

# USDA NRCS Forestry Programs for Rhode Island

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Looking Forward - Recovering From Oak Loss  
on Rhode Island's Private Woodlands

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&

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NRCS is the lead federal agency within the USDA that helps private landowners *voluntarily* conserve soil, water, and other natural resources



Productive Soil



Healthy Plants



Clean Water

## Who Are We?

We were formally known as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) which was created in 1935 to reverse the devastation caused as a result of the Dust Bowl



# What do we do?

- We work primarily on private lands
- We provide technical assistance to help landowners develop and implement conservation plans for their property.
- We provide financial assistance to both protect and restore natural resources.
- All our programs are voluntary and non-regulatory

## Forest Conservation Assistance for Private Woodland Owners

- Environmental Quality  
Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship  
Program (CtSP)
- Regional Conservation  
Partnership Program (RCPP)
  - » Young Forest Project
  - » Healthy Forest Project



# Common Forestry Practices

- Forest Management Plan Preparation
- Forest Stand Improvement
- Forest Trails & Landings
- Early Successional Habitat Development
- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Tree & Shrub Site Preparation
- Tree & Shrub Planting
- Pruning
- Invasive Species Management
- Woody Residue Treatment
- Fire Break/Dy Hydrant



## Single Tree Selection





# Clearcutting

## Even-aged Management System



# Clearcutting with Reserves (retaining 5-8 trees per acre)



# Clearcutting response



Narrow River Land Trust – RI – 20 months after cut

Photo: Gary Casabona, NRCS

# Seed Tree Harvest (5-20 trees retained)



# Shelterwood Harvest (retaining 30-50 trees/acre)



## Group Selection, (0.1 - 1 acre)



# Process for New Participants


- **Submit an Application,**
- **Determine Objectives and Eligibility,**
- **Develop Plan and Contract Application,**
- **Applications Evaluated & Ranked Monthly,**
- **Applications selected for Funding,**
- **Practice details & prescriptions provided by NRCS...  
then work can begin.**

# Process for Current NRCS Forestry Clients

- Forest Conditions Have Changed Since NRCS Contract Awarded
- Contact NRCS Planner & TSP (Forester)
- TSP (Forester) should revise forest management recommendations based upon new conditions (mortality, etc) and submit to NRCS
- NRCS will review and certify new recommendations
- Upon NRCS approval, continue with implementation of contract with revised recommendations
- Coordinate with NRCS to certify practice completion & payment




# Some Other NRCS Forestry Projects

*The RI RC&D Area Council, Inc.*  "HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND SINCE 1973"

## The Rhode Island Coverts Program

Managing Rhode Island's Forests to Enhance Wildlife Habitat




### The Issue

Rhode Island's forests provide habitat to a large variety of wildlife species. While forests cover 55 percent of Rhode Island, wildlife biologists and foresters are finding that forest fragmentation and loss of habitat is having a detrimental effect on many bird species and other wildlife. For instance, twelve of sixteen shrubland birds and seven of ten grassland birds have declining population trends in the region. Many are listed as threatened or endangered in several northeastern states. Additionally, American woodcock have declined by 40% over the past 30 years, ruffed grouse have largely disappeared from southern New England, and the New England cottontail occur in only 20% of the area that this species was historically found.

The issue is that most of the state's 355,000 acres of forest are owned by an estimated 38,000 private individuals who own 50 acres or less. These small tracts of land have become fragmented by roads, homebuilding and other developments which have disrupted wildlife corridors. In addition, forest landowners with small amounts of forest land are less likely to manage their property for wildlife habitat protection.

RI RC&D, working with numerous partners, has started the Rhode Island Coverts Program in Rhode Island to help woodland owners conserve their land and protect wildlife habitats in an effort to sustain forests and prevent further fragmentation.

### Rhode Islands Coverts Project




The **Rhode Island Coverts Project** is the latest program to help landowners. The Coverts Project is a special educational program developed jointly by Cooperative Extension Systems in Connecticut and Vermont and the Ruffed Grouse Society in 1983. Since then it has expanded to eleven other states across the northeastern U.S. with the exception of the state of Rhode Island.

Covert (*pronounced cover with "t"*) is a word that describes a thicket that provides shelter cover for wildlife.


The goal of the Project is to show individual woodland owners how sound forest management practices can make wildlife healthier, more diverse, and more abundant through improved wildlife habitats. Actively managed demonstration areas are used as outdoor classrooms. A well-designed covert will provide food sources, nesting sites, and protection from snow, ice, and predators. One example of a covert is a tree and shrub thicket that provides shelter for wildlife such as quail, rabbits, pheasants, turkeys and songbirds. A tree and shrub covert can be established through natural regeneration, enhancing existing thickets, or designing and planting a thicket from scratch on open ground. Snags (standing or fallen dead trees) are another example of a covert that can benefit wildlife. Snags provide nesting or den sites as well as insects as a source of food for wildlife such as birds. Cavity nesting birds that reduce insect and rodent populations and provide color and song, need snags to thrive.

## The Young Forest Project

GROWING WILDLIFE HABITAT TOGETHER



Young forest provides essential homes for many kinds of wildlife. We are losing this important habitat as woodlands in our region grow older and become more uniform. More than 60 kinds of mammals, birds, and reptiles require young forest to survive. Their populations have been falling, and they are considered "species of greatest conservation need" in numerous states. Many other more common kinds of wildlife also need and use young forest.



# Some Other NRCS Forestry Projects

## Forestry for RI's Birds

Enhancing habitat by managing forests  
with birds in mind

RI Coverts Workshop



Wood Thrush  
© Andrew Spencer

# Some Other NRCS Forestry Projects

Southern New England Heritage Forest (SNEHF)  
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)  
Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP) Application



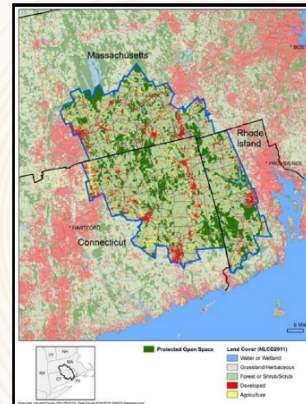
## Do you love your woods?

Are you interested in birds?

Do you want to learn more about how to make your woods  
healthy for birds?

Are you located in the Southern New England Heritage Forest?\*

\*Southern New England Heritage Forest towns include: Burrillville, Scituate, Foster, Gloucester, Coventry, Exeter, West Greenwich, Hopkinton and Richmond. Properties in the Scituate Reservoir Watershed will be prioritized.



- ◇ Funding is available for Forest Management Plans with Audubon Society of RI habitat assessments through the USDA-NRCS EQIP Program.
- ◇ Professional Foresters and Audubon Biologists are available to assist you!
- ◇ Free technical and application assistance available for interested landowners.
- ◇ Now accepting applications!

### Interested in Learning More?

Contact Kate Sayles at 401.934.0840 or [ksayles.nrcid@gmail.com](mailto:ksayles.nrcid@gmail.com) to see if you qualify for this excellent opportunity!

This opportunity is made possible by The Northern RI Conservation District, in partnership with The Last Green Valley, and the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership with funding made possible by a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

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# More Information



## Conservation Practices & Programs for Forest Land in Rhode Island



### Why are healthy forests important?

As a Rhode Island forest land owner, you can help promote healthy, sustainable forests and protect rare ecosystems and rare species habitat in the Ocean State.

Healthy forests are a critical part of our landscape. Forest lands provide clean air, carbon sequestration, climate change buffering, flood protection, wildlife habitat, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment.

Our forests work to keep us healthy by storing and filtering the water that we drink. Forests and forest products also provide important economic and energy benefits.

Privately owned forests make up a substantial share of our forest resource base, but are increasingly being divided into smaller parcels and are facing increasing threats from changes in climate, population and land use.

Wildfires, insects and disease, and invasive species can damage the ability of forests to do their important work.

### Can I get help protecting my forest?

Rhode Island NRCS is working with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to provide technical assistance for enhancing the health and diversity of forest land and wildlife habitat in forests.

We can help you develop and implement a sustainable forest management plan. Technical and financial assistance is offered through the federal **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** and the **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**.



### Conservation practices eligible for financial assistance

Below is a partial list of forestry-related conservation practices eligible for financial compensation through EQIP. To be eligible for financial assistance, conservation practices must be part of your forest management plan.

For a complete list of eligible practices and payment rates, please visit us online or call your local NRCS field office.

- Forest management plan preparation
- Forest stand improvement
- Forest trails and landings
- Early successional habitat
- Invasive species control
- Tree and shrub planting, pruning and site preparation
- Firebreaks
- Riparian forest buffers
- Woody residue treatment

### Contact us

**NRCS RI Offices**  
60 Quaker Lane, Suite 46  
Warwick, RI 02886

**Northern RI Field Office**  
*Serving Providence County*  
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401-822-8833

**Southern RI Field Office**  
*Serving Kent and Washington counties*  
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for Field Operations  
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**Eastern RI Field Office**  
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Rhode Island  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
[www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov)



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### Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP helps promote farm and forest production by enhancing the environmental quality of soil, water, air, plants and animals.

### Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

CSP helps farm and forest land owners maintain and improve existing conservation systems and adopt new conservation activities.



### About NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is a federal agency that helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners conserve the nation's soil, water, air and other natural resources.

NRCS conservationists provide technical expertise and conservation planning for landowners who want to make conservation improvements to their land.

The agency offers financial assistance through programs authorized under the federal Farm Bill. All programs are voluntary and offer science-based solutions that benefit both the landowner and the environment.

We work with local conservation districts and other partners to serve Rhode Island farmers and landowners.

### Who can apply?

Private forest land owners who have forest management plans can apply for NRCS forestry assistance.

- In Rhode Island, forest stewardship plans, as well as most forest management plans under the Farm, Forest and Open Space Act will fulfill this requirement.
- All forest management plans will be reviewed individually by NRCS to ensure that conservation principles have been addressed to NRCS standards.
- If you need a forest management plan, NRCS funding may be available to help.

There is no minimum acreage requirement to apply for EQIP or CSP, however, projects with more significant resource concerns are more likely to receive funding.

### How and when do I apply?

Applications may be submitted anytime. All applications will be evaluated periodically in a competitive ranking process as funding becomes available. Ranking criteria is available on our website.

To apply, you will need to file the following forms (also on our website):

- Conservation Program Application (CCC-1200)
- Adjusted Gross Income Certification (CCC-926)
- Highly Erodible Land & Wetland Conservation Certification (AD-1026)

If your application is funded, you will be required to install and maintain your conservation practices according to NRCS standards.

### Conservation Plans & Conservation Activity Plans

Your program application must be supported by an NRCS approved conservation plan, which provides documentation of the practices that could be used to address your natural resource concerns. We will work with you to develop an approved conservation plan.

You may also apply for financial assistance to hire Technical Service Providers (TSP) to develop a specialty plans called Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) to address certain land use activities or specific resource needs on your land.

Call your local NRCS field office or visit us online for more information.



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[www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov)

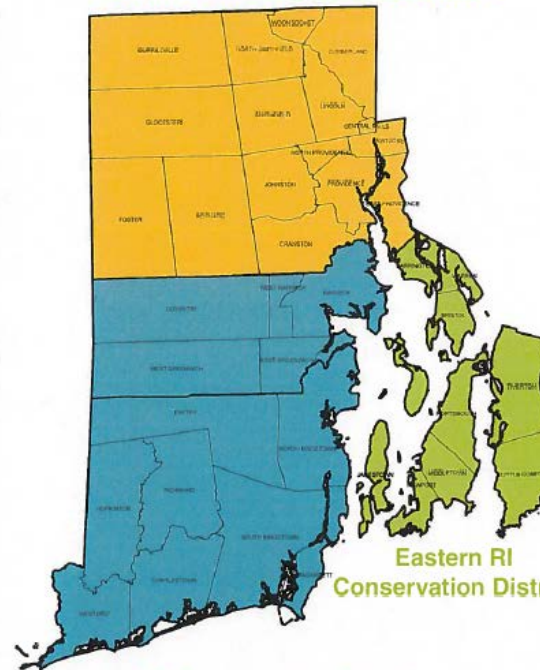
For Assistance



## Rhode Island Field Offices & Conservation Districts



### Northern RI Conservation District



### NRCS RI Offices

60 Quaker Lane, Suite 46  
Warwick, RI 02886

#### Northern RI | NRCS Field Office

Serving Providence County  
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### Southern RI Conservation District



# Thank You

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