

EXHIBIT A

Eagle County Open Space Criteria

**For the Evaluation of Land Suitability,
and the Prioritization of Potential Acquisitions
Utilizing Eagle County Open Space Funds**

February, 2004

Criteria Summary

No ranking of relative importance is inferred by the following order

- I. Scenic Landscapes and Vistas**
Preserve and protect Eagle County's outstanding natural beauty and visual quality
- II. Regional Heritage, Agriculture and Ranching**
Retain Eagle County's history, culture and agricultural land uses
- III. Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat and Migration Routes**
Set aside areas critical to the long term health and vitality of indigenous wildlife
- IV. Sensitive Lands & Environments**
Protect riparian areas, flood plains, and other sensitive, unique or endangered ecosystems or environments.
- V. Physical and Visual Buffers**
Promote community separation and distinction, and provide separation between developed areas and sensitive lands
- VI. Access to Streams, Rivers, Public Lands and Dispersed Recreation Opportunities**
Provide access to public lands, and improve opportunities for high quality dispersed recreation

In-County Regional Weighting

In recognition of 1) the elevated risk of losing critical open space in areas subject to high development pressure; 2) the present-day economic realities of ranching, and the resulting risk of losing significant elements of County's ranching heritage and culture, and; 3) the importance and sensitivity of the County's higher elevation environments and watersheds, three regions have been identified within which certain criteria will receive stronger, or "weighted", consideration. Those in-county regions are: Agriculture and Ranching Uses, Development Corridors and Upland Watersheds. Page 10 of this document summarizes the weighting of criteria within these "target" areas, and relevant information is also found in the left hand column of each criteria description on pages 3 through 8.

Additional Criteria

In addition to the above criteria, which will be used to evaluate qualities inherent to the land – its location, topography, size, vegetation, use, etc. - additional criteria will be used to evaluate the quality of the business transaction and other more or less subjective factors associated with the proposed acquisition. Those additional criteria include, but are not limited to, partnering, funding or other factors that would reduce the County's portion of the purchase cost, anticipated long term maintenance costs, conformance with County Master Plans, project urgency, property encumbrances, community support, potential educational benefits, and potential benefits of regional or state wide significance (see page 9).

Evaluation Criterion	Rating	Point Score	Weighted Score
<p>I. Scenic Landscapes and Vistas</p> <p><i>Factors:</i></p> <p><i>Location</i> <i>Visibility</i> <i>Quality</i> <i>Relative Contribution</i> <i>Contiguity</i> <i>Size (relative)</i></p> <p>Region Weighting Factor: For this Open Space Value multiply the Point Score by the Weighting Factor shown for the Region in which this Project is located:</p> <p>Ag. and Ranching [x3]</p> <p>Development Corr. [x3]</p> <p>Upland Watershed [x2]</p>	<p><u>High (4 points):</u> Relatively larger tract, the size is significant relative to its location and surrounding parcels. High visual exposure from primary highway or travel route. Outstanding and/or unique scenic quality of regional importance or scale. Contains prominent Eagle County features, ridgelines or landmark(s), strongly associated with County’s identity or sense of place. Land is contiguous with other highly valued existing or potential open space lands. Preservation enhances perceived and economic value to residents and tourists and supports the reasons for living/visiting here. Property generally undisturbed, in natural state. Long term visual benefits are free of obstruction from potential uses on adjacent or surrounding properties. Geology and vegetation is stable. Property an “in-holding” whose protection from development would greatly add to the community and the open space surrounding it.</p> <p><u>Med (2 points):</u> Significant visual exposure from secondary travel route. High visual quality, diversity, contributes to community identity or sense of place. Contains prominent local features, ridgelines or local landmark(s). Of more local importance or scale.</p> <p><u>Low (1point):</u> Witnessed only from less traveled roads. Low visual diversity, interest. Disturbances or improvements on the land lessen scenic quality. Contribution to scenic quality in a very limited geographic area.</p> <p><u>NA (0 points):</u> Land cannot be seen by the public, provides no contribution to the landscape.</p>		

