

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Sand Canyon at McElmo

Site Code S.USCOHP*21412

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1331 Site Class PCA
Site Alias Sand Canyon

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 372118N
State Colorado Longitude 1084818W

Quad Code Quad Name
37108-C7 Battle Rock

County

Montezuma (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name
14080202 Mcelmo

SITE DESCRIPTION

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Minimum Elevation | 5,600.00 Feet | 1,706.88 Meters |
| Maximum Elevation | 6,200.00 Feet | 1,889.76 Meters |

Site Description

The site includes the lower reaches of Sand Canyon and parts of the surrounding uplands, including the Sand Canyon trailhead on McElmo Road. Sand Canyon is an area rich in scenic beauty and cultural heritage. It currently receives heavy visitation from hikers and mountain bikers relative to most other areas within the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. Sand Creek flows between dramatic Entrada sandstone canyon walls in this rugged and beautiful reach. Many Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings can be seen in alcoves along the canyon walls. Most of the site is dominated by open pinon - juniper woodlands, interspersed with areas of rimrock sandstone devoid of soil. Patches of heavily crusted soil were found in concavities in the sandstone on the canyon rim. These patches often appeared to be defying the laws of gravity, having evidently been washed into these concavities from above. The soil in these patches is only a few inches deep. It appears likely that the only thing preventing rapid erosion of these soil patches is the presence of the cryptobiotic crust. Most of the Naturita milkvetch (*Astragalus naturitensis*) individuals found were growing in these patches of soil. A good occurrence of little penstemon (*Penstemon breviculus*) was found in this area, with hundreds of individuals scattered along the trail from near the trailhead at McElmo Road for approximately one mile into Sand Canyon. This population is estimated to contain at least 1,000 plants. A fair occurrence of the weak-stemmed mariposa lily (*Calochortus flexuosus*) was found on the west canyon rim in which only four individuals were counted. The longnose leopard lizard (*Gambelia wislizenii*), a lizard critically imperiled in Colorado, was observed in 1993. Although the site was not drawn to address its needs, the area contains much suitable habitat for this species. Silky pocket mouse (*Perognathus flavus hopiensis*) has also been documented in the area.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

Many Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings are present here in alcoves in the canyon walls.

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 10/27/2000

Designer Anderson, D.G.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the known extent of the occurrences of the Naturita milkvetch (*Astragalus*

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naturitensis), the little penstemon (*Penstemon breviculus*), and the weak-stemmed mariposa lily (*Calochortus flexuosus*). Its large size should contain sufficient suitable habitat to allow for future movement or expansion of these populations.

Primary Area 1,864.00 Acres 754.34 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B2: Very High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site supports an excellent (A-ranked) occurrence of Naturita Milkvetch (*Astragalus naturitensis*), a globally imperiled (G2G3/S2S3) species and an excellent (A-ranked) occurrence of little penstemon (*Penstemon breviculus*), a globally vulnerable (G3/S2) species. Weak-stemmed mariposa lily (*Calochortus flexuosus*), a plant that is rare (G4/S2) in Colorado was found in fair condition (C-ranked).

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

Weeds observed in 2000 included bur buttercup (*Ceratocephala orthoceras*), cheat grass (*Anisantha tectorum*), and redstem filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*). These weeds were not impacting the element occurrences.

Offsite

No Data

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> |
| 21647 | <i>Astragalus naturitensis</i> | Naturita milkvetch | G2G3 | S2S3 | No |
| 21647 | <i>Astragalus naturitensis</i> | Naturita milkvetch | G2G3 | S2S3 | Yes |
| 21647 | <i>Astragalus naturitensis</i> | Naturita milkvetch | G2G3 | S2S3 | No |
| 22171 | <i>Calochortus flexuosus</i> | weak-stemmed mariposa lily | G4 | S2 | No |
| 23967 | <i>Penstemon breviculus</i> | little penstemon | G3 | S2 | No |

REFERENCES

| <u>Reference ID</u> | <u>Full Citation</u> |
|---------------------|---|
| 192772 | Lyon, M.J. 2005. Final Report: Survey of Rare Plants. San Juan Public Lands in Dolores and Montezuma counties, Colorado. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO. |

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 12/08/2004
Version Author Lyon, M.J.

Disclaimer

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