

# Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program Gets Young Hands Dirty

*September 17, 2008*

The Partners for Fish & Wildlife (Partners) Program joined forces with the Beal City Public School and other partners to help "connect children with nature" through a habitat restoration project on the school property. The Beal City Public School is located in a rural area where students of all ages attend classes in the same building. Although a small school, the dreams of developing an outdoor learning center for the children were very large. The Partners Program has helped to make this dream a reality. The students of Beal City and its neighboring private school, St. Joseph, will now be getting their hands dirty in the 1.5-acre wetland restoration completed in September 2008.



*Beal City students planting native seedlings into restored wetland.  
Jim Hudgins/USFWS; September 2008*

In addition to the wetland restoration, the Partners Program provided the school with the materials to build a 100-foot long boardwalk. The boardwalk, which is being constructed and installed by the school's wood shop class and the maintenance staff, will allow students to get into the heart of the wetland. The boardwalk was provided in partnership with Lumbermen's, Inc., a local wholesale building supply company. The material is called MoistureShield and is made of 90% recycled material. It is manufactured at Advanced Environmental Recycling

Technologies (AERT). AERT is a member of the U.S. Green Building Council and has received an award from the Sierra Club for their "green" product.



*Beal City School Wood Shop students installing wetland boardwalk.  
Jim Hudgins/USFWS; September 2008.*

The school was also provided a trunk of study materials, including ID guides, binoculars, magnifying boxes, dip nets, curriculum guides and more, which was part of a partnership between the Partners Program, Ducks Unlimited, and Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network. These resources helped to make the site a true outdoor learning center.

A four-foot deep borrow area, created during restoration, was filled by 70 Sixth grade students from Beal City and St. Joseph on September 17, 2008. The students planted almost 300 aquatic plants in the wetland area to increase diversity of the site and learn about the importance of native plants. The plants were grown at the Saginaw Correctional Facility (SCF), which has a partnership with the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge to take seeds collected from the refuge and grow them into plants that can then be used in habitat restoration efforts. The young plants were transported to the site, and planted by the students, under the guidance of the Partners Program biologist, Michelle Vander Haar. SCF has provided the refuge and private lands program with approximately 40,000 plugs in 2008.