

APPENDIX 1

Project Report

on research entitled

**Public Attitudes Toward Land Use and
Wildlife in La Plata County**

by

Paul C. Layden, Research Assistant

Michael J. Manfredo, Unit Leader

Human Dimensions in Natural Resources Unit
College of Natural Resources
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523

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Introduction

La Plata County is currently undergoing rapid population growth. It is estimated that the county increased in population by 14% from 1990 to 1994, growing from 32,284 to 36,887 people. The projected population by the year 2000 is 42,549, a 32% increase from 1990 (Colorado Department of Local Affairs, 1995). Signs of growth from the second quarter of 1994 to the second quarter of 1995 included a 10% increase in overall employment, an 18% increase in retail sales, and a 5% increase in residential electric customers (Fort Lewis College, School of Business Administration, 1995).

With this increased growth, comes pressure to develop more land and natural resources throughout the county. New developments are geared toward single family units on larger lots which require larger parcels of land to house fewer people, versus multi-family units which require smaller parcels of land to house more people. As this development expands, it can adversely impact wildlife and wildlife habitat (Bailey, 1984) and can limit the ability of managers to manage wildlife.

Because of this rapid growth, La Plata County officials (county commissioners, planning commissioners, and planners) initiated a long range planning process in 1995. At the same time, Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) officials are facing increasing numbers of wildlife-human conflicts as more humans share the land with the wildlife.

This study was requested by La Plata County and CDOW officials to assist in land use planning efforts. The study was directed toward identifying the publics' general philosophical orientations toward land use options. This study placed special focus on determining the importance of wildlife as a planning consideration. To this end, the study had six objectives:

- Determine the attitudes of La Plata County residents toward land use and development concerns for the county;
- Examine opinions regarding future emphasis on sectors of the La Plata County economy.
- Determine residents' opinions regarding level of problems and current conditions of specific quality of life attributes in La Plata County;
- Measure the level of support or opposition of residents to selected issues which are relevant to the land use planning process in La Plata County;
- Examine perceptions of level of responsibility of various entities for certain wildlife/human conflicts in La Plata County; and
- Ascertain wildlife-associated recreation participation, land ownership status, and socioeconomic status of La Plata County residents.

Methods

The study population consisted of two randomly sampled strata: those who lived in Durango and those who lived outside Durango within La Plata County. Study participants were first contacted

by telephone in July and August, 1995 and asked if they would like to receive a mail survey to complete and return. Surveys were collected throughout September and October, 1995. Random digit telephone numbers were obtained from Survey Sampling Incorporated, Fairfield, Connecticut. As part of the telephone contact, a brief non-response check was done. This non-response check was done to see whether respondents and non-respondents held similar beliefs about issues addressed in the mail survey. The initial telephone contact and non-response check was conducted by trained interviewers at the Telephone Survey Lab of the Human Dimensions in Natural Resources Unit at Colorado State University.

Data analysis was done with *SPSS/PC+® 5.0*, (Norusis, 1992) and *SPSS® for Windows™ 6.0* (Norusis, 1993). For each strata, inferential statistics were used to describe: attitudes toward land use and development concerns for La Plata County; opinions toward future emphasis on sectors of the economy; opinions regarding perceived level of problems and conditions of community characteristics; level of support for certain planning issues; perceptions of responsibility for wildlife-human conflicts; wildlife-associated recreation participation; land ownership status; and socioeconomic status. T-tests were used to compare respondents in Durango to those outside Durango. Multiple analysis of variance was used to determine if mean scores for development and wildlife belief indices were different across strata. Finally, correlational analysis was used to determine relationships among the belief indices and recreation participation, land ownership status, socioeconomic status, years in Colorado, and perception of responsibility for human-wildlife conflicts.

Survey Response

From the initial telephone contact, 1,204 people agreed to return the mail-back questionnaire: 526 from Durango and 678 from the rest of the county. Overall, 2.9% of the surveys were undeliverable, resulting in an actual mailing of 1,169 surveys. A total of 825 surveys were returned for an overall response rate of 70.6% which provided estimates that were in the range of $\pm 5\%$ at the 95% confidence interval.

