

Urban Refuge Partnerships Launched In Anchorage, Atlanta and Springfield

The U.S. Fish and Service launched three new Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships and named five new Urban Bird Treaty cities in July. The moves are designed to increase opportunities for city residents to connect with nature and engage thousands of volunteers in restoring local environments.

The new Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships – in Anchorage, AK; Atlanta, GA; and Springfield, MA – join 14 other cities with such partnerships. All are collaborative efforts to provide residents of demographically diverse cities with fresh opportunities to get outdoors, experience nature in the urban environment and develop an appreciation of wildlife conservation.

The new Urban Bird Treaty cities are Atlanta; Baltimore, MD; Pittsburgh, PA; New Haven, CT; and McAllen, TX. They join 21 other such partnerships. The Urban Bird Treaty – formally known as the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds – works with cities and partners to conserve migratory birds through education, citizen science and conservation action in metropolitan areas.

The new partnerships all are part of the Service’s Urban Wildlife Conservation Program. They were made possible by the 2015 Five Star grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, which generated \$2.35 million in direct contributions and matching funds from local partners. The Service contributed \$540,000 to this year’s projects.

“The Urban Wildlife Conservation Program was created because we believe the future of conservation depends on engaging people in natural resource stewardship. That is especially true of the millions who live in America’s biggest cities,” said Service Director Dan Ashe. “These grants will make a huge difference in reaching new communities by creating local partnerships with the Service in neighborhoods across the country. The benefits will be felt for generations.”

The Anchorage Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership will help restore 30 miles of streams, engage urban youth and families in wildlife conservation, mentor urban and rural youth ambassadors to promote shared perspectives, and engage nontraditional partners to achieve conservation and urban community development objectives. The partnership is designed to foster unity among future urban/rural conservation leaders.

Via the Atlanta Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, the South Fork Conservancy and scientific partners will collect and analyze data on plant and animal populations and water quality at the degraded confluence of the north and south forks of Peachtree Creek about six miles north of downtown. Partners, including the Service, will build creek access and engage under-served communities in monitoring and sustaining current restoration and green infrastructure efforts.

The Springfield Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership is designed to involve students and adult residents in the creation of a network of conserved habitats in the Connecticut River watershed of central New England.

The 14 previously established Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships are in Albuquerque, NM; Baltimore; Chicago, IL; Denver, CO; Houston, TX; Los Angeles, CA; New Haven, CT; New Orleans, LA; Pharr/San Juan/Alamo, TX; Philadelphia, PA; Providence, RI; Santa Barbara, CA; Seattle, WA; and Yonkers, NY.

For more information about the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/urban>.

CAPTION:

Young volunteers and South Fork Conservancy executive director Sally Sears, far right, clear pine saplings near Peachtree Creek in Atlanta. The conservancy is a major partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the newly established Atlanta Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership. (Bill Head/South Fork Conservancy)