



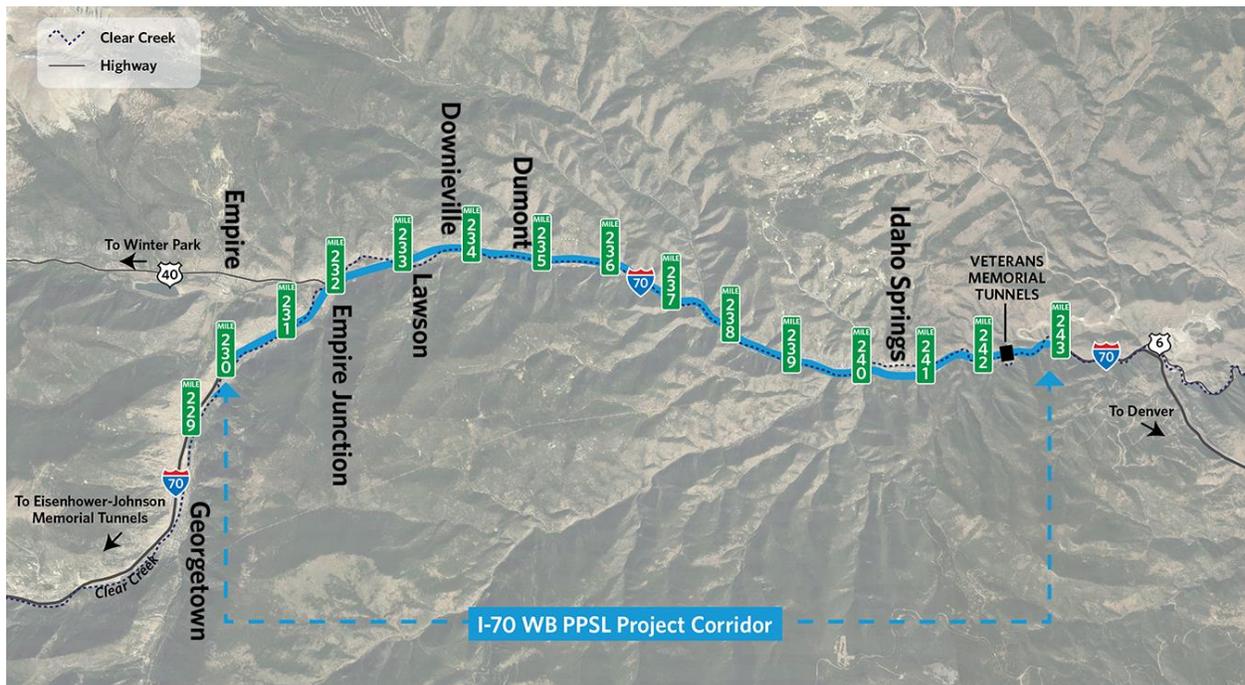
Summary

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), is preparing a Categorical Exclusion for proposed changes to the westbound (WB) lanes of Interstate 70 (I-70) between approximately milepost (MP) 230 and MP 243, in Clear Creek County, Colorado (Proposed Action). The Proposed Action includes the addition of a 12-mile tolled Peak Period Shoulder Lane (PPSL) between the US Highway 40 (US 40)/I-70 interchange and east Idaho Springs in the WB direction and improvements to the State Highway (SH) 103 interchange. The Proposed Action includes the following improvements:

- I-70 resurfacing and widening in select areas
- Walls at acceleration lane locations and at rockfall locations
- SH 103 Interchange improvements
- Rockfall mitigation
- Active traffic management
- Fiber optic upgrades
- Guardrails and barriers
- Drainage infrastructure
- Safety pull-outs

The project corridor is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Project Corridor



Source: HDR 2018.

