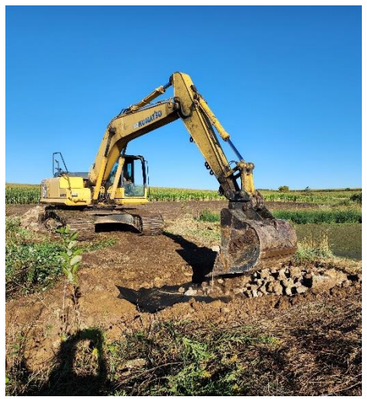
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Partners for Fish and Wildlife
Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report









Partners for Fish & Wildlife



MISSION

The mission of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is to work with others to efficiently achieve voluntary habitat restoration on private lands, through financial and technical assistance, to conserve federal trust species and their habitat for the continuing benefit of the American people.

PARTNERS FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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Left page: Canadian geese using a wetland with heavy machinery use in the background during a Minnesota PFW Program project. / USFWS
Left inset: Restored longleaf pine ecosystem in South Carolina. / USFWS



Pronghorn observed during grassland monitoring on PFW Program project in Arizona (above). / USFWS



Restored wetland in a high elevation sagebrush and mountain brush ecosystem of southern Utah (above). / USFWS

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

The voluntary, non-regulatory, innovative, and collaborative nature of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program sets conservation up for success. In the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), we help keep working lands working to benefit local economies and create and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities. We work hand-in-hand with landowners and other partners to enhance and restore habitats.

In 2025, Service biologists, working across all states and U.S. territories, completed 1,701 wildlife habitat projects, restoring and enhancing 218,392 acres of uplands, 12,943 acres of wetlands, and 186 miles of rivers and streams. We didn't do it alone.

Landowners who choose to work with the PFW Program often share similar goals – to improve forage and agricultural yield, protect property, care for wildlife, leave the world in a better place for the next generation to enjoy– yet each project has a unique story to tell. It's hearing and sharing these stories, as unique as the landscapes we work in, that keeps us going.

Private land conservation is about relationships. It's about listening to the person standing at the fence post, leaning on the hood of the truck, or, as we would more often prefer, sitting across the kitchen table. When we take the time to hear the stories and the goals of landowner partners, we're in a better position to reach shared conservation goals.

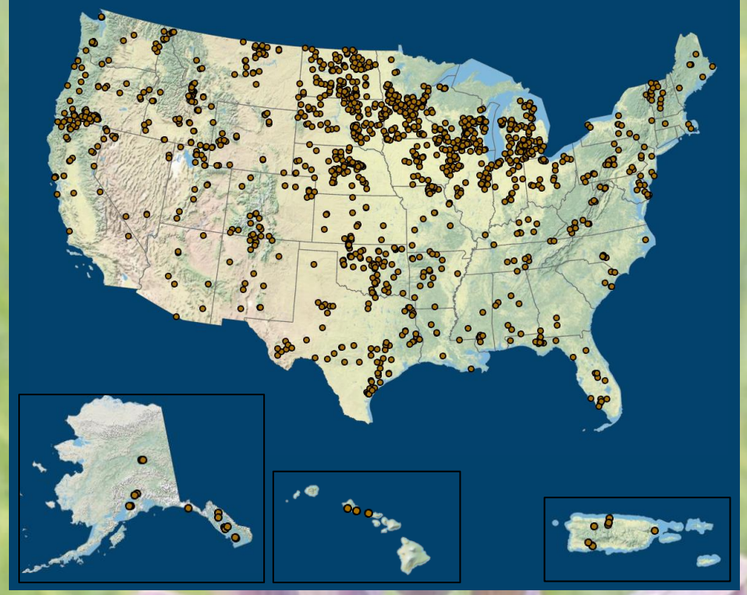
As you read this annual report, I hope you'll take a minute to reflect on the people behind the conservation, because without them sharing their thoughts, and without PFW Program staff listening, none of this would be possible.

Cynthia Martinez,
Chief National Wildlife
Refuge System



USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System Chief Cynthia Martinez (above). / USFWS

2025 NATIONWIDE ACCOMPLISHMENTS



1,701
PROJECTS

$12.08M
PFW PROJECT INVESTMENT

$53.70M
PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

$65.78M
TOTAL PROJECT INVESTMENT

$1:4.45
LEVERAGE

186
STREAM AND RIVER MILES

218,392
UPLAND ACRES

12,943
WETLAND ACRES

60
FISH PASSAGE STRUCTURES

2,973
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

WORKING TOGETHER

Working with 1,588 landowners and 410 partnering organizations, we completed 1,701 collaborative restoration and enhancement projects in 2025.

Above: Map showcasing national PFW Program projects completed in 2025.
Background photo: Bumble bee visiting a lupine plant in Michigan / USFWS



PFW Program biologists and University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Chapter workday removing undesired woody vegetation that overtake native plant species within natural prairies (above). / USFWS

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW) provides technical and financial assistance to landowners interested in restoring and enhancing wildlife habitat on their land. Projects are custom designed to meet landowners' needs.

Since the PFW program's start in 1987, more than 25,000 landowners have worked with PFW Program biologists to complete 40,000 habitat restoration projects across 7 million acres.

PFW Program projects are voluntary. Participating landowners continue to own and manage their land to serve their needs while they improve conditions for fish, wildlife, and plants.

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. Many PFW Program projects take place on working landscapes such as forests, farms and ranches. Our goal is to keep lands working: increasing sustainability and yield while improving habitat for wildlife. We focus our efforts on areas of conservation concern, such as upland prairies, wetlands, rivers and streams. Projects range in size and scope to benefit federal trust species including migratory birds, endangered, threatened and at-risk species.

1,588
Landowners Worked with in 2025

231,335
Total Acres Restored in 2025

$1:4.45
Federal Dollars Leveraged with Partners

STRATEGIC CONSERVATION

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS AREAS



2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLANS

A Comprehensive Approach to Conservation Planning and Delivery

Our conservation efforts are guided by a national strategic plan and our current plan covers fiscal years 2022–2026. Collectively, the components of the plan identify conservation goals, priorities, and objectives that were developed collaboratively among national, regional and field staff, in collaboration with conservation partners. The national strategic plan ensures that we continually allocate our resources toward habitats and priorities with the greatest need. The national strategy presents the vision, goals, and national priorities. The regional implementation plans present each region's geographic focus areas (i.e., priorities), focal species, and conservation objectives.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 NATIONAL PRIORITIES

Species Conservation

Implement habitat projects within priority areas that prevent decline or supports recovery of species of greatest conservation concern, including federal listed species, Birds of Conservation Concern, pollinators and interjurisdictional fish.



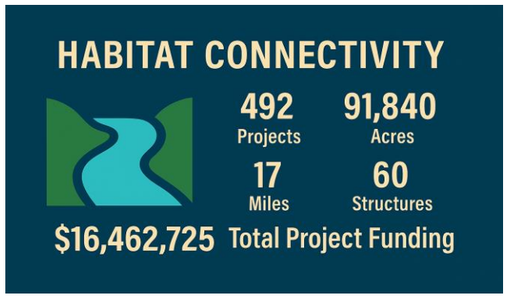


Federally threatened Gopher tortoise on PFW project site (left) and Species Conservation metrics for fiscal year 2025 with total project funding including both program funds and partner contributions (right). / USFWS

Habitat Connectivity

Integrate projects at a landscape level to improve habitat connectivity and functionality in recognition that interconnected habitats and migration corridors are vital to fish and wildlife conservation.





Bottomless arch culvert replacements improve aquatic connectivity, stream health, and high-flow resiliency (left) and Habitat Connectivity metrics for fiscal year 2025 with total project funding including both program funds and partner contributions (right). / USFWS

Resilient Ecosystems

Improve resilience to natural disaster related impacts to benefit communities, people, and wildlife acknowledging that natural disasters and storms affect all parts of the ecosystem, including those on which American people depend.





Aerial view of prescribed fire removing overgrowth of invasive plants posing a wildfire risk in Florida (above) and Resilient Ecosystems metrics for fiscal year 2025 with total project funding including both program funds and partner contributions (right). / IHHRC

MIGRATION CORRIDORS

Conserving Western Big Game Seasonal Habitat and Migration Corridors

Background

The western United States supports some of North America's largest herds of native ungulates. However, critical winter ranges and migration corridors that sustain these populations face growing threats. Habitat fragmentation from development reduces access to quality forage and cover, roads and fences impede seasonal movements, and degraded habitat compromises herd health and reproductive success.

Recognizing these challenges, the Department of the Interior (DOI) launched a coordinated effort to conserve these critical habitats. On February 9, 2018, the Secretary of the Interior signed Secretarial Order (S.O.) 3362, Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors. S.O. 3362 directs DOI bureaus to work closely with 11 western states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) to enhance big game winter range and migration corridor habitat on Federal lands under DOI jurisdiction. The order emphasizes collaboration that respects state authority and private property rights.

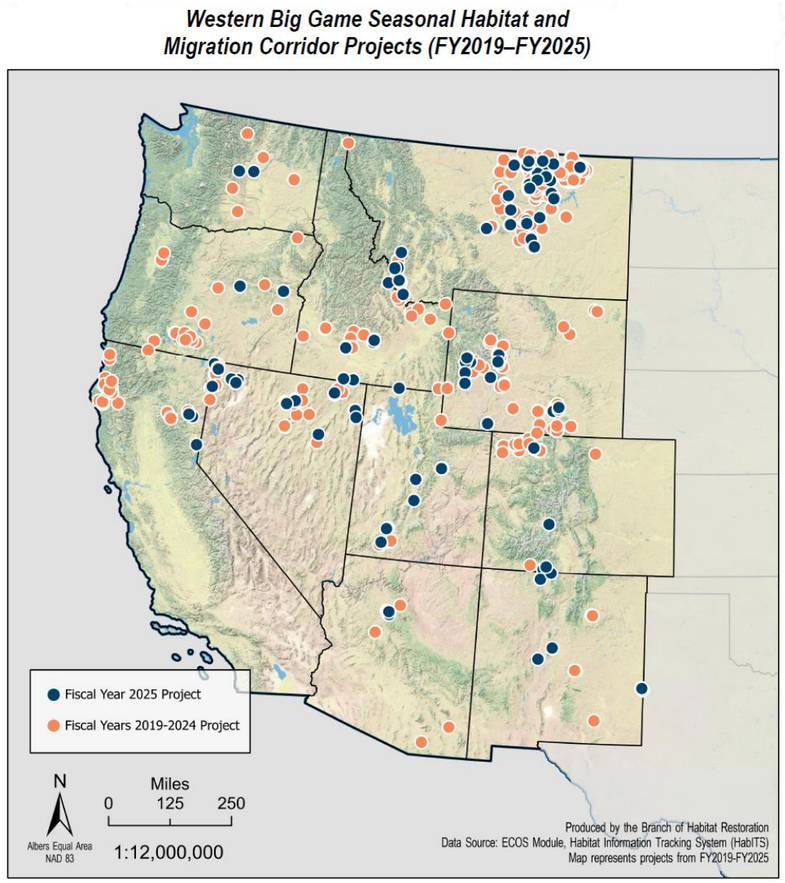
Since 2018, efforts under S.O. 3362 have focused on improving habitat for Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, and pronghorn within state-identified and Tribal priority areas. Actions span multiple ownerships, with voluntary agreements with landowners and Tribes serving as a cornerstone for success.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program Response

National-Level Collaboration: The PFW Program has invested $500,000 annually—totaling $4 million to date—through cooperative agreements with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to bolster its Western Big Game Seasonal Habitat and Migration Corridor Fund.

