

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Decker Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*10667

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 459 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 382316N
State Colorado Longitude 1060134W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
38105-C8	Bushnell Peak
38106-D1	Poncha Pass
38105-D8	Wellsville
38106-C1	Whale Hill

County

Saguache (CO)
Chaffee (CO)

<u>Watershed Code</u>	<u>Watershed Name</u>
13010003	San Luis
11020001	Arkansas Headwaters

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation - Feet - Meters
Maximum Elevation - Feet - Meters

Site Description

"The Poncha Pass GUSG population is located in Saguache County and is centered about 10 miles northwest of Villa Grove, Colorado. The known population distribution is in the sagebrush habitat from the summit of Poncha Pass extending south for about 8 miles on either side of U.S. Highway 285; the estimated range of the population is about 20,400 acres and the area varies in elevation from about 8,020 - 9,020 feet. The vegetation is dominated by mountain big sagebrush, with some black sagebrush and oakbrush, especially in drainages. Sagebrush in this area is extensive and continuous with very little fragmentation. Vegetation inventory data illustrate that sagebrush habitat quality throughout the Poncha Pass area is adequate for GUSG (Nehring and Apa 2000). San Luis Creek runs through the area, providing a year-round water source and lush, wet meadow riparian habitat" (GSGRSC 2005). The Decker Creek site is comprised of rolling hills dominated by a sagebrush shrubland (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *vaseyana*), and is part of the larger intact sagebrush habitat found around Poncha Pass. The sagebrush habitat in Saguache County is primarily limited to this area. This shrub rangeland exists on the western lower slopes of the northern Sangre de Cristo mountain range. San Luis Creek drains the area from the north, and Decker Creek drains from the east. This area is important habitat for a small population of Gunnison Sage Grouse, which specialize on sagebrush lands. Although a natural population existed, the Division of Wildlife has since augmented this population with approximately 150 individuals in 1971-72. The primary use of this site is livestock grazing.

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 04/20/2006
Designer Gaughan, C.R.

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Boundary Justification

The site boundary was provided by CDOW (NDIS overall range) drawn to encompass the entire nesting area, including known leks, of the Gunnison Sage Grouse and surrounding habitat containing potential or known roost and nesting locations. (CDOW 2005).

Primary Area 20,407.09 Acres 8,258.49 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site contains a poor (D-ranked) occurrence of the Gunnison Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*), which is critically imperiled on a global scale (G1/S1). This location supports the only population of Gunnison Sage Grouse in the San Luis Valley. The grouse is restricted to a small portion of west central Colorado in its global distribution. The population at this site is small in terms of both numbers of grouse and area of occupied habitat when compared to occurrences in the Gunnison Valley; however, outer populations are critical to the core population for genetic augmentation.

Other Values Rank No Data

Other Values Comments

No Data

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

"The BLM manages 48% of the area, the USFS manages 26%, 24% is in private holdings, and 2% is managed by the Colorado State Land Board. Most of the area is managed for domestic livestock grazing, wildlife, recreation, and watershed values. Several permanent residences are established in the region, most of which are within a mile of Highway 285, and several ranch houses are scattered throughout the area" (GSGRSC 2005). The primary use of this site is livestock grazing. Several two-track roads cross this site and Hwy 285 is near the western boundary.

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 Rank</u>	<u>State Rank</u>	<u>Driving Site Rank</u>
<u>State ID</u>	<u>State Scientific Name</u>	<u>State Common Name</u>			
17758	<i>Centrocercus minimus</i>	Gunnison Sage Grouse	G1	S1	Yes

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
194308	Colorado Division of Wildlife. 2005. Gunnison Sage Grouse Overall Range. Fort Collins, CO. GIS data online at http://ndis.nrel.colostate.edu/ftp/index.html
194272	Gunnison Sage-grouse Rangewide Steering Committee (GSGRSC). 2005. Gunnison sage -grouse rangewide conservation plan. Colorado Division of Wildlife, Denver, Colorado, USA.
194309	Nehring, J.A. and A.D. Apa. 2000. Gunnison sage-grouse population augmentation to Poncha Pass, Saguache County and Sims Mesa, Montrose County, Spring 2000. Unpublished report to the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado, USA.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

Original site design by Rondeau, R.J. 1998-01-26.

VERSION

Version Date 04/20/2006

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Version Author Gaughan, C.R.

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