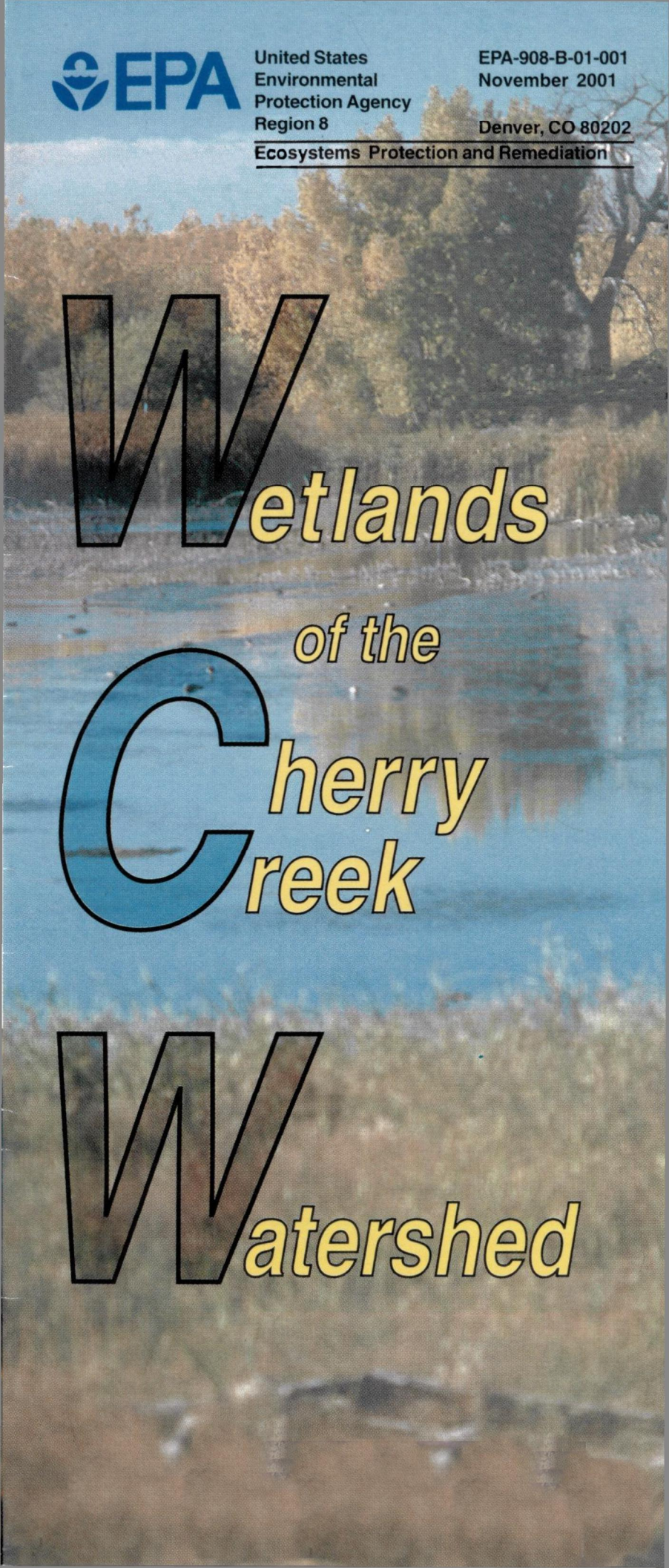
EPA
United States
Environmental
Protection Agency
Region 8
EPA-908-B-01-001
November 2001
Denver, CO 80202
Ecosystems Protection and Remediation



