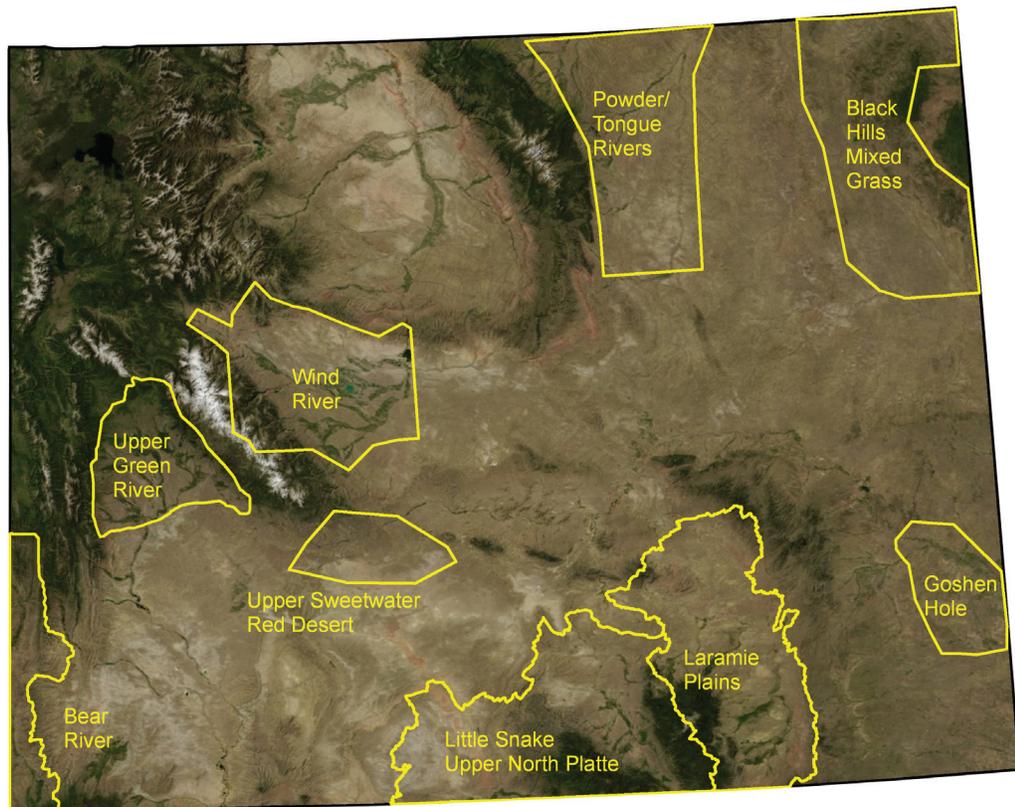


Wyoming



Wyoming Partners Program Conservation Focus Areas

Introduction and Overview

The PFW program has been actively restoring fish and wildlife habitat in Wyoming since 1988. Emphasis has been on building partnerships between various federal, state, local and Tribal governments, conservation organizations, agricultural interests and private landowners. Wyoming (WY) PFW program provides technical and financial assistance for landowners within designated priority areas for on-the-ground habitat developments. Projects are conceived based on Federal trust species habitat needs, landowner and conservation partner interests, and site potential. PFW program staff members are co-located within

local resource offices and work one-on-one with private landowners and other partners to design, permit, and implement a variety of habitat projects for Federal trust species. Major types of habitat restoration, creation, and enhancement activities within our priority areas include:

Wetland Restoration, Enhancement and Establishment

Wetland habitat projects include restorations and enhancements of both natural and created wetlands for the benefit of migratory waterfowl, wading and shorebirds. Natural wetland restorations generally involve restoration of historic hydrology, while created

wetlands often incorporate agricultural water which provides a consistent source to manage for a variety of wetland water regimes. In northeast Wyoming, stock ponds often serve a dual purpose as a livestock water source and shallow water wetlands for migratory bird productivity. Through the combined efforts of over 100 partners more than 5,381 acres of wetland habitats have been restored, established, and enhanced since 1988.

Upland Restoration and Enhancement

Using livestock as the tool of choice, upland enhancements most commonly include improvements in grazing management that allow landowners greater flexibility in

livestock management. This results in improved plant health and/or species composition and habitat for a wide variety of native sagebrush/grassland wildlife. Landowners also receive assistance with developing a grazing management plan for their operation. Mechanical vegetation treatments such as seeding, mowing, disking, and aeration are often combined with grazing management to enhance upland areas. Over 171,000 acres of upland habitat improved, enhanced or restored have been completed since 1998.