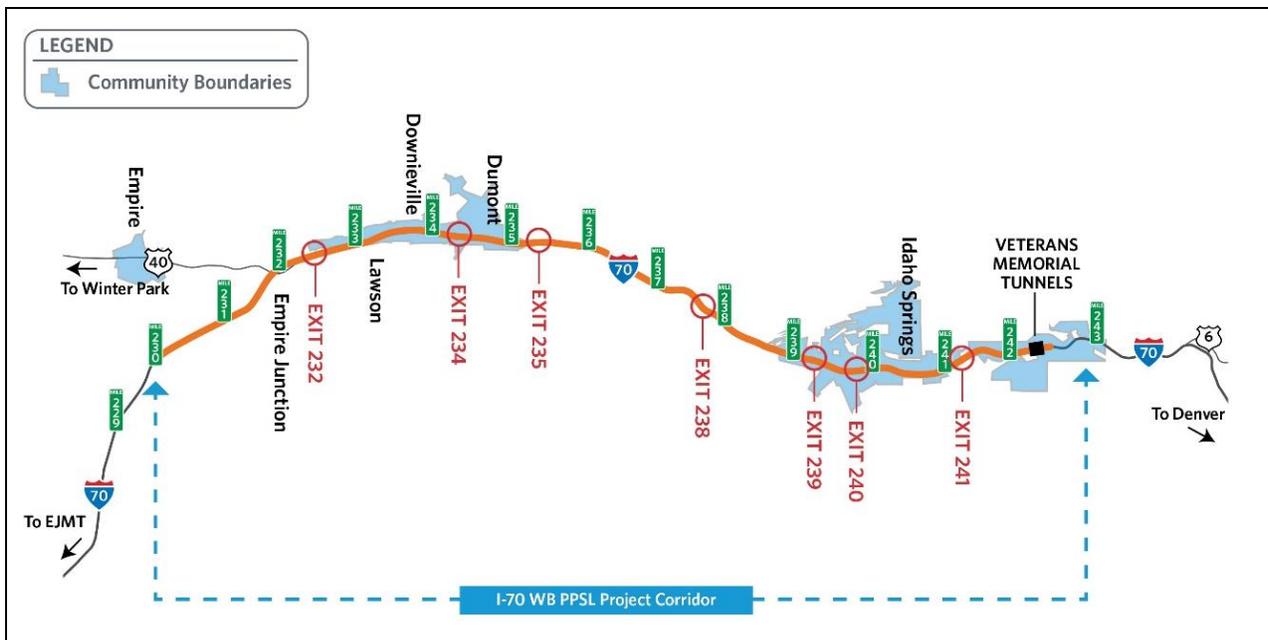


Study Area

The study area for the WB PPSL project encompasses CDOT right-of-way along I-70 in both directions from MP 243 to MP 230 and areas immediately adjacent to the right-of-way. This study area was used to evaluate the **direct** effects of the Proposed Action.

For transportation and socioeconomic impacts, the study area for **indirect** effects includes Clear Creek County and the communities of Idaho Springs, Downieville-Lawson-Dumont, and the town of Empire. This area is broadly defined and includes the communities and other areas that would be **indirectly** affected by the Proposed Action. The indirect effects study area includes the communities shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Study Area Communities



For the remaining resources, the study area for **indirect** effects generally includes a 0.25-mile buffer around the study area. This area encompasses the communities and other areas that would be indirectly affected by the Proposed Action.

Farmland Resources

A review of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey conducted on December 6, 2017, indicates that about 77.0 acres of soils found within the study area are classified as “farmland of statewide importance”. Table 1 indicates the two types of soils considered farmlands of statewide importance in the study area.



Table 1: Farmlands of Statewide Importance in the Study Area

Soil Map Unit	Sum of Acres in Study Area
34: Lininger-Breece gravelly sandy loams, 3 to 12 percent slopes	3.2
27: Lone Rock-Breece gravelly sandy loams, 2 to 9 percent slopes	73.8
Total	77.0

Source: USDA NRCS 2017.

None of the existing classified prime farmland is currently being used for agricultural purposes. Figure 3 shows prime farmlands near the project corridor.

Determination

Approximately 1.0 acre of prime farmland is converted as part of the Proposed Action. Assuming a 10-foot-wide construction buffer, about 6.9 acres of prime farmland is temporarily impacted by construction of the Proposed Action.

The Proposed Action does not result in adverse impacts to prime farmland resources. A letter dated February 12, 2018 from NRCS states that the Proposed Action occurs in either areas that are previously developed or reserved for development, or occur in existing rights-of-way, and are exempt from the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA; Appendix A).

