

Two Service Programs Epitomize the Concept

Two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service programs -- the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and the Coastal Program -- exemplify the concept of working beyond the boundaries of national wildlife refuges, joining partners to conserve and restore ecosystems on a landscape scale. Working with more than 45,000 private landowners and 3,000 conservation partners since its founding 1987, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has restored more than a million acres of wetland habitat; 3 million acres of upland habitat and 11,000 miles of streams on private lands, a lot of it near and in conjunction with refuges.

“We have 225 Partners staff biologists in the field all over the country, and they’re in their trucks with shovels and leaning across fences with farmers and ranchers every day” helping to repair wetlands and streams, remove fish barriers, aid fish passage and even set up grazing systems, says John Schmerfeld, chief of the Refuge System Branch of Habitat Restoration. “It’s really an amazing program that has had incredible conservation success over the past 28 years.”

Coastal Program staff members in 24 priority coastal areas develop long-term partnerships on both private and public property to deliver landscape-scale conservation. Through the Coastal Program, the Service has restored approximately 517,670 acres of wetland and upland habitat, more than 2,220 miles of stream habitat, and helped permanently protect 2,079,655 acres since 1985. In 2014, the Service leveraged \$22 for every \$1 the Coastal Program project spent.

“The Refuge System is heavily invested in coastal areas,” says Schmerfeld. “They are super-important both for the human element and for wildlife.” He cites two facts: More than 170 refuges are coastal; and while coastal counties make up only 10 percent of the lower 48 states’ land mass, they are home to more than half of the states’ population.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, established in 1987, is a diversified habitat restoration program that provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and tribes who are willing to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners to help meet the habitat needs of federal trust fish, wildlife and plant species. Locally-based field biologists work one-on-one with private landowners to plan, implement and monitor projects. This level of personal attention and follow-through is a significant strength of the program. More about the program: www.fws.gov/partners/aboutus.html

Coastal Program

The Coastal Program is one of the Service’s most effective tools for delivering fish and wildlife habitat restoration and protection on public and privately owned lands. Coastal Program staff members are located in 24 priority coastal areas, including the Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes and Caribbean. These locally-based personnel know the community, its natural resources, environmental challenges, potential partners and political and economic issues. This knowledge enables the Service to develop long-term partnerships to deliver strategic habitat conservation. More about Coastal program: <http://www.fws.gov/coastal/>

CAPTION:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has been working with ranchers to restore native dry-prairie habitat for the endangered Florida grasshopper sparrow, which is critically imperiled (Mary Peterson/USFWS)