Strata	Number Mailed	Number Undeliverable	Percent Undeliverable	Actual Mailing	Number Returned	Response Rate
Durango	526	13	2.5%	513	368	71.7%
Rest of County	678	22	3.2%	656	457	69.7%
Total	1204	35	2.9%	1169	825	70.6%

Due to the nature of the sampling scheme, generalizations from this data can only be made about three groups: La Plata County residents who reside in Durango, county residents who reside outside Durango, and the entire populace of La Plata County. Separate generalizations cannot be made about other specific groups within the county, such as hunters, senior citizens, or farmers for example, because separate random and representative samples of these groups were not

drawn. However, these groups are represented in our sample *proportional* to how they exist in the county population.

It should be noted that differences are apparent between our sample's characteristics and characteristics of La Plata County residents as described in the 1990 U.S. Census (Table 1). Compared to census data, our sample had a higher proportion of middle-aged, higher educated, and higher income residents.

Results of the telephone non-response check indicated that non-respondents outside Durango did not differ from respondents outside Durango. However, for the Durango stratum, non-respondents differed statistically from respondents. Non-respondents in Durango were more likely to agree (65%) than respondents (52%) that local government should not interfere with what a person wants to do on their own land. Therefore, using the telephone sample as the best estimate of the population, mail survey respondents in Durango were weighted differently to reflect this bias when making comparisons between the strata on the mail survey data.

In order to make comparisons between the two strata, respondents inside Durango were over-sampled (54% in Durango vs. 46% outside Durango). Data from the 1990 census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993) indicated that La Plata County had 39% of its population in Durango and 61% outside Durango. Consequently, weights were applied to the strata when making county-wide estimates to correct for this over-sampling.

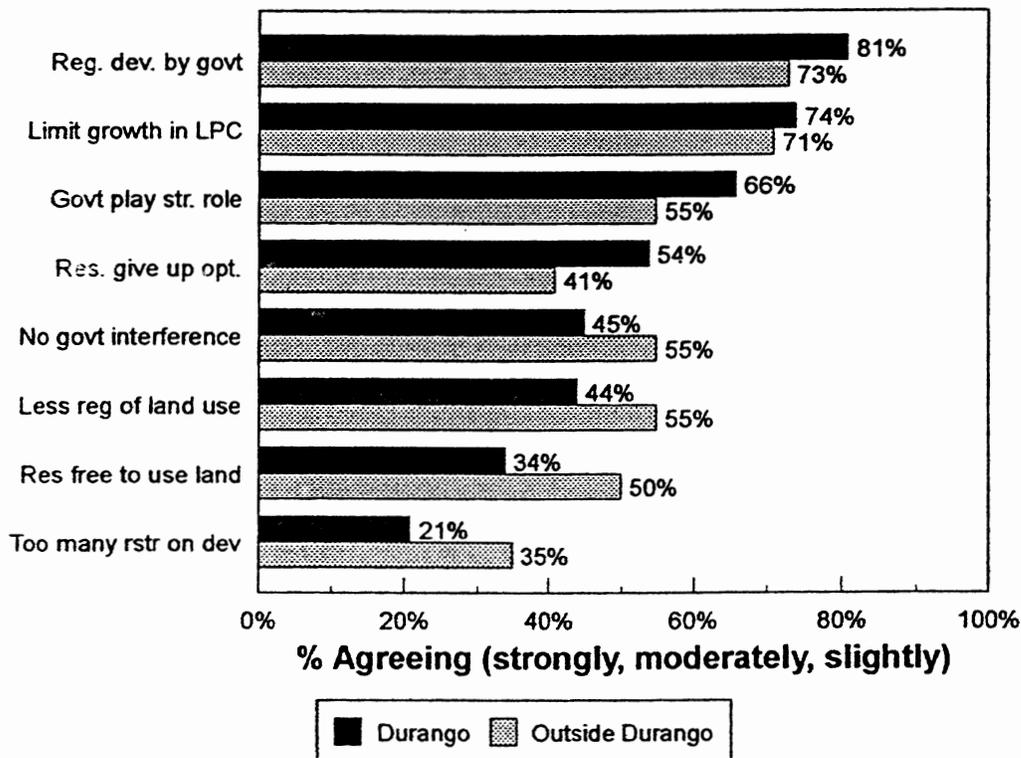
Attitudes Toward Local Government Regulation of Land Use

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- Development in La Plata County needs to be regulated by local government.
- Growth should be limited in La Plata County.
- Local government should play a strong role in regulating uses of land in La Plata County.
- La Plata County residents should give up some land use options on their property for the good of the community.
- Local government in La Plata County should not interfere with what a person wants to do on their own land.
- There should be less local government regulation of land uses on private property in La Plata County.
- La Plata County residents should be free to do whatever they want to with the land they own.
- Currently there are too many restrictions on development in La Plata County.

