



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



2020 Coastal Program Accomplishment Report



**Committed to healthy coastal ecosystems
and resilient communities**

A Note from the Chief of Refuges



Cynthia Martinez at Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge, Hawaii / USFWS

I am proud of the work our employees and partners completed in 2020, despite facing extraordinary stress on families and friends due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We swiftly adapted to working from home and implementing social distancing tactics in the field; while continuing to work with partners to conserve natural habitats.

The work we do supports not only an array of fish, wildlife, and plant species, but also the American public looking to connect with nature. The American people find solace in our National Wildlife Refuges, natural areas managed by our partners, and other outdoor spaces. Nature provides communities with a safe space to relax and explore, something many people yearned for in 2020 while living their lives in isolation.

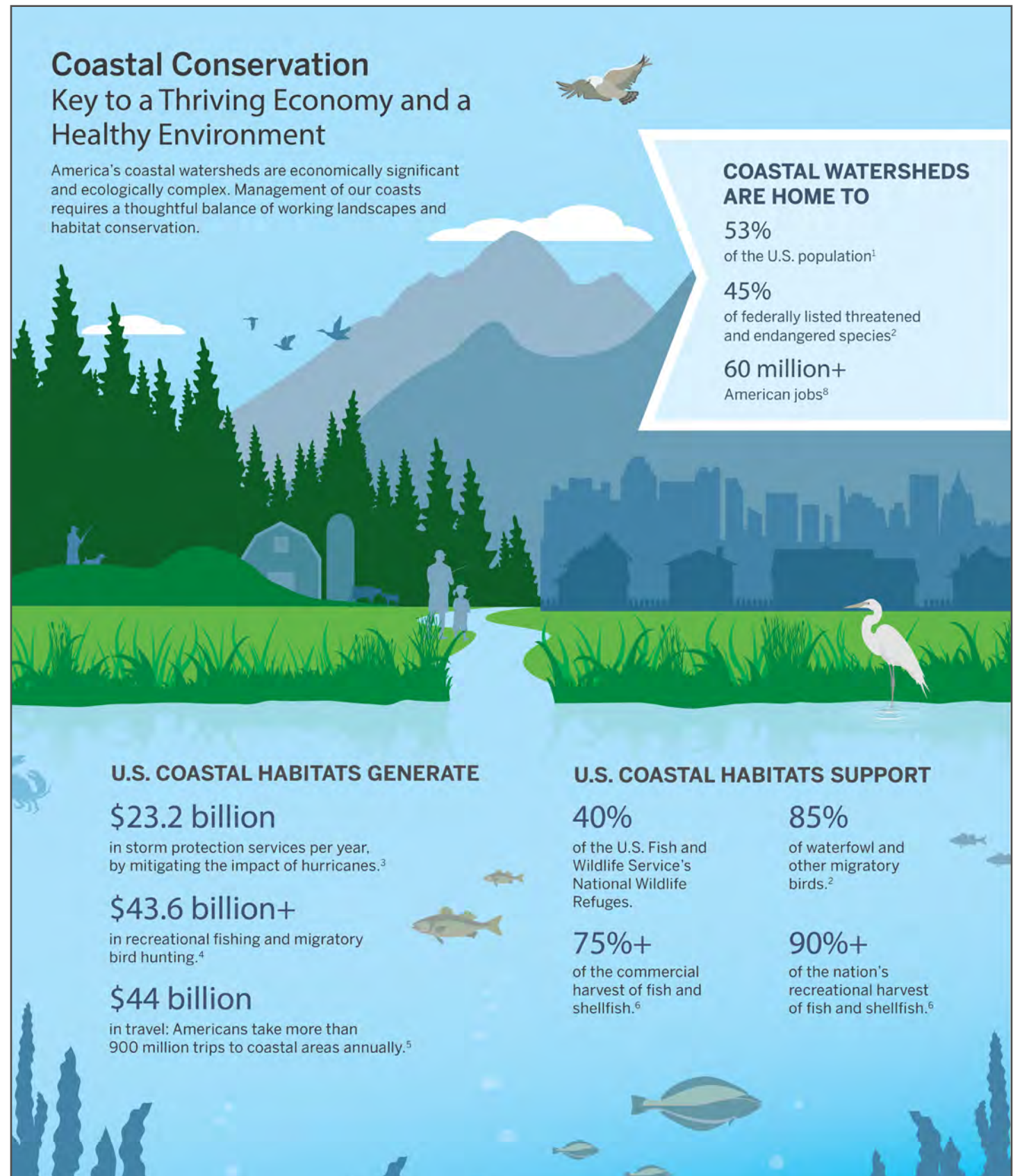
The Coastal Program is an excellent example of how the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service caters to the needs of

both nature and humans. By providing financial and technical assistance on Refuges, urban and state parks, and privately owned lands; the Coastal Program has made a difference in the lives of many Americans seeking to spend more time outdoors.

This accomplishment report celebrates not only the completion of 147 projects, but also our amazing employees working in the Coastal Program and our partners who continue to demonstrate flexibility, innovation, and patience during the ongoing pandemic. The projects highlighted in this report demonstrate the passion and commitment of our team to restoring and protecting fish and wildlife habitat.

Cynthia Martinez
Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

Benefits of Coastal Ecosystems



Citations available at fws.gov/coastal/about.html

The Coastal Program

A Conservation Leader

We work with communities to voluntarily restore and protect habitats that benefit fish, wildlife, and people. We also develop resources that help land managers and practitioners to better deliver habitat conservation. By working together, we can 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

from around the Nation, we improve and protect habitat on both public and private lands, from the headwaters to the ocean, to deliver landscape conservation and maintain habitat connectivity and continuity.

Find the Coastal Program online at:

Webpage

fws.gov/coastal/

Facebook

facebook.com/coastalprogram/

YouTube

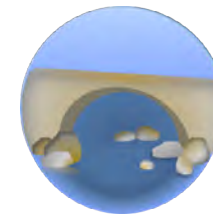
bit.ly/3dihu7A

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Priorities



Species Recovery

Conserving habitats that recover and sustain federal trust species.



Infrastructure & Habitat Management

Protecting infrastructure and supporting habitat management on National Wildlife Refuges and other lands.



Recreation & Access

Enhancing the visitor experience at National Wildlife Refuges and building a legacy of stewardship by expanding public access and recreation on public and other lands.



Outreach & Urban Conservation

Working with tribes, states, and others to promote the North American Wildlife Conservation Model and habitat conservation in urban communities.

Department & Service Priorities

Our habitat conservation supports many Department of the Interior and Service priorities by restoring and protecting habitats for priority fish and wildlife. Other conservation benefits include supporting local businesses, building resilient coasts, sequestering carbon, engaging underserved communities, and ensuring the quality of protected lands. Our conservation on public lands can provide a connection and access to nature that can ease the effects of the COVID-19 quarantine and social distancing.

Build Back Better

Climate Change

COVID-19

Racial Equity

Wildlife Conservation

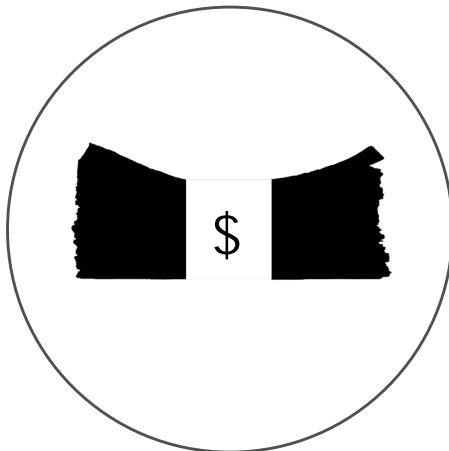
2020 Projects



147 Projects



18 States
and territories



More than
\$2 Million
in Coastal Program contributions



147 Project
partners



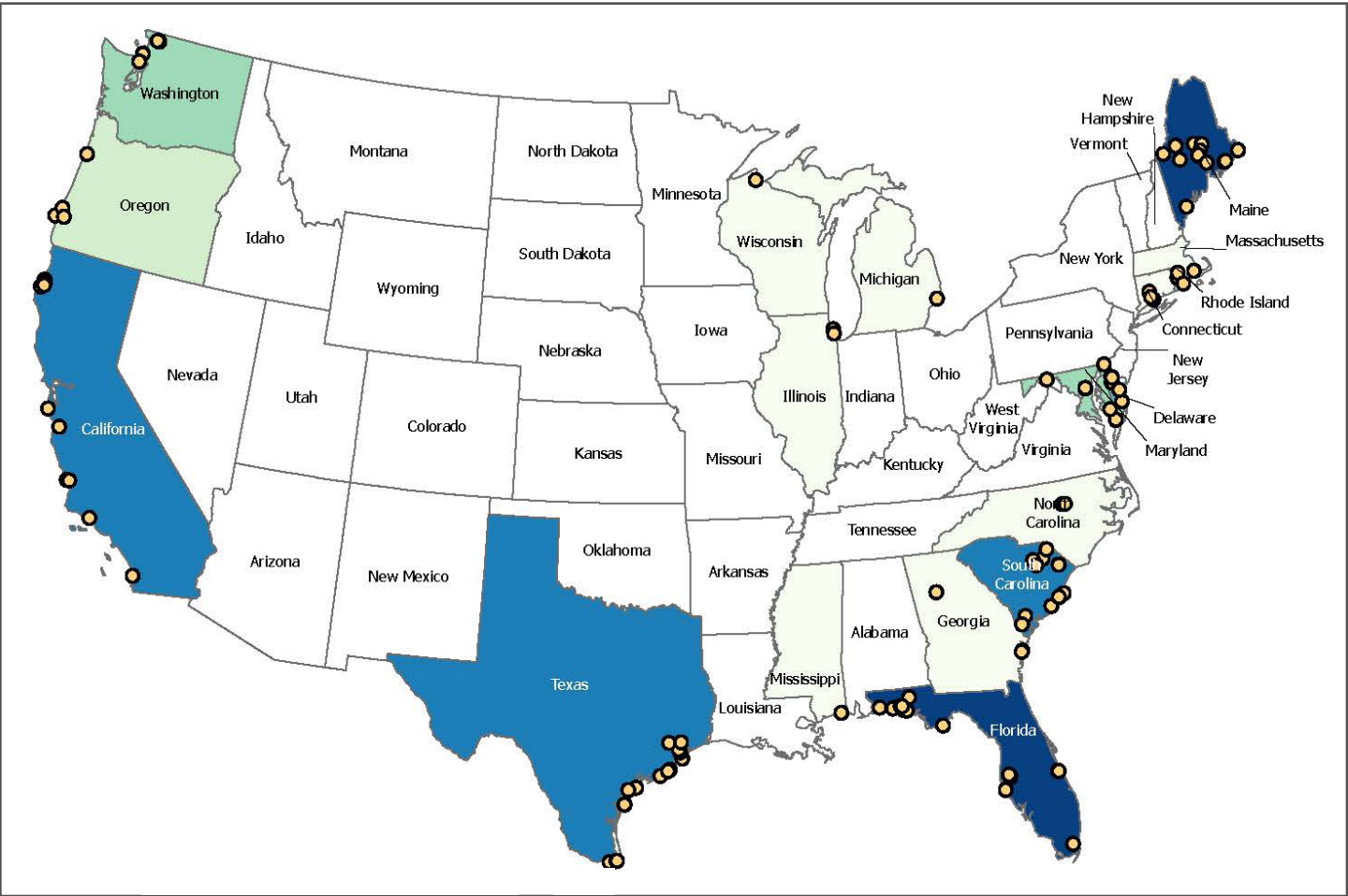
More than
8,600 Acres
restored



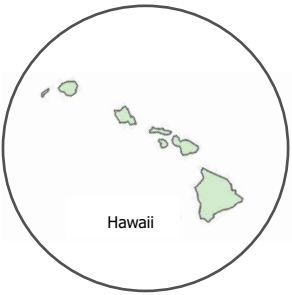
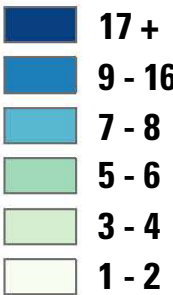
Leveraged
\$1 to \$36
Coastal Program to
Partner contributions

More than
\$72 Million
in Partner contributions

2020 Projects



Number of Projects



Species Recovery

Department & Service priorities supported:

America the Beautiful
Wildlife Conservation
Build Back Better
Climate Change

More than
61,200 acres
voluntarily protected

More than
510 miles
of streams restored

Benefited
45 Threatened or
endangered
species

Wetland in Maryland

Bog turtles are habitat specialists, which is a technical term for being picky about where they live, preferring untouched marshy meadows that receive abundant sunshine and spring-fed waters. The Coastal Program used GIS, a digital mapping tool, to identify viable bog turtle habitats that are eligible for wetland reserve easements. Results of the analysis were shared with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to pursue permanent protection of bog turtle habitats.



Bog turtle habitat / K. Stohlgren; Bog turtle being handled by Coastal Program biologist to study population dynamics / USFWS S. Demberger



Ngerkeklau Island, Palau

From coral shoals to forested knolls Palau’s island of Ngerkeklau is teeming with life. The pristine islet and surrounding coral reefs support over 2,000 species of corals, sponges, and fish as well as endangered sea turtles, Micronesian megapodes (pictured below), saltwater crocodiles, and dugongs – a marine mammal similar to the manatee. The island itself is a paradise supporting one of Micronesia’s most diverse flora and fauna, including many endemic species. The island’s fragile ecosystem has been scarred by forest burning and clearing and sea turtle and megapode egg poaching.

The Coastal Program played a vital role in assisting in the creation of management plans, biosecurity plans (to prevent the introduction of invasive species), and securing the funding required to permanently protect this tropical oasis. Protecting this island will restrict island visitation to only those with valid research and education objectives and will allow the irreplaceable fish and wildlife to thrive.

Aerial view of Babeldaob Island (top)/ Lightening Strike Productions R. Brooks; Hawksbill sea turtles (bottom left) enjoy Palau’s warm waters and return to the sandy beaches every two to three years to nest / NOAA C.S. Rogers; The survival of the endangered Micronesian megapode (bottom right) depends on habitat conservation / USFWS



Ashland Tern Island, Wisconsin

Severe erosion from ice and waves over the years had put Ashland Tern Island, a small manmade island in Lake Superior, at risk of being lost. The loss of this island would be catastrophic to Wisconsin’s endangered common tern population because it supports one of the largest tern colonies in the Great Lakes.

The Coastal Program, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the City of Ashland teamed up to reinforce the island’s structure to maintain habitat important to the recovery of the common tern. This project was implemented with the hope to one day make the common tern as common as its name implies.

Read more here: bit.ly/3v3LoCM

Ashland Tern Island construction (bottom) was done during the early winter when the common tern colony was not present / USFWS; Upon completion of the project, team members from the City of Ashland, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Pearl Beach Construction took a celebratory photo (top left) / USFWS; While common terns often dip into the water to feed on fish, they are agile enough to snatch flying insects out of the air / Flickr P. Green



Infrastructure & Habitat Management

Department & Service priorities supported:

America the Beautiful
Wildlife Conservation
Build Back Better
Climate Change
Infrastructure



3,460 acres
treated for invasive
species



5 Prescribed
fire projects -
more than 5,600
acres



22 Fish
passage
projects

Iliamna Lake, Alaska

The islands of Iliamna Lake in southwest Alaska contain some of the richest assemblages of fish and wildlife in the Nation. Alaska Native peoples in the region rely on this pristine landscape and its resources for their traditional way of life. Working with the Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust and other partners, the Coastal Program helped conserve over 13,000 acres of coastal wetlands and shoreline.

Conservation efforts like this support tribal traditions in perpetuity as well as habitats that benefit harbor seal and salmon populations. The Bristol Bay watershed, in which Iliamna Lake lies, supports the world's largest and most valuable sockeye salmon fishery. Preserving this lake will help sustain the \$2.2 billion salmon industry which supports more than 15,000 fishing and processing jobs*.

Watch this video to see this beautiful landscape for yourself: vimeo.com/192552463

An aerial view of the beautiful Iliamna Islands / Jason Ching

*Source: "The Economic Benefits of Bristol Bay Salmon," McKinley Research, McKinley Research Group LLC. Feb. 2021.



Charleston, Maine

Around the Town of Charleston, small stream crossings were frequently washed out by storm floods causing damage to downstream habitats, impairing emergency access, and threatening public safety. Undersized culverts have contributed to the decline of native Atlantic salmon populations by impeding fish passage and degrading stream habitat throughout Maine.

The Coastal Program partnered with the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the Town of Charleston, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and Maine Audubon to replace five undersized stream culverts in the Penobscot River watershed with fish-friendly bridge designs. The Coastal Program provided vital assistance including stream assessment surveys, restoration design recommendations, and permitting guidance, among other types of assistance.

The residents of Charleston now have safer, more reliable road crossings and Atlantic salmon and other fish species can return to 8 miles of reopened aquatic habitat.

Before restoration (right) these perched culverts were impassible by fish and other aquatic life / USFWS; The newly constructed bridge (bottom) will allow aquatic life to reconnect with upstream habitats / USFWS



Nooksack River, Washington

Salmon, steelhead, and other fish once migrated freely along the Middle Fork Nooksack River in northwest Washington before construction of the dam in 1960. The Coastal Program partnered with the City of Bellingham, local Tribes, American Rivers, and other conservation organizations to remove the dam, reestablishing aquatic connectivity in the headwaters of the Nooksack River.

See the project stages from beginning to end here: bit.ly/32snfcK



The Middlefork Nooksack river dam (bottom left) prevented the flow of aquatic organisms for nearly 50 years / City of Bellingham. Backhoes and other large machinery were used to remove the dam (bottom center) / City of Bellingham. The restored river channel has reconnected the aquatic ecosystem allowing species like Chinook salmon, bull trout, and steelhead, which are listed under the Endangered Species Act, to once again migrate along this portion of the river (top) / American Rivers. Bull trout (bottom right) now have access to an additional 16 miles of foraging and breeding habitat / J. Armstrong



Recreation & Access

Department & Service priorities supported:

America the Beautiful
Wildlife Conservation
Build Back Better
Climate Change
COVID-19

More than
22 acres
publicly accessible
for recreation

11 Projects on/near
National Parks -
more than 10,500
acres

13 Projects on
Refuges -
more than
2,500 acres

Encinitas, California

The Coastal Program collaborated with several partners to restore 2,900 feet of shoreline and vegetated dunes that provide habitat to native shorebirds and protects critical transportation infrastructure from coastal erosion and floods. The newly established dune system, adjacent to the Pacific Coastal Highway (US Route 101), will provide snowy plovers and least terns with suitable nesting habitat.

In addition, several footpaths along the restored shoreline will provide public access to the beach. Signs along these footpaths describe the importance of dune ecosystems to both coastal resiliency and native species recovery efforts.

The Coastal Program provided financial and technical assistance with project coordination, regulatory compliance, and project design.

Read more here: bit.ly/2P5VQua



Vegetation thriving on the newly restored sand dunes /USFWS J. Gilkeson; Snowy plovers are already using this shore-side habitat to forage and nest / Nature Collective T. Marchant



Port Aransas Nature Preserve, Texas

Bird watchers from across the country flock to Port Aransas Nature Preserve every year to view the migration of birds, including the agile loggerhead shrike and the federally endangered whooping crane. The Preserve's coastal habitats provides plentiful food, water, and cover attracting hundreds of migratory birds annually.

Hurricane Harvey wiped out many trails and observation points, like the one seen below, which enabled birders to witness numerous migrating species. The Coastal Program is helping to build more resilient trails to improve site access for future birdwatchers.



