Telluride Valley Floor Open Space Management Plan

August 2009
Amended June ___, 2011

Prepared by—

Town of Telluride

with

ERO Resources Corporation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Valley Floor property is an important ecological resource, recreational amenity, and scenic gateway to the Town of Telluride. The 560-acre property contains diverse vegetation communities, wildlife habitat, and cultural and historical resources along a three-mile reach of the San Miguel River. The trails and paths on the property are a valued recreational resource, providing access to a unique natural area that defines the Telluride Valley.

The purpose of this Telluride Valley Floor Open Space Management Plan (Plan) is to provide philosophical and policy guidance for the Town's management of natural resources and public recreation on the property. Implementation of this plan will emphasize an adaptive management approach that uses monitoring, evaluation, and feedback to refine and improve management actions and decisions over time.

The property is classified into three management zones that vary in character, use, and environmental sensitivity. These management zone classifications establish the overall management emphasis, public use policies, and resource management priorities:

- **Zone 1 – Low Impact Recreation Area:** Disturbed or altered areas with low environmental sensitivity where recreational uses are highly suitable.
- **Zone 2 – Conservation Area:** Diverse habitat areas with moderate to high environmental sensitivity, where limited recreational uses should consider resource impacts.
- **Zone 3 – Habitat Protection Area:** Undisturbed habitat areas with the highest environmental sensitivity, where limited recreational uses should be carefully considered to minimize impacts.

This Plan articulates an overall management approach and detailed management policies on several topics, including the following:

- **Wildlife:** The Town will emphasize the protection of sensitive wildlife habitat areas while seeking to provide a diverse and functional mosaic of habitat for a variety of wildlife species. While a healthy and sustainable elk presence is valued, ongoing monitoring of population dynamics and habitat impacts will be used to identify long-term trends and potential management issues. ~~The Town will work to contain the existing prairie dog population to its present location, minimizing dispersal into other areas.~~ The Town will minimize disturbances to, and emphasize prairie dog conservation of, the colony east of Boomerang Road, while allowing natural dispersal in other areas. As prairie dogs naturally disperse into other areas, the Town will not compromise other management priorities (such as irrigation or recreational use) to specifically accommodate prairie dogs.

- **Recreational Uses:** The Town will develop and implement a Trails Plan that provides recreational access and opportunities that are compatible with conservation values and long-term restoration. Compatible winter recreational uses and water-based uses will be permitted in a manner that minimizes impacts to wildlife, sensitive vegetation, and wildlife movement corridors.

- **Restoration and Tailings:** The Town will emphasize the planning and implementation of large-scale San Miguel River and tailings remediation efforts, while also completing small-scale projects as resources are available. The Town will work with the State of Colorado and relevant parties to develop and implement a tailings remediation plan that also protects and enhances wildlife, habitat, recreational, and aesthetic values.
- **Monitoring:** The Town will use ongoing monitoring to document long-term trends and resource responses to management actions.

This Plan also provides specific guidance for roads, fencing, utilities, cultural and historic resources, noxious weeds, water rights and irrigation, temporary festival uses, and educational uses and activities.

MANAGEMENT ZONES

Zone 3: Habitat Protection Area (HPA)

Zone 3 contains the property's most environmentally sensitive areas. Accordingly, the management approach for the zone is to emphasize conservation and preservation, and to maintain and protect ecological integrity. Off-trail human use of all types will be actively discouraged in these areas, and major restoration efforts are not contemplated in the short term given the land's present natural condition. This zone also includes a Gunnison's prairie dog colony, many portions of identified Canada lynx habitat, and major vegetated habitat corridors. Although mostly a natural area, this zone does contain a few significant cultural and historic resources that should be maintained, and includes small areas of low or medium environmental sensitivity.

The Habitat Protection Area Zone 3 will receive the highest degree of protection from public use and other disturbances, and such disturbances should be minimized to the greatest extent possible. However, this does not mean that specific disturbances (such as trails or restoration efforts) should be absolutely prohibited. Instead, any disturbances in this zone must be carefully planned and managed to minimize short- and long-term impacts to the specific ecological values and functions that make those areas important.