Evaluation Criterion	Rating	Point Score	Weighted Score
<p>II. Regional Heritage, Agriculture and Ranching</p> <p><i>Factors:</i></p> <p><i>Agricultural production</i></p> <p><i>Economic viability</i></p> <p><i>Water rights</i></p> <p><i>Historic uses/ structures</i></p> <p><i>Relative total size and fraction that is in production</i></p> <p>Region Weighting Factor: For this Open Space Value multiply the Point Score by the Weighting Factor shown for the Region in which this Project is located:</p> <p>Ag. and Ranching [x3]</p> <p>Development Corr. [x3]</p> <p>Upland Watershed [x2]</p>	<p><u>High (4 points):</u> Historic working ranch with long term viability. Large size (500 acres or greater). Extensive areas of pasture, irrigated land, prime soils. Productivity predominately rated as 10 or above according to the State of Colorado uniform productivity evaluation system, which includes assessment of water quantity and availability. Site of significant historical or cultural value. Preservation enhances perceived and economic value to residents and tourists and supports the reasons for living/visiting here. Senior water rights intended to stay with the land. Excellent water delivery system. Contiguous to other ranches or protected open space. No present or proposed non-ranching businesses or activities that would diminish values important to open space preservation.</p> <p><u>Med (2 points):</u> Working ranch of smaller scale. Productivity predominately rated as 7 or above according to the State of Colorado uniform productivity evaluation system. Long term viability less certain. Adequate water, perhaps less senior in right, will stay with the land. Historical or cultural value of less significance. Contiguous to other ranches or protected open space. No adverse non-ranching activities that place or would potentially place ranching as a secondary activity on the land.</p> <p><u>Low (1 point):</u> Productivity predominately rated as 5 or below according to the State of Colorado uniform productivity evaluation system. Relatively small. Minimal water rights. Some history or cultural connection, but of minimal value</p> <p><u>NA (0 points):</u> Land with no ranching activities, agricultural production, or connection to Eagle County history</p>		

Evaluation Criterion	Rating	Point Score	Weighted Score
<p>III. Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat and Migration Routes</p> <p><i>Factors:</i></p> <p><i>Quality of Habitat</i> <i>Species</i> <i>Intensity/type of use</i> <i>Contiguity to Other Sensitive Habitats</i> <i>Size (relative)</i></p> <p>Region Weighting Factor: For this Open Space Value multiply the Point Score by the Weighting Factor shown for the Region in which this Project is located:</p> <p>Ag. and Ranching [x3]</p> <p>Development Corr. [x3]</p> <p>Upland Watershed [x3]</p>	<p><u>High (4 points):</u> Relatively larger tract. Contains significant mapped winter range or winter concentration areas for elk and deer. Contains significant big game calving areas or migratory routes. Contains critical habitat, breeding or nesting areas for grouse, waterfowl, or raptors. Known presence of threatened or endangered species. Excellent species and habitat diversity. Has significant water in the form of streams, rivers, ponds or lakes for wildlife use. Is contiguous with other existing or potential open space or public lands of importance to wildlife. Long term wildlife benefits are free of obstruction from potential uses on adjacent or surrounding properties.</p> <p><u>Med (2 points):</u> High quality habitat, but land somewhat fractioned or isolated in nature. Used extensively by deer and elk as summer range, but less in winter. Less species and/or habitat diversity. Significant use by non-game species.</p> <p><u>Low (1 point):</u> Only occasional use by non-game wildlife, little use by deer and elk. Poor diversity. Habitat disturbed/degraded by historic activities, uses, improvements.</p> <p><u>NA (0 points):</u> Little or no documented current use by, or value to, wildlife.</p>		

