

Building Rural Community Coalitions for Trails and More!

Western Places/Western Spaces Conference

University of Denver

March 8, 2019

Rio de la Vista

Director, Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center at Adams State University

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San Luis Valley Volunteer and Partnership Manager, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado



Introducing the San Luis Valley & the Rio Grande Basin

Rio de la Vista, Director, Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center
Adams State University, Alamosa, Colorado



Where in
Colorado
is the
San Luis Valley?

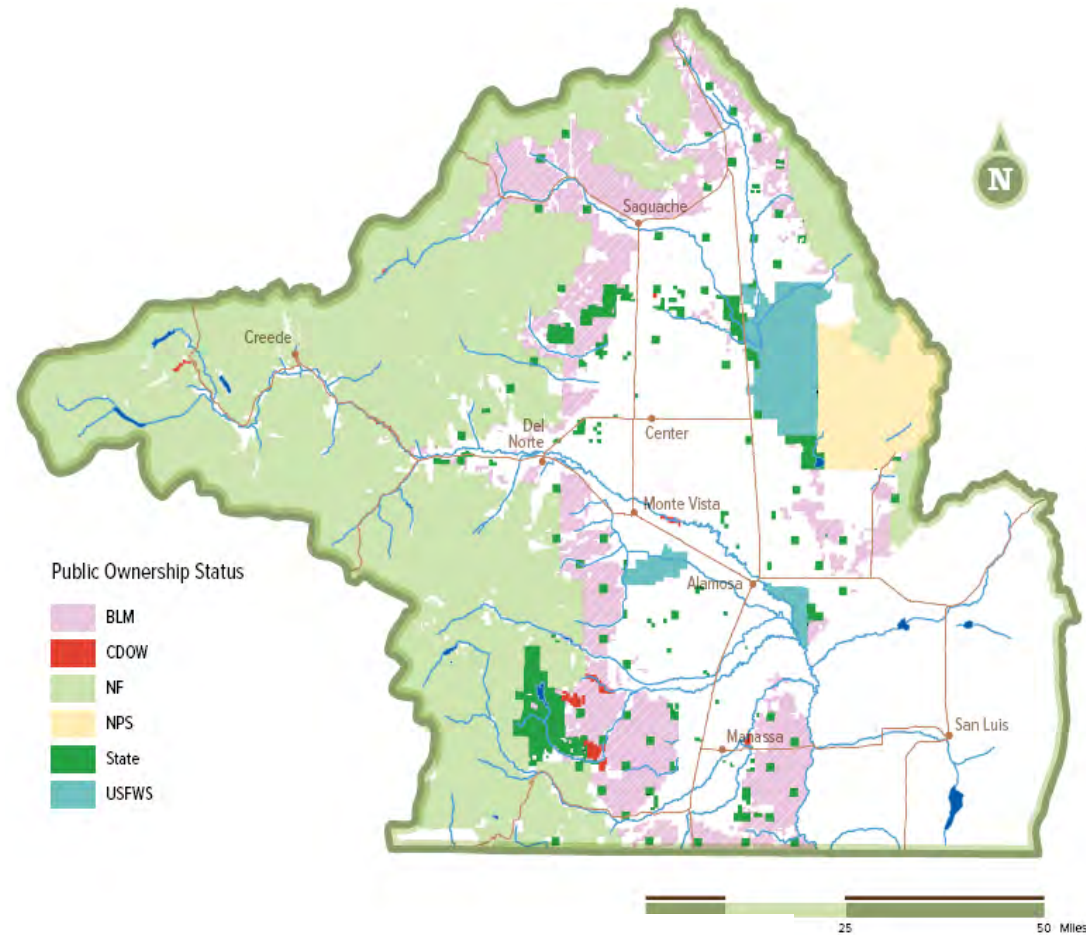


Who owns the land in and around the San Luis Valley?

- 57% Public land (*Mineral County 97%, Costilla County 1%*)
- USFS = surrounding high country
- BLM = foothills & wetland habitats
- Great Sand Dunes National Park
- Alamosa, Baca, Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuges
- Many State Wildlife Areas
- Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
- Rio Grande Natural Area
- 6"-8" annual rainfall on Valley floor
- Rio Grande: 175 river miles
- > 200,000 wetland acres
- > 350,000 private acres conserved

Demographics:

- 46,000 population
- 46% Hispanic
- Avg. income = approx 70% of Colorado avg.



Entity	Total Area (acres)	Percent of Public Lands	Percent of Total Basin land
Private	1,282,558	-	43%
Bureau of Land Management	514,741	19%	11%
Colorado Parks and Wildlife	9,707	0.4%	0.2%
Rio Grande National Forest	1,837,817	67%	38%
National Park Service	150,324	5%	3%
State of Colorado	131,597	5%	3%
US Fish and Wildlife Service	119,330	4%	2%
Total Public Lands	2,763,515	-	57%

Water, especially in a dry landscape, is what brought people here, over millennia....and Spanish settlers in the mid-1800s....

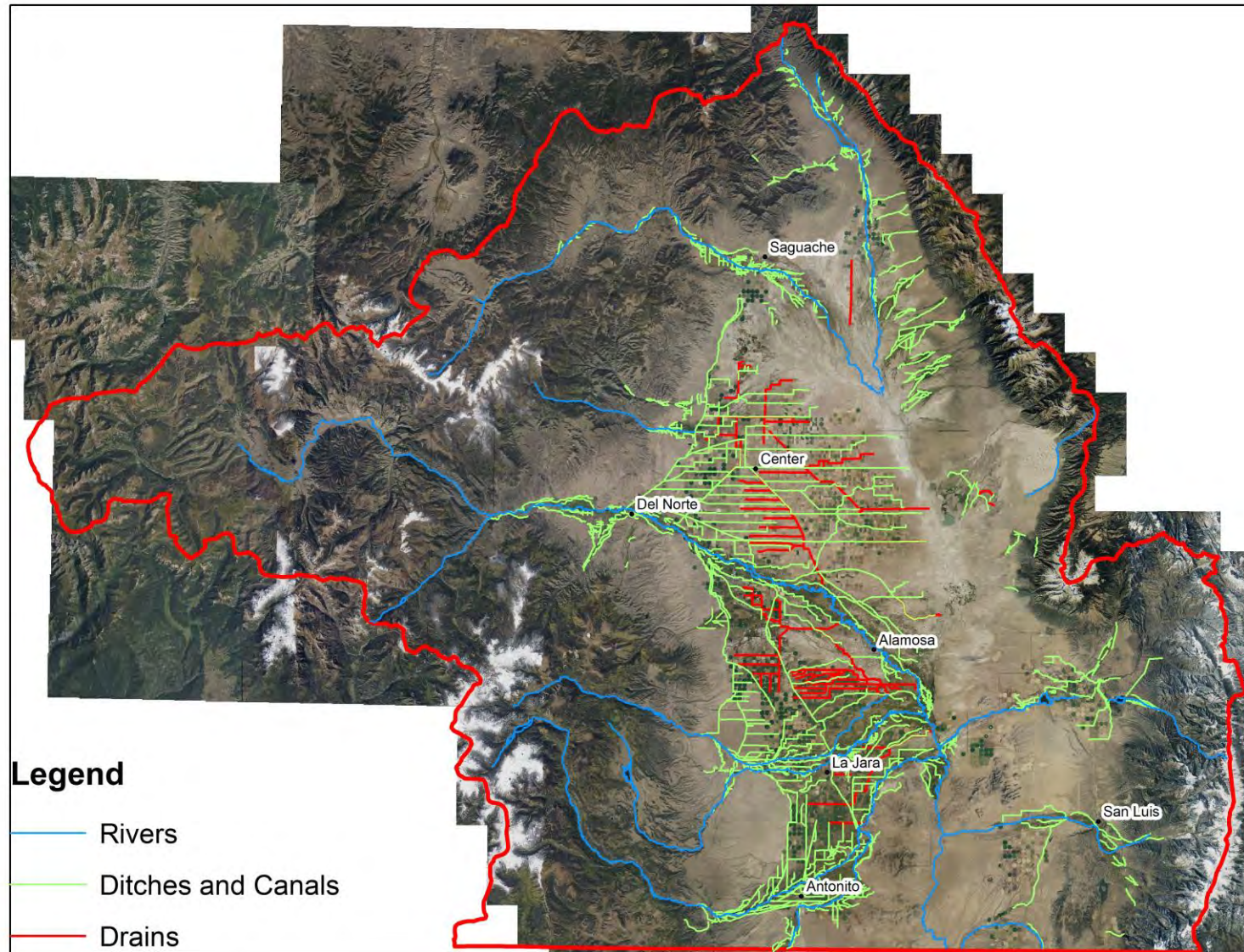


Water supports
agriculture.

