



June 2013 Accomplishment Report

Leadership in Science and Technology

Native American Consultation: Max Canestorp and Diane Strohm worked with the US Air Force Academy (USAFA) Community Planner and an archaeology consultant to review numerous cultural sites in preparation for this season's Native American consultations. Max has done considerable work studying culturally-modified trees, which were incorporated into this year's consultations. Native Americans occasionally tied trees close to the ground to produce a sharp bend which could indicate a trail direction or sacred site. They also peeled trees, likely for nutrition derived from the cambial layer.



Possible culturally-modified tree near Cadet area

Species Conservation and Management

Duck Rehab: Krystal Phillips responded to the call of female mallard and duckling behind the secure area fence at Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) and successfully captured all six ducklings. Krystal coordinated with Colorado Parks and Wildlife Area Wildlife Manager, Travis Harris, transported ducklings to him for rehabilitation.

Hops Azure Butterfly: Brian Mihlbachler and Rob Schorr (Colorado Natural Heritage Program) met with a Gazette reporter who is writing an article on the rare Hops Azure Butterfly and Odell's Brewery's support of butterfly research on USAFA through donations from the sale of their Celastrina saison ale.

Burrowing owl surveys on BAFB: Krystal Phillips monitored the nest site while Laura Scieszka both identified nests and monitored them using the wildlife caller. Laura installed signage to mark site. Juvenile presence was reported within the nest site in late June. Data was compiled in an Access Database for future analysis.

Fisheries and Aquatic Management Report: Chris Kennedy completed update of the 2001 Rocky Mountain National Park Fisheries and Aquatic Management Report. This report encompasses almost all fisheries and aquatic work conducted in the park. Reviews are expected to be due in September.

Migratory bird surveys: Laura Scieszka continued observing migratory birds in five locations on BAFB and generated reports based on location, wind speed, birds observed, duration of survey, and type of environment. Data was compiled in the Access Wildlife Database.

Prairie Dog Surveys: Laura Scieszka performed black-tailed prairie dog surveys at an area that will be affected by future barrier construction on BAFB.

Fish sampling on Rocky Mountain Arsenal: Laura Scieszka, Krystal Phillips and Pam Sponholtz assisted Joel Colvin at Rocky Mountain Arsenal in processing of fish data collected via electrofishing. Sampling methods also included setting gill nets and minnow traps.



Krystal Phillips, Pam Sponholtz and Laura Scieszka

Alpine Anglers Trout Unlimited: Chris Kennedy prepared and gave talks to Alpine Anglers Trout Unlimited Chapter and Rocky Mountain National Park Colorado River District training.

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) surveys: Max Canestorp coordinated bird surveys for RMBO on Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD). RMBO has a plot on PCD upon which they conduct annual bird surveys.

Kids Learn to Fly Fish event: Chris Kennedy prepared and gave a talk, as well as an electrofishing demonstration at Kids Learn to Fly event put on by the Alpine Anglers Trout Unlimited Chapter. This event was sponsored

through a grant obtained by Bruce Rosenlund when he was with the FWS Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office.



FWS sponsored Kids Learn to Fly Fish Event

Effects of Antimycin on Macroinvertebrates: Chris Kennedy met with USGS researchers regarding initiating a study on the possible effects of antimycin on macroinvertebrates.

Partnerships and Accountability

Fish Health Board: Pam Sponholtz participated in a Fish Health Board meeting that discussed whirling disease exemptions, development of commercial salvage permits and aspects of rearing Hofer/Harrison trout crosses for rearing in hatcheries.

Support to National Firefighting Program: Diane Strohm served as infrared interpreter (IRIN) for two weeks in late June to early July, mapping the South Fork Complex and several other wildfires during a two-week detail in Durango, CO. She worked with an IRIN trainee to help with his certification, and was able to attend planning meetings and interact with the Incident Command Team, staged in Pagosa Springs.

Field Visit by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW): Brian Muhlbachler and Diane Strohm hosted a field trip for the CPW Southeast Regional Manager and the Area Wildlife Manager. They showed a variety of projects and focus areas highlighted in the recent multi-agency annual review of the Academy Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan. USAFA

is fortunate to have a positive and interactive working relationship with CPW.

Landline Survey Partnership Project: Diane Strohm coordinated with the U.S. Forest Service to secure funding for a joint partnership to survey the USAFA boundary with the Pike National Forest. This cost-sharing project will be completed by a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) survey crew. Surveys of the north and south USAFA boundaries will also be completed by the survey crew as part of this project.

Upper Monument Creek Landscape Restoration Initiative: Diane Strohm continues to participate in the Upper Monument Creek (UMC) Restoration project. The objective of this multi-agency consortium is to collaboratively develop science-based forest restoration and management recommendations for a 67,000-ac UMC area on the Pike NF, west of USAFA. Diane developed an array of proposed fuels management and forest health projects in proximity to USAFA and Monument that will be discussed at the next group workshop in July. The US Forest Service will consider the group's proposal in its upcoming environmental analysis of this area.

Forest thinning, fuels mitigation and stream restoration projects: Diane Strohm and Brian Mihlbachler provided a tour of various USAFA forest thinning, fuels mitigation, and stream restoration projects to Dan Prenslow, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Regional Manager.

