

# Private Land Habitat Programs



2009/2010

# Pheasant Habitat Improvement Program

The Pheasant Habitat Improvement Program (PHIP) is a cooperative effort between the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Pheasants Forever Inc., and local chapters of Pheasants Forever in eastern Colorado. Spanning 12 counties in eastern Colorado core pheasant range and logging nearly 20 years of habitat development, PHIP has created tremendous partners and accomplished significant habitat objectives. The roots of PHIP can be traced back to the early 1980's, when CDOW research indicated that winter survival cover was a limiting factor for populations in Colorado; addressing this deficiency was the overwhelming focus of PHIP early on.

Additional research in the 1990's supported this idea, but added other factors to the mix, particularly the need for secure night-roosting cover and year round survival cover. Over the last

5 years, PHIP has shifted focus from shrub thickets and woody habitat to grass plantings, survival cover plots, and cropland incentives, all of which are designed to increase pheasant survival and provide better hunting opportunity. New endeavors for 2009 include a focus on enhancing CRP to increase nesting success and chick survival through mid contract management provisions of the CRP program.



While the Division of Wildlife provides funding and technical guidelines for habitat improvement, local Pheasants Forever chapters provide a crucial service contact with landowners interested in creating pheasant habitat. PHIP accomplishments over the life of the program include the following:

- Establishment of over 2,400 woody cover plantings
- Over 27,000 acres of annual survival plantings
- Nearly 48,000 acres of CRP planted to pheasant beneficial grasses
- Over 500 additional warm season grass plantings for pheasants
- Partnership and technical assistance on hundreds of CRP, CCRP, WHIP, and EQIP projects

While continuing to offer woody cover plantings, the Division is emphasizing plantings that have great potential to increase populations immediately, including cropland incentives, like tall wheat stubble retention, pivot corner plantings, and annual survival plantings. As PHIP continues, these practices are becoming the mainstays of the program, with landowners, pheasant populations, and pheasant hunters the direct beneficiaries. This new emphasis can be seen over the last few years. Since 2003, chapters have developed more than 10,000 acres of annual food plots, and worked with landowners to create an additional 3,000 acres of tall wheat stubble and pivot corner plantings. A large percentage of these projects are also enrolled into the Division's Walk-In Access Program, further benefiting Colorado's hunters and landowners.

While PHIP's focus lies with ring-necked pheasants, we are also exploring habitat projects that benefit other upland bird species. In southeast Colorado, PHIP habitat projects are likely to benefit mourning doves, bobwhite and scaled quail, while in the northeast part of the state projects have been beneficial to plains sharp-tailed grouse, doves, bobwhite quail, and occasionally wild turkeys.

Contact your local District Wildlife Manager or visit our web page at <http://wildlife.state.co.us/LandWater/PrivateLandProgram/PHIP/> or the PHIP office at (970)-521-0233 for more information.

# Habitat Partnership Program

The Habitat Partnership Program (HPP) was authorized by the Colorado Wildlife Commission and the Colorado legislature in 1990 to address rangeland forage and fence conflicts between big game and livestock on private and public lands. In 2002, HPP's mission was changed to "reduce wildlife conflicts, particularly those associated with fence and forage and to help the DOW meet game management objectives". The Program has successfully evolved with 19 locally based partnerships operating across western Colorado and the northern and southern Front Range.

HPP is administered by a local Committee consisting of three representatives of the livestock/agricultural community, one representative of the big game license buying public, one representative of each of the federal land use agencies involved (i.e. the USDA Forest Service and USDI Bureau of Land Management), and one representative of the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Each Committee produces a written Plan, approved by the Colorado Wildlife Commission that outlines strategies for meeting their goals and objectives to resolve local wildlife /agricultural conflicts or to help the DOW meet game management objectives. Local HPP committees have the authority to solicit, review, approve, fund implement, monitor and evaluate projects..

The entire Program is overseen by a Statewide Council composed of two livestock producers, two sportsmen, one crop producer, one Colorado State University Range Extensionist, one Bureau of Land Management representative, one Forest Service Representative, and one CDOW representative.

Typical projects undertaken by local HPP committees include:

- Habitat Manipulation Projects to encourage big game utilization of identified areas or to improve the overall habitat conditions for big game and livestock. Project examples include tree and shrub cutting, water developments, weed control, seeding/fertilizer and prescribed burns.
- Fence Projects include both new construction and repairs to existing fences for damages caused by big game. Methods that reduce reoccurring damages are encouraged.
- Game Damage projects include the providing of materials and/or labor for stackyards, the hiring of hunt coordinators and providing recommendations for Distribution Management Hunts.
- Other projects include partnering with other agencies and organizations for conservation easements, project monitoring for both vegetation response to habitat improvement projects and big game use, developing brochures, conducting range management seminars, etc.

Funded by 5% of big game license fees, HPP typically spends approximately, two million dollars each year, leverages 5-6 times that amount from other partners and gets more than 20,000 hours of labor contributed to implement solutions for wildlife and livestock conflicts. Projects accomplished by the expenditures of HPP and project cooperators, as well as labor contributed as part of the projects, demonstrate the success of partnerships between public land managers, private landowners, sportsmen and the CDOW to accomplish common goals.