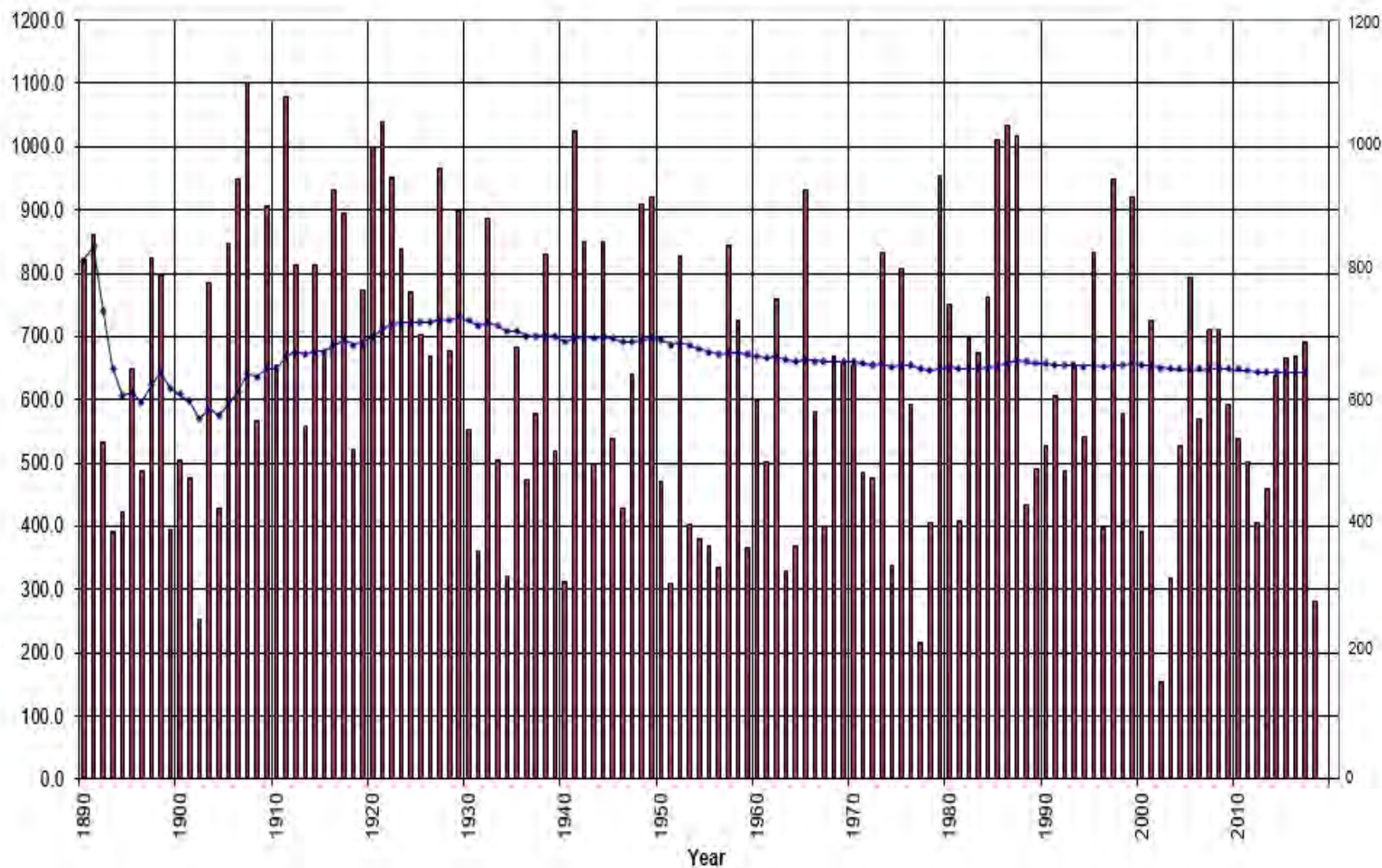
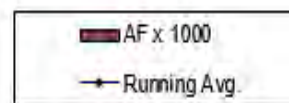
Sourced from
mountain snowmelt
and underground
aquifers,
water
is literally
The lifeblood
of the Valley.
It supports the
base economy
of agriculture,
ranching to farming.



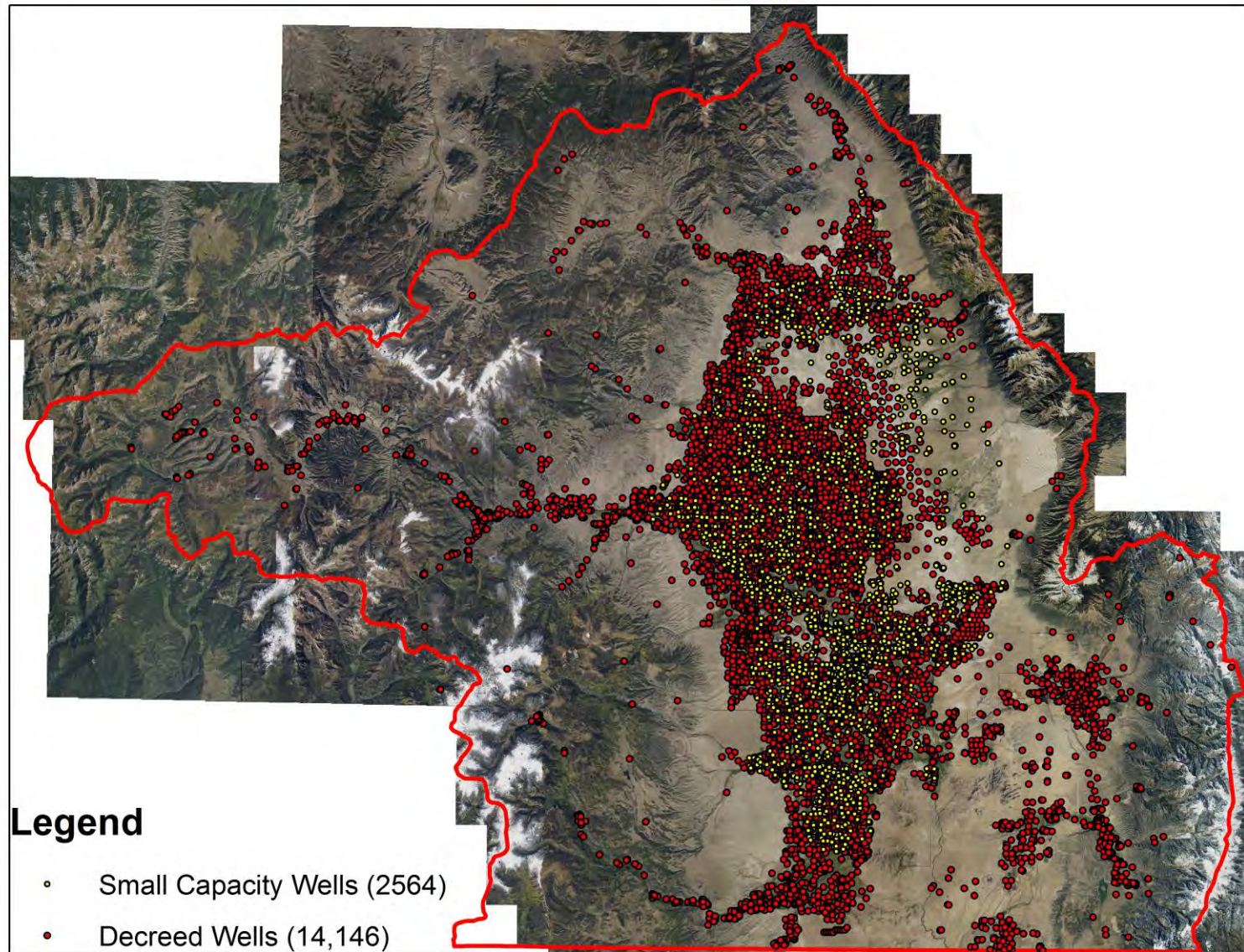
Surface
water is
diverted
from rivers
and
streams...



Rio Grande River near Del Norte, CO
Annual Calendar Year Flows



... and ground water is pumped from the underground aquifers/ These sources support the base economy of agriculture, in the high, dry San Luis Valley.

