



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

2024 Coastal Program Accomplishment Report



Note from the Chief of Refuges



Thank you to the entire Coastal Program team. Your continued leadership and hard work are pivotal to fostering habitat conservation with partner communities.

In 2024, Coastal Program employees were instrumental in addressing environmental concerns and building habitat and community resiliency, helping to protect families and local economies from natural disasters. Coastal Program employees are improving access to technical and financial resources available to conservation practitioners and communities seeking to implement conservation projects. This demonstrates our commitment to expanding conservation and recreational access.

The accomplishments highlighted in this report would not be possible without the incredible partners and community members who work with the Service to achieve shared conservation goals. In 2024, these partnerships implemented 197 projects across 17 states and territories, successfully restoring and protecting more than 30,000 acres of habitat important to fish, wildlife, and people.

Working alongside public and private partners, the Coastal Program delivers exponential benefits to communities. These projects, often conducted on private land, demonstrate the power of non-regulatory conservation through a shared vision for wildlife, habitats, and local communities.

To our partners and the dedicated Coastal Program employees, your passion and commitment to conservation and to one another serve as a shining example for the entire conservation community. Thank you for your hard work and for making a real difference in the world. Together, we are creating a legacy of hope and resilience for our natural spaces and the communities that depend on them.

Warm regards,

Cynthia Martinez

Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System

Cynthia Martinez, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System / USFWS

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program

A Conservation Leader

that works with communities to voluntarily and collaboratively protect and improve habitats that benefit fish, wildlife, and people. We also develop resources for decision makers, land managers, and restoration practitioners to better manage and deliver habitat conservation. By working together, we sustain the people and wildlife that rely on coastal and marine ecosystems.



Our Mission

is to achieve voluntary habitat conservation by providing technical and financial assistance, in collaboration with partners, for the benefit of federal trust species.

Working with Communities

along our nation's coasts, we conserve habitat on public and private lands to deliver landscape conservation, build resilient coasts and communities, and maintain habitat connectivity and continuity from headwater streams to the ocean.

Find the Coastal Program online:

