

Benefits of Wetlands

Wetlands, including riparian or riverine areas, form an essential part of our landscape. These wetlands provide many benefits, including:

- *Cleaning water and reducing erosion*
- *Dampening flood flows*
- *Recharging aquifers and supplying water*
- *Growing forage for livestock*
- *Wildlife habitat*
- *Recreation*
- *Biodiversity*



Playas are seasonal wetlands found throughout the High Plains, with more than 1,500 located in eastern Colorado. These wetlands provide wildlife habitat and are the primary source of recharge for the Ogallala Aquifer

The Colorado Wetlands Program

The purpose of our Colorado Division of Wildlife's (CDOW) Wetlands Program is to protect wetlands and wetland-dependent wildlife through incentives and other voluntary means. For the purpose of the wetlands program, protection means the use of some or all of the following tools: restoration, management, purchase of conservation easements or fee titles by land trusts, private landowners, non-government organizations or government agencies.

To learn more please visit;

CDOW (<http://wildlife.state.co/habitat/wetlands/>)

Playa Lakes Joint Venture: (www.pljv.org)

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (www.rmbo.org)

*These programs are dedicated to and provide funding for the **voluntary and non-regulatory** conservation of wetlands by working with the focus area.*

Benefits of Prairies

The eastern plains of Colorado are characterized by shortgrass prairie and cultivated land along with mixed-grass and sand sage communities. The prairie provides habitat for wildlife species that are unique to this ecosystem. The prairie ecosystem provides benefits to wildlife and humans including:

- *Wetland buffering*
- *Livestock grazing*
- *Energy resources*
- *Nutrient cycling*
- *Wildlife habitat*
- *Recreation*
- *Biodiversity*



Prairie and Wetlands Focus Area Partners

Audubon of Colorado, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Farm Bureau, Colorado Open Lands, Colorado Wildlife Heritage Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Kiowa County Economic Development, Park Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, Quail Unlimited, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, Pueblo County Dept. of Planning, City of Pueblo – Dept. Planning & Community Development, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, The Nature Conservancy, US Fish & Wildlife Service – Partners for Wildlife, and Private Landowners

To be added to an email mailing list that announces Wetlands Focus Area activities in your area contact:

Prairie Partners Staff

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

14500 Lark Bunting Lane

Brighton, CO 80603

(970)482-1707 or email:

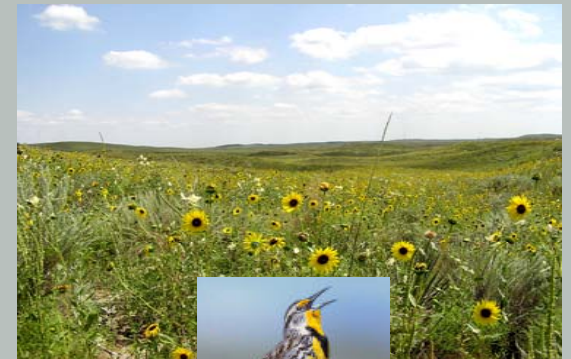
Tammy.vercauterer@rmbo.org



Prairie and Wetlands Focus Area



A Community Group Dedicated to the Conservation of Prairie and Wetland Habitats

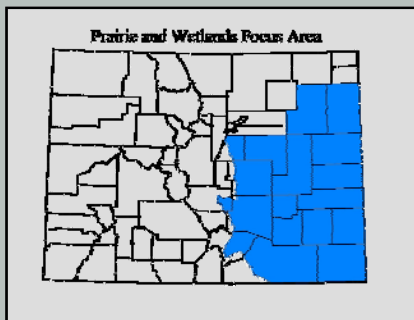


What is a Focus Area?

Wetlands Focus Areas have been designated in Colorado by the Colorado Division of Wildlife's Wetlands Program to help promote the conservation of the valuable wetlands and associated uplands in the state. Focus area members are groups of local farmers, ranchers, and wildlife and wetland enthusiasts, working with local, state, and federal agencies on wetland and upland conservation efforts in a specific focus area.



The **Prairie and Wetlands Focus Area** covers the majority of eastern Colorado and because of the prevalence and importance of prairie habitats, maintains a dual focus on prairie and wetlands conservation.



Mission Statement

The mission of the **Prairie and Wetlands Focus Area** is to provide a forum for state, federal, and private partners to facilitate voluntary and proactive conservation of prairie and wetland habitats.



Vision

The **Prairie and Wetlands Focus Area** envisions conserving prairie and wetland habitats that sustain the natural integrity of the eastern Colorado ecosystem, including healthy human communities.

Goals

- Conserve a sufficient quantity, quality, and diversity of prairie and wetland habitats to maintain and enhance existing biodiversity
- Promote application of existing and new programs for prairie and wetland conservation
- Promote project tracking to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of projects
- Increase quality and accessibility of information and technical resources for prairie and wetland conservation
- Increase awareness of prairie and wetland conservation in local and regional communities.



Why Participate in a Focus Area ?

Focus areas are informal but effective forums for identifying opportunities for conservation projects and partnerships in your community. Individuals can partner with organizations and agencies to apply for funding for conservation, enhancement, or restoration of prairies and wetlands. Partnerships often lower the cost share to individuals and increase funding potential. A copy of the **Prairie and Wetlands Focus Area Strategic Plan** can assist you in developing projects, partnerships, and help identify potential funding sources. A copy can be obtained through a focus area representative.

IMPORTANCE OF PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

Private landowners own or manage the majority of the Great Plains. Their participation with the Prairie and Wetlands Focus Area and voluntary involvement with conservation efforts is vital for the future of prairie and wetland habitats.



Thus, outreach and partnership-building with private landowners is essential. The focus area hopes to conserve prairie and wetland habitats and associated species as well as the rural way of life on the eastern plains.