



Front Range Focus Area

Partners for Fish and Wildlife in Colorado

Introduction and General Description

The Front Range of Colorado is a transition zone between the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains. Vegetation ranges from spruce/fir forest to mixed and shortgrass prairie, with occasional remnants of tall grass prairie. The streams forming the South Platte River system drain the northern portion of the Front Range. This Focus Area runs from approximately Castle Rock, Colorado, to the Wyoming state line, generally bounded by Interstate 25 on the east and the 8,500-foot elevation contour on the west.

Habitats of Special Concern

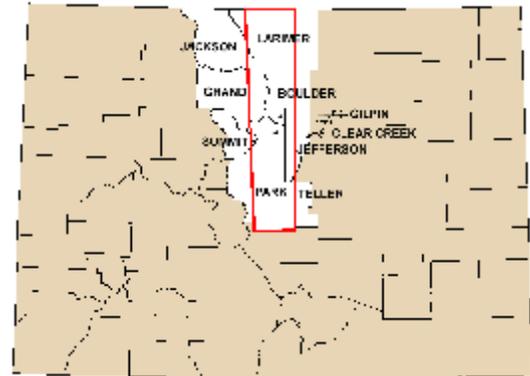
Riparian habitat associated with Front Range rivers and streams is the center of Partners for Fish and Wildlife efforts in this Focus Area. The threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse requires healthy riparian corridors along Front Range streams. Willow overstory with a robust grass/forb understory are believed to be key habitat components. Grass-dominated foraging areas, in close association with riparian habitat and suitable hibernaculum sites, are also required for this species' life history needs.

Threats

The primary threat to riparian habitat along the Front Range is massive and rapid suburban and commercial development. The Preble's meadow jumping mouse is located in some of the fastest growing counties in the United States. New homes and associated commercial and infrastructure development are converting vast areas of agricultural lands and open space. Agricultural uses of riparian areas can also have a negative impact through tillage or heavy grazing. Channelization and flood control related to development are also major concerns.

Conservation Strategies

Partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetlands Reserve Program is the centerpiece of our Front Range efforts. Through this partnership, Partners for Fish and Wildlife helps restore riparian habitat that will be protected through a 30-year or permanent easement held by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



Front Range Focus Area location map.

Fencing, revegetation, erosion control, and grazing plans are onsite techniques used to restore riparian habitat. Local soil conservation districts are becoming involved in locating potential landowner cooperators.

The total project costs, including easements and restoration, averages \$4,300/per acre.



Preble's meadow jumping mouse. Photo courtesy of El Paso County, Colorado.

Partners

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in the Front Range Focus Area has developed funding and planning relationships with many conservation-minded landowners and:

Colorado Division of Wildlife
Great Outdoors Colorado
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Longmont and Kiowa Soil Conservation Districts
City of Kiowa
The Nature Conservancy

Accomplishments

Since 1999, this Partners for Fish and Wildlife effort has restored approximately 8 miles of occupied or potential Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat. Seven of those miles were subsequently protected by conservation easements, either through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetlands Reserve Program or The Nature Conservancy.

Future Needs

Continued and increased funding of the Wetlands Reserve Program will be critical to the future success of this effort. As the development pressure along the Front Range is so high, only land under easement or other long-term protection mechanisms warrants an investment in time and money. There is potential to restore an additional 2,500 acres of riparian habitat in this Focus Area.



Heavily impacted riparian zone due to unrestricted grazing.



Cattle using newly installed watering access that limits use of the stream by livestock.