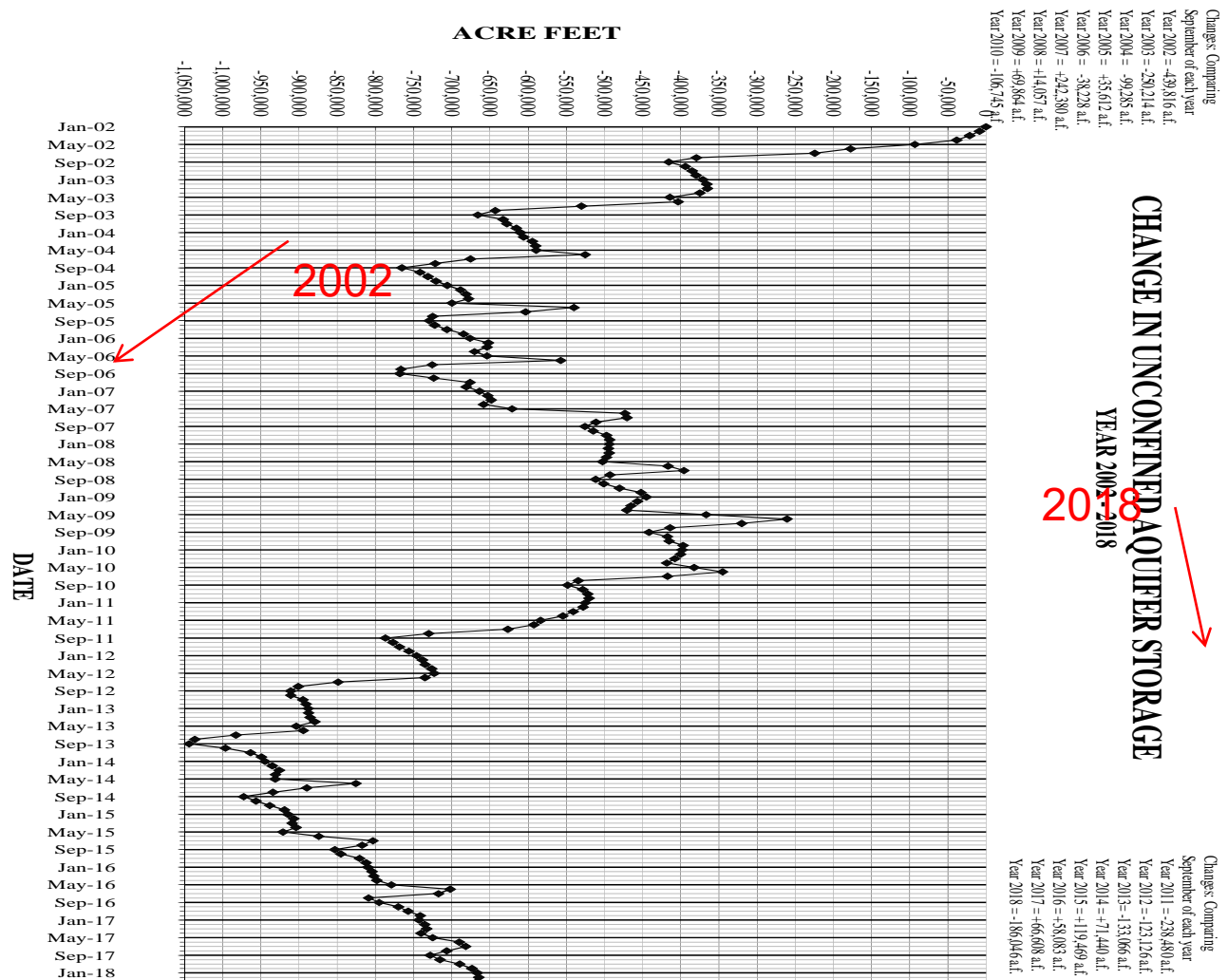


The San Luis Valley
is a microcosm
of the West:
Long Term
Drought....
Climate
Change...
Aridification...

Since 2002:

- 11 of the 17 years have been below average
- Largest year was 123% of long term average
- Lowest year was 24% of long term average
- Average of those years was 84% of long term average

DRAFT-January 23, 2019
By Davis Engineering Service, Inc.



Agriculture:

Challenges:

- Reduction in snowpack/aridification
- Groundwater Sustainability
- Surface Water Variability
- Variable Markets
- Aging Infrastructure

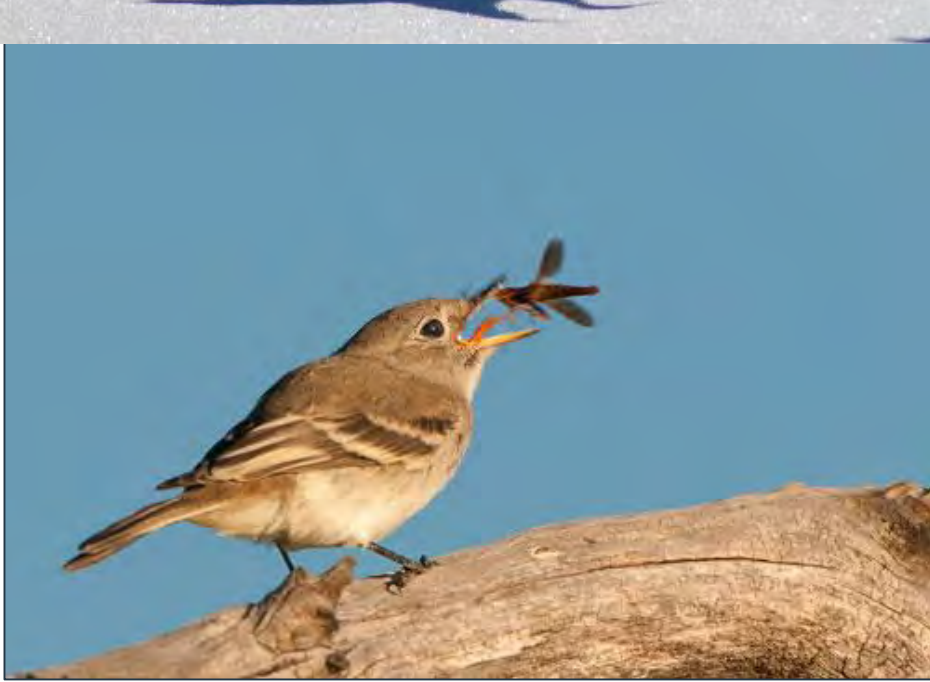
Opportunities:

- Community Partnerships & Collaboration
- Groundwater Management Subdistricts
- Building Soil Health
- New Crops & New Markets
- Improved Irrigation Infrastructure





Water supports internationally important wetlands & wildlife habitat



Environment, Wildlife & Watershed Health:

Challenges

- Habitat Fragmentation & Degradation
- Changing Climate
- Endangered Species at Risk
- Fires and Beetlekill in Forests
- Mining, highways, resort & 2nd home construction

Opportunities

- Landscape Scale Planning
- Investments in Forest Health
- Endangered Species Protection, & Reintroduction
- Private Land Conservation



Water supports recreation



Recreation:

Challenges

- Access
- Variable Flows
- Hazardous Infrastructure
- Information & Outreach
- High Visitation & Impacts

Opportunities

- New Recreation Areas and Access
- Collaborative Flow Programs
- Stewardship Education & Initiatives
- Local Trail Coalitions
- Youth Engagement Programs
- Agricultural & Cultural Tourism
- SLV GO!



Community Engagement & Public/Private Partnerships:



Federal:

USDA-Forest Service
and NRCS

USDOI-Bureau of Land
Management

US Fish & Wildlife Service
National Park Service

State:

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Colorado Parks & Wildlife

Private:

Conservation,
Community Development,
& Health Foundations

Businesses

Individuals

Local:

Counties

Cities

Towns

Water Districts & Organizations

Soil Districts

SLV GO!

SLV Wetlands Committee

Local Foods Coalition

Adams State University

Conservation Organizations:

Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust;

Colorado Cattleman's Agricultural
Land Trust

Colorado Open Lands

The Nature Conservancy

Western Rivers Conservancy

Trust for Public Land

Ducks Unlimited

Trout Unlimited

And many more!

Community Planning for Outdoor Recreation



Mission: To provide residents and visitors throughout the San Luis Valley with accessible and inclusive outdoor recreation opportunities that connect communities, to improve wellness, encourage stewardship, and contribute to the economic vitality of the region.

History

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graph LR; A((America's Great Outdoors Initiative)) --> B((Secretary of the Interior - Ken Salazar))
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America's
Great
Outdoors
Initiative

Secretary
of the
Interior -
Ken Salazar

Community Planning for Outdoor Recreation



Mission: To provide residents and visitors throughout the San Luis Valley with accessible and inclusive outdoor recreation opportunities that connect communities, to improve wellness, encourage stewardship, and contribute to the economic vitality of the region.

SLV GO! Coalition

"As highlighted in the America's Great Outdoors vision, recreation provides one of the easiest and most natural ways to connect with the outdoors. America's lands and waters offer a multitude of outdoor recreation activities that enhance health and wellness, encourage appreciation for natural and cultural resources, and present enjoyable opportunities to connect with family and friends."

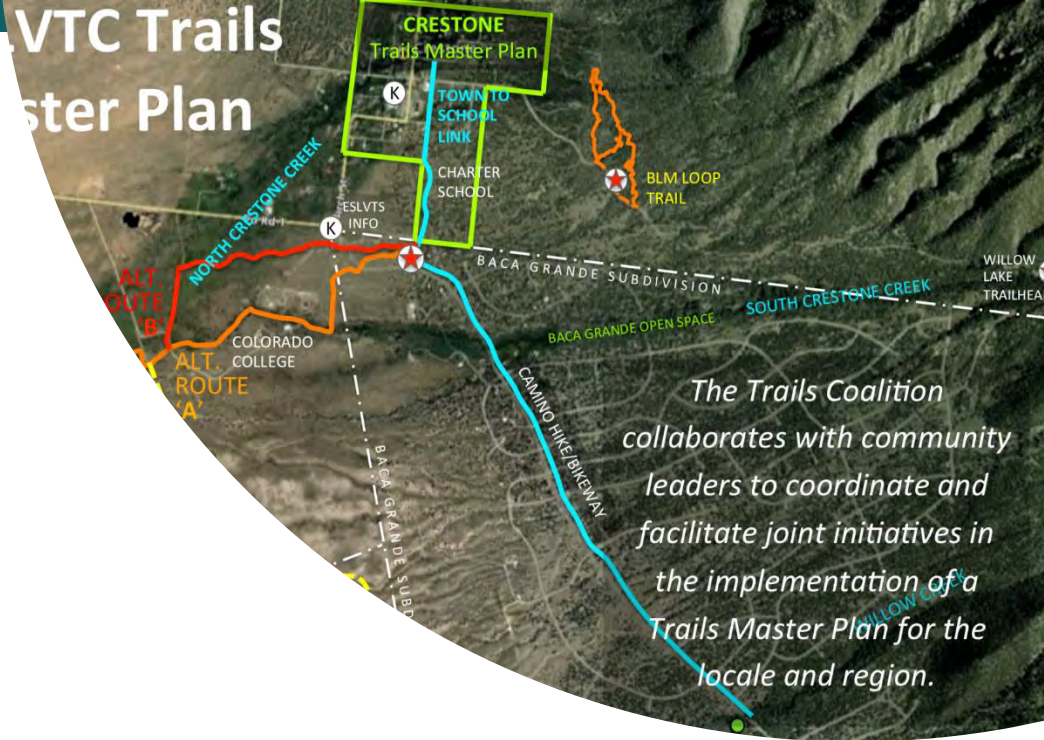
- America's Great Outdoors:
A Promise to Future Generations





- Spearheaded by the SLVGO Coalition, SLV GO! is a partnership between counties, municipalities, interested organizations and federal, state and local land management agencies.
- Efforts to holistically approach trail and recreation development in the SLV began in 1996 with the development of the Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan.
- Building on the 1996 Master Plan and inspired by the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative launched by President Obama in 2010, SLVGO brings partners from all reaches of the SLV together in order to develop a framework for improving, sustaining and promoting outdoor recreation opportunities.

