

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name North Elk Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*19449

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 193 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 393116N
State Colorado Longitude 1052534W

Quad Code Quad Name
39105-E4 Meridian Hill

County
Park (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name
10190002 Upper South Platte

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	8,880.00 Feet	2,707.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	9,480.00 Feet	2,890.00 Meters

Site Description

North Elk Creek flows through a large spring-fed Nebraska sedge (*Carex nebrascensis*) dominated wetland surrounded by granite outcrops and mixed coniferous forest. There are several areas of groundwater discharge and springs throughout the wetland and on the adjacent slopes, on which the wetland is exclusively dependent. Although Elk Creek flows through the site, it contributes little, if at all, to the hydrology of the wetland. The wetland is "quaking" in places with a deep (40cm) layer of peat. As such, this wetland is a fen, which is defined as a groundwater-driven wetland with organic matter accumulation in the first 40 centimeters of the soil (USFWS 1997). Because this fen is dependent on springwater from the surrounding slopes, alterations to these slopes will affect its hydrology. The road has completely altered the hydrology of one part of the fen, resulting in the drying of a one to two acre portion. The hydrology of the upstream portion of North Elk Creek on the north side of this PCA has also been affected to a lesser extent by the adjacent road, and by a few very small upstream dams. Some non-native plant species are spreading into the edges from the adjacent roads (see Management Comments for species). However, the wetland remains in fair condition overall. Nebraska sedge (*Carex nebrascensis*) dominates the wettest portions of the wetland. Also present with *C. nebrascensis* are other sedges (*C. simulata* and *C. utriculata*). Hummocks or mounds are dominated by dwarf birch (*Betula glandulosa*), willow (*Salix planifolia*), and shrubby cinquefoil (*Pentaphylloides floribunda*), with alpine meadowrue (*Thalictrum alpinum*) and Sphagnum mosses. Elephantella (*Pedicularis groenlandica*), blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*), and cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) are scattered throughout the wetland. Other species observed in this wetland are shooting star (*Dodecatheon pulchellum*), monkshood (*Aconitum columbianum*), scouring rush (*Equisetum* sp.), mariposa lily (*Calochortus gunnisonii*), marsh marigold (*Psychrophila leptosepala*), and chiming bells (*Mertensia ciliata*). A narrow grassland band between the wetland and upland forest is dominated by fescue (*Festuca* sp.) and oatgrass (*Danthonia parryi*). This PCA ranges in elevation from 8880 to 9480 feet. At 400 acres it is the largest PCA in Staunton State Park.

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 09/15/1999

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Designer Culver, D.R. and S.C. Spackman

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the wetland community and the adjacent slopes from which spring water flows into the wetland. Part of the adjacent road is also included in the PCA due to the effects the road is having on the wetland. Areas upstream in the North Elk Creek watershed need to be considered when a plan is developed for the long-term viability of the community.

Primary Area 369.87 Acres 149.68 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B5: General Biodiversity Interest

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site contains a fair occurrence of a plant community which is imperiled in Colorado. The wetland is slightly degraded by weeds and hydrological alterations, but overall it remains in good condition. The *Carex nebrascensis* wetland community has been documented in 13 sites in Colorado, in Jefferson, Routt, Moffat, Garfield, Weld, Larimer, Rio Blanco, and Costilla counties. Because the North Elk Creek occurrence of this community is spring fed, it is somewhat anomalous. CNHP wetland ecologists are currently considering classifying this variant as a separate community type.

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

The influx of invasive species is likely to accelerate when the park is opened to the public. A management plan should also address removal and control strategies for weeds in this area. Exotic species found in this area include dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), Timothy grass (*Phleum pratense*), and sweet clover (*Trifolium repens*).

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>
22403	<i>Carex nebrascensis</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Wet Meadows	G4	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
160766	Spackman, S., D. Anderson, J. Siemers, P. Pineda, and J. Handwerk. 1999. Staunton State Park Biological Inventory.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 09/15/1999
Version Author Culver, D.R. and S.C. Spackman

Disclaimer

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