



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Erie National Wildlife Refuge

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INSIDE *Erie*



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The Partners for Wildlife Program exists to turn private lands into wildlife habitat - in this case providing a resting and feeding spot for a great egret.

Landowners Partner with Fish and Wildlife Service on Habitat

Jack Kiser was born and raised on a hilly farm just five miles from the 86-plus acres in Crawford County that he and his wife, Erlinda, own today. He has an affinity for wildlife and hunting; she loves plants and gardening.

In 2000, they applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program for help to restore a one-and-a-half-acre wetland on their land. In 2001, they returned to the program to create a second wetland,

and last year the Partners program helped them sell a conservation easement on most of the land to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wetland Reserve Program. The conservation easement is an agreement through which the Department of Agriculture permanently protects marginally productive agricultural land as wildlife habitat.

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program helps private landowners like

the Kisers who wish to protect, restore or enhance wildlife habitat on their lands. In Pennsylvania, the program operates from the Service's State College field office and assists landowners statewide with more than 60 projects a year.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife provides technical and financial assistance to landowners on such projects as wetland

(story continued on page 3)

Comprehensive Conservation Plan Update

The major themes of the refuge's CCP continue to grow and evolve. One theme that will be a high priority for refuge staff is the development of partnerships which are intended to enhance the effort to conserve the French Creek Watershed. Refuge staff plans to collaborate with partners to assist with conservation measures within the French Creek Watershed. Refuge staff also plan to work with the Fish and Wildlife Service's Pennsylvania Field Office to foster opportunities to restore or improve wildlife habitat on private lands through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

As a step toward invigorating this effort, during the upcoming meeting of the French Creek Consortium, the Refuge, its mission, programs, interests and capabilities will be featured. Additional partnership opportunities are being researched for future conservation.



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Erie National Wildlife Refuge Summer Fest



Saturday, June 25
10 am- 4 pm

Activities for everyone!

Live animals, hikes, games, activities, crafts, give-aways, auction and more!

Erie National Wildlife Refuge
11296 Wood Duck Lane
Guys Mills, PA 16327

Phone: 814/789 3585
Email: fw5rw_ernwr@fws.gov
Website: www.fws.gov/northeast/erie

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...Landowners Partner (cont.)

and stream bank restoration, fencing to keep livestock out of streams, and replanting previously farmed areas with native grasses to benefit American woodcock and other species that rely on grassland and shrub habitat. The program partners with nonprofit organizations, county conservation districts, state agencies and other federal agencies to provide funding and assistance to landowners.

“The policy is to shoot for a 50 percent cost share with landowners, but because of our extensive partnerships we typically can do a project for very minimal costs to the landowners,” Supervisory Fish and Wildlife Biologist Mark Roberts explains. “On average, landowners probably contribute 10 to 20 percent of the project costs.” In exchange, landowners commit to maintaining the project for at least 10 years, depending on the contract’s terms.

Projects are tailored to the needs and interests of the landowner and the partners involved, Roberts emphasizes. A wetlands restoration project may receive a federal North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant or direct construction assistance from program staff, while another may receive grass seed or help with planting from contractors or volunteers. Partners for Fish and Wildlife launched in Pennsylvania in 1990. The popular program has grown primarily through word of mouth. Projects are selected based on a number of criteria:

- If they benefit such priority species as federally threatened or endangered species, species on the candidates list to be considered for that status, or migratory birds.
- If they are within one of the focal areas where the program has identified critical habitat exists. Much of Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango counties constitute the Northwest focus area.
- If the project is likely to leverage strong partnerships from other groups or agencies with a shared interest in protecting or enhancing the habitat.



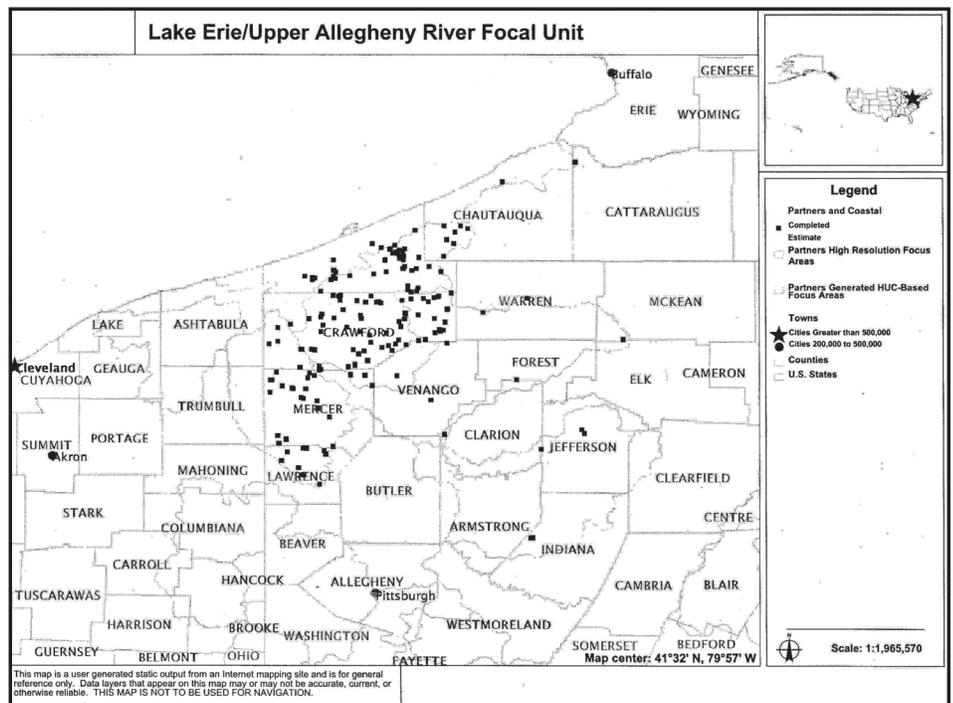
The Partners Program strives to provide quality habitat for a diversity of wildlife. Here, a wood duck thrives in a wetland.

From 2000-2009, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program created or restored over 4,000 acres of wildlife habitat in the Lake Erie/Upper Allegheny area.

Because Erie National Wildlife Refuge and other federally protected lands account for a very small portion of the state’s acreage, private landowners like the Kisers serve a crucial role in protecting and restoring habitat for migratory birds, native trees and plants, and

wildlife, says Clint Riley, supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pennsylvania Field Office: “With so little public land in Pennsylvania, the fact that we still have such productive wildlife habitat is a testament to the good stewardship provided by private landowners.”

For more information on the Partners in Fish and Wildlife Program in Pennsylvania, see www.fws.gov/northeast/pafo/partners.html or call 814-234-4090. Information is also available at Erie National Wildlife Refuge, please call 814-789-3585.



Crawford County, PA has been the host for a great number of Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program projects in the last decade.

TRASH TO TREASURE

As part of the 2011 Refuge Summer Fest, the **Friends of Erie National Wildlife Refuge** are sponsoring a “Trash to Treasure” contest.

The competition involves reworking items that would normally be recycled or discarded into either useful or artistic creations. Cash prizes will be awarded in both categories (useful and artistic) in four age groups:

- 11 years and under
- 12-14
- 15-18
- 19 and over

The entry deadline is June 13. For more information and contest rules, call 814-789-3585.

