

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

Adaptive Management of American Woodcock in the Atlantic Northern Forest Bird Conservation Region



- **The Challenge:** Research goals of this project seek to take an adaptive approach to habitat management for American woodcock. Under this process a mix of early successional forest habitat will be created following the allowable guidelines of state forest management, National Wildlife Refuge management plans, and commercial timber management plans; management actions will consist of various treatments at different scales (e.g., clear cutting, strip cutting, overstory removal) on commercially marketable timber, and treatments of non-commercial timber (alder, scrub/shrub habitats) such as cutting with heavy equipment and brush saws; Competing hypotheses include: H1: Even age forest management will provide the highest quality early successional habitat. H2: Overstory removal provides high quality habitat. We will utilize the woodcock Singing Ground Surveys technique to monitor responses and to compare the result of a chosen management action with the predictions under each hypothesis.



- **The Science:** The American woodcock is a US Fish and Wildlife Service "Species of Concern" and has been selected as a "Focal Species." The goal of USFWS is "to provide explicit, strategic, and adaptive sets of conservation actions required to return the species to healthy and sustainable levels." This program is envisioned to benefit woodcock habitat on a landscape scale, through coordinated research, further development of wildlife/forest management practices, implementation guidelines, and technical education assistance directed toward private landowners. Sustainable Forestry is the cornerstone of the Initiative.



- **The Future:** This project is an ongoing collaboration with USFWS, The Wildlife Management Institute, state wildlife agencies, private timber companies and private land owners. To date more than 75 presentations have been made to interested parties, and more than 192 properties have been assessed. Projects have begun on 91 properties affecting more 61,000 acres of forest land in New England alone. A web site www.timberdoodle.org was developed and populated with documentation of Best Management Practices and opportunities for technical assistance. A brochure: "Wildlife Needs Young Forest, The Woodcock Management Plan" was developed and distributed in the project states. The program is expanding into other states within the breeding range of woodcock.