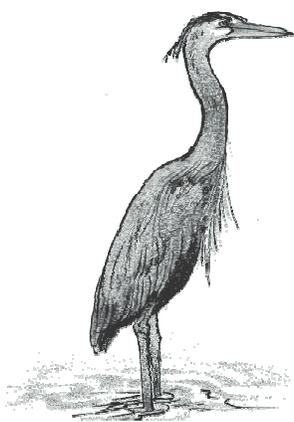


# Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary USDA program for people who want to improve or develop fish and wildlife habitat on non-federal lands. The program provides both technical and financial assistance to establish and enhance habitat for priority species and habitat types.



Landowners work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat development plan. The plan becomes the basis for a contract which, if funded through a competitive ranking process, provides payments for completed practices that create or

improve the approved wildlife habitat. There is **no** financial limit on WHIP contracts, although most average around \$15,000.

Partnering agencies and organizations may be available to provide additional technical and financial assistance.

## Wildlife Habitat Development Plans

The wildlife habitat development plan describes the landowner's goals for improving habitat and lists habitat improvement practices as well as a schedule for implementation. The plan is a document the landowner can use to meet their objectives with or without financial assistance from USDA.

For financial assistance, the plan is ranked based on how well it meets national, state and species specific habitat goals, as well as for cost efficiency (providing the greatest benefit for the least cost). If selected for funding, the landowner will enter into a contract agreement with NRCS that will last 5 years.

Payments are made after the practices are installed. Landowners agree to maintain the installed practices for their normal lifespan, which is set out in the contract. NRCS conducts annual reviews of the contract with the landowner to monitor practice success or failure and determine if plan modifications are needed.

## Funding and Priority Projects

NRCS and their wildlife partners in New Jersey have developed a state plan to direct WHIP financial and technical assistance in several areas. Applications are accepted year-round for individual projects that meet one of these objectives.

- **Delaware Bay Priority Area**

The Delaware Bay counties of Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem, are globally important habitat for many migratory wildlife species and have been designated as a priority area for WHIP in New Jersey. Any wildlife habitat enhancement project in this priority area may be eligible for funding and technical assistance.

- **Early Successional Priority Habitat**

Create, restore or manage for early successional habitats such as grasslands, savannahs and emergent wetlands that provide habitat for declining wildlife species. An emphasis will be placed on establishing native plant species, including those species that provide nectar, pollen and larval food sources for pollinators that will benefit agriculture in New Jersey.



- **Wetland Priority Habitat**

Create, restore and manage wetland habitats including forested wetlands, coastal wetlands and riparian habitats. Focus is on land not likely to be funded by the Wetlands Reserve Program.

- **Disturbance-dependent Priority Habitat**

Manage habitats that depend upon a natural or human-induced disturbance in order to create conditions suitable for regeneration or maintaining these unique habitats. Habitats such as Atlantic white cedar forests, scrub/shrub habitats and fire dependent plant communities are examples.



- **Bog Turtle Priority Species**

Enhance or maintain habitat for this federally threatened species that occurs on farms infrequently, throughout most of New Jersey.



### Who Is Eligible?

To participate in WHIP, applicants must own or have control of the land under consideration. Land is not eligible for WHIP if it is currently enrolled in another USDA Farm Bill conservation program such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). Land is also ineligible if it is used for mitigation or if the land is owned by the federal government.

### USDA Service Centers:

#### Columbus Service Center

1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Road, Columbus NJ 08036  
Telephone: (609) 267-1639  
*Serves Burlington, Camden and Ocean counties*

#### Freehold Service Center

4000 Kozloski Rd. Box 5033, Freehold, NJ 07728  
Telephone: (732) 462-0075  
*Serves Mercer, Middlesex and Monmouth counties*

#### Frenchtown Service Center

687 Pittstown Rd Suite 2, Frenchtown, NJ 08825  
Telephone: (908) 782-4614  
*Serves Hunterdon, Somerset and Union counties*

#### Hackettstown Service Center

Bldg #1, 101 Bilby Rd, Hackettstown, NJ 07840  
Telephone: (908) 852-2576  
*Serves Morris, Sussex and Warren counties*

#### Somerset Office

220 Davidson Ave, Somerset, NJ 08873  
Telephone: (732) 537-6057  
*Serves Bergen, Essex, Hudson, and Passaic counties*

#### Vineland Service Center

1317 South Main Rd. Bldg 3, Vineland, NJ 08360  
Telephone: (856) 205-1225  
*Serves Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties*

#### Woodstown Service Center

51 Cheney Road, Suite 2, Woodstown, NJ 08098  
Telephone: (856) 769-1126  
*Serves Gloucester and Salem counties*

For further information on WHIP or to sign up for the program, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service at your local USDA Service Center. Sign-up is open year-round. Additional program information and technical resources are also available online at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov>.

**Sign up by June 1 of each year for practices you wish to install the following year!**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.