



2001 Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Program Focus —

Georgia has utilized both priority practices and priority habitats in applying WHIP to the Georgia landscape.

The priority practices emphasized are field borders, hedgerows, longleaf pine restoration and conversion of improved grasses to native warm season grasses. These practices allow for emphasis on buffers, increasing nesting areas and travel lanes as well as restoring native habitat.

Priority habitats allow limited funds to be used in those areas that would benefit most from applied management. Priority habitats concentrate funds in areas where declining native habitats have been most affected.



Georgia Summary

Overview

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program that helps landowners develop and improve wildlife habitat on private lands. The program offers landowners up to 75 percent cost-share for wildlife habitat projects.

Georgia landowners have shown tremendous interest in WHIP. Available funds can support only a fraction of the applications received. Consequently a decision was made to utilize limited funds to carry out special projects. These projects serve as demonstrations of how quality habitats can be realized through proper management.

All projects were for wildlife habitat management on farmland. Priority practices were field borders, hedgerows, longleaf pine restoration, and conversion of improved grasses to native warm season grasses.

Accomplishments

Georgia developed contracts for 22 special projects in fiscal year 2001. Contracts were entered into with individual landowners, a soil and water conservation district, and with the Longleaf Pine Alliance of Auburn University. These projects will serve to show a number of different habitat management practices in various locations in the state. Trees and shrubs will be planted on 412 acres to restore both longleaf pine and bottomland hardwood habitats. Prescribed burning will be applied to 3319 acres to provide quality vegetative composition and structure. Non-native vegetation will be eradicated on 240 acres and re-established to wildlife-friendly native warm season grasses.

Funds from previous program years have allowed the development of 310 WHIP contracts. These contracts have resulted in habitat improvement on almost 26,250 acres of farmland. Prescribed burning, tree planting, and reestablishment of wildlife friendly plant communities will begin to provide significant gains for declining species.

Program Benefits

Georgia's WHIP program has provided opportunities to introduce new clientele to USDA programs providing a stronger support base for natural resources conservation. WHIP has strengthened the cooperation with such partners as Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Longleaf Pine Alliance of Auburn University. The sharing of both staff and funding arrangements has allowed WHIP to reach many more customers.

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