



Baby wood turtle

WORKING LANDS FOR NORTHEAST TURTLES

Options for Landowners to Help Rare Turtles and Restore Wetlands

NRCS helps landowners maintain the productivity of their farms and forests while conserving important natural resources. Those resources include turtle habitat.

Let NRCS develop a comprehensive, resource conservation plan that meets the goals of your operation and meets conservation needs for at-risk turtles.

Northeast Turtles

Wetlands and riparian areas are home to a variety of wildlife, including the rare Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*), wood turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*), and spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*). All three of these turtles are under consideration for listing under the Endangered Species Act. A number of factors have contributed to these turtles' population struggles, including the loss, fragmentation, and degradation of wetland habitat as well as illegal collection.

Assistance Available

To help reverse the decline of these turtles, NRCS is working with private landowners to improve the status of these species through voluntary land protection efforts including easements, restoration, and habitat management.

Landowners in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont are helping the Blanding's, wood, and spotted turtles by making turtle-friendly improvements on working lands.

Highlights of these efforts include restoring natural wetlands, establishing trees and shrubs along streams, controlling invasive plants, and managing turtle-nesting habitats.

With the help of NRCS and other partners, landowners are making wildlife improvements to working lands and protecting lands with conservation easements. Through conservation practices, landowners are restoring and protecting wetlands, managing healthy riparian areas and stream corridors, and improving grazing and forestry operations.








Conservation Choices

NRCS offers more than two dozen conservation practices that can benefit Northeast turtles by providing ideal wetland and upland habitat. Here are a few examples:

Conservation Practice	What Is It?	How Does It Help Northeast Turtles?
<div>Aquatic Organism Passage</div> 	Modification or removal of barriers to aquatic species like dams or culverts.	Increased connectivity of aquatic and riparian habitats to allow turtles to safely move through and between habitat.
<div>Brush Management</div> 	Management or removal of woody plants including those that are invasive and noxious.	Improve habitat through control of non-native invasive woody plants and keep nesting sites in open condition.
<div>Early Successional Habitat Development</div> 	Maintains or restores "open" habitats, such as young forest, shrublands, old fields, hayfields, and grasslands.	Improves food and cover habitat and provides nesting and basking areas.
<div>Filter Strip</div> 	A strip or area of herbaceous vegetation that removes contaminants from overland flow. Typically next to agricultural fields or livestock.	Increases habitat sustainability for turtles by providing improved water quality, cover, and shelter. Decreases erosion.

Conservation Practice	What Is It?	How Does It Help Northeast Turtles?
<div>Fish and Wildlife Plan</div> 	A habitat improvement plan written by professional biologists to address habitat needs and landowner objectives.	Missing habitat components like food, cover, or nesting areas can be addressed through conservation practices in a plan.
<div>Riparian Forest Buffer</div> 	An area of predominantly trees and shrubs located adjacent to an upgradient from watercourses or water bodies.	Improves aquatic and riparian habitat, landscape connectivity, and water quality.
<div>Wetland Restoration</div> 	Restores wetland hydrology and native vegetation providing key habitats for turtles.	Restored wetlands provide critical habitat for turtles as well as many other fish and wildlife species.
<div>Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management</div> 	Identifies and addresses missing habitat elements for target wetland wildlife species (in this case, turtles!).	Key habitat elements such as turtle nesting sites can be restored or created.





Blanding's turtle



Wood turtle



Spotted turtle

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is free to private landowners and producers. The agency's staff of experts and conservation partners work side-by-side with producers to develop a conservation plan. Each plan focuses on the habitat needs of these turtles and is tailored to the landowner's property. These plans provide a roadmap to meet natural resource and production goals.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance helps landowners pay for the adoption of conservation actions that improve the health of ecosystems on which turtles and other species depend.

Easement Programs

Easement programs offer landowners an opportunity for long-term protection of farms, forests, and wetlands and provide tools needed to restore and enhance them. Easements are an important tool to protect the key areas for turtle conservation.

Working Lands for Wildlife

While NRCS works with landowners to implement turtle-friendly practices nationwide, the agency is working to accelerate conservation efforts in the Northeast with a seven-state Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) project. WLFW is a collaborative approach to conserve habitat on working lands. WLFW provides technical and financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and Healthy Forests Reserve Program, all conservation programs of the Farm Bill, the largest funding source for conservation on private lands.

Turtles and Friends

Habitats restored for these turtles benefit many other species, including the blue-spotted salamander, New England cottontail, American bittern, wood duck, American woodcock, bobcat, brook trout, and a variety of songbirds.

Partnerships Matter

NRCS collaborates with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), state fish and wildlife agencies, and non-government organizations. Government and nonprofit organizations leverage resources and technical staff to help educate landowners and recreationists about the need to protect at-risk turtles.

Get Started

If you're interested in technical and financial assistance from NRCS, please contact your local USDA service center. An NRCS conservationist in your community will help you develop a conservation plan customized to your land. Then, you can apply for financial assistance through Farm Bill conservation programs.

More information is also available at
nrcs.usda.gov/wildlife