References

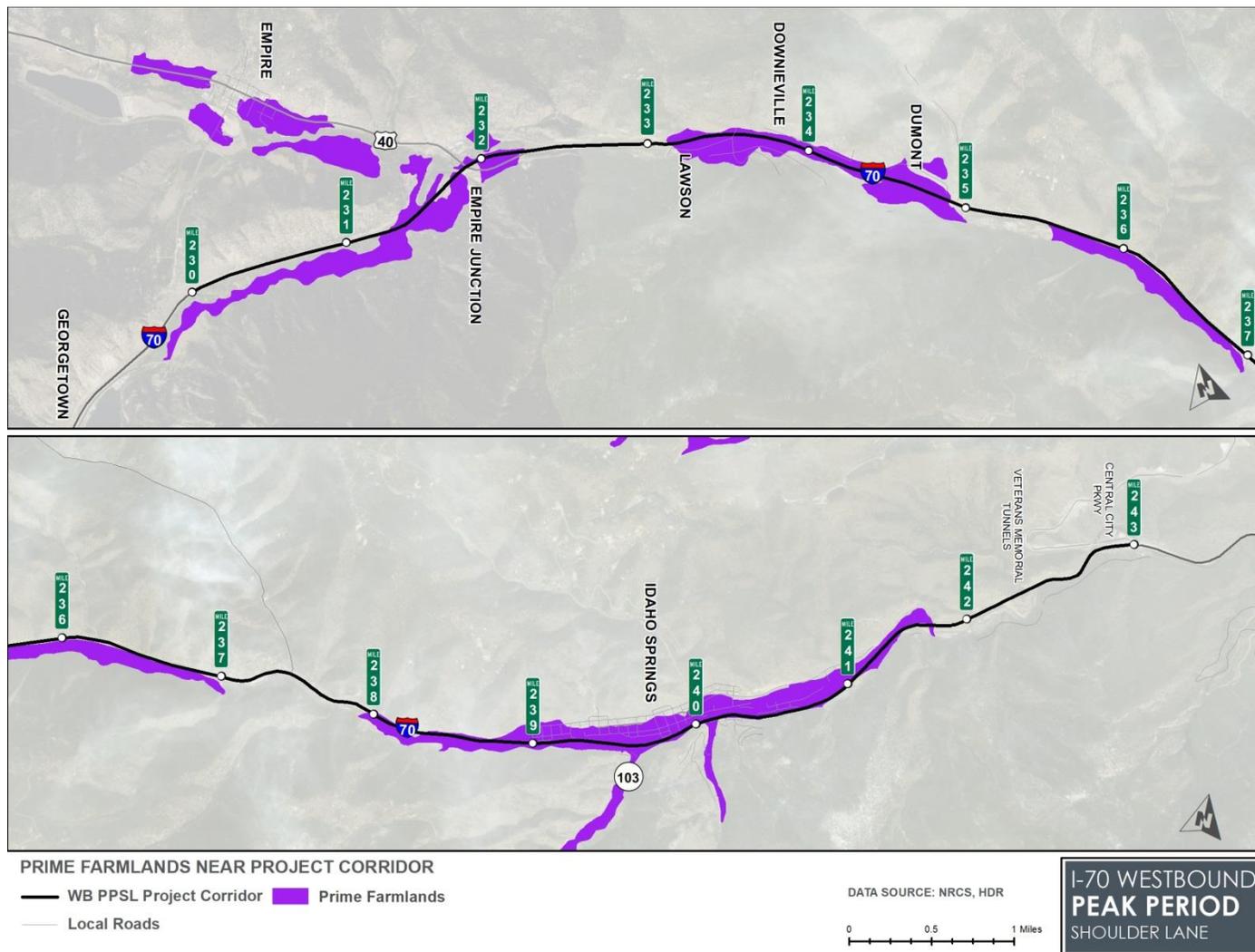
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2017. Web Soil Survey. Accessed December 6, 2017 at <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
CR	County Road
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
I-70	Interstate 70
MP	Milepost
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
PPSL	Peak Period Shoulder Lane
SH	State Highway
U.S.	United States
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WB	Westbound



Figure 3. Prime Farmlands Near the Project Corridor



Source: HDR 2017.



Appendix A. NRCS Correspondence



From: Beazley, Sandy
Sent: Monday, February 12, 2018 2:25 PM
To: Navio, Nikki; Jones, Lorena
Cc: Storey, Catherine; McAfee, Gina; Wallach, Wendy
Subject: FW: farmland conversion rating form for a CDOT/FHWA project
Attachments: FPPA Response WB I70 Clear Creek Improvement Project.pdf

From: Dayberry, Riley - NRCS, Denver, CO [mailto:Thomas.Dayberry@co.usda.gov]
Sent: Monday, February 12, 2018 11:49 AM
To: Beazley, Sandy <Sandy.Beazley@hdrinc.com>
Cc: Shoup, William - NRCS, Denver, CO <william.shoup@co.usda.gov>; Evans, Clinton - NRCS, Denver, CO <Clint.Evans@co.usda.gov>; Backhaus, Eugene - NRCS, Denver, CO <eugene.backhaus@co.usda.gov>
Subject: FW: farmland conversion rating form for a CDOT/FHWA project
Importance: High

Hello Sandy,

Attached is the response from NRCS for your project file. Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns.

