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## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service celebrates 25 years of coastal conservation**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Region's Coastal Program is celebrating its 25th year of conserving wetlands and habitats for fish and wildlife across the coast. In recognition of its anniversary, the national USFWS Coastal Program received the Restoration Partnership Award on Tuesday, Nov. 16, at the Restore America's Estuaries Conference. The award recognizes an individual or group that has demonstrated dedication, commitment and passion for estuary habitat restoration.

"The Coastal Program is a shining example of how people from all different sectors can work together to accomplish remarkable conservation achievements," said Acting Fish and Wildlife Service Director Rowan Gould. "This voluntary, cooperative program has conserved some of our nation's most imperiled estuaries, wetlands and coastal habitats for current and future generations to enjoy."

The Northeast Region's Coastal Program restored 23,600 acres of wetlands and uplands just this past year. From enhancing more than 400 acres in the Great Cypress Swamp in Delaware to inventorying 50,000 acres of forest in Rhode Island, controlling rodent predator populations in the Nanticoke River watershed in Maryland and removing a 100-year-old dam on the Little River in Maine, the four northeast Coastal Program offices continue to make coordinated, focused efforts to protect the area's high-priority coastal resources.

"The Northeast Region of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is proud of the important coastal conservation and restoration results we have been able to achieve in concert with our state, corporate, non-governmental and volunteer partners here in the Northeast," said Tim Fannin, Chief of the Northeast Region Habitat and Contaminants Division. "We look forward to working together for at least another 25 years to accomplish similar results."

Across the nation, the Coastal Program has restored 251,000 acres of coastal wetlands and upland habitat, permanently protected nearly 2 million acres of coastal habitat, and restored 1,700 miles of riverside and stream habitat. These coastal wetlands provide for improved water quality, increased water storage and supply, reduced flood and storm surge risk, and vital habitat for plants, fish and wildlife. Twenty-three program offices across the United States reach these goals by providing technical assistance, funding and other resources to partners including private landowners and federal, state and local agencies.

Despite the successes of the Coastal Program and other similar voluntary, incentive-based programs, threats to coastal ecosystems have become even more challenging. Climate change poses numerous and complex threats to coastal wetlands and the fish and wildlife they support, including sea level rise, more invasive species, and increases in ocean temperatures and acidity.

Scientists predict that increased flooding of populated coastal areas and further decreases in water quality will severely impact fish, wildlife and humans. The magnitude of these threats escalates the strong need for public-private partnerships to protect and restore coastal wetland habitats.

To learn more about the Northeast Region Coastal Program, visit <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/coastal/features/25years.html>. Visit our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/usfwsnortheast> to join the discussion on the Coastal Program's 25th anniversary.

See a Coastal Program video on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and coastal photos at the National Flickr page, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsHQ>, and the Northeast Region's page, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsnortheast>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).