

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Lake Fork of the Gunnison River

Site Code S.USCOHP\*26737

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2419 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 380647N  
State Colorado Longitude 1071735W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
38107-A3	Lake City
38107-B3	Alpine Plateau
37107-H3	Lake San Cristobal

## County

Gunnison (CO)  
Hinsdale (CO)

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

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,950.00 Feet	2,423.16 Meters
Maximum Elevation	9,220.00 Feet	2,810.26 Meters

## Site Description

The Lake Fork of the Gunnison River is a third order tributary of the Gunnison River. The river is naturally dammed above the site by the Slumgullion Slide, creating Lake San Cristobal, the second largest natural lake in Colorado. The river flows free of extensive man-made obstructions from the outlet of the lake to Blue Mesa Reservoir. The site encompasses over 20 miles of the river corridor. General geology of the drainage is composed of landslide deposits, older gravels, and alluviums of the Quaternary Age and ash-flow tuff of main volcanic sequence of the Tertiary Age (Steven 1974). The watershed is mainly comprised of igneous rocks of the Tertiary Age, specifically ash-flow tuff of main volcanic sequence and pre-ash-flow andesitic lavas, breccias, tuff, and conglomerates (Tweto 1979). The basin forms a wide, open valley, with the Lake Fork as a narrow, riparian corridor. Soils are undeveloped with medium to large gravels, deposits of sands and silts interspersed with small to large cobbles. Riparian vegetation spans the length of the site as a narrow, riparian area of over 20 miles of the middle reaches of the Lake Fork. Being this extensive, vegetation is variable throughout, with areas of dense canopy, sparse canopy, tall shrublands, and mesic herbaceous vegetation. Canopy species cover is variable with blue spruce (*Picea pungens*) being consistent throughout in moderate to low cover and narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) being dense in some reaches and absent in others. Thinleaf alder (*Alnus incana*) is consistent in low to moderate cover along the entire reach. Other tall shrubs include Drummond's willow (*Salix drummondiana*), narrowleaf willow (*Salix exigua*), park willow (*Salix monticola*), and Bebb's willow (*Salix bebbiana*). Along a few areas, tall shrubs form dense, open shrublands. Short shrubs include American red raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*), skunkbush sumac (*Rhus trilobata*), and Wood's rose (*Rosa woodsii*). Mesic graminoids include bluejoint (*Calamagrostis canadensis*) and water sedge (*Carex aquatilis*). Mesic forbs present include starry false lily of the valley (*Maianthemum stellatum*) and field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*). Some areas of the drainage are heavily impacted by disturbance and support high cover of exotic species including common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), common plantain (*Plantago major*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), and smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*). Exotic species are concentrated in heavily disturbed areas near town, private property, and high use public lands. Surrounding uplands are dominated by ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) woodlands with patches of xeric shrubland grassland communities. Surrounding land uses are also highly variable including private property with residential development, hay fields and grazing, and ponds for fishing and public reaches with access for fishing and camping. Main disturbances include grazing, hydrologic alterations, exotic species invasion, road proximity, and recreational use.

## Key Environmental Factors

Key environmental factors influencing species composition of the wetland are montane elevation, low gradient,

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seasonal flooding, and floodplain development.

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## 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.

## Land Use History

No Data

## 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. Boundaries also include small tributaries, floodplain and overflow channels. However, the boundary does not include all hydrological processes necessary to the maintenance of site hydrology and upstream activities such as deforestation, improper livestock grazing, development, or water diversion could be detrimental to the site.

Primary Area 6,470.07 Acres 2,618.36 Hectares

### SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

## Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site is drawn for a good (B-ranked) occurrence of the globally vulnerable (G3/S3) narrowleaf cottonwood - blue spruce / thinleaf alder (*Populus angustifolia* - *Picea pungens* / *Alnus incana*) woodland. There is also a fair (C-ranked) occurrence of the state rare (G4/S3) Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*).

Other Values Rank V1 - Outstanding values

## Other Values Comments

The river provides excellent aesthetic and recreational values. The site also provides important wildlife habitat, aquifer recharge and discharge, and flood attenuation and storage.

### LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

## Land Use Comments

Land use varies along the corridor from public access to developed and private access.

## Natural Hazard Comments

No Data

## Exotics Comments

Exotics are common in many areas and include common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), common plantain (*Plantago major*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), and smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*). These species are concentrated along disturbed and accessible reaches.

## Offsite

Off-site considerations include road proximity and maintenance, development, and weedy species introductions from use of surrounding uplands.

## Information Needs

No Data

### ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

Element State ID	State Scientific Name	State Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	Driving Site Rank
24823	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> - <i>Picea pungens</i> / <i>Alnus incana</i> Woodland	Montane Riparian Forests	G3	S3	Yes
23518	<i>Cypseloides niger</i>	Black Swift	G4	S3B	No

### REFERENCES

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## Reference ID

## Full Citation

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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