COPPERBELLY CONSERVATION AGREEMENT AREA

WHO IS THE CONSERVATION TEAM?

Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources
Indiana Coal Council
Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources
Kentucky Coal County Coalition
Kentucky Coal Association
Kentucky Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
Kentucky Dept. For Surface Mining, Reclamation, & Enforcement
Kentucky Division of Conservation
Kentucky Farm Bureau
Kentucky Nat. Res. & Env. Prot. Cabinet
USDI Fish & Wildlife Service
USDI Office of Surface Mining
Western Kentucky Coal Association

COPPERBELLY WATER SNAKE

HOW CAN I HELP?

Conservation team meetings are open to the public. Attendance details can be obtained by contacting the TEAM LEADER at the address listed. If you wish to notify someone of actual or potential threats to the snake, or to volunteer for wetland reforestation/habitat maintenance efforts, or if you are interested in copperbelly pamphlet distribution, please write or call one of the listed contacts.

PAMPHLET CREDITS

Created by Kimery Vories, USDI Office of Surface Mining, Alton, IL based on input from the conservation team.
(Version of 12/17/97)

WHO DO I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

Roy Grimes, **KY** Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources (TEAM LEADER)
#1 Game Farm Road
Frankfort, **KY** 40601 (502) 564-4406

Scott Pruitt, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service
620 W. Walker Street
Bloomington, **IN** 47403 (812) 334-4261 x 217

Glen Kruse, **IL** DNR, Division of Natural Heritage
600 N. Grand Ave. West
Springfield, **IL** 62706 (217) 785-8774

Visit the OSM Home Page for the latest meeting dates and information under Public Information at: http://www.osmre.gov/

COMMON LANDOWNER QUESTIONS

Will land be condemned for the copperbelly?
NO! Any land acquired for the copperbelly will be from willing sellers only.

How will copperbelly conservation efforts affect use of private lands?
There will be little or no effect on private landowners. Normal farming practices are not a threat and no land use restrictions are in place. State law in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois prohibit the killing, collecting, or selling of copperbellies.

What does it mean to have copperbellies on my land?
The presence of copperbellies will not affect any use of your land in the conservation agreement area. If you find copperbellies on your property, you are encouraged to report them to one of the listed agencies in this brochure. This information will help the conservation team in their efforts to conserve the copperbelly. Continued success with the conservation agreement will keep the copperbellies in the conservation agreement area off of the Endangered Species list.

COPPERBELLY WATER SNAKE

CONSERVATION AGREEMENT

A PARTNERSHIP FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

ABOUT THE COPPERBELLY WATER SNAKE

Named for its bright orange underside, **the copperbelly is a docile, nonvenomous snake** that depends on wetland and bottomland habitats to live, feed, and raise its young. The copperbelly was once found through much of Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois. However, **loss of its habitat in the conservation agreement area has restricted most copperbellies to pockets of remaining wetlands and bottomlands** in southern Indiana, western Kentucky, and southern Illinois. A small, isolated population in southern Michigan, northern Indiana, and western Ohio has been listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and is not covered by this conservation agreement.

WHY IS AN AGREEMENT NEEDED?

In the past, agricultural practices resulted in large reductions in copperbelly habitat. Due to current agricultural regulatory programs, that threat has been minimized. Currently, conversion of the copperbelly's habitat to other uses, chiefly coal mining in the conservation agreement area, has caused the copperbelly to decline. As a result, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, with its mandate to protect imperiled species, considered the copperbelly for protection under the Endangered Species Act. Such protection is aimed at reducing threats to listed species and encouraging recovery activities. Before a listing was made, however, **a partnership of local, State, Federal, and private interests developed a plan to protect the copperbelly in the agreement area. The agreement works to assure the survival of the copperbelly and the future of coal mining within the agreement area**. As long as the agreement is in place, threats to the copperbelly should be reduced such that listing of the copperbelly under the Endangered Species Act is unnecessary within the agreement area.

THE VALUE OF THE CONSERVATION AGREEMENT IS THAT IT ENSURES THE CONTINUED SURVIVAL OF A RARE SPECIES WHILE ALLOWING IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES TO CONTINUE WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.

HOW DOES THE AGREEMENT WORK?

The agreement establishes a conservation team made up of coal and agricultural interests, and State and Federal resource agencies. In general, **coal companies in Kentucky, southern Illinois, and Indiana voluntarily agree to ensure copperbelly survival by avoiding mining activities in certain areas considered vital to the copperbelly. Most mining operations, however, will continue without interruption.** When reclaiming areas after mining is completed, coal companies will restore lands to enhance copperbelly habitat. State agencies in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois will place a high priority on copperbelly conservation, and the entire team will monitor the copperbelly's status and progress.

The value of the agreement is that it ensures the continued survival for a rare species while allowing important economic activities to continue without interruption.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CONSERVE THE COPPERBELLY?

Like most imperiled species, the copperbelly reflects the condition of the environment in which it lives. So, in addition to ensuring its survival, **conserving the copperbelly means conserving its wetland habitat.** Wetlands support many other species of plants and animals, many of which are valuable to man. Wetlands also perform vital functions such as holding flood waters and removing sediments and pollutants from water supplies. **Efforts to conserve wetland species like the copperbelly ultimately means a cleaner, healthier, and more valuable environment for us all.**