

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Wild Cherry Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP1*2092

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 1667 Site Class PCA
Site Alias Peanut Lake Ridge

Network of Conservation Areas (NCA)

<u>NCA Site ID</u>	<u>NCA Site Code</u>	<u>NCA Site Name</u>
1956	S.USCOHP*5778	Sangre de Cristo

LOCATORS

Nation United States Latitude 380639N
State Colorado Longitude 1054525W

<u>Quad Code</u>	<u>Quad Name</u>
38105-B6	Electric Peak
38105-A7	Mirage
38105-A6	Rito Alto Peak

County

Saguache (CO)

<u>Watershed Code</u>	<u>Watershed Name</u>
13010003	San Luis

SITE DESCRIPTION

Minimum Elevation	8,072.00 Feet	2,460.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation	12,524.00 Feet	3,817.00 Meters

Site Description

The Wild Cherry canyon site designates a 2,060 acre watershed draining the western slope of the northern Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Site elevations range from 12,524 feet (3,819 meters) at the upper edge of the lake basin to 8,072 feet (2,462 meters) at the western boundary below the mouth of the canyon. Wild Cherry Lake basin, at the head of the watershed, contains alpine wetlands which harbor several species of sedges (*Carex* spp.) and willows (*Salix* spp.), as well as elephantella (*Pedicularis groenlandica*), rose crown (*Sedum rhodanthum*), star gentian (*Swertia perennis*), and the state imperiled Altai cottongrass (*Eriophorum altaicum* var. *neogaeum*). Below the lake basin, the canyon narrows and supports a large aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) forest. The understory is dominated by red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) near the stream and wild rose (*Rosa woodsii*) and forbs farther upslope. On the alluvial fan below the canyon mouth, the riparian forest is flanked by woodlands of Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) and Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelii*), creating a structurally diverse riparian ecosystem which extends approximately one mile west from the Sangre de Cristo mountain front. The setting and hydrology of this site appear largely pristine. A pack trail follows the north side of Wild Cherry Creek from the canyon mouth to the lake basin. Invasive species, such as soft brome (*Bromus inermis*) and Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) are present along the trail corridor but did not appear widespread in the canyon. A single house is located next to the creek at the extreme west end of the site.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

No Data

SITE DESIGN

Site Map P - Partial Mapped Date 02/16/1998
Designer Sarr, D.A.

Boundary Justification

The site boundaries are drawn to protect the floodplain of Wild Cherry Creek, and valley toeslopes within 1/8 mile of the stream which contribute surface runoff to the stream channel. In the glaciated headwater basin, all

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valley bottom wetlands were included. Although not contained in the present site boundary, contributory sub-watersheds should be managed to avoid downstream impacts to elements in the Wild Cherry Creek site. The site boundary was based on initial aerial photo analysis, a field visit by a CNHP wetland ecologist, and subsequent corroboration with satellite imagery.

Primary Area 2,063.45 Acres 835.05 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B4: Moderate Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

The Wild Cherry Canyon site contains the Sangre de Cristo region's only known occurrence of Altai cottongrass (*Eriophorum altaicum* var. *neogaeum*). Altai cottongrass is an alpine wetland plant with a geographically broad, but sporadic, distribution through the higher ranges of the Rocky Mountain states. It occurs from Alaska and British Columbia south to the Uinta Mountains of Utah and several ranges of western Colorado. This stand is disjunct by nearly 100 miles from Hinsdale and Park County populations to the west and north, respectively. A good example of a quaking aspen / red-osier dogwood (*Populus tremuloides* / *Cornus sericea*) community fills the lower canyon. This plant association occurs in Montana (Hansen et al. 1988), Utah (Padgett et al. 1989), and Colorado (Colorado Natural Heritage Program 1997). In Colorado, this plant association is known from only three stands, but is estimated to be somewhat more common. The association typically occurs in deep, narrow valleys along banks of low order streams. Gray's peak whitlow-grass (*Draba grayana*) has been historically reported from higher elevations of the site in 1942. Gray's peak whitlow-grass is a Colorado endemic scattered along the eastern crest of the southern Rocky Mountains. It inhabits talus slopes in crevices between rocks or other protected sites (Spackman et al. 1997). This plant was not censused in 1997, and viability or persistence of this population is presently unknown.

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

Should this be a fish-free or cutthroat lake?

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

<u>Element</u>			<u>Global Rank</u>	<u>State Rank</u>	<u>Driving Site Rank</u>
<u>State ID</u>	<u>State Scientific Name</u>	<u>State Common Name</u>			
17794	<i>Draba grayana</i>	Gray's Peak whitlow-grass	G2	S2	No
21874	<i>Eriophorum altaicum</i> var. <i>neogaeum</i>	Altai cottongrass	G4?T3T4	S3	Yes

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
-	No Data

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

No Data

VERSION

Version Date 02/16/1998
Version Author Sarr, D.A.

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