

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Lower Rock Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP\*20689

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 475 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 373132N  
State Colorado Longitude 1060737W

### Quad Code Quad Name

37106-E2 Monte Vista  
37106-E1 Homelake

### County

Rio Grande (CO)

### Watershed Code Watershed Name

13010002 Alamosa-Trinchera

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,625.00 Feet	2,324.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	7,640.00 Feet	2,329.00 Meters

### Site Description

This site contains an extensive stand of native wet meadows, emergent marshes, and saline bottomland shrublands. Hay meadows and pasture surround the site in all directions except south, where the site abuts the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge. Colorado Highway 15 skirts the west side of the site. Aerial photographs and National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps indicate that Rock Creek contributes much to the hydrology of this site. The broad alluvial fan associated with Rock Creek appears to funnel groundwater into the valley sediments where it discharges and supports native wet meadows, emergent marshes, and saline wetlands. It is assumed that a substantial amount of irrigation water supplements natural groundwater discharge to support the wetlands found at this site. The combination of these two hydrologic sources has given rise to very extensive stands of native wetland vegetation. It is estimated that approximately 300 acres of this site are dominated by woolly sedge (*Carex lanuginosa*), with species such as small beaked sedge (*C. simulata*), beaked sedge (*C. utriculata*), awned sedge (*C. atherodes*), and spikerush (*Eleocharis palustris*) forming smaller stands. Sloughgrass (*Beckmannia syzigachne*) and Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*) are also fairly common throughout the area. Most of the site had at least four inches of standing water present at the time of the site visit in mid-September. Some areas had deeper water where cattail (*Typha latifolia*) dominated the edges of open water wetlands. Small knolls are interspersed throughout the area, these being dominated by greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), Baltic rush, and alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*) while broom seepweed (*Suaeda calceoliformis*) was found growing in highly saline areas where salt crusts on the soil surface were evident. Slender spiderflower (*Cleome multicaulis*) was found growing on every knoll that was visited. The size of the population on any given knoll was never very large, however the consistent occurrence of this species on the knolls put the total number of individuals near 2,000. It is estimated that many more individuals occur on nearby knolls that were not visited. Due to persistent inundation and abundance of food sources, this site has high potential value for migrating waterbirds. During the site visit, approximately 100 Greater Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis tabida*) were observed.

### Key Environmental Factors

No Data

### Climate Description

No Data

### Land Use History

No Data

### Cultural Features

No Data

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## SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 01/01/2000

Designer Rocchio, F.J.

### Boundary Justification

The site boundary encompasses the area in which groundwater discharge appears to be the greatest. Areas on the periphery of the site, where groundwater discharge and irrigation are not as prevalent, were also included to provide a buffer from non-native species and intense grazing. The buffer may also provide a filter for surface water runoff from nearby hay meadows and pastures that might contain heavy nutrient and sediment loads. Although Rock Creek was not captured within the site boundaries, actions affecting the volume and timing of water from this drainage would likely affect the elements at this site.

Primary Area 2,051.04 Acres 830.03 Hectares

## SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

### Biodiversity Significance Comments

The Lower Rock Creek site supports one fair example of a plant species imperiled on a global scale and one good example of a wetland plant community vulnerable on a global scale.

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</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>
18080	<i>Cleome multicaulis</i>	slender spiderflower	G2G3	S2S3	Yes
21815	<i>Carex pellita</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Montane Wet Meadows	G3	S3	Yes

## REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
165924	Kettler, S., J. Rocchio, R. Schorr, J. Burt. 2000. Biological Inventory of Rio Grande and Conejos Counties, Colorado. Unpublished report prepared for The Nature Conservancy. 234 pp.

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

### Additional Topics

No Data

## VERSION

Version Date 01/01/2000  
Version Author Rocchio, F.J.

## Disclaimer

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