

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Squaw Canyon

Site Code S.USCOHP*24444

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2056 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 371138N
State Colorado Longitude 1065816W

Quad Code Quad Name
37106-B8 Serviceberry Mountain

County
Archuleta (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name
14080101 Upper San Juan

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,150.00 Feet	2,179.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	7,295.00 Feet	2,224.00 Meters

Site Description

The Squaw Canyon site encompasses a large open, flat valley with numerous low hills and several different types of habitats. Elevation within the site varies by about 150 feet and all of this elevation gain is associated with the hills, otherwise the site is extremely flat. The area is dominated by grassland and pastures, but also includes areas of mixed grass and sagebrush (*Artemisia* sp.), Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelii*) and even some pockets of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). Much of the area is under residential development and each lot is 3 to 17 acres in size. The PCA contains a large Gunnison's prairie dog (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) complex with an estimated 300 individuals. Some of the houses already built in the Loma Linda development have prairie dog mounds in their yards. Grazing of domestic livestock occurred historically on most or all of the site, and today it continues on some portions.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

Grazing of domestic livestock occurred Historically on most or all of the site, and today it continues on some portions.

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 04/01/2003

Designer Sovell, J.R.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the entire extent of the prairie dog complex and the (mostly) unoccupied space among these colonies. Scattered within the unoccupied areas are several small clusters of occupied prairie dog mounds. The site is bounded on all sides by land that is unsuitable for use by prairie dogs because it is much too hilly and wooded. The boundary also includes unoccupied habitat outside of the edge of the prairie dog complex and is intended to allow for suitable areas into which the population can expand. The boundary includes the grasslands grazed by the cattle, which mimics the historic disturbance processes of fire, and herbivory by bison, natural disturbances that influenced evolution of prairie dogs.

Primary Area 1,690.83 Acres 684.26 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B5: General Biodiversity Interest

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Biodiversity Significance Comments

The PCA contains a good (B-rank) occurrence of the Gunnison's prairie dog (*Cynomys gunnisoni*), a species that is globally secure (G5/S5). Gunnison's prairie dogs are endemic to the southwestern United States and have a broad distribution within Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah. Gunnison's prairie dogs are declining throughout their range, although extent of the decline is unknown. Indiscriminate poisoning, habitat conversion, and plague have drastically reduced numbers and range (Miller and Cully 2001, Cully and Williams 2001). Plague is probably the greatest threat at this time. The Gunnison's prairie dog is a keystone species upon which many other prairie species depend (Miller and Cully 2001). The Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*, G4), hawks, and fox and coyote are among those animals that are found in greatest numbers on prairie dog towns.

Other Values Rank No Data

Other Values Comments

No Data

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

[Sovell 2002:] Residential development and cattle grazing are the current land uses in the area. Cattle grazing will probably have no impact on the viability of the prairie dog complex, but continued conversion of suitable habitat to homesites has the potential to eradicate this prairie dog complex.

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</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>
21389	<i>Cynomys gunnisoni</i>	Gunnison's Prairie Dog	G5	S5	Yes

REFERENCES

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

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 04/01/2003

Version Author Sovell, J.R.

Disclaimer

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