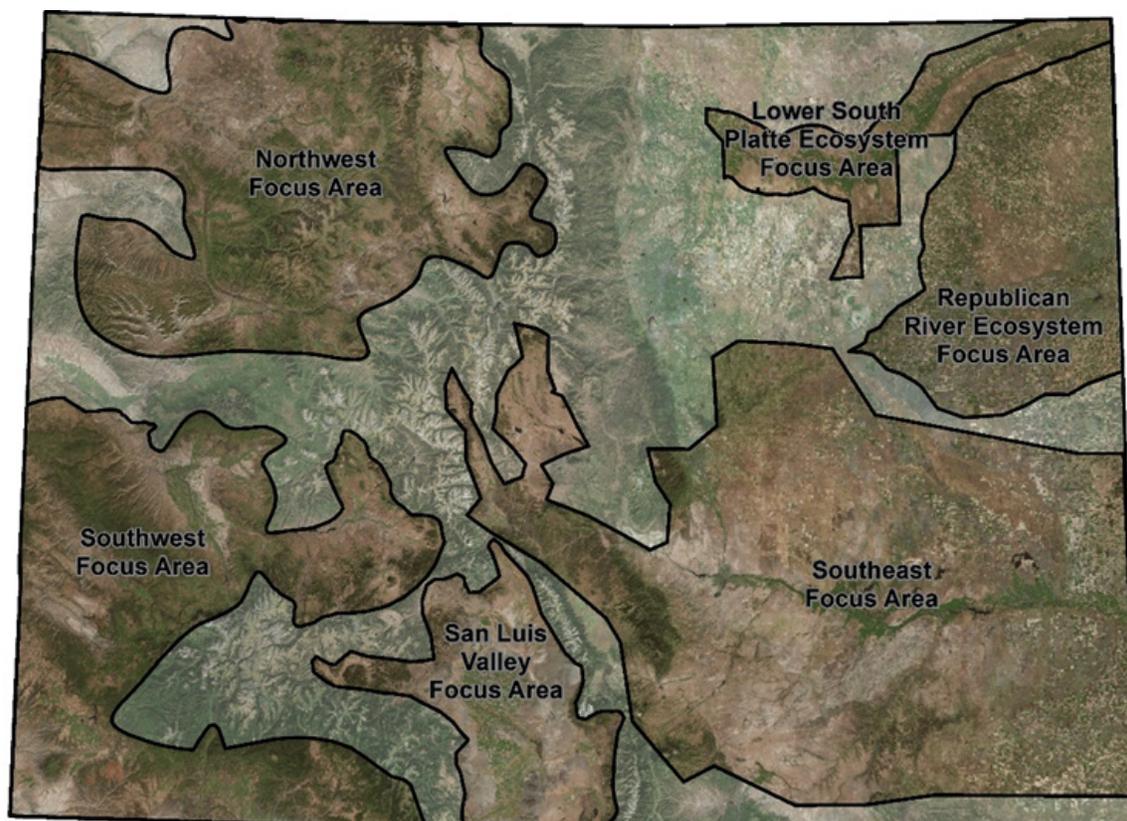
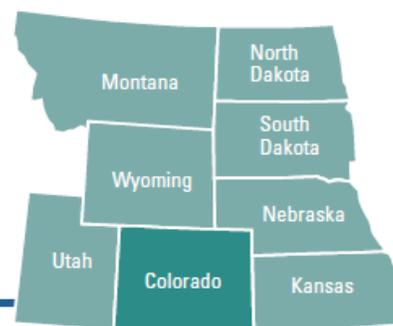


# Colorado



Colorado PFW program Focus Areas. USFWS map.

## Introduction and Overview

This narrative presents a summary of the Colorado Partners for Fish and Wildlife (CO PFW) program's FY 2017 efforts toward achieving the stated goals within the FY 2017–2021 Strategic Plan. In FY 2017, the CO PFW program completed 27 projects (as reported for Government Performance and Results Act [GPRA]) through Private Landowner Agreements (PLAs) with landowners and other partners in the six focus areas across the State. These agreements resulted in 5,937 acres restored or enhanced. Additionally, 23 new PLAs were signed during FY

2017, which will address 747 acres of wetlands, 5,935 acres of uplands and 10 miles of riparian habitat. Of these 23 FY 2017 PLAs, 14 have already been completed and invoiced, most of which were rolled up into FY 2017 Habitat Information Tracking System (HabITS) accomplishments.

