

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Middle Rifle Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP\*10002

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1406 Site Class PCA  
Site Alias Rifle Creeks  
Site Alias Rifle Falls State Park  
Site Alias Rifle Gap

## Network of Conservation Areas (NCA)

NCA Site ID NCA Site Code NCA Site Name  
- No Data

## LOCATORS

Nation United States Latitude 393935N  
State Colorado Longitude 1074623W

Quad Code Quad Name  
39107-F7 Horse Mountain

County  
Garfield (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name  
14010005 Colorado headwaters-Plateau

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation 6,000.00 Feet 1,829.00 Meters  
Maximum Elevation 7,366.00 Feet 2,245.00 Meters

### Site Description

This PCA contains many steep washes of sandstone leading down to Middle Rifle Creek. There is a mixture of riparian vegetation along Middle Rifle Creek and pinyon pine-juniper (*Pinus edulis*- *Juniperus* spp.) woodland upslope. The woodland has much brush (*Artemisia*, *Quercus*, *Amelanchier*, *Cercocarpus*, and *Rhus*), but the shrub understory is not dense enough to classify as a strong mountain shrub pinyon-juniper community. Portions of this site fall within Rifle Gap State Wildlife Area and within BLM land, while the northern one third of the PCA is privately owned. Both the private and BLM lands are presently grazed. The PCA contains a complex mix of sedimentary sandstone from the Pennsylvania, Triassic, Cretaceous, Permian and Jurassic ages. There are also formations of Mancos shale from the Cretaceous. There is a large population of Wetherill milkvetch estimated at over 200 individual plants and occupying approximately 5 acres of the PCA. The population is in good condition except for weedy exotics at the edges and smaller patches spread within. A known population of the Gray Vireo was relocated during this survey. There is some discussion as to what species of vireo this population represents. The woodland has somewhat more brush than is often described for the Gray Vireo (*Vireo Vicinior*). These authors are satisfied that they are the Gray Vireo. The western yellowbelly racer, a snake, was also observed along Middle River Creek in this PCA in 1999.

### Key Environmental Factors

No Data

### Climate Description

Annual precipitation averages 11.3 inches. Temperatures range from the low teens in January to the 90's in July, and the frost-free season is about 107 days.

### Land Use History

No Data

### Cultural Features

No Data

## SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 12/05/2000  
Designer Sovell, J.R.

### Boundary Justification

This site includes the plant occurrence and some additional adjacent suitable habitat to allow for additional individuals to become established over time. It also provides for the western yellow belly racer found in this area along Middle Rifle Creek. The site boundary protects the semi-arid shrubland and the dry open

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pinyon-juniper (*Pinus edulis*- *Juniperus*) woodlands, common nesting and foraging habitats of the Gray Vireo (*Vireo vicinior*), in the vicinity of the Gray Vireo observation.

Primary Area 1,359.04 Acres 549.99 Hectares

## SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

### Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site contains a good occurrence of a plant species which is globally vulnerable.

Other Values Rank V2 - High values

### Other Values Comments

State Park with open space recreation: hiking, fishing, and bird watching.

## LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

### Land Use Comments

No Data

### Natural Hazard Comments

No Data

### Exotics Comments

Both cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and sweet clover (*Melilotus officinale* and *M. alba*) occur along the roadsides of the PCA, with *M. alba* extending up the washes.

### 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>
22584	<i>Astragalus wetherillii</i>	Wetherill's milkvetch	G3	S3	Yes
18668	<i>Vireo vicinior</i>	Gray Vireo	G4	S2B	No
22447	<i>Coluber constrictor mormon</i>	Western Yellowbelly Racer	G5T5	S3	No

## REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
-	No Data

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

### Additional Topics

No Data

## VERSION

Version Date 12/05/2000  
Version Author Sovell, J.R.

## Disclaimer

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