**Contact your local District Wildlife Manager for more information.**

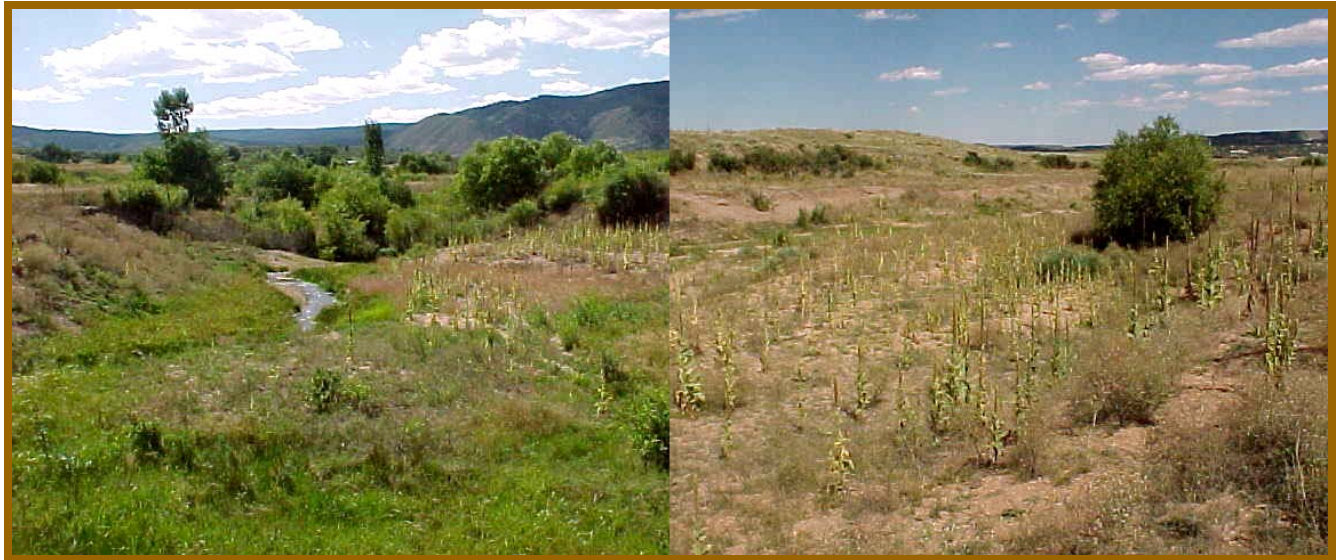
## Habitat Partnership Program Accomplishments\*

FY 2008-2009

### **PROJECT**

Habitat Manipulation	23,777 Acres
Water Developments	88
Fence Constructed	26.6 miles
Fence Repair Projects	529
Gallons of Herbicide Provided	67.5
Pounds of Seed Provided	5013
Tons of Forage Purchased	315
Stackyards Provided/Repaired	24
Hunt Coordinators Hired	9
Conservation Easements	6
Information/Education Projects	3
Monitoring/Research Projects	12
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTS</b>	<b>658</b>
<b>PRIVATE LAND PROJECTS</b>	<b>616</b>
<b>PUBLIC LAND PROJECTS</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>PUBLIC and PRIVATE</b>	<b>3</b>

*\*These figures use actual project accomplishments for completed projects and uses estimated accomplishments for in-progress projects that were provided at initial project approval. Report numbers are subject to change as in-progress projects are completed.*



Proper grazing systems are used to improve forage production for livestock and wildlife.

Additional information concerning the Habitat Partnership Program, project applications, program accomplishments and contact information can be found by contacting your local CDOW officer or on the HPP website – <http://wildlife.state.co.us/landwater/privatelandprograms>



# Colorado Wetlands for Wildlife Program

The purpose of the Wetlands for Wildlife Conservation Program is to conserve wetland and riparian habitats and their ecological functions for the benefit of wildlife.

Projects occur on public and private lands and include restoration of degraded wetland and riparian areas, enhancement of functioning wetland and riparian areas, and creation of wetlands. Participation in projects is voluntary and collaborative.

Many projects are delivered through local Wetland Focus Area Committees that are based in major drainages throughout the State. These committees are the local “eyes and ears” of the statewide program, and they provide a venue for landowners, interested citizens, and professionals to discuss wetland and riparian habitat resource issues in their area.

Since 1997, Colorado’s Wetlands Program has preserved, restored, enhanced or created almost 220,000 acres of wetlands and adjacent habitat and more than 200 miles of stream corridors. Collaborations between this program and partners are responsible for almost \$40 million in total funding devoted to wetland and riparian preservation and improvement in Colorado.

“Wetlands” refers to a variety of habitats affected by water, including classic wetlands with large areas of standing water, areas with shallow (less than 12 inches) groundwater, and ephemeral habitats such as playa depressions on the eastern plains that only occasionally have standing water. Riparian areas are lands immediately adjacent to streams as well as areas subject to seasonal flooding to the extent that such flooding influences the vegetation and other habitat components. *Wetlands and riparian habitats comprise less than two percent of Colorado’s landscape but provide benefits to more than 75% of the species in the State, including waterfowl and several declining species.*

Services and benefits provided by the Wetlands for Wildlife Program include:

- Funding for wetland and riparian area restoration, enhancement, and creation of projects.
- Research and inventories of wetland and riparian resources in Colorado.
- Matching non-federal funds for federal grant programs for Wetlands projects.
- Technical assistance on wetland habitat restoration and management.