Management Approach

The management approach for the Habitat Protection Areas Zone 3 is to protect areas of high environmental sensitivity while permitting limited recreational uses and restoration where suitable.

Management Policies

- Permit the following recreational uses:
    a. Walking, running, and hiking; in areas of high environmental sensitivity, such uses are encouraged to occur on designated trails only
    b. Bicycling on designated trails only
    c. Limited cross-country skiing on areas of low and medium environmental sensitivity, with particular attention given to avoiding habitat fragmentation and movement corridors per an approved operational plan. Carefully consider and evaluate crossings of any areas of high environmental sensitivity, and ensure short- and long-term impacts to the specific ecological values and functions are minimized.
- Actively discourage off-trail use and visitation, including on-ground, off-trail use associated with fishing. Consider prohibiting all off-trail use if unacceptable impacts occur.
- Allow limited off-trail use for hang/paraglider landing on the northern portion of the prairie dog colony (proximate to the gate)
- Utilize small directional signs informing users to stay on trails, and clearly identify HPAs at major trailheads
- Maintain the existing River Trail, including the north and south branches west of Prospect Creek. In the short term, consider constructing or modifying minor stream

crossings to encourage users to stay on the trail, thereby minimizing off-trail impacts, particularly at the Prospect Creek crossing/Missouri Ditch location.

- Consider the adequacy of the existing River Trail as part of the Trails Plan for the property. Any major rerouting, permanent closure, or replacement of the River Trail should be based on Trails Plan recommendation.

- Carefully consider major restoration efforts, weighing ecological benefits against impacts
- ~~Follow the Containment approach for~~ Emphasize conservation of prairie dogs ~~management~~ pursuant to the *Gunnison's Prairie Dog* section
- Continue irrigation practices to recharge and improve wetlands functioning
- Carefully consider and limit visitation by environmental education groups (see *Environmental and Cultural Education/Special Activities Permitting Process*)
- Perform seasonal closures as needed to protect specific wildlife or habitats (such as elk calving areas or raptor nests) and to prevent soil erosion
- Preserve and protect the Missouri Ditch and Race Track pursuant to the *Cultural and Historic Resources* section
- Monitor impacts resulting from recreational use, particularly in areas of high environmental sensitivity and wildlife habitat and movement corridors; evaluate and adjust management policies and strategies as needed

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT TOPICS

GUNNISON'S PRAIRIE DOG

See new Section.
Delete "23-acre" text in Maps

~~The property is home to a 23-acre colony of Gunnison's prairie dog, which appears to be a healthy viable population with a relatively high density of burrows. The species is relatively new to the property, having arrived approximately 4 years ago. The species likely originated from the existing colony on the grassy slopes to the north of the property, across the Spur. If left unchecked by human management or natural controls, the prairie dog population could expand to the west, colonizing another approximately 40 acres of available grassland habitat on the property. Overpopulated colonies can have adverse effects on the composition and quality of vegetation by stimulating growth of nonnative annuals such as cheatgrass.~~

~~In February 2008, the USFWS listed Gunnison's prairie dog in the northeastern/montane portions of its range as a candidate for listing as threatened or endangered. According to the USFWS, prairie dogs within the property are not within the northeastern part of the range and are currently not considered a candidate species. Gunnison's prairie dog is not listed as a state endangered, threatened, or species of concern in Colorado. While future changes in their regulatory status would not preclude any management approach, including extermination, ecological value of the species should be considered before such actions are taken.~~

~~With cooperation from the Town, CDOW is currently studying the 23-acre colony as part of a southern regional study (Southwestern IPA) to determine the genetic makeup, confirm the listing status, and provide information to be incorporated into the statewide conservation plan. The goal of the statewide plan is to implement conservation strategies to facilitate long-term viability and preclude the need for protection under the ESA.~~

~~Management Approach~~

~~The Town will use a "Containment" approach, as described in the Environmental Report, to guide management of Gunnison's prairie dog on the property. This approach emphasizes the containment of the existing prairie dog colony to its present location on the east side of Boomerang Road, minimizing dispersal into other areas. Any new colony will be actively removed. The Containment approach recognizes and balances other conservation and management goals for the Property, including habitat needs for other wildlife species, vegetation and weed management, aesthetics and scenic quality, public recreation, and public sentiment expressed during the educational forums and meetings during the Environmental Report process.~~

