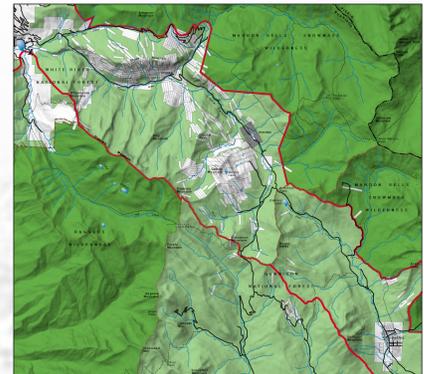


HIGH ELK CONSERVATION CORRIDOR

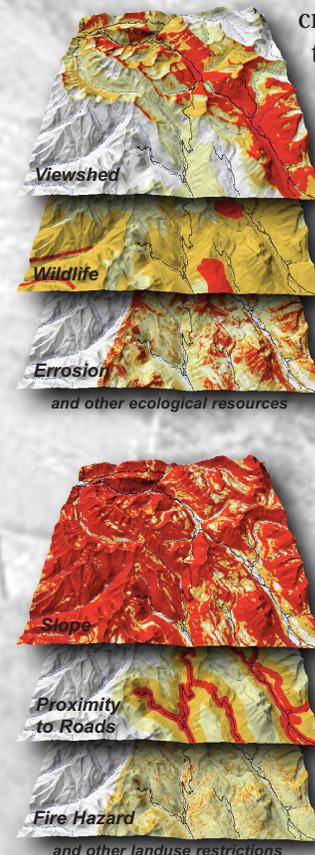
Crested Butte, Colorado

The High Elk Conservation Corridor is a strip of land lying between the Maroon Bells Wilderness to the northeast and the Raggeds Wilderness to the southwest, connecting the townsite of Gothic with the Town of Marble. While much of this land is under U. S. Forest Service jurisdiction, several thousand acres remain in private hands, in the form of patented mining claims. This patchwork of private ownership represents a unique conservation challenge: literally hundreds of landowners have parcels that range from a fraction of an acre to tens of acres in size.



This is an area of sublime beauty. In fact, it is one of the most photographed locations in Colorado. Complementing this setting are the world-class recreational opportunities that the area provides. The region contains wildlife habitat so important that two state-designated Natural Areas and four potential conservation areas occur within its bounds. Furthermore, High Elk contains the headwaters of both the Crystal River and the East River – important water sources for downstream communities.

Unfortunately, funds may not be available to conserve all the worthy properties. Consequently, a significant planning effort was spearheaded by the national conservation organization, The Trust For Public Land, to identify the most critical parcels. CTM's GIS capabilities played a pivotal role in developing the spatial analyses that formed the foundation for this planning effort



Using GIS technology, the landscape was characterized by “development risk”, ie., the presence or absence of physical building constraints at any particular locale, and by “ecological and scenic value”: the occurrence of desirable resources such as wildlife habitat, scenic views, public access to existing trails, etc. This analytical approach put the land acquisition process into a strategic framework, helping to simplify the formidable tasks of prioritization and subsequent landowner contact.

