

# Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program New Jersey State Plan 2011 - 2015

This plan was prepared in consultation with the New Jersey State Technical Committee Wildlife Subcommittee in February of 2011. The plan includes NJ NRCS state objectives, NJ NRCS habitat priorities that are based upon national WHIP priorities and WHIP guidelines. Brief discussions on WHIP practices, partnership involvement, the application evaluation and ranking process, and measurements of success are also included.

## National Priorities

- Promote the restoration of declining or important native fish and wildlife habitats.
- Protect, restore, develop, or enhance fish and wildlife habitats.
- Reduce the impacts of invasive species on fish and wildlife habitats
- Protect, restore, develop, or enhance declining or important aquatic wildlife species' habitats.
- Protect, restore, develop, or enhance important migration and other movement corridors for wildlife.

## State Objectives

- To promote the restoration of aquatic and upland habitats for New Jersey's declining or important native fish and wildlife species.
- To create, restore, enhance or maintain habitat for at-risk fish and wildlife species in New Jersey.
- To reduce the impacts of invasive, exotic species on New Jersey fish & wildlife habitats.

## Habitat Priorities

### Early Successional Habitat

Create, restore or manage for early successional habitats such as grasslands, savannahs and emergent wetlands that provide habitat for declining wildlife species. An emphasis will be placed on establishing native plant species, including those species that provide nectar, pollen and larval food sources for pollinators. Species benefited include: Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), Vesper Sparrow (*Pooectes gramineus*) and Bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*).

### Disturbance Dependant Habitats

Manage habitats that depend upon a natural or human-induced disturbance in order to create conditions suitable for regeneration or maintaining these unique habitats. Habitats such as Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*) forests, scrub/shrub habitats and fire dependent plant communities are examples. Species benefited include: Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*), Northern Pine Snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus melanoleucus*), Arogos Skipper (*Atrytone arogos arogos*), and American Burying Beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*).

### Wetland Habitats

Create, restore and manage wetland habitats including forested wetlands, coastal wetlands and riparian habitats. Focus is on land not likely to be funded by the Wetlands Reserve Program. Species benefited include: Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*), Dwarf wedgemussel (*Alasmidonata heterodon*), Pine Barrens Treefrog (*Hyla andersonii*), Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*) and Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*).

Woodland Habitat

Create, restore, or manage woodland habitat for forest dependent species. Funding is provided to create and manage niche habitat areas within managed woodlots in addition to practices for plant health and vigor. Species benefited include: Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalists*), Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulean*), Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*), American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*), Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) and Barred Owl (*Strix varia*).

Priority Area – Delaware Bay Region

Create, restore or manage any fish and wildlife habitat in this critical area of New Jersey that only includes Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties. Species benefited include Red knot (*Calidris canutus*), Southern Gray Treefrog (*Hyla chrysoscelis*), Frosted Elfin (*Callophrys irus*), Eastern Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum tigrinum*), Bobwhite Quail (*Colinus virginianus*), and American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*).

Priority Species – Bog Turtle (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*)

Enhance or maintain habitat for this federally threatened species that occurs on farms infrequently, throughout New Jersey.

**Practices to be Emphasized**

Eligible practices for WHIP in New Jersey will center on site preparation and establishment of native plants communities, control of invasive exotic species, management practices to retain vegetative communities and some specific practices for specific fish and wildlife species.

A list of NRCS NJ FOTG practices that will *typically* be used for the six Habitat Priorities is provided below:

Early Successional Habitat

- 314 Brush Management
- 647 Early Succession Habitat Management
- 643 Restoration & Mgmt. of Declining Habitats
- 327 Conservation Cover
- 386 Field Border
- 422 Hedgerow Planting
- 460 Land Clearing
- 512 Pasture and Hay Planting
- 338 Prescribed Burning
- 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
- 528 Prescribed Grazing
- 646 Shallow Water Management for Wildlife

Disturbance Dependant Habitat

- 314 Brush Management
- 460 Land Clearing
- 643 Restoration & Mgmt. of Declining Habitats
- 612 Tree and Shrub Establishment
- 338 Prescribed Burning
- 490 Forest Site Preparation
- 666 Forest Stand Improvement
- 528 Prescribed Grazing
- 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
- 643 Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats

Woodland Habitat

- 314 Brush Management
- 394 Firebreak
- 666 Forest Stand Improvement
- 655 Forest Trails and Landings
- 338 Prescribed Burning
- 612 Tree/Shrub Establishment
- 490 Tree/Shrub Site Prep

Wetland Habitat

- 396 Fish Passage
- 584 Stream Channel Stabilization
- 391 Riparian Forest Buffer
- 390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover
- 646 Shallow Water Management for Wildlife
- 580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection
- 395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Mgmt.
- 587 Structure for Water Control
- 612 Tree and Shrub Establishment
- 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
- 658 Wetland Enhancement
- 659 Wetland Restoration

Priority Area – Delaware Bay Region

645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management  
 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management  
 646 Shallow Water Management for Wildlife  
 647 Early Succession Habitat Management  
 658 Wetland Enhancement  
 659 Wetland Restoration  
 643 Restoration and Mgmt. of Declining Habitats  
 580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection  
 314 Brush Management  
 395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Mgmt.

