

Making Habitat Happen: Financial Assistance for Landowners

By Emma Carcagno, UNH Cooperative Extension



Coverts Cooperator David White
Photo by: Emma Carcagno

With over 80% of New Hampshire's forestland in private ownership, private landowners play an integral role in creating, enhancing and maintaining wildlife habitats. Many of the habitats required by rare wildlife in NH require active habitat management to maintain their unique characteristics. However, like any big project, there are many obstacles to doing this valuable work on private lands. Whether you are hiring a brontosaurus (a large machine that grinds young trees) to create shrublands habitat, cutting down low-quality timber to create a wildlife opening, or forgoing income to delay the mowing of a hay field to provide

breeding habitat for grassland birds, there is no denying that wildlife habitat management can cost landowners money. Luckily, here in New Hampshire, there are many [programs](#) available to help put this important work within reach of most landowners.

David White, a UNH Cooperative Extension [Coverts Cooperator](#) in Sandwich, NH is very familiar with wildlife habitat management. David and his wife C.C. have worked hard to manage their property with wildlife in mind, creating permanent wildlife openings, planting fruit trees for wildlife, doing timber stand improvement, creating patch cuts, and building and improving woods roads to better access their 118 acre property. All of these projects were done with financial assistance through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Interestingly, it doesn't matter if you do the work or hire someone; you are paid the same amount. David and C.C. have done the majority of the work themselves, but David notes that the financial assistance from his NRCS contracts would have likely covered the cost of hiring a contractor. The fruits of their labor have not gone unnoticed by the wildlife on their property. "We have seen so many bear foraging in our wildlife opening, it's really unbelievable. We weren't expecting such an immediate positive response." David emphasizes that, "Without a doubt, without these programs this work simply wouldn't have happened, and it's been a pleasure."

In New Hampshire, both NRCS and NH Fish and Game (NHF&G) offer financial assistance programs for wildlife habitat projects. NRCS offers two programs available only to private landowners, the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) and the [Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program](#) (WHIP). Both EQIP and WHIP help pay for all kinds of environmental practices which include everything from improving air and water quality to specific wildlife habitat management. If you are interested in these programs and want to learn more call your [local NRCS conservationist](#) or [UNH Cooperative Extension county forester](#).



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The NHF&G Department's [Small Grants Program](#) is designed to help landowners restore, maintain, or enhance wildlife habitat. It applies to properties larger than 25 acres, and is particularly useful for towns or cities interested in managing land for wildlife, since all landowners qualify, not just private landowners. Because it is funded by a fee required of all who purchase a New Hampshire hunting license, the land needs to remain open for non-motorized public use, including hunting. For more information, contact your [regional New Hampshire Fish and Game Department office](#).

To hear more stories from landowners who've used these programs to help pay for habitat projects, check out the ["Landowner Stories" section of the Taking Action for Wildlife website](#). Tune into the next Taking Action for Wildlife e-Newsletter to read about how landowners can use timber harvests as a way to help cover the costs of wildlife habitat projects.