Webpage
bit.ly/3Q0leLf

YouTube
bit.ly/3dihu7A



Coastal Program 2024 Accomplishment Statistics



197
Projects



278
Project Partners



17
States and Territories



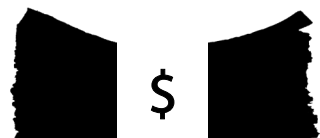
23,541
Acres Protected



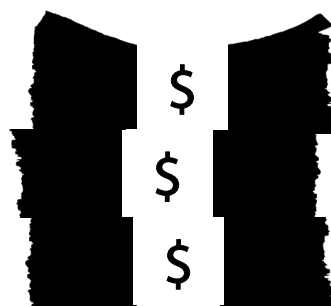
7,162
Acres Restored



25
Projects on Federal Lands



More than
\$2,964,900
in Coastal Program Contributions

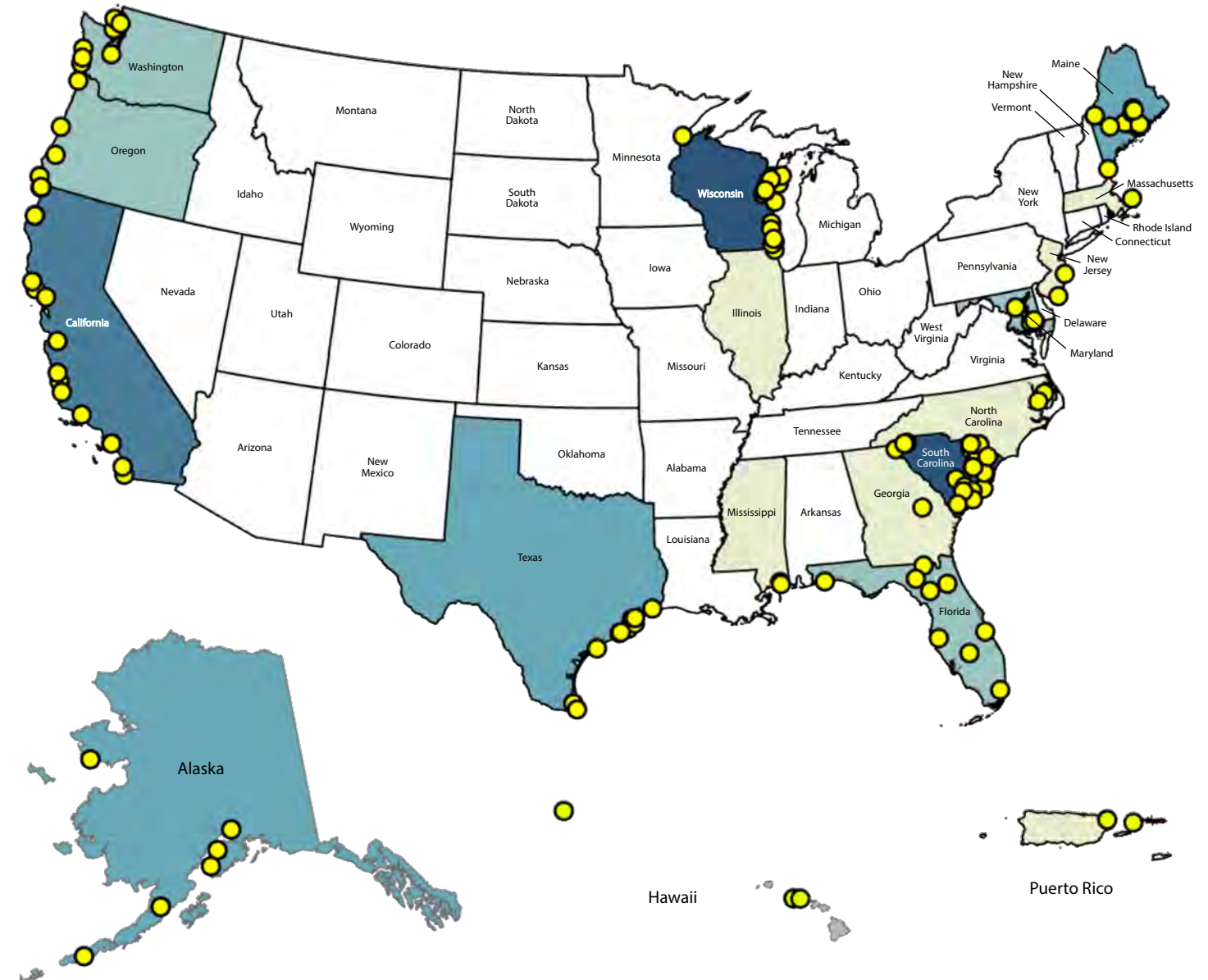


More than
\$41,888,900
in Partner Contributions

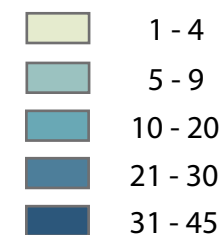


\$1 to \$14
Coastal Program to
Partner Contributions

Coastal Program 2024 Accomplishment Map ¹



Number of Projects



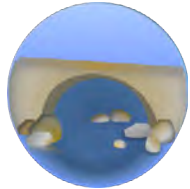
1. The accomplishment map includes only habitat improvement projects. Technical assistance (e.g., conservation planning and monitoring) and maintenance projects and accomplishment stories are not included on the map. Technical assistance projects often have a broad geographic impact that does not make projects easy to display graphically.

Coastal Program Priorities



Species Conservation

Conserving habitats that recover and sustain federal trust species.



Coastal Resiliency & Habitat Connectivity

Building resilient ecosystems and communities, protecting infrastructure, and supporting habitat connectivity on national wildlife refuges and other public and private lands.



Access & Recreation

Enhancing the visitor experience at national wildlife refuges and building a legacy of stewardship by expanding public access and recreation on public lands and elsewhere.