~~Management Policies~~

- ~~Emphasize prairie dog conservation within the existing colony by minimizing public access and use, direct flood irrigation, and other disturbances~~
- ~~Contain the existing prairie dog colony to its general present location east of Boomerang Road. Employ management actions as necessary, including barrier fencing or barrier planting along Boomerang Road, strategic flood irrigation to the west of Boomerang Road, and other management techniques to prevent prairie dog dispersal to the west.~~
- ~~Use active measures to relocate or remove new colonies should they begin to establish in other areas~~

- ~~Continue to monitor colony size, expansion, habitat conditions, and responses to other uses, and adaptively manage the colony over time~~
- ~~Continue to work with CDOW and USFWS on ongoing studies to learn about Gunnison's prairie dog management and conservation, and allow the property population to benefit from the conservation of the entire species~~
- ~~Install an interpretative display near Boomerang Road to describe the species, its habitat, and its role in the ecosystem~~

SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT TOPICS

WINTER ACTIVITIES

Winter recreational activities, including Nordic skiing (cross-country) and snowshoeing on groomed and ungroomed trails, can impact wildlife due to snow compaction and wildlife disturbance. The level of impact varies depending on the extent and intensity of activities. In addition to the wildlife disturbance considerations, larger mammals are vulnerable to increased stress during the winter period.

Nordic skiing (and potentially snowshoeing) requires mechanical grooming by vehicles and, therefore, is unique compared to other recreational uses permitted on the property. For this reason, an annual operational plan will be reviewed by the Open Space Commission to manage the grooming activities on the property. The operational plan will identify the season, specific routes, hours of grooming activities, temporary signage, and review the previous season's activities.

Management Approach

Permit compatible winter recreational activities and uses while minimizing impacts to wildlife, sensitive vegetation, and wildlife movement corridors.

Management Policies

- Locate winter trails and routes to avoid areas with sensitive vegetation or movement corridors for carnivores, including Canada lynx; periodic trail crossings (groomed or ungroomed) of sensitive habitats may be appropriate, however such crossings should be kept to a minimum to avoid habitat fragmentation
- Discourage off-trail use in areas of high environmental sensitivity
- Limit grooming for Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, or winter hiking to Zone 1, and portions of Zones 2 and 3, subject to an approved operational plan
- Obtain annual approval by the Open Space Commission for any activity using mechanized grooming
- Prohibit early- and late-season grooming when low snow depths result in direct contact with the ground/vegetation
- Discourage trail grooming through wetlands, particularly willow-dominated wetlands, histosols, or other areas with high sensitivity characteristics; permitted only in individual and limited circumstances
- Prohibit trail grooming through the prairie dog colony east of Boomerang Road
- Conduct grooming activities in a manner that minimizes impacts and disturbances to wildlife and adjacent or nearby properties; minimize grooming at night, focusing such activities during dusk and dawn hours
- Encourage the use of electric and biodiesel vehicles for grooming activities, if feasible
- Provide separate trails for snowshoeing/foot travel and Nordic skiing; determine whether grooming is necessary or desired for snowshoeing/foot travel
- Identify winter routes and winter access policies as part of the overall Trails Plan for the property
- Enact temporary closures during severe winters for wildlife or resource protection as needed
- Monitor changes in vegetation along groomed trail routes to evaluate actual impacts and improve long-term conservation and management

WATER RIGHTS AND IRRIGATION

The Town acquired significant senior water rights with the property, which are summarized and described in the Environmental Report in Table 2-11. The Town's interest in a water right includes the actual physical water right itself, as well as related interests in the ditches, headgates, pipelines, and ancillary structures that convey the water to its intended beneficial use.

Management Approach

Per Colorado water law, implement water management practices that ensure the rights are maintained, put to beneficial use, and are compatible with management objectives and policies for other resources, including vegetation management, recharging and improving wetland functioning noxious weed control, prairie dog management, recreational use, and cultural and historic resources.

