



Southeastern Colorado Focus Area

Partners for Fish and Wildlife in Colorado

Introduction and General Description

The Southeastern Colorado Focus Area incorporates three critical and interrelated habitat types: playa lakes, riparian/floodplain, and native prairie. Southeastern Colorado is characterized by cultivated tableland; short, mixed, and sand sage prairie; canyonlands; and the Arkansas River Valley. The western part of the Focus Area is montane. The Comanche National Grasslands and the Army's Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site are the principle publicly owned tracts in the Focus Area. The Nature Conservancy, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and Ducks Unlimited also have ongoing habitat protection efforts within this area. Most of this Focus Area is within the Playa Lakes Joint Venture of the North



Lesser prairie-chicken hen.

American Waterfowl Management Plan.

Habitats of Special Concern

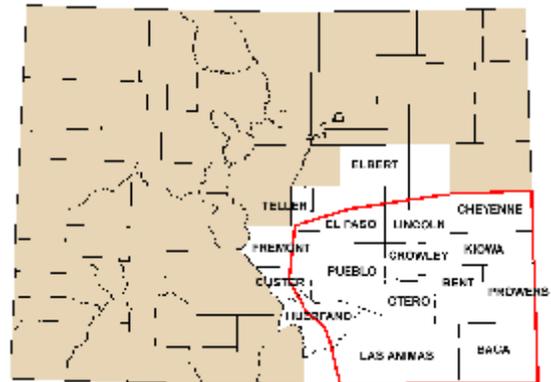
In Southeastern Colorado, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and our funding partners (Colorado Division of Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service, North American Wetland Conservation Act, The Nature Conservancy, and Ducks Unlimited) are focusing on playa restoration/management, floodplain wetlands, riparian restorations, and native prairie



Mixed grass prairie.

restorations. Playa and wetland/riparian projects will benefit migratory birds, both water birds and neotropical migratory birds, as well as resident wildlife.

Native prairie projects are currently primarily directed at restoring sand sage and mixed grass prairie for lesser prairie-



Southeastern Colorado Focus Area location map.

chicken habitats. Projects to improve habitat for the mountain plover and other shortgrass dependent species are being developed.

Threats

Intensive agriculture is the primary source of habitat loss in this Focus Area. However, agricultural producers in this part of Colorado are also the source of virtually all Partners for Fish and Wildlife projects. Habitat loss from non-agricultural development is currently a significant issue only in the western mountain portion of the Focus Area due to subdivision of large ranches.



Male lesser prairie-chicken.

Conservation Strategies

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and our other partners, designs and implements habitat improvement projects with private landowner cooperators. Fencing, grazing management, alternative livestock water supply, and revegetation are the primary tools used for lesser prairie-chicken habitat restoration. Our projects are designed to improve nesting and brood rearing habitat by increasing residual cover and insect producing forbs. Wetland projects entail contour terraces, water concentration pit backfill in playa basins, and restoration of seasonal/temporary wetland types through use of irrigation water. Riparian restoration involves fencing (usually electric) to exclude or restrict livestock use of stream corridors.

Most Partners projects include a combination of upland and wetland restoration. The average cost is \$45/per acre.

Partners

In working with cooperating landowners, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in the Southeastern Colorado Focus Area has developed funding and planning relationships with:

Colorado Division of Wildlife
Great Outdoors Colorado
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Ducks Unlimited
Western Governors' Association
Playa Lakes Joint Venture
Local Soil Conservation Districts
Pheasants Forever

Accomplishments

Since 1996, the Partners Program in southeastern Colorado has completed:

- 149 landowner agreements
- restored 1,620 acres of wetland
- restored 19,315 acres of upland
- restored 25 miles of riparian habitat
- Projects to restore lesser prairie-chicken habitat have addressed 7,493 acres of



Plains leopard frog.

grassland through fencing, reseeding, and alternative livestock watering facilities.

Future Needs

- Increase in the number of projects targeted toward short and mixed grass prairie species. There are 100,000 acres of prairies that could be restored in this Focus Area.
- There are 10,000 acres of restorable wetlands in this Focus Area.