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# APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS JOINT VENTURE

## 2023 IMPACT REPORT

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Learn more about AMJV at  
<https://amjv.org/> or scan the QR  
code above





## Mission and Vision

**Guided by our mission and vision, we are committed to the conservation of dynamic, healthy habitats for the benefit of birds, wildlife, and people in the core of the Appalachian Region.**

Our **mission** is to restore and sustain viable populations of native birds and their habitats in the Appalachian Mountains region through effective, collaborative partnerships.

Our **vision** is partners working together for conservation of native bird species in the Appalachian Mountains region to attain:

- Fully-functioning ecosystems with sustainable populations of the region's native avifauna, guided by state, regional, national, and international bird plans.
- Effective delivery of habitat conservation through adaptive management and guided by a conservation approach consisting of biological planning, conservation design, delivery of conservation actions, evaluation, and research.
- Success in capitalizing on funding opportunities relevant to partnership priorities.
- An engaged Management Board, representative of the diverse landscape and effective partnerships in the Appalachian Mountains.

# Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture

SINCE 2020, OUR AMJV PARTNERS HAVE



CONSERVED OVER 551,900 ACRES OF HABITAT



LEVERAGED \$30 FOR EVERY \$1 OF JOINT VENTURE FEDERAL FUNDING

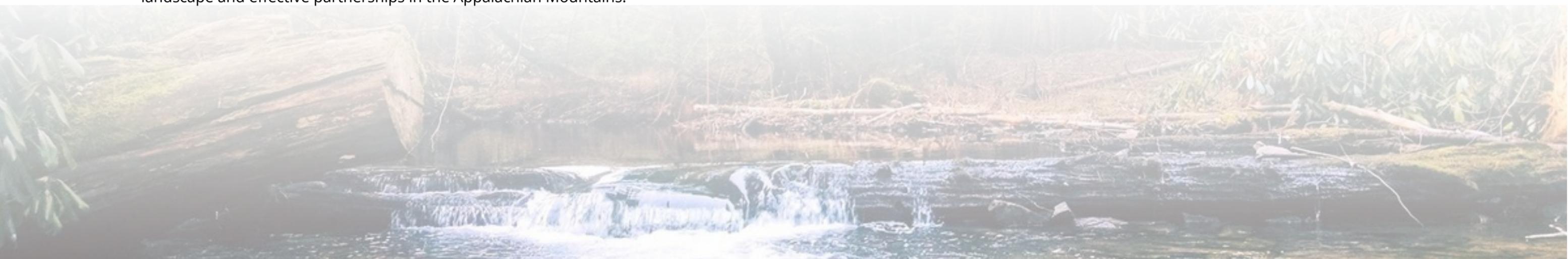


DEDICATED OVER \$17 MILLION TOWARDS BIRD CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN OUR REGION.



The Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture (AMJV) is one of 21 Migratory Bird Joint Ventures in the United States. We are a regional partnership of over 55 state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, and universities working to conserve habitat for birds.

**As a self-directed partnership, our strength is in our ability to strategically deliver conservation actions at a scale and scope unachievable by any single agency or organization.**



# Focal Landscape Initiative

## Focal Landscapes

Through our Focal Landscape Initiative, AMJV identifies the most important places in the region for conservation, and works to build effective and collaborative partnership networks to restore and sustain wildlife and their habitats. So far, AMJV has established six focal landscapes across our geography, encompassing over 10 million acres in eight states.

### Southeastern Ohio

The mix of public and private ownership in this region makes it even more important to plan forest management across ownership boundaries and at the landscape-scale. AMJV is collaborating with the Ohio Interagency Forestry Team on a shared vision for supporting healthy and sustainable oak dominated ecosystems in the region.

### Allegheny Highlands

24 representatives from 12 organizations attended AMJV's first partner workshop. Partners in attendance identified conservation challenges and priorities to advance landscape-scale planning and management in this region.

### Greenbrier and High Alleghenies

AMJV and West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WV DNR) hosted two meetings to establish a foundation for collaboration among stakeholders to implement, monitor, and evaluate the results of conservation actions outlined in the Conservation Focus Area plans developed by WV DNR. The meetings were attended by representatives from more than a dozen organizations.

### Cumberland Mountains

AMJV is a partner in two projects led by Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS). Project partners will enhance more than 2000 acres of public and private forests to benefit Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

### Virginia Highlands

With support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, AMJV and our partners coordinated efforts across ownership boundaries to write management plans for 7480 acres and implement 275 acres of habitat management activities to benefit Golden-winged Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, and Wood Thrush.