Management Policies

- Perform a legal review of water rights to ensure the rights are maintained and are put to beneficial use
- Continue to exercise the water rights to preserve their historic use and value
- Continue to restore and maintain irrigation system's functionality of on-site and off-site facilities
- Explore and identify alternative "beneficial use" for the water rights
- Continue irrigating most areas where irrigation infrastructure exists to retain existing vegetation communities and recharge wetlands
- Use the Missouri Ditch to supply water to the wetland area in Zone 3; repair and maintain the ditch, and modify the River Trail to prevent sheet flooding and subsequent erosion and trail braiding
- Evaluate modifications to the Eider Creek irrigation system to improve health and function of the adjacent wetland community
- Manage problematic beaver activity (such as plugging irrigation diversions or culverts) on a case-by-case basis, balancing ecological processes against infrastructure management and flood control needs; utilize nonintrusive management first, and if necessary, emphasize relocation of beaver over removal or extermination
- Modify irrigation practices over time, as necessary, to be compatible with other management objectives and policies for other resources
- Preserve the irrigation ditches that possess historic significance, although the use or management thereof may be modified over time
- Intermittently irrigate the prairie dog colony east of Boomerang Road consistent with the *Gunnison's Prairie Dog section*

MONITORING

The natural and physical characteristics of the property are a dynamic system, always changing in response to human interaction and natural forces. While the Environmental Report provides a thorough baseline understanding of many of the resources, it is only a snapshot in time from which initial management decisions can be made. Little is known about some of the resources on the property, other resources are constantly changing, and others are likely to change in response to recreational use, restoration, or management activities. Monitoring provides an opportunity to fill data gaps, track long-term trends, evaluate management actions, and identify management problems before resource damage occurs. Ongoing monitoring is a key component of the Town's adaptive approach to management of the property (described above under *Adaptive Management Philosophy*).

Management Approach

As part of an Adaptive Management Approach, the Town will use ongoing and situation-specific monitoring to document long-term trends on the property and resource responses to management actions. A variety of techniques will be used to monitor resources, ranging from ground water levels to wildlife dynamics and recreational use. Based on the results of monitoring, the Town will routinely adapt management policies and actions based on an improved understanding of the resources, as well as the benefits and consequences of various management actions.

Management Policies

- Develop an integrated Monitoring Plan for the Property
- Initiate the following monitoring activities:
    a. ***Surface water*** – Monitor seasonal San Miguel River flows at the eastern edge of the property and below Mill Creek confluence; as well as flows in Mill and Prospect creeks
    b. ***Ground water*** – Monitor ground water to better understand elevations, fluctuations, and flow patterns. While the number and location of piezometers (monitoring wells) should be established on-site by appropriate experts, general locations may include the wetland and upland areas in the eastern portions of the property, the Mill Creek alluvial fan, and the Prospect Creek alluvial fan (depending on the anticipated location of restoration efforts).
    c. ***Trail and resource conditions*** – Establish photo points at strategic locations throughout the property to document visible changes to resource conditions, trails, or other areas with potential management issues. Recommended locations include the River Trail, existing single-track trails, the prairie dog colony east of Boomerang Road, beaver areas, tailings piles, Prospect Creek trail crossings, existing social trails and river access points, existing weed patches, and general areas with "typical" vegetation condition and structure.
    d. ***Prairie dog activity ~~colony~~*** – Monitor ~~the~~ colony sizes and extent to track the movement, density, and viability of the population consistent with the *Gunnison's Prairie Dog* section
    e. ***Wildlife*** – Conduct surveys, including snow track count surveys, elk surveys, bird counts, and general wildlife observations to better understand trends and responses to management or uses
    f. ***Noxious weeds*** – Map and evaluate noxious weed patches
- Consistent with the Monitoring Plan, identify and prioritize additional routine monitoring that will be conducted over the long term. The specific methods and frequency of monitoring are to be directly related to the resources being monitored. In addition to

those listed above, routine monitoring may also include documentation of resource conditions, recreational uses, and management issues observed by staff.

