

Community-driven team works to ensure survival of rare mouse species

A multidisciplinary team has been established to ensure the survival of the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, a threatened mammal listed under the Endangered Species Act, in the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed. The team was established following the release of a [recovery plan published in 2018](#) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The team — including Colorado State University conservation experts — known as the Poudre River Site Conservation Team, is the first of its kind and designed to give a voice to local communities in the process of recovering the Preble's mouse. The goal of the team is to work toward meeting recovery goals, striving to recommend simple, straightforward conservation tools for restoration on public and private lands for habitat improvement.

"The Preble's mouse is important as an indicator of healthy riparian ecosystems," said George Seidel, a member of the team, landowner in the watershed and University Distinguished Professor Emeritus at CSU. The species is only found below 7,600 feet in dense, streamside vegetation consisting of shrubs, grasses and flowering plants along the Front Range of Colorado and southeastern Wyoming.

Seidel said meeting recovery goals for the Preble's mouse will be a team effort among stakeholders and will reflect good land management that benefits private landowners and public lands.

"Working collaboratively with community members for its recovery is the main goal of the team," he added.

Landowners' roles and opportunities

The recovery goal for the Preble's mouse in the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre watershed is a minimum of 57 miles of healthy, connected habitat.

The team has invited private landowners and public land managers will help with this effort by participating in a program to provide protection or restoration of Preble's mouse habitat. The team's members are pursuing financial opportunities to support future projects.

"Traditional and current agricultural and land management practices have been compatible with the Preble's mouse, and can be enhanced to maintain the population at the natural density for this species," Seidel said. "Our efforts will build on and expand these efforts by partnering with landowners and public agencies to ensure its survival and meet recovery goals."

The main objectives of the site conservation team include to:

- Evaluate the conditions of the riparian habitat along the streams within the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed and identify a suitable area for the recovery population
- Recommend land management practices to improve and reconnect habitat, and
- Identify financial resources through agreements and partnerships that are available to private landowners to improve Preble's mouse habitat.

Three additional teams have been established on the Colorado Front Range in the Saint Vrain, Plum Creek and Monument Creek watersheds. Project leaders anticipate that other teams will also be created

in Colorado and Wyoming. The goal for all the recovery efforts is to contribute to delisting the Preble's mouse.

Site Conservation Team Partners

- U.S. Forest Service: Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Coalition for the Poudre River
- Colorado Water Conservation Board
- CSU's Colorado Natural Heritage Program
- CSU's Center for Collaborative Conservation
- Larimer County Natural Resources/Open Space
- City of Ft Collins Utilities
- City of Fort Collins, Department of Natural Resources
- The Nature Conservancy
- East Rabbit Creek Ranch
- Landowners Association for Phantom Canyon Ranches
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Colorado State Land Board, North Central District
- Colorado Open Lands
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

For more information, visit https://collaborativeconservation.org/2021/06/03/prebles_sct/ .

The Site Conservation Team is partnering with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to engage with local communities and form partnerships among stakeholders in conservation and restoration efforts in the Poudre River's North Fork watershed.

The final recovery plan released in 2018 for the Preble's mouse was developed in partnership with Colorado and Wyoming state wildlife agencies, The Nature Conservancy, Colorado Natural Heritage Program at CSU, ERO Resource Corporation, U.S. Forest Service and Ecology and Environment, Inc.