

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Big Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*22896

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1874 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 390934N
State Colorado Longitude 1075707W

Quad Code Quad Name

39107-B8 Collbran
39107-A8 Grand Mesa

County

Mesa (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

14010005 Colorado headwaters-Plateau

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	6,500.00 Feet	1,981.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	9,600.00 Feet	2,926.00 Meters

Site Description

Big Creek is a steep drainage beginning atop of Grand Mesa and draining north into Plateau Creek near Collbran. The floodplain is confined and narrow. Riparian vegetation is dense and consists of narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*), blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), thinleaf alder (*Alnus incana*), and red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) along most of the creek. Gambel's oak (*Quercus gambelii*) and serviceberry (*Amelanchier utahensis*) dominate upland slopes. Ditches and canals transporting water from nearby reservoirs have altered the creek's hydrology. Areas downstream of these intakes have high stream flow throughout the summer. Water quality also appears to be affected by these intakes as indicated by clear stream water above the intakes and cloudy, murky water below. Head gates of several ditches also remove water from Big Creek. There are a few non-native species present, especially near the ditches and head gates, but overall the riparian area is in good condition. Soils along the drainage are derived from alluvium. Soil development is minimal due to the steep, confined nature of the stream channel.

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 12/03/2001

Designer Rocchio, F.J.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries are drawn to encompass the ecological processes believed necessary for long term viability of the elements. These boundaries will ensure continued natural surface flow and thus allow fluvial processes such as flood scouring, lateral flow, and channel meandering, to maintain a dynamic distribution of riparian and wetland plant associations along the drainage.

Primary Area 4,536.38 Acres 1,835.82 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

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Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site supports two good occurrences of globally vulnerable (G3) and apparently globally secure (G4) riparian plant associations. The narrowleaf cottonwood riparian forest (*Populus angustifolia* / *Cornus sericea*) (G4/S3) plant association is found along moderate-size rivers in the montane zone and is a widespread plant association in Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Colorado. Many stands occur in Colorado, but they are highly threatened by improper livestock grazing, development, highway corridors, and stream flow alterations. No large, pristine stands remain in Colorado. The montane riparian forest (*Populus angustifolia* - *Picea pungens* / *Alnus incana*) (G3/S3) is an abundant (>100 stands) association in Colorado and is likely to occur in other Rocky Mountain states. This is a common association of montane valleys. However, only a handful of good condition stands are known, and it is highly threatened by improper livestock grazing, heavy recreational use, and stream flow alterations.

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

<u>Element</u>			<u>Global</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Driving</u>
<u>State ID</u>	<u>State Scientific Name</u>	<u>State Common Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Site Rank</u>
24860	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Cornus sericea</i> Woodland	Cottonwood Riparian Forest	G4	S3	No
24823	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> - <i>Picea pungens</i> / <i>Alnus incana</i> Woodland	Montane Riparian Forests	G3	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
169188	Rocchio, Joe. 2001. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Survey of Critical Wetlands of Mesa County.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 12/03/2001
Version Author Rocchio, F.J.

Disclaimer

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