

Watershed Projects

Havens for Fish and Wildlife

Watershed Projects Provide Thousands of Acres of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

There are 2,100 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assisted watershed projects in the United States with at least one project in every state and two territories. 1,271 of these watershed projects include flood control dams.

Some projects provide flood control while others include conservation practices that address a myriad of natural resource issues such as water quality, soil erosion, animal waste management, irrigation, water management, municipal water, and recreation.

Whatever the primary purpose, watershed projects have many community benefits such as fish and wildlife habitat enhancement that sometimes goes unnoticed.



Lakes formed by watershed dams have created thousands of acres of open water providing excellent fish and wildlife habitat

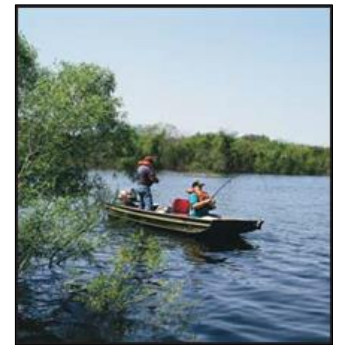
Watershed projects are planned and implemented by local sponsors (units of governments such as conservation districts cities, counties, or special water districts) with assistance from the NRCS.

The projects are authorized and funded through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (Public Law 83-566) and the Flood Control Act of 1944 (Public Law 78-534).

Over 300,000 Acres of Surface Water Have Been Created by the Construction of 11, 845 Flood Control Dams

Some of the best fishing spots in a state can be found in these flood control lakes.

Lakes generally range in size from 20 to 80 surface acres and provide a good mix of deep water and shoreline riparian areas. This provides excellent fish and wildlife habitat diversity.



Some lakes have up to several hundred acres of surface water and many have recreational areas developed around them. Regardless of the size of the lakes everyone benefits from the increased habitat for fish, birds and animals.

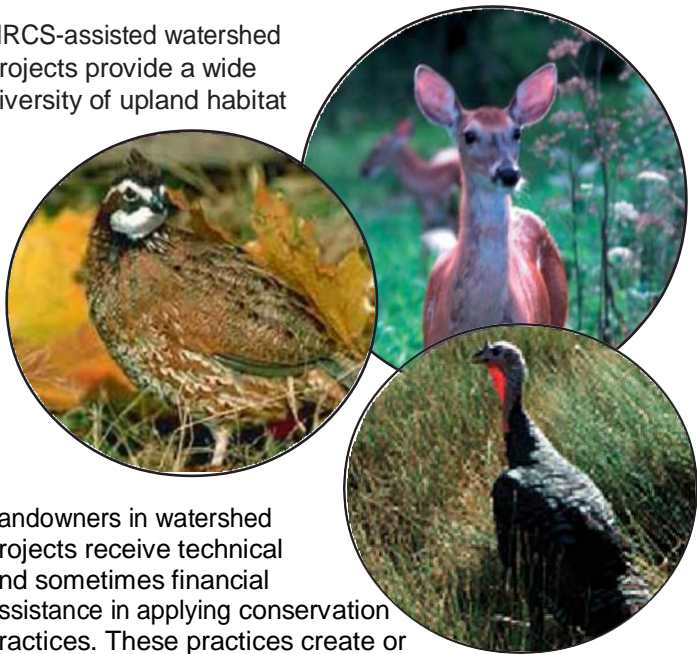
Conservation Practices are an Important Component of Watershed Projects



Conservation practices in watershed projects such as buffers, pasture and rangeland management, tree plantings, ponds, conservation cropping systems and conservation tillage provide cover, water, and food for a variety of birds and animals.

Over Nine Million Acres of Upland Wildlife Habitat Have Been Created or Enhanced by Watershed Projects.

NRCS-assisted watershed projects provide a wide diversity of upland habitat



Landowners in watershed projects receive technical and sometimes financial assistance in applying conservation practices. These practices create or improve wildlife habitat and protect water quality in streams and lakes.

Enhancing Habitat and Public Access



This Stillwater, Oklahoma lake is one example of how project sponsors and landowners have enhanced habitat created by the construction of a flood control dam.

Underwater structures were placed in the lake during construction for fish shelters. Several small peninsulas and fishing docks were constructed to make it more assessable for fishing and a small island was constructed in the middle of the lake for waterfowl to rest and nest protected from predators. Thousands of people enjoy fishing, hiking, and viewing wildlife in this very scenic setting each year.

Creating and Enhancing Wetlands



This 38-acre wetland area was created during construction of the Airlie Dam in Fauquier County, Virginia. It is an important resting and feeding area for waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway. The lake formed by the Airlie Dam is also a major water supply for the City of Warrenton, Virginia.

Protecting Water Quality and Fish Habitat



Watershed projects protect stream water quality and fish habitat. Bad Axe Creek Watershed Dam No. 24 in Vernon County, Wisconsin was built on a tributary to Hornby Creek, a Class I trout stream. The dam traps sediment and slows down floodwater flowing into the creek helping to maintain the creek's high water quality.

Watershed Program National Benefits

Upland wildlife habitat created or enhanced (acres)	9,427,086
Wetlands created or enhanced (acres)	282,037
Miles of streams enhanced or protected	47,770
Reduced soil erosion (tons/year)	92,341,221

For additional information about watershed projects and their benefits, visit the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service website at: www.nrcs.usda.gov and select "Programs", then "Landscape Planning" and then "Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention" or visit your local NRCS office.

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