

# Northeast Region Coastal Program

## *Celebrating 25 Years of Partnering for Coastal Conservation*

### The Coastal Program

The primary focus of the Coastal Programs is to work with partners to protect and restore habitat for Federal Trust Species: migratory birds; threatened and endangered species; inter-jurisdictional fish; certain marine mammals; and, species of international concern and their associated critical habitat types: coastal and inland wetlands; native grasslands; rivers and streams. Region 5 is comprised of an extensive coastline extending from Maine to Virginia. These coastal areas and shorelines support a myriad of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and, as a result, are critical to human endeavors.

### Coastal Habitats Provide an Economic Boost to Our Region

Each year our country's coastal resources contribute millions to the national economy. Fisheries, tourism, and recreation are just several of the industries that are absolutely dependent upon healthy, functioning coastal areas. Fish and wildlife resources and associated habitats serve as a beacon for ecosystem health. Healthy habitats, untouched spaces, and enduring populations of fish, birds, and other wildlife add to the value of inland and coastal resources.



The loss of estuarine and nearshore habitat is the greatest long-term threat to the health of our marine ecosystems. *USFWS photo*

### Challenges Facing Coastal Conservation

Over the last several hundred years, coastal resources have been under stress from development, loss of wetlands, nutrient over-enrichment, pollutants, blockages of fish migration, and invasive-exotic species. While these threats remain, new challenges rise to the surface. Virtually every habitat will be impacted by the effects of global climate change. Sea level rise in coastal areas will threaten birds, beetles, and fish alike. By the year 2025, nearly 75 percent of all Americans are expected to live in coastal counties.

### Cooperating for Conservation

This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the Coastal Program. While we celebrate our successes of the past, we are ready to face the challenges of the future with strong partnerships and creative solutions. We will continue to use a voluntary, collaborative approach, and seek opportunities to protect and restore high value habitat throughout the region.

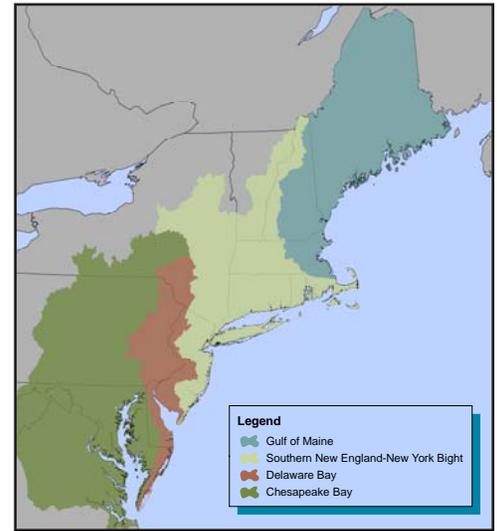
### Meet the Northeast Region Coastal Programs

#### Gulf of Maine Coastal Program

The Gulf of Maine Coastal Program (GOMCP) works closely with other federal and state agencies, non-government conservation groups (NGO's), willing landowners and other local partners on habitat protection and restoration projects in the coastal watersheds of Maine that provide habitat for migratory birds (especially waterbirds) such as American Eider, Atlantic Puffin, and Razorbilled Auk, searun fish and federally threatened and endangered species.

#### Southern New England-New York Bight

The Southern New England-New York Bight Coastal Program (SNEP) strives to reduce the negative impacts of human activities by emphasizing a proactive, collaborative approach toward protecting



valuable coastal resources. The SNEP area spans 5 states with habitats ranging from shorelines to forest. Both the Connecticut River and Hudson River watersheds support nationally important runs of anadromous fish such as Atlantic sturgeon, American shad, striped bass, river herring, and endangered shortnose sturgeon. The lower Connecticut River is an especially important area for young salmon migrating to the ocean and for returning adult salmon.

### Delaware Bay Estuary Project

The Delaware Bay Estuary Project (DBEP) forges innovative partnerships to protect and restore some of the country's most important migratory shorebird and waterfowl habitat. During fall and winter, tens of thousands of waterfowl can be found there feeding and resting. Each spring, the area hosts the second largest concentration of shorebirds in North America as birds migrating from South America to the Arctic stop to fuel up for the long journey north.

