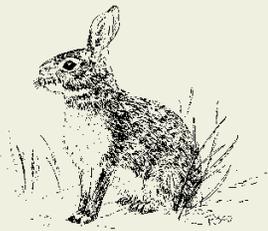

New England Cottontail Initiative

An update of activities being conducted to benefit this declining species

The decision is in, and it's good news for the New England Cottontail!



*If you build
it, they will
come-*

Welcome to the latest edition of the New England cottontail newsletter. On Friday, September 11th, the US Fish and Wildlife Service announced their finding that the New England cottontail will not be listed as threatened or endangered. The ongoing efforts of state and federal agencies, town, land trusts, and private landowners has us heading in the right direction – everyone's hard work is paying off! For the latest information and video footage of the announcement event, please visit the USFWS [New England Cottontail](#) webpage.

What does this mean for the future?

While welcome news, this is not the time to relax; we are still by no means done. The NEC Conservation Strategy Plan extends out to 2030, and the work does not end with the decision. State and federal agencies have made financial commitments to continue conservation and monitoring efforts. The decision shows that regional conservation can and does work! As DEEP Wildlife Division Director Rick Jacobson noted, "... this is a proven model that is sure to serve as a foundation for future collaborations to advance the conservation of other species, like wood turtles, golden-winged warblers and the American

woodcock. This is an exciting time for regional conservation and we are just getting started."



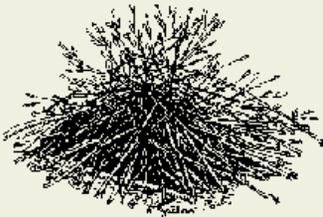
Wildlife Division Director Rick Jacobson prepares to release a New England Cottontail. Photo courtesy of Paul Fusco.

NEC in the news

The *Connecticut Wildlife Magazine* September/October 2015 issue features an informative article on both the listing decision and the NEC in Connecticut. This issue will soon be available on-line; in the meantime, please visit [CT Wildlife Magazine](#) to subscribe or browse back issues.

State Land Projects

A 57-acre project at Spignesi WMA (Scotland-Canterbury Focus Area) was previously bid out and awarded, and the project is nearing completion. This WMA, which has confirmed NEC present, is in close proximity to key private lands projects that also have confirmed NECs. This is the first state-lands project in this NEC hotbed area.



New England Cottontail Initiative

Aldo Leopold WMA (Lower Housatonic Focus Area) also has had a project bid out and awarded. The 45-acre project is scheduled to begin this upcoming winter and will expand on high-quality power line right-of-way/thicket habitat. Aldo Leopold WMA has confirmed NEC presence.

Inventory work is being finalized at Mad River Flood Control Area (Goshen Uplands Focus Area); once complete, a planned 45-acre project will be bid out. The project abuts existing NEC habitat.

The Wildlife Division continues working cooperatively with the US Fish & Wildlife Service's Partners Program to prepare 10-year management plans for many WMAs. A plan has been completed for Aldo Leopold WMA, which, as stated above, is soon to have a project implemented. We have recently finalized a plan for Assekong Swamp WMA (Ledyard-Coast Focus Area), where the first phase of a 27-acre project will be implemented in the near term. Project activities will include mowing invasive plant species, followed by herbiciding next summer and timber harvest next fall/winter. Work on a draft plan continues for Zemko Pond WMA (Lower Connecticut River Focus Area and confirmed NEC).

Stay tuned for more updates on current and future state lands projects!

Private Land Efforts Continue

The Natural Resources Conservation Service once again has funding appropriated specifically for NEC projects under the Working Lands For Wildlife

program. The Wildlife Division continues to provide technical assistance on projects and help with contract development. This very successful program continues to attract private landowners interested in creating cottontail habitat on their property. For more information about pursuing a project on your property, please contact the NRCS or the DEEP. You can find NRCS local service office contact information at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ct/contact/local/>, and DEEP contact information is available at the end of this newsletter.

Workshops and Outreach Events

A workshop was held on October 27 at Sessions Woods WMA to discuss and demonstrate the latest guidance for building brush piles to benefit wildlife. Attendees included certified foresters, land managers and both DEEP and NRCS staff. The workshop included a visit to the Sessions Woods NEC project site for a brush pile building demonstration.

Staff also continue to offer presentations to land trusts, game clubs and



Courtesy of Paul Fusco

other organizations that are interested in pursuing an NEC project.

Have you checked out New-EnglandCottontail.org?

Need more detailed information on



New England Cottontail Initiative

the New England Cottontail? Look no further than newenglandcottontail.org. This website covers all aspects of the entire Regional Cottontail Initiative; here you can find information about cottontail biology, the latest media news stories, what's happening in each of the regional states, as well as pictures, signs, brochures, guidebooks, posters, and a host of other resources.

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

Contact Information

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

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

www.ct.gov/deep/youngforestinitiative
www.newenglandcottontail.org
www.ctnrcc.usda.gov/cottontail
www.fws.gov/northeast/indepth/rabbit

