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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The New Jersey Field Office

Activities in the Garden State



The New Jersey Field Office as part of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The New Jersey Field Office (NJFO), located in Pleasantville, Atlantic County, New Jersey implements the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's (Service) Ecological Services (ES) program throughout New Jersey and its territorial waters. The Service is a bureau within the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Service is organized into seven regions and has its headquarters in Washington, D.C. About 8,500 people work for the Service at

approximately 700 units including National Wildlife Refuges, fisheries stations, law enforcement offices, and ES field offices. Through its ES field offices, including the NJFO, the Service works closely with states, other federal agencies, Native American tribes, and the private sector to accomplish the Service's mission. The components of the ES program in the State of New Jersey are the focus of this fact sheet.

"The mission of the U.S. Fish & 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."

What does the New Jersey Field Office do?

The NJFO is part of the Service's northeast region that spans from Maine to Virginia and West Virginia. The NJFO is responsible for protecting endangered species and implementing recovery efforts, reviewing federal projects and activities under federal permit or license, investigating environmental contaminant problems, developing partnerships, and providing public education and outreach. The NJFO's responsibilities chiefly focus on the stewardship of federal trust resources, which include federally listed threatened and endangered species, migratory fish and birds, certain marine mammals, and federal lands including National Wildlife Refuges. Emphasis is also given to the impacts from invasive species and Superfund Sites on native fish and wildlife populations.

The NJFO employs biologists, communication specialists, supervisors, and administrative staff to oversee the Service's ES activities in New Jersey. The NJFO works closely with Service counterparts in law enforcement, fisheries and National Wildlife Refuges. The NJFO (like the rest of the Service) uses an ecosystem approach in implementing responsibilities, meaning that Service decisions and recommendations consider natural boundaries. Under this approach, New Jersey encompasses two areas: the Delaware Basin, which includes the Delaware River and Delaware Bay, and Hudson River-New York Bight. The New York Bight is an area extending in a wide arc from the eastern tip of Long Island to the southern end of Cape May.

Endangered Species

The United States Congress passed the *Endangered Species Act (ESA)* in 1973. The Act entrusts the Service with the responsibility to recover and protect federally listed threatened and endangered species and their habitats. Similarly, the National Marine Fisheries Service is responsible for marine species. When a species becomes threatened or endangered, it serves as a serious health warning for the entire ecosystem. Listed species are designated as endangered -- likely to become extinct throughout all or most of its range, or threatened -- likely to become endangered in the near future.

Both designations receive the same level of protection. The NJFO is responsible for 13 federally listed species. Activities relating to the *ESA* in New Jersey include implementing recovery efforts for listed species; reviewing projects that could adversely affect listed species; monitoring populations of listed and declining species; working with partners to conserve listed species' habitats; assessing the status of species considered candidates for listing; and educating the public about threatened and endangered species, why they are important, and what people can do to help.



Environmental contaminants monitoring of wildlife nesting on a navigation beacon in New York / New Jersey Harbor

Federal Activities

Federal Activities include technical assistance and project review, often for other federal agencies. Authority for the Service's involvement is the *Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act*. When the federal government undertakes a water resource project, the Service participates in project planning to protect federal trust

resources. For example, when the Army Corps of Engineers, an agency that often works closely with the Service, plans a beach replenishment project, the Service considers the implications of the sand deposition on existing habitat and impacts to the off-shore borrow area. The Service also reviews federal flood control projects, dredging projects, and

permit applications for proposals involving regulated activities in wetlands (the State has already lost almost half its wetlands). By working with other agencies, Service's recommendations often become part of a federally funded or permitted project to ensure the continued protection of New Jersey's wild living resources.

Environmental Contaminants

When hazardous chemicals accidentally or deliberately enter the environment, they can produce harmful effects in living things — plants, wildlife, fish, and humans. Sources of contaminants effecting New Jersey's natural resources include oil spills affecting coastal areas and dependent wildlife, past industrial discharges of contaminants such as PCBs and dioxins that continue to make fish unsafe for wildlife and human consumption, and the former wide-spread use of pesticides

(such as DDT which nearly exterminated the bald eagle) that remain in the environment. The goals of the NJFO's Environmental Contaminants (EC) Program are to: (1) identify and investigate contaminant problems affecting fish, wildlife, and their habitats, and (2) prevent further losses and degradation of those resources. The NJFO's EC Specialists fulfill these goals through activities such as conducting scientific investigations to document and remedy contaminant-related

problems for fish and wildlife, monitoring long-term contaminant trends, participating in oil and chemical spill clean-ups, consulting with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reduce impacts to federal trust resources at Superfund sites, and ensuring that polluters restore and compensate for environmental damage. Through these actions, the Service helps to ensure a healthy environment for fish and wildlife — and humans as well.

Partnerships and Habitat Restoration

Partnerships enable the Service to accomplish its mission and balance its activities while increasing public awareness and participation in fish and wildlife conservation efforts. The strength of partnerships lies within their ability to unite varied parties in pursuit of shared resource objectives. Among the NJFO's biggest partnership efforts are *Partners for Fish and Wildlife*, *Farm Bill programs*, *Coastal*



Ecosystem programs, and joint efforts with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation such as *Bring Back the Natives*. For example: *Partners for Fish and Wildlife* is

a Service program directed at protecting and restoring important fish and wildlife habitats on non-federal lands through voluntary partnerships. Cost-sharing is an important program component. The program's main focus is wetland restoration, but the Service also pursues riparian and upland restoration. Individual citizens and groups looking to restore, enhance, or even create wildlife habitats can contact the NJFO for more information.

Education

Education provides another partnership opportunity for the NJFO. *The Nature of Learning*, an award-winning program for elementary and high school students, blends the Service's mission with school curricula, helping students understand and

appreciate New Jersey's living resources while advancing the school's educational efforts. Field trips, special talks from Service biologists, and information about careers in conservation are among the topics covered. The Service also attempts to educate the

public about fish and wildlife through educational materials, work with Congress and the media, and public contact at festivals and shows. The NJFO's newsletter, *Field Notes* is published to inform the public and government agencies.

A Closing Statement

Through our efforts to protect endangered species, participate in federal activities, manage contaminants, develop partnerships, and perform outreach and education, the Service works toward preserving a high quality of life for New Jersey.

Protecting the environment for today and the future will ensure the health of New Jersey's natural systems, providing recreation and awareness for the eight million people living in the nation's most densely populated state.



Protecting the Hackensack Meadowlands