### Chesapeake Bay Field Office

The Chesapeake Bay Field Office (CBFO) Coastal Program works with others to conserve and restore fish and wildlife habitat in the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays watersheds. In cooperation with partners, CBFO Coastal Program biologists identify important fish and wildlife habitat and design and implement protection and restoration measures. Major areas of focus are invasive species control, wetland conservation and restoration, stream habitat assessment and restoration, and fish passage.

# Coastal Programs at Work in the Northeast Region

## Fish Passage

From 2004 - 2008 the regional coastal programs have facilitated and completed, through funding and/or technical assistance, 27 fish passage projects in the Northeast Region.



Bradford Fishway. *Photo by Chris Fox*

*Wood/Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership* SNEP provided technical expertise and funding in the effort to open migratory fish routes for Alewife and Blueback herring, American shad, sea run brook and brown trout and American eel in the Pawcatuck River. The first action completed by the partnership was repairing deficiencies at the Bradford Fishway in the fall of 2008 to prevent structural failure and improve efficiency, and to ensure sustained anadromous fish passage to the rest of the restorations planned for the upper Pawcatuck River system in Rhode Island.

## Assesment and Inventory

Each year coastal offices participate in survey, assessment, and inventory of coastal resources.



Red Knot. *USFWS photo*

The **DBEP** provides leadership and coordination in conserving the Delaware Bay spring shorebird migration stopover. DBEP serves as the coordinator for the FWS's Shorebird Technical Committee and works closely with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Horseshoe Crab Management Board. Additionally, DBEP helps prioritize projects and identify funding sources

to carry out high priority research, and provides expertise and equipment to the International Shorebird Monitoring Program, especially focused upon the declining red knot population. A joint meeting of the Shorebird and Horseshoe Crab Technical Committees was held in October 2007 to tackle this issue and resulted in the formation of an Adaptive Management Workgroup charged with developing models and providing input to the board on the predicted effects of different harvest levels on shorebirds.

## Habitat Protection

Numerous habitat protection projects have occurred throughout the region. In the last five years over 700 thousand acres have been protected for the benefit of trust species and their habitats.



Coastal Wetlands of Maine *USFWS photo*

During 2008, the **GOMCP** worked with numerous partners to protect significant coastal wetland habitats for important fish and wildlife. National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grants (NCWCG) were awarded to four coastal wetland protection projects in Maine to permanently protect more than 900 acres of wetland and upland buffer. These projects involve numerous NGO's and State agency partners and are located throughout coastal Maine from Maquoit Bay in Brunswick to Mason Bay in Jonesboro. Three additional North American Wetland Conservation Act grants were awarded to Maine to protect important wetlands including Cobscook Bay, Wabassus Lake, and Kennebec Estuary III. The GOMCP leveraged significant non-federal funding and provided its expertise to partners to make the projects possible.

## Habitat Restoration

Restoring altered habitats in coastal areas is a high priority for all the coastal offices. Innovative projects like the one below illustrate the imagination and creativity of staff in managing the natural

resources. In the last five years over 53 thousand acres have been restored or enhanced for the benefit of our trust resources.



Goats grazing invasive plants. *USFWS photo*

## *Bog Turtle Wetland Restoration*

**CBFO** and partners used goats to graze woody vegetation at a five-acre bog turtle wetland site from July to September 2008 in Millers, Maryland. When used effectively, prescribed grazing not only helps to control undesired vegetation but also helps break down dense plant roots and rhizomes, improving burrowing quality of the substrate for bog turtles. Grazing is preferred over herbicide and mechanical control of undesired vegetation because the latter two control methods are labor intensive, costly, and time consuming.

## Partnerships

### *Cypress Swamp Restoration*

The **CBFO** and the **DBEP** are involved with the effort to restore Great Cypress Swamp. Due to the magnitude of the project, and because one portion of the swamp drains into the Chesapeake Bay while another portion drains into the Delaware Inland Bays, both offices are providing funding and technical assistance in this multiphased project. The coastal offices and their partners are working to restore 84 acres of Atlantic White Cedar wetland habitat, and the enhancement of at least 342 additional acres through hydrologic restoration. The Great Cypress Swamp is the largest remaining contiguous tract of forest on the Delmarva Peninsula, and supports many rare, forest-dependent species, including state endangered bird species and globally rare insects and plant communities that will benefit from the proposed restoration.

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
**1 800/344 WILD**  
<http://www.fws.gov>

March 2009