Attitudes Toward Local Government Regulation of Land Use

Belief Statement



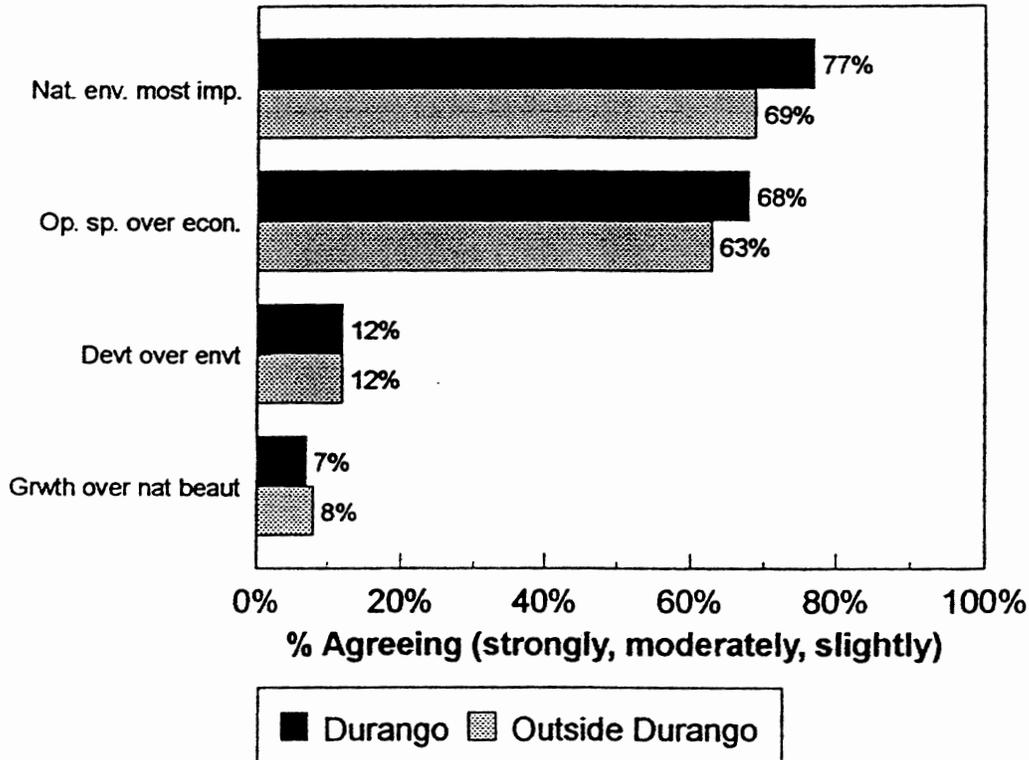
Overall, respondents supported local government regulation of growth and development. However, respondents were divided on whether local government should regulate what an individual wants to do on their own land. Those outside Durango were less supportive of such regulation than respondents in Durango (see Table 3 for data).

Attitudes Toward Importance of the Natural Environment

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- Preserving the quality of the natural environment is the most important priority in La Plata County.
- Open space in La Plata County should remain intact regardless of the economic consequences.
- Development in La Plata County should take place regardless of the environmental consequences.
- Growth should take precedence over preserving the natural beauty of La Plata County.

