

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Houselog Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*10852

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 510 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 380427N
State Colorado Longitude 1062226W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
38106-A4	Lake Mountain
38106-A3	Laughlin Gulch

County

Saguache (CO)

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

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	8,770.00 Feet	2,673.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	9,411.00 Feet	2,868.00 Meters

Site Description

The Houselog Creek site includes 578 acres of riparian and valley bottom wetlands in a narrow canyon in the middle reaches of Houselog Creek. Site elevations range from 8770 to 9411 feet (2673 to 2870 meters). The canyon harbors excellent quality Bebb's willow (*Salix bebbiana*) and thin-leaf alder (*Alnus incana*) riparian shrublands which form a nearly continuous canopy approaching 20 feet in height. A subcanopy of several species of willows (*Salix* spp.), shrubby cinquefoil (*Pentaphylloides floribunda*), common juniper (*Juniperus communis*), wild rose (*Rosa woodsii*), and gooseberry (*Ribes inerme*) is also present. The understory is composed of a very species rich assemblage of native forbs, sedges, and grasses. Particularly abundant species include beaked sedge (*Carex utriculata*), water sedge (*Carex aquatilis*), tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), meadow rue (*Thalictrum fendleri*), shooting star (*Dodecatheon pulchellum*), and bluebells (*Mertensia ciliata*). Moist canyon toeslopes support a mesic forest of aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), which further increases the habitat diversity of the floodplain area. Grazing impacts appear minor, possibly because the steep walls of the canyon or dense alder thickets inhibit livestock access. Upstream and downstream areas of the watershed, however, are severely impacted. Forest Road 41G abuts the site on the western margin.

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 02/14/1998
Designer Sarr, D.A.

Boundary Justification

This boundary is drawn to 1) protect the riparian occurrences from direct impacts such as trampling, overuse, or other surface disturbances; and 2) to include the immediate slopes which contribute surface and groundwater flow to the wetlands. Upstream portions of Houselog Creek were excluded because no CNHP elements had been recorded there as of the conclusion of the 1997 field survey. Although not contained in the present site boundary, the contributory upper watershed has the potential to affect this site as well as the

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Saguache Creek site located just downstream. The site boundary was based on initial aerial photo analysis, a field visit by a CNHP wetland ecologist, and subsequent validation with satellite imagery.

Primary Area 578.22 Acres 234.00 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site contains two montane riparian shrubland communities, both globally imperiled. This site supports excellent examples of a Bebb's willow (*Salix bebbiana*) montane willow carr and a thin-leaf alder/mesic forb (*Alnus incana*/mesic forb) riparian shrubland. These communities are contiguous and often form a diverse mosaic of habitats along Houselog Creek. The herbaceous understory accompanying these associations is among the most species-rich in the Closed Basin watershed. The thinleaf alder/mesic forb plant association is widely distributed in the cordillera of the Western U.S. Similar types occur in Alaska (Vioreck et al. 1992), Oregon (Kovalchik 1987), Nevada (Manning and Padgett 1995), Utah (Padgett et al. 1989), Montana (Hansen et al. 1995), Idaho, Wyoming (Youngblood et al. 1985, Jones 1992), and Colorado (Cooper and Cottrel 1990, Johnston 1987, Colorado Natural Heritage Program 1997). It is rare, however, to find stands dominated by native species in the undergrowth. The *Salix bebbiana* plant association is less common and occurs as a minor type in the canyonlands of southwestern Utah (Padgett et al. 1989) and at mid- to low-elevations in southwestern Montana (Hansen et al. 1988) and Colorado (Colorado Natural Heritage Program). Similar types occur in eastern Wyoming (Girard et al. 1995). In Colorado, this association occurs in canyon country at lower elevations in the San Juan National Forest (Richard et al. 1996), the Rio Grande River Basin (Kittel et al., in preparation), and in foothill canyons of the South Platte River Basin (Kittel et al. 1997). Both of these associations occur at relatively low elevations in Colorado, where floodplain habitats are often impacted by water diversion, improper livestock grazing, invasive plant species, or agricultural conversion. This site harbors stands which are in excellent condition with regards to species composition, regeneration, and canopy structure. The rather small size of this site, and poor condition of the riparian areas upstream and downstream, require a good rather than excellent ranking for both of these communities.

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>
24645	<i>Alnus incana</i> / Mesic Forbs Shrubland	Thinleaf Alder/Mesic Forb Riparian Shrubland	G3	S3	Yes
20994	<i>Salix bebbiana</i> Shrubland	Montane Willow Carrs	G3?	S2	Yes

REFERENCES

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

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

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VERSION

Version Date 02/14/1998

Version Author Sarr, D.A.

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