



## Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Technical and Financial Assistance for Habitat Restoration



### PROGRAM GUIDELINES SOUTH CAROLINA

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program restores, improves, and protects fish and wildlife habitat on private lands through partnerships between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), individuals, and other organizations, while leaving the land in private ownership. This voluntary program was started in 1987, and has since enrolled thousands of landowners from every state in U.S.

#### **Typical Partners for Fish and Wildlife Project Types** Projects include but are not limited to:

- Replanting **bottomland hardwoods** on suitable sites such as riparian areas and open fields in floodplains.
- Restoring **wetland hydrology** by plugging drainage ditches, breaking tile drainage systems, installing water control structures, berm construction, re-establishing ephemeral pools, re-establishing old connections with waterways.
- Restoration and improvement **longleaf pine forest** on suitable sites where the landowner's objective is wildlife. Practices include, site prep, planting, removal of hardwood competition, and restoration of ground layer vegetation.
- Planting suitable open areas with **native warm season grasses** and other native plants.
- Removal of **invasive exotic plants** which compete with native fish and wildlife and alter their natural habitats.
- Reconstruction of degraded **stream habitats** through bioengineering techniques.
- Planting **Atlantic white cedar** on suitable sites.

#### **General Information**

- Projects must benefit federal trust species. Federal trust species include migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and anadromous (migratory) fish.
- The USFWS provides technical assistance as needed and requested, to the extent that workload allows.
- Cooperator cost share is generally 50 percent of total project cost. In certain cases where wildlife benefits are determined to be very high, exceptions may be considered for a lower percentage of cooperator match.
- After an agreement is signed, cooperator performs or contracts the work. Payment is reimbursement.
- Biological significance and cost-effectiveness is important. Try to improve the most acres you can for the least amount of money with a high quality project ensuring long-term conservation benefits.
- Cooperators retain all rights to their land.
- USFWS personnel do not enter private property without owner's permission.
- Longleaf pine projects: This involves restoring fields and cut-over areas back to longleaf pine forest on appropriate sites where longleaf historically existed. It can also involve improving existing longleaf stands by removing overgrown hardwood competition. Cut-over sites must have been non-longleaf before the harvest. The minimum area is 20 contiguous acres. Cooperators must be committed to maintaining a prescribed fire regime to reduce hardwood competition and maintain healthy understory and layer vegetation. Raking of straw on project site is discouraged and should not take place to the extent that it removes fuel for prescribed burns or disturbs ground layer vegetation.
- USFWS Partners program personnel provide assistance to USDA on conservation programs and projects.

#### **Eligible Lands**

- private
- tribal
- non-federal
- non-state

#### **Projects Not Eligible**

- having low biological significance and/or low cost effectiveness
- upland ponds
- fish ponds
- greentree reservoirs
- where pen-reared waterfowl will be released
- backyard habitats
- use as compensatory mitigation for meeting requirements of any Federal or state regulatory program

**Ranking Factors** More requests for financial assistance are received each year than can be funded. Funding priority will be given to projects that meet the following conditions (sequence of listing does not imply order of preference):

- Project provides significant benefit to threatened or endangered species, species of concern, or species that are declining or imperiled.
- High biological significance and high cost effectiveness
- Projects that result in self-sustaining systems that are not dependent on artificial structures
- Project site protected by conservation easement or other permanent protection
- Projects that reduce habitat fragmentation and establish corridors between protected lands
- Projects located adjacent or in close proximity to protected habitat and complements the activities on that land (i.e., national wildlife refuge, conservation easements, wildlife management area, national forest, heritage preserve, state forest, state park, and certain Dept. of Defense and Dept. of Energy lands, etc.)
- Adjacent to other Partners for Fish and Wildlife project sites, WRP, WHIP, or CRP sites.
- Habitat restoration is typically favored over habitat enhancement
- On longleaf pine projects, restoring native ground cover vegetation as needed (i.e., wiregrass, legumes, etc.)
- Committing to an agreement period longer than the 10-year minimum
- Projects with a significant riparian or wetland restoration component
- A high percent of total project cost shared by the cooperator and other partners

### **Application and Funding Cycle**

- Applications compete for funding with other applications from within the Savannah-Santee-Pee Dee eco-region. This area includes most of state of South Carolina and portions of Georgia and North Carolina.
- To request an application contact: Partners for Fish and Wildlife Phone: (843) 727-4707 ext. 220 or 219  
176 Croghan Spur Rd., Suite 200 E-mail: joe\_cockrell@fws.gov  
Charleston, SC 29407
- Applications are accepted year-round, however, project funding occurs once per year.
- October 15: Application deadline for funds becoming available the following year.
- Fall: Applications are ranked on factors listed above by a panel of wildlife biologists.
- Spring: USFWS field office receives annual program allocation. Projects are approved for funding in order of ranking. Applicants are notified of status.
- Late spring to late summer: Money becomes available to landowner after completion of work

### **Agreement**

- After the project is approved for funding, cooperator signs an agreement that secures the federal investment.
- Basically, the agreement states that the cooperator agrees to the restoration plan, and agrees to leave the habitat improvements in place for at least 10 years.
- Project work must be completed within four years.

### **Cost-share Payment**

- After the project is completed and inspected, the cooperator submits an invoice to the USFWS with supporting receipts or documents to claim payment.
- Payment is made via electronic transfer to the cooperator's account.
- The federal cost share may be taxable by the IRS.

### **Monitoring**

- A project biologist maintains contact with the cooperator, follows up with occasional site visits to determine wildlife benefits and project success, and provides technical assistance as needed and requested.

### **For more information**

Web site: <http://partners.fws.gov>

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