### Southern Appalachian High Country

In an effort to build upon the strong network of partnerships and broaden the scope of the conservation activities already occurring in this region, AMJV hosted a series of listening sessions focused on building partnerships with new audiences, including small businesses, local government officials, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

# Private Lands

Private landowners are vital stewards of our nation's landscapes and wildlife. Roughly 83% of land in the Appalachian Mountains is privately owned. In many cases private lands are working lands that provide a source of income and livelihood to landowners through farming, forest management, and other agricultural and recreational uses. Working lands can operate sustainably in ways that provide critical wildlife habitat while maintaining, and even enhancing, the land's productivity and value.



West Virginia landowner John Cobb meets with local foresters and wildlife biologists in his woodlands. Photo by Kyle Aldinger.

Since 2017, the AMJV Partnership has leveraged over **\$10 million** to help private landowners take advantage of financial and technical assistance opportunities.

## Helping Birds by Helping People

AMJV's outreach efforts help connect landowners with financial and technical assistance opportunities to create management plans for their lands. Sustainable habitat management can provide landowners with economic and ecological benefits, including:

- New income sources
- Ecological benefits such as healthier forests and improved water quality
- Improved recreational opportunities for hunting and wildlife watching
- Improved habitat for birds and bats that can reduce need for insecticides in crop production.

## Engaging Industrial Forest Landowners

The AMJV is working with the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Weyerhaeuser, WV DNR, WVU, and others to engage industrial landowners and encourage the integration of best management practices that support sustainable forest products while providing greater benefits to birds and other wildlife.

Since 2022, our outreach efforts have led to...



8,030 private landowners reached through direct mailings



Over 8,815 acres of wildlife habitat created

## Celebrating Successful Partnerships

Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture (AMJV), in partnership with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), and the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR) and Division of Forestry (DOF), organized a field day to showcase their joint efforts to improve private lands for wildlife in West Virginia. Wendy Madden, representing Senator Manchin, and Todd Gunter, representing Senator Capito, attended the event to tour the work implemented through Farm Bill and Forest Stewardship programs.

The field day was hosted by local landowner John Cobb on his 365-acre property in Ireland, West Virginia where he has worked to improve the health of his forest and create habitat for wildlife. The tour of Cobb's woodlands took attendees to see a forest stand that was managed to improve habitat for the Cerulean Warbler. The partners discussed the roles their respective agencies played in bringing this project to fruition.

At the end of the day, Madden commented on how eye-opening it was to see the strong partnerships in West Virginia that make this work possible.



Field day attendees included the AMJV, USDA-NRCS, West Virginia DNR and DOF, True North Forestry LLC, Eagle Land Transformations LLC, AmeriCorp, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, representatives from Senator Manchin and Senator Capito, and several local landowners.

## New Agreements Expand NRCS and AMJV Partnership

The AMJV worked strategically with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop new agreements that invest nearly \$1.9 million over 5 years to improve the health and resiliency of privately owned forests in Central Appalachia. AMJV staff worked with the NRCS offices in Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia to define a suite of deliverables focused on meeting their greatest capacity needs to deliver Farm Bill conservation programs. The AMJV will utilize these investments to develop and deliver forestry trainings and outreach materials that will enable NRCS staff to better deliver sustainable forestry practices to landowners.