Stream Restoration and Enhancement

Stream habitat improvement projects have been closely tied with fish passage and screening to reduce fish entrainment into irrigation systems. Large rock and log in-stream structures are commonly used to restore or

enhance stream habitat features promoting stream bed and bank stability. Since 1998, more than 28 miles of intensive in-stream treatments have been installed for the benefit of native fish.

Fish Passage and Screening

Fish passage or screening projects involve updating irrigation diversion structures to improve native fishes' ability to migrate up and downstream, while reducing the number of fish stranded in irrigation systems. A landowners' ability to utilize water rights is maintained and often enhanced through installation of permanent, low maintenance diversions and delivery improvements. Seven irrigation diversion fish screens have been completed in association with twenty-six fish passage projects.

Riparian Enhancement

Improving livestock grazing management is the primary tool for riparian restorations and enhancements. Developing off-stream livestock water sources and/or fencing riparian areas as separate pastures from uplands are two common approaches to increase management flexibility, with an emphasis on increased plant production in the riparian area. Increasing native riparian plants improves stream bank stability while providing benefits for livestock production as well as fish and wildlife. PFW grazing management projects have improved 168 miles of riparian habitat.

The Wyoming Landscape

Wyoming is biologically and geographically rich as the place



Sonnicant Lake, in the Wind River Range, headwaters to Little Wind River. USFWS photo.



Large working cattle ranch, providing good forage for cattle production as well as wildlife habitat. USFWS photo.

where the Great Plains meets the Rocky Mountains. The Great Plains forms the eastern third of Wyoming while the remaining Rocky Mountains are separated into the Southern and Middle Rockies by a unique eco-region known as the Wyoming Basin. Interrupted by hills and low mountains, the basin area of Wyoming is a broad westward extension of grassland and shrub land more commonly known as sage-steppe. John C. Fremont (1845), a lieutenant in the Army Corps of Topographical

Engineers described the sage-steppe region of Wyoming as “One of the prominent characteristics in the face of this country is the extraordinary abundance of sage. As the country increased in elevation on our advance west, they increased size...rendering progress of our carts rough and slow.” Known as the “rooftop” of watersheds, all but one of Wyoming’s five major rivers originates within Wyoming boundaries and flows into neighboring states. The Continental

Divide extends diagonally across the state from northwest to south central sending melt water in the direction of both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. With the majority of precipitation coming in the form of snow, the mountains provide a seasonal reservoir of water for aquatic systems.

Agricultural lands are an important part of Wyoming’s landscape. Private and Tribal land ownership totals over 29.2 million acres of relatively intact fish and wildlife



Habitat Fragmentation and Energy development in the Wyoming Range are significant threats to species conservation. USFWS photo.



habitat. Agricultural operations average 3,761 acres, with livestock grazing being the predominant land use. These large landscapes are traditionally viewed as a “good cattle country” but are also becoming recognized for their important wildlife habitat and open space values.

Wyoming has always had more acres than people, starting with emigrants passing through the “big desert” on their way to the West coast. The 1870 census counted only 9,700 hearty souls willing to stay. Currently, the 2010 census lists Wyoming as the least populated state at 416,000 people. This relative long-term isolation coupled with rugged landscapes, large livestock operations, and plenty of open space has maintained rich fish and wildlife resources. In recent years, rapid domestication of the landscape is occurring from industrial and urban expansion. More than 800 species of fish and wildlife consider Wyoming home, with 279 identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in the Wyoming State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan (WSCWC). Of the 279 (SGNC), approximately 15% are listed due to known threats and stressors, while the remaining 85% are as a result of insufficient information to assess conservation status (WSCWC).

Plan Development

The WY PFW program incorporated input and advice from internal and external stakeholders in five major areas. These included: 1) project priorities 2) focus area boundaries 3) target species lists 4) plans and data sets 5) staffing. Our federal, state and local government partners, non-profit partners, and landowners were engaged in the process at several levels with agency coordination and local workgroup gatherings and through an informal outreach request. Priority areas were initially developed with local input and based on large-scale watersheds. As technology and information transfer improved with time, especially remote sensed habitat

and species mapping, focus areas became much more refined. Development of focus areas was a mix of local landowner and resource professionals working knowledge of the landscape, priority species of partners, habitat and species data sets and partnership opportunities, largely driven by our Federal trust resource responsibilities.