Attitudes Toward Importance of Natural Environment Belief Statement

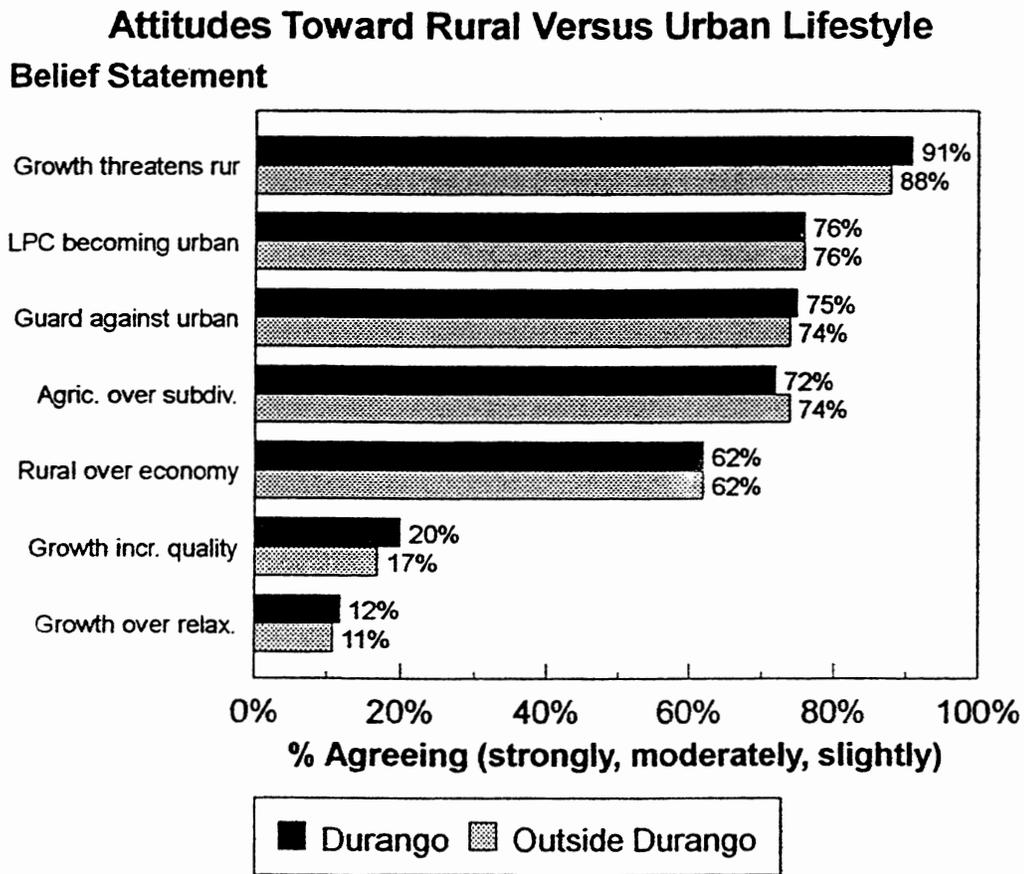


Between two-thirds and three-fourths (63% to 77%) of respondents felt that open space and the natural environment are very important to the overall character of La Plata County. Similarly, respondents felt that development should not take place regardless of the environmental consequences (12%) or that growth should take precedence over the preserving the natural beauty (7% to 8%) of La Plata County (see Table 3 for data).

Attitudes Toward Rural Versus Urban Lifestyle

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- The current rate of growth threatens the rural way of life in La Plata County.
- One of my biggest concerns is that La Plata County is becoming too urbanized.
- La Plata County should guard against adopting an urban lifestyle.
- The prime agricultural lands of La Plata County should stay agricultural despite pressures to subdivide and develop them.
- The rural way of life in La Plata County should be preserved in spite of the economic consequences.
- Increased growth brings a better quality of life.
- Growth should take precedence over preserving the relaxed lifestyle of La Plata County.



Overall, the rural character of La Plata County was quite important to respondents, with widespread concern that growth threatens this rural character. Respondents also valued the agricultural heritage of the county, with nearly three-fourths agreeing that prime agricultural lands stay agricultural despite pressures to subdivide and develop them (see Table 3 for data).

