

September 27, 1996

Jefferson County, Colorado
Board of County Commissioners
700 Jefferson County Parkway
Golden, Colorado 80401

Dear Commission Members,

Enclosed are the signatures of seventy-six landowners or their representatives requesting that you establish a new zoning designation, "A-35" which will result in an overall density not to exceed one dwelling unit per 35 acres in the area described below. These signatures currently represent 85% of the land area described as "all land that lies outside White Ranch Open Space in Jefferson County, Colorado:

- all of Sections 26, 27, 28, 33, 34, and 35 in Township 2 South, Range 71 West
- all of Sections 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, in Township 3 South, Range 71 West.
- those portions of Sections 15, 16, 23, 24 in Township 3 South, Range 71 West, lying north of Golden Gate Canyon Road."

Additionally, we are requesting that the county place a moratorium on any subdivision plats in the subject area and accept no new proposals until such zoning can be achieved.

Attached are the following:

- Copy of the original petitions and signatures. *
- List of parcel numbers and names with signers designated. (Those who have signed the petitions are highlighted in orange) *
- Map designating area requested in new zoning colored to indicate properties owned by signers. (Area is bordered in green. Areas colored in pink indicate land owned by those who signed the petition). *
- Argument in support of new 35 acre zoning designation.
- Maps and illustrations in support of argument.

*In Planning Department file.

cc Jefferson County Planning Department

Argument in support of new zoning designation, A-35:

In 1992 the Jefferson County Planning Commission adopted The North Mountains Community Plan in "the best interest of the health, safety, and welfare and morals of the citizens of Jefferson County."(Jeffco Plan Dept. 1992)

In the spirit of that endeavor the citizens of the Crawford Gulch region have come together to request that an even more strenuous model be put forward to enhance and preserve the quality of the north mountains community for the welfare and enjoyment of future generations of citizens of Jefferson County.

We are addressing the central area of the North Mountains region that is flanked on the west by Golden Gate State Park, on the east by White Ranch Open Space, on the north by the lands currently in acquisition negotiations by Jefferson County Open Space and on the south by Golden Gate Canyon Road.

The people currently living in the region vary from farmers and ranchers whose families have lived here for generations to builders and developers, and homeowners on small acreage. What they all have in common is a respect for the land that supersedes their interest in financial gain. To live in such a bountiful environment instills an awe of the surrounding natural beauty. They do not want to see that environment lost again, for this time the damage could be so complete that recovery would not be possible.

In an excerpt from North Mountains community plan, Mary Ramstetter describes the area's previous destruction:

The Golden Gate Canyon environment has been more or less under siege since gold seekers arrived on the scene, a pick in one hand, a match in the other. The fires, set to locate rock outcroppings, were called the "miners' fires" and took a considerable toll on human life. Eventually the fires were declared illegal by a court in Denver.

Travelers plinked away at every animal in sight for target practice. The traffic in the canyons stirred up so much dust that dray animals choked and died and the resulting stench caused travelers to insist that the dead animals be hauled away.

Prior to World War II agricultural and timbering interests severely depleted the native pastures and greatly reduced wildlife habitat. Meadowlands were plowed up and as a consequence, washed away. Extensive timbering denuded the hillsides and resulted in severe gullies. Ironically, many of the trees that were cut down were so huge that they were left to rot where they fell. Wildlife was overhunted and well into

the 1940s hunters searched for days to find a track, and then tracked for days to find the animal.

.....
Since World War II, the region has evolved into a bedroom community. This change has gradually reduced pressure on the native grasses, timber and wildlife. Jefferson County's White Ranch Open Space Park and Golden Gate Canyon State Park are jewels in the crown of the area. (*Ibid.*, p. 9-10)

Today the region is again under siege. The combination of rising land prices, very high prices for approved lots, and the relatively low cost of putting together a water augmentation plan have provided strong financial incentives for developers to subdivide property, even in areas where the end result will be substandard. The result is poorly conceived subdivisions, an attitude of take-all-they-can-get, and a building density and product that residents and property owners do not want.

The North County Plan states that "The goal of the Plan is to direct the orderly, sensitive growth of the North Mountains area while retaining and protecting its natural beauty, rural character and existing quality of the mountain area environment including water, air and wildlife habitat." (*Ibid.*, p. 4) "This rural mountain area is characterized by expansive views of natural terrain, abundant wildlife, quiet, relatively low levels of traffic, and high levels of privacy..... The natural environment in the area should be respected and enhanced when development occurs." (*Ibid.*, p. 20)

We do not believe the stated goal of The North County Plan is achievable with the current zoning that allows for five and ten acre parcels.

Geographically a large portion of the area is designated as "Potentially Unstable Slopes" and/or slopes in excess of 30%. See illustrations #1 and 2. Not only is it difficult to fit development to this terrain but often the roads cut to reach such sites become ugly scars and frequently lead to erosion on the hillside. Small lots in a fragile environment frequently acquire more livestock than they are able to support, which also leads to erosion. The Plan suggests minimizing clearing and cutting for roads, driveways, and houses as well as limiting the number of livestock, all of which could be accomplished by zoning that minimizes overall density.

