

# ALPINE LOOP BACKCOUNTRY BYWAY ANALYSIS AND MAPPING

Southwest Colorado

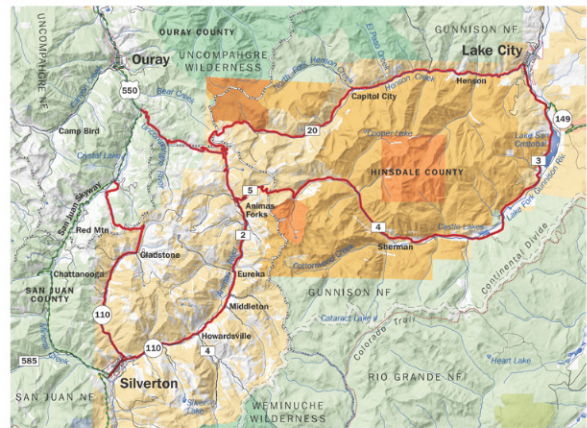


Howardsville, 1885. *Western History /Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library*

The Alpine Loop Back Country Byway in the northern San Juan Mountains of Colorado is a spectacular 65-mile tour of some of North America's most magnificent scenery. For those with an adventurous spirit (and an appropriate vehicle!), the area offers an opportunity to look backward in time to an era when early miners struggled in a rugged, often hostile environment. While the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) manage the majority of land along the Alpine Loop, an unseen legacy of the mining past is the jumbled pattern of private patented mining claims. Backcountry development, particularly the construction of second homes and vacation cabins, has replaced mining as the preferred use for many landowners of these private inholdings.

Large-scale development of these private inholdings threatens the very qualities that have led to national recognition of the Alpine Loop.

The Alpine Loop Spatial Analysis and Mapping Project inventoried natural and cultural resources and identified important areas where overlapping resources occur. The results from this project will provide an opportunity for area stakeholders - landowners, outdoor enthusiasts, surrounding communities, federal government agencies and local preservation groups -- to come together to find solutions that maintain the Alpine Loop experience for future visitors and residents, while working within the framework of landowner objectives as well as local and federal government goals.



This enhanced site photo along the Alpine Loop illustrates the matrix of mining claims within the region.

## ALPINE LOOP BACK COUNTRY BYWAY SPATIAL ANALYSIS AND MAPPING



The Conservation Priorities map combined resource values (agriculture lands, watershed protection, proximity to historic and archeological sites, public lands and recreation opportunities, visual resources and critical wildlife habitat) and development potential (avalanche hazard, environmental constraints, steep slopes, road proximity, geologic hazards, floodplains, and wildflir hazard) to generate the composite map.