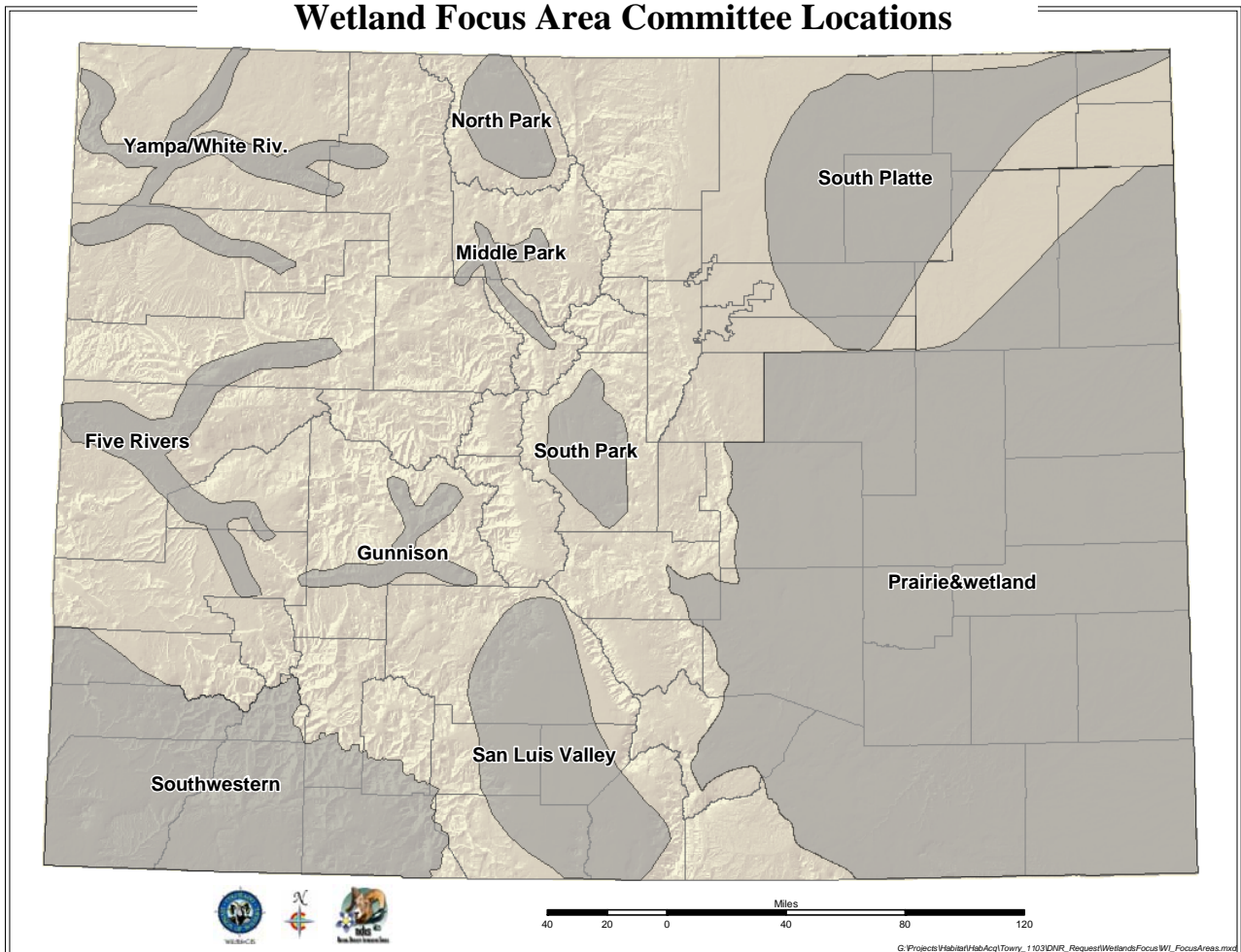
Major financial partners in the Wetlands Program have included Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Partners for Fish and Wildlife (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture), Colorado Natural Heritage Program, local governments, and other private, non-profit land conservation organizations. In addition to funds provided by these partnering organizations, major sources of funding include Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund, revenues from hunting and fishing licenses, and a variety of public and private grant programs.

For more information on the Wetlands for Wildlife Program, please contact the Program’s coordinator at (303) 291-7158 or visit the web site at [www.wildlife.state.co.us/LandWater/WetlandsProgram/](http://www.wildlife.state.co.us/LandWater/WetlandsProgram/). Contact information for specific Wetland Focus Area Committees is provided below.

## Wetland Focus Area Committee Contact Information

Focus Area Committee	Contact	Phone	Email
North Park	Barbara Vasquez	970-723-3270	bv_99_munich@yahoo.com
South Park	Sarah McDonald	303-988-2373	smcdonald@coloradoopenlands.org
San Luis Valley	Rio de la Vista	719-852-2211	riovista@rmi.net
South Platte River	Wendy Figueroa	970-842-6340	wendy.figueroa@state.co.us
Gunnison	Inactive		
Prairie Wetlands	Seth Gallagher	970-482-1707	Seth.gallagher@rmbo.org
Southwest Wetlands FAC	Catherine Ortega	970-247-7393	ortega_c@fortlewis.edu
Yampa/White River	Inactive		
Five Rivers	Inactive		
Middle Park	Inactive		

## Wetland Focus Area Committee Locations



# Game Damage Program: Prevention and Claims

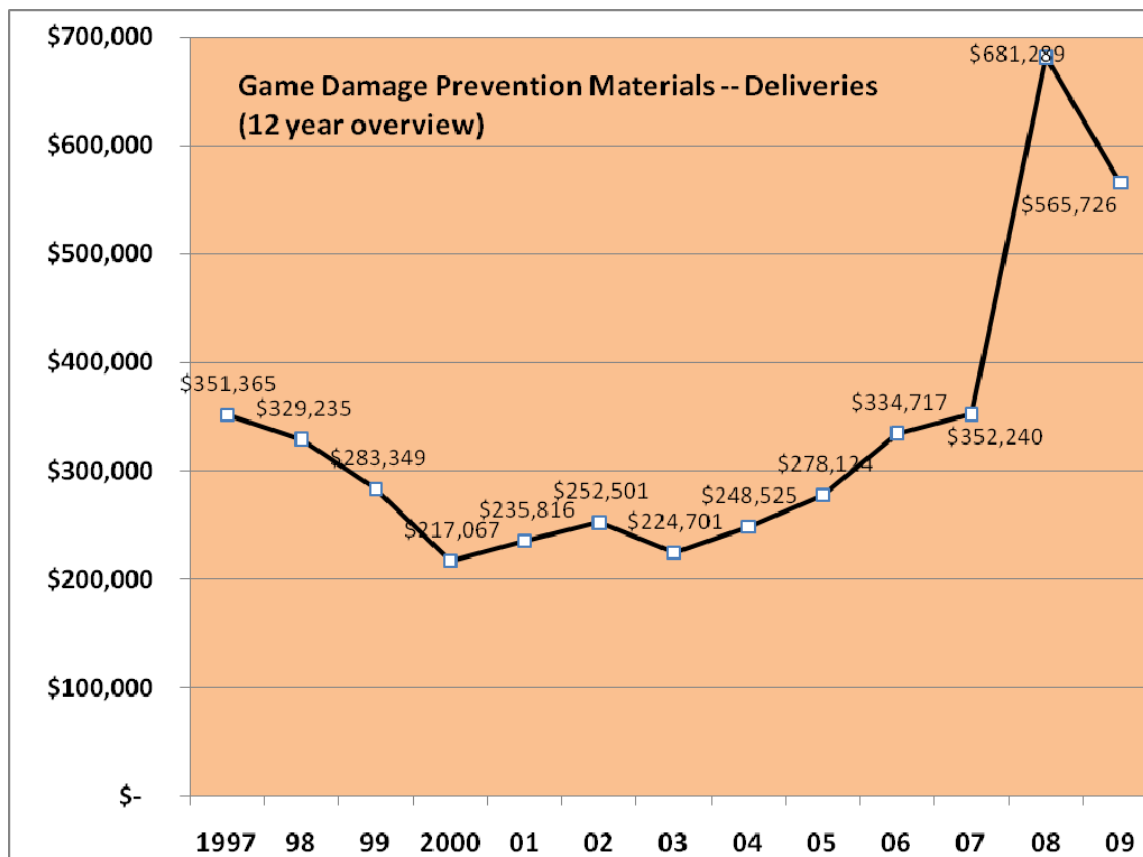
The State of Colorado compensates ranchers, farmers and landowners for damage by big game animals. Of the 10 states that address this issue, Colorado has the most liberal game damage laws in the nation. Most states have no legal responsibility to compensate for damage by wildlife.

