

Charleston

Ecological Services Field Office



photo: L. Duncan



photo: Ed Endaly



photo: Bruce Richardson



photo: USFWS

Photos (top to bottom)

Endangered wood stork.

Coastal ecosystem habitat.

South Carolina focus area partnership.

Endangered red cockaded woodpecker.

Station Facts

- Established: 1973.
- Staff: 15.

Station Goals

- Conserve biodiversity of the South Carolina Coastal Plain by perpetuating healthy, dynamic coastal ecosystems.
- Promote landscape scale and ecosystem planning efforts to conserve and restore fish and wildlife habitats in South Carolina and the associated Savannah-Santee-Pee Dee Ecosystem.
- Conduct interagency consultation, habitat conservation planning activities, candidate conservation, listing and recovery activities for 33 federally listed endangered, threatened, and proposed species, three candidate species, and 94 species of concern in South Carolina.
- Reduce impacts to fish and wildlife and their habitats in South Carolina from federally funded or authorized projects.
- Restore and improve fish and wildlife habitat on private lands.
- Identify, reduce, and prevent contamination of fish and wildlife resources through technical assistance, investigations, monitoring, and technical reviews of environmental contaminant issues.
- Conduct education and outreach activities in support of fish and wildlife conservation.

Services Provided To

- Private citizens.
- Community groups, local governments, and schools.
- Partners associated with the Lowcountry Focus Area Initiative, Land Trusts, and other conservation easement holders.
- Federal and state agencies seeking approval on federally funded activities that may impact federally listed species, wetlands, migratory birds, anadromous fish, and other trust resources.

Activity Highlights

- Review of over 500 federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects annually for potential impacts to wetlands, endangered species, and other fish and wildlife.
- Coordinate habitat conservation planning efforts in S.C. with private landowners, State agencies, and with the Service's Regional Office.
- Serve as the base-of-operations for the Service's S.C. Coastal Ecosystems program.
- Provide technical assistance to U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies in the implementation of conservation provisions of Farm Bill.
- Provide technical assistance to EPA and South Carolina on investigation and cleanup of contaminant sites.
- Coordinate national recovery efforts on three Federally listed species.

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Questions and Answers

Does the Endangered Species Act stop development?

The Charleston Field office reviews more than 500 projects each year, none of which have been stopped. However, recommendations have been made on some projects to avoid and minimize impacts to federally listed and proposed species and wetlands resources. The Endangered Species Act provides flexible tools (e.g., habitat conservation planning, inter-agency consultations) so that solutions can be found to allow projects to proceed while protecting the species.

What are the Service's Trust Resources?

Trust Resources under the management jurisdiction of the Fish and Wildlife Service are anadromous fish, migratory birds, endangered and threatened species, their habitats and Service lands (primarily national wildlife refuges).

What is the SC Coastal Ecosystems Program?

The South Carolina Coastal Ecosystems Program, established in 1995, is one of 11 Coastal Programs the Service has initiated nationwide. The goal of the program is to conserve biodiversity by perpetuating healthy, dynamic, coastal ecosystems. Its intent is to develop and implement ecosystem based policies and actions in partnerships with Federal, state and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

In South Carolina, the program works closely with partners in the five major coastal Focus Areas to maintain natural ecosystem diversity, functions and productivity. The primary tool to carry out this focused area approach to ecosystem protection is the placement of voluntary conservation easements. These voluntary easements can lead to conservation of a mixture of upland and wetland habitats that would otherwise be difficult to protect. Because public lands are expensive to acquire and maintain, these efforts of private land owners are a cost effective way to conserve habitat.

Why is it important to protect wetlands?

Wetlands provide a number of public benefit functions including provision of valuable fish and wildlife habitat including habitat for many federally listed species, enhancement of water quality through filtration and purification of river overflow waters and stormwater runoff, flood protection through storage and slow release of floodwaters and stream stabilization. They also are important producers of timber products and foodstuffs which fuel the aquatic food web. Approximately 37 percent of South Carolina's wetland resources have been lost since colonial times.

Why is the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) considered an endangered species when it is so widespread?

The RCW lives in mature pine forests, usually those with long-leaf pines more than 80 years old and loblolly pine more than 70 years old. It is currently distributed on the remaining fragmented parcels of suitable pine forests in 13 southeastern states. About 4,500 family units of RCWs are estimated to occur in this range, representing about one percent of the woodpecker's original range. The RCW is one of numerous federally listed, proposed, and candidate species associated with the longleaf pine ecosystem. However, more than 98 percent of presettlement longleaf pine forests in the southeastern coastal plain have been lost. There is still hope for the RCW and the associated ecosystem, with continuing cooperative efforts. In fact, some populations of RCWs are now stable or increasing and habitat is being restored.