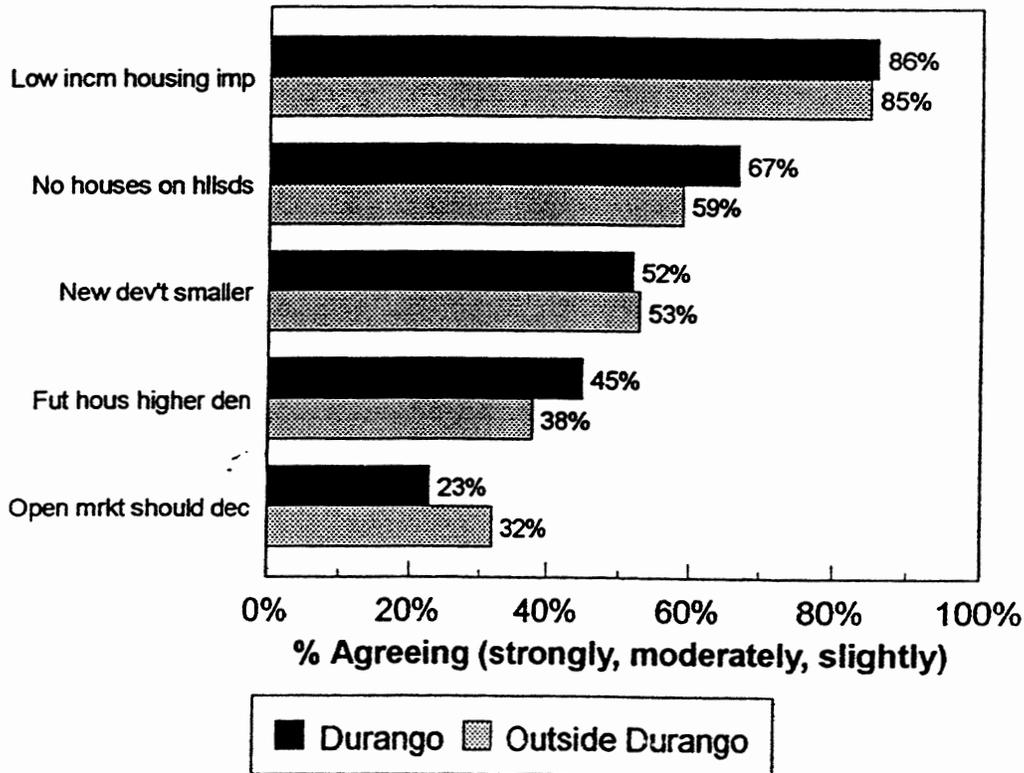
Attitudes Toward Residential Development Issues

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- Availability of low income housing is important for residents of La Plata County.
- Housing developments should be discouraged from being located on ridges or hillsides in La Plata County.
- New housing developments should be smaller than current housing developments in La Plata County.
- Future housing developments in La Plata County should be of higher density to minimize sprawl.
- The open market should decide where development takes place in La Plata County.