VTC Trails Master Plan

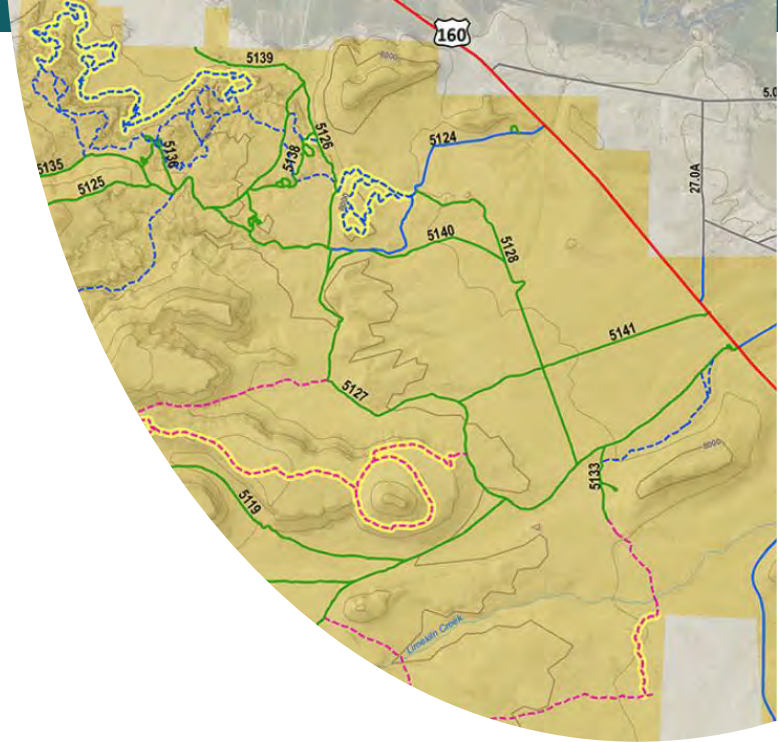


The Trails Coalition collaborates with community leaders to coordinate and facilitate joint initiatives in the implementation of a Trails Master Plan for the locale and region.

SLV GO! Priority Initiatives

Improve community wellness through enhanced in-town recreation facilities.





SLV GO! Priority Initiatives

Connect, expand,
and enhance trail
systems
throughout the San
Luis Valley.



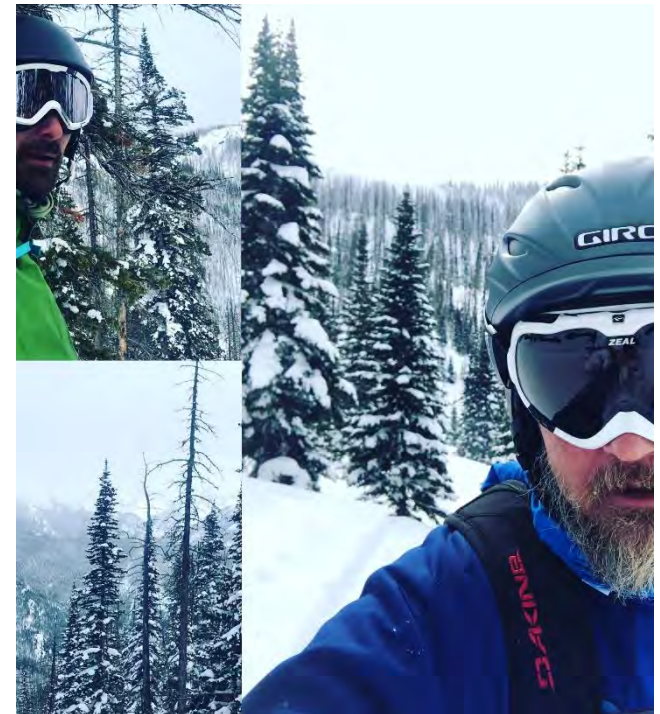
SLV GO! Priority Initiatives

Grow more recreation
programs and activities
specifically tailored to SLV
youth.



SLV GO! Priority Initiatives

- Expand water-based recreation.
- Expand opportunities for winter recreation.



SLV GO! Priority Initiatives

Promote the SLV's recreation opportunities and increase information sharing about what there is to see and do in the SLV.



How do we
enact
those
priorities?

HOW

TOOL KITS

SHAPING
RECREATION
DESTINATIONS

BUILDING
HEALTHIER
COMMUNITIES

DEVELOPING
TRAIL
SYSTEMS

REALIZING
TRAIL
CONNECTIONS

CONNECTING
YOUTH
& THE
OUTDOORS

BALANCING
RECREATION &
CONSERVATION

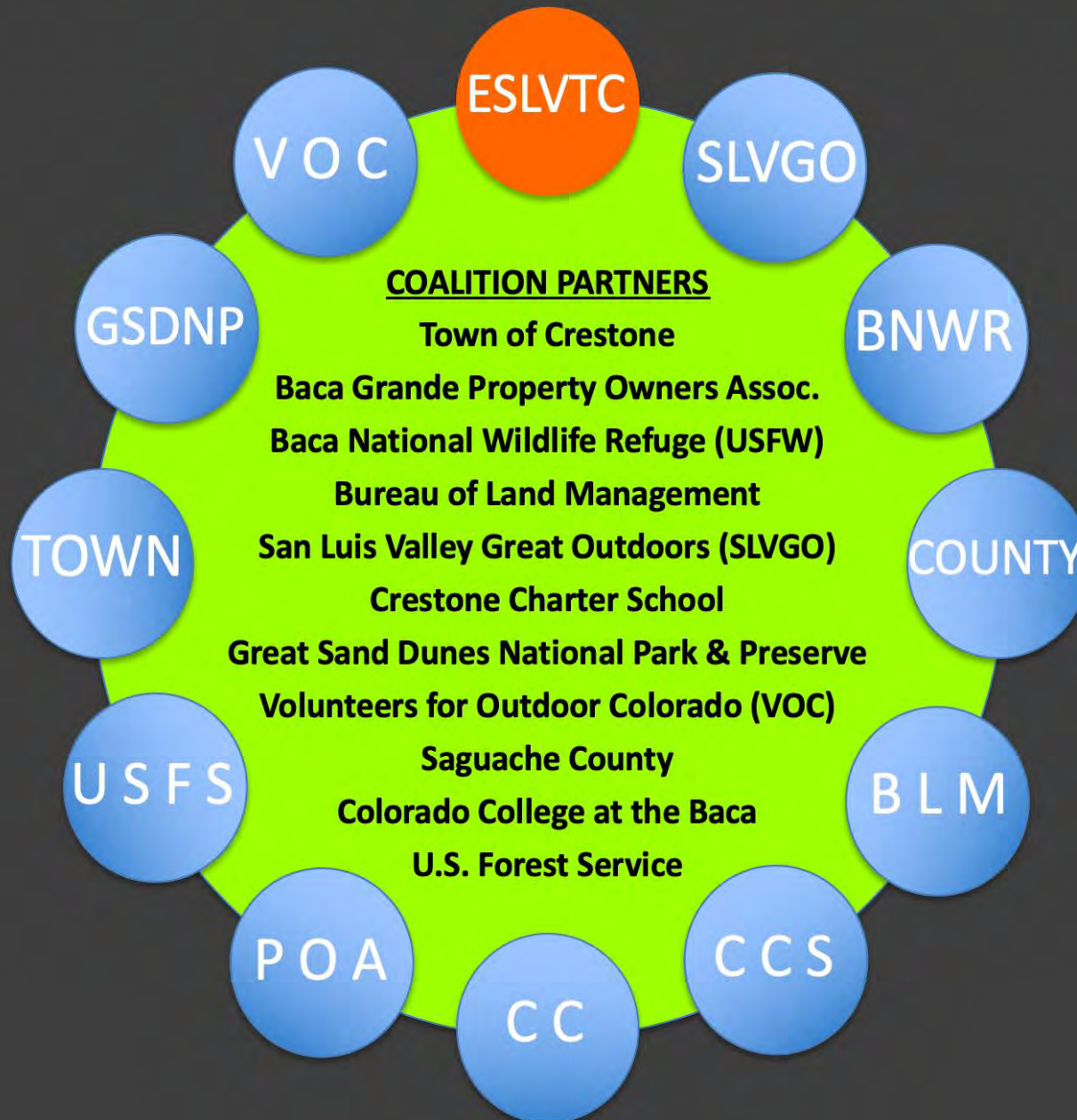
PROMOTING
RECREATION

HOSTING
RECREATION
EVENTS

FUNDING &
SUSTAINING
RECREATION



Eastern SLV Trails Coalition (ESLVTC)



