

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Silver Pick Basin

Site Code S.USCOHP*21249

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1639 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 375206N
State Colorado Longitude 1080007W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
37108-G1	Dolores Peak
37108-H1	Little Cone
37107-G8	Mount Wilson

County

San Miguel (CO)

<u>Watershed Code</u>	<u>Watershed Name</u>
14030003	San Miguel

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	11,000.00 Feet	3,353.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	12,200.00 Feet	3,719.00 Meters

Site Description

Silver Pick Basin is a high alpine basin at the headwaters of Big Bear Creek just below Wilson Peak. The site of extensive former mining activity, the basin is most often visited today by climbers and hikers. An old aerial tramway can still be seen. Access is via a closed road leading from a Forest Service trailhead at the end of the Silver Pick Road. The trail leads through forests of spruce and aspen, before the landscape opens out above treeline. The forested area is rich with mosses, mushrooms, and shade-loving species such as one-sided wintergreen, common juniper, bilberry, meadowrue, wild geranium, heartleaf arnica, sweet cicely and Oregon grape. More open areas and aspen groves have wild rose, white peavine, elk sedge, and osha. Above timberline, scree slopes with little other vegetation support the Altai chickweed. The few other species in that habitat include Colorado columbine, harbour penstemon, Fremont's groundsel, and thickroot claytonia. The chickweed, penstemon and groundsel share similar adaptations to this habitat in the form of long, flexible roots that allow them to move with the downhill creep of the rocks. The tiny plants were common in all suitable habitat on the loose rocks, preferring sites with smaller size rocks, a little soil development, and some natural disturbance. In some cases, the Arctic draba was found growing in the same sites with the chickweed. It was also found in more disturbed sites along the road, especially in areas that had been cleared for turning vehicles. The San Juan whitlow-grass was found in cold, wet tundra near late-melting snowfields. It can be recognized by its narrow leaves, and broad and dark green pods. Each four-petaled yellow flower is subtended by a bract. It occupied a narrow band from about 20 to 80 feet away from the melting edge of the snowbanks. In this zone, grasses are still brown and soils cold and wet late into July. Farther away from the snow, the tundra is lush with wildflowers like alpine avens, Indian paintbrush, snow-lover, moss campion, three-toothed groundsel, alpine sandwort, and blackhead daisy. The narrow niche that the San Juan whitlow-grass occupies could make it very vulnerable to small changes in climate. Enough warming so that snowbanks did not persist into late summer could eliminate it from this site.

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 03/13/2000

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

Boundary Justification

The site includes the known locations of the three rare plant species, with some adjacent potential habitat that is suitable for each. These currently unoccupied areas can provide sites for the plants to become established in the future. Further research on the ecological requirements of these plants could lead to revisions of the boundaries, for example to allow for the habitat needs of pollinators that are as yet unidentified.

Primary Area 243.92 Acres 98.71 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B2: Very High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site contains a good occurrence of the globally imperiled (G2/S2) San Juan whitlow-grass (*Draba graminea*), a good (B-ranked) occurrence of the state rare (G4/S2) Altai chickweed (*Stellaria irrigua*) and a fair (C-ranked) occurrence of the state rare (G4/S2S3) arctic draba (*Draba fladnizensis*).

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

No Data

Information Needs

No Data

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

<u>Element</u>			<u>Global Rank</u>	<u>State Rank</u>	<u>Driving Site Rank</u>
<u>State ID</u>	<u>State Scientific Name</u>	<u>State Common Name</u>			
19017	<i>Draba fladnizensis</i>	arctic draba	G4	S2S3	No
17247	<i>Draba graminea</i>	San Juan whitlow-grass	G2	S2	Yes
17150	<i>Stellaria irrigua</i>	Altai chickweed	G4?	S2	No

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
-	No Data

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 03/13/2000

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

Disclaimer

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