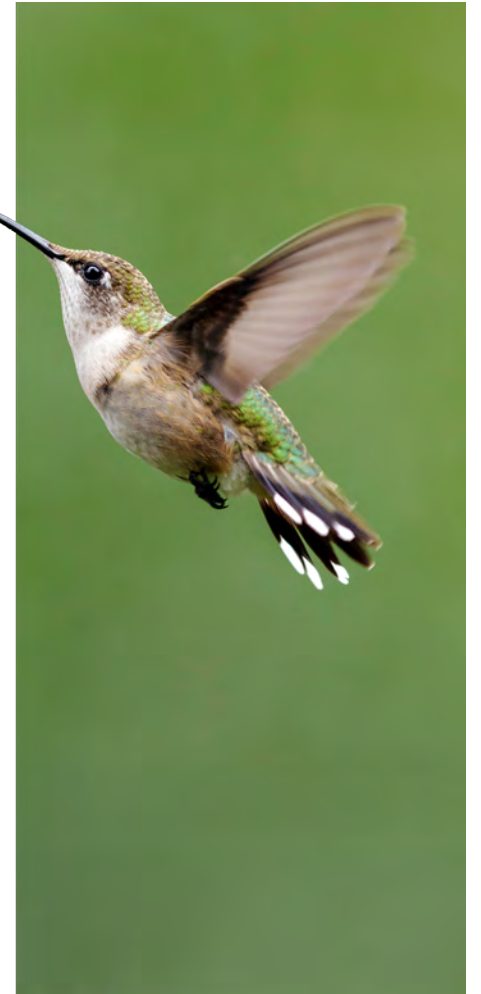
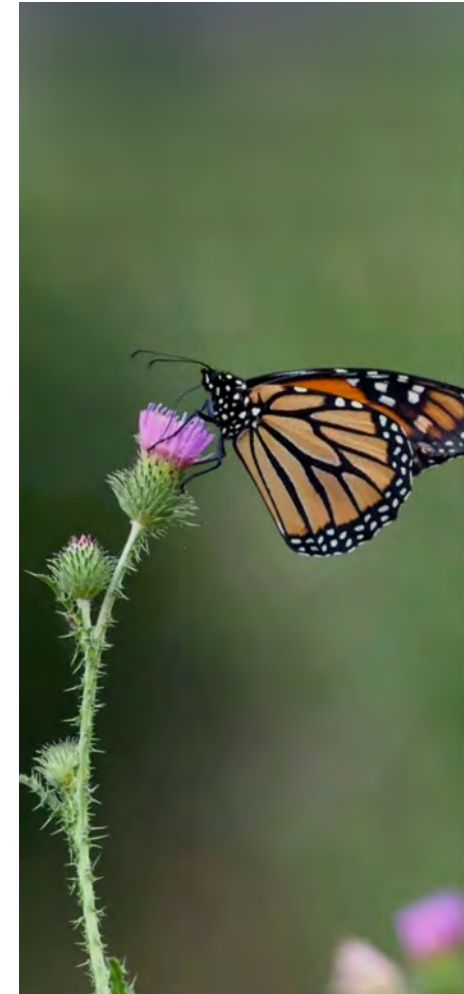
Engagement & Urban Conservation

Working with Tribes, states, and others to implement habitat and species conservation, including in urban areas.



Coastal Program Priorities

Habitat Connectivity & Wildlife Corridors



Habitat connectivity and wildlife corridors are critically important to wildlife migration and species richness. These networks of natural habitat also provide a wide-range of ecosystem services, such as clean water and flood protection. These habitats attenuate the impacts of natural disasters, creating more resilient communities that support the livelihood and well-being of people.

The Coastal Program uses a landscape approach to habitat conservation, which allows us to strategically implement projects that restores and maintains habitat connectivity and wildlife corridors. Within coastal watersheds, our projects benefit a wide-range of habitats, including forests, wetlands, and streams.

