Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative

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PARTNERS

- Apache Corporation
- Cargill
- Chevron Corporation
- ConocoPhillips
- Occidental Corporation
- Nestle USA
- XTO Energy, Inc., an ExxonMobil subsidiary
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

ABOUT NFWF

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 6,800 organizations and generated a total conservation impact of more than $10 billion.

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Pecos River

OVERVIEW

The Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative (PWCI) is dedicated to restoring and sustaining healthy rivers, streams and grasslands that provide important wildlife habitat in the Pecos River watershed of southeastern New Mexico and West Texas. The fund was launched in 2017 to identify significant conservation opportunities that improve habitat, address water scarcity, improve water quality and engage local communities.

Since its inception, the PWCI has invested a total of $12 million in 59 projects that address three priority strategies: habitat restoration and management of riparian and grassland systems, species intervention and species information. These projects benefit migratory grassland birds like chestnut collared longspur, Sprague's pipit and pronghorn, and implement aquatic and riparian restoration activities that benefit Pecos pupfish, Pecos gambusia, Texas hornshell and Rio Grande cooter.

The PWCI is an unprecedented and strategic partnership between the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and Apache Corporation, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Occidental Corporation, XTO Energy, an ExxonMobil subsidiary, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Implementation partners include soil and water conservation districts, nonprofit organizations, state wildlife agencies in New Mexico and Texas, federal agencies and universities.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The PWCI will:

- Strengthen the health of habitat along the Pecos River and its tributaries in West Texas and southern New Mexico, including some of the last remaining populations of fish and other aquatic species found only in the Chihuahuan Desert
- Improve the management and function of native grasslands, many of which have been negatively impacted by past management and fragmentation
- Address water quality and scarcity concerns for wildlife and agricultural uses
- Identify opportunities to re-establish species to areas of their range where they have been lost or bolster small remnant populations

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PWCI investments are targeted primarily in tributary watersheds and grasslands within the region where investments in restoration are expected to realize the greatest return for species. The priority conservation strategies for the region were determined by a team of local partners with on-the-ground knowledge of conservation needs and opportunities and are detailed in NFWF's Southwest Rivers Business Plan.

2023 GRANTS

Facilitating Grassland Conservation in the Trans-Pecos: Using Science to Guide Management (TX)
Grantee: Borderlands Research Institute-Sul Ross State University
Grant Amount:. $250,000
Matching Funds:. $250,000
Total Project Amount:. $500,000
Evaluate impacts of herbicide applications on targeted invasive brush species and subsequent wintering grassland bird response in the Trans-Pecos Region. Project will utilize vegetation and bird monitoring data to develop applicable Best Management Practices and improved management practices, and expand fencing modification to benefit pronghorn.

Grassland Restoration and Reconnection in Hudspeth County and Hovey Grasslands (TX)
Grantee: Parks and Wildlife Foundation of Texas
Grant Amount:. $346,700
Matching Funds:. $346,700
Total Project Amount:. $693,400
Conduct herbicide application restoring 10,000 acres of brush-invaded dry mixed prairie in northern Hudspeth County and hovey grasslands in Brewster and Pecos counties, critical habitat for chestnut-collared longspur, Sprague's pipit and pronghorn. Project will strategically expand existing grassland for the greatest net gain of contiguous, usable habitat for grassland species with an emphasis on reconnecting patches of intact prairie.

Grassland and Riparian Restoration for Native Species in Chaves and Eddy Counties (NM)
Grantee: Chaves Soil and Water Conservation District
Grant Amount:. $100,000
Matching Funds:. $656,100
Total Project Amount:. $756,100
Install up to 10 miles of pronghorn-friendly fencing to maximize pronghorn movement across the landscape, enabling increased antelope movement and habitat access within Chaves County, New Mexico. Project will contribute to local efforts to re-establish pronghorn populations within grassland habitats throughout the Pecos River drainage in Chaves and Eddy counties.

Habitat Conservation Plan and Instream Flow Initiative for the Texas Hornshell Mussel (NM, TX)
Grantee: Center of Excellence
Grant Amount:. $25,000
Matching Funds:. $25,000
Total Project Amount:. $50,000
Support the development of a Habitat Conservation Plan and provide instream flow for the Texas hornshell mussel in the Black and Delaware rivers through short or long-term water transactions in times of low flow. Project will develop a long-term plan to maintain instream flows and will provide guidance for the conservation and management of Texas hornshell mussel and its habitat by reducing or eliminating threats.

Implementing a Monitoring Program for Wintering Grassland Birds in the Chihuahuan Desert (NM, TX)
Grantee: Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
Grant Amount:. $300,000
Matching Funds:. $300,000
Total Project Amount:. $600,000
Conduct surveys of wintering grassland birds including Sprague's pipits and chestnut-collared longspurs in the Chihuahuan Desert. Project will estimate the density of wintering grassland birds in the Chihuahuan Desert to provide baseline numbers of grassland bird populations informing critical on-the-ground habitat management changes to mitigate decline.

