

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Hurt Canyon

Site Code S.USCOHP*25693

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2243 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 371217N
State Colorado Longitude 1070943W

Quad Code Quad Name
37107-B2 Lonetree Canyon

County
Archuleta (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name
14080102 Piedra

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,250.00 Feet	2,209.80 Meters
Maximum Elevation	8,000.00 Feet	2,438.40 Meters

Site Description

In the central part of Archuleta County south of the prominent landmark of Broken Off Point, Hurt Canyon occurs as a narrow, steep, moderate elevation canyon with an intermittent stream draining northwest from Oakbrush Hill. After leaving its canyon, the stream channel meanders through a broad meadow of hay fields and residential homes and eventually joins Stollsteimer Creek, a tributary to the Piedra River more than 12 miles downstream. The site occurs in the lower reaches of Hurt Canyon, within Southern Ute Indian Tribal land. Here, the stream channel is narrow, moderately sinuous, and somewhat incised, with scoured banks, gravel bars and pools within the channel. There are signs of flooding, such as debris piles, gravel/rock deposits, and scoured banks. All erosion within the channel is probably due to natural causes such as relatively steep terrain, local geology and seasonal flooding. Stream flow is low and appears to be fed by groundwater discharges. The uplands immediately above the channel are dominated by ponderosa pine / Douglas-fir (*Pinus ponderosa* / *Pseudotsuga menziesii*) forests and Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelii*) shrublands. The riparian zone along the channel is very narrow with a limited floodplain, and Douglas-fir dominates the tree canopy displaying mostly mature stature trees on the high banks of the channel. Patches of narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) are present but not dominant within the canyon, typically occurring at spring water discharges. Red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) dominates the shrub layer displaying dense patches and scattered individuals along the banks and within the channel bed. A riparian shrub mixture is present as well, including black chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana* var. *melanocarpa*), roundleaf snowberry (*Symphoricarpos rotundifolius*), Rocky Mountain maple (*Acer glabrum*), Saskatoon serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), skunkbush sumac (*Rhus trilobata* var. *trilobata*) and Woods' rose (*Rosa woodsii*). The western white clematis vine (*Clematis ligusticifolia*) is abundant throughout the riparian areas in the canyon. The herbaceous understory is sparse, though vigorous, and appears typical of a shaded ravine. Gambel oak and creeping barberry (*Mahonia repens*) also occur within the riparian area, encroaching from the adjacent uplands. There are very few weeds of note within the site. Common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) is the most common, occurring only sporadically in the understory. All the vegetation in the riparian zone appears vigorous, with no disease or excessive browsing noted. The canyon is generally shaded and moist, and there are downed logs in multiple locations within the site. No trails or roads travel up the canyon, so the area is quite densely vegetated and relatively pristine. A Cordilleran Flycatcher (*Empidonax occidentalis*) was seen at the mouth (west end) of the canyon; it sat in a willow and sang contentedly for several minutes, allowing excellent time for identification (Sibley 2000). This species is identified as high priority in high elevation riparian habitat under the Colorado Bird Conservation Plan (Colorado PIF 2000).

Key Environmental Factors

The geology within Hurt Canyon appears to be predominantly sandstone, and Tweto (1979) delineates the area as MesaVerde Group, comprised of sandstone and shale deposits. The soils are not described by the current soil survey of the region. Soils in the channel are alluvial with angular cobble and coarse deposits such

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as small gravel and sand. Scoured stream banks reveal a 50 cm deep horizon of black colored soils with 50-60% organic matter and duff, over loose rock.

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes

Mapped Date 12/06/2005

Designer Freeman, K.M.

Boundary Justification

The boundary incorporates an area that encompasses the element occurrence and the immediate watershed, to buffer the hydrologic processes such as surface flows and groundwater discharges necessary for the viability of the element occurrences. It should be noted that all the hydrological processes necessary to the community are not fully contained by the site boundaries. Given that the community is dependent on the natural hydrology associated with the unnamed drainage in Hurt Canyon, upstream activities such as water diversions and impoundments, road and residential development, and improper livestock grazing may be detrimental to the hydrology of the riparian area. This boundary indicates the minimum area that should be considered for any conservation management plan.

Primary Area 162.65 Acres

65.82 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B4: Moderate Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site supports a good (B-ranked) occurrence of the globally apparently secure (G4) Douglas-fir / red-osier dogwood (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* / *Cornus sericea*) lower montane riparian forest, a community considered rare in Colorado (S2), and only documented in Western Slope forests of Colorado. It typically occurs above the floodplain in narrow valleys that funnel cold-air drainage, and often occurs as small patches. As of 2005, this community is documented only twice in Archuleta County, and the next closest documented occurrence in La Plata County was completely lost in the Missionary Ridge fire of 2002 (March et al. 2004).

Other Values Rank No Data

Other Values Comments

No Data

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

Current land use is unknown, but it is likely that cattle grazing occurs upstream. No trails or roads enter the area, but plenty of wildlife trails, tracks, and scat were noted within the site.

Natural Hazard Comments

Western poison ivy (*Toxicodendron rydbergii*) occurs sporadically throughout the canyon.

Exotics Comments

There are very few weeds in the site, but common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) was noted in places.

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>
24989	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> / <i>Cornus sericea</i> Woodland	Lower Montane Riparian Forests	G4	S2	Yes

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REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
192744	Colorado Partners in Flight. 2000. Land Bird Conservation Plan. http://www.blm.gov/wildlife/plan/pl-co-10.pdf .
193633	Freeman, K.M., March, M.A. and D.R. Culver. 2006. Final Report: Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Archuleta County. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
193581	March, M., P. Lyon, D. Culver, J. Huggins. 2004. Final Report: Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in La Plata County, Colorado. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
193575	Sibley, David A. 2000. National Audubon Society The Sibley Guide to Birds, First Edition. New York: Chanticleer Press, Inc.
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 12/06/2005
Version Author Freeman, K.M.

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