Local-Level Collaboration: PFW Program biologists partner with landowners, Tribes, state and federal agencies, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and conservation districts to restore and enhance big game seasonal habitat and migration corridors on private and Tribal lands across 11 western states. The table below shows national statistics from fiscal year 2025 projects:

Projects	Upland Acres	Wetland Acres	Stream and River Miles	Fencing Miles	Total USFWS Funds	Total Partner Funds
159	96,899	2,185	75	183	$3,909,000	$4,562,000



Map showing PFW Program projects benefiting western big game seasonal habitat and migration corridors from FY2019 - FY2025 (above). / USFWS

Fiscal Year 2025 Example Projects

Grant County, Oregon - Restored 312 acres by removing juniper, controlling invasive grasses, and reseeding native vegetation—improving winter range habitat for mule deer, elk, and other species in a priority watershed.

Wolf Creek, New Mexico - Collaborated with many local and regional partners, including the Jicarilla Apache Nation, to implement an 88-acre fuels reduction treatment—creating a strategic fuel break to reduce wildfire risk and protect municipal water supplies, while improving forest resilience and enhancing forage quality for elk and mule deer in a state-identified priority area.

Southwest Montana - Worked with 11 private landowners and 7 conservation partners between 2024 and 2025 to replace 31.2 miles of fencing with wildlife-friendly fencing and permanently remove 1.8 miles—improving migration for pronghorn, mule deer, elk, and moose in a state-identified priority area.

Northeastern California - Following a 30,000-acre fire in a mule deer priority area on private land, worked with partners to seed 56 acres with native grasses and shrubs and plant 6,500 bitterbrush seedlings in "islands" (40 acres total) within a 450-acre project area—accelerating post-fire habitat recovery and improving forage for mule deer and other wildlife.

PRESCRIBED FIRE

Background

Low-intensity fire historically played a vital role in shaping many ecosystems, maintaining healthy plant communities, and supporting a wide range of wildlife species. Decades of fire exclusion have altered these systems, allowing hazardous fuels to accumulate and increasing the risk of large, high-severity wildfires. Prescribed fire, along with other fuels management practices such as mechanical thinning and vegetation removal, helps restore more natural conditions, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce the likelihood and intensity of catastrophic wildfire, thereby protecting lives, property, and natural resources.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program implements prescribed fire and other fuels management practices with willing private landowners to restore and enhance habitat on their lands. Reintroducing fire in landscapes where people live and work can be complex, with challenges including liability concerns, limited experience, and cost. To address these challenges, PFW Program staff use a diverse set of tools and approaches tailored to regional conditions and landowner needs. The projects highlighted in this section illustrate how prescribed fire and other fuels reduction strategies are successfully applied to reduce hazardous fuels, protect communities, strengthen ecosystem resilience, and deliver lasting benefits for wildlife.

The table below shows national statistics from fiscal year 2025 projects that benefited from prescribed fire:

Projects	States	Acres	Total PFW Program Funds	Total non-PFW Program Project Funds
314	32	86,188	$2,627,000	$8,269,000







Park Creek Elementary prescribed burn with PFW Program sign (left). Typical view of drip torch ignition in Massachusetts (left center). Drip torches during prescribed burn training in Oklahoma (right center). Partners reviewing project map while crews burn defensible space in Utah (right). Eastern red cedar skeleton with smoke from a prescribed burn in Kansas (top background). / USFWS

Fiscal Year 2025 Example Projects

Grassland Restoration and Fuels Reduction on Private Land Adjacent to Valentine National Wildlife Refuge - In Nebraska's Sandhills, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is collaborating with private landowners and conservation partners to remove eastern red cedar from nearly 57,000 acres of ranchland adjacent to Valentine National Wildlife Refuge. Combined with recent refuge work, this effort will restore nearly 130,000 acres of native grassland—reducing wildfire risk, improving wildlife habitat, and boosting forage for livestock across one of the world's most intact grassland ecosystems.

Prescribed Fire: A Vital Tool for Ranchers and Prairie Wildlife - In Kansas, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is helping private landowners combat woody encroachment through prescribed fire and integrated prairie management. A recent 1,625-acre restoration project improved forage for cattle, reduced wildfire risk, and revitalized habitat for species like upland sandpipers and monarch butterflies—contributing to over 100,000 acres of restored grasslands across the region.

The Importance of Forest Fuels Management: A Collaborative Approach to Shared Stewardship - The Two Rivers Park project in Bonner County, Idaho, showcases how cross-agency collaboration under Idaho's Shared Stewardship initiative is reducing wildfire risk, improving forest health, and creating safer, more enjoyable recreational spaces. Through strategic fuels management and habitat restoration, this 38-acre demonstration site serves as a model for community engagement and private landowner education.

After the Storm: Recovery in the Florida Panhandle Post-Hurricane Michael - In Florida's Panhandle, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is partnering with landowners to restore hurricane-damaged lands and reduce wildfire risk. To date, cleanup and fuels reduction work—including shearing, mulching, and prescribed burning—has been completed on approximately 5,000 acres, helping communities and wildlife recover and thrive.

Tackling Invasive Species and Wildfire Risk in Hawai'i - In the Waianae Mountains, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and local partners are tackling invasive, fire-prone grasses and restoring native habitat to reduce wildfire risk. Efforts include planting over 2,200 native plants, collecting 11,000 seeds, and engaging more than 1,100 students and volunteers—creating fire breaks that protect homes and support endangered species.



Burn crew conducting a prescribed burn on private land in Ohio (above). / USFWS

FARM CONSERVATION

Keeping Working Lands Working



Rural landowners are vital to conservation. By focusing efforts and using the best science, wildlife conservation and sustainable agriculture can work hand in hand.

The Farm Conservation Program works with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide technical support for developing, implementing, and evaluating Farm Bill conservation programs that advance shared conservation goals and benefit federal trust species. The Farm Conservation Program supports the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program biologists by sharing information on USDA programs and conservation practices that help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners sustain their operations while maximizing wildlife habitat benefits.

IN 2025:

- Strengthened relationships with agricultural producers and local partners through implementation of a technical assistance agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for Farm Bill program delivery in support of species and habitat conservation.
- The PFW Program completed over 133 projects in FY2025 with USDA programs as a project partner, restoring and enhancing 39,000 acres and 22 riparian miles using about $9 million of total project funding.
- Worked with NRCS, as directed by Congress in the 2018 Farm Bill, to support implementation of the Working Lands for Wildlife program, which offers regulatory predictability to agricultural producers who take actions to conserve declining species on their lands.
- Coordinated with State Fish and Wildlife agencies and other partners to leverage resources and maximize conservation opportunities offered by the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill.



PFW and NRCS staff at restored wetland in Minnesota (top) and Kansas rancher (above). / USFWS

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Providing Opportunities to Enjoy the Outdoors

By working with private landowners and partners, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program delivers benefits for outdoor enthusiasts by restoring habitats that support healthy fish and wildlife populations. PFW projects enhance the places where people hunt, fish, and enjoy nature—supporting America's outdoor heritage while promoting healthy ecosystems that benefit both wildlife and recreation.

Wetland restoration improves water quality and hydrology, creating prime conditions for waterfowl hunting and enhancing fish habitat for recreational anglers. Stream and riparian projects reconnect waterways, allowing native fish species to thrive and increasing opportunities for sport fishing. Grassland and upland habitat improvements provide food and cover for game species such as pheasants, quail, and deer, enriching hunting experiences. These restored landscapes also attract migratory birds and pollinators, offering exceptional wildlife viewing and photography opportunities for outdoor recreationists.

PFW Program projects often restore and enhance habitat adjacent to public lands with similar treatments, creating a continuous restored landscape. Furthermore, many states have a high proportion of private land, so collaboration with private landowners is vital for wildlife populations to flourish.

IN 2025:

- In fiscal year 2025, PFW completed 325 projects with hunting and fishing opportunities as a priority, improving habitat for over 94,000 acres and 84 miles of river and streams, using over $1.8 million of program funds and leveraging over $7.7 million of nonprogram funds.
- Approximately 135 of these projects are open to the public with a portion of these open but requiring landowner permission.





Missouri landowner enjoying a restored wetland for waterfowl hunting (left) and goose watching over a restored wetland in California (right). / USFWS

PARTNERS FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE
2025 REGIONAL PERFORMANCE DATA AND SUMMARIES

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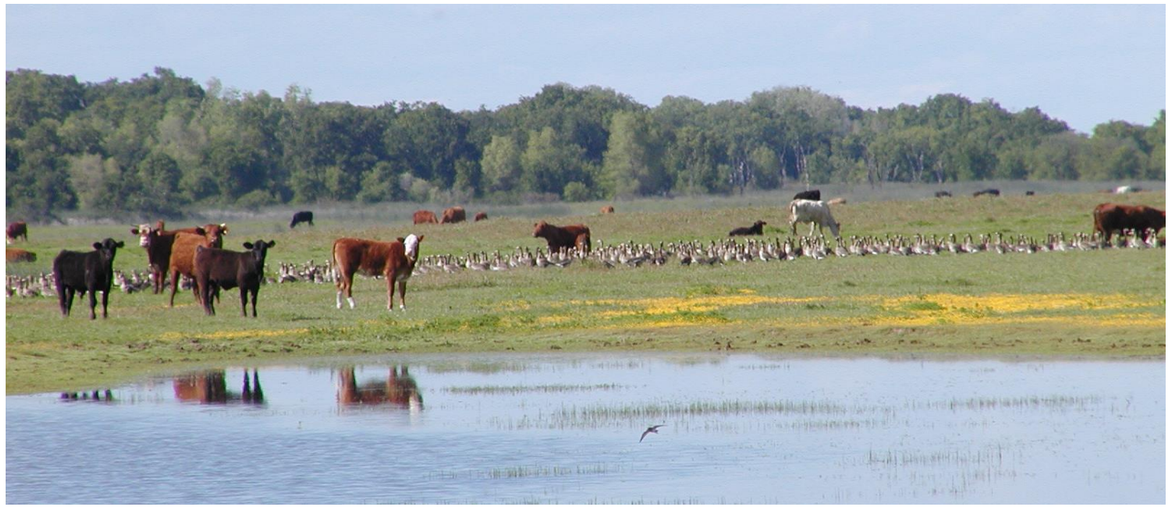
REGION 6.....36-39

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REGION 8.....42-45

Regional Summaries

The following section focuses on each Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program region by providing performance accomplishment data and project highlights from the states.



