

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Straub Mountain

Site Code S.USCOHP*28252

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2753 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 384036N
State Colorado Longitude 1050828W

Quad Code Quad Name

38105-F1 Big Bull Mountain
38105-F2 Cripple Creek South

County

Teller (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

11020002 Upper Arkansas

SITE DESCRIPTION

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Minimum Elevation | 9,100.00 Feet | 2,773.68 Meters |
| Maximum Elevation | 9,700.00 Feet | 2,956.56 Meters |

Site Description

The Straub Mountain site is located in the montane zone foothills on the west slope of the Front Range south of the City of Victor. Topography is characterized by expansive rolling hills and ridges interrupted by rock outcrops with steep canyons to the west. Uplands are drained by a small, south-trending, first order stream, Millsap Creek. The stream has its beginning as shallow groundwater discharge and is soon joined by several other 1st order streams, flowing to the south and having its confluence with the North Fork just below the County line. Stream riparian habitat is dominated by mesic graminoids and occasionally patches of willow (*Salix* spp.) Several stock ponds are located along the stream and in swales on ephemeral streams that are confluent with Millsap Creek. Northern leopard frogs (*Rana pipiens*) occur in a large stock pond on Millsap Creek and pale blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium pallidum*) is occasionally found along the streambanks and on toeslopes above the stream. Upland habitat is mosaic of deciduous and coniferous woodlands and grasslands. Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), and bristlecone pine (*Pinus aristata*) woodlands occupy a variety of sites depending on soil moisture and aspect. Open meadow grasslands are interspersed with forested site occupying ridgetops, toeslopes and benches. Rocky ridgetops are typically occupied by patches of limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*) and the, Front Range heuchera (*Heuchera hallii*) is also found in protected rocky sites. Domestic livestock grazing is ubiquitous throughout the site and has altered vegetation structure and composition and soil characteristics. Hydrology has been altered by dams and diversions and by grazing-induced impacts to soils and native vegetation. Geology is composed of granitic rocks of 1,700 m.y. age group (Tweto 1979). Soils are primarily Herbman gravelly sandy loam, 5 to 55 percent slopes, and Quander-Bushpark very gravelly loams, 5 to 40 percent slopes with small patches of Ivywild-Catamount complex, 30 to 70 percent slopes scattered throughout the site (USDA NRCS 2010).

Key Environmental Factors

Key ecological processes include fire, grazing intensity and hydrology (Rondeau 2001). Fire has been absent from this landscape that has evolved with low-intensity burns. Domestic livestock grazing intensity is excessive, particularly in riparian habitat, and has altered vegetation species' composition and structure and soil characteristics in both upland and riparian zones. Stream and riparian hydrology is dependent on shallow groundwater discharge which has been impacted by grazing, diversions and small dams.

Climate Description

Wide climate variations occur within short distances due to dramatic topographic variation and elevational changes from the high peaks of the Front Range to the rolling foothills to the west. At this site on in the montane zone site at an average elevation of 9,400 feet, from 1971 through 2000, coldest temperatures occurred in January with an average maximum of 32.23 °F and a minimum of 9.32 °F. Warmest temperatures occurred in July with an average maximum of 70.77 °F and an average minimum of 44.02 °F. Annual average maximum precipitation was 18.46 inches. July and August were the wettest months of the year with 3.91 and

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3.75 inches of precipitation respectively. Driest months are December, January and February with 0.44, 0.42 and 0.34 inches of precipitation respectively. March through June and September through November have intermediate amount of precipitation (Prism 2010).

Land Use History

The City of Victor, which is located to the north of the Straub Mountain site, was a gold mining camp and was known as the City of Gold because mining in the surrounding Cripple Creek area was the most productive gold mining district in the United States (City of Victor 2010). Gold mining declined after 1900 as the mines became worked out. In 1994 large-scale open pit mining began and the area is again producing gold (Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Mining Company 2010). However, open pit mining has dramatically altered the landscape and has eliminated large areas of habitat. Surrounding habitats were historically ranched and logged. Market hunting was also common throughout the region and was a key cause of the extirpation of many native wildlife species (Fitzgerald et al 1994).

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes

Mapped Date 01/03/2011

Designer Malone, D.G.

Boundary Justification

The site boundary was delineated to encompass the known element occurrences and their potential extent as well as the ecological processes essential to their long-term persistence. Especially essential to upland ecosystems in this site is the inclusion of a natural fire regime to shaping sustainable bristlecone and ponderosa woodlands; ecological processes essential to maintaining sustainable riparian and stream habitat and dependent wildlife at this site are a natural hydrologic regime which here, is maintained by shallow groundwater discharge. Only private lands with written permission were accessed.

Primary Area 2,923.61 Acres

1,183.15 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

The site is drawn for a fair (C-ranked) occurrence of the globally vulnerable (G2G3/S2) pale blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium pallidum*) and a fair (C-ranked) occurrence of the state rare (G4/S3) bristlecone pine / Arizona fescue (*Pinus aristata* / *Festuca arizonica*) woodland. Additionally, an extant occurrence of the state rare (G5/S3) northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*) is present. The northern leopard frog is also listed as sensitive by the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

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

White clover (*Melilotus albus*), Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), and dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) were documented in the site.

Offsite

No Data

Information Needs

No Data

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

| Element | | | Global | State | Driving |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------|-----------|
| State ID | State Scientific Name | State Common Name | Rank | Rank | Site Rank |
| 18389 | <i>Rana pipiens</i> | Northern Leopard Frog | G5 | S3 | No |

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| 24588 | <i>Pinus aristata</i> / <i>Festuca arizonica</i> Woodland | Montane Woodlands | G4 | S3 | No | |
| 21615 | <i>Sisyrinchium pallidum</i> | pale blue-eyed grass | G2G3 | S2 | Yes | |

REFERENCES

| <u>Reference ID</u> | <u>Full Citation</u> |
|---------------------|--|
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| 172432 | Fitzgerald, J. P., C. A. Meaney, and D. M. Armstrong. 1994. Mammals of Colorado. Denver Museum of Natural History and University Press of Colorado. |
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| 192747 | Tweto, O. 1979. Geologic Map of Colorado, 1:500,000. United States Geological Survey, Department of Interior, and Geologic Survey of Colorado, Denver, CO. |
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ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Version Date | 01/03/2011 |
| Version Author | Malone, D.G. |

Disclaimer

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