Wetlands of the Cherry Creek Watershed

Wetlands of Cherry Creek

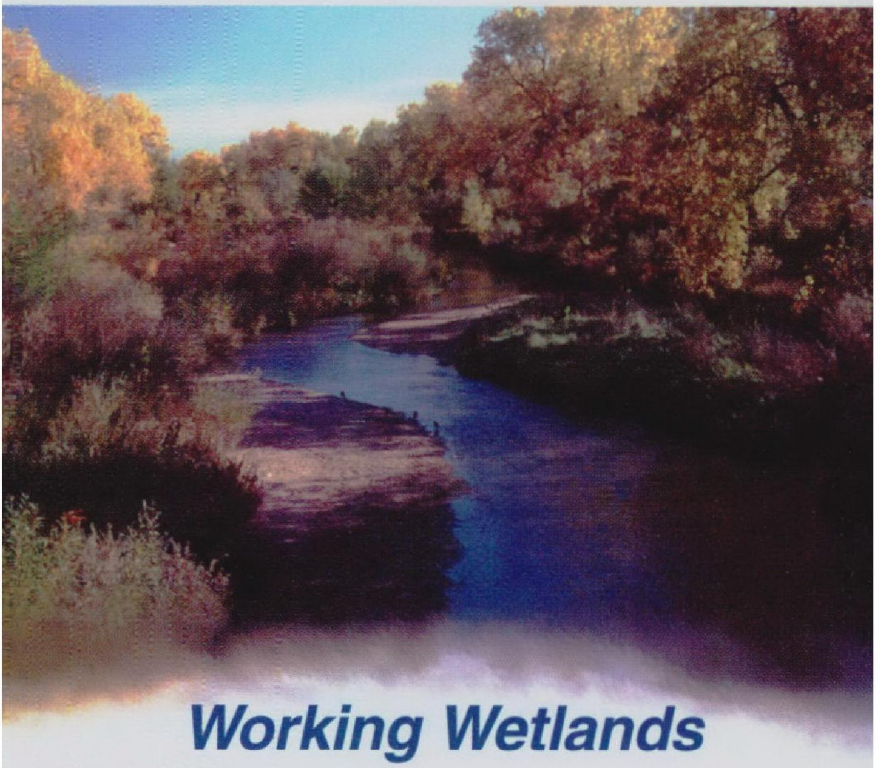
Cherry Creek begins its journey in El Paso and Douglas Counties. The waters of Cherry Creek flow through Franktown, Parker and Aurora, into the reservoir of Cherry Creek State Park, then through urban Denver to the confluence of the South Platte River. Wetlands are critical watershed elements, comprised of the following types. The map inside this brochure includes examples of each type.

Wet meadows may not look like wetlands because their vegetation is so different. Wet meadows usually do not have open water. Early summer plants include grasses, sedges and occasionally, wild irises. Late in the season these sites may appear dry, unlike marshes that usually have standing water.

Riparian areas of the semiarid west are narrow bands of lush vegetation growing on stream banks within the broader, dry environment. Cottonwoods and willows are typical riparian plants. These areas are natural corridors used by wildlife for shelter and food. This thin band of vegetation makes up less than 3 percent of the Colorado landscape, but contains about 75 percent of our plant and animal diversity.

