



RESTORING HABITAT AT HORSETHIEF SWA

An extensive turnaround took place last summer at western Colorado's Horsethief State Wildlife Area (SWA) that resulted in the transformation of 88 publicly accessible acres into shallow wetland cells supported by water-control structures for the benefit of waterfowl and vegetation.

The SWA, which is owned by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation but managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), was in desperate need of new infrastructure and a water-conveyance system to better control the seasonal wetlands' in- and outflow.

DU installed two new hydrants, four 18-inch drains, and four 24-inch agri-drains.

Contractors then cleaned a previously built ditch and constructed three additional ditches for better water conveyance between the pond units. A large barrow area was regraded, a spillway was installed, embankments were repaired, a crossbox was placed between two ditches and rip rap was laid down around all water-control structures and hydrants to fend off erosion and sun damage.

As a result, the proliferation of smartweed, an amphibious plant that serves as an important food source for waterfowl, flourished



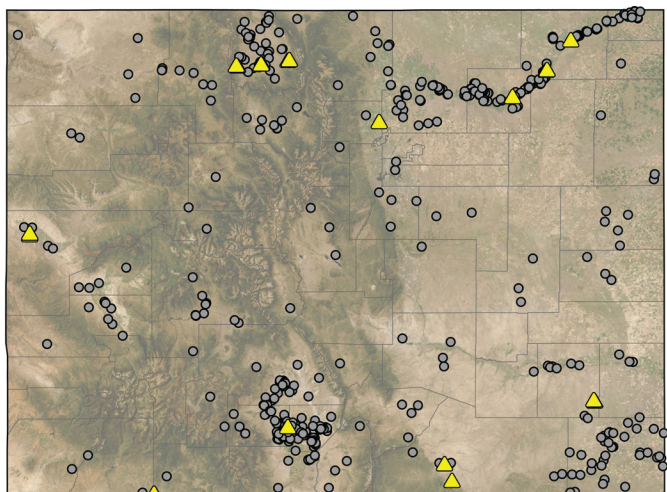
in ponds that were previously choked with cattails.

Filled with water at the end of last summer, the project opened 88 acres of huntable wetlands to the public in a portion of the Centennial State outside of DU's traditional priority areas.

DU REVITALIZES YAMPA RIVER WILDLIFE AREA

At the Yampa River SWA, Ducks Unlimited worked with CPW to repair degraded infrastructure and restore the water management capabilities necessary to support productive waterfowl habitat. Managers can now seasonally add or remove water from the Yampa River from the wetland impoundments on the SWA, according to habitat needs.

The SWA provides public access to the river and through the summer months, observers can see significant populations of bobolinks and sandhill cranes. It's also an area used by waterfowl hunters in the region and the restorations will enhance the value of the river overall and support the wildlife prized by the people of Colorado.



Earthstar Geographics

**Ducks Unlimited
PROJECTS**

● Completed Project(s) ▲ Completed 2023
Note: Project points may represent more than one project.

The SWA project also aligns with the habitat goals outlined in DU's Peaks to Prairies conservation initiative. DU major donors like Bob and Kitty Wilson and Dr. Alan Reishus contributed to this initiative to help ensure DU could complete the project.

In all, seven wetland impoundments, irrigated meadows and associated uplands were restored for a total of 74 acres of wildlife habitat. DU and partners are planning additional wetland restorations on the property in the coming years.





SAMBRITO WETLANDS RESTORED

DU completed a project that restored an additional 34 acres of wetland and streamside habitat within the Sambrito Wetlands Complex at Navajo State Park. This project, coordinated by the Bureau of Reclamation, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and Ducks Unlimited, brought to life the vision of a myriad of partners who have participated in various planning efforts for the project during the last decade.

The Sambrito and adjacent Miller Mesa Wetlands Complex were intensively managed for wildlife between 1964 and 1993 through habitat improvements, food production units and wetland creation and enhancements. The restoration project reinvigorated waterfowl habitat and improved recreational opportunities by renovating and repairing the existing water diversion and conveyance system, which now delivers water from

West Sambrito Creek (Vallejo Arroyo) to five wetland impoundments. The project will also restore hydrologic functions to a section of West Sambrito Creek and potentially benefit the endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse.

Navajo State Park is a major recreational facility in southwest Colorado, drawing more than 300,000 visitors every year. The 2,100-acre park offers boating, fishing, trails, wildlife viewing, 138 campsites and three cabins.

2024 DU COLORADO PRIORITIES

South Platte River: Jackson Lake State Park, Bureau of Reclamation Narrows, Andrick State Wildlife Area, and invasive weed control at Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, DU (Wetlands America Trust) Conservation Easements.

San Luis Valley: Rock Creek corridor, Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge, Baca National Wildlife Refuge, Blanca Wetlands (Bureau of Land Management), DU (Wetlands America Trust), Partner Land Trust Conservation Easements

North Park: Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge, Hebron Wildlife Management Area (Bureau of Land Management), Yampa River State Wildlife Area, Partner Land Trust Conservation Easements

Arkansas River: Kinney Lake State Wildlife Area, Partner Land Trust Conservation Easements

Western Colorado: Grand Valley Audubon Wetlands, Conservation Partner Wetland and Stream Restoration Activities



DUCKS UNLIMITED conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

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COLORADO NUMBERS

2023

- 10 projects
- 1,997 acres conserved
- \$2,287,607 invested

HISTORICAL

- 300 projects
- 140,727 acres conserved
- \$41,704,606 invested



**GREAT PLAINS
REGION**

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
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