

Dept. of Natural Resources: Highlights habitat restoration partnerships

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is proud to highlight partnerships with several external organizations that help improve public land and habitat across our state.

Earlier this year, the DNR added two new partnerships to the growing list who help strengthen the DNR's mission to protect and improve habitat for wildlife species.

“Habitat conservation programs are essential to maintaining and improving the places where wildlife live to ensure their populations are healthy,” said Jason Fleener, DNR Wetland Habitat Specialist. “Habitat conservation also helps Wisconsinites by improving the land and water quality in the places where people recreate and live.”

The two new partnerships are with the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association (WWA) and the Ruffed Grouse/American Woodcock Society (RGS). Both partnerships include new, jointly funded positions dedicated to their respective projects and will begin work this year.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association – The new partnership with the [Wisconsin Waterfowl Association \(WWA\)](#) adds two new positions, both Public Lands Ecologists. These ecologists will work exclusively on DNR-managed public lands to restore and enhance wetland habitat. They will also work on expanding wild rice beds throughout the Ceded Territory in northern Wisconsin. These positions are contracted to continue through at least 2024. Wisconsin Waterfowl Association and the DNR are mutually contributing funding for this work.

Ruffed Grouse/American Woodcock Society – The partnership with the [Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society \(RGS\)](#) adds two forest wildlife habitat biologist positions. These biologists will work closely with the Wisconsin DNR wildlife program to provide diversified age-class forests that will sustain the timber industry while supporting wildlife habitat on private and public lands in the northern part of the state.

The biologists will also help enhance and maintain hunter-access to public lands, develop elk habitat with the US Forest Service and promote the mission of the Young Forest Partnership more generally. Additionally, these biologists will assist private landowners enrolled in the [Deer Management Assistance Program \(DMAP\)](#) with creating wildlife habitats on their property. These positions are scheduled to last into 2025 and may continue beyond that date, depending on community support.

A Growing List Of Partners

These new partnerships join a growing list of other jointly funded positions across Wisconsin. The DNR thanks all the organizations that have built creative partnerships with us and demonstrated their commitment to habitat restoration.

Lumberjack Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D) Agreement – In August 2014, the DNR entered into an agreement with several conservation organizations and government agencies for the purpose of enhancing public understanding of the [Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership \(WYFP\)](#). One of these groups was the [Lumberjack RC&D Council](#), a multi-county nonprofit organization in Northeast Wisconsin.

In 2021, the DNR renewed its agreement with the Lumberjack RC&D Council to partially fund an administrator who coordinates the partners' efforts and provides outreach and technical assistance in creating and managing young forest habitat. This agreement is scheduled to last until June 2024.

Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists – The DNR reached a five-year agreement with [Pheasants Forever](#) and the [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#) to provide funding for eight Farm Bill Biologist positions. These positions will assist in the promotion of USDA Farm Service Agency and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service habitat conservation programs on private lands, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality

Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Pheasants Forever recently confirmed that these positions are filled, and they are ready to hit the ground running to help provide private land conservation services across the state.

Ducks Unlimited Engineering Contract – The DNR renewed a three-year agreement with [Ducks Unlimited \(DU\)](#) to provide the department with engineering services for wetland habitat infrastructure and wetland restoration projects through June 2025. The project will utilize Ducks Unlimited's expertise and capacity to help the DNR deliver more wetland projects to state lands. Since the original agreement in 2016, Ducks Unlimited has provided engineering services for approximately 50 DNR wetland project sites across the state.