Most of the region is designated as “moderate” wildfire hazard with some even designated as “high”. See illustration #3. The Plan states “As development and related human activity continues to increase in the North Mountains area, the risk of wildfire will increase.” (*Ibid.*, p. 15) The risk of loss of property and life of current and future residents magnifies with the increased density of housing.

Currently the primary road access to and from the metropolitan area is Crawford Gulch Road to Golden Gate Canyon Road east to Golden.

Golden Gate Canyon Road carries the traffic for the residents of Golden Gate Canyon, Robinson Hill and Crawford Gulch, Golden Gate State Park, the west entrance of White Ranch Park, many residents of Gilpin County and some of the visitors to Black Hawk and Central City. That amounts to a considerable amount of traffic for a two lane mountain road. The Jefferson County Department of Highways and Transportation most recent traffic counts on Golden Gate Canyon Road showed 3029 trips per twenty-four hour period. There has been a steady increase over the past few years. According to the Highway Capacity Manual by the Transportation Research Board quoted in the Plan, we are already entering the “range of flow in which the operation of individual users becomes significantly affected by interaction with others.....The general level of comfort and convenience declines noticeably at this level.” (*Ibid.*, p. 62). Any significant increase would lead to unacceptable levels of traffic which “could confront the state, the county and the community with hard choices.” (*Ibid.*, p. 40)

Widening the road in either Golden Gate Canyon or Crawford Gulch could destroy visual resource and turn what is now a pleasant mountain drive into another highway corridor where concerns for heavy traffic supersede the ability to enjoy the natural backdrop.

The Planning Department calculates that every new home adds ten trips a day to the local roads. Using those figures and not factoring in the ever increasing traffic to the parks in the region, Golden Gate Canyon Road can only absorb the traffic from 200 more homes in the whole region before traffic levels will be at unacceptable levels.

In the last few years the reemergence of wildlife in the Crawford Gulch area has been dramatic. Species not seen in years are regularly sited. See illustrations #5, 6, and 7. With the good husbandry of the land by the remaining farmers and ranchers and

understanding of new residents that this is a special environment to be preserved and enhanced, wildlife has been able to move unmolested from Golden Gate Park to White Ranch Park allowing a more normal distribution of wildlife for the whole region. Mountain lions sightings are on the rise. Bear habitat is spreading similarly. Mule deer are plentiful. Golden eagles, peregrine falcons and red tailed hawks fly freely overhead. The area includes both a large area of winter concentration and a large reproduction area for the elk. Elk range throughout the area. Red fox, wild turkeys, marmots and coyotes are all thriving in the area.

If allowed to develop in the manner allowed by current zoning the wildlife habitat would become fragmented and the wildlife community of the whole region would be less vital or perhaps even lost forever.

According to the 1989 Jefferson County Open Space Master Plan the area we are addressing lies in the middle of the largest "Critical Biological Habitat" in Jefferson County. See illustration #8. It is a habitat worth saving. The Plan tells us that "hillside springs and natural stream beds are important water sources for area wildlife. Buildings in close proximity or road cuts that disturb those sources put the local wildlife at risk." (*Ibid.*)

"The dramatic beauty of the surrounding natural landscape is a major asset in the mountains. Scenic or high quality elements of the natural landscape need to be maintained or enhanced.....The views seen from major transportation corridors can have a great impact in the mountains areas. The large numbers of viewers make these corridors very important in establishing a positive image to visitors and residents alike." (*Ibid.*, p. 53)

Currently developers are able to circumvent the "one well per 35 acre rule" by buying water augmentation rights from one area of the water district and applying them elsewhere in the district with little regard for the availability water. If the whole district were using the same water table, this might be logical. There is no natural way for water from lower elevations to replenish depleted ground water in the higher elevations. This depletion would be difficult to document until real damage has taken place.

There are numerous other mountain communities where development has been allowed and water supplies have been

depleted, leading to loss in property values and real inconvenience for the homeowners. But inconvenienced homeowners and loss of property value are small in comparison to the loss of a natural environment. Where water tables drop, natural vegetation becomes distressed. Trees become diseased and eventually die. Natural cover and food supply for native animal species are no longer available. The animals too become distressed and move to another range in hopes of finding food. How long does this take? Can we afford to find the answer to that?

We in the Crawford Gulch region want to see its resources preserved and enhanced. We feel that this is best accomplished by limiting growth density in our area.

The Plan states that "Agriculture/ranching, although it is a declining activity, is supported as an important land use and amenity of the community." (*Ibid.*, p. 29) We appreciate living in an environment where farming and ranching can still be pursued. Where people can live in homes big and small. We are not asking for the kind of restrictions that allow only the affluent to live here. On the contrary, we are asking that this not be turned into another wealthy suburb at the expense of the history, natural beauty, and wildlife of the area. We would like instead for people to look back a hundred years from now and see us as visionary people who were wise enough to know the value of what we held in our hands. We are asking you to join us in our vision.