The Game Damage Program promotes a higher tolerance level for those big game animals that may cause significant damage to livestock and agricultural products. Higher populations of big game animals are integral to Colorado's rich and diverse wildlife heritage.

Since the inception of the Game Damage Program in 1931, the original broad legal language has evolved to specify what is covered by our game damage laws. Twenty years ago the Program expanded to include damage prevention. The Game Damage Prevention Program has significantly lessened the amount of damage and the amount of sportsmen's dollars paid out in game damage claims.

## Game Damage Prevention Materials

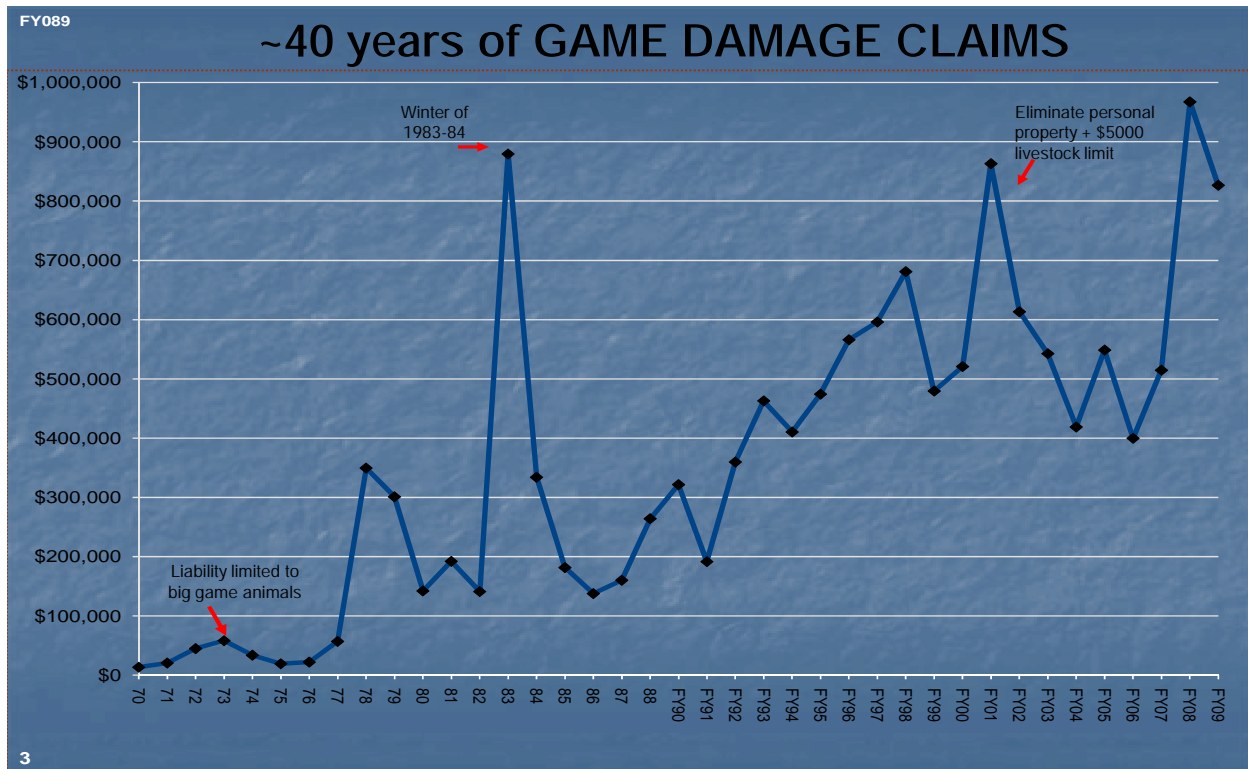
This aspect of the program receives an annual appropriation, approved by the Joint Budget Committee, of \$1,000,000 from the Game Cash Fund. The annual appropriation is used to purchase bulk fencing materials and pyrotechnics through competitive bidding. We anticipate our fencing needs and stockpile fencing materials centrally in Delta CO. They are distributed to qualified landowners for the protection of their crops and livestock. Our fleet of trucks travels an average of 50,000 miles throughout Colorado delivering fencing and other prevention materials each year. Extensive fencing of commercial orchards/nurseries, stackyards and apiaries throughout Colorado has significantly reduced the number of damage claims and hence, the amount of money paid out in game damage claims.





## Game Damage Claims

Qualified ranchers, farmers and landowners may file a claim for compensation for their losses by big game animals. The claimants must meet certain legal qualifications. For example: a claimant cannot unreasonably restrict hunting, cannot charge more than \$500/person in access fees, and the claimant has a duty to mitigate damage. The regulations describe the legal conditions in detail, and are available from Division offices. In recent years, the Division pays out \$500,000-\$600,000 a year on an average of 200-300 claims. During the harsh winter of 2007-2008, claim payments climbed to nearly \$1,000,000. This program, as with the Prevention Program, is funded by the appropriation of sportsmen's dollars from the Game Cash Fund.



