

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name McIntire Springs

Site Code S.USCOHP\*20691

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 634 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 371715N  
 State Colorado Longitude 1054854W

Quad Code Quad Name  
 37105-C7 Pikes Stockade

County  
 Conejos (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name  
 13010005 Conejos

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,525.00 Feet	2,294.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	8,000.00 Feet	2,438.00 Meters

### Site Description

The McIntire Springs site is located along the Conejos River approximately six miles upstream from the confluence with the Rio Grande River. The Pikes Stockade historic site is located on the northern edge of the site. The wetlands on the site are supported by the Conejos River and a series of perennial warm springs located at the base of Sierró Del Ojito. The area is highly diverse in terms of species, habitat types (at least five wetland types plus adjacent upland habitat), and vegetation structure. The Conejos River supports a healthy riparian system, with all age classes of trees and shrubs represented. Narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) and coyote willow (*Salix exigua*) are common along the riverbanks and in the floodplain. Beaked sedge (*Carex utriculata*), small fruited bulrush (*Scirpus microcarpus*), and giant bur-reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*) occupy old oxbows within the floodplain. Monkeyflower (*Mimulus* spp.) is found growing in areas where the springs surface. Overall, habitat diversity at the site is extremely high in comparison to other sites visited during this study. Five wetland types are represented including open water (warm springs and river), wet meadows, scrub-shrub, forested, and emergent wetlands, in addition to nearby upland habitats that are dominated by rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus* spp.), greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), ring muhly (*Muhlenbergia torreyi*), and Indian ricegrass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*). There are some meadows to the north and south of the Conejos River that were irrigated prior to 1988. These are currently dominated by smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) a non-native grass, western wheatgrass (*Pascopyron smithii*), baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*), wild iris (*Iris missouriensis*), and patches of the invasive non-native whitetop (*Cardaria* spp.) (Bureau of Land Management 1994). Two populations of the Rio Grande chub were located in pools near the springs. Northern leopard frogs (*Rana pipiens*) were observed near the edges of the spring pools and in backwater areas along the river. McIntire Springs contributes a large volume of warm water creating 20 or more acres of open water during the winter months. These warm water pools provide wintering habitat for a large concentration of waterbirds (Bureau of Land Management 1994). The congregation of waterbirds also provides a forage base for wintering raptors such as bald and golden eagles. Communal roost of bald eagles (20 or more have been documented) have been observed in nearby cottonwood forests (Bureau of Land Management 1994). In addition, the diverse riparian/wetland complex found at this site provides roosting, resting, foraging habitat, escape routes, and thermal and nesting cover for many migratory bird species (Bureau of Land Management 1994). Willow Flycatchers (*Empidonax traillii*) were seen at this site in June of 1997 and 1998. It is possible that these willow flycatchers are the subspecies *Empidonax traillii extimus*, which ranges from California through Arizona and New Mexico, and possibly into southern Colorado. This subspecies was listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1995 and is ranked G5T2 by the Natural Heritage Program. Range-wide populations are estimated at 300-500 breeding pairs (Sogge et al. 1997). Six individuals were banded at the site in 1997, including one female with a brood patch, confirming breeding in the area. Genetic material was taken from all six individuals. In 1998, four individuals were identified from the area. Should the individuals at McIntire Springs be confirmed as the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher this would be the only confirmed location of this subspecies in Colorado and the significance of this

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conservation area could increase. The site also contains a few significant cultural resources, including the ruins of Governor McIntire's Mansion and Pikes Stockade. The mansion is one of the few territorial structures left in southern Colorado (Bureau of Land Management 1994). Hay meadows and rangeland are adjacent to the site to the north and west. Approximately two miles downstream, there are another series of springs (Dexter Springs) that may potentially support similar elements as this site. These springs were not visited and are located on private land.

## Key Environmental Factors

No Data

## Climate Description

No Data

## Land Use History

No Data

## Cultural Features

No Data

### SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes

Mapped Date 01/24/2000

Designer Rocchio, F.J.

## Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the entire series of springs and their associated drainages that feed into the Conejos River to include one of the hydrological sources of the site. The other hydrological source (Conejos River) is not fully included in these boundaries. Upstream activities along the Conejos River have the potential to adversely affect the elements. The area within the boundaries should allow natural fluvial processes to continually establish new riparian and wetland habitats in which the elements could establish. The southeastern boundary extends to the top of Sierró Del Ojito to address excessive sediment loads that could potentially come from the steep slopes.

Primary Area 1,450.47 Acres

586.99 Hectares

### SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

## Biodiversity Significance Comments

The McIntire Springs site supports two good occurrences of a fish vulnerable on a global scale and critically imperiled in Colorado, one fair example of a wetland plant community imperiled in Colorado, and two good examples of widespread plant communities. It is important to note that if the 1998 observations are confirmed as the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, this would be the only confirmed location of this subspecies in Colorado and the significance of the PCA could increase.

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>			

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19189	<i>Gila pandora</i>	Rio Grande Chub	G3	S1?	Yes
17129	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Short-eared Owl	G5	S2B	No
21249	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle	G5	S1B,S3N	No
40636	<i>Sparganium eurycarpum</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Foothills/Plains Floating/Submergent Palustrine Wetlands	G4	S2	No
24738	<i>Populus angustifolia / Salix exigua</i> Woodland	Narrowleaf Cottonwood Riparian Forests	G4	S4	No

## REFERENCES

Reference ID	Full Citation
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	01/24/2000
Version Author	Rocchio, F.J.

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