

Kingfisher Point Natural Area Restoration

Fort Collins, Colorado



From top: Kingfisher Gadwell Pond before construction can be seen with steep banks, old gravel, and no wetland edges; Kingfisher Gadwell Pond after construction, now with wide wetland benches, sod mats created from local wetland vegetation seed, and a transition to uplands.

In Fort Collins, a city that has seen its population triple in the past four decades, the preservation, management, and restoration of natural areas has become increasingly important. When the Fort Collins Natural Areas Department, the agency

30 acres of degraded open space along Colorado's Cache la Poudre River are now ecologically functioning and part of Fort Collins' vast and growing network of restored, urban natural areas.

responsible for the 36,000 acres of local and regional natural areas, acquired property along the Cache la Poudre River that was once occupied by a farm and a gravel mining operation, they recognized the opportunity for ecological restoration.

At the site, known as Kingfisher Point Natural Area, the river, its floodplain and riparian vegetation had been manipulated for both agricultural and gravel mining purposes. To make matters worse, waste from the processing of sugar beets had been dumped in several gravel pits which further degraded the floodplain. The river was eroding into the dumped material, which was creating water quality issues.

Biohabitats designed and constructed a restoration plan that moved the river away from the waste material and lowered the floodplain to allow the expansion of the riparian vegetation. The restoration also transformed one side of a gravel pit pond into a wetland mosaic. The wetland restoration, which involved the use of more than 600 sod mats containing over 10,000 locally eco-sourced native wetland plant plugs, was implemented and timed to accommodate resident raptors and ground nesting birds.

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