The State is not liable for damage from non-big game wildlife species, such as geese, coyotes, or bobcats. The State does reimburse for damages caused by elk, deer, bear, mountain lion, pronghorn, moose, and bighorn sheep. Generally, damages to livestock, commercial orchards/nurseries, growing and harvested crops, forage, fences and apiaries are covered. Livestock losses are capped at \$5000/animal. We are liable for claims for personal property that is used in the production of raw agricultural products which includes apiaries. As of 2003, we no longer pay claims for hot tubs, tents, coolers or other real property.

Filing a claim entails a series of steps and required paperwork and/deadlines. It is imperative that the claimant contact DOW immediately upon discovery of damage. Through the process, the claimant is responsible for timely notifications, completion of forms, efforts to mitigate the damage and assisting Division personnel investigating the claim. The claimant must be able to prove that the damage was caused by big game. Some claims will not meet the necessary criteria. Typically, 10 claims out of 200 are denied and most of these were because the claimant could not prove that big game caused the damage.

Claims over \$20,000 and denied claims are reviewed by the Wildlife Commission. This provides an opportunity for the claimant to offer additional support for the claim.

**Contact your local District Wildlife Manager for more information**

# Ranching for Wildlife

Ranching for Wildlife was initiated in 1985 by the Colorado Wildlife Commission to provide incentives for landowners who control large acreage to manage their lands to maximize wildlife benefits. The Program has, to date, opened up over 1.3 million acres of prime private wildlife habitat to both paid hunting and to limited public hunting.

Eligible landowners must have a minimum of 12,000 contiguous acres that contain significant number of the species that they wish to manage for hunting. There are currently 23 ranches enlisted in the Program. Species hunted include all of those that are limited in drawings; Elk, Deer, Pronghorn, Bear, Moose, Bighorn Sheep and Turkey. The number of licenses available on these ranches is based on the amount of habitat for each species on the ranch. Most of these ranches manage their big game populations to increase the size and age structure of their male animals. The number of male licenses is generally more conservative than those issued for public lands. The limited licenses for these ranches are available to the public through the CDOW drawing process. They are very popular with public hunters, require a number of preference points to draw these licenses, and provide an excellent opportunity to harvest male or female animals.

Licenses issued for these ranches can only be used on the specified ranch. Hunters obtaining a license to hunt on these ranches are given access to private property that would otherwise be closed to public hunting. The agreements with these ranches allow them to impose additional conditions on the public hunters that relieve concerns the landowners have about security and liability. Hunting on these ranches is a privilege and both the public and the private hunters need to present a favorable impression of good sportsmanship. Successful applicants will receive information from the ranch that will address specific ranch rules.

*Some common ranch rules are:*

- Each hunter is allowed to bring in one non-hunting companion;
- Each hunter must sign a liability release;
- Each hunter must check in and check out;
- Hunters are often assigned areas to hunt on a daily basis to spread out and reduce hunting pressure;
- Hunters are not allowed to hunt other species or discharge firearms unnecessarily; and
- Certain areas of the ranches may be closed for safety reasons;`

*Advantages the program gives to landowners:*

- A relatively consistent level of male licenses that they can market to paying hunters;
- 90-day season window to hold their hunts;
- They can hunt with rifles during the archery or muzzleloader seasons; and
- The knowledge that you are preserving and enhancing prime wildlife habitat.

*Benefits the public receive from the program:*

- 10%-20% of the male licenses;
- 100% of the female licenses issued for the ranch;
- Access to private lands that would otherwise be accessible only by payment of trespass fee;
- Equal access to all parts of the ranch that are hunted by the private clients;
- Wildlife habitat improvements implemented on the ranch dictated by a cooperative management plan;
- Quality hunting experience on prime habitat typically at low hunter densities; and
- The state has no liability for game damage payments on these ranches, although preventative materials may be supplied.

Season dates for each ranch may vary and change each year. They are listed yearly in the CDOW Big Game Brochure.

The average annual Ranching for Wildlife license distribution is as follows:

<b>Average Annual RFW License Distribution</b>							
	Public Distribution		Private Distribution		Youth Hunts	<b>TOTAL</b>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent			
<b>Elk</b>							
	Bull	191	12%	1358	88%	17	1566
	Cow	2452	75%	828	25%	52	3332
<b>Deer</b>							
	Buck	94	13%	645	87%	30	769
	Doe	476	100%	0	0%	37	513
<b>Pronghorn</b>							
	Buck	47	16%	267	84%	20	334
	Doe	311	100%	0	0%	25	336
<b>Moose</b>							
	Either Sex	2	67%	1	33%	0	3
	Antlerless	2	100%	0	0%	1	3
<b>Bighorn Sheep</b>							
	Ram	1	50%	1	50%	0	2
<b>Bear</b>							
	Either Sex	2	50%	2	50%	0	4
<b>Turkey</b>							
	Spring	44	55%	36	45%	4	84
	Fall	7	40%	10	60%	0	17
<b>TOTAL</b>		3629	54%	3148	46%	186	6963

The program is an access and habitat management partnership and provides incentives for private landowners to manage their lands in a manner that integrates agricultural management with wildlife management in order to provide benefits to livestock, farm and ranch products, and the needs of wildlife. The overall objective in all cases is to improve land health conditions that are beneficial for both wildlife and agriculture production. Since 1997 the following significant accomplishments have been achieved in terms quantifiable habitat management strategies:

- 250,000 acres – timber management with plans oriented toward wildlife;
- 19 miles In-Stream Habitat improvement;
- 39 stream miles of riparian habitat improvement;
- 55,000 acres shrubland treated with mechanical or prescribed fire;
- 35,000 acres re-seeded in forb-grass mixes for wildlife;
- 850,000 acres with modified grazing management; and
- 350,000 acres with perpetual conservation easements.

