



# The Waterways for Wildlife Initiative

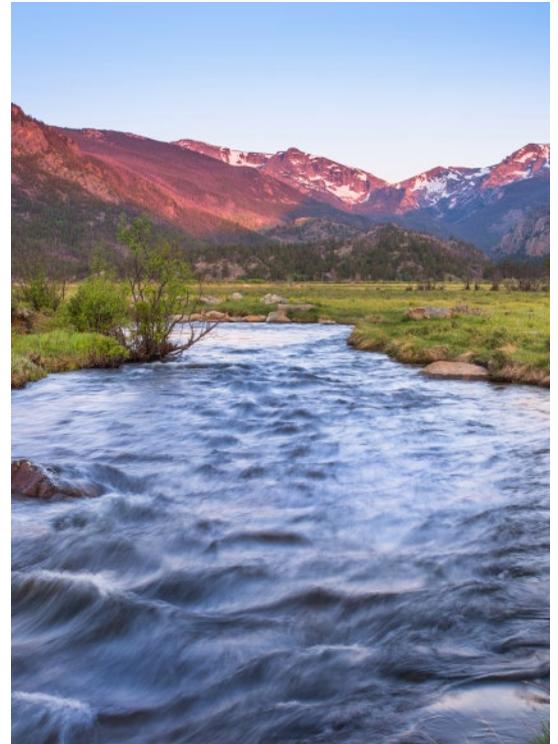
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Healthy Habitats. Healthy Harvests.™



# The Waterways for Wildlife Initiative

The National Wild Turkey Federation developed the Waterways for Wildlife Initiative, a comprehensive, landscape-level effort, to address critically urgent conservation needs in riparian ecosystems along rivers and streams in the Great Plains of the United States. Announced in 2021, this ambitious initiative is designed to continue our efforts addressing declining riparian, or streamside, health in America's Big Six of Wildlife Conservation, specifically America's Great Open Spaces and America's Western Wildlands. In the West's arid plains, riparian areas are a natural magnet for wild turkeys and hundreds of other species of wildlife. Many of these important wildlife habitats, however, are in poor condition due to a variety of causes. To address critical conservation issues, the NWTF is partnering with landowners, governmental agencies and other conservation organizations to restore these vitally important ecosystems across the landscape. Over the next 10 years (2022-32), the NWTF will improve 75,000 acres of wildlife habitat along 1,500 linear miles of waterways in the Great Plains landscape.



## Project Summaries FY23

### First Creek Waterway Project - Colorado

Restore 3.5 miles of First Creek, a vital South Platte River tributary that flows through Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. The creek's channelization and degradation have harmed natural vegetation and increased flooding, negatively impacting 140 acres of riparian habitat. This project involves mechanical and manual removal of invasive flora, replanting with native species and reshaping creek banks to enhance water quality and mitigate floods. These actions will restore the creek's original floodplain and flow patterns, rejuvenating its ecosystem.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
United States Fish and Wildlife Service	\$10,000	\$44,082	\$54,082



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## South Fork Republican River Restoration - Kansas

Improve wildlife habitat and river system health by removing invasive species from riparian areas of the Republican River. Project includes 350 acres of mechanical removal of invasive species such as salt cedar, Russian olive and Eastern red cedars on lands enrolled in the KDWP Walk-in Hunting Access program and other private lands.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks	\$10,000	\$115,000	\$125,000

## Brzon WMA Riparian Vegetation Management - Kansas

Restore riparian habitat along Rose Creek on the Brzon Wildlife Area managed by KDWP. Project consists of 320 acres of invasive species removal such as Eastern red cedar and locust through cutting and mulching. The mulch generated from this project will be mixed with mud to be used in Low-tech Process-Based in-stream structure maintenance.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks	\$20,000	\$1,654,909	\$1,679,169

## Phase 2b Flint Creek Riparian Habitat Restoration Project - Montana

Restore, enhance and protect a 1,300-foot reach of stream corridor and 20 acres of wetlands and riparian habitat on private land on Flint Creek in Granite County, Montana. Project entails stream channel restoration, fencing and revegetation. Native and wild trout species, nongame fish, waterfowl, game birds, migratory birds, songbirds and a variety of mammalian, reptile and amphibian species are expected to benefit.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Trout Unlimited	\$10,000	\$130,000	\$140,000



