

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Blue Creek at Curecanti Needle

Site Code S.USCOHP\*23633

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1648 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 382517N  
State Colorado Longitude 1072418W

Quad Code Quad Name  
38107-D4 Curecanti Needle

County  
Gunnison (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name  
14020002 Upper Gunnison

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,400.00	Feet	2,256.00	Meters
Maximum Elevation	8,600.00	Feet	2,621.00	Meters

### Site Description

Blue Creek has cut a narrow, steep canyon through metamorphic gneiss and schist and granite before emptying into the Gunnison River, just downstream of Blue Mesa Reservoir. The floodplain is narrow through much of the site. Near the upstream end of this site, the gradient somewhat moderates and the floodplain begins to widen. Hwy 50 cuts across the site near the upstream end. Access to much of the area is difficult and no trail runs down the canyon. Adjacent slopes are very steep and sporadically covered with spruce-fir. Grazing is occurring near the upstream end of the site. Blue spruce (*Picea pungens*) and alder (*Alnus incana*) dominate the riparian area. Drummond's willow (*Salix drummondiana*), Woods' rose (*Rosa woodsii*), gooseberry (*Ribes* sp.), beaked sedge (*Carex utriculata*), bluejoint reedgrass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), and horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) increase in abundance upstream.

### 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 12/20/2002  
Designer Rocchio, F.J.

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries incorporate an area that will allow natural hydrological processes such as seasonal flooding, sediment deposition, and new channel formation to maintain viable populations of the elements along Blue Creek. The boundaries also provide a small buffer from nearby agriculture fields, roads, and houses where surface runoff may contribute excess nutrients, sediment, and herbicides/pesticides. It should be noted that the hydrological processes necessary to the elements are not fully contained by the site boundaries. Given that the elements are dependent on natural hydrological processes associated with Blue Creek and its tributaries upstream activities such as water diversions, impoundments, improper livestock grazing, and development are detrimental to the hydrology of the riparian area. This boundary indicates the minimum area that should be considered for any conservation management plan.

Primary Area 1,092.20 Acres 442.00 Hectares

## SITE SIGNIFICANCE

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Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

## Biodiversity Significance Comments

High biodiversity significance. This site supports a good (B-ranked) example of the globally vulnerable (G3/S3) blue spruce/thinleaf alder (*Picea pungens*/*Alnus incana*) woodland. This woodland occurs in deep, shaded canyons and narrow valleys along relatively straight stream reaches. It generally forms small patches, but can be continuous for several river miles. This association is known from Wyoming to New Mexico. Fewer than 100 stands exist in Colorado, and very few of these are in pristine condition. This association is threatened by development, road building and maintenance, heavy recreational use, improper livestock grazing, 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>
24518	<i>Picea pungens</i> / <i>Alnus incana</i> Woodland	Montane Riparian Forests	G3	S3	Yes

## REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
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.
173182	Rocchio, J. 2002. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Field Survey of Critical Wetlands in Gunnison County.

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

### Additional Topics

No Data

## VERSION

Version Date 12/20/2002  
Version Author Rocchio, F.J.

## Disclaimer

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