Selection criteria for focus area designation included:

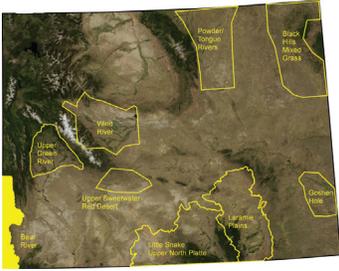
- Federal Trust Species and Associated Habitats
- Partners Species of Concern
- Private /Public Ownership Patterns
- Habitat Fragmentation and Loss
- Partnership Opportunities
- Tribal Trust Responsibilities
- Refuge and Unique Habitats
- Important Priorities of our Partners

Through the refinement process some minor boundary modifications were made to existing focus areas with one major addition of a new focus area, the Little Snake River/ Upper North Platte. Six of the nine focus areas are staffed with PFW biologists or jointly-funded range ecologist positions. With growing concerns over habitat fragmentation and loss of keystone species like the greater sage-grouse, additional emphasis on sage steppe has shifted program priorities necessitating a re-tooling of existing workforce. A limited presence is maintained in un-staffed priority areas to continue building program awareness and maintaining partner relationships until such time additional program expansion is possible.

Related Plans

- Wyoming State Wildlife Action and Strategic Habitat Plan
- Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI)
- Wyoming Sage-Grouse Core Area Strategy
- USFWS - A Plan for the Management of Fish and Wildlife Resources on the Wind River Reservation
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan
- North American Waterbird Conservation Plan
- Inter-mountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) Implementation Plan
- National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP)
- USFWS Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans
- Local Workgroup Priorities and Plans
- Coordinated Resource Management Plans
- UT, WY TNC Rocky Mountain Eco-regional Plan and Wyoming Basins Ecoregional Plans (TNC)
- The Nature Conservancy’s Bear River Conservation Action Plan
- Audubon – Important Bird Areas of Wyoming
- Ducks Unlimited, Inc, Wyoming: the Platte River and Rainwater Basin Initiative in the Southern Great Plains and the High Country Wetlands initiative in the Northern and Southern Rockies
- Western Native Trout Initiative – A Plan for Strategic Action

Bear River Focus Area



The Bear River Focus Area encompasses about 836,000 acres, of which 53% is private land and 47% is public. Wet meadow and willow-dominated habitats of the Bear River floodplain make up the heart of this area, while surrounding uplands are mostly comprised of sage-steppe and foothills shrublands. A complex of over 40,000 acres of riparian wetlands in the focus area has been identified by the Wyoming Bird Habitat Conservation Partnership, and others, as high-priority for conservation. These wetlands, mostly maintained by flood-irrigation practices, provide breeding and migratory habitat for a diversity and abundance of waterfowl, shorebirds, and waterbirds. However, urban expansion and removal of traditional water rights from the land are ongoing and signify a future threat to these habitats. PFW program activities seek to compensate for these threats through wetland restoration and enhancement of existing wetlands.

Mountain snowmelt provides water for not only wetlands and irrigation, but supports several native fish species in rivers and streams of the area. A notable example is the Bonneville cutthroat trout, native only to tributaries of the Great Salt Lake. Threats to native fish include stream modification, urban expansion, declining riparian health, and de-watering. The program seeks to benefit fish by removing fish passage barriers and preventing fish entrainment into canals, improving stream stability with natural channel design, and enhancing riparian vegetation.

Conservation concerns for sage-steppe species such as greater sage-grouse have heightened the priority for upland projects in the Bear River Focus Area. Approximately 30% of the focus area is state-designated area for greater sage-grouse. Core areas

are the highest priority areas for sage-grouse conservation and encompass 85% of known sage-grouse populations in Wyoming. PFW program projects to improve upland habitat for the benefit of sage-steppe wildlife species include vegetative treatments and grazing management projects to promote desirable grass-forb-shrub plant communities.

Priority Species

- Greater sage-grouse
- White-faced ibis
- Sandhill crane
- Northern pintail
- Redhead
- American bittern
- Yellow-billed cuckoo
- Bonneville cutthroat trout
- Leatherside chub

Bear River Focus Area Five Year Targets

- Stream enhancement: 10,000 ft
- Riparian enhancement: 10 miles
- Wetland restoration/enhancement: 500 acres
- Upland enhancement: 2000 acres
- Fish passage: 8 units

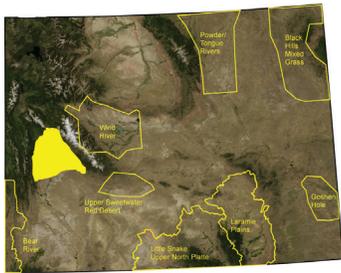
Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 15
- Amount of technical assistance: 40 staff days
- % of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:4



Bear River Wetland Restoration. USFWS photo.