The types of Coastal Program projects vary from wildlife crossings that reduce turtles mortalities from vehicle collisions to dam removals that re-open miles of river to migrating salmon. We also help communities to protect habitats that provide critical stop-over habitats for migratory birds and overwintering sites for monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Regardless of the project's type and size, these projects have a significant impact to the local communities of fish, wildlife, and people.

(Left to Right) Monarch butterfly / Ryan Hagerty, USFWS; Sockeye salmon jumping over rapids / M. Bradburn, NPS; and Ruby-throated hummingbird / N. Lewis, NPS. (Opposite Page) Great blue heron at Toleak Point (Washington) / Shawn Sheltren, NPS.

2024 Accomplishment Statistics



2. Habitat improvement projects may have multiple species benefits, such as benefits for endangered species and migratory birds.



Uncommon Name
Puerto Rico

Leptocereus grantianus is a federally endangered cactus found only on Island of Culebra - located 20 miles east of Puerto Rico. This sprawling and nearly spineless cactus, with no common name, is found on steep and rocky hillsides adjacent to the coastline.

The Coastal Program, in coordination with the Ecological Services Program and Culebra National Wildlife Refuge, worked with Protectores de Cuencas, Inc. to introduce the cactus and enhance native forest habitat on Culebrita Island.

The project involved the planting of 150 cacti and 100 native trees at three locations on the island. The new populations support the cactus’ recovery plan and improves the plant’s resiliency to natural disasters. The project improves habitat for migratory birds and reduces land erosion that benefits coral reefs and federally protected sea turtles, such as the hawksbill sea turtle.

The project partners will monitor the survival and recruitment of the cactus to document recovery plan outcomes and advance the science of its recovery.



Coastal Program and National Wildlife Refuge staff arriving at Culebrita Island for the planting of the restoration project

Blooming *Leptocereus grantianus*, Puerto Rico and (inset) Coastal Program and National Wildlife Refuge staff at Culebrita Island, Puerto Rico / Carlos Pacheco, USFWS

Jewel of the Forest

Florida



Eastern indigo snake

The federally threatened eastern indigo snake is the apex predator of the southeastern longleaf pine forest. This non-venomous snake preys upon a wide-range of animals, including venomous snakes. The snake’s decline is attributed to the 97 percent loss of the longleaf pine in the region.

Working with the Alachua Conservation Trust, the Coastal Program identified more than 13,500 acres of longleaf pine for conservation on 19 privately-owned properties, along the Suwannee River.

In 2024, the partnership conserved 296 acres of longleaf pine in Gilchrist County and Levy County. The properties remained in private ownership, with the forests protected by permanent conservation easements. The partnership also treated with properties with prescribed fire to maintain the open-pine community.

In addition to the eastern indigo snake, the properties support 12 other federally listed or at-risk species, including the federally threatened Suwannee alligator snapping turtle. The easements also add to the protected lands along the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail, a 170-mile water trail connecting federal and state lands.

Eastern indigo snake / Kevin Enge, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Collaborative Recovery

New York



Roseate terns flying over Great Gull Island

The northeastern population of roseate terns was listed as federally endangered in 1987. Habitat loss, predation, and human disturbance continue to be significant threats to the terns along their migratory routes and nesting and wintering grounds. For 15 years, the Coastal Program has provided technical and financial assistance toward the recovery of these birds.

The Coastal Program began coordinating and planning the annual Roseate Tern Recovery Group annual meeting, which met in the Fall of 2023. At least 95 professional from over 50 federal, state, and local agencies as well as universities and non-governmental organizations attended the 2-day meeting, which focused on the comprehensive recovery of the roseate tern, including current research and threats, and innovative management techniques.

The Coastal Program also partnered with the University of Rhode Island, University of Connecticut, Massachusetts Audubon, and other partners to conduct long-term habitat management and tern monitoring at Great Gull Island in New York, the largest roseate tern breeding colony in the northeast.