During FY 2017, the CO PFW program lost three of four field biologists to new job opportunities. Although the program still had a successful year, the loss of 75% manpower impacted new project delivery, partnerships, implementation of Level II monitoring, and other proactive

efforts. In the five un-staffed focus Areas (Lower South Platte Ecosystem, Republican River Ecosystem, Southeast, San Luis Valley and Southwest), the priority became ensuring existing agreements were completed and cooperators paid. Enough new starts were initiated to keep the program viable in these five focus Areas and many of our long time partners have assisted to help keep habitat conservation efforts on track. Significant concerns exist related to loss of our leadership, presence, and influence in the vacant focus areas should this reduced staff condition continue through FY 2018.

**Goal I. Conserve Habitat**

**Colorado Partners for Fish and Wildlife FY 2017 Habitat Accomplishments**

Habitat Type (restored/enhanced/established)	FY 2017 Total	FY 2017–2021 Cumulative Total	FY 2017–2021 Target	Percent Complete
Upland acres	3,304	3,304	29,700	11%
Wetland acres	2,633	2,633	5,000	53%
Riparian/river miles	0	0	13	0%
Fish passage structures	0	0	13	0%



*Invasive winter conifer removal in sage-steppe reduces soil disturbance. Spring handwork then occurs to remove smaller trees and shoots, which effectively doubles the lifespan of the restoration project and its benefits. Photo by Bob Timberman, USFWS.*

**Goal II. Broaden and Strengthen Partnerships**

The CO PFW program during FY 2017 worked on maintaining our active statewide and local partnership base. Our relationship with all major partners remains strong and several have stepped in to assist the CO PFW program with manpower when possible. New partnerships with Western Rivers Conservancy, conservation districts and local offices of State and Federal agencies were also developed.



*Fish barrier installed for a greenback cutthroat trout restoration project. USFWS photo.*

**Colorado Partners for Fish and Wildlife FY 2017 Partnership Accomplishments**

Accomplishment Type	FY 2017 Total	FY 2017–2021 Cumulative Total	FY 2017–2021 Target	Percent Complete
Private landowner agreements	27	27	170	16%
Partnerships	67	67	1,412	5%
Technical assistance (staff days)	324	324	2,045	16%
Leveraging ratio (PFW:non-program)	1:2.7	1:2.7	1:3	n/a



*A portion of the "Brownie Hills" riparian fence. A partnership of Costilla County, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Western Rivers Conservancy, Great Outdoors Colorado, and the USFWS. USFWS photo.*

**Goal III. Improve Information Sharing and Communication**

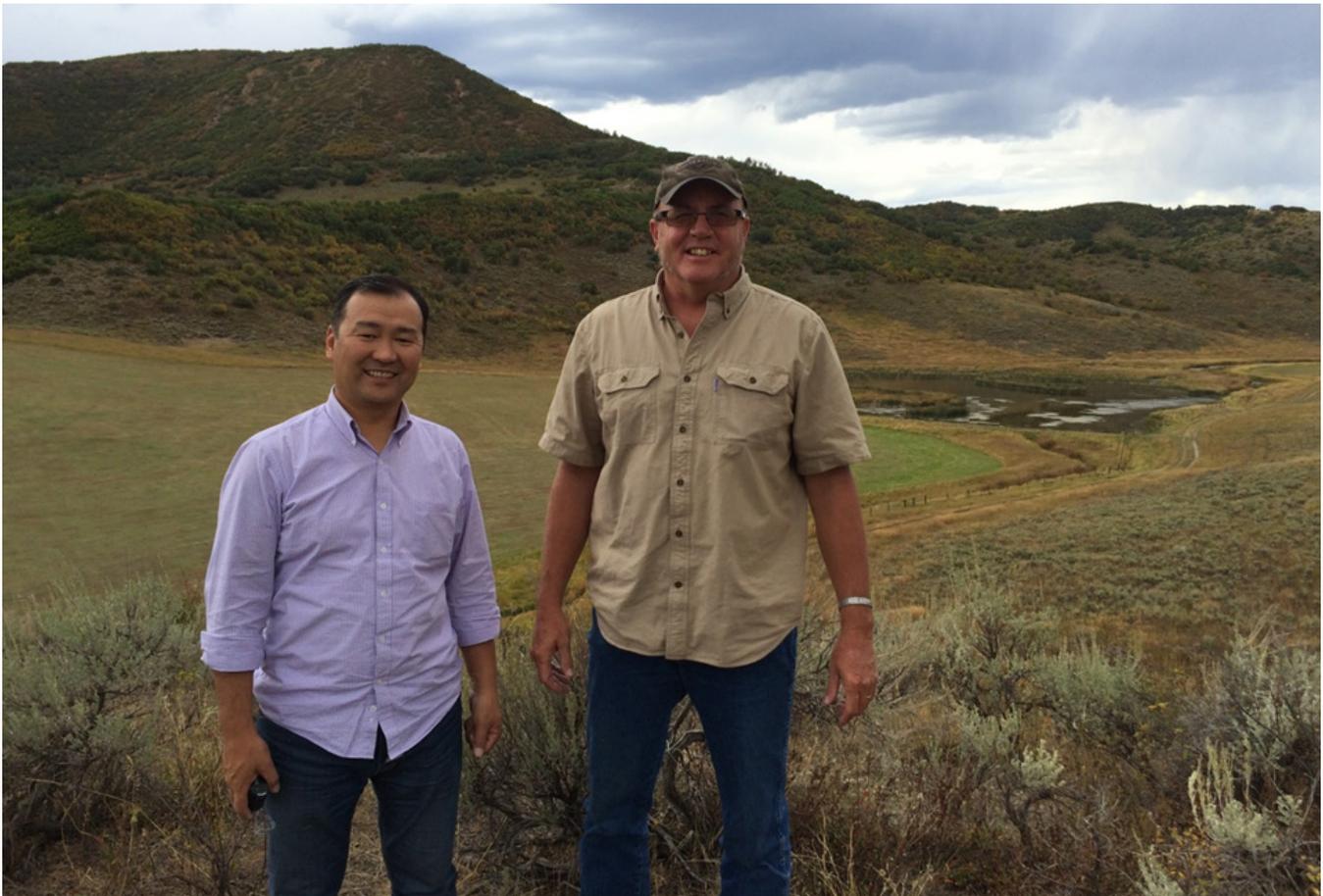
*Internal Communication:* The CO PFW program worked with Colorado Ecological Services on several projects including assisting the protection of Gunnison sage-grouse lek and will continue to work well together through FY 2018. Cooperation with the Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office expanded with joint efforts for warm and cold water native fish. The CO PFW program, working closely with Costilla County, Western Rivers Conservancy, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the San Luis Valley

