

Mountain-Prairie

Region 6

Overview of the Service's Mountain-Prairie Region



Widgeon Pond at Red Rocks Lake National Wildlife Refuge / USFWS

The Mountain-Prairie Region consists of 8 states in the heart of the American west including Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. The region is defined by three distinct landscapes. In the east lie the central and northern Great Plains, primarily the vast mixed- and short-grass prairies. To the west rise the Rocky Mountains and the intermountain areas beyond the Continental Divide, including parts of the sprawling Colorado Plateau and the Great Basin. The northeastern part of the Region contains millions of shallow wetlands known as the “prairie potholes,” which produce a large portion of the continent’s waterfowl.

Some of the nation’s greatest rivers rise in the Region including the Missouri, Colorado, and Platte rivers. The fish and wildlife that make their home on the Region’s prairies and in its mountains are among the nation’s most iconic species: grizzly bear, gray wolf, the American bison, and cutthroat trout.

People, too, live here and are an active presence on the land. The Region includes 40 Indian Tribes, many of whom manage large land holdings, as do other



Grizzly bear cub / USFWS

federal agencies such as the Department of Defense. Energy development, agricultural trends and urbanization all exert influences on the Region’s landscapes.

Resource Facts and Figures

- Approximately 5,751,358 acres protected by the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), including both fee title and easement lands. This includes 124 national wildlife refuges, 18 coordination areas, and numerous waterfowl production areas in 120 counties through Fiscal Year 2012.
- 2,576,476 visitors to NWRS lands in Fiscal Year 2012.
- 12 units of the National Fish Hatchery System, including D.C. Booth, a National Historic Fish Hatchery in Spearfish, SD; two fisheries offices (one in Grand Junction, CO and one in Vernal, UT) that implement the recovery of endangered fish in the Colorado River; a National Fish Technology Center and National Fish Health Center, both located in Bozeman, MT; and seven Fish & Wildlife Conservation Offices.
- Approximately 33 million fish stocked by National Fish Hatcheries in 2010 which resulted in a total economic output of over \$401,000,000 and supported over 3,700 private sector jobs.
- 82 species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act; 18 species that are candidates for listing under the Act.
- 1,080 employees.

Regional Demographics

- Land area: 737,884 square miles (468,573,000 acres)
 - Population: 15,403,172 (Roughly 2.5 to 1 urban to rural ratio)
 - Members of Congress: 37
 - Federally Recognized Indian Tribes: 40
 - Public land: 137,024,000 acres (federal and state)
 - Wildlife-dependent recreation: 7,275,000 people* (hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching)
- * USDA Economic Research Service
 **FY 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation

Key Habitats and Ecosystems

The Mountain-Prairie Region contains some of the last large, intact and ecologically functional landscapes in the lower 48 states. As part of the Service’s ongoing efforts to work cooperatively with local communities to conserve these functional ecosystems, the Service has created large landscape-scale Conservation Areas (CA). These CA’s include the Sangre de Cristo Mountains



Female bison and calf / USFWS



Bull trout / USFWS

of Colorado and New Mexico (an important corridor for animal movement in the Southern Rockies and home to imperiled Rio Grande cutthroat trout); the Flint Hills of Kansas (the largest block of intact tallgrass prairie remaining in North America); the Dakota Grasslands (which provides crucial stopover and breeding habitat for over 130 species of grassland birds and waterfowl); and the northern Rocky Mountains of Montana (that are still home to all of the plants and animals that were noted during the Lewis and Clark expedition). The Region is also actively working with a diverse array of partners to recover and conserve fish and wildlife and habitat in the headwaters regions of several major river systems: the Platte/ Yellowstone/Missouri; the Green/ Colorado; Rio Grande; and the Snake/ Columbia.

Regional Budget

In Fiscal Year 2012, the Region's budget was \$365,060,676. (This figure represents all available sources: appropriated, permanent, partnerships, and includes funding for our grant programs). The Region disbursed a total of \$124,492,331 in grants to states, tribes, and other partners during Fiscal Year 2012.

Conservation Successes and Challenges

The Mountain-Prairie Region, together with our partners, has achieved significant conservation successes in recent years, including the biological recovery of the grizzly bear in the Yellowstone ecosystem and the Northern Rocky Mountain population of gray wolf. We have partnered with hundreds of landowners in maintaining working farms and ranches while conserving essential wetland and

grassland resources for waterfowl and other birds. This is especially evident in the Dakotas where we have redirected substantial resources to keep up with the immense interest of willing landowners. The Region has also implemented a successful program to enhance genetic conservation for American bison on National Wildlife Refuge lands and pioneered innovative methods to target land acquisition for waterfowl conservation. Current and future challenges include: (1) addressing the impacts of intensive energy development, from oil and gas to wind, on habitat and trust species; and (2) managing water for imperiled aquatic species such as pallid sturgeon and native Colorado River fishes in the face of increasing water demand from urbanizing areas and a changing climate. To meet these challenges, the Region is employing a strategic, landscape-level approach to identify and prioritize conservation actions to restore and maintain sustainable populations of trust species.

Science Supporting Conservation

The Region continues to implement strategic habitat conservation to achieve sustainable wildlife populations on western landscapes. The Service has recently introduced a new adaptive management method known as the surrogate species approach. Selecting surrogate species will lead to projects



Eared grebe in the Platte River / USFWS

where progress can be made on conservation of multiple species while working across programs with our partners.

The region also hosts two Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) serving as a forum for our science based partnerships including Federal, state, tribal, local government and nongovernmental partners. These LCCs include the Great Northern LCC and Southern Rockies LCC. The LCCs are aligned in geographically similar areas and they are true cooperatives formed and directed by a large base of natural resource managers and nongovernment organizations. The LCCs work daily with conservation partners to connect the region's six shared LCCs with other landscape-level programs and conservation delivery initiatives.

Connect with the Mountain-Prairie Region

Regional website address: www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/
Website: www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/
Twitter: <http://twitter.com/USFWSMtnPrairie>
Facebook: www.facebook.com/#!/USFWSMountainPrairie
Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtnpairie/
News Releases: www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/pressrel/

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