



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.

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NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Wood thrush

BACKGROUND

The Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program was established in 2017 to improve the quality and connectivity of forest and freshwater habitat and increase the distribution and abundance of native fish, birds and other wildlife, as evidenced by a suite of species that collectively are indicators of forest and freshwater habitat condition.

Grants are awarded in portions of the Appalachian region of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia. Priority is given to projects within 10 focal geographies. These geographies were selected by analyzing large watersheds for priority forest and freshwater habitat for target species, with a goal of sustaining and improving large, contiguous blocks of the highest quality habitat.

From 2017 through 2023, the Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program has awarded more than \$17.7 million in funding to 81 projects to enhance forest age and structural diversity, improve aquatic habitat connectivity and increase the abundance of key species. Grantees are providing more than \$20 million in match for a total conservation impact of more than \$37.7 million. Key partners in the effort are the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, AstraZeneca and Cleveland-Cliffs.

(continued)



Cerulean warbler

Together, these 81 projects are expected to:

- Open 425 miles of stream for eastern brook trout by prioritizing and removing barriers to fish passage, including replacing culverts and removing under-utilized dams.
- Improve 25,809 acres of young forest habitat for golden-winged warbler, 25,995 acres of middle-aged forest for wood thrush and 12,516 acres of mature forest for cerulean warbler.
- Re-introduce 198,000 freshwater mussels of multiple species to targeted watersheds, especially those that have had significant dam removals or flow regime changes that would increase potential for reproductive success.
- Restore 120 acres of legacy mine land to forest.

PROGRAM GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of the Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Fund are to:

- Improve the management of public and private forestlands in order to create blocks with a mosaic of mixed-aged forests that support a diversity of bird and wildlife species, especially targeting golden-winged

warbler, wood thrush and cerulean warbler.

- 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.

The program achieves these goals through three priority strategies:

- Restore and manage dynamic forest blocks to enhance age and structural diversity that demonstrates improved forest conditions for golden-winged warbler, wood thrush and cerulean warbler.
- Invest in strategies to accelerate adoption of forest management that maximizes forest health and wildlife benefits while improving carbon storage, water quality and other ecosystem services.
- Restore aquatic ecosystems 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.