

Atlantic Coast Joint Venture News

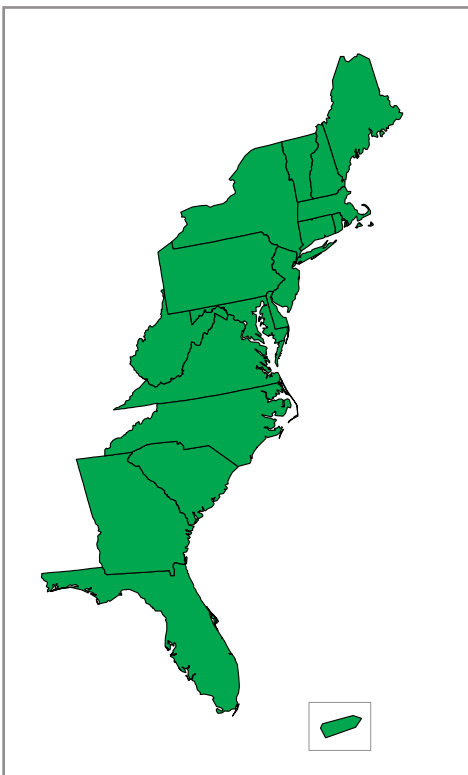
Partners working together for the conservation of native bird species in the Atlantic Flyway region of the United States.

December 2004

Volume 1, Number 3



*Learn more about the
[Atlantic Coast Joint Venture
program.](#)*



Twelve North American Wetland Conservation Act Grants Receive Approval in Atlantic Coast Joint Venture

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission in September, 2004 approved four [North American Wetland Conservation Act grants](#) projects in Maine and South Carolina totaling over \$3.6 million with partners matching nearly \$12 million, conserving over 827,000 acres.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Council in December 2004 recommended funding eight additional projects totaling over \$4 million in four states in the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture. Project partners in Massachusetts, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia matched the grants with nearly \$17.6 million. More than 18,000 acres of important habitats for migratory birds will be protected through acquisition, conservation easements and restoration. If all twelve projects are approved and fully funded, partners in 2004 from 6 states will receive nearly \$8 million in grant funds to conserve over 845,000 acres in the Atlantic Flyway.

[View all twelve NAWCA grant summaries.](#)

Coastal Wetlands Grants Awarded

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in December awarded more than \$4.5 million in National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants to five states in the Atlantic Flyway – Maine, Massachusetts, Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia – for projects to conserve, restore and protect coastal wetlands. State resource agencies and other project partners contributed nearly \$6 million in matching funds to the federal grants, conserving over 8,000 acres of coastal habitats.

[View grant summaries.](#)



Red knots are just one of the many species that benefit from coastal grant projects. *Photo by Bill Buchanon*



Removing remaining fuel from BTC barge. *USCG photo*

Transportation Company Sentenced to Pay \$7 Million Fine into NAWCA Fund for Buzzards Bay

On April 27, 2003, a tanker operated by Bouchard Transportation Company (BTC) spilled an estimated 98,000 gallons of number 6 fuel into Buzzards Bay—a federally-designated “Estuary of National Significance” and a state-designated Ocean Sanctuary. The spill eventually polluted 93 miles of coastline, killed a recorded 461 birds, and shut down thousands of acres of shellfish beds to harvest. The oil spill reduced the habitat quality of Buzzards Bay for migratory birds, resident birds, marine mammals, coastal vegetation and coastal invertebrates.

On November 18, 2004, Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Marianne B. Bowler sentenced BTC to pay a fine of \$10 million and ordered them to comply with several remedial measures designed to prevent future spills. In her sentencing Order, the Court endorsed the U.S. Attorney’s Office recommendation that \$7 million of the fine be placed in the NAWCA fund and used for eligible wetlands conservation projects in the Buzzards Bay Watershed area of Southeastern Massachusetts.

Atlantic Coast Joint Venture staff worked with a coalition of partners led by the [Coalition for Buzzards Bay](#) to put together a set of eligible projects by the July deadline in anticipation of a fall sentencing. The partners put together nine projects for a total of \$6.1 million in grant funds matched by over \$19 million in partner funds for a total of over 2,000 acres conserved. Three of the projects were selected at the December Council meeting ([View grant summaries](#)). Several of the other projects will be resubmitted in March along with a set of new projects from the Buzzards Bay watershed. These projects will result in the conservation of salt and brackish marshes, beaches and coastal ponds most impacted by the spill. Habitats in two [ACJV focus areas](#), Buzzards Bay and Westport Rivers will benefit. Buzzards Bay winters large numbers of assorted waterfowl. Two to three thousand black ducks are counted on Midwinter Waterfowl Surveys scattered in small flocks ranging in size from a few dozen to a few hundred. Several hundred mallards also winter in the area, primarily on the fresh-water rivers and streams that dump into Buzzards Bay. It is an important site for greater scaup, common goldeneyes, bufflehead, and merganser species. Three thousand or more Canada geese make it their winter home as southern New England has become the winter terminus of North Atlantic Population Canada geese. Small number of Atlantic brant winter in the area and in recent years common eiders have been extending their range farther south along the coast to this area. Buzzards Bay is also important for shorebirds, marsh birds and colonial-nesting waterbirds including the largest colony of the federally listed endangered roseate tern in North America.



