



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program



*Since 1990, when Congress passed the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been working with coastal States to acquire, restore, manage or enhance coastal wetlands through a matching grants program. To date, \$139 million in grant monies have been awarded to 25 coastal States and 1 U.S. Territory, and about 167,000 acres of coastal wetlands have, or will be, acquired, protected or restored.*

## Why Protect Coastal Wetlands?

Coastal wetlands are valuable resources. They protect against flooding, help maintain water quality, and provide habitat to wildlife. Coastal environments are important economically, generating billions of dollars annually through such industries as tourism and commercial fisheries.

## Why Are Coastal Wetlands in Trouble?

Thousands of acres of coastal wetlands have already been lost, and additional acres have been degraded by pollution. The concentration of the U.S. population along the coastal areas is a continuing

source of development pressure. Threats to coastal resources include agricultural and urban run-off, shoreline modification, invasive species, oil spills, residential and commercial development, municipal waste disposal, and over-harvesting of resources.

## What Is the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program?

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program was established by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (Act) of 1990. Under the program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides matching grants for acquisition, restoration, management or enhancement of coastal wetlands.

Between \$12-17 million in grants are awarded annually through a nationwide competitive process. Funding for the program comes from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat and small engine fuels.

## Who Can Apply for Grants?

States which border the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico, Pacific and Great Lakes are eligible. The one exception is the State of Louisiana, which has its own coastal wetlands program under the Act (see box below). Also eligible are the Trust Territories and Commonwealths of the United States.



## How Does Cost-Sharing Work?

States provide 50% of the total costs of the project. However, if the State has established and maintains a special fund for acquiring coastal wetlands, other natural areas or open spaces, the Federal share can be increased to 75%. Territories and Commonwealths are not required to share the costs of projects except for Puerto Rico. Federal grants awarded under the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program cannot exceed \$1,000,000 for an individual project.

## How Are Projects Selected?

The Service's role has been to review, rank, and select projects based on their national importance and to assist State resource agencies in the planning and application process. Due to limited

### Louisiana's Coastal Wetland Program

Louisiana's unique wetland resources have been seriously depleted and degraded. Recognizing this, the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act of 1990 has special provisions for the State of Louisiana. It called for the development of both Restoration and Conservation Plans specifically for Louisiana's wetlands. Since Louisiana's Conservation Plan was approved in 1997 by the Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the State's cost share for wetland projects dropped from 25% to 15%.

funding and considerable demand, projects need to be selected competitively. The Act itself calls for projects to be given priority if they are:

- Consistent with the criteria and considerations outlined in the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan.
- Located in States with dedicated funding for programs to acquire coastal wetlands, natural areas and open spaces.
- Located in maritime forests on coastal barrier islands.

Additional ranking factors that have been developed by the Service include giving credit to projects that benefit threatened and endangered species, encourage cooperative efforts, and benefit other ongoing projects.

#### **What Is Being Accomplished?**

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is an effective approach that assists States acquire, restore, manage, and enhance their coastal wetland resources. The program's emphasis on encouraging partnerships, supporting watershed planning and leveraging on-going

projects ensures that the use of limited funds results in maximum benefits.

Three examples of funded projects illustrate its accomplishments (see box below). The lasting results of the program will be the protection and restoration of thousands of acres of coastal wetland ecosystems nationwide. Wildlife and resource-based industries, like tourism and commercial fisheries, will directly benefit.

#### **Examples of Funded Projects**

##### ***Cheesequake Marsh, New Jersey***

New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection received a 2004 grant to help acquire 234.5 acres of land adjacent to Raritan Bay and less than 4 miles from New York City. A large number of migratory and wintering waterfowl depend on Raritan Bay. The State's project partners include the American Littoral Society and the National Estuarine Research Reserve Program.

##### ***Pickrel Creek, Ohio***

Ohio's Department of Natural Resources was awarded a grant for 2003, to acquire and restore approximately 280 acres of Lake Erie's coastal wetlands in Sandusky County. This is an important area for migrating songbirds and the most important staging area for black ducks in North America.

##### ***South Padilla Bay, Washington***

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, in cooperation with the Salmon Recovery Board, will use its 2004 grant to acquire and restore 440 acres of estuarine wetlands within the Puget Sound ecosystem. The project will provide nursery habitat for salmon and foraging areas for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Project partners include Skagit County, Ducks Unlimited and the Pacific Coast Joint Venture.



For more information about the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program, contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife Management and Habitat Restoration, Branch of Habitat Restoration at (703/358 2201) or the Division of Federal Assistance (703/358 2156), or visit us on the Internet at: <http://www.fws.gov/cep/coastweb.html>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
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