



New England Cottontail

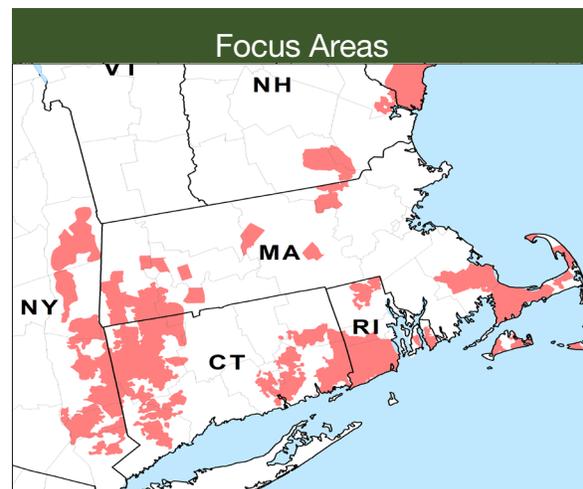
The New England cottontail (*Sylvilagus transitionalis*) is a rabbit that prefers early successional forests, or young forests, in states east of the Hudson River, including Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York. Since the 1960s, development and maturing forests decreased the species' range by 86 percent.

The primary threat to the rabbit is loss of habitat to development and maturation of forests. Fragmentation further degrades habitat by reducing the size of forests and reducing connectivity among habitat. The New England cottontail requires at least 25 acres of continuous young forests. These young forests provide thickets where the cottontail can raise young and escape from predators.

Restoring habitat for the New England cottontail not only benefits the cottontail but 60 other species with similar habitat needs, including whitetail deer and ruffed grouse.

NRCS and the Cottontail

Through Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help private landowners re-establish young forests and encourage the regeneration of these forests. NRCS works with landowners to make a variety of conservation improvements to their lands to enhance habitat for the rabbit. WLFW also provides landowners with regulatory predictability under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which ensures regulatory compliance for landowners who continue to manage their working farms and ranches using NRCS-prescribed conservation practices for up to 30 years.



Actions

- Control weeds and manage for desired brush species.
- Re-establish native shrubs and trees.
- Remove trees and other vegetation to encourage dense forest regeneration and rehabilitate shrubby nature of young forests.
- Increase connectivity of habitat.
- Restore wetland areas in priority areas.

Outcomes and Impacts

Landowners are restoring habitat for the New England cottontail and other species that depend on young forests in the Northeast. This work aids in the species' recovery and increases landowner confidence that the conservation practices they implement will not harm the species or its habitat.



Leaders from The Trustees of Reservations, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and Orenda Wildlife Land Trust look at habitat restoration work that benefits the New England cottontail.

Fiscal Year 2015 New England Cottontail
NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) and Active and Completed Contracts through WLFW

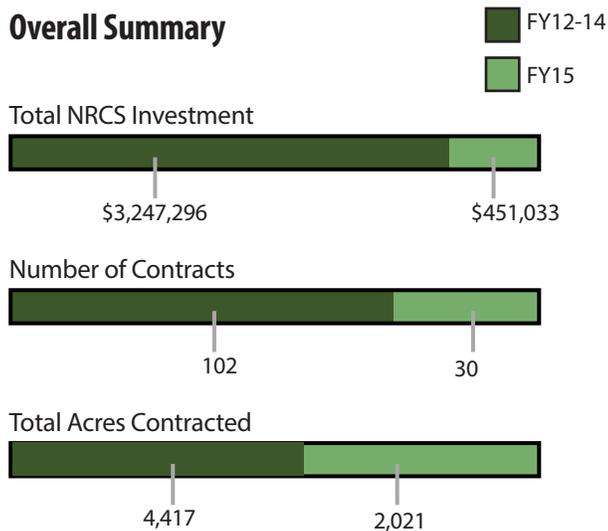
State	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts
Connecticut	162	\$281,499	9
Maine	1,108	\$18,654	9
Massachusetts	15	\$24,406	2
New Hampshire	201	\$46,910	3
New York	16	\$27,225	1
Rhode Island	519	\$52,339	6
Total	2,021	\$451,033	30

Data source: NRCS Resource Economics, Analysis and Policy Division, October 2015.

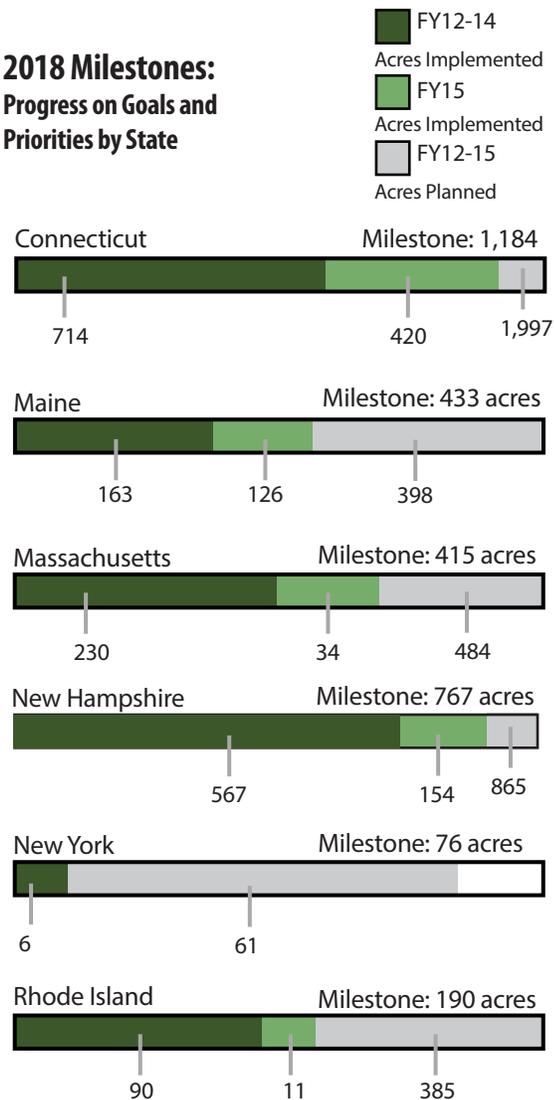
NRCS GOALS

Through WLFW, NRCS works with producers to restore young forests old field habitat to increase New England cottontail populations, provide habitat for other species and provide predictability to producers, ensuring they can continue managing their working lands. To address these three goals, NRCS plans to restore 3,065 acres of young forests and old fields by 2018 with specific acreage milestones in each state. These 2018 milestones as an interim target to help the New England Cottontail Final Conservation Strategy reach its 2030 goals.

Overall Summary



**2018 Milestones:
Progress on Goals and
Priorities by State**



Progress on
NEC Final
Conservation
Strategy Goals for
2030