There are many breeding sites in Buzzards Bay for the Federally endangered Piping plover. *USFWS photo*



Bird deaths for the spill totaled 454 by the end of July 2003. *USFWS photo*

For more information on the Buzzards Bay Oil Spill:
<http://www.buzzardsbay.org/oilspill-4-28-03.htm>

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New Partnerships Emerging in Puerto Rico

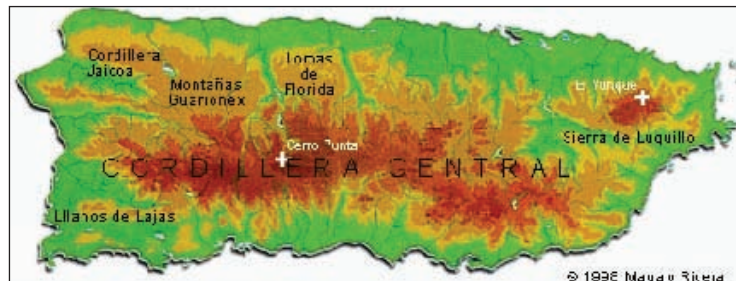
Puerto Rico's natural resources are benefiting from new partnerships established under the Joint Venture and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. When Puerto Rico became a member of the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture in 2001, many opportunities became available for international bird conservation, not only for birds that migrate or spend their winter in Puerto Rico, but for many resident and endemic species as well. In 2004, Puerto Rico received grants for bird conservation from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the new Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. More recently, the ACJV provided the Puerto Rican Ornithological Society with funds to complete and implement a conservation plan for critical bird habitat in the Sierra Bermeja region.

The Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex received a \$50,000 grant through the Small Grants Program of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act in 2004. This project is to restore a 350 acre wetland at Laguna Cartegena National Wildlife Refuge, once considered to be the most important breeding area for resident waterfowl, and migrating and wintering waterfowl in Puerto Rico. Initial efforts have already resulted in dramatic increases in waterfowl.



Also in 2004, The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico received \$250,000 from the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act to assist in acquiring 1,000 acres of karst forest habitat to be placed into the Rio Encantado Natural Reserve. More than 110 migratory bird species have been recorded in the karst forests along with numerous resident and endemic species. Approximately 30 threatened and endangered bird species are present in this region. The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico is contributing \$1.4 million to assist in acquiring lands in the Rio Encantado region. The Trust will protect and manage the preserve in perpetuity, enriching the 17,000 acre network of conserved land it already manages islandwide.

Recognizing the need to assist further in bird conservation in Puerto Rico, the ACJV provided \$10,000 to the Puerto Rican Ornithological Society to develop and implement a conservation plan for critical bird habitat in the Sierra Bermeja region of southwestern Puerto Rico. Much of this



area is in private ownership, but a small portion is part of the Caribbean Island NWR Complex. Approximately 75% of Puerto Rico's endemic bird

species exist here, along with several threatened and endangered plants. The Sierra Bermeja project is a demonstration project of the Puerto Rico Important Bird Area program, an initiative of the PROS and [Birdlife](#)



Northeast Cape Fear River corridor.

Photo by: North Carolina Coastal Land Trust



The Shaken Creek Savanna.

Photo by: North Carolina Coastal Land Trust

For more information on the Onslow Bight contact:
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The submission deadline for the next issue of Atlantic Coast Joint Venture News is February 15, 2005. Send press releases, comments and subscription inquiries to debra_reynolds@fws.gov.

International Caribbean Program. The plan focuses on community support and land acquisition in the municipalities of Cabo Rojo and Lajas. Funding for the entire project was made possible by the American Bird Conservancy, Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, Ford Motor Company, Toyota Motor Corporation, and the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture. *Information from this article contributed by Veronica Anadón-Irizarry.*

Partnership Profile: The Onslow Bight

The Onslow Bight Region encompasses all or portions of nine counties in eastern North Carolina extending from the lower Northeast Cape Fear River at the southern end to the Pamlico River at the northern end and from offshore waters to approximately 30 miles inland. The Onslow Bight, named for the land surrounding the massive saltwater expanse of Onslow Bay which lies in the center of the region, is a rich mosaic of barrier islands, marshes, riverine wetlands, pocosins, longleaf pine savannas and many other ecologically diverse coastal ecosystems. The region is home to a number of rare and endangered plant and animal species including the federally endangered rough-leaved loosestrife, golden sedge, red-cockaded woodpecker, and shortnose sturgeon. A diversity of waterfowl and wetland dependent bird species such as northern pintail, American black duck, wood duck, lesser scaup, little blue heron and black rail overwinter or breed in the expansive swamp forests and/or coastal marshes of the region.

The Onslow Bight Region includes 16 Important Bird Areas identified by the National Audubon Society, one national wildlife refuge, one national estuarine research reserve, one state nature preserve, eight State Game Lands, one national seashore, one national forest, and over 100 state natural heritage sites. The Onslow Bight Conservation Forum (OBCF) originated in 2001 out of a unified interest among a diversity of agencies and organizations to buffer and to create corridors between these existing conservation lands and to coordinate and accelerate land conservation efforts in the region. The OBCF partnership operates under a signed Memorandum of Understanding and includes representatives from the military, state and federal natural resource agencies, and conservation organizations. The increased communication and coordination with the OBCF partnership is already yielding extraordinary conservation dividends.

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture has played a key role in assisting the OBCF partnership meet its land conservation and restoration goals. NAWCA grants have helped fund the acquisitions of key parcels along the Northeast Cape Fear River contributing to a growing corridor of over 8,000 acres of protected land along this ecologically significant waterway and two acquisitions of large parcels comprising the Shaken Creek Savanna, one of the most unusual and diverse wetland savanna systems left in the state. NAWCA funds also contributed to the acquisition of a rare forested wetland community at Sea Gate Woods and to one of the largest wetland restoration projects ever initiated in the State at North River Farms. *Article Contributed by Janice Allen.*



BCR 30 is a critical migration area for species like the Dunlin.

Photo by Bill Buchanan

Upcoming meetings of the
Joint Venture:
ACJV Waterfowl Technical
Committee
February 27, 2005
Mystic, Connecticut

ACJV Waterfowl Technical
Committee (Summer)
July 24, 2005
Bar Harbor, Maine

ACJV Integrated Bird
Conservation Committee
March 14, 2005
Arlington, Virginia

ACJV Management Board
March 15, 2005
Arlington, Virginia

ACJV Management Board
(Summer)
July 26 and 27, 2005
Bar Harbor, Maine

Grant proposal deadlines:
North American Wetlands
Conservation Act Standard
Grants
March 4 and July 29, 2005

North American Wetlands
Conservation Act Small Grants
December 2, 2005

National Coastal Wetlands
Conservation Act Grants
First week of June, 2005

Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Hosts New England Mid Atlantic Bird Conservation Workshop

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies hosted a bird conservation workshop December 7-9, 2004 in Cape May, New Jersey. This workshop brought together 85 state, federal and non-governmental organization partners from ten states to review and reach consensus on the highest priorities for bird conservation in the New England Mid Atlantic Bird Conservation Region, the region encompassing the coastal plain from southern Maine to northern Virginia. Using information from the major continental and regional bird conservation plans as well as the draft State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies, partners reached consensus on priority bird species, habitat-species suites, threats to these species and habitats, approaches for determining population and habitat goals, focus areas, and priority conservation actions (habitat and non-habitat conservation projects as well as monitoring, research and outreach projects). Databases and maps created for the workshop allowed state partners, refuge biologists and others to compare priorities among their state and refuge plans and to determine their ability to meet habitat objectives in the region. The results of this workshop and subsequent analyses will be used to draft a bird conservation plan for this region in the months ahead and will be used by states to refine their Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies.

Staff News

Debra Reynolds joined the Joint Venture in December as an Outreach Coordinator. She worked most recently at the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge as an outreach and education specialist and has held previous positions in conservation planning. Debra will work from the USFWS Regional Office in Hadley, Massachusetts.

Through an interagency agreement with USGS, the ACJV also welcomes a half-time GIS analyst, Dan Endreson. Dan is co-located with science coordinator Tim Jones at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center.

Joint Meeting with Eastern Habitat Joint Venture Planned

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Management Board will be meeting jointly with the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture in July 2005 in Bar Harbor, Maine. The Eastern Habitat joint Venture delivers habitat conservation for migratory birds in eastern Canada. The management boards will be celebrating the completion of joint conservation plans for the Atlantic Northern Forest and the Lower Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Regions and discussing Joint Venture projects in the Atlantic Flyway.