

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Lightner Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*24593

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2070 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 372018N
State Colorado Longitude 1075855W

Quad Code Quad Name
37107-C8 Durango West

County
La Plata (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name
14080104 Animas

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation - Feet - Meters
Maximum Elevation - Feet - Meters

Site Description

Lightner Creek is situated in a steep canyon though the stream gradient eventually decreases in a broader valley within the site. Steep canyon walls to steep hillslopes surround the stream with mixed conifer forests dominating the uplands. The narrow riparian area claims the old floodplain and active channel. Narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) and box elder (*Acer negundo*) dominate the riparian tree canopy while Mexican white pine (*Abies concolor*) and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) are occasionally situated in the riparian zone. Regeneration is vigorous with conifer saplings on higher benches and cottonwood recruits in the old floodplain and point bars. Dense patches of red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) are found on the benches while Drummond's willow (*Salix drummondiana*) and thinleaf alder (*Alnus incana*) occupy the active channel. The shaded herbaceous layer is sparse with introduced grasses and weedy species. Much of the ground is covered with leaf litter, downed logs and detritus. Where the gradient decreases, beaver activity has created small, successive pools. Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) is common throughout, but not dense. Near the beaver ponds is a ditch diversion with bare soils and sparse weed invasion. An old roadbed is adjacent with the creek for part of the reach. It is covered with dandelions (*Taraxacum officinale*) and there is evidence of horse use.

Key Environmental Factors

seasonal flooding; beaver activity

Climate Description

Drought has affected area in recent years.

Land Use History

Old road bed adjacent, mining upstream. Horse packing, cattle grazing.

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 12/10/2003
Designer March, M.A.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries incorporate an area that will allow for the natural hydrological processes from surrounding drainages. Seasonal flooding and sediment deposition will help maintain a viable population of the element along Lightner Creek. The boundaries also provide a small buffer from nearby trails and roads where surface runoff may contribute excess nutrients, sediment and weed invasion. It should be noted that the hydrological processes necessary to the element are not fully contained by the site boundaries.

Primary Area 207.53 Acres 83.98 Hectares

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SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B2: Very High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site supports a globally imperiled (G2/S2) box elder - narrowleaf cottonwood / red-osier dogwood (*Acer negundo*-*Populus angustifolia* / *Cornus sericea*) plant association in good (B-ranked) condition.

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

Taraxacum officinale, hay grasses, and Canada thistle. Canada thistle is invading creek bed. Other weeds are in old road bed and ditch diversion in site. Herbaceous layer is sparse.

Offsite

Ditch diversion and grazing occurs on private land adjacent. Grazing and horse packing occurs within and outside of site. All contribute to weed invasion.

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>
24479	<i>Acer negundo</i> - <i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Cornus sericea</i> Forest	Narrowleaf Cottonwood Riparian Forests	G2	S2	Yes

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
184533	March, M. and D. Culver. 2003. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Field Survey for La Plata County Wetlands.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 01/14/2004

Version Author March, M.A.

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