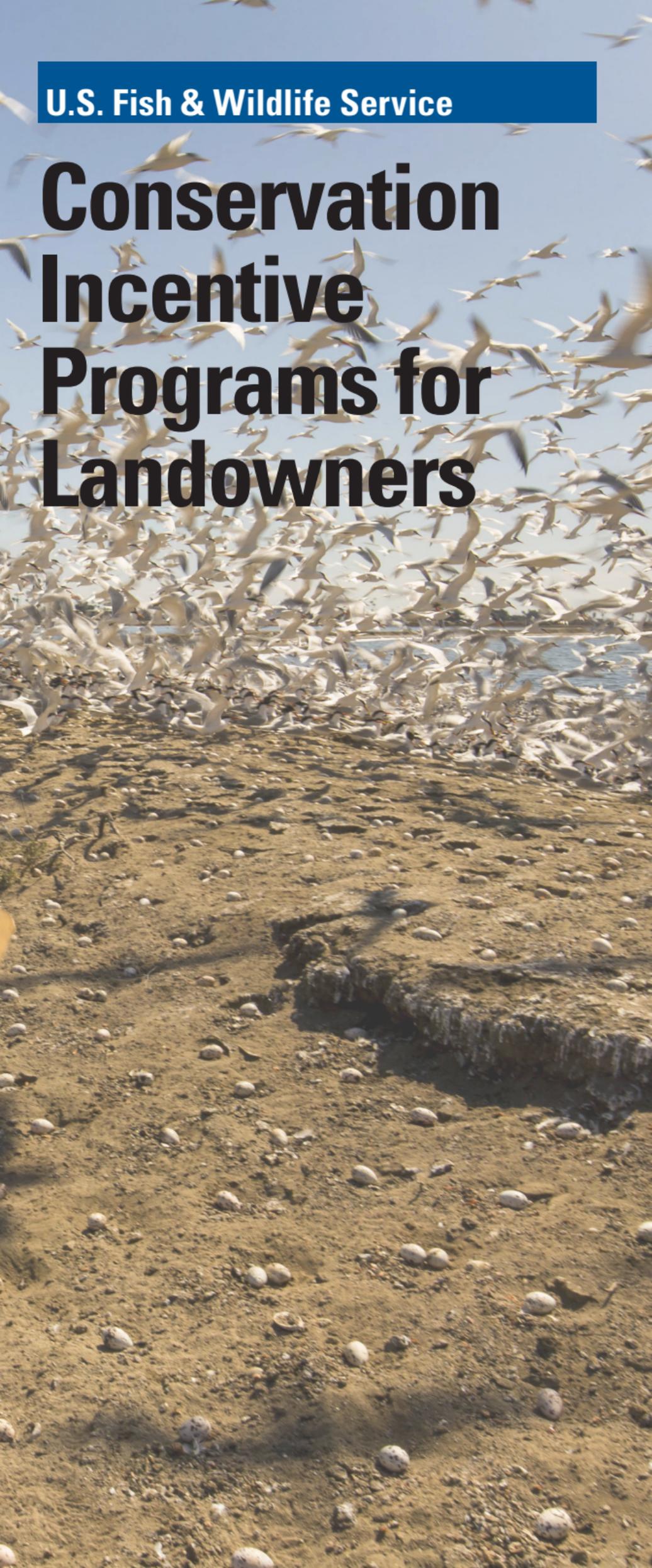


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Conservation Incentive Programs for Landowners



Conservation Easement Acquisition

- *Maintains ranches, farms, and other working landscapes.*
- *Achieves conservation at lower cost.*
- *Minimizes operations and management costs since the landowner retains ownership.*
- *Permanently protects habitat.*
- *Provides landowners with funds to pay off debts or invest in their land.*
- *Keeps properties on tax rolls.*



The health of the country's fish and wildlife populations depends on private landowners, who manage more than two-thirds of the country's land. Voluntary conservation efforts by private property owners are crucial to maintaining landscape connectivity and supporting healthy wildlife habitat. These efforts also help clean our air and water, improve our soil and make communities more resilient to storms and floods. Continue reading to learn how you can partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to better the land and leave a conservation legacy.



Land Acquisition Options for Landowners

Fee title land acquisition refers to the acquisition of all or most of the property rights associated with a tract of land. The Service acquires fee title through donation or purchase.