# The Landowner Recognition Program

The Landowner Recognition Program was initiated in 1982 by the Colorado Division of Wildlife to improve communications between landowners, sportsmen, and the CDOW. This program was the result of suggestions from the Colorado Wildlife Commission and the work of a special task force of CDOW personnel who spent several months developing program to provide appreciation, assistance, and recognition to landowners for their contributions in providing wildlife habitat and public access to that wildlife. Private lands comprise approximately 60% of Colorado's landscapes and 80% of Colorado's wildlife depend on this land for food, shelter, and water. The program has developed specific cooperative efforts to create a better working relationship between landowners and sportsmen.

The Landowner of the Year Program recognizes the outstanding contributions made by private landowners in providing habitat and/or public access to Colorado's wildlife on private lands. Winners and runners-up are selected annually by a judging team comprised of members from the Colorado Wildlife Commission and the Colorado Agriculture Commission. Winners are provided a trip to the awards banquets held in Denver to publicly receive their awards from the CDOW and many other supporting and endorsing groups representing other government agencies, private wildlife and sportsmen organizations. The banquet is held in January in conjunction with the National Western Stock Show.

This award:

- Recognizes the important contributions private landowners are making to improve habitat for wildlife in Colorado;
- Promotes the creation and improvement of habitat on private and public land by acknowledging efforts of landowners;
- Promotes understanding and appreciation of the rural land ethic; and
- Provides educational opportunities for schools, 4-H groups, Future Farmers of America, Scout troops, and many other groups.

The CDOW Landowner Recognition Program encourages wildlife habitat improvement projects that involve partnerships between landowners, other state and federal agencies and the private wildlife organizations which in turn improve land and resource management and provides benefits to all involved. Landowners provide critical wildlife habitats that must not only be acknowledged by public recognition and are also able to continue to make a living off of their lands providing the nations food and fiber, and to maintain the custom and culture of agriculture. Landowners are essential components to sustaining Colorado's rich and diverse wildlife heritage to this and other programs that provide incentives for them to enhance their lands for wildlife are essential ingredients to a successful wildlife management program.

**For more information, please contact the Division of Wildlife Private Lands Coordinator at 303-291-7404 or 303-883-7533, e mail [ken.morgan@state.co.us](mailto:ken.morgan@state.co.us).**

# Private Lands Wildlife Biologist Program

The Private Lands Wildlife Habitat Conservation is funded and managed through a joint agreement between the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. The program places Private Land Wildlife Biologists (PLWB) into NRCS offices around the state. This multi-organization partnership reflects a unique and exciting direction in Colorado.

The program provides technical resources to private landowners NRCS personnel and other land managers to more fully incorporate wildlife management into their existing conservation plans. Private landowners recognize the value of wildlife habitat as an integral component of land health, but have not always had the resources to successfully incorporate wildlife practices into their agriculture and other land use practices. CDOW works with landowners to the greatest extent possible, but does not have enough resources or staff to fully assist with Farm Bill programs. The NRCS has the responsibility and financial resources through the Farm Bill to address wildlife concerns, but does not always have the technical expertise. By integrating CDOW expertise with the NRCS resources the new PLWB program brings the best of both organizations together to assist Colorado's landowners.

The primary responsibility of the program's biologists is to provide technical and program support for the conservation of species of greatest conservation need as identified in the Colorado State Wildlife Action Plan utilizing programs within the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Conservation Security Program (CSP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), and Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program. Each biologist covers multiple counties providing technical support to incorporate fish and wildlife considerations into resource planning with landowners. The current biologists and program contacts are listed below.

## CONTACTS:

Patty Knupp, Southeast PLWB – Pueblo: (719) 543-8386 x112; [patty.knupp@co.usda.gov](mailto:patty.knupp@co.usda.gov)

Noe Marymor, Northeast PLWB - Greeley: (970) 330-0380x207; [noe.marymor@co.usda.gov](mailto:noe.marymor@co.usda.gov)

Brandon Miller, Northwest PLWB - Steamboat Springs; (970) 879-3225x111;  
[Brandon.miller@co.usda.gov](mailto:Brandon.miller@co.usda.gov)

Southwest PLWB – Durango (970) 259-3289x113; Open Postion

Seth Gallagher, Outreach Coordinator, Ricky Mountain Bird Observatory (970) 482-1707 x 12;  
[seth.gallagher@rmbo.org](mailto:seth.gallagher@rmbo.org)

Ken Morgan, CDOW Private Lands Coordinator (303) 291-7510; [ken.morgan@state.co.us](mailto:ken.morgan@state.co.us)

# The Small Game Walk-In Access Program

The Walk-In Access Program started in Colorado in 2001 and was patterned after similar successful programs in Nebraska and South Dakota, with some unique practices specific to Colorado. Walk-In is an effort by the Division of Wildlife (DOW) to respond to hunter concerns about difficult access for hunting small game in eastern Colorado. The DOW worked with six local contractors that first year and obtained access to over 113,000 acres of quality pheasant cover throughout eastern Colorado. From a focus of pheasants, the program has grown to offer a variety of small game opportunities, including pheasant, dove, waterfowl, and scaled quail at the forefront. The program has grown to provide over 220,000 acres open to hunters who purchase a Walk-In permit. Properties are classified into 3 groups. Regular WIA properties, which are enrolled to provide good early and late hunting opportunity, are open to WIA hunting beginning September 1. Other properties, termed *Late Cropland* properties, open on the first day of the pheasant season to allow the landowner sufficient time to harvest crops. Both *Regular* and *Late Cropland* properties offer access through the end of February, annually. *Extended* WIA properties offer walk-in hunting for waterfowl during the light goose conservation order, extending through March 31, annually.



The landowner enrollment period begins July 1 and ends in late September. In many counties, WIA enrollment occurs by a series of contracts with local non-profit groups, such as FFA clubs, Conservation Districts, and others, which run the day to day aspects of the program. Contracted groups hold enrollment periods for landowners, explain how the program works, post signs on accepted acres, and basically handle all of the local administration required to run the program under the guidelines the Division of Wildlife establishes and reviews each year.

The program has been very popular with landowners and hunters alike. Nearly 90% of landowners that are accepted into WIA reapply in following years for acceptance into the program, and a good percentage take advantage of Division habitat programs such as PHIP, to improve habitat and provide a better hunting experience.

