

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name San Miguel River at Cottonwood Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*5794

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 75 Site Class PCA

Site Alias San Miguel Creek at Cottonwood Creek

Network of Conservation Areas (NCA)

<u>NCA Site ID</u>	<u>NCA Site Code</u>	<u>NCA Site Name</u>
1598	S.USWRO1*418	San Miguel River

LOCATORS

Nation United States Latitude 381521N

State Colorado Longitude 1082331W

Quad Code Quad Name

38108-B3	Norwood
38108-B4	Redvale
38108-C3	Ute
38108-C4	Big Bucktail Creek

County

Montrose (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

14030003	San Miguel
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SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation 5,800.00 Feet 1,768.00 Meters

Maximum Elevation 6,400.00 Feet 1,951.00 Meters

Site Description

The San Miguel River at Cottonwood Creek PCA is located at the downstream end of the roadless section of the river that begins just below the Norwood Bridge. At Pinyon, a dirt road follows the north side of the river upstream for several miles on BLM and private lands. Camping and fishing are popular on BLM lands at this PCA. Near the confluence of Cottonwood Creek, riparian vegetation begins to take on more low elevation characteristics. Plant growth on the floodplain is very dense in places, with thick stands of cottonwood, river birch, box elder, Rocky Mountain juniper, clematis, poison ivy, wild rose, Gambel's oak, skunkbrush, thinleaf alder, gray aster and Fendler's barberry. The tall shrubs strapleaf willow, skunkbrush, chokecherry and red-osier dogwood dominate other patches. In highly disturbed wetlands along the banks of the San Miguel, coyote willow dominates the riparian area. Associated species in these sites were Baltic rush, spike rush, scouring rush, wild licorice, and several sedges. There is some regeneration of cottonwoods in these areas. Some of the area that was formerly placer mined now has weedy gravel bars with hairy golden aster, dogbane, coyote willow and Russian knapweed. Numerous exotic species are present in the PCA. These include Russian olive, Russian knapweed, Canada thistle, oxeye daisy, yellow sweet clover, and meadow timothy. Highway 90 follows Cottonwood Creek upstream. Vegetation here tends to be somewhat less dense than along the San Miguel, but there are patches with very heavy plant growth. The CNHP riparian survey of 1991 identified a community of narrowleaf cottonwood and skunkbrush that had 80% tree cover and 60% shrub cover. Gambel's oak is common along Cottonwood Creek, sometimes attaining large tree size. Poison ivy is abundant beneath the oak. Other riparian species here include lanceleaf cottonwood (*Populus acuminata*), the hybrid of the narrowleaf and Fremont cottonwoods, Rocky Mountain juniper, clematis, wild geranium, wild rose, Fender's barberry, red-osier dogwood, and river hawthorn.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map P - Partial Mapped Date 09/27/1996

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Designer Culver, D.R.

Boundary Justification

The boundary circumscribes the riparian zones of the San Miguel River and Cottonwood Creek. Some of the adjacent upland areas were also included, as they contribute significantly to the hydrological functioning of the river. Disturbance in the upland vegetation resulting in increased erosion can negatively impact the quality of the river and its riparian community.

Primary Area 2,006.78 Acres 812.12 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

The high significance of this PCA is due to the fair to good occurrence of the globally imperiled skunkbrush riparian woodland. There is also a good occurrence of the globally vulnerable narrowleaf cottonwood/skunkbrush association, and an excellent example of the common coyote willow/mesic graminoid community.

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

Offsite hydrological alterations and improper grazing need to be addressed.

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>
16839	<i>Rhus trilobata</i> Shrubland	Skunkbrush Riparian Shrubland	G2	S2	Yes
24619	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Rhus trilobata</i> Woodland	Narrowleaf Cottonwood/Skunkbrush	G3	S3	No
24872	<i>Salix exigua</i> / Mesic Graminoids Shrubland	Coyote Willow/Mesic Graminoid	G5	S5	No

REFERENCES

Reference ID Full Citation

- No Data

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 01/13/2000

Version Author Lyon, M.J. and J.R. Sovell

Disclaimer

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