

Waterways for Wildlife Initiative

Project Summaries FY22

OVERVIEW / The Waterways for Wildlife Initiative is a comprehensive, landscape-level effort developed by the National Wild Turkey Federation to address critically urgent conservation needs in riparian ecosystems along rivers and streams in the Great Plains of the United States. This ambitious initiative is designed to continue our efforts addressing declining riparian health in America's Big Six of Wildlife Conservation, specifically America's Great Open Spaces and America's Western Wildlands. In the arid plains of the American West, riparian areas are a natural magnet for wild turkeys and hundreds of other species of wildlife. Many of these important wildlife habitats, however, are in poor condition due to a variety of causes. To address critical conservation issues, the NWTF is partnering with landowners, governmental agencies, and other conservation organizations to restore these vitally important ecosystems across the landscape. Over the next 10 years, the NWTF will improve 75,000 acres of wildlife habitat along 1,500 linear miles of waterways in the Great Plains landscape.

Canadian River Riparian Corridor Restoration (TX)

Grantee: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Grant Amount: \$25,000
 Matching Funds: \$75,000
 Total Project Amount: \$100,000

Restore riparian habitat and rotational grazing infrastructure along the Canadian River on Gene Howe Wildlife Management Area in Texas. Project consists of grubbing of invasive species such as Russian olive, salt cedar and Eastern red cedar and silt removal in a derelict pond to help facilitate a rotation grazing program by providing water for livestock. Targeted species that will benefit include Rio Grande wild turkey, migratory cavity nesting waterfowl such as hooded mergansers and wood duck, reptiles and amphibians such as yellow mud turtles and barred tiger salamanders, as well as several fish species including largemouth bass, bluegill and other sunfish.

Chat Canyon WMA Timber Stand Improvement (NE)

Grantee: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Grant Amount: \$10,000
 Matching Funds: \$30,000
 Total Project Amount \$40,000

Restore and enhance riparian habitat along the Niobrara River on Chat Canyon Wildlife Management Area. Project consists of 50 acres of timber stand improvement and Eastern red cedar removal to improve forest health, reduce wildfire hazard, create breaks in woody fuels, and enhance biological diversity and wildlife habitat. Targeted species include wild turkey, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and elk but other at-risk species will also benefit.

Cow Creek Riparian Enhancement (MT)

Grantee: United States Forest Service (USDA)

Grant Amount: \$2,000
 Matching Funds: \$8,314
 Total Project Amount: \$10,314

Restore riparian and wet meadows along one mile of Cow Creek through the installation of 10 beaver dam analogue structures, and to promote the recolonization of beavers in this tributary. This project takes place on the Ashland RD of the Custer-Gallatin NF located in Southeast Montana and will benefit 48 acres of habitat for elk, deer, wild turkeys, upland game birds on nongame species.

Evans Bend Cottonwood and Chokecherry Regeneration Enclosure (MT)

Grantee: NorthWestern Energy

Grant Amount: \$2,500
Matching Funds: \$59,612
Total Project Amount: \$62,112

Restore cottonwood and chokecherry trees to a burn site located on the Missouri River in Central Montana. This project will consist of installation of an 11-acre exclusion fence to prevent livestock and intensive wildlife browsing on naturally regenerating cottonwood and chokecherry trees on Evans Bend. Evans Bend is part of a 473-acre riparian bench and island complex that is within a contiguous 1,394-acre parcel of BLM and Montana DNRC land. Restoring mature riparian trees would provide diverse wildlife habitat and stabilize soils, preventing bank erosion.

Flint Creek Riparian Habitat Improvement (MT)

