

Habitat on Cropland and Wetlands

The peak wintering period for waterfowl in Tennessee is from November through February. Ducks need water, food, cover, and protection from disturbance from the time they arrive on their wintering grounds in September until the late migrating species leave in May.

Waterfowl Habitat On....

Flooded winter croplands

Harvested croplands provide waste grain and other natural foods for waterfowl. Corn, soybeans and milo, or areas seeded to waterfowl foods, become especially attractive when flooded with 1 to 15 inches of water. Fields can often be inexpensively flooded after harvest, especially already leveed fields.

Impounded water, rather than fall plowing or burning increases the amount of food available for waterfowl and wetland wildlife.

Fallow or Set-Aside Areas

Fields that readily flood in fall and winter and drain slowly in spring will often grow moist soil plants. Holding shallow water on such fields encourages the growth of these high quality waterfowl foods and increases their availability to waterfowl.

Wetlands

Restoration and Management

Natural wetlands may be reestablished as habitat or managed to increase their value to wintering waterfowl. Water control structures may be installed in field drains to control flooding, manage water levels, and manipulate dense vegetation stands. Existing or reforested bottomland hardwoods can be managed in this way to increase their value to waterfowl.

Additional Information

Project Target Areas

The 21 counties west of the Tennessee River are targeted for the Tennessee Partners Project.



Photo courtesy of US Fish & Wildlife Service

All counties within the state are eligible to participate. Landowners are responsible for the transport of all pipe material from the designated West Tennessee pick-up sites to the project site.

For assistance and more detailed information, contact:

Tennessee Partners Biologist
 Natural Resources Conservation Service
 235 Oil Well Road
 Jackson, TN 38305
 731-668-0700

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

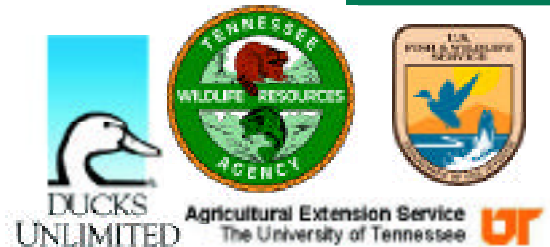
To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Tennessee Partners Project

An Assistance Program for Landowner Management of Waterfowl Habitat



Photo courtesy of Ducks Unlimited



Management of Waterfowl Habitat

Fluctuating duck populations...

Annual wetland habitat availability causes dramatic fluctuations in duck population levels, and some species such as pintails and scaup have not rebounded from below average levels. Shorebirds, songbirds, and other wetland-dependent wildlife have experienced more serious decreases due to wetland loss and degradation. Quality habitat along migration routes and in wintering areas in Tennessee can improve the breeding potential of many bird species the following spring.

You hold the key....

Landowners hold the key to the future for waterfowl and other wetland wildlife. More than 70 percent of the remaining wetlands in North America are privately owned. Landowners can make the difference in restoring America's waterfowl populations.

Mission

The objective of the Tennessee Partners Project is to return waterfowl to the breeding grounds physically conditioned for maximum reproductive success. Managing off-season agricultural fields as waterfowl habitat provides a valuable food source needed to achieve this conditioning with direct benefits to landowners.

This Project is implemented in support of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.



Photo courtesy of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Benefits of Habitat Management

Waterfowl....

will benefit from increased habitat opportunities that are more diverse and of better quality.

Increased habitat opportunities will disperse birds and increase survival rates. Better quality and diversity of foods will produce stronger, hardier birds in better breeding condition.

The Landowner....

will benefit from impounded water.

Decreased water flow will reduce erosion. Water impounded until spring will:

- Inhibit weed growth.
- Increase soil moisture
- Promote minimum and no-till farming

Increased wetland wildlife habitat will create:

- Personal recreational opportunities
- Financial opportunities from recreational leasing.

The landowner retains all property rights.

The Environment....

will benefit from reduced water runoff.

Impounded water will:

- Allow settlement of silt and pesticides and inhibit their runoff into surface waters.
- Contribute to recharging the water table.
- Control erosion.
- Help control flooding.
- Improve biodiversity.



Photo courtesy of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Assistance Available



Photo courtesy of Ducks Unlimited

Project Assistance

Project personnel will provide:

- An evaluation of habitat development potential.
- Management recommendations.
- A project construction plan, if needed.
- Water control structure materials.
- Technical assistance during installation.

Landowner Responsibilities

The landowner must:

- Sign a Wetland Development Agreement that
 - Has a minimum term of 10 years.
 - Does not permit hunting after 12 noon.
 - Permits an annual inspection by any representative of the partners.
 - Outlines management requirements.
- Install and maintain projects in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications.
- Arrange cost sharing, if desired.
- Close water control structures by October 1 or immediately after harvest and maintain until at least March 1.
- Obtain all required permits.

Projects receiving material assistance should encompass a minimum of 5 acres of surface water and adjacent habitat buffer zones.