



## Partners for Fish and Wildlife

### Technical and Financial Assistance for Habitat Restoration

#### PROGRAM GUIDELINES SOUTH CAROLINA



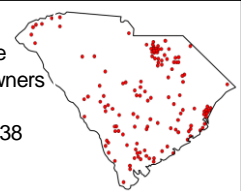
<http://partners.fws.gov>

**MISSION:** TO EFFICIENTLY ACHIEVE VOLUNTARY HABITAT RESTORATION ON PRIVATE LANDS, THROUGH FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE BENEFIT OF FEDERAL TRUST SPECIES

#### Types of Projects May include, but are not limited to:

- Replanting **bottomland hardwoods** on suitable sites such as stream shoreline areas and open fields in floodplains.
- Restoring **wetland hydrology** by plugging or filling drainage ditches, breaking tile drainage systems, constructing berms, re-establishing ephemeral pools, re-establishing microtopography, and installing water control structures.
- Restoration of **longleaf pine forest** on suitable sites where the landowner's objectives include restoring longleaf ecosystem values. See details under "General Information" below.
- Establishment and maintenance of suitable open areas in **early succession habitat** with a variety of native plants.
- Remove barriers to fish passage.
- Controlling **invasive species** which compete with native fish and wildlife and alter their natural habitats.
- Improvement of degraded **stream habitats** through bioengineering techniques, shoreline re-vegetation, livestock fencing with alternative water source, and culvert elevation alignment.
- Replacement of rice field trunks
- Restoration of Atlantic white cedar bogs on suitable sites
- Special management actions for federally listed imperiled species
- School yard habitats

This voluntary program was started in 1987 and has since enrolled thousands of landowners from every state. Over 178 landowners have enrolled in 38 counties of South Carolina.



LOCATION OF PARTNERS PROJECTS  
IN SOUTH CAROLINA

#### General Information

- Program projects must involve on-the-ground habitat restoration, be cost effective, and benefit Federal trust species (migratory birds, threatened species and endangered species, interjurisdictional fish, other priority species as identified by the USFWS) or priority species listed in the South Carolina Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.
- Eligible lands are: private; tribal; non-federal; non-state, and; public school lands owned by local school districts.
- Technical assistance is provided as needed and requested, to the extent that workload allows.
- Cooperator cost share is generally 50 percent of total project cost. Exceptions may be considered in certain cases where wildlife benefits are determined to be high, in high priority locations, or when the cooperator agrees to provide a higher percentage of match.
- The Service cost share range per project is from \$1,000 to \$25,000. For landscape-scale, multiple-partner projects higher amounts are possible.
- Proposals may be funded in full, in part, or declined.
- After an agreement is signed, the cooperator performs or contracts the work. Payment is generally reimbursement after work is completed. Some projects may be eligible for advanced payment.
- Program projects must be biologically sound and cost-effective. Try to improve the most acres you can for the least amount of money with a high quality project ensuring long-term conservation benefits.
- Cooperators retain all rights to their land. USFWS personnel do not enter private property without permission.
- USFWS Partners program personnel can assist with information and coordination on USDA conservation programs.
- **Longleaf Pine Forest Restoration:** We are interested in forming partnerships to restore and maintain the biological richness of native longleaf pine forests on private land. This involves establishing longleaf pine on suitable sites, improving wildlife habitat in existing longleaf stands, and conversion of stands from loblolly/slash to longleaf. Technical and financial assistance is offered for: 1) site preparation; 2) planting of longleaf seedlings in fields and cut-over areas; 3) midstory hardwood control; 4) re-establishment of the native plant understory with grasses, legumes, and flowering herbs; 5) invasive exotic plant treatment, and; 6) firebreak establishment and disking. The minimum area eligible is 15 contiguous acres (exceptions may be authorized). Cut-over sites must have been non-longleaf before the harvest. **Cooperators must be committed to maintaining prescribed fire on the site** to reduce hardwood competition, to maintain open understory, to perpetuate native ground layer vegetation, and to retain the longleaf ecosystem values. We are restricted from providing funding assistance for prescribed burning unless the burn is performed by an entity that meets National Wildfire Coordinating Group qualification standards (for clarification contact USFWS Partners biologist). A Safe Harbor Agreement is available for landowners who may be concerned about possible restrictions involving the red-cockaded woodpecker or who want to conserve endangered species.

