

Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



Lakewood: Pam Sponholtz, Project Leader

US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs: Brian Mihlbachler, Biological Scientist, Diane Strohm, Biological Scientist, Greg Speights, Biological Technician, Steve Wallace, Forestry Technician

Buckley Air Force Base, Aurora: Krystal Phillips, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Peterson, Schriever, Cheyenne Mtn Air Force Bases, Colorado Springs: Max Canestorp, Wildlife Biologist

Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park: Chris Kennedy, Fish Biologist

Warren Air Force Base, Cheyenne, WY: Timothy Grosch, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

December 2013 Accomplishment Report

Leadership in Science and Technology

Aerial reconnaissance monitoring for bark beetle infestation: Steve Wallace and Diane Strohm are coordinating with Academy faculty on a senior-level course to employ remotely-piloted aerial flights and spectral analysis to identify beetle-infested trees. Focus will be on the Ips engraver beetle, which can complete a generation and reemerge to infest additional trees within two months. This course could provide valuable, timely information in support of forest health protection, since prompt identification and treatment of infested trees is critical. Frequent aerial monitoring could greatly enhance efforts to reduce beetle spread and tree mortality.

Genetics of cutthroat trout: Chris Kennedy reviewed a manuscript written by University of Colorado-Boulder geneticists for which he is a co-author. This project looks at the genetic make-up of cutthroat trout within Rocky Mountain National Park and compares it to stocking records and known sources of the cutthroat trout stocked.

Species Conservation and Management

Pronghorn removal efforts: Pronghorn removal efforts continue on F. E. Warren Air Force Base (WAFB). The program will continue through the end of February or until the goal of 50 animals is reached. Cooperation between the Civil Engineering Squadron along with Security Forces has made this venture possible already culling 45 pronghorn within the first two months. All meat is processed and donated out to local charities or those in need.

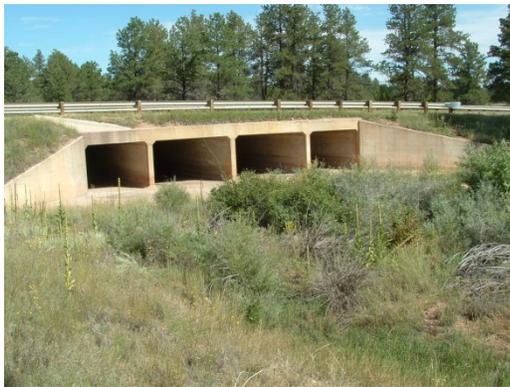
Deer hunt: Greg Speights and Brian Mihlbachler administered the 2013 Academy deer hunt, with 14 bucks and 14 does harvested.



9x6 mule deer harvested during the 2013 USAFA hunt.

Recovery efforts for greenback cutthroat trout: Pam Sponholtz and Leslie Ellwood met with the U.S. Forest Service to discuss potentially stocking threatened greenback cutthroat trout into Grizzly Gulch on the Roosevelt National Forest. Consultation under the Endangered Species Act would have to be completed before this action could occur.

Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat: Brian Mihlbachler met with a contractor repairing multiple roadway box culverts this winter and spring in Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat at the Academy. Procedures for construction access and limits for vegetation removal were developed to prevent excessive habitat damage. All impacts will be mitigated in accordance with the Preble's Conservation Agreement.



Box culvert to be repaired in Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat

ArcGIS maps and began Paradise Creek and Boundary Lake report: Chris Kennedy finished creating ArcGIS maps and began writing a report from data collected from Paradise Creek and Boundary Lake within Rocky Mountain National Park during the 2013 field season. These data were collected as part of a project to assess the area for the potential of converting it to native cutthroat trout. Data collected include: pH readings, water flows, mapping of backwaters, location of macroinvertebrate collections, lake depth readings, extent of fish, locations of fish migration barriers, time of water travel, fish survey locations, and locations of temperature loggers. The report will summarize all information collected so that a chemical treatment plan can be developed if it is decided to go forward with a reclamation project.

Thermograph plan and deployed thermographs map: Chris Kennedy gave input on a Rocky Mountain National Park thermograph plan and created a map of deployed thermographs. This is necessary to evaluate the need for thermographs currently deployed and those proposed for deployment as they relate to the goals of Wilderness.

Habitat Conservation and Management

Pine Valley home demolition area: Diane Strohm participated in planning meetings on the Pine Valley House Demolition Project, to ensure that as many native trees as possible are retained and protected.



Healthy ponderosa pines within Pine Valley home demolition area

Bark Beetles: Steve Wallace performed a final sweep for late season bark beetle activity at the Academy. Developing broods will enter a quiescent state under tree bark, with emergence expected in early spring. Steve located a number of infested trees that will be examined in support of an aerial reconnaissance course. Cadets will need a sampling of infested trees to calibrate sensors to identify similarly colored trees.



