

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Colorado Springs Airport

Site Code S.USCOHP*7770

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 344 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 384714N
State Colorado Longitude 1044218W

Quad Code Quad Name

38104-G6 Elsmere
38104-G7 Colorado Springs
38104-F6 Fountain

County

Watershed Code Watershed Name

11020003 Fountain

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation 5,700.00 Feet 1,737.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation 6,300.00 Feet 1,920.00 Meters

Site Description

Remnants of tallgrass prairie occur in Colorado as disjuncts from the historic tallgrass prairie that made up the eastern third of the Great Plains. Historically, tallgrass prairie occupied approximately 150 million acres (60 million hectares), but today less than 2% of that remains (Samson and Knopf 1994). Most tallgrass prairie has been converted to cropland or other uses. In Colorado, tallgrass prairie remnants are limited to the plains adjacent to the Front Range where the rainfall and soil is appropriate. Further east of the Front Range, the rainfall diminishes and shortgrass prairie dominates. Very few large patches of tallgrass prairie remain in Colorado. Tallgrass prairie is present in scattered patches in El Paso County both along the foothills and out into the plains in the northern portion of the county. The Colorado Springs Airport site encompasses the largest known occurrence of a big bluestem - prairie sandreed (*Andropogon gerardii* - *Calamovilfa longifolia*) tallgrass prairie in Colorado. The community is most extensive within about two square miles south of the airport between Drennan and Powers roads and occurs in small patches within surrounding areas. Based on a roadside survey, the occurrence appears to be in good condition with relatively few weeds. Other grasses occurring within the matrix of big bluestem and prairie sandreed are little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), needle-and-thread grass (*Hesperostipa comata*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), and purple three-awn (*Aristida purpurea*). Associated with tallgrass prairie are at least five species of skippers (butterflies in the family *Hesperiidae*) known to rely on big bluestem as their primary host plant (Opler 1999). These eastern Great Plains skippers occur, like tallgrass prairie, as disjunct populations along the Colorado Front Range. Though we have no current records of these species within the Colorado Springs Airport site, three skippers tracked by CNHP have been documented in El Paso County (Opler et al. 1995). These include the Dusted Skipper (*Atrytonopsis hianna*), Crossline Skipper (*Polites origines*), and Ottoo Skipper (*Hesperia ottoe*). Future surveys may reveal populations of these rare butterflies.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map P - Partial Mapped Date 05/30/2001

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Designer Doyle, G.A.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the two square mile tallgrass prairie occurrence and smaller scattered tallgrass patches occurring within a matrix of shortgrass prairie and residential and light industrial development. The site includes areas occupied by the Colorado Springs Airport, portions of Peterson Air Force Base, the residential, commercial and light industrial areas to the west and southeast of the Airport, and areas south of the airport recently purchased by Colorado Springs Open Space. The lands to the east are privately owned and actively grazed but have been master planned for development, as have the partially developed lands to the west of the airport. The eastern boundary of the occurrence was surveyed from the road. An onsite survey may result in an expansion of the element occurrence and the site boundary to include areas that support the occurrence but which have not yet been adequately surveyed.

Primary Area 17,489.36 Acres 7,077.72 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site contains a good (B-ranked) example of a state vulnerable (GU/S2) big bluestem - prairie sandreed tallgrass community (*Andropogon gerardii* - *Calamovilfa longifolia*). This is the largest known occurrence of this tallgrass community in Colorado as most patches are highly fragmented.

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>
24925	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i> - <i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Mesic Tallgrass Prairie	GU	S2	Yes

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
171613	Opler, P. A., and A. B. Wright. 1999. A field guide to western butterflies. Second edition. Peterson Field Guides. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Massachusetts. 540 pp.
163337	Opler, Paul A., Harry Pavulaan, and Ray E. Stanford. 2000. August 17-last update. Butterflies of North America. Jamestown, ND: Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center Home Page. Online. Available: http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/bflyusa/bflyusa.htm .
171240	Samson, F. and F. Knopf. 1994. Prairie conservation in North America. Bioscience 44(6):418-421.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

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VERSION

Version Date 05/30/2001

Version Author Doyle, G.A.

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