Roseate terns / Casey Manera, USFWS

All Ears

Ohio



Tricolored bat

The Coastal Program provides technical and financial assistance for the recovery of federally protected species. Since 2022, we have worked with the City of Lorain to expand habitat restoration efforts on a 260-acre former steel slag waste site near southwestern Lake Erie.

The partnership is preparing for a riparian restoration project adjacent to the Black River. The project will remove invasive plants and plant native trees to establish a forested wildlife corridor. The project will benefit a wide range of wildlife, including native bat species.

The Coastal Program conducted pre-restoration bat acoustic monitoring that found the presence of six native bat species, including the tricolored bat. This bat has experienced notable declines due to white-nose syndrome and is proposed for federal protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The project will enhance roosting, foraging, and commuting habitat for tricolored bats and potentially for federally endangered northern long-eared bats. The partnership will also conduct post-restoration bat acoustic monitoring following the completion of the restoration project.

Tricolored bat on an evergreen branch / Pete Pattavina, USFWS

Once in a Lifetime

Wisconsin



Federally threatened pitcher's thistle

The federally threatened pitcher's thistle inhabits coastal dunes throughout the Great Lakes region. The thistle's decline is due to habitat loss from land use changes and invasive plants. The thistle's recovery is complicated by its unique lifecycle – taking up to eight years to flower and seed.

One of the largest population of this thistle is located on the Door County Land Trust's (DCLT) Sturgeon Bay Ship Canal Nature Preserve (Preserve). DCLT works to preserve and enhance lands that contribute to the scenic beauty and ecological integrity of Door County. Since 2019, the Coastal Program has helped DCLT to achieve their conservation priorities, including the recovery of the Pitcher's thistle.

Through our technical and financial assistance, DCLT has supported citizen science, including efforts to control invasive species and monitor Pitcher's thistle populations. These efforts create a larger network of native pollinator habitats on and adjacent to the Preserve. In 2024, the Coastal Program and DCLT hosted eight community events with more than 240 volunteers, who planted 900 native pollinator plants across 9 acres and 13 private properties.

Federally threatened pitcher's thistle on Sturgeon Bay Ship Canal Nature Preserve, Wisconsin / Julie Schartner

2024 Accomplishment
Statistics



839

Acres Treated with
Prescribed Fire



4,845

Acres Treated for
Invasive Species



18

Miles of Stream
Habitat Conserved

**A Rare Find
Oregon**

The federally threatened Oregon silverspot butterfly is found in only five coastal meadows in California and Oregon, where females lay their eggs exclusively on the early blue violet.

Habitat loss from land use changes and invasive plants contributed to the butterfly's decline. The butterfly also experienced a population crash in 1998, which prompted the Service to begin a propagation program in collaboration with the Oregon Zoo and the Woodland Park Zoo.

The Coastal Program helped with recovery efforts by working with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to restore three acres of coastal meadow at Big Creek – a parcel of Washburne Memorial State Park. The Coastal Program also helped the Woodland Park Zoo and U.S. Forest Service to release more than 500 caterpillars at the project site.



Coastal Program biologist planting
early blue violet at Big Creek, Oregon

Oregon silverspot butterfly / Christine Damiani, USFWS and (inset)
Coastal Program biologist restoring a coastal meadow at Big Creek,
Oregon / Oregon Parks and Recreation Department



An Investment in Coastal Resiliency New Jersey



Eroding shoreline and degrading marsh that will be restored on the Lighthouse Center property

Over the last decade, the United States has led the world in rates of salt marsh loss. This trend is concerning not just for fish and wildlife, but for the people who live and work in coastal communities. The decline of salt marshes is due primarily to land use changes, erosion, and flooding impacts.

Since 1995, the Lighthouse Center, part of the Upper Barnegat Wildlife Management Area, has lost more than 100 feet of fringing beach that leaves more than 50 acres of degraded salt marsh vulnerable to further loss. The marsh provides storm protection for the community of Waretown and habitat for the saltmarsh sparrow, which has experienced an estimated 87 percent decline in its population.

The Coastal Program is working with the Natural Resources Education Foundation, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, New Jersey Department of Fish and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, and others partners to restore the salt marshes at the Lighthouse Center.