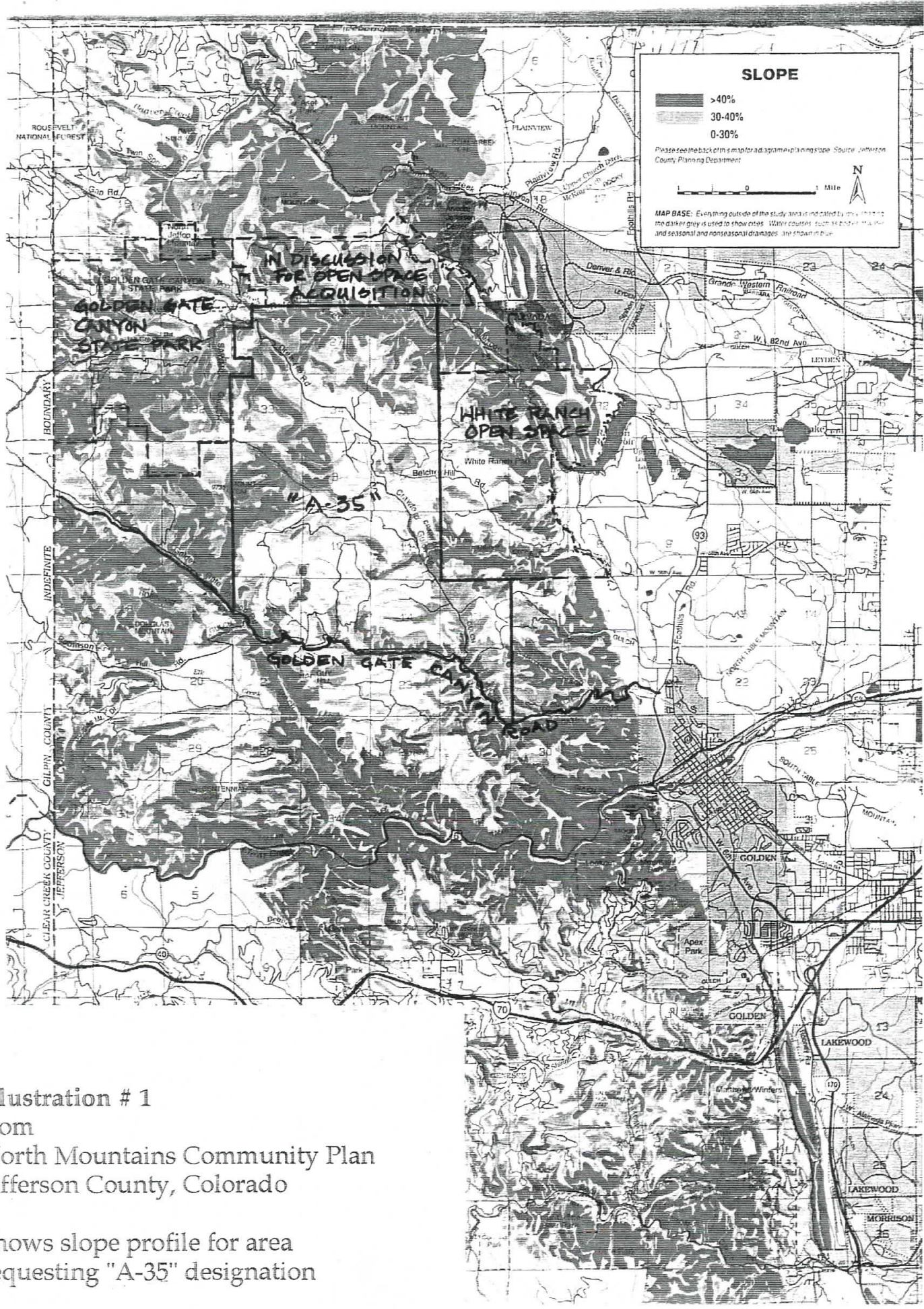


Illustration # 1
 from
 North Mountains Community Plan
 Jefferson County, Colorado

