

Centennial Rotary, a club of 109 members, in Greeley, Colorado, is proposing construction of a boardwalk promenade. This winding boardwalk (wheelchair accessible) would provide easy entry for all visitors into a prairie wetland area. This area is part of the 68-acre Poudre Learning Center (PLC), located at the western edge of Greeley, a city of 100,000 in Northern Colorado.

Boardwalks can provide an inviting access into nature. In fact, there is something magical about the way a boardwalk stirs the imagination the moment one sets foot on the first plank. Perhaps this is because boardwalks allow us to visit places we might not otherwise be able to experience without hip waders. Officer Larry Rogstad from the Department of Wildlife, says, "Boardwalks let us get up close to see, hear and smell the living things that make up a wetland."

Visitors traveling along the Poudre Learning Center boardwalk, would discover a rich diversity of wetland plant and animal life, including birds, fish, turtles, frogs, flowers, grasses and trees. A wide variety of migrating birds, journeying to and from their seasonal homes during the spring and fall, also populate the Learning Center's wetlands.

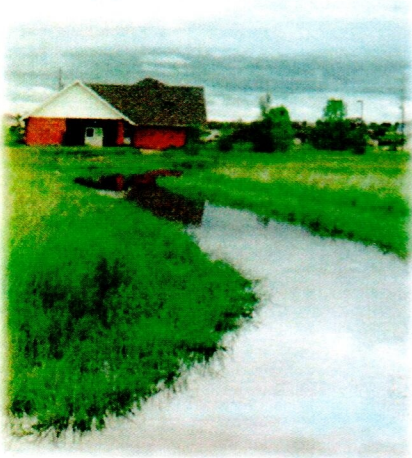
The Poudre Learning Center, adjoining the Poudre River, is located in a floodplain that features wetlands formed by meander scars (water-filled tracks left by slow-moving runoff). Students visiting the Learning Center explore wetlands themes that include:

- Natural history and nature study
- Cultural and historical resources
- Water conservation and management structures
- Water resources and ecology
- Wildlife observation
- River, lake, and woodland habitats
- Aesthetic appreciation

Students collect wetland information relevant to wildlife habitat, water quality, watershed protection, biomass storage, climate regulation, pollutant absorption, subsistence production and cultural uses.



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When the Poudre Learning Center's ecosystem is flooded, fish can retreat from

the rapid flow of the Poudre River into the slow-moving backwaters of the flood plain.

During flooding events, the Poudre River overflows its banks and merges with lakes in the area, producing passageways for aquatic life into the wetland system.

Once in the wetlands, fish travel throughout the flooded system. However, once the waters recede, the fish are confined to their new habitat. The boardwalk would pass over these flooded areas and allow visitors the opportunity to closely observe the changed ecosystem and its new inhabitants.



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