Best,

Riley Dayberry
Asst. SSS for Colorado
Denver, CO
720-544-2855

Web Soil Survey
<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>
Check it out!

From: Dayberry, Riley - NRCS, Denver, CO
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2018 2:21 PM
To: 'Sandy.Beazley@hdrinc.com' <Sandy.Beazley@hdrinc.com>
Subject: FW: farmland conversion rating form for a CDOT/FHWA project
Importance: High

Hello Sandy,



I am writing to inquire about the I-70 project that you submitted for NRCS review. As long as the additions or improvements occur in areas that are previously disturbed or developed, or they occur in existing rights-of-way, then the projects are exempt. If that is the case with the additions and improvements of this project, please let me know and I will send you a formal response stating that this project is exempt.

On a different note, there is an alternate form to submit when dealing with corridor projects. I have attached it.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Riley Dayberry
Asst. SSS for Colorado
Denver, CO
720-544-2855

Web Soil Survey
<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>
Check it out!

From: Harshbarger, Clark - NRCS, Greeley, CO
Sent: Friday, January 26, 2018 9:10 AM
To: Dayberry, Riley - NRCS, Denver, CO <Thomas.Dayberry@co.usda.gov>
Cc: Shoup, William - NRCS, Denver, CO <william.shoup@co.usda.gov>
Subject: FW: farmland conversion rating form for a CDOT/FHWA project
Importance: High

Riley,

Good morning. I am forwarding this FPPA request to you. If you need assistance let me know.

Have a good weekend,

Clark Harshbarger
Resource Soil Scientist
USDA NRCS
4302 West 9th ST RD
Greeley, CO 80634
(970) 356-8097 x103 (o)
(970) 290-9021 (m)
clark.harshbarger@co.usda.gov

From: Beazley, Sandy [<mailto:Sandy.Bezley@hdrinc.com>]
Sent: Friday, January 26, 2018 6:07 AM
To: Harshbarger, Clark - NRCS, Greeley, CO <Clark.Harshbarger@co.usda.gov>
Cc: Navio, Nikki <Nikki.Navio@hdrinc.com>; Storey, Catherine <Catherine.Storey@hdrinc.com>
Subject: farmland conversion rating form for a CDOT/FHWA project

Clark,



Attached you will find the farmland conversion rating form for the CDOT Westbound Peak Period Shoulder Lane Project. I have also included a 2-page project overview to provide background on the proposed action.

The project will result in minor widening along in I-70 in Clear Creek County. In general this widening is limited to the immediately adjacent medina or roadway shoulder, which area identified as protected farmland resource per review of the NRCS WSS.

As you review the attached should you have questions or require clarification do not hesitate to contact us. And also, my apologies in advance for any oversights on our part. Our projects typically do not impact farmlands, so Nikki and I feel like we relearn this every few years, so your assistance is appreciated.

Sincerely,
Sandy

Sandy Beazley, AICP
Environmental Planner

HDR
1670 Broadway, Suite 3400
Denver, CO 80202
D 303.318.6343. M 303.419.2800
sandy.beazley@hdrinc.com