Upper Green River Focus Area



The Upper Green River Focus Area encompasses 1.23 million acres, 44% of which is privately owned. It is bordered by the Wind River Mountain range to the North and East, the Gros Ventre and Wyoming Mountain ranges to the North and West, and the mesa lands to the South. It is a biologically diverse and complex landscape, ranging from 13,000-foot peaks and alpine habitats to 7,000-foot high elevation desert. The Upper Green River is well known for the critical habitat it provides for large ungulates and predators, including grizzly bear, moose, elk, mule deer, and pronghorn antelope.

Over half of the focus area is contained within a wetland complex identified by the Wyoming Bird Habitat Conservation Partnership as high-priority for conservation. The glacially formed potholes and lakes are especially unique and striking among the 53,000 acres of wetlands in the valley. The wetlands provide breeding habitat and migration corridors for waterfowl, shorebirds, and waterbirds, including trumpeter swan and common loon. However, a significant increase in the human population has occurred in this area, due to an increase in recreational rural landowners and the oil and gas boom of the Pinedale Anticline and the Jonah Field. Wetland habitats have become threatened due to drainage, nutrient loading, and subdivision. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and several private land trusts have been working in this area to secure conservation easements that will maintain open space and intact landscapes.



Top: Wetland diversity within sage dominated plant community of the Upper Green River Focus Area. USFWS Photo.

Bottom: Low-density subdivision leading to fragmentation. USFWS photo.



*Grazing system leads to positive habitat improvements for sage grouse, while benefitting cattle production.
Photo by Matt Filsinger, USFWS.*

Extensive ribbons of riparian habitat exist along the Green and New Fork rivers and their tributaries, providing important multi-layered vegetative structure for migrating and resident riparian birds and other wildlife. Riparian areas occupy only 2-3% of the land surface in Wyoming, yet 75% of wildlife depend on them for all or part of their life cycles. PFW program has enhanced 4.1 miles of this important habitat since 2000 with off-stream water development and/or fence construction to manage livestock grazing. The streams and rivers that flow through these riparian habitats are home to native fishes such the Colorado River cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, and mountain sucker. Irrigation diversions, road crossings, and dewatering threaten fish in the focus area. Projects that directly benefit fish in this focus area include stream habitat restorations and fish passage improvements.

Conservation concerns for sage-steppe species such as greater sage-grouse have heightened

the priority for upland projects in the Upper Green River Focus Area. Approximately 56% of the focus area is state-designated core area for greater sage-grouse. Projects to improve upland and wet meadow habitat for the benefit of sage-steppe wildlife include vegetative treatments and grazing management projects to promote desirable grass-forb-shrub plant communities.

Priority Species

- Common loon
- Trumpeter swan
- Lesser scaup
- Cinnamon Teal
- Long-billed curlew
- Greater sage-grouse
- Golden Eagle
- Green-tailed towhee
- Willow flycatcher
- Colorado River cutthroat trout
- Roundtail chub
- Pygmy rabbit

Upper Green River Focus Area Five Year Targets

- Stream enhancement: 10,000 ft
- Riparian enhancement: 10 miles
- Wetland restoration/enhancement: 80 acres
- Upland enhancement: 2000 acres
- Fish passage: 5 units

Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 15
- Amount of technical assistance: 30 staff days
- % of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:4



Achieving grazing management objectives of rest rotation benefitting sage steppe species by utilizing high tensile electric fence. USFWS photo.

Upper Sweet Water/ Red Desert Focus Area Five Year Targets

- Stream enhancement: 10,000 ft
- Riparian enhancement: 10 miles
- Wetland restoration/enhancement: 10 acres
- Upland enhancement: 10,000 acres
- Fish passage: 0 units

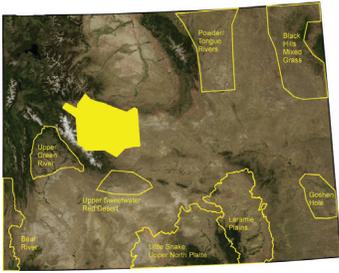
Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 3
- Amount of technical assistance: 20 staff days
- % of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:4

Priority Species

- Lesser scaup
- Cinnamon Teal
- American Avocet
- Wilson's Phalarope
- Willet
- Ferruginous hawk
- Greater sage-grouse
- Willow flycatcher
- Veery
- Meadow pussytoes (Antennaria arcuata)

