

**Colorado WHIP Plan – FY 2012-2017
May 2012**

WHIP National Priorities: (517.0 D)

The National priorities for WHIP are:

- 1) To promote the restoration of declining or important native fish and wildlife habitats.
- 2) To protect, restore, develop, or enhance fish and wildlife habitat to benefit at-risk species.
- 3) To reduce the impacts of invasive species on fish and wildlife habitats.
- 4) To protect, restore, develop, or enhance declining or important aquatic wildlife species' habitats.
- 5) To protect, restore, develop, or enhance important migration and other movement corridors for wildlife.

Colorado Objectives:

Colorado has two objectives for WHIP in FY 2012-2017. These objectives, in order of priority, are as follows:

- 1) To improve habitat for species of greatest conservation need as listed in the Colorado Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CCWCS).
- 2) To improve habitat for economically important species.

National and State Fish and Wildlife Habitat Priorities:

Habitat Types of Special Concern and Fish and Wildlife Species to be Targeted

In 2012, the Chief has focused WHIP program dollars on 7 species using a special program, Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW). Colorado has 3 of the 7 WLFW species, so is focusing 2012 WHIP efforts on these 3 species. Colorado NRCS will continue to follow the National lead on focused species and habitats in future years.

For 2012, the National NRCS prioritized habitats and species that occur in Colorado are sagebrush-steppe, native prairie, and riparian habitats; and sage-grouse, lesser prairie-chicken, and Southwestern willow flycatcher.

Colorado Wildlife Habitat Priorities

Colorado priority habitats and species are listed in Table 1. These habitats and species were developed by the Wildlife Subcommittee of the State Technical Committee. Habitats and species may be annually reviewed and updated by the Wildlife Subcommittee. In absence of national priorities, Colorado will default to the species and habitats in this table for priorities under WHIP.

Table 1. Species List & General Habitat Type

Habitat/Common Name	Scientific Name	Status*
Native Prairie		
Black-footed ferret	<i>Mustela nigripes</i>	FE, SE
Lesser prairie-chicken***	<i>Tympanuchus pallidicinctus</i>	FC, ST
Plains sharp-tailed grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus jamesii</i>	SE
Eastern Slope Riparian		

Arkansas darter	<i>Etheostoma cragini</i>	FC, ST
Plains orangethroat darter	<i>Etheostoma spectabile</i>	SC
Preble's meadow jumping mouse	<i>Zapus hudsonius preblei</i>	FT
Western Slope Riparian		
Southwestern willow flycatcher***	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	FE, SE
Yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	FC, SC
Native cutthroat trout		
Greenback cutthroat	<i>Oncorhynchus clarki stomias</i>	FT, ST
Colorado River cutthroat	<i>Oncorhynchus clarki pleuriticus</i>	FT,** SC
Rio Grande cutthroat	<i>Oncorhynchus clarki virginalis</i>	SC
Colorado River Endangered Fish		
Razorback sucker	<i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>	FE, SE
Colorado pikeminnow	<i>Ptychocheilus lucius</i>	FE, ST
Humpback chub	<i>Gila cypha</i>	FE, ST
Bonytail chub	<i>Gila elegans</i>	FE, SE
Rio Grande chub	<i>Gila Pandora</i>	SC
Rio Grande sucker	<i>Catostomus plebeius</i>	SE
New Mexico meadow jumping mouse	<i>Zapus hudsonius luteus</i>	FC
Mountain shrub		
Gunnison's prairie dog	<i>Cynomys gunnisoni</i>	FC
Columbian sharp-tailed grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus</i>	SC
Sagebrush-steppe		
Gunnison sage-grouse***	<i>Centrocercus minimus</i>	FC
Greater sage-grouse***	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	FC
Wetlands		
Northern leopard frog	<i>Rana pipiens</i>	SC
Boreal toad	<i>Bufo boreas boreas</i>	SE
Greater sandhill crane	<i>Grus Canadensis tabida</i>	SC

*Federal Endangered = FE; Federal Threatened=FT; Federal Candidate=FC; SE=State Endangered; ST=State Threatened; SC=State Species of Special Concern

**Genetic studies are ongoing to determine whether Greenback and Colorado River cutthroats are distinct subspecies or not.

***Indicates a species that is already part of a program or Initiative

Essential Plant and Animal Habitats

Colorado has identified the following Essential Plant and Animal Habitats:

Native Prairie
Riparian
Sagebrush-steppe
Mountain Shrub
Wetlands

These habitats were selected based on the species they support and their importance to wildlife species in Colorado.

Special Projects:

The Wildlife Subcommittee may propose special projects in areas where Local Work Groups were not convened. The State Conservationist may consider reserving some funds for these special projects. The WHIP manual, Part 517.25F, permits the State Conservationist to approve special projects that are proposed by LWGs or through a locally led process if the project provides important, high priority wildlife habitat that would not be adequately addressed through the WHIP State ranking criteria.

Fund Allocation:

Recommendations for funding will be prioritized using the screening and ranking tools. The State Conservationist may allocate funds toward 15 year agreements following the guidelines in 517.45 of the WHIP manual. Appropriate projects must focus on essential plant and animal habitat.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement Practices:

All practices in the Field Office Technical Guide except windbreaks and shelterbelts on grasslands are eligible for WHIP if the Wildlife Habitat Development Plan demonstrates how the selected practices benefit wildlife. Although windbreaks and shelterbelts provide benefits for some wildlife species, these practices do not fit Colorado’s objectives for the WHIP when they are used to convert grassland to trees and shrubs. Initiatives and other special programs may place restrictions on how eligible practices for that Initiative or program are applied. Table 2 is an example of some of the most commonly applied eligible practices for the current Initiatives and Working Lands for Wildlife. Acronyms used: Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), Southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL), Sage-grouse Initiative (SGI), Lesser prairie-chicken Initiative (LPCI), Essential or Core (C), Supporting or Facilitating (S), Limited Use (L).