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## Wildcat Bend Acquisition on Lower Yellowstone River - Montana

Permanently protect, through fee-title acquisition, the “Wildcat Bend” property located in Rosebud County, Montana. This project involves the acquisition of 328 contiguous acres of riparian habitat and more than 2 miles of associated shoreline along the Yellowstone River to be transferred to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Benefits include permanent protection of habitat for riparian-associated species, including a wide variety of terrestrial game and nongame wildlife species, as well as public recreation access.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Pheasants Forever	\$25,000	\$1,160,000	\$1,185,000

## Mill Creek Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Conservation Project - Montana

Enhance 35 acres and 6,440 feet of Mill Creek near Paradise Valley, Montana. Projects within this planned phase include in-stream habitat restoration and floodplain reconnection using Low-tech Process-Based techniques. Expected benefits include increased aquatic and terrestrial habitat diversity, and improved water quality.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Trout Unlimited	\$7,500	\$192,880	\$200,380

## Dugas Conservation Easement Fence, Tree and Irrigation Project - Montana

Develop a mature riparian tree and shrub community on 8.5 acres and 1,350 linear feet along the Missouri River in Cascade County. This project entails tree and shrub plantings, fencing and irrigation. The project is expected to benefit a variety of bird species, to include game birds, nongame species and neotropical migrants.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
NorthWestern Energy	\$2,500	\$84,017	\$86,517



# The Waterways for Wildlife Initiative

## Painted Woods Creek Addition - North Dakota

This acquisition was made possible by our partners at the North Dakota Natural Resources Trust, North Dakota Game and Fish Department and the American Foundation for Wildlife. Located in southeastern McLean County, North Dakota, this acquisition is an addition to Painted Woods Creek WMA, existing public land owned by the NDGF. This 166-acre addition will make the WMA a total of 1,191 acres. This project increases public land available and improves water quality efforts as Painted Woods Creek flows into the Missouri River. Future project work will install grassed waterways to assist in flood mitigation and reduce soil erosion.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
North Dakota Natural Resources Trust	\$25,000	\$925,000	\$950,000

## Niobrara Exclosure Habitat Improvement and Bovee Fire Recovery - Nebraska

Restore 56 acres of riparian woodlands on the Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest along the Niobrara River in Nebraska. Project consists of mechanical and chemical treatment of invasive species like Eastern red cedar near the 2022 Waterways for Wildlife project on Chat Canyon Wildlife Management Area and will benefit wild turkey, white-tailed deer and mule deer, as well as the American burying beetle, state-listed riparian plants, northern long-eared bat and many other species included in the Nebraska Natural Legacy Plan.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	\$5,000	\$75,753	\$99,113

## Post-Fire Restoration of the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area's Wild Turkey Sanctuary - New Mexico

This project will restore a 5-acre dedicated wild turkey sanctuary within a 97-acre conservation area that was burned during a 2022 catastrophic wildfire. The turkey sanctuary was originally funded and created by the NWTF Middle Rio Grande Chapter, and this project will focus on restoring the turkey sanctuary to meet the needs of wild turkeys. The restoration work aims to provide roosting trees, nest cover and brooding habitat for wild turkeys. A major component of this project is planting and promoting native plants that will thrive with future climate change models and reduce invasive species that have thrived after the wildfire.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District	\$5,000	\$51,750	\$56,750



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## ODWC Canton WMA Cedar Removal - Oklahoma

Restore 215 acres of riparian habitat along the Canadian River on Canton Wildlife Management Area in northwest Oklahoma. Project consists of removing Eastern red cedar through cutting and stacking in high-density areas, followed by prescribed fire, benefiting Rio Grande wild turkeys by improving roost sites, foraging areas and visibility.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation	\$20,000	\$60,000	\$80,000

## Black Kettle WMA Riparian Restoration Project - Oklahoma

Restore 463 acres of riparian habitat along the Canadian River on Black Kettle Wildlife Management Area in Oklahoma. Project consists of Eastern red cedar removal through mastication or by hand crew, benefiting Rio Grande wild turkey, bobwhite quail, white-tailed deer, mule deer and the Texas horned lizard.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation	\$22,000	\$66,000	\$88,000

