

What if my land is within the conservation partnership area and I do not want to sell?

You maintain every right to your land, including the right to sell your land to whomever you choose. It is the policy of the Service to purchase lands only from willing sellers. Having land within the conservation partnership area does not require you to sell your property to the Service.

If I want to sell my land or otherwise make it part of Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge, what options do I have?

The Service acquires interest in lands in a variety of ways, including fee title purchase, donation, lease, and conservation easement.

How would the Service acquire funds to purchase refuge land?

The Service anticipates that funding for this project would be provided through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The LWCF includes monies collected from the sale of offshore oil leases. It's the principal source of funding for land acquisition for the purpose of outdoor recreation by the Fish & Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Forest Service.

Who is leading this effort?

The Fish and Wildlife Service is leading this effort and is coordinating with multiple partners. For many years, numerous agencies, organizations, and landowners have sought to conserve this rare habitat. Portions of several of the bog sites are already protected by a variety of organizations. The creation of this refuge would protect additional bog acreage and bring the management of many of these sites under a single entity, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

If the refuge is created, will I be able to hunt, fish, hike and bird watch on lands acquired?

Most likely. The Service gives priority consideration to six wildlife-dependent public uses on National Wildlife Refuges: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation.



Service botanist Carolyn Wells taking a compass bearing during a bog plant inventory, credit USFWS/Gary Peeples.

If these uses are determined to be compatible with refuge purposes, and funds are available to manage them, they would be allowed within the proposed refuge. During the planning process, lands proposed for acquisition would be evaluated for the priority recreational uses. Some areas could be open to all six uses, while few or no uses might be allowed on other areas of the refuge.

Would I be allowed the same recreational opportunities on any privately-owned lands in the refuge?

Landowners who choose to sell their development rights would retain many other ownership rights. They would not be required to allow public use activities on their property.

How would conservation easements be managed?

Local landowners who choose to participate in the conservation easement program would work with refuge staff to develop the terms of the conservation easement agreement.

How would tax revenues be affected if lands become part of the National Wildlife Refuge system?

While it's true that lands acquired by the Service are removed from the tax rolls, the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act (Public Law 95-469), allows us to offset the tax losses by annually paying the county or other local government an amount that often equals or exceeds that which would have been collected from taxes if the land was in private ownership.

This law requires that the revenue sharing payments to the counties for our purchased land will be based on the greatest of:

- ¾ of 1% of the fair market value;
- 25% of the receipts collected in connection with the operation and management of the refuge;
- \$0.75 cents per acre.

Funding for the payments comes from income generated on national wildlife refuges. If there is not enough revenue, Congress is authorized to appropriate money to make up the difference. Service lands are reappraised every five years to ensure that payments to local governments remain equitable. On lands where the Service acquires only partial interest through easement, all taxes would remain the responsibility of the individual owner.

Schedule for the Proposed Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge
Summer, 2012 - Develop draft Land Protection Plan and environmental review documents

Fall/winter, 2012 - Conduct public review of draft Land Protection Plan and environmental review documents

Winter, 2012 - Develop final documents for approval

For more information and to submit questions and concerns
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Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge Proposal

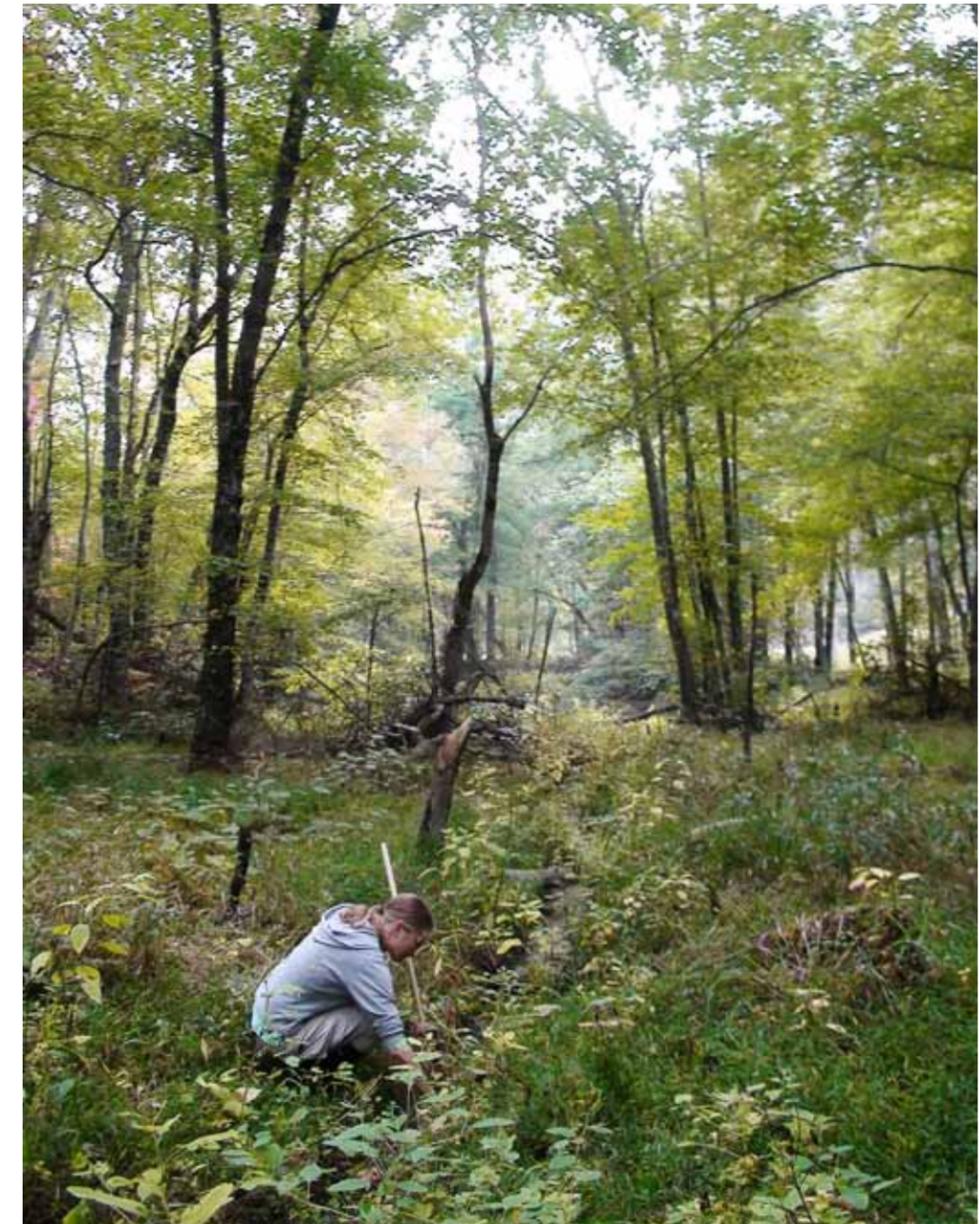
The Proposal

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes to protect Southern Appalachian Mountain bogs, one of the nation's rarest and most imperiled plant and wildlife habitats, through the creation of the Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge.

This follows years of effort to conserve these areas on the part of the Service, other conservation organizations, and individual citizens. The proposed refuge would eventually include up to 23,478 acres scattered across as many as 30 sites in Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Clay, Graham, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Transylvania, Wilkes, and Watauga counties, North Carolina; and Carter and Johnson counties, Tennessee.

The proposed Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge has numerous goals:

- Protect some of the last remaining examples of Southern Appalachian bogs.
- Conserve habitat for migratory birds, including several of conservation importance, such as golden-winged warbler, Swainson's warbler, and yellow-bellied sapsucker.
- Protect habitat for multiple federally threatened and endangered species. These include the mountain sweet pitcher plant, green pitcher plant, bunched arrowhead, swamp pink, and North America's smallest turtle, the bog turtle. Protecting the habitat of these plants and animals would be an important step in preventing their extinction.



North Carolina Natural Heritage Program biologist Angie Rodgers helps inventory bog animals, credit USFWS/Gary Peeples.

- Protect breeding and migration habitat for the American woodcock, a game bird which has seen dramatic declines in recent years.
- Where compatible, provide increased opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, education, and interpretation on land now generally closed to the public.

A Unique Place

Mountain bogs are among the rarest and most imperiled habitats in the United States. They're typically small and widely scattered across the landscape, often isolated from other wetlands.

These areas are recognized hotspots for biodiversity and contain numerous rare and declining plant and animal species. Seventeen bog species are either federally listed under the Endangered Species Act or are species of conservation concern. Additionally mountain bogs offer essential feeding, wintering and nesting habitat for numerous migratory bird species of national or regional conservation concern.

Bogs provide food and shelter for many important game species, including furbearers such as mink, muskrat, raccoon, and beaver, and game birds such as rails, woodcock, ruffed grouse, turkey, and wood duck. In the winter, when plants in drier areas have withered, these mountain wetlands are a source of food for turkey and grouse. Bogs are breeding habitat for many species of amphibians, especially salamanders, for which the Southern Appalachians have the greatest diversity in the nation.

In addition to providing specialized habitat, bogs provide important services to humans and animals downstream. Bogs possess a natural capacity for regulating water flow, holding floodwaters like giant sponges then slowly releasing the water to minimize the effects of droughts and floods. Mountain wetlands play an important role in many aquatic food chains, and contribute to the productivity and good water quality needed by downstream fishes, including native brook trout.

Bogs are usually found on fairly flat terrain where water has pooled at or near the surface. Water sources for bogs, which can originate at considerable distances from the actual bogs, must be protected in order to preserve the well-being of the bog as many bog plants and animals are sensitive to water quality and flow patterns. For example, sphagnum or peat moss is exceptionally nutrient sensitive and can be destroyed by excessive nutrient runoff in the form of fertilizer or livestock excrement. Because sphagnum acts as a living sponge - maintaining stable water levels and forming the peat other plants grow on - it's a key species in mountain bogs.

The Public and Mountain Bogs Today

Bogs have long been recognized for their biological importance and numerous organizations have sought to protect these lands. Some are privately owned by conservation organizations. Some are owned by state and federal agencies, including sites purchased to mitigate for wetland impacts elsewhere. However, the vast majority of mountain bog sites are owned by private individuals, some of whom have already expressed an interest in protection efforts.



Bog turtle, credit USFWS/Gary Peeples

The Service will work with communities and willing landowners to determine which sites would be part of the refuge. Including these lands in the National Wildlife Refuge system would help ensure their protection, both as a place where rare plants and animals could thrive, but also as a place where the public could enjoy the wildlife of Western North Carolina, including hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching.

Frequently Asked Questions

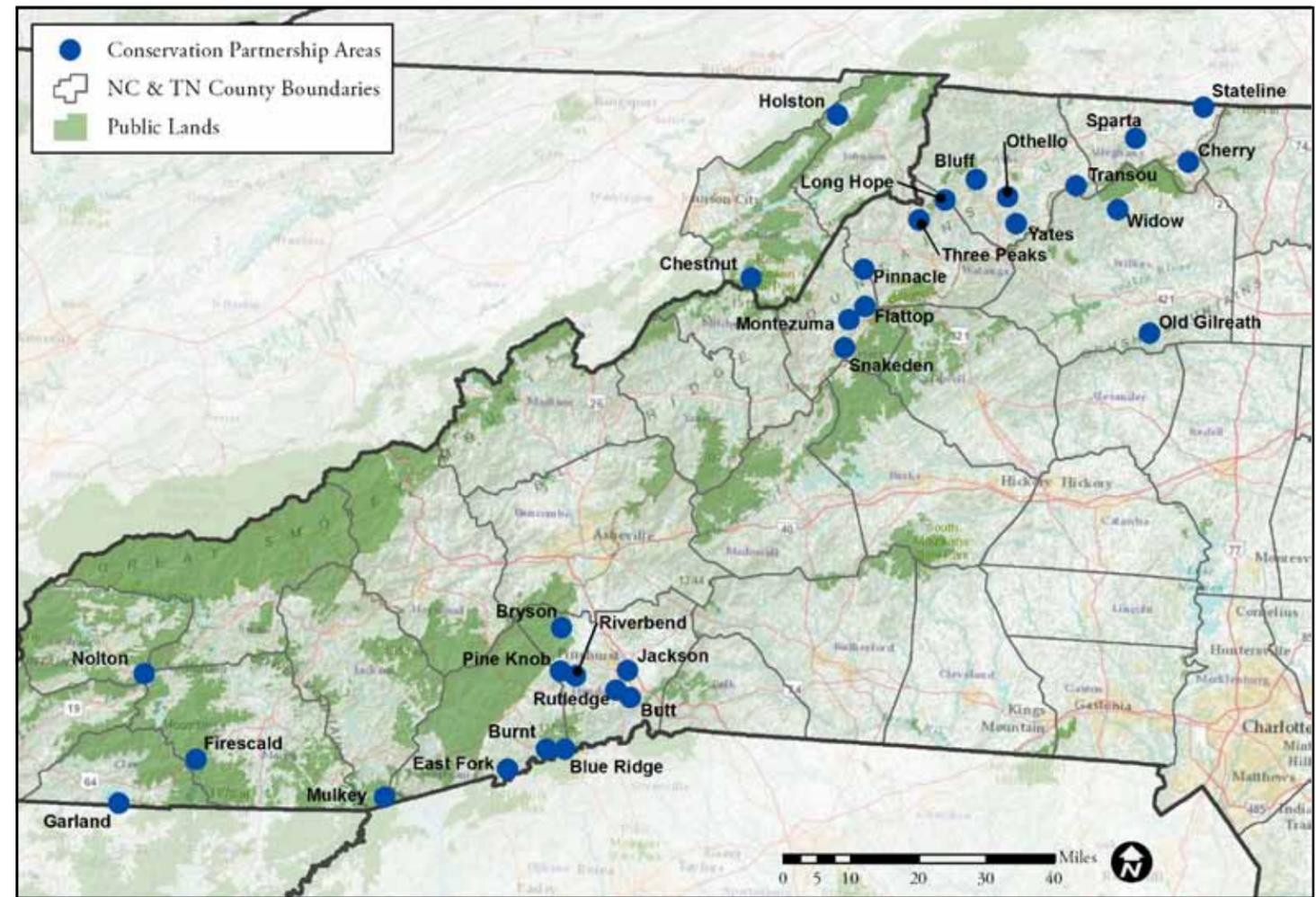
What is a National Wildlife Refuge?

