

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Grape Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*8060

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 465 Site Class PCA
Site Alias Grape Creek at Bear Gulch

Network of Conservation Areas (NCA)

<u>NCA Site ID</u>	<u>NCA Site Code</u>	<u>NCA Site Name</u>
-		No Data

County

Custer (CO)
Fremont (CO)

SITE DESCRIPTION

Site Description

Grape Creek is a long, perennial drainage that winds through rugged, granitic, lower montane hills west of the north end of the Wet Mountains. The steep canyon slopes above the stream are sparsely covered with rocky pinon - juniper woodland (*Pinus edulis* - *Juniperus* spp.) with mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*) and Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelii*) groves. There are small prospect mines in the hills of the stream valley. This perennial stream is recovering from intensive land use in the past (grazing, railroad corridor). It previously washed out annually during high energy spring flooding once water flow resumed after being much reduced in winter by Deweese Reservoir upstream. This repeatedly stripped all vegetation out of the riparian corridor until recent years when the streambank vegetation has held. Intensive land use has been curbed and the riparian vegetation is recovering. Currently, the predominant vegetation within the corridor is the graminoid-dominated streambanks that have been gradually expanding. The entire reach is dotted with Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) and one seed juniper (*Juniperus monosperma*) individuals interspersed with groves of narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) and/or plains cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*). There are some groves of mature cottonwoods where the ground has significant woody debris as well as areas of regenerating cottonwoods that likely will replace the junipers as canopy dominants in the future. Shrubs are sparse along the reach, but show signs of establishment and regeneration in many places. Coyote willow (*Salix exigua*) is the most common, although peachleaf willow (*Salix amygdaloides*) saplings are also present. The herbaceous cover is lush along the banks. Dominant graminoids include pasture grasses like quackgrass (*Elymus repens*) and Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), although native Nebraska sedge (*Carex nebrascensis*), common spikerush (*Eleocharis palustris*), and scouring rush horsetail (*Equisetum hyemale*) are common and abundant. There are scattered forbs throughout, including wild mint (*Mentha arvensis*), water horehound (*Lycopus americana*), and others. Vines such as riverbank grape (*Vitis riparia*) and clematis (*Clematis ligusticifolia*) crawl up and cover rock outcrops and juniper and cottonwood trees in several areas. Tributaries of Grape Creek are moderate to high gradient sandy washes with ephemeral to intermittent flow. Tree canopies, where present, are mixed evergreen-deciduous woodlands, often with sporadic cover.

Key Environmental Factors

Lower montane elevation; moderate gradient; perennial flow.

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

A railroad was built through Grape Creek canyon in the late 1800's. It was abandoned and dismantled after repeated flooding washed out the tracks. Small mines dot the canyonsides in some areas.

Cultural Features

No Data

Minimum Elevation	5,700.00 Feet	1,737.36 Meters
Maximum Elevation	8,045.00 Feet	2,452.12 Meters

SITE DESIGN

Site Map Y - Yes Mapped Date 01/13/2006
Designer Neid, S.L.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn as a 1 km buffer of the riparian corridor, which roughly approximates the adjacent

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ridgelines surrounding Grape Creek for immediate watershed protection.

Primary Area 13,093.83 **Acres** 5,298.90 **Hectares**

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B2: Very High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

This site encompasses an excellent (A-ranked) and a good (B-ranked) occurrence of a globally imperiled (G2G3/S2S3) riparian natural community, narrowleaf cottonwood - Rocky Mountain juniper (*Populus angustifolia* - *Juniperus scopulorum*) woodland. Additionally, there is a good (B-ranked) occurrence of the globally vulnerable (G3/S2) narrowleaf cottonwood - Douglas-fir (*Populus angustifolia* - *Pseudotsuga menziesii*) woodland and a good to fair (BC-ranked) occurrence of the apparently globally secure but state imperiled (G4/S2) Rocky Mountain juniper / Red-osier dogwood (*Juniperus scopulorum* / *Cornus sericea*) woodland. Several fair (C-ranked) occurrences of a globally imperiled (G2/S2) plant, Arkansas Canyon stickleaf (*Nuttallia densa*), have also been documented.

Other Values Rank No Data

Other Values Comments

No Data

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>			
24692	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> - <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> Riparian Woodland	Montane Riparian Forest	G3	S2	N
16858	<i>Nuttallia densa</i>	Arkansas Canyon stickleaf	G2	S2	N
16858	<i>Nuttallia densa</i>	Arkansas Canyon stickleaf	G2	S2	N
24657	<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i> / <i>Cornus sericea</i> Riparian Woodland	Riparian Woodland	G4	S2	N
24963	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> - <i>Juniperus scopulorum</i> Riparian Woodland	Montane Riparian Forest	G2G3	S3	Y
24963	<i>Populus angustifolia</i> - <i>Juniperus scopulorum</i> Riparian Woodland	Montane Riparian Forest	G2G3	S3	Y
16858	<i>Nuttallia densa</i>	Arkansas Canyon stickleaf	G2	S2	N

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

No Data

Natural Hazard Comments

No Data

Exotics Comments

No Data

Offsite

Hydrological processes originating outside of the planning boundary, including water quality, quantity, timing and flow must be managed to maintain site viability.

Information Needs

No Data

REFERENCES

<u>Reference ID</u>	<u>Full Citation</u>
159580	Kittel, G., R. Rondeau and A. McMullen. 1996. A classification of the riparian vegetation of the Lower South Platte and parts of the Upper Arkansas River basins, Colorado. Unpublished CNHP Report for CO DNR and US EPA, Region VIII. 243 p.
193618	Neid, S.L. 2006. Final Report: Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Fremont County, Colorado. Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Fort Collins, CO.
169032	Rondeau, R. and A. McMullen. 1995. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Riparian Field Survey of the Arkansas River Basin.

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ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

Original site design by Kittel, G.M. 1997-04-02.

LOCATORS

Nation United States

Latitude 382011N

State Colorado

Longitude 1052013W

Quad Code Quad Name

38105-C3 Curley Peak

38105-D3 Royal Gorge

Watershed Code Watershed Name

11020001 Arkansas Headwaters

11020002 Upper Arkansas

VERSION

Version Date 01/13/2006

Version Author Neid, S.L.

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