Ecoregions of Colorado

Ecoregions denote areas of general similarity in ecosystems and in the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources. They are designed to serve as a spatial framework for the research, assessment, management, and monitoring of ecosystems and environmental resources; they are designed to serve as a spatial framework for the entire nation.

The approach used to compile this map is based on the premise that ecological regions can be identified through the analysis of the spatial patterns and the composition of basic and atomic phenomena that affect or reflect differences in ecosystems quality and integrity. These phenomena include: geology, physiography, vegetation, climate, soils, land use, wildlife, and hydrology. The relative importance of each characteristic varies from one ecological region to another, regardless of the hierarchical level.

The Level III and IV ecoregion map was compiled at a scale of 1:1,500,000 and depicts revisions and subdivisions of earlier Level III ecoregions that were originally compiled at a smaller scale. This map is part of a collaborative project primarily between USGS, Region VIII, USAF, National Health and Environmental Effects Laboratory (NHEL), Fort Logan, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS), United States Department of Interior-Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and United States Department of Interior-Geological Survey (USGS)-National Center for Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS).

The project is associated with an interagency effort to develop a common framework of ecological regions. Reaching that objective requires recognition of the differences in the conceptual approaches and mapping methodologies applied to developing the more common ecological-type frameworks, including those developed by the USFS, the BLM, the NRCS. As each of these frameworks is further refined, their differences are becoming less discernible. Regional collaborative projects, such as this one in Colorado, where agreement has been reached among multiple resource management agencies, are a step toward attaining consensus and consistency in ecoregion frameworks for the entire nation.

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