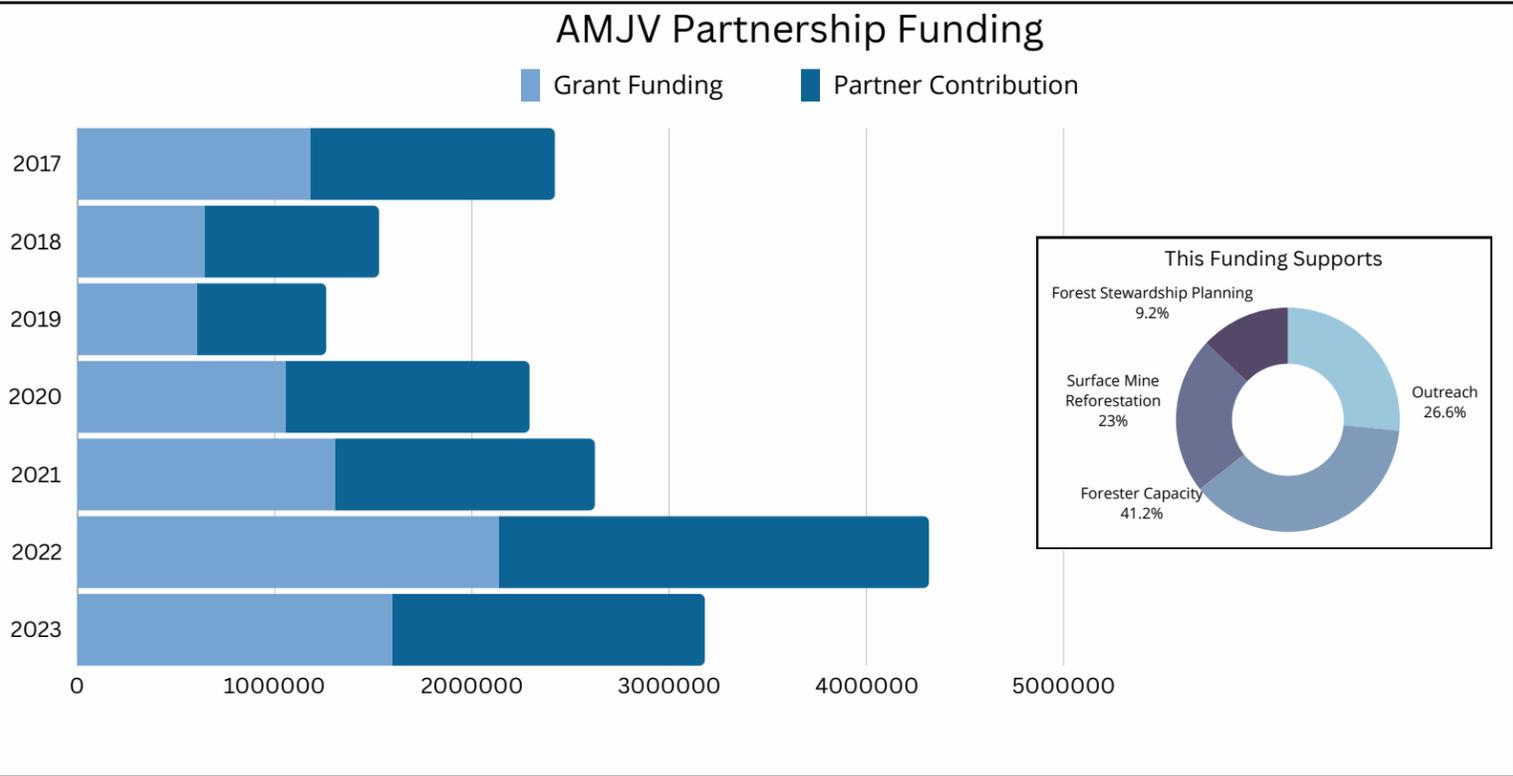


Nick Millet, USFWS, demonstrating the use of a seeder to partners. Photo by Becky Haddix (NRCS).

The AMJV is also boosting delivery and landowner engagement capacity with these investments by establishing three new positions. Two of these are partner forester positions working with WV NRCS to boost on-the-ground forest habitat conservation. The third is a Community Science and Engagement Coordinator who is developing a framework enabling landowners to collect data quantifying the positive impacts of the conservation actions implemented on their property. Learn more about this exciting work in the "Tracking Our Impact" section!

# Economic Impact of Private Lands Programs

Farm Bill Conservation Programs do more than just improve habitat for wildlife. These programs create jobs and support the local economy and forest products industry.



The AMJV Partnership has brought over **\$17 million** into Appalachia through grant funding and partner contributions. These funds have built a framework for boosting private lands forestry that translates directly into opportunities for loggers, contractors, foresters, and other businesses.

“The forest products industry needs sustainable forests. These programs provide that pathway while benefitting wildlife and providing forest products to boost our local economy.”

- Mark Byler, General Manager, A.M. Logging LLC Millheim, Pennsylvania



# Tracking Our Impact

## Measuring the Effectiveness of Our Work

The AMJV monitors the impacts of our work by tracking changes in the populations of target birds and evaluating how wildlife use the habitat we create. Monitoring also allows us to measure and showcase the collective impact of our partnership’s conservation actions. The information collected through monitoring ensures we are maximizing outcomes for birds, other wildlife, and landowners while improving the effectiveness of our projects.

