

Managing Forests and Wildlife

Forest landowners can utilize the Environmental Quality Incentives Program - Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) to help manage forest health and improve wildlife habitat. The WLFW initiative focuses on target wildlife species whose decline can be reversed. In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies and organizations, NRCS has identified target species for WLFW in New Jersey: Golden Winged Warbler, American Black Duck, and Northern Bobwhite (Bobwhite Quail).

Improving Habitat for Golden-winged Warbler

Since 2012, New Jersey landowners have worked with NRCS biologists and conservationists to develop habitat for Golden-winged Warbler (GWWA) and other species. At the end of FY2018, 29 WLFW contracts for 494 privately-held acres have been established. Forest Stand Improvement, Brush Management and other practices that support habitat for Golden-winged Warbler and other imperiled forest bird species are being implemented on these acres.

NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife surveys have shown a sizable increase of young forest-dependent bird species at the improved sites. Golden-winged Warblers have not yet been detected, but this is expected since the forest cuts are still “young.” The response observed from the other bird species indicates the habitat will ultimately be suitable for GWWA. Research has shown that forest cuts that have aged 7 years tend to be suitable as breeding sites for Golden-winged warblers. Some of the earliest WLFW projects will reach the 7-year mark in FY2019.

The interest from forest landowners is growing. Partners like NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, NJ Audubon, and NJ Forest Service are assisting in all aspects of the program, helping with outreach, conducting on-site monitoring, and even providing additional funding for interested landowners through grants.



The photo at left shows the site after the initial cut; the second photo shows the developing habitat after 2 years.



The photo at left shows conditions after the initial cut; the second shows developing habitat after 3 years.

FY2018

Working Lands for Wildlife

Golden-winged Warbler
\$181,417; 7 contracts
157.8 Acres

American Black Duck
No contracts

Northern Bobwhite
(Bobwhite Quail)
\$7,268; 1 contract
12 Acres

Forestry Conservation Activity Plans (CAPS)

99 contracts
5,491.3 acres

North Jersey
85 contracts on
4,305.8 acres

Central Jersey
12 contracts on
689.6 acres

South Jersey
10 contracts on
495.9 acres

Aquaculture

EQIP Aquaculture Initiative

Following Hurricane Sandy, NRCS initiated a focused effort toward New Jersey's aquaculture producers. The EQIP Aquaculture Initiative supports Gear Cycling, Rack Replacement, Oyster Bed Restoration or Enhancement/ Replenishment, Shoreline Protection.

Oysters are great filterers of nutrient in water. Practices like Oyster Bed Restoration help attract natural spat allowing farmers to not only increase productivity but also improve water quality. Oyster farmers often struggle with biofouling on their gear. Gear cycling helps alleviate this problem while improving water quality by cleaning gear on shore rather than in the water. Rack Replacement to increase the height of oyster racks helps reduce Horseshoe crab mortality rates and subsequently ensure adequate food supplies for the endangered Red Knot bird.

Assistance has been provided to nine Aquaculture producers since the Initiative has been offered. (\$262,000).



Complying with the new rack height requirements on our own would have been a major financial burden that would have likely put a lot of oyster farmers out of business. Having that safety net from NRCS helped ensure that we could continue to remain productive, produce quality oysters and comply with regulations regarding the endangered Red Knot.

– Brian Harman of Elder Point Oysters LLC

