

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name UnawEEP Canyon

Site Code S.USCOHP*4647

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1756 Site Class PCA
Site Alias East Creek

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 385302N
State Colorado Longitude 1083311W

Quad Code Quad Name

38108-H5	Island Mesa
38108-G5	Jacks Canyon
38108-G6	Snyder Flats
38108-H4	Whitewater

County

Mesa (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

14020005	Lower Gunnison
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SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	6,520.00 Feet	1,987.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	7,800.00 Feet	2,377.00 Meters

Site Description

This large site encompasses the eastern part of UnawEEP Canyon, the "Canyon with two mouths". Near the divide between East and West Creeks, dark gray Precambrian cliffs with diagonal slashes of quartz intrusions comprise the valley walls. High on the cliff faces, red alum-root (*Heuchera rubescens*), a tiny rare saxifrage, clings to small crevices. Rare bat species and raptors use the cliffs for their homes. Pools in the perennial stream are home to red spotted toads (*Bufo punctatus*) and canyon tree frogs (*Hyla arenicolor*). Farther downstream, the granite gives way to younger sandstones and shales. The banks of East Creek have scattered cottonwoods (*Populus* sp.), coyote willow (*Salix exigua*), and scouring rushes (*Hippochaete* sp.), while the uplands have pinon - juniper woodlands with mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*) and Indian rice grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*). Tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*) is prevalent near the mouth of the canyon. A large flood occurred on July 10, 2001, scouring out most of the herbaceous vegetation in the canyon. Several side canyons, draining the Uncompahgre Plateau, enter the main canyon. In at least one of these, Nancy Hanks Gulch, widely spaced pinon - juniper are accompanied by curl-leaf mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*), comprising a plant association vulnerable through its range. Along the North Fork East Creek, thinleaf alder (*Alnus incana*), red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), river birch (*Betula occidentalis*), and blue spruce (*Picea pungens*) dominate the riparian area. Soils along the drainage are derived from alluvium.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 01/31/2002

Designer Rocchio, F.J.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries are drawn to encompass the ecological processes believed necessary for long-term viability of

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the elements. These boundaries will ensure continued natural surface flow and thus allow fluvial processes such as flood scouring, lateral flow, and channel meandering, to maintain a dynamic distribution of riparian and wetland plant associations along the drainage.

Primary Area 9,184.14 Acres 3,716.70 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site supports two good (B-ranked) examples of mesic western slope pinon - juniper woodlands (*Pinus edulis* / *Juniperus osteosperma* / *Cercocarpus intricatus*) and thinleaf alder - red-osier dogwood riparian shrubland (*Alnus incana* - *Cornus sericea*), which are both vulnerable throughout their range (G3). The thinleaf alder / red-osier dogwood plant association is a narrow thicket of medium to tall shrubs lining the stream bank. It is an uncommon association restricted to small tributaries and narrow, constricted reaches of larger rivers. Due to heavy shading, there is usually a limited herbaceous understory. This plant association is widespread throughout the Rocky Mountains. However, all of the occurrences are small and threatened by improper grazing and stream impoundments. The state imperiled (G5/S2) canyon tree frog (*Hyla arenicolor*) is also found here. The canyon tree frog inhabits rocky canyons along intermittent or permanent streams. This desert frog reaches its northern limits in Southern Colorado. Although primarily terrestrial, it breeds in canyon bottom pools surrounded by rock. It is usually found near permanent pools or cottonwoods in the pinon - juniper zone. The state rare (G4T4/S2B) Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) is also known to use this area and there are extant occurrences of Townsend's big-eared bat (*Plecotus townsendii pallescens*), a state rare (G4T4/S2) subspecies. The globally imperiled (G2/S2) plant, Alkaline pepperwort (*Lepidium crenatum*), has been historically documented.

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

Tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*) is prevalent near the mouth of the canyon.

Offsite

No Data

Information Needs

Search for the rare Alkaline pepperwort.

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>
23434	<i>Heuchera rubescens</i>	red alum-root	G5	S1	No
21725	<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	American Peregrine Falcon	G4T4	S2B	No
21725	<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	American Peregrine Falcon	G4T4	S2B	No
19160	<i>Hyla arenicolor</i>	Canyon Treefrog	G5	S2	No
21654	<i>Plecotus townsendii pallescens</i>	Townsend's Big-eared Bat Subsp	G4T4	S2	No
24829	<i>Pinus edulis</i> - <i>Juniperus osteosperma</i> / <i>Cercocarpus intricatus</i> Woodland	Mesic Western Slope Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands	G3	S3	Yes
23434	<i>Heuchera rubescens</i>	red alum-root	G5	S1	No
21654	<i>Plecotus townsendii pallescens</i>	Townsend's Big-eared Bat Subsp	G4T4	S2	No
21654	<i>Plecotus townsendii pallescens</i>	Townsend's Big-eared Bat Subsp	G4T4	S2	No
24773	<i>Alnus incana</i> / <i>Cornus sericea</i> Shrubland	Thinleaf Alder-Red-osier Dogwood Riparian Shrubland	G3G4	S3	Yes
25209	<i>Lepidium crenatum</i>	Alkaline pepperwort	G2	S2	No

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REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
161178	Lyon, M. J., C. Richard, and S. Austin. 1996. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Mesa County Inventory.
198627	Lyon, P. and B. Kuhn. 2010. Rare Plant Survey of Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area.
169188	Rocchio, Joe. 2001. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Survey of Critical Wetlands of Mesa County.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

Original site design by Lyon, M.J. 1996.

VERSION

Version Date	12/09/2010
Version Author	Kuhn B. and M.J. Lyon

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