

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# St. Lawrence

*Wetland and Grassland  
Management District*



*“Avian research confirms that the expanse and interspersion of agricultural grasslands and freshwater wetlands found in the St. Lawrence Valley provide essential wildlife habitat. The area supports dense waterfowl breeding populations and grassland nesting bird species, many of which are rare and declining elsewhere in Eastern North America.”*

Thomas M. Jasikoff  
USFWS

Grasshopper Sparrow  
Courtesy of Mary Tremaine for the  
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology



## Welcome

The St. Lawrence Wetland and Grassland Management District is located in the St. Lawrence Valley of northern New York State that has been designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an official field station and management unit. Within the 2 million-acre District, which encompasses portions of Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Franklin, and Lewis Counties, the Service develops cooperative partnerships with private landowners, farmers, local residents, and other stakeholders to restore wildlife habitat and conserve and enhance migratory birds and other wildlife populations.

## Goal

The goal of the St. Lawrence WGMD is to maintain and improve the exemplary fish and wildlife resources in the St. Lawrence Valley by working with local communities and private landowners to enhance fish and wildlife populations in an ecologically sound, economically feasible, and socially acceptable way.

The District accomplishes this goal by sponsoring wildlife research, providing technical assistance on a broad array of environmental and resource related issues, conducting effective public

*Habitat restoration project before construction.*

Jasikoff, USFWS



*Habitat restoration project after construction.*

Jasikoff, USFWS

outreach, and promoting the establishment of voluntary partnerships with landowners under a variety of programs including: the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the Challenge Grant Program, the Wetland Reserve Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, and easement activities. Through the use of economic incentives, cost-sharing, and other innovative techniques, the St. Lawrence WGMD has accomplished many individual wildlife habitat restoration and improvement projects that are beneficial to both wildlife conservation and agricultural interests.

## **The Importance of the St. Lawrence Valley to Wildlife**

The St. Lawrence Valley contains extensive agricultural grasslands interspersed with abundant freshwater wetlands and tributaries. When compared with other areas in the northeastern United States, the mix of grasslands (400,000 acres) and wetlands (150,000 acres) found in the St. Lawrence Valley is outstanding for wildlife. Results from research and wildlife field studies conducted in the valley confirm that this interspersion of agricultural lands and wetlands creates habitat conditions that favor;



and are of critical importance to several species of migratory birds that are rare and declining elsewhere in the northeast.

The St. Lawrence Valley is the most important area for waterfowl production in the Northeast. Waterfowl and other water-dependent species rely on the shoreline marshes, protected island bays, and open water areas of the St. Lawrence River, as well as the numerous freshwater wetlands scattered throughout the valley for resting, feeding and staging areas during spring and fall migration. Because wetlands are shallow and full of hydrophytes (water-loving plants), they provide a greater variety of nutrients for feeding and more abundant cover for nesting and hiding than do deep lakes or fast moving rivers. The St. Lawrence Valley is noted for having the highest breeding

density for mallards in the entire Atlantic Flyway, with a breeding population of approximately 40,000. Upwards of nine million waterfowl use-days per year have been reported in the St. Lawrence River; Eastern Lake Ontario, and surrounding islands during migration alone!

Dairy farming and associated agricultural land uses represent a major economic activity in the St. Lawrence Valley. Many grassland bird species and waterfowl that nest in the valley are dependent upon the pastures, hayfields and agricultural grasslands maintained by farmers and other landowners. Elsewhere in the northeastern United States, grasslands are the most rapidly disappearing type of habitat, and thus many grassland dependant species are showing rapid population declines throughout much of their range.

*Mallard*  
USFWS



In contrast, many of these declining species are breeding successfully and maintaining stable populations in the St. Lawrence Valley, including the bobolink, eastern meadowlark, short-eared owl, upland sandpiper, Henslow's sparrow, savannah sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, sedge wren, and the northern harrier. An estimated 17% of the world's bobolink population breeds in the St. Lawrence Valley, and exceptionally high relative abundances of savannah sparrows have been recorded. These birds, and many other wildlife species, rely upon the extensive grasslands of the St. Lawrence Valley.

