

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Little Coal Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*10503

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 359 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 384454N
State Colorado Longitude 1073137W

Quad Code Quad Name

38107-F5 Crawford
38107-G5 Paonia

County

Delta (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

14020004 North Fork Gunnison
14020002 Upper Gunnison

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation 6,960.00 Feet 2,121.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation 8,400.00 Feet 2,560.00 Meters

Site Description

This site includes the riparian zone and adjacent uplands of Little Coal Creek from its mouth at the Smith Fork to a point opposite Land's End Peak. Access to the site is by an unimproved road (F Road) northeast of Crawford. Although the lower part of the creek was not visited, it appears from a distance to have a good growth of cottonwoods and willows. The non-riparian hills in the lower elevations of the site have a diverse mixture of juniper and mountain shrubs, including serviceberry, fremont barberry, wild rose, and squaw apple. With increasing elevation, Gambel's oak replaces the barberry, and mountain mahogany and snowberry become more common. Understory species include elk sedge, lupine, and smooth brome. The Rocky Mountain thistle was found along the roadside in this community. The upstream reaches that we surveyed were dominated by Douglas-fir, narrowleaf cottonwood, and thinleaf alder, with an understory of red-osier dogwood, wild rose, Rocky Mountain willow and drummond's willow. Uplands were vegetated with Gambel's oak and aspen. Part of the Gambel's oak woodland was burned in 1996 by the Forest Service, (Attempt to regenerate oak? Wildlife habitat?) in the burned area, we found that about 60% of the oak was burned, and bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*) had grown, forming a dense cover. Our largest native fern, bracken is a clonal species, spreading by long hairy rhizomes and often forming large colonies. Other species present were nettle-leaf giant hyssop (*Agastache urticifolia*), stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*), and chokecherry. Bracken fern also occurred in the adjacent aspen forest, forming a plant association that is tracked by CNHP, although it was much more dense in the burned oak. Associated species in the wet aspen forest were Richardson's geranium (*Geranium richardsonii*), black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and fragrant bedstraw (*Galium triflorum*). Northern leopard frogs were found in a tributary of Little Coal Creek and next to a small irrigation ditch some distance from the creek. This species breeds in open water, but may then move into adjacent wetlands or grasslands well away from the water in its adult stage. Both habitats and connections between them must be protected to ensure survival of the population. The sierra corydalis was a small patch, in a typical site for the species, a small rocky stream bank. This species has since been removed from CNHP's list of species of special concern, as it was found in abundance on Grand Mesa.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

Arid semi-desert.

Land Use History

No Data

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Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes

Mapped Date 12/01/1997

Designer Lyon, M.J.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include the occurrence of the Rocky Mountain thistle with the adjacent aspen and Douglas-fir riparian communities.

Primary Area 837.34 Acres

338.86 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B4: Moderate Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

The Little Coal Creek site harbors good quality (B-ranked) examples of two plant communities, *Pseudotsuga menziesii* / *Cornus sericea* (G4/S2) and *Populus tremuloides* / *Pteridium aquilinum* (G4/S3S4), and a poor (D-ranked) occurrence of the globally imperiled (G2/S2) Rocky Mountain thistle (*Cirsium perplexans*).

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 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>			
24989	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> / <i>Cornus sericea</i> Woodland	Lower Montane Riparian Forests	G4	S2	Yes
22079	<i>Cirsium perplexans</i>	adobe thistle	G2G3	S2S3	No
24883	<i>Populus tremuloides</i> / <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> Forest	Aspen Wetland Forests	G4	S3S4	Yes

REFERENCES

Reference ID Full Citation

- No Data

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 12/01/1997

Version Author Lyon, M.J.

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