- Develop a practical strategy to ensure that routine monitoring is completed at regular and appropriate intervals, using open space rangers, volunteers, and outside resources (e.g., public agencies, educational groups, or consultants)
- In addition to the routine monitoring described above, identify and implement specific monitoring to track the results of management actions or programs; specific monitoring may include:
    a. Vegetation establishment following restoration/revegetation
    b. Location-specific weed monitoring (in response to disturbances)
    c. Elk behavior, movement, and foraging
    d. Tailings pile stability and revegetation
    e. Prairie dog population surveys, geographic dispersion, and ground monitoring
    f. Fish surveys
    g. Benthic macroinvertebrate sampling
    h. Trail use and frequency
    i. Trail impact measurements
- Annually evaluate the results of monitoring and refine management strategies (a "feedback loop")
- Integrate both ongoing and specific monitoring programs into the staffing and budgetary priorities for management of the property

Appendix A
Summary of Planned Short and Long Range Activities

New Section to replace current Section in <u>Wildlife Management Topics</u> Chapter

GUNNISON'S PRAIRIE DOG

The type of prairie dog that exists on the Telluride Valley Floor is the Gunnison's prairie dog (*Cynomys gunnisoni*), one of five species of prairie dogs that exist. The *Cynomys* genus is native to North America and dates back more than two million years (Slobodchikoff et al. 2009). The Gunnison's prairie dog occurs in southwestern and southcentral Colorado, northwestern and northcentral New Mexico, northern Arizona, and southeastern Utah. It historically inhabited approximately 24 million acres but currently occurs on less than 500,000 acres, a decline of 98% (USFWS 2008).

The prairie dog activity in the vicinity of Boomerang Road, first detected in 2004, may be an extension of a colony on private lands on the grassy slopes to the north of the property, across the Spur. The origins of the Eider Creek colony are unknown. Prairie dogs on the property may have been lethally controlled under previous ownership.

Gunnison's prairie dogs occur in high desert and montane grasslands, in habitat types such as montane meadows, hillsides, broad alluvial valleys, floodplains, and playas. This species is found at elevations ranging from 6,000-10,000 feet, although they have been recorded at altitudes as high as 12,000 feet. Gunnison's occur in areas containing deep soils, flat slopes, and little rock cover. The association with deeper soils is likely related to the need for prairie dogs to establish hibernation areas below the frost line, and that flat slope preference may be related to the need for intraspecific Gunnison's prairie dog alarm calls to carry farther. Gunnison's tolerate the presence of shrubs to some degree, although they are also closely associated with semiarid grasslands.

Prairie dogs are burrowing rodents within the squirrel family. Their underground burrow networks can be simple or extensive, with some burrows stretching for more than 100 feet horizontally and containing multiple entrances. They are gregarious animals that employ a complex communication system vital for warning of predators, with distinct calls for people, predatory mammals, and avian predators (Slobodchikoff et al. 2009). Their diet is vegetation, including leaves, stems, seeds, and roots. Prairie dogs live in close-knit family groups called coteries; aggregations of which comprise colonies. Gunnison's prairie dogs are highly territorial.

This species reproduces very slowly for a small mammal: adult female Gunnison's prairie dogs have just one litter per year of an average of 3.77 pups (Hoogland 2001). Adult females are receptive to breeding for just a few hours on one day per year; of these females, not all will produce a litter. *Id*. Most Gunnison's prairie dogs do not survive their first year. *Id*. Gunnison's prairie dogs hibernate in the fall and winter months. In the Telluride area, they enter torpor (a form of hibernation) generally in September and emerge in March or April.

The prairie dog colonies on the Telluride Valley Floor fit into state and national conservation contexts. The Gunnison's prairie dog warrants Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and is currently a formal candidate awaiting ESA protection (USFWS 2008). FWS has agreed to resolve the ESA status of this species by September 2016 (USFWS and WildEarth Guardians 2011). The Colorado Division of Wildlife has adopted a conservation strategy for the Gunnison's and white-tailed prairie dogs, which

advocates maintenance of viable populations of prairie dogs and prairie dog-associated wildlife (Seglund and Schnurr 2010).