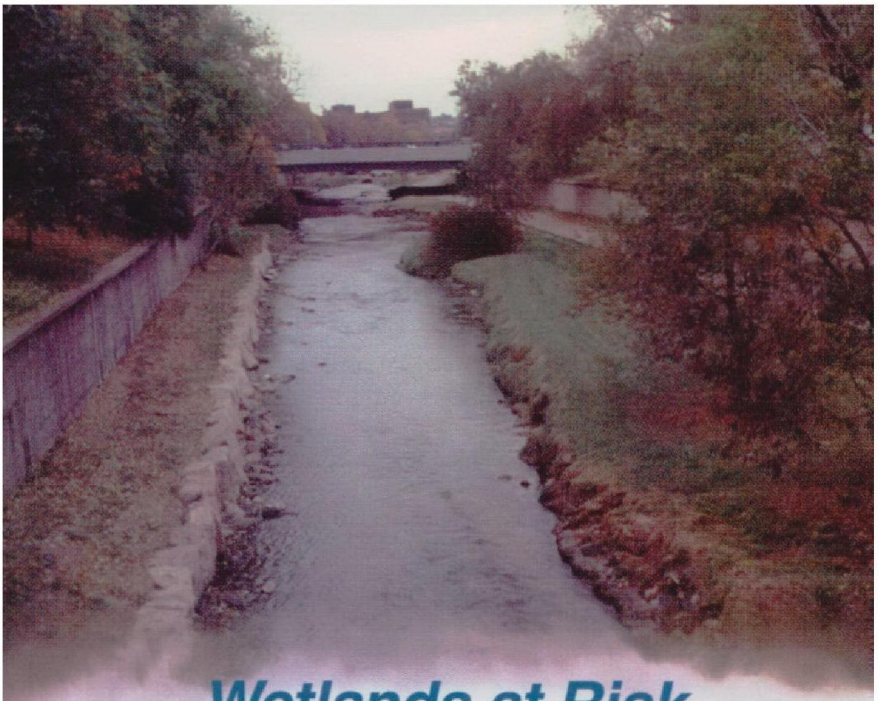
Marshes in the watershed contain cattails, sedges, bulrushes and some open water. Cottonwoods and willows sometimes fringe areas of open water. Marshes attract a large variety of waterfowl and other birds such as redwing blackbirds, common yellow throat and white pelicans. These are important breeding areas for many amphibians.

Constructed treatment wetlands are artificial wetlands built specifically for treating water quality problems. They should not be confused with restored or created wetlands, which may be required to mitigate impacts to natural wetlands. Properly designed, constructed wetlands improve water quality, as well as provide wildlife habitat and opportunities for recreation and education. Examples in the Cherry Creek Watershed are the Shop Creek Wetlands in Cherry Creek State Park and the Cottonwood Creek Wetlands currently under construction in Greenwood Village.



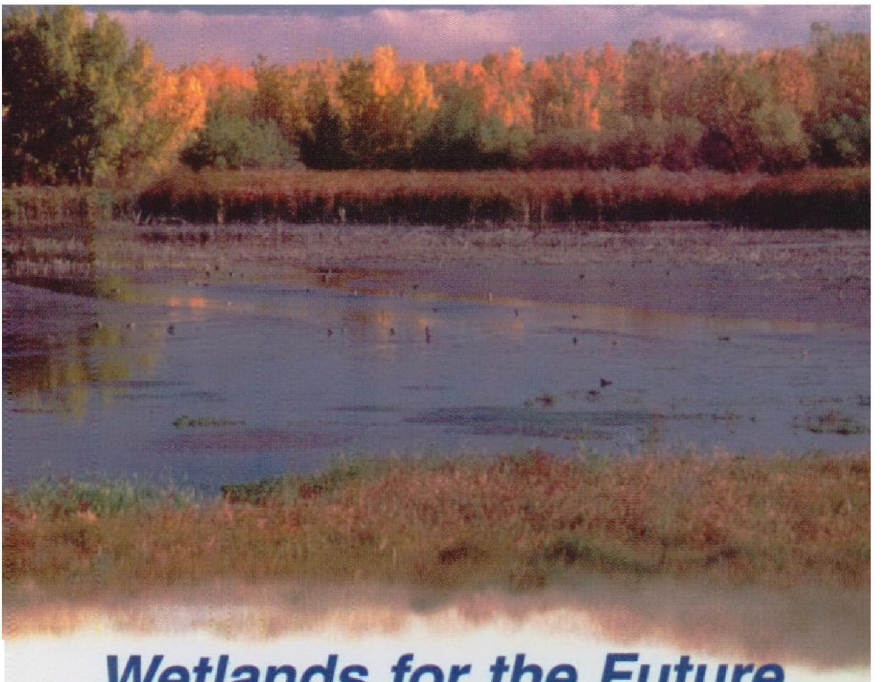
Working Wetlands

Wetlands play a great role in a watershed context. Wetlands function as water storage during floods, slowing the speed of flood waters. They are sources of ground and surface water for domestic and agriculture needs. Many species of wildlife depend on wetlands for their survival. Wetlands improve water quality and provide scientific, educational and recreational opportunities. Wetlands are great places to watch wildlife and learn the importance of aquatic resource. Schools are using wetlands to teach about the environment, demonstrating in nature, the principles discussed in the classroom.