Pine recently killed by Ips beetles

Construction impact monitoring and planning: Steve Wallace and Diane Strohm met with a retired Colorado Springs city forester with extensive experience in urban tree environments and health issues, to assess impacts of trenching and grading on surrounding trees. Several trees in close proximity to construction footprints were deemed unable to survive excess fill material, and will be removed. Planned trenching around ornamental trees was reviewed, with mitigation measures recommended to protect trees.

Union Pacific Railroad clearing: Steve Wallace inspected tree and brush clearing along the Union Pacific Railroad, to ensure it meets Academy specifications. Extensive clearing had resulted in large woody debris piles, which could attract Ips and twig bark beetles if not properly treated.



Slash piles from clearing along railroad right-of-way

Extension Commercial Pesticide Safety Education Program Course: Tim Grosch attended a University of Wyoming Extension Commercial Pesticide Safety Education Program Course in Laramie Wyoming. The course covered federal and state regulations regarding proper application of restricted use pesticides. Testing and licensing was done through Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

Partnerships and Accountability

Wildfire Center meeting: Diane Strohm, Tim Grosch, Max Canestorp, and Krystal Phillips participated in meetings for CO Front Range installations to learn about the newly-established USAF Wildland Fire Center at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Florida. Wildland Fire Center representative Roger Kennedy gave a presentation to the group about how the Wildland Fire Center will provide technical assistance for prescribed burn planning,

implementation and training, and will help facilitate wildfire suppression readiness.

Upper Monument Creek Landscape Restoration Initiative: Diane Strohm reviewed and submitted comments on final documents for Upper Monument Creek, a 67,000-acre portion of the Pike National Forest west of the Air Force Academy. Approximately 15 agencies participated in this year-long collaborative planning process to develop recommendations to restore ecosystem health and mitigate wildland fire risk. Final reports and maps will be presented in January to the USFS, for consideration in an upcoming National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis.

Partnership with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS): Diane Strohm coordinated with the BLM and the USFS on a survey of the south, west and north boundaries of the Academy. Several discrepancies between previous surveys were identified and corrected. Plats and final reports are expected this winter.

Tribal Wildlife Grant (TWG) Reviews: Through the FWS, Tribal Wildlife Grants are used to provide technical and financial assistance to Tribes for the development and implementation of programs that benefit fish and wildlife resources and their habitat. Krystal Phillips and Diane Strohm completed their reviews and participated in a final web meeting to recommend the top proposals submitted through the TWG program.

Western Division American Fisheries Society meeting: As Western Division AFS President, Pam worked on several aspects of the upcoming annual meeting that will be held in Mazatlan, Mexico in April 2014 including registration, funding for professional and student travel, and general travel logistics.

Lake Williams Design Review: The completed Environmental Assessment for the removal of Lake Williams on Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) outlines a requirement for the FWS to review the design to remove the Lake Williams Dam and restore the area to a natural drainage. During the month of December, Krystal Phillips facilitated the review by the FWS for 30% design stage.

Agreement with the National Park Service: Pam Sponholtz worked with Natural Resource staff at Rocky Mountain National Park to develop a new agreement to cover pre-restoration studies and temperature monitoring in the Park.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department coordination: Tim Grosch continued coordination with Wyoming Game and Fish Department Regional Wildlife Supervisor Rick King and Game Wardens Nick Roberts and Shawn Blajszczak to discuss future pronghorn depredation activities, to ensure proper shooting techniques, safety concerns, and herd management objectives were being addressed.



Bird Airstrike Hazard (BASH): Krystal Phillips developed and delivered training to the BAFB Chief of Safety on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act with special focus on depredation permits to be presented at the quarterly meeting with the 460th Space Wing and 140th Air National Guard Vice Commanders. Additionally, Krystal assisted the BAFB Chief of Safety with the information necessary to submit the 2014 depredation permit package to the FWS Region 6 Migratory Bird Permit Office prior to the 2013 depredation permit expiration.

National Agreement with the Air Force: Pam Sponholtz continued to work with Air Force personnel to resolve issues with contracting out projects conducted on Department of Defense lands and provide access to new hires.

Tree City USA Recertification: Diane Strohm compiled the annual application package for recognition of the Academy as a Tree City USA. 2013 will be the 21th consecutive year the Academy has earned this award from the Arbor Day

Foundation, acknowledging a commitment to urban forest management. The Tree City USA banner will be presented to the Academy at the Arbor Day event in April.

Environmental plan reviews: Project plan reviews are an important tool for identifying any impacts to the natural and biological environment. Krystal Phillips participated in reviews delivering a response ahead of the assigned deadlines - Environmental Assessment for building construction and demolition and review of final sustainable infrastructure assessment report for BAFB.

Public Use and Recreation

Harvesting cow elk: Greg Speights and Brian Muhlbachler continue to scout for opportunities to harvest cow elk on the Academy. The elk herd contains approximately 40 animals; 5-10 animals could be culled to meet management objectives if the opportunity becomes available.

Edited by: Emily R. Fausch