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# New England Cottontail Initiative

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*An update of activities being conducted to benefit this declining species*

## Welcome to the inaugural issue of the New England Cottontail Initiative Newsletter!

Serving to inform you about current activities and future opportunities to participate in projects benefitting this declining species.

The New England cottontail, a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act, has experienced significant population declines throughout the northeast, and a large-scale effort has been undertaken to try and reverse this. Loss of habitat has been identified as the main cause; this species requires large patches (25 acres) of tangly, thorny, thick, brushy vegetation. This has become rare in the northeast and, even where found, is ephemeral in nature. Creating large acreages of this habitat type is key to reversing the decline of the species.

### Who are we?

Multiple governmental agencies are working collectively to stop the decline in New England Cottontail populations, including the CT DEEP Wildlife Division, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. We are partnering with other organizations, including the Wildlife Management Institute and the National

Fish and Wildlife Foundation, as well as private landowners to put projects on the ground that will increase the amount of habitat available.

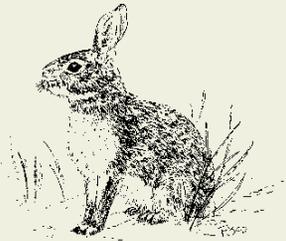
### What have we been doing?

**Research**—Ongoing work includes live trapping, fecal pellet analysis, and roadkill specimen collection to identify areas where New England cottontails currently exist.  
**Development of Focus Areas**—Existing data was used to create a model that targets the best locations for management work. The twelve Focus Areas identified are shown in the map below.

**Outreach**—We have held several workshops and distributed informational brochures to get the word out to private landowners that we are seeking partners for habitat management projects.

**Management**—Several projects have already been implemented on state lands including:

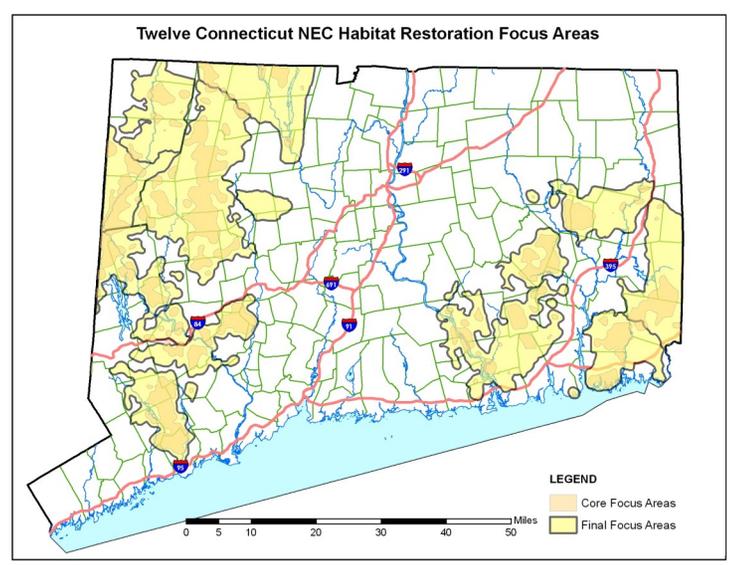
- Roraback WMA— 51 acres
- Housatonic WMA—58 acres
- Goshen WMA—70 acres



***If you build  
it, they will  
come-***



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Camp Columbia WMA—4 acres  
A captive breeding program has also been developed, in partnership with Roger Williams Zoo.



### What do we hope to do in the future?

Additional state lands projects are scheduled, including:

Spignesi WMA—41 acres  
Bartlett Brook WMA—21.8 acres  
Bear Hill WMA—30 acres  
Pease Brook WMA—22 acres  
Sessions Woods WMA—35 acres  
Pachaug SF—250 acres  
Eight private lands projects, totaling 258 acres, are in various stages of development, located throughout the Focus Areas.

Trapping and pellet collection efforts will continue, as will the captive breeding program and additional workshops will be scheduled.

### How can you get involved?

If you think you have a project that may benefit this species, please contact us! We are also interested in collecting specimens (head portion only) whether

lost to injury or taken by hunters. Help get the word out by forwarding this newsletter. Future issues will include announcements of upcoming workshops. If you would like to visit a site and see the what a New England cottontail habitat project looks like, we recommend visiting the Roraback WMA— call us to request a trail map delineating the project site.

### Contact Information

For more information, or to discuss a potential project, please contact the following:

- Paul Rothbart  
Supervising District Biologist  
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[john.berlanda@ct.gov](mailto:john.berlanda@ct.gov)

Our office location is:  
CT DEEP Eastern District HQ  
209 Hebron Road  
Marlborough, CT 06447  
(860) 295-9523

The following websites offer further information pertaining to New England cottontails:

[www.newenglandcottontail.org](http://www.newenglandcottontail.org)  
[www.ctnrns.usda.gov/cottontail](http://www.ctnrns.usda.gov/cottontail)  
[www.fws.gov/northeast/indepth/rabbit](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/indepth/rabbit)

### What do you think?

We hope you find this newsletter informative and we welcome all comments. To submit recommendations or to unsubscribe, please email [robin.adamcewicz@ct.gov](mailto:robin.adamcewicz@ct.gov).

