

# Wildlife Conservation Land Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the Wildlife Conservation Land Program?**

The Wildlife Conservation Land Program (WCLP) is a new program that allows landowners who have owned their property for at least five years and want to manage for protected wildlife species or priority wildlife habitats to apply for a reduced property tax assessment.

### **Is WCLP the same thing as Wildlife PUV?**

Currently, land enrolled in the N.C. Present-Use-Valuation (PUV) program and classified as agricultural, horticultural, or forest land is assessed by counties at a reduced value. The WCLP is similar to PUV in that landowners must still apply to their county tax office for a property tax deferment but the WCLP is actually a completely separate program and is not part of PUV.

Technically there is no such thing as 'Wildlife PUV' but wildlife conservation land must be appraised and assessed as if it were classified under PUV as agricultural land. This may account for the name confusion.

### **Can anyone who wants to manage for wildlife apply for the WCLP?**

Only land with protected wildlife species or priority habitats will qualify.

### **Explain protected wildlife species and priority habitats.**

Protected wildlife species are those designated by the state wildlife agency (NCWRC) as endangered (E), threatened (T), or special concern (SC). Six priority habitats have been identified as follows - longleaf pine forest, early successional habitat, small wetland community, stream and riparian zone, rock outcrop, and bat cave.

### **What if a landowner has forestland they want to enroll in the WCLP?**

Longleaf pine forests will qualify. Other forest types may qualify as wildlife conservation land if the forestland contains a protected wildlife species or a priority habitat type such as rock outcrop, stream and riparian zones, or bat caves. Forestland that does not contain a protected wildlife species or a priority habitat type will not qualify.

### **What if a landowner has T & E plants on their property?**

Having listed plant species will not qualify under the WCLP. Only land with protected animal species or priority habitats will qualify.

### **Is there an acreage requirement under the WCLP?**

A landowner must have at least 20 contiguous qualifying acres. That means 20 acres of wildlife habitat designated as priority habitat or as habitat to conserve a protected wildlife species, not just 20 acres of land. Contiguous means that the qualifying habitat must be connected in a block of at least 20 acres, not just add up to 20 acres.

There is also a maximum acreage limit. No more than 100 acres of an owner's land in a county may be classified as wildlife conservation land.

### **Is there some kind of contract a landowner has to sign?**

Wildlife conservation land must be managed under a written Wildlife Habitat Conservation Agreement (WHCA) with NCWRC. The management agreement must document the presence of a protected wildlife species or the existence of one or more of the priority habitats and describe the management strategies in place or planned with appropriate timelines to ensure the continued existence of the protected species, the priority habitat, or both.

### **What happens once a landowner has an approved Wildlife Habitat Conservation Agreement?**

To request their property be assessed as wildlife conservation land, the landowner must submit an application to the county assessor's office during the regular listing period which is typically the month of January for the year in which the landowner desires the assessment. The county assessor will determine if the land qualifies for an assessment at a reduced value.

### **How soon can a landowner apply?**

The WCLP will take effect for taxable years on or after July 1, 2010. Landowners may apply to their county for a reduced assessment of their land as wildlife conservation land during the regular listing period beginning January 1, 2010.

### **What if a landowner wants to change over from PUV to the WCLP?**

Landowners may enroll land currently receiving a reduced tax rate as agricultural, horticultural or forest land as wildlife conservation land without penalty provided the landowner meets all other requirements related to wildlife conservation land.

For land not currently enrolled in the PUV program, landowners must demonstrate to the county assessor and the NCWRC that the land has been used for the purpose outlined in the Wildlife Habitat Conservation Agreement for three years preceding January 1 of the year for which the benefit is claimed.

### **Where can landowners obtain more information on the WCLP?**

The NCWRC has prepared a document called 'Introduction to the Wildlife Conservation Land Program'. To request a copy, obtain an 'Application for Wildlife Resources Commission Assistance', or if there are additional questions regarding the program, see [www.ncwildlife.org/Conserving/Programs/Land-Conservation-Program](http://www.ncwildlife.org/Conserving/Programs/Land-Conservation-Program) or contact the NCWRC headquarters in Raleigh at (919) 707-0050 and they will direct interested applicants to the appropriate field representative for their area.