The site is located along Clear Creek about 2.5 air miles east of Golden at the base of the Front Range foothills. The floodplain has been developed extensively upstream and downstream of the site. Gravel pits, urban developments, roads and trails are common throughout. In areas where the floodplains have vegetation and seasonal moisture from flooding, there is a matrix of native plants and remnants of plant communities that likely would have existed on the floodplains pre-development. These areas exist on parts of the Greenbelt where residential development has not proliferated. The dominant vegetation types are cottonwood riparian woodlands and non-native grasslands dominated by smooth brome (Bromopsis inermis). Common species in the vegetated parts of the floodplains include Plains cottonwood (Populus deltoids subsp. monilifera), narrowleaf cottonwood (Populus angustifolia), thinleaf alder (Alnus incana), water birch (Betula occidentalis), coyote willow (Salix exigua), narrowleaf cattail (Typha angustifolia), slenderleaf false foxglove (Agalinis tenuifolia), cutleaf teasel (Dipsacus laciniatus), Canada goldenrod (Solidago canadensis), arctic rush (Juncus arcticus), three-square bulrush (Schoenoplectus pungens = Scirpus americanus), and redtop (Agrostis gigantea). Cottonwood riparian woodlands and habitat for Ute ladies'-tresses (Spiranthes diluvialis), a federally Threatened species, are found within the site. A meadow in the Greenbelt supports a newly described subspecies of an earthstar fungus (Mycenastrum corium subsp ferrugineum - Miller et al. 2005). There are many former creek channels which are typically dominated by wetland vegetation such as cattails (Typha spp.) and coyote willow. Small creeks flow across the floodplain throughout the summer that are fed by seeps along the ridge to the south and by storm water runoff. Many of these creeks flow through dense vegetation that is virtually impenetrable, such as thickets of common buckthorn (Rhamnus cathartica), poison ivy (Toxicodendron rydbergii) and nightshade (Solanum dulcamara). Two areas in the site have components of rare communities. These include the Plains cottonwood - chokecherry woodland and the Plains cottonwood - snowberry (Symphoricarpos sp.) woodland. Non-native species are extremely common and include many noxious weed species. Some areas have been surveyed since the 1990's and it is interesting to note that northern green orchid (Limnorchis hyperborea), great blue lobelia (Lobelia syphilitica), and salt spring checkerbloom (Sidalcea neomexicana) were common associates of Spiranthes diluvialis. None of these plants were observed during the 2000 or 2010 surveys associated with the orchids. The geology is diverse across the Clear Creek valley including modern and quaternary alluviums some with large amounts of gravels. On the south side of the creek, in the vicinity of the gravel mines, sedimentary rock dominates with sandstones, mudstones, claystones and conglomerates of the Denver and Arapahoe formations (Tweto 1979). The upland soils consist of the Nunn-Urban and Engelwood-Urban land complexes with 0 to 2 percent slopes. The wetland floodplains include gravel pits filled with water (ponds), Torrifluvents, very gravelly with 0 to 3 percent slopes, Alda loam with 0 to 2 percent slopes and Loveland variant gravelly sandy loam with 0-2 percent slopes (USDA NRCS 2008).

**Key Environmental Factors**

Floodplains that still support native vegetation cover, and other hydrological features that support periodic flooding and intact ecological processes which support the rare plants dependent on them.

**Climate Description**

Between 1962 and 2012 the nearby weather station at Lakewood recorded an average annual precipitation of 16.43 inches. Snowfall is greatest in March, spring/summer rains peak in April-July. The average annual maximum temperature is 63.6°F (17.6°C) and the average annual minimum temperature is 36.4°F (2.4°C, WRCC 2012).

**Land Use History**

This section of Clear Creek has been extensively developed as an urban corridor. Gravel mines, homesteads,
Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name: Prospect Park
Site Code: S.USCOHP*352

factories, farms, city buildings, dense residential developments, roads, trails, city parks and open space are some of the developments that have occurred in the vicinity of the river floodplain.

