

St. Lawrence Wetland and Grassland Management District

Proposal for Permanent Protection of Important Waterfowl and other Migratory Bird Habitats

Working Together to Protect Habitat

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) proposes permanent protection of important wetland and grassland habitats within a portion of Jefferson County, NY (see map on reverse). These habitats are important for waterfowl and other migratory birds and wildlife.

With this proposal, the Service will purchase conservation easements from landowners, with land remaining in private ownership, and also acquire small landholdings. This will supplement our current efforts at restoring habitats in the St. Lawrence Valley by working cooperatively with farmers and other private landowners.



Photo by Erwin and Peggy Bauer/USFWS

Approximately 30,000 mallards breed in the St. Lawrence Valley. It hosts the highest breeding density for mallards in the entire Atlantic Flyway.

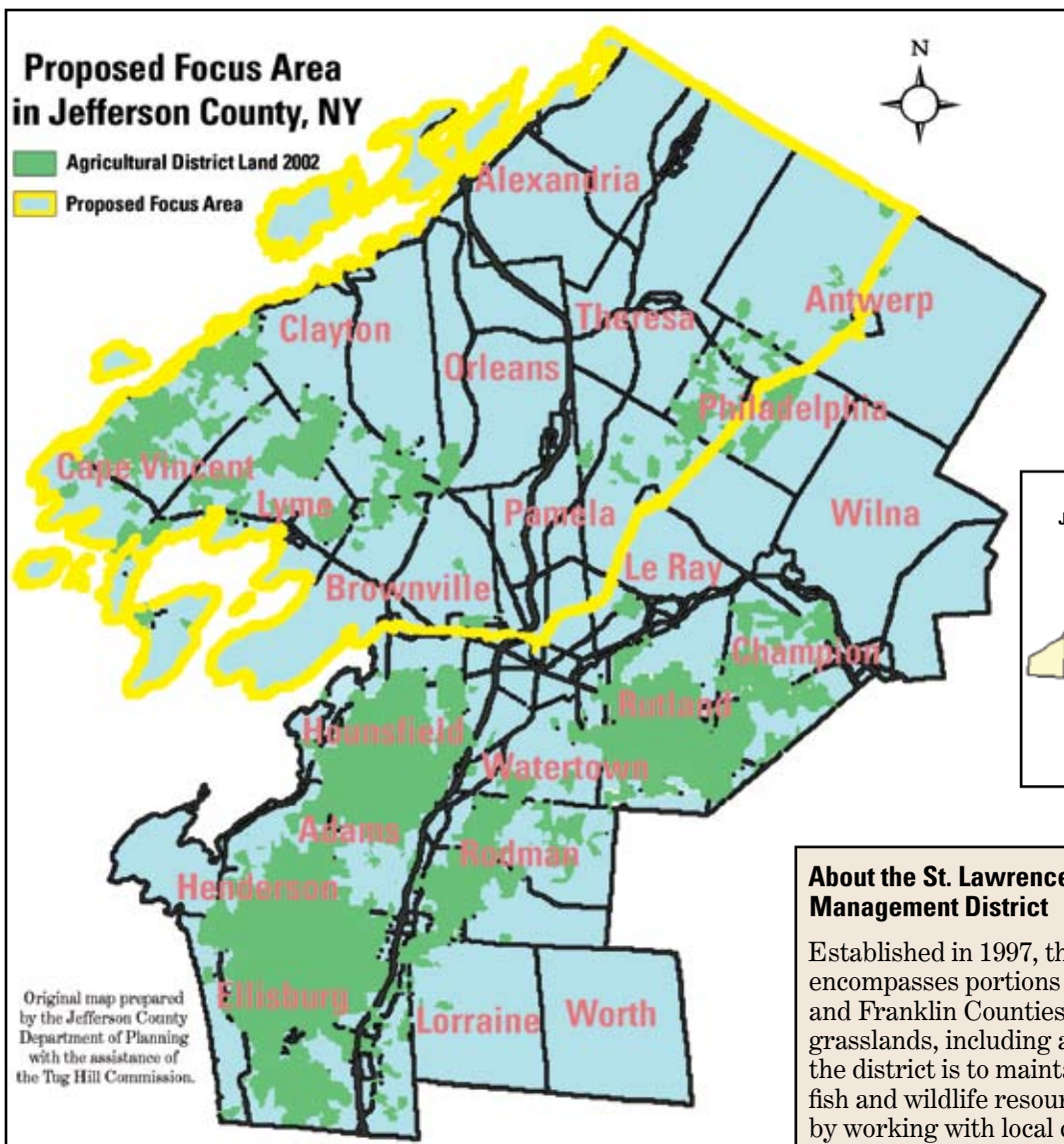


Photo courtesy of Janet C. Zinn © www.jczinn.com

An estimated 17% of the world's bobolink population breeds in the St. Lawrence Valley.

Proposal Highlights

- Protects up to 8,000 acres of valuable breeding and migratory bird habitats in Jefferson County
- Establishes permanent protection primarily through the Service's purchase of conservation easements on privately owned land (~80%), with land remaining in private ownership, and fee title acquisition where needed (~20%)
- Focuses on abandoned fields and wet marginal lands, but avoids productive agricultural lands
- Only involves willing sellers and voluntary landowners, and requires town government approval on a parcel by parcel basis
- Designates fee title areas as Waterfowl Production Areas, which will be open for hunting and other compatible public uses
- Benefits residents of Jefferson County by providing direct payments to landowners, maintaining the rural landscape of the St. Lawrence Valley, and attracting visitors who contribute to the local economy
- Promotes regional, national, and international bird partnerships
- Expands the Service's cooperative and voluntary *Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program* on private lands
- Provides annual revenue sharing payments to towns, offsetting tax losses from federal fee title ownership



What happens next?

We are developing an environmental assessment (EA) that evaluates three alternatives for achieving the purpose and intent of this proposal. In early 2006, we will distribute the draft EA for public review and comment. Public input will be important to reaching a final decision.



About the St. Lawrence Wetland and Grassland Management District

Established in 1997, this two million-acre district encompasses portions of Jefferson, St. Lawrence, and Franklin Counties with over 350,000 acres of grasslands, including agricultural lands. The goal of the district is to maintain and improve the exemplary fish and wildlife resources in the St. Lawrence Valley by working with local communities and private landowners to enhance fish and wildlife populations in an ecologically sound, economically feasible and socially acceptable way.

"...working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people."

-U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Mission

For further information

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<http://www.fws.gov>
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Aerial view of pothole wetlands surrounded by grasslands—typical habitats of the St. Lawrence Valley.

Photo (also title background) by Carl Schwartz/USFWS