Wind River Focus Area



Granite peaks, glaciers, tilt bed foothills, broad valley floor, prehistoric rock art and spiritual sites characterize the Wind River basin. The Wind River Range contains 25 of Wyoming's 38 named glaciers, including Gannett Glacier. The Range is noted to have the highest concentration of glaciers within the lower 48 states within the U.S. The melting water from these glaciers provides late season flows for over 3,000 miles of low elevation perennial streams. As a result, the basin is one of the leading agricultural regions in

the state with more than 260,000 acres of irrigated crop and hay lands. Sagebrush and grassland make up the majority of the area at 1.7 million acres with livestock production being the primary land use in the valley. Of the total land in this priority area, tribal lands make up 63%, private 27% and public 10%.

Included in the 2.1 million acre Wind River Focus Area is the Wind River Reservation, Ocean Lake Drift Plain and Upper Wind River Drainage. The heart of the focus area is the Wind River Reservation. In 1998, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the USFWS, Shoshone and Arapaho Tribes to jointly work on habitat projects for tribal designated fish and wildlife species of cultural importance. The Tribes have identified an extensive number of culturally significant fish and wildlife species covering a broad spectrum of habitat types including wetland, sagebrush-

steppe, woody riparian and riverine habitats.

Shaped by glaciation, the Wind River Mountains contain high elevation lakes and wetlands providing breeding habitat for waterfowl including; ring-necked ducks, lesser scaup, and bufflehead. The valley floor holds 43,618 acres of palustrine emergent wetlands, either associated with river floodplains, flood irrigation wastewater or wind-blown depressions. Higher density wetlands occur in three distinctive locations and individual wetland priority areas have been established for the Wind River. Since 1998, partnering activities have led to more than 1,100 acres of wetland habitat being restored on private and tribal lands.

Declining native fish populations are largely a result of non-native introductions, habitat degradation, dewatering, and fish barriers. The most intact native fish



Wind River Focus Area Petroglyph.
USFWS Photos.



Popo Agie River Valley Riparian Projects.
USFWS Photo.

assemblages reside in fragmented populations or are constricted to headwater environments where public ownership and relative inaccessibility have moderated detrimental impacts. Restoration of lower elevation habitat and improving fish passage and minimizing fish entrainment are the three primary elements to

maintaining healthy tribal fisheries. (Pochop et al. 1990).

Priority Species

- Lesser scaup
- Ring-necked duck
- Trumpeter swan
- American avocet
- Wilson’s phalarope
- Bald eagle
- Golden eagle
- Greater sage-grouse
- Willow flycatcher
- Yellowstone cutthroat trout
- Ling
- Sauger
- Gray wolf
- Grizzly bear

Wind River Focus Area Five Year Targets

- Stream enhancement: 5,000 ft
- Riparian enhancement: 20 miles
- Wetland restoration/enhancement: 300 acres
- Upland enhancement: 10,000 acres
- Fish passage: 2 units

Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 20
- Amount of technical assistance: 50 staff days
- % of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:5

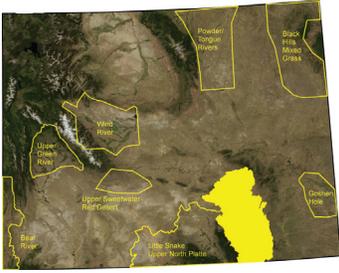


Wind River Focus Area wetland restoration project . USFWS photo.



Wind River Focus Area- Bull Lake Creek Fish Screen. USFWS Photo.

Laramie Plains Focus Area



Positioned between the Laramie and Medicine Bow mountain ranges, the Laramie Plains Focus Area encompasses 2.5 million acres of high elevation mixed-grass prairie interspersed with Wyoming big sage communities, saltbush flats, greasewood, aspen, and pine. Land use consists primarily of livestock production; the area only supports a combined total of 136,000 acres of irrigated hay and croplands.

The Shirley Basin lies within the northern two-thirds of the conservation area. The basin consists of more than 101,000 acres of wetland scattered throughout

intact grasslands. The vast expanse of grassland habitat offers an enormous conservation opportunity, especially for the management and protection of greater sage-grouse, mountain plover, and black-footed ferrets, which were reintroduced into the area in 1991.

