

HABITAT PRIORITY PLANNER BOOSTS CONSERVATION IMPACT



In an era where conservation and restoration dollars are hard to come by but decisions remain critically important, the Habitat Priority Planner helps coastal communities set land use and conservation priorities that are informed, strategic, and far-reaching. What makes this popular tool unique is the ease with which groups can display and change scenarios “on the fly,” experimenting with different scenarios and quickly “seeing” the potential impact of their ideas via reports, maps, and data tables.

Just one person with intermediate skills in ArcGIS is needed to operate the planner for an entire group. In addition, Habitat Priority Planner training is available at the NOAA Coastal Services Center or can be brought to your organization.



NOAA Coastal Services Center
LINKING PEOPLE, INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

Ideal Communication Tool

The Habitat Priority Planner provides a format for analyzing critical coastal habitat that is consistent, repeatable, and transparent. Teams of people working on habitat decisions use this tool to share information and find answers to these questions, and others:

- Where are we most likely to find this plant/animal/demographic?
- Where is the best place to locate this dock/marina/school?
- How will our proposed boundary impact a nearby resource/school/road?
- How do we prioritize areas vulnerable to climate change impacts?



THE TOOL IN ACTION

“The Habitat Priority Planner gave us answers that were instant, graphic, and factual.”

— Sue Bickford, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve

Taking Stock in South Carolina

“Recently, the Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge decided to evaluate all we have accomplished and consider how the refuge should adapt to future conditions. The Habitat Priority Planner and Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM) have helped us fine-tune our modeling to consider how urban growth, sea level rise, and changes in forest practices will affect the refuge’s migration corridors and habitat for black bear and swallowtail kite. These tools have enabled us to take the habitat facts we know and analyze different scenarios, with an eye toward mitigating habitat losses and creating good adaptation plans for future climate change impacts.”

CRAIG SASSER — REFUGE MANAGER
Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge

Piecing Together the Conservation Puzzle in Maine

“The Wells Reserve and Great Works Regional Land Trust worked with stakeholders and officials in six coastal towns in Maine to identify conservation priorities through 2025. Our group

‘asked’ the Habitat Priority Planner database an amazing number of questions about our regional species, habitats, and landscape features. Selecting from the information we had fed into the database, the Habitat Priority Planner gave us answers that were instant, graphic, and factual. The planner helped us prioritize our conservation goals because it gleaned the data that answered our questions.”

SUE BICKFORD — GIS SPECIALIST
Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve

Customizing Maps in the Gulf

“Thanks to the Habitat Priority Planner and technical assistance provided by the Center, we and our partners in Alabama’s Mobile and Baldwin Counties were able to build a tool that made our conservation and restoration maps customizable, dynamic, and printable. First, we used the Habitat Priority Planner to identify priority conservation areas. Next, we placed the data and information into an online viewer, which helped our partners without GIS experience to ‘see’ local conservation priorities combined with extra local information on natural resources and human uses. As a result, our Mississippi-Alabama Habitats Tool and Habitat Mapper allows users to more objectively analyze the data and narrow down patches of critical coastal habitat.”

ROBERTA ARENA SWANN — DIRECTOR
Mobile Bay National Estuary Program