Funding travel to Western Division AFS meeting: Pam Sponholtz worked with David Ward (WDAFS past president) and Jeff Yanke (Oregon AFS president) on developing criteria for professional level travel assistance for the next WDAFS meeting in Mazatlan Mexico.

Noxious weed control: Brian Mihlbachler coordinated with Colorado Springs Utilities to

accomplish noxious weed control at the City's McCullough Water Treatment Facility on USAFA's southwestern boundary.

Wildlife Management Plan: Krystal Phillips is waiting for finalization of the Plan at installation commander level for BAFB.

Monthly Bird Airstrike Hazards (BASH) meeting Krystal Phillips assisted the Hazardous Waste Management Manager with coordinating efforts with U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services information exchange of rounds of ammunition spent on Buckley Air Force Base Airfield in support of airfield flight safety.

Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMP) Review: Krystal Phillips developed a draft five year Work Plan of all natural resource projects for BAFB to be merged into final document; this was accomplished in light of new Air Force INRMP guidance.

Natural Resources Contracts: Air Force level changes in project execution have been decided and natural resource projects are now being managed centrally. Pam Sponholtz participated in discussions regarding developing a partnership with FWS to accomplish these projects under one central Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request (MIPR).

Cultural Resources Management on BAFB: Krystal Phillips attended a conference call with contractors to review and clarify the comments provided by internal stakeholders on the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP) and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Change of Command: Max Canestorp attended the Change of Command ceremonies at Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD).

Migratory bird/operations conflict: Max Canestorp investigated a report of an active migratory bird nest in a piece of construction equipment on Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD). The Say's phoebe nest suspends use of the equipment, which is leased at a rate of \$6000 per week. Options for resolution to the conflict are under consideration.

Native American consultations: Max Canestorp participated in consultations with the northern and southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Tribes, and the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, on behalf of USAFA.

Habitat Conservation and Management

Forest Health surveys: Steve Wallace continues to focus on forest health surveys to locate beetle-infested trees, coordinating with contractors to have these trees treated immediately to minimize insect spread. USAFA has incurred substantial tree mortality this year from the Ips pine engraver beetle, with help from twig beetles. These insects proliferate in extreme drought conditions. Prompt removal and chipping or peeling of infested brood trees is necessary to preclude infestation of adjacent trees. Numerous annual generations of Ips and twig beetles greatly complicate effective suppression. Approximately 250 infested trees have already been removed this season.

Wildlife Fencing on BAFB: Due to changes in Air Force contracting procedures, Krystal Phillips and Pam Sponholtz worked with Kris Johnson (FWS Fisheries Program) to develop a scope of work for the FWS to complete the fencing project with in-house staff.

Fireline Clearing Training: Steve Wallace has been coordinating with the USAFA Fire

Department to provide opportunities to practice cutting fireline in heavy brush. He has lined out several stretches of fuelbreaks to clear in the Jacks Valley area. Chainsaw operation in Gambel oak habitat is challenging, but an important skill to learn due to its prevalence in the area.



USAFA firefighters clearing dense oak during Waldo fire

USAFA Wildfire: Steve Wallace assisted USAFA firefighters in suppressing and monitoring a small wildfire in the northwest corner of USAFA on June 10. This lightning-caused fire posed a serious threat to the town of Monument due to a red-flag warning for high south winds the following day. Steve checked the site for several days to ensure no hot spots remained, and mapped the burn area.

Military Construction Contracts: Diane Strohm and Brian Mihlbachler revised the Erosion Control, Revegetation and Tree Care Standards for USAFA. These requirements are applied to all contract work done on base. They also participated in revising environmental standards in the Simplified Acquisition Base Engineering Requirement (SABER) contract, a national multiple-award construction contract used across military installations.

Noxious weeds: Greg Speights, Max Canestorp, and Brian Mihlbachler aggressively dug and pulled myrtle spurge, scotch thistle, musk thistle, and knapweeds as part of the USAFA Integrated Noxious Weed Management program.

Herbicide spraying: Brian Mihlbachler is directing the herbicide spraying to target small, dispersed weed populations for control. Newly identified bouncingbet (*Saponaria officinalis*) populations are a particularly high priority for eradication.

Waldo Canyon Fire aftermath: Brian Mihlbachler surveyed the 35 acres of fire line rehabilitated following the Waldo Canyon Fire for signs of erosion or noxious weed invasion. Establishment of the seeded native grasses has been slow due to the drought conditions.

Control populations of leafy spurge and whitetop
Brian Mihlbachler requested the El Paso County Noxious Weed Coordinator contact private landowners adjacent to USAFA to encourage them to control populations of leafy spurge and whitetop that threaten to invade high value habitats.

Leafy spurge monitoring: Max Canestorp assisted Renée Rondeau of the Colorado Natural Heritage Program with monitoring leafy spurge on plots established on USAFA.

Public Use and Recreation

Rainbow Trout stocking: Greg Speights and Max Canestorp stocked 9-11" rainbow trout in the USAFA and Farish Recreation Area lakes.

Minimizing loss of stocked rainbow trout
Greg Speights removed double-crested cormorants under a migratory bird permit at the Kettle Lakes to minimize the loss of stocked rainbow trout.

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