## Polecat Creek Restoration Project - Oklahoma

Restore 40 acres of riparian habitat along the Polecat Creek, part of the Arkansas River system, on Heyburn Wildlife Management Area in Oklahoma. Project consists of Eastern red cedar removal through mulching, followed by prescribed fire for maintenance. This benefits the Rio Grande wild turkey and many other wildlife species, as well as improves water quality and quantity by removing groundwater competition.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation	\$10,000	\$30,000	\$40,000



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## Castle Creek Fencing Kinney Canyon Walk-in Fishery - South Dakota

This project will help protect roughly a mile and a half of streambanks on Castle Creek in the northern Black Hills and will be completed in partnership with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks as well as the Black Hills Fly Fishers Club. Livestock grazing in the area has diminished streambanks and subsequently reduced the water quality needed to support multiple trout species (and other fish) that use the waters. This project will put up exclusion fencing around the streambanks for a critical portion of Castle Creek. The fencing will be designed to stop livestock access to the creek but still provide easy access to anglers and other recreational users. Removing livestock from grazing these areas will allow native vegetation to regrow and stabilize the banks, which will reduce erosion and ultimately increase water quality.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks	\$10,000	\$120,300	\$130,300

## Partnering to Enhance Key Upland and Riparian Habitats on Private Lands in NWTF Focal Landscapes in South Dakota - South Dakota

This project partners with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks as well as private landowners across the state. The goal of this project work is to improve riparian habitat and water quality through enhanced grazing infrastructure. Common projects include livestock-exclusion fencing, water source creation and pipeline installation. Excluding livestock from waterways will eliminate foot traffic in the waterway, reducing grazing of the vegetation that stabilizes the banks, and will reduce compaction and excess nutrients from entering the waterway. Each of these improvements have direct water-quality benefits and provide habitat for wildlife as well.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks	\$10,000	\$30,000	\$40,000

## Oxbows of the Big Sioux River - South Dakota

Inform visitors (primarily youth) to the Outdoor Campus in Sioux Falls, South Dakota on the importance of riparian habitat for both water quality and wildlife. Partnering with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks, as well as the Friends of the Big Sioux River, to distribute outreach and educational brochures to nearly 100,000 visitors the park has each year.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks	\$500	\$1,500	\$2,000



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## West Slope Riparian Enhancement - Bear Creek Conifer and Invasive Tree Removal - Wyoming

Restore watershed health and habitat for multiple species. Project entails removal of conifer encroachment and invasive tree species on 67 acres and along 7,950 feet of headwaters on Bear Creek, emanating from the west slope of the Bighorn Mountains in north-central Wyoming. The removal of conifer and invasive species is expected to release native riparian deciduous species, improving wildlife habitat and increasing availability of water throughout the riparian zone.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Bureau of Land Management	\$5,000	\$90,000	\$95,000

## Weston Drainage Juniper Removal - Wyoming

This project involves the mechanical removal of juniper and restoration of broadleaf trees and shrubs in a drainage and surrounding uplands located in the Weston Hills on the Thunder Basin National Grasslands north of Gillette, Wyoming. The project will increase water flows to help restore natural erosion processes and deposition events that provide areas for natural cottonwood recruitment and the re-establishment of riparian shrubs, grasses and forbs, which in turn help to stabilize streambanks and provide quality forage for wildlife. Treatments will take place on 295 acres and along 6 linear miles of drainage.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
United States Forest Service	\$20,000	\$96,250	\$116,250

## Hesse Ranch Beaver Dam Analog Structures - Wyoming

Install a total of 30 beaver dam analog structures on 1.5 miles of the North Fork of the Red Fork Powder River on the Hesse Ranch, with the objectives of improving riparian hydrologic function and restoring riparian ecosystem in Johnson County, Wyoming. The activities will take place on 8 acres along 7,920 feet of stream corridor.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Wyoming Game and Fish Department	\$5,000	\$36,400	\$41,400



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## Popo Agie Creek Russian Olive Removal - Wyoming

Continues ongoing long-term efforts to remove invasive Russian olive trees along the length of Popo Agie Creek creek near Lander, Wyoming. Russian olive trees are removed through mechanical methods and stump treatments with herbicide. This phase will treat 100 acres along 7 miles of Popo Agie Creek. Treatments are expected to benefit native trees, shrubs and forb components, in turn benefiting wildlife habitat and water quantity.

Grantee	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Project Amount
Wyoming Game and Fish Department	\$2,500	\$28,000	\$30,500