Shows slope profile for area
 requesting "A-35" designation

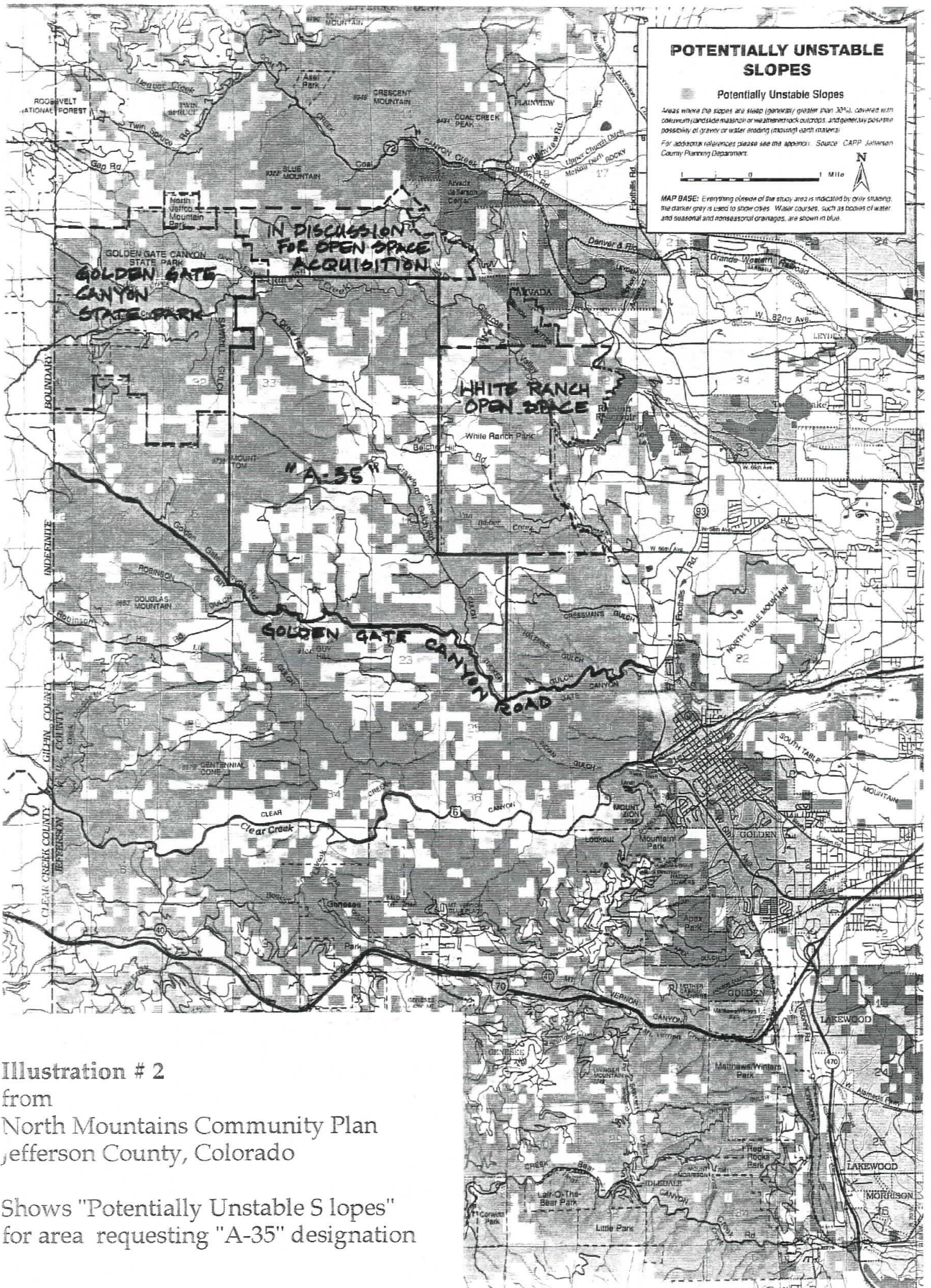


Illustration # 2
 from
 North Mountains Community Plan
 Jefferson County, Colorado

