

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Beaver Creek at Last Chance

Site Code S.USCOHP*10208

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1725 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 393914N
State Colorado Longitude 1034128W

Quad Code Quad Name

39103-F5	Last Chance
39103-F6	Last Chance NW
39103-E6	Last Chance SW
39103-E5	Lusto Springs
39103-F7	Cottonwood Valley North
39103-E7	Cottonwood Valley South

County

Washington (CO)
Arapahoe (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

10190013 Beaver

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	4,800.00 Feet	1,463.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	5,200.00 Feet	1,585.00 Meters

Site Description

The site is characterized by gently rolling shortgrass prairie with numerous south to north flowing drainages. Most of the drainages are intermittent but have some ponds or dams which hold water year round. Elevations range from about 4730 feet at the north end of the ranch to about 5200 feet at the southeast end. The ranch is divided into about 100 200-300 acre pastures in which livestock are grazed for short duration (usually 2-3 days). The pastures receive about 40-60 days rest between rotations. About one-half dozen pronghorn were observed on the ranch. The pools or stock ponds have emergent vegetation and support fish and amphibians. Spikerush and bulrush and generally dominate the wettest areas. Uplands and gentle slopes above the creeks are dominated by blue grama-buffalo grass prairie. The benches above the creeks are dominated by alkali sacaton prairie. Mesic meadows near the ranch headquarters are dominated by alkali sacaton prairies which are more moist and have much more dense vegetative cover than the alkali sacaton prairie on benches above other creeks. Some eroded slopes or small breaks above Beaver Creek are sparsely vegetated with blue grama and sideoats grama. There are numerous small stands (<1 acre) of fourwing saltbush/blue grama on benches above Beaver Creek and at the southeast corner of the ranch and some small patches of winterfat/blue grama on benches above the Beaver Creek. The ranch to the east has more extensive and dense patches of fourwing saltbush on rolling hills. Management differences may affect the extent and abundance of the shrublands. Agricultural lands dominate the landscape in this area with the exception of this ranch and a few adjacent ones. The ranch manager stated that much of the land adjacent to the ranch was converted to agricultural use in the last 10-15 years.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

The family has had the ranch for about 50 years. A few small areas had been plowed before the Frasier family came to the ranch.

Cultural Features

No Data

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SITE DESIGN

Site Map P - Partial Mapped Date 09/30/1997

Designer Kettler, S.M.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses most of the local watershed up to ridges or other natural topographic breaks. The hydrologic regime may be important for the continued persistence of the alkali sacaton meadows. The entire watershed is not encompassed in the boundary but may be important at some level for the persistence of the natural communities. Many of the small streams in the area flow through agricultural lands to the south.

Primary Area 59,926.07 Acres 24,251.32 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

Rank is based on a good (B-ranked) occurrence of a globally imperiled (G2?S2?) natural community.

Other Values Rank No Data

Other Values Comments

Pronghorn, a harrier, red-tailed hawks and several species of waterfowl were observed on the ranch. The ranch manager stated that burrowing owls occasionally nest on the ranch. No prairie dogs were observed. The ranch manager stated that he doesn't think they have had prairie dogs on the ranch. The management of the ranch appears to be excellent. A diverse assemblage of plant communities were observed and species diversity seemed to be relatively high on the prairie. This is one of the few areas still dominated by natural vegetation in an area that has mostly been tilled. This could serve as a reference area for restoration projects.

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

The ranch is used for livestock grazing. The ranch manager uses a Holistic Resource Management approach with short, high intensity grazing in the 100+ pastures. This results in 40-60 days rest between rotations. This management approach has been used for the last 12 years.

Natural Hazard Comments

No Data

Exotics Comments

Russian olive, elms, and junipers have been planted as windbreaks around the headquarters. Beaver Creek has some small patches of tamarisk which appear to be dying off. Mesic areas around the creeks have some small patches of cheatgrass, Japanese brome, Kentucky bluegrass, and Canadian thistle. None of the exotics appear to be a management problem at this time.

Offsite

The ranch is mostly surrounded by dryland agriculture except the northeast side which is adjacent to CRP land and several thousand acres of native shortgrass prairie.

Information Needs

The effects of intense short-term grazing on the fourwing saltbush community should be investigated.

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

<u>Element</u>			<u>Global Rank</u>	<u>State Rank</u>	<u>Driving Site Rank</u>
<u>State ID</u>	<u>State Scientific Name</u>	<u>State Common Name</u>			
24979	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i> - <i>Buchloe dactyloides</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Shortgrass Prairie	G4	S2?	No
19429	<i>Sporobolus airoides</i> Southern Plains Herbaceous Vegetation	Great Plains Salt Meadows	G3Q	S3	No
19429	<i>Sporobolus airoides</i> Southern Plains Herbaceous Vegetation	Great Plains Salt Meadows	G3Q	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
159111	Kettler, S.M. 1997. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Field Survey for the Central Shortgrass Prairie Inventory.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

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VERSION

Version Date 09/30/1997

Version Author Kettler, S.M.

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