

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name School Gulch

Site Code S.USCOHP*26899

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2440 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 400645N
State Colorado Longitude 1083629W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
40108-A6	Gillam Draw
40108-A5	Calamity Ridge
40108-B5	Divide Creek
40108-B6	Cactus Reservoir

County

Rio Blanco (CO)

<u>Watershed Code</u>	<u>Watershed Name</u>
14050006	Piceance-Yellow
14050007	Lower White

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	5,400.00	Feet	1,645.92	Meters
Maximum Elevation	6,980.00	Feet	2,127.50	Meters

Site Description

The School Gulch site is located in the Piceance Basin, south of Colorado Highway 64 and the White River. Hammond Draw, School Gulch, Alkali Gulch and Boise Creek dissect the area. Calamity Ridge rises prominently to the south. The topography is characteristic of this portion of the Piceance Basin with draws dissecting the Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) shrubland, with pinon pine (*Pinus edulis*) occurring sporadically with mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*) and serviceberry (*Amelanchier utahensis*). Associated species include shadscale saltbush (*Atriplex confertifolia*), Wyoming sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *wyomingensis*), green rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), spear-leaf buckwheat (*Eriogonum lonchophyllum*), snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), and prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia polyacantha*). The herbaceous layer is dominated by saline wild rye (*Leymus salinus*). Additional graminoids present include Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), blue bunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), and Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*). Forbs also provide sparse cover and include Hooker's desert sandwort (*Arenaria hookeri*), Fendler's sandwort (*Arenaria fendleri*), sulphur flowered buckwheat (*Eriogonum umbellatum*), prickly phlox (*Leptodactylon pungens*), mountain pepperweed (*Lepidium montanum*), mountain phlox (*Phlox austromontana*), rock goldenrod (*Petroradia pumila*), spiny phlox (*Phlox hoodii*), scarlet globemallow (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*), and stemless goldenweed (*Stenotus acaulis*).

Key Environmental Factors

Geology consists of shale, sandstone, and claystone from Green River and Wasatch Formations. Soils range from Rentsac channery loam and Piceance fine sandy loams to rock outcrops of Rentsac Moyerson outcrop complex.

Climate Description

In the County, summers are warm or hot in most valleys but are much cooler in the mountains. Winters are cold in the mountains. Summer thunderstorms are prevalent; of the total precipitation, 55% usually falls between April and September. Average seasonal snowfall is 74.4 inches, average day time temperature is 45 degrees and average precipitation is 16.5 inches for Meeker between 1948 -2007 (Western Regional Climate Center 2008).

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

No Data

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SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 01/23/2008

Designer Culver, D.R.

Boundary Justification

Boundary was delineated to encompass the known occurrence of the *Juniperus osteosperma* / *Leymus salinus* spp. *salinus* plant community, potential habitat, and adjacent hillsides and gulches. White River represents the northern extent of the site and Calamity Ridge represents the southern boundary. This area only includes the immediate ecological processes and does not consider insect and mammal pollinators. Only public lands were surveyed in 2007.

Primary Area 26,125.48 Acres 10,572.65 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site encompasses an excellent (A-ranked) occurrence of the globally vulnerable (G3/S3) *Juniperus osteosperma* / *Leymus salinus* spp. *salinus* plant association. This was one of the best observed occurrences of this community type in Rio Blanco during 2007. This plant community is only known from Utah and Colorado, however, the potential for more occurrences is very likely. Although not drawn for this species, there are documented Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) nest sites adjacent to this site. This is a globally apparently secure (G4/S4) species, however, it has a restricted range, is a State Special Concern species and a BLM/USFS sensitive species. The Greater Sage-grouse and other sagebrush obligates such as Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*), Sage Sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*), and the Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*) depend on large, continuous blocks of viable habitat such as identified within this site.

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

Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is present, typically only along two tracks. Otherwise, the presence of non-native plants is minimal.

Offsite

No Data

Information Needs

No Data

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

Element State ID	State Scientific Name	State Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	Driving Site Rank
40542	<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i> / <i>Leymus salinus</i> spp. <i>salinus</i> Wooded Herbaceous Vegetation	Mesic Western Slope Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands	G3	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

Reference ID	Full Citation
195026	Culver, D., J. Huggins and P. Lyon. 2008. Final Report: Significant Biological Resources in Rio Blanco County, CO. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
195034	WRCC. 2008. Western Regional Climate Center. Division of Atmospheric Sciences, Desert Research Institute. Reno, Nevada. < http://www.wrcc.dri.edu >.

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ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 01/23/2008

Version Author Culver, D.R.

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