

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Dark Canyon

Site Code S.USCOHP*5128

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 23 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 385710N
State Colorado Longitude 1071247W

Quad Code Quad Name

38107-H2 Marcellina Mountain
38107-H3 Paonia Reservoir

County

Gunnison (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

14020004 North Fork Gunnison

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	6,800.00	Feet	2,073.00	Meters
Maximum Elevation	8,600.00	Feet	2,621.00	Meters

Site Description

Anthracite Creek, through this site, is a large third order stream with a continuous gradient of approximately 120 ft./mile. The walls of the canyon are steep, rocky, and bare of vegetation. Talus slopes and cliffs come right down to the river. In spite of the narrowness, a lush strip of riparian vegetation is found throughout the PCA. Vegetation structure along the riparian area is diverse and with dense volume. This site contains an excellent example of a moderately low elevation riparian community. Other than Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) and white-Dutch clover (*Trifolium repens*) very few non-native species were observed along the length of the creek. A trail parallels the creek, but is sometimes well removed from the riparian area. No upstream alterations of hydrology were observed. Riparian vegetation along the creek varies with the amount of flooding and width of floodplain in a given area. Large stands dominated by narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*), blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), and alder (*Alnus incana* ssp. *tenuifolia*) occur in moderately broad valleys on secondary floodplain terraces while narrowleaf cottonwood saplings and sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*) occupy point bars which are flooded more frequently. The floodplain along the creek is active as indicated by a wide-braided channel, cobble bars, and log debris.

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 12/19/2002

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 Anthracite Creek. The boundaries also provide a small buffer from nearby trails where surface runoff may contribute excess nutrients and sediment. 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 Anthracite Creek and its tributaries, upstream activities such as water

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diversions, impoundments, and improper livestock grazing 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 2,395.41 Acres 969.39 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

High biodiversity significance. This site supports a good (B-ranked) example of a globally vulnerable (G3/S3) narrowleaf cottonwood/alder riparian forest (*Populus angustifolia*/*Alnus incana* ssp. *tenuifolia*). This association is known from New Mexico and Colorado. Although not well documented from other states, it is expected to occur throughout the range of narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) in the Rocky Mountains. In Colorado, this is a common community along montane streams, but few high quality examples exist. This association is highly threatened by improper livestock grazing, development and stream flow alterations. The site also supports four common globally apparently secure (G4) riparian plant communities.

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

Hydrological processes originating outside the planning boundary, including water quality, quantity, and timing, must be managed to maintain site viability.

Information Needs

No Data

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

<u>Element State ID</u>	<u>State Scientific Name</u>	<u>State Common Name</u>	<u>Global Rank</u>	<u>State Rank</u>	<u>Driving Site Rank</u>
24738	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Salix exigua</i> Woodland	Narrowleaf Cottonwood Riparian Forests	G4	S4	No
24823	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> - <i>Picea pungens</i> / <i>Alnus incana</i> Woodland	Montane Riparian Forests	G3	S3	No
24832	<i>Abies lasiocarpa</i> - <i>Picea engelmannii</i> - <i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Lonicera involucrata</i> Forest	Montane Riparian Forest	G4	S3	No
24541	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Alnus incana</i> Woodland	Montane Riparian Forest	G3	S3	Yes
24823	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> - <i>Picea pungens</i> / <i>Alnus incana</i> Woodland	Montane Riparian Forests	G3	S3	No

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 12/18/2002
Version Author Rocchio, F.J.

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