

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Rollins Pass

Site Code S.USCOHP*25915

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2300 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 395501N
State Colorado Longitude 1054117W

Quad Code Quad Name
39105-H6 East Portal

County

Gilpin (CO)
Grand (CO)
Boulder (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name
10190005 St. Vrain
14010001 Colorado headwaters

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	11,330.00	Feet	3,453.38	Meters
Maximum Elevation	11,620.00	Feet	3,541.78	Meters

Site Description

The community inhabits the upper subalpine and lower alpine areas of exposed ridges south of Rollins Pass. It consists of a mosaic of thickets of shortfruit willow (*Salix brachycarpa*) and open alpine meadows dominated by Ross' avens (*Geum rossii*) and tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*). It inhabits very large areas of local exposed slopes and likely adjacent slopes of surrounding areas. Soils are loamy and rocky throughout and contain large amounts of coal in the top layers near the track of the former Moffat Railroad. General geology consists of metamorphic and igneous rocks of the Precambrian Age. The area was historically transected by the Moffat Railroad, and is now transected by Moffat Road and the Continental Divide Trail. Surrounding communities are composed of alpine meadow vegetation dominated by tufted hairgrass and further upslope by dwarf alpine communities. Subalpine communities of Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*) form open woodlands of flagged and densely growing trees downslope.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

Climate likely follows patterns typical of this region of Colorado, being generally xeric throughout the year, with wet spring seasons and late summer "monsoons".

Land Use History

The area was used as the first route through the Rockies from Denver to Salt Lake during the late 1800's, early 1900's. There is still evidence of the town of Corona that was established at the top of the pass to aid trains and crews and later tourists visiting the area. The site was abandoned in the mid 1900's after the Moffat Tunnel was built.

Cultural Features

Cultural features include remains of the old town of Corona and housing where trains were stored.

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 12/20/2005
Designer Jones, J.R.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries include approximately 350 acres along the Continental Divide east of Rollins Pass. Boundaries are drawn to encompass those ecological processes necessary to maintain site biota including extreme exposures, seasonal snowpack, and rocky, undeveloped substrates. Boundaries do not include all ecological

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processes influencing the site. Activities along adjacent slopes such as improper development and road maintenance may negatively impact site biota.

Primary Area 738.06 Acres 298.68 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B4: Moderate Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site is drawn for an excellent (A-ranked) occurrence of the globally apparently secure (G4/S3S4) plant community, shortfruit willow (*Salix brachycarpa*) / Ross' avens (*Geum rossii*) - tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*) shrubland.

Other Values Rank V2 - High values

Other Values Comments

This site provides high quality values other than biodiversity. The area is an excellent site for recreation, providing wonderful views and high quality open space. The road provides an easily accessible site for visitors to Colorado's unique alpine environment. The area is likely an important summer habitat for elk and bighorn sheep populations.

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

Predominant land uses include hiking, biking, camping, hunting, and sight-seeing.

Natural Hazard Comments

Winds and temperatures may cause exposure hazards during colder seasons. Avalanches may occur during the fall, winter, and spring seasons.

Exotics Comments

There were no exotic species observed during the survey. However, the road may act as a conduit for non-native species.

Offsite

No Data

Information Needs

Further survey is needed. Occurrence likely continues along adjacent ridges in both directions along the Continental Divide and is a very important although common community along the lower alpine reaches in this region of the Colorado Rockies.

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

<u>Element State ID</u>	<u>State Scientific Name</u>	<u>State Common Name</u>	<u>Global Rank</u>	<u>State Rank</u>	<u>Driving Site Rank</u>
24477	<i>Salix brachycarpa</i> / <i>Deschampsia caespitosa</i> - <i>Geum rossii</i> Shrubland	Alpine Willow Scrub	G4	S3S4	Yes

REFERENCES

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Reference ID

Full Citation

160903	Carsey, K., D. Cooper, K. Decker, D. Culver, and G. Kittel. 2003. Statewide wetlands classification and characterization: Wetland plant associations of Colorado. Prepared for Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Denver, CO by Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
193632	Culver, D.R. and Jones, J.R. 2006. Final Report: Survey of Critical Biological Resources in Grand County. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
160140	Dorn, R. D. 1997. Rocky Mountain Region Willow Identification Field Guide. Renewable Resources R2-RR-97-01. Denver, CO: USDA, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region. 107p.
167224	Hurd, E.G., N.L. Shaw, J. Mastroguiseppe, L.C. Smithman, and S. Goodrich. 1998. Field Guide to Intermountain Sedges. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Ogden, UT.
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.
193553	USDA, NRCS. 2005. The PLANTS Database, Version 3.5 (http://plants.usda.gov). Data compiled from various sources by Mark W. Skinner. National Plant Data Center < http://npdc.usda.gov/ >, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA. Accessed 2005.
172684	Weber, W.A. and R.C. Wittmann. 2001. Colorado Flora: Western Slope, Third Edition. University Press of Colorado, Niwot, CO.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 12/20/2005

Version Author Jones, J.R.

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