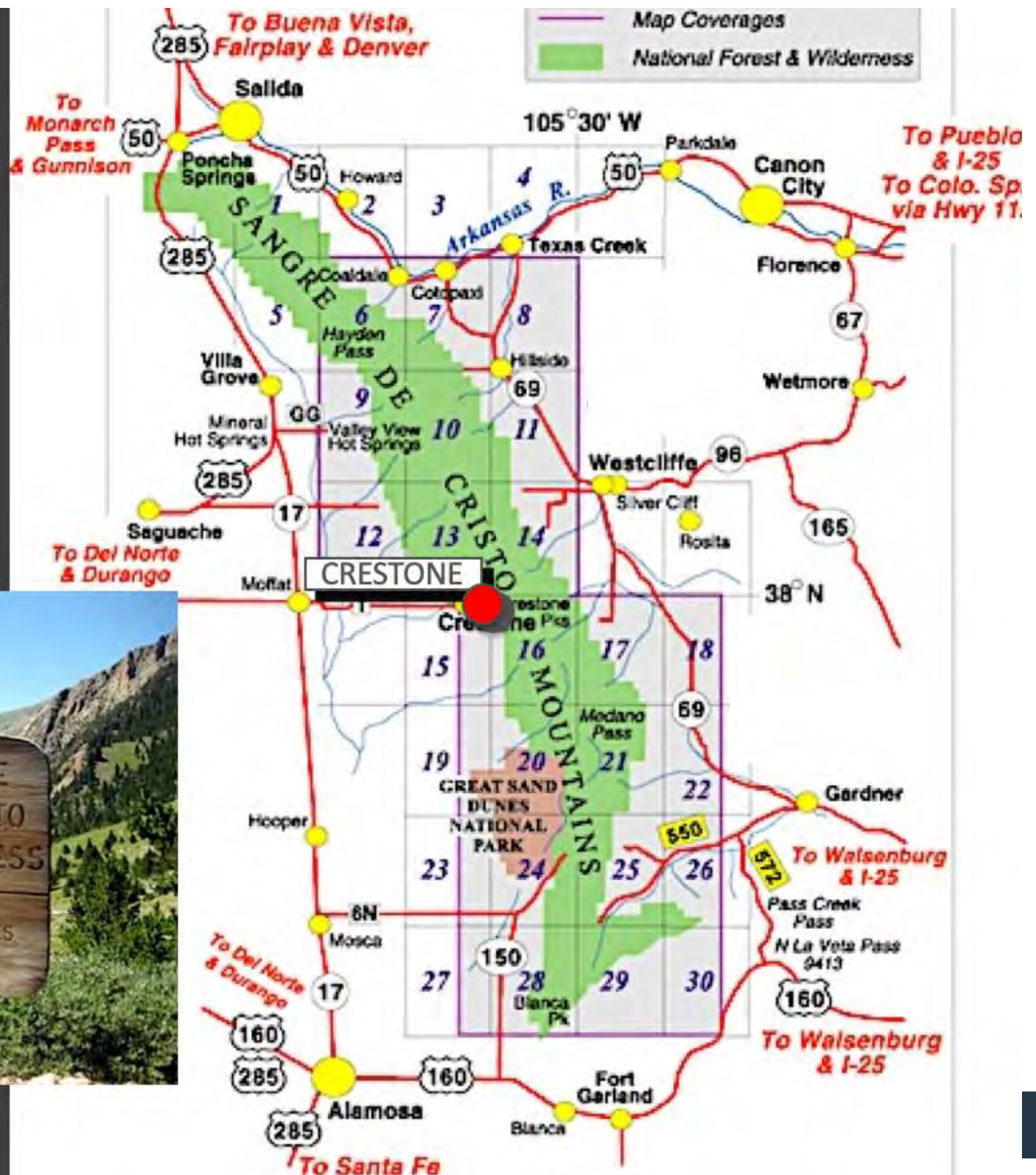
Sangre De Cristo Wilderness Area

70 miles long from Salida to Mt. Blanca

180 miles of trails

220,000 acres

Third largest Wilderness in the state



Sangre De Cristo Wilderness Area

Crestone Group of "Fourteeners" is the most visited destination in the Wilderness

Wilderness includes U.S. Forest Service lands within the San Isabel and Rio Grande National Forests, and the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve

Climbers consider Crestone Needle the most difficult climb of all "Fourteeners"

The Sangres are fault-block mountains, with sharply uplifted blocks, jagged ridges, and soaring pinnacles

The wilderness is crisscrossed east-west by short narrow drainages terminated by impassable ridges and cliffs

Hiking trails follow drainages to high altitude lakes and fourteeners

Hermit Pass view looking northeast
www.coloradoswildareas.com

NORTH
CRESTON
E CREEK

BLM

CRESTON
NE

SOUTH CRESTONE CREEK

SAN RAFAEL
DE CRISTO
WILDERNESS

WILLOW CREEK

USFS

Natl Wildlife
Refuge
(USFW)

BACA
GRANDE
SUBDIVISION
(4,000 LOTS)

SPANISH CREEK

COTTONWOOD CREEK

SPIRITUA
CENTERS

MOUNT
ADAMS
13,931

CHALLENGE
R POINT
14,081

KIT
CARSON
PEAK
14,165

COLUMBIA POINT
(13,980)