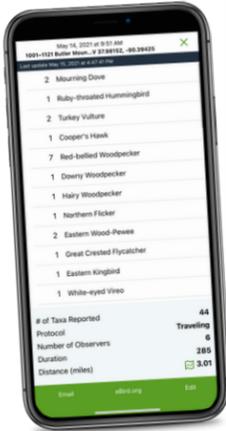
Monitoring occurs through a variety of methods employed by partners, private landowners, and wildlife viewers, all of whom play a critical role in assessing progress towards our conservation goals.

Wildlife viewers, a rapidly growing community, are invaluable for tracking populations of birds and other wildlife. Many birders participate in winter and breeding bird surveys where they volunteer their time and knowledge to report the birds they see in their region.

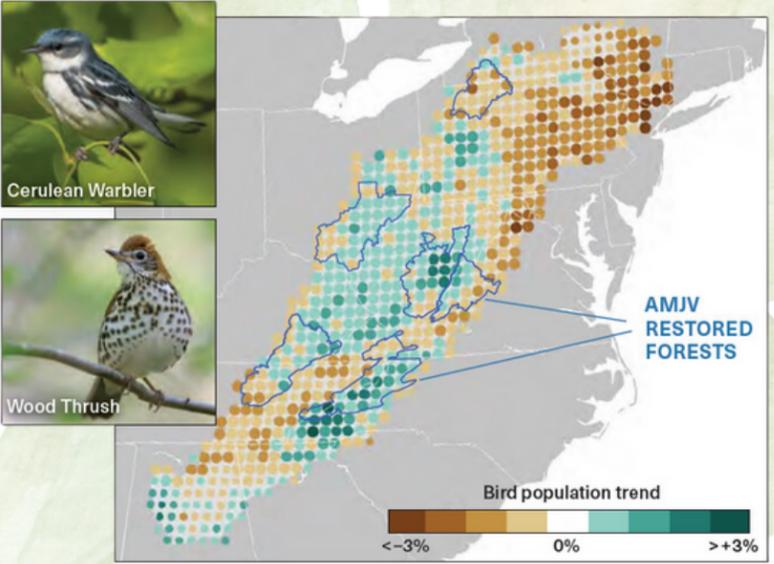
The AMJV’s new community science program will engage these volunteer communities to help increase our partners’ capacity to monitor priority species on both public and private lands.

AMJV monitoring efforts include enabling landowners to collect information on their properties demonstrating the positive impacts of their conservation actions they have taken through NRCS and other private lands programs. These efforts allow us to share the impact of conservation actions with the industrial and family forest landowners who participate.

A recent study by Virginia Tech showed that landowners who participated in bird monitoring on their properties were more satisfied with their conservation projects.



A biologist and landowner look for birds during a site visit. Tools like eBird (pictured left) help scientists and landowners easily track the birds they see in their forests. Photo by Amanda Duren.



**FOREST RESTORATION WORKS FOR BRINGING BACK BIRDS**  
 In areas where the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture has helped restore forests, data from eBird show remarkable increases in numbers of Cerulean Warbler and Wood Thrush. Source: Cornell Lab | eBird 2007-2019.

## Engaging Appalachian Communities

Dr. Ashley Peele joined the AMJV staff in August of 2023 as the Community Science and Engagement Coordinator. Her role is a brand new position for the AMJV and will focus on expanding two core components of our work: community engagement and monitoring. Dr. Peele will add the needed capacity for AMJV and partners to effectively engage a wide range of Appalachian communities, including the ever-growing community of wildlife viewers, in monitoring the impacts of our work on Appalachian species and habitats.



“Long-term success of conservation efforts is measured not only by birds on the landscape or acres of habitat restored, but by the communities actively engaged in their stewardship. Connection to the land runs deep in Appalachia and we need local knowledge and participation to better inform our work for the diverse habitats and peoples of this incredible region.”

- Dr. Ashley Peele, AMJV Community Science and Engagement Coordinator

## Tracking Outcomes Across Partners

Dr. Peele's work with Appalachian communities will provide a framework for engaging communities in monitoring wildlife and habitat. It will strengthen the ability of our partnership to evaluate the effectiveness of the conservation work they are implementing, both for the ecological communities we seek to conserve and the regional peoples impacted by our work on the ground.

The diverse range of partners in the region, including land trusts, bird clubs, natural resource agencies, and universities, share many overlapping needs for monitoring species and habitats across the Appalachian geography. The AMJV seeks to identify areas of alignment amongst these partners and establish monitoring protocols which can be implemented across our partnership.

