

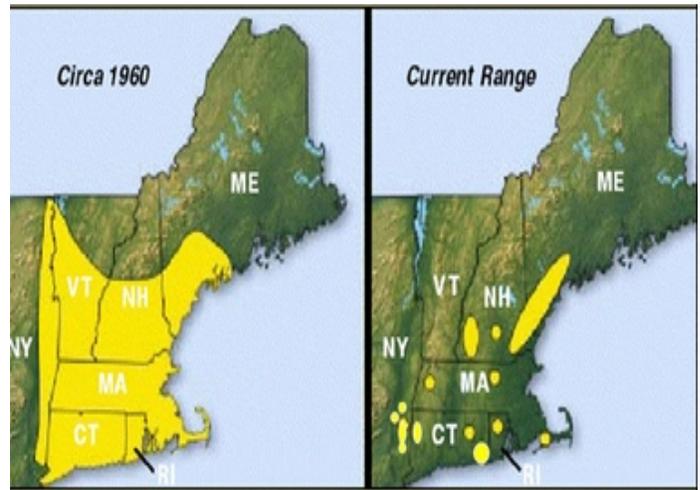


# New England Cottontail Project

## Background

As New England's overgrown fields have been increasingly plowed under to make way for more roads and houses, our only native rabbit has lost the habitat it requires to live.

The New England Cottontail's populations are declining because its preferred habitat, early successional habitat or thickets, has been reduced by aging forests, introduction of invasive plant species and development. Cottontails need dense cover to hide from predators, and they prefer thickets dominated by species such as blackberry, raspberry, and willow.



Through the years, their numbers have been significantly diminished, and without some serious changes, New England Cottontails may soon disappear from the New England landscape altogether.

## What RC&D is Doing

RIRC&D is working with USDA NRCS, agricultural producers and partnering with State, grass roots and other Federal Agencies, to restore and expand habitat for the New England Cottontail.

NRCS has funding for financial assistance to landowners to create and enhance early-successional scrub/shrub habitat for the New England Cottontail. Funding and technical assistance are available for potential clients who own or have control of land that is suitable habitat for the New England Cottontail and who are willing to implement practices that will benefit this declining species. Examples of eligible lands in Rhode Island include:

- privately owned grasslands, and shrub lands,
- young forest,
- freshwater wetlands,
- upland oak forest,
- pitch pine/scrub oak habitat,
- coastal habitats.

To be considered for participation in this initiative, clients must provide proof of control of a minimum of 10 acres of suitable habitat or control of acreage adjacent to protected land that will result in a minimum of 10 contiguous acres of habitat.

*Courtesy of Gary Casabona, State Biologist, USDA NRCS (RI)*

2283 Hartford Avenue • Johnston, Rhode Island 02919

*RIRC&D is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer*