



United States Department of the Interior  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge  
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PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

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**Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge established in southern Maine**  
*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchases 48 acres in South Berwick and Berwick*

**January 11, 2021**

**Wells, Maine**– The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) acquired the first parcel of land in Maine for the Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) with the purchase of a 48-acre forested property in South Berwick and Berwick.

“We’re really excited to add another conservation area in southern Maine,” said Karl Stromayer, manager of Rachel Carson NWR and Great Thicket NWR in Maine. “Through Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge, we’re conserving important habitat that will ensure current and future generations can experience the rich variety of animals and plants that call these special places home.”

The property, acquired on December 28, 2020, slopes down to Knights Pond and contains a wooded swamp and streams, providing a diversity of habitats for local wildlife. The Great Works Regional Land Trust, which has conserved over 6,600 acres in southern Maine, helped the Service with the land acquisition.

“This success involved the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a newly established refuge and the local land trust,” said board



*New England Cottontail, Cape Elizabeth, ME  
Photo courtesy of John Greene*

member Tin Smith. “It could not have happened any other way and is a clear demonstration of the benefits of partnerships.”

Great Thicket NWR was established in 2017 to manage and protect young forest and shrubland habitat for the New England cottontail rabbit, ruffed grouse, American woodcock, monarch butterfly, box turtle, and other species that depend on young forest and shrubland. The Service hopes to conserve 15,000 acres in 10 focus areas across six states through sales and donations of land from willing sellers or donors. There are two refuge-acquisition focus areas in Maine, the Berwick-York focus area and the Cape Elizabeth-Scarborough focus area.

The Great Thicket NWR is part of a larger landscape effort with state wildlife agencies and other partners in Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York, and Rhode Island to protect and manage lands for young forest and shrubland habitat and species. Wildlife-dependent recreation, including wildlife observation, nature interpretation and hunting and fishing, are allowed on these lands when compatible with the refuge purposes. The Land and Water Conservation Fund will be a principal source of funding for such acquisitions.



*Old field habitat suitable for New England cottontail at Libby Field/Scarborough, ME, Kelly Boland/USFWS*

The property is now part of the nation’s National Wildlife Refuge System – the largest network of lands in the nation dedicated to wildlife conservation, with 568 national wildlife refuges – at least one refuge in every state. Over a hundred years in the making, the refuge system is a network of habitats that benefits wildlife, provides unparalleled outdoor experiences for all Americans, and protects a healthy environment.

Learn more about Great Thicket National Wildlife

Refuge: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/refuges/planning/lpp/greatthicketLPP.html>

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