**Landowners may also offer land by contacting their local DOW office or the Walk-In Access Program office at 970-521-0233.**

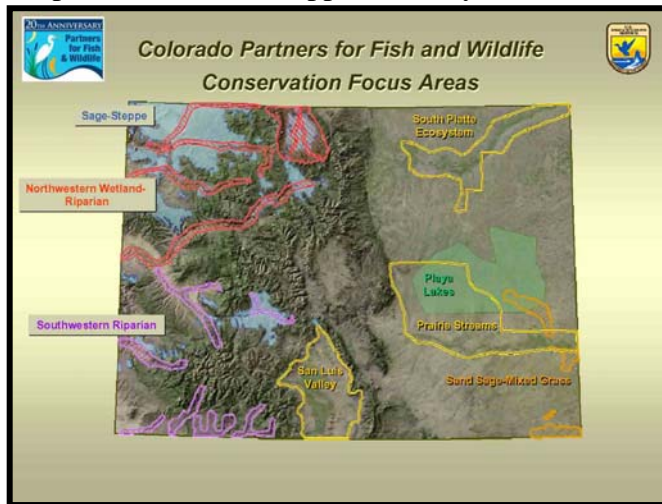
# Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) is a program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designed to provide funding and technical assistance for habitat improvement projects to interested landowners.



PFW has been functioning within Colorado since 1988.

In that time the program has completed 932 agreements with landowners. These projects have resulted in the restoration, creation or enhancement of over 28,000 acres of wetland, 83,000 acres of upland habitats and approximately 294 miles of riparian fencing and restoration.



The PFW programs Five Year Strategic Plan established several focus areas within the State of Colorado. These focus areas are located where the opportunity to address habitat restoration needs for State and Federal species of concern on private lands is the greatest. PFW projects are generally designed to benefit native species dependant upon sage steppe, short grass/sand sage prairie, riparian, and wetland habitat such as: greater sage grouse, Gunnison's sage grouse, lesser prairies chicken, migratory water birds, waterfowl, native fishes, reptiles and

amphibians.

Through July of 2009, the program has participated in projects totaling over \$23 million dollars. This amount includes funds from other sources such as Colorado Division of Wildlife, landowners, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited and other non-profit groups. The Colorado Division of Wildlife's state waterfowl stamp and wetland programs are critical to PFW's success.



The program is truly a cooperative effort among landowners, private organizations, and state and federal government. The landowner retains complete control of their property; there is no obligation to allow public access.

# The Owl Mountain Partnership

The Owl Mountain Partnership developed as a spin-off from the Habitat Partnership Program (HPP) in North Park (Jackson County), Colorado. The North Park HPP Committee applied for and received seed money from Seeking Common Ground to put together an ecosystem level planning process to manage the natural resources in that area. The challenge was accepted and a steering committee separate from the HPP group was formed in July 1993.

The Owl Mountain Partnership began on shaky ground in the community because of local distrust in government, the perception that government agencies were joining forces to take over the county, and because of all the political baggage surrounding the term ecosystem management. However, the steering committee outlined these concerns as some of their major issues to first address and resolve by developing a collaborative planning and project implementation process from the community level. The partnership recognizes that science cannot provide all of the answers for resource management. Common sense and experience available through local expertise are also essential ingredients and can come only from the grassroots level of the community. Local people representing a diversity of interests came forward to take the risks and responsibility of demonstrating that successful and sustainable resource management can be accomplished at the community level.

The mission of the Owl Mountain Partnership is to serve the economic, cultural, and social needs of the community by developing adaptive, long term landscape management programs, policies, and practices that ensure ecosystem sustainability. The partnership, working from the common ground of land health and the development of a local land ethic, put together five fundamentals of ecosystem management to guide them in their planning processes:

**Fundamental 1:** Increased trust must be developed between local stakeholders and all levels of government.

**Fundamental 2:** Ecosystems allow harvest and use of appropriate natural resources on a sustainable basis.

**Fundamental 3:** Local people being affected must be involved and empowered to make decisions and implement actions that will contribute to sustaining the social, cultural, economic and ecological systems upon which they depend.

**Fundamental 4:** Environmental education is a crucial element of management because it is a process of mutual learning about interactions and interdependence of socio-cultural, economic and ecological systems that support mankind.

**Fundamental 5:** Issues that drive an ecosystem management effort must, in large measure, originate from the community's grass roots, where a sense of place and community ties to a natural world are best expressed.

The Owl Mountain Partnership agreed at its beginning to develop its processes over the course of five years. At the end, the partnership would put together an intensive analysis to determine its future in North Park. That analysis is currently taking place to determine government resource management agency, local government and citizen commitment to continue to expand the program into a full-scale, countywide ecosystem planning process. The first five years were extremely challenging in terms of developing a working group that had the trust and credibility to effectively make meaningful decisions and recommendations on managing the land and its resources. The task has only just begun, but it is evident that the process for ecosystem management being set up in North Park is one that provides an effective template for the evolutionary processes of land stewardship necessary to meet the challenges of modern day resource management. Members of the community have already expressed their willingness to expand the program and this will be used as a primary basis for determining the future of the Owl Mountain Partnership.



# The Farm Bill – U.S. Department of Agriculture

The 2002 Farm Bill authorized about 20 agricultural conservation programs with a combined funding level of approximately \$2.5 billion per year. Since nearly three fourths of the land in the United States is privately owned, these programs have the enormous potential to maintain and enhance wildlife habitats at the landscape level. Wildlife managers and landowners both recognize that conservation activities on private lands have more influence on wildlife populations than all of the remaining wildlife management programs in the country combined.

Farm Bill programs continue to provide incentives for landowners to implement conservation practices on their lands. The Farm Bill is without question, the strongest private land conservation legislation ever assembled but landowners and managers must effectively implement the program to realize full wildlife benefits and to ensure its continued support.

