



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM**

**TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW TIME (07:03)**

**SWAMP PINK (HOST – SARAH LEON WITH WENDY WALSH)**

This transcript was produced from audio provided by USFWS Endangered Species Program

**P R O C E E D I N G S**

(Music plays.)

MS. LEON: Hello there this is Sarah Leon with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and I'm on the phone today with Wendy Walsh a biologist with the services New Jersey field office. Hi Wendy how are you today?

MS. WALSH: Good.

MS. LEON: I'm hoping you can tell us a little about the swamp pink a beautiful plant there in New Jersey.

MS. WALSH: Sure. The swamp pink is a perennial evergreen member of the lily family. It grows in an interesting growth form what we call a basil rosette where there's sort of a circle of whirl of leaves at the bottom where all of the other leaves emerge from. In a typical year about ten percent of each population will also send off a flowering stalk from the basil rosette with a conspicuous pink flower. That stalk can be two or three feet high with fragrant pink flowers. Despite the interesting appearance of the flower most of the plants actually reproduce by vegetative means, rhizomes underground. The swamp pink occurs in forested wetlands. It requires very specific hydrologic conditions that usually occur along headwater streams where the ground is saturated but not flooded.

The swamp pink really likes very stable hydrologic conditions. Sometimes biologists say it likes to have its feet wet. It likes to have the roots in the saturated zone but not flooded in the above ground portions of the plant. Its native range is from northern Georgia all the way up to northern New Jersey.

MS. LEON: And what are the major reasons for this species decline?

MS. WALSH: Well, swamp pink is listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a threatened species and some of the major factors that we believe led to the decline was historic wetland losses prior to some of the current wetland protections that we have in place. Wetlands would be cleared or converted to other land uses. This represented a lot of habitat loss for species like swamp pink. In more recent decades wetlands have been more protected from full land use conversion. But they still see indirect threats from development. If you picture a wetland that's got a lot of housing or residential or retail development all around it one of the noteworthy changes there is the paving of the land surface.

The pavement prevents the water from seeping down in to the ground and supporting the wetland in a very slow stable rate during dry periods. Instead the water runs off as storm water which is a much flashier type of hydrology meaning that it's much wetter and more flooded during wet times and much drier during dry times. This basic change really seems to cause the swamp pink to decline.

MS. LEON: So then what's being done to help restore this species and who all is engaged in these efforts?

MS. WALSH: Well, sort of at the most basic level there is the endangered species act itself. Under section seven of the act the fish and Wildlife field offices all the way from Maine to Georgia engage in what we call **(inaudible)** when there is for example a permit to fill a wetland the Army Corps of engineers would come and consult with the service to try to minimize and avoid impacts. Here in New Jersey where most of the swamping occurs, more than 60 percent of swamping populations are in New Jersey, we have an extensive set of state regulations that actually go well beyond the Army Corps regulations rules for wetlands, **(inaudible)** zones, coastal zone, even storm waters.

We work cooperatively with the state to try to work through those regulatory processes. But there's also a number of voluntary efforts under way. A number of landowners have signed memoranda of understanding with the service. It's a purely voluntary arrangement to manage their land for swamp pink. We have a few land acquisition projects in planning where perhaps some additional habitat will be purchased for swamp pink. We partnered with the Camden county soil conservation district to prepare a water shed plan for the bay timber creek which supports 17 populations of swamp pink. There's several habitat restorations underway with various partners ranging from a township a golf club and our own staff in house here through the partners of Fish and Wildlife program.

We also got some support from our regional hydrologists Fred **Wurster** to get hydrologic impacts to one important population that we have on a very cooperative partner over at Camden County college. Finally, we'll be having an

intern this summer working with us from the New York Botanical Garden to look at swamp pink and propagation and help us learn more about who might be growing swamp pink and helping us educate those folks about using propagated plants for conservation purposes in a responsible manner.

MS. LEON: So, Wendy you said it—New Jersey is the stronghold for swamp pink. But, I understand that the majority of existing populations there are on private land. What can private landowners do if they find they have swamp pink on their property?

MS. WALSH: Well, certainly they can contact the Service and learn more about the swamp pink—what its habitat requirements are and what type of management might be beneficial. Fortunately, in most cases, it pretty much entails just leaving it alone. It occurs in a mature forest, so there's not a lot of active management that is necessary, unless there's a threat like invasive species.

In New Jersey, they would also have the option of signing one of those Memorandum of Understanding, which is a purely voluntary arrangement for landowners who are interested in doing that. And they could also assist our efforts by