

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name North Clear Creek Falls

Site Code S.USCOHP\*6875

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 301 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 375200N  
State Colorado Longitude 1070936W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
37107-H2	Slumgullion Pass
37107-G2	Hermit Lakes

## County

Hinsdale (CO)  
Mineral (CO)

<u>Watershed Code</u>	<u>Watershed Name</u>
13010001	Rio Grande headwaters

## SITE DESCRIPTION

<b>Minimum Elevation</b>	9,820.00	<b>Feet</b>	2,993.14	<b>Meters</b>
<b>Maximum Elevation</b>	10,600.00	<b>Feet</b>	3,230.88	<b>Meters</b>

## Site Description

The site comprises a wide, open, glaciated valley at the lower reaches of Spring Creek and its confluence with the North Fork of Clear Creek. The riparian corridor is a mosaic of dense tall shrub copses with patches of herbaceous vegetation. The wetland is concentrated along the creek and dry floodplain with dense willow cover along the creek edge and mesic areas and open, patchy cover along drying areas. Dry openings support a patchy distribution of Colorado tansy-aster (*Machaeranthera coloradoensis*). Bedrock geology consists of glacial drift of the Quaternary Age in the valley bottom (Steven 1974, Tweto 1979). The wetland is dominated by a dense, tall shrub layer of park willow (*Salix monticola*) and Geyer's willow (*Salix geyeriana*), with park willow being more common along mesic reaches and Geyer's willow along drying edges. Other shrubs present include diamondleaf willow (*Salix planifolia*), shrubby cinquefoil (*Dasiphora fruticosa* ssp. *floribunda*), strapleaf willow (*Salix ligulifolia*), and whitestem gooseberry (*Ribes inerme*). Graminoid species include Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*), tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*), and alpine timothy (*Phleum alpinum*). The herbaceous layer is variable throughout with drier areas dominated by forbs and weedy graminoid species and mesic areas by native graminoids. Exotic species include Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), and white clover (*Trifolium repens*). Dry areas also support Colorado tansy-aster. Other species associated with openings and dry rocky soils include shrubby cinquefoil, prairie sagewort (*Artemisia frigida*), beautiful cinquefoil (*Potentilla pulcherrima*), Fendler's sandwort (*Eremogone fendleri*), mat penstemon (*Penstemon caespitosus*), and Arizona fescue (*Festuca arizonica*). Disturbances include livestock grazing, hydrologic alterations, an adjacent highway, and recreational use. Evident grazing impacts include tunneling in willows, exotic species component, trampling, and sloughing along stream banks. Surrounding uplands are dominated by a large, xeric, subalpine grassland with patches of shrubby cinquefoil grading up into Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*) dominated forested areas.

## Key Environmental Factors

Key environmental factors influencing species composition of the wetland are montane elevation, low gradient, extensive floodplain, and dry, rocky uplands.

## Climate Description

Climate and weather tend to follow typical patterns of the San Juan Mountains of Colorado being generally xeric throughout the year with warm spring weather causing snowmelt flooding, wet summers, and a late summer "monsoon" season.

## Land Use History

No Data

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## Cultural Features

No Data

## SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes

Mapped Date 10/15/2006

Designer Jones, J.R.

## Boundary Justification

Boundaries include 1,000 ft of uplands to buffer from impacts to site condition (Keate 2004). This buffer accounts for natural ecological processes important for the maintenance of wetlands such as seasonal flooding, groundwater recharge, surface flows, and sediment deposition. However, the boundary does not include all ecological processes necessary to the maintenance of the site and activities such as improper livestock grazing or recreational use, development, or water diversion could be detrimental to the site.

Primary Area 2,298.05 Acres 929.99 Hectares

## SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

## Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site is drawn for two good (B-ranked) occurrences of the globally vulnerable (G3/S3) Colorado tansy-aster (*Machaeranthera coloradoensis*). The site also includes a good (B-ranked) occurrence of the globally vulnerable (G3/S3) park willow / mesic graminoid (*Salix monticola* / mesic graminoids) montane riparian willow carr and an extant occurrence of the state rare (G4/S3) Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*).

Other Values Rank V2 - High values

## Other Values Comments

The site provides aesthetic value and multiple recreational uses to the area. In addition, the site provides ecological values including erosion control and wildlife habitat.

## LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

## Land Use Comments

Predominant land uses include recreational use and livestock grazing.

## Natural Hazard Comments

No Data

## Exotics Comments

Exotic species found include Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), and white clover (*Trifolium repens*). These species are concentrated in disturbed, drying areas.

## Offsite

Off-site considerations include highway use and maintenance, recreational uses, and livestock grazing.

## 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>			
23921	<i>Machaeranthera coloradoensis</i>	Colorado tansy-aster	G3	S3	Yes
23518	<i>Cypseloides niger</i>	Black Swift	G4	S3B	No
23921	<i>Machaeranthera coloradoensis</i>	Colorado tansy-aster	G3	S3	Yes
24585	<i>Salix monticola</i> / Mesic Graminoids Shrubland	Montane Riparian Willow Carr	G3	S3	No

## REFERENCES

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## Reference ID

## Full Citation

192813	Keate, Nancy S. 2004. Bibliography of Impacts to Wetlands II - Draft - revised - Jan 2004. Utah Wetland Outreach, Wildlife Resources, Utah Department of Natural Resources.
194565	Neid, S.L. and J.R. Jones. 2008. Final Report: Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Hinsdale County. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
194566	Steven, T.A. 1974. Geologic Map of the Durango Quadrangle, Southwestern Colorado. United States Geological Survey, Department of Interior, Reston, VA.
192747	Tweto, O. 1979. Geologic Map of Colorado, 1:500,000. United States Geological Survey, Department of Interior, and Geologic Survey of Colorado, Denver, CO.

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

### Additional Topics

Original site design by Fayette, K.K. 1997-02-26. Updated by Doyle, G.A. 2005-12-22.

## VERSION

Version Date 10/15/2006

Version Author Jones, J.R.

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