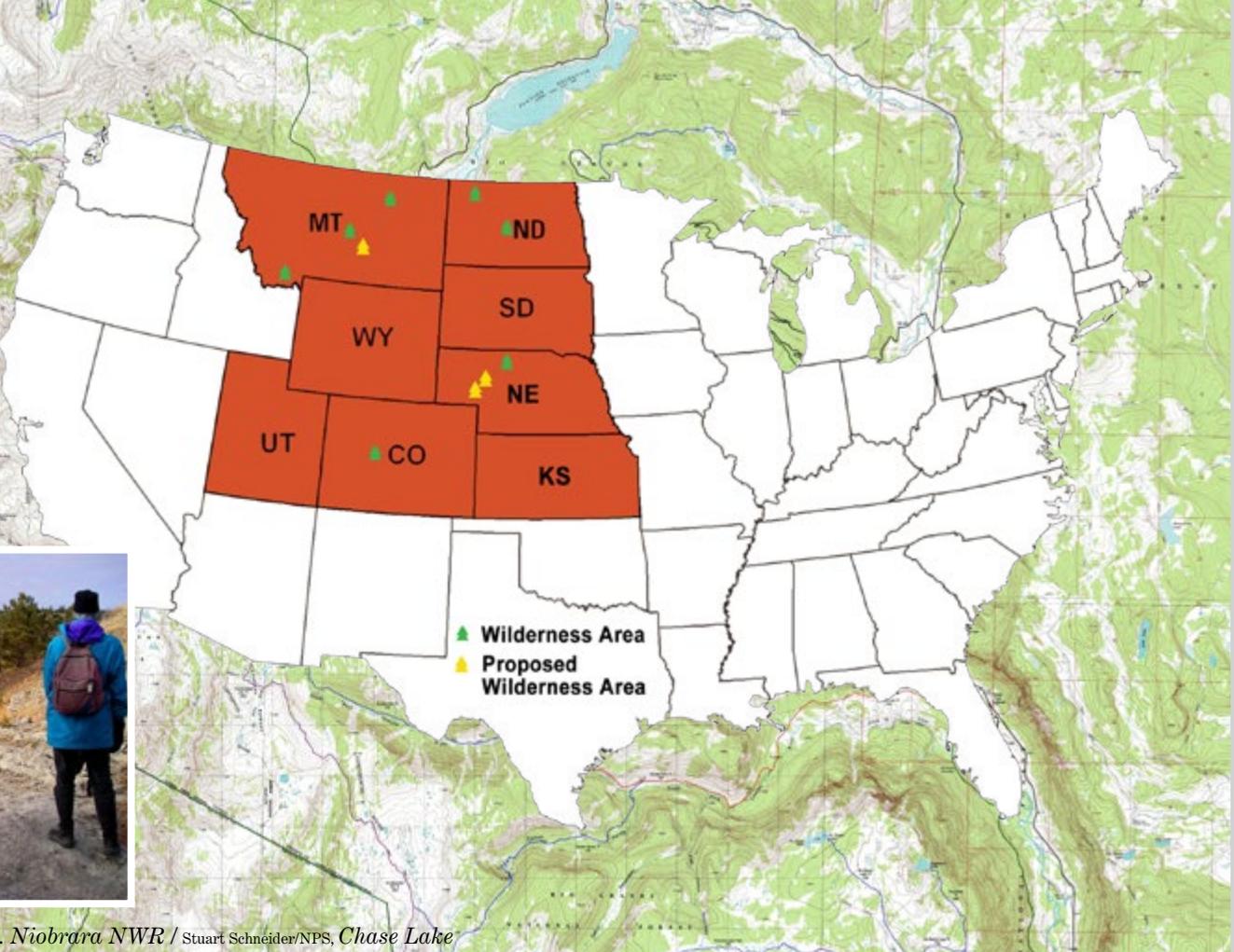




U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Peaks to Prairies: Mountain-Prairie Regional Newsletter

Vol 2 Issue 2 SUMMER 2014

Celebrating...
WILDERNESS
50 YEARS



Photos Clockwise: Sea of sunflowers at Crescent Lake NWR, Ft. Niobrara NWR / Stuart Schneider/NPS, Chase Lake

Any comments or suggestions can be emailed to kate_miyamoto@fws.gov.