The southern portion of the Laramie Plains contains Mortenson Lake, Hutton Lake, and Bamforth National Wildlife Refuges. These refuge lands, each no greater than 2,000 acres, surround the community of Laramie to the northwest, west, and southwest. Hutton Lake and Bamforth were established under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. The PFW program is working on private land to compliment the conservation efforts on these public lands, using a landscape-scale approach to meet shared partner goals.

Mortenson Lake was established under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to protect the endangered Wyoming Toad which was extirpated from its historic range

by the early 1990's and recently reintroduced into the Refuge as well as restored wetlands and wet meadows of the PFW program's Buford Foundation Project. A Safe Harbor Agreement for Wyoming toads has been completed for the entire area. The Wyoming toad recovery team is planning to expand reintroduction sites in the coming five years. The PFW program will continue to assist with recovery efforts for the Wyoming toad as opportunities become available.

One of the best ways to help the largest number of native Wyoming species is to maintain or improve grassland and riparian habitats. Area ranches historically ran large-scale sheep operations and are now transitioning to cattle. PFW program is working with landowners to establish grazing management plans and providing much needed infrastructure such as interior fencing and off-site water development to provide operational flexibility and management.



Cattle being used as a management tool on Wyoming PFW project in the Laramie Plains Focus Area. USFWS photo.



Landscape photo highlighting the diversity of the Little Snake River/Upper North Platte Focus Area. USFWS photo.



Battle Creek restoration project completed by WY PFW program. USFWS photo.

the state. Gibben's beardtongue, a rare plant, can be found in two locations within the area. Presently, the only known breeding population of Columbia sharp-tailed grouse in Wyoming exists here. Thirty-nine percent of this occupied range lies within lands that are privately owned. In addition, the area is very important for numerous Species of Greater Conservation Need (SGCN) as identified by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, including seven species of fish, four species of amphibians, two reptile species, seventeen bird species, eleven bat species, and nine mammal species.

Even though this has been identified as a new focus area, over the past ten years, PFW has worked on two river systems to eliminate fish barriers and improve stream function. More than 12 miles of in-stream restoration activities have been completed for the benefit of native fishes. Efforts will continue to focus on providing fish passage, maintaining in-stream flows, and habitat improvement for

both cold water Colorado cutthroat trout, and species such as bluehead sucker, flannelmouth sucker, and roundtail chub. Wetland and upland projects place heavy emphasis on providing breeding and migratory habitat for Federal trust avian species. Projects vary from wetland restoration and creation to assisting with the development of range management plans and providing much needed upland infrastructure to enhance rangelands for both livestock and wildlife use.

Priority Species

- Lesser scaup
- Northern pintail
- American avocet
- Wilson's phalarope
- Greater sage-grouse
- Columbian sharp-tailed grouse
- Golden eagle
- Sage thrasher
- Colorado cutthroat trout
- Bluehead sucker
- Flannelmouth sucker
- Roundtail chub

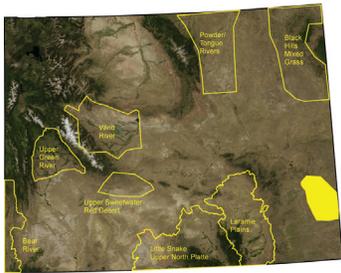
Little Snake Upper North Platte Focus Area Five Year Targets

- Stream enhancement: 20,000 ft
- Riparian enhancement: 35 miles
- Wetland restoration/enhancement: 75 acres
- Upland enhancement: 25,000 acres
- Fish passage: 5 units

Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 35
- Amount of technical assistance: 50 staff days
- % of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:6

Goshen Hole Focus Area



Goshen Hole is a great widening of the North Platte Valley defined by a 400-500 foot escarpment to the west and south. A part of the Great Plains, the land is undulating to rolling and predominant land cover is short and mixed-grass. Goshen Hole Focus Area has a land mass of 861,000 acres, of which 15 % is used for irrigated cropland, 15% for dry land cropland, and 60% rangeland. Farmland is concentrated in the center of the lowland and contains the highest wetland densities. Interior wetlands often rely on irrigation water to provide hydrologic inundation. Drought and obsolete irrigation water delivery systems continue to be the largest wetland threats. Program emphasis has been on restoring wetland and adjacent short-grass upland habitats for an assortment of ground nesting species, including mountain plovers, long-billed curlew, McCown’s longspur, grasshopper sparrow, and a variety of waterfowl species.



Pictures highlighting wetland restorations in the Goshen Hole focus area. USFWS photos.

