

January 18, 2001

Jan McKee
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Colorado Field Office
755 Parfet Street, Suite 361
Lakewood, Colorado 80215

RE: RARE PLANT SURVEY FOR PRPA/WAPA TRANSMISSION LINE UPGRADE

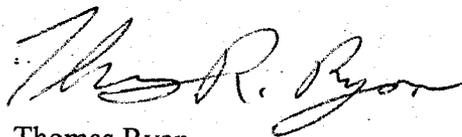
Dear Ms. McKee:

The following descriptions outline our *Spiranthes diluvialis* and *Gaura neomexicana* ssp. *coloradensis* survey locations from Rawhide to Fort Collins completed last August. Greystone completed the surveys in conjunction of an impacts assessment of a proposed transmission line upgrade by the Platte River Power Authority. Greystone provided a letter on 7 December 2000 indicating the survey results. You had stated in an 8 January 2001 email to Greystone, that you would like more detailed descriptions of the habitats surveyed. This letter provides this information as well as photographs taken during the surveys.

For each stream crossing that we surveyed, I have provided 1) a general description of the habitat, 2) photographs, if available, and 3) a wetland classification. The wetland coverages that we have available encompass two systems, the NWI and the PLUS System (Copper et al 1996). **Figure 1** presents these two systems within northeast Larimer County. The NWI only covers the northern portion of the Project Area (i.e., Rawhide to Park Creek, south to Township 9 North; **Figure 1**). The remaining wetlands are as described by Copper although some of the Fort Collins Natural Areas are not presented in this system.

If you have any questions, please call me at (303) 850-0930.

Sincerely,



Thomas Ryon
Staff Biologist

W/ attachments

Stream Crossing Descriptions

The stream crossings surveyed in August 2000 as indicated in the 7 December letter, traveling from Rawhide to Fort Collins along the proposed project route include:

- Rawhide Creek
- Boxelder Creek and associated tributaries
- Park Creek
- Owl Canyon Creek (Note: although it is the creek emerging from the east side of Owl Canyon, no name is present on the quadrangle map)
- Cache la Poudre River (Note: the transmission line crosses in three areas)

One crossing not listed individually in the original letter is the Park Creek Lateral. It was included in the legal description of Park Creek, but is separate here.

All photographs were taken within the right-of-way of the proposed project area. The PRPA right-of-way is 100 feet wide.

Rawhide Creek – Legal Description: (T10N, R69W, Sec 2; T10N, R68W, Sec 6; **Figure 1**). The NWI type is Riverine - Intermittent Streambed. It is a short marsh with sedges (*Carex* sp.) and a small amount of rush (*Juncus* sp). Uplands transition from snowberry (*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*) to rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*). No photos of the creek are available.

Boxelder Creek and associated tributaries - Legal Description: (T10N, R69W, Sec 3, 4, 9; **Figure 1**). NWI type for main channel is Riverine - Intermittent Streambed. The main channel (Section 9; **Figures 2 & 3**) is a short marsh with sedges (*Carex* sp.) and rush (*Juncus* sp). A small amount of the wetland vegetative cover is horsetail (*Equisetum* spp.) and willow (*Salix* spp.). This stream is severely grazed and vegetation is kept to a minimum. Upland areas are strictly grasses. Salt blocks were located close to the stream (**Figure 2**) and bank slumping is common throughout the area (**Figure 3**). The northern tributary (Section 3 & 4; **Figure 4**) is a narrow channel and was not classified on the NWI map. Wetland species include rushes and water-cress (*Nasturtium officinale*). Bank species include snowberry, rose (*Rosa arkansana*.), rabbitbrush, and peach-leaved willow (*Salix amygdaloides*).

Park Creek Lateral – Legal Description: (T10N, R69W, Sec 16, 17; **Figure 1**). NWI type: Riverine - Intermittent Streambed; Artificial. This is an earthen ditch with steep banks. Grasses reseeded during reclamation line the banks. No photographs are available.

Park Creek – Legal Description: (T10N, R69W, Sec 29; **Figure 1**). NWI type: Palustrine Emergent. This is a small channel below the Park Creek Reservoir. The water flows are highly regulated and the stream channel is narrow. The uplands show signs of grazing but not to the extent of Boxelder Creek. The banks of the stream channel are lined with thick grasses and sedges. We observed one *Gara mollis* plant and some Canada thistle as well. No photographs are available for this stream crossing.

