

Healthy Forests · Abundant Wildlife · Conservation Ethic



**2022 CONSERVATION
IMPACT REPORT**





OUR MISSION

RGS & AWS unites conservationists to improve wildlife habitat and forest health. *Since 1961*, RGS has promoted stewardship for our forests, our wildlife and our future. Our vision is to create landscapes of diverse, functioning forest ecosystems that provide homes for wildlife and opportunities for people to experience them.

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY BENJAMIN C. JONES | RGS & AWS President & CEO

Without a doubt, we're energized by reports of work being done in the woods and knowing wildlife benefits will follow. However, that same passion doesn't usually accompany financial reports. Nonetheless, financials drive the business equation and as we say, "No margin, no mission!" This address, accompanying our 2022 annual report, is an occasion to focus on funding, and most importantly, what it means for RGS & AWS habitat management now and in the years to come.

We'll set the bar for this dis-

cussion noting that 90% of money raised went directly toward our forest wildlife mission. Delivering 90 cents on the dollar shows we're focused, efficient and living up to our word. Beyond numbers on a page, I see this every day working with staff — our team is dialed in and working with a great sense of purpose.

We're leading projects that leverage local and national funds. I recently looked back through several years of financial data leading up to 2020. At any given time, we had about \$500,000 of fund-

ed agreements and grants in place (i.e., the funds we pursue for habitat work through public agencies and foundations). As this report goes to press, we have more than \$10,600,000 of funded agreements in play. That's a 20-fold increase representing the delta for our updated business model. Pretty exciting, but not the end of the story.

A friend and fellow RGS & AWS member recently called them "multiplier projects." The term fits. Each agreement requires that RGS & AWS come to the table with skin in the game, the ever-important and

sometimes elusive “match.” So, we need cash in hand to negotiate each funded agreement. This is where locally raised funds really shine.

Yes, we’re expanding into new funding arenas that expand mission impact — that doesn’t mean we can abandon traditional fundraising! Support from individual donors, membership and events is more important than ever. Without a strong, donation-supported core, we can’t pursue millions of dollars in innovative projects that work for wildlife. In modeling our financial future, unrestricted contributions are a key catalyst (or Jake brake) for our upward habitat trajectory.

RGS & AWS is growing, but not just for growth’s sake. Our progress is intentional and centered on habitat. Over the past year, we added 18 new positions that hit the field supported by an interrelated

When we leverage \$20K raised at a chapter’s banquet to bring in an additional \$100K in habitat funding, it **magnifies the hard work** of local RGS & AWS volunteers.

portfolio of new agreements, local and national contributions and generous donations.

Recruiting new staff, some of whom are just beginning their own conservation careers, reminds me that our work is generational. We’re positively affecting habitat today. We’re leveraging funding for enterprises important to us. We’re ensuring access to habitat so people can share the wonders of grouse,

woodcock and all forest wildlife. It’s work worth doing, and with sound financial footing, it’s a legacy that’ll continue for years to come. Truly generational impact.

On this June day, I’ll put this capstone on our 2022 annual report, review 2023 year-to-date financials and work on balance sheets projecting through 2025. Is this as energizing as touring a new habitat project? Yes, absolutely! Because it’s essential to ensure that RGS & AWS remains a vehicle to deliver our shared conservation passion. While the phrase may not appear in our tag line, “healthy financials” are the basis for healthy forests, abundant wildlife and conservation ethic. In all these things, 2022 was another solid year, yet clearly not a time to rest on our laurels. There’s much work to do.

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Without a strong, donation-supported core, we can’t pursue millions of dollars in innovative projects that work for wildlife.