Acquisition of conservation easements allows the Service to protect wildlife habitat on a property that remains in private ownership. For example, the Service may purchase property rights that restrict certain uses, such as development, and allow for necessary habitat management to occur. However, the landowner can continue other activities, such as farming and forestry, as long as they are consistent with the terms of the conservation easement. Once a property has a conservation easement on it, the landowner can still sell or transfer the land, but the conditions of the easement remain attached to the property. The Service acquires conservation easements through donation or purchase.

Property subject to a conservation easement remains on local tax rolls. By selling easements, landowners receive funds to pay down debt, reinvest in capital improvements, or buy other lands to maintain and/or expand working lands.



Fee or Easement?

The Service acquires fee title lands and easements from willing sellers only. Generally, the Service purchases fee title in areas where there is demand for public access and public opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation, such as hunting and fishing. The Service also purchases fee title when doing so will improve management capability or reduce management costs. Fee acquisition also may be appropriate when it will improve access to other refuge lands. All acquisitions must be within an approved refuge acquisition boundary and are subject to federal appraisal, title, and ownership rules.

Assistance for Landowners

The Service's *Partners for Fish and Wildlife* program provides technical and financial assistance to landowners interested in restoring and enhancing wildlife and plant habitat on their land. Projects are voluntary and often take place on working landscapes such as forests, farms, and ranches. Our goal is to improve and restore habitat while maintaining the working lands. Each Partners program project is custom-designed to meet landowners' needs.

The Partners program focuses on areas of conservation concern, such as upland forests, wetlands, native prairies, marshes, rivers, and streams. Projects are designed to benefit federal trust species, which include migratory birds and endangered, threatened, and at-risk fish species.

The Service's *Coastal Program* works with communities to voluntarily conserve habitats on public and private lands that benefit fish, wildlife, and people. Field staff provide technical and financial assistance to partners to implement habitat restoration and plan habitat protection projects in coastal areas.



Other Federal Programs

The Farm Bill authorizes the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency to offer financial and technical assistance to landowners to voluntarily implement conservation practices that will improve soil, water, and wildlife habitat, while also benefiting agricultural operations. Programs offered by NRCS include:

Agricultural Land Easements protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses. NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible entities to purchase these easements on private lands.

Healthy Forests Reserve Program Easements provide financial incentives to private landowners to support specific conservation actions on forestland; improve biological diversity; or increase carbon storage through perpetual and 30-year easements.

Wetland Reserve Easements provide financial incentives to private landowners to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands and to retire those lands from agricultural use through perpetual and 30-year easements.

For more info, see: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

Other Resources

For a repository of conservation resources for landowners, see the Land Conservation Assistance Network web site at <https://www.landcan.org/>.

Learn more about all these Service programs at <https://www.fws.gov/refuges/get-involved/landowners/>.

North Atlantic-Appalachian Region: (Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Vermont, Washington DC, West Virginia)

300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, MA 01035

Ph: 413-253-8200

South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi-Basin Regions: (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, Iowa, Missouri, Mississippi, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands)

1875 Century Blvd., 3rd Floor, Atlanta, GA 30345

Ph: 404-679-7103

Great Lakes Region: (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin)

5600 American Blvd., Suite 990, Bloomington, MN 55437

Ph: 612-713-5410

Missouri-Basin and Upper Colorado-Basin Regions:

(Kansas, most of Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico)

134 Union Boulevard, Lakewood, CO 80228

Ph: 303-236-8130

Arkansas-Rio Grande-Texas-Gulf and Lower Colorado-Basin Regions: (Oklahoma, Texas, Arizona, Southern California, Southern Nevada)

500 Gold Ave., SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102

Ph: 505-248-6849

Columbia-Pacific Northwest and Pacific Islands Regions:

(Idaho, most of Oregon, Washington, NW Montana, American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, Northern Marianas)

911 NE 11th Ave., NWRS-LND, Portland, OR 97232-4181

Ph: 503-231-6201

California-Great Basin Region: (Most of California, most of Nevada, Klamath County Oregon)

2800 Cottage Way, W-1832, Sacramento, CA 95825

Ph: 916-414-6445

Alaska Region: (Alaska)

1011 E. Tudor Road, MS 211, Anchorage, AK 99503

Ph: 907-786-3414

December 2020