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The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Welcome



Regional Director's Corner

Focusing on... Wilderness

I consider myself lucky to live and raise a family in such a beautiful state as Colorado. With its mountains, plateaus, rivers, and forests, it offers access to the great outdoors, and also supports some very vibrant human communities. While economic growth is good for the state, I'm also thankful to know that there are still places where no roads exist, where you can still hear the beating wings of a flock of pintails take off, and where trees, not skyscrapers dominate the horizon. I'm reminded of all the wild places in nature that hold a special place in my heart, and thankful that in 1964, the Wilderness Act was approved by Congress to keep these places wild.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, which was signed by President Lyndon Johnson on September 3, 1964, and created the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Act initially protected 9.1 million acres of wilderness, but over the past 50 years, Congress has added over 100 million acres to the system! Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System has more than 20 million acres of designated wilderness and 75 wilderness areas. In the Mountain-Prairie Region alone there are seven designated wilderness areas and three proposed wilderness areas in Montana, North Dakota, Colorado and Nebraska, all of which you will read about in this issue.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 poetically defines wilderness as; "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." A big part of my philosophy is that people need to come together cooperatively to figure out how to balance human uses and the needs of wildlife. All the same, I am glad to know that because of what was passed in 1964, we can choose to visit wilderness areas where human uses take a backseat. This 50 year milestone brings me gratitude, that the nation continues to support and protect wild places, and hope, that our future generations will have the opportunity to experience the majesty of some of the most beautiful untouched places on earth. As Aldo Leopold said "I am glad I will not be young in a future without wilderness."

-Noreen Walsh, Regional Director



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Updates

Lake Ilo National Wildlife Refuge Rescue

In June 2013, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Officer Todd Gallion and Service Park Ranger Jackie Jacobson responded to a call reporting a capsized canoe on Lake Ilo at the Lake Ilo National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota. Upon arrival at the scene, Officer Gallion and Ranger Jacobson found the capsized canoe and its two occupants. One victim was still clinging to the canoe, while the other was unable to hold on and was drifting away. Officer Gallion determined it was necessary to enter the water and rescue the two men. With water temperatures around 50 degrees, and the two men in the water for over 45 minutes, hypothermia was setting in. Officer Gallion entered the water and brought both men to shore. Without quick action and bravery of both Officer Gallion and Ranger Jacobsen these two men could have drowned due to the cold water conditions and onset hypothermia. For Officer Gallion's courageous actions, he was granted the Valor Award by the Department of the Interior this past June. ■



*Lake Ilo National Wildlife Refuge
entrance sign*



*Todd Gallion receiving the Valor Award from
Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell*



Lake Ilo National Wildlife Rescue

Lake Ilo National Wildlife Refuge



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Updates

by Brian Sanchez, Environmental Contaminants Program

From Urban Denver to Rural Wiggins

From Urban Denver to Rural Wiggins: Volunteer Restoration along the South Platte River, Colorado

Since the early 1980s, residents of the Overland Pond Neighborhood have held a vested interest in the S.W. Shattuck Chemical Company, Inc. (Shattuck) Superfund site cleanup and played a substantial role in local restoration efforts led by the Service’s Colorado Field Office Environmental Contaminants Program

Located in the neighborhood and nearby Overland Pond Park, the Shattuck chemical processing plant was placed on the National Priorities List (aka Superfund) in 1983, and closed in 1984. The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) reached the National Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration Program (NRDAR) settlement with Shattuck in 2002, and in 2009 completed a Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment which outlined local projects and four wetland projects along the South Platte River in Colorado’s eastern plains.

“It is such an impressive collaboration of wetland proponents”

- Betsy Maslow

Overall, the \$250,000 in NRDAR settlement funds were leveraged to generate more than \$1 million for restoration work along the South Platte River for projects that benefit migratory birds and their supporting habitat in key areas of the river, and along its course further east. And, Overland Pond residents played a key role in making this happen.

For example, local bird watchers and neighbors diligently collected bird count data (around the park) for more than 20 years that indicate approximately 170 bird species use the area. Their data helped support the fact that the completed projects deliver critical migratory bird stopover habitat, which was historically provided by overbank flooding.

The urban restoration component at Overland Pond Park consisted of removing invasive trees and shrubs, native seeding operations, and visitor amenity upgrades. *(continued)*



Field trip near the South Platte River

Western tanager



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Updates

From Urban Denver to Rural Wiggins



Along with project partners including the South Platte River Environmental Education program, the Greenway Foundation, Denver Parks and Recreation, Denver Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, and the University of Colorado - Denver, this work was completed with the fervent help of volunteers from the Overland Pond Neighborhood Association.

The eastern plains restoration components consisted of wetland creation projects aimed at establishing spring and fall stopover sites for wetland-dependent migratory birds. This work fits into a larger framework of conservation projects along the South Platte River designed to maintain ecosystem viability to support sustainable migratory bird populations. Specific actions included the construction of low-level contour levees or impoundments and the installation of water delivery infrastructure that created for enhanced floodplain, shallow open water, and wetland habitat. This work was completed through cooperation with regional water conservation districts, private landowners, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and Ducks Unlimited.

In April 2014, the Service organized a field trip to eastern Colorado near Wiggins for the Region 6 NRDAR Program, the DOI NRDAR Restoration Support Unit, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Ducks Unlimited, and several members of the Overland Pond Neighborhood Association. The goal was to illustrate the connection between urban and rural components of this restoration work, and educate participants about restoration techniques and wetland ecology. It also highlighted how local involvement and environmental volunteerism has the potential to reap ecological benefits on a landscape scale, and show how their efforts have translated into substantial wetland habitat enhancement over 70 miles away. "It is such an impressive collaboration of wetland proponents," said Betsy Maslow, Overland Pond Neighborhood resident. ■



Gadwall



Double crested cormorant

Western tanager



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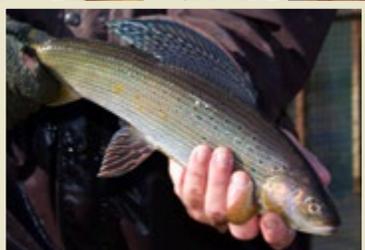


U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FEATURE: WILDERNESS

by Bill West, Red Rocks Lake NWR

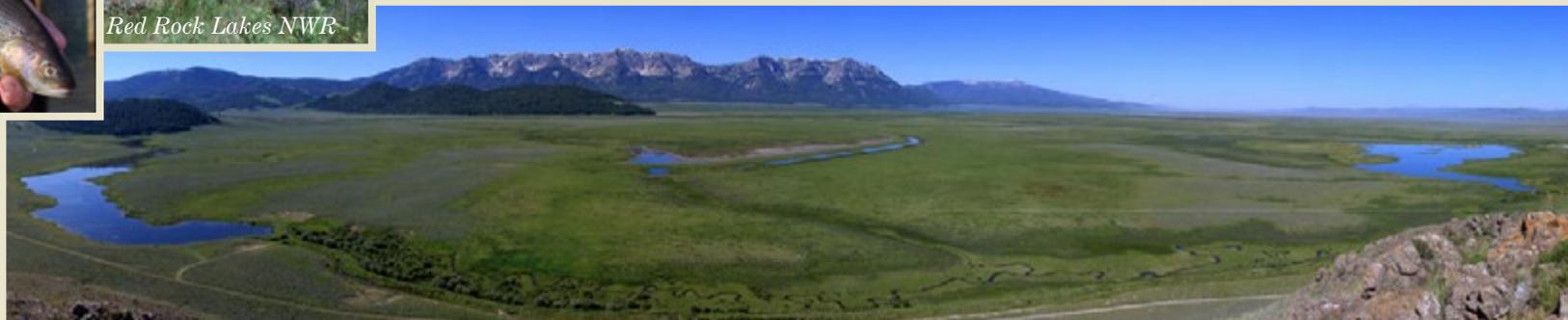
Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge WILDERNESS



*Upper Missouri River
Arctic Grayling*



Red Rock Lakes NWR



Culver pond at Red Rock Lakes NWR

There are few places where the only sounds you hear in the still of a moonlit night are calls of trumpeter swans flying overhead; or, where you might witness, at the break of day, a bull moose appearing out of the early morning mist. This is a place where creeks flow freely, wildlife thrives, and a soul can get lost in solitude and wildness. This is Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge, which protects the largest wetland complex in the 20 million acre Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, is surrounded by high mountains, with wildflower filled meadows, grasslands, marshes, aquatic plants, and sagebrush communities, plus sand dunes, and forests. This rich system nurtures many mammals, waterfowl, raptors, songbirds, a variety of fish and invertebrates such as butterflies and damsel flies. The refuge is designated a National Natural Landmark and of the 61,000 acres that the refuge encompasses, 32,350 acres are designated wilderness. The majority of the wilderness is wetland, which can be traversed by canoe or kayak. The refuge is home to many species including grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines, trumpeter swans, sage-grouse and Arctic graylings. The climate varies throughout the year from extreme cold with deep snows to spring and summer rains with moderate temperatures and brilliant sunshine to high desert-like conditions. The American people are fortunate to have such a magnificent Wilderness Area with limited human surrounding development. ■



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FEATURE: WILDERNESS

Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge Proposed Wilderness, Montana

by Paula Gouse, Wildlife Refuge Specialist, Ft. Peck Station CMR



Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge Proposed WILDERNESS

When you think of wilderness, do you picture clear mountain streams surrounded by lush, unending forests? The wilderness of Charles M. Russell (CMR) National Wildlife Refuge may not conform to this picture but it embodies the spirit of wilderness described in the Wilderness Act of 1964 as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”

Much of CMR fits this description but hiking through any of the sixteen wilderness areas across the refuge brings an even greater sense of solitude and of natural processes at work without human interference. The coulees, badlands, prairies and river bottoms that make up CMR wilderness are virtually unchanged since Lewis and Clark passed through 200 years ago.

In 1974, the Secretary of the Interior recommended 158,619 acres, divided into fifteen areas, for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Because Congress has not officially designated these fifteen areas, they are defined as proposed wilderness but are managed as designated wilderness. In 1976, Congress designated 20,819 acres as the UL Bend Wilderness.

From Antelope Creek on the west side of the refuge to Sheep Creek on the east, the proposed wilderness areas are as varied as the terrain. Burnt Lodge, the largest at 21,576 acres, is one of the most rugged and scenic areas in the Missouri River Breaks. It varies from rolling hills to rugged breaks with Ponderosa pine and juniper on the north slopes giving way to grasses, greasewood and sagebrush. The West Hell Creek unit is where the badlands topography of the east transitions to the breaks topography to the west and is dominated by prairie, sagebrush and other shrubs.
(continued)



*View of the
UL Bend
designated
wilderness*



Burnt Lodge proposed wilderness area



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FEATURE: WILDERNESS

Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge Proposed Wilderness, Montana

Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge Proposed WILDERNESS

In addition to scenic landscapes, wilderness at CMR and UL Bend National Wildlife Refuges provides critical wildlife habitat. More than 50% of bighorn sheep habitat on the refuge is found within proposed wilderness areas. Pronghorn antelope are known to migrate across the refuge and cross the Missouri River via UL Bend Wilderness and through the Burnt Lodge and West Seven Blackfoot proposed wilderness areas. Winter sage-grouse tracking

found that grouse migrating from northern Montana and Canada use habitat within Burnt Lodge and surrounding areas in the winter. The refuges' wilderness is also significant to conservation of the American prairie grassland ecosystem, which has been identified, by organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund and The Wilderness Society, as one of the least protected biomes in the world. CMR wilderness in combination with adjacent BLM wilderness study areas may increasingly provide critical habitat corridors for wildlife and play a pivotal and promising role in the continued conservation of important northern Great Plains species such as bighorn sheep, sage-grouse, black-tailed prairie dogs, black-footed ferrets, and mountain lions.

In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, CMR will be hosting four wilderness walks in partnership with the Montana Wilderness Association, with a celebration in September 2014. ■



Bighorn sheep



Sharp-tailed grouse



Prickly pear cactus

Big Dry Arm at Charles M. Russell NWR



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FEATURE: WILDERNESS

by Michelle Chappell, Medicine Lake NWR

Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness, Montana



Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge was established by Executive Order 7148 on August 19, 1935. Originally known as Medicine Lake Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, the refuge is located on the glaciated rolling plains of northeastern Montana and contains 31,660 acres within the central flyway on the edge of the highly productive Prairie Pothole Region. The refuge has been designated as one of the top 100 globally important bird areas in the United States by the American Bird Conservancy.

In 1976, Congress designated approximately 11,360 acres of the refuge as wilderness. The Medicine Lake Wilderness includes the lake with its natural islands and the 2,300-acre Sandhills Unit. The Sandhills Unit is located southeast of the lake where large sand deposits formed from prevailing northwest winds which scoured sand from the lake bed. The sand deposits formed choppy sand dunes ranging between 20 and 40 feet in height.

A variety of management tools are used to mimic the natural processes that historically maintained vegetation of the grasslands in the northern Great Plains. Today, the integrity of native vegetation has been compromised by the planting and spread of invasive plants, and the lack of regular disturbance. Crested wheatgrass, smooth brome, and leafy spurge are some of the invasive plants found within the refuge. Leafy spurge has been found in wilderness areas including the Sandhills Unit and on one of the islands. The Wilderness Character Monitoring conducted in 2013, concluded that the biggest threat impacting wilderness character on Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge "is the decline in native mixed grass prairie seen widespread throughout the entirety of the Sandhills Unit" ■



Medicine Lake and Sandhills



Service staff banding American white pelican



Medicine Lake shore



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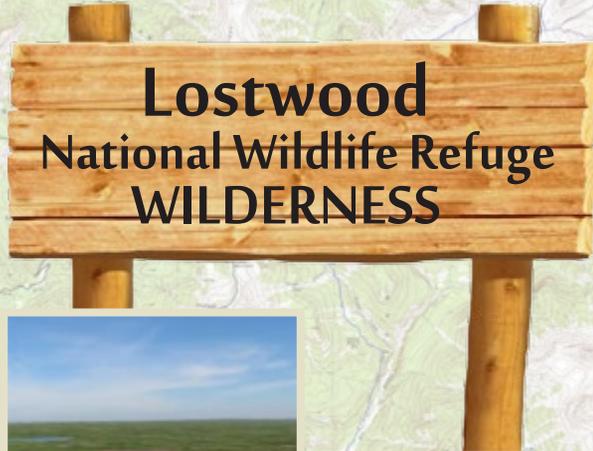


U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FEATURE: WILDERNESS

Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness, North Dakota

by Kory Richardson, Lostwood NWR



Lostwood NWR



Prairie coneflowers

Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established on September 4, 1935. Lostwood NWR was created during the drought years of the 1930's to help conserve dwindling waterfowl populations. Guidelines were set and established for the wilderness plan which state that Lostwood NWR would be studied for wilderness resources that met the basic criteria outlined in the Wilderness Act of 1964.

A letter was signed by Roger C. B. Morton, Secretary of Interior, on Sept 14th, 1972 introducing a bill to the President to designate certain lands in the Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge, Burke and Mountrail Counties in North Dakota as wilderness. In 1975, the 5,577-acre Lostwood Wilderness Area was established within the boundaries of Lostwood NWR. The refuge is located in the geological feature known as the Missouri Coteau, an area of rolling hills, wetlands and mixed grass prairie in the midst of the Northern Great Plains and contains one of the largest tracts of federally owned native prairie.

When Lostwood NWR lands were purchased in 1935, about seventy-five percent of the designated refuge area was native mixed-grass prairie. It was determined that nine sections in the northwest corner of the refuge best met wilderness criteria and the objective of preserving a unique piece of the Coteau prairie and numerous wetlands. The letter to the President expressed the primary reason for Lostwood NWR Wilderness designation as one of the northernmost National Wildlife Refuges located in the Missouri Coteau of northwestern North Dakota.

Today Lostwood NWR is made up of 27,569 acres of rolling, mixed grass prairie dotted with wetlands and is a showcase for prairie management utilizing prescribed fire and grazing. This area is located in the heart of the Prairie Pothole Region which is also referred to as the "duck factory" of North America because it is the most productive area for nesting waterfowl in the continent. This area is comprised of excellent waterfowl breeding, nesting, brood rearing and migration habitat. Lostwood NWR provided visionary conservationists with an opportunity to set aside a unique tract piece of mixed grass prairie and wetlands that provide refuge for a diverse community of plants and animals. ■



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FEATURE: WILDERNESS

Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge Proposed Wilderness Area, Nebraska

by Rod Wittenberg, Project Leader,
Crescent Lake NWR



The northern prairie region of North America is composed of the extensive Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) and the nearby, Nebraska sandhills. In the Prairie Pothole Region, much of the native prairie has been lost to agriculture. Crops cannot grow in water, yet they need sufficient irrigation. Therefore, many pothole wetlands have been drained or diverted, resulting in a significant loss of biodiversity. Conservation efforts and environmental research have steadily increased in the PPR since the 1980s. The movement to preserve this vanishing ecosystem has been bolstered by research indicating that between 50 and 75% of the continent's waterfowl are produced in these PPR wetlands.

In contrast to the PPR, the Nebraska sandhills are the largest expanse of sand dunes in the Western Hemisphere. Covered and stabilized by native prairie vegetation, the sandhill dunes are no longer in constant, shifting motion. The sandy soil does not lend itself to agriculture, therefore, most early attempts at crop production in the region failed. Settlers quickly realized that the rolling sandhills prairie provided forage for cattle, and today cattle grazing remains widespread across the landscape. The sandhills are located above the Ogallala Aquifer which produces a prairie landscape dotted with sub-irrigated lakes and marshes, thereby creating an ecosystem rich with wildlife habitat. Primary threats to the Nebraska sandhills prairie include the removal of bison and fire from the landscape, unsustainable grazing practices, introduction of invasive plants, and groundwater depletion.



Sunset over sandhills prairie



Crescent Lake NWR in bloom

In 1931, Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge was established on the southwestern edge of the Nebraska sandhills. This 45,849-acre refuge was established to serve as a "refuge and breeding ground for birds and wild animals." Owing to its wilderness characteristics, the eastern portion of the refuge (24,502 acres) was proposed for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System in 1972. Although Congress has not acted on this proposal, this area has been managed to maintain and further enhance its wilderness characteristics. Since 1972, the refuge has eliminated eight miles of fence and removed nine windmills from the proposed wilderness area. Additionally, 44 miles of two-track roads have been closed, allowing the native vegetation to cover and heal the land. Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and the proposed wilderness within its boundaries, provides an unmatched opportunity to experience one of North America's most unique ecosystems. In the Nebraska panhandle, where north meets south and east meets west, this wild, native prairie and its fertile wetlands supports an amazing diversity of wildlife. ■

Flint Hills grassland landscape



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FEATURE: WILDERNESS

Ft. Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness, Nebraska

by Steven A. Hicks, Project Leader, Ft. Niobrara NWR



The Fort Niobrara Wilderness is part of the 110 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System. The Wilderness Area lies completely within the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge and extends from the south rim of the Niobrara River canyon north to the refuge boundary. In the wilderness, you can enjoy recreational activities like hiking, kayaking, canoeing, horse riding, bird watching, deer hunting, and opportunities for solitude. In the Fort Niobrara Wilderness, you will find a unique mix of prairie grasslands, wooded valleys and several small creeks with hidden waterfalls. Bison winter here, then head south of the river for the summer. Day-hikers can have a great adventure in the wilderness year round with access to the maintained Fort Falls Trail on the south side of the river. Floating the Niobrara River is a popular activity and approximately 10,000 people ride the river through the wilderness every year. ■



