



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
- Altria Group
- Cleveland-Cliffs

ABOUT NFWF

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) works with partners to foster sustainable and impactful conservation solutions so that people and nature thrive together. Chartered by Congress in 1984, NFWF has grown to become the nation's largest conservation foundation. Since its founding, NFWF has funded more than 23,300 projects that have generated a total conservation impact of \$11.3 billion.

Learn more at www.nfwf.org

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Cerulean warbler

OVERVIEW

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, Richard King Mellon Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Altria Group and Cleveland-Cliffs in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), announced a 2025-year round of funding for Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program projects. Seven new grants totaling \$2.2 million will support projects to reforest legacy mine lands, improve forest habitat management for birds, improve agricultural practices, and restore aquatic connectivity. The seven awards announced leveraged \$2 million in matching contributions from grantees, providing a total conservation impact of \$4.2 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 brook trout, eastern hellbender and native freshwater mussels.

(continued)



Golden-winged warbler

Building Regional Capacity for Forest Management on Private Lands in Southwest Virginia (VA)

Grantee: American Forests
 Grant Amount: \$499,929
 Matching Funds: \$499,968
 Total Project Amount: \$999,897
 Implement forest management on 70 acres of The Nature Conservancy lands and 900 acres of private lands within established dynamic forest restoration blocks, provide technical assistance to 25 private forest landowners, and catalyze emerging forest product markets in southwest Virginia. Project will increase forest ecosystem health and resilience and restore wildlife habitat for cerulean warbler, golden-winged warbler and wood thrush.

Establishing the West Virginia Hellbender Conservation Collaborative (WV)

Grantee: Friends of the Cheat
 Grant Amount: \$302,304
 Matching Funds: \$147,930
 Total Project Amount: \$450,234
 Initiate monitoring, planning, outreach, landowner technical assistance and implementation actions to sustain

and expand West Virginia hellbender populations within Central Appalachia. Project will restore 30 acres of forested riparian buffer habitat, survey 200 crossings for barriers in hellbender streams, and reach 1,833 individuals through outreach, trainings, and educational opportunities specific to hellbender conservation initiatives, and set up over 30 long-term monitoring sites for the species.

Expanding Freshwater Mussel and Eastern Hellbender Conservation in Virginia’s Central Appalachia

Grantee: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
 Grant Amount: \$158,387
 Matching Funds: \$158,465
 Total Project Amount: \$316,853
 Expand freshwater mussel tools and initiate new eastern hellbender conservation tools using species habitat modeling and overland-flow buffer mapping that incorporates non-point source nutrient loadings and land cover data in Virginia’s Central Appalachia. Project will develop spatial data products and metadata to guide riparian restoration, conservation planning, prioritization and reintroduction efforts.



Eastern hellbender

Expanding the Stream Smart Program in the Central Appalachia Region of Pennsylvania (PA)

Grantee: Trout Unlimited

Grant Amount:.....\$92,345
 Matching Funds:.....\$80,844
 Total Project Amount:.....\$173,190

Expand the Stream Smart program, an outreach program that works with contractors, engineers, landowners and other professionals responsible for road-stream crossings to construct culverts and bridges that maintain fish and wildlife habitat while protecting roads and public safety. Project will hold advanced workshops that will reach 105 people and ultimately support the assessment of three sites and rectify at least one priority barrier.

Implementing the Pennsylvania Freshwater Mussel Conservation Plan (PA)

Grantee: Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Grant Amount:.....\$340,690
 Matching Funds:.....\$244,041
 Total Project Amount:.....\$584,731

Initiate implementation of the Pennsylvania Freshwater Mussel Conservation Plan by filling freshwater mussel data gaps, completing silo and relocation projects in targeted watersheds, and identifying and installing restoration practices in priority restoration watersheds in the Central Appalachia region of Pennsylvania. Project will restore 10 acres through riparian buffers in watersheds that support freshwater mussel populations.

Managing Dynamic Habitats on Public and Private Lands through Controlled Burns (MD, PA)

Grantee: The Nature Conservancy

Grant Amount:.....\$292,477
 Matching Funds:.....\$389,782
 Total Project Amount:.....\$682,259

Build capacity to hire a four-person seasonal Habitat Improvement Team to implement controlled burns and non-commercial forest management on established dynamic forest restoration blocks within the Laurel Highlands and Southern Allegheny Front focal landscapes. Project will improve 300 acres of habitat for golden-winged warblers, 700 acres for cerulean warblers and 75 acres for wood thrush.

Restoring Brook Trout and Eastern Hellbender Habitat in the Greenbrier and Gauley River Headwaters (WV)

Grantee: Trout Unlimited

Grant Amount:.....\$498,507
 Matching Funds:.....\$502,622
 Total Project Amount:.....\$1,001,129

Restore habitat in the Greenbrier and Gauley River headwaters by mitigating eight barriers to aquatic organism passage, restoring 34 acres of riparian forest buffers, providing technical and implementation assistance to public and private landowners, and implementing agricultural best management practices. Project will improve water quality and habitat for brook trout, eastern hellbender, green floater mussel and candy darter.