Important breeding populations of bird species listed as threatened in New York State, such as common tern, black tern, and northern harrier, nest in the valley. Bald eagles also nest here and overwinter in the Thousand Islands area. The valley is a major migration corridor and wintering area for raptors, and contains diverse and valuable fisheries resources.

### *Habitat Restoration Project*

USFWS



*Bobolink*

Courtesy of O.S. Pettingill for the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

Collectively, the fish and wildlife resources found in the St. Lawrence Valley have local, national, international, and global significance!

### **How Can You Help Wildlife in the St. Lawrence WGMD?**

The Service has been successfully implementing a private lands approach to wildlife habitat conservation in the St. Lawrence Valley since 1990. Under the program, known as Partners For Fish and Wildlife, staff from the St. Lawrence WGMD have been establishing voluntary partnerships with private landowners to improve, restore, and enhance wildlife habitat. All work is done on private land, and the land remains in private ownership. Critical for waterfowl, migratory birds, amphibians, and other resident wildlife, habitat restoration projects





*Beaver Creek Wetland*

Carl Schwartz, USFWS

provide landowners with recreational opportunities, increased aesthetic value, and improved water quality. Through the *Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program*, privately-owned wetlands and grasslands are restored at no cost to the landowner. Since 1990, the District has developed partnerships with hundreds of private landowners in the valley, resulting in thousands of acres of improved and restored wildlife habitat. Contact the St. Lawrence WGMD Office in Richville, New York for further information.

Areas that are considered for *wetland restoration* are low areas that hold water in the spring, areas that once held wetlands or potholes which are now drained by ditches, and areas containing patches of wetland plants such as cattail and sedges. Wetlands are restored by constructing dikes or plugging ditches, and then returning water to the sites either permanently or intermittently to stimulate the reappearance of wetland plants and organisms. Restored wetlands can also be used for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

*Great Blue Heron*

Lou Stahlman, USFWS



*Henslow's Sparrow*  
Courtesy of B.D. Cottrille for the  
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology



*Blue-winged Teal*

Courtesy of Lawrence Wales for the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

Grasslands that have been taken over by shrubs, brush, and tree seedlings are suitable for *grassland restoration*. Grasslands are restored using techniques such as mowing, plowing, discing, reseeding, and burning. Restored grasslands can be used for haying as well as wildlife conservation. Based upon site-specific conditions and objectives of the landowner, either native warm season grasses or cool season grasses can be established to benefit both conservation and agricultural purposes.

### **Headquarters**

The Headquarters and Office for the St. Lawrence WGMD is located off of Boland Road, in the town of Dekalb, just two miles east of U.S. Highway 11 in Richville. The Headquarters is a 350-acre property owned by the USFWS that welcomes the public and provides opportunities for wildlife-oriented uses such as wildlife observation, nature trail hiking, and environmental education. The Headquarters also provides the public and wildlife partners/cooperators with an opportunity to visit and personally

### *Eastern Meadowlark*

Courtesy of W.A. Paff for the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology



*Wetland/Grassland habitat Restoration Project*  
Jasikoff USFWS

experience habitat restoration sites, wildlife management, and demonstration projects that would be applicable on privately-owned land. In addition to the Headquarters area, the St. Lawrence WGMD has management responsibilities on three properties owned in fee title and 20 wetland easements.

### **Directions to Headquarters**

Exit U.S. Highway 11 onto Main Street in Richville. Turn onto Depot Street (County Route 20) and travel east for 1.7 miles to the first intersection. At the intersection, turn right onto Boland Road. Travel south onto Boland Road for .6 mile to the entrance of the St. Lawrence WGMD. Operating hours are as posted.