REVENUE



32%

BANQUETS
& EVENTS
\$1,701,804

32%

GRANT
INCOME
\$1,671,282

17%

CONTRIBUTIONS
\$893,666

10%

PROGRAM
REVENUE
\$525,064

8%

MEMBERSHIP
\$439,170

1%

OTHER
\$42,556

EXPENSES

7%

ADMINISTRATION
\$429,138

90%

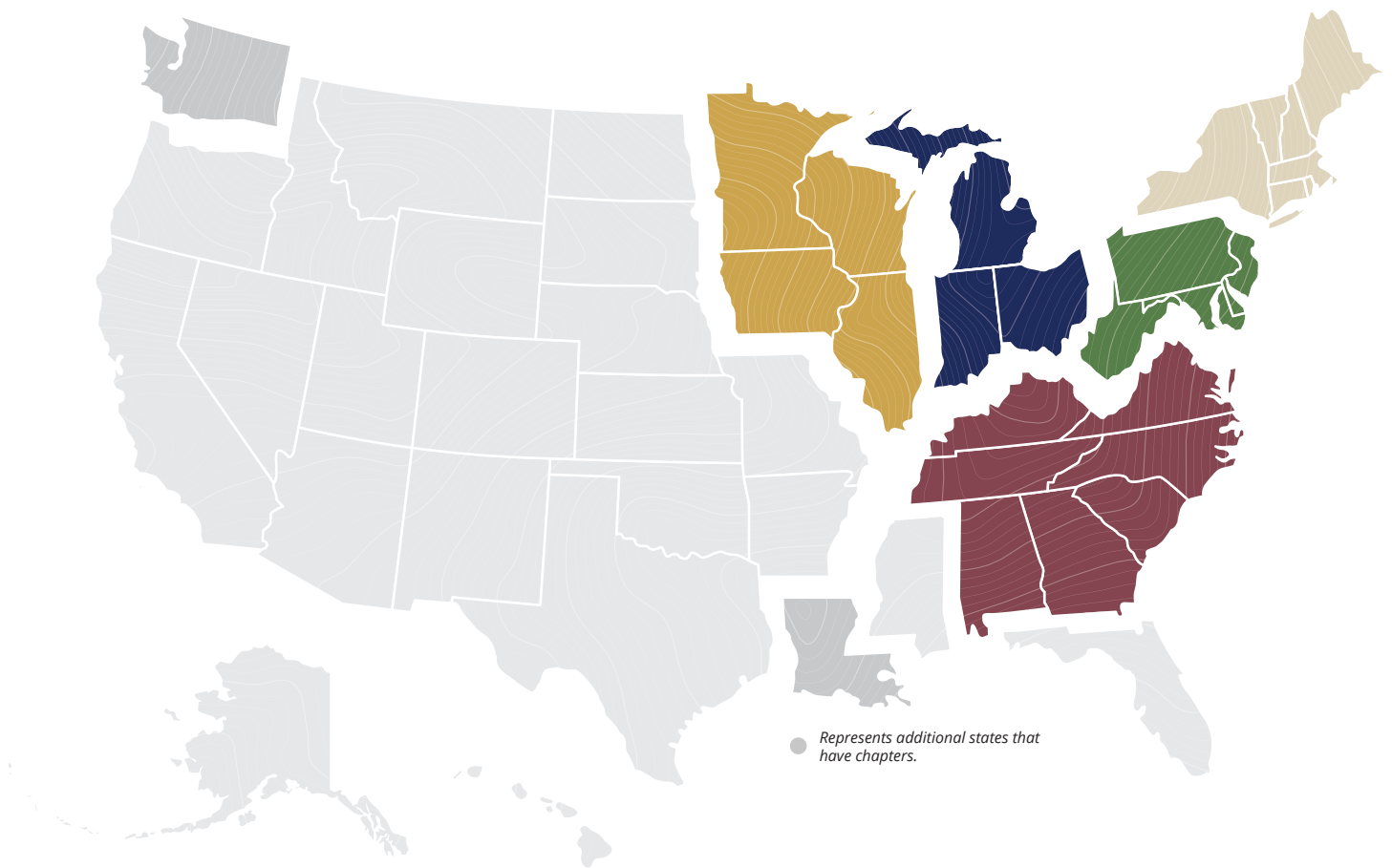
CONSERVATION
PROGRAMS
\$5,184,543

3%

FUNDRAISING
\$165,755



RGS & AWS projects are made possible by the generous support of our donors, chapter network, grant funding and partners in forest conservation.



