

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Mee Canyon

Site Code S.USCOHP*6823

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1068 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>
883	S.USWRO1*1045	Colorado National Monument

LOCATORS

Nation United States Latitude 390712N
State Colorado Longitude 1085400W

Quad Code Quad Name

39108-A7	Battleship Rock
39108-B8	Ruby Canyon
39108-B7	Mack
39108-A8	Sieber Canyon

County

Mesa (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

14030001	Westwater Canyon
14010005	Colorado headwaters-Plateau

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	5,100.00	Feet	1,554.00	Meters
Maximum Elevation	6,000.00	Feet	1,829.00	Meters

Site Description

This scenic sandstone canyon contains an enormous, 300 foot deep cavern cut by a meander of a small stream which drains to the Colorado River. The canyon is rimmed with red Entrada sandstone, and has steep sides of the Kayenta and Wingate formations. The bottom is ungrazed, and difficulty of access to the upper reaches has probably protected it from human impacts. The narrow riparian area in the canyon bottom has scattered box elders (*Acer negundo*) that are regenerating. The stream bank has a dense growth of scouring rushes (*Hippochaete* sp.), with hundreds of giant helleborine orchids (*Epipactis gigantea*) growing among them. Other riparian species include Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*), skunkbrush (*Rhus trilobata*), coyote willow (*Salix exigua*), mountain willow (*S. monticola*), and cattails (*Typha* sp.). Not far from the cavern is a grotto with seeping walls covered by mosses and yellow Mancos columbine (*Aquilegia micrantha*). Dry slopes on the side of the canyon have scattered Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*), Fremont barberry (*Mahonia fremontii*), and cliffrose (*Cowania mexicana*). The mesa at the head of the canyon supports an excellent example of the Utah juniper / Salina wild rye (*Juniperus osteosperma* / *Elymus salinus*) association. Other species on the mesa include black sage (*Artemisia novum*), Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) and needle-and-threadgrass (*Hesperostipa* sp.). Raptors nest in the Wingate sandstone cliffs, and the canyon tree frog (*Hyla arenicolor*) was found in the stream. Soils along drainages are derived from alluvium. The BLM currently is eradicating tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*) within this canyon.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

arid semi-desert

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map P - Partial Mapped Date 12/01/1996
Designer Lyon, M.J.

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Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the entire canyon, and the juniper / Salina wild rye association on the mesa above. These boundaries will ensure continued natural surface flow and thus allow fluvial processes such as flood scouring, lateral flow, and channel meandering, to maintain a dynamic distribution of riparian and wetland plant associations along the drainage.

Primary Area 5,205.81 Acres 2,106.73 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B2: Very High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

The site supports a good (B-ranked) example of the globally imperiled (G2G3/S2S3) hanging garden association (*Aquilegia micrantha* - *Mimulus eastwoodiae*). This association is found in sandstone alcoves where seeping water supports hanging gardens comprised of Mancos columbine and sometimes the state rare Eastwood's monkeyflower. An excellent (A-ranked) occurrence of the globally vulnerable (G3G4/S2) giant helleborine orchid (*Epipactis gigantea*) is also within the site. The giant helleborine orchid grows along streambanks and near springs and seeps in the pinon - juniper zone. Although the species is widespread in the southwestern region, its specific habitat requirements limit its numbers. The state imperiled (G5/S2) canyon tree frog also occurs here. The canyon tree frog inhabits rocky canyons along intermittent or permanent streams. This desert frog reaches its northern limits in Southern Colorado. Although primarily terrestrial, it breeds in canyon bottom pools surrounded by rock. It is usually found near permanent pools or cottonwoods in the pinon - juniper zone. Good and fair examples of upland and riparian plant associations also occur here, most notably, a good (B-ranked) occurrence of the globally vulnerable (G3/S3) mesic Western Slope pinon - juniper woodland (*Juniperus osteosperma* / *Leymus salinus* spp. *salinus*).

Other Values Rank No Data

Other Values Comments

No Data

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

No Data

Natural Hazard Comments

Descent into the canyon is difficult and can be dangerous. The route down the slickrock is not always clear.

Exotics Comments

There are a few tamarisk individuals at the upper end of the canyon, and probably more downstream.

Offsite

No Data

Information Needs

No Data

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

Element	State Scientific Name	State Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	Driving Site Rank
24552	<i>Aquilegia micrantha</i> - <i>Mimulus eastwoodiae</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Hanging Gardens	G2G3	S2S3	Yes
24898	<i>Acer negundo</i> / <i>Equisetum hyemale</i> Forest	Montane Riparian Deciduous Forest	GU	SU	No
17626	<i>Epipactis gigantea</i>	helleborine	G4	S2S3	No
24872	<i>Salix exigua</i> / Mesic Graminoids Shrubland	Coyote Willow/Mesic Graminoid	G5	S5	No
19160	<i>Hyla arenicolor</i>	Canyon Treefrog	G5	S2	No
40542	<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i> / <i>Leymus salinus</i> spp. <i>salinus</i> Wooded Herbaceous Vegetation	Mesic Western Slope Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands	G3	S3	No

REFERENCES

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Reference ID

Full Citation

173289

Lyon, P., C. Pague, R. Rondeau, L. Renner, C. Slater, and C. Richard. 1996. Final Report: Natural Heritage Inventory of Mesa County, Colorado. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.

193477

USDI Bureau of Land Management. 1989. Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement. Grand Junction District, Grand Junction, CO.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 12/01/1996

Version Author Lyon, M.J.

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