

Loess Canyons

landscape consists of steep loess hills and canyons south of the Platte River in Lincoln, Dawson, and northern Frontier counties. These hills support mixed-grass prairie and scattered cropland.

The mixed-grass prairies have been highly invaded by eastern red cedars in recent decades. Most have also been heavily grazed in the past and are infested with cheatgrass and Japanese brome. This BUL is significant because it contains one of the largest known populations of the federally and state endangered American burying beetle. This landscape contains few protected areas, the largest being the Wapiti WMA.



Stresses Affecting Species and Habitats

- ❖ Specific livestock grazing and haying practices that may reduce native plant diversity and promote uniform habitat structure
- ❖ Invasive plants species in upland prairies, primarily eastern red cedar, smooth brome, cheatgrass, Kentucky bluegrass
- ❖ Broadcast herbicide application to prairies
- ❖ Light pollution from acreage developments which impacts the American burying beetle
- ❖ Poorly-sited utility-scale wind turbines

Conservation Strategies

- ❖ Implement planned grazing strategies on private lands to reduce exotic cool-season grasses and improve native plant diversity and vigor
- ❖ Increase the use of prescribed fire and invasive tree cutting on private lands to reduce cedars, improve native plant diversity, and improve grassland wildlife habitat
- ❖ Promote use of outdoor lighting that will not interfere with American burying beetle habits
- ❖ Work with wind energy companies to select turbine sites that minimize fragmentation and impacts to native species. Avoid placing wind turbines in native prairies and woodlands, and on bluff tops where they cause higher bird and bat mortality than on open, flat ground. Wind farms should

not be located within the recommended radius of prairie grouse leks and nesting grounds. Turbines can be halted temporarily during peak migration periods for bats and birds. Pre- and post-construction monitoring should be implemented. See Nebraska Game and Parks Commission guidelines for wind energy development.

Tier I At-risk Species

Plants:

None

Animals:

River Otter

Bell's Vireo

Burrowing Owl

Greater Prairie Chicken

Loggerhead Shrike

American Burying Beetle

Regal Fritillary

Married Underwing

Whitney Underwing

Aquatic Communities:

Headwater, Warm Water Stream

Terrestrial Communities:

Buckbrush Shrubland

Freshwater Seep

Loess Mixed-grass Prairie*

* Priority for conservation in this BUL