Some examples of programs available in Colorado that provide wildlife benefits include:

- The **Conservation Reserve Program** (CRP) is a large-scale land retirement program that can establish permanent vegetative cover for wildlife habitat on cropland or marginal pasture. Acres are enrolled periodically through traditional national sign-ups, or continuously for certain habitats and important conservation practices.
- The **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program** (CREP) is part of the Conservation Reserve Program. It was designed to protect environmentally sensitive land, increase wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water. This program expands CRP's effectiveness by allowing USDA to work in partnerships with State and local interests to meet specific resource objectives. Project development must originate with State and local governments, which also contribute funding, specialized local knowledge, and technical support.
- The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** (EQIP) is a land-management program that provides incentives to address conservation needs, including fish and wildlife habitat on croplands or land used for livestock operations. It is a locally-driven program focused on priority areas and specific resource needs.
- The **Wetland Reserve Program** (WRP) is a voluntary land retirement program that assists landowners in restoring and protecting wetlands through cost-share agreements or easements.
- The **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program** (WHIP) provides technical and financial assistance to assist landowners to establish and improve wildlife habitat. In Colorado, the program is focused on declining species and their habitats.

**For further information regarding CDOW's involvement in USDA Conservation Programs, please contact the Division of Wildlife Private Lands Coordinator at 303-291-7404 or 303-883-7533, or e-mail [ken.morgan@state.co.us](mailto:ken.morgan@state.co.us)**

# Colorado Wildlife Habitat Protection Program

Habitat loss is a primary cause for the decline of many wildlife species in Colorado. As highly desirable lands are altered or converted to other uses, wildlife habitat can become degraded, destroyed and fragmented. Habitat conversion and loss can also reduce opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking and wildlife observation. This Program's priorities are guided by Colorado's Wildlife Action Plan and the requirements of specific funding sources. The State Habitat Stamp was created primarily to address the loss of big game winter range and migration corridors. Funding sources associated with this program will also be directed towards public access for hunting or fishing, important habitat for Threatened or Endangered Species or Species of Concern, wetlands and riparian corridors.

Emphasis is placed on the purchase of permanent conservation easements to ensure that all reasonable avenues are pursued in lieu of fee simple acquisition. Fee simple title purchases are allowed, however. Public access is not required for conservation easement projects, but additional financial consideration will be given to projects that separately convey to the CDOW restricted or year-round public access for wildlife-related recreation, in addition to placing a conservation easement on the project property. Property owners may also submit proposals for projects whose sole purpose is to provide hunting or fishing access through an access easement or agreement, or conveyance of fee title.

Colorado's Wildlife Habitat Protection Program is designed to accept proposals from property owners, local government open space programs, land trusts or other conservation organizations that address one or more of the following priorities:

- Winter range for big game species
- Migration corridors for big game
- Important access for hunting and/or fishing opportunities
- Important habitat for Threatened or Endangered Species or Species of Concern
- Wetlands and riparian corridors
- Property acquisitions that would enhance the management of a CDOW State Wildlife Area (i.e. provide a more manageable boundary, fill in an in-holding, improve public access, or enhance management of habitat or wildlife-related recreation on CDOW property)



By combining funding programs, the CDOW is able to bring together an array of species protection and land conservation tools and incentives not otherwise available. The preferred strategy uses habitat protection through perpetual conservation easements that provide incentives to private property owners to actively assist with the management and protection of

the priority species/landscapes mentioned above. Conservation easements will be used to guarantee that landscapes will remain intact and to provide fundamental wildlife benefits on a long-term basis. Private property owners have the opportunity to choose either perpetual conservation easements or fee simple acquisition for their proposals; the CDOW encourages easements. *All conservation easements funded from the program will have an accompanying management plan that must be agreed upon by the property owner and the CDOW prior to closing of the project.* The implications of a management plan should be carefully considered by the property owner prior to submitting a proposal. The conservation easements purchased under this program must include not only the protection of open space values, but of the habitat being utilized by the wildlife on the property. The protections sought by the CDOW may include (but not be limited to) restrictions on the type, timing and duration of livestock grazing, the type and timing of recreational activities and the overall management of vegetation on the property. Negotiating the terms and conditions of the management plan is a key step in the process. The CDOW encourages property owners to develop a clear vision for the future of their property prior to entering into these negotiations.

Any property owner wishing to participate in the program that has property benefiting the priority species/landscapes/recreational access identified may complete a Proposal form for the proposed project, or may ask an interested land trust or a local government open space program for assistance in completing the Proposal. It is not required that CDOW hold title to conservation easements funded through this program; land trusts or open space programs may be part of the Proposal process at a landowner's request and may hold the grantee interest in a proposed conservation easement.

Landowners who wish to participate in this program are strongly encouraged, although not required, to donate a percentage of the value of the property interest being conveyed. The value of any landowner donation will be given significant weight (along with other factors) in CDOW's evaluation, ranking, and selection of properties.

All proposals will undergo a rigorous biological review and ranking process. Property owners are strongly encouraged to contact the Area Wildlife Manager within their project area to assist with wildlife information needed in the proposal. Contact information for CDOW Area offices is listed on the CDOW Areas map provided above.

Following the successful closing of transactions, completed projects may be publicized by CDOW on the agency's Web site and through the press.

**For further information, please contact the Colorado Division of Wildlife Land Protection Specialist, at 303-291-7217 or e-mail [diane.gansauer@state.co.us](mailto:diane.gansauer@state.co.us).**

## The Colorado Birding Trail

The Colorado Birding Trail is a major nature tourism initiative to promote watchable wildlife recreation, conservation of natural resources by private landowners, and a diversified income for rural landowners and agricultural producers. The birding trail links outdoor recreation sites, both public and private, into a network of sites where visitors can observe birds and other wildlife. Some of the sites may also have archaeological and paleontological treasures.

Birding Trail sites are published on the [coloradobirdingtrail.com](http://coloradobirdingtrail.com) website to enable the general public access to individual sites. It is entirely the wishes of each landowner as to how access to their property will be managed.

The Birding Trail is established in both Southeastern Colorado and Southwestern Colorado. Other site opportunities in the state will be developed as the program grows.

Any landowner interested in enhancing habitat for the benefit of birds or establishing their property as a birding Trail site should contact the CDOW Regional Office, District Wildlife Manager, or Wildlife Conservation Biologist in their area