Grantee: Trout Unlimited

Grant Amount: \$7,000
Matching Funds: \$313,855
Total Project Amount: \$320,855

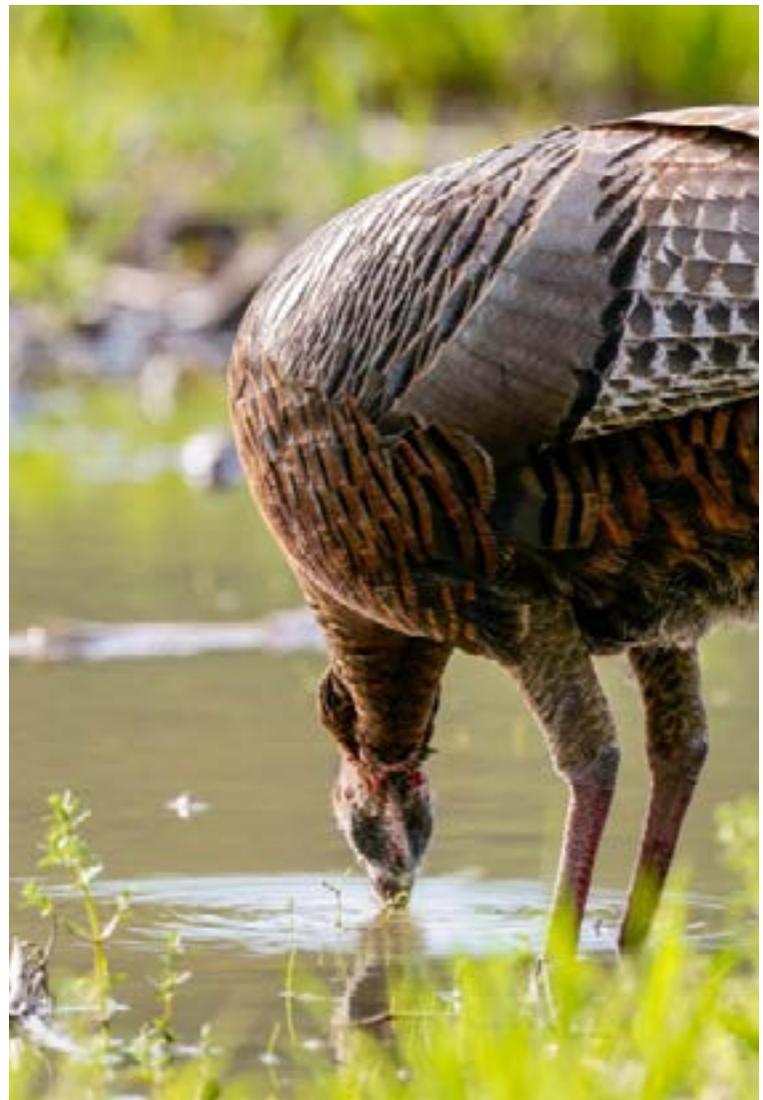
Restore, protect and enhance one half mile of Flint Creek corridor and additional 20-acres on private land near Hall, MT to reduce sediment loading to Flint Creek and improve riparian habitat. The project supports a larger effort in the Flint Creek watershed with multiple partners to restore riparian and aquatic habitats, improve habitat connectivity, restore streamflow, and improve water quality. The Flint Creek Riparian Habitat Improvement Phase 2 Project will restore approximately 3,000 feet of channel and 25-acres of wetlands and riparian habitat by using a combination of riparian fencing, revegetation, and active channel restoration techniques.

Heart River and Fish Creek Confluence Improvement (ND)

Grantee: United States deer and Wildlife Service

Grant Amount: \$4,000
Matching Funds: \$82,07
Total Project Amount: \$86,078

This project will transition an intensively grazed livestock operation to rotational grazing. The project includes fencing for new paddocks as well as upland water sources for livestock. Allowing native vegetation to fully re-establish in the riparian areas will slow surface water runoff from the uplands as well as protect against erosion on the streambanks. The increased vertical structure of the vegetation slows surface water runoff and allows excess nutrients and sediments to settle before reaching the stream. When the native vegetation fully re-establishes, its naturally deep and complex root structure will be greatly increased which will increase water infiltration to the water table as well as lock soil particles into place which reduces erosion potential. By removing the livestock from the stream, we are removing direct waste deposits from the water as well as sediment being kicked up from foot traffic within the stream. Reducing sedimentation and excess nutrients from the water instantly increase water quality. Aside from the water quality benefit of this project it will also



provide great habitat like cover, foraging, and young rearing opportunities for many species. The better vegetative management paired with water access control will increase water quality, habitat, and erosion control. 860 acres of habitat will benefit from this transition.

Monitoring, Education, Collaboration, and Assisting in Invasive Plant Management (MT)

Grantee: Park County Cooperative Weed Management Area Group

Grant Amount: \$6,500
Matching Funds: \$356,500
Total Project Amount: \$363,000

Restoring and maintaining riparian health through invasive species education, removal and control. This project supports a large-scale collaborative effort to improve riparian health in the upper Yellowstone River watershed. Woody and herbaceous invasive plant species are monitored and treated annually across 112,000 acres of private and public lands. Up to 27,000 acres of riparian community acres will be surveyed for invasive species in 2022 with 3,114 scheduled to be treated. The upper Yellowstone River watershed is part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and supports an extremely diverse assemblage of wildlife species.

Canadian River Riparian Restoration (OK)

Grantee: Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

Grant Amount: \$25,000
Matching Funds: \$75,000
Total Project Amount: \$100,000

Restore up to 2,035 acres of riparian habitat along the Canadian River on Packsaddle Wildlife Management Area in Oklahoma. Project consists of Eastern red cedar removal through mastication or by hand crew, benefiting Rio Grande wild turkey, bobwhite quail, white-tailed deer, mule deer, and Texas horned lizard. This area of the Canadian River is also known to be utilized by whooping cranes and least terns.