***This coordinated monitoring effort will not only allow our partners to show their effectiveness, but will allow key regional organizations like the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to track the impacts of their funded projects.***

### Investment in Appalachian Conservation

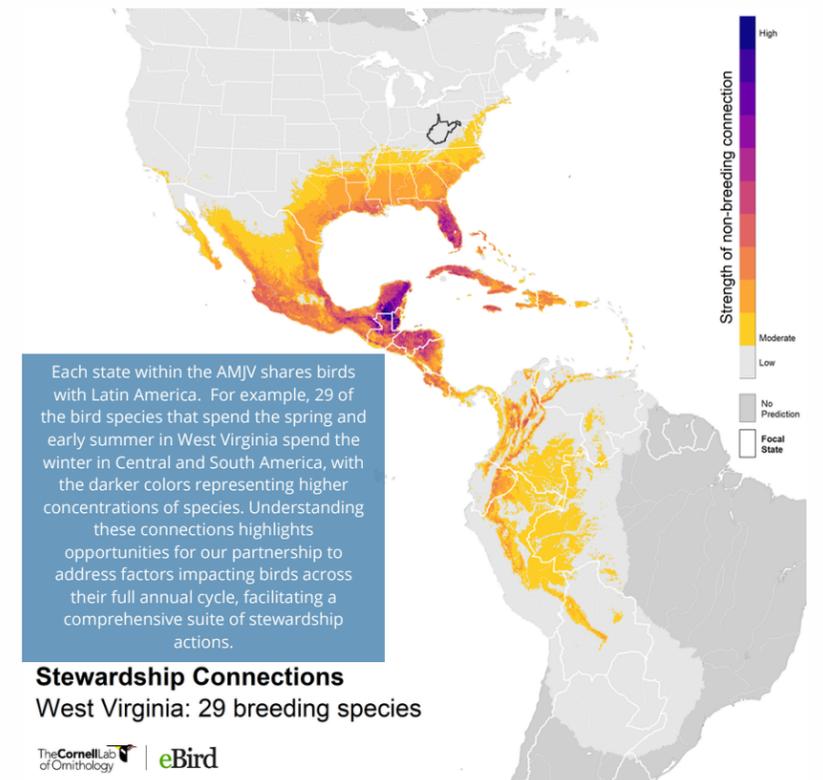
Since 2017, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has awarded **over \$8.5 million** to **39 partners** for conservation projects in Appalachia.

The AMJV Partnership has contributed **over \$9 million** in match to these projects.

## International Partnerships

Many of the birds that breed in the Appalachians spend the winter in Central and South America. While our priority birds are benefiting from protection and habitat improvements on the breeding grounds in Appalachia, habitat loss and degradation in Central and South America is still rapidly occurring and threatening their survival.

Our partners are actively engaged in research and conservation efforts throughout Central and South America, and our partnership seeks to facilitate greater coordination, collaboration, and involvement in these international conservation efforts. This work, coupled with our conservation work in the Appalachians, will enable us to better achieve full annual cycle conservation for our priority species.



## Conserving Birds with Your Cup of Coffee

AMJV partners are working with farmers and landowners across the Caribbean, Central American and South America to increase the habitat available to migratory songbirds while boosting the productivity of their farms.



Cacao trees, such as the one pictured above, grown alongside native trees can boost the availability of bird habitat while keeping farms productive. Photo courtesy of Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute.

AMJV partners and local international conservation groups and governments support sustainable agroforestry on coffee and cacao farms. Partners work to enhance education, restore ecosystems, and develop best management practices for improving wintering habitats for migratory species as well as supporting the livelihoods of local landowners.

**The morning cup of coffee that fuels you through meetings can support birds, too!**

**Make every sip and bite count for birds! Support bird conservation by ordering some Smithsonian-certified Bird Friendly™ coffee or chocolate. Find a local retailer by scanning the QR code or visiting the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/SIBirdFriendlyCoffee>**





## Management Board

- Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
- American Bird Conservancy
- American Forest Foundation
- Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Wildlife Resources Division
- Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- The Nature Conservancy
- National Audubon Society
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
- Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement
- Ohio Department of Natural Resources - Division of Wildlife
- Pennsylvania Game Commission
- Ruffed Grouse Society
- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
- U.S. Forest Service - Eastern and Southern Regions
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Northeast and Southeast Regions
- U.S. Geological Survey
- Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
- West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
- Wildlife Management Institute

# *Thank you for supporting the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture*

Your support allows the AMJV partnership to continue the conservation of dynamic, healthy habitats for the benefit of birds, wildlife, and people in the core of the Appalachian Region.



*Cerulean Warbler photo by Ray Hennessy, Shutterstock*