REGIONAL REPORTS



PAGE 11 | Funded agreements totaling \$1.22 million in place for habitat work in the Mid-Atlantic region.



PAGE 07 | \$1.33 million allocated in federal funding in Wisconsin.



PAGE 13 | \$4.63 million in habitat funding from grants and forest stewardship agreements in the Southern Appalachians.

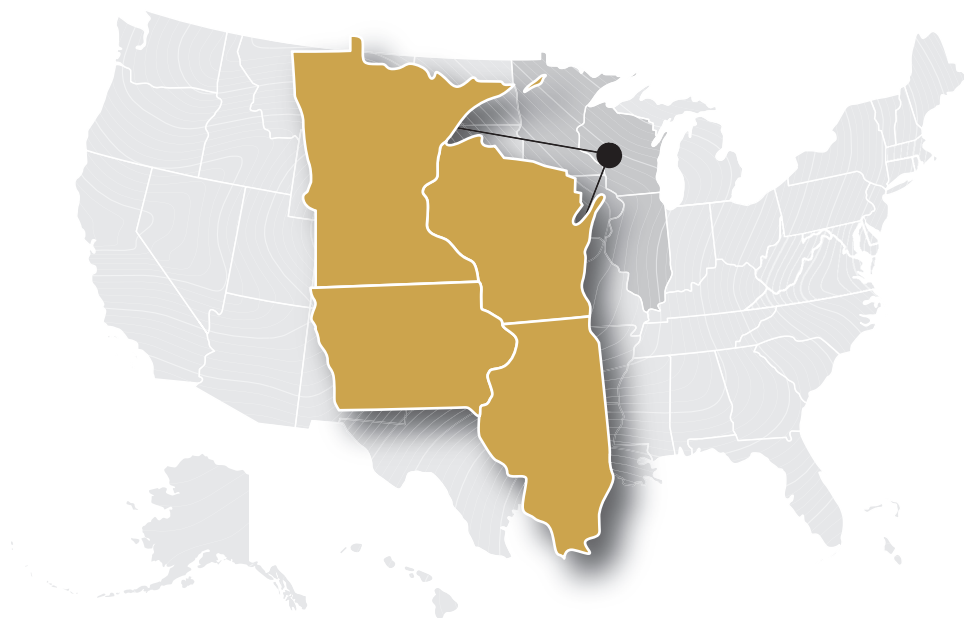


PAGE 09 | Stewardship agreements on every national forest in Michigan (Ottawa, Hiawatha and Huron-Manistee).



PAGE 15 | New partnerships lead to investing in the next generation of forest wildlife professionals in the Northeast.

WESTERN GREAT LAKES



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“Cook Logging had a very successful relationship with RGS on the Chippewa National Forest. It’s important to have forest management advocates like RGS to act as liaisons between the forest products industry and the federal land managers. Our communication with RGS was excellent. We’d certainly work with RGS again on forest stewardship projects,” said Carl Bleiler, forester (retired) for Minnesota-based Greg Cook Logging, Inc.

Some of our most significant forest conservation wins in 2022 were centered around the human element. The investment we made in growing our conservation team capacity is paying dividends. In 2022, our Forest Wildlife Specialist team celebrated the enrollment of **5,871 acres of land into long-term stewardship planning programs**. Their dedicated efforts have helped allocate *\$1.33 million in federal funding* that delivered **2,793 acres of forestry and wildlife habitat projects** across Wisconsin.

