

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Henson Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*26738

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2420 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 380109N
 State Colorado Longitude 1072252W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
38107-A4	Uncompahgre Peak
38107-A3	Lake City

County

Hinsdale (CO)

<u>Watershed Code</u>	<u>Watershed Name</u>
14020002	Upper Gunnison

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	8,680.00 Feet	2,645.66 Meters
Maximum Elevation	9,600.00 Feet	2,926.08 Meters

Site Description

The site is situated along middle and lower reaches of Henson Creek, a third order tributary of the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River. The wetland communities form a narrow riparian zone confined to a few meters along stream banks by the road and steep adjacent slopes. General geology of the drainage and surrounding uplands consists of igneous rocks of the Tertiary Age, specifically, ash-flow tuff of the main volcanic sequence and intra-ash flow andesitic lavas (Steven 1974, Tweto 1979). The site occurs in an active mining area of the mineral belt and upstream reaches of the drainage have been mined extensively. The BLM manages the largest portion of the Henson Creek watershed and is actively working toward reclamation of abandoned mines in the area. Two dams associated with mining operations along the drainage have been breached and no longer impact hydrology. Soils consist of alluviums of silt and clay over sandy clay loams. Stream bottoms consist of small to medium cobbles with intermittent boulders. Vegetation forms a dense layer of tall shrubs along narrow riparian areas and patches of open floodplain. The shrub layer is dominated by thinleaf alder (*Alnus incana*) and Drummond's willow (*Salix drummondiana*). Other tall shrubs interspersed throughout include greenleaf willow (*Salix lucida* ssp. *caudata*) and coyote willow (*Salix exigua*). Narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) and blue spruce (*Picea pungens*) form a consistent canopy layer along upper reaches of the drainage above the Henson Mine. Canopy cover is intermittent along lower reaches. Understory cover is sparse in most areas including low cover of short shrubs and mesic herbaceous species. Short shrubs include whitestem gooseberry (*Ribes inerme*) and Wood's rose (*Rosa woodsii*). California nettle (*Urtica dioica* ssp. *gracilis*), bluejoint (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), tall fringed bluebells (*Mertensia ciliata*), common cowparsnip (*Heracleum maximum*), and field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) are consistent in low cover throughout riparian reaches. Surrounding uplands are dominated by mixed forests and woodlands of Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*), blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Disturbances in the drainage include past mining activity, adjacent road, development on private property, and recreational uses including OHV use, fishing, camping, hiking, and biking. Although there is extensive anthropogenic disturbance in the watershed, riparian vegetation is vigorous. Exotic species found in disturbed areas include Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), and Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*).

Key Environmental Factors

Key environmental factors influencing species composition of the wetlands are montane elevation, seasonal flooding, free-flowing hydrology, and moderate gradient.

Climate Description

Climate and weather tend to follow typical patterns of the San Juan Mountains of Colorado being generally xeric throughout the year with warm spring weather causing snowmelt flooding, wet summers, and a late summer "monsoon" season.

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Land Use History

Watershed contains multiple town sites from past mining activity including Capitol City and Henson, both founded during the mining booms of the late 1800's as well as many old homesites from past settlers. The road along Henson Creek has been used and maintained since this time.

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 10/15/2006
 Designer Jones, J.R.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries include 1,000 ft of uplands to buffer from impacts to site condition (Keate 2004). This buffer accounts for natural ecological processes important for the maintenance of wetland elements such as seasonal flooding, groundwater recharge, surface flows, and sediment deposition. However, the boundary does not include entire watershed or all ecological processes necessary to the maintenance of the site and activities within the watershed such as deforestation, improper livestock grazing and recreational use, development, or water diversion could be detrimental to the site.

Primary Area 2,020.09 Acres 817.50 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site is drawn for an excellent (A-ranked) occurrence of the globally vulnerable (G3/S3) thinleaf alder - Drummond's willow tall shrubland (*Alnus incana* - *Salix drummondiana* shrubland) and a good (B-ranked) occurrence of the globally vulnerable (G3/S3) narrowleaf cottonwood - blue spruce / thinleaf alder riparian woodland (*Populus angustifolia* - *Picea pungens* / *Alnus incana* woodland). There are also extant occurrences of the globally imperiled (G2/S2) small-winged sedge (*Carex stenoptila*).

Other Values Rank V2 - High values

Other Values Comments

Site provides aesthetic quality and multiple recreational uses to an area with a significant tourism industry important to the local economy. In addition, the site provides ecological values including erosion control, habitat, and remediation of environmental toxins from mining.

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

Predominant land use is recreation. Other land uses include grazing along upper reaches and various private uses including development throughout the drainage.

Natural Hazard Comments

Natural hazards present in the drainage include avalanche danger, spring flooding, and falling rocks.

Exotics Comments

Exotic species are common along the drainage due to extensive use and an adjacent road. Exotics do not dominate or create large monocultures in any areas. Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), and Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) were observed at the site in disturbed areas.

Offsite

Off-site considerations include mining, roadway use and maintenance, and grazing.

Information Needs

No Data

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

Element State ID	State Scientific Name	State Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	Driving Site Rank
24743	<i>Alnus incana</i> - <i>Salix drummondiana</i> Shrubland	Montane Riparian Shrubland	G3	S3	Yes
24823	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> - <i>Picea pungens</i> / <i>Alnus incana</i> Woodland	Montane Riparian Forests	G3	S3	Yes
20938	<i>Carex stenoptila</i>	small-winged sedge	G2	S2	Yes
20938	<i>Carex stenoptila</i>	small-winged sedge	G2	S2	No

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REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
192813	Keate, Nancy S. 2004. Bibliography of Impacts to Wetlands II - Draft - revised - Jan 2004. Utah Wetland Outreach, Wildlife Resources, Utah Department of Natural Resources.
194565	Neid, S.L. and J.R. Jones. 2008. Final Report: Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Hinsdale County. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
194566	Steven, T.A. 1974. Geologic Map of the Durango Quadrangle, Southwestern Colorado. United States Geological Survey, Department of Interior, Reston, VA.
192747	Tweto, O. 1979. Geologic Map of Colorado, 1:500,000. United States Geological Survey, Department of Interior, and Geologic Survey of Colorado, Denver, CO.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 10/15/2006

Version Author Jones, J.R.

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