Shows "Potentially Unstable Slopes"
 for area requesting "A-35" designation

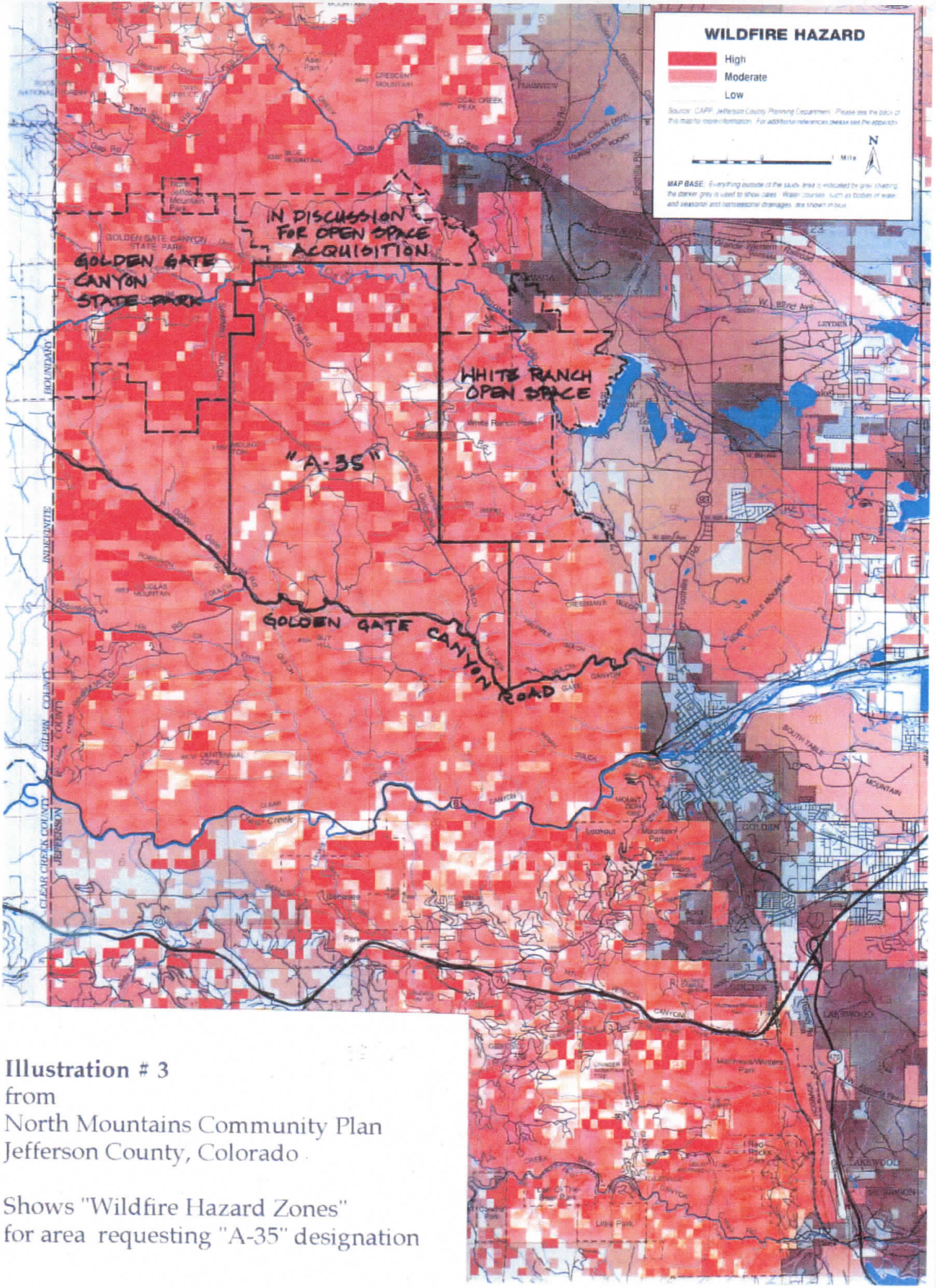


Illustration # 3
 from
 North Mountains Community Plan
 Jefferson County, Colorado

