



MICHIGAN

“This is a terrific program and probably the only way some of our lost wetlands will be restored.” -- Bob & Julie Roberts, Sanilac Co.

Introduction and General Description

Stewardship. Partnership. Fish and wildlife. Future generations. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in Michigan embraces each of these themes. It's about working together in a voluntary proactive manner with private landowners to restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. It's about sharing resources of time, energy, and funds to help ensure that elements of our common heritage-- **wildlife, fish and a healthy ecosystem**-- will be there for our kids, and their kids.

Since this program began in Michigan in 1988, more than 1,500 projects have been completed. Most projects were on lands in the southern 47 counties of Michigan. Much of this land has been farmed at some point in time, providing the

greatest opportunity for wetland and grassland restoration projects.

Habitats of Special Concern

The Partners Program focuses on improving habitat for Federal trust resources: migratory birds, federally-listed endangered or threatened species, and inter-jurisdictional fish. In Michigan, restoration of wetlands has been, and remains, the primary focus for the Partners Program. Acreage of grassland restorations continues to increase each year. Increased emphasis is also being placed on stream restoration, both in the channel and within the riparian corridor. Specific habitats, such as fens, are also targeted when opportunities exist to improve habitat for federally-listed endangered or threatened species such as the Mitchell's

satyr butterfly.

Threats

Michigan's landscape has been significantly altered by past land uses. Logging, that took place a century ago, followed by agriculture, mining, and urban development have each made indelible marks on the countryside. Wetland losses since the 1800s are estimated at 28 percent statewide; 43 percent in the southern Lower Peninsula. That equates to nearly 2.4 million acres of wetlands lost statewide. Only scattered remnants of Michigan's native grassland/prairies remain. Many streams, particularly smaller ones, have been channelized or otherwise altered. These land uses continue to contribute to the degradation of key fish and wildlife habitat.

Current development is sending another significant wave of change across the landscape. Urban expansion into the rural countryside of southern Michigan, presents a double-edged sword. Development may build over and forever change features like drained wetlands or grassland remnants. Blocks of wildlife habitat are being fragmented and degraded. In contrast, many individuals who acquire acreage "in the country" are interested in protecting and restoring wildlife habitat on their



“We love it!” -- Dan and Karen Frederici, Clinton County

property. As such, the southern Lower Peninsula, with the State's largest population centers and the greatest percentage of land in private ownership, offers both the greatest challenges and opportunities for habitat improvement.

Northern Michigan presents a different set of challenges related to logging, mining, and an expanding population of recreational users. While the landscape is much more "natural" and there is a significant amount of land in public ownership, there are degraded habitats that can be improved. For example, many poor quality road crossings contribute a significant sediment load into streams and obstruct fish passage.

Another threat to high quality native habitat, occurring statewide, is the increasing number and abundance of non-native invasive species.

Conservation Strategies

Habitat Restoration

Restoration projects are developed to improve habitat quality for Federal trust resources in a biologically-sound, cost-effective manner. Because there are no rental or easement payments



Yellow warbler Photo: Cornell Lab. of Ornithology

associated with Partners projects (we only cost-share on the restoration), Michigan landowners tend to participate because they are interested primarily in improving wildlife habitat.

Wetland restorations are focused in southern Michigan where previous agricultural drainage provides abundant opportunities to restore hydrology to formerly drained wetlands. Projects often involve breaking tile lines, filling in ditches, or building low berms. While costs vary considerably depending on the size or complexity of a projects, on-the-ground restoration costs are approximately \$500 per acre.

Grassland habitat provides a buffer around wetland areas and nesting cover for some waterfowl and a number of declining grassland birds such as bobolinks. The Partners Program is working with others in Michigan's agricultural counties to promote the establishment of mixed stands of warm-season grasses and forbs. Depending on the site preparation required and seed mix used, costs range from \$50 to \$500 per acre.

Efforts are underway to restore streambanks and improve road crossings in northern Michigan watersheds to improve habitat for inter-jurisdictional fish. Initial bank stabilization efforts, using bio-logs and other techniques, have cost approximately \$130-150 per linear foot treated. The cost of road crossings vary depending on the size and flow of the stream. To date, individual crossing projects have cost \$45,000-\$120,000. Projects reduce sediment load into the stream, thus improving both

habitat and water quality as well as fish passage.



Northern Michigan road crossing before and after project.

Partners projects are expanding to include removal of invasive plant species from sensitive habitats supporting endangered or threatened species. These projects are much more labor intensive because of the sensitive nature of the habitat. Two of the invasive species targeted for removal are glossy buckthorn in wetland fens and baby's breath on coastal dunes. These efforts will benefit Mitchell's satyr and pitcher's thistle, respectively.

Technical Assistance

The Partners Program continues to provide biological expertise to the USDA in implementing its conservation programs such as "Debt for Nature," the Wetlands Reserve Program and the Conservation Reserve Program. These incentive-based programs

generally reach a different group of landowners than those who participate in the Partners Program.

