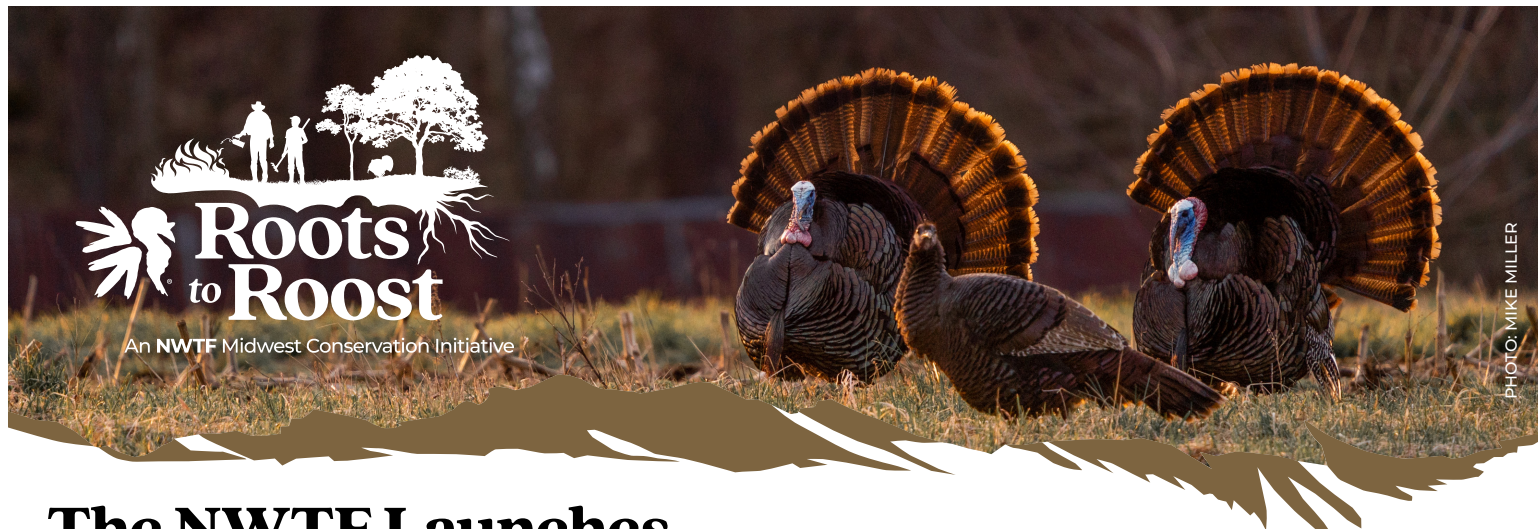




The NWTF Launches New Landscape Scale Conservation Initiative

Conservation Delivery is Expanding in the Midwest

Turkeys need proper habitat to prosper and grow. When managed correctly, habitat benefits wild turkeys, pollinators, and many wildlife species, including those that are threatened or endangered. Well-managed habitat also improves water quality and quantity, provides communities with resiliency against wildfires and allows everyone to have a positive experience in nature.

Because this work is extensive and ongoing, it requires sustainable funding and collaboration. With this in mind, the NWTF has launched the Roots to Roost landscape-scale habitat initiative to combat negative changes to landscapes across the Midwest. This initiative unites people, companies, and agencies with the common goal, to leave the earth better than we found it.

The NWTF's landscape-scale approach builds upon the success of its previous initiatives: Waterways for Wildlife (Great Plains, 2022), Habitat for the Hatch (Southeast, 2023) and Forests and Flocks (Northeast, 2024). With Roots to Roost, the focus shifts to the Midwest, to include the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin, states that once held thriving ecosystems now facing fragmentation and decline.

Roots to Roost: Restoring Habitat, Supporting Wildlife, and Strengthening Communities in the Midwest

Across the Midwest, native grasslands, savannas, and open woodlands are disappearing. These once-vast ecosystems



The Landscape

The Roots to Roost initiative encompasses Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin.

relied on natural disturbances such as fire and grazing to remain healthy. Fire rejuvenated the land, providing ideal nesting and feeding conditions for wildlife like the wild turkey. However, land-use changes, fire suppression, and invasive species have caused severe habitat loss.

Roots to Roost

Species that depend on these habitats now face significant challenges. Because nearly 91% of land in the Midwest is privately owned, private landowners are key to large-scale restoration. Supporting resource professionals with current best practices is equally important.

Over the next 10 years, the NWTF aims to restore more than 1.2 million acres of healthy, productive disturbance dependent breeding season habitat across public and private lands, with strong emphasis on landowner education and outreach.

What the Initiative Will Do

1. Conservation Delivery

- Support prescribed burns to encourage native plant growth.
- Thin forests improve sunlight and plant diversity.
- Plant native grasses and wildflowers
- Enhance nesting and brood-rearing habitat for wild turkeys.

Currently, NWTF and its partners improve nearly 98,000 acres of critical breeding season habitat for wild turkeys per year in the region. Through this initiative, they plan to increase that number by 5% annually — impacting an additional 250,000 acres and totaling over 1.2 million acres improved in a decade.

2. Education and Outreach

- Produce training materials and videos on land management.
- Provide technical support for landowners.
- Promote best management practices like controlled burning and active forest management.
- Expand conservation delivery on private lands.

By empowering landowners with tools and knowledge, NWTF helps ensure long-term success for wild turkeys and countless other species.

The Vision Behind Roots to Roost

The initiative aims to deepen understanding of what

wild turkeys and wildlife need to thrive, particularly on private land. It also supports scientific research, endowed professorships, and studies on effective management techniques and landowner engagement.

NWTF will advocate for policies that encourage active habitat management — such as prescribed burning, forest thinning, and responsible timber harvest — all vital to ecosystem health.

Benefits for People and Communities

1. Healthy Forests and Wildlife Habitat – Actively managed lands support greater biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.
2. Resilient Communities – Restored landscapes resist wildfires, pests, and disease.
3. Clean Water – Healthy grasslands and forests filter and protect major water systems like the Great Lakes and Mississippi River.
4. Recreation and Local Economies – Thriving ecosystems enhance outdoor experiences and boost regional economies.

Funding the Work

The NWTF seeks to raise **\$12 million** over 10 years to support habitat improvements, education and outreach, and new management equipment.



The Bigger Picture

Roots to Roost is about more than restoring land, it's about uniting people for a shared purpose. By supporting private landowners, advancing science, and fostering partnerships, the NWTF is creating a healthier future for wildlife, forests, water, and people.

Whether you're a landowner, hunter, conservationist, or nature lover, this work matters. The outdoors belong to all of us and through Roots to Roost, the NWTF is ensuring it stays that way for generations to come.

