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Playa Lakes Joint Venture

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New Maps Show Playa Wetland Locations in Six States

Wondering how many playas are in your backyard? New maps are available from the Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) that pinpoint the locations of more than 60,000 playa wetlands in 155 counties across six states in the region. All 155 maps are available for download from the [PLJV website](#).

“We hope these maps help landowners identify wetland resources on their properties and seek out ways to conserve them,” said Megan McLachlan, PLJV Geographic Information System (GIS) Analyst.

Multiple sources of geographic data went into making the maps, including the [National Wetlands Inventory](#) (NWI), [Soil Survey Geographic](#) (SSURGO) database and satellite imagery. The data were analyzed for each state where playas are found – Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas – to create the most accurate playa location map possible using remote sources. In some cases, field studies on playas contributed to the mapping process. In southwest Nebraska and eastern Colorado, researchers surveying playas were able to provide PLJV information on playa conditions and locations.

“Mapping playas is tricky,” said McLachlan. “If a playa is filled with sediment or it is dry, it might not show up in the data.” Because of these constraints, the PLJV acknowledges that not all playas will show up on the maps, and that some playas may have been missed.

Locating playas from the ground isn’t any simpler. Playas are relatively small, indistinct features compared to their surroundings and are easy to overlook amid

the flat, prairie landscape or in a cornfield. Only from above can one truly appreciate the abundance and proximity of the wetlands. For example in Hale county Texas, there is about one playa every square mile.

Playas are seasonal wetlands found throughout the Southern High Plains. They are the center of biodiversity on the plains, supporting more than 200 species of birds and other wildlife. Playas are also the primary source of recharge for the Ogallala Aquifer, a 174,000 square mile groundwater formation that supplies nearly 100 percent of the High Plains water needs. Due to sedimentation and other impacts, playas are critically threatened wetlands, with more than 70 percent having been altered from their natural state.

The Playa Lakes Joint Venture is a partnership of federal and state wildlife and natural resource agencies, national, state and local conservation groups, corporations and individuals dedicated to conserving bird habitat in the Southern High Plains. For more information, visit the PLJV website: www.pljv.org.

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