

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Left Hand Canyon

Site Code S.USCOHP*27225

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2499 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 400541N
State Colorado Longitude 1052038W

Quad Code Quad Name

40105-A4 Gold Hill
40105-A3 Boulder

County

Watershed Code Watershed Name

10190005 St. Vrain

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	5,900.00 Feet	1,798.32 Meters
Maximum Elevation	8,580.00 Feet	2,615.18 Meters

Site Description

The Left Hand Canyon site is located in central Boulder County, some five miles northwest of Boulder. The site encompasses the lower reaches of Left Hand Canyon, west of the hogbacks at the mountain front. Left Hand Creek originates below Niwot Mountain, in the basin which hold Left Hand Park Reservoir. As it flows eastward from the foot of Niwot Ridge, the creek is joined by several tributaries, including James Creek. At Buckingham Park, at the eastern end of the site, the creek turns abruptly to the north to flow along the hogback, eventually exiting the foothills at a gap opposite Table Mountain north of Boulder. Within the site, Left Hand Creek flows through a steep, narrow canyon where dense shrubs and scattered trees overhang the creek. The creek is 16.4-26 ft (5-8 m) wide and fast moving, with a gradient of 5-10%. Steep canyon walls rise above the creek. North-facing slopes are dominated by dense Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*). Exposed south-facing slopes are open and rocky with low-cover ponderosa pine, Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*), and dry shrubs. The riparian corridor contains high diversity of woody species, both shrubs and trees, but the most consistent dominants are narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) and water birch (*Betula occidentalis*). Several other tree species from the surrounding slopes, including Douglas-fir, quaking aspen, ponderosa pine, and Rocky Mountain juniper, extend into the riparian zone. The shrub layer is mixed and contains high cover of tall shrubs thinlinef alder (*Alnus incana*), Rocky Mountain maple (*Acer glabrum*), Bebb's willow (*Salix bebbiana*), and beaked hazel (*Corylus cornuta*) as well as water birch. The mixed mesic understory is well developed and contains a diverse array of species such as bluejoint reedgrass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), cowparship (*Heracleum maximum*), and horsetail (*Equisetum arvensis*).

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

A well-used paved road runs along Left Hand Creek and is the main route to the town of Ward on the Peak-to-Peak Hwy. There are houses scattered along the road. Evidence of historic mining is minimal within the site but common upstream.

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 06/03/2008
Designer Decker, K.L. and J.M. Lemly

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Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the occurrence and the surrounding canyon, with a buffer of approximately 1 mile upstream. These boundaries are believed to be sufficient to maintain the normal hydrological and ecological processes supporting the riparian vegetation. These natural processes are not completely contained within the boundary, and off-site activities within the watershed have the potential to impact the elements of biodiversity present in the area.

Primary Area 2,943.47 Acres 1,191.18 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site supports a good (B-ranked) occurrence of a globally vulnerable (G3/S3) *Populus angustifolia* / *Betula occidentalis* montane riparian forest. Boulder County also has documented records for the state imperiled (G5/S1) northern redbelly dace (*Phoxinus eos*), found in pond near OSMP property, and an occurrence for the state rare (G5/S3) Theano alpine butterfly (*Erebia pawlowskii*) but these records are not in the CNHP database at this time.

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

Non-native plants are present along the road, but the steep, rocky nature of the canyon and the creek has kept cover relatively low. Non-native plants include smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), orchardgrass (*Dactylis glomerata*), crack willow (*Salix fragilis*), and dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*).

Offsite

No Data

Information Needs

Complete element occurrence records for northern redbelly dace (*Phoxinus eos*) and Theano alpine butterfly (*Erebia pawlowskii*).

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>			
24884	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Betula occidentalis</i> Woodland	Montane Riparian Forest	G3	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
195190	Neid, S., J. Lemly, K. Decker and D. Culver. 2009. Final Report: Survey of Critical Biological Resources in Boulder County 2007-2008. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 06/03/2008
Version Author Decker, K.L. and J.M. Lemly

Disclaimer

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