



NEWS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

January 15, 1998

Rachel F. Levin 202-208-5634
rachel_levin@fws.gov

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO FUND 20 COASTAL WETLANDS CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN 1998

A variety of fish, wildlife and plants from shortnose sturgeon to red-legged frogs to native seagrasses will benefit from nearly \$10 million in wetlands conservation grants to be awarded in 1998 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Twenty projects in 13 states received funding through the Service's National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants program. Funded projects are in Alabama, California, Delaware, Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. The projects involve the acquisition and restoration of more than 13,000 acres of sensitive coastal wetlands.

"Healing our wounded waterways is one of my three top priorities. These grants will aid in achieving that goal by conserving coastal wetlands that provide habitat for a broad diversity of plants, mammals, fish, waterfowl and shorebirds," said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark in announcing the grants.

"Coastal areas also support our livelihood by generating billions of dollars annually through industries such as tourism, transport, and commercial fishing, making these projects doubly important," Clark said.

Since 1990, when Congress passed the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act establishing the grant program, the Service has awarded more than \$43 million in grants to 24 coastal states and one U.S. territory for the conservation of more than 63,000 acres of vital coastal wetlands.

Under the program, the Service makes yearly matching grants to coastal states and U.S. territories for projects involving the acquisition, restoration, or enhancement of coastal wetlands, which must be administered for long-term conservation benefits.

All grants are awarded through a competitive process. Funding for the program is generated from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat and small engine fuels. These taxes are deposited into the Sport Fish Restoration Account of the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund (commonly called Wallop-Breaux after its Congressional sponsors).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages 511 national wildlife refuges covering 92 million acres, as well as 67 national fish hatcheries. It also enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts.

Descriptions of the 1998 Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant projects are attached.



FACTS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1998 COASTAL WETLANDS CONSERVATION GRANTS

ALABAMA

Gulf Oak Ridge Acquisition: The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will acquire 588 acres of Gulf Oak Ridge, the only remaining globally imperiled maritime forest in Alabama. The area will be included in Gulf State Park. Six globally imperiled or rare plant species occur here. Large numbers of neotropical migratory birds fly here as the first and last staging area in spring and fall, respectively. The Federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, Mississippi sandhill crane, and jaguarundi and Federally threatened indigo snake are likely inhabitants.

State share: \$463,000 Federal share: \$1,000,000
Partners share: \$227,000

CALIFORNIA

Moro Coho Slough Acquisition: The California State Coastal Conservancy will acquire in fee title 360 acres of land in the Lower Moro Cojo Slough, Monterey County, one of the most ecologically rich wetland complexes on California's central coast. The slough system consists of hypersaline ponds; mudflats; saltmarsh; and brackish, freshwater, and seasonal wetlands, which drain into the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary. Federally threatened or endangered species include California brown pelicans, peregrine falcons, snowy plovers, California red-legged frogs, and Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders. Title will be transferred to the Elkhorn Slough Foundation for management.

State share: \$500,000 Federal share: \$500,000
Partners share: \$700,000

DELAWARE

Lower Army Creek Acquisition: The Division of Fish and Wildlife of the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control will acquire 222 acres of fresh to slightly brackish intertidal emergent wetlands near the mouth of Lower Army Creek Marsh on the Delaware River, New Castle County. The Army Creek Natural Resource Trustees will manage the lands. Two landowners will also donate 82 acres, nearly all wetlands. The site is currently being restored by the trustees, who have a conservation easement. The area is important because of its size and

proximity to other large wetlands. Federally endangered or threatened shortnose sturgeons and bald eagles, shorebirds, wading birds, waterfowl, and anadromous fish will benefit.

State share: \$30,000 Federal share: \$273,000
Partners share: \$217,000

FLORIDA

Sarasota Bay Acquisition and Restoration: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection will acquire 1 acre and restore 68 acres of intertidal and shoreline habitat on four barrier islands bordering Sarasota Bay, a coastal lagoon system of mangroves, coastal saltmarsh, and seagrass meadows. The project involves moving dredge spoil, beach nourishment, dune restoration, planting marsh grass, improving tidal circulation, and controlling non-native vegetation. Marine fishes and wading and shorebirds will benefit, as well as Federally endangered manatees; green, sea, and Kemp's ridley sea turtles; and wood storks and Federally threatened loggerhead sea turtles, piping plovers, and bald eagles.

State share: \$195,000 Federal share: \$650,000
Partners share: \$150,000

Hendry and Mullock Creek Acquisitions: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection will acquire 1,651 acres of freshwater marsh, flatwoods, oak hammocks, and salt flats surrounding Mullock and Hendry creeks in Ft. Myers, Lee County, to be added to the Estero Bay Aquatic and State Buffer Preserves. These creeks are major freshwater drainages into Rocky Bay. Purchasing these parcels will provide a mile-wide band of buffer lands surrounding the northern and northeastern shorelines of Estero Bay. The area is a stopover or seasonal habitat for a number of neotropical songbirds, migrating shorebirds, and waterfowl. More than 200 species of important finfish and shellfish use the nursery habitat in Estero Bay. Manatees frequent the seagrasses in the bay and creeks. Twelve other Federally endangered or threatened species occur here. The Nature Conservancy and Lee County will donate large parcels of land also.