Wyoming Steering Committee for the Intermountain West Joint Venture has identified Goshen Hole as one of the top wetland complexes in the state. Springer Reservoir, Bump-Sullivan Reservoir, and Table Mountain State Wildlife Management Areas (WHMA) are at the core of this complex. This is one of three unstaffed focus areas.

Priority Species

- Northern pintail
- Lesser scaup
- American avocet
- Wilson’s phalarope
- Mountain plover
- Long-billed curlew
- Golden eagle
- McCown’s longspur
- Grasshopper sparrow
- Prebles’s jumping mouse (Threatened)

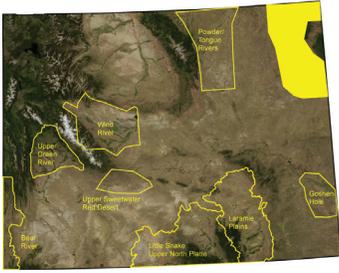
Goshen Hole Focus Area Five Year Targets

- Stream enhancement: 0 ft
- Riparian enhancement: 1 mile
- Wetland restoration/enhancement: 30 acres
- Upland enhancement: 200 acres
- Fish passage: 0 units

Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 3
- Amount of technical assistance: 3 staff days
- % of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:3

Black Hills Mixed Grass Focus Area



Taking in the portions of Crook and Weston counties, Black Hills Mixed-Grass Focus Area contains the forest edge and periphery grasslands around the Black Hills. Being the largest priority area in the state at 2.9 million acres and 78% in private ownership, plenty of habitat development opportunities exist for imperiled grassland species. The southern extent includes a small segment of Thunder Basin National Grasslands, known for ferruginous hawk, swift fox, greater sage-grouse, burrowing owl, and black-tailed prairie dog. More than 6,500 miles of riverine habitat and 14,000 acres of

woody riparian habitats exist within the area. PFW efforts have concentrated on grassland and riparian habitats in the form of livestock fencing, water developments, and grazing management plans. Water developments include constructing multi-purpose wetlands, water gaps, wells, pipelines, and water troughs. Main threats are in the form of habitat fragmentation from sub-division and extraction industries. This is one of three unstaffed focus areas.

Black Hills Mixed Grass Focus Area Five Year Targets

- Stream enhancement: 0 ft
- Riparian enhancement: 1 miles
- Wetland restoration/enhancement: 10 acres
- Upland enhancement: 500 acres
- Fish passage: 0 units

Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 3
- Amount of technical assistance: 3 staff days
- % of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:3

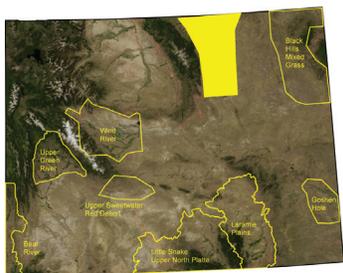


Crook County wetland and grassland restoration in the Black Hills Mixed-Grass focus area. USFWS photo.

Priority Species

- Northern pintail
- Blue-winged teal
- Wilson’s phalarope
- Mountain plover
- Long-billed curlew
- Burrowing owl
- Brewer’s sparrow
- Greater sage-grouse
- Swift fox
- Black-tailed prairie dog

Powder/Tongue River Focus Area



Starting at the eastern slope of the Big Horn Mountains and extending to the Powder River, this area receives considerably more summertime precipitation and more closely resembles the southern Rockies in vegetative composition. Mixed-grass and sagebrush make up more than 92% of the area and roughly 80% is in private ownership. Wetlands are commonly found in association with floodplain and riparian habitats. The Powder River is distinctive in that it's one of the few remaining rivers that has not been blocked by dams or irrigation diversions. The Powder River has remained relatively intact with unique fish species like the sturgeon chub adapted to high turbidity and low summertime flows.

Since 1998, PFW and its partners have improved or enhanced more than 26,100 acres of upland habitat and 47 miles of riparian habitat with livestock fencing, off-site water developments, and grazing management systems. With concerns over habitat loss and fragmentation in the county, the Johnson County Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Project was initiated in 2005. Rangeland and habitat inventories were conducted to develop grazing management plans to benefit greater sage-grouse and a host of other sagebrush-obligate species. This is one of the three unstaffed focus areas.

Priority Species

- Northern pintail
- Wood duck
- Sandhill crane
- Greater sage-grouse
- Sage thrasher
- Bairds sparrow
- Shovelnose sturgeon



Aerial view of stream and oxbow slough restoration. USFWS photo.



Restored wetland in the Powder/Tongue River Focus Area. USFWS photo.

