

The Golden-winged Warbler Initiative

Tips to help you Along the Way



The Golden-winged Warbler is a small migratory songbird that has been experiencing a major decline in its population since the 1960's. This is predominately due to the decline in young forest habitat (growing into closed-canopy forest). Young forest habitat embedded in a highly forested landscape is where Golden-winged Warblers breed and produce offspring during the summer months.

This migratory songbird breeds in young forest throughout Appalachia and spends winters in southern Central America and northern South America.

They build nests on the ground in herbaceous and woody cover

Males and females forage for insects, especially caterpillars, in trees and shrubs



The “Down and Birdy” on the Program

The Golden-winged Warbler Habitat Initiative is working to establish young forest habitat on public and private lands. On private lands, funding through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) may be available to help cover some costs of habitat management. The program addresses declining Golden-winged Warbler populations, along with several other game and non-game species that use the same habitat, all while helping landowner objectives!

Key Personnel of the Program

Biologist

A biologist with National Wild Turkey Federation will write the initial plan and address wildlife habitat concerns.

Foresters

Foresters (Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Pheasants Forever, and Department of Conservation & Natural Resources) will prescribe activities that address forest health.

NRCS Staff

Natural Resources Conservation Service staff and partner biologists will write plans and contracts and provide cost-share information.

Field Technicians

Field technicians and biologists will monitor the sites to see if Golden-winged Warblers and other young-forest associated species use the habitat.



The Process

There are several steps in the GWWA Habitat program. Although, they may seem confusing you have a team of professionals to help you along the way!

1. The Initial Site Visit

One of the first steps is the initial site visit where a team of biologists, foresters, and staff from cooperating agencies all meet with you on your property. We'll talk about your objectives and how they may fit with a Golden-winged Warbler project. We will work together to identify areas of your property that are both suited to your personal objectives and appropriate for Golden-winged Warbler habitat.

2. Filling out an NRCS application

This step may be completed before or after the initial site visit. The application is non-binding (you can cancel it at any time during the planning stage) and helps determine if you are eligible for cost-share programs and how your project ranks against (compares to) other potential Golden-winged Warbler projects.

US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE	
CONSERVATION PROGRAM APPLICATION	
Name:	Application Number:
Address:	Application Date:
Email:	County and State:

3. Planning: The Golden-winged Warbler Conservation Activity Plan (GWWA-CAP)

After the initial site visit and submission of an application, the foresters and biologist work together to draft a habitat management plan (a GWWA-CAP) highlighting potential projects.

Once area(s) and project(s) are chosen, data will be collected by GWWA foresters to ensure sustainable forestry and to document the conditions of your forest before management occurs.

4. Plan Review

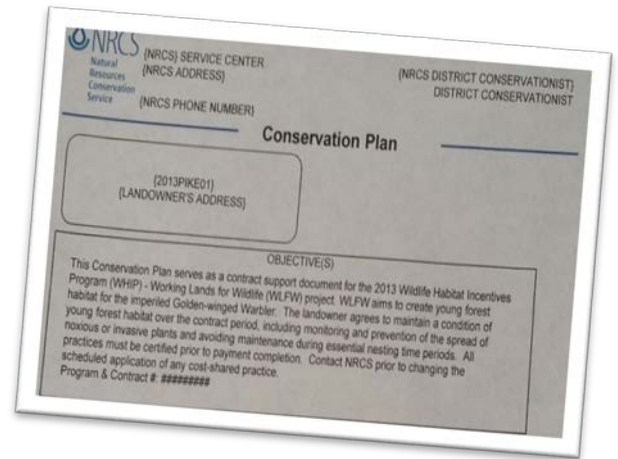
When the GWWA-CAP draft plan is complete, you will review the plan and determine what works best for you. When you, the biologist, and foresters agree on the plan of action, the draft plan will be finalized.



The Process (cont.)

5. NRCS Plan & Contract

NRCS and partners reference the finalized GWWA-CAP plan to produce draft plan and contract documents for your review. The contract includes reimbursement amounts for management practices and timelines for completion. If everything looks good, the plan, contract, and other supporting documents are finalized and sent for review at higher levels. If your project is selected for funding, NRCS will let you know and contract signing can begin.



6. Signing the NRCS Plan & Contract

At this time, an NRCS employee will sit down with you and explain in detail all steps and requirements of the contract. Up until this point you are not obligated to complete any of the habitat management work. However, after signing you are legally responsible to ensure the contract is completed correctly and on time. But don't worry, our team of professionals are here to help see your project through to completion!

7. Contract Implementation

Once the NRCS contract is signed, GWWA foresters can begin to mark project boundaries, mark trees to be reserved during the harvest, and assist with any other project forestry needs. Note that the GWWA foresters cannot assist in predicting timber value or selling your timber, and we **highly recommend** hiring a consulting forester to work with you to cut and/or sell your timber.



8. Practice Completion

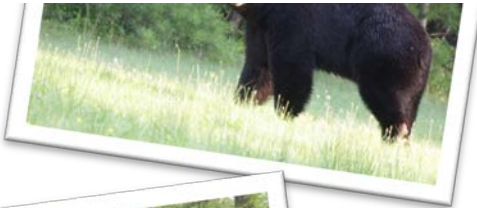
Golden-winged Warbler habitat projects often have several steps (such as herbicide application(s), shelterwood harvest, and overstory removal). All management practices need to be completed as the plan specifies, in order, and on time. After each step is completed the practice will be certified by NRCS and a forester and you will be reimbursed via direct deposit into your bank account (this information is submitted to NRCS during the application process and is part of the application/eligibility determination).

Key Tips

to make your GWWA project be a singing success:

- Take advantage of the advice and professional opinions of the biologist, GWWA foresters and DCNR service foresters. Their services are free and unbiased.
- Before you sign your NRCS contract, do your homework! Look at the habitat management practices that the contract identifies, then shop around and find contractors willing to do the work for the price you are willing to pay BEFORE you sign. This is where hiring a consulting forester really pays off. A good consulting forester will know the contractors in your area who do quality work and are reputable operators.
- Tell your consulting forester (and contractors) that you have an NRCS habitat management project. Many contractors understand that you will be getting reimbursed after the habitat work is complete and will wait for payment until the work is complete and NRCS has reimbursed you. Your consulting forester can help you work out these details with contractors.
- Understand that this initiative, which is funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP, funded through the 2014 farm bill) is not designed to cover the whole cost of the project. However, by doing your homework and choosing the competitively-priced contractors, you can make the reimbursement go farther.
- Ask your GWWA and DCNR service foresters what to look for in a good consulting forester and/or contractor. They can provide lists of consulting foresters and contractors and can assist you in knowing what questions to ask them. They may even be able to meet with you and your consulting forester to talk about the planned habitat management.
- If you have timber that might be of value we **highly recommend** hiring a consulting forester to help with the sale. They know what important items to include in the contract between you and the operator, and will make sure the operator adheres to the promised work. The consulting forester will work to protect you and your property! Furthermore, using a consulting forester often increases financial return.





Questions about the
Golden-winged Warbler Initiative?

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