State share: \$105,000 Federal share: \$1,000,000
Partners share: \$760,000

Cow Slough Acquisition and Restoration: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection will acquire 880 acres of flatwoods, mangrove sloughs, maritime hammocks, salt flats, freshwater marshes, and saltmarsh at Cow Slough in the Estero Bay Aquatic and State Buffer Preserve, Ft. Myers, Lee County, to be added to the Estero Bay Aquatic and State Buffer preserves. This slough

is a major freshwater drainage into Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve's Hell-Peckney Bay. Restoration will include removal of non-native plants. The area is a stopover or seasonal habitat for a number of neotropical songbirds, migrating shorebirds, and waterfowl. More than 200 species of important finfish and shellfish use the nursery habitat in Estero Bay. Manatees frequent the seagrasses in the bay and creeks. Twelve other Federally endangered and threatened species occur here. Purchasing these parcels will provide three uninterrupted miles of historic passageway and associated habitats. Lee County will donate 160 acres of land.

State share: \$2,625,000 Federal share: \$1,000,000
Partners share: \$180,000

MAINE

Weskeag Estuary Acquisition: The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife will acquire an 88-acre inholding, predominately upland, in the relatively pristine Weskeag estuary, Knox County, for the R. Waldo Tyler Wildlife Management Area. The purchase will protect the 360 acres of regularly flooded salt- and freshwater marsh surrounding the inholding. Bald eagles frequent the estuary. The area is used by numerous species of waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, and fish.

State share: \$33,000 Federal share: \$169,000
Partners share: \$66,000

Reachwood Forest/Marsh River Acquisition: The Bureau of Resource Management of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife will acquire the development rights on 853 acres of land, including 726 acres of forested uplands, 127 acres of pristine salt marsh, and 4.55 miles of tidal wetland edge, in the Reachwood Forest/Marsh River estuary, Lincoln County. This is one of the last and largest undeveloped shorefront properties in this fast-growing region. Indirectly, 569 acres of salt- and freshwater wetlands in the Sherman Lake region downstream will benefit as well. Federally endangered and threatened species present include shortnosed sturgeon and feeding bald eagles. Waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, neotropical migrants, oysters, and fish species will benefit.

State share: \$10,000 Federal share: \$260,000
Partners share: \$148,000

MASSACHUSETTS

Joppa Flats Salt Marsh Restoration: The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs is providing funds to restore 1.1 acres of salt marsh in the estuarine portion of the Merrimack

the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust. The acquisition will serve to connect much of the protected open space in the area, creating several hundred acres of almost uninterrupted habitat within a highly developed coastal region. Federally endangered peregrine falcons and threatened bald eagles use the area. The site is ideal resting, feeding, and wintering habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and neotropical birds. The area provides nursery habitat for juvenile fish and feeding and resting for juvenile and adult fish.

State share: \$261,000 Federal share: \$345,000
Partners share: \$85,000

OREGON

Neawanna Acquisition and Restoration: The Oregon Governor's Watershed Enhancement Board will acquire 115 acres of the Neawanna River wetlands in Clatsop County. The project will also include restoration of three mill ponds for wintering waterfowl and coho salmon rearing habitat. Restoration will include tidal control structures, connecting channel excavation, fish habitat structures in the pond, and riparian vegetation planting. The wetlands, located at the head of the Necanicum Estuary, are relatively intact and vital to the integrity of the estuary system. The estuary is an important staging and transition area for anadromous fish. Steelhead and cutthroat trout, bald eagles, and shorebirds will also benefit. The North Coast Land Conservancy, a local conservation group, and the City of Seaside are also partners.

State share: \$132,000 Federal share: \$170,000
Partners share: \$39,000

TEXAS

Shamrock Island Restoration: The Texas Parks and Wildlife and Texas General Land Office will restore and protect 172 acres of estuarine wetlands, beach, uplands, and seagrasses on Shamrock Island in Nueces County, owned by The Nature Conservancy. The island, part of the Mustang Island coastal barrier system, is a key component of the Corpus Christi Bay ecosystem. It provides important habitat for colonial waterbirds, threatened piping plovers, endangered brown pelicans, and numerous aquatic species. The project involves armoring the island with rock riprap. Local match from three conservation organizations is \$28,000. The area is threatened by severe erosion.

