

What benefits and incentives does the Coastal Program offer?

By participating in this program, you directly collaborate with the conservation of the coastal resources of our Islands. In addition, the USFWS offers technical and economic assistance (incentives).

Technical assistance is provided for the development of projects, including the design and establishment of conservation practice(s).

Economic assistance is possible through cost-sharing or by fund pairing (1:1). Generally, the cost includes labor and materials, which is shared 50-50% between the owner or manager of the

For additional information or to participate in the Program, please contact us:

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Boquerón, Puerto Rico

COASTAL PROGRAM



Coastal Forests and Sand Dunes Restoration Initiative in Puerto Rico
Photo: Vida Marina & UPR Aguadilla



Coastal Forests and Sand Dunes Restoration Initiative in Puerto Rico
Photo: Vida Marina & UPR Aguadilla



Habitat Vulnerability Assessment of U.S. Caribbean Cays.
Steven Cay, USVI Photo: HJR Reefscape

property and the USFWS. However, this percentage is flexible. The collaboration of the participant(s) can be an in-kind contribution and labor and materials qualify for it.

External resources can also be identified (technical and financial) in benefit of the project and/or the owner of the entity that manages the land subject to conservation.

For the participant(s) of the program the limit of money allocated per project or cooperative agreement is set to \$50,000. Most projects do not exceed \$25,000, and the established practices should be kept for a period of 10 years.

Postal Address:
PO Box 491, Boquerón Puerto Rico, 00622-0491

Internet sites:

www.fws.gov/caribbean/es
www.fws.gov/coastal



Map source: Esri, GE BCO, NOAA, National Geographic, DeLorme, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors

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BENEFITS, INCENTIVES AND MORE... HOW TO PARTICIPATE!



Introduction

Coastal ecosystems include bodies of salty and fresh water, as well as salines, littoral, coastal and adjacent lands. In the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands), these ecosystems comprise the total surface of the islands, cays and islets, where marine, estuarine, and riverside habitats coexist, including the rivers and streams that run in the mountains. Coastal ecosystems, such as wetlands and estuaries are of great economic and ecological importance since they are home to our fishery resources, and to a great diversity of wildlife, including aquatic fauna, resident and migratory birds.

During the last decades in the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands) urban sprawl and agriculture have exerted a continuous pressure on these ecosystems, causing disturbances and destruction to the coastal habitats essential for wildlife.

The Coastal Program focuses on helping communities, agencies and organizations face the challenge of integrating economic development with the conservation of our coastal resources, combining efforts for their protection and restoration.

What is the Coastal Program about?

It is a voluntary participation program that provides technical and economic assistance (incentives) to individuals, public or private entities interested in conserving or restoring native vegetation, hydrology and soils associated with coastal ecosystems that are important to several species protected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Among those species we can find the following:

- diadromous fish (fish that move between the sea and rivers),
- migratory birds,
- species listed as threatened or endangered,
- species identified by the State as priorities,
- candidate species for listing, at-risk species, and
- native or endemic species with declining populations.

Who can participate in the Coastal Program?

Any person, private or public entity interested in establishing cooperative agreements with the USFWS to implement conservation projects or practices that benefit coastal habitats.

Participants include:

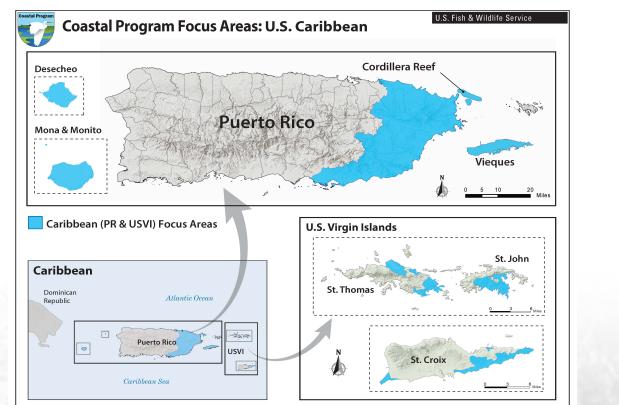
- private landowners (farmers, ranchers, others),
- corporations, educational institutions,
- non-governmental conservation organizations
- (NGO), private groups, and
- federal, state or municipal agencies.

All participants must be willing to maintain the conservation practices and restored areas under this program for a minimum period of 10 years.

The Coastal Program, also offers talks and workshops aimed to students and teachers; moreover, the program collaborates in environmental educational projects such as the well-known School Yard Habitat Program.

What is the focal area in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Island?

The Coastal Program focuses on the eastern, northeastern and southeastern regions of Puerto Rico, including Vieques to the east, and Mona, Monito and Desecheo Islands to the west. In USVI, the focal areas are in the western and eastern portions of St. Croix, the East End and the northern and southeastern portions of the St. Thomas and the southern slopes of the Virgin Islands National Park and adjacent private lands on east St. John.



Other priority areas of the program include:

- priority areas of the Caribbean such as the Strategic Habitat Conservation Area (SHC),
- national wildlife refuges of the USFWS,
- forests or state reserves and private conservation areas,

- lands adjacent or close (buffer zone) to established conservation areas or that connect to coastal habitats, and
- areas identified as important or essential habitat for wildlife by the Commonwealth or the Territory

Mitigation or compensation projects required to obtain permits or to comply with federal or state laws do not qualify to participate in this program. Proposals for purchasing or renting properties do not qualify either.

What type of conservation projects or activities does the Coastal Program promote?

By participating in the Coastal Program, the owner or manager of the property (private or public) establishes a cooperative agreement with the USFWS, which details the most appropriate conservation practices to restore or improve the selected coastal habitat(s).

Some of the most common practices include:

- opening of closed channels to re-establish the original course of water (hydrology) in coastal lagoons,
- establishment of buffer strips in bodies of water,
- creation of habitats for the benefit of birds and other species, such as the artificial ponds for the reintroduction of the Puerto Rican crested toad,
- improvement of at-risk, threatened and endangered species habitat,
- maintaining natural areas that provide food and shelter to wildlife,
- restoration of wetlands and other coastal habitats,
- improvement of agricultural practices that benefit the wildlife habitats at the watershed level, such as the exchange of the coffee grown under the sun for the shade grown coffee (agroforestry system),
- planting native trees in wetlands and other coastal ecosystems areas,
- protection of habitats important to wildlife through the construction of gates to keep the livestock excluded, and
- restoration and conservation of cays ecosystems, mangrove forests, coastal forests and aquatic resources.