

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Ranch at the Roaring Fork

Site Code S.USCOHP\*10240

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1983 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 392425N  
State Colorado Longitude 1071048W

## Quad Code Quad Name

39107-D2 Carbondale

## County

Garfield (CO)

## Watershed Code Watershed Name

14010004 Roaring Fork

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	6,093.00 Feet	1,857.15 Meters
Maximum Elevation	6,526.00 Feet	1,989.12 Meters

## Site Description

Affording spectacular views of Mount Sopris to the south, and including the widest stretch of riparian vegetation, this is one of the most intact sites along the lower elevations of the Roaring Fork River. The site includes approximately a five mile stretch of the Roaring Fork River floodplain, between 6,000 and 6,500 feet. The riparian vegetation includes a continuous mosaic of narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) and coyote willow (*Salix exigua*) and supports a high diversity of species in the shrub layer. In a few small patches, a rare orchid, yellow lady's slipper (*Cypripedium pubescens*), is found associated with false solomon's seal (*Maianthemum stellatum*). In similar habitats, but distinct locations, another rare orchid was documented. It is possible that further research would discover additional orchid occurrences in this site. On the north bank of the river, the riparian vegetation is bisected by multiple two-track roads. A series of ponds in the north and center part of the site support a diverse mix of native bird species, cattail marshes, and patches of sedge and rush-dominated wetlands. On the south side of the river there are private homes scattered within the historic floodplain and natural riparian vegetation. Islands in the river are covered by dense stands of coyote willow (*Salix exigua*). The alluvial deposits found along the river banks range from pure sand to large cobbles. The adjacent upland areas rise 200 feet above the floodplain and support pinon - juniper (*Pinus edulis* - *Juniperus osteosperma*) communities and mixed shrublands. Approximately 500 acres are included within this site. The soils along the riparian areas are mapped as Fluvaquents, Atencio series, and Redrob series. Fluvaquents are a broadly defined unit consisting of deep, somewhat poorly drained soils on floodplains and alluvial valley floors (Soil Conservation Service 1992). These soils are typically stratified and widely vary in texture. The water table is typically within 2 feet of the soil surface during spring and summer. Fluvaquents are found immediately adjacent to the river at this site. The Atencio series is classified as a fine-loamy over sandy or sandy-skeletal, mixed Aridic Argiustolls (Soil Conservation Service 1992). Atencio soils are deep, well drained soils on fans and terraces, which have formed in alluvium. The Redrob series is classified as fine-loamy over sandy or sandy-skeletal, mixed (calcareous), frigid Fluvaquentic Haplaquolls (Soil Conservation Service 1992). Redrob soils are somewhat poorly drained and are found on alluvial valley floors, low terraces, and floodplains along major streams. The Redrob occupies the largest area of the floodplain at this site. A functional assessment was conducted for this site.

## Key Environmental Factors

No Data

## Climate Description

No Data

## Land Use History

No Data

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## Cultural Features

No Data

## SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes

Mapped Date 07/14/2009

Designer Panjabi, S.S.

## Boundary Justification

The site boundary encompasses a large portion of the Roaring Fork River's floodplain east of Carbondale to south of Catherine. It incorporates an area that will allow natural hydrological processes such as seasonal flooding, sediment deposition, and new channel formation to maintain viable populations of the elements. The boundary also provides a buffer from nearby agriculture fields, roads, and houses where surface runoff may contribute excess nutrients, sediment, and herbicides/pesticides. The site also contains old oxbow lakes, sloughs, and ponds that could provide a source of recruitment for native wetland and riparian plant species. It should be noted that the hydrological processes necessary to the elements are not fully contained by the site boundaries. Given that the elements are dependent on natural hydrological processes associated with the Roaring Fork River, any upstream activities such as water diversions, impoundments, and development could potentially be detrimental to the elements.

Primary Area 1,906.45 Acres

771.52 Hectares

## SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B2: Very High Biodiversity Significance

## Biodiversity Significance Comments

This is one of the largest riparian areas in good condition observed in the lower Roaring Fork Valley. It supports a good (B-ranked) occurrence of a globally imperiled (G2G3/S2) and federally listed Threatened plant species, Ute ladies'-tresses orchid (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) and a state rare orchid, American yellow lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus* ssp. *parviflorum*). The site also includes a fair (C-ranked) example of a globally vulnerable (G3/S3) riparian plant community, *Populus angustifolia* / *Alnus incana*. Although not drawn for this species, a small rookery of Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*), including approximately four nests, is found within this site. Great Blue Heron rookeries often include several hundred pairs of birds. The mountain whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*) is also known to occur in Roaring Fork River from Glenwood Springs to near Woody Creek and unverified occurrences have been reported between Woody Creek and Aspen.

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

Exotics include houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), sweetclover (*Melilotus officinale*), oxeye-daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), plumeless and Canada thistle (*Carduus acanthoides* and *Cirsium arvense*), Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) and Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*).

## Offsite

No Data

## 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>			
24541	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Alnus incana</i>	Woodland Montane Riparian Forest	G3	S3	No
20940	<i>Cypripedium calceolus</i> ssp. <i>parviflorum</i>	American yellow lady's-slipper	G5	S2	No
17998	<i>Spiranthes diluvialis</i>	Ute ladies' tresses	G2G3	S2	Yes

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## REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
168289	Butler, R. W. 1992. Great Blue Heron ( <i>Ardea herodias</i> ). No. 25 in A. Poole, P. Stettenheim and F. Gill, editors. The Birds of North America. The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
160919	Lyon, P. 2000. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Biological Assessment of Garfield County.
160810	Rocchio, J. 2000. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Wetland Inventory/Assessment of Garfield County.

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

### Additional Topics

Original site design by Rocchio, F.J. 2001-04-06.

## VERSION

Version Date 07/14/2009

Version Author Panjabi, S.S.

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