Partners for Fish and Wildlife in New Jersey

Restoring Habitat on Private Lands

Red Knot in flight

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 Jersey

The Partners Program in New Jersey is administered by the New Jersey Field Office in Pleasantville, New Jersey. The Partners Program began in 1991 with a primary focus on wetland restoration. Projects are focused in focus 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.

USFWS

The Calco Dam Fish Passage Project helped restore habitat for migratory fish.

New Jersey Partners Program Accomplishment Highlights 1991-2009

- **Protected, restored and enhanced 6.499 acres of wetlands;**
- **Protected, restored and enhanced 3,009 acres of uplands;**
- **Protected 49 miles of stream and riparian habitat; and**
- **Partnered with over 230 organizations to achieve accomplishments.**

Threats

New Jersey has lost more than half its wetlands, some 584,000 acres. Extensive development pressure in New Jersy has lead to direct loss of wetlands through filling and indirectly altered and degraded habitat through changed hydrology, fragmentation, and introduction of invasive exotic species. Invasive species often take over native habitats and cause diverse plant communities to become stands of a single species with minimal value to wildlife.

Conservation Strategies

Although not restricted to any one part of New Jersey, the Partners Program has identified several geographic focal areas based on the concentration of federal trust resources, the need for restoration, overlapping planning and conservation efforts, and the presence of areas designated for conservation.

Grasslands

The Partners Program often assists with the establishment of native warm-season grasses in large fields by providing technical advice, equipment, and seed. These grasses provide nesting habitat for rare grassland-dependent birds and forage for migratory birds. The upright stems provide cover to over-wintering birds and other wildlife.

Wetlands

New Jersey has an impressive abundance and diversity of forested and herbaceous wetlands. Partners-assisted projects help restore these wetlands by improving hydrology, reducing invasive species populations, and reestablishing native plant species. New Jersey also has many areas that were once productive wetlands

Bill Majoros

Great Blue Heron benefit from wetland restoration projects.

but were filled in, drained, or otherwise altered. The Partners Program can assist with returning wetland hydrology to these areas through tasks such as plugging drainage ditches, berming, installing water control structures, excavating, or braking drainage tile.

Streams and Riparian Areas

A long history of development in New Jersey along its streams and watersheds have caused many watercourses to become channelized, eroded, and devoid of native vegetation while the percentage of impervious cover in the watersheds

continues to increase and exacerbate conditions. The Partners Program has helped municipalities plant fast-growing trees and shrubs along riparian areas to increase shade of streams; provide buffer strips to filter urban runoff; and provide nesting, resting, and foraging habitat for migratory birds. In agricultural areas, livestock often contribute to eroded streambanks, sedimentation, and eutrophic water conditions. The Partners Program can help farmers construct fencing to limit cattle's access to the streams and thereby stabilize streambanks and improve water quality and can purchase fence materials or provide a post-pounder to assist with these projects.

Many of the historical migratory fish runs in New Jersey for species, such as the American shad, have been blocked with dams. Partners can help remove these obstructions or build fish ladders over them so that fish can return to their original spawning grounds.

Special Projects

The Partners Program has worked with partners to assist with protecting rare mine habitat used by the federally endangered Indiana bat and provided bat boxes for other more common roosting bats; has distributed nest boxes for wood duck, bluebird, and kestrel; provided outreach and native plants to schools; assisted with prescribed burning; small-scale beach and tidal marsh erosion; instream habitat creation; and wildflower and wetland seeding.

Priority Habitats

Certain areas in New Jersey have high potential for restoration including: bog turtle sites, large open grasslands, disturbed coastal and bay salt marshes, farmed or drained wetlands, drained vernal ponds, former cranberry bogs, wetlands in the Hackensack Meadowlands, abandoned mining sites, shrub/dune communities, fragmented forests, caves used by roosting or hibernating bats, urban riparian corridors, grazed and eroded riparian areas, and dammed or otherwise blocked historical fish passages. Generally, any private, county, municipal, or tribal lands meeting the program's goals and guidelines are eligible. Committed landowners with a keen interest in helping fish and wildlife are often the key element of successful projects.

Cooperative Conservation

From 1991-2009 the Partner Program in New Jersey worked with hundreds of partners on 270 projects in our focus areas. This work contributed to the protection, enhancement, or restoration of nearly 10,000 acres of habitat and 50 river miles supporting dozens of migratory and federally protected species.

USFWS

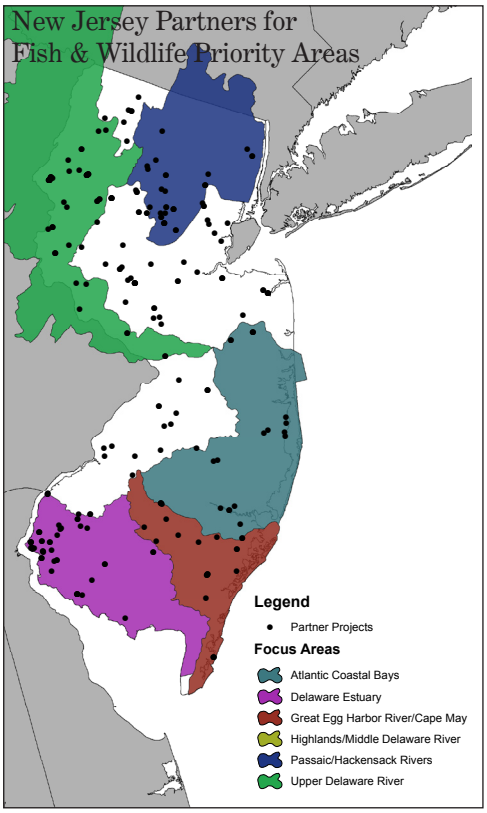
Ferro Upland Restoration Project, before.

USFWS

Ferro Upland Restoration Project, after.

USFWS

Bog turtle habitat would be a high priority for restoration activities.



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