Shows "Wildfire Hazard Zones"
 for area requesting "A-35" designation

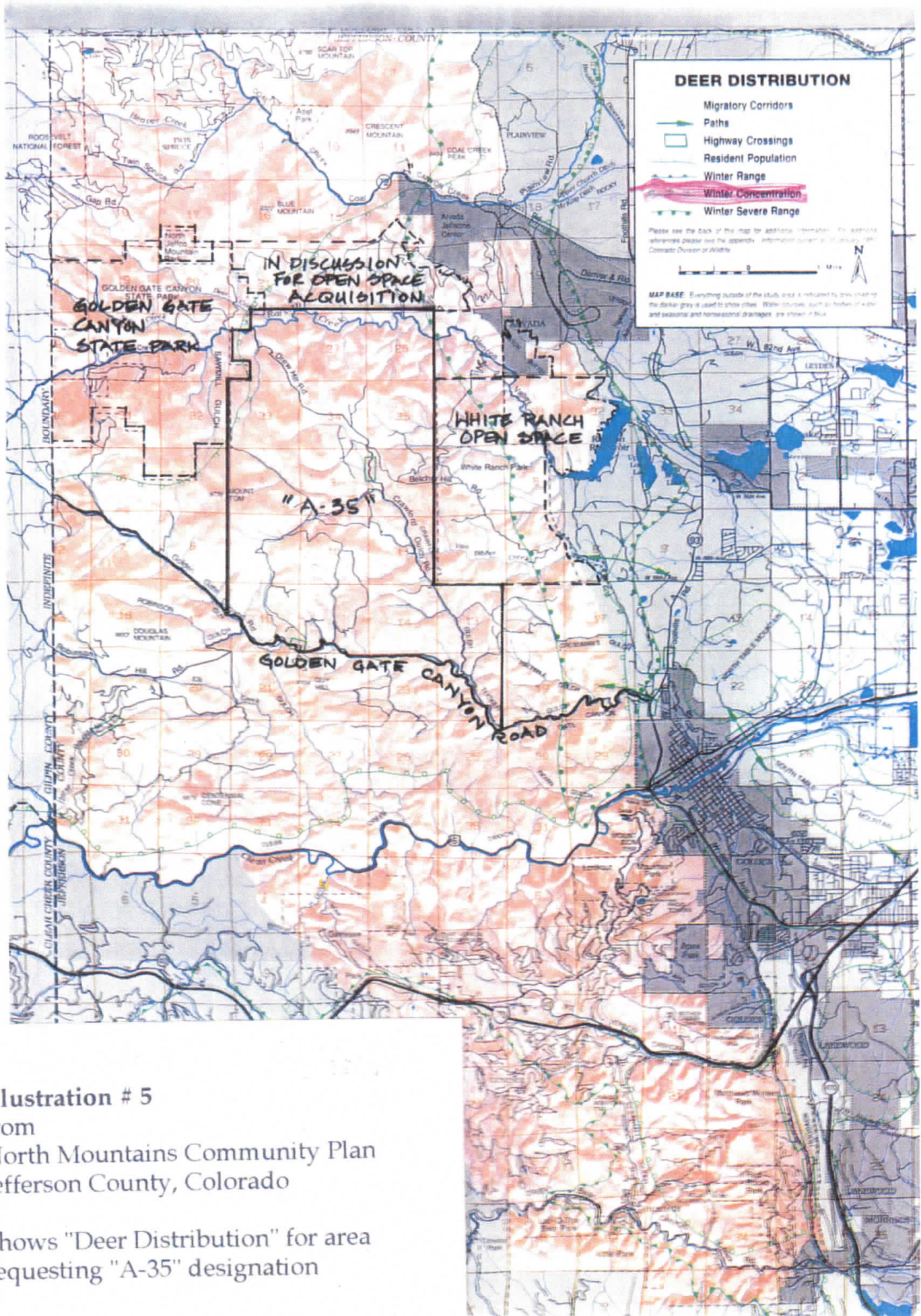


Illustration # 5
 from
 North Mountains Community Plan
 Jefferson County, Colorado

Shows "Deer Distribution" for area
 requesting "A-35" designation

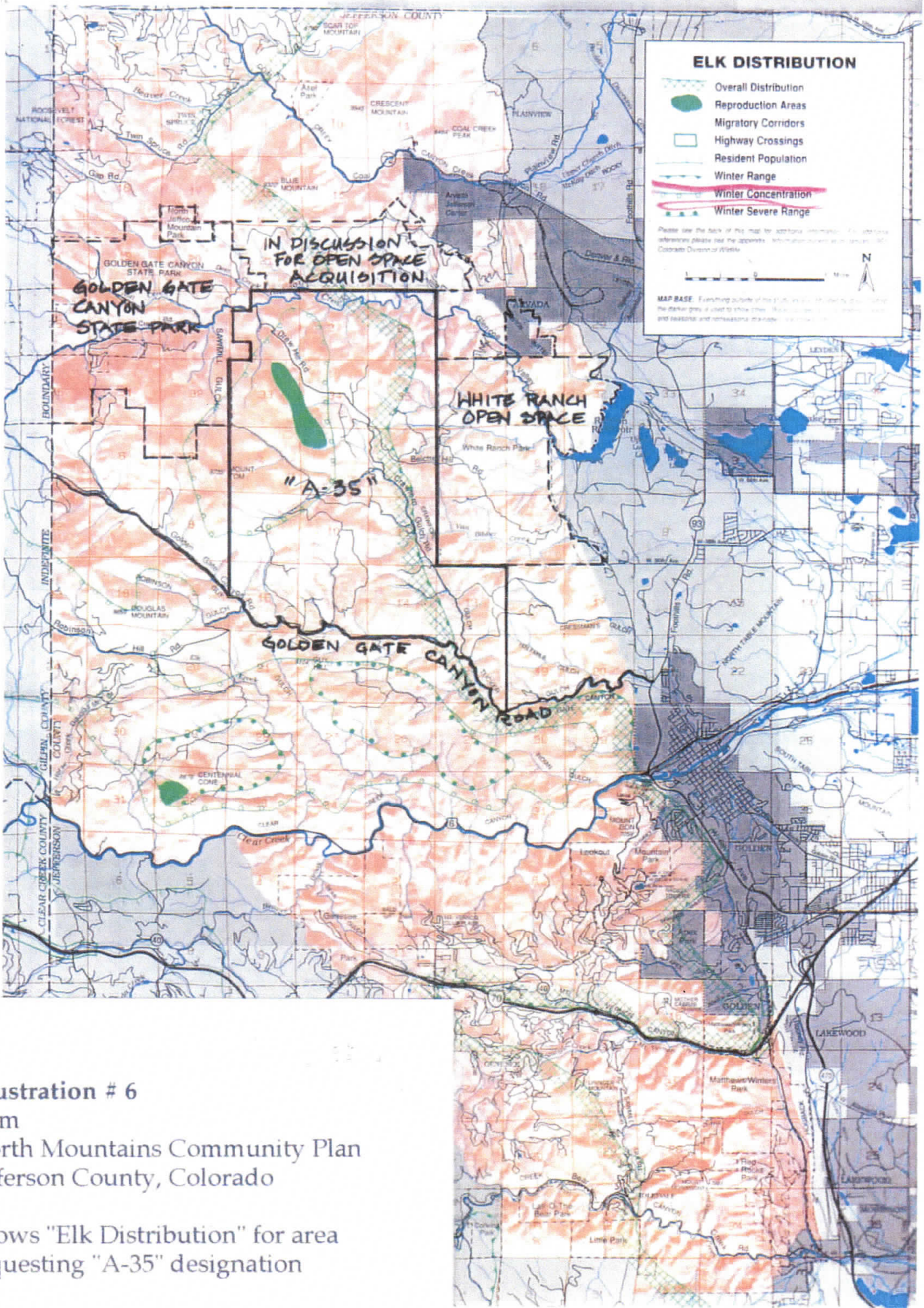


Illustration # 6
 from
 North Mountains Community Plan
 Jefferson County, Colorado

