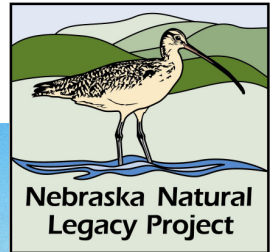


North Platte River

landscape includes the North Platte River channel and associated freshwater and alkaline wetlands and riparian woodlands within the valley from the



upper end of Lake McConaughy to the Wyoming/Nebraska border. It includes also the headwater reach of Pumpkin Creek. The North Platte River valley has a braided, mainly tree-lined channel. Cottonwood, eastern red cedar and Russian olive are the dominant floodplain trees. The majority of the river floodplain is farmed. However, both alkaline and freshwater wetland complexes remain. Many of the freshwater meadows are heavily invaded by exotic grasses. The alkaline meadows tend to be in better condition. These meadows support unique assemblages of insects including tiger beetles, dragonflies and butterflies. North Platte valley wetlands are an essential migratory stopover point for waterfowl and shorebirds. Major protected areas in this landscape include Kiowa and Chet and Jane Fleisbach Wildlife Management Areas and lands owned by Platte River Basin Environments, Inc.

Stresses Affecting Species and Habitats

- ❖ Specific livestock grazing and haying practices that may reduce native plant diversity and promote uniform habitat structure
- ❖ Invasive plant species in sandbars, meadows, and woodlands, including tall wheatgrass, Russian olive, cheatgrass, European phragmites, narrow-leaf cattail, Canada thistle, and reed canary grass
- ❖ Ditching and drainage of wetlands
- ❖ Altered natural hydrology, particularly lack of high spring flows, low summer flows, and reduced sediment transport to maintain sandbars and fish habitat and to prevent channel degradation.
- ❖ Groundwater pumping and reduced in-stream flows that impact water levels in valley wetlands
- ❖ Sedimentation and drainage of backwater sloughs
- ❖ Conversion of meadows to cropland
- ❖ Urban and second home development

Conservation Strategies

- ❖ Implement planned grazing and haying strategies on public and private lands, in combination with prescribed fire and rest, to improve native plant diversity and vigor.
- ❖ Clear eastern red cedar and undertake other tree clearings to maintain open meadow habitat for waterbirds and grassland birds
- ❖ Develop and implement best management practices to control and manage invasive plant communities
- ❖ Work with agronomists to discontinue use of tall wheatgrass, reed canary grass, and Garrison creeping foxtail in plantings
- ❖ Acquire through voluntary fee title acquisition or place conservation easements on undeveloped reaches of the river and wet meadows to protect them from development
- ❖ Restore and/or maintain North Platte River hydrology necessary to sustain biological diversity and ecosystem function . Also, restore natural hydrology to key streams in the BUL (e.g., Pumpkin Creek)
- ❖ Restore wetland hydrology and connect backwater habitats to the river
- ❖ Facilitate the establishment of prescribed burn associations

Tier I Species

Plants:

Large-spike Prairie-clover
Platte River Dodder¹

Animals:

River Otter
Bell's Vireo
Burrowing Owl
Trumpeter Swan
Regal Fritillary
Plains Topminnow

Aquatic Communities:

Headwater, Warm Water Stream
Mid-order, Warm Water River

Terrestrial Communities:

Cottonwood-Peachleaf Willow Riparian Woodland
Cottonwood Riparian Woodland
Sandbar Willow Shrubland
Buckbrush Shrubland
Buffaloberry Shrubland
Chokecherry-Plum Shrub Thicket

Freshwater Seep
Western Alkaline Meadow*
Western Subirrigated Alkaline Meadow*
Western Sedge Wet Meadow*
Cattail Shallow Marsh
Reed Marsh
Western Alkaline Marsh*
Perennial Sandbar*
Sandbar/Mudflat*
Riverine Gravel Flats*

* Priority for conservation in this BUL

¹ This is the only BUL where the species is known to occur

² Known to occur in only one other BUL

³ Known to occur in only two other BULs

⁴ Known to occur in only three other BULs