

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name San Miguel River at Tabeguache Creek

Site Code S.USCOFO*155

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 266 Site Class PCA
Site Alias Campbell Creek
Site Alias Fisherman Placer
Site Alias Lower San Miguel River Preserve Site
Site Alias Spear Placer

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 381944N
State Colorado Longitude 1084149W

Quad Code Quad Name

38108-B5 Naturita
38108-B6 Naturita NW
38108-C5 Nucla
38108-C6 Uravan
38108-D6 Atkinson Creek

County

Montrose (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

14030003 San Miguel

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	5,000.00 Feet	1,524.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	6,900.00 Feet	2,103.00 Meters

Site Description

The San Miguel River at Tabeguache site includes the riparian corridor of the San Miguel River and a small amount of the adjacent uplands. It also takes in the riparian zones of the lower part of Tabeguache Creek and Coal Canyon. Mature cottonwoods, both the narrowleaf and Rio Grande species, as well as their hybrids dominate the riparian zone. The understory consists of skunkbrush and coyote willow. The uplands have dry, rocky pinon and juniper woodland with much exposed sandstone. Most of the site is owned by The Nature Conservancy, having been donated to the organization in 1987 by the State of Colorado, after it was donated to the state by Umetco Minerals Corporation. The Conservancy recently acquired additional private land upstream of the original preserve. A total of 39 element occurrences have been recorded for the site, in part reflecting the efforts of The Nature Conservancy to thoroughly document the current vegetation. The site contains numerous high quality examples of riparian plant communities, including the globally imperiled Fremont cottonwood/skunkbrush association, the New Mexico privet riparian shrublands, and the more common Rio Grande cottonwood/coyote willow association. The San Miguel riparian zone varies from narrow and straight in incised canyons, to wide meanders that lead to a multi-layered successional pattern of plant associations on the riverbends. Shrubs generally line the channel, with upland vegetation, including sagebrush, rabbitbrush, rose and serviceberry occurring on the flat meander bends. In some areas, tamarisk has invaded the riparian vegetation, replacing the native New Mexico privet and skunkbrush. Cottonwoods and willows are reproducing successfully along the river, thanks to the natural flooding processes that can occur on this undammed river.

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 03/01/2000

Designer Lyon, M.J. and J.R. Sovell

Boundary Justification

The site includes the riparian zones of the San Miguel River, Coal Canyon and Tabeguache Creek in the area owned by The Nature Conservancy and encompassing the element occurrences listed above. It also includes some adjacent uplands with pinon - juniper communities that are important in maintaining the quality of the riparian zone by limiting erosion and sedimentation.

Primary Area 18,972.55 Acres

7,677.95 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B2: Very High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site contains an excellent (A-ranked) occurrence of a plant community which is imperiled globally (G1G2). In addition to the critically imperiled New Mexico privet riparian shrubland community, there are over 20 other targeted riparian communities within the site, including riparian forests dominated by both narrowleaf and Fremont cottonwoods (and their hybrids), and montane riparian shrublands dominated by river birch, skunkbrush, coyote willow or silver buffaloberry. There are several occurrences of rare plants; Payson lupine and San Rafael milkvetch. The rare plant populations have not been updated in recent years. Uplands include targeted plant communities, including occurrences of mesic western slope pinon - juniper woodlands, salt meadows, and western slope grasslands.

Other Values Rank No Data

Other Values Comments

This site is quite scenic and accessible to the public.

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

Surrounding lands are mostly managed by Bureau of Land Management under multiple use. There is little livestock grazing of the uplands due to lack of water, scarcity of forage and steep slopes. The Superfund site at Uravan is 2 miles downstream of the site and does not adversely impact the Lower San Miguel River Preserve site.

Natural Hazard Comments

During spring runoff, the river has a swift current and is not safe for water activities such as swimming or fishing. Rattlesnakes are present.

Exotics Comments

Exotics are present, as they are on virtually all riparian sites at lower elevation in the western United States. The only woody exotic plant of any consequence is tamarisk (*Tamarix chinensis*) which is not especially abundant. Efforts to control this species were initiated in October 1990. Common exotic herbaceous plants include cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), yellow sweetclover (*Melilotus officinalis*), and Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*). However, the herbaceous understory also contains an abundance of native, perennial species, principally western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*).

Offsite

Livestock grazing on adjacent public (BLM) or private lands does not appear to spill on to the preserve.

Information Needs

The rank of the Utah juniper / Utah serviceberry - mockorange / salina wildrye (*Juniperus osteosperma* / *Amelanchier - Philadelphus microphyllus* / *Elymus salina*) plant community, which is found on the uplands of the site, is unknown. This community also occurs on nearby BLM lands. There are a number of ramshackle structures on the northern (downstream) end of the site. They were supposedly built for the enjoyment of employees of the Uravan mill by Umetco. We need to determine if any of the structures have any historic value.

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>
19709	<i>Forestiera pubescens</i> Shrubland	Foothills Riparian Shrubland	G1G2	S1	Yes
18466	<i>Lupinus crassus</i>	Payson lupine	G2	S2	No

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40542	<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i> / <i>Leymus salinus</i> spp. <i>salinus</i> Wooded Herbaceous Vegetation	Mesic Western Slope Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands	G3	S3	No
24634	<i>Populus deltoides</i> ssp. <i>wislizeni</i> / <i>Salix exigua</i> Woodland	Fremonts Cottonwood Riparian Forests	G3	S1S2	No
24984	<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i> Woodland	Mesic Western Slope Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands	G5	SU	No
24984	<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i> Woodland	Mesic Western Slope Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands	G5	SU	No
16839	<i>Rhus trilobata</i> Shrubland	Skunkbrush Riparian Shrubland	G2	S2	No
22406	<i>Astragalus rafaensis</i>	San Rafael milkvetch	G2G3	S1	No
24600	<i>Populus deltoides</i> ssp. <i>wislizeni</i> / <i>Rhus trilobata</i> Woodland	Fremont's Cottonwood Riparian Forests	G3	S3	No
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17439	<i>Shepherdia argentea</i> Shrubland	Foothills Riparian Shrubland	G3G4	S1	No
24637	<i>Betula occidentalis</i> / Mesic Graminoids Shrubland	Lower Montane Riparian Shrublands	G3	S2	No
19709	<i>Forestiera pubescens</i> Shrubland	Foothills Riparian Shrubland	G1G2	S1	Yes
24659	<i>Salix exigua</i> / Barren Shrubland	Coyote Willow/Bare Ground	G5	S5	No
16839	<i>Rhus trilobata</i> Shrubland	Skunkbrush Riparian Shrubland	G2	S2	No
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18466	<i>Lupinus crassus</i>	Payson lupine	G2	S2	No
24637	<i>Betula occidentalis</i> / Mesic Graminoids Shrubland	Lower Montane Riparian Shrublands	G3	S2	No
19429	<i>Sporobolus airoides</i> Southern Plains Herbaceous Vegetation	Great Plains Salt Meadows	G3Q	S3	No
24830	<i>Pinus edulis</i> - <i>Juniperus</i> spp. / <i>Cercocarpus montanus</i> Woodland	Mesic Western Slope Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands	G5	S4	No
18131	<i>Pleuraphis jamesii</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	Western Slope Grasslands	G2G4	S1	No
20453	<i>Astragalus linifolius</i>	Grand Junction milkvetch	G3Q	S3	No
17439	<i>Shepherdia argentea</i> Shrubland	Foothills Riparian Shrubland	G3G4	S1	No
24659	<i>Salix exigua</i> / Barren Shrubland	Coyote Willow/Bare Ground	G5	S5	No
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24619	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Rhus trilobata</i> Woodland	Narrowleaf Cottonwood/Skunkbrush	G3	S3	No
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REFERENCES

Reference ID	Full Citation
192792	Lyon, P. and J. Sovell. 2000. Final Report: A Natural Heritage Assessment, San Miguel and Western Montrose Counties, Colorado. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date	03/01/2000
Version Author	Lyon, M.J. and J.R. Sovell

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