

Mississippi

Ecological Services Field Office

photo: Rich Seigel



Photos (top to bottom)

Endangered Mississippi gopher frog.

Longleaf pine habitat in southern Mississippi.

Threatened gopher tortoise.

Black bear outreach education.

photo: Linda LaClaire



Station Facts

- FY 05 budget: \$3,414,000.
- Staff: 19.

Station Goals

- Implement recovery, permit, and Section 7 consultation activities for 34 federally listed threatened and endangered species in Mississippi.
- Conduct listing and recovery activities for species in Mississippi and for a number of species in the adjoining states.
- Investigate, prevent, and remediate effects of environmental pollution to maximize quality habitat for Service trust species.
- Assist Federal and state agencies, and private citizens, to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to fish and wildlife resources resulting from water resources development projects.
- Restore longleaf pine, native prairie and degraded riparian and wetland habitats on privately owned lands through our Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

photo: USFWS



photo: USFWS



Services Provided to

- Private citizens and community groups.
- Federal/state agencies, local governments seeking federal or state approvals/permits.
- Other Service entities.

Activity Highlights

- Reviews over 1,500 federally funded, licensed or permitted projects annually for impacts on fish and wildlife resources.
- Represents fish and wildlife interests in navigation-related issues on the Lower Mississippi River.
- Assists other agencies in containment spill contingency planning to minimize effects on fish and wildlife resources.
- Conducts Section 7 consultation on the pallid sturgeon, least tern, Mississippi sandhill crane, red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, Mississippi gopher frog, Louisiana black bear, Louisiana quillwort and pondberry.
- Restore/enhance degraded wildlife habitats in the Mississippi Delta and restore longleaf pine, native prairie, degraded riparian and upland hardwood ecosystems in southern Mississippi through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.
- Assists in the creation of 15 national wildlife refuges and three wildlife management areas as mitigation for losses of fish and wildlife habitat associated with Federal civil works projects.
- Coordinates with the Corps of Engineers on controversial projects such as the Yazoo Backwater Area Pump Project. For information on the pump project visit the web site <http://yazoobackwater.fws.gov>.
- Provides protection for over 180 species through listing and recovery actions taken under provisions of the Endangered Species Act. For information on threatened and endangered species see the Fish and Wildlife Service's web site on the internet at <http://www.fws.gov> (Endangered Species).

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Questions and Answers

What are the Fish and Wildlife Service's natural resource goals regarding the major Federal flood control projects in Mississippi?

Structural approaches to flood control frequently damage fish and wildlife resources.

The Service recommends nonstructural methods including flowage easements and reforestation on frequently flooded agricultural land and flood proofing or relocation of homes and buildings since these measures have been shown to reduce flood damages, save money, and do not adversely impact fish and wildlife resources.

What are the Service's natural resource goals regarding the Corps' Section 10/ 404 permit program in Mississippi?

The Service is working with the Corps and their Section 10/404 permit program to reemphasize the need to either avoid impacts to wetlands or minimize impacts to wetlands. Unavoidably lost wetland functions and values should be replaced through compensatory mitigation.

The Service is working with the Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Corps in identifying new locations and methods for Compensatory Mitigation Banks, especially in the piney woods and coastal ecosystems in Mississippi.

The Service, the Corps, EPA and Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality are collaboratively using and refining a methodology to evaluate lost wetland functions and values and the potential for wetland restoration. The Charleston District Mitigation Method evaluates the wetland credits lost through Section 404 permit activity. It can also be used to determine credits gained through restoration of degraded wetlands. It is the Service's goal that this methodology be adopted by the Mobile and Vicksburg Districts statewide to create unanimity on potential project impacts to wetlands and the appropriateness of offered mitigation.

What contaminant issues are there in Mississippi?

There are several contaminant issues in Mississippi which are adversely impacting fish and wildlife trust resources. These issues include runoff from hazardous waste sites (over 10 superfund and 994 CERCLIS), and oil and other hazardous waste spills. Other concerns include waste disposal from large swine rearing facilities, sewerage overflows from municipal sewerage treatment plants, and pesticide runoff from agricultural lands.

What is the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and its accomplishments in Mississippi?

This program provided technical and financial assistance to anyone interested in restoring, improving, and protecting fish and wildlife habitat on private lands. Cropland, pasture, or wet areas that have been drained or altered qualify for this program, as well as degraded riparian, longleaf pine, native prairie and upland hardwood habitats. Assistance is provided through partnerships with farmers, ranchers, conservation groups, corporations, local and governmental agencies and educational organizations.

The Mississippi Field Office has three full time employees who work under the auspices of this program. They provide technical assistance to numerous private landowners and to other government agencies. Since 1996, the Mississippi Field Office worked with over 80 landowners to restore wetland hydrology to 4,000 acres, enhance hydrology on an additional 7,500 acres, and reforest 3,500 acres.

Is the Service involved in natural resource partnerships in Mississippi?

The Service is involved in several natural resource partnership activities throughout the State but is recently focusing efforts on the lower Mississippi River and the Pascagoula River basins. Partnership activities include water quality improvements, eco-tourism development and habitat restoration for migratory birds, endangered species and other wildlife.

The Mississippi Field Office is working to restore historic flows, improve water quality and fish habitat in Deer Creek of the lower Mississippi River Delta. As part of the partnership effort, plans are initiated to replace stream barriers, restore stream flows and monitor water quality along Deer Creek.

We have joined an affiliation of State and Federal agencies, conservation and agricultural organizations, and others dedicated to the economic revitalization of the Lower Mississippi Delta through the sustainable utilization and management of natural resources. With conservation of existing bottomland hardwood forests and restoration of marginal agricultural lands, much needed income for Lower Mississippi Delta residents could be generated by the forest products industry, private hunting operations and eco-tourism development.

The Bear Education and Restoration (BEAR) Group of Mississippi addresses bear issues of restoration, education and management in Mississippi. As a member of the BEAR, the Service has partnered with the delta city of Rolling Fork to host the annual Great Delta Bear Affair which celebrates black bear, the toy teddy bear and President Theodore Roosevelt's historic Mississippi bear hunt of 1902.