

Marsh Mat Pilot Project

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ATLANTIC COAST JOINT VENTURE / US FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

MAY

RESEARCH & MANAGEMENT PROJECT



Need to Build Resiliency of Salt Marsh Birds

- Suite of salt marsh birds in steep decline
- Highest concern is “high marsh” nesting species (e.g., Saltmarsh Sparrow, Black Rail)
- Greatest threat assumed to be nest flooding due to sea-level rise
- Urgent need to develop management approaches to increase resiliency of nesting birds
- How can we reduce nest flooding? Create microhabitats of greater elevation?

Develop Viable Management Approaches

Short-term goal:

Pilot test of 1-2 similar approaches that could create microhabitats

Trouble-shoot implementation

Achieve success with technique

Medium-term goal:

Measure whether mats reduce nest flooding

Compare costs, longevity, effectiveness of 1-2 different methods/materials

Ultimate outcome?

Provide an approach that can be scaled up and investigate whether it could work for birds

Project Area

Still TBD, probably in a few NWR from ME to NJ

- Paired sets of mats at each site:
- Each mat is 2m X 3m
- One synthetic (recycled PET plastic) mat
- One natural (coir fiber) mat
- Holes cut (2 / ft²) for plants
- Half of mat is planted with *Spartina* seedlings

Who is doing the work and When are you doing it?

Project lead: Mitch Hartley, ACJV / USFWS

USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System, potentially NPS, NOAA/NERR Network, NYC Parks, states

Starting this summer (2019), likely expanded in 2020, and monitored for a few years probably, maybe longer.

First step of a multi-step effort to develop/evaluate viable approaches to improve nesting habitat

How

Funding is TBD

- Costs per site are minimal
- <\$1,000 (possibly <\$500)
- Labor to install mats and monitor twice each summer

Not yet being communicated widely

Need to Develop Management Techniques

Immediate and major need to better understand salt marsh bird conservation needs and develop practices that improve nest success and increase resiliency of bird populations and their habitat.