

Helping People Help the Land

Opportunity to Expand Habitat For Migrating Birds

Signup Deadline: **August 2, 2010**

Farmers and ranchers now have the ability to work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop and enhance habitat for birds making their annual migration south.

For more information, or to sign-up for the Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative, please check with your local USDA Service Center, or visit our website at:

www.al.nrcs.usda.gov



This Pectoral Sandpiper is a shorebird that occurs in this region during migration. This bird requires shallow water habitat to refuel during its annual migration between Arctic breeding grounds and wintering areas in central and southern South America.

*Photo: Stephen J. Dinsmore,
Iowa State University*

In the coming months, more than 50 million migrating birds will instinctively head for marshes and coastlands of the northern Gulf of Mexico. The oil spill is adversely affecting marshes and coastlands used by shorebirds, waterfowl, and other migrating birds.

Under the *Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative*, NRCS will work with farmers and ranchers to manage portions of their land to provide these birds with additional food and habitat.

Eligible lands include wetlands farmed under natural conditions, existing farmed wetlands, and prior converted croplands. Flooded crop fields are particularly well-suited for this initiative, as are catfish farms. Shallow water, ranging from mudflats to less than one foot, is the key to creating suitable habitat.

NRCS Program Assistance and Priority Counties

NRCS will use technical expertise and financial resources from existing Farm Bill programs to provide resources to agricultural producers to install practices. Essential practices will control water levels and enhance habitat to attract migratory birds.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP): Producers have the opportunity to sign-up for EQIP or WHIP to enhance available habitat in the following counties:

High priority counties: Baldwin and Mobile

Priority counties: Autauga, Barbour, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Escambia, Greene, Hale, Henry, Houston, Lowndes, Marengo, Monroe, Montgomery, Perry, Pickens, Sumter, Washington, and Wilcox.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP): Producers with WRP easements have the opportunity to implement additional management strategies to optimize habitat on coastal and inland wetlands for migratory birds and other species by *enrolling catfish ponds for conversion to migratory bird habitat under WRP* in the following counties: Dallas, Greene, Hale, Marengo, Perry, Pickens, and Sumter.