

INTRODUCTION

One of the great challenges facing the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) in the 21st century will be our ability to maintain sustainable fish and wildlife populations and meet the expectations and desire of our citizens. Potential impacts to fish and wildlife continue to expand, with some of the more noticeable being energy development, increasing demands for water, other land uses, and urban sprawl. The long-term drought, fire suppression and differences in public expectations and uses of natural resources have caused habitat impacts as well. We must conserve and enhance habitats for all species, while, at the same time conserving habitats essential for species identified at risk in the State Wildlife Action Plan.

To answer these challenges, the Department is actively pursuing habitat-related management activities on a landscape level partnering with public land managers and private landowners on lands throughout Wyoming. In recognition of this challenge and to help focus efforts and direct funds for habitat-related activities, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission (WGFC) adopted a Strategic Habitat Plan (SHP) in 2001. An updated and revised SHP was developed during 2008 and adopted by the WGFC in early 2009. This will guide our efforts and direct funds over the next several years. The SHP and priorities habitat areas identified can be viewed on the WGFD website at <http://gf.state.wy.us/habitat/StrategicPlan/index.asp>.

The purpose of this annual report is to highlight 2008 activities and SHP accomplishments of the Terrestrial Habitat, Aquatic Habitat, and the Habitat and Access Maintenance programs of the WGFD as well as associated portions of the Lands Administration and Water Management Section programs. In addition, many other Department personnel provided invaluable assistance on various aspects of SHP.

Program performance in terms of expenditures on projects is summarized on a statewide basis in the following sections.

I. Approximate WGFD funds (figures rounded to the nearest \$1,000) expended for on-the-ground projects for implementation of SHP goals which include: Goal 1) Manage, preserve and restore habitat for long-term sustainable management of wildlife populations; Goal 2) Increase wildlife based recreation through habitat enhancements that increase productivity of wildlife and; Goal 3) Increase or maintain wildlife habitat and associated recreation on WGFC owned and managed lands during calendar year 2008. These figures do not include personnel salaries and equipment used for routine maintenance and operation functions follows:

Department Funds Expended for Goals 1, 2 and 3: \$2,679,000

II. Non-Department funds expended for implementation of SHP Goals 1 and 2 for calendar year 2008 from or in collaboration with various sources including but not limited to: a) Farm Bill government funds; b) Other federal government funding programs; c) Other state and local government funding sources; d) Nongovernmental organizations; e) Wyoming Wildlife Heritage Foundation; f) Wyoming Governors Big Game License Coalition; g) Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust Fund; f) Private landowners contribution (including in-kind); h) Corporations and businesses; and I) Private donors follows:

Non-Department Funds Expended for Goals 1 and 2: \$8,355,000

III. Non-Department funds expended for implementation of SHP Goal 3 for calendar year 2008 from or in collaboration with various sources cited above follows:

Non-Department Subtotal for Goals 3: \$4,000

IV. SUBTOTAL NON-DEPARTMENT FUNDS: \$ 8,359,000

V. GRAND TOTAL FOR GOALS 1, 2, and 3: \$ 11,038,000

These figures **do not** include personnel salaries and equipment used for routine maintenance and operation functions.

In other words, the Department was able to secure funding from outside sources amounting to approximately **\$3.12** for each Department dollar expended for on-the-ground fish and wildlife habitat activities. This outside funding is a critical element for implementing the Strategic Habitat Plan and conserving our wildlife resources in collaboration with the many dedicated partners throughout the State.

Overall, personnel directly involved in implementing the SHP including routine maintenance and operation activities, oversaw spending of approximately **\$7,013,000** of WGFD regular maintenance and operating funds, State Wildlife Grants from US Fish and Wildlife Service and Department Trust Fund monies. This figure includes wages, benefits, equipment operation expenses, supplies and on-the-ground improvement material expenses allocated as follows: approximately **58%** for personnel that includes habitat inventories, monitoring, project contact oversight, project design and implementation. Without personnel none of these habitat projects would happen. The remainder of the funding was allocated as follows: **4%** for vehicles and heavy equipment and **38%** for materials and supplies.

These activities resulted in on-the-ground accomplishments during calendar year 2008 as summarized below:

Strategic Habitat Plan Goals 1 and 2:

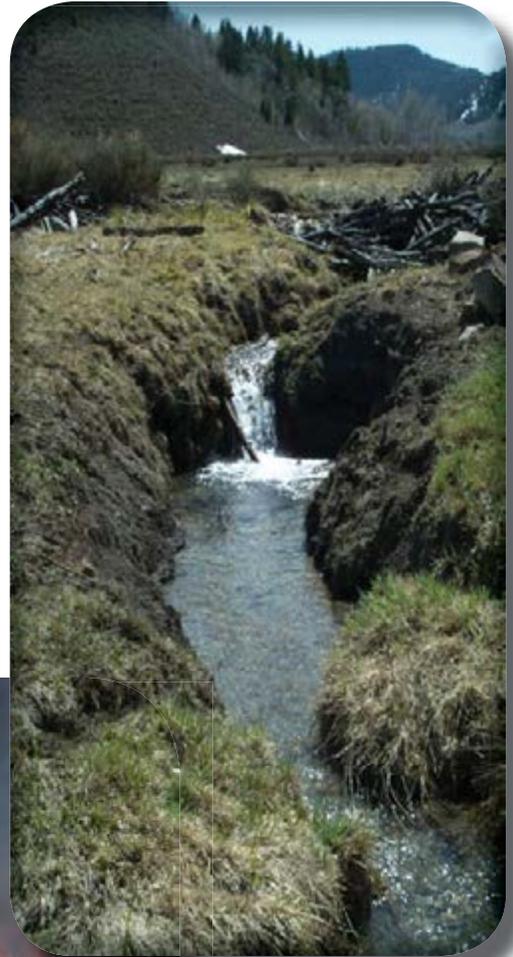
<u>On-the-Ground Activity</u>	<u>On-the-Ground Accomplishment</u>
Extension Services to private landowner contacts and number of contacts resulting in wildlife habitat enhancement	293 extension contacts resulting in 152 projects
Stream fishery inventories and assessments	68.0 miles
Stream bank enhancement	1.0 miles
Stream structures (revetments, barbs, diversions, screens, sills, jetties, etc.)	35 installed
Water for fisheries and aquatic habitat	100 acre feet for 1 year obtained
Prescribed burns (uplands and CRP enhancement) mainly in aspen, conifer, wooded draw, mixed mountain shrub and sagebrush grassland communities	20,152 acres
Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans and US Forest Service Plans	4 Plans
Conservation easements	4 acquired totaling 10,300 acres; 4 being actively pursued
Major Information and Education efforts (formal presentations, articles, booths, radio, television and hosting workshops)	45 formal programs
Herbicide vegetation treatments to control noxious or invasive weeds primarily cheatgrass, prickly pear, Russian olive and salt cedar	7,711.4 acres
Herbicide vegetation to thin dense sagebrush communities	6,067 acres
Mowing, chopping, and Lawson aerator treatments mainly in sagebrush and grassland communities	350 acres

Mechanical tree removal mainly conifer removal from aspen stands, juniper and Russian olive and salt cedar removal	9,278 acres
Tree and shrub planting	12,309 planted
Upland grass, forb and food plot seeding	3,610 acres
Water guzzlers installed	10
Water wells drilled	1
Spring developments	1
Water tanks installed	7
Water pipelines installed	38,960 feet or about 7.4 miles
Fences installed to manage or protect treatment areas or to facilitate livestock grazing management	112,654 feet or about 21.3 miles
Wetland development or major renovation	20 acres
Riparian habitat protection, enhancement and management	317.8 acres
Farm Bill Program contract involvement for 2008	CCRP-14; EQIP-34; GLI-8; WRP-5; AMA-24; WHIP-4; CRP-14; FFRP-2; CSP-5; and AFO-2
Livestock grazing management plans	255,085 acres
Upland habitat inventory (landscape analysis scale)	2.1 million acres
Upland habitat inventory (intensive project level scale)	643,801 acres
Habitat monitoring sites (annual monitoring)	181 sites monitored
Field research projects	9 projects
Beaver transplants	10 beaver

Strategic Habitat Plan Goal 3 – WGFC Managed Lands

<u>On-the-Ground Activity</u>	<u>On-the-Ground Accomplishment</u>
Overseeing maintenance and land management on WGFC Wildlife Management Areas and Public Access Areas	411, 650 acres of WGFC lands 36 Wildlife Management Areas 96 Public Access Areas
Land Acquisition	2 parcels totaling 958 acres
Intensive livestock/forage reserve/meadow rejuvenation grazing administered	173,446 acres (Red Canyon and Wick Meadows, Red Rim, Grizzly, Chain Lakes, Renner, Yellowtail, Ocean Lake and Sunshine)
Mowing, chopping, and Lawson aerator treatments mainly in sagebrush and grassland communities	129 acres
Mechanical tree removal mainly conifer removal from aspen stands, juniper and Russian olive and salt cedar removal	700 acres
Grass, forb and food plot seeding	55.5 acres
Herbicide vegetation treatments to control noxious or invasive weeds; primarily Russian olive and salt cedar	1,200 acres
Center pivot irrigation sprinkler systems	2 new ones installed
Intensive irrigation enhancements	95 acres; 1,200 feet pipe; 5 headgates
Food plot and permanent cover irrigation	235 acres
Herbicide application for noxious weed control	2,765 acres
Fence removal	1.9 miles
Water wells drilled	1
Reservoir overflow installation	1
Beaver transplants	5 beaver

We believe habitat is the key to maintaining wild and healthy populations of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Without the support and partnerships of private landowners, public land managers, conservation groups and the public these habitat enhancement projects would not be possible. We greatly appreciate your assistance and support and look forward to working with you to ‘Conserve Wildlife and Serve People’ in the years ahead.



For additional information please contact any of the personnel listed above. Also, feel free to share this report with anyone who may be interested in the Department and Commission’s habitat efforts.

The report can also be viewed on the WGFD website at <http://gf.state.wy.us/habitat/AnnualRpts/index.asp>.