Evaluation Criterion	Rating	Point Score	Weighted Score
<p>IV. Sensitive Lands & Environments</p> <p><i>Factors:</i></p> <p><i>Riparian areas</i></p> <p><i>Floodplains</i></p> <p><i>Geology</i></p> <p><i>Watershed characteristics</i></p> <p><i>Vegetation communities</i></p> <p><i>Sensitivity</i></p> <p><i>Contiguity</i></p> <p><i>Size (relative)</i></p> <p>Region Weighting Factor: For this Open Space Value multiply the Point Score by the Weighting Factor shown for the Region in which this Project is located:</p> <p>Ag. and Ranching [x3]</p> <p>Development Corr. [x3]</p> <p>Upland Watershed [x3]</p>	<p><u>High (4 points):</u> Large property, contains significant undisturbed areas designated (mapped) as riparian or wetland, and/or areas within mapped flood plain. Significantly areas of potential geologic hazard. Contains ground water re-charge or surface source water areas. Contains outstanding example of native plant community, or known presence of rare and/or endangered plant species. Benefits are free of obstruction from potential uses on adjacent or surrounding properties. Protection would contribute to the long-term viability of larger ecosystem. Is contiguous with other existing or potential open space or public lands.</p> <p><u>Med (2 points):</u> Smaller property, contains riparian, wetland or flood plain or geologic hazard areas, but to a lesser degree. Smaller pockets of rare, threatened or endangered vegetative species. Potential contribution to ground water/surface water quality, though less significant. Less contiguity with other open space or public lands. Good example of native plant community, some contribution to viability of larger ecosystem.</p> <p><u>Low (1 point):</u> Limited amount of riparian, wetland or flood plain area. Vegetation previously disturbed, non-native. Does not contain threatened or endangered vegetative species. Isolated from existing or potential open space or public lands.</p> <p><u>NA (0 points):</u> No unique or endangered environments. No contribution to larger ecosystem, no wetlands or contribution to ground or surface water system</p>		

Evaluation Criterion	Rating	Point Score	Weighted Score
<p>V. Physical and Visual Buffers</p> <p><i>Factors:</i></p> <p><i>Position in County</i></p> <p><i>Proximity to sensitive lands</i></p> <p><i>Master Plan Contiguity</i></p> <p><i>Size (relative)</i></p> <p>Region Weighting Factor: For this Open Space Value multiply the Point Score by the Weighting Factor shown for the Region in which this Project is located:</p> <p>Ag. and Ranching [x1]</p> <p>Development Corr. [x3]</p> <p>Upland Watershed [x1]</p>	<p><u>High (4 points):</u> Relatively large tract. Of itself, or in combination with other contiguous open space lands, would provide significant separation between developed communities, promoting separate community identity and distinction. Preservation would provide separation between identified sensitive lands and existing or proposed development areas. In close proximity to identified urban growth boundary, or areas proposed for urban development. Land is in natural state or generally undisturbed. If disturbed, needed restoration is economically viable.</p> <p><u>Med (2 points):</u> Contribution to goal of separation still considerable but less significant. Properly positioned, but somewhat isolated from development centers, development corridors. Less contiguity with other existing or potential open space tracts that could contribute to creation of buffer.</p> <p><u>Low (1 point):</u> Property properly positioned, but overall contribution would be minimal.</p> <p><u>NA (0 points):</u> Would provide no buffer.</p>		

Evaluation Criterion	Rating	Point Score	Weighted Score
<p>VI. Access to Streams, Rivers, Public Lands and Dispersed Recreation Opportunities</p> <p><i>Factors:</i></p> <p><i>Existing access</i> <i>Need for access</i> <i>Desirability</i> <i>Sensitivity of resource</i> <i>Maintenance</i></p> <p>Region Weighting Factor: For this Open Space Value multiply the Point Score by the Weighting Factor shown for the Region in which this Project is located:</p> <p>Ag. and Ranching [x2] Development Corr. [x3] Upland Watershed [x1]</p>	<p><u>High (4 points):</u> Acquisition would permit or significantly improve access to area of high desirability and suitability for dispersed-recreational uses. Negative consequences to sensitive lands or environments non-existent, or easily mitigated. On primary travel route, close to a community center, sufficient parking would be available. Proposed or existing dispersed-recreational use compatible with uses on surrounding properties, and not threatened by potential uses on adjacent lands that would diminish its value. Necessary improvements / maintenance / monitoring projected to be reasonable, within budget.</p> <p><u>Med (2 points):</u> Access already exists but would be improved or enhanced. Target use area less desirable, less utilized. Land suitable but less durable, considerable care / expense required to avoid impacts to sensitive lands/ environments. Located on secondary travel route, some distance from a community center, sufficient parking would be available. More difficult to monitor.</p> <p><u>Low (1 point):</u> Adequate access already exists. Area is not desirable. Development of access would be overly expensive. Remote location. Environmental or maintenance costs would be prohibitively high. Dispersed recreation use problematic given sensitivity of land. Other open space values would be materially compromised by dispersed-recreational use.</p> <p><u>NA (0 points):</u> Would provide no access. Recreational uses are not available.</p>		

