

**Understanding landowner participation in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and ongoing stewardship behaviors**

**Landowner focus group & interview protocol**

County and state:

Biologist

Current or most recent contract date:

Project dates:

Other partners:

Project activity:

## **Introduction script**

My name is Kyle Clifton and I am a researcher at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA.

## **Purpose**

I'm conducting a study in the southeast region to understand why landowners like you decide to participate in conservation programs to help wildlife.

Information from this focus group/interview will be used to help develop a survey that will be sent to other landowners who have participated in programs to help declining species throughout the ten states in the southeast region.

Today, I want to talk to you about the [*project type*] you started in [*month year*] that you worked on with [*biologist*], who gave me your name.

## **Confidentiality**

The responses and comments you give today will be completely confidential. Your name will not be linked to your comments in any way [and your comments will not be transcribed or recorded].

I will be taking notes during the interview to allow me to remember what is said, but your name will not be linked to these notes in any way. [If it's okay with you, I would like to record this focus group so that later I can transcribe the recording to make sure I nothing from our discussion is missed. Your name will not be linked to the recording or your comments in any way.]

## **Opt out**

Participation in this focus group/interview is completely voluntary. You are free to stop at any time or to skip any individual question.

## **Consent**

Do you have any questions?

Would you like to proceed with the focus group/interview?

## **Property**

1. Tell me about your property
  - 1.1. What is your history on the land?
    - 1.1.1. Current acres ranched/farmed/owned (not just in Program)
    - 1.1.2. Land tenure arrangement
  - 1.2. What do you use the property for?
    - 1.2.1. Goals for the property

## **Initial participation**

Next, I want to specifically discuss the [*Partners restoration/enhancement activity*].

2. Tell me why you decided to do [*activity*] and how you got involved
3. Tell me specifically how you found your way into the program
4. There are probably a number of considerations you had when deciding to participate. What was on your mind when you were considering the program?
  - 4.1. Can you tell me more about some of your concerns?
  - 4.2. Can you tell me more about the reasons you wanted to participate?
5. Tell me about the payments you received
  - 5.1. Did they come from one agency or multiple sources?
  - 5.2. What did you receive payments for exactly (e.g. the requirements you had to satisfy to receive them)?
6. There seem to be a lot of conservation programs out there. I'm curious, what was your thought process on choosing to work with the Partners Program compared to other available programs?

## **Contract term**

7. Tell me about your experiences with the Partners Program from your decision to participate until now
  - 7.1. What do you have to do and how is it going?

8. Were there any particularly positive experiences along the way or good outcomes—what has gone well?
9. Tell me about the challenges that have come up as being a part of the Partners program. What have you found particularly frustrating?

### **Persistence**

10. Your contract is up in [year]. Have you considered or do you have any plans for what you'll do with the land that's currently in the program once the contract ends?

### **Program engagement**

11. If this contract ended tomorrow, would you re-up with PFW for another project on your property?
  - 11.1. Why would you make that decision?
12. If someone new to the area asked you your thoughts about participating in the PFW Program, what advice would you give them?

### **Closing**

13. Do you have any other comments with regard to the Partners Program?
14. Are there any questions you thought I might ask but I didn't?
15. If you were putting together a survey, what would you want to know from all of the other landowners?

### **Thank you for your time—I really appreciate you telling me about your experiences.**

**PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT:** We are collecting this information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501) to identify factors that lead to private landowner participation in the Partners Program and factors impacting the actions/behavior and attitudes of private landowners during and after the life of a landowner agreement. The information that you provide is voluntary. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned OMB Control No. 1018-0140. Public reporting for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Service Information Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: BPHC, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803, or via email at [Info\\_Coll@fws.gov](mailto:Info_Coll@fws.gov).