

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Veatch Gulch

Site Code S.USCOHP*26914

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2442 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 395449N
State Colorado Longitude 1075028W

Quad Code Quad Name

39107-H8 Lo 7 Hill
39107-G7 Red Elephant Point
39107-H7 Veatch Gulch

County

Rio Blanco (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

14050005 Upper White

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,100.00 Feet	2,164.08 Meters
Maximum Elevation	8,200.00 Feet	2,499.36 Meters

Site Description

The Veatch Gulch site is located south of Meeker between the Grand Hogback and Miller Creek. The prominent topographic feature, Veatch Gulch, is an ephemeral stream that drains into the White River. The north portion of the site is dominated by steep mud or siltstone cliffs, derived from the Chinle and State Bridge silt and sandstones that rise dramatically from Veatch Gulch. These hillsides are sparsely vegetated, mainly with tufts of the big bunch bluegrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), long flower rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus depressus*), fringed sagebrush (*Artemisia frigida*), lacy tansy aster (*Machaeranthera pinnatifida*), and Oregon grape (*Mahonia repens*). The sagebrush shrubland is dominated by Great Basin and Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *tridentata* and *Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *wyomingensis*) with snowberry (*Symphoricarpos rotundifolius*). Native grasses dominate the understory and include Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), green needle and thread grass (*Stipa viridula*), June grass (*Koeleria macrantha*), Fendler's bluegrass (*Poa fendleriana*), Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus*), and Western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*). Of special note is the near absence of cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) which dominates graminoid cover in sagebrush shrublands throughout western Colorado. Several gulches with ephemeral streams are present and include Veatch Gulch, Moog Gulch, and Bloodsworth Gulch. The gulches and gullies are dominated quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier* sp.), and scattered narrowleaf cottonwoods (*Populus angustifolia*). Several springs have been enhanced for cattle and the ponds support Rocky Mountain willow (*Salix monticola*), planeleaf willow (*Salix planifolia*), cattails (*Typha* sp.) and spikerush (*Eleocharis palustris*).

Key Environmental Factors

The north portion of the site is dominated by steep mud or siltstone cliffs, derived from the Chinle and State Bridge silt and sandstones. The sagebrush area consists of deep, well drained soils that are formed in colluvium and alluvium derived from red-bed sandstone and shale (Tampico Series).

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

Several abandoned homesteads are evident throughout. At one time, there were 35 families present. The area

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was hayed and lime outcrops in the southeastern portion of the site were mined from 1917- 1930s.

Cultural Features

Remnants of a schoolhouse and cabins remain.

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes

Mapped Date 01/15/2008

Designer Culver, D.R.

Boundary Justification

Boundary was delineated to encompass the known occurrence of the sagebrush plant community, potential habitat, and adjacent hillsides and gulches. The boundary is drawn using Flag Creek as the western border and Miller Creek its eastern border. It only includes the immediate ecological processes and does not consider insect and mammal pollinators. Only private lands with written permission were surveyed.

Primary Area 19,180.53 Acres 7,762.12 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site encompasses a good (B-ranked) occurrence of a globally vulnerable (G3/SNR) sagebrush plant community, Wyoming sagebrush with Sandberg bluegrass (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *vaseyana* / *Poa secunda*). This was one of the best observed locations of this element during 2007. There is currently no disturbance from oil and gas exploration, and the only roads within the site are two tracks to summer cabins. The presence of non-native plants is minimal and is being aggressively eradicated by owners. Although not designed for this species, there are documented Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) nest sites adjacent to the site. This globally apparently secure species (G4/S4) has a restricted range and is a State Special Concern species as well as a BLM/USFS sensitive species. The Division of Wildlife is currently considering a wildlife management plan for the area. 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 sagebrush 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

There were several non-native forbs present: *Carduus nutans*, *Cynoglossum officinale*, *Verbascum thapsus*, especially in areas of disturbance such as salt licks and stock ponds.

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>
40669	<i>Artemisia tridentata</i> ssp. <i>vaseyana</i> / <i>Poa secunda</i> Shrubland	Mountain Big Sagebrush / Curly Bluegrass Shrubland	G3	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

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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>>.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 01/15/2008

Version Author Culver, D.R.

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