

Partners for Fish and Wildlife in Maine

Restoring Habitat on Private Lands



American Black Duck

Background

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (Partners Program) is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's most popular and effective program for voluntary, citizen and community-based fish and wildlife habitat restoration activities. The Partners Program serves as a bridge to owners and managers of private lands to develop partnerships for the benefit of federal trust species. The approach is simple: engage willing partners, through non-regulatory incentives, to conserve, restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat on their property. The Partners Program began in 1990 to help farmers restore degraded wetlands for wildlife; today it continues to grow with opportunities to restore wetland, riverine, and upland habitats.

Partners Program in Maine

The Partners Program in Maine is administered by the Maine Field Office in Orono, Maine. The Partners Program began in 1990 with a focus on restoring several types of habitat: wetlands, uplands, streams, and riparian areas. Projects are focused in areas where conservation efforts will provide the greatest benefit for federal trust species, which include: migratory birds, anadromous fish, and federally-listed threatened and endangered species. Habitats that were once in a degraded state are now providing important cover, food, water, and breeding areas for many species.

Threats

Although wetland losses in Maine are relatively small compared to losses in mid-western States, wetlands continue to be filled or severely degraded by development, particularly in southern and central Maine. Loss of grasslands are also occurring as conversion of prime farmland to residential home development and farmland abandonment increase in Maine. Consequently,

Maine Partners Program Accomplishment Highlights 1990-2009

- Developed close working relationships with four Native American Tribes who collectively own 230,000 acres in Maine;
- Restored 180 acres of saltmarsh;
- Restored 130 acres of ditched-emergent wetlands;
- Protected and restored 9,500 acres of freshwater wetlands from drainage by installing 500 beaver exclosures;
- Protected 33 miles of stream and riparian habitat; and
- Partnered with over 80 landowners and 30 partners to achieve accomplishments.



USFWS

Partner Program funds are used to help construct fishways for alewives and other migratory fish.

grassland birds, such as bobolinks, the State endangered grasshopper sparrow and meadowlarks, are declining faster than any other group of birds in the Northeast.

Water quality degradation continues to plague Maine rivers and streams, impacting federally endangered Atlantic salmon, state threatened yellow lampmussel, and other aquatic resources. Dams on rivers and streams and undersized culverts on tidal creeks prevent or limit anadromous fish runs. Roads and undersized culverts on salt marshes impair tidal circulation, encouraging the establishment of invasive plants such as phragmites and purple loosestrife.



Lloyd Spitzniece

Blue-winged Warblers depend on early successional habitat being restored by the partners program.

The Partners Program in Maine has worked voluntarily with 30 landowners to restore degraded emergent wetlands and saltmarshes to improve habitat for many Federal trust species, including waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds.

Conservation Strategies

Wetland Conservation, with Special Emphasis on Native American Lands

The Partners Program, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Penobscot Indian Nation, and the Passamaquoddy Tribe work together to prevent hundreds of acres of beaver-influenced wetlands from being drained by private landowners and town road crews.

To help offset the annual loss of hundreds of acres of wetlands in Maine, beaver exclosure devices were constructed to help maintain diverse wildlife habitat by preventing the complete drainage of wetlands by road crews. These wetlands, often the last remaining "open" spaces in urban environments, act as wildlife magnets, attracting bitterns, rails, green herons, moose, ducks, and songbirds.

The Partners Program provides financial and technical assistance to The Houlton Band of Maliseet to restore riparian corridors along their lands next to the Meduxnekeag River. The tribe has planted native trees to provide wildlife habitat for migratory songbirds and cover to the river keeping the temperature of the water cooler for native fish populations.

Grasslands

The Partners Program in Maine is working cooperatively with landowners to restore hundreds of acres of grassland habitat for declining grassland birds on the Kennebunk Plains and elsewhere in Maine.

State, Federally Listed and Candidate Species

The Partners Program is working closely with farmers and land trusts to improve water quality in the Ducktrap, Sheepscot, Kennebec, Kenduskeag, and other federally-endangered Atlantic salmon rivers that are also home to State threat-ened mussels and rare dragonflies and damselflies. Gravel pit restoration in riparian areas and streambank fencing on dairy farms are two conservation steps being taken to improve water quality for fish and wildlife.

Federally threatened Canada lynx populations on Passamaquoddy Tribal lands have benefitted from the Partners Program's recommended actions to Tribal foresters, particularly the management of early successional stage coniferous forests.

The Partners Program is working to restore early successional habitat for declining populations of New England Cottontail (Federal Candidate Species), American woodcock, and blue-winged warbler.

Fish Passage

The Partners Program has worked with partners to improve fish passage on the Orland River and Little Madawaska River in northern Maine by providing funding and technical assistance to install a fishway for alewives, and other

migratory fish that are economically and environmentally important to local communities.

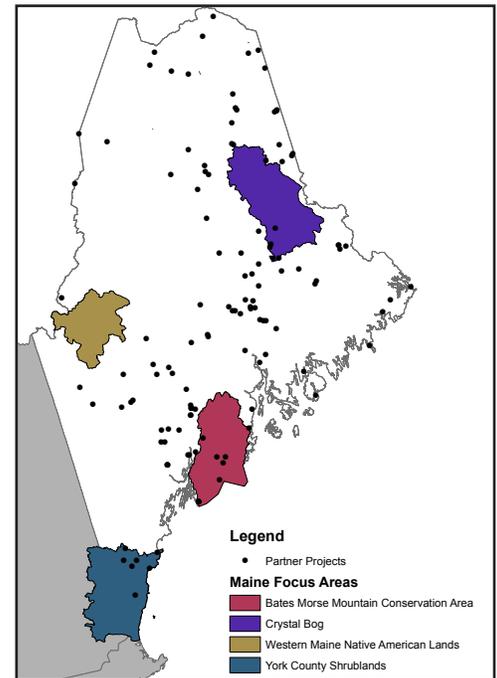
Farm Bill Conservation

The Partners Program is a member of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) State Technical Committee and plays a significant role in deciding how best to allocate funds for USDA conservation programs. The programs are designed to assist farmers in restoring, enhancing, and protecting habitat for at-risk and other high priority fish and wildlife species on their lands. Additionally, as a member of an interagency Easement Review Team, the Partners Program plays an important role in setting aside conservation areas through the Farm Service Agency's Debt-For-Nature and Inventory Property programs. The Partners Program worked with the Debt-For-Nature Program to protect Furbish lousewort, a federally endangered plant species, on the St. John River in northern Maine.

Public Outreach

Partners Program staff attend Maine Cooperative Extension Service evening meetings with farmers and other landowners to inform the public of federal programs available to assist landowners interested fish and wildlife resources in Maine. Staff also work closely with public libraries, schools, land trusts, and scouting groups by leading field trips for youngsters interested in learning about wetland restoration and migratory birds. Maine Public Radio and other local radio stations have featured the Partners Program to help educate the public.

Maine Partners for Fish & Wildlife Priority Areas



Cooperating for Conservation

From 1990-2009 the Partner Program in Maine worked with hundreds of partners and 30 landowners on almost 120 projects in our focus areas. This work contributed to the protection, enhancement, or restoration of over 240,000 acres of habitat and 33 river miles supporting dozens of migratory and federally protected species.

For additional information or questions contact:

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Don Getty ©

Restoring early successional coniferous forests help species like the Canada lynx.