Ft. Niobrara River



Lower Taylor Falls



Ft. Niobrara River



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FEATURE: WILDERNESS

by Mark Lindvall, Valentine NWR

Valentine National Wildlife Refuge Proposed Wilderness, Nebraska



In 1973, a portion of Valentine National Wildlife Refuge was recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The 15,937 acre proposed wilderness is located in the southwest portion of the Refuge. The proposal includes two large lakes, Dad's and Mule, and several smaller lakes. The smaller lakes are bordered by marshes while Dad's Lake, one of the largest natural lakes in the sandhills, is bordered on the south by a narrow strip of trees and brush and high sandy hills. The area is very scenic with the native grasses, undeveloped lakes, high choppy sand hills, and the feeling of isolation and the expanse of the prairie. Man-made structures in the wilderness consist of a few windmills and tanks, electric and barbed wire fences. The area of the Refuge proposed for designation as wilderness is to be managed according to the Wilderness Act of 1964, which requires wilderness areas to be managed in a natural condition for solitude, or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation until such a time as Congress either officially designates the area as wilderness or drops it from further consideration for designation. ■



Lost Lake



Hunter admiring the prairie landscape at Valentine NWR



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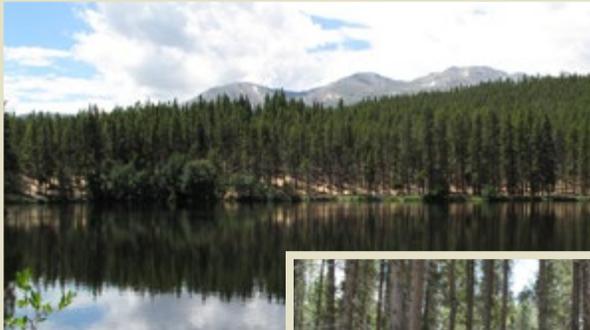


U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FEATURE: WILDERNESS

Leadville National Fish Hatchery Wilderness Area, Colorado

by Ed Stege, Project Leader, Leadville NFH



View of wilderness area at Leadville NFH



Nature trail at Leadville NFH

In 1889, Leadville National Fish Hatchery was established at the base of Mount Massive in Colorado. At that time, the main water supply for the hatchery was from Rock Creek, a stream located approximately five miles from Leadville. To protect the hatchery's water supply, most of the Rock Creek drainage was included in the 3,072 acre hatchery land base. In 1980, Congress designated the 30,540 acre Mount Massive Wilderness Area, which included 2,500 acres of the fish hatchery. Mount Massive (14,421 feet), Colorado's second highest peak, and other mountains of the Sawatch Range have two distinctive characteristics: great height, and a huge, sloping bulk that makes them relatively easy to climb. Nowhere along the Continental Divide does the ground rise higher than the Sawatch Range, the crest of this continent. Just south of the Wilderness Area stands Mount Elbert at 14,443 feet, Colorado's highest summit. The divide marks the western boundary of this area, with the Hunter-Fryingpan Wilderness immediately to the other side. Dry lodgepole pine forests, typical of the eastern slopes of the divide, cover much of the lower elevations and give way to spruce and fir higher up before all trees yield to alpine tundra.

The majority of the Leadville National Fish Hatchery lies within the boundary of the Mount Massive Wilderness Area. The hatchery land inside the wilderness boundary is co-managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Service. The USFS is the principal land manager, protecting the wilderness resources, while the Service manages the fishery and water resources to protect and perpetuate native fish species.

Three trails lead into the wilderness area from the fish hatchery; the Highline, Kearney Park and Rock Creek trails. Each of these trails intersects with the Colorado Trail, which crosses 10 miles of the eastern region. Trails from the fish hatchery are the main access points for winter travel into the wilderness. ■



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Update

The State of Utah's Endangered Species Mitigation Fund

The State of Utah created the Endangered Species Mitigation Fund (ESMF) in 1997. The purpose of the ESMF is to provide funding to facilitate conservation of fish and wildlife species and their habitats in greatest need of protection. The program's priority is to fund projects that benefit species identified as sensitive on the state sensitive species list, including those listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The primary objective is to direct funds towards the protection of federally listed and state sensitive species, to promote their conservation and recovery and to preclude the need for listing additional species under the ESA.

The ESMF is administered by the Utah Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and funded through a portion of a 1/16th percent sales tax on water and by a tax from the Brine Shrimp Royalty Act. A total of up to \$3 million is available on an annual basis. Through multi-partner cooperative agreements, Utah is committed to participating in three recovery implementation programs for federally listed fish species (Upper Colorado River, Virgin River and June sucker recovery programs), and the state's fiscal contribution to these programs is provided through ESMF.

