

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Findley Gulch

Site Code S.USCOHP*13494

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 21 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 380714N
State Colorado Longitude 1061131W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
38106-B2	Klondike Mine
38106-A2	Saguache

County

Saguache (CO)

<u>Watershed Code</u>	<u>Watershed Name</u>
13010004	Saguache

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,800.00	Feet	2,377.00	Meters
Maximum Elevation	8,600.00	Feet	2,621.00	Meters

Site Description

The Findley Gulch site is approximately 2 miles west of Saguache and mostly north of Saguache Creek. For the most part, it is a shortgrass prairie, bisected by an ephemeral stream, and surrounded by montane foothills. The shortgrass prairie is dominated by blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*). Mountain plovers (*Charadrius montanus*) were found on the bare ground within the grassland. Findley Gulch, an ephemeral stream, cuts through the grassland and supports a linear strip of greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) with salt meadow grass (*Distichlis stricta*). This habitat is important for a San Luis Valley endemic subspecies of Ord's kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys ordii montanus*). The park-like area included in this site is bordered to the west by steep to vertical rock outcrops. Pinyon pine-juniper (*Pinus edulis-Juniperus monosperma*) woodlands dominate the foothills surrounding the site. Only on the south does the grassland merge with hay meadows of Saguache Creek. For the most part, the entire site is free from non-native plants, although several two track roads cross the site and provide habitat for some non-natives, e.g., henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*) at Garcia Spring. The Findley Gulch site is very dry for much of the year, and there are a few springs that have been developed to help support the cattle that use the area in the summer. Moderate levels of cattle grazing have helped keep the grass in the site very short in areas, and maintain a good portion of bare ground. Both these characteristics are favored by the mountain plovers that nest here (Fritz Knopf, pers. comm.). This site extends for approximately 7,000 acres, and ranges in elevation from 7,800 to 8,600 feet (2,400 - 2,600 meters).

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map P - Partial Mapped Date 02/16/1998
Designer Wunder, M.B.

Boundary Justification

The majority of the basin area that supports the winterfat grasslands which in turn support the nesting plovers is encompassed within the site. There is a strong possibility that plovers nest in other areas of similar habitat

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nearby, in which case the site boundaries could expand to include those other areas. A more thorough inventory would help to validate or discredit this hypothesis. The boundaries were drawn using 1:40,000 infrared aerial photos and a satellite image at a scale of 1:100,000.

Primary Area 6,923.69 Acres 2,801.93 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site includes two elements of concern, a small occurrence of mountain plover and a winterfat/blue grama grassland. This grassland type is very unusual in Colorado and represents the largest known occurrence in Colorado. This site supports a small population (2 adults, and 2 juvenile), and the only documented occurrence, of breeding mountain plovers in Saguache County. The presence of Mountain plovers at this site have been reported for several years (CNHP 1997). The mountain plover is globally rare, and has been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The winterfat grassland community present at this site is the largest known for Colorado. This grassland is more common in New Mexico, although seldom forms 7,000 acre stands (Esteban Muldavin, pers. comm.).

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>
24851	<i>Krascheninnikovia lanata</i> / <i>Pascopyrum smithii</i> - <i>Bouteloua gracilis</i> Dwarf-shrub Herbaceous Vegetation	Western Slope Grasslands	G4	SU	No
18609	<i>Charadrius montanus</i>	Mountain Plover	G2	S2B	Yes
18609	<i>Charadrius montanus</i>	Mountain Plover	G2	S2B	Yes

REFERENCES

Reference ID Full Citation

- No Data

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 02/16/1998

Version Author Wunder, M.B.

Disclaimer

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