

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Fremont Fort

Site Code S.USCOHP8*3432

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1337 Site Class PCA
Site Alias Combs 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 390714N
State Colorado Longitude 1042429W

Quad Code Quad Name

39104-A4 Peyton
39104-B4 Bijou Basin

County

El Paso (CO)
Elbert (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

11020011 Big Sandy
10190011 Bijou

SITE DESCRIPTION

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

Site Description

A big bluestem - prairie sandreed tallgrass community occurs on the upper slopes, drainage swales, and saddles surrounding the main rock outcrops of the Fremont Fort and associated geologic formations. The community primarily occurs on areas with deeper soils, and is often adjacent to or interspersed with open stands of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). Large portions of the site are managed as a private game hunting preserve and likely also contain additional stands of this community type. Richardson's alum-root (*Heuchera richardsonii*) occurs on the steep and rocky approaches to the top of the mesa. The Castle Rock conglomerate and the Dawson Formation are unique to this part of central Colorado and are two of the few types of Tertiary rocks found east of the mountains along the Front Range (von Ahlefeldt 1991). Von Ahlefeldt (1991) described the area as an interesting transition from Cretaceous to Tertiary rocks, with corresponding edaphic factors unique to the Front Range, possibly explaining the unusual vegetation. Precipitation averages approximately 18 inches per year near the South Platte-Arkansas divide, about 75% of which falls from April to September (Savonen 1986). Von Ahlefeldt described the vegetation of the Bijou Springs Ranch as both representative of the Black Forest and also unique because of the unique geology. She identified 10 major vegetation types in the Black Forest (Palmer Divide) area during her Ph.D research of which 9 were present at the Bijou Springs Ranch.

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 10/25/2000
Designer Stevens, J.E.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the tallgrass prairie and adjacent habitat areas that form the overall habitat of this type. This includes the mesa tops and upslope areas that provide runoff and infiltration to the existing

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stands and areas likely to also support this community.

Primary Area 1,088.57 Acres 440.53 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site contains a good (B-ranked) occurrence of a state imperiled (GU/S2) tallgrass prairie plant community. The *Andropogon gerardii* - *Calamovilfa longifolia* prairie has only been reported from El Paso County. Similar plant communities have been seen in Douglas County (S. Kettler - personal observation) but are generally very small (usually less than 5 acres) and degraded by invasion of exotic plant species. A similar plant association is reported from the nearby area by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (SCS) as the Sandy Foothill range site (#210) and from the Air Force Academy (ESCO Associates, Inc. 1992). The occurrence here is in good condition although fairly small and seems to have escaped heavy grazing in recent times. Surveys within the elk preserve may extend this occurrence or discover other high quality communities. This site also contains an excellent (A-ranked) occurrence of the state rare (G5/S1) plant, Richardson's alum-root (*Heuchera richardsonii*).

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

Adjoining property to the south has potential habitat for the grassland community, but is heavily grazed. Adjacent land use and management practices strongly influence the core area weed population. Opportunities to change management practices on adjacent lands with potential habitat should be sought. Adjacent land management improvements will decrease the weed problems on the core site, but may also ultimately increase the size and viability of the original occurrence.

Information Needs

Several days of field work to look for other community elements, and general floral and fauna survey. Information on land use history on the ranch. Potential for skipper butterflies.

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>			
24925	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i> - <i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Mesic Tallgrass Prairie	GU	S2	Yes
20486	<i>Heuchera richardsonii</i>	Richardson alum-root	G5	S1	No

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
162855	Doyle, G.A., J. Gionfriddo, D. Anderson, and D. Culver. 2000. Final Report: Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in El Paso and Pueblo Counties, Colorado. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
166624	Savonen, C.A. 1986. The Natural History of West Bijou creek, Colorado. Unpublished report for the Field Naturalist Program.
167490	Stevens, J.E. 2000. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Field Inventory of El Paso County.
160154	Von Ahlefeldt, J. 1991. The Landscape Ecology of the Palmer Divide, CO. Unpublished thesis submitted to Department of Biology, Fort Collins, Co.

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ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 08/21/2001

Version Author Doyle, G.A.

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