

6 CONSERVATION EASEMENT LANDS

During 1999, DOE placed 177 acres of the STM site in a Conservation Easement. The purpose of the Conservation Easement is to preserve the natural character of the property, including its visual, biological, and recreational resources, especially in relation to the changing land uses adjacent to the NREL site and within the region.

The goals of the easement are to:

- Retain, preserve and protect natural, scenic, ecological, and historical aspects of the conservation easement property;
- Protect the ecosystem of the South Table Mountain area and the sustainable habitat for biodiverse vegetation, birds, and terrestrial animals;
- Ensure the scenic and biological integration with adjoining open-space land;
- Prevent further industrial, commercial, or residential development of the conservation easement property; and
- Preserve the conservation easement property as natural open space.

A baseline inventory of the property was prepared in June 1999 to document the current condition of the easement property and to assess the conservation value of the property (Department of Energy, Golden Field Office, 1999). The baseline inventory includes a description of the geographical setting and adjacent property owners, access and use of the property by the public, and a description of the existing environmental conditions of the property (geology, hydrology, vegetation, wildlife, cultural resources). There are also photos incorporated into the report that document the condition of the property.

2004 Assessment of the Property

During 2004 there was no NREL activity on the conservation easement property having the potential to degrade the environmental condition of the property. Jefferson County Open Space conducted a site inspection during the summer of 2004. No degraded conditions or other environmental issues were found. Photos taken in 2003 showing the representative areas of the easement lands are included in Section 2 of the report.

Jefferson County Open Space has the responsibility to establish and maintain formal trails on the Conservation Easement Property. The trail plan calls for establishing trails in phases. The first phase began in 2004, with Jefferson County Open Space installing two trails from Denver West Parkway (near the NREL Site Entrance) to the mesa top.