

Recommended NAWCA Projects

Connecticut

Quinebaug Highlands - Natchaug River Watershed Project

Organization: The Nature Conservancy

Grant: \$1,000,000

Non-Federal Partner Contributions: \$3,277,643

Acres: 1,103 (P)

The Quinebaug Highlands - Natchaug River Watershed Project would protect over seven and a half miles of river and stream frontage and a significant network of lands in this watershed located in the one of the largest remaining natural landscapes in Connecticut and southeastern New England. The project is in the ACJV Upper Thames River Planning Area and provides the best inland American Black Duck and most productive Wood Duck breeding habitat in the state. The marshes provide important habitat for Sora and bitterns and the adjacent mesic forests provide the best Cerulean Warbler habitat in the state. The project area is in the national geographic priority areas for landbirds and waterbirds. The agricultural lands in the watershed are also a focus for the state for a grassland bird initiative that will complement this wetland project. Development pressure has greatly increased in this part of the state. An important benefit of this proposal lies in the context of the ecological function that will be maintained by protection of these tracts along with existing protected lands they connect to, and the benefits to water quality accrued throughout the Natchaug River Watershed and the Thames River Basin.

Florida

North Florida Wetlands Conservation Project

Project Organization: Alachua Conservation Trust

Grant: \$1,000,000

Non-Federal Partner Contributions: \$2,045,000

Acres: 3,328 (P)

The North Florida Wetlands Conservation Project would protect, through fee and easement acquisition, large tracts of ecologically unique emergent marsh prairies, lakes and hardwood hammocks in an ACJV focus area in north central Florida that supports a rich diversity of bird species. The karst geology includes sinkhole lakes that flood and drain periodically creating diverse habitat conditions for migratory and resident waterbirds, waterfowl and land bird species including Sandhill Cranes, Wood Storks, Whooping Cranes (re-established population), Mottled Duck and Swallow-tailed Kite. Site visits by joint venture staff and partners confirmed the high resource values. Because of the geology and hydrology of the area, it is important to maintain a network of prairie sites in various flood conditions for habitat and water quality. The diverse local partnership would add key tracts of land to the extensive network of lands that have already been protected. Protection of these tracts will allow for management for wildlife including prescribed burning, mowing and controlled grazing. There is a high threat from urban encroachment and inappropriate agriculture and several of the tracts are already on the market.

Maine

Caribou Bog Penjajowoc Wetland Conservation Project

Project Organization: Orono Land Trust

Grant: \$666,566

Non-Federal Partner Contributions: \$1,422,500

Acres: 3,918 (P)

The Caribou Bog Conservation project brings together a strong and diverse partnership to protect a large network of grant and match tracts on one of the most important inland wetland complexes in Maine. These tracts provide connectivity between Penjajowoc Marsh in the south recognized by the state as highly significant breeding and stopover habitat for rare waterbirds and waterfowl and the extensive Orono and Caribou Bog peatlands to the north particularly important for breeding American Black Ducks. The staff and partners familiar with the site indicate that the application does not adequately account for the high waterbird and waterfowl values including significant concentrations of waterfowl such as scaup and Ring-necked Duck on adjacent Pushaw Lake, which would receive significant shoreline protection if the project is successful. The project occurs within the ACJV Piscataquis/Penobscot River Focus Area, in the Maine Inland Wetlands Planning area. The project builds upon the NAWCA small grant recently received for the southern end of this wetland complex. Equally impressive is the partnership which includes local land trusts, state agencies, NGOs and the state's land grant university. This project has served as a catalyst for the university to protect and manage their lands for wildlife. The Caribou Bog – Penjajowoc Corridor is between the City of Bangor and the university town of Orono and although the project area is now relatively pristine it is highly threatened by future development.

New Jersey

Cape May Peninsula Partnership

Project Organization: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Grant: \$991,000

Non-Federal Partner Contributions: \$2,134,000

Acres: 727 (P)

The Cape May Peninsula Partnership coordinates the efforts of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Cape May National Wildlife Refuge), State of New Jersey, Nature Conservancy, Conservation Fund, Cape May County and private landowners to protect the most important remaining habitat at the southern end of the Cape May Peninsula. Wetland and adjacent upland habitats on the peninsula are critical as migratory stopover habitat especially for landbirds during fall migration; the Delaware Bayshore of Cape May is hemispherically important for shorebirds during spring migration; and the wetlands are also important as waterbird and waterfowl habitat throughout the year. Cape May/Delaware Bay is in joint venture focus areas for waterfowl, landbirds, shorebirds and waterbirds. This project would protect key tracts of forested and scrub-shrub wetlands and upland, salt marsh and grasslands that tie in well to existing lands and will serve as a catalyst for future acquisitions. These tracts will be owned and managed by Cape May National Wildlife Refuge for wildlife and public use.

North Carolina

North Carolina Pee Dee River Conservation Initiative

Project Organization: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Grant: \$1,000,000

Non-Federal Partner Contributions: \$3,486,250

Acres: 2,269 (P)

The North Carolina Pee Dee River Conservation Initiative is a significant wetland conservation project at the boundary between the Piedmont and Coastal Plain BCRs in North Carolina. Although the tracts contain a relatively small percentage of wetlands, these wetlands along the lower Pee Dee represent some of the most significant intact bottomland hardwood, floodplain forests and pristine river marsh wetlands in the Piedmont of North Carolina and a focus area for large-scale habitat conservation (as recognized in the State Wildlife Action plan and other plans). The uplands are threatened by development and logging and provide important buffer to these wetlands. The project tracts provide excellent connectivity to existing protected lands in this river corridor including the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge, Uwharrie National Forest and state game lands and will provide a catalyst for protection of adjacent tracts in the near future. Additionally, conservation organizations involved in this partnership are working with partners across the state line into South Carolina to build a vision of conservation connectivity from this project area all the way to the coast of South Carolina in the Winyah Bay Focus Area. This network of connected wetlands provides important habitat for breeding and migrating landbirds such as Prothonotary Warbler and wintering waterfowl including wood ducks, mallards, black ducks and pintail. Joint venture staff site visits confirmed the high quality of these wetlands and associated bird use. The tracts are in the ACJV Lower Pee Dee River waterfowl focus area in North Carolina.