Wetlands at Risk

Wetlands are at risk of being lost if the public is not informed about the importance of protecting and preserving these critical aquatic resources. The Cherry Creek corridor has undergone many changes in land use. Residential and commercial development, highway construction and agricultural activities are reducing the number and size of the wetlands. Today, less than half of Colorado's wetlands remain. Major causes of wetlands losses include agricultural conversion and urbanization. In the Cherry Creek watershed, concerns have been raised about water quality, riparian and wetland losses, recreation pressures and flooding.



Wetlands for the Future

Not all of the changes to the area have been detrimental. A bike path follows much of Cherry Creek to the confluence of the South Platte, enhancing the public's opportunity to experience and appreciate the diversity of an ecosystem. Careful design and construction of bike paths, or any corridors, are important to prevent altering the flow of water and changing the wetland dynamics.

The Environmental Protection Agency, in partnership with other agencies, nonprofit organizations and local citizens, shares responsibility for protecting our wetland resources. Wetlands are protected under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Section 404 requires a permit, issued by the Corps of Engineers, to fill or dredge a wetland. Preserving or constructing wetlands can be integral to new development, enhancing both the natural and man-made environments.

The Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners is an informal association of stakeholders promoting effective stewardship of the Cherry Creek Watershed. This broad coalition represents local jurisdictions; State and Federal resource agencies; environmental conservation, recreation, and historic preservation groups; and the business community. The Partners provide a forum to discuss and implement approaches for protecting and enhancing the natural resources of the Cherry Creek Watershed.

For more Information:

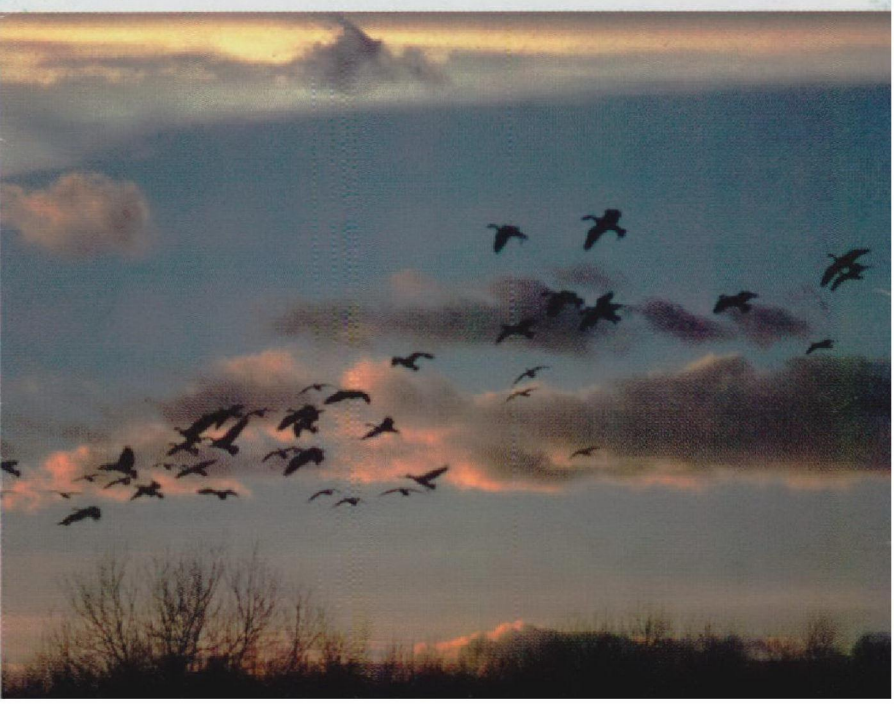
U.S. EPA Region 8: 303-312-6312

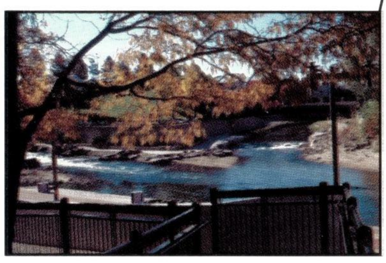
U.S. EPA Wetlands Help Line: 1-800-832-7828

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Tri-Lake Project Office): 303-979-4120

Cherry Creek State Park: 303-699-3860

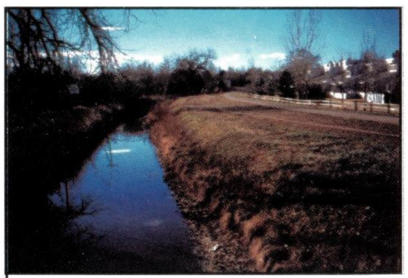
Colorado Division of Wildlife: 303-297-1192

