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**NFWF Announces First Grants  
from the Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program**

*\$1.7 million will fund 15 grant to restore habitat for forest birds, brook trout and hellbender*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (December 18, 2017)** –The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) today announced \$1.7 million in grants to restore forest and freshwater habitat in central Appalachia, including New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia. The grants will generate \$1.9 million in matching contributions for a total conservation impact of more than \$3.6 million.

The grants were awarded through the Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program, a partnership between NFWF, USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, the American Forest Foundation, and in western Pennsylvania, the Richard King Mellon Foundation. Additional funding is provided by the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Central Appalachia boasts some of the world’s oldest river systems and most biologically diverse temperate deciduous forests. These grants represent the inaugural round under the Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program, which was launched in 2017 to help protect and restore this unique and globally significant habitat.

“The work we are supporting will restore vital habitat for many of the region’s most iconic species, including eastern brook trout and hellbender, as well as golden winged and cerulean warblers,” said Amanda Bassow, northeastern regional director, NFWF. “Working with such a diverse and dedicated group of partners is allowing the community to take a comprehensive approach to addressing conservation in the region.”

The projects supported by the 15 grants announced today will work with close to 200 different landowners to improve management on 11,590 acres of forestland and remove six barriers to fish passage, thereby opening up more than 140 miles of upstream habitat.

“With the majority of Appalachia under private ownership, the land management decisions of farmers and forest landowners are important to a wide array of wildlife species,” said NRCS Acting Chief Leonard Jordan. “We’ve seen firsthand how stewardship-minded landowners are integrating wildlife-friendly practices onto working lands, benefitting many species, including the golden winged warbler. These efforts not only help wildlife but make working lands and forests more productive and resilient.”

The Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program was established in 2017 and invests in on-the-ground restoration and planning to restore the quality of forest and freshwater habitats in the Central Appalachian-Allegheny Plateau landscape, including the Appalachian regions of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia. Funding priorities for this program include forest conservation, connectivity and management and healthy river systems.

“Given that the majority of Northeastern forests are owned by families and individuals, the American Forest Foundation is thrilled to partner with NFWF and others to support the outreach and engagement of this critical landowner audience,” said Christine Cadigan, American Forest Foundation’s director of northeastern woodlands. “Effective landscape-scale forest conservation in the Northeast must engage family woodland owners in sustainable forest stewardship.”

A complete list of the 2017 grants made through the Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program is available [here](#).

### **About the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation**

*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 4,500 organizations and committed more than \$3.8 billion to conservation projects. Learn more at [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org).*

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