CRESTON
E PEAK
14,294

CRESTON
E NEEDLE
14,197

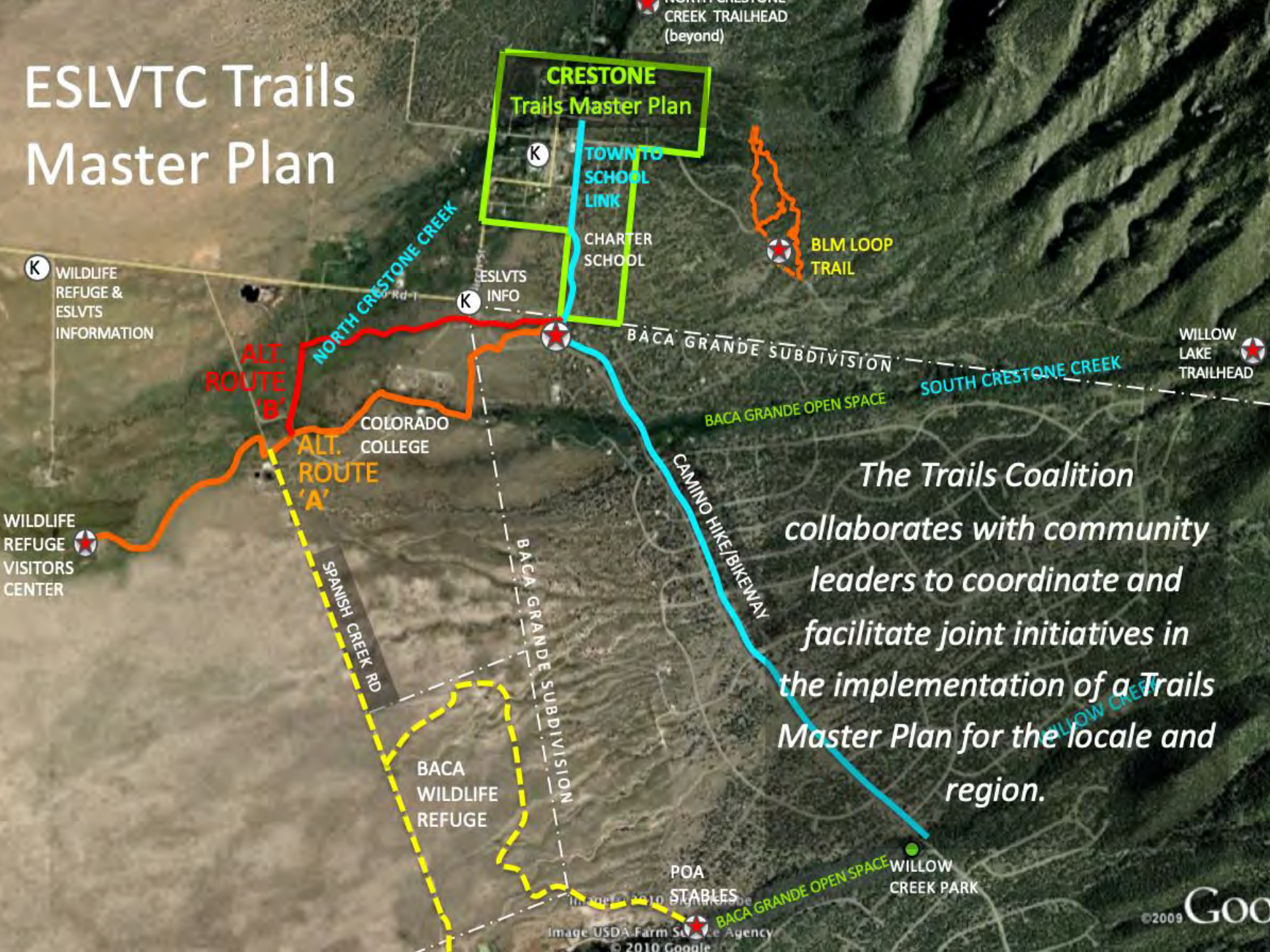
BROKEN
HAND
PEAK
13,573

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

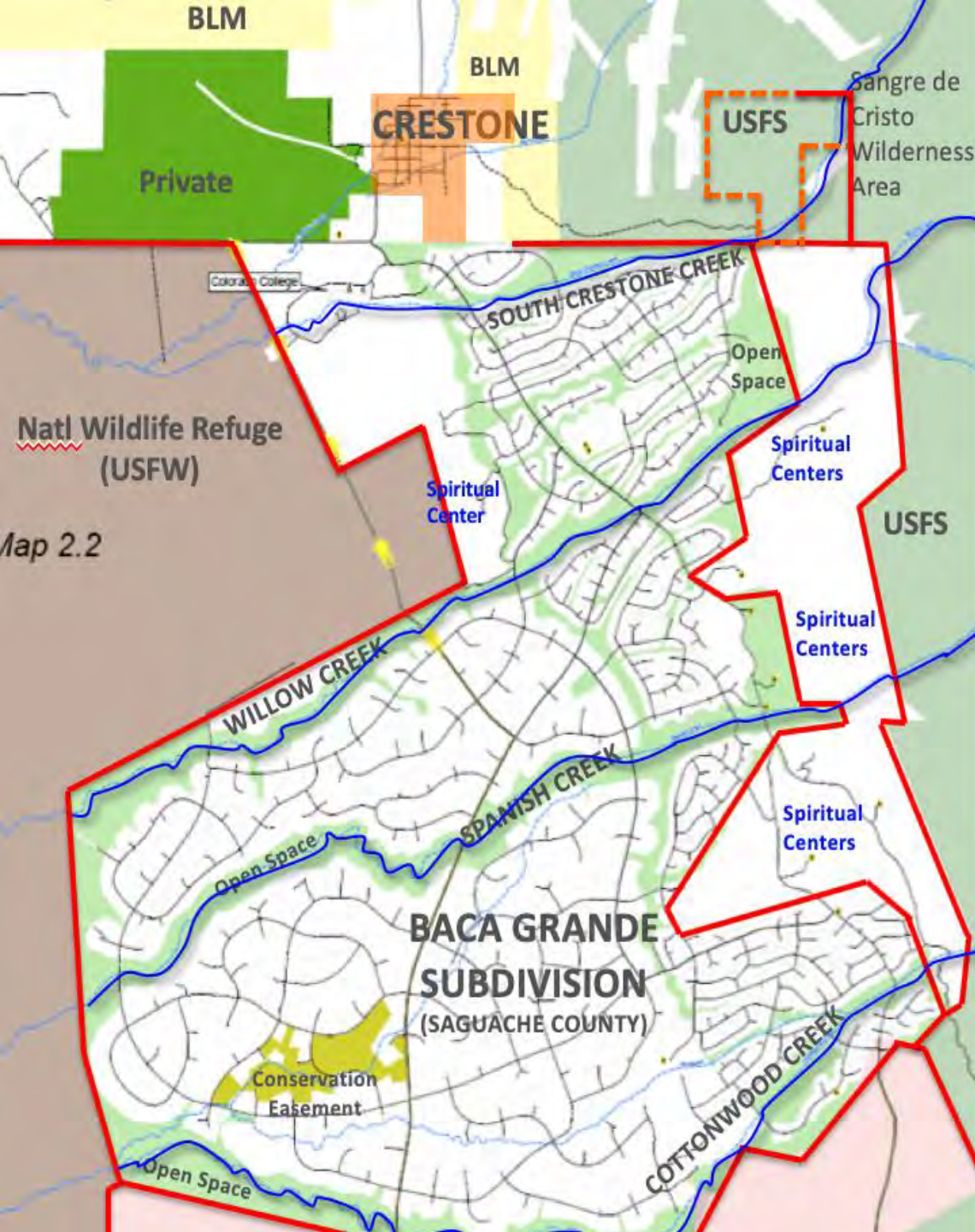
Great Sand Dunes National Park (NPS)

Google earth

ESLVTC Trails Master Plan



The Trails Coalition collaborates with community leaders to coordinate and facilitate joint initiatives in the implementation of a Trails Master Plan for the locale and region.



Crestone/Baca Local Area

Surrounded on all sides by Public Lands

Area: 42,000 acres

Population: 1900+/-

NORTH
CRESTONE
CREEK
TRAILHEAD &
CAMPGROUND

Campground's 13 sites can
generate more than \$1 million
in annual revenue

CRESTONE

Amounts spent per person
within a 50 mile radius of their
destination within the
Rio Grande National Forest:

Lodging, \$568
Food, \$319
Transportation \$168

Crestone's one campground and
two primary trailheads remain
surprisingly unrecognized and
unpromoted. There is significant
economic potential from hikers,
backpackers and climbers
accessing the Wilderness Area.

WILLOW
LAKE
TRAILHEAD

ACCESSED FROM
WILLOW LAKE
TRAILHEAD

S P I R I T U A L
C E N T E R S

SPANISH CREEK

COTTONWOOD CREEK

CHALLENGER
POINT
14,081

KIT CARSON
PEAK
14,165

3000 climbers per
year summit on
the "Crestone
Group"

CRESTONE
PEAK
14,294


CRESTONE
NEEDLE
14,197

ACCESSED FROM
SOUTH
COLONY
LAKES

Crestone Needle has
been included as one of
the "Fifty Classic Climbs
in North America"

© 2015 Google

Google earth



280,000+/- visitors per year

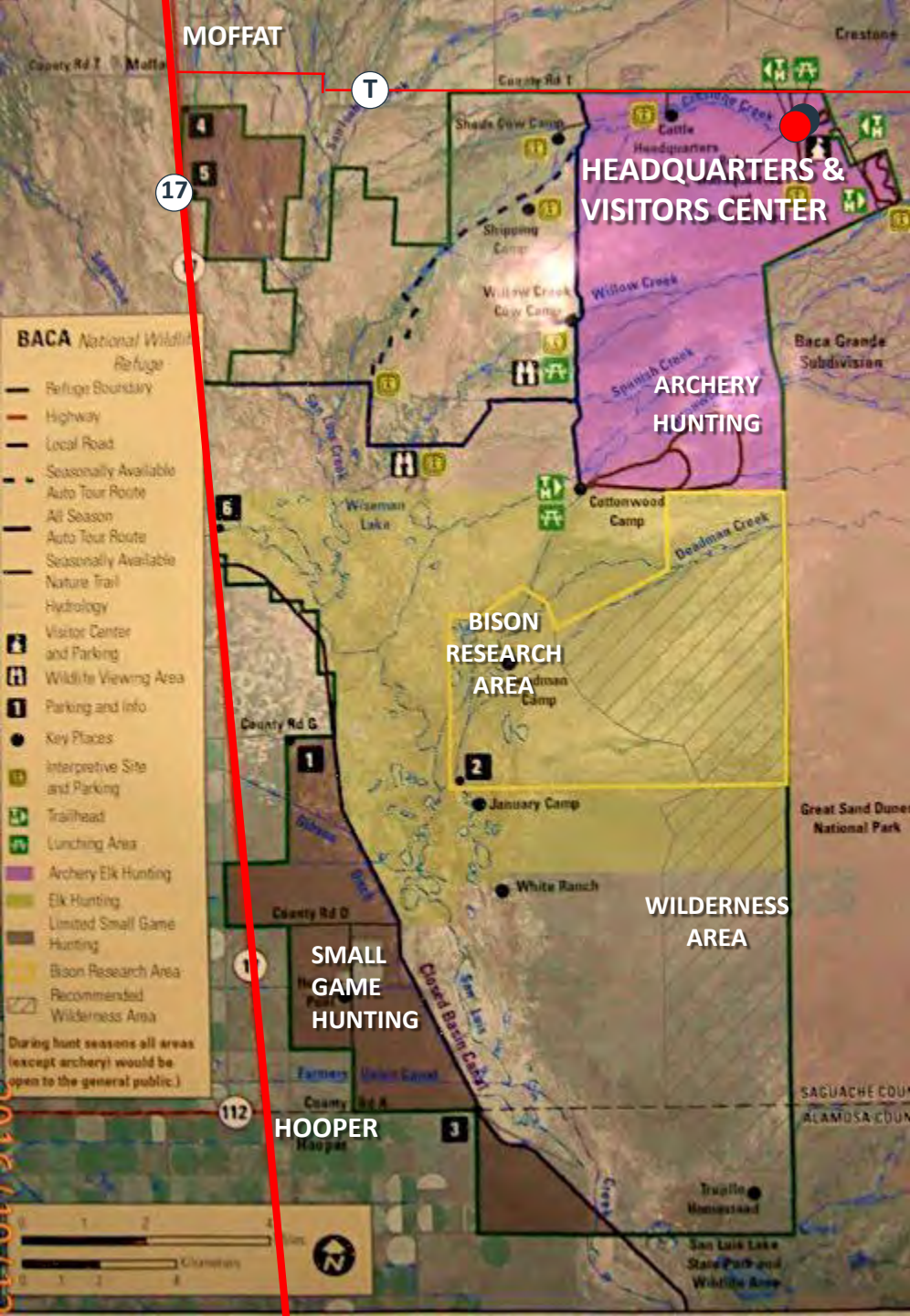
149,000 acres encompass the entire Sand Creek and Medano Creek watersheds

Multiple ecosystems ranging from mixed conifer forests to alpine tundra, and including pristine alpine lakes and major creek headwaters

Hiking and equestrian trails, backpacking, fishing and hunting

ATVs are not permitted anywhere in the national park and preserve

Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve



Baca National Wildlife Refuge

92,000 Acres

- 41 million people visit America's 59 Wildlife Refuges each year.
- **ACTIVITIES:** Wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretive programs, hunting and fishing.
- **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT:** The developing program at the Baca Wildlife Refuge offers visitors a fascinating and accessible destination to nourish spirit and connect to the environment.

