

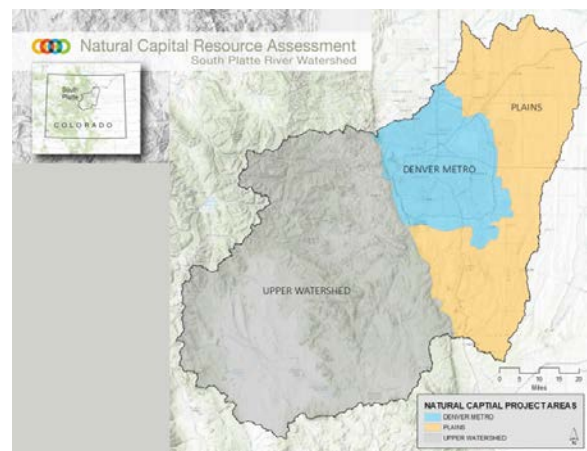
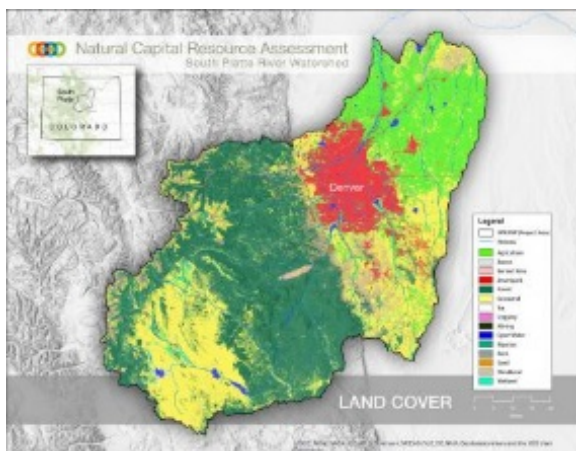
Natural Capital Resource Assessment South Platte River Watershed

Collaborating toward a robust assessment and planning tools to guide strategic investment in a healthy South Platte River watershed & building lasting relationships through a common vision

Natural Assets of Importance

The South Platte Watershed encompasses just under 4 million acres and a variety of land uses, ecosystem types, and natural assets of importance. Three project areas – Upper Watershed, Denver Metro Area, and Plains – were delineated to capture locally relevant attributes and available data sets. In summary:

- **The Denver Metro** project area is characterized by dense urban development and large areas of impervious surface, relative to the Upper Watershed and Plains. This area coincides with the 2013 Denver Metro Urban Tree Canopy Study.
- **The Upper Watershed** project area is dominated by evergreen forest and issues related to the management of wildfire and wildlife habitat. Much work and extensive studies been done in this area to mitigate wildfire risk, erosion, and flooding.
- **The Plains** project area is dominated by herbaceous and agriculture land cover types. It was defined once the Denver Metro and Upper Watershed project areas were delineated and includes the low slope grasslands to the south and east of the Denver Metro Project Area.



Finalized in October 2016, the Land Cover and Project Area maps describe the three project areas considered in development of the Natural Assets of Importance map, ecosystem services valuation, and prioritization.

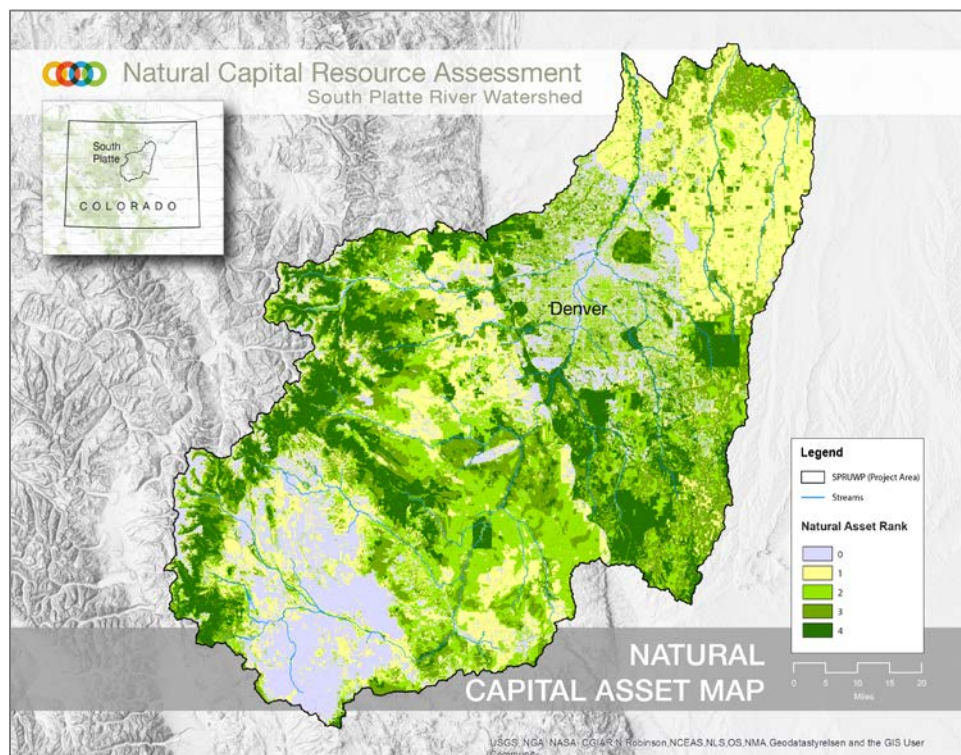
Across these geographies, the stakeholder team identified seven natural assets of importance, which provide essential ecosystem services that influence the local economy and quality of life in the South Platte Watershed. Some asset categories were considered across the entire watershed (e.g., wildlife habitat, clean drinking water) while others were specific to a single area (e.g., urban ecosystem resources and parks).

- **Native Forest Resources** include trees and associated native vegetation in the mountainous headwaters of the South Platte Watershed.
- **Productive Agricultural Resources** include cultivated crops and rangeland throughout the watershed, produce food, and sustain local agricultural economies.

- **Wildlife Habitat** includes high quality native vegetation and water resources that provide food and shelter for local wildlife throughout the watershed. Many of these species are part of a thriving outdoor recreation economy.
- **Clean Drinking Water** is produced by high elevation snowpack and retention in the Upper Watershed and retained by reservoirs throughout the South Platte Watershed.
- **Healthy Waterways** are high quality waterways that originate in the Upper Watershed and weave throughout the entire watershed. They sustain healthy wildlife and human populations and support local recreational opportunities.
- **Access to Nature** includes trails, parks and open space that provide access to outdoor recreational opportunities that are important to the people who live and recreate within the watershed.
- **Urban Ecosystem Resources and Parks** include urban trees and vegetation, green stormwater infrastructure, and parks and greenspace throughout the urban area.

Data and Methods

More than 40 datasets informed the Natural Capital Asset Map, and will be used in the ecosystem services valuation and prioritization components of the project. Methods used to create the map are consistent with other landscape scale green infrastructure efforts.¹ In order to capture differences in scale and data availability of natural assets in each of the three project areas, some data sets were considered across the entire project area while others were not (e.g., higher resolution land use classification data were used in the Denver Metro project area). In the final map below, natural capital assets of importance are classified from 0 to 4, low to high.



Finalized in April 2017, the Natural Assets of Importance Map depicts the region’s green infrastructure network and serves as the foundation for the project’s ecosystem services valuation and prioritization components.

For more information and updates visit: www.epa.gov/urbanwaterspartners/south-platte-natural-capital-project

¹ <http://www.esri.com/about-esri/greeninfrastructure>