



Red-Cockaded Woodpecker

A Conservation Story



Conservation Initiatives

PotlatchDeltic occasionally enters into formal agreements with nonprofit and governmental agencies that limit timber harvesting or development on our forestland. We offer such easements to support the recovery of a threatened or endangered species, or to preserve places and landscapes that have exceptional natural, social, or cultural value.



We are especially proud of the conservation easement we granted as part of the habitat conservation plan for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker in Arkansas.

The red-cockaded woodpecker, or RCW, has been listed as an endangered species since 1970. Its numbers are believed to have dropped to an estimated 15,000 from an original population of 1.5 million. It is a habitat specialist occupying fire-maintained open pine woodlands and savanna and is the only woodpecker in North America to excavate roost and nest cavities in living pine trees. They practice cooperative breeding, a social system in which some mature adults forgo reproduction and instead assist in raising the offspring of others. These characteristics contribute to the importance of available cavity trees and prescribed fire to provide habitat for breeding groups and maintain healthy populations.



In 1995, we entered into an historic partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to create a habitat conservation plan, or HCP, for the red-cockaded woodpecker, providing a variety of strategies for encouraging the bird's recovery. More recently, we rewrote the HCP and embedded it in a 16,000-acre conservation easement in prime red-cockaded woodpecker habitat. This easement with the Nature Conservancy and the State of Arkansas, known as the Moro Big Pine working forest conservation easement, sets these lands apart in perpetuity.

Biologists from The Wildlife Company monitor the red-cockaded woodpecker's population on our lands, conducting an annual survey and banding all newly fledged birds. Our researchers also regularly use "video peepers" to investigate the tree cavities where the red-cockaded woodpecker nests.

Habitat management and translocation of RCW to improve population viability has resulted in the population on Moro Big Pine growing from 24 birds with 9 potential breeding groups to 54 birds with 23 potential breeding groups.



The recent merger with Deltic brought a small number of red-cockaded woodpeckers scattered in non-viable demographic settings and we are actively working to conserve them by permitting their translocation to Moro Big Pine. This will increase the population size and viability on Moro Big Pine where cavity trees are readily available and fire is used to maintain open pine, high quality habitat.

This conservation initiative is a partnership that enables PotlatchDeltic to move RCWs into the conservation area and significantly contribute to the species' long-term viability across the landscape, while at the same time allowing us to more efficiently harvest and utilize timber that would not have provided long-term habitat.