

For Immediate Release

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*Signup ends April 30, 2012*

## **WILDLIFE CONSERVATION EFFORTS TO SUPPORT LOCAL DECLINING WILDLIFE SPECIES**

*Innovative partnership preserves working lands and protects at-risk species*

ATHENS, GA, (April 5, 2012)—State Conservationist James E. Tillman Sr., of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), announced today that financial assistance was approved under the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) to help sustain populations of the Golden-winged Warbler through the Working Lands For Wildlife (WLFW) partnership.

The NRCS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) formed a new partnership to accelerate wildlife conservation. Under this partnership, WLFW has two primary goals: 1) restore populations of declining wildlife species, 2) strengthen rural economies through productive working lands.

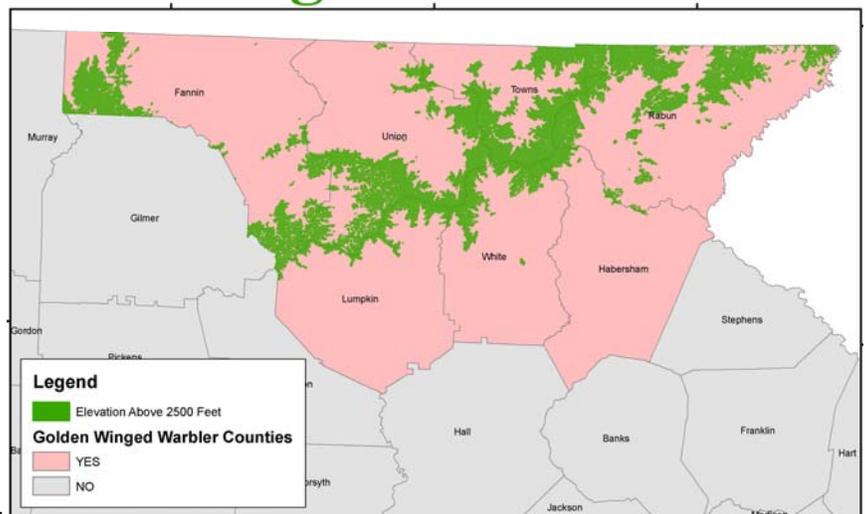
Using innovative approaches Working Lands for Wildlife will assist private land owners in the creation and maintenance of habitat necessary to sustain breeding populations of Golden-winged Warblers in their current range. It focuses on the creation, management and maintenance of early successional habitat in close association with forested landscapes.

Landowners can sign-up to manage and restore high-priority habitats for the gopher tortoise that are located across the southern part of the state.

The three primary practices are; 1) Prescribe burning, 2) Forest Stand Improvement and 3) Tree planting of hardwoods.

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## Georgia Focal Area



Helping People Help the Land

Some facts about the Golden-winged Warbler:

- Golden-winged warbler has undergone a significant population declines in the Appalachian region of its range.
- Golden-winged warblers and many other species depend upon shrubby, early successional habitats at high elevations including forest clear-cuts, alder swamps, areas harvested for timber, and utility rights-of way.
- The Appalachian region offers a tremendous opportunity to improve habitat for golden-winged warbler and other neotropical migratory birds. The vast forested lands, grasslands and forb-rich areas provide structurally diverse vegetation for breeding and foraging, and offer the greatest opportunity to combat declines in golden-winged warbler populations.
- Working Lands for Wildlife will assist private land owners create and maintain the habitat necessary to sustain breeding populations within and adjacent to their current range.

Interested producers and landowners in focal areas can enroll in the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program on a continuous basis at their local NRCS field office. NRCS funds from WHIP will share the cost of conservation practices with landowners in areas known to support the gopher tortoise.

Nationally for 14 years, WHIP has worked to protect, restore or develop fish and wildlife habitat for many species, including those considered at-risk. Since 2003, about \$310 million has been committed to 23,000 farmers, ranchers and landowners to provide wildlife treatments on four million acres of private working lands.

For more information about WHIP and other NRCS conservation programs, visit the Georgia NRCS Web site at [www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov), or contact your local NRCS office.

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