



# Appalachian Forest Renewal Initiative

## Restoring forests in Appalachia’s coal mining region

**Description:** The Appalachian Forest Renewal Initiative (AFRI) began in August 2012 and reflects the U.S. Forest Service State and Private Forestry intent to actively participate in forest restoration in the Appalachian coal mining region. The Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry is leading the initiative in collaboration with U.S. Forest Service Region 8 under a 5-year cooperative agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).

### The Landscape

The Appalachian region contains the largest block of interior forest in the East that is home to breeding populations of many species of conservation concern. Forests cover 86 million acres (65 percent) of the region, providing wildlife habitat and recreation, protecting the region’s waters, and supporting an extensive wood products industry.

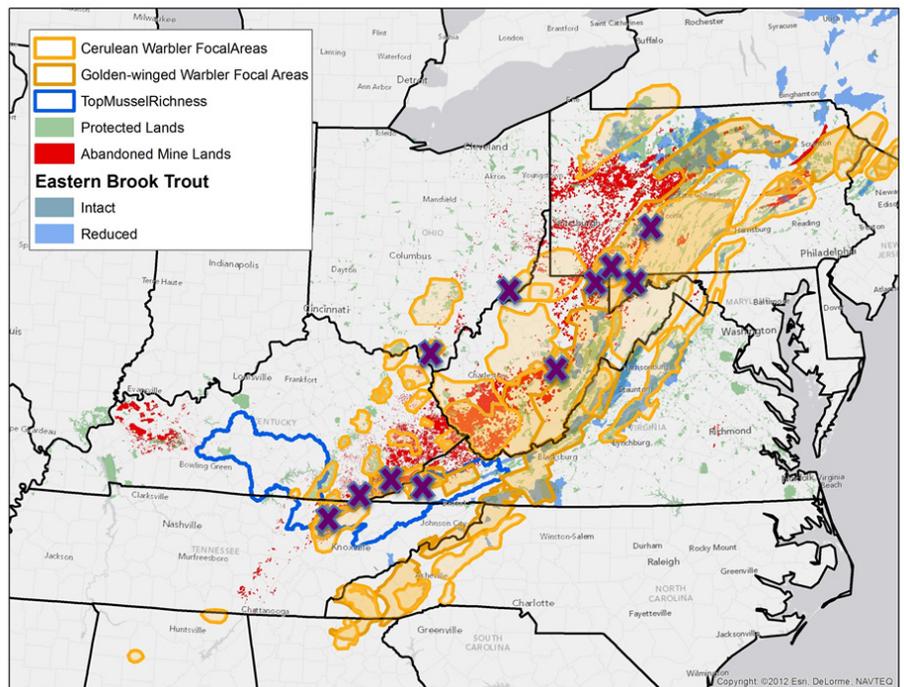
Appalachian forests shaped the region’s history and influenced its culture. The history of coal mining and reclamation across the Appalachian coalfields is well documented. Coalfields cover a broad area from western Pennsylvania to northern Alabama.

### Complementing the Efforts of Partners

Recognizing both the work of other partners in this region and how the AFRI can complement and integrate these efforts is critical to establishing the business case for the initiative. Examples of some key partners and landscape-level documents include the Office of Surface Mining; Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative; State Forest and State Wildlife Action Plans; Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture; Chesapeake Bay Forest Restoration Strategy; and nongovernmental efforts such as those from Green Forests Work, Trout Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, The American Chestnut Foundation, Ruffed Grouse Society, Wild Turkey Federation, and the Golden-Winged Warbler Working Group.

### Key Issues:

1. Restoring priority areas of previously mined lands that could be available for such efforts in the Eastern United States.
2. Restoring forest habitat for the golden-winged warbler or cerulean warbler on high-quality, small- to medium-sized project areas.
3. Targeting sites that include a mixture of natural forest, quality streams, and previously mined land that are adjacent to biologically rich and protected Federal, State, or private lands.
4. Integrating practices such as stream restoration, timber management, tree planting, and invasive plant management to achieve multiple ecological/habitat objectives.



Map of general focus areas for Appalachian Forest Renewal Initiative projects. (Map courtesy of NFWF)



## Project Status:

- State Foresters and nongovernmental partners developed the first group of pilot projects on State and private lands in Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Maryland, and West Virginia in the fall of 2013. Projects began in spring 2014. Three more projects in Ohio, Kentucky/Tennessee, and Maryland were initiated in FY2015 with the remaining funds.
- In early January 2015, Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture was awarded an \$8 million grant under the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). This grant will be used to essentially continue the practices and approach established under AFRI in five Appalachian States that have critical cerulean warbler habitat – Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and West Virginia.

## Budget History:

The AFRI is currently supported by a \$1 million agreement between the U.S. Forest Service and the NFWF. All of the funding is now committed to integrated restoration projects. The initiative is being continued and expanded in five States through the RCPP grant described above.

<b>Appalachian Forest Renewal Initiative</b> <i>(dollars in thousands)</i>						
	FY2012 <sup>a</sup>	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015 <sup>b</sup>	FY2016	FY2017
Appalachian Forest Renewal Initiative <sup>a</sup>	1,000	0	0	0	0	0

<sup>a</sup> Initial funding was provided from S&PF-WO Forest Stewardship & Cooperative Fire funds. NFWF matched it on a 1:1 basis in concert with project partners.

<sup>b</sup> FY2015 funds from the NRCS RCPP program, not the U.S. Forest Service, will continue the initiative (see Project Status section).

## Future Direction:

Monitor existing AFRI projects until completion in 2017. Continue to support as needed the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture RCPP project as described in the Project Status section.

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