

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name West Elk Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*21724

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 826 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 394223N
State Colorado Longitude 1073925W

Quad Code Quad Name

39107-F6 Rifle Falls

County

Garfield (CO)

Watershed Code Watershed Name

14010005 Colorado headwaters-Plateau

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	7,300.00 Feet	2,225.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	8,800.00 Feet	2,682.00 Meters

Site Description

This site includes the upper portion of West Elk Creek. The creek is dominated by aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*), river birch (*Betula occidentalis*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), and a diversity of herbaceous species in the understory. Much of the creek, at least along the lower portions of the creek within the site, has been heavily altered from development and agricultural practices. However, a relatively pristine remnant of the riparian community exists along a small portion of the creek. The canyon bog-orchid (*Limnorchis ensifolia*) was found growing near West Elk Reservoir within this remnant riparian community. Soils along the riparian area are mapped as the Holderness variant series, a fine, montmorillonitic, frigid Aridic Haploborolls (Soil Conservation Service 1985). These soils formed in alluvium derived from shale and sandstone and are deep, well drained soils. It is a variant of the Holderness series because it is calcareous to the surface (Soil Conservation Service 1985). This site contains a narrow riparian area with a fairly high cover of woody vegetation in sporadic locations, while other portions of the creek have been heavily impacted by development and agricultural conversion. Thus, the capacity of this wetland to perform flood attenuation and bank stabilization is low and below normal expectations. Because of the encroachment of human activities, this site also does not provide high quality habitat for wildlife and fish. Nutrient cycles have likely been altered by the alteration of this stretch of the creek.

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 01/15/2001

Designer Rocchio, F.J.

Boundary Justification

The site boundaries incorporate the entire upstream portion of West Elk Creek and thus encompass upstream hydrological sources.

Primary Area 1,304.57 Acres 527.94 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B4: Moderate Biodiversity Significance

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Biodiversity Significance Comments

Near the downstream end of the site is a small, yet pristine remnant of the globally vulnerable (G3/S3) narrowleaf cottonwood / river birch (*Populus angustifolia* / *Betula occidentalis*) montane riparian forest. This occurrence is surprisingly intact, yet its small size puts into question the viability of this community at this particular location hence it is ranked as fair (C-ranked).

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</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>
24884	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Betula occidentalis</i> Woodland	Montane Riparian Forest	G3	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
160919	Lyon, P. 2000. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Biological Assessment of Garfield County.
160810	Rocchio, J. 2000. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Wetland Inventory/Assessment of Garfield County.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 01/15/2001
Version Author Rocchio, F.J.

Disclaimer

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