Several factors are responsible for the imperilment of Gunnison's prairie dogs: habitat destruction due to urban sprawl and oil and gas development; lethal control through shooting and poisoning; and sylvatic plague (Seglund and Schnurr 2010). Most of the remaining populations are small and fragmented, particularly at high elevations. Small, isolated populations can be more vulnerable to extirpation, but interconnected populations of prairie dogs can also be quickly eliminated, by sylvatic plague (Johnson et al. 2011).

The imperilment of Gunnison's prairie dogs has broad implications, given the keystone or strongly interactive role of this species. This species creates habitat and serves as prey for a variety of associated wildlife. Altogether, approximately 150 vertebrate species benefit from prairie dog colonies. Raptors, such as golden eagles and ferruginous hawks, feed on prairie dogs; mammalian carnivores, such as badgers, coyotes, kit foxes, and the endangered black-footed ferret also prey on prairie dogs; a suite of snakes, turtles, salamanders, frogs, and toads use prairie dog burrows as refuges; small mammals, such as ground squirrels, grasshopper mice, cottontails, and jackrabbits also use prairie dog burrows; as does the burrowing owl, which breeds and raises its young in burrows.

With cooperation from the Town, CDOW is currently studying the Gunnison's prairie dog on the property as part of a southern regional study (Southwestern IPA) to determine the genetic makeup, confirm the listing status, and provide information to be incorporated into the statewide conservation plan. The goal of the statewide plan is to implement conservation strategies to facilitate long-term viability.

References

Hoogland, John L. 2001. Black-tailed, Gunnison's, and Utah prairie dogs reproduce slowly. Journal of Mammalogy 82(4):917-927.

Johnson, T.L, Cully, J.F., Collinge, S.K., Ray, C., Frey, C.M., and B.K. Sandercock. 2011. Spread of plague among black-tailed prairie dogs is associated with colony spatial characteristics. Journal of Wildlife Management 75(2):357-368.

Seglund, A.E. and P.M Schnurr. 2010. Colorado Gunnison's and white-tailed prairie dog conservation strategy. Colorado Division of Wildlife, Denver, Colorado, USA.

Slobodchikoff, C.N., Perla, B.S., and J.L. Verdolin. 2009. Prairie Dogs: communication and community in an animal society. Harvard Univ. Press.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2008. 12-month finding on a petition to list the Gunnison's prairie dog under the Endangered Species Act. Dated February 5, 2008.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and WildEarth Guardians. 2011. Settlement agreement filed in Case No. 1:10-mc-00377-EGS, submitted to the court on May 10, 2011.

Management Approach

The Town will use a "Natural Dispersal" approach, as described in the Environmental Report, to guide management of Gunnison's prairie dogs on the property. This approach seeks to minimize disturbances to the colony east of Boomerang Road while allowing natural dispersal in other areas on the Valley Floor. Prairie dog conservation within the colony east of Boomerang Road will be emphasized. The Town will not actively facilitate dispersal. As dispersal occurs, management activities or uses, such as habitat needs for other wildlife species, vegetation and weed management, aesthetics and scenic quality, and public recreation, will not be changed or curtailed in areas outside of the conservation focus area. Additionally, the Town may take steps to reduce conflict with non-open space areas, such as the use of visual barriers (e.g., fences or dense vegetation), to discourage prairie dog ingress into the Town of Telluride. This approach will include monitoring prairie dog activity in order to adaptively manage over time. The Natural Dispersal approach recognizes the importance and significance of prairie dogs and prioritizes their management in the area east of Boomerang Road, which will be a focal site for prairie dog conservation and education efforts.