Cultural Features
No Data

Minimum Elevation 5,280.00 Feet 1,609.00 Meters
Maximum Elevation 5,450.00 Feet 1,661.00 Meters

Boundary Justification
The boundary encompasses a broad area known to support *Spiranthes*, including potential areas for expansion that include appropriate habitat. Due to the occasional presence of potential habitat along the riparian corridor of Clear Creek, and the presence of several small subpopulations, all of the corridor east to a historically known location for the state-rare *Ribes americana* is included. The extensive cottonwood riparian woodland in the floodplain is circumscribed due to the potential for restoration to high quality natural communities throughout the area. The area west of the Miller Trailhead is included due to the presence of a new to science subspecies of an earthstar fungus (*Mycenastrum corium* subsp. *ferrugineum*). In general, the entire floodplain, both private and public portions, between Youngsfield Street and 44th Street, is included to encompass a functional portion of the riparian system on which the plants depend.

Primary Area 3,860.84 Acres 1,562.43 Hectares

Biodiversity Significance Rank B2: Very High Biodiversity Significance
Biodiversity Significance Comments
This site includes a good (B-ranked) occurrence of a globally imperiled (G2G3/S2) and federally Threatened plant species, the Ute ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*). Counts of over 400 individuals have been obtained in past years for two large subpopulations (Smith and Anderson 2010). In addition, a new-to-science subspecies of an earthstar fungus was discovered at the site. The new subspecies was officially described by Miller et. al. in 2005. Currently this is the only known occurrence in the world of this subspecies of earthstar (*Mycenastrum corium* ssp. *ferrugineum*), which is considered to be both globally and state critically imperiled (G5T1/S1).

Other Values Rank No Data
Other Values Comments
Two areas in the site have components of very rare communities. These include the Plains cottonwood (*Populus deltoides* subsp. *monilifera*) - chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) woodland and the Plains cottonwood - snowberry (*Symphoricarpos* sp.) woodland. However, these examples may be remnants of the community type that naturally occurred there. Although their quality is poor, these areas could serve as references for restoration of these community types in other parts of the greenbelt where conditions would be appropriate for their establishment. Historically, an occurrence of the state rare American currant (*Ribes americanum*) was documented, but it has not been relocated since the early 1900’s. In addition, there are six plants that ranked 7 or above on the Colorado Floristic Quality Index (Rocchio 2007): slenderleaf false foxglove (*Agalinis tenuifolia*), water birch (*Betula occidentalis*), great blue lobelia (*Lobelia sylphilitica*), slender green orchid (*Limorchis hyperborea*), Ute ladies’ tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*), and prairie cordgrass (*Spartina pectinata*). Coefficient of Conservation values range from 0-10 with 10 ranks representing species that are always found in unaltered high quality habitats. The presence of species with high FQI values (7-10) is indicative of the high quality of the habitats where these rare plants were found.

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Land Use Comments
Much of the land is part of the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt and is used for recreation including hiking, biking and fishing activities. Residential and urban developments surround the area.

Natural Hazard Comments
Extensive populations of poison ivy and buckthorn that are virtually impenetrable can be encountered off the trail system.

Exotics Comments
B-List exotic species (Colorado Weed Management Association 2009) were found in the impacted wetlands and upland areas: cutleaf teasel (Dipsacus laciniata), Russian olive (Elaeagnus angustifolia), Canada thistle (Barea arvensis), diffuse knapweed (Acosta diffusa), yellow toadflax (Linaria vulgaris) and leafy spurge (Euphorbia esula). C-List: common mullein (Verbascum thapsus). Other non-native species include: smooth brome (Bromopsis inermis), redtop (Agrostis gigantea), bittersweet nightshade (Solanum dulcamara), rabbitfootgrass (Polypogon monspeliensis), redtop (Agrostis gigantea), alfalfa (Medicago sativa), plantain (Plantago major) and sweetclover (Melilotus alba). Many of the noxious weeds occur in the wetlands with the threatened orchids.

Offsite
No Data

Information Needs
No Data

REFERENCES

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ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Original site design by Anderson, D.G. 2001-01-17.
## Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

**Name**  Prospect Park  
**Site Code**  S.USCOHP*352

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| **Version Date** | 03/21/2012  
**Version Author** | Smith, P.F. |

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