Owl Canyon Creek – Legal Description: (T9N, R69W, Sec 5; **Figure 1**). Wetland type: Riverine – Forested Riparian (Cooper et al 1996). This tributary of Park Creek is unnamed and drains the eastern portion of Owl Canyon. Woody riparian vegetation including plains cottonwood (*Populus sargentii*) and peach-leaved willow is substantial (**Figure 5**). The right-of-way is shaded most of the time and the cut banks on the south side of the creek add to the shading. Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) has invaded the understory and this area is heavily grazed (**Figure 6**). The clay soil and shade lead us to conclude this area is not good orchid habitat.

Poudre River, first crossing – Legal Description: (T8N, R69W, Sec 33; **Figure 1**). Wetland type – forested riparian and littoral; lacustrine. This is an old gravel mine site. The uplands are forested with cottonwoods and willows (**Figure 7**). Large cut banks define the flood plain and emergent wetland vegetation is present in the stream channel. Large gravel bars were present in the river along the right-of-way in August (**Figure 8**).

Ute Ladies-tresses' orchids have been found upstream of this crossing near the Poudre River. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program indicates an element occurrence over a four square mile area (T8N, R69W, Sec 29, 30, 31, 32). Susan Spackman discovered this population(s) in 1996 during an orchid survey of Larimer County.

Poudre River, second crossing – Legal Description: (T7N, R69W, Sec 2 and 3; **Figure 1**). Wetland type – forested riparian and littoral; lacustrine. This is a portion of the transmission line where poles are to be replaced (**Figure 9**). The riparian understory in this portion of the river is highly disturbed with constant recreational use (hiking and bike path) and the banks are rip-rapped with concrete and asphalt slaps. Trees are cottonwood and peach-leaved willow.

Jan McKee

USFWS

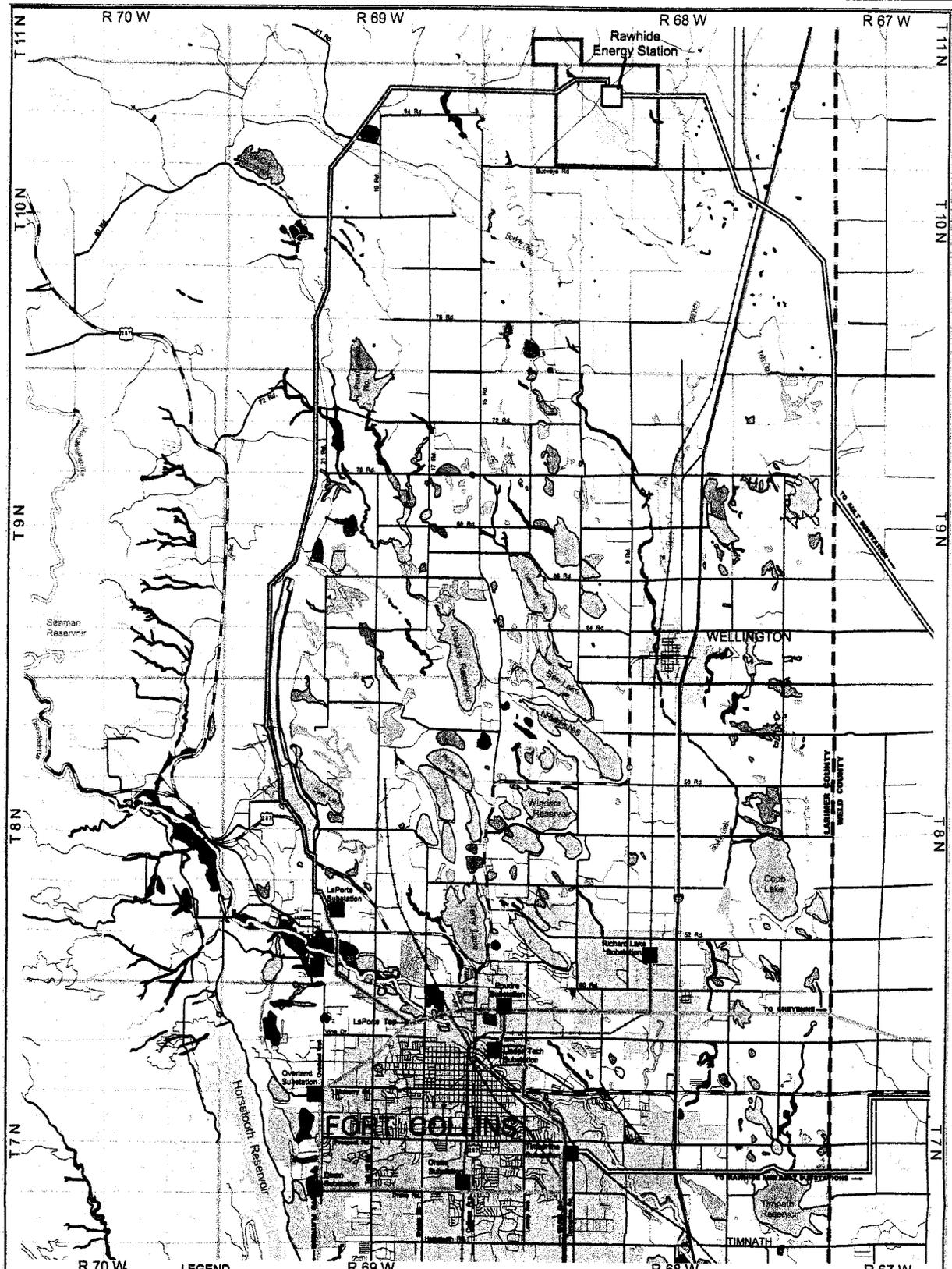
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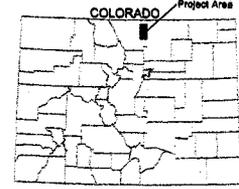
Poudre River, third crossing – Legal Description: on City of Ft Collins Natural Areas (T7N, R68W, Sec 18; **Figure 1**). Wetland type – forested riparian and palustrine marsh, tree/shrub dominated. In this portion of the transmission line, only the second circuit will be strung on existing structures (i.e., no pole replacement). Along this portion of the river, the transmission line follows the river and crosses four properties owned by the city; Mulberry Water Reclamation Facility and Springer (**Figure 10**), Bignall (**Figure 11**), and Nix (**Figure 12**) Natural Areas. These areas are all heavily forested. In the understory there are various cattail marshes and shrubby areas that add to the thick cover in these natural areas. We concluded that these areas were not orchid habitat.

