

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Ford Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*10853

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 490 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 381357N
State Colorado Longitude 1061225W

Quad Code Quad Name

38106-C3	Chester
38106-B2	Klondike Mine
38106-B3	Lake Mountain NE
38106-C2	Bonanza

County

Saguache (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

13010004	Saguache
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SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	8,450.00	Feet	2,576.00	Meters
Maximum Elevation	11,225.00	Feet	3,421.00	Meters

Site Description

Ford Creek site includes several confluent streams, and their riparian areas, which pass through semi-arid rangeland north of Saguache Creek. Within the site, the riparian shrub canopy is continuous and stands of thin-leaf alder/mesic forb (*Alnus incana*/mesic forb) occur along the creek at lower elevations; willows (*Salix* spp.) are also common on the creek floodplain. Part of this site is included in the Bureau of Land Management riparian study area established in 1988, and appears to be recovering from past heavy livestock grazing. The historical grazing regime has caused channel entrenchment and stands of non-native grasses, such as Kentucky bluegrass and bromes (*Poa pratensis*, *Bromus* spp.). Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) are present and are an important component of this ecosystem. Their ponds expand the wet floodplain habitat and capture fine textured sediment which facilitates meadow formation. Dry shortgrass meadow dominated by blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) occur on surrounding toeslopes and thick stands of Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*) and juniper (*Juniperis monosperma*) occur on the higher slopes of the valley. The stream channel is comprised largely of fine textured substrates in the lower reaches, and banks are armored with dense herbaceous vegetation. The upper reaches increase in gradient and cobbly substrates are present. The site is approximately 3,000 acres in size and ranges in elevation from 8,450 to 11,225 feet (2,575-3,425 m).

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 02/15/1998
Designer Kittel, G.M.

Boundary Justification

This boundary is drawn to include the riparian complex that supports the elements of biodiversity found at the site. It is designed to 1) protect the occurrences from direct impacts such as trampling or other surface

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disturbances; and 2) to include the immediate slopes which contribute surface and groundwater flow to the creek and riparian ecosystem. The boundary was delineated after 1997 field visits, using 1988 NAPP 1:40,000 aerial photograph and satellite imagery at a scale of approximately 1:100,000.

Primary Area 3,053.18 Acres 1,235.58 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site contains a good occurrence of a plant community which is globally vulnerable (G3). The biodiversity rank has been lowered due to the questionable taxonomy of the element. This plant association occurs throughout the Rocky Mountains of Colorado (Cooper and Cottrell 1990, Johnston 1987, Kittel and Lederer 1993, Kittel et al. 1994, Kittel et al. 1995, Kittel et al. 1996, Kettler and McMullen 1996, Richard et al. 1996, Colorado Natural Heritage Program 1997). This association was once common and widespread, but is now declining. This type is rarely found in good condition without non-native species in the undergrowth. There are only 10 documented occurrences of this plant association in Colorado. A total of 60 occurrences are estimated for the entire state. The Rio Grande cutthroat trout's range once included the entire Rio Grande and Pecos River watersheds, and possibly the upper Canadian River as well (Trotter 1987). In Colorado, the species occupies less than 1% of its former range (Alves 1996), and wild, genetically pure stock populations are especially imperiled. Artificial habitat including wells, farm ponds, and extensive canal systems as well as human activities including dewatering, fishing and stocking, transbasin diversions, release of domestic sewage, stream channelization, and agricultural chemical applications have greatly modified the original aquatic ecosystem of the San Luis Valley (Zuckerman 1984). These modifications may have contributed directly to the decline in range of the native fishes of the Rio Grande drainage. Free-flowing streams with good quality water, healthy banks, and streamside vegetation within the upper Rio Grande watershed are vital habitat for this subspecies of trout.

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>
20205	<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii virginalis</i>	Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout	G4T3	S3	No
20205	<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii virginalis</i>	Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout	G4T3	S3	No
24645	<i>Alnus incana</i> / Mesic Forbs Shrubland	Thinleaf Alder/Mesic Forb Riparian Shrubland	G3	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

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

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 02/15/1998

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Version Author Kittel, G.M.

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