Attitudes Toward Residential Development Issues

Belief Statement

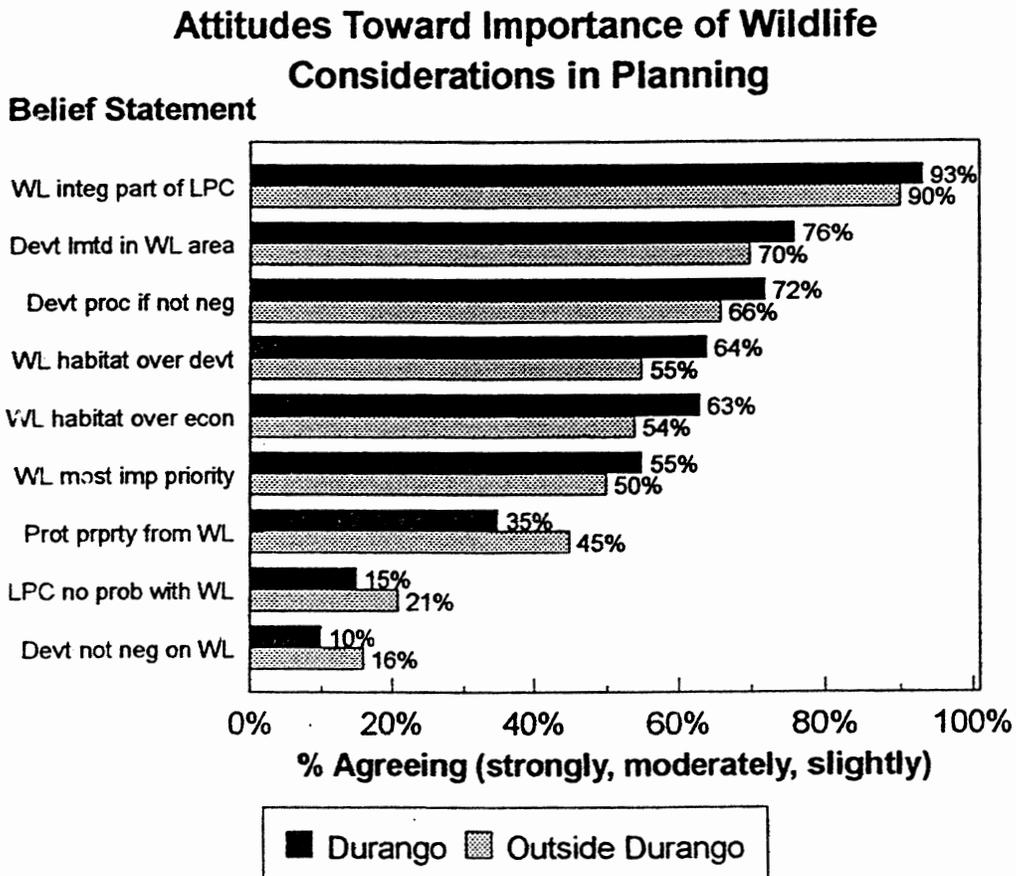


The vast majority of respondents agreed that the availability of low income housing is important in La Plata County. Between one-half and two-thirds felt housing developments on ridges or hillsides should be discouraged and one-half of respondents felt new housing developments should be smaller. Higher density housing developments were not widely agreed upon. A strong majority disagreed that the open market should decide where development occurs in the county (see Table 3 for data).

Attitudes Toward the Importance of Wildlife Considerations in Planning

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- Wildlife are an integral part of La Plata County and need to be taken into account when making land use decisions.
- Development should be severely limited in areas where wildlife live in La Plata County.
- Development in La Plata County should proceed only if it does not cause negative impacts on wildlife.
- Protecting wildlife habitat is more important than letting development occur in La Plata County.
- Wildlife habitat in La Plata County should be protected regardless of the economic consequences.
- Providing for wildlife and their needs is the most important priority for land use in La Plata County.
- Private property needs to be protected from wildlife impacts in La Plata County.
- La Plata County currently has no problems with wildlife.
- Development in La Plata County does not negatively affect wildlife.



Respondents agreed that wildlife is an important part of La Plata County. They also agreed that La Plata County currently has problems with wildlife and their habitat should be protected from development pressures. About one-half felt that providing for wildlife and their needs was the most important priority for land use in the county (see Table 4 for data).

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TRIBAL RELATIONS

La Plata County includes approximately 176,000 acres of Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Tribal lands located in the southern portion of the County. Recognized as sovereign nations by the Federal government in the late 1800s, the regulatory function of La Plata County government does not apply to tribal lands. None-the-less, issues that transcend political boundaries require a degree of interaction and cooperation. This interaction has led to a number of formal and informal agreements between tribal and non-tribal interests including the following:

Law Enforcement: The County often works with the Southern Ute Police Department (SUPD). If the SUPD makes a traffic stop or otherwise are involved in an incident that is not handled through tribal or federal court, it will often come to the County for prosecution. The County will call SUPD officers as witnesses, and they provide incident reports to us in these cases. The chief of SUPD is involved in some of La Plata County's law enforcement meetings and interdepartmental protocols. The County also has an intergovernmental agreement concerning the rental of bed space at the Southern Ute Detention Facility which enables the County to rent up to 20 beds to house County prisoners.

Transportation: An agreement with Southern Ute Community Action Programs, Inc, (SUCAP) provides County matching funds for a fixed-route transit system between Ignacio and Durango. A number of road maintenance agreements are also in place.

Taxing and Finance: The Tribal Impact Fund Agreement--a fund established to mitigate the tax losses that result when a tribe reacquires real or personal property interests on trust lands. In addition, the tribal payment-in-lieu of taxes (PILT) agreement between the County, the Southern Ute Tribe and the State of Colorado was established in 1995. It provides a mechanism for a tribe to make a payment-in-lieu of taxes to mitigate the impacts of tax revenue lost as a result of tribal acquisition of real and personal property on fee land. The County, Lt. Governor, and Southern Ute Tribe, meet annually to discuss and evaluate these agreements.