Our innovative approach to sustainable forest management has opened the door to new opportunities and partnerships with what some might view as unexpected partners. Ruffed Grouse Society & American Woodcock Society joined the Minnesota Moose Habitat Collaborative in 2020, serving as a project lead, with Phase 4 continuing through 2022. While the Collaborative's habitat enhancement work spotlights moose populations, we know many other wildlife populations benefit from diverse, healthy forests. Here are additional examples of ongoing work in the region:



- Forest management and timber sale administration continuing on Chippewa National Forest in Minnesota
- Hunter walking trail maintenance with adjacent habitat management in Minnesota
- County land coordination and management assistance in Wisconsin
- Wildlife area management and hunter walking trail upkeep in Wisconsin
- Forest management planning on Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Wisconsin

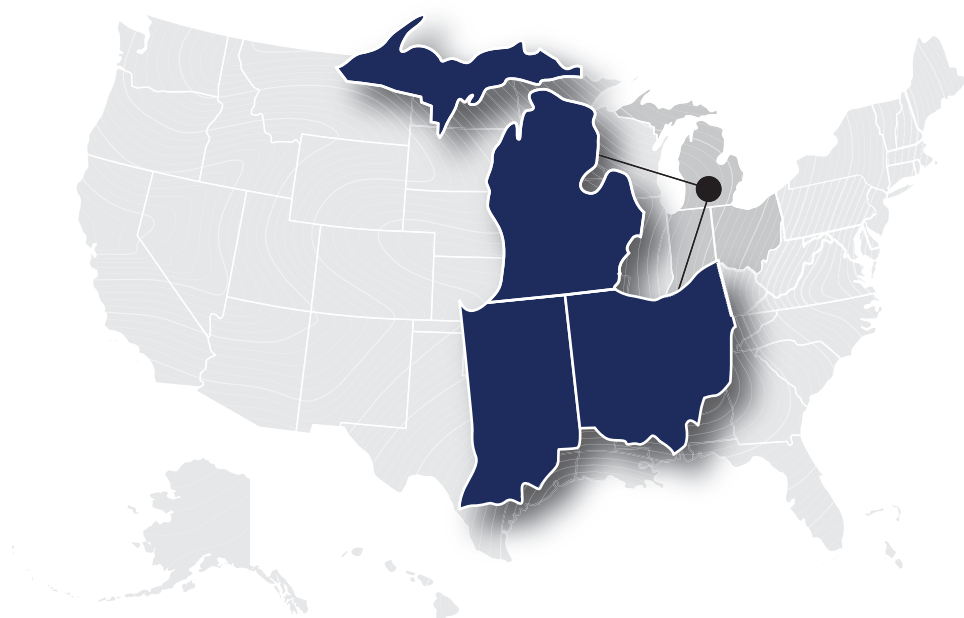
ON THE HORIZON

We're building both new and longtime partnerships in the region. Work will continue and expand in Wisconsin and Minnesota, with exciting discussions occurring with Iowa DNR — and yes, there are ruffed grouse and woodcock in Iowa!



Uihlein Foundation

EASTERN GREAT LAKES



ON THE HORIZON

We believe there's incredible potential for woodcock habitat improvement in Ohio and are strategizing an initiative with partners and Ohio DNR's Division of Wildlife. This will be an "all lands" approach, including wildlife areas and private lands.

We've set our sights on implementing the recently signed stewardship agreements on the Huron-Manistee and Ottawa national forests. Combined, they're valued at more than \$194,000, improving 370 acres through timber harvest and 107 acres of additional forest management paid for through timber sale dollars. Hunter walking trail improvements will also be included.

This region represents opposite ends of the ruffed grouse conservation spectrum. From Michigan — home to healthy populations — to Indiana, where ruffed grouse are on the verge of extirpation — we must engage in very different activities, sometimes on the same day. Ohio falls in between, although unfortunately, it's more like Indiana from a grouse troubles perspective.

