

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Playa Blanca

Site Code S.USCOHP\*24711

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2089 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 372809N  
State Colorado Longitude 1055711W

Quad Code Quad Name  
37105-D8 Alamosa West

County  
Alamosa (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name  
13010002 Alamosa-Trinchera

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,550.00	Feet	2,301.24	Meters
Maximum Elevation	7,570.00	Feet	2,307.34	Meters

### Site Description

This site contains saline wet meadows, marsh, and bottomland shrublands all of which are hydrologically supported from surface water inputs and likely, some groundwater discharge. A series of open water, saline ponds occur in the area. Historically, the area between Rock Creek and La Jara Creek was referred to as the "Llano Blanca" or "White Plain" and likely refers to salt crusts exposed on the soil surface from groundwater seepage (Simmons 1999). Thus, most of the wetlands in this site were likely supported by surface flow and shallow groundwater from Rock Creek. Discharge from the unconfined and/or confined aquifer may also have been important. Due to groundwater pumping and water diversions, Rock Creek does not maintain its historical hydrological regime. The area now appears to receive more surface water than the natural regime would have provided due to the presence of the Colorado Division of Wildlife's aquatic species hatchery just upstream. Discharge from the hatchery (which was previously a tilapia farm) flows directly into the wetland basins in the site. A few berms have been constructed, impounding and spreading water through the area. Downstream, surface water infiltrates into the soil and doesn't appear to flow into any defined channel. Wetland vegetation is very lush in these areas. Hardstem bulrush (*Schoenoplectus acutus*) and alkali bulrush (*S. maritimus*) occupy wettest sites along with common spikerush (*Eleocharis palustris*). Nevada bulrush (*Amphiscirpus nevadensis*), sea-blite (*Suaeda calceoliformis*), arrowgrass (*Triglochin concinna*), and common threesquare (*Schoenoplectus pungens*) occur in the next outer "ring". Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*), foxtail barley (*Hordeum jubatum*) and saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*) meadows surround these areas. The globally imperiled slender spiderflower (*Cleome multicaulis*) was found in the latter community in a narrow band where hydrology/salinity allow the species to thrive. Slender spiderflower is also thriving along the lower margins of these dikes. Some grazing occurs in the area. Saline bottomland shrublands, the matrix vegetation type in the San Luis Valley, dominate most of the site. Species such as greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) and saltgrass are the dominant species in this vegetation type. A county road bisects the site and agriculture and rural housing are nearby. Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and whitetop (*Lepidium latifolium*) are present in drier areas especially in Baltic rush meadows. Non-native species are not abundant in or near ponds.

### Key Environmental Factors

No Data

### Climate Description

No Data

### Land Use History

No Data

### Cultural Features

No Data

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## SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes

Mapped Date 05/04/2004

Designer Rocchio, F.J.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn to encompass the ecological processes believed necessary for long-term viability of the element. The boundaries provide many source areas for seed dispersal to buffer long-term population fluctuations of the element. The boundary does not encompass the source of surface and ground water input to the site, thus any changes in the current status of groundwater pumping and water diversions from water bodies that recharge groundwater would likely affect the element.

Primary Area 1,644.41 Acres 665.47 Hectares

## SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

### Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site supports a fair (C-ranked) occurrence of a globally imperiled (G2G3/S2S3) plant species. The slender spiderflower (*Cleome multicaulis*) has a global range from southern Wyoming to central Mexico. The San Luis Valley contains the most numerous, largest, and healthiest populations in the world. Slender spiderflower has a limited distribution due to its requirement of moist alkaline soil along with periodic soil disturbance, such as pocket gopher (*Thomomys talpoides*) diggings. These habitat requirements limit the slender spiderflower to the edges of alkaline wet meadows and playas. Numerous other common communities such as common threesquare, hardstem bulrush, and alkali bulrush are found at this site, but due to the hydrologic manipulation occurring in these stands, they did not meet CNHP's requirements for an element occurrence. However, they provide important wildlife habitat at this site.

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</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>
18080	<i>Cleome multicaulis</i>	slender spiderflower	G2G3	S2S3	Yes

## REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
184706	Rocchio, J. 2004. Final Report: Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Southern Alamosa and Costilla Counties, San Luis Valley, Colorado. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
184699	Simmons, V. McConnell. 1999. The San Luis Valley. Land of the Six-Armed Cross. Second Edition. University Press of Colorado. Niwot, CO.

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

### Additional Topics

No Data

## VERSION

Version Date 05/04/2004

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Version Author Rocchio, F.J.

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