Additional Criteria and Considerations

A. Factors Favoring Land Protection, including but not limited to:

- Discounts, other funding, partnerships, land donation, and/or endowment contributions favorably reduce the County's portion of the purchase cost.
- Land or development rights acquisition is supported by the intent and purposes of applicable Eagle County Master Plan documents.
- Development of the property, to a degree that open space values would be significantly compromised, is imminent.
- The subject property is the only remaining, or one of a very few remaining, opportunities to protect open space of its kind
- Preservation would provide unique educational opportunities
- The project sets positive precedent for open space preservation values and objectives, and may motivate other landowners to consider preservation alternatives.
- There is wide-spread community support for the project.
- The project has significant benefit on a regional or state-wide basis.
- The property is not negatively encumbered by mineral rights, rights of way or easements.
- The long term cost of maintaining and/or monitoring the land is expected to be reasonably low.

B. Factors Weighing Against Land Protection, including but not limited to:

- The cost to the County is not reasonable.
- Land or development rights acquisition would be in conflict with the intent and purposes of applicable Eagle County Master Plan documents.
- There is not an urgent need for preservation at this time, as development that would result in open space values being significantly compromised is improbable.
- The property is significantly burdened by environmental hazards (chemicals) or other waste or refuse.
- There is significant public opposition to the transaction.
- Mineral rights, rights of way or easements place the property at risk for future resource extraction or other improvements that would diminish open space values.
- The project sets negative precedent relative to open space preservation initiatives and values.
- The long term cost of maintaining and/or monitoring the land is expected to be unreasonably high.

Summary of Criteria-Weighted Regions

For Lands within Historic Agriculture and Ranching Use Areas:

<u>Criteria and weight factor</u>	<u>Points</u>		
	<u>High</u>	<u>Med</u>	<u>Low</u>
Regional Heritage, Agriculture [x3]	12	6	3
Scenic Landscapes and Vistas [x3]	12	6	3
Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat [x3]	12	6	3
Sensitive Lands and Environments [x3]	12	6	3
Access, Dispersed Recreation [x2]	8	4	2
Physical and Visual Buffers [x1]	4	2	1

For Lands within Development Corridors:

<u>Criteria and weight factor</u>	<u>Points</u>		
	<u>High</u>	<u>Med</u>	<u>Low</u>
Scenic Landscapes and Vistas [x3]	12	6	3
Regional Heritage, Agriculture [x3]	12	6	3
Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat [x3]	12	6	3
Physical and Visual Buffers [x3]	12	6	3
Sensitive Lands and Environments [x3]	12	6	3
Access, Dispersed Recreation [x3]	12	6	3

For Lands within Upland Watersheds:

<u>Criteria and weight factor</u>	<u>Points</u>		
	<u>High</u>	<u>Med</u>	<u>Low</u>
Sensitive Lands and Environments [x3]	12	6	3
Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat [x3]	12	6	3
Scenic Landscapes and Vistas [x2]	8	4	2
Regional Heritage, Agriculture [x2]	8	4	2
Physical and Visual Buffers [x1]	4	2	1
Access, Dispersed Recreation [x1]	4	2	1