

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Bellows Creek

Site Code S.USCOFO\*45

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 849 Site Class PCA  
 Site Alias Wagon Wheel Gap  
 Site Alias Phipps Ranch Site

## 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 374834N  
 State Colorado Longitude 1064807W

## Quad Code Quad Name

37106-G7	Wagon Wheel Gap
37106-G6	Pool Table Mountain
37106-G8	Creede
37106-F6	South Fork West
37106-F7	Lake Humphreys
37106-H7	Halfmoon Pass

## County

Mineral (CO)

## Watershed Code Watershed Name

13010001	Rio Grande headwaters
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## SITE DESCRIPTION

<b>Minimum Elevation</b>	8,400.00	<b>Feet</b>	2,560.00	<b>Meters</b>
<b>Maximum Elevation</b>	11,720.00	<b>Feet</b>	3,572.00	<b>Meters</b>

## Site Description

The Bellows Creek site is diverse, with East and West Bellows Creeks, volcanic cliffs near Wagon Wheel Gap, and grasslands along the Rio Grande and above the cliffs. East and West Bellows Creeks are similar in that they are moderate gradient mountain streams in a V-shaped valley. The creeks have a pool-drop nature with beaver ponds common throughout. Both of these streams provide habitat for the Rio Grande cutthroat trout. Along the banks of these streams are high quality examples of montane riparian forest (*Abies lasiocarpa* - *Picea engelmannii* / *Salix drummondiana*) grading into willow carrs as the two streams join and form a low-gradient and wide floodplain. Large cliffs and talus slopes that support some of the rare flora (Smith whitlow grass and black canyon gilia) border both of the creeks. Aside from the small and seldom used trails that parallel the streams, the creeks are unmodified. Below the confluence of East and West Bellows Creeks is a ditch that diverts water into four ponds that are used for maintaining rainbow trout for the fishing resort. This site also includes shortgrass prairie adjacent to the Rio Grande. Although limited in area due to the geology, several rare or imperiled species use this habitat, including the Southern Rocky Mountain cinquefoil and the Gunnison prairie dog. Above the shortgrass prairie, cliffs constituting remnants of the 25 to 30 million year old caldera (Chronic 1980) tower 200 to 2,000 feet above the flats. This dramatic scenery provides essential habitat for the rare plants as well as the vulnerable Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*). Sloping benches break up the cliff line and provide for Arizona fescue (*Festuca arizonica*) grasslands. Above these cliffs and benches a grassland mosaic with Parry's oatgrass (*Danthonia parryi*), Arizona fescue and slimstem muhly (*Muhlenbergia filiculmis*) occupy thousands of acres. Surrounding the montane grasslands is a montane forest of aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), and Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*), with occasional ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) or bristlecone pine (*Pinus aristata*) patches. The primary use of this land is private and public recreation. The La Garita Ranch supports a long-standing private fishing resort, while the adjacent Forest Service lands have general recreation use, including hiking, camping, hunting, and sightseeing (especially for Wheeler Geologic Area). Pool Table Road, a popular two-track road that leads to Wheeler Geologic Area, intersects with the eastern portion of this site. The upper elevations are within the La Garita Wilderness Area.

## Key Environmental Factors

No Data

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## Climate Description

No Data

## Land Use History

No Data

## Cultural Features

No Data

### SITE DESIGN

Site Map P - Partial Mapped Date 12/10/1998

Designer Rondeau, R.J.

## Boundary Justification

Captures from upslope buffer zone to Rio Grande River, including processes maintaining slopes. All known occurrences are included.

Primary Area 9,584.00 Acres 3,878.52 Hectares

### SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B2: Very High Biodiversity Significance

## Biodiversity Significance Comments

The Bellows Creek site contains excellent (A-ranked) examples of the globally rare (G2/S2) and Colorado-restricted Smith whitlow grass (*Draba smithii*) and the globally vulnerable (G3/S3) black canyon gilia (*Gilia penstemonoides*). Small populations of the globally vulnerable (G4T3/S3) Rio Grande cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii virginialis*) were found in both West and East Bellows Creek which has high quality riparian plant communities. The grasslands above the cliffs have exemplary occurrences of montane grasslands, while the grasslands adjacent to the Rio Grande support the globally rare (G3/S1S2) Southern Rocky Mountain cinquefoil (*Potentilla ambigens*).

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 State ID	State Scientific Name	State Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	Driving Site Rank
21624	<i>Draba smithii</i>	Smith whitlow-grass	G2	S2	Yes
22568	<i>Potentilla ambigens</i>	southern Rocky Mountain cinquefoil	G3	S1S2	No
23498	<i>Gilia penstemonoides</i>	Black Canyon gilia	G3	S3	No
40641	<i>Salix planifolia</i> / Mesic Forbs Shrubland [Provisional]	Planeleaf Willow/Mesic Forbs	G4	S4	No
24965	<i>Salix monticola</i> / <i>Carex aquatilis</i> Shrubland	Montane Riparian Willow Carr	G3	S3	No
21624	<i>Draba smithii</i>	Smith whitlow-grass	G2	S2	Yes
23977	<i>Oreocarya weberi</i>	Weber's catseye	G3	S3	No
24543	<i>Festuca arizonica</i> - <i>Muhlenbergia montana</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Montane Grasslands	G3	S2	No
23498	<i>Gilia penstemonoides</i>	Black Canyon gilia	G3	S3	No

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Name			Site Code	S.USCOFO*45		
24905	Bellows Creek	<i>Abies lasiocarpa</i> / <i>Salix drummondiana</i> Forest	Montane Riparian Forest	G5	S4	No
22568		<i>Potentilla ambigens</i>	southern Rocky Mountain cinquefoil	G3	S1S2	No
22568		<i>Potentilla ambigens</i>	southern Rocky Mountain cinquefoil	G3	S1S2	No
24707		<i>Festuca arizonica</i> - <i>Muhlenbergia filiculmis</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Montane Grasslands	GU	S3	No
19228		<i>Danthonia parryi</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Montane Grasslands	G3	S3	No
20205		<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii virginalis</i>	Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout	G4T3	S3	No
21624		<i>Draba smithii</i>	Smith whitlow-grass	G2	S2	No

## REFERENCES

Reference ID	Full Citation
158413	Chronic, H. 1980. Roadside geology of Colorado. Mountain Press Publishing Company, Missoula, Montana. 322 pp.

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

### Additional Topics

No Data

## VERSION

Version Date	12/10/1998
Version Author	Rondeau, R.J.

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