

Bog Turtles & the Endangered Species Act (ESA)

LANDOWNER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does the ESA require from landowners?

Because bog turtles are federally protected:

- You must avoid harming the turtle or seriously damaging its wetland.
- You need to involve the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) if you plan a new activity that could impact the wetland and requires a federal permit or federal funding.
- There is no requirement to search for turtles or manage habitat on your own.

Are there benefits or help for landowners to manage wetlands for bog turtles?

Yes.

- Free technical assistance through the U. S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS)
- Cost-share funding for wetlands and pasture management
- Voluntary agreements that provide regulatory certainty
- Programs designed specifically for working farms and ranches in the Southern Appalachians
- Voluntary participation

Who should I contact in the Southern Appalachians?

USFWS - Asheville Ecological Services Field Office (serves western NC and surrounding areas).

USDA NRCS - Your local county NRCS office.

State Wildlife Agency - Local staff understand mountain landscapes, farms and small wetlands (e.g., North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources).

Summary

- Having bog turtles does not mean giving up your land or livelihood.
- Most landowners with bog turtles continue normal land use.
- Help, flexibility and incentives are available.
- Early, informal conversations can make things simpler—not harder.

Find out more
ARCProtects.org/bogturtles



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What is a bog turtle?

- The bog turtle is North America's smallest turtle (about the size of an index card).
- They live in small, spring-fed wetlands referred to as mountain bogs, fens or wet meadows in the Southern Appalachians.
- Many Southern Appalachian bog turtle sites are on private, working lands primarily used for grazing.

What is the bog turtle's status?

- Northern population (CT, DE, MA, MD, NY, NJ, PA): Federally listed as threatened under the ESA.
- Southern population (GA, NC, SC, TN, VA): Federally listed as threatened by Similarity of Appearance and under active consideration for greater ESA protection, and protected in all states where they occur.

Does having a bog turtle mean the government will take my land?

No.

- The ESA does not allow the government to take your property because a bog turtle is present.
- You keep control of your land and decide who can access it.

Can I still farm, graze or use my land?

Usually, yes.

- Normal, ongoing activities (established grazing, haying, fence repair, routine maintenance) are often compatible with bog turtles.
- In fact, well-managed grazing can help keep wetlands open and suitable for bog turtles.



Photo: J.D. Kleopfer

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