hdrinc.com/follow-us

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U.S. Department of Agriculture						
FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING						
PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)			Date Of Land Evaluation Request 01.25.2018			
Name of Project West Bound Peak Period Shoulder Lane			Federal Agency Involved FHWA			
Proposed Land Use Transportation			County and State Clear Creek County, Colorado			
PART II (To be completed by NRCS)			Date Request Received By NRCS		Person Completing Form:	
Does the site contain Prime, Unique, Statewide or Local Important Farmland? <i>(If no, the FPPA does not apply - do not complete additional parts of this form)</i>			YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	Acres Irrigated	Average Farm Size
Major Crop(s)	Farmable Land In Govt. Jurisdiction Acres: %		Amount of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: %			
Name of Land Evaluation System Used	Name of State or Local Site Assessment System		Date Land Evaluation Returned by NRCS			
PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)			Alternative Site Rating			
			Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly			1.0			
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly						
C. Total Acres In Site			70.0			
PART IV (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information						
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland						
B. Total Acres Statewide Important or Local Important Farmland						
C. Percentage Of Farmland in County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted						
D. Percentage Of Farmland in Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value						
PART V (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Criterion Relative Value of Farmland To Be Converted (Scale of 0 to 100 Points)						
PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency) Site Assessment Criteria <i>(Criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5 b. For Corridor project use form NRCS-CPA-106)</i>			Maximum Points	Site A	Site B	Site C
1. Area In Non-urban Use			(15)			
2. Perimeter In Non-urban Use			(10)			
3. Percent Of Site Being Farmed			(20)			
4. Protection Provided By State and Local Government			(20)			
5. Distance From Urban Built-up Area			(15)			
6. Distance To Urban Support Services			(15)			
7. Size Of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average			(10)			
8. Creation Of Non-farmable Farmland			(10)			
9. Availability Of Farm Support Services			(5)			
10. On-Farm Investments			(20)			
11. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services			(10)			
12. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use			(10)			
TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS			160	0	0	0
PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)						
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)			100	0	0	0
Total Site Assessment (From Part VI above or local site assessment)			160	0	0	0
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)			260	0	0	0
Site Selected:		Date Of Selection		Was A Local Site Assessment Used?		
				YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Reason For Selection:						
Name of Federal agency representative completing this form:					Date:	

(See Instructions on reverse side)

Form AD-1006 (03-02)



STEPS IN THE PROCESSING THE FARMLAND AND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING FORM

- Step 1 - Federal agencies (or Federally funded projects) involved in proposed projects that may convert farmland, as defined in the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) to nonagricultural uses, will initially complete Parts I and III of the form. For Corridor type projects, the Federal agency shall use form NRCS-CPA-106 in place of form AD-1006. The Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) process may also be accessed by visiting the FPPA website, <http://fppa.nrcs.usda.gov/lesa/>.
- Step 2 - Originator (Federal Agency) will send one original copy of the form together with appropriate scaled maps indicating location(s) of project site(s), to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) local Field Office or USDA Service Center and retain a copy for their files. (NRCS has offices in most counties in the U.S. The USDA Office Information Locator may be found at http://offices.usda.gov/scripts/ndISAPI.dll/oip_public/USA_map, or the offices can usually be found in the Phone Book under U.S. Government, Department of Agriculture. A list of field offices is available from the NRCS State Conservationist and State Office in each State.)
- Step 3 - NRCS will, within 10 working days after receipt of the completed form, make a determination as to whether the site(s) of the proposed project contains prime, unique, statewide or local important farmland. (When a site visit or land evaluation system design is needed, NRCS will respond within 30 working days.
- Step 4 - For sites where farmland covered by the FPPA will be converted by the proposed project, NRCS will complete Parts II, IV and V of the form.
- Step 5 - NRCS will return the original copy of the form to the Federal agency involved in the project, and retain a file copy for NRCS records.
- Step 6 - The Federal agency involved in the proposed project will complete Parts VI and VII of the form and return the form with the final selected site to the servicing NRCS office.
- Step 7 - The Federal agency providing financial or technical assistance to the proposed project will make a determination as to whether the proposed conversion is consistent with the FPPA.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING FORM

(For Federal Agency)

- Part I:** When completing the "County and State" questions, list all the local governments that are responsible for local land use controls where site(s) are to be evaluated.
- Part III:** When completing item B (Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly), include the following:
 1. Acres not being directly converted but that would no longer be capable of being farmed after the conversion, because the conversion would restrict access to them or other major change in the ability to use the land for agriculture.
 2. Acres planned to receive services from an infrastructure project as indicated in the project justification (e.g. highways, utilities planned build out capacity) that will cause a direct conversion.
- Part VI:** Do not complete Part VI using the standard format if a State or Local site assessment is used. With local and NRCS assistance, use the local Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA).
 1. Assign the maximum points for each site assessment criterion as shown in § 658.5(b) of CFR. In cases of corridor-type project such as transportation, power line and flood control, criteria #5 and #6 will not apply and will, be weighted zero, however, criterion #8 will be weighed a maximum of 25 points and criterion #11 a maximum of 25 points.
 2. Federal agencies may assign relative weights among the 12 site assessment criteria other than those shown on the FPPA rule after submitting individual agency FPPA policy for review and comment to NRCS. In all cases where other weights are assigned, relative adjustments must be made to maintain the maximum total points at 160. For project sites where the total points equal or exceed 160, consider alternative actions, as appropriate, that could reduce adverse impacts (e.g. Alternative Sites, Modifications or Mitigation).

