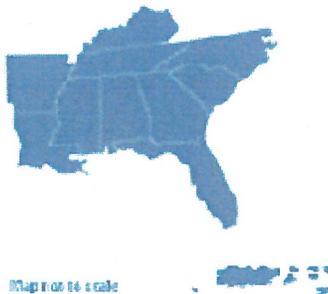


# North Carolina Sandhills Suboffice

## Conserving the Nature of America

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## Information for Private Landowners Links

Private landowners have different responsibilities than do public land managers for endangered species conservation under Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act. Therefore, private landowners are strongly encouraged to follow general guidelines for red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) management in order to avoid inadvertent destruction of pine habitat supporting red-cockaded woodpeckers and any potential violation of the Federal Endangered Species Act.

The North Carolina Sandhills Sub-office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is responsible for coordinating red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) recovery in the North Carolina Sandhills. Our office promotes conservation, restoration, and ecologically sound management of the Southeast's longleaf pine ecosystem, the ecosystem upon which RCW recovery depends. The Service works with landowners to protect habitat for the benefit of the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker in support of Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543) (Act).

The RCW is a small black and white woodpecker with horizontal stripes down its back, with its most distinguishing feature being its large white cheek patches. Only the male of the species has a small red streak on each side of its black cap which is called a cockade. The RCW is typically found in mature, fire-maintained pine forests in the southeastern United States. Habitat consists of pine or pine-hardwood stands which include mature trees (60 years and older), and it is in these mature trees that the RCW excavates its cavities for roosting and nesting. Typically the RCW forages on pines  $\geq$  30 years old. The forage habitat requirement, [on private lands](#), is to provide a minimum of 3,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of pine basal area on at least 75 acres for each cluster or group. A cluster is the aggregation of cavity trees used and defended by a group of RCWs and a 200-foot buffer of continuous forest.

Cavity excavation is a natural process that is ongoing, and there may be newly established, previously undetected cavity trees within pine-forested parcels in the North Carolina Sandhills. Pine tree removal within a cluster and associated foraging habitat, if not carefully conducted is potentially harmful to the species and may violate the Endangered Species Act if not specifically authorized by the Service. **For this reason, the Service strongly recommends that cavity tree surveys be conducted prior to any tree clearing if**

- [North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership](#)
- [Sustainable Sandhills](#)
- [USFWS News](#)
- [USFWS FAQs](#)

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**these activities include the removal of pine trees  $\geq$  8 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh - measured 4.5 feet above ground level). Such surveys should be conducted by personnel experienced in management and monitoring of the species.**

### **RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES**

The need for residential lot surveys for RCW activity is strongly encouraged. Landowners (and those acting on their behalf such as builders, realtors, contractors, etc.) should retain the services of a private consultant who is qualified to do this type of work. The consultant should send their findings to us via e-mail: [ncsandhillsrcw@fws.gov](mailto:ncsandhillsrcw@fws.gov) or fax: 910-695-3322 so that we can issue a letter. For residential lots that occur within developments that are currently enrolled in our safe harbor program, FWS staff may be available to work with the landowner (or those acting on their behalf) to conduct the survey (ex: National Golf Club).

Information to include:

**Name and mailing address** of applicant  
Subject property's **lot number, street address**  
Property **Parcel ID, LRK, or PIN number**  
**Type of activity proposed** (new home construction, room addition, pool construction, etc.)  
**Site plan** showing location of the proposed action on the property and includes the size class (diameter) and total number of pine trees proposed for removal (only necessary if you are proposing an activity that requires pine tree removal).

### **COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES**

Requests to evaluate potential impacts of proposed commercial developments within red-cockaded woodpecker habitat may require a more in-depth project review. A cavity tree survey should be provided for the project area. The results of cavity tree surveys, including the date that they were conducted, and a map of the specific area covered, should be provided to the Sandhills sub-office via e-mail: [ncsandhillsrcw@fws.gov](mailto:ncsandhillsrcw@fws.gov) or fax: 910-695-3322. In the event that cavity trees are found, please contact the Sandhills sub-office for further guidance.

#### [Cavity Tree Survey Protocol](#)

If a commercial development is proposed within an active red-cockaded woodpecker cluster and/or foraging partition, a biological assessment that includes a forage habitat analysis is also necessary.

#### [Procedures for Collecting Forage Habitat Analysis Data](#)

For more details on the project review process, please contact Susan Miller at (910) 695-3323 ext. 10 or [susan\\_miller@fws.gov](mailto:susan_miller@fws.gov). Biological assessments generally require a minimum of 25 working days for review by the Service.

Because of the potential for harassment and/or harm under the definition of 'take' in the Endangered Species Act, the following activities are prohibited without concurrence and/or a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service):

1. Removing any red-cockaded woodpecker cavity tree, through cutting, bulldozing, or any other activity.
2. Damaging an active cavity tree which results in the death of that tree. Damage includes, but is not limited to, injury to the bole or root system (generally due to heavy equipment use), exposure to herbicides, and fire scorch to the crown due to inadequate protective measures during prescribed burning. Pines are best protected from damage by intense fires through frequent low-intensity prescribed burns.
3. Using insecticides on any standing pine tree. Prevention and control of disease and insect infestations is encouraged. Infestations of insects such as southern pine beetles are best prevented by maintaining open structure and adequate spacing between pines. Control of active infestations often includes the cutting of infested trees. If such control will result in losses of trees below recommended foraging guidelines (below), or in the removal of cavity trees, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must be contacted prior to the action.
4. Constructing roads and utility rights-of-way within a cluster. A cluster is defined as the aggregation of cavity trees previously and currently used and defended by a group of red-cockaded woodpeckers plus a 200 foot buffer around the outermost trees. Use of existing roads, improved or unimproved, generally does not adversely affect red-cockaded woodpeckers and therefore is permitted. If, in the landowner's opinion, there is no reasonable alternative to construction of new roads, either improved or unimproved, or if there is no reasonable alternative to placing a utility right-of-way within the cluster, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must be contacted before construction or clearing activities are initiated.
5. Construction of facilities within a cluster including, but not limited to, buildings, campgrounds, recreational developments, residential dwellings, and industrial or business complexes. If, in the landowner's opinion, extenuating circumstances require a facility to be constructed in an active cluster, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must be contacted during the planning phase and prior to any construction activity.
6. Planting of shrubs and/or ornamental plants that will exceed 2.1 m (7 ft) in height within 15.24 m (50 ft) of active and inactive cavity trees. If cavities are 3.05 m (10 ft) or less in height, planting any shrubs within 15.24 m (50 ft) of cavity trees may adversely affect red-cockaded woodpeckers. Construction equipment and construction material cannot be stored within 61 m (200 ft) of cavity trees. Landscaping within clusters should be accomplished with hand tools or

lightweight power equipment rather than tractor-mounted equipment.

For a general map showing the location of red-cockaded woodpecker cluster locations and foraging areas in Moore County, NC click [here](#).

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
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