National wildlife refuges are areas of land and water set aside for fish, wildlife, and plant conservation, and managed by or in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Collectively, refuges across the nation comprise the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's premier system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve fish, wildlife and plants. Since President Theodore Roosevelt designated Florida's Pelican Island as the first wildlife refuge in 1903, the System has grown to more than 150 million acres, 553 national wildlife refuges and other units of the Refuge System, plus 38 wetland management districts.

What is the proposed Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge?

The Service proposes establishing a National Wildlife Refuge on up to 23,478 acres scattered across 11 counties in western North Carolina and two counties in eastern Tennessee. The purpose of the

Proposed Mountain Bog National Wildlife Refuge Conservation Partnership Areas



proposed refuge is to protect Southern Appalachian bogs, one of the rarest natural communities in the nation, and the plants and animals found there, including migratory birds, several threatened and endangered species, and game animals.

How would a refuge be created?

The Service would work with communities and willing landowners to establish the proposed refuge through several methods, including fee simple



North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission biologist Gabrielle Graeter weighing a bog turtle, credit USFWS/Gary Peeples

purchases, conservation easements, leases, lands set aside through habitat conservation plans, and/or cooperative agreements with landowners. The planning target is to work with partners and willing landowners to protect up to 23,478 acres for the refuge.

What areas is the Service considering?

The Service has identified 30 potential areas that could be incorporated into the refuge. We've identified these as conservation partnership areas and they consist of bogs and adjacent lands.

What is a Conservation Partnership Area (CPA)?

Conservation Partnership Areas are the places where we'll focus efforts to protect bogs. These are the areas where we'll work with willing landowners to acquire land for the proposed refuge, but we'll also pursue other conservation opportunities such as purchasing conservation easements, leasing land, entering management partnerships, and providing technical assistance to private landowners.



Mountain sweet pitcher plant flower, credit USFWS/Gary Peeples

Having land in the Conservation Partnership Area does not give the Service any special jurisdiction or control over these lands. Lands become part of the National Wildlife Refuge System when they are purchased from willing sellers or placed under agreements with willing landowners. Landowners who choose not to have their land become part of the refuge continue owning and managing their lands, with all associated rights and responsibilities.



Service biologist Sue Cameron walks through a bog searching for reptiles and amphibians, credit USFWS/Gary Peeples