State share: \$221,000 Federal share: \$655,000
Partners share: \$28,000

VIRGINIA

Dameron Marsh Acquisition: The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation will acquire 375 acres of Dameron Marsh, Northumberland County. The marsh is one of the most significant natural areas along the coastal zone of Virginia. It will be protected as a Natural Area Preserve. The site has 239 acres of mostly estuarine intertidal emergent marsh, 30 acres of maritime forest, and 2 sandy beaches and is a coastal barrier with frontage on Chesapeake Bay as well as 2 creeks. The Nature Conservancy and Northern Neck of Virginia Chapter of the Audubon Society will also provide financial support. Army Corps of Engineers wetland mitigation funds will be used to purchase an additional 27.5 acres and restore agricultural fields to scrub-shrub and forested wetlands. Federally threatened or endangered species include northeastern beach tiger beetles, bald eagles and least terns. Other animals benefitting include shore- and wading birds, migratory waterfowl, neotropical migrants, and a large number of fish species.

State share:	\$247,000	Federal share:	\$827,000
Partners share:	\$283,000		

Elkins Marsh Acquisition: The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation will acquire 4,000 acres of pristine lagoon saltmarsh at Elkins Marsh in Northampton County to be managed by The Nature Conservancy. This marsh is the last large privately owned saltmarsh in the core of Virginia's barrier island/lagoon system on the Eastern Shore. Federally threatened or endangered species include peregrine falcons and loggerhead and Kemp's ridley sea turtles. The marsh supports large numbers of nesting, migrating, and wintering colonial waterbirds, waterfowl, raptors, and shorebirds, and nursery area for many fish species. Extensive tidal mudflats surround the wetlands.

State share:	\$27,000	Federal share:	\$591,000
Partners share:	\$300,000		

WASHINGTON

Whatcom Creek Acquisition and Restoration: The Washington Department of Ecology will acquire and restore 4 acres of wetlands in the city of Bellingham, Whatcom County. The project will expand and reconnect wetlands through the city in a three-quarter-mile stretch. This will complement past restoration efforts to allow salmon runs absent for 100 years. Critical spawning, feeding, nursery, overwintering, resting, and rearing habitat will be created. The coho and chinook salmon, as well as

steelhead and cutthroat trout, will benefit. Great blue herons and bald eagles are found in the Whatcom Creek corridor.

Partners share: \$500,000

Federal share: \$500,000

Hoko River Acquisition: The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission will acquire 115 acres of maritime forest and marine and freshwater wetlands at the mouth of the Hoko River on the northern portion of the Olympic Peninsula, Clallam County. The area, which serves as a transition between the freshwater Hoko River and the saltwater Strait of Juan de Fuca, is the final link in the chain of state parks in this vicinity. Wild runs of coho, fall chinook, and chum salmon and steelhead and cutthroat trout occur in the river. Bald eagles nest on the site. The beach and wetlands are used by migrating shorebirds and wintering waterfowl. Peregrine falcons use the area in winter.

State share: \$550,000

Federal share: \$489,000

Partners share: \$152,000

Middle Nemah River Acquisition: The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will acquire 180 acres of estuary at the mouth of the Middle Nemah River and confluence of the Middle and South Nemah in Willapa Bay, Pacific County. The land will become part of WDFW's Lands and Restoration Services Program for long-term management. The area is behind two proposed coastal barrier units. Eighty-six percent is in estuarine wetlands, primarily low-salinity marsh, and 14 percent is in forested uplands. Willapa Bay is one of the largest and most productive estuaries in the Pacific Flyway, providing critical staging and feeding habitat for migratory waterfowl. It is also extremely important for migratory shorebirds and contains the largest commercial shellfish beds in the state. The bay is one of the five largest oyster-producing areas in the world. Federally threatened or endangered species include breeding bald eagles, wintering peregrine falcons, migrating Aleutian Canada geese and foraging brown pelicans. Chinook, coho, and chum salmon and steelhead and sea run cutthroat trout use the river.

State share: \$ 3,000

Federal share: \$350,000

Partners share: \$380,000

WISCONSIN

Chiwaukee Prairie Acquisition: The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will acquire 17 acres of wet prairie and coastal emergent wetlands on Kenosha County's Lake Michigan shoreline. This is the largest remaining coastal wetland/prairie complex on the state's Lake Michigan shoreline. The area is recognized by the National Park Service as a National Natural

Landmark. The dynamic functions of Lake Michigan, including changing water levels, and swell and swale topography result in unique and rare plants and animals adapted to this prairie and wetland area, including the Federally threatened eastern white fringed prairie orchid. More than 400 wetland and prairie species occur here. The area will be managed as part of the Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area.

State share:	\$55,000	Federal share:	\$175,000
Partners share:	\$20,000		

North Bay Acquisition: The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will acquire 220 acres of wetlands to be managed as part of the North Bay Natural Area, Door County. The site will be managed through The Nature Conservancy. The area includes 150 acres of coastal wetlands (130 acres of forested and 20 acres of emergent) and 3,200 feet of the last remaining length of Lake Michigan shoreline to be protected. The project will also provide a link of natural communities from North Bay to the greater project area. Federally threatened or endangered species include the dwarf lake iris, Hine's emerald dragonfly and bald eagle. The area is important for migrating and nesting waterfowl, a diverse neotropical avifauna, and whitefish spawning grounds.

State share:	\$45,000	Federal share:	\$315,000
Partners share:	\$90,000		