The partnership successfully secured more than \$1 million to conduct marsh assessments and restoration planning – laying the groundwork for a \$7 million conservation project.

The Coastal Program filled important capacity gaps within the partnership, such as conducting bird and marsh surveys (e.g., topography, vegetation, and water levels). The surveys provided critical information for the restoration design.

In 2024, the project advanced to the design phase, with implementation anticipated for 2026. This project will restore salt marsh habitat, improve coastal resiliency, and flood protection. The partnership's approach to marsh restoration can serve as a model for developing landscape scale nature-based solutions for salt marsh conservation.

Aerial view of eroding shoreline and degrading marsh on the Lighthouse Center property / Roger Thomas

Day at the Beach Florida



Federally endangered Perdido Key beach mice

Since 2016, the Coastal Program has worked with the University of Florida's West Florida Research and Education Center and other partners to improve conservation outcomes by developing planning resources and best practices for dune restoration projects in the Florida panhandle.

The partnership collects seeds and cuttings of native dune plants for propagation and develops techniques to improve plant propagation and transplant survivorship. The partnership also works with partners to implement dune restoration projects.

In 2024, the partnership worked with the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, Florida State Parks, Santa Rosa County, and other partners to restore more than 29 acres of coastal dunes. The project's goal was to increase food sources for pollinators and the federally endangered Choctawhatchee and Perdido Key beach mice. The project included planting of Cruise's goldenaster, coastal groundcherry, and squareflower as well as developing propagation techniques for the Coastal plain honeycombhead plant – the sole food for the Gulf Coast solitary bee.

Federally endangered Perdido Key beach mouse / Jennifer Brown, Into Nature Films

Corporate Conservation South Carolina



Federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker

Corporations can have an important role in the conservation of natural habitat and recovery of federally listed species. The Brosnan Forest is a 14,400-acre private property owned by Norfolk Southern Railway. A majority of the property is permanently protected by a conservation easement.

Primarily composed of mature longleaf pine, the Brosnan Forest has been regularly burned with prescribed fire to prevent encroachment by hardwood trees for decades. This practice has allowed the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) and federally endangered pondberry to thrive on the property. In fact, the forest has one of the largest RCW populations on any private land in all of South Carolina.

The Coastal Program worked with the Longleaf Alliance, Milliken Forestry, and Norfolk Southern Railway to enhance longleaf pine stands to further benefit the RCW and pondberry. The partnership restored more than 380 acres by mechanically removing hardwood trees. We assessed forest habitat conditions and recommended management practices that benefit the RCW.

Federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker / Dominic Sherony, Flickr

2024 Accomplishment Statistics



1,594

Acres Restored on Service Land



80

Acres Restored on National Park Service Land



5

Fish Passage Projects

Shifting Sands California

Wind and waves can reshape and move coastal dunes – creating beneficial wildlife habitat and corridors. The dunes at Doran Regional Park provide important nesting and overwintering habitat for nearly half of the western snowy plovers in Sonoma County; however, invasive plants are preventing this natural process. The dense root system of the European dunegrass and iceplant stabilize the dunes and create overly large dunes that provide low quality habitat and block movement by native wildlife.

Since 2020, western snowy plovers have been nesting on the dunes at the Park. The continued presence of plovers indicates the critical role the Park plays in sustaining this federally threatened species. The dunes also support nearly half of

the overwintering population of western snowy plover in the County.

Working with volunteers from the California Native Plant Society (Sonoma County Chapter) and Sonoma County Regional Parks, the Coastal Program restored two acres of dune habitat by removing the European dunegrass and iceplant. Identified as a major threat in the plover's recovery plan, these invasive plants also provide cover for predators, such as skunks, foxes, and bobcats. The restored dunes will provide the diverse and dynamic habitats needed by plovers and other native wildlife.