### *Canvasback*

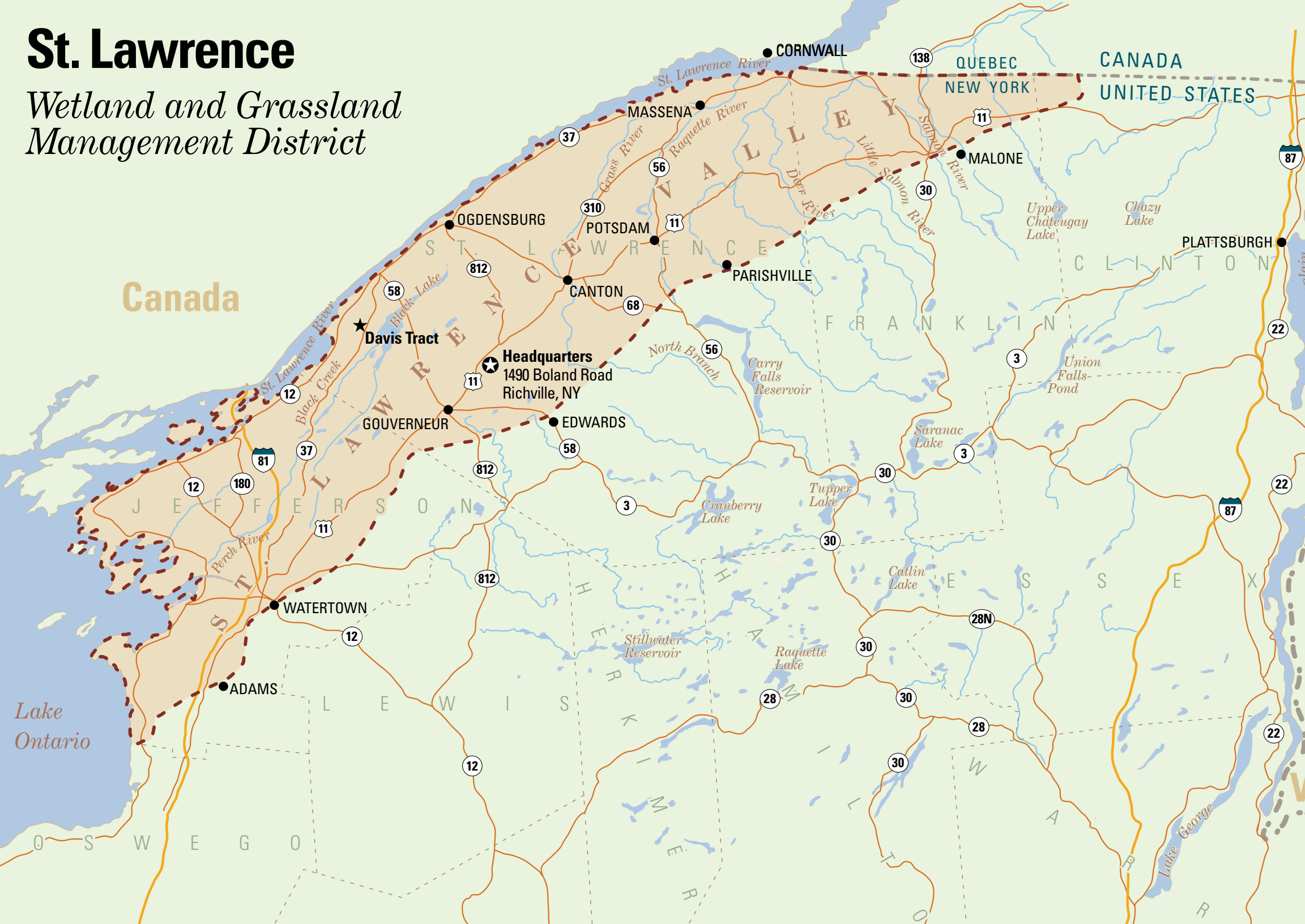
Courtesy of Lawrence  
Wales for the Cornell  
Laboratory of  
Ornithology





# St. Lawrence

## Wetland and Grassland Management District



**St. Lawrence Wetlands and  
Grasslands Management District  
1490 Boland Road  
Richville, NY 13681  
315/287 9093**

**New York Relay Center  
1 800/662 1220 TDD  
1 800/421 1220 voice**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
<http://www.fws.gov>**

**For Refuge Information  
1 800/344 WILD**

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**Cover: Upland Sandpiper  
Courtesy of Mary Tremaine for the  
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology**