

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Widefield Fountain

Site Code S.USCOHP*22710

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 768 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 383856N
State Colorado Longitude 1044135W

Quad Code Quad Name

38104-G7	Colorado Springs
38104-G6	Elsmere
38104-F7	Cheyenne Mountain
38104-F6	Fountain
38104-E6	Buttes
38104-E5	Fountain SE

County

Watershed Code Watershed Name

11020003 Fountain

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation - Feet - Meters
Maximum Elevation - Feet - Meters

Site Description

The Widefield Fountain site includes a relatively flat, low-lying strip of land along Fountain Creek that extends southward from Academy Boulevard (Colorado Highway 83) to Wigwam Road. Bounded on the west by Interstate Highway 25, this portion of the site (that lies along Fountain Creek) varies in width (measured east-west) from about 0.7 to about 2.3 miles. Among the larger tributaries that join Fountain Creek within the site are Jimmy Camp Creek, Little Fountain Creek, and Williams Creek. The eastern portion of the Widefield Fountain site is located to the south of Fontaine Boulevard, where it extends southward from an area between Powers Boulevard and Marksheffel Road to the northeastern corner of the intersection of Link Road and Old Pueblo Road. Jimmy Camp Creek, an intermittent stream, crosses the site between C and S Road and Squirrel Creek Road as it flows southwestward toward Fountain Creek. The western portion of the Widefield Fountain site (along Fountain Creek) consists mainly of the open, flat, floodplain along Fountain Creek and several of its tributaries. At the southern end of this area the site extends eastward onto a large expanse of *Opuntia imbricata* (cholla cactus) invaded shortgrass prairie along Hanover Road. The western portion of the site is covered by a mosaic of soil types (U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service and Colorado Agricultural Experiment Station 1981). The complex distribution of soil types, especially within the floodplain of Fountain Creek, precludes the identification of clearly discernable patterns of preferential use of soils by the prairie dogs. The eastern portion of the Widefield Fountain East site (the eastern branch of the "Y"-shaped site) also is covered by a mosaic of soil types (U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service and Colorado Agricultural Experiment Station 1981). Each of the five known prairie dog colonies in this area, however, is located on a patch of soil of a single type. Two prairie dog colonies are located on Nunn clay loam, two are located on Ascalon sandy loam, and one is located on Stoneham sandy loam. All of these soils are deep and well-drained, with moderately slow to moderate permeability, moderate to high available water capacity, slow to medium surface runoff, and a slight to moderate hazard of erosion or soil blowing. The effective rooting depth for plants on these soils is 60 inches (150 centimeters) or more (U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service and Colorado Agricultural Experiment Station 1981). Riparian vegetation lines the banks of Jimmy Camp Creek, which crosses the site between C and S Road and Squirrel Creek Road and then runs southward along the western boundary of the eastern portion of the site. Historically, much of the Widefield Fountain site was covered with floodplain, riparian, and native shortgrass prairie vegetation. Although patches of these vegetation types remain, large portions of the site (especially the flat, relatively rich-soiled floodplain along Fountain Creek) were converted to agricultural croplands during the past 100 years. The cultivation of many of these areas was

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subsequently abandoned, producing "old-field" (weedy, early-successional) habitats. Vegetative cover on these fields now varies greatly: some areas are characterized by high proportions of bare soil, whereas other areas support dense stands of invasive, early-successional perennial and annual species. Other agricultural fields within the site remain under cultivation. Horse pastures planted with mixed grasses are common near the towns of Widefield and Fountain. Grazing of domestic livestock occurred historically on much of the site, and today grazing continues on many areas, especially to the north of Kane Road. In some locations grazing has been very heavy and it apparently has substantially altered the vegetative composition. At least 4 rookeries (colonial breeding sites) of the Great Blue Heron are known along Fountain Creek within this site. The Widefield Fountain site also provides essential wetland habitats and resources for many species of migratory birds (Cafaro2000). In addition, both Fountain Creek and Jimmy Camp Creek support the Arkansas Darter (*Etheostoma cragini*), a globally vulnerable and state imperiled species of fish that is classified as sensitive (Forest Service) and threatened (State of Colorado), and that is a candidate for listing as a federally threatened/endangered species. (See the Fountain and Jimmy Camp Creeks Potential Conservation Area for a description of the Arkansas Darter occurrence in this general vicinity.)

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 05/25/2001

Designer Gionfriddo, J.P.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the nine known prairie dog colonies and the (mostly) unoccupied space among these colonies. Scattered within the unoccupied areas are several small clusters of occupied prairie dog mounds. Interstate Highway 25 forms the western boundary for the Fountain Creek portion of the site (although at one location a prairie dog town extends westward to include a small tract of land on the west side of the highway). The northern boundary of this portion of the site consists of Academy Boulevard (Colorado Highway 83) and associated, high-density land uses. Railroad (Denver and Rio Grande) tracks provide the eastern boundary for this area. At the southern end of the Fountain Creek portion of the site, the eastern boundary follows natural topographic, edaphic (soil-related), and vegetative features. The eastern portion of the site is bounded on the north by Fontaine Boulevard. Although the road does not constitute a physical barrier to the dispersal of prairie dogs, the land to the north of Fontaine Boulevard has not been colonized by prairie dogs. A ditch full of water (2-3 meters wide) lies immediately to the north of the road. This ditch runs parallel to Fontaine Boulevard and then swings southward and crosses Fontaine Boulevard; it then extends southeastward, forming the northeastern boundary of the site. To the east of this boundary lie a residential subdivision and active agricultural fields. Farther to the south, the site's eastern boundary becomes coincident with Marksheffel Road, then C and S Road, and then Link Road. At the intersection of Link Road and Kane Road, the eastern boundary of the site jogs to the southwest and extends southwestward to a point along Link Road that lies just to the east of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad crossing. From that point the site boundary runs westward to the intersection of Link Road and Old Pueblo Road. The western boundary of the eastern portion of the Widefield Fountain site runs northeastward from this intersection to Fontaine Boulevard. Outside this western boundary are several types of habitat that are unsuitable for occupation by prairie dogs: active agricultural fields, riparian woodland (along Jimmy Camp Creek), hilly terrain that rises to a bluff, and residential subdivisions.

Primary Area 13,984.86 Acres

5,659.50 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B5: General Biodiversity Interest

Biodiversity Significance Comments

The Widefield Fountain site supports at least 8 (2 excellent, 4 good, one fair and one unranked) occurrences of the globally apparently secure (G4/S3) black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*).

Other Values Rank No Data

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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>
17796	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	G4	S3	Yes
17796	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	G4	S3	Yes
17796	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	G4	S3	Yes
17796	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	G4	S3	No
17796	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	G4	S3	No
17796	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	G4	S3	Yes
17796	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	G4	S3	Yes
17796	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	G4	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

Reference ID Full Citation

- No Data

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 05/25/2001

Version Author Gionfriddo, J.P.

Disclaimer

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