Enhanced Minnesota prairie with native tallgrass species regrowth (left) and restored vernal pool at ranch in California (above). / USFWS

FISCAL YEAR 2025

76
PROJECTS

$1.22M
PFW PROJECT INVESTMENT

$4.84M
PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

$6.06M
TOTAL PROJECT INVESTMENT

$1:3.98
LEVERAGE

13.1
STREAM AND RIVER MILES

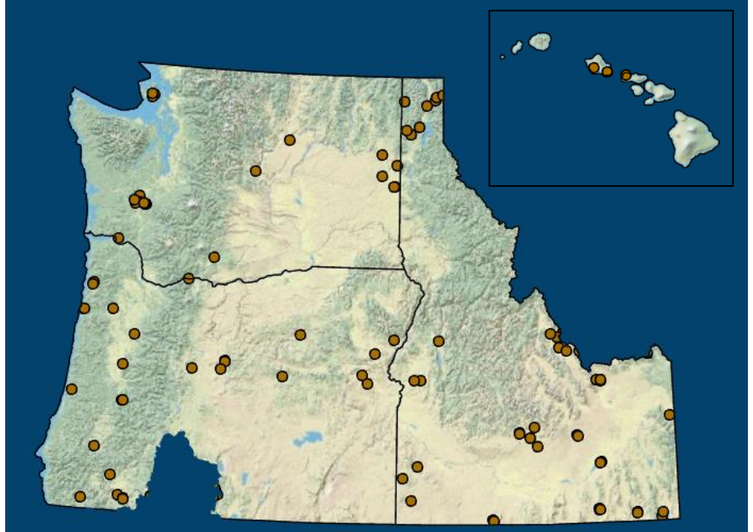
4,211
UPLAND ACRES

382
WETLAND ACRES

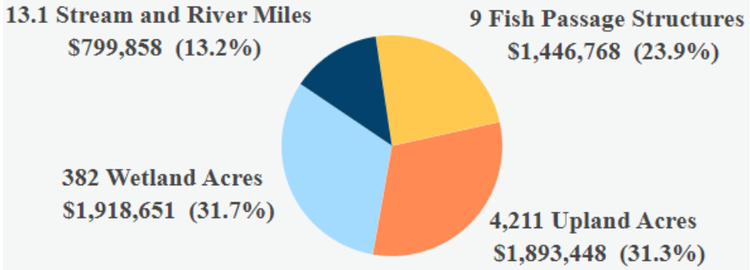
9
FISH PASSAGE STRUCTURES

500
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

REGION 1



Investments by Habitat Type



* Funding includes both program funds and partner contributions

State	Projects	Stream and River Miles	Upland Acres	Wetland Acres
Hawai'i	4	0	62	0
Idaho	29	9.9	2,479	170
Oregon	23	3.3	703	21
Washington	20	0	967	191

Top: Completed 2025 PFW Program project map in Region 1.
Middle: Chart showcasing project investments by habitat type.
Below: Regional state overview.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: A Community Approach to Reducing Wildfire Risk in Central Washington

In 2025, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program partnered with the Columbia Land Trust to implement fuels reduction treatments within the Bear Creek Natural Area in Klickitat County, Washington. This effort is part of a forest health initiative supported by funding from the U.S. Wildland Fire Service. The goal was to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest resilience in a landscape historically managed for industrial timber production.

The project focuses on removing ladder fuels (small densely packed trees and shrubs) which significantly lowers the risk of severe wildfire. Fuels reduction treatments protect nearby communities and adjacent state and community-owned lands. Partners included the Columbia Land Trust, Yakama Nation, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Mount Adams Resource Stewards.



Fuels reduction treatments (above). / USFWS

Fuels treatments were completed on 264 acres of forest and enhanced habitat for Oregon white oak, western gray squirrel, Lewis' woodpecker and other oak associated species. Beyond ecological benefits, this initiative supports the local economy by hiring community-based contractors, ensuring that project funds stay local and build capacity for future restoration work. It also demonstrates how strategic funding and local partnerships can deliver environmental and economic benefits. Reducing wildfire risk across a network of lands provides an overall more resilient landscape while protecting communities, cultural resources, and wildlife habitat.



Burning piles of forest debris (slash) from thinning projects under safe, controlled conditions to reduce wildfire risk, create fuel breaks, and restore forest resilience (above). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Floodplain Restoration to Improve Outdoor Recreation and Salmon Production in Oregon

The Ochoco Preserve restoration project is revitalizing a critical floodplain at the confluence of the Ochoco Creek, the McKay Creek, and the Crooked River near Prineville, Oregon. Historically, these streams were straightened and wetlands drained, reducing groundwater recharge and habitat. Today, strategic restoration efforts are benefitting both water quality and recreation opportunities while also reconnecting floodplains that improve stream quality and habitat for rearing salmon.

This project exemplifies collaborative conservation. The Deschutes Land Trust led the effort with support from partners including the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Pelton Round Butte Fund, Bureau of Reclamation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program staff contributed technical expertise in design, construction oversight, and compliance, while also performing hands-on tasks such as biological monitoring, and fish salvage.

Work included re-meandering channels, installing large wood structures, and constructing Beaver Dam Analogs and Post-Assisted Log Structures. These actions slowed water, increased infiltration, and enhanced groundwater storage. This adjustment improved water quality and late season flow which benefits downstream agricultural users while also creating high-quality habitat for Middle Columbia River steelhead, Lower Columbia Spring Chinook salmon, and Columbia River redband trout. Additionally, this project created local outdoor recreation opportunities by developing a trail network for the nearby town of Prineville to enjoy.

Beyond ecological restoration, the project benefits local agriculture and communities by improving groundwater storage and late-season flows, which support irrigation and reduce drought impacts. Future plans include nature trails and interpretive sites, creating a hub for outdoor learning and recreation. These efforts foster local stewardship, improve water quality, and reduce wildfire risk, benefiting both ecosystems and nearby communities.



Aerial view of the restored floodplain in Ochoco Preserve with the town of Prineville, OR in the distance (above). / Deschutes Land Trust

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Restoring Crooked Creek: Collaborative Water Management for Working Lands in Idaho

This collaborative project is a long-term effort to restore Crooked Creek and its surrounding riparian areas for the health and resilience of wildlife and working lands. The Crooked Creek drainage lies within Idaho's Big Desert and Mountain Valleys Complex, a state-identified big game migratory corridor and a designated sage grouse priority area. The goal was to make Crooked Creek functional across multiple ownerships and secure water resources. Outdated ditch conveyance systems were replaced with more than 70,000 feet of high-efficiency pipeline, nine tire troughs and three wildlife watering outlets were installed, which created new upland watering sites. These upgrades reduce livestock pressure on sensitive riparian areas, allowing streambanks to stabilize and vegetation to recover naturally. Beyond immediate habitat gains, this project strengthens community resilience by supporting sustainable ranching practices and improving vegetation health, which maintain high resistance to invasive annual grasses and greater resilience to disturbances such as wildfire.





Dozer (top) used to dig pipeline (below). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Protecting Coastal Ecosystems on Moloka'i in Hawai'i

Mokio Preserve on Moloka'i has long been an ideal location for coastal restoration for ground nesting seabirds, endangered native plants, and pollinators. In Hawai'i, less than half of the coastline supports native vegetation and a smaller amount is considered high-quality habitat. Seabirds, pollinators, and other key species have largely been threatened by loss of habitat and predators. To remedy this, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Molokai Land Trust, and American Bird Conservancy, collaborated to construct an innovative 5,600-foot predator proof conservation fence to protect 85 acres of high coastal habitat. This barrier excludes invasive predators such as mongoose, rats, mice, and feral cats that prey on ground-nesting seabirds such as the Wedge-tailed Shearwater ('Ua'u Kani), Laysan Albatross (Mōlī), and Black-footed Albatross (Ka'upu). It also keeps out feral ungulates, allowing native plants to regenerate over time. This model of restoration and predator management is inspiring similar efforts across the Hawaiian Islands.





Predator proof fence in process (left) and completed (right) at Mokio Preserve. / USFWS

FISCAL YEAR 2025

151
PROJECTS

$2.19M
PFW PROJECT INVESTMENT

$1.63M
PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

$3.83M
TOTAL PROJECT INVESTMENT

$1:0.74
LEVERAGE

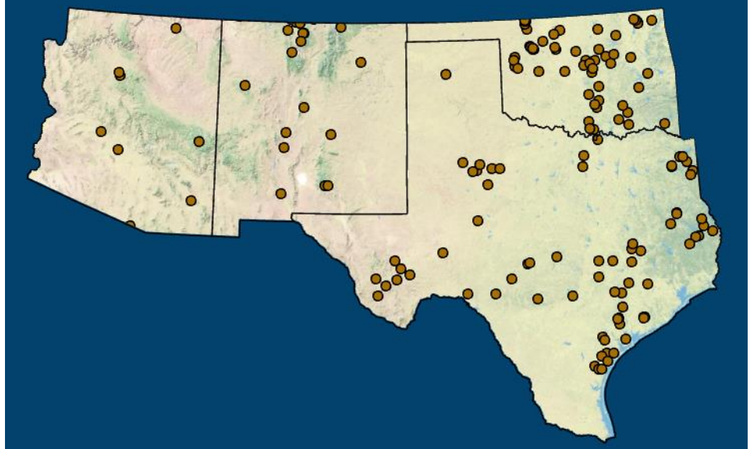
10.9
STREAM AND RIVER MILES

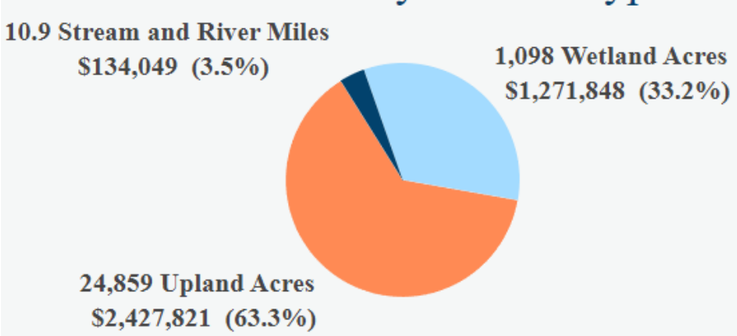
24,859
UPLAND ACRES

1,098
WETLAND ACRES

192
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

REGION 2





* Funding includes both program funds and partner contributions

State	Projects	Stream and River Miles	Upland Acres	Wetland Acres
Arizona	10	0.8	1,060	0.4
New Mexico	25	4.4	3,365	203
Oklahoma	39	5.7	1,898	99
Texas	77	0	18,536	796

Top: Completed 2025 PFW Program project map in Region 2.
Middle: Chart showcasing project investments by habitat type.
Below: Regional state overview.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Apache Trout Recovery and Big Bonito Creek Barrier Replacement in Arizona



An Apache trout with typical Apache trout habitat shown in the background (above). / USFWS

Apache trout (Oncorhynchus apache), Arizona's state fish, is found nowhere else in the world. Although Apache trout are a cold-water species living in Arizona's warm, arid climate, they have survived decades of threats thanks to their resilience and strong conservation partnerships. Apache trout have journeyed through the full spectrum of the Endangered Species Act protections: listed as endangered in 1967, downlisted to threatened in 1975, proposed for delisting in August 2023, and officially delisted in September 2024. This recovery is a testament to collaborative conservation.

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program began supporting Apache trout recovery in 1999. Its most recent contribution helped fund the replacement of the Big Bonito Creek Barrier, a critical infrastructure project. Conservation barriers are essential for protecting Apache trout habitat from nonnative trout species. The original gabion barrier, built decades ago, had deteriorated and was no longer effective. Replacing it was a high priority, as it safeguards nearly 22 miles of stream, representing 18% of all Apache trout recovery habitat.

The new barrier was completed in 2025 with funding from a broad coalition: the White Mountain Apache Tribe, Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, Desert Fish Habitat Partnership, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the PFW Program. This project exemplifies how strategic partnerships and infrastructure investment can lead to measurable conservation success.

Old barrier that was no longer functioning on Big Bonito Creek (bottom left) with newly constructed barrier located downstream of the old site (bottom right). / USFWS





PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Community Engagement Project Demonstrating Soil Erosion and Grassland Management Techniques in New Mexico

The goals of this project were to improve native grass species habitat through reducing soil erosion, implementing water conservation structures, and reducing overgrazing. Completed work includes erecting wildlife-friendly cross fencing for rotational grazing, building a rock drop structure that receives major stormwater coming from an adjacent highway culvert, constructing road rolling dips (water bars), rock dams, and swale/berms at various locations to reduce active soil erosion while increasing soil moisture. All erosion control structures were designed to increase soil moisture for native grasses, forbs, and other vegetation, in addition to reducing the erosive force of water during rain events.

The erosion control structures were built by contractors and community members through hands-on volunteer learning workshops. Workshops were organized by Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program staff and the landowner and provided an educational hands-on learning experience. One workshop involved students from a local youth corps and Universities, while another consisted of a local community volunteer group. A mix of warm and cool season native grasses and native pollinator mix were planted across the property.

Since completion of the restoration work on the property, there has been a huge increase of native forbs. The landowner has also seen an increase in the presence of migratory birds and big game animals on the property. In addition to supporting outdoor recreation opportunities and improving local economies and livelihoods, the habitat restoration work has also allowed the landowner to showcase erosion control techniques, grassland health improvement, and the reduction of fuels that decreases wildfire risk. The landowner has been extremely enthusiastic about advocating for such work with other private landowners, conservation groups, and ranching associations.




Group of volunteers posing with the landowner behind one of the constructed erosion control structures (left) and the restored grassland during the growing season (right). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: High Plains Resource Conservation and Development Council Ranch Conservation Meetings in Oklahoma

The High Plains Resource Conservation and Development Council received a grant to facilitate ranch conversation meetings across Northwestern Oklahoma with the intent to inform landowners/ranchers about programs and agencies that offer financial and technical assistance for conservation and production practices. These conversations were held in seven Oklahoma counties and allowed a multitude of agencies and ranchers to come together with a primary focus of networking and developing solutions to local ranching operation challenges. Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program staff were asked to present on the PFW Program at each meeting, allowing us to inform landowners about the services we provide, as well as answering any questions about wildlife conservation and habitat needs. The PFW Program was able to start partnerships with many of the 500 participants, which resulted in technical assistance visits on properties that could eventually become future habitat restoration projects across Oklahoma.



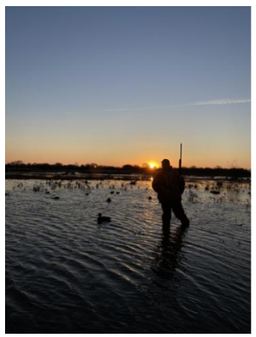
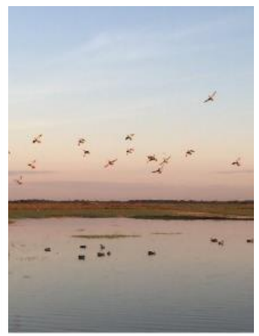


Meeting attendees (left and center) and PFW staff presenting (right). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Celebrating Decades of Collaborative Conservation: Texas Prairie Wetland Project Restores Wetlands Along the Texas Coast

In 1991, Ducks Unlimited, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service partnered to create the Texas Prairie Wetlands Project (TPWP). The main goal of the TPWP is to restore, enhance, and protect shallow, seasonally flooded wetland habitat on private lands within a 28-county focus area along the Texas Gulf Coast to help deliver waterfowl habitat foraging objectives. The Texas PFW Program has a dedicated senior staff biologist to TPWP.

Over the past 34 years, the TPWP has worked with hundreds of private landowners to restore wetland habitat. In 2025, the project completed its 1,000th wetland project, cumulatively, restoring or enhancing over 100,000 acres of wetlands. Each year, these projects provide critical staging and wintering habitat for thousands of waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and other wetland-dependent species, while providing improved waterfowl hunting opportunities.

A hunter observing a sunset (left / Taylor Abshier) and waterfowl flying over (right / USFWS) a TPWP restored wetland.

FISCAL YEAR 2025

645
PROJECTS

$1.11M
PFW PROJECT INVESTMENT

$16.22M
PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

$17.33M
TOTAL PROJECT INVESTMENT

$1:14.61
LEVERAGE

0.4
STREAM AND RIVER MILES

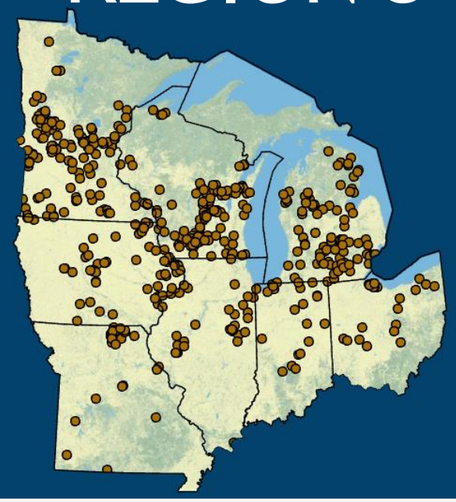
11,586
UPLAND ACRES

3,092
WETLAND ACRES

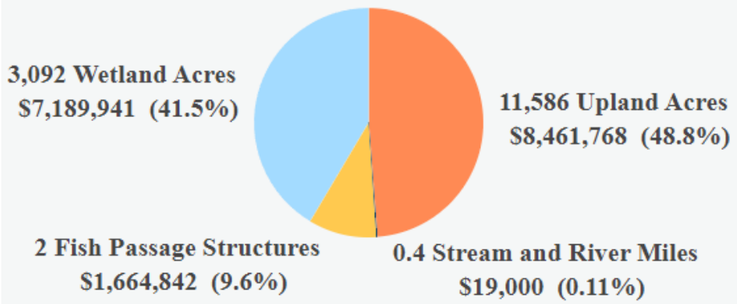
2
FISH PASSAGE STRUCTURES

1,042
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

REGION 3



Investments by Habitat Type



* Funding includes both program funds and partner contributions

State	Projects	Stream and River Miles	Upland Acres	Wetland Acres
Illinois	40	0	513	133
Indiana	25	0	342	74
Iowa	67	0	850	132
Michigan	117	0	812	436
Minnesota	202	0	5,824	1,877
Missouri	28	0	1,063	38
Ohio	25	0	879	235
Wisconsin	141	0.4	1,304	167

Top: Completed 2025 PFW Program project map in Region 3.
Middle: Chart showcasing project investments by habitat type.
Below: Regional state overview.



Burn crew meeting before the prescribed fire (left) and project habitat after restoration practices (right). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: A Conservation Legacy: Restoring Habitat and Community in Southern Illinois

An Illinois private landowner's 120-acre property in Hardin County, Illinois, is more than just land—it's a living legacy. Passed down through generations since the Civil War, the property has recently undergone a remarkable transformation from degraded pasture to a thriving habitat for quail, monarch butterflies, and more. What began as a personal mission to honor the family's heritage has evolved into a model conservation project that exemplifies the power of collaboration, vision, and stewardship.

Faced with the challenges of maintaining the land after traditional agricultural leases fell through, the landowner found inspiration in an article about conservation. That spark ignited a journey that led to the formation of a conservation team composed of local, state, and federal partners. With support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, Quail Forever, the Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP), and other organizations, the landowner initiated a full-scale restoration of their property.

The project began with the removal of invasive species from an overgrown hayfield, followed by the implementation of forestry practices and prescribed burns. These efforts have revitalized native plant communities and created critical habitat for declining species such as bobwhite quail and monarch butterflies. The restoration also supports oak regeneration in the wooded areas, contributing to long-term forest health. Researchers from Southern Illinois University Carbondale have conducted botanical studies on-site, and local hunters have accessed the land through IRAP, experiencing firsthand the benefits of conservation.

The landowner's approach—building a network of partners, maintaining clear communication, and developing a shared management plan—has proven essential to the success of the project. This story serves as an inspiring example for other landowners seeking to make a difference. It is not only a win for wildlife and natural resources but also for the community that now benefits from a revitalized landscape rich in biodiversity and opportunity.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Annual Dane County Prairie Seed Challenge in Wisconsin

Conservation partners including the Wisconsin Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program staff gathered for a day of prairie seed collection and camaraderie. The annual event drew approximately 150 partners from across the state for the purpose of assisting with habitat restoration efforts in Dane County, WI. The day was topped off with a potluck picnic and the chance for PFW Program staff and partners to share updates and express thanks. The event concluded by transferring the seed to Dane County Park's state of the art seed storage facility. Dane County Parks will benefit from this collective effort, processing and storing the seeds collected for later use on prairie restoration projects on county public lands. This effort significantly offsets upfront project costs, supplying seeds for upcoming habitat restoration projects on hundreds of acres of public land. For this event, over 600 pounds of native seeds from more than thirty species were collected. Migratory birds and pollinators will benefit as these habitat restoration projects will increase critical habitat.





PFW staff, volunteers, and partners discussing seed collection process (left) and USFWS staff assisting youth during the event (right). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Mississippi River Floodplain Wetland Restoration in Missouri

The Missouri Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program worked collaboratively to restore a 38-acre wetland that historically supported a rich mosaic of bottomland forests, marshes, and wet prairies shaped by seasonal flooding. Over the years, however, levees, locks, and drainage systems disrupted the natural hydrology and much of the floodplain has since been converted into agricultural land. The project focused on restoring the hydrology of a degraded wetland pool to provide seasonally flooded habitat for migratory birds, amphibians, reptiles, and other wetland-dependent species. The site now boasts a mix of annual and perennial emergent wetland vegetation with improved water quality and retention times. This effort was part of the Missouri Agricultural Wetland Initiative, a voluntary partnership between landowners and conservation organizations to combine technical expertise and funding to support high-quality wetland restorations compatible with agricultural production. Together, these partners demonstrate how conservation and agriculture could coexist, delivering ecological, recreational, and economic benefits to Missouri. In addition to its ecological benefits, the restored wetland supports the goal of increasing participation in hunting, fishing, trapping, and shooting sports as the landowner and his family actively engage in both habitat management and recreation on the property.



Landowner and son utilizing the restored wetland for waterfowl hunting (above). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Restoring Medora Prairie in Iowa





Prairie habitat before (top) and after eastern red cedar removal (bottom). / USFWS

A transformative restoration project was completed on approximately 102 acres of the Medora Prairie unit, managed by the Warren County Conservation Board. This project focused on the mechanical removal of encroaching eastern red cedar, a species known to degrade native prairie ecosystems by outcompeting native flora and altering fire regimes. The project involved strategic tree removal, piling in designated areas, and a prescribed burn across the unit to stimulate regrowth of desirable native species. Following the cedar removal and burn, the site responded with remarkable resilience, exemplifying the biodiversity potential when invasive species are removed and natural processes are restored. The success of this project demonstrates that targeted restoration can yield profound ecological benefits. It serves as a model for future prairie restoration efforts across Iowa and the Midwest, highlighting the importance of proactive land management and interagency collaboration. The Medora Prairie is now better positioned to support native species, resist future invasions, and provide a vibrant landscape for generations to come.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Historic Fort Wayne Pollinator Meadow in Michigan

A cooperative effort restored seven acres of former military parade grounds at Historic Fort Wayne, an ecologically important and culturally significant site, into a vibrant pollinator grassland meadow habitat. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program worked closely with a diverse group of partners, including Historic Fort Wayne, the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi, and the City of Detroit to provide technical expertise, project oversight, and cost-share assistance. This collaboration reflects years of relationship-building and shared trust, allowing partners with different perspectives and priorities to work toward a common conservation goal. By converting underutilized land into native meadow habitat, the project increases the diversity and availability of resources for pollinators, migratory birds, and other wildlife, all while offering residents a tangible connection to nature. Ultimately, this multifaceted effort stands as a strong example of how trust, partnerships, and shared vision can create lasting benefits for wildlife, communities, and future generations.





Pollinator grassland meadow habitat with Historic Fort Wayne in the background (left) and tour group at the site with famous Gordie Howe International Bridge in the distance which connects the USA and Canada (right). / USFWS

FISCAL YEAR 2025

111
PROJECTS

$1.67M
PFW PROJECT INVESTMENT

$6.10M
PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

$7.78M
TOTAL PROJECT INVESTMENT

$1:3.65
LEVERAGE

2.7
STREAM AND RIVER MILES

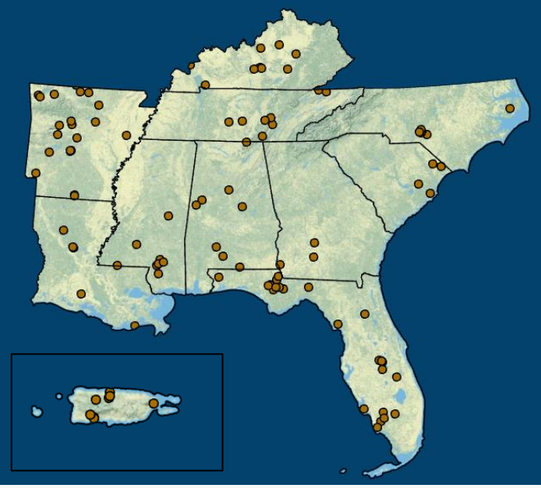
7,580
UPLAND ACRES

389
WETLAND ACRES

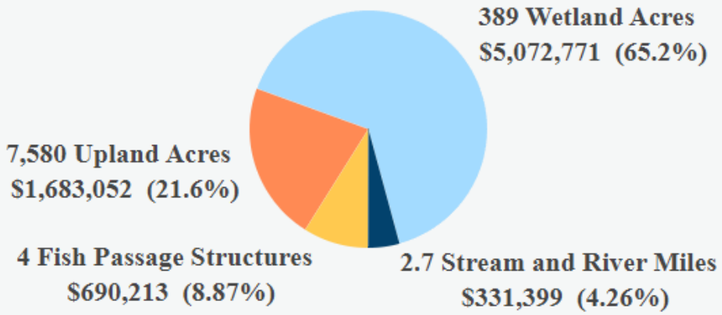
4
FISH PASSAGE STRUCTURES

702
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

REGION 4



Investments by Habitat Type



* Funding includes both program funds and partner contributions

State	Projects	Stream and River Miles	Upland Acres	Wetland Acres
Alabama	9	0	151	11
Arkansas	28	0.3	1,788	53
Florida	18	0	2,214	256
Georgia	3	0	499	0
Kentucky	9	0	354	0
Louisiana	5	0	98	68
Mississippi	6	0	168	0
North Carolina	7	0	343	0
Puerto Rico	10	0	8.7	0
South Carolina	5	0	1,759	0
Tennessee	11	2.4	197	0.2

Top: Completed 2025 PFW Program project map in Region 4.
Middle: Chart showcasing project investments by habitat type.
Below: Regional state overview.







The original crossing on Jordan Creek (upper left) and removal using heavy machinery (left). The new bottomless arch culvert that will withstand high flows and maintain aquatic connectivity (above). Landowner and PFW Biologist with the newly installed culvert (right). / USFWS



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Jordan Creek River Crossing Replacement in Alabama

In the heart of timber country, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is collaborating with conservation-minded landowners to improve habitat for the federally endangered Alabama pearlshell, fuzzy pigtoe, and other listed and imperiled aquatic species. Of the few remaining Alabama pearlshell populations, the most robust is housed in Jordan Creek in Conecuh County, Alabama. After reading about the importance of Jordan Creek to the recovery of imperiled species, a landowner reached out to the PFW Program about a river crossing of concern on their property.

This conservation-minded landowner and their family are passionate about the outdoors, evident by their approach to land management. They harvest timber to help offset costs of management activities; however, their primary management objective is wildlife. They go beyond the requirements of timber best management practices to ensure their harvesting activities do not have a negative impact on the many creeks on their properties.

The original crossing was comprised of a recycled pipe that was installed by a previous landowner. This perched pipe presented a barrier to fish passage, a source of excessive erosion, and a repetitive cause of road maintenance for the landowner. The new structure is an appropriately sized bottomless arch culvert that can withstand the volume of water present during high flows, while also maintaining connectivity during low flows.

Following the completion of a successful project, the landowner wrote a story in the Alabama Forests magazine published by the Alabama Forestry Foundation. In the article, this landowner shared their experience as a forestry landowner, learning about endangered species on their property, and collaborating with the PFW Program. By sharing this conservation success story, we continue to build a stronger relationship with the forestry community in south Alabama.

Overall, this project supported a family-owned tree farm, protected water quality, removed a barrier to fish passage, and improved habitat for seven federally listed species in Jordan Creek.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Restoration in the Ouachita Mountain highlands in Arkansas

The Ouachita Mountain highlands of Arkansas is a landscape of remarkable biodiversity, supporting a wide array of endemic, rare, and endangered plant and wildlife species. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and partners have been working here with two neighboring landowners to provide both technical guidance and financial assistance to restore more than 400 acres of open woodlands, rocky glades, ridgetops, and other natural features that once defined the region. The PFW program complemented multiple rounds of prescribed fire with targeted forest thinning. Together, these practices stimulated the growth of native herbaceous plants, which has increased numbers of migratory birds, at-risk pollinator species, and game species such as white-tailed deer and wild turkey. The landowners plan to expand restoration efforts to an additional 600 acres over the next five years, while collaborating with neighboring landowners to promote similar stewardship practices, working toward a more connected network of restored habitat across the landscape.





Prescribed fire (right) and the restored open woodland with ample herbaceous vegetation in the understory (far right). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Freshwater Mussel Technical Assistance to Conservation Partners in Tennessee





PFW biologist instructing NRCS staff on freshwater mussel characteristics (top) and rabbitsfoot mussels (bottom). / USFWS

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program biologists from the Tennessee Ecological Services Field Office provided expert aquatic training to twenty-five partner staff members from the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on the highly biodiverse Duck River. At this training PFW biologists discussed key characteristics of freshwater mussels, such as regional biodiversity, basic anatomy, life-history traits, ecosystem function, and recovery and conservation needs. PFW biologists aided in hands-on sampling for freshwater mussels by snorkel and view buckets. Individual species characteristics, habitat preference, and proper handling procedures were all taught to participants as part of this aquatic training. This training helps to leverage the technical expertise of the PFW Program as species experts and to provide NRCS partners with valuable technical information that will allow for better application of conservation practices in alignment with species recovery goals.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Drone Technology Herbicide Treatment of Invasive Climbing Fern in Florida

Seventy acres of hardwood swamp wetland in Okeechobee County, Florida, had long been overtaken by invasive climbing fern. The dense fern canopy had raised concerns about increased wildfire risk by smothered native vegetation, while simultaneously diminishing wildlife habitat for deer, Florida panther, bears, and migratory birds. Herbicide treatment followed by prescribed fire was recommended. However, the long period of neglect made hand crew application difficult and helicopter treatment was deemed excessive. Drone technology emerged as the ideal solution, providing a cost-effective and minimally invasive alternative. A licensed drone operator was contracted to carry out the herbicide application. The team first flew a drone to map the area and identify zones of heavy infestation. Using this map, they programmed flight paths for two spray drones, each with an 8-gallon capacity. The drones operated in shifts—while one was airborne, the other was refilled and recharged. Follow-up surveys showed a confirmed treatment success of 90 to 95 percent, indicating high success. Lastly, a contracted prescribed burn cleared the dead vegetation and remaining underbrush, further reducing wildfire risk and improving access for future maintenance.





Drone with 8-gallon tank for herbicide application (top) and post-herbicide treatment prescribed fire (bottom). / IHHRC

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Post-Hurricane Helene Longleaf Pine Restoration Efforts in Georgia

In September 2024, Hurricane Helene traversed 8.9 million acres of Georgia's forestlands with over $1.28 billion of timber losses. Since this devastation, the Georgia Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has collaborated with other southeastern partner programs and landowners to prioritize cleanup and longleaf pine habitat restoration in affected areas. A private landowner in central Georgia partnered with the Georgia PFW Program 16 years ago to plant longleaf pine trees on his property through a cooperative agreement with The Longleaf Alliance. This landowner faced severe property and forest damage from Hurricane Helene and reached out to repair the longleaf pine ecosystem. Restoring hurricane impacted longleaf pine ecosystems throughout the state will continue to be a priority for the Georgia PFW program.









Longleaf pine damage from Hurricane Helene (above) and heavy equipment used to clean the debris (left). / USFWS

FISCAL YEAR 2025

144
PROJECTS

$450K
PFW PROJECT INVESTMENT

$7.83M
PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

$8.28M
TOTAL PROJECT INVESTMENT

$1:17.39
LEVERAGE

29.9
STREAM AND RIVER MILES

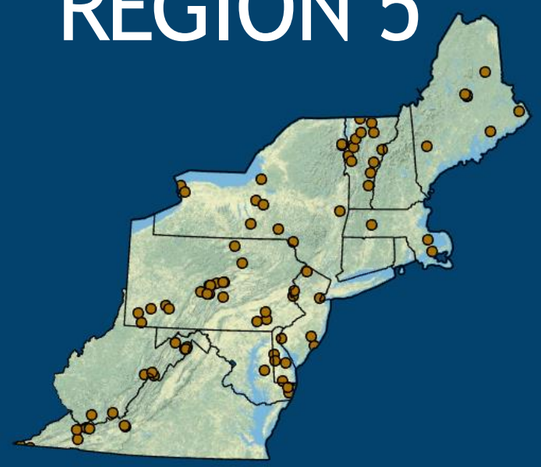
408
UPLAND ACRES

440
WETLAND ACRES

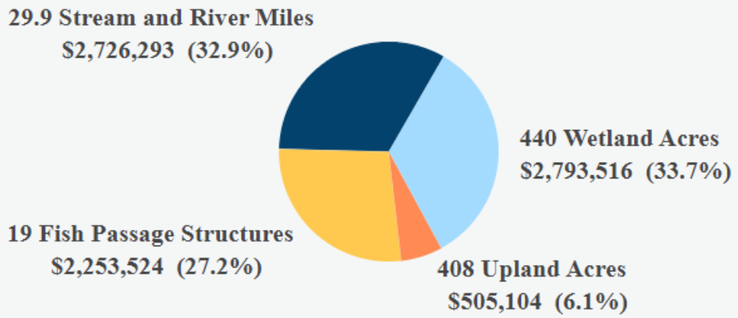
19
FISH PASSAGE STRUCTURES

178
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

REGION 5



Investments by Habitat Type



* Funding includes both program funds and partner contributions

State	Projects	Stream and River Miles	Upland Acres	Wetland Acres
Delaware	5	0	0	54
Maine	8	7.8	80	11
Maryland	6	0	31	116
Massachusetts	3	0	52	0
New Jersey	8	0	63	18
New York	13	0.5	25	10
Pennsylvania	45	10.8	95	24
Vermont	26	8.3	39	175
Virginia	17	2.5	6	0
West Virginia	13	0.03	17	31

Top: Completed 2025 PFW Program project map in Region 5.
Middle: Chart showcasing project investments by habitat type.
Below: Regional state overview.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Salt Marsh Habitat Restoration in Maryland

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program staff and partners completed a 35-acre salt marsh restoration project in Snow Hill, Maryland, approximately 20 miles south of Ocean City. The Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council, Maryland Coastal Bays Program, Sovereign Consulting, the Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office, and the Maryland Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office worked together to design and restore this site in order reestablish tidal connectivity.

This privately-owned parcel in Worcester County, Maryland, is threatened from historic ditching as well as increased storm surge. Restoring this salt marsh improves coastal resiliency, restores habitat for marsh-nesting birds, fish, and shellfish, and rebuilds salt marsh functions through the placement of runnels and channels. Prior research found that installing targeted runnels and channels is a low-tech, low-cost approach to relieve waterlogging and promote revegetation by restoring tidal hydrology. In addition, hummocks provide nesting habitat for birds such as salt marsh sparrow and black rail. Work included excavating 12 new channels/runnels totaling 2,320 linear feet, cleaning out 233 feet of existing tidal platform channels, and restoring up to 257 marsh hummocks.

There are now four sites in the Maryland Coastal Bays Salt Marsh Restoration Initiative led by PFW Program biologists, totaling 90 acres with more planned in the future. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources - Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund Grant, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and other partners provided funding for this project.







Hummocks before revegetation (above left) and after vegetation and grasses have grown (left). Vegetation monitoring (above). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Muddy Creek Stream and Riparian Restoration in Pennsylvania

Muddy Creek is an overlooked and over-farmed trout stream located in Brecknock Township, Lancaster County. A farmer with property along Muddy Creek wanted to improve the stream and knew the eroding stream banks and buffer could be better for deer, trout, turtles and ducks. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program designed the restoration and estimated cost, while the Lancaster County Conservation District proposed the project for Pennsylvania's Growing Greener program for funding. After permitting was completed, construction started with excavator mounted mulching heads and skid loaders with mowers to clear the stream buffer. In-stream work brought back fish habitat by building mudsills (log cribbing), rock and log vanes, and riffles. The landowner worked hand-in-hand with site planning, removing exotic vegetation, restoring the stream, and planting the buffer. This project is a model for the local community as three more landowners have proposed projects on their farms, recognizing how functional their farms can be with healthy streams.



Muddy Creek six months after restoration (above). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Riparian Restoration Technical Assistance and Workshops in Vermont

The Vermont Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program provided technical assistance in a statewide project that benefited over 140 acres of high priority riparian restoration projects. With funding secured by the Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District, the project supported 27 private landowners in their land management goals, improved critical wildlife habitat for at-risk species such as the wood turtle, bolstered the economy through employment of local contractors, and enhanced the water quality and flood resiliency of several stream systems. In addition to the tangible habitat enhancements, PFW Program staff led two workshops at four restoration sites on private lands. Staff shared the results of ongoing monitoring and management strategies that led to improved wildlife habitat, while landowners shared how enrolling sensitive riparian areas in voluntary conservation benefits their land management.





At-risk wood turtle found during restoration (left / USFWS) and PFW staff biologist leading workshop (right / Fritz Gerhardt).

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Fisherman's Park Garden Renovation in Atlantic City, New Jersey





Building the raised flower beds (top) and wildflower meadow after project completion (above). / USFWS

New Jersey's Atlantic coast is both heavily developed and critically important habitat for a variety of wildlife. Migratory birds and pollinators, such as the monarch butterfly, follow the coast on their north and southbound migrations. These species increasingly depend on limited and degraded natural areas essential to rest and feed. Fisherman's Park in Atlantic City was an underutilized open space with no facilities, maintained only by periodic mowing. The non-profit organization Communities Revolutionizing Open Public Space (CROPS) received a grant to renovate a section of the park and establish a community garden. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program worked with CROPS, Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, and other local partners to create a native wildflower meadow, walking path, and install educational signage. The native garden created habitat for wildlife, beautified the park, and connects people with nature.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Katahdin Iron Works Road Culvert Replacements in Maine

The Maine Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program collaborated with numerous partners to replace two deteriorating culverts and restore access to 7.75 miles of upstream habitat for Federally endangered Atlantic salmon, eastern brook trout, and other cold water dependent fish. The two culvert replacements are located on the Katahdin Iron Works Road, which rural residents rely on, is a critical access point for the timber industry moving forest products out of the vast North Maine Woods region, and is as a major throughfare for outdoor recreation as it provides a gateway to vast hunting opportunities, backcountry camping, and the Appalachian Trail. Before restoration, these undersized culverts suffered damage in storms, causing closures on the road, preventing emergency service transport, forcing delays to forest product trucking, and substantial detours for outdoor enthusiasts. These culverts were replaced with open-bottom bridges whose stream beds mimic the natural stream bed topography. These larger structures with natural stream beds allow increased fish passage and greatly reduce the likelihood of road floodings.





Bog Brook culvert before (top) and after replacement (above). / USFWS

FISCAL YEAR 2025

477
PROJECTS

$788K
PFW PROJECT INVESTMENT

$13.20M
PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

$13.99M
TOTAL PROJECT INVESTMENT

$1:16.74
LEVERAGE

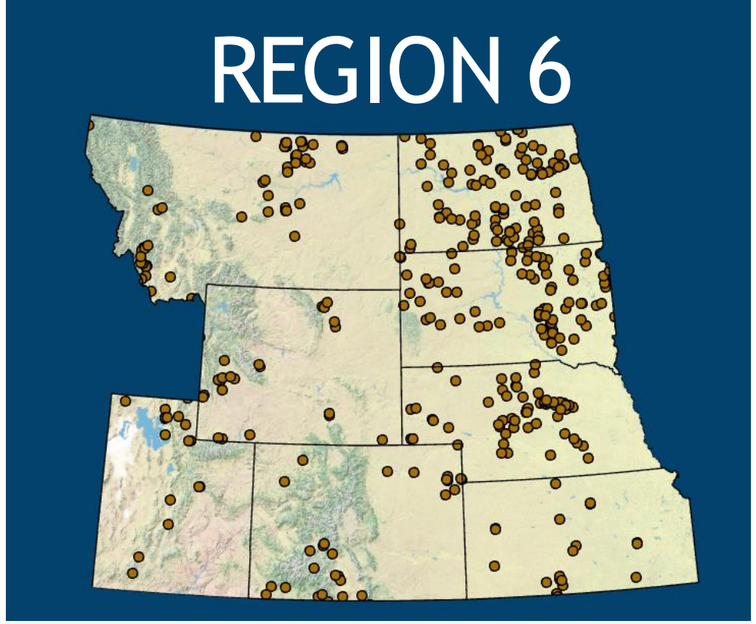
113.6
STREAM AND RIVER MILES

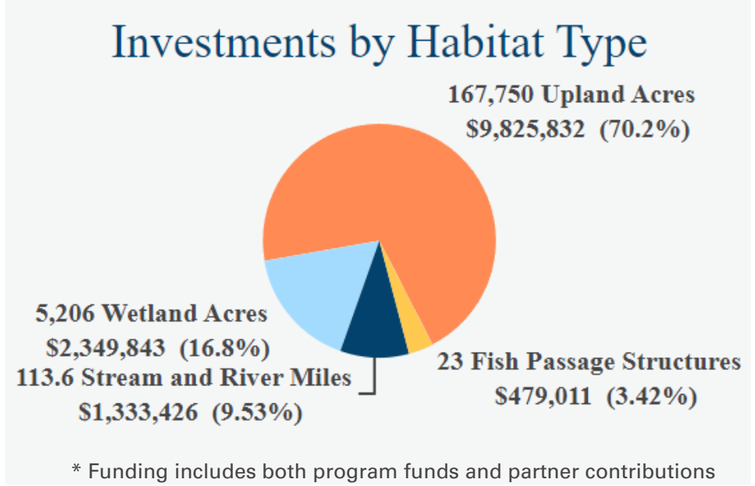
167,750
UPLAND ACRES

5,206
WETLAND ACRES

23
FISH PASSAGE STRUCTURES

138
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES





* Funding includes both program funds and partner contributions

State	Projects	Stream and River Miles	Upland Acres	Wetland Acres
Colorado	35	2.3	3,490	486
Kansas	34	43.4	10,437	688
Montana	67	58.1	22,503	568
Nebraska	74	0	56,917	83
North Dakota	145	0	33,941	2,252
South Dakota	95	0	25,485	939
Utah	13	8.8	1,310	133
Wyoming	14	1	13,667	58

Top: Completed 2025 PFW Program project map in Region 6.
Middle: Chart showcasing project investments by habitat type.
Below: Regional state overview.



Morning briefing with partners before heading out to begin ignition operations (top left). Meeting area on the mountain prior to breaking off to specific assignments (top right). Burn boss watching over the prescribed fire from the landowners porch (bottom left). Smoke filters uphill as a low intensity burn slowly moves through the sage, juniper, and mountain brush community (bottom right). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Building a Fire-Resilient Landscape in Utah

In the heart of central Utah, the San Pitch Mountain Collaborative is a multi-year initiative aimed at enhancing landscape resilience against large-scale wildfires while improving watershed health for people, wildlife, and livestock. This extraordinary effort has united a broad coalition of stakeholders, including the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, private landowners, county governments, state and federal agencies, and sportsmen groups.

Spanning 16,000 acres in the San Pitch Mountains, the project focuses on reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire by reducing fuel loads and restoring habitat in sagebrush and mountain brush communities. Pinyon pine and juniper trees were mechanically removed from sagebrush communities using chainsaws and machinery. Smaller woody fuels were reduced using prescribed fire in mountain brush and high-elevation aspen/conifer communities, and herbaceous vegetation were seeded to stabilize soil and create high quality habitat.

The collaborative has achieved significant progress. Six thousand acres of pinyon pine and juniper have been mechanically removed on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, with slightly less on private and state lands. The prescribed fire area encompasses about 10,000 acres of mostly private land interspersed with BLM and state parcels.

The cooperative spirit of the San Pitch Mountain Collaborative extends beyond planning and execution. Landowners are making significant financial and in-kind contributions to the project. Notably, one landowner donated time and equipment to conduct aerial seedings, while others have provided essential heavy equipment support. These contributions are paired with innovative approaches, such as virtual fencing, to allow ranchers to exclude livestock grazing from recently burned or seeded areas so the vegetation can recover.

The San Pitch Mountain Collaborative exemplifies what can be achieved when a broad range of stakeholders unite around a common vision. As the project nears completion, it sets a strong precedent for future conservation efforts, showcasing effective collaboration in addressing wildfire risks.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Prescribed Burn Associations Technical Assistance in Kansas

Working in cooperation with conservation partners, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program staff in Kansas integrates prescribed fire which promotes regeneration of native grasses and forbs, benefiting grassland-obligate wildlife and livestock forage. Fire also controls woody plant encroachment such as eastern red cedar, which can outcompete native grasses and reduce forage for livestock. Western Kansas counties are building capacity for prescribed fire through organizations known as Prescribed Burn Associations (PBAs). These associations are typically grassroots, community-based organizations that help landowners safely and effectively conduct prescribed burns on their property. When possible, PFW Program staff in Kansas coordinate prescribed fire delivery with a landowner through a PBA. These associations offer collaboration, networking opportunities, resource sharing, education, training, and a culture of shared responsibility, facilitating the safe execution of prescribed burns. In Kansas, PBAs are not just about fire—they're about community, conservation, and continuity.



Mature eastern red cedar burning during a PBA prescribed fire (above). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Wyoming Toad Conservation: Partnership Restores Critical Habitat

Once common in the wetlands and rivers of southeastern Wyoming, the Wyoming toad is now one of the most endangered amphibians in North America. Endemic to the Laramie Basin, the species is making a gradual comeback thanks to a strong network of public and private partners and leadership from Wyoming's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. The PFW Program played a key role in establishing the Wyoming Toad Conservation Area (WTCA). The WTCA protects more than 3,000 acres of critical wetland habitat essential for the species' breeding and recovery. The PFW Program is leading continued habitat improvement efforts by strengthening partnerships with neighboring landowners, resulting in improved water delivery through irrigation infrastructure enhancements. These actions support wetland function while aligning with local agricultural operations. Through continued partnership and shared stewardship, the WTCA is strengthening habitat not only for the Wyoming toad, but for a suite of aquatic and terrestrial species that depend on this wetland landscape.





Wyoming toad (top) and PFW Program biologist with partner posing in front of the newly established Wyoming Toad Conservation Area (bottom). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: How One Rancher is Building a Legacy for Wildlife and Family in North Dakota

A landowner in western North Dakota lives on a ranch that his grandparents bought from a former state governor 100 years ago. As a young man, the landowner helped raise sheep on the ranch and remembers installing miles of woven wire fencing to keep the flocks in place. Those fences stood for decades, long after the ranch's sheep business ended. The landowner wanted to update the fence and implement a grazing system that improves habitat for deer, birds, and pollinators while protecting the riparian corridor and upland vegetation. To make it happen, the landowner teamed up with the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the Mule Deer Foundation, North Dakota Petroleum Foundation, and North Dakota Natural Resources Trust. Together, they brought in equipment, tore down, and hauled away a mile of old woven wire. Wildlife-friendly fencing replaced the old fence with a design that included smooth bottom wires without barbs and wider spacing of top wires to allow deer and other species to move freely under or over the fence as they move between pastures. Since the improvements, the landowner is seeing more vegetation, more wildlife, and a healthier landscape to keep the ranch thriving for generations to come.





Updated wildlife-friendly fencing (left) and volunteers pose after the day of fencing removal (right). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Grassland Restoration and Fuels Reduction in Nebraska

Stretching over 19,600 square miles, the Nebraska Sandhills are a vast formation of grass stabilized sand dunes in north-central Nebraska, identified as the most intact grassland ecosystem remaining in the world. However, the ecosystem is under threat from woody plant encroachment—particularly from eastern red cedar trees which reduce the quality and quantity of habitat for wildlife and increases the wildfire risk. To reverse this trend, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program collaborated with a local rancher and multiple conservation partners to improve native grassland habitat. The project involved mechanically removing all eastern red cedar trees across nearly 57,000 acres of privately-owned ranchland adjacent to Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, where similar restoration efforts were recently completed, resulting in a combined 130,000 acres of continuous restored native grassland. The result is a more resilient landscape that supports wildlife, improves the quality and quantity of forage for livestock, and significantly reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfires.





Encroaching eastern red cedar before planned removal (above) and after cut and piled, but before the prescribed burning of the piles (below). / USFWS

FISCAL YEAR 2025

26
PROJECTS

$130K
PFW PROJECT INVESTMENT

$288K
PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

$418K
TOTAL PROJECT INVESTMENT

$1:2.22
LEVERAGE

2.1
STREAM AND RIVER MILES

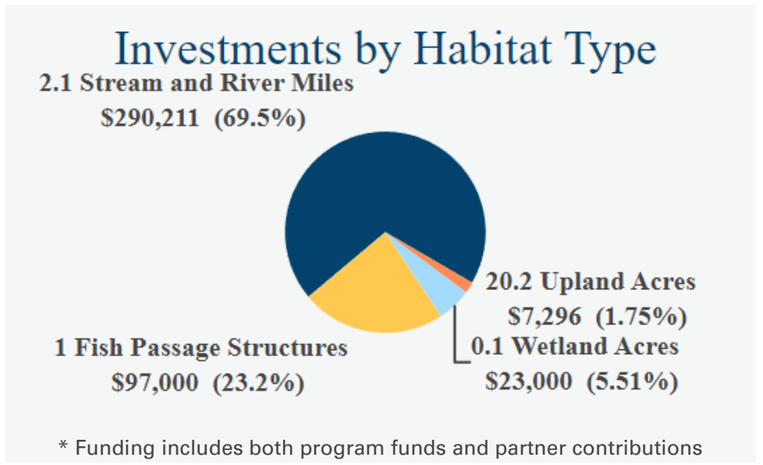
20.2
UPLAND ACRES

0.1
WETLAND ACRES

1
FISH PASSAGE STRUCTURES

REGION 7





* Funding includes both program funds and partner contributions

Top: Completed 2025 PFW Program projects Alaska map.
Below: Chart showcasing project investments by habitat type.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Hendrickson Creek Fish Passage Improvements

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program partnered with a private landowner, the Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition (SAWC), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to replace a driveway culvert presenting a fish passage barrier on Hendrickson Creek near Juneau, Alaska.

An abundance of Pacific Salmon and persistent annual rainfalls give this region the nickname the “Salmon Forest”. These rain events have been growing in intensity in recent years causing issues for both fish and infrastructure. In 2020, a large rain event washed out and severely damaged the double culverts at this landowner’s driveway. They were reinstalled to restore access, however, the undersized emergency repair culverts were perched and created water velocity barriers to salmon and native trout populations.

After forming a relationship with the landowner, SAWC, PFW Program, and NRCS partnered to find a solution. The group contracted a local engineering firm to design a new culvert that would restore ecological function, improve infrastructure resilience to intense flood flows, and provide the landowners with reliable access to their home. PFW Program financial and technical assistance guided the design work to ensure consistency with the Alaska Region Fish Passage Design Guidelines.

NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program funded the installation of the new 15’4” X 6’5” aluminum arch culvert. PFW and NRCS biologists and engineers were on site during construction to ensure adherence to ecological function design criteria and achieve a successful project outcome. The installed culvert now freely passes Coho, Pink, and Chum Salmon, Dolly Varden Char, and Coastal Cutthroat Trout; it is also capable of accommodating high water flow events.