Citations

Cooper, D.J. and D.M. Merritt. 1996. Larimer Partnership Land Use System: Proposed wetland classification and protection program. Prepared for Larimer County and Constituents of the PLUS Study Area.



- LEGEND**
- Upgrade Existing 230kV Single Circuit to 230kV Double Circuit
 - Upgrade Existing 115kV Single Circuit to 115/230kV
 - Rebuild Existing 115kV Single Circuit to 115/230kV
 - Existing 230kV Double Circuit
 - Existing 115kV Single Circuit
 - Existing 230kV Single Circuit
 - Existing Power Substation
 - Rawhide Energy Station
 - Rawhide Property Boundary
 - Prairie-Dog Colony
 - Overland Wetlands Jurisdiction Data
 - Lacustrine Littoral-Open Water, Artificial
 - Lacustrine Littoral Flat
 - Lacustrine Littoral Open Water, Artificial
 - Palustrine Emergent
 - Palustrine Flat
 - Palustrine Forested
 - Palustrine Open Water
 - Palustrine Scrub/Shrub Emergent
 - Riparian Intermittent Streambed
 - Riparian Emergent
 - Riparian - Intermittent Streambed
 - Riparian - Intermittent Streambed, Artificial
 - Cache la Poudre River
 - Ditch or Canal
 - Aqueduct
 - Lake/Reservoir
 - Mine Boundary
 - Municipality
 - Larimer County Wetland Data
 - Aquatic, Palustrine Marsh
 - Bare Mineral Soil, Palustrine Marsh
 - Bare Mineral Soil, Riparian
 - Bare Mineral Soil, Salt Flat
 - Bare Mineral Soil, Vernal Pool
 - Bare Mineral Soil, Wet Meadow
 - Forested Riparian
 - Herbaceous Riparian
 - Herbaceous Salt Meadow
 - Herbaceous Wet Meadow
 - Herbaceous, Palustrine Marsh
 - Herbaceous, Vernal Pool
 - Littoral, Lacustrine
 - Shrub Dominated Riparian
 - Shrub Dominated Wet Meadow
 - Tree/Shrub Dominated, Palustrine Marsh
 - Forested Riparian
 - US Interstate Highway
 - US Highway
 - State Highway
 - Primary Road
 - Secondary Road
 - Railroad
 - County Line
 - Section Line
 - Township/Range



SOURCE: Wetland data provided by Larimer County Planning Department (Townships 7N, 8N, and 9N) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Townships 10N and 11N)

Western

PLATTE RIVER POWER AUTHORITY
FORT COLLINS TRANSMISSION LINE UPGRADE PROJECT
Figure 1
Wetlands and Sensitive Areas