DNR has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources that matches ESMF funds with federal dollars provided through the State Wildlife Grant program for the purpose of implementing the Utah Wildlife Action Plan. Although not required by the legislation, DNR opted to distribute the remainder of ESMF funds through a competitive grants program. Organizations are encouraged to apply for funding on an annual basis. To receive funding, grant applications must meet the intent of the legislation and be consistent with the mission and objectives of the DNR. *(continued)*



Boreal toad



Desert tortoise

The State of Utah's Endangered Species Mitigation Fund



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Update

The State of Utah's Endangered Species Mitigation Fund

In addition to the three native fish recovery programs, Utah currently funds the following high priority programs addressing endangered and sensitive species: Utah prairie dog management, southwestern willow flycatcher, desert tortoise, Virgin spinedace, ferruginous hawk, and boreal toad. For species that are already Federally listed, the recovery actions implemented through the ESMF have improved the species' status such that ESA regulation has been decreased or streamlined.

ESMF and DNR are a key component of Utah's success in conserving species and avoiding listings. In the past five years, Utah's proven track record of funding and implementing on-the-ground recovery actions for species at risk has been a key piece of the Service's rationale in determining that the least chub, leatherside chub, Coral Pink Sand Dunes tiger beetle, White River penstemon and Graham's penstemon were not warranted for listing. For the tiger beetle and least chub, the Service could point to: 1) a long track record of implementation of conservation actions; 2) on-the-ground successes that improved the status of the species; 3) a continuing commitment to address any unresolved stressors.

For the leatherside chub, there was better survey information as a result of the DNR's work, indicating that the species' status was not imperiled as previously thought. For the two penstemon species, the ESMF was instrumental in showing continued financial commitments for surveys and monitoring. By working with all stakeholders proactively and before a listing determination is imminent, Utah has created conservation programs with a track record of success that can significantly influence listing decisions. ■



Graham's penstemon



Coral Pink Sand Dunes tiger Beetle



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Awards

by Steve Segin, Public Information Officer

Dr. Donald "Pete" Gober, Black-footed Ferret Coordinator for Service, received a 2014 Special Achievement award from the Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) at their summer meeting in San Antonio, TX on July 22nd. This award is in recognition of his outstanding service and contributions to the recovery of the black-footed ferret and conservation of the prairie ecosystem of the American West.

"I am pleased to have received this award," said Gober "WAFWA members are probably the most pragmatic conservation partners that I have worked with over the past 30 years. You can count on them to pick you up if you have a good idea...and to knock you down if it's a bad one. Either way it's usually a win for wildlife."

As the recovery coordinator, Gober worked with a wide array of federal agencies, state and county governments, Native American tribes, private citizens, landowners, and non-governmental organizations; to recover the endangered black-footed ferret throughout its former range in the Great Plains, mountain basins, and semi-arid grasslands of North America.

Gober has worked for the Service for 27 years and is the Black-footed Ferret Recovery Coordinator stationed at the Black-footed Ferret Recovery Center in Wellington, CO. ■



Black-footed ferret in pen

Black-footed Ferret Recovery Coordinator Receives Award



Pete Gober (center) receives a Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies 2014 Special Achievement Award from WAFWA President Carter Smith (left) and Awards Chairman Jim Douglas (right).



Black-footed ferrets

Black-footed Ferret Recovery Coordinator Receives Award



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Tribal Updates

by Ivy Allen, Tribal Communications Specialist

Tribes Strengthen Wildlife Conservation Efforts through Game & Fish Law Enforcement Training



Combat training



Firearms training

To meet a unique requirement for Tribal wildlife law enforcement officers, federal agencies partnered with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS) to host a week-long intensive training program. All Federal law officers are required to receive 40 hours of annual in-service training. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Law Enforcement policy mandates the same training requirements for Tribal law enforcement officers. As a result, thirty-eight Tribal conservation officers attended the instruction representing 14 Tribes, to include: Oglala Sioux Tribe, Pueblo of Jemez, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, Crow Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Nation, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Three Affiliated Tribes, Navajo Nation, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Fort Belknap Tribe, Shoshone-Bannock Tribe, Mescalero Tribe, and Columbia River Inter-tribal Fisheries Commission.

"This is probably one of the first times that there were this many officers from the Southwest tribes and this added to the success of the training," said Emerson Bullchief, Historic Preservation Officer for the Crow Tribe and a Board Director in the NAFWS. "The Society is committed to making sure tribal conservation law officers are getting the training they need for anything that they would ever encounter out there in the field for their safety."

The Tribal officer training was held in Billings, Montana, on June 9–13, 2014. The training program was led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) with the assistance of tribal instructors from Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and Three Affiliated Tribes along with the U.S. Attorney's Office. The Crow Tribe hosted this year's effort while working closely with NAFWS Great Plains Region. The NAFWS provided logistical support, planning assistance and Simunition® equipment for the participants.

"Training in Indian Country has always been a need, a great need, because a lot of the other (Tribal) agencies don't have instructors," said Mike Kennedy, Society member and Cheyenne River Sioux Conservation officer. "So, a lot of times we rely on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to give that instruction to us," Kennedy added. *(continued)*



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Tribal Updates

Tribes Strengthen Wildlife Conservation Efforts through Game & Fish Law Enforcement Training



Firearms training

“NAFWS has provided funding for equipment, like where I live in Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe; they sent us to training—to be instructors—so we could train our own people. The Society found the need was so great that we expanded it and now we train other departments.”

