



APPALACHIAN
MOUNTAINS
JOINT VENTURE



FOCAL LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE



The Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture (AMJV) partnership is focused on preserving, managing, and restoring diverse, healthy forest habitats in the region to benefit not only birds, but the diversity of Appalachian plants and wildlife.

OBJECTIVE

Our objective with this initiative is to achieve landscape-level benefits for our priority birds, demonstrated by stabilizing or increasing populations within the focal landscapes.

Our Focal Landscape Initiative **strategically targets our capacity and resources** to high-priority regions established by our partners within the AMJV geography.

This approach maximizes our conservation impacts and make concrete steps towards improving habitat for our priority species.

We are developing this initiative in parallel with American Bird Conservancy's [BirdScapes](#).

THE PROCESS

This is a “bottom-up” effort, with AMJV partners leading the development of individual focal landscapes across the AMJV geography and AMJV staff supporting and advising these efforts as needed. We are treating each landscape as a holistic system and leaning heavily on partners to identify the overarching objectives for each landscape, including priorities that are not bird-centric.



Each focal landscape is developed based on the following criteria:

LOCAL PARTNER EXPERTISE AND INPUT

Existing partners working in the focal landscape, especially private and industry sector; funding prospects; needs of stakeholders; non-bird priorities.

IMPORTANCE TO PRIORITY BIRDS

Concentration and trends of priority species; identification of priority species habitat or focal areas; current research; connectivity to wintering grounds; existing conservation plans.

CONTAINS A MIX OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS

EXTENT/CONDITION OF FOREST

Representative of types and conditions across the Appalachians; ability to achieve long-term desired conditions given initial forest composition; forest connectivity and level of fragmentation.

LAND USES AND THREATS

What are major threats to birds and their habitat; what are drivers of threats; climate vulnerability/resiliency of the landscape.

CHANCE OF SUCCESS AND BARRIERS TO CONSERVATION

Ability to establish long-term framework for operating in landscapes; ability to monitor and evaluate results; public attitudes towards management; commodity interests and influence (e.g., forest products market).



FOCAL LANDSCAPES IN ACTION

*Southeastern
Ohio*



The oak-dominated forests of southeastern Ohio are exceptionally valuable, both ecologically and economically. However, the complexity of ownership in this region, which is mostly private but includes multiple state forests and state wildlife areas, and Wayne National Forest, make it even more important to plan forest management across ownership boundaries and at the landscape-scale.

FOCAL LANDSCAPE PARTNERS

- Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife
- ODNR Division of Forestry
- USDA Forest Service (Wayne National Forest, Northern Research Station and State & Private Forestry)
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Ohio State University Extension
- Central State University Extension

An important element of the Focal Landscape Initiative is to support existing local programs that align with the Initiative's goals by building onto and adding capacity to successful whenever possible. In Southeast Ohio, AMJV's focal landscape and the Ohio Interagency Forestry Team share a vision for supporting healthy and sustainable oak dominated ecosystems in the region.

ABOUT THE OHIO INTERAGENCY FORESTRY TEAM



The Ohio Interagency Forestry Team is comprised of the agencies in Ohio listed above that have a forest management mission area. The purpose of the Forestry Team is to improve internal agency coordination around the delivery of government services in support of forest management. The Forestry Team is focusing its efforts across the 17-county Oak Management Priority Forest Area, which overlaps the AMJV focal landscape and is where 43% of the state's forest resource exists. Most members of the Forestry Team have a state-wide scope for services, but initial focus for team organization and capacity building is on southeast Ohio.

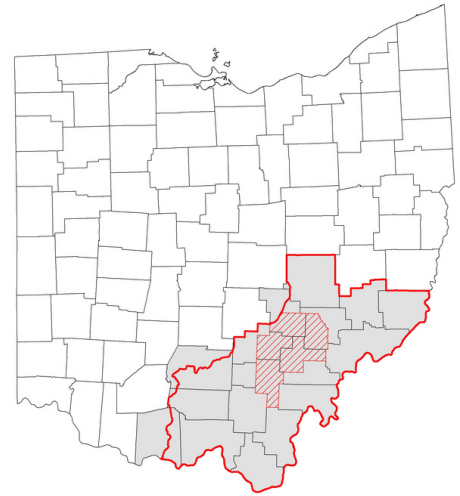
Agency Leadership Team signing the Ohio Interagency Forestry Team business plan in September of 2019. Photo courtesy of Jarel Bartig.




CURRENT WORK ON THE GROUND

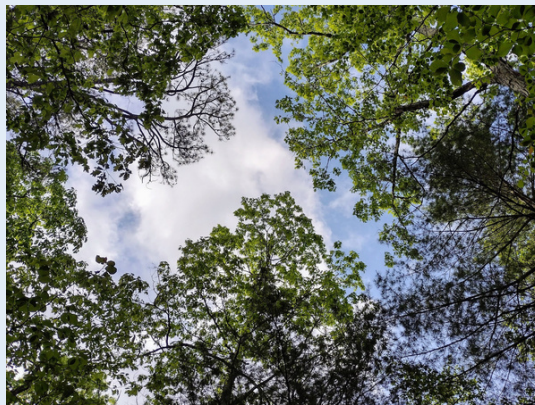
Hocking Plateau Shared Stewardship Project

The Ohio Interagency Forestry Team is developing a new approach for delivering services collectively within an actionable area called the Hocking Plateau Shared Stewardship Project. This area is in the central part of the Hocking Plateau and includes Hocking, Perry, Athens, Morgan, and Vinton counties. The approach for this project is to build on relationships already established and focus on deepening the quality of woodland owner engagement within the project area. Family woodland owners control the majority of the land base within the Oak Management Priority Forest Area, and will determine the future of oak on this landscape.

- Development of a place-based woodland owner outreach program focused on forest stewardship, selling timber, and legacy planning. Programming will utilize the Peers and Pros 360 method, an effective and engaging teaching method uses peer to peer interaction and mediated learning by natural resources professionals.



-  Focal Landscape Boundary
-  Oak Management Priority Forest Area
-  Shared Stewardship Project Area



In tandem with building relationships with woodland owners, the project also seeks to deepen interagency relationships across public lands within the core of the project area. This will support cross-boundary planning, implementation, and activity tracking.

- Cross-boundary Good Neighbor Agreement: Good Neighbor Authority allows the USDA Forest Service to enter into agreements with state forestry agencies to do management work to keep forests healthy and productive. A new Good Neighbor Agreement between Wayne National Forest and ODNR Division of Forestry allowed for implementation of cross-boundary prescribed fire to begin in 2022, burning 3,119 acres of public and private land. Under the agreement, additional prescribed fire and other TSI treatments are planned over the next five years.