MISSION

- Safe Access to Schools and Surrounding Public Lands
- Reduce Traffic Conflicts & Limitations Based on Distances and Absence of Routes
- Separate Hike/Bike Lane Along Camino Baca Grande

Safety

- Multi-User, Maximum Accessibility

Accessibility

- Access to Public Lands

Common Amenity

- Health and Wellness
- Community Building
- Community Buy-in and Management
- Community Acceptance as a Viable Transportation Mode

- Preserves Habitat Areas
- Reduces "braiding" & Protects the Fragile Environment
- Increases Walkability, Encourages Walking & Makes Scenic Areas Accessible

Low Impact & Sustainable

**Create a
MULTI-MODAL
TRAIL SYSTEM
That connects
VITAL DESTINATIONS
& accesses surrounding
PUBLIC LANDS
Recreation & Education
opportunities**

Critical Connectivity

- Connectivity to Schools, Baca Refuge, and Between Town and the Baca, Builds Relationships
- "Trunk line" Supports Future Trail Branches
- Creates Seamless Connections Across Jurisdictions

Youth Engagement

- Engages Youth, Promotes Stewardship and Develops Trail Building Skills

Education & Interpretation

- Cultivates Awareness and Appreciation for the Natural Environment

Economic & Recreation Opportunities

- Increases Tourism Access
- Attracts Recreational Users
- Supports Town's Goal as 'Gateway Community'
- Increases Access & Promotes use of the Baca Refuge Asset
- Enhances Social Connections

Visioning Workshop Courtesy
National Park Service Rivers &
Trails Conservation Assistance
Program (RTCA) In-Kind
Contribution

ESLVTC's emerging *ROLE*

- **Collaboration**

With partners to achieve shared goals

- **Coordination**

Among partners to fulfill project requirements

- **Facilitation**

Thru administration, grant writing and seed funding

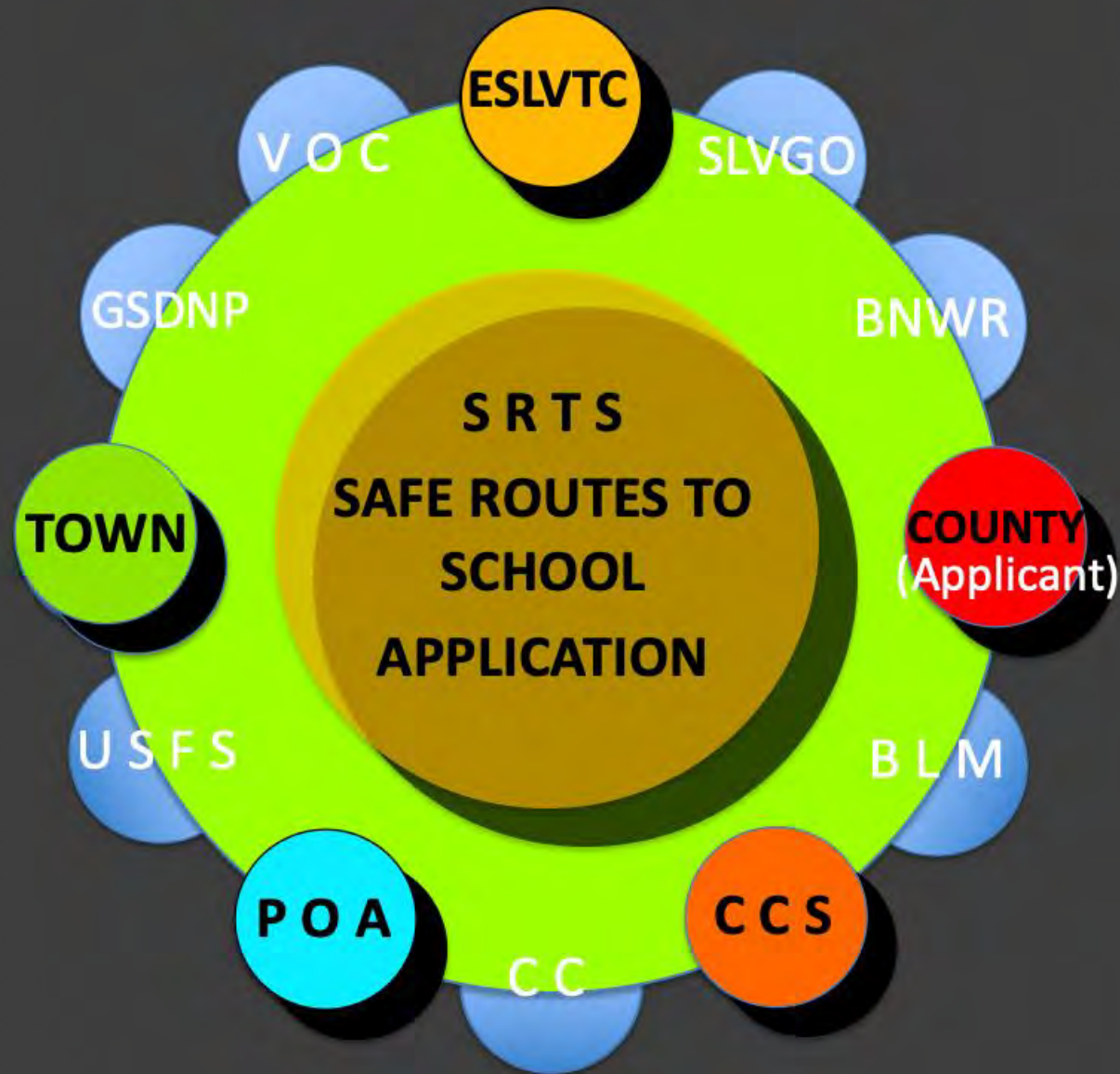
2019-20 Project: Safe Routes to School

Crestone/Baca Safe Routes to School Project Phase I Saguache County, Colorado & Partners



An eighth grader biking along Camino Baca Grande at the downhill turn where the proposed Safe Route to School accesses the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland

SRTS Project Team



ENGINEERING coordinated with CDOT

Timeline

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL - PHASE I SAGUACHE COUNTY

SRTS Application - Project Timeline
Prepared By: Davis Engineering Service, Inc.
Prepared October 25, 2018

	Milestone	Start	End	November-18	December-18	January-19	February-19	March-19	April-19	May-19	June-19	July-19	August-19	September-19	October-19	November-19	December-19	January-20	February-20	March-20	April-20	May-20	June-20	July-20	August-20	September-20	October-20
1	Project Application & IGA																										
1.1	SRTS Application Due Date	11/1/2018	11/1/2018																								
1.2	STRS Grant Award Review & Notification	11/1/2018	2/21/2019																								
1.3	IGA Between CDOT & Saguache	2/25/2019	5/25/2019																								
1.4	Public Survey/Outreach 1	3/4/2019	3/4/2019																								
2	Consultant Selection																										
2.1	RFQ for Engineering & Design Consultant	3/4/2019	3/25/2019																								
2.2	RFQ Proposals Due & Review	4/1/2019	4/5/2019																								
2.3	Brooks Act Process	4/5/2019	9/5/2019																								
3	F.I.R. Plan Development																										
3.1	Site Surveying	9/9/2019	9/13/2019																								
3.2	Finalize Alignment	9/9/2019	9/13/2019																								
3.3	Geotechnical Investigation & Report	9/9/2019	9/27/2019																								
3.4	Cultural/Historical Investigation & Report	9/9/2019	9/27/2019																								
3.5	Palentology Report	9/16/2019	10/4/2019																								
3.6	Wetlands T&E Investigation Report	9/9/2019	9/27/2019																								
3.7	Phase I ESA Report	9/16/2019	10/4/2019																								
3.8	Environmental Permitting	9/16/2019	10/4/2019																								
3.9	Execute Easement Agreements with Partners	9/13/2019	10/31/2019																								
3.10	ROW Plan Preparation (none anticipated)	-	-																								
3.11	30% Level Plans & F.I.R.	9/2/2019	11/15/2019																								
3.12	Public Survey/Outreach 2	11/18/2019	11/18/2019																								
3.13	CDOT Form 128 Clearance	12/2/2019	1/2/2020																								
4	F.O.R. Plan Development																										
4.1	ROW Acquisition (none anticipated)	-	-																								
4.2	90% Level Plans & F.O.R.	11/18/2019	1/10/2020																								
4.3	Public Survey/Outreach 3	1/13/2020	1/13/2020																								
5	Project Construction																										
5.1	Final Set of Plans & Specifications	1/13/2020	1/24/2020																								
5.2	Project Construction Bid Advertisement	2/3/2020	2/21/2020																								
5.3	Bid Review Opening	2/24/2020	2/28/2020																								
5.4	Notification of Award & CDOT Concurrence	3/3/2020	4/10/2020																								
5.5	Construction (90 Days)	5/1/2020	7/30/2020																								
5.6	Project Closeout with CDOT	8/1/2020	8/30/2020																								
5.7	SRTS Grant Project Completion Date	6/30/2021	6/30/2021																								
6	Post Construction Educational Outreach																										
6.1	Project Completion Ribbon Cutting	8/3/2020	8/3/2020																								
6.2	Public Survey/Outreach 4	8/17/2020	8/17/2020																								

Cost Estimate

		UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE	EXTENSION
1	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
2	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
3	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
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14	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
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78	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
79	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
80	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
81	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
82	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
83	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
84	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
85	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
86	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
87	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
88	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
89	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
90	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
91	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
92	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
93	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
94	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
95	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
96	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
97	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
98	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
99	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00
100	CONCRETE CURB	CS	100	\$ 1.00	\$ 100.00

This cost estimate was prepared by the engineer as a design professional familiar with the construction industry. It is not a guarantee that the estimate or construction costs will not vary from the prepared estimate. For this reason, the estimate is not a contract.

This estimate is not to be used for any other purpose than the project for which it was prepared.

By *Chifh*

Date: 10/25/2018

Eastern SLV Trails Coalition (ESLVTC)



MISSION • PLAN • ROLE



WILDERNESS

SPACE

DARK SKIES

STILLNESS

REMOTENESS

WILDLIFE

SELF-RELIANCE

SPIRIT

COMMUNITY

Find **Your** Place



Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado

*motivating and enabling people to be active stewards
of Colorado's natural resources since 1984*



VOC San Luis Valley Field Office



In partnership with the
Rio Grande National Forest
and the
Bureau of Land Management
San Luis Valley Field Office

Sangre de Cristo Family Camping and Trail Construction Projects



Volunteer Crew Leaders – A model to leverage more quality work







Funding

“Conservation without finance is just conversation.”

-Jim Levitt, Harvard Forest

Sources

- Bureau of Land Management
- USFWS
- Grants
 - San Luis Valley Conservation and Connection Initiative – collaborative grant to leverage more funds
 - Saguache County Sales Tax grant
- Private and corporate donors to VOC and Memorial Funds
- In-kind donations of funds and goods from local businesses

Partnerships



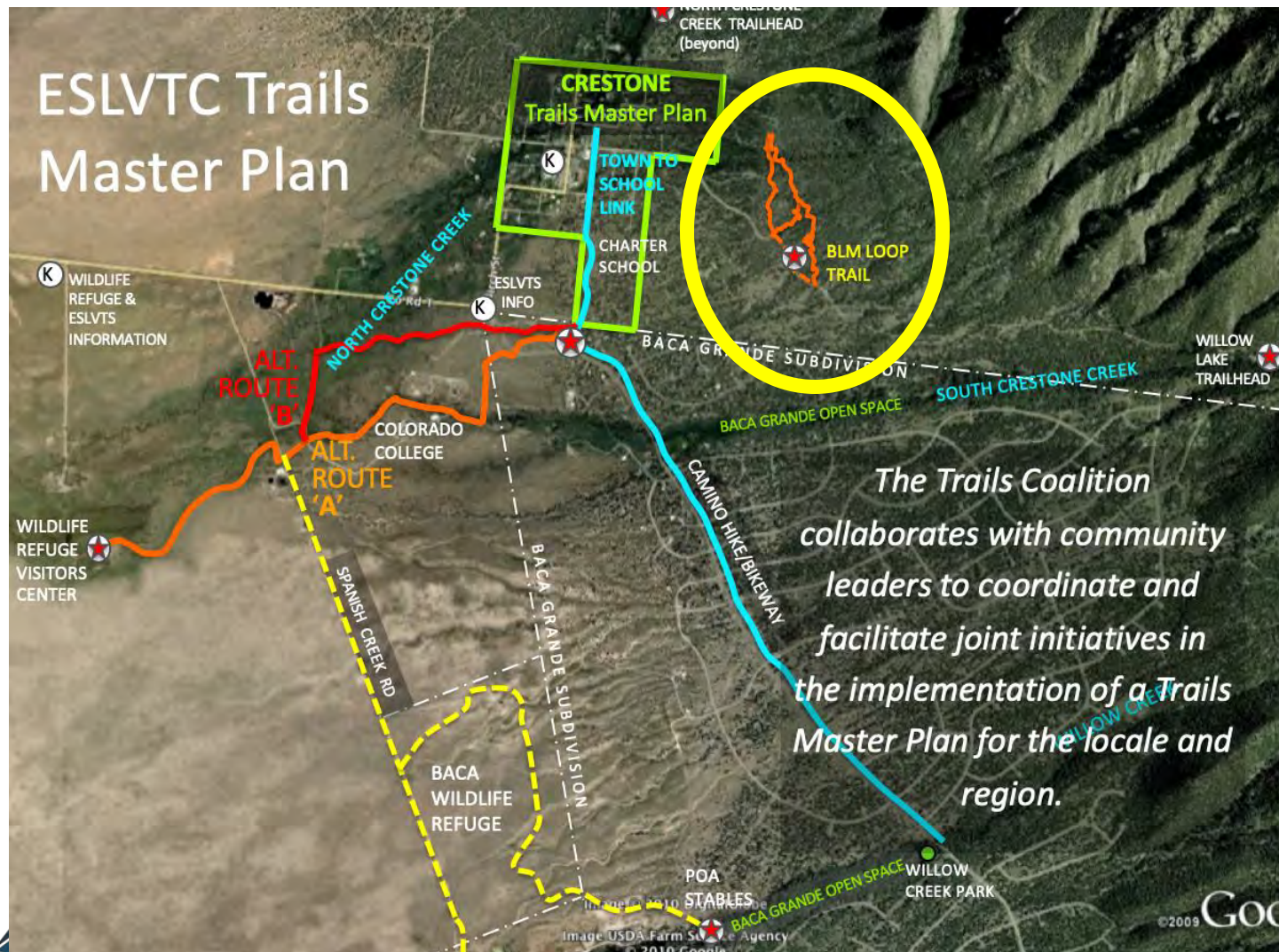
Alpine Achievers Initiative



Southwest Conservation Corps



Accomplishments



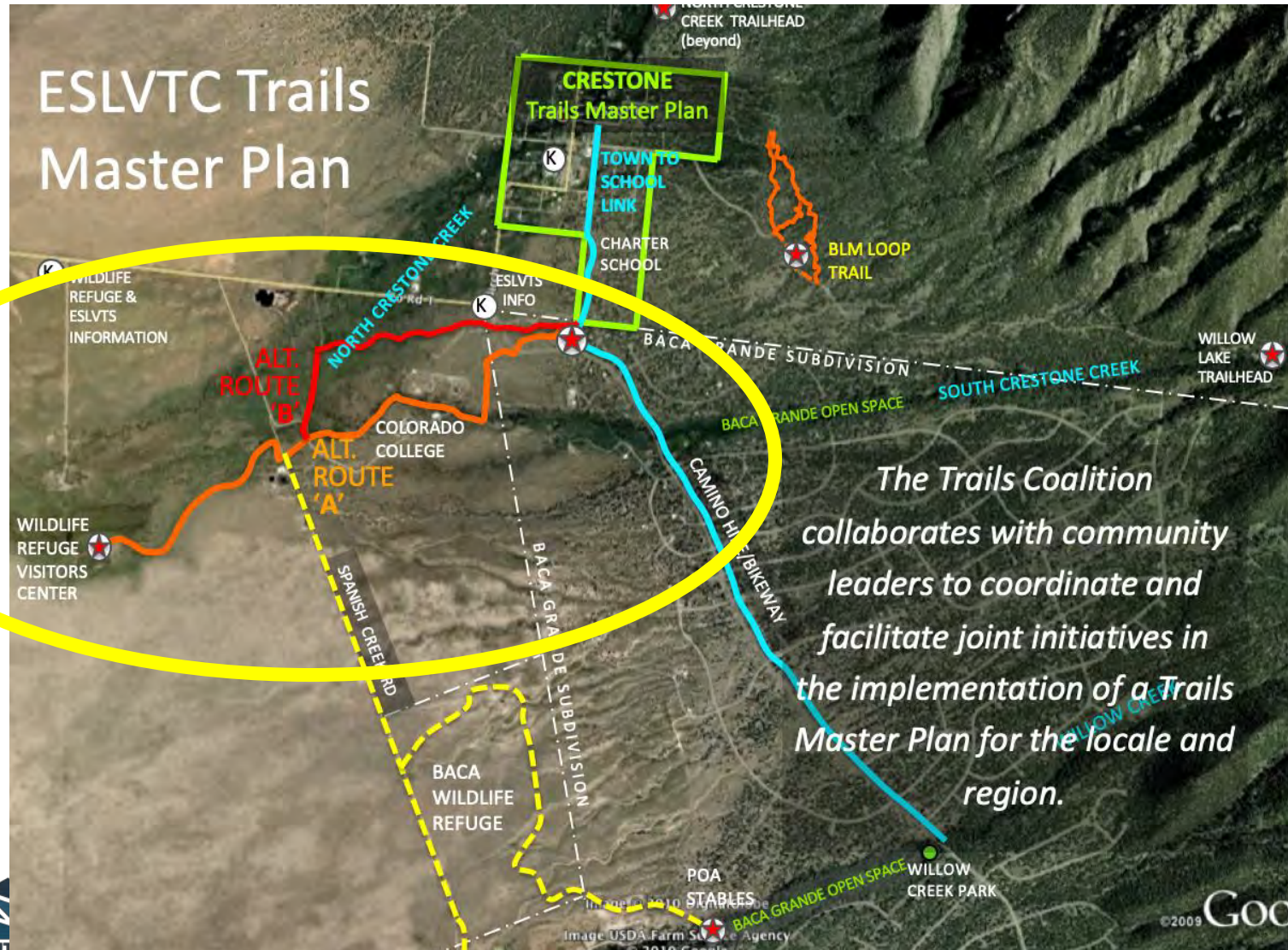
Accomplishments

2017 and 2018

- 120 individual volunteers engaged
- 4,900 feet of new, sustainable trail
- 2 rock steps constructed
- 4 climbing turns constructed
- 104 feet of rock wall installed
- 1 foot of rock wall restored
- ½ mile of trail maintained and restored
- 500 feet of trail revegetated
- 2 bags of trash collected



Moving Forward – 2019 Project



MAY, 2019: VOC TRAIL CONSTRUCTION & HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT LINKING BACA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE TO THE COLORADO COLLEGE BACA CAMPUS



Volunteer on Your Public Lands in the Upper Rio Grande Basin!

Strengthening Overall Stewardship in the Upper Rio Grande Basin

The Upper Rio Grande Basin and San Luis Valley is surrounded by amazing public lands held by the Rio Grande National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management. Opportunities abound here to be involved with active stewardship on public lands. Join us for larger Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado projects (visit www.voc.org/volunteer), or work with community-based projects on the National Forest or BLM. Come work with us to help maintain trails, create healthy environments for plants and wildlife, plant trees and community gardens, and restore fire- and flood-damaged places!

Email **Sally** at sally@voc.org to get involved.



Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado 2019 Projects in the Upper Rio Grande Basin

Outdoor Stewardship Institute

- Building greater local capacity
- Training for crew and team leaders
- Technical assistance and design
- Basic and advanced trail construction
- Ecological Restoration skills
- Volunteer and project management training
- Customized trainings



Stepping Up Stewardship



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PUTTING VOC'S EXPERIENCE TO WORK FOR YOU.

GUIDES

Learn the Basics

TRAINING

Hands-on Practice

CONSULTING

Additional Services

Questions?



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Photo credit: Cindy Bond