

APPENDIX C. COMMENTS



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Pueblo Service Center - Area 11
600 Reservoir Road
Pueblo, CO 81005
P 719-561-5300 | F 719-531-5321

July 14, 2014
Joe Garcia, Project Manager
Colorado Department of Transportation
905 Erie Avenue
Pueblo, CO 81002

RE: US 50 West EA Project #112407

To Mr. Joe Garcia,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding the US 50 West Environmental Assessment (EA). Colorado Parks and Wildlife representatives have reviewed the EA and would like to offer the following comments.

As indicated in the EA, revegetation/reclamation will occur on all disturbed areas. Proper reclamation, from a wildlife perspective, involves not only stabilizing the soil and establishing ground cover, but fostering plant communities with a diversity of species and plant types (grasses, woody plants, and broadleaf forbs) which will fully serve the nutritional needs of wildlife. In addition to revegetation of disturbed areas, the timely prevention and control of noxious and invasive weeds is of high importance. Ground disturbing activities and the use of machinery from other locations have a potential to introduce and spread noxious and invasive weeds. The EA's inclusion of the SB 40 Guidelines' Best Management Practices will require strict adherence regarding the native mix of trees, grasses and forbs that are utilized for revegetation of the disturbed areas.

The two drainages that are affected by the proposed construction, Wild Horse Dry Creek and Williams Creek, provide the best opportunity for wildlife species occurrence. CPW appreciated the attention that will be used to monitor and assess the species associated with these riparian corridors, including these sensitive species: the plains leopard frog, the northern leopard frog, the triploid Colorado checkered whiptail, and massassauga. CPW encourages CDOT biologists to consult with CPW *during construction if any issues should arise*. Species-specific seasonal impacts can adversely affect critical life cycles. Consequently, the best practice would be to ensure that seasonal impacts are thoroughly contemplated, monitored, and mitigated.

Two native fish species have been observed in the proposed development--the plains killifish and the fathead minnow. Any changes that may occur to aquatic habitat in



the two drainages has the potential to impact these species. Stormwater runoff and sediment carried into the Williams and Wild Horse Dry Creeks should be monitored to determine if the water quality is negatively impacting these species and their importance to the riparian ecosystem.

Burrowing owls (a state threatened bird) are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act which forbids the “take” of any individuals, eggs or nests. If work in prairie dog towns occurs during the spring or summer months (March 15 to Oct 31), the presence of burrowing owls and whether they are actively nesting should first be determined. If nesting burrowing owls are present, CPW recommends no human encroachment or surface disturbance within 150ft of nesting burrows from March 1 to August 15. If burrowing owls merely occupy the site, it is recommended that earthmoving and other disturbance activities be delayed until late fall after they have migrated. CPW’s protocol for surveying for breeding burrowing owls during the nesting season (March 15 - Oct 31) will be provided upon request.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the US 50 West EA. Please feel free to contact our Pueblo Area CPW office at 719-561-5300, if you have any questions or comments regarding this or any other wildlife matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mike Trujillo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" being more prominent than the last name "Trujillo".

Mike Trujillo

Area Wildlife Manager