This project highlights the PFW Program-NRCS partnership in Alaska and demonstrates the productive relationship between Federal and non-profit organizations who are working together in Alaska to leverage their collective capacities to improve infrastructure resilience, fisheries resources, and healthy stream systems.



The culvert on Hendrickson Creek before and after replacement (above). / USFWS

FISCAL YEAR 2025

71
PROJECTS

$4.51M
PFW PROJECT INVESTMENT

$3.59M
PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

$8.09M
TOTAL PROJECT INVESTMENT

$1:0.80
LEVERAGE

13.4
STREAM AND RIVER MILES

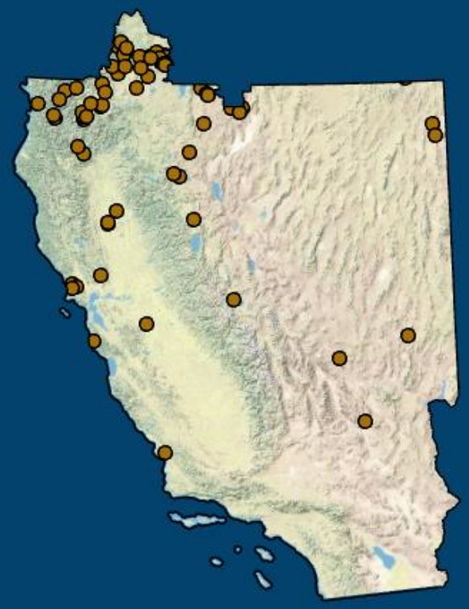
1,977
UPLAND ACRES

2,337
WETLAND ACRES

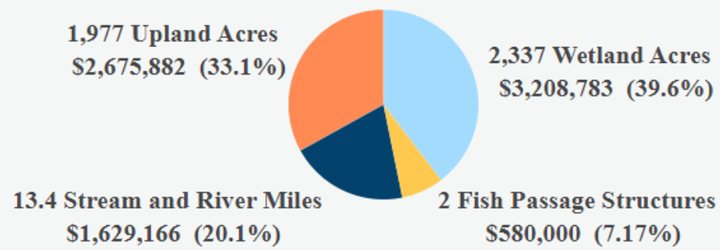
2
FISH PASSAGE STRUCTURES

221
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

REGION 8



Investments by Habitat Type



* Funding includes both program funds and partner contributions

State	Projects	Stream and River Miles	Upland Acres	Wetland Acres
California	12	0	266	481
Klamath	49	13.3	883	1,726
Nevada	10	0.1	828	130

Top: Completed 2025 PFW Program project map in Region 8.
Middle: Chart showcasing project investments by habitat type.
Below: Regional state overview.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Revitalizing Jamison Meadow for Wildlife and Working Lands in the Klamath Basin

Jack Creek is a tributary to the Upper Williamson River that flows through the Klamath Marsh National Wildlife Refuge. Upstream of the Refuge, this project restored approximately 1.2 river miles and 75 acres of wetland habitat in the Jamison Meadow area of Jack Creek. The landowners were facing declining agricultural productivity of their property due to channel incision of the creek and declining shallow groundwater tables. The degradation of this portion of Jamison Meadow has had a negative effect on the breeding population of the federally endangered Oregon Spotted Frogs which represents some of the highest elevation habitat for this species.

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and restoration partners installed 10 Beaver Dam Analogs (BDAs) in Jack Creek, designed to slow water movement, increase water on the floodplain and promote sediment accumulation. Extensive willow plantings were completed to increase plant diversity in the meadow and to stabilize the creek banks. The combination of the BDAs and willow planting may promote future beaver population establishment within the Jack Creek watershed.



Beaver Dam Analog structure (above). / USFWS

The results from installation of the BDAs increased presence of water in this formally wet meadow beyond expectations. The previous winter was considered a high precipitation year, and the pooling of water behind the dams pushed water out of the incised channel in a deltaic fashion spreading water across the meadow as it may have had historically during high run off years.





This project was a large collaboration with the landowner, the PFW Program, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Klamath Watershed Partnership, the U.S. Geological Survey, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, U.S. Forest Service, and the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Fire Management Zone. The collaboration of these partners to restore this portion of Lower Jamison Meadow is a true testament of how working together we can enhance agricultural sustainability for producers while simultaneously enhancing habitat for endangered wildlife.

Lower Jamison Meadow before (above left) and after habitat restoration efforts (left). / Anabranch Solutions

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Build it Like a Beaver Training in California



PFW biologist instructing workshop attendees during the Build it Like a Beaver Training (above). / USFWS

Nearly 75 restoration professionals, researchers, and landowners gathered for the third annual “Build it Like a Beaver” training. The four-day event consisted of beaver-focused field tours, discussions, and hands-on building activities. Several Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program biologists have been involved with this effort since inception, providing instruction as well as logistical and financial support. The event began as a small gathering of interested restoration minded partners and has steadily grown into a highly anticipated training. The event is commonly booked full of conservationists from other agencies (federal and state), tribal members, non-profits, contractors and private landowners, eager to learn process-based restoration techniques from leading experts.

Restorationists from all over California and Southern Oregon took part in this event. Low-tech restoration techniques taught at this workshop are becoming an excellent option to higher cost, heavily engineered type restoration practices. Process based restoration activities have been quickly deployed to stabilize streams and waterways in areas of recent catastrophic fire. These practices often require less permitting and can be completed in a shorter time frame.

Restoration of Sierra Nevada mountain meadows and their associated streams can increase water holding capacity, prevent erosion and sedimentation. Downstream users such as agriculture and municipalities benefit from the prolonged run-off and increased hydroperiod to intermittent and perennial streams. These effects can also benefit recreational opportunities for fishing and hunting by improving riparian habitat and reliable water flows for trout and salmon.





Workshop attendees building Beaver Dam Analogs (BDAs) (bottom left and right). / USFWS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Sagebrush Restoration in Northeast Nevada

The sagebrush biome is a vast region that is losing over a million acres per year due to varying factors including conifer encroachment. Encroachment is characterized by trees, oftentimes native, expanding into sagebrush shrublands and grasslands which impacts wildlife habitat, water availability, fire resilience, and forage productivity. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in Nevada has been working with our partners to address these threats across the landscape. Considerable restoration efforts on both private and public lands have been completed over the past decade to restore or enhance sage-steppe habitats that are critical to mule deer and other wildlife species including sage sparrow, Brewer’s sparrow, and pinyon jay.

The PFW Program coordinates closely with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) to identify and implement habitat restoration projects that meet objectives for fish and wildlife species, including priority big game migratory and winter range habitat. In one of the focus areas of Nevada's Action Plan for big game, pinyon-juniper encroachment is identified as one of the three major threats to the mule deer population.

As part of ongoing efforts, a PFW biologist in Elko worked collaboratively with NDOW and a livestock grazing operation to complete 150 acres of juniper removal on private rangelands in a big game priority area. The project area was directly adjacent to a recently completed 3,000-acre juniper removal project and built off these restoration efforts accomplished by NDOW. Removing juniper in the early encroachment stage is the most economically feasible approach to addressing this threat because 1) smaller diameter trees are easier to cut and dispose of and 2) reseeding efforts for preferred mule deer forage species will likely not be required if they have persisted in areas of lower density trees.

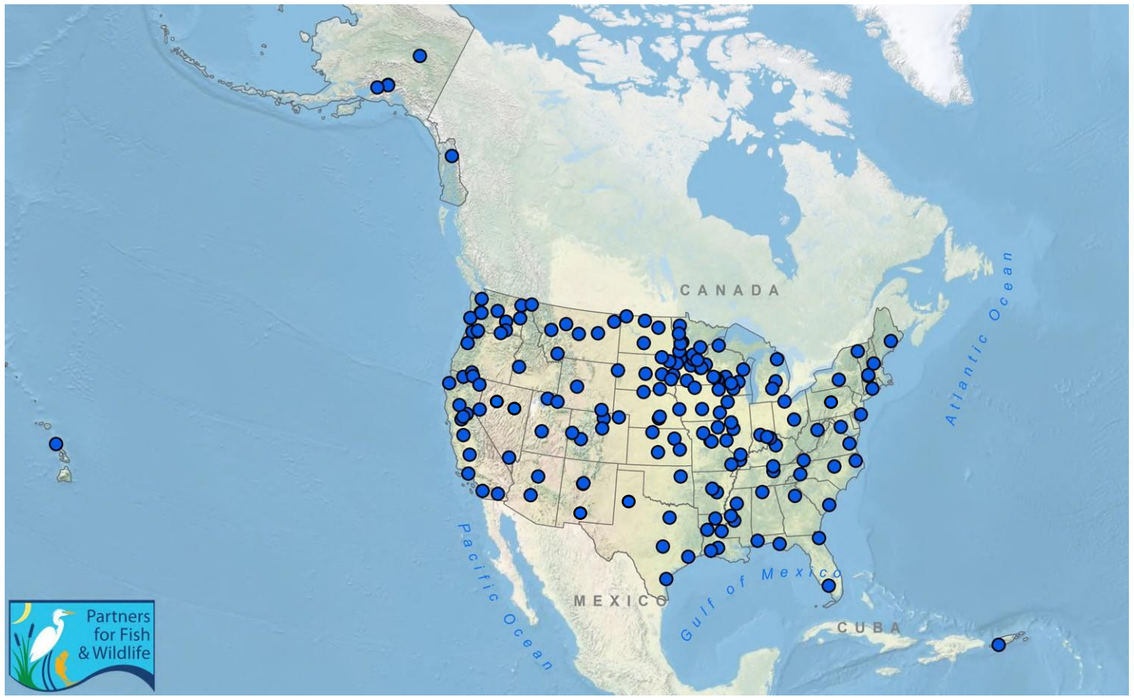






Landscape view of encroaching conifers prior to project implementation (above right). Conifers are cut and scattered to increase exposure of understory shrubs and herbaceous vegetation (left) and a cut and piled juniper post implementation (right). / USFWS

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Restored wetland with healthy native plant species at sunset in Minnesota (above). / USFWS

Front cover photos (L-R): Prescribed Fire in the Bear Creek Natural Area in Washington. / USFWS
PFW Program staff and partners pose in front of installed bat box in Florida. / USFWS
PFW Program staff assessing native vegetation growth in Hawaii. / USFWS
FWS staff removing invasive plants by hand in Vermont. / USFWS
Euchee Butterfly Farm Director and PFW Program Coordinator posing with PFW Program Cooperative sign in Oklahoma. / USFWS
Removal of invasive Russian olive using heavy machinery in Nevada. / USFWS
Wetland construction using heavy machinery in Wisconsin. / USFWS
PFW Program staff identifying Karner blue butterfly habitat in Wisconsin. / USFWS
Peperomia planting in Puerto Rico. / USFWS



Partners for Fish & Wildlife

http://www.fws.gov/partners

January 2026