This year, there were approximately 19 instructors to conduct the training sessions from the Service, BIA, U.S. Attorney’s Office, Housing and Urban Development, and the two previously mentioned Tribes. This rigorous training was designed to meet the needs of Tribal law enforcement officers responsible for protecting trust resources and people in Indian Country. The training covered standard skill sets in areas such as defensive tactics, crime scene investigation, search and seizure, firearms proficiency, federal laws in Indian Country, wildlife field forensics, raptor identification, use of force, officer safety and awareness of drug activity.

There was both a classroom component and a two-day outdoor applied learning session where practical exercises were used to create an authentic field environment for the scenario based training. The instructors created exercises that dealt with development and documentation of crime scenes and shoot or don’t shoot Simunition® scenarios.

The purpose of these scenarios was to reinforce officer safety in a real world setting—where outcomes and responses—reinforce officer actions which avoid putting themselves or their fellow officers into dangerous situations where they could be injured or killed.

Terry Thibeault, a Service Resident Agent In Charge stated, “Tribal Conservation Officers are essentially our boots on the ground when it comes to conservation law enforcement in Indian Country.” “We strive to provide the best training we can in order to help them do their job proficiently, and most importantly safely.”

Tribal participants requested the continued support for this well-attended training. One huge benefit to the localized training is the role it has played in forging working relations between Federal law enforcement officers and Tribal officers. These relationships have led to real-world joint investigations between Tribes and the Service, which helps in the successful prosecution of offenders. Participants’ questions, interest and engagement was witnessed throughout the week. The course takes a direct and tailored approach to situations, which could be expanded throughout Indian Country, to deal with the unique issues faced by Tribal wildlife law enforcement officers on Tribal lands. ■

Support for this Training was provided by: Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS), Department of Interior (DOI), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement and Refuges Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Tribal Justice and Division of Natural Resources, Department of Justice (DOJ), Environmental Natural Resource Division and the Montana US Attorney’s Office



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Update

Restoration of Colorado's Upper Arkansas River Basin

by Laura Archuleta, Environmental Contaminants Specialist



*Headwaters Ranch /
Wade Shelton*

*Right: Headwaters
Ranch partners
discuss fishing
access*



For more than a century, waste from historic mines leached into adjacent lands and waters of the Arkansas River, contaminating more than 15 square miles of the upper Arkansas River basin in Lake County, Colorado, which includes the California Gulch Superfund site. The mining waste posed a serious threat to human health and safety because heavy metals, including lead, seeped into drinking water sources and soil. The metals also injured wildlife such as the American dipper, tree swallow, brown trout and their habitats. Starting in 1992, a team of state, federal agencies and academics began the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) process, led by the Mountain-Prairie Region. This NRDAR process includes determining the extent of the injuries, calculating damages (dollars) and negotiating legal settlements with the parties responsible for the hazardous releases. For this site, the 2008 NRDAR settlement was with ASARCO LLC and Resurrection Mining Company/Newmont USA Ltd. for \$20.6 million.

In 2010, as part of the restoration planning process, partners identified Headwaters Ranch as the highest conservation priority in Lake County and the Upper Arkansas Valley. The ranch provides important habitat for elk, mule deer, black bear, mountain lions and greenback cutthroat trout, as well as potential lynx habitat. Nearly one-third of the property is classified as high quality wetland and riparian habitat.

To date, 550 acres of land and more than 3.5 miles of the headwaters of the Arkansas River are now permanently protected by a conservation easement, thanks to our partners, The Trust for Public Lands, Land Trust of the Upper Arkansas, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Great Outdoors Colorado.

Further, the landowner has agreed to allow public access for fishing and partners are now working on developing access and parking.

Many other restoration projects will be implemented in the next several years. In addition, post-implementation monitoring and adaptive management strategies will improve outcomes for trust resources as we continue to work together to restore fish and wildlife habitat, and public places. ■



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 **National Elk Refuge**
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♪ "Oh give me a home ♪ where the buffalo roam ♪..." Wait a minute: we already have one @NatlElkRefuge! #FridayFun



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Pretty perching pelican. #refuge #utah #wildlife



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Black-footed #Ferret Conservationists Honored in #Colorado 4 Safe Harbor Agreement w @USFWSHQ 1.usa.gov/1nOya1P



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Black-necked stilt family visits the #Refuge. You should too! Photo by: B. Ferguson. #utah #BRBR



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A sagebrush sunrise @ Charles M. Russell Nat'l #Wildlife Refuge's auto-tour route. Photo credit Katie Theule / #USFWS



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Two small fawns cautiously step out of the tall grass at J. Clark Salyer NWR in #ND. #ConserveThePrairies #USFWS



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