

CATEGORY: FISH AND WILDLIFE

# PROJECT — WILDLIFE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

## Description —

Restore a native wildlife species population by improving habitat conditions and managing the diversity of wildlife on the property. This project may be carried out by planting fruit- and nut-bearing trees and shrubs, native grasses, wild grains and forbs; employing beneficial land practices, enhancing riparian buffers, and protecting wetlands. It can include the release of propagated game bird species and trapped and transferred native wildlife by a state fish and wildlife agency.

## Benefits —

A successful project can restore native wildlife species to your region, increase wildlife viewing opportunities for nature watchers, and improve experiences for hunters. Improvements in habitat and enhanced habitat diversity can benefit other wildlife in addition to the targeted species.

## Key Steps —

- Investigate what wildlife is native to the region and their habitat and forage needs.
- Habitat improvement techniques will vary depending on desired wildlife species and existing conditions. Techniques may include removing invasive plants, prescribed burning, selective timber cutting to open up canopy, planting nut- and fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, restoring grassland, and installing food plots of wild grains, grasses, and forbs.
- Ask your state fish and wildlife agency about appropriate habitat improvement techniques, along with habitat management needs, and specifics on releasing game birds and relocating wildlife species. For more details, refer to the sample **Wildlife Propagation and Management** project description.
- Ask state fish and wildlife or forestry agencies about acceptable timber management practices that would improve the habitat for wildlife. For more details, refer to the sample **Reforestation** project description.
- Contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service about additional habitat improvement options and proper grassland management. For more details, refer to assorted sample conservation project descriptions, including **Invasive Plant Species Removal** and **Native Grasslands Restoration**.
- Develop your wildlife habitat improvement plan, working with landowners (on private or leased land) or property managers (on public lands).
- Coordinate with adjacent property owners about your project and its benefits.
- Invite a local youth group, such as a 4-H club, to help implement the plan.

- If the plan includes food plots, work with volunteers to remove brush, conduct plantings, inspect food plots weekly, and maintain the plot on a seasonal basis.
- Remember, wildlife should be observed, not disturbed. When viewing wildlife, remain at a safe distance.
- When working with power equipment, rely on experienced operators, follow all instructions, and use safety precautions. When in the field, remember to use sunscreen and insect repellent. Always have first aid kits available.

## Who Can Help —

**Volunteers:** The number of volunteers will vary, depending on the scope of the wildlife habitat improvement plan, such as the size of food plots and tasks required (cutting brush, cultivating land, planting).

**Partners/Sponsors:** State fish and wildlife agencies, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, local chapters of conservation organizations (such as Quality Deer Management, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Ruffed Grouse, Pheasants Forever, and Quail Unlimited), local 4-H clubs, and other IWLA chapters.

**Technical and Other Support:** State fish and wildlife agencies, local chapters of conservation organizations (see above list), and other IWLA chapters.

## Dollars and Cents —

**Expenses:** Purchasing materials for each food plot costs from \$45 to \$175 per acre.

**Revenue:** To offset expenses, consider asking area businesses for contributions (cash or in-kind services) and borrow tools and equipment from members or supporters. Approach your state fish and wildlife agency, other conservation organizations, and private foundations about providing grants for wildlife seed and plant materials. The Natural Resources Conservation Service offers various financial assistance programs for landowners interested in restoring or conserving wetlands or creating wildlife habitat.

## Getting the Word Out —

Promote your work and project successes to local media, and state fish and wildlife agency publications, as well as in your chapter newsletter and on your Web site. Provide guests with information about the League's mission, your chapter's accomplishments, and membership. Take advantage of those non-members participating in this project by promoting the League and recruiting them as new members.

## Chapters With Successful WILDLIFE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT Projects —

Franklin County, PA  
Bethesda-Chevy Chase, MD  
Wisner, NE

Lancaster, PA  
Winchester, VA  
Ottumwa, MN

Worth County, IA  
Maine, ME  
St. Joseph County, IN

**Note:** For the most current specific chapter contacts, refer the *IWLA National Directory* or IWLA Web site ([www.iwla.org](http://www.iwla.org)).