



Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program

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PARTNERS

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- Richard King Mellon Foundation
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- AstraZeneca
- Cleveland-Cliffs

ABOUT NFWF

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 6,000 organizations and generated a total conservation impact of \$8.1 billion.

Learn more at www.nfwf.org

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Golden-winged warbler

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, Richard King Mellon Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, AstraZeneca and Cleveland-Cliffs announced a 2023-year round of funding for Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program projects. Ten new or continuing grants totaling \$4.1 million will support projects to reforest legacy mine lands, improve forest habitat management for birds, improve agricultural practices, and restore aquatic connectivity. The 10 awards announced generated \$3.7 million in matching contributions from the grantees, providing a total conservation impact of \$7.8 million.

Created in 2017, the overall goal of the program is to improve the quality and connectivity of forest and freshwater habitat in order to increase the distribution and abundance of birds, fish and other wildlife, as evidenced by a suite of species that collectively are indicators of forest and freshwater habitat condition. Specifically, the program seeks to improve the management of public and private forestlands to create large blocks with a mosaic of mixed-age forests that support a diversity of bird and wildlife species, especially targeting golden-winged warbler, wood thrush and cerulean warbler. The program also seeks to improve stream health by removing passage barriers, restoring riparian buffers, and improving water quality and hydrology to bolster populations of eastern brook trout, eastern hellbender and native freshwater mussels.

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Accelerating Creation of Late Successional Forest Habitat for Focal Bird Species (MD, PA, WV)

Grantee: The Nature Conservancy

Grant Amount: \$231,200
 Matching Funds: \$231,200
 Total Project Amount: \$462,400

Accelerate the implementation of late successional forest habitat management in Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia to increase critical habitat for cerulean warbler populations. Project will train a work force of 100 to provide economic opportunities in underserved communities and create a community of practice focused on management of this habitat, implement treatments on 530 acres of private and public lands, and monitor forest, carbon storage and wildlife responses to these practices.



Cerulean warbler

Assessing and Removing Barriers to Aquatic Organism Passage on the Upper Blackwater River (WV)

Grantee: Friends of the Cheat

Grant Amount: \$341,300
 Matching Funds: \$160,100
 Total Project Amount: \$501,400

Assess all barriers to aquatic organism passage in the Upper Blackwater River in West Virginia, replace barriers and restore forested riparian buffers along coldwater streams in red spruce-northern hardwood forest habitat important for focal species including brook trout and wood thrush. Project will replace four barriers, improve forest management practices on 135 acres of public and private land, restore 74 acres of forested riparian buffers, and monitor brook trout and wood thrush response.

Building a Riparian Buffer Partnership and Planting Pipeline in Priority Watersheds for Brook Trout (PA)

Grantee: Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Grant Amount: \$400,000
 Matching Funds: \$502,500
 Total Project Amount: \$902,500

Maintain recently expanded technical assistance capacity in western Pennsylvania to build a robust partnership with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and others for landowner outreach, targeted planting of forested riparian buffers in areas that overlap with priority brook trout watersheds and develop a pipeline of projects for future implementation. Project will plant 50 acres, equivalent to 8 stream miles, and augment funding for five new regional watershed forestry specialists.

Improving Soil Health and Water Quality Using Agricultural Best Management Practices in Smyth County (VA)

Grantee: Evergreen Soil and Water Conservation District

Grant Amount: \$479,400
 Matching Funds: \$379,300
 Total Project Amount: \$858,700

Advance use of best management practices on private land in Smyth County, Virginia, to improve soil health and water

quality by focusing on upland and riparian forest restoration on the North Fork, Middle Fork and South Fork of the Holston River, which is a biodiversity hotspot for eastern hellbender and freshwater mussels. Project will implement 1,800 acres of conservation tillage, install 10 miles of livestock exclusion fencing, restore 5 miles of riparian buffer and establish 150 acres of cover crops.

Increasing Sustainable Forest Management Practices that Benefit Focal Bird Species in West Virginia

Grantee: Sustainable Forestry Initiative

Grant Amount: \$400,000
 Matching Funds: \$573,500
 Total Project Amount: \$973,500

Expand sustainable forest management practices to new industrial landowners and adjacent family forest landowners in the Monongahela Forest focal geography of West Virginia to improve age and structural diversity that benefits focal bird species. Project will enroll 30 landowners in NRCS cost-share programs, improve 3,750 acres for wood thrush, 1,000 acres for golden-winged warbler, 5,500 acres for cerulean warbler, and implement occupancy and abundance monitoring using established protocols.

Planning and Implementing Dynamic Forest Restoration on State and Private Land in Western Virginia

Grantee: Ruffed Grouse Society & American Woodcock Society

Grant Amount: \$498,500
 Matching Funds: \$592,900
 Total Project Amount: \$1,091,400

Increase capacity for planning and implementing forest habitat management projects on state and private lands in western Virginia, with a focus on the southwest Virginia and Blue Ridge focal geographies. Project will hire a Forest Wildlife Specialist to partner with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, improve 779 acres of forest habitat for cerulean warbler, 977 acres for golden-winged warbler, 198 acres for wood thrush and promote low grade wood markets through the WestRock company.

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Brook trout

Restoring Freshwater Mussel and Brook Trout Populations in the Upper Potomac River Watershed (MD, PA)

Grantee: Maryland Department of Natural Resources
 Grant Amount: \$452,400
 Matching Funds: \$455,000
 Total Project Amount: \$907,400
 Restore aquatic connectivity for freshwater mussels and brook trout in the Upper Potomac River watershed of Maryland and Pennsylvania by replacing road stream crossings, planting riparian buffers, developing mussel conservation plans and re-establishing freshwater mussel occupancy. Project will replace five undersized culverts, plant 10,000 trees, restore access to 25 miles of stream, complete two mussel conservation plans, and propagate and stock 17,500 mussels of four species in the watershed.

Restoring Freshwater Mussel Communities in the Clarion and Kiskiminetas Rivers of Western Pennsylvania

Grantee: The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
 Grant Amount: \$500,000
 Matching Funds: \$255,000
 Total Project Amount: \$755,000
 Re-establish freshwater mussel communities within two Allegheny River tributaries in Pennsylvania, the Clarion and Kiskiminetas, and restore forested riparian habitats that support six species in both watersheds. Project will increase distribution and biomass of the native mussel community through the propagation and culture of 40,000 mussels and restore 20 acres of riparian habitat that is essential to both restoration of degraded mussel habitats and improving water quality.

Restoring Native Freshwater Mussel Populations to the Clinch River in Russell County, Virginia

Grantee: The Nature Conservancy
 Grant Amount: \$366,000
 Matching Funds: \$374,800
 Total Project Amount: \$740,800
 Augment populations of native freshwater mussels in the Clinch River of southwest Virginia by producing juvenile mussels of at least three common species and other rare species, culture those mussels to a taggable size, release them into suitable habitats and monitor survival and growth over time. Project will add at least 40,000 mussels in three to six mussel shoals and aim for densities of 10 mussels per square meter that are likely to be self-sustaining populations.

Scaling Up Restoration of Legacy Mine Land in Pennsylvania and the Appalachian Coal Field Region (PA)

Grantee: Green Forests Work
 Grant Amount: \$467,800
 Matching Funds: \$186,000
 Total Project Amount: \$653,800
 Develop a strategic plan to scale up restoration of legacy mine lands in the Appalachian coal field region and increase the capacity to implement work by supporting additional staff. Project will create an inventory of all known current legacy sites in the region, prioritize work on those sites, and restore and monitor 120 acres of legacy mine land to determine successful restoration to forest or grassland habitat that benefits wildlife.