

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Coal Creek at Rattlesnake Mesa

Site Code S.USCOHP\*26916

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2444 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 400609N  
State Colorado Longitude 1074344W

## Quad Code Quad Name

40107-B6 Thornburgh  
40107-A6 Sawmill Mountain  
40107-A7 Rattlesnake Mesa

## County

Rio Blanco (CO)

## Watershed Code Watershed Name

14050005 Upper White

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	6,800.00 Feet	2,072.64 Meters
Maximum Elevation	7,400.00 Feet	2,255.52 Meters

## Site Description

The Coal Creek at Rattlesnake Mesa site is located along County Road 15, south of Yellow Jacket Pass. Coal Creek flows west from the White River National Forest until it is directed south by the shale slopes of Rattlesnake Mesa. Within the site, Coal Creek flows at a gentle grade, 4-8%, creating thick willow carrs and enabling beaver to erect numerous dams. The dominant plants include Booth's willow (*Salix boothii*), Geyer willow (*Salix geyeriana*), Rocky Mountain willow (*Salix monticola*), strap-leaf willow (*Salix eriocephala* var. *ligulifolia*) and alder (*Alnus incana*), with an understory of dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos rotundifolius*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier utahensis*), gooseberry (*Ribes inerme*) and rose (*Rosa woodsii*). Sedges (*Carex utriculata*, *C. praegracilis*, *C. pellita*) and rushes (*Juncus balticus*, *J. saximontanus*, and *Eleocharis palustris*) dominate the wetter areas. The ground is uneven and hummocky due to past flooding and beaver activity. Patches of narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) with box elder (*Acer negundo*) occur, especially where there is a confluence with a major tributary such as Boxelder Draw or Ninemile Draw. The uplands consist of big basin sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *tridentata*.), Gambel's oak (*Quercus gambelii*), pinon pine (*Pinus edulis*) and Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*).

## Key Environmental Factors

Geology is derived from sedimentary rocks of the Cretaceous Age: Williams Fork and Iles Formation and Mancos Shale. Soils consist of well drained loams from Shawa Series and from Jerry-Thornburgh-Rhone complex.

## Climate Description

In the County, summers are warm or hot in most valleys but are much cooler in the mountains. Winters are cold in the mountains. Summer thunderstorms are prevalent; of the total precipitation, 55% usually falls between April and September. Average seasonal snowfall is 74.4 inches, average day time temperature is 45 degrees and average precipitation is 16.5 inches for Meeker between 1948 -2007 (Western Regional Climate Center 2008).

## Land Use History

No Data

## Cultural Features

No Data

## SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 01/29/2008  
Designer Culver, D.R.

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## Boundary Justification

Boundary was delineated to encompass the known occurrence of the willow plant community and potential habitat along the immediate floodplain. This boundary only includes the immediate ecological processes. Only private properties with written permission were surveyed.

Primary Area 725.75 Acres 293.70 Hectares

## SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

## Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site supports an excellent (A-ranked) example of a globally vulnerable (G3/S3) riparian shrub community, *Salix boothii* / mesic forb. This plant community is common in northern Colorado and is typically associated with wetter areas within the floodplain (Carsey et al. 2003).

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

Knapweed and tamarisk are present.

## 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>
24734	<i>Salix boothii</i> / Mesic Forbs Shrubland	Booth's Willow/Mesic Forb	G3	S3	Yes

## REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
160903	Carsey, K., D. Cooper, K. Decker, D. Culver, and G. Kittel. 2003. Statewide wetlands classification and characterization: Wetland plant associations of Colorado. Prepared for Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Denver, CO by Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
195026	Culver, D., J. Huggins and P. Lyon. 2008. Final Report: Significant Biological Resources in Rio Blanco County, CO. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
195034	WRCC. 2008. Western Regional Climate Center. Division of Atmospheric Sciences, Desert Research Institute. Reno, Nevada. < <a href="http://www.wrcc.dri.edu">http://www.wrcc.dri.edu</a> >.

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

## Additional Topics

No Data

## VERSION

Version Date 01/29/2008

Version Author Culver, D.R.

## Disclaimer

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