Powder/Tongue River Focus Area Five Year Targets

- Stream enhancement: 1,000 ft
- Riparian enhancement: 2 miles
- Wetland restoration/enhancement: 20 acres
- Upland enhancement: 2000 acres
- Fish passage: 0 units

Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 5
- Amount of technical assistance: 5 staff days
- % of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:5

Wyoming Statewide Goals



Improve Information Sharing and Communication

WY PFW program's preferred advertising method has been by "word of mouth" between our cooperating landowners. Our project approach varies; at times the PFW program is the driver, initiating and delivering projects while at other times we are the passenger supporting successful ongoing work of our partners. Information transfer is three-tiered, including landowner or project level, local partner level and state partner level. At the state level, numerous annual coordination opportunities exist with our partners including USDA State Technical Committee meetings, Fish and Wildlife Agency Coordination, and non-governmental and association partner meetings and conventions. Local partner level coordination occurs on a more routine basis with a variety of active work groups, agency and local government meetings and forums. Landowner or project level coordination is the one-on-one habitat project management that incorporates the landowner's working knowledge with other resource professionals at the planning, design, permitting and implementation levels. Wyoming PFW program works with schools by participating in the local science fair judging, participating in outdoor classroom experiences held around the state, and serving as instructors for teacher continuing education classes.

Implementation:

- Work with partners and stakeholders on individual planning documents.
- Provide partners with an annual accomplishment report.
- Use farming and ranching industry associations and publication.
- Initiate state level landowner and/or partner award/recognition program.
- Support existing, and explore new, opportunities for long term funding options.
- Refine local project priorities through established local workgroup settings.
- Provide resource information at workshops, conventions and coordination meetings.



Example of oxbow restoration project. USFWS Photo.

Enhance Our Workforce

Program success depends upon our most valuable asset—PFW staff, who bring to the table an incredible amount of knowledge, skill and dedication. We will continue to build on this foundation and deliver habitat conservation effectively by improving workforce capacity when necessary and developing and improving strong technical and leadership skills of existing staff to meet the needs of our conservation partners and trust resource responsibilities. Facilitating a wide array of terrestrial and aquatic habitat projects requires a substantial investment of staff time in working with conservation partners, as well as a high degree of expertise in a wide range of technical disciplines. We will continue to strengthen our partnerships, habitat delivery, and customer service in an effort to restore and conserve habitat in an ever-changing landscape.

Implementation:

- Refine and implement a strategic workforce plan to ensure that the correct skills are in the right location to deliver an efficient and effective habitat conservation program.
- Seek-out partnership efforts that develop and share employee skills across conservation partner lines.
- Review annual career development guidance and training programs for staff and ensure resources are available to improve habitat conservation delivery, partnership development, and leadership skill sets.
- Continue coordination with other Federal, State, and local government units, tribes, and non-governmental partners to utilize available training and development opportunities to maintain technical excellence in an environment of rapidly expanding knowledge and technology.



PFW hosted Laramie Plains wetland tour. USFWS Photo.

Increase Accountability

It is essential that the PFW program keep track of resource conditions and habitat activities over time to effectively deliver high-priority and quality habitat projects at a landscape level. The measures or indicators primarily used for monitoring include: structural function, habitat response, and biological outcomes. Structural evaluations examine performance and design objectives for practices such as in-stream rock/ log structures or wetland water control structures. Habitat response is principally focused on expected outcomes like plant community health, wetland function, or constructed stream features. Biological outcomes are based upon species response to habitat improvements. Costs for habitat restoration projects vary greatly across the state and from year to year. In order to maintain a cost-efficient program, annual restoration costs will be monitored and evaluated. Accurately determining habitat projects costs will ensure equitable and reliable sources of funding, timely project delivery, and quality habitat projects.

Implementation:

- Refine annual project status review process for completed projects.
- Continue to incorporate creative partnerships to assist with monitoring, for example, employ the assistance of local birding groups to collect biological data and in return expand birding opportunities on lands available through willing landowners.
- Maintain and refine methods of monitoring and evaluating project costs, which include internal review of all previous fiscal year PFW program habitat projects within Wyoming and published statewide annual cost analysis of conservation practices by our conservation partners.

External Factors:

Factors beyond the control of the Wyoming PFW program that could affect progress towards accomplishing long-term habitat goals and objectives include the following:

- Extreme weather, climate fluctuations, and environmental change that affect ecological processes and local economies.
- Fluctuating habitat conservation funding.



Landowner monitoring vegetation response to validate grazing system. Photos by Rob Hellyer.