striping for two general-purpose lanes and two exclusive bus lanes (see the Introduction to the Technical Report Volume for more detail).

The intersection of Truscott Drive and State Highway 82 was completed in 2001. While this intersection is not part of the Entrance to Aspen Project, its configuration accommodates the alignment for the east approach to the Maroon Creek Bridge Replacement Project.

A transportation easement across the Marolt-Thomas Open Space was conveyed from the City of Aspen to CDOT in August of 2002, as part of land exchange and mitigation agreements between CDOT and the City of Aspen and Pitkin County. (Refer to Appendix A and B in the 1998 Record of Decision for details of the open space conveyance agreements and mitigation commitments.)

2.0 Environmental Consequences

2.1 Methodology

The current farmland conditions in the project area were compared to the conditions (pages IV-69 to IV-70) and impacts (page V-45) reported in the FEIS. For prime, unique and locally protected farmlands, there were no changes observed in the existing conditions that would alter the impacts reported in the FEIS; therefore, no additional impact analysis was necessary.

2.2 Preferred Alternative

The farmland impacts in the project area have not changed from those described on page V-45 in the 1997 FEIS. These consist of potential impacts to irrigation systems during highway construction.

Based on existing conditions in the study area, there is no evidence of any project-related impact on irrigation systems from the previous intersection or roundabout construction.

3.0 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures described on page VI-5 in the 1997 FEIS have been implemented for components for the Preferred Alternative already constructed and would be implemented during construction of future components. The measures are considered adequate to minimize impacts to agricultural lands in the project area. Impacts and mitigation measures are summarized below in Section 4.0

4.0 Summary of Impacts and Mitigation

Impacts are summarized below in Table 4-1 as identified in both the FEIS and this reevaluation. Mitigation measures listed in the table are those from the 1998 ROD, unless additional measures are noted as being required due to findings of the reevaluation.

**Table 4-1
Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

Topic	FEIS Impact	Reevaluation Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Farmlands	None identified	No change	Any existing irrigation systems impacted due to highway construction will be relocated and replaced.

5.0 Agency Consultation

Pitkin County was contacted for information for this reevaluation.

6.0 References

Clarke, Lance. 2006. Personal communication between Lance Clarke (Assistant Director of Pitkin County Community Development) and HDR Engineering, Inc., on July 5, 2006 regarding the presence of county-designated “valued agricultural lands” in the project corridor.

Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2006. Soil Survey of Pitkin County.
<http://datagateway.nrcs.usda.gov/> Site accessed July 5, 2006.

7.0 List of Preparers

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