

# Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Saguache Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP\*10847

## IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 163 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 375915N  
State Colorado Longitude 1064410W

## Quad Code Quad Name

38106-A7	Elk Park
38106-A6	Saguache Park
38106-A5	Grouse Creek
37106-H7	Halfmoon Pass
37106-H6	Mesa Mountain

## County

Saguache (CO)

## Watershed Code Watershed Name

13010004	Saguache
14020003	Tomichi

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation - Feet - Meters  
Maximum Elevation - Feet - Meters

## Site Description

This site encompasses approximately 12,053 acres of riparian, valley bottom, and slope communities along the upper reaches of Saguache Creek. Elevation extends from 8,991 feet on lower Saguache Creek to 12,940 feet (2,742-3,947 meters) at the western margin near the Continental Divide. The creek floodplains are well vegetated with willows (*Salix* spp.) and a dense understory of native grasses, sedges, and forbs. At higher elevations herbaceous riparian communities become increasingly common, usually dominated by Canadian reedgrass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), and several species of sedges (*Carex* spp.). The upper reaches of the stream traverse the semi-arid Saguache Park region which contains extensive montane grasslands. The grasslands support populations of Gunnison's prairie dog (*Cynomys gunnisoni gunnisoni*). Adjacent uplands are vegetated with patchy spruce (*Picea engelmannii*) and aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) forests on north-facing slopes and bristlecone pine/fescue (*Pinus aristata/Festuca* spp.) woodlands on southern exposures. The site includes Saguache and its major tributaries, all free flowing streams, which harbor populations of Rio Grande cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki virginalis*). The headwater basins within the La Garita wilderness contain among the highest concentrations of alpine lakes and wetlands in the Closed Basin. The Upper Saguache Creek site is heavily used by for a wide variety of extractive and recreational uses. The entire site is used as summer range for domestic livestock. Grazing by tethered packstock is common within the heavily used trail corridors of the La Garita Wilderness. This site is a popular destination for off-road vehicle campers and two-track roads are abundant. Hunting and fishing are common in season.

## 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 P - Partial

Mapped Date 02/15/1998

Designer Sarr, D.A.

### Boundary Justification

The site boundaries are drawn to envelope the floodplain of Saguache Creek, its major tributaries, and valley toeslopes within 1/8 mile of the stream which contribute surface runoff to the stream channel. In glaciated basins, such as those on the headwaters of the middle fork of Saguache Creek, all valley bottom wetlands were included. The boundary was extended to include occurrences of non-wetland elements (e.g. Gunnison's prairie dog) where such occurrences were contiguous to the wetland boundary. Although not contained in the present site boundary, contributory watersheds should be managed to avoid downstream impacts in the Saguache Creek site. Further research on the grasslands of Saguache Park may warrant including these within this site boundary.

Primary Area 12,056.12 Acres 4,878.96 Hectares

## SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

### Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site contains eight elements of concern. In particular, the site supports five different montane and subalpine willow carr associations: Bebb's willow (*Salix bebbiana*), Geyer's willow/mesic forb (*Salix geyeriana*/mesic forb), Rocky Mountain willow/mesic graminoid (*Salix monticola*/mesic graminoid), Rocky Mountain willow/Canadian reedgrass (*Salix monticola*/*Calamagrostis canadensis*), and planeleaf willow/Canadian reedgrass (*Salix planifolia*/*Calamagrostis canadensis*). A good stand of beaked sedge (*Carex utriculata*) wetland occurs along the middle fork of Saguache Creek and numerous smaller wetlands occur in the upper watershed. Occurrences of three imperiled vertebrate species or subspecies have been recorded at the site, an occurrence of a nesting northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Rio Grande cutthroat trout, and Gunnison's prairie dog subspecies. The upper watershed of Saguache Creek supports a broad diversity of aquatic and terrestrial habitats and maintains a largely undisturbed hydrological regime. This site is a valuable headwater refuge for species which have been impacted by land use in the lower watershed, such as the Rio Grande cutthroat trout.

Other Values Rank No Data

### Other Values Comments

No Data

## LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

### Land Use Comments

The Upper Saguache Creek site is heavily used by for a wide variety of extractive and recreational uses. The entire site is used as summer range for domestic livestock. Grazing by tethered packstock is common within the heavily used trail corridors of the La Garita Wilderness. This site is a popular destination for off-road vehicle campers and two-track roads are abundant. Hunting and fishing are common in season.

### Natural Hazard Comments

No Data

### Exotics Comments

No Data

### Offsite

No Data

### Information Needs

No Data

## 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>
20994	<i>Salix bebbiana</i> Shrubland	Montane Willow Carrs	G3?	S2	Yes
24585	<i>Salix monticola</i> / Mesic Graminoids Shrubland	Montane Riparian Willow Carr	G3	S3	No
20205	<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii virginalis</i>	Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout	G4T3	S3	No
23289	<i>Oeneis alberta</i>	Alberta Arctic	G4	S3	No
24629	<i>Salix geyeriana</i> / Mesic Forbs Shrubland	Montane Willow Carr	G3	S3	Yes

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20205	<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii virginalis</i>	Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout	G4T3	S3	No
18795	<i>Carex utriculata</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Beaked Sedge Montane Wet Meadows	G5	S4	No
24805	<i>Salix planifolia</i> / <i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i> Shrubland	Subalpine Riparian Willow Carr	G4	S2S3	No
20205	<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii virginalis</i>	Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout	G4T3	S3	No
24514	<i>Salix monticola</i> / <i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i> Shrubland	Montane Willow Carr	G3	S3	Yes

## REFERENCES

Reference ID	Full Citation
-	No Data

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

### Additional Topics

No Data

## VERSION

Version Date	02/15/1998
Version Author	Sarr, D.A.

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