



# Fisheries & Habitat Conservation

## Program Overview

The Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Program is unique within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in its ability to apply a dual approach to natural resource management; it focuses on both helping manage species and helping to conserve their habitats. The Program relies on collaboration and joint ventures with State agencies, Tribes, private landowners, industry, other Federal agencies and the public to achieve these conservation goals. In doing so, the Program combines expertise in habitat restoration, contaminant assessment and remediation, genetics, population dynamics and management, fish culture and fish health, fish passage, invasive species management, wetlands, water development and management, instream flow and other disciplines. Fisheries and Habitat Conservation blends these capabilities to provide expert technical assistance to our conservation partners.

Under the leadership of the Assistant Director for the Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Program, several major Programs: Fisheries; Habitat Conservation; and Environmental Contaminants, share

a common commitment to resource conservation. These programs work toward the common goal of healthy fish and wildlife, healthy habitat, healthy people, and a healthy economy.



USFWS

The Service's Fisheries Program provides a suite of tools to address these threats: nationwide scope, state-of-the-art science, a wide array of aquatic programs, and close collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

The Fisheries Program includes the National Fish Hatchery System, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices, the Aquatic Invasive Species program, and the Marine Mammals program. We provide a network unique in its broad geographic coverage, diversity of capabilities, and ability to cross political and program boundaries to address national perspectives and emerging issues.

## Fisheries Program

Since 1871, the Fisheries Program has played a vital role in conserving America's fisheries, and today is a key partner with States, Tribes, other Federal agencies, and private interests in a larger effort to conserve imperiled fish and other aquatic populations for the benefit of the American people.

More than 40 percent of North American fish species are currently in jeopardy and nearly 400 aquatic species have some protection afforded to them. Habitat loss, invasive species, and emerging issues such as viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) and global climate change pose serious threats to America's aquatic resources.

The responsibilities of the program include monitoring national aquatic populations and habitats, stocking genetically-appropriate aquatic species, restoring aquatic habitats, executing restoration and recovery strategies (regional and national), providing refugia for imperiled species, mitigating fisheries lost from Federal water projects, controlling invasive species, providing technical assistance to the Tribes, co-management of coastal migratory and diadromous species, and providing educational opportunities.



USFWS



USFWS

The Marine Mammals program coordinates implementation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The Service is responsible for the conservation and management of polar bears, sea otters, walrus, manatees, and dugongs. The MMPA requires that marine mammals be maintained at, or returned to, their optimum sustainable populations. Management of marine mammals requires coordination among a variety of interests, including Federal and State agencies, commercial industries, Native Alaskans, and international governments.

### Fisheries Facts and Figures

- \$126.5 million within Resource Management (FY 2008)
- Over \$1.3 billion in assets – 75 percent are mission-critical water management assets
- 152 Field Offices and 813 FTE's nationwide
- Responsible for more than 2,060 aquatic populations (476 for recreational fishing)

in the protection of landscapes and watersheds for future generations. The primary Habitat Conservation programs, most of which are legislatively mandated, are: *Conservation Planning Assistance* – Helps public and private entities conserve fish, wildlife, and habitat during the planning and development of energy, transportation, and water-supply projects; *Coastal Barrier Resources* – Conserves aquatic habitat on hurricane-prone coastal barrier islands through the prohibition of Federal expenditures that encourage building in harm's way; *Partners for Fish and Wildlife* – Restores and improves habitat on private, tribal, and local government lands via voluntary, incentive-based partnerships. To date, the program has supported the conservation efforts of more than 41,000 private landowners; *Coastal Program* – Collaborates with partners to provide financial and technical assistance for the restoration and conservation of coastal habitat; *National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants* – Provides grants to states for coastal

wetlands conservation; *National Wetlands Inventory* – Develops and distributes digital map data and scientific reports identifying wetland habitats and their status and trends; and *Sikes Act* – Works with the Department of Defense and states to develop integrated natural resource management plans to maximize conservation of 30 million acres of habitat, including wetlands, on the Nation's military lands.

### HC Facts and Figures

- \$101 million for Resource Management (FY 2008)
- 580 FTEs in 81 Ecological Services Field Offices nationwide
- Partners for Fish and Wildlife, with over 3,000 partnering organizations to restore or enhance 900,000 acres of wetlands, 2.4 million acres of uplands, and 7,300 miles of stream and riparian habitat
- The Coastal Program has restored 187,275 acres of coastal wetlands, 64,170 acres of coastal uplands, 1,607 miles of coastal streamside habitat, and protected 1.73 million acres of coastal habitat

## Habitat Conservation

The Habitat Conservation Program provides leadership, technical expertise and financial assistance in landscape-level conservation and restoration of habitat for fish and wildlife. Through providing assistance early in project planning, the Service safeguards public and environmental health



USFWS

## Environmental Contaminants

The Service's Environmental Contaminants (EC) Program includes Contaminant Biologists stationed at more than 75 locations around the country. These scientists are on the front lines in the fight against habitat degradation from environmental pollution. They are experts in detecting and addressing toxic chemicals and their effects in the environment; preventing harm to fish, wildlife, and their habitats; and removing toxic chemicals and restoring habitats when prevention is not possible.

Areas of responsibility include restoration activities for habitats harmed by pollution, evaluating water quality, responding to oil and chemical spills, working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to evaluate pesticide effects on fish and wildlife during



USFWS



pesticide registrations, and conducting investigations into contaminant impacts to fish and wildlife.