Improving Grasslands and Fences to Restore Habitat Connectivity for Pronghorn (NM)
Grantee: Carlsbad Soil and Water Conservation District
Grant Amount:. $420,900
Matching Funds:. $420,900
Total Project Amount:. $841,800
Improve grassland habitat in Eddy County through herbicide treatment of invasive mesquite and creosote and replacement of 9 miles of net wire fencing. Project will include restoration of invasive invaded grasslands throughout southeastern New Mexico, promoting pronghorn movement across large grassland areas and pronghorn-friendly fence passes will be installed to reinstate historic migration patterns of the pronghorn.

Native Grassland Restoration to Benefit Pronghorn and Grassland Bird Species (TX)
Grantee: Big Bend Soil and Water Conservation District
Grant Amount:. $250,000
Matching Funds:. $250,000
Total Project Amount:. $500,000
Restore native grassland habitat for use by pronghorn and migratory grassland birds in Brewster and Jeff Davis counties in Texas through pronghorn-friendly fence replacement and invasive brush removal. Project will control invasive brush species including mesquite, tarbush, whitebrush and creosote using chemical and mechanical removal methods to improve pronghorn habitat.

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2024 GRANTS

Building Capacity for Flows Restoration in the Texas Reach of the Pecos Basin (TX)
Grantee: Texas Water Trade
Grant Amount:..... $192,800
Matching Funds:..... $220,000
Total Project Amount:..... $412,800
Hire a dedicated Pecos River Basin Manager to advance freshwater restoration work in the Texas reach. Project will induce more water calls from Red Bluff Reservoir to boost flow in the main reach, negotiate additional groundwater forbearance agreements to increase water storage and springflow in the Edwards-Trinity Aquifer, advance mitigation of flowing oil and gas wells proximate to the Pecos River and evaluate the potential for reuse of produced water for environmental and agricultural benefit.

Expanding Ecoregion-Wide Monitoring to Measure Success of Pronghorn Habitat Improvements (TX)
Grantee: Borderlands Research Institute-Sul Ross State University
Grant Amount:..... $124,900
Matching Funds:..... $125,000
Total Project Amount:..... $249,900
Monitor and analyze pronghorn habitat quality and invasive brush to provide annual projections of brush dominance in the landscape for use in monitoring brush distribution and impact on pronghorn. Project will provide a rigorous framework for inexpensive, efficient and long-term monitoring of pronghorn habitat improvement efforts.

Grassland and Riparian Restoration for Native Species in Chaves and Eddy Counties (NM)
Grantee: Chaves Soil and Water Conservation District
Grant Amount:..... $276,700
Matching Funds:..... $418,500
Total Project Amount:..... $695,200
Install pronghorn-friendly fencing in Chaves and Eddy counties, restore riparian areas and treat invasives such as salt cedar. Project will provide a more continuous, healthy habitat for pronghorn and other grassland species.

Increasing Understanding of the Rio Grande Cooter to Inform Future Recovery Options (NM, TX)
Grantee: Eastern New Mexico University
Grant Amount:..... $235,700
Matching Funds:..... $238,600
Total Project Amount:..... $474,300
Research abiotic stressors and microbiome variation of Rio Grande cooter and detect new populations with environmental DNA to refine an ecological niche model. Project results will inform habitat suitability modeling and help target conservation efforts.

Restoring Grasslands and Enhancing Riparian Habitat in Southeastern New Mexico
Grantee: Western Landowners Alliance
Grant Amount:..... $272,200
Matching Funds:..... $272,200
Total Project Amount:..... $544,400
Replace fencing, address invasive species in pastures, assess potential for riparian restoration and monitor avian species on 1.1 million acres of ranch land in Eddy, Chaves and Otero counties in New Mexico. Project will restore and enhance habitat for pronghorn, which will increase migratory ranges and both the quality and quantity of forage.

Restoring Grasslands in Hudspeth and Culberson Counties for Pronghorn and Grassland Birds (TX)
Grantee: Parks and Wildlife Foundation of Texas
Grant Amount:..... $500,000
Matching Funds:..... $500,000
Total Project Amount:..... $1,000,000
Continue aerial herbicide application to treat around 14,000 acres of invasive brush on University Lands properties and private ranches in Hudspeth and Culberson counties in Texas. Project will help secure a currently isolated, but stable pronghorn population and benefit grassland bird communities by expanding the footprint of suitable grassland habitat for them to thrive in the long term.

Restoring and Reconnecting Grasslands for Native Species in Jeff Davis and Presidio Counties (TX)
Grantee: Highland Soil and Water Conservation District
Grant Amount:..... $112,500
Matching Funds:..... $112,500
Total Project Amount:..... $225,000
Install pronghorn-friendly fence, manage brush encroachment, and implement range for wildlife planting. Project will improve habitat for grassland birds and pronghorn and help mitigate the effects of drought by increasing plant productivity and health, which in turn will stabilize and maintain healthy soils.

Watershed Restoration on Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Adjacent BLM Lands (NM)
Grantee: National Wildlife Refuge Association
Grant Amount:..... $324,000
Matching Funds:..... $589,000
Total Project Amount:..... $913,000
Remove invasive salt cedar on Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent BLM land and add capacity for restoration efforts on the Refuge. Project is intended to increase the flow of springs that feed into Bitter Creek.