Priority Species – Bog Turtle

658 Wetland Enhancement  
 659 Wetland Restoration  
 382 Fence  
 314 Brush Management  
 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management  
 646 Shallow Water Management for Wildlife

**Partnership Involvement**

WHIP in NJ since 1998 has had successful partnerships with state and federal wildlife agencies in New Jersey including the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. In addition non-governmental groups such as the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, Trout Unlimited, the Nature Conservancy, the New Jersey Audubon Society and others have provided financial and technical assistance to landowners enrolled in WHIP, reducing the cost burden to landowners and NRCS NJ and making our WHIP program dollars go further.

**Application Evaluation and Ranking Process**

NRCS NJ utilizes a ranking process that gives priority to those applications that support the greatest improvement benefits to wildlife habitat. Ranking criteria include ecological considerations, economic considerations and societal benefit considerations. A habitat appraisal is conducted for each WHIP application to assess habitat improvements planned.

**Measuring Program Success**

NRCS NJ has several partnerships that will help provide some important monitoring data about wildlife populations targeted with WHIP funding. NJ Audubon, the Conserve Wildlife Foundation and the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife are involved in a multi-year project to monitor grassland habitat in New Jersey for the presence of grassland birds. In 2006 the monitoring included WHIP sites where landowners have given permission for the monitoring to occur. Monitoring of WHIP sites is planned to continue throughout the project and data will be shared with NRCS. All NRCS NJ WHIP bog turtle sites are monitored for habitat conditions and bog turtle occurrence by the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife biologists. The NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife will monitor fish populations and share data with NRCS from streams where WHIP was implemented for fish passage projects such as dam removal.

NRCS NJ will collect performance data about WHIP applications and contracts annually including:

- Number of applications received
- Dollar value of applications received
- Acres under contract
- Number of individuals and groups funded
- Dollar value of partner contributions
- Dollar value of participant contributions
- Acres of upland wildlife habitat management
- Acres of wetland wildlife habitat management
- Acres of riparian wildlife habitat
- Acres of aquatic wildlife habitat management
- Acres of threatened and endangered species habitat benefited

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## References

- United States Shorebird Conservation Plan 2001  
<http://www.fws.gov/shorebirdplan/USShorebird/downloads/USShorebirdIntroduction2.pdf>
- New Jersey Statewide Forest Resource Assessment & Strategies 2010  
<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/forest/images/NJFSassessment.pdf>
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan  
<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/NAWMP/index.shtml>
- North East Partnership for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (NEPARC) - Northeast Amphibian and Reptile Species of Regional Responsibility and Conservation Concern  
[http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/neparc/Products/PDFs/NEPARC\\_NEspeciesofresponsibility.pdf](http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/neparc/Products/PDFs/NEPARC_NEspeciesofresponsibility.pdf)
- Atlantic Coast Joint Venture  
<http://www.acjv.org/planning.htm>
- Partners in Flight  
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- Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture  
[http://www.easternbrooktrout.org/docs/EBTJV\\_Conservation\\_Strategy\\_July\\_08.pdf](http://www.easternbrooktrout.org/docs/EBTJV_Conservation_Strategy_July_08.pdf)  
[http://www.easternbrooktrout.org/docs/EBTJV\\_Roadmap\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.easternbrooktrout.org/docs/EBTJV_Roadmap_Fact_Sheet.pdf)
- New Jersey State Wildlife Action Plan  
<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/ensp/waphome.htm>
- “Locations of Anadromous American Shad and River Herring During Their Spawning Period in New Jersey’s Freshwaters Including Known Migratory Impediments and Fish Ladders,” March 2005, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries.
- “Classification of New Jersey Waters As Related to Their Suitability for Trout”, December 2005, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries.
- Memorandum of Understanding between the USDA NRCS and Trout Unlimited, Inc., March 21, 2003.
- Memorandum of Understanding between Quail Unlimited, Inc. and USDA NRCS, July 17, 1996.
- Memorandum of Understanding between the USDA NRCS and Ducks Unlimited, Inc., March 17, 1997.
- Memorandum of Understanding between the USDA NRCS and Bat Conservation International, January 2002.
- Memorandum of Understanding between the National Association of State Foresters and the National Association of Conservation Districts and the USDA NRCS and the USDA USFS, September 29, 2008.