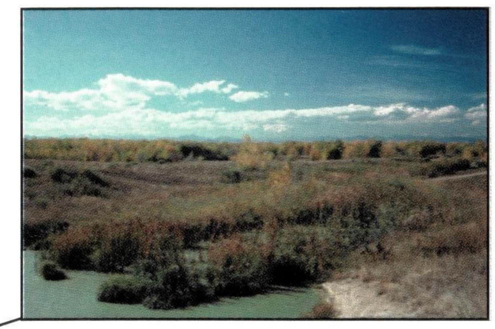




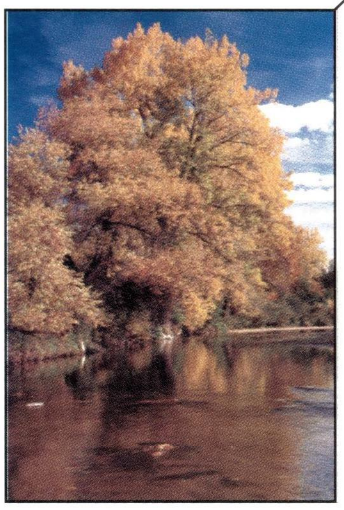
Confluence Park

Restoration Opportunity

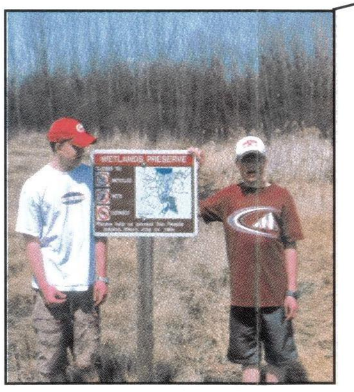




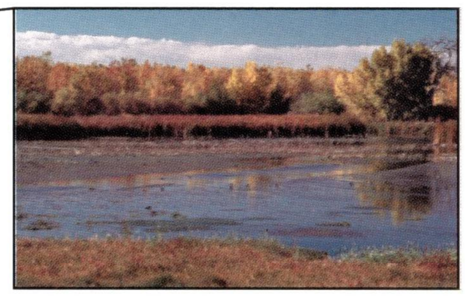
Constructed Treatment Wetlands



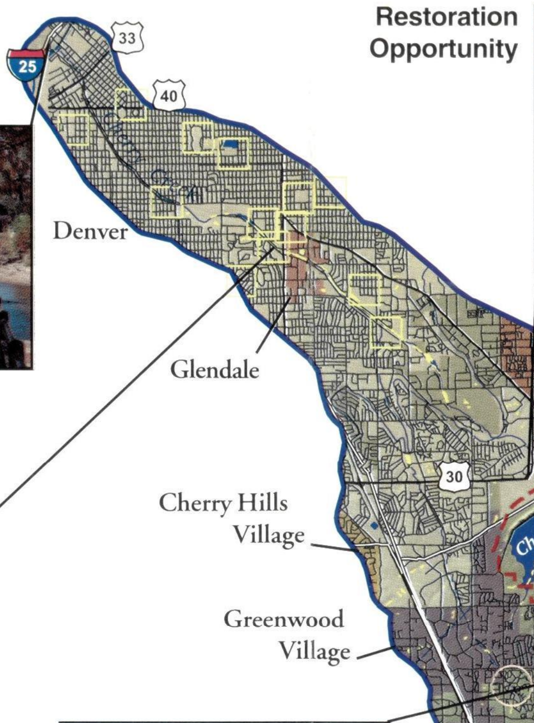
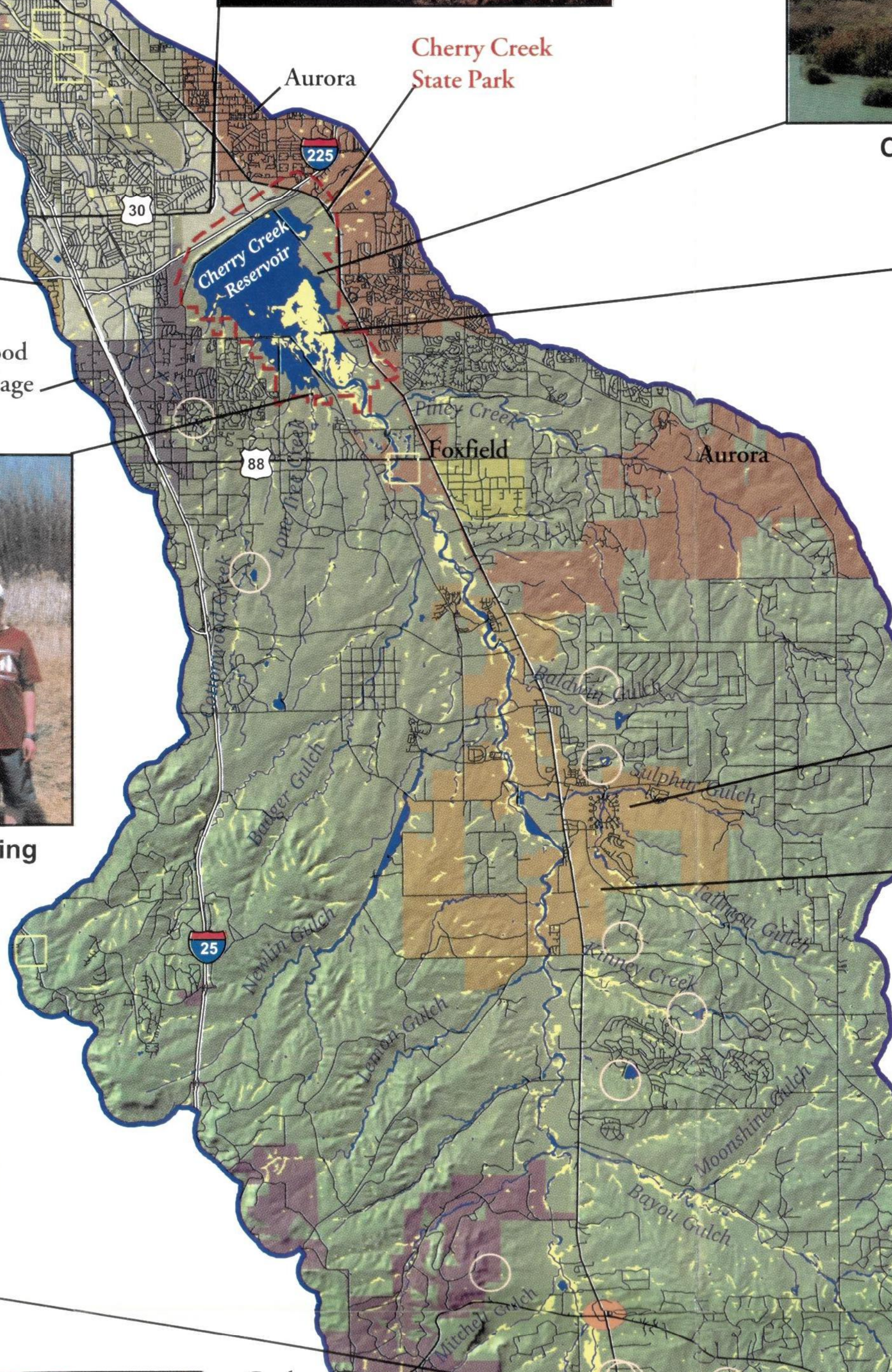
Riparian