Emergency Management: The County and Southern Ute Tribe work together on emergency management issues affecting tribal lands. The County has a list of Tribal employees who participate in the coordination of emergency response on Tribal lands. The Tribe and 16 other agencies, including La Plata County, have participated in the Annual Wild Fire Cooperation Plan. The Tribe has also been heavily involved in the Region 9 Hazmat Group and has actively participated in many programs associated with hazardous materials training.

Social Services : No formal agreements. However, the County cooperate with Southern Ute Tribe on child abuse investigations and work with their tribal court regarding child support.

Building/Planning: While no formal agreements are in place, the County often works with the Tribe relative to planning efforts that may affect land uses near or adjacent to tribal lands.

It is envisioned that over time, as the population of the County increases, so will the intricacies of cooperation between the County government and the tribal interests. As a result, there likely will be a need for further intergovernmental cooperation. However, it is not in the scope of the 2001 County Comprehensive Plan to fully evaluate these relationships, and as such, no specific policy recommendations relative to this issue will be made.

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APPENDIX 3

RESOLUTION NO. 2001- 7

A RESOLUTION OF THE LA PLATA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION OF LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO, ADOPTING THE LA PLATA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS A MASTER PLAN PURSUANT TO C.R.S. § 30-28-106

WHEREAS, C.R.S. §29-20-102 states that “The General Assembly hereby finds and declares that in order to provide for planned and orderly development within Colorado and a balancing of basic human needs of a changing population with legitimate environment concerns, the policy of this State is to clarify and provide broad authority to local governments to plan for and regulate the use of land within their respective jurisdictions.”; and

WHEREAS, C.R.S. §30-28-106 states that “It is the duty of a county planning commission to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory of the county” and that the “Master plan of a county . . . shall show the county . . . commission’s recommendations for the development of the territory covered by the plan....” and

WHEREAS, C.R.S. §38-28-109 states that “The county planning commission shall certify a copy of its master plan, or any adopted part or amendment thereof or addition thereto, to the board of county commissioners of the county” and further provides that “The county . . . planning commission shall certify such copies to the planning commissions of all municipalities within the county . . . ; and

WHEREAS, it is in the interest of La Plata County to adopt a document which clearly defines a vision for the future; and

WHEREAS, the document, the La Plata County Comprehensive Plan—Growth Management Strategies for the Unincorporated Areas of La Plata County, Colorado, establishes that Vision for the future of la Plata County; and

WHEREAS, the La Plata County Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing to consider the La Plata County Comprehensive Plan on the 10th day of Dec., 2001, which notice was published in the *Durango Herald* and is attached hereto as Exhibit 1.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LA PLATA PLANNING COMMISSION OF LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO, AS FOLLOWS:

1. Based upon the evidence and testimony presented at the public hearings, the La Plata County Planning Commission hereby finds that the La Plata County Comprehensive Plan should be adopted.

2. Based upon the evidence and testimony presented at the public hearings, the La Plata County Planning Commission hereby adopts the La Plata County Comprehensive Plan as set forth in Exhibit 2 attached hereto.

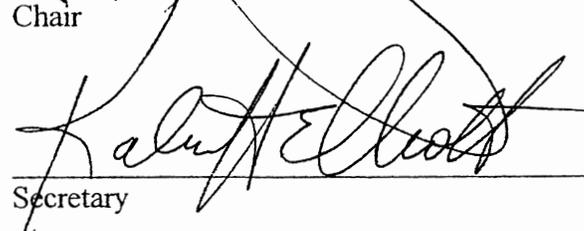
3. The La Plata County Planning Commission hereby certifies the La Plata County Comprehensive Plan to the Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County and to the Planning Commissions for the Cities of Bayfield, Ignacio and Durango.

DONE AND ADOPTED IN DURANGO, LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO, this 10th day of December, 2001.

LA PLATA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS



Chair



Secretary

ATTEST:



Joseph Crain
Director of Planning Services