Management Policies

- Emphasize prairie dog conservation east of Boomerang Road by minimizing activities that will harm the prairie dogs.
    - Install an interpretative display near Boomerang Road to describe the species, its habitat, and its role in the ecosystem.
    - Design and implement irrigation east of Boomerang Road in a manner that supports the overall health of the colony, avoids lethal effects to the prairie dogs, and benefits the colony. Monitor groundwater level to insure irrigation is not rendering the area unsuitable for prairie dog occupancy.
    - Conduct revegetation efforts east of Boomerang Road to benefit prairie dogs and restore a native plant community. Work in conjunction with experts to develop a site-specific revegetation plan using intermittent irrigation, including the potential use of above ground sprinkler systems, and following recommendations of native grasses and forbs outlined in the Native Plant Revegetation Guide for Colorado (1998). Control of invasive non-native plants will be pursuant to the policies set forth in the weed management section.
    - If the colony east of Boomerang Road disappears (e.g. from plague), the Town may designate another prairie dog colony on the Valley Floor as a conservation focus and allow natural recolonization of prairie dogs. In the event natural recolonization does not occur, the Town may reintroduce prairie dogs consistent with State and Federal permitting processes while the burrows remain viable on the property.
- Prairie dogs beyond the conservation area. Allow, but do not actively facilitate, the natural dispersion of the species on the Property. Outside of the colony east of Boomerang Road (or any other designated conservation focus area), other management activities such as trails, winter use, and irrigation will not be curtailed.
- Lethal control. The Town will not allow or conduct poisoning, shooting, lethal trapping, or any other means of intentional lethal control of prairie dogs, including directed irrigation at, and manipulation of, burrows. Outside of the conservation area described above, prairie dogs could experience unintentional adverse impacts through the exercising of other management objectives such as flood irrigation.
- Prairie dog relocation. Explore opportunities to relocate prairie dogs from the Valley Floor to private properties. Any such relocation shall be performed in accordance with humane standards recommended by practictioners and experts and should be to land

where the prairie dogs will be strictly protected. This relocation should be conducted to serve the broader purpose of Gunnison's prairie dog conservation but should not undermine the viability of prairie dogs on the Valley Floor (especially the colony east of Boomerang Road or another colony designated as a priority for conservation).

- Reducing conflict. Minimize dispersion onto adjacent, urbanized areas off the Valley Floor:
    - Reverse Dispersal Translocation on the property will be employed, as appropriate, to prevent potential conflicts with adjacent landowners.
    - Erect a barrier fence or plant dense vegetation along the northeastern boundary property line (from Colorado Ave. south to the wetlands, along the Pearl Property fence line).
    - Plant willows and other vegetation along, or proximate to, northern property lines.
    - The presence of prairie dogs within the urbanized portion of Telluride, or Town rights-of-way, will be managed by the Town through policies generated by the Ecology Commission.
- Increase the presence of natural predators through the erection of species appropriate raptor poles. When erecting such poles, use natural materials, such as relocated standing dead trees, or recycled telephone poles present on the property. This will be done in consultation with wildlife experts and the local hang-gliding and paragliding community.
- Monitoring. Continue to monitor the species and adaptively manage the colony over time. As part of the overall monitoring plan for the property (see *Monitoring Plan* section) include:
    - overall health
    - population
    - areas of activity
    - habitat conditions and food supply
    - soil conditions
    - ground water level in the Boomerang colony
    - revegetation efforts
    - responses to, and impacts on, other uses
- Encourage scientific research
    - Continue to work with CDOW and USFWS on ongoing studies to learn about Gunnison's prairie dog management and conservation, and allow the property population to benefit from the conservation of the entire species.
    - Invite researchers to conduct non-invasive studies (genetic, communication, behavior, etc.) on the Valley Floor prairie dogs in order to benefit the local community's knowledge of prairie dogs on the Valley Floor, as well as to add to scientific understanding of prairie dogs more generally.
- Sylvatic Plague. In the event of any prairie dog die-off potentially associated with sylvatic plague:
    - The San Miguel Department of Health and Human Services and the Town shall notify the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and shall cooperate with these agencies in obtaining samples for epidemiological evaluation.
    - If plague is confirmed, the County's Health and Human Services Department, in cooperation with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Town, shall implement a program to dust the affected area for fleas to eliminate or control the outbreak and shall provide public notice according to

the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's guidelines. Affected trails and trailheads will be signed, and trails and portions of the property may be temporarily closed in the event of outbreak.

- If plague is suspected, but not yet confirmed, the Town shall implement a public awareness program, sign affected trails and trailheads, and potentially close trails and portions of the property.
- In the case of a prairie dog die-off on the property due to plague or other causes, the Town will survey the site to assess ecological conditions and develop a weed control and revegetation program in anticipation of natural recolonization.