Trails, constructed by the American Conservation Experience (left), are expected to withstand future flooding events / USFWS; The loggerhead shrike (right) is one of the many bird species who rely on Port Aransas Nature Preserve's abundant resources / Flickr K.C. Schneider; Hurricane Harvey destroyed this boardwalk that was used by birders, wildlife photographers, and nature enthusiasts. (bottom) / USFWS



Walton & Holmes County, Florida

Millions of Floridians visit state parks to enjoy the outdoors and discover Florida's natural landscape annually. The Coastal Program worked with Florida Department of Environmental Protection State Parks and the Atlanta Botanical Garden over the past 9 years to restore a rare 1,500+ acre wetland habitat – characterized by carnivorous pitcher plants in three parks along the Florida panhandle (Deer Lake State Park, Grayton Beach State Park and Ponce de Leon State Park).

The removal of large trees that benefited from the suppression of wildfires, will allow the few original and many newly planted sun-loving carnivorous plants to thrive. Miles of hiking and biking trails in the parks allow visitors to experience these unique wetland communities, but only the most patient will see a carnivorous plant in action.

Read more here: bit.ly/3xgvEOP



A field crew (top) diligently transplanting pitcher plants in the background of this photo / USFWS; In Deer Lake State Park invasive titi trees were mechanically removed, chipped, and moved off-site (bottom left) /USFWS; Pitcher planting at Grayton State Park (bottom center) / USFWS; White fringed orchids in Deer Lake State Park are attracting sphinx moths and other pollinators (bottom right) / USFWS



Outreach & Urban Conservation

Chicago, Illinois

Green spaces in the cities along Lake Michigan provide valuable stopover habitat for migratory birds and connect urban communities to nature. The Coastal Program assisted the Chicago Park District in designing and enhancing a native habitat along the Chicago River at Ping Tom Memorial Park that will benefit communities of wildlife and people.

Removing invasive species and planting native vegetation will provide a colorful buffet for a variety of pollinators as well as exhausted migratory birds who need to forage and rest before continuing their migration. The Coastal Program's efforts will also boost the health and well-being of residents who recreate in these urban sanctuaries.

The public can view songbirds and pollinators attracted to the native plants from the observation deck seen on the left side of this image / The Chicago Parks District

Department & Service priorities supported:

America the Beautiful
Wildlife Conservation
Build Back Better
Climate Change
COVID-19


39 Urban projects -
more than
9,400 acres

More than
5 
Outdoor classroom
projects & volunteer
activities

More than
85 
miles of restored
urban streams



Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, Georgia

Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge's maritime forest and adjacent marshes support one of the largest wood stork colonies in Georgia. The Refuge, with the support of the Coastal Program and volunteers, is improving the federally threatened wood stork's habitat and increasing nesting opportunities for the colony.

The Coastal Program also supported a visit from a Girl Scout troop where the scouts learned about the importance of the Refuge for habitat and species conservation. The troop helped wood stork recovery efforts by erecting signs around the colony to reduce visitor disturbance. Visitors can still get a birds-eye view of nesting wood storks from several observation points.



Wood stork chicks (top) will stay with their parents for about two months before fledging / M.L. Dickson; Girl scouts (bottom left) pose after working with refuge staff to post signs about wood stork nesting / USFWS. A wood stork (bottom center) banded for monitoring / M. Dickson; Wood storks build their nests in large trees above standing water (bottom right) and will have 1 - 5 eggs in a clutch / M.L. Dickson



New Haven, Connecticut

The Coastal Program is inspiring the next generation of conservationists by building outdoor classrooms and working with educators to develop environmental curriculum. McGrath Park's newly constructed 4.5-acre urban oasis will serve as an outdoor classroom for the adjacent Long River Middle School students and as an outdoor retreat for the public. This urban oasis will attract songbirds and pollinators which will serve as the park's unassuming ambassadors for community stewardship.

Projects like this will motivate students, joggers, and picnickers alike, to act as stewards of these natural areas.



The northern parula (left) often stops in Connecticut during their migration to forage among chickadees, vireos and other warblers / NPS N. Lewis; Volunteers helped make McGrath park an urban oasis for the community and wildlife to enjoy (right) / USFWS; Interpretive signage in the park (bottom) will inform readers of year-round wildlife, native plants, and basic backyard stewardship tips / USFWS





Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge / USFWS

Published: 2021
Learn more about the Coastal Program at fws.gov/coastal