Partners

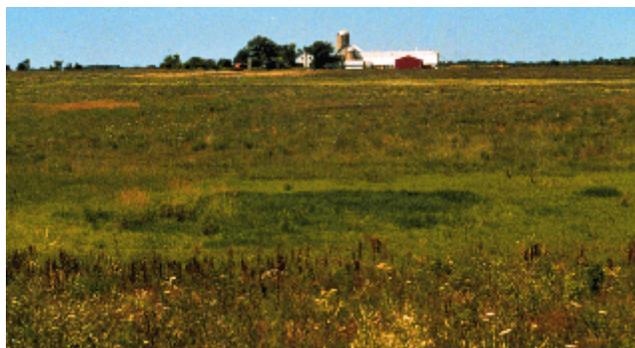
The success of the Partners Program comes from a coordinated effort among a wide variety of agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals. The backbone of the partnership remains the landowners who allow us to assist them with conservation efforts on their private lands.

A partial list of representative partners includes:

- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- Conservation Districts
- Resource Conservation & Development Councils
- County Drain Commissioners
- County Road Commissions
- School Districts
- Michigan State University
- Ducks Unlimited
- Pheasants Forever
- The Nature Conservancy
- Michigan Association of Conservation Districts
- Trout Unlimited
- Wildlife Forever
- Michigan Audubon Society
- Michigan Duck Hunters Association
- Wetlands Foundation of West Michigan
- Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation
- Potter Park Zoological Society
- Friends of the Bad River



Staff from the MI Dept. of Environmental Quality, DU, NRCS and Partners work together to review a Partners project.



Two-acre wetland restoration site before project and 2 years after the tile break was completed.

- Upper Black River Watershed Restoration Committee
- Detroit Edison
- Evergreen Excavating
- Running Excavating

Accomplishments

In fiscal year 2000, Partners Program biologists and their partners completed these projects with 175 landowners, improving more than 1,000 acres:

- wetlands – 211 basins restored, 838.5 acres
- grasslands – 23 projects, 232.2 acres
- streams – 23 sites, 3,140 linear feet restored
- riparian tree planting – 7 sites, 45.6 acres

Since the Partners Program was established in Michigan, the following habitat restorations have been accomplished:

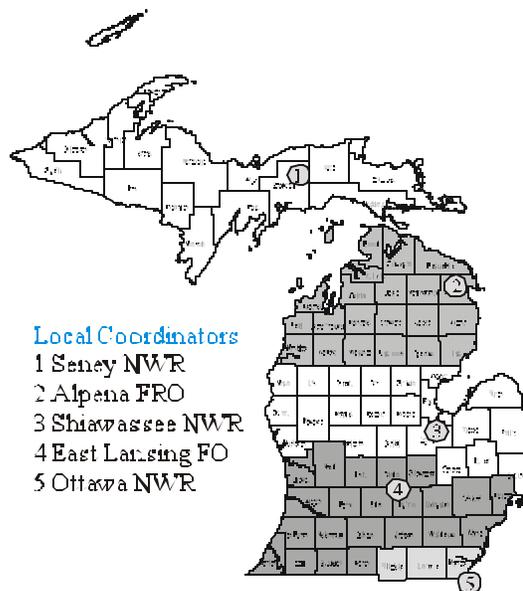
- 1,400 wetland basins totaling 5,600 acres have been restored.

- 560 acres of native grasslands have been restored.
- 83 stream and streamside restoration projects have been completed, restoring 15,693 linear feet of habitat.
- 65.5 river miles have been improved.
- In addition to habitat accomplishments, partnering efforts continue to improve. A close working partnership among the five Partners Program local coordinators and staff of conservation districts, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Ducks Unlimited, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and others allows us to provide landowners with one-stop shopping. Each partner is familiar with the conservation programs that are available and can discuss options with the landowner.

“The Service biologist was very professional. He did everything just as he said he would.”

—
 ss
 tter,
 hou
 Co.

Ru
 Clu
 Cal
 n



Future Needs

Opportunities for habitat restoration and improvement abound across the Michigan landscape, including:

- Restore/enhance 30,000 acres of wetland, primarily in the southern 47 counties to provide breeding and migration habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds.
- Reestablish 60,000 acres of grasslands contiguous with wetlands to improve habitat for grassland nesting birds.
- Stabilize banks on 250 river miles and replace 150 road crossings, focusing on northern streams used by inter-jurisdictional fish.
- Target potential habitat restoration projects to benefit federally endangered or threatened species including the Karner blue butterfly, Mitchell’s satyr, clubshell mussel, pitcher’s thistle and others.

“We are very thankful for programs like this. I only wish more people would take these opportunities, as the benefits programs are irreplaceable.”



– Mike Nauta, Hillsdale Co.

CONTACT

Jim Hudgins
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 2651 Coolidge Road, Suite 101
 East Lansing, MI 48823
 517-351-4230 517-351-5419 (Fax)

“We think this is one of the most useful and important programs the government has for wildlife. It’s fun for us and educational for our children.”

– Anthony Miazgowicz, Hillsdale Co.

August 2001