

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Eagle Rock Ranch at Chalk Bluffs

Site Code S.USCOHP\*6176

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 764 Site Class PCA  
Site Alias Eagle Rock Ranch

## 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 405619N  
State Colorado Longitude 1043726W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
40104-H5	Chalk Bluffs East
40104-H6	Chalk Bluffs West

County  
Weld (CO)

<u>Watershed Code</u>	<u>Watershed Name</u>
10190008	Lone Tree-Owl
10190009	Crow

## SITE DESCRIPTION

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

### Site Description

The Eagle Rock Ranch occupies 29,000 acres on the high plains of Colorado. The landscape is characterized by rolling grasslands that are broken by steep sandstone bluffs known as the Chalk Bluffs. The bluffs support several rare or vulnerable plant species and are dominated by mat-forming cushion plants. The bluffs and cliff sides provide nesting sites for several hawks, falcons, and eagles. Rolling to flatter areas are mostly dominated by a mixed-grass or mid-grass or mid-grass prairie. The dominant plant association is *Stipa-comata-Bouteloua gracilis* grasslands with many acres in good condition. The steep slopes and bluffs support *Cercocarpus montanus*/*Stipa* shrublands, also in good to excellent condition. At the bases of many bluffs and ridges is a plant community dominated by *Bouteloua curtipendula* and *Schizachrium scoparium* with *Yucca glauca* common and occasional *Pinus ponderosa*. Porcupines have killed numerous pine trees and browsed on almost every tree to some level. Two primary streams dissect the ranch, Geary Creek and Simpson Creek, supporting riparian communities dominated by *Salix amygdaloides*. One large sedge-dominated wetland occurs in the floodplain of Geary Creek. Several reservoirs exist on the creeks, one supporting populations of state vulnerable fishes. The Eagle Rock Ranch is an active cattle ranch with a ranchhouse/home and several outbuildings near Eagle Rock Spring. Generally, cattle are grazed on the ranch from May to October. Numerous windmills provide water to livestock on other parts of the ranch. The cattle seem to concentrate in the riparian areas and around the windmills and have degraded the plant communities of those areas. This has left much of the uplands on the ranch in good condition.

### Key Environmental Factors

No Data

### Climate Description

No Data

### Land Use History

Plains Indians occupied the high plains of Colorado and left few permanent monuments. We know that traders first occupied the area in the early 19th Century with little observable record. In the late 1800's, Ben Ketcham occupied the ranch, beginning its long history of livestock production. Mark Cox arrived in 1908, soon thereafter marrying May Ketcham and forming the family business. Descendants of Mark and May continue operating the ranch today. The ranch is observably grazed, but is maintained not as short grass, but rather as mid-grass prairie. A few areas have apparently been plowed for dry wheat, but have now been replanted to grasses.

### Cultural Features

No Data

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## SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 11/17/1996

Designer Kettler, S.M.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include large populations of vulnerable plants, good condition parts of the plant communities, and the ferruginous hawk nest site and is considered a large enough area to allow simulation of natural processes of grazing and fire. Little specific information is available to confirm that the boundary adequately encompasses the amount of land necessary for this type of fire and grazing management.

Primary Area 12,818.62 Acres 5,187.53 Hectares

## SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

### Biodiversity Significance Comments

The site contains an A-ranked (excellent) occurrence of a globally vulnerable (G3S2) element, a fair example of a globally imperiled (G2S2) natural community, and a concentration of state-rare species, many in excellent condition.

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>State Scientific Name</u>	<u>State Common Name</u>	<u>Global Rank</u>	<u>State Rank</u>	<u>Driving Site Rank</u>
17016	<i>Orophaca triphylla</i>	plains milkvetch	G5	S1	No
17096	<i>Oreocarya cana</i>	mountain cat's-eye	G5	S2	No
24967	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium - Bouteloua curtipendula</i> Western Great Plains Herbaceous Vegetation	Great Plains Mixed Grass Prairies (Sandstone/Gravel Breaks)	G3	S2	Yes
18877	<i>Aletes nuttallii</i>	dog parsley	G3	S1	Yes
18877	<i>Aletes nuttallii</i>	dog parsley	G3	S1	Yes
23117	<i>Bolophyta alpina</i>	Wyoming feverfew	G3	S3	Yes
19973	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	Ferruginous Hawk	G4	S3B,S4N	No
24787	<i>Stipa comata - Bouteloua gracilis</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Montane Grasslands	G5	S2S3	No
24531	<i>Cercocarpus montanus / Hesperostipa comata</i> Shrubland	Mixed Foothill Shrublands	G2	S2	Yes

## REFERENCES

Reference ID Full Citation

- No Data

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

### Additional Topics

No Data

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## VERSION

Version Date 11/17/1996

Version Author Kettler, S.M.

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