

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name White River at Agency Park

Site Code S.USCOHP*26895

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 2436 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 400003N
State Colorado Longitude 1074941W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
39107-H7	Veatch Gulch
40107-A7	Rattlesnake Mesa

County

Rio Blanco (CO)

<u>Watershed Code</u>	<u>Watershed Name</u>
14050005	Upper White

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	5,760.00 Feet	1,755.65 Meters
Maximum Elevation	5,900.00 Feet	1,798.32 Meters

Site Description

The White River at Agency Park site is located west of the Town of Meeker in a wide floodplain created by the White River cutting through the adjacent sandstone hills. The hydrology of the White River is intact due to no major water retention projects; however, there are irrigation take outs throughout the site. The White River meanders across a broad floodplain with a low gradient (< 3%). The potential for flood attenuation is high due to the density of riparian vegetation and presence of microtopography and sandy, alluvial soils. The river banks are moderately stable, due to a few areas where the hay meadows have reached the river bank, removing woody vegetation that can stabilize the banks during a flood event. The riparian vegetation along the White River is dominated by narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) with lanceleaf cottonwood (*Populus x acuminata*) in the tree canopy. The riparian shrub layer is dominated by strap-leaf willow (*Salix eriocephala* var. *ligulifolia*), whiplash willow (*Salix lasiandra*), willow hawthorn (*Crataegus saligna*), river hawthorn (*Crataegus rivularis*), river birch (*Betula occidentalis*), thinleaf alder (*Alnus incana*), and red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*). Coyote willow (*Salix exigua*) dominates the point bars and sandy shoreline. The herbaceous understory along the river banks is characterized by sedges (*Carex utriculata*, *C. nebrascensis*, *C. praegracilis*) and grasses (*Phalaroides arundinacea*, *Glyceria grandis*, *Phleum pretense*, *Poa pratensis*, *Dactylis glomerata*, *Beckmannia syzigachne*). Above the immediate floodplain, meadows are flood irrigated for hay production and cattle grazing. The wildlife and fish value for Rio Blanco County is high. Evidence of elk (*Cervus elephus*) and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) was found throughout the property. Two Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and Greater Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis tabida*) were observed on the property, as well as many songbirds and woodpeckers.

Key Environmental Factors

Gravels and alluviums from the Quaternary Age dominate the riparian area of the site. Uplands consist of sandstone and siltstones from Mancos Shale and Frontier sandstone. Soils range from Redrob loam, Patent loam, and Shawa loams.

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

Nathan C. Meeker arrived in the White River Valley in 1878 to accept the position of Indian Agent in the White River Valley. The original site of the Indian Agency was approximately 6 miles east of Meeker along the river, now called Agency Park. Eventually, Nathan Meeker had the agency disassembled and floated the logs

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downstream to the Powell Park location.

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Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 01/14/2008

Designer Culver, D.R.

Boundary Justification

Boundary was delineated to encompass the known occurrence of the riparian plant communities and potential habitat along the floodplain, as well as the lower portions of the White River's tributaries. The boundary encompasses several private properties, however, only those properties with written permission were surveyed.

Primary Area 1,547.09 Acres 626.09 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

The site supports a fair (C ranked) example of a globally rare (G2/S2) *Acer negundo* - *Populus angustifolia* / *Cornus sericea* riparian forest. This plant association is a narrow regional endemic which is undergoing continued fragmentation and degradation throughout its range due to agricultural impacts and fluvial instability. It is presently recorded only from western Colorado in broad alluvial valleys and has significantly declined from historical distributions. There is also an active Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) (G5/S1B,S3N) nest. Although not drawn for this species, there are documented Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) lek sites nearby. This globally apparently secure (G4/S4) species has a restricted range and is a State Special Concern species and a BLM/FS sensitive species. 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 and adjacent to the site.

Other Values Rank V2 - High values

Other Values Comments

Excellent wildlife and bird habitat exists.

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

No Data

Natural Hazard Comments

No Data

Exotics Comments

Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) is found throughout the site. The site does contain agriculture fields with hay grasses. Noxious weeds such as hounds tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), Canada thistle (*Breca arvensis*), butter and eggs (*Linaria vulgaris*) and mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) are found throughout the understory.

Offsite

No Data

Information Needs

No Data

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

Element State ID	State Scientific Name	State Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	Driving Site Rank
24479	<i>Acer negundo</i> - <i>Populus angustifolia</i> / <i>Cornus sericea</i> Forest	Narrowleaf Cottonwood Riparian Forests	G2	S2	Yes
21249	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle	G5	S1B,S3N	No

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 01/14/2008

Version Author Culver, D.R.

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