

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Colorado and Little Grizzly Creeks

Site Code S.USCOHP*28035

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2687 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 403115N
State Colorado Longitude 1063423W

Quad Code Quad Name

40106-E6 Buffalo Pass
40106-D5 Rabbit Ears Peak
40106-E5 Teal Lake

County

Jackson (CO)

| <u>Watershed Code</u> | <u>Watershed Name</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 10180001 | North Platte Headwaters |

SITE DESCRIPTION

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Minimum Elevation | 8,040.00 Feet | 2,450.59 Meters |
| Maximum Elevation | 8,580.00 Feet | 2,615.18 Meters |

Site Description

The Colorado and Grizzly Creeks site is located in North Park, an intermountain glacial basin located in north-central Colorado that is approximately 35 miles wide and 45 miles in length. The dominant features are Colorado and Grizzly Creeks, and their associated tributaries and wetlands. There is over 110 acres of open water on the site and approximately 80 miles of creeks that support a nesting population of Greater Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis tabida*). The creeks and their tributaries host the second largest nesting population of Greater Sandhill Cranes in Colorado (CNHP 2009, Kingery 1998). The broader area, including parts of this site, includes historical records for the boreal toad (*Bufo boreas*) and wood frog (*Rana sylvaticus*). There is also a population of northern leopard frogs at Tiago Lake that was observed in 2007 by the U.S. Forest Service. Plant communities consist of four broad types including riparian, wetland, meadow, and upland. Habitat ranges from emergent wetlands dominated by sedges and willow riparian shrublands at the lowest elevations along the creeks, to uplands dominated by big mountain sagebrush, aspen, lodgepole pine, or aspen - fir forest at higher elevations. The riparian habitat includes willow carrs along portions of the channel and floodplain of both Colorado and Grizzly creeks. There are numerous wetlands that supply critical habitat to wetland dependent species including aquatic birds and amphibians (CNHP 2009). There are irrigated hay meadows along both Colorado and Grizzly creeks that supply nesting habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds. The sagebrush supplies habitat for Greater Sage Grouse.

Key Environmental Factors

The hydrology of the area is the important feature of the site. The riparian areas, wetlands and meadows flood annually from snow melt and spring runoff, creating significant breeding habitat for wetland dependent species including the Sandhill Crane and the amphibians.

Climate Description

The climate is semiarid and is characterized as having short, cool summers followed by long, cold winters. Mean annual air temperature in Walden, 14 miles northeast of the site, is 36.4 degrees Fahrenheit and temperatures range from minus 39 degrees to 90 degrees Fahrenheit, based on the National Weather Bureau's 30-year average data (USFWS 2004). The annual mean rainfall in Walden is 10.83 inches and seventy percent falls as snow with Walden averaging 53 inches of snow per year (USFWS 2004). The highest average monthly precipitation occurs in March, April, May, and August (Lischka et al. 1983).

Land Use History

Prior to 1820, the Ute peoples used North Park to hunt wild game in the summer but moved to lower altitudes in the fall to avoid the severe winters that are common in the mountain park. After 1820, European trappers started to visit the area and miners and prospectors who panned for gold followed them. Since European

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settlement began in earnest in the late 1880's and 90's ranching, including both hay production and cattle grazing, has been the dominant land use at the site.

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes

Mapped Date 11/23/2009

Designer Sovell, J.R.

Boundary Justification

The wetland complex, riparian areas associated with Colorado and Grizzly creeks and their tributaries, and the surrounding meadows all lie within the boundary of this site and are important to the nesting Sandhill Crane population. Field surveys and GIS layers from the Colorado Vegetation Classification Project, and the digital orthophoto quad for Jackson County were used to delineate the boundary. The site protects a large area to provide enough space for Sandhill Cranes that require large home ranges for breeding, nesting, and foraging (Tacha 1992).

Primary Area 23,086.46 Acres

9,342.80 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B5: General Biodiversity Interest

Biodiversity Significance Comments

The site contains a breeding occurrence of the Greater Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*), a species that is rare (G5T4/S2) in the state and a Colorado species of special concern.

Other Values Rank V2 - High values

Other Values Comments

This site protects a wetland complex and extensive riparian habitat that are important to a diverse number of animals including wood frog, northern leopard frog, and numerous waterfowl and shorebirds.

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

Land uses include cattle grazing and hay production.

Natural Hazard Comments

No Data

Exotics Comments

No Data

Offsite

The main offsite activities include livestock grazing and hay production on irrigated pastures. The use of creek flows for hay production that increases wet meadow habitat could benefit the nesting cranes.

Information Needs

No Data

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

| <u>Element</u> | <u>State Scientific Name</u> | <u>State Common Name</u> | <u>Global Rank</u> | <u>State Rank</u> | <u>Driving Site Rank</u> |
|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 23668 | <i>Grus canadensis tabida</i> | Greater Sandhill Crane | G5T4 | S2B,S4N | Yes |

REFERENCES

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Reference ID

Full Citation

| | |
|--------|---|
| 198407 | Culver, D.R., K. Decker, J. Parker, J. Bell, J. Sovell, and J. Huggins. 2010. CNHP Final Report: Identification and Assessment of Important Wetlands within the North Platte Watershed, CO. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO. |
| 162919 | Kingery, H. E., editor. 1998. Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas. Colorado Bird Atlas Partnership and Colorado Division of Wildlife, Denver, CO. 636 pp. |
| 198469 | Lischka, Joseph J., Mark E. Miller, R. Branson Reynolds, Dennis Dahms, Kathy Joyner Mcguire, and David Mcguire. 1983. An Archaeological inventory in North Park, Jackson County, Colorado, Bureau of Land Management report, Denver Colorado, 359 pp. |
| 198314 | NatureServe Explorer (Web Page). Accessed 2010. An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. http://www.natureserve.org/explorer . |
| 169360 | Tacha, T. C., S. A. Nesbitt, and P. A. Vohs. 1992. Sandhill Crane (<i>Grus canadensis</i>). No. 31 in A. Poole, P. Stettenheim and F. Gill, editors. The Birds of North America. The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C. |
| 198470 | USFWS. 2004. Comprehensive conservation plan: Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge. http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning/States/Colorado/colorado.htm |

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 11/23/2009

Version Author Sovell, J.R.

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