Shows "Elk Distribution" for area
 requesting "A-35" designation

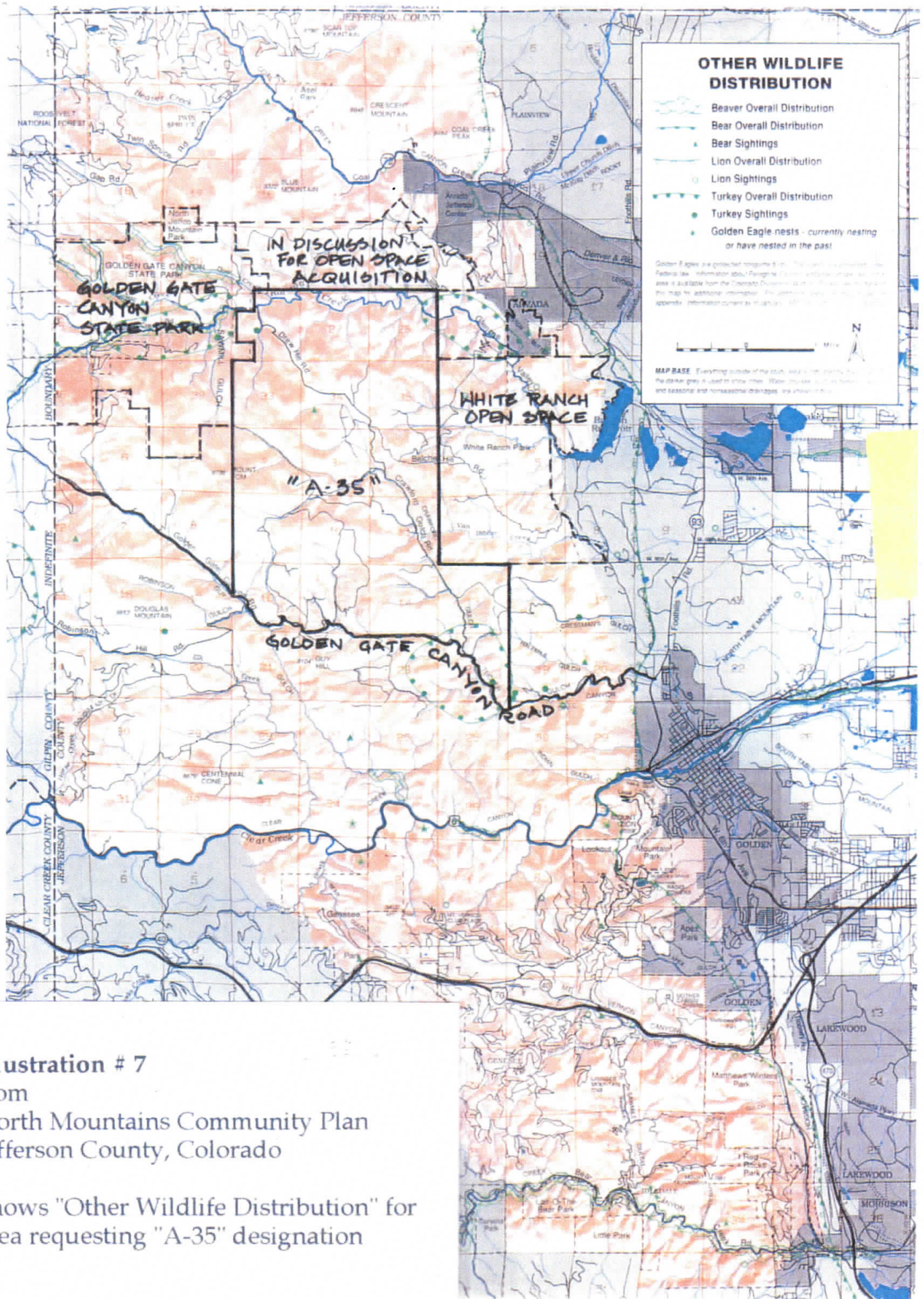


Illustration # 7

from
North Mountains Community Plan
Jefferson County, Colorado

Shows "Other Wildlife Distribution" for
area requesting "A-35" designation



JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

PREPARED BY



4643 S. Ulster St
Suite 1180
Denver, CO 80237

ASSISTED BY

URBAN EDGES, INC.

