

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

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Since 1990, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has been working to voluntarily restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitats on private lands throughout California and Nevada. The program provides financial and technical assistance to conservation minded farmers, ranchers, and other landowners to benefit fish and wildlife by restoring historic ecological communities in conjunction with the desires and priorities of private landowners. Restored habitats provide important food, cover, and water for federal trust species including migratory birds, anadromous fish (salmon and steelhead), and threatened and endangered species. Projects that receive the highest priority for funding are those that provide direct benefits to federal trust species and/or are located near a National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

The majority of habitat improvement projects funded through the Partners program are those that restore wetlands, riparian areas, native uplands, or a combination of habitats. Wetland restoration typically involves the use of earthmoving equipment to restore historic topography that has been leveled or drained for agriculture or other uses. To mimic historic wetland conditions, water control and delivery structures are placed around the restored wetland and wetland vegetation is planted to produce immediate wildlife benefits. Riparian restoration projects often are accomplished by working with ranchers and others to exclude livestock from creeks, replant native riparian vegetation, and to restore and stabilize eroding streambanks. Restoration of native uplands (lands supporting primarily native grasses and forbs) involves the eradication of non-native weeds, planting of native upland plants, and improved grazing management. Educational projects are also a priority of the program, whereby habitat improvement projects involve teachers, students, and parents alike in learning about fish and wildlife habitats and the importance of preserving and protecting our fish and wildlife heritage.

Projects selected for funding are those in which the landowner provides a substantial contribution to project installation, either as cash or as "in-kind" services, supplies, or other contributions that typically amount to 50% or more of the project cost. Cost share contributions for both the FWS and the landowner can be reduced substantially if another agency, non-profit, or other organizational partner helps fund the project. Criteria used to determine which projects are funded include the diversity of fish and wildlife expected to benefit, project size, cost-effectiveness, the number of partners, proximity of the project to a NWR or other protected area, and if the project contributes to other FWS priorities. Those interested in seeking funding or other assistance through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program are encouraged to call (916) 414-6446 for more information.