



New York & Long Island Field Offices

<http://nyfo.fws.gov>
2009



Ecological Services Programs in New York: Services to the Public

Federal Activities: It's all about habitat. Our U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Federal Activities biologists assist New Yorkers by helping the public and State and Federal regulatory agencies understand how a wide range of projects, including development projects, highway infrastructure improvements, and energy generation projects (including wind and hydroelectric energy) may impact fish and wildlife. Federal interest in water resources began in the 1850s when the U.S. Supreme Court recognized the importance of commerce on nontidal waters and determined that the navigability on such waters should not be restricted. These waterways, also recognized for their important natural resources, were eventually protected in trust for all people. The trust resources of the USFWS include endangered species, interjurisdictional fish, migratory birds, and their habitats.



Recognizing that the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of our Nation's waters was critical to our society, Congress passed the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and later the Clean Water Act to maintain this integrity. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) was given regulatory authority over these resources and issues permits for activities in streams, lakes, rivers, wetlands, etc.



Every year, our office reviews approximately 250 public notices prepared by the Corps and U.S. Coast Guard. In these public notices, applicants propose to impact wetlands, streams, and other water bodies. The USFWS is effective at reducing the impacts of these projects on fish and wildlife resources and ensuring that mitigation is provided to achieve fish and wildlife benefits.

The Environmental Contaminants Program: Environmental contamination is one of America's greatest concerns. Annually, approximately 136 million pounds of toxic chemicals are discharged into the Nation's waterways, while 4 billion pounds of pesticides are applied to the land. Fish and wildlife often signal environmental contamination unnoticed by any other means – fish kills, deformities in birds and fish, and failed reproduction. The New York Field Office's (NYFO) environmental contaminants program responds to the threats contamination poses to fish and wildlife. The NYFO biologists are responsible for natural resource damage assessment and restoration, hazardous spill response, and technical assistance to State and Federal agencies, National Wildlife Refuges, and citizens with concerns regarding contamination of our fish and wildlife.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife is a voluntary program administered by the USFWS. Nationally, the program was initiated in 1987 to help protect, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat. The program is designed for use on privately owned (non-Federal) lands, providing landowners with technical and financial assistance to restore fish and wildlife habitats. Partnerships are the keystone of the program. The list of partners is varied, but in general they include other Federal agencies, State and local governments, educational institutions, businesses, conservation organizations, and private landowners. Generally speaking, anyone can become a partner providing the work will be done on non-Federal lands, and eligibility requirements of the program are met.



The Endangered Species Program: Protecting endangered and threatened species and restoring them to a secure status in the wild is the primary objective of the Endangered Species Program of the USFWS. Our responsibilities include listing, reclassifying, and delisting species under the Endangered Species Act (Act); providing information and biological opinions through the consultation process to Federal agencies on their activities that may affect listed species; enforcing species protection under the Act; overseeing recovery activities for listed species; providing for the protection of important habitat; and providing assistance to the State and others with their endangered species conservation efforts.



The Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) Program is designed to restore natural resources that have been impacted by releases of hazardous substances or oil spills. Several laws provide the foundation for NRDAR, giving natural resource Trustees the legal authority to have those responsible for harm to natural resources pay to restore those resources. Natural resource Trustees include Federal and State agencies and Indian Tribes that have the responsibility and authority to protect natural resources.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Mitigation Funds Facilitate Collaborative Conservation

A \$24 million Fish Enhancement, Mitigation, and Research Fund (FEMRF) was established in 2003 by a FERC relicensing settlement agreement for the St. Lawrence-FDR Power Project to benefit aquatic resources in the LOSLR basin. The Agreement also established the FEMRF Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC), a collaborative conservation group comprised of Federal, State and Canadian resource agencies, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, the New York Power Authority, St. Lawrence County, and New York Rivers United. The FAC first convened in August 2005.



The collaboration developed a conservation strategy to benefit recovery of native fish species historically found in the St. Lawrence River. These species were impacted by the power project and are also targeted for recovery in 18 comprehensive plans developed by international conservation groups on both sides of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. In 2007 and 2008, the FEMRF contributed approximately \$1.4 million to conservation efforts. The FAC is seeking proposals from restoration

ecologists, the academic community, tribes, non-profits, and other interested parties in the Lake Ontario/St. Lawrence River Basin. The USFWS anticipates that \$400k-\$1 million of the FEMRF will be awarded to collaborative conservation groups in FY2009. See <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/fwc/femrf.htm> for more information.



Fish ladder to pass northern pike and muskellunge to spawning and rearing habitats, Delaney Bay, St. Lawrence, Grindstone Island, New York. Ducks Unlimited, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and SUNY-ESF.