LEGEND

- CRITICAL BIOLOGICAL HABITAT**
IDENTIFIED SPECIES ARE PEREGRINE FALCON AND GOLDEN EAGLE (NESTING), ELK AND DEER (CALVING AND WINTER RANGE), RED FOX AND COYOTE (DENSI), MOUNTAIN LION AND MOUNTAIN SHEEP.
- MEDIUM TO HIGH BIOLOGICAL HABITAT POTENTIAL**
BASED ON LITERATURE STUDIES AND INDICATE THE "ROBUSTNESS" OF A HABITAT AREA TO SUPPORT A HIGH VARIETY OF ANIMAL SPECIES.
- WETLANDS OVER 10 ACRES**
BASED ON AVAILABILITY OF FOOD, COVER AND WATER
- WETLANDS OF LESS THAN 10 ACRES**

WILDLIFE HABITAT

Figure 4

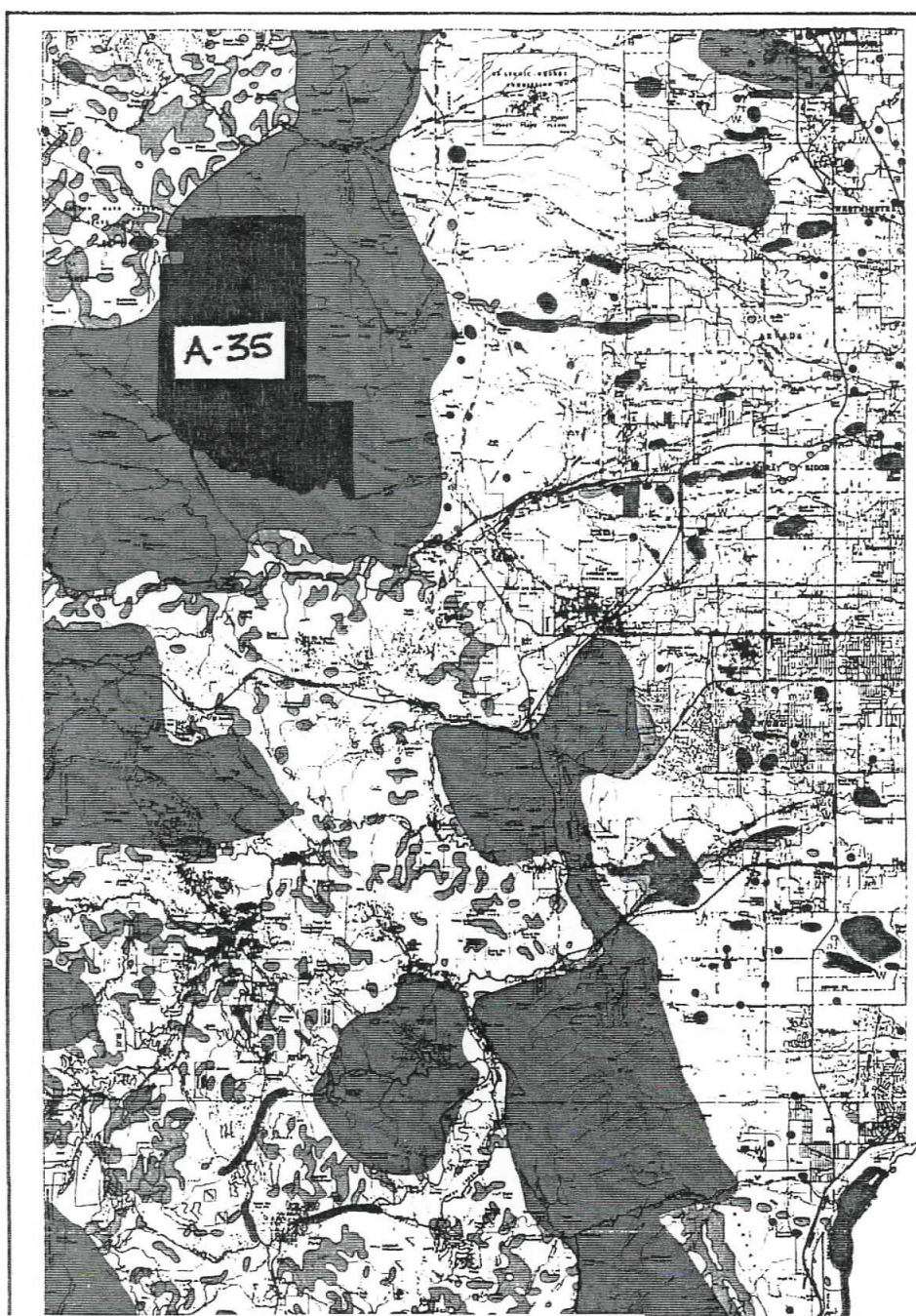


Illustration # 8
from
Jefferson County Open Space Master Plan

Shows "Critical Wildlife Habitat" for
area requesting "A-35" designation

