

McMurry-Poudre Restoration Phase 1 & 2

Fort Collins, Colorado



McMurry Natural Area is a 44-acre site in the western part of Fort Collins that includes two floodplain ponds and a half-mile of riparian corridor along the Cache la Poudre River. Former sand and gravel mining had scarred the landscape and left high armored riverbanks, containing concrete and automobiles, and steep pond edges with minimal ecological function and little biological diversity.

In Phase 1, Biohabitats worked closely with the City and led a design-build effort that targeted the western pond and areas outside of the floodway. The restoration design focused on lowering elevated pond edges, creating shallow wetlands, and revegetating the riparian area. A diverse assemblage of five vegetated zones were created including emergent wetland, wet meadow, willow, cottonwood, and upland grasses. To facilitate public use and stewardship of the site, the design included a pedestrian trail and designated fishing areas. Grading and planting of Phase 1 was completed in June 2011.

A former sand and gravel mining site is transformed into a rich habitat mosaic of aquatic, emergent, woody, and herbaceous communities within the floodplain ponds.

Phase 2 of the project was initiated by the City in 2013 to expand the restoration to the eastern gravel pit as well as include streambank and channel improvements. Biohabitats led this effort which included preparing the Phase 2 design-build plans, coordinating floodplain modeling analysis, and implementing all aspects of construction including erosion control and soil management. The project included removing concrete and debris from the stream bank, lowering high berms to reconnect the floodplain, regrading the ponds' shorelines and berms to more gradual slopes, and using the excavated soils to create shallow water wetlands along the edges of the ponds.

The Poudre River Master Plan found that the cottonwood riparian forest regeneration has been negatively affected by the urbanization and alterations in

the flow regime, and the diversity of the Poudre's native vegetation is limited. Accordingly, the full design included planting native wetland vegetation and upland trees and shrubs to enlarge the riparian forest and increase species diversity of the upper pond banks. Upon completion of the project, the property will provide the City of Fort Collins residents with additional recreational opportunities for fishing and hiking as well as nature experiences. To enhance those experiences, our designs used on-site, natural materials such as downed trees, cobble, and large boulders to create access, seating, and educational opportunities.

SERVICES

- Inventory & Assessments
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- Permitting
- Post-construction Monitoring
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*conservation planning
ecological restoration
regenerative design*



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