

Partners for Fish and Wildlife in New York

Restoring Habitat on Private Lands



Great Blue Heron

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 1987 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 New York

The Partners Program in New York is administered by the New York Field Office in Cortland, New York. 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 priority areas; where conservation efforts will provide the greatest benefit for federal trust species including: 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

Since settlement in the 1600's, New York's vast forests, wetlands, streams, and grasslands have fueled the State's growth and development. Many of the State's natural resources were greatly diminished or degraded as the landscape was changed to provide for agriculture and urban development. During this period, 60% of the wetlands were drained or filled, 99.9% of native grasslands were

New York Partners Program Accomplishment Highlights 1990-2009

- Protected, restored and enhanced 14,760 acres of wetlands;
- Protected, restored and enhanced 5,261 acres of grasslands;
- Protected 57 miles of stream and riparian habitat; and
- Partnered with over 675 landowners and 40 partners to achieve accomplishments.



Dennis Donohue

The Partners Program actively restores grassland habitat for Bobolink.

converted to other uses, more than 5,000 dams were constructed blocking fish movement, and miles of stream were channelized. In addition, the extensive northern hardwood and spruce-fir forests were cut and cleared. These changes have led to declines in waterfowl, grassland nesting birds, anadromous fish, and many forest-dependent species.

Conservation Strategies

Wetlands

Restoration techniques have focused on returning hydrology to drained wetlands. Wetland restoration projects are carefully crafted to blend into the landscape and involve a variety of activities, such as: creating micro-topography, establishing complexes of small seasonal wetlands, and restoring larger permanent wetlands.



USFWS

Planting wild blue lupine provides habitat for the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly.

Grasslands

Grasslands are required nesting habitat for many species of migratory birds. The decline of species such as bobolink and eastern meadowlark is directly correlated with the decline of grasslands in the Northeast. The Partners Program uses management techniques such as mowing, burning, planting both warm- and cool-season grasses, and invasive species removal to restore grassland habitat.

Streams and Riparian Areas

Streams and riparian areas support fish, amphibians, mussels, and many other species needed for a diverse community. Streambank fencing is a restoration technique that is cost effective and valued by natural resource advocates as well as farm groups and landowners. The Partners Program purchases equipment

and provides labor to protect streams from grazing livestock. Along with sediment and nutrient reduction in the stream, excellent habitat is provided for both fish and wildlife. Using natural channel design concepts, in-stream work reduces bank erosion rates while improving fish and wildlife habitat to restore stable streams in a cost-effective manner.

Invasive Species

Purple loosestrife, a European wetland plant, has invaded many wetlands in New York to the point of being the dominant plant species. This plant out-competes native species that provide important food and cover for wildlife from proliferating. The Partners Program works with Cornell University to utilize the most successful technique for reducing this invasive plant by releasing beetles that feed only on loosestrife. The plant becomes stressed allowing native plants to better compete.

Multiflora rose is an invasive plant common in old pastures and can dominate a grassland in a few years, if not controlled. The Partners Program works to reduce multiflora rose invasions so those fields are more attractive for grassland nesting birds.

Outdoor Classrooms

The Partners Program has worked with schools and nature centers throughout New York State to restore wetlands, grasslands, and savannah that are used in conjunction with environmental educational programs. Partners staff give presentations at these sites to teach about the biological values these habitats provide.

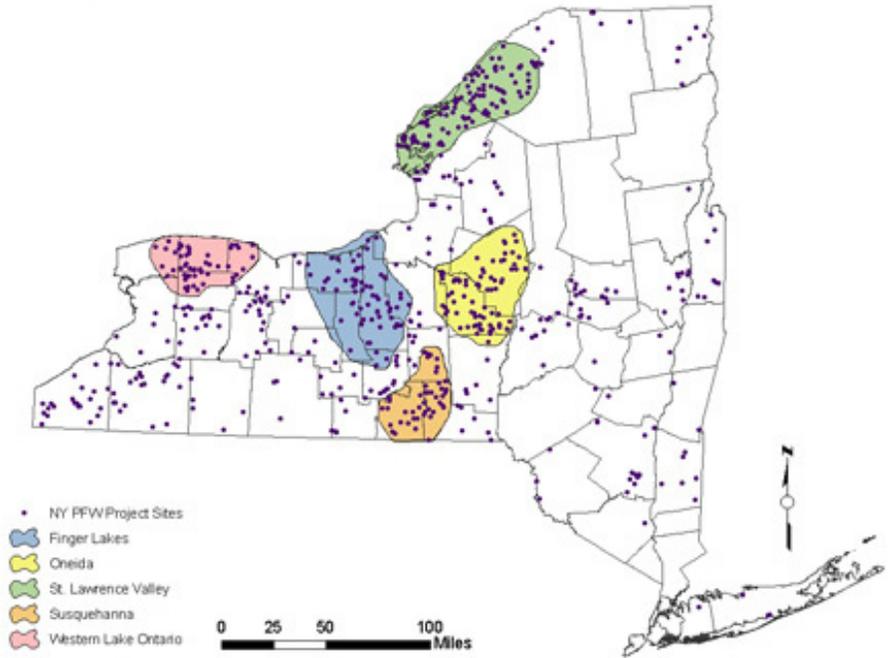
Farm Bill Conservation

The Partners Program works with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) by providing the technical expertise needed to evaluate which projects provide the most benefit to fish and wildlife and recommending and demonstrating management and restoration techniques. The Partners Program recognizes that agricultural lands are more valuable to wildlife than urban development and works with agricultural producers to keep farms economically and biologically productive. The special expertise of Partners staff has affected more than a million acres of private lands enrolled in various USDA conservation programs.

Unique Habitat

Two unique habitats in New York have brought together partners on protection projects. The Partners Program has

New York Partners for Fish & Wildlife Priority Areas



worked with partners to install gates on caves to minimize disturbance to hibernating bats. Wintertime disturbance cause the animals to expend energy reserves that are needed to get them through their winter hibernation.

Other projects have involved clearing areas to plant wild blue lupine, the plant which is relied on by the endangered Karner blue butterfly, and constructing fences around the habitat of the State-listed endangered bog turtle, so the unique wetland habitat can be maintained and improved through grazing.



Restored vernal pool habitat.



Spotted salamander benefit from vernal pool restoration.

Cooperative Conservation

From 1990-2009 the Partner Program in New York worked with hundreds of partners and 675 landowners on almost 700 projects in our focus areas. This work contributed to the protection, enhancement, or restoration of over 20,000 acres of habitat and 57 river miles supporting dozens of migratory and federally protected species.

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