

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name East Chico Basin Ranch

Site Code S.USCOHP*22430

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1042 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 383255N
State Colorado Longitude 1041720W

Quad Code Quad Name
38104-E3 Hanover SE

County
El Paso (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name
11020005 Upper Arkansas-Lake Meredith

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation 5,220.00 Feet 1,591.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation 5,320.00 Feet 1,622.00 Meters

Site Description

This PCA includes islands of shortgrass prairie surrounded by rolling sandhills and sand sage prairie. These islands are poorly drained and relatively flat, though not as flat as the playas to the north and east. Soils are less sandy than in the surrounding area and support vegetation similar to that of playas, with buffalograss (*Buchloe dactyloides*) as the dominant species, and prairie coneflower (*Ratibida tagetes*) also prevalent. Overall, the shortgrass prairie areas have the appearance of extremely large playas due to the similar physiography and vegetation, but may be functionally different from other playas in El Paso County. This area supports several large, excellent occurrences of the globally vulnerable plains ambrosia (*Ambrosia linearis*) in the shortgrass basins of the PCA. The western occurrence is located in a basin at the terminus of an ephemeral drainage visible on satellite imagery. This is the largest known natural occurrence of plains ambrosia, with an estimated population size of at least 20,000 individuals. Cover of plains ambrosia throughout the occurrence ranges from nearly 0 to 25 percent throughout most of the occurrence in unaltered areas. Cover exceeds 50 percent in the vicinity of the road, corral, and water tank area within the occurrence, where plains ambrosia is co-dominant with kochia (*Bassia sieversiana*), an annual weed. Such areas, however, make up a very small portion of the occurrence. To the east is another excellent occurrence of the plains ambrosia, in an extremely large playa basin. The plains ambrosia is concentrated around the rim of the playa and in a small slight depression in the center. Small patches of buffalograss are also found here but with large areas of bare ground and patchy blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and three awn (*Aristida purpurea*). Other plant species observed in the PCA were yucca (*Yucca glauca*), rocky mountain bee plant (*Cleome serrulata*), alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*) and locoweed (*Oxytropis* sp.) and a native thistle (*Cirsium* sp.). A large prairie dog town also resides in the western basin, and may be excellent Mountain Plover breeding habitat. Mountain Plovers have been observed within the PCA.

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 06/15/2001
Designer Anderson, D.G.

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Boundary Justification

The boundary of the PCA encompasses the known occurrences of plains ambrosia in the Chico Basin Ranch and the surrounding area. Additional surrounding area is included due to the presence of apparently suitable habitat and topography for the plains ambrosia.

Primary Area 3,120.21 Acres 1,262.71 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This PCA contains two excellent (A-ranked) occurrences of the globally vulnerable (G3S3) plains ambrosia (*Ambrosia linearis*).

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>
23164	<i>Ambrosia linearis</i>	plains ragweed	G3	S3	Yes
23164	<i>Ambrosia linearis</i>	plains ragweed	G3	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
-	No Data

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 06/15/2001
Version Author Anderson, D.G.

Disclaimer

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