NWR complex fenced nearly 5 miles of the Rio Grande riparian corridor on the new Brownie Hills Conservation Easement.

*External Communication:* The CO PFW program Coordinator and CPW Private Lands Coordinator have maintained the bi-monthly lunch meeting schedule with the NRCS State Conservationist. Communication with the CPW Private Lands and Wetlands Coordinators occur virtually daily. The State Coordinator and staff continue to increase outreach to CPW Terrestrial and Aquatic Biologists to increase awareness of our program

for delivery habitat restoration projects on private lands.

CO PFW program field staff attend a wide variety of local, state, and regionally focused meetings and host or participate in field tours. PFW program field staff often initiates and lead joint efforts within their geographic areas promoting a team approach to habitat restoration. Five briefings for staff of Colorado's Congressional delegation were completed. The CO PFW program also assisted in planning and participated in the Intermountain West Joint Venture board meeting and tour in the San Luis Valley.



*Nyambayar Batbayar, PhD and Director of the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia with CO PFW program Biologist, Bob Timberman. Mr. Timberman provided a tour and briefing to Dr. Nyambayar Batbayar. The CO PFW program wetland restoration project in the background (Routt County) directly benefits both sandhill cranes and northern leopard frogs. USFWS photo.*

**Goal IV. Enhance our Workforce**

Training for both improved Program delivery and professional growth is a major goal for the CO PFW program. CO PFW program staff attended a variety of professional meetings and training to improve species and technical skills. Examples include Zeedyk methods, Conservation Biology, Speed of Trust, Colorado Wildlife Society, and the Tamarisk Coalition (TC) Annual Conferences. In addition, as presented above, all staff attend and present at various local workshops and meetings to both exchange and acquire new information and ideas.

**Goal V. Increase Accountability**

CO PFW program projects were entered into HABITS in accordance with database guidelines and policy. Quality control of both projects and data begins with field staff who take pride in the biology and accounting underpinning each project. Full implementation of the monitoring plan was impacted with only Level 1 able to be fully completed.

**Conclusion**

For FY 2017, the CO PFW program was in a survival mode weathering the 75% reduction in field presence. The strength of our partnerships was exposed through the support provided by several major partners. Progress toward our 2107-2021 Strategic Plan targets was made, although at slower rate than originally planned. It is hoped that the 2018 Service budget will allow filling of the vacant focus areas so that the CO PFW program established role as a leader in private lands habitat restoration delivery can be resumed.



*Zeedyk methodology workshop near Gunnison, Colorado. USFWS photo.*



*Monitoring implementation of a wetland restoration project. USFWS photo.*



*Newly completed wetland/groundwater recharge project in Sedgwick County, Colorado. USFWS photo.*