**Projects Not Eligible:** Research projects; backyard habitats; upland ponds/fish ponds; greentree reservoirs; projects where pen-reared waterfowl will be released; use as compensatory mitigation for meeting requirements of any federal or state regulatory program; and projects having low biological significance and/or low cost effectiveness.

### **Criteria Used for Determination of Priority Projects**

- Project provides significant benefit to threatened or endangered species, species of concern, species or habitats that are declining, imperiled, at-risk, or designated as high priority on the South Carolina Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.
- Biological significance and cost effectiveness
- Projects that result in self-sustaining systems that are not dependent on artificial structures
- Project site protected by conservation easement or other permanent protection
- Projects that reduce habitat fragmentation, serve as buffers, and establish corridors between protected lands.
- Projects that expand existing core habitat areas (e.g., National Wildlife Refuge, private land conservation easements, Heritage Preserve, state Wildlife Management Area, National Forest, State Forest, WRP easement, State Park, certain Dept. of Defense and Dept. of Energy lands, etc.).
- Adjacent or in close proximity to sites under agreement in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), or Wetland Reserve Program (WRP).
- Habitat restoration is typically favored over habitat enhancement and maintenance activities.
- On longleaf pine projects, inclusion of native ground cover restoration as needed (grasses, legumes, herbs).
- Committing to an agreement period longer than the 10-year minimum
- Projects with a significant riparian or wetland restoration component
- Cooperator (multiple partners if applicable) agreeing to share higher percentage (>50%) of project cost.
- Projects located inside the program's priority focus area for South Carolina, which is approximately the South Atlantic Coastal Plain. Projects outside of the priority focus area may also be considered.

### **Procedures and Sequence**

- If you are interested in pursuing a project under the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program you must contact a program biologist. Requirements may vary by project so it is essential that you make direct contact with us:

PHONE: (843) 300-0425

EMAIL: joe\_cockrell@fws.gov

MAILING ADDRESS: USFWS Partners, 176 Croghan Spur Rd., Suite 200,  
Charleston, SC 29407

- Complete and submit a Pre-application for Assistance form which provides contact information and basic information about the proposed project. Pre-applications will compete with others from throughout South Carolina.
- October 15: Pre-application deadline for funds becoming available the following spring.
- November: Pre-applications are ranked on criteria listed above by a panel of natural resource professionals.
- April - May: USFWS field office receives annual program allocation. Projects are approved for funding in order of ranking until the allocation is expended. Applicants are notified of status.
- April to July: Recipient completes an Application for Federal Assistance and signs a cooperative agreement. Recipients that are not acting as an individual (organization, business, etc.) must obtain a D&B DUNS number and register in the online System for Award Management (SAM) database. After this is completed and the agreement is executed, project work can begin. Note: Reimbursement cannot be made for project activities that began before initial project planning with USFWS. Any work performed before an agreement is executed is at risk of not being funded if unexpected budget cuts occur.
- Project work should be initiated in the first year and completed within three years. Extensions may be authorized.

**Agreement** After the project is approved for funding, cooperator signs an agreement that secures the federal investment. The agreement includes description of the contributions of each party, states that the cooperator agrees to leave the habitat improvements in place for at least 10 years, and includes procedures for termination of the agreement.

**Cost-share Payment** After the project is completed, in portion or whole, the recipient provides receipts to the USFWS project manager and the work is inspected. The recipient requests payment with Standard Form 270 - Request for Advance or Reimbursement. Payment is made electronically to the recipient's bank account.

**Monitoring** A project biologist maintains contact with the cooperator, follows up with occasional site visits to monitor wildlife benefits and project success, and provides technical assistance as needed and requested.