White Oak River – Morton Tract

Project Organization: North Carolina Coastal Federation

Grant: \$1,000,000

Non-Federal Partner Contributions: \$3,182,601

Acres: 981 (P)

The White Oak River – Morton Tract builds upon a previous NAWCA projects (Onslow Bight, Quaternary Tract) and existing NGO and state-managed lands and the Croatan National Forest by protecting two key riverfront parcels on the White Oak River in coastal North Carolina as part of the larger efforts of the Onslow Bight Conservation Forum. The resubmitted proposal more accurately documents the high resource value of the Morton Tract and adjacent match tract (Huggins). The project will provide benefits to both wetland species and upland species through planned restoration of farmland to longleaf pine. The project is adjacent to the ACJV Neuse-Pamlico Rivers waterfowl focus area and is in the SAMBI (BCR 27) landbird and waterbird focus areas and will provide important habitat for a diversity of wetland-dependent migratory birds and listed species. The project would significantly increase public access to the properties and complement existing public access on the White Oak River Gamelands.

Neuse-Pamlico Conservation Initiative

Project Organization: Ducks Unlimited

Grant: \$999,067

Non-Federal Partner Contributions: \$2,202,436

Acres: 3,812 (P), (E)

The Neuse-Pamlico Conservation initiative would protect and enhance important coastal wetlands including brackish water impoundments, marsh and nearby wetlands and adjacent uplands in an area of the state with very high concentrations of waterfowl such as Northern Pintail and American Black Duck, waterbirds such as Yellow Rail and Wood Stork and shorebirds such as Marbled Godwit. Coastal areas in this part of North Carolina, especially managed wetlands, likely contain the highest wintering concentrations of pintail in the Atlantic Flyway. The project area and all tracts are in the ACJV Abermarle-Pamlico waterfowl focus area and SAMBI (BCR 27) focus areas for waterfowl, landbirds, waterbirds and shorebirds. Protecting these properties and maintaining and enhancing the impoundments would have significant benefits for these species groups over the short term and the enhancement would prevent failure of the dikes and allow for better management of water levels - a high priority for the state. Public access is provided on the Goose Creek Game Lands portion of this project. Match to be lost if the project is not funded this round is \$1.5 million. The project will provide significant benefits in a critical geographic location in the Atlantic Flyway for waterfowl and other wetland-dependent birds.

South Carolina

Middleton Place Woodlands

Project Organization: The Conservation Fund

Grant: \$1,000,000

Non-Federal Partner Contributions: \$2,100,000

Acres: 3,962 (P)

The Middleton Place Woodlands project would protect a key remaining piece in the network of protected lands along the Ashley River corridor in an area of high threat from development in the Charleston, South Carolina metropolitan area. The 3,962-acre project will be complemented by an additional 1,268 acres of protected lands on the other half of this tract at a later date. This resubmitted project includes additional acreage and less inholdings and better reflects the high resource values on this tract and in the surrounding area. The majority of the project is declining forested wetlands and palustrine emergent marsh that provide significant habitat value for wintering waterfowl, breeding wood ducks and priority waterbirds and landbirds. The network of protected wetlands along the Ashley River Corridor is critical to species such as Swallow-Tailed Kite that depend upon large contiguous forested wetlands. In addition, the planned forest management practices will favor the re-establishment of native longleaf pine. The project is in all four national priority wetland areas, in the ACJV CAWS Basin Waterfowl Focus Area and is adjacent or upstream of landbird, waterbird and shorebird focus areas in the SAMBI (BCR 27) plan. Although there will be up to five housing lots reserved on the grant property, these lots are a very small part of the total acreage and the landowner has indicated that development of these lots is unlikely. The lots if they do happen are limited to upland pine plantation areas with a setback from wetlands with 2-3 of the 5 acres remaining subject to the conservation easement.

Rhode Island

Little Narragansett Bay, Pawcatuck River Watershed

Project Organization: The Nature Conservancy

Grant: \$783,333

Non-Federal Partner Contributions: \$4,557,000

Acres: 1,457 (P)

The Little Narragansett Bay, Pawcatuck River Watershed project is an unusual opportunity to protect relatively large and intact tracts of wetlands and adjacent uplands along six miles of river near the coast in Southern New England. The diverse wetland and upland habitats on these tracts including Atlantic white cedar swamp, globally rare coastal plain bog, river, floodplain forests, fens and adjacent pitch pine scrub oak barrens are considered a high priority for conservation in Rhode Island and in several regional conservation plans. In addition to providing direct habitat benefits to landbirds such as Wood Thrush and American Woodcock and waterfowl such as black ducks and Wood Duck in the floodplain wetlands, protecting properties along the river would contribute to maintaining the water quality of Little Narragansett Bay, which would benefit important coastal species such as Atlantic Brant and the federally endangered Roseate Tern. Little Narragansett Bay is part of the ACJV Fishers Island Sound waterfowl focus area and the Lower Pawcatuck River is a landbird focus area in the New England - Mid Atlantic Bird Conservation Region (BCR 30). The diverse partnership provides generous match through a network of match properties along the river that directly connects 6,000 existing acres of protected lands (including a NWR and large WMA) extending upriver and down to the coast. The developable land on these tracts, only seven miles from the coast, is threatened by primary and secondary home development.