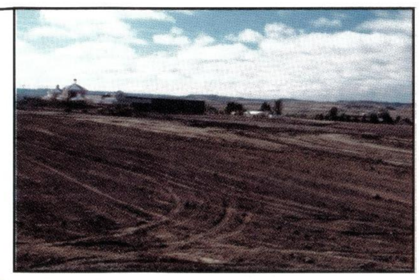


Trailheads for Hiking



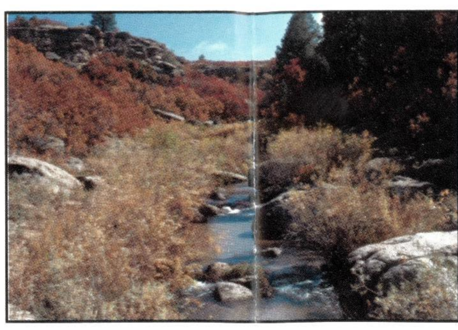
Marshes

Development in the Watershed

Loss of Riparian Vegetation



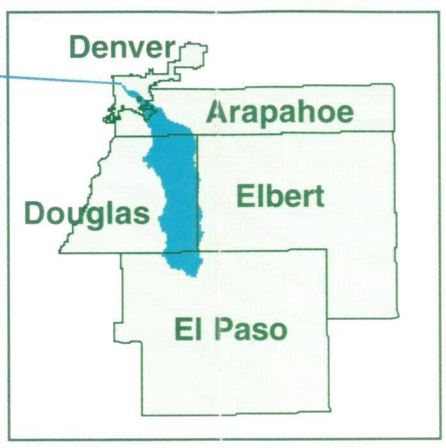
Natural Riparian Area in Castlewood State Park

Cherry Creek Watershed

Total Area in Square Miles: 411

Total Area (square miles), Area and Percent of the Watershed in Each County:

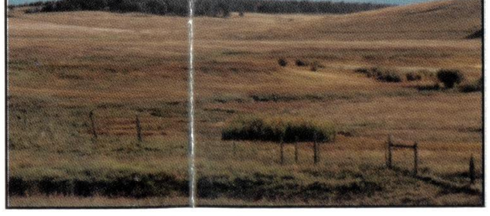
Counties	Area	Watershed	%
Arapahoe	805	50	6
Denver	155	17	11
Douglas	843	291	35
El Paso	2130	43	2
Elbert	1851	11	0.6



The Cherry Creek Watershed

- NWI¹/CDOW² Open Water Classification; NHD³ Rivers, Ponds, Lakes, Reservoirs, Inundated Areas.
- NWI Combined Wetlands Classes; CDOW Combined Riparian Classes
- DPOR⁴ State Park Boundaries (approximate)
- Reservoirs (Wessex⁵)
- Parks (Wessex)

This key includes only unlabled map features



Wetland Meadows

* Approximate Scale
[1] National Wetlands Inventory
[2] Colorado Department of Wildlife
[3] National Hydrography Dataset
[4] Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
[5] Wessex Corperation revision of 1990 Census Data.