Rush Creek Conservation Easement and Restoration (NE)

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited

Grant Amount: \$15,000
Matching Funds: \$1,357,850
Total Project Amount: \$1,362,850

Protect 1,264 acres with a perpetual conservation easement and restore wetland and grassland habitat along the North Platte River in Nebraska. Project will remove invasive species such as Russian olives, plant high diversity seed mixtures, restore wetlands and install grazing management infrastructure, benefiting wild turkey, migratory birds and at-risk species including two at-risk plant species (large-spike prairie clover and Platte River dodder) and 15 wildlife species including long-billed curlew, trumpeter swan, regal fritillary, monarch butterfly and plains topminnow, as identified in the Nebraska Natural Legacy Plan.

Salt Cedar Chemical Treatment on the Pecos River (NM)

Grantee: Chaves Soil and Water Conservation District

Grant Amount: \$10,000
Matching Funds: \$30,000
Total Project Amount: \$40,000

Between 2004 and 2005, the Roswell BLM completed 342 acres of Salt Cedar (tamarisk) and Russian Olive mechanical treatments within the project area floodplain of the Pecos River. Since this time, salt cedar has re-sprouted and is now once again outcompeting native cottonwoods and willows. This project is needed to maintain the previous treatment and is estimated to treat 10 acres or re-sprouts. Removal of these invasive shrubs will increase water quality, quantity, and allow native cottonwoods and willows to compete. In 2018, NMGFD released Rio Grande turkeys in this area so we hope this needed maintenance will aid in their establishment and increase their utilization of the riparian corridor.

Scaling up Mesic and Wet Meadow Restoration, Missouri River Grasslands (MT)

Grantee: National Wildlife Federation – Northern Rockies, Prairies, and Pacific Region

Grant Amount: \$10,000
Matching Funds: \$57,192
Total Project Amount: \$67,192

Restore mesic areas and wet meadows in north-central Montana using low-tech methods such as beaver dam analogs and Zeedyk structures to enhance Greater Sage-grouse core habitat. This project will complete the second phase of two existing mesic restoration projects on public lands in the Missouri River grasslands, an area that is home to a rich and diverse wildlife community that depend upon these riparian corridors. Restoration activities include creating pool habitat, reactivating side channels and former meanders, and raising the water table and/or channel level enough to sub-irrigate a broader area of floodplain. As a result of this work, at least 13 additional acres of mesic habitat will be restored to benefit Greater Sage-grouse and other species.



Squaw Creek and Baldwin Creek Russian Olive Removal (WY)

Grantee: Popo Agie Conservation District

Grant Amount: \$5,000
 Matching Funds: \$27,000
 Total Project Amount: \$32,500

Restore 100 acres of riparian communities along 7 miles of Squaw and Baldwin creeks through Russian olive removal. The Squaw/Baldwin Creek Russian olive control project is a coordinated noxious weed removal effort supported by private landowners and multiple federal, state and local agencies in the Lander, Wyoming area. This project will focus management of Russian olive within the upper reaches of tributaries in the Popo Agie watershed. These tributaries have mostly light infestations of Russian olive with a strong presence of native trees and shrubs such as willow, cottonwood, chokecherry, silver buffaloberry, rose, and currant. The native species are very important for local wildlife and bird species, as well as providing soil stabilization and shading for the streams which support several species of trout and other aquatic species.

Tamarisk Removal Initiative (CO)

Grantee: United States Army Corps of Engineers

Grant Amount: \$25,000
 Matching Funds: \$238,046
 Total Project Amount: \$263,046

Black Bridge is owned and operated by the Army Corps of Engineers and is a 544-acre multi-use wildlife area near Las Animas, CO, at the confluence of the Purgatoire and Arkansas Rivers. This project aims to restore riparian areas by removing invasive tamarisk within the Black Bridge area. This project will remove

55 acres of invasive tamarisk along the Las Animas River. This removal will increase water quantity and quality, open wildlife corridors, increase native riparian vegetation growth, provide recreational access, and increase the utilization of the riparian corridor by the current turkey population. This project also includes planting the existing 40 acre food plots with a dryland seed mix suitable for turkeys and other wildlife.

Tongue River Acme Aquatic Connectivity (WY)

Grantee: Sheridan County Conservation District

Grant Amount: \$20,000
 Matching Funds: \$105,000
 Total Project Amount: \$125,000

Improve hydrology and riparian function through the removal of in-channel water diversion. The Tongue River Acme Aquatic Connectivity Project is associated with brownfield reclamation efforts at the former Acme Power Plant. The plant includes a channel-spanning metal structure previously used to divert water into underground cooling tunnels. Completion of this project will directly benefit 5 acres and 850 feet of channel and bank at the project site and restore aquatic connectivity on 47 miles of the Tongue River by removing an in-stream barrier and stabilizing the channel bed associated with the structure. Removing the diversion structure will reduce flooding risks across contaminated soils and potential pollutant transport from the site into the river. The structure is the last known barrier in the Tongue River between the head of the mainstem at river mile 70 and the Interstate Diversion at river mile 23.