Part VII: In computing the "Total Site Assessment Points" where a State or local site assessment is used and the total maximum number of points is other than 160, convert the site assessment points to a base of 160. Example: if the Site Assessment maximum is 200 points, and the alternative Site "A" is rated 180 points:

$\frac{\text{Total points assigned Site A}}{\text{Maximum points possible}} = \frac{180}{200} \times 160 = 144 \text{ points for Site A}$

For assistance in completing this form or FPPA process, contact the local NRCS Field Office or USDA Service Center. NRCS employees, consult the FPPA Manual and/or policy for additional instructions to complete the AD-1006 form.



1 Summary

2 The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the Colorado Department of
3 Transportation (CDOT), is preparing a Categorical Exclusion for proposed changes to the westbound
4 (WB) lanes of Interstate 70 (I-70) between approximately milepost (MP) 230 and MP 243, in Clear Creek
5 County, Colorado (Proposed Action). The Proposed Action includes the addition of a 12-mile tolled Peak
6 Period Shoulder Lane (PPSL) between the US Highway 40 (US 40)/I-70 interchange and east Idaho
7 Springs in the WB direction; improvements to the US 40 and State Highway (SH) 103 interchanges; and
8 County Road (CR) 314 improvements. Improvements include the following:

- 9 • I-70 resurfacing and widening in select areas
- 10 • Walls at acceleration lane locations, in Idaho Springs, and at rock fall locations
- 11 • US 40 Interchange ramp modifications
- 12 • SH 103 Interchange improvements
- 13 • Rock fall mitigation
- 14 • CR 314 frontage road improvements
- 15 • Active traffic management
- 16 • Fiber optic upgrades
- 17 • Guardrails and barriers
- 18 • Drainage infrastructure
- 19 • Emergency pull-outs (7)

20 The project corridor is shown in Figure 1.

21 Study Area

22 The study area for the Proposed Action extends between MP 230 and MP 243, from 100 feet north of the
23 inside edge of pavement on eastbound I-70 to the centerline of I-70 on the south. For the CR 314
24 improvements, the study area extends 25 feet on each side of the centerline of CR 314. The study area
25 for the US 40 ramp improvements includes a 50-foot-wide buffer on each side of the centerline of the
26 eastbound and WB ramps onto I-70. For the SH 103 interchange improvements, the study area includes
27 the entire interchange and the immediately adjacent areas.

28 The study area was used to evaluate the **direct** effects of the Proposed Action (Figure 1).

29 The study area for indirect effects includes a 0.25-mile buffer around the study area. It extends 0.25 mile
30 to the north and south of the study area, and extends along the I-70 corridor from MP 229.75 to MP
31 243.25. This area encompasses the communities and other areas that would be indirectly affected by the
32 Proposed Action.



Figure 1. Project Corridor



Source: HDR 2017

1



United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
Denver Federal Center
Building 56, Room 2804
P.O. Box 25426
Denver, CO 80225

SUBJECT: Farmland Protection Policy Act February 12th, 2018

Sandy Beazley, AICP
Environmental Planner
HDR, Inc.
1670 Broadway, Suite 3400
Denver, CO 80202

RE: Westbound I-70 Improvements Project, Clear Creek County, CO

Dear Mr. Beazley,

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) is intended to minimize the impact federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use. It assures that to the extent possible federal programs are administered to be compatible with state, local units of government, and private programs and policies to protect farmland.

For the purpose of the FPPA, farmland includes prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance. Farmland subject to the FPPA requirements does not have to be currently used for cropland. Projects are subject to the FPPA requirements if they may irreversibly convert farmland to non-agriculture use and are completed by a federal agency or with assistance from a federal agency.

All improvements included in this project occur in either areas that are previously developed or reserved for development, or occur in existing rights-of-way, and are exempt from the FPPA. NRCS encourages the use of accepted erosion control practices during the construction of this project.

If you have any further questions, please call at (720) 544-2855.

Thank you,

T. Riley Dayberry
Asst. State Soil Scientist
Thomas.dayberry@co.usda.gov

cc:
Clint Evans – State Conservationist, NRCS, Denver CO
Eugene Backhaus - State Resource Conservationist, NRCS, Denver CO
William Shoup - State Soil Scientist, NRCS, Denver CO

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