Table 2 Practice Lists for Special Programs

Practice	WLFW-SWFL	SGI	LPCI
Restoration & Mgt Rare/Declining Habitats 643	C	S	S
Stream Habitat Imp. & Mgt. 395	C		
Upland Wildlife Habitat Mgt. 645	C	C	C
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Mgt. 644	C	S	
Above Ground, Multi-Outlet Pipeline 431		L	
Access Control 472	S	S	S
Access Road 560		L	
Animal Trails & Walkways 575	S		
Brush Management 314	S	S	S
Brush Mgt.-non-conifer 314		L	
Channel Bed Stabilization 584	S		
Conservation Cover 327	S	S	
Conservation Crop Rotation 328		S	
Cover Crop 340		S	S
Critical Area Planting 342		S	S
Early Successional Habitat Dev. & Mgt. 647	S		
Fence 382	S	S	S

Field Border 386	S		
Firebreak 394		S	S
Forage & Biomass Planting 512	S	S	S
Forage Harvest Mgt 511	S	S	S
Forest Harvest Trails/Landings 655	S		
Forest Slash Treatment 384		S	
Forest Stand Improvement 666	S		
Grade Stabilization Structure 410		S	S
Grazing Land Mech. Treat. 548		L	
Heavy Use Area Protection 561	S		
Herbaceous Weed Control 315	S	S	S
Integrated Pest Management 595	S		
Irrigation Field Ditch Irrigation System, Surface & Subsurface 388		L	
Irrigation System, Micro 441		L	
Irrigation System, Sprinkler 442		L	
Irrigation System, Surface/Subsurface 443		L	
Irrigation Water Conveyance-Pipeline 430AA-GG		L	
Irrigation Water Management 449		L	
Obstruction Removal 500		S	S
Open Channel 582	S		
Pipeline 516	S	S	S
Pond 378		L	S
Prescribed Burning 338		L	S
Prescribed Grazing 528	S	C/S	C/S
Pumping Plant 533		S	S
Range Planting 550		S	S
Riparian Forest Buffer 381	S		
Riparian Herbaceous Cover 390	S	S	
Road/Trail/Landing Closure/Treatment 654		S	
Spring Development 574		S	S
Stream Crossing 578	S		
Streambank/Shoreline Protect. 580	S		
Structure for Water Control 587	S		
Tree Shrub Site Preparation 490	S		
Tree/Shrub Establishment 612	S		
Water Well 642	S	S	S
Watering Facility 614	S	S	S
Wetland Enhancement 659	S		
Wetland Restoration 657	S		
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Est. 380		L	

Typically, a WHIP project includes Upland Wildlife Habitat Management as the umbrella practice. A number of additional practices are included in the WHIP Plan that support the management practice.

Partnerships:

The following are major financial partners in WHIP, contributing cash for doing work on the ground or for hiring partner biologists:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Partners for Wildlife Program
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Pheasants Forever
Ducks Unlimited
Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Intermountain West Joint Venture
Playa Lakes Joint Venture
Trout Unlimited
Conservation Districts
Mule Deer Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation

The following are other partners who provide input on goals and projects:

Trout Unlimited
The Nature Conservancy
Colorado Natural Heritage Program
Conservation Districts
Colorado State Forest Service
Colorado Water Conservation Board
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-ecological Services Section

State application evaluation and ranking process and criteria:

Screening and Ranking tools are developed by Programs staff members at the State and National level. Biologists and other users may submit recommendations to Programs staff for use in the screening and local ranking questions. Screening and ranking tools are uploaded to ProTracts and are posted on the Colorado NRCS web page under the Programs tab, <http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/whip.htm>.

This section may be updated annually to keep pace with National programs and Initiatives.

Performance Measurement and Accountability:

Expected results from WHIP are installation of practices as discussed above. This will be measured in several ways as described below.

- 1- The Performance Reporting System (PRS) tracks progress on the following three measures using the reported practices in Table 4.

Measure: 3.30: Wetlands created, restored, or enhanced, acres

Measure: 3.31: Wetlands re-enhanced, acres

Measure: 3.21: Non-Federal land with conservation applied to improve fish and wildlife habitat quality, acres

Table 4-Selected Conservation Practices used in PRS system

Code	Practice (units)	Code	Practice (units)
327	Conservation Cover	643	Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats (ac)
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover (ac)	644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (ac)
391	Riparian Forest Buffer (ac)	645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (ac)
395	Stream Habitat Improvement and Management (ac)	646	Shallow Water Development and Management (ac)
396	Fish Passage (mi)	647	Early Successional Habitat Development/Management (ac)
422	Hedgerow Planting (ft)	657	Wetland Restoration (ac)
472	Access Control (Ac.)	658	Wetland Creation (ac)
580	Streambank and Shoreline Protection (ft)	659	Wetland Enhancement (ac)
614	Watering Facility (no)		

- 2- The ProTracts system contains records of the following information on program applications: location, program, year, dollar value, acres, resource concerns addressed, status of application/contract. Reports are easily generated on numerous parameters such as Field Office, County, Administrative Area, program, and Initiative.
- 3- Throughout the year, Field Offices respond to special requests for information on the practices applied in a program or initiative. Usually this includes more detail than what can be gleaned from PRS and ProTracts. This information is frequently used to present to Congress or Congressional Committees.
- 4- Annual quality assurance reviews are conducted in all Field Offices. The State Office conducts an additional 8-10 reviews of the Field Office reviews each year.
- 5- Monitoring of projects will be conducted according to Initiative/Program guidelines and where appropriate.