



# United States Department of the Interior



## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Judith Swift  
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Narragansett, Rhode Island 02882

DEC 1 2017

Dear Ms. Swift,

I am writing on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) New Jersey Field Office (NJFO) in support of New Jersey Audubon's (NJA) application for membership in the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) for the North Atlantic Coast. NJA has had a long and productive relationship with the NJFO and the Service in carrying out work that is not only essential for the protection of natural resources over the long-term, but also provides tangible benefits to the public by improving coastal resiliency and community engagement.

NJA is partnering or has partnered with the Service on several projects, including:

- A Cooperative Agreement with the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program for the period from 2014-2024 to conduct beach restoration at Southern Seven Mile Island in Stone Harbor Point, New Jersey. This project seeks to improve habitat suitability for beach-nesting birds and roosting shorebirds through restoration, targeted management activities (e.g., predator control), and community engagement; increase coastal resiliency for the Borough of Stone Harbor through the enhancement of the existing U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) dune system; and develop a plan using innovative methods for the continued maintenance of the beach restoration as a long-term community resiliency strategy for the Borough (which could be replicated by other communities) by using an adaptive management framework for beach and biological monitoring.
- A project entitled "Coastal Impoundment Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment", which will categorize the importance of all impoundments in the Northeast in terms of flood risk reduction, vulnerability to future storm events, ecological value, and societal importance. The Service is partnering with NJA in using Integrated Waterbird Management and Monitoring data to develop ecological rankings for these sites.
- Working to achieve the flyway-wide goals and objectives of the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative's plan by investigating the ecology, physiology, and conservation needs for shorebirds, in particular the semipalmated sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*). This long-term project is conducted at both the Delaware Bay spring migration stopover site and wintering areas in South America. The work includes determining shorebird physiological condition and habitat use during stopover and at the wintering grounds; characterizing demographic properties and population structure; assessing contaminant

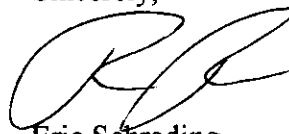
loads; building law enforcement capacity that increases efforts to control illegal shorebird hunting in South America; and developing conservation strategies that ensure the long-term population viability of these species.

- Conducting weed and invasive species management in Cape May in support of the Cape May Habitat Restoration Task Force. This work includes facilitating invasive species control and habitat restoration; outreach to local landowners and stakeholders about invasive species identification and control; and training volunteers to conduct restoration activities.
- Conducting invasive plant management on private lands. This work includes control of non-native plants that usurp habitat for federally-listed species; early detection and rapid response in controlling kudzu; control of non-native invasive plants to enhance forestry practices on private lands; and improving New Jersey Pine Barrens savannah habitat by using prescribed fire to control invasive non-native plants.
- Providing assistance in developing intertidal and nearshore structural aquaculture projects that are protective of foraging red knots (*Calidris canutus*). This involves identifying levels of red knot use to assist with the siting and permitting of oyster farms; preparing reviews regarding the potential impacts of aquaculture on red knots; providing input on the Service's Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO) to avoid and minimize adverse effects to red knots; and serving on a Stakeholder Committee to advise the Service, the USACE, and the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife on adaptive management under the PBO.

In all of these projects, NJA has consistently provided objective and scientifically sound products while practicing judicious fiscal management. The high-quality, professional technical assistance provided to the NJFO has helped to carry out the Service's mission to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service strongly supports NJA's application for admission to the North Atlantic Coast CESU.

If I can be of further assistance in this regard, please contact me at 609-382-5272.

Sincerely,

  
Eric Schradling  
Field Supervisor