### EC Facts and Figures

- EC budget of \$12.0 million with Resource Management (FY 2008)
- 160 FTEs in 81 Ecological Services Field Offices nationwide
- 22,251 wetland acres restored and 9,276 wetland acres enhanced through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program

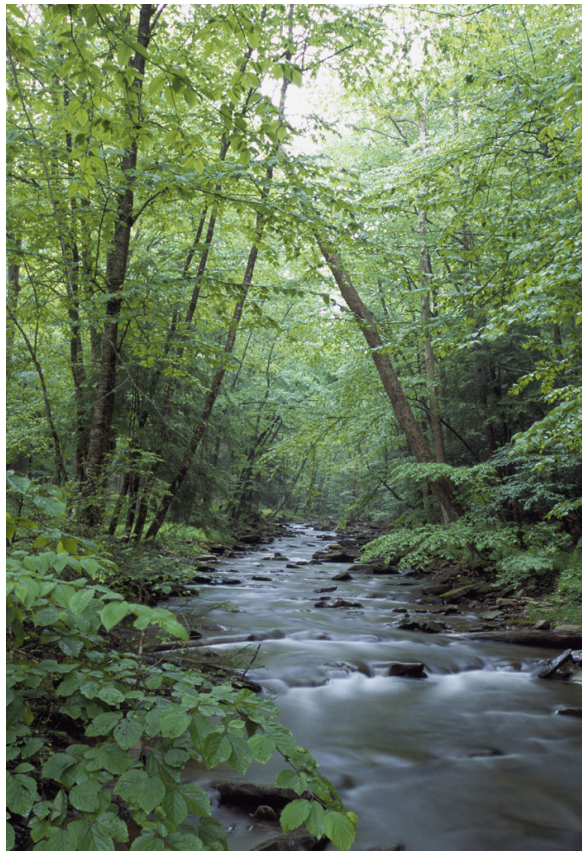
### Laws the Program Administers

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1956, as amended, (16 U.S.C. 661-667e; the Act of March 10, 1934; Ch. 55; 48 Stat. 401). Authorizes the Secretary to take such steps as may be required for the management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources including research, development of facilities and acquisition of land and water.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act (16 U.S.C. 3771). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore, enhance, and manage private land to improve fish and wildlife habitats through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

Energy Policy Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-58).. Addresses development, study and incentives for renewable energy sources such as hydropower as well as oil and gas. It provides authority for Service involvement in the federal hydropower licensing process, including fishway prescriptions.

Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA), Public Law 97-348 (96 Stat. 1653; 16 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.). Designated various undeveloped coastal barrier islands, depicted



USFWS

by specific maps, for inclusion in the Coastal Barrier Resources System (System). Designated areas were made ineligible for direct or indirect Federal financial assistance that might support development, including flood insurance, except for emergency life-saving activities. The Act assigns various mapping and study requirements to the Secretary of the Interior, which are delegated to the Service.

Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407, P.L. 92-522, October 21, 1972, 86 Stat. 1027) as amended. Established a Federal responsibility to conserve marine mammals with management vested in the Department of Interior for sea otter, walrus, polar bear, dugong, and manatee. The Department of Commerce is responsible for cetaceans and pinnipeds, other than the walrus.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (Superfund) (26 U.S.C. 4611-4682; P.L. 96-510, December 11, 1980; 94 Stat. 2797), as amended. The Department of the Interior is a trustee for natural resources, and the Service is responsible for the protection and restoration of trust resources injured by uncontrolled

releases of hazardous materials. The Service is responsible for conducting assessments to establish injury to trust resources through the damage assessment process.

Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (33 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.; 104 Stat. 484). Established new requirements and extensively amended the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1301 et seq.) to provide enhanced capabilities for oil spill response and natural resource damage assessment by the Service.

### Conservation Challenges, Successes, and Emerging Issues

- Renewable energy development, particularly wind and hydrokinetic energy, and minimizing environmental impacts from energy production and infrastructure development
- Addressing new forms of aquatic pathogens and diseases, both in the wild and in captive fishery operations
- Implementing the *National Fish Habitat Action Plan*, coordinating locally-driven efforts that build private and public partnerships to improve fish habitat
- Removing artificial barriers to fish migration through the National Fish Passage Program.
- Enhancing the agency's capacity for using wetlands mapping, monitoring and science for decision-making
- Restoration of Storm-Damaged Coastal Habitats – As hurricanes grow in size and magnitude, the impacts to coastal habitats are becoming more common and severe
- Contaminants of Emerging Concern (i.e., endocrine disrupting compounds and nanomaterials)
- *SMARxT™* Disposal – A national public awareness and partnership campaign promoting responsible consumer medication disposal while helping to protect our environment



- Aquatic invasive species – Prevention, early detection, rapid response, and control and management are key components of the National Invasive Species Management Plan
- Coastal Barrier Resources Map Modernization - Congress has directed the Service to modernize the CBRS maps using digital technology
- Implementation of 2008 Farm Bill – Working to assist USDA in establishing state and national priorities, scoring criteria, focus areas, or special initiatives that will be most effective in achieving priority fish and wildlife conservation objectives



USFWS



USFWS



USFWS



USFWS

**Gary Frazer, Assistant Director  
Fisheries and Habitat Conservation**  
<http://www.fws.gov/fisheries/>

**November 2008**