Western snowy plover walking on sand dune / Jessica Weinberg, NPS



Subsistence Fishing Alaska



Aerial view of protected habitat adjacent to Nome River

In western Alaska, the Coastal Program worked with The Conservation Fund (TCF), Interior Alaska Land Trust, and the Sitnasuak Alaska Native Village Corporation of Nome to protect 1,830 acres of wetland and upland habitat and 10 miles of the Nome River.

Current and historic mining has impacted much of the region; however, this property had little or no mining activity – maintaining its natural conditions. The protected property provides important habitat for more than 200 bird species and populations of chum, coho, and pink salmon, Dolly Varden, and Arctic grayling.

The Coastal Program provided technical and financial assistance to TCF to support the property acquisition, including payment for the costs-of-conveyance. TCF acquired \$1.6 million for the purchase of the property, which will be transferred to the Interior Alaska Land Trust to own and manage for conservation and recreation access in perpetuity. Easily accessible from the road, the river is a frequented area for fishing among the community of Nome.

Aerial view of habitat protection project adjacent to Nome River, Alaska / The Conservation Fund

Green(er) Fatigues Maryland



Wild brook trout

The Coastal Program works with government agencies and other partners to meet their water quality standards by reducing nonpoint source pollution at their facilities. In 2024, the Coastal Program completed two projects that restored more than 4,200 feet of stream on the U.S. Army's Fort George G. Meade (Fort Meade). The projects will reduce nonpoint source pollution to Severn Run – a tributary to the Severn River, which flows directly into the Chesapeake Bay. We estimate that the projects will reduce nonpoint source pollution by 440 tons of sediment, 504 lbs. of nitrogen, and 232 lbs. of phosphorus, annually.

The projects also improve aquatic connectivity and resiliency that support the facility's natural resource priorities. Severn Run is home to the only reproducing brook trout population in Maryland's Coastal Plain. Brook trout help support the estimated \$400 million in annual revenue derived from freshwater sportfishing in Maryland. Over the next two years, the Coastal Program will continue restoration efforts at Fort Meade.

Brook trout / Alison McKellar, Flickr

National Wildlife Refuge System Texas



Federally endangered northern alomado falcon

The Coastal Program works with partners and local communities to improve and expand our Nation's conservation estate. In 2024, the Coastal Program completed two conservation projects that support the recovery of the northern aplomado falcon on the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge).

Extirpated from the United States in the 1950's, the Peregrine Fund began breeding falcons and releasing them in Texas and New Mexico, in the 1980's. Their propagation efforts has successfully reintroduced a limited number of breeding pairs in Texas, including on the Refuge.

The Coastal Program worked with The Conservation Fund (TCF) to protect more than 490 acres of coastal prairie adjacent to the Refuge by paying for the due diligence and costs-of-conveyance. The property provides habitat for the federally endangered falcon, which nest on the Refuge.

The Coastal Program worked with TCF and the Peregrine Fund to improve more than 1,000 acres of prairie on the Refuge by



Northern alomado falcon nesting platform on the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

removing invasive mesquite and huisache shrubs. We assisted with an application for the ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation Grant that resulted in the project being awarded \$156,000 by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. We also provided assistance with site selection, project compliance, and monitoring.

The Coastal Program also hired a fellow through the Directorate Fellowship Program to develop a monitoring protocol to evaluate vegetation changes and restoration outcomes in coastal prairies.

These conservation projects complement recovery efforts for the falcon on the Refuge, including past prairie restoration and installation of artificial nesting structures. Currently, TCF is working to transfer the property to the Service to be part of the Refuge.

(Left) Northern aplomado falcon / The Peregrine Fund and (Right) Aplomado falcon nesting platform / Ken Rice

2024 Accomplishment Statistics



235
Acres Restored
and Protected in
Urban Areas



27
Projects with
Public Access

CommUNITY Michigan

The Coastal Program provides additional capacity to help other programs implement habitat conservation, including the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) – a private conservation foundation that works with both the public and private partners to conserve fish, wildlife, and habitats for future generations.

Since 2019, the Coastal Program has supported for NFWF's Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund (Fund) through grant review and project selection. The Fund is a public-private partnership that improves community resilience and natural resources in Southeast Michigan by conserving habitat, improving water quality and stormwater management, and increasing access to public and natural areas.

The Fund has awarded 39 projects more than \$9 million, along with more than \$11 million

in matching contributions. The projects have treated 21 million gallons of stormwater, restored 940 acres of natural habitat, and improved 93 public access points to natural areas. The projects engaged more than 63,000 people engaged through volunteer events and education activities.

A project was recently complete at Ypsilanti Township CommUNITY Skatepark, which provides a safe place to skateboard as well as 8,000 square feet of green infrastructure, including pollinator and rain gardens. The stormwater features will treat more than 195,000 gallons of storm runoff before reaching the Huron River. The local community was involved in all the project phases, including design and construction.

Stormwater feature at the Ypsilanti Township CommUNITY Skatepark /
Bryan Mitchell

A Rare Opportunity Washington



Protection Island National Wildlife Refuge supports 70 percent of the nesting seabirds in the Puget Sound

The Coastal Program provides technical and financial assistance to improve natural habitats and recreation amenities on national wildlife refuges. Since 2019, the Coastal Program has been working with the Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex to restore 200 acres of native prairie on Protection Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Protection Island’s elevated topography supports one of the largest seabird colonies in the Salish Sea. The island also provides a rare opportunity to restore a coastal prairie. Once completed, the restoration project will sustain the delisting of the golden paintbrush and support the recovery of the federally endangered Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly, among other rare native plants and pollinators.

In 2024, the project partners completed the initial restoration plan that included best practices and a native planting list. With the help of local volunteers, the partners restored more than 3 acres of prairie. The restoration project will likely be completed by next year.

Historically, the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe had a strong connection with Protection Island. In 2024, this connection was restored when the Service and Tribe agreed to co-manage the island and the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge. The Coastal Program looks forward to working with the Tribe to continue restorations efforts on the island.

Sign for Protection Island National Wildlife Refuge / Peter Davis, USFWS

Voluntary Conservation California



The Coastal Program works with partners to connect people with nature. In 2024, we worked with the Jacoby Creek Land Trust (JCLT), California Conservation Corps, Americorps, Scouting America, and local volunteers to remove invasive Himalayan blackberry and English ivy that restored two acres of riparian habitat on the Kokte Ranch and Nature Preserve (Preserve), located in Bayside.

The restoration project complements previous projects completed since 2021 by the Coastal Program, JCLT, and other partners. Previous projects include rebuilding livestock fencing to protect wetlands, installing tree swallow nest boxes, and improving trails and other recreational amenities.

The Preserve is a stellar example of how communities can successfully manage land for nature, agriculture, and recreation; while fostering the next generation of environmental stewards.

Volunteers at the Kokte Ranch and Nature Preserve, California / Jacoby Creek Land Trust

Community Outreach Texas



The Coastal Program builds trust and relevancy through community outreach and engagement. In 2024, the Coastal Program participated in the Fall Fiesta hosted by The Friends of Padre – a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of North Padre Island. The event gathers government agencies, organizations, and vendors to celebrate the Fall season with the local community, including live music, children activities, and food.

The event was an excellent opportunity for the Coastal Program to talk about the potential impact of Halloween decorations, such as fake webs, on birds and small wildlife. We also talked about the proper disposal of fishing line, which can entangle federally protected sea turtles and shorebirds.

Beaches are a popular destination for beach goers and off-roaders, during the same time birds are nesting on Texas beaches. We made people aware of the potential impact they can have on nesting birds and the importance of sharing the beach with wildlife.

Visitors at The Friends of Padre's Fall Fiesta, Texas / Adriana Leiva, USFWS



Learn more about the Coastal Program at
<https://www.fws.gov/program/coastal>



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(Front Cover) Lake Michigan shoreline in Traverse City, Michigan / Nick Perez, Unsplash
(Back Cover) Beach scene, California / Josh Hild, Unsplash