

NEWS RELEASE

From the Brodhead Watershed Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, June 12, 2019

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Cutline: *These 20 acres of open field, formerly in soybeans, are now protective habitat for a threatened turtle.*

July 20: A rare chance to tour Cherry Valley field that protects turtles

Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge's newest addition, near Stroudsburg, Pa., doesn't look like much at first — 20 acres of open field, formerly in soybeans, now mostly bare ground.

But participants in the Saturday, July 20, guided hike hosted by Brodhead Watershed Association will learn that this is the “before” picture.

Workers recently planted native warm-season grasses like big bluestem, Indiangrass and switchgrass, meant to stabilize the soil, prevent further erosion, and let nature take over. This will keep silt out of Cherry Creek, protect downstream drinking water, and provide habitat and protection for birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

Colonies of bog turtles have been documented in the 3,000 acres under protection in the refuge. The tiny, 3- to 4-inch turtles are listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act — one small step away from endangered. They're found only in the eastern U.S. and have been documented to live more than 60 years. But invasive plants and loss of habitat put them at risk. People stealing them from the wild to sell on the black market is also a problem.

Because the land here is protected and patrolled, the bog turtles are doing well and could serve as a source to repopulate lost colonies in other areas.

Suddenly, this place looks very special indeed.

IF YOU GO

This part of Cherry Valley Wildlife Refuge near Stroudsburg, Pa., consists of 60 acres. It is not open to the public. By permission, Carol Hillestad will lead a moderate walk of about one mile around the property's perimeter to Cherry Creek.

WHEN: 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, July 20, 2019

NOTE: This is an off-trail walk. Footing is often irregular, with high grass. Tick protection and hiking stick are essential.

COST: Free, but registration is required.

INFORMATION: Call 570-839-1120 or 570-629-2727; email info@brodheadwatershed.org. For information about this and other hikes in the free Get Outdoors Poconos series, go to brodheadwatershed.org/gopoconos. The hike series is administered by Brodhead Watershed Association and supported by a grant from the William Penn Foundation.