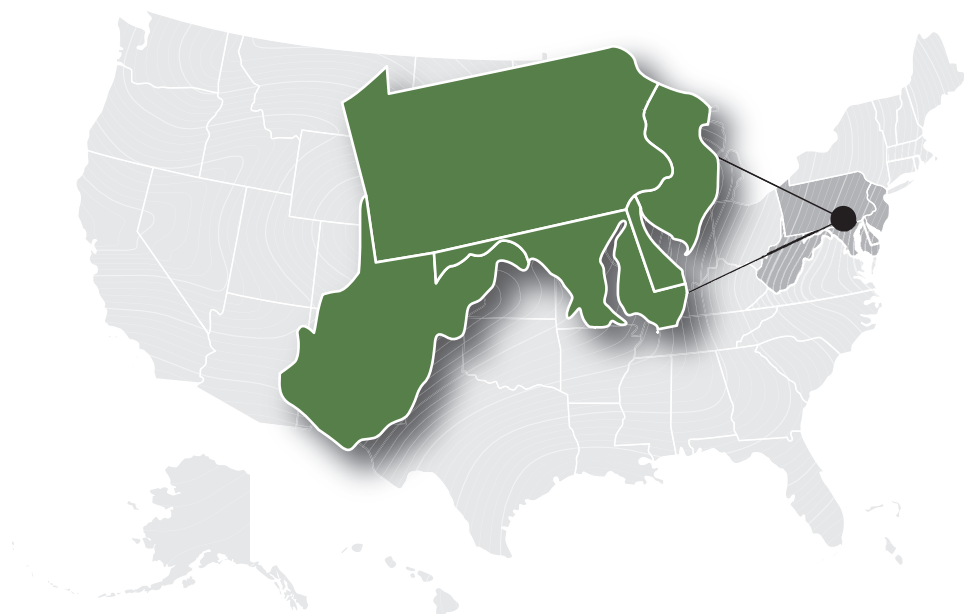
Michigan has relatively abundant grouse numbers as well as opportunities for habitat improvement. In 2022, we were awarded our **largest Michigan State Wildlife Habitat Grant to date: \$198,000**, which is making an even more significant impact with

additional financial support totaling \$37,400 from the Pere Marquette Forest Habitat Collaborative partners. This collaborative brings together partners from the Huron-Manistee National Forest, SEEDS EcoCorps, YouthWork Industries and the Conservation Resource Alliance. In 2022, our Great Lakes conservation team signed three new stewardship agreements on two national forests in Michigan. These agreements are essential to scale up habitat improvements. **We now have agreements on every national forest in Michigan (Ottawa, Hiawatha and Huron-Manistee).** Examples of ongoing work in the region include:

- **Forest planning and management on Ottawa, Hiawatha and Huron-Manistee national forests**
- **Providing support and capacity for the 30,000-acre Zone Aspen Project on the Huron-Manistee National Forest**
- **Wildlife habitat management advocacy through the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council**
- **Active participation on the Indiana Forests Forever Coalition, advocating for sound wildlife and forest science**
- **Ruffed grouse regulatory considerations in Ohio and promotion of landscape-scale forest management**



MID-ATLANTIC



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“Domtar is happy to support this innovative partnership to help restore balance to the landscape,”

said Luke Dillinger, Domtar’s wood procurement manager in Johnsonburg.

“The committed organizations involved bring the experience, dedication and know-how needed to be effective at the landscape level.”

The need for a new state coordinator position in Pennsylvania sums up the main story line for the Mid-Atlantic. There's a ton of opportunity, and we're growing to capitalize on it! **Habitat improvements continue on more than 20 landscapes, ranging from 3,000 to 30,000 acres in size.** Our chapter network's grassroots fundraising and volunteering support have helped on-the-ground habitat work. Funded agreements totaling *\$1.22 million* that leverage national support dollars with local chapter and State Drummer funds are in place for habitat work. Examples of ongoing work in the region include:

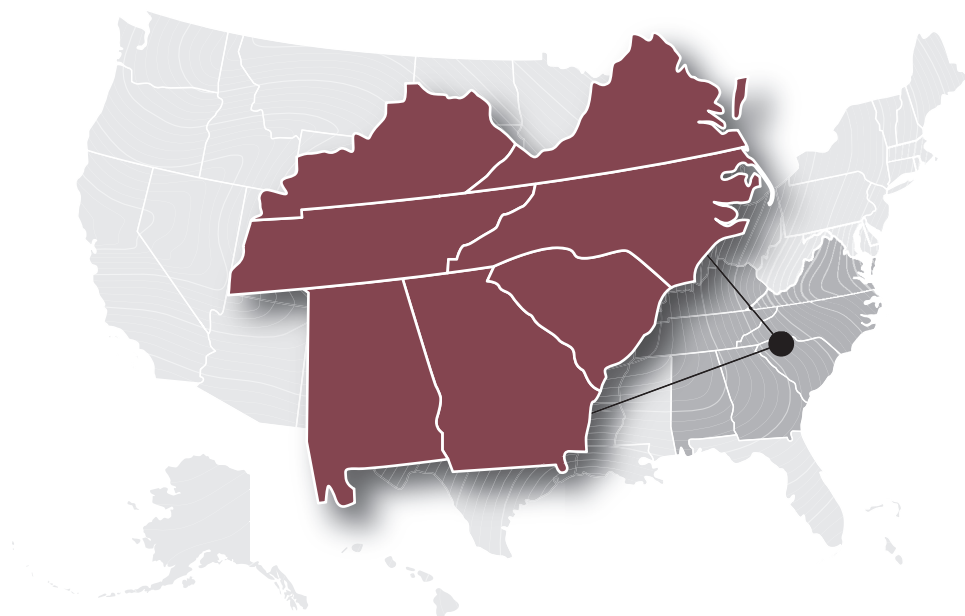
- **Active forestry and timber sale management on the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia**
- **Habitat management and timber sale planning on the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania**
- **Woodcock habitat management and mined land reforestation in Maryland**
- **Forest management planning and assistance on state forest and state game lands in Pennsylvania**
- **Technical and financial assistance for private woodland owners across Pennsylvania**
- **Relationship building with forest products companies to ensure markets for wood coming from habitat projects**

ON THE HORIZON

Our new partnership with forest products company Domtar is a model that can be expanded to other companies, ensuring pulpwood markets can support wildlife habitat management. Grant-funded staff positions will continue to build our state, federal and private land management cooperatives.



SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS



Lightner Sams
FOUNDATION



The regional conservation team has grown this past year, celebrating the addition of four new wildlife foresters — three specialists and one coordinator. Their expertise and boots-on-the-ground methods are vital to delivering active forest management on public and private lands. Forest Conservation Director Nick Biemiller continues to build a program focused on providing the gold standard in working forest management.

RGS & AWS is creating healthy habitat across the Southern Appalachian region. The Southern Appalachian team has secured *\$4.63 million* in habitat funding from grants and forest stewardship agreements. Action is underway on **27 habitat projects**, with **2,000 acres** of habitat improvements completed and more to come. Examples of ongoing work in the region include:

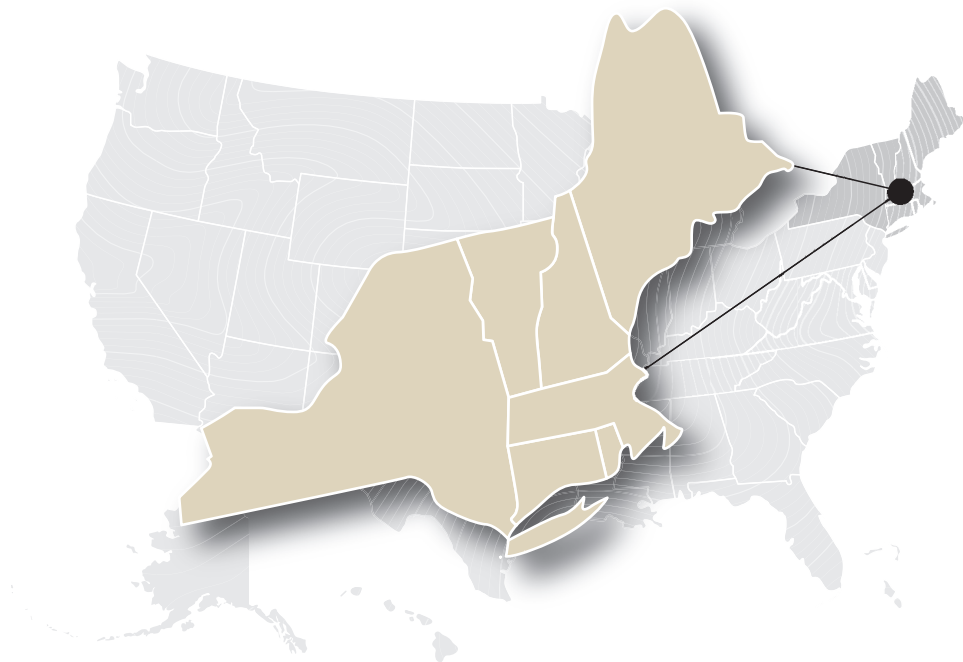
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- **Oak management and timber harvest on national forests in North Carolina**
 - **Timber harvest and roadside management on Chattahoochee National Forest in Georgia**
 - **Active forest management on state, federal and private lands in Kentucky**
 - **Forest management planning and implementation on state, federal and private lands in southwestern Virginia**
 - **State land forest management in Tennessee and Kentucky (Catoosa, Lone Mountain and Kentucky Ridge wildlife management areas)**
 - **Forest management on Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee**
 - **Logging workforce development in Virginia and Kentucky**
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ON THE HORIZON

The Southern Appalachian conservation team has planned more than **20,000 acres of habitat improvements**. In the next several years, we'll grow the regional conservation program by adding new field staff to manage projects that create or enhance quality habitat. Our conservation team is developing a lineup of new active forest management projects on national forests and state and private lands. We're also supporting local workforce development for forest workers and contractors to create the habitat and aiding in robust forest product markets to utilize wood harvested from active forest management projects.

NORTHEAST



ON THE HORIZON

Building staff capacity, expanding landscape forest management and ramping up partnerships and funding are priorities for the coming year. With partners, we're creating a template for research and active forest management that better informs where we should focus on habitat work. The new tools and technologies developed can be expanded to other states, increasing our impact and forest conservation successes.

Leading a landscape-level initiative in Massachusetts to assist state land forest management was among our priority efforts during the past year. In no other Northeast state is there more at stake for healthy forests, sustainable forestry and wildlife habitat. The first step was uniting like-minded partners. Our Northeast team brought together more than 50 academics, decision makers, legislators and staffers, state and federal agency partners and conservation groups for a **Forest Wildlife Summit**. Together, we're working toward a collective understanding around managing for healthy forests, abundant wildlife, climate benefits, clean water, access to shared natural resources and sustainable forest economies. This work's just ramping up, and we can adapt its framework for nearly every other state in New England and beyond.

Our foresters are **helping private landowners in Vermont and New York optimize their lands for wildlife**. By connecting woodland owners with technical and financial support, we're helping ensure that current and future generations have the opportunity to enjoy wildlife — a top priority for most woodland landowners.

We're also investing in the next generation of forest wildlife professionals through new partnerships with the College of Environmental Science at Syracuse University and Paul Smith's College. Both are top wildlife and forestry schools, making them ideal partners for promoting working forests. Examples of ongoing work in the region include:

- **Woodcock habitat improvement in Maine**
- **Forest management planning and improvements on state, federal and private lands in New York and Vermont**
- **Forest management on Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont**
- **Forest management and habitat management on Finger Lakes National Forest in New York**
- **State lands management advocacy in Massachusetts**



CAMP FIRE
CONSERVATION FUND



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“RGS & AWS is about keeping our forests healthy and diverse — this is good for birds, wildlife, water and everything else,” said Bruce Bennett, RGS & AWS board member and lifelong forest conservation champion.



RECOGNIZING OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS

Our work wouldn't be possible without the generous
support of our corporate partners. Thank you!





2022 CONSERVATION IMPACT REPORT
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