

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Beaver Creek at Gunnison State Wildlife Area

Site Code S.USCOHP*23620

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 504 Site Class PCA
Site Alias None

Network of Conservation Areas (NCA)

<u>NCA Site ID</u>	<u>NCA Site Code</u>	<u>NCA Site Name</u>
-		No Data

LOCATORS

Nation United States Latitude 383630N
State Colorado Longitude 1070419W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
38107-E1	McIntosh Mountain
38107-F1	Squirrel Creek
38107-F2	West Elk Peak

County

Gunnison (CO)

<u>Watershed Code</u>	<u>Watershed Name</u>
14020002	Upper Gunnison

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,800.00 Feet	2,377.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	9,900.00 Feet	3,018.00 Meters

Site Description

Beaver Creek flows through a U-shaped valley between rolling hills of sagebrush uplands. The creek supports a narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) riparian forest with a dense and diverse understory. Understory shrubs include whiplash willow (*Salix lucida* var. *caudata*), alder (*Alnus incana* ssp. *tenuifolia*), Geyer willow (*S. geyeriana*), Woods' rose (*Rosa woodsii*), and chokecherry (*Padus virginiana*). Beaver activity creates a series of ponds. Songbirds are abundant in the trees and shrubs. Grasses in the understory are mainly non-native pasture species but there are large patches of native bluejoint reedgrass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*). The creek was flowing (though at low flow) during August 2002 when many other creeks had dried up due to extended drought conditions. A fish barrier was installed as a cooperative project between the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and the U.S. Forest Service to isolate reintroduced Colorado River cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki pleuriticus*) in the upper part of the creek. However, removal of non-native brook trout was incomplete in the creek and the reintroduced cutthroat trout coexist with brook trout. The site is within the overall habitat range for the globally critically imperiled Gunnison Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*). Wet meadows and riparian areas are important habitat for the Gunnison Sage Grouse as they use these areas for brood rearing (Colorado Sage Grouse Working Group 1997). Livestock grazing has occurred within the watershed but is currently excluded as part of the management for cutthroat trout. A road follows the creek part way up the drainage but is closed to vehicular traffic above the fish barrier. Johnston et al. (2001) state the following: "In the Upper Gunnison River basin most cottonwood stands lack tall or medium shrubs, and have been reduced to cottonwood-Kentucky bluegrass or cottonwood-tree juniper gullies, which have considerably reduced forage, wildlife habitat, and watershed values." The globally imperiled riparian community and the dense and diverse understory in the Beaver Creek site add to the biological importance of this site.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 12/18/2002

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Designer Doyle, G.A.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes a portion of Beaver Creek and the surrounding watershed. The upstream boundary of the site includes Colorado Division of Wildlife fish monitoring stations in the West Elk Peaks Wilderness Area where Colorado River cutthroat have been documented. The boundary represents a preliminary estimate of the area needed to maintain local hydrological conditions. However, it should be noted that the hydrological processes necessary to the riparian area are not fully contained in the site. Any upstream activities along Beaver Creek and its tributaries such as water diversions, impoundments, improper livestock grazing, and development could potentially be detrimental to the hydrology of riparian area. This boundary indicates the minimum area that should be considered for any conservation management plan.

Primary Area 4,396.10 Acres 1,779.05 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site supports a good (B-ranked) example of the globally critically imperiled (G1Q) narrowleaf cottonwood/whiplash willow riparian forest. The "Q" in the Global and State ranks indicate the question as to whether the community is its own taxonomic entity. It may be more closely aligned with the *Populus angustifolia*/Mixed *Salix* species plant association. The site is ranked B3 instead of B2 because of the uncertainty associated with the community global rank. A reintroduced population of the Colorado River cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki pleuriticus*) also exists in the PCA. The globally imperiled (G4T3/S3) Colorado River cutthroat trout is a sensitive species, which is native to the Colorado River basin, and has recently been in decline. Remnant populations still remain in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah.

Other Values Rank No Data

Other Values Comments

No Data

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

No Data

Natural Hazard Comments

No Data

Exotics Comments

No Data

Offsite

No Data

Information Needs

No Data

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

Element			Global	State	Driving
State ID	State Scientific Name	State Common Name	Rank	Rank	Site Rank
21796	<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii pleuriticus</i>	Colorado River Cutthroat Trout	G4T3	S3	No
24808	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Salix (monticola, drummondiana, lucida)</i> Woodland	Narrowleaf Cottonwood/Mixed Willows Montane Riparian Forest	G3	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

Reference ID	Full Citation
164036	Doyle, G.A. 2002. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Field Survey of Critical Wetlands in Gunnison County.
173839	Rocchio J., G Doyle, and R. Rondeau